ESSAYS IN MODERN ENGLISH

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SELECTED AND EDITED
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HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN
SHANGHAI PEKING COPENHAGEN
1926

PREFACE

THIS collection of essays has been planned with a view to the needs of students reading for the various examinations of the Indian Universities, but this utilitarian possibility arises out of the historical and educational interest that inheres in any collection of English prose. Such a collection is necessarily a lesson in the art of writing, and may illustrate the history of that art during a certain period, as this selection of essays does for the period beginning with Leigh Hunt and continuing to the present day.

And, for a lesson in the art of writing, a collection of essays in the sense of that word to be indicated shortly, and exemplified in this book, is particularly useful. The essays here given are generally in the tradition of Addison and not in that of Bacon, and their origin may be traced to Montaigne. For though Bacon's essays are short, and are masterpieces of prose, they are full of close thought, and from them are descended those 'essays' which are books, as Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*; whereas, though some of Montaigne's essays are long, they are never close, and they have given rise to all those essays which aim first at pleasing (and very often, at self-pleasing), and are informative or hortatory only by the way.

The Essay, as here represented, is closer to conversation or to letter-writing than it is to the Treatise. Thus, Henley speaks of the 'conversational literature' of the best essayists; and Walter Pater, with especial reference to Charles Lamb's essays and letters, says that 'the essence of the old fashion of letter-writing, as of true essay-writing, lies in the dexterous availing oneself of accident and circumstance.' The lesson such essays enforce in the art of writing is that, whatever else it may be, it should be entertaining: and this, rightly considered, is a lesson in humility.

In strict accordance with this view of the Essay, it is hoped that this book may not merely be of use to the examinee, and

of profit to the student, but may give pleasure to the reader in his idler hours.

A short note is prefixed to each essay, giving the main facts of the life of the author, with, where it has proved possible, an appraisement of his style or literary importance, quoted generally from some acknowledged authority.

Translations of a few foreign words and phrases are given, for such as may need them, silently in footnotes, without distracting reference-figures in the text. The more numerous foreign words and phrases not so translated will be found, paradoxically, in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Other footnotes, enclosed in square brackets, are the editors', and a fuller annotation for such as may need it is given at the end of the book. An attempt has been made to give the sources of all quotations, and some unintentional and slight misquotations (as Emerson's from Beaumont and Fletcher, and Walter Bagehot's from Wordsworth) are in this book for the first time corrected.

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F. P.
E. V. R.

October 1920.

CONTENTS

ESSAYS IN MODERN ENGLISH

I

LEIGH HUNT

(1784–1859)

ON SHAKING HANDS

[James Henry Leigh Hunt, essayist and poet, was born at Southgate near London, on Oct. 19, 1784. Like Coleridge and Lamb some years earlier, he was educated at Christ's Hospital, the 'Bluecoat School.' In 1808 together with his brother, John Hunt, he started a newspaper, *The Examiner*, and for an article in it, in 1811, protesting against Army flogging, he was prosecuted, but acquitted. In 1813 he was sentenced to a fine of £500 and two years' imprisonment for a libel on the Prince Regent. He was able to furnish his room in prison according to his own taste and to receive visits from his friends. He was a copious writer both in prose and verse, but little of his poetry is remembered save 'Abou ben Adhem' and 'Jenny kissed me.' Almost all his prose appeared first in the form of essays in newspapers, from which selections were afterwards issued in book-form as *Men, Women, and Books*; *Imagination and Fancy*; *Wit and Humour*; &c. The present essay is from his newspaper, *The Indicator*, July 12, 1820. Of his place in the line of English essayists Professor Saintsbury has said: 'The praise of giving the last special turn to the Essay is due, more than to any one else, to Leigh Hunt. As Keats took hints from this unequal writer in verse, so did Lamb and Hazlitt in prose: and from these three came all the essayists and all the essays of the English nineteenth century.' As a young man he was the friend of Keats and Shelley, of Lamb and Hazlitt; he lived long enough to enjoy the friendship of Dickens, Carlyle, and the Brownings. He died on August 28, 1859.]

AMONG the first things which we remember noticing in the manners of people, were two errors in the custom of shaking hands. Some we observed, grasped everybody's hand alike, —with an equal fervour of grip. You would have thought

that Jenkins was the best friend they had in the world; but on succeeding to the squeeze, though a slight acquaintance, you found it equally flatter'ng to yourself; and on the appearance of somebody else (whose name, it turned out, the operator had forgotten), the crush was no less complimentary: the face was as earnest and beaming, the 'glad to see you' as syllabical and sincere, and the shake as close, as long, and as rejoicing, as if the semi-unknown was a friend come home from the deserts.

On the other hand, there would be a gentleman now and then as coy of his hand, as if he were a prude or had a whitlow. It was in vain, that your pretensions did not go beyond the 'civil salute' of the ordinary shake; or that being introduced *to him in a friendly manner* and expected to shake hands *with the rest of the company, you could not in decency omit his. His fingers, half coming out, and half retreating, seemed to think that you were going to do them a mischief; and when* you got hold of them, the whole shake was on your side: the other hand did but proudly or pensively acquiesce,— there was no knowing which: you had to sustain it, as you might a lady's in handing her to a seat: and it was an equal perplexity to know how to shake or to let it go. The one seemed a violence done to the patient; the other an awkward responsibility brought upon yourself. You did not know, all the evening, whether you were not an object of dislike to the person; till on the party's breaking up, you saw him behave like an equally ill-used gentleman, to all who practised the same unthinking civility.

Both these errors, we think, might as well be avoided: but of the two, we must say we prefer the former. If it does not look so much like particular sincerity, it looks more like general kindness; and if those two virtues are to be separated (which they assuredly need not be, if considered without spleen), the world can better afford to dispense with an unpleasant truth than a gratuitous humanity. Besides, it is more difficult to make sure of the one, than to practise the other; and kindness itself is the best of all truths. As long as we are sure of that, we are sure of something, and of something pleasant. It is always the best end, if not in every instance the most logical means.

This manual shyness is sometimes attributed to modesty,

but never, we suspect, with justice, unless it be that sort of modesty, whose fear of committing itself is grounded in pride. Want of address is a better reason, but this particular instance of it would be grounded in the same feeling. It always implies a habit either of pride or distrust. We have met with two really kind men, who evinced this soreness of hand. Neither of them perhaps thought himself inferior to anybody about him, and both had good reason to think highly of themselves; but both had been sanguine men contradicted in their early hopes. There was a plot to meet the hand of one of them with a fish-slice, in order to show him the disadvantage to which he put his friends by that flat mode of salutation: but the conspirator had not the courage to do it. Whether he heard of the intention, we know not; but shortly afterwards he took very kindly to a shake. The other[1] was the only man of a warm set of politicians, who remained true to his first love of mankind. He was impatient at the change of his companions and at the folly and inattention of the rest, but though his manner became cold, his consistency still remained warm; and this gave him a right to be as strange as he pleased.

[1] [William Hazlitt.]

II

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

(1785–1859)

ON THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE IN 'MACBETH'

[Thomas de Quincey, man of letters, was born at Manchester on Aug. 15, 1785. He early showed signs of an eccentric nature. He ran away from school and wandered about Wales, eventually making his way to London, where he endured great hardships. He returned to his family and was sent to Oxford, but left without taking a degree. He became a friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth and settled at Grasmere in 1809 to be near the latter. Here he acquired the opium habit, and under its influence he wrote *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, his best-known book. In 1821 he returned to London and wrote for magazines, but in 1828 migrated to Edinburgh on the invitation of John Wilson, to write for *Blackwood's Magazine*. There he died on Dec. 8, 1859. His best known works are *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*, and *Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts*. The present essay first appeared in *The London Magazine*, Oct. 1823, as one of the 'Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater.']

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this, the knocking at the gate, which succeeds to the murder of Duncan, produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was, that it reflected back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect.

Here I pause for one moment, to exhort the reader never to pay any attention to his understanding, when it stands in opposition to any other faculty of his mind. The mere understanding, however useful and indispensable, is the meanest faculty in the human mind, and the most to be dis-

trusted; and yet the great majority of people trust to nothing else, which may do for ordinary life, but not for philosophical purposes. Of this out of ten thousand instances that I might produce, I will cite one. Ask of any person whatsoever, who is not previously prepared for the demand by a knowledge of the perspective, to draw in the rudest way the commonest appearance which depends upon the laws of that science; as, for instance, to represent the effect of two walls standing at right angles to each other, or the appearance of the houses on each side of a street, as seen by a person looking down the street from one extremity. Now in all cases, unless the person has happened to observe in pictures how it is that artists produce these effects, he will be utterly unable to make the smallest approximation to it. Yet why? For he has actually seen the effect every day of his life. The reason is that he allows his understanding to overrule his eyes. His understanding, which includes no intuitive knowledge of the laws of vision, can furnish him with no reason why a line which is known and can be proved to be a horizontal line, should not *appear* a horizontal line; a line that made any angle with the perpendicular, less than a right angle, would seem to him to indicate that his houses were all tumbling down together. Accordingly, he makes the line of his houses a horizontal line, and fails, of course, to produce the effect demanded. Here, then, is one instance out of many, in which not only the understanding is allowed to overrule the eyes, but where the understanding is positively allowed to obliterate the eyes, as it were; for not only does the man believe the evidence of his understanding in opposition to that of his eyes, but (what is monstrous!) the idiot is not aware that his eyes ever gave such evidence. He does not know that he has seen (and therefore *quoad* his consciousness has *not* seen) that which he *has* seen every day of his life.

But to return from this digression, my understanding could furnish no reason why the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* should produce any effect, direct or reflected. In fact, my understanding said positively that it could *not* produce any effect. But I knew better; I felt that it did; and I waited and clung to the problem until further knowledge should enable me to solve it. At length, in 1812, Mr. Williams made his *début* on the stage of Ratcliffe Highway, and exe-

cuted those unparalleled murders which have procured for him such a brilliant and undying reputation. On which murders, by the way, I must observe, that in one respect they have had an ill effect, by making the connoisseur in murder very fastidious in his taste, and dissatisfied by anything that has been since done in that line. All other murders look pale by the deep crimson of his; and, as an amateur once said to me in a querulous tone, 'There has been absolutely nothing *doing* since his time, or nothing that's worth speaking of.' But this is wrong; for it is unreasonable to expect all men to be great artists, and born with the genius of Mr. Williams. Now it will be remembered that in the first of these murders (that of the Marrs), the same incident (of a knocking at the door, soon after the work of extermination was complete) did actually occur, which the genius of Shakespeare has invented; and all good judges, and the most eminent dilettanti, acknowledged the felicity of Shakespeare's suggestion, as soon as it was actually realized. Here, then, was a *fresh proof that I was right in relying on my own feeling in opposition to my understanding*; and I again set myself *to study the problem*: at *length I solved it to my own satisfaction, and my solution is this*. *Murder, in ordinary cases*, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason, that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life: an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures; this instinct, therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of 'the poor beetle that we tread on,' exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with *him* (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them, not a sympathy of pity or approbation).[1]

[1] It seems almost ludicrous to guard and explain my use of a word, in a situation where it would naturally explain itself. But it has become necessary to do so, in consequence of the unscholarlike use

In the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him 'with its petrific mace.' But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.

In *Macbeth*, for the sake of gratifying his own enormous and teeming faculty of creation, Shakespeare has introduced two murderers: and, as usual in his hands, they are remarkably discriminated: but, though in Macbeth the strife of mind is greater than in his wife, the tiger spirit not so awake, and his feelings caught chiefly by contagion from her,—yet, as both were finally involved in the guilt of murder, the murderous mind of necessity is finally to be presumed in both. This was to be expressed; and on its own account, as well as to make it a more proportionable antagonist to the unoffending nature of their victim, 'the gracious Duncan,' and adequately to expound 'the deep damnation of his taking off,' this was to be expressed with peculiar energy. We were to be made to feel that the human nature, i.e. the divine nature of love and mercy, spread through the hearts of all creatures, and seldom utterly withdrawn from man was gone, vanished, extinct; and that the fiendish nature had taken its place. And, as this effect is marvellously accomplished in the *dialogues* and *soliloquies* themselves, so it is finally consummated by the expedient under consideration; and it is to this that I now solicit the reader's attention. If the reader has ever witnessed a wife, daughter, or sister, in a fainting fit, he may chance to have observed that the most affecting moment in such a spectacle is *that* in which a sigh and a stirring announce the recommencement of suspended life. Or, if the reader has ever been present in a vast metropolis, on the day when some great national idol was carried

of the word sympathy, at present so general, by which, instead of taking it in its proper sense, as the act of reproducing in our minds the feelings of another, whether for hatred, indignation, love, pity, or approbation, it is made a mere synonym of the word *pity*; and hence, instead of saying 'sympathy *with* another,' many writers adopt the monstrous barbarism of 'sympathy *for* another.'

in funeral pomp to his grave, and chancing to walk near the course through which it passed, has felt powerfully in the silence and desertion of the streets and in the stagnation of ordinary business, the deep interest which at that moment was possessing the heart of man—if all at once he should hear the death-like stillness broken up by the sound of wheels rattling away from the scene, and making known that the transitory vision was dissolved, he will be aware that at no moment was his sense of the complete suspension and pause in ordinary human concerns so full and affecting, as at that moment when the suspension ceases, and the goings-on of human life are suddenly resumed. All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible, by reaction. Now apply this to the case in *Macbeth*. Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stept in; and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is 'unsexed;' Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested—laid asleep—tranced—racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is, that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers; like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert—but that, the farther we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident!

III

LORD MACAULAY

(1800–1859)

LORD HOLLAND[1]

[Thomas Babington Macaulay, essayist, historian, and poet, was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, on Oct. 25, 1800. He was the son of Zachary Macaulay, an ardent advocate of negro emancipation. As a child Macaulay was a prodigy of reading, and remained so all his life. He was educated privately, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. He entered political life, and from 1834 to 1838 was a member of the Supreme Council of India. On his return to England he became Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, then Secretary of State for War, and later, Paymaster-General. He was raised to the Peerage in 1857. He began his connexion with *The Edinburgh Review* in 1825, with his essay on Milton, and in this review most of his later essays appeared. They may be divided into those on literary and those on historical subjects. Among the best known in both kinds are those on Addison and Johnson, on Clive and Warren Hastings, on Chatham and Frederick the Great. The essay printed below on Lord Holland reflects Macaulay's intimacy with the brilliant Holland House circle. His *Lays of Ancient Rome* were published in 1842, the first two volumes of his *History of England* in 1848 and the last two in 1855. He died on Dec. 28, 1859. Appreciations of Macaulay by Thackeray and Mr. Birrell will be found on pages 47–51, 169–170, of the present book.]

MANY reasons make it impossible for us to lay before our readers, at the present moment, a complete view of the character and public career of the late Lord Holland. But we feel that we have already deferred too long the duty of paying some tribute to his memory. We feel that it is more becoming to bring without further delay an offering, though intrinsically of little value, than to leave his tomb longer without some token of our reverence and love.

We shall say very little of the book which lies on our table.[2]

[1] From the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1841.

[2] *The Opinions of Lord Holland, as recorded in the Journals of the House of Lords, from 1797 to 1841.* Collected and edited by D. C. MOYLAN, of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law. 8vo. London: 1841.

And yet it is a book which, even if it had been the work of a less distinguished man, or had appeared under circumstances less interesting, would have well repaid an attentive perusal. It is valuable, both as a record of principles and as a model of composition. We find in it all the great maxims which, during more than forty years, guided Lord Holland's public conduct, and the chief reasons on which those maxims rest, condensed into the smallest possible space, and set forth with admirable perspicuity, dignity, and precision. To his opinions on Foreign Policy we for the most part cordially assent, but, now and then we are inclined to think them imprudently generous. We could not have signed the protest against the detention of Napoleon. The Protest respecting the course which England pursued at the Congress of Verona, though it contains much that is excellent, contains also positions which, we are inclined to think, Lord Holland would, at a later period, have admitted to be unsound. But to all his doctrines on constitutional questions, we give our hearty approbation; and we firmly believe that no British Government has ever deviated from that line of internal policy which he has traced, without detriment to the public.

We will give, as a specimen of this little volume, a single passage, in which a chief article of the political creed of the Whigs is stated and explained, with singular clearness, force, and brevity. Our readers will remember that, in 1825, the Catholic Association raised the cry of emancipation with most formidable effect. The Tories acted after their kind. Instead of removing the grievance they tried to put down the agitation, and brought in a law, apparently sharp and stringent, but in truth utterly impotent, for restraining the right of petition. Lord Holland's Protest on that occasion is excellent.

'We are,' says he, 'well aware that the privileges of the people, the rights of free discussion, and the spirit and letter of our popular institutions, must render - and they are intended to render - the continuance of an extensive grievance, and of the dissatisfaction consequent thereupon, dangerous to the tranquillity of the country, and ultimately subversive of the authority of the state. Experience and theory alike forbid us to deny that effect of a free constitution; a sense

of justice and a love of liberty equally deter us from lamenting it. But we have always been taught to look for the remedy of such disorders in the redress of the grievances which justify them, and in the removal of the dissatisfaction from which they flow—not in restraints on ancient privileges, not in inroads on the right of public discussion, nor in violations of the principles of a free government. If, therefore, the legal method of seeking redress, which has been resorted to by persons labouring under grievous disabilities, be fraught with immediate or remote danger to the state, we draw from that circumstance a conclusion long since foretold by great authority—namely, that the British constitution, and large exclusions, cannot subsist together; that the constitution must destroy them, or they will destroy the constitution.'

It was not, however, of this little book, valuable and interesting as it is, but of the author, that we meant to speak; and we will try to do so with calmness and impartiality.

In order to fully appreciate the character of Lord Holland, it is necessary to go far back into the history of his family; for he had inherited something more than a coronet and an estate. To the House of which he was the head belongs one distinction which we believe to be without a parallel in our annals. During more than a century, there has never been a time at which a Fox has not stood in a prominent station among public men. Scarcely had the chequered career of the first Lord Holland closed, when his son, Charles, rose to the head of the Opposition, and to the first rank among English debaters. And before Charles was borne to Westminster Abbey, a third Fox had already become one of the most conspicuous politicians in the kingdom.

It is impossible not to be struck by the strong family likeness which, in spite of diversities arising from education and position, appears in these three distinguished persons. In their faces and figures there was a resemblance, such as is common enough in novels, where one picture is good for ten generations, but such as in real life is seldom found. The ample person, the massy and thoughtful forehead, the large eyebrows, the full cheek and lip, the expression, so singularly compounded of sense, humour, courage, openness, a strong will and a sweet temper, were common to all. But

the features of the founder of the House, as the pencil of Reynolds and the chisel of Nollekens have handed them down to us, were disagreeably harsh and exaggerated. In his descendants, the aspect was preserved, but it was softened, till it became, in the late lord, the most gracious and interesting countenance that was ever lighted up by the mingled lustre of intelligence and benevolence.

As it was with the faces of the men of this noble family, so was it also with their minds. Nature had done much for them all. She had moulded them all of that clay of which she is most sparing. To all she had given strong reason and sharp wit a quick relish for every physical and intellectual enjoyment, constitutional intrepidity, and that frankness by which constitutional intrepidity is generally accompanied, spirits which nothing could depress, tempers easy, generous, and placable, and that genial courtesy which has its seat in the heart, and of which artificial politeness is only a faint and cold imitation. Such a disposition is the richest inheritance that ever was entailed on any family.

But training and situation greatly modified the fine qualities which nature lavished with such profusion on three generations of the house of Fox. The first Lord Holland was a needy political adventurer. He entered public life at a time when the standard of integrity among statesmen was low. He started as the adherent of a minister who had indeed many titles to respect, who possessed eminent talents both for administration and for debate, who understood the public interest well, and who meant fairly by the country, but who had seen so much perfidy and meanness that he had become sceptical as to the existence of probity. Weary of the cant of patriotism, Walpole had learnt to talk a cant of a different kind. Disgusted by that sort of hypocrisy which is at least a homage to virtue, he was too much in the habit of practising the less respectable hypocrisy which ostentatiously displays, and sometimes even simulates vice. To Walpole Fox attached himself, politically and personally, with the ardour which belonged to his temperament. And it is not to be denied that in the school of Walpole he contracted faults which destroyed the value of his many great endowments. He raised himself, indeed, to the first consideration in the House of Commons; he became a consummate master of

the art of debate; he attained honours and immense wealth: but the public esteem and confidence were withheld from him. His private friends, indeed, justly extolled his generosity and good-nature. They maintained that in those parts of his conduct which they could least defend there was nothing sordid, and that, if he was misled, he was misled by amiable feelings, by a desire to serve his friends, and by anxious tenderness for his children. But by the nation he was regarded as a man of insatiable rapacity and desperate ambition; as a man ready to adopt, without scruple, the most immoral and the most unconstitutional measures; as a man perfectly fitted, by all his opinions and feelings, for the work of managing the Parliament by means of secret-service-money, and of keeping down the people with the bayonet. Many of his contemporaries had a morality quite as lax as his; but very few among them had his talents, and none had his hardihood and energy. He could not, like Sandys and Doddington, find safety in contempt. He therefore became an object of such general aversion as no statesman since the fall of Strafford has incurred, of such general aversion as was probably never in any country incurred by a man of so kind and cordial a disposition. A weak mind would have sunk under such a load of unpopularity. But that resolute spirit seemed to derive new firmness from the public hatred. The only effect which reproaches appeared to produce on him, was to sour, in some degree, his naturally sweet temper. The last acts of his public life were marked, not only by that audacity which he had derived from nature, not only by that immorality which he had learned in the school of Walpole, but by a harshness which almost amounted to cruelty, and which had never been supposed to belong to his character. His severity increased the unpopularity from which it had sprung. The well-known lampoon of Gray may serve as a specimen of the feeling of the country. All the images are taken from shipwrecks, quicksands, and cormorants. Lord Holland is represented as complaining, that the cowardice of his accomplices had prevented him from putting down the free spirit of the city of London by sword and fire, and as pining for the time when birds of prey should make their nests in Westminster Abbey, and unclean beasts burrow in St. Paul's.

Within a few months after the death of this remarkable man, his second son Charles appeared at the head of the party opposed to the American War. Charles had inherited the bodily and mental constitution of his father, and had been much, far too much, under his father's influence. It was indeed impossible that a son of so affectionate and noble a nature should not have been warmly attached to a parent who possessed many fine qualities, and who carried his indulgence and liberality towards his children even to a culpable extent. Charles saw that the person to whom he was bound by the strongest ties was, in the highest degree, odious to the nation; and the effect was what might have been expected from the strong passions and constitutional boldness of so high-spirited a youth. He cast in his lot with his father, and took, while still a boy, a deep part in the most unjustifiable and unpopular measures that had been adopted since the reign of James the Second. In the debates on the Middlesex Election, he distinguished himself, not only by his precocious powers of eloquence, but by the vehement and scornful manner in which he bade defiance to public opinion. He was at that time regarded as a man likely to be the most formidable champion of arbitrary government that had appeared since the Revolution, to be a Bute with far greater powers, a Mansfield with far greater courage. Happily his father's death liberated him early from the pernicious influence by which he had been misled. His mind expanded. His range of observation became wider. His genius broke through early prejudices. His natural benevolence and magnanimity had fair play. In a very short time he appeared in a situation worthy of his understanding and of his heart. From a family whose name was associated in the public mind with tyranny and corruption, from a party of which the theory and the practice were equally servile, from the midst of the Luttrells, the Dysons, the Barringtons, came forth the greatest parliamentary defender of civil and religious liberty.

The late Lord Holland succeeded to the talents and to the fine natural dispositions of his House. But his situation was very different from that of the two eminent men of whom we have spoken. In some important respects it was better, in some it was worse than theirs. He had one great advantage over them. He received a good political education.

The first lord was educated by Sir Robert Walpole. Mr. Fox was educated by his father. The late lord was educated by Mr. Fox. The pernicious maxims early imbibed by the first Lord Holland, made his great talents useless, and worse than useless, to the state. The pernicious maxims early imbibed by Mr. Fox led him, at the commencement of his public life, into great faults which, though afterwards nobly expiated, were never forgotten. To the very end of his career, small men, when they had nothing else to say in defence of their own tyranny, bigotry, and imbecility, could always raise a cheer by some paltry taunt about the election of Colonel Luttrell, the imprisonment of the lord mayor, and other measures in which the great Whig leader had borne a part at the age of one or two and twenty. On Lord Holland no such slur could be thrown. Those who most dissent from his opinions must acknowledge that a public life more consistent is not to be found in our annals. Every part of it is in perfect harmony with every other part; and the whole is in perfect harmony with the great principles of toleration and civil freedom. This rare felicity is in a great measure to be attributed to the influence of Mr. Fox. Lord Holland, as was natural in a person of his talents and expectations, began at a very early age to take the keenest interest in politics; and Mr. Fox found the greatest pleasure in forming the mind of so hopeful a pupil. They corresponded largely on political subjects when the young lord was only sixteen; and their friendship and mutual confidence continued to the day of that mournful separation at Chiswick. Under such training, such a man as Lord Holland was in no danger of falling into those faults which threw a dark shade over the whole career of his grandfather, and from which the youth of his uncle was not wholly free.

On the other hand, the late Lord Holland, as compared with his grandfather and his uncle, laboured under one great disadvantage. They were members of the House of Commons. He became a peer while still an infant. When he entered public life, the House of Lords was a very small and a very decorous assembly. The minority to which he belonged was scarcely able to muster five or six votes on the most important nights, when eighty or ninety lords were present. Debate had accordingly become a mere form, as it was in the

Irish House of Peers before the Union. This was a great misfortune to a man like Lord Holland It was not by occasionally addressing fifteen or twenty solemn and unfriendly auditors, that his grandfather and his uncle attained their unrivalled parliamentary skill. The former had learned his art in 'the great Walpolean battles,' on nights when Onslow was in the chair seventeen hours without intermission, when the thick ranks on both sides kept unbroken order till long after the winter sun had risen upon them, when the blind were led out by the hand into the lobby and the paralytic laid down in their bed-clothes on the benches. The powers of Charles Fox were, from the first, exercised in conflicts not less exciting. The great talents of the late Lord Holland had no such advantage. This was the more unfortunate, because the peculiar species of eloquence which belonged to him in common with his family required much practice to develop it. With strong sense, and the greatest readiness of wit, a certain tendency to hesitation was hereditary in the line of Fox. This hesitation arose, not from the poverty, but from the wealth of their vocabulary. They paused, not from the difficulty of finding one expression, but from the difficulty of choosing between several. It was only by slow degrees and constant exercise that the first Lord Holland and his son overcame the defect. Indeed neither of them overcame it completely.

In statement, the late Lord Holland was not successful; his chief excellence lay in reply. He had the quick eye of his house for the unsound parts of an argument, and a great felicity in exposing them. He was decidedly more distinguished in debate than any peer of his time who had not sat in the House of Commons. Nay, to find his equal among persons similarly situated, we must go back eighty years to Earl Granville. For Mansfield, Thurlow, Loughborough, Grey, Grenville, Brougham, Plunkett, and other eminent men, living and dead, whom we will not stop to enumerate, carried to the Upper House an eloquence formed and matured in the Lower. The opinion of the most discerning judges was that Lord Holland's oratorical performances, though sometimes most successful, afforded no fair measure of his oratorical powers, and that, in an assembly of which the debates were frequent and animated, he would have attained a very high

order of excellence. It was, indeed, impossible to listen to his conversation without seeing that he was born a debater. To him, as to his uncle, the exercise of the mind in discussion was a positive pleasure. With the greatest good nature and good breeding, he was the very opposite to an assenter. The word 'disputatious' is generally used as a word of reproach; but we can express our meaning only by saying that Lord Holland was most courteously and pleasantly disputatious. In truth, his quickness in discovering and apprehending distinctions and analogies was such as a veteran judge might envy. The lawyers of the Duchy of Lancaster were astonished to find in an unprofessional man so strong a relish for the esoteric parts of their science, and complained that as soon as they had split a hair, Lord Holland proceeded to split the filaments into filaments still finer. In a mind less happily constituted, there might have been a risk that this turn for subtilty would have produced serious evil. But in the heart and understanding of Lord Holland there was ample security against all such danger. He was not a man to be the dupe of his own ingenuity. He put his logic to its proper use; and in him the dialectician was always subordinate to the statesman.

His political life is written in the chronicles of his country. Perhaps, as we have already intimated, his opinions on two or three great questions of foreign policy were open to just objection. Yet even his errors, if he erred, were amiable and respectable. We are not sure that we do not love and admire him the more because he was now and then seduced from what we regard as a wise policy by sympathy with the oppressed, by generosity towards the fallen, by a philanthropy so enlarged that it took in all nations, by love of peace, a love which in him was second only to the love of freedom, and by the magnanimous credulity of a mind which was as incapable of suspecting as of devising mischief.

To his views on questions of domestic policy the voice of his countrymen does ample justice. They revere the memory of the man who was, during forty years, the constant protector of all oppressed races and persecuted sects, of the man whom neither the prejudices nor the interests belonging to his station could seduce from the path of right, of the noble, who in every great crisis cast in his lot with

the commons, of the planter, who made manful war on the slave trade, of the landowner, whose whole heart was in the struggle against the corn-laws.

We have hitherto touched almost exclusively on those parts of Lord Holland's character which were open to the observation of millions. How shall we express the feelings with which his memory is cherished by those who were honoured with his friendship? Or in what language shall we speak of that house, once celebrated for its rare attractions to the furthest ends of the civilized world, and now silent and desolate as the grave? To that house, a hundred and twenty years ago, a poet[1] addressed those tender and graceful lines, which have now acquired a new meaning not less sad than that which they originally bore.

> Thou hill, whose brow the antique structures grace,
> Reared by bold chiefs of Warwick's noble race,
> Why, once so loved, whene'er thy bower appears,
> O'er my dim eyeballs glance the sudden tears?
> How sweet were once thy prospects fresh and fair,
> Thy sloping walks, and unpolluted air!
> How sweet the glooms beneath thine aged trees,
> Thy noon-tide shadow, and thine evening breeze!
> His image thy forsaken bowers restore;
> Thy walks and airy prospects charm no more;
> No more the summer in thy glooms allayed,
> Thine evening breezes, and thy noon-day shade.

Yet a few years, and the shades and structures may follow their illustrious masters. The wonderful city which, ancient and gigantic as it is, still continues to grow as fast as a young town of logwood by a water-privilege in Michigan, may soon displace those turrets and gardens which are associated with so much that is interesting and noble, with the courtly magnificence of Rich, with the loves of Ormond, with the counsels of Cromwell, with the death of Addison. The time is coming when, perhaps, a few old men, the last survivors of our generation, will in vain seek, amidst new streets, and squares, and railway stations, for the site of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties, of painters

[1] [Thomas Tickell (1686–1740), *To the Earl of Warwick on the Death of Mr. Addison* (1719). 'Nor,' says Dr. Johnson, 'is a more sublime or more elegant funeral poem to be found in the whole compass of English literature.']

and poets, of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen. They will then remember, with strange tenderness, many objects once familiar to them, the avenue and the terrace, the busts and the paintings, the carving, the grotesque gilding, and the enigmatical mottoes. With peculiar fondness they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and wit could devise to embellish a drawing-room. They will recollect, not unmoved, those shelves loaded with the varied learning of many lands and many ages, and those portraits in which were preserved the features of the best and wisest Englishmen of two generations. They will recollect how many men who have guided the politics of Europe, who have moved great assemblies by reason and eloquence, who have put life into bronze and canvas, or who have left to posterity things so written as it shall not willingly let them die, were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society of the most splendid of capitals. They will remember the peculiar character which belonged to that circle, in which every talent and accomplishment, every art and science, had its place. They will remember how the last debate was discussed in one corner, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Sir Joshua's Baretti; while Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation; while Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxembourg, or his ride with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz. They will remember, above all, the grace, and the kindness, far more admirable than grace, with which the princely hospitality of that ancient mansion was dispensed. They will remember the venerable and benignant countenance and the cordial voice of him who bade them welcome. They will remember that temper which years of pain, of sickness, of lameness, of confinement, seemed only to make sweeter and sweeter, and that frank politeness, which at once relieved all the embarrassment of the youngest and most timid writer or artist, who found himself for the first time among Ambassadors and Earls. They will remember that constant flow of conversation, so natural, so animated, so various, so rich with observation and anecdote; that wit which never gave a wound; that exquisite mimicry which ennobled, instead of degrading;

that goodness of heart which appeared in every look and accent, and gave additional value to every talent and acquirement. They will remember, too, that he whose name they hold in reverence was not less distinguished by the inflexible uprightness of his political conduct than by his loving disposition and his winning manners. They will remember that, in the last lines which he traced, he expressed his joy that he had done nothing unworthy of the friend of Fox and Grey; and they will have reason to feel similar joy, if, in looking back on many troubled years, they cannot accuse themselves of having done anything unworthy of men who were distinguished by the friendship of Lord Holland.

IV

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

(1803–1882)

ON HEROISM

[Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist, lecturer, and poet, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on May 25, 1803. He entered and soon relinquished the Unitarian ministry, and became the centre of the New England group of transcendentalists,—idealists influenced by German philosophy and Oriental literature. His essays were published in two series, in 1841 (from which the present essay is taken) and 1844, and were introduced to the English public by Thomas Carlyle. The essays on 'Compensation,' 'Spiritual Laws,' 'Heroism,' 'Self-Reliance,' and 'Friendship' have become recognized as classics, and on the strength of them, principally, Emerson is spoken of as a teacher, and as Matthew Arnold expressed it, 'a friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit.' His influence is summed up in these words from Lowell's essay on 'Emerson as Lecturer.' 'He awakened us . . . put us in communication with a larger style of thought, sharpened our wits with a more pungent phrase, gave us ravishing glimpses of an ideal under the dry husk of our New England; made us conscious of the supreme and everlasting originality of whatever bit of soul might be in any of us.' Emerson visited England in 1833 and 1847 and published his *English Traits* in 1856. Apart from this book and his essays, his prose-writings were first delivered as lectures or addresses. He wrote poetry, of truly poetic inspiration, but imperfect in form. He died at Concord, near Boston, April 27, 1882.]

In the elder English dramatists, and mainly in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, there is a constant recognition of gentility, as if a noble behaviour were as easily marked in the society of their age, as colour is in our American population. When any Rodrigo, Pedro, or Valerio, enters, though he be a stranger, the duke or governor exclaims, This is a gentleman, and proffers civilities without end; but all the rest are slag and refuse. In harmony with this delight in personal advantages, there is in their plays a certain heroic

cast of character and dialogue—as in *Bonduca*, *Sophocles*, *The Mad Lover*, *The Double Marriage*—wherein the speaker is so earnest and cordial, and on such deep grounds of character, that the dialogue, on the slightest additional incident in the plot, rises naturally into poetry. Among many texts, take the following. The Roman Martius has conquered Athens—all but the invincible spirits of Sophocles, the Duke of Athens, and Dorigen, his wife. The beauty of the latter inflames Martius, and he seeks to save her husband; but Sophocles will not ask his life, although assured that a word will save him, and the execution of both proceeds.

Valerius. Bid thy wife farewell.
Soph. No, I will take no leave. My Dorigen,
Yonder, above, 'bout Ariadne's crown,
My spirit shall hover for thee. Prithee, haste.
Dor. Stay, Sophocles,—with this tie up my sight;
Let not soft nature so transformèd be,
And lose her gentler sexed humanity,
To make me see my lord bleed. So, 't is well;
Never one object underneath the sun
Will I behold before my Sophocles:
Farewell; now teach the Romans how to die.
Mar. Dost know what 't is to die?
Soph. Thou dost not, Martius,
And, therefore, not what 't is to live; to die
Is to begin to live. It is to end
An old, stale, weary work, and to commence
A newer and a better. 'T is to leave
Deceitful knaves for the society
Of gods and goodness. Thou thyself must part
At last from all thy garlands, pleasures, triumphs,
And prove thy fortitude what then 't will do.
Val. But art not grieved nor vexed to leave life thus?
Soph. Why should I grieve or vex for being sent
To them I ever loved best? Now I'll kneel,
But with my back toward thee; 't is the last duty
This trunk can do the gods.
Mar. Strike, strike, Valerius,
Or Martius' heart will leap out at his mouth:
This is a man, a woman! Kiss thy lord,
And live with all the freedom you were wont.
O love! thou doubly hast afflicted me
With virtue and with beauty. Treacherous heart,
My hand shall cast thee quick into my urn,
Ere thou transgress this knot of piety.
Val. What ails my brother?
Soph. Martius, O Martius,

> Thou now hast found a way to conquer me.
> *Dor.* O star of Rome! what gratitude can speak
> Fit words to follow such a deed as this? . . .
> *Mar.* This admirable duke, Valerius,
> With his disdain of fortune and of death,
> Captived himself, hath captivated me,
> And though my arm hath ta'en his body here,
> His soul hath subjugated Martius' soul.
> By Romulus, he is all soul, I think;
> He hath no flesh, and spirit cannot be gyved;
> Then we have vanquished nothing; he is free,
> And Martius walks now in captivity.

I do not readily remember any poem, play, sermon, novel, or oration, that our press vents in the last few years, which goes to the same tune. We have a great many flutes and flageolets, but not often the sound of any fife. Yet, Wordsworth's 'Laodamia,' and the ode of 'Dion,' and some sonnets, have a certain noble music; and Scott will sometimes draw a stroke like the portrait of Lord Evandale, given by Balfour of Burley. Thomas Carlyle, with his natural taste for what is manly and daring in character, has suffered no heroic trait in his favourites to drop from his biographical and historical pictures. Earlier, Robert Burns has given us a song or two. In the *Harleian Miscellanies*, there is an account of the battle of Lutzen, which deserves to be read. And Simon Ockley's *History of the Saracens* recounts the prodigies of individual valour with admiration, all the more evident on the part of the narrator, that he seems to think that his place in Christian Oxford requires of him some proper protestations of abhorrence. But, if we explore the literature of Heroism, we shall quickly come to Plutarch, who is its Doctor and historian. To him we owe the Brasidas, the Dion, the Epaminondas, the Scipio of old, and I must think we are more deeply indebted to him than to all the ancient writers. Each of his 'Lives' is a refutation to the despondency and cowardice of our religious and political theorists. A wild courage, a Stoicism not of the schools, but of the blood, shines in every anecdote, and has given that book its immense fame.

We need books of this tart cathartic virtue, more than books of political science, or of private economy. Life is a festival only to the wise. Seen from the nook and chimney-side of prudence, it wears a ragged and dangerous front. The violations of the laws of nature by our predecessors and our

contemporaries are punished in us also. The disease and deformity around us certify the infraction of natural, intellectual, and moral laws, and often violation on violation to breed such compound misery. A lockjaw that bends a man's head back to his heels, hydrophobia, that makes him bark at his wife and babes; insanity, that makes him eat grass; war, plague, cholera, famine, indicate a certain ferocity in nature, which, as it had its inlet by human crime, must have its outlet by human suffering. Unhappily, no man exists who has not in his own person become, to some amount, a stockholder in the sin, and so made himself liable to a share in the expiation.

Our culture, therefore, must not omit the arming of the man. Let him hear in season, that he is born into the state of war, and that the commonwealth and his own well-being require that he should not go dancing in the weeds of peace; but warned, self-collected, and neither defying nor dreading the thunder, let him take both reputation and life in his hand, and, with perfect urbanity, dare the gibbet and the mob by the absolute truth of his speech, and the rectitude of his behaviour.

Towards all this external evil, the man within the breast assumes a warlike attitude, and affirms his ability to cope single-handed with the infinite army of enemies. To this military attitude of the soul we give the name of Heroism. Its rudest form is the contempt for safety and ease, which makes the attractiveness of war. It is a self-trust which slights the restraints of prudence, in the plenitude of its energy and power to repair the harms it may suffer. The hero is a mind of such balance that no disturbances can shake his will, but pleasantly, and, as it were, merrily, he advances to his own music, alike in frightful alarms and in the tipsy mirth of universal dissoluteness. There is somewhat not philosophical in heroism; there is somewhat not holy in it; it seems not to know that other souls are of one texture with it; it has pride; it is the extreme of individual nature. Nevertheless, we must profoundly revere it. There is somewhat in great actions, which does not allow us to go behind them. Heroism feels and never reasons, and therefore is always right; and although a different breeding, different religion, and greater intellectual activity would have

modified or even reversed the particular action, yet for the hero that thing he does is the highest deed, and is not open to the censure of philosophers or divines. It is the avowal of the unschooled man, that he finds a quality in him that is negligent of expense, of health, of life, of danger, of hatred, of reproach, and knows that his will is higher and more excellent than all actual and all possible antagonists.

Heroism works in contradiction to the voice of mankind, and in contradiction, for a time, to the voice of the great and good. Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual's character. Now to no other man can its wisdom appear as it does to him, for every man must be supposed to see a little farther on his own proper path than any one else. Therefore, just and wise men take umbrage at his act, until after some little time be past: then they see it to be in unison with their acts. All prudent men see that the action is clean contrary to a sensual prosperity; for every heroic act measures itself by its contempt of some external good. But it finds its own success at last, and then the prudent also extol.

Self-trust is the essence of heroism. It is the state of the soul at war, and its ultimate objects are the last defiance of falsehood and wrong, and the power to bear all that can be inflicted by evil agents. It speaks the truth, and it is just, generous, hospitable, temperate, scornful of petty calculations, and scornful of being scorned. It persists; it is of an undaunted boldness, and of a fortitude not to be wearied out. Its jest is the littleness of common life. That false prudence which dotes on health and wealth is the butt and merriment of heroism. Heroism, like Plotinus, is almost ashamed of its body. What shall it say, then, to the sugar-plums and cat's-cradles, to the toilet, compliments, quarrels, cards, and custard, which rack the wit of all society? What joys has kind nature provided for us dear creatures! There seems to be no interval between greatness and meanness. When the spirit is not master of the world, then it is its dupe. Yet the little man takes the great hoax so innocently, works in it so headlong and believing, is born red, and dies grey, arranging his toilet, attending on his own health, laying traps for sweet food and strong wine, setting his heart on a horse or a rifle, made happy with a little gossip or a little praise, that the great soul cannot choose but laugh at such earnest nonsense. 'Indeed,

these humble considerations make me out of love with greatness. What a disgrace is it to me to take note how many pairs of silk stockings thou hast, namely, these and those that were the peach-coloured ones; or to bear the inventory of thy shirts, as one for superfluity, and one other for use!'[1]

Citizens, thinking after the laws of arithmetic, consider the inconvenience of receiving strangers at their fireside, reckon narrowly the loss of time and the unusual display: the soul of a better quality thrusts back the unseasonable economy into the vaults of life, and says, I will obey the God, and the sacrifice and the fire he will provide. Ibn Hankal, the Arabian geographer, describes a heroic extreme in the hospitality of Sogd, in Bukharia. 'When I was in Sogd, I saw a great building, like a palace, the gates of which were open and fixed back to the wall with large nails. I asked the reason, and was told that the house had not been shut, night or day, for a hundred years. Strangers may present themselves at any hour, and in whatever number; the master has amply provided for the reception of the men and their animals, and is never happier than when they tarry for some time. Nothing of the kind have I seen in any other country.' The magnanimous know very well that they who give time, or money, or shelter, to the stranger— so it be done for love, and not for ostentation— do, as it were, put God under obligation to them, so perfect are the compensations of the universe. In some way the time they seem to lose is redeemed, and the pains they seem to take remunerate themselves. These men fan the flame of human love, and raise the standard of civil virtue among mankind. But hospitality must be for service, and not for show, or it pulls down the host. The brave soul rates itself too high to value itself by the splendour of its table and draperies. It gives what it hath, and all it hath, but its own majesty can lend a better grace to bannocks and fair water than belong to city feasts.

The temperance of the hero proceeds from the same wish to do no dishonour to the worthiness he has. But he loves it for its elegancy, not for its austerity. It seems not worth his while to be solemn, and denounce with bitterness flesh-eating or wine-drinking, the use of tobacco, or opium, or tea, or silk, or gold. A great man scarcely knows how he dines,

[1] [Cf. Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, ii. 2. 11.]

how he dresses; but without railing or precision, his living is natural and poetic. John Eliot, the Indian Apostle, drank water, and said of wine, 'It is a noble, generous liquor, and we should be humbly thankful for it, but, as I remember, water was made before it.' Better still is the temperance of King David, who poured out on the ground unto the Lord the water which three of his warriors had brought him to drink, at the peril of their lives.

It is told of Brutus, that when he fell on his sword, after the battle of Philippi, he quoted a line of Euripides, 'O virtue! I have followed thee through life, and I find thee at last but a shade.' I doubt not the hero is slandered by this report. The heroic soul does not sell its justice and its nobleness. It does not ask to dine nicely, and to sleep warm. The essence of greatness is the perception that virtue is enough. Poverty is its ornament. It does not need plenty, and can very well abide its loss.

But that which takes my fancy most, in the heroic class, is the good humour and hilarity they exhibit. It is a height to which common duty can very well attain, to suffer and to dare with solemnity. But these rare souls set opinion, success, and life, at so cheap a rate, that they will not soothe their enemies by petitions, or the show of sorrow, but wear their own habitual greatness. Scipio, charged with peculation, refuses to do himself so great a disgrace as to wait for justification, though he had the scroll of his accounts in his hands, but tears it to pieces before the tribunes. Socrates' condemnation of himself to be maintained in all honour in the Prytaneum, during his life, and Sir Thomas More's playfulness at the scaffold, are of the same strain. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Sea Voyage*, Juletta tells the stout captain and his company

> *Jul.* Why, slaves, 't is in our power to hang ye.
> *Master.* Very likely,
> 'T is in our powers, then, to be hanged, and scorn ye.

These replies are sound and whole. Sport is the bloom and glow of a perfect health. The great will not condescend to take anything seriously; all must be as gay as the song of a canary, though it were the building of cities, or the eradication of old and foolish churches and nations, which have

cumbered the earth long thousands of years. Simple hearts put all the history and customs of this world behind them, and play their own game in innocent defiance of the Blue-Laws of the world; and such would appear, could we see the human race assembled in vision, like little children frolicking together; though, to the eyes of mankind at large, they wear a stately and solemn garb of works and influences.

The interest these fine stories have for us, the power of a romance over the boy who grasps the forbidden book under his bench at school, our delight in the hero, is the main fact to our purpose. All these great and transcendent properties are ours. If we dilate in beholding the Greek energy, the Roman pride, it is that we are already domesticating the same sentiment. Let us find room for this great guest in our small houses. The first step of worthiness will be to disabuse us of our superstitious associations with places and times, with number and size. Why should these words, Athenian, Roman, Asia, and England, so tingle in the ear? Where the heart is, there the muses, there the gods sojourn, and not in any geography of fame. Massachusetts, Connecticut River, and Boston Bay, you think paltry places, and the ear loves names of foreign and classic topography. But here we are: and, if we will tarry a little, we may come to learn that here is best. See to it, only, that thyself is here; — and art and nature, hope and fate, friends, angels, and the Supreme Being, shall not be absent from the chamber where thou sittest. Epaminondas, brave and affectionate, does not seem to us to need Olympus to die upon, nor the Syrian sunshine. He lies very well where he is. The Jerseys were honest ground enough for Washington to tread, and London streets for the feet of Milton. A great man makes his climate genial in the imagination of men, and its air the beloved element of all delicate spirits. That country is the fairest which is inhabited by the noblest minds. The pictures which fill the imagination in reading the actions of Pericles, Xenophon, Columbus, Bayard, Sidney, Hampden, teach us how needlessly mean our life is, that we, by the depth of our living, should deck it with more than regal or national splendour, and act on principles that should interest man and nature in the length of our days.

We have seen or heard of many extraordinary young men,

who never ripened, or whose performance in actual life was not extraordinary. When we see their air and mien, when we hear them speak of society, of books, of religion, we admire their superiority, they seem to throw contempt on our entire polity and social state; theirs is the tone of a youthful giant, who is sent to work revolutions. But they enter an active profession, and the forming Colossus shrinks to the common size of man. The magic they used was the ideal tendencies, which always make the Actual ridiculous; but the tough world had its revenge the moment they put their horses of the sun to plough in its furrow. They found no example and no companion, and their heart fainted. What then? The lesson they gave in their first aspirations is yet true; and a better valour and a purer truth shall one day organize their belief. Or why should a woman liken herself to any historical woman, and think, because Sappho, or Sévigné, or De Staël, or the cloistered souls who have had genius and cultivation, do not satisfy the imagination and the serene Themis, none can— certainly not she? Why not? She has a new and unattempted problem to solve, perchance that of the happiest nature that ever bloomed. Let the maiden, with erect soul, walk serenely on her way, accept the hint of each new experience, search in turn all the objects that solicit her eye, that she may learn the power and the charm of her new-born being, which is the kindling of a new dawn in the recesses of space. The fair girl, who repels interference by a decided and proud choice of influences, so careless of pleasing, so wilful and lofty, inspires every beholder with somewhat of her own nobleness. The silent heart encourages her; O friend, never strike sail to a fear! Come into port greatly, or sail with God the seas. Not in vain you live, for every passing eye is cheered and refined by the vision.

The characteristic of heroism is its persistency. All men have wandering impulses, fits and starts of generosity. But when you have chosen your part, abide by it, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world. The heroic cannot be the common, nor the common the heroic. Yet we have the weakness to expect the sympathy of people in those actions whose excellence is that they outrun sympathy, and appeal to a tardy justice. If you would serve your brother, because it is fit for you to serve him, do not take

back your words when you find that prudent people do not commend you. Adhere to your own act, and congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant, and broken the monotony of a decorous age. It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person—'Always do what you are afraid to do.' A simple, manly character need never make an apology, but should regard its past action with the calmness of Phocion, when he admitted that the event of the battle was happy, yet did not regret his dissuasion from the battle.

There is no weakness or exposure for which we cannot find consolation in the thought—this is a part of my constitution, part of my relation and office to my fellow-creature. Has nature covenanted with me that I should never appear to disadvantage, never make a ridiculous figure? Let us be generous of our dignity, as well as of our money. Greatness once and for ever has done with opinion. We tell our charities, not because we wish to be praised for them, not because we think they have great merit, but for our justification. It is a capital blunder; as you discover, when another man recites his charities.

To speak the truth, even with some austerity, to live with some rigour of temperance, or some extremes of generosity, seems to be an asceticism which common good-nature would appoint to those who are at ease and in plenty, in sign that they feel a brotherhood with the great multitude of suffering men. And not only need we breathe and exercise the soul by assuming the penalties of abstinence, of debt, of solitude, of unpopularity, but it behoves the wise man to look with a bold eye into those rarer dangers which sometimes invade men, and to familiarize himself with disgusting forms of disease, with sounds of execration, and the vision of violent death.

Times of heroism are generally times of terror, but the day never shines in which this element may not work. The circumstances of man, we say, are historically somewhat better in this country, and at this hour, than perhaps ever before. More freedom exists for culture. It will not now run against an axe at the first step out of the beaten track of opinion. But whoso is heroic will always find crises to try his edge. Human virtue demands her champions and martyrs, and the trial of persecution always proceeds. It is but the

other day that the brave Lovejoy[1] gave his breast to the bullets of a mob, for the rights of free speech and opinion, and died when it was better not to live.

I see not any road of perfect peace which a man can walk, but after the counsel of his own bosom. Let him quit too much association, let him go home much, and establish himself in those courses he approves. The unremitting retention of simple and high sentiments in obscure duties is hardening the character to that temper which will work with honour, if need be, in the tumult, or on the scaffold. Whatever outrages have happened to men may befall a man again; and very easily in a republic, if there appear any signs of a decay of religion. Coarse slander, fire, tar and feathers, and the gibbet, the youth may freely bring home to his mind, and with what sweetness of temper he can, and inquire how fast he can fix his sense of duty, braving such penalties, whenever it may please the next newspaper and a sufficient number of his neighbours to pronounce his opinions incendiary.

It may calm the apprehension of calamity in the most susceptible heart to see how quick a bound nature has set to the utmost infliction of malice. We rapidly approach a brink over which no enemy can follow us.

> Let them rave:
> Thou art quiet in thy grave.[2]

In the gloom of our ignorance of what shall be, in the hour when we are deaf to the higher voices, who does not envy those who have seen safely to an end their manful endeavour? Who that sees the meanness of our politics, but inly congratulates Washington that he is long already wrapped in his shroud, and for ever safe; that he was laid sweet in his grave, the hope of humanity not yet subjugated in him? Who does not sometimes envy the good and brave, who are no more to suffer from the tumults of the natural world, and await with curious complacency the speedy term of his own conversation with finite nature? And yet the love that will be annihilated sooner than treacherous, has already made death impossible, and affirms itself no mortal, but a native of the deeps of absolute and inextinguishable being.

[1] [Elijah Parish Lovejoy (1802–1837), abolitionist; murdered at Alton, Illinois, Nov. 7, 1837.]

[2] [Tennyson, *A Dirge*, inexactly quoted.]

V

DR. JOHN BROWN

(1810–1882)

EDUCATION THROUGH THE SENSES

[Dr. John Brown, physician and essayist—'the most Goldsmithian of recent writers,' says Professor Saintsbury—was born at Biggar in Lanarkshire, Scotland, on Sept. 23, 1810. His essays contributed for the most part to *The North British Review*, were reissued as *Horae Subsecivae* in three series, in 1858, 1861 and 1882. He was among the first to recognize the genius of Ruskin, and some of his earliest and latest essays were in art-criticism. His friendship with Thackeray is commemorated in an essay called 'Thackeray's Death' (1864). He is best known for his pathetic and humorous sketches and essays, 'Rab and his Friends' 'Our Dogs,' and 'Marjorie Fleming.' His letters have been published and bear witness, no less than his other writings, to a deeply thoughtful, kindly, and gravely humorous nature. He practised as a physician in Edinburgh from 1833 till his death there on May 11, 1882. The present essay first appeared in *The Museum*, July, 1861, an Edinburgh magazine devoted to the cause of education.]

ONE of the chief sins of our time is hurry: it is helter skelter, and devil take the hindmost. Off we go all too swift at starting, and we neither run so fast nor so far as we would have done, had we taken it *cannily* at first. This is true of a boy as well as of a blood colt. Not only are boys and colts made to do the work and the running of full-grown men and horses, but they are hurried out of themselves and their *now*, and pushed into the middle of next week where nobody is wanting them, and beyond which they frequently never get.

The main duty of those who care for the young is to secure their wholesome, their entire growth, for health is just the development of the whole nature in its due sequences and proportions: first the blade—then the ear—then, and not till then, the full corn in the ear; and thus, as Dr. Temple wisely says, 'not to forget wisdom in teaching knowledge.' If the blade be forced, and usurp the capital it inherits; if it be robbed by you its guardian of its birthright, or squandered

like a spendthrift, then there is not any ear, much less any corn; if the blade be blasted or dwarfed in our haste and greed for the full shock and its price, we spoil all three. It is not easy to keep this always before one's mind, that the young 'idea' is in a young body, and that healthy growth and harmless passing of the time are more to be cared for than what is vainly called accomplishment. We are preparing him to run his race, and accomplish *that* which is one of his chief ends; but we are too apt to start him off at his full speed, and he either bolts or breaks down—the worst thing for him generally being to win. In this way a child or boy should be regarded much more as a mean than as an end, and his cultivation should have reference to this; his mind, as old Montaigne said, should be forged, as well as—indeed, I would say, rather than—furnished, fed rather than filled,—two not always coincident conditions. Now exercise—the joy of interest, of origination, of activity, of excitement—the play of the faculties,—this is the true life of a boy, not the accumulation of mere words. Words—the coin of thought—unless as the means of buying something else, are just as useless as other coin when it is hoarded; and it is as silly, and in the true sense as much the part and lot of a *miser*, to amass words for their own sakes, as to keep all your guineas in a stocking and never spend them, but be satisfied with every now and then looking greedily at them and making them chink. Therefore it is that I dislike—as indeed who doesn't?—the cramming system. The great thing with knowledge and the young is to secure that it shall be their own—that it be not merely external to their inner and real self, but shall go *in succum et sanguinem*; and therefore it is, that the self-teaching that a baby and a child give themselves remains with them for ever—it is of their essence, whereas what is given them *ab extra*, especially if it be received mechanically, without relish, and without any energizing of the entire nature, remains pitifully useless and *wersh*. Try, therefore, always to get the resident teacher *inside the skin*, and who is for ever giving his lessons, to help you and be on your side.

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in succum et sanguinem, Lat. = lit. 'into their sap and blood,' i.e. into their strength and life.

wersh, Scot. dialect = insipid, tasteless.

Now in children, as we all know, *he* works chiefly through the senses. The quantity of accurate observation—of induction, and of deduction too (both of a much better quality than most of Mr. Buckle's); of reasoning from the known to the unknown; of inferring; the nicety of appreciation of the like and the unlike, the common and the rare, the odd and the even; the skill of the rough and the smooth—of form, of appearance, of texture, of weight, of all the minute and deep philosophies of the touch and of the other senses,—the amount of this sort of objective knowledge which every child of eight years has acquired—especially if he can play in the lap of nature and out of doors—and acquired for life, is, if we could only think of it, marvellous beyond any of our mightiest marches of intellect. Now, could we only get the knowledge of the school to go as sweetly and deeply and clearly into the vitals of the mind as this self-teaching has done, and this is the paradisiac way of it, we should make the young mind grow as well as learn, and be in understanding a man as well as in simplicity a child; we should get rid of much of that dreary, sheer endurance of their school-hours—that stolid lending of ears that do not hear—that objectless looking without ever once seeing, and straining their minds without an aim; alternating, it may be, with some feats of dexterity and effort, like a man trying to lift himself in his own arms, or take his head in his teeth, exploits as dangerous, as ungraceful, and as useless, except to glorify the showman and bring wages in, as the feats of an acrobat.

But you will ask, how is all this to be avoided if everybody must know how far the sun is from *Georgium Sidus*, and how much of phosphorus is in our bones, and of ptyalin and flint in human spittle—besides some 10,000 times 10,000 other things which we must be told and try to remember, and which we cannot prove not to be true, but which I decline to say we *know*.

But *is* it necessary that everybody should know everything? Is it not much more to the purpose for every man, when his turn comes, to be able to *do* something; and I say, that other things being equal, a boy who goes bird-nesting

Georgium Sidus = the planet Uranus, first named after George III, by Sir W. Herschel in 1781.

and makes a collection of eggs, and knows all their colours and spots, going through the excitements and glories of getting them, and observing everything with a keenness, an intensity, an exactness, and a permanency, which only youth and a quick pulse, and fresh blood and spirits combined, can achieve,—a boy who teaches himself natural history in this way, is not only a healthier and happier boy, but is abler in mind and body for entering upon the great game of life, than the pale, nervous, bright eyed, feverish, 'interesting' boy, with a big head and thin legs, who is the 'captain,' the miracle of the school; dux for his brief year or two of glory, and, *if he live*, booby for life. I am, of course, not going in for a complete *curriculum* of general ignorance: but I am for calling the attention of teachers to drawing out the minds, the energies, the hearts of their pupils through their senses, as well as pouring in through these same apertures the general knowledge of mankind, the capital of the race, into this one small being, who it is to be hoped will contrive to forget much of the mere words he has unhappily learned.

For we may say of our time in all seriousness, what Sydney Smith said in the fullness of his wisdom and his fun, of the pantologic master of Trinity—Science is our *forte*; omniscience is our *foible*. There is the seed of a whole treatise, a whole organon in this joke; think over it, and let it simmer in your mind, and you will feel its significance and its power. Now, what is *science* so called to every 999 men in 1000, but something that the one man tells them he has been told by some one else who may be one among say 50,000—is true, but of the truth of which these 999 men (and probably even the teaching thousandth man) can have no direct test, and, accordingly, for the truth or falsehood of which they, by a law of their nature, which rejects what has no savour and is superfluous, don't care one fig. How much better, how much dearer, and more precious in a double sense, because it has been brought by themselves,—how much nobler is the knowledge which our little friend, young Edward Forbes, 'that marvellous boy,' for instance and what an instance!—is picking up, as he looks into everything he sees, and takes photographs upon his retina—the *camera lucida* of his mind—

camera lucida, Lat. = a lighted room; cf. *camera obscura*, a 'dark-room.'

which never fade, of every midge that washes its face as a cat does, and preens its wings, every lady-bird that alights on his knee, and folds and unfolds her gauzy pinions under their spotted and glorious lids. How more real is not only this knowledge, but this little knowledger in his entire nature, than the poor being who can maunder amazingly the entire circle of human science at second, or it may be, twentieth hand!

There are some admirable, though cursory remarks on 'Ornithology as a Branch of Liberal Education,' by the late Dr. Adams of Banchory, the great Greek scholar, in a pamphlet bearing this title, which he read as a paper before the last meeting of the British Association in Aberdeen. It is not only interesting as a piece of natural history, and a touching co-operation of father and son in the same field — the one on the banks of his own beautiful Dee and among the wilds of the Grampians, the other among the Himalayas and the forests of Cashmere; the son having been enabled, by the knowledge of his native birds got under his father's eye, when placed in an unknown country to recognize his old feathered friends, and to make new ones and tell their story; it is also valuable as coming from a man of enormous scholarship and knowledge — the most learned physician of his time — who knew Aristotle and Plato, and all those old fellows, as we know Maunder or Lardner — a hard-working country surgeon, who was ready to run at any one's call — but who did not despise the modern enlightenments of his profession, because they were not in Paulus Agineta; though, at the same time, he did not despise the admirable and industrious Paul because he was not up to the last doctrine of the nucleated cell, or did not read his Hippocrates by the blaze of paraffin; a man greedy of all knowledge, and welcoming it from all comers, but who, at the end of a long life of toil and thought, gave it as his conviction that one of the best helps to true education, one of the best counteractives to the necessary mischiefs of mere scientific teaching and information, was to be found in getting the young to teach themselves some one of the natural sciences, and singling out ornithology as one of the readiest and most delightful for such a life as his.

I end these intentionally irregular remarks by a story.

Some years ago I was in one of the wildest recesses of the Perthshire Highlands. It was in autumn, and the little school, supported mainly by the Chief, who dwelt all the year round in the midst of his own people, was to be examined by the minister, whose native tongue, like that of his flock, was Gaelic, and who was as awkward and ineffectual, and sometimes as unconsciously indecorous, in his English, as a Cockney is in his kilt. It was a great occasion: the keen-eyed, firm-limbed, brown-cheeked little fellows were all in a buzz of excitement as we came in, and before the examination began, every eye was looking at us strangers as a dog looks at his game, or when seeking it; they knew everything we had on, everything that could be known through their senses. I never felt myself so studied and scrutinized before. If any one could have examined them upon what they thus mastered, Sir Charles Trevelyan and John Mill would have come away astonished, and, I trust, humble. Well, then, the work of the day began; the mill was set a-going, and what a change! In an instant their eyes were like the windows of a house with the blinds down; no one was looking out; everything blank; their very features changed—their jaws fell, their cheeks flattened, they drooped and looked ill at ease—stupid, drowsy, sulky—and getting them to speak or think, or in any way to energize, was like trying to get any one to come to the window at three of a summer morning, when, if they do come, they are half awake, rubbing their eyes and growling. So with my little Celts. They were like an idle and half asleep collie by the fireside, as contrasted with the collie on the hill and in the joy of work; the form of dog and boy are there—he, the self of each, was elsewhere (for I differ from Professor Ferrier in thinking that the dog *has* the reflex ego, and is a very knowing being). I noticed that anything they really knew roused them somewhat; what they had merely to transmit or pass along, as if they were a tube through which the master blew the pea of knowledge into our faces, was performed as stolidly as if they were nothing but a tube.

At last the teacher asked where Sheffield was, and was answered; it was then pointed to by the dux, as a dot on a skeleton map. And now came a flourish. 'What is Sheffield famous for?' Blank stupor, hopeless vacuity, till he came

to a sort of sprouting 'Dougal Cratur'—almost as wee, and as gleg, and as tousy about the head, as my own Kintail terrier, whom I saw at that moment through the open door careering after a hopeless rabbit, with much benefit to his muscles and his wind—who was trembling with keenness. He shouted out something which was liker 'cutlery' than anything else, and was received as such amid our rapturous applause. I then ventured to ask the master to ask small and red Dougal what cutlery was; but from the sudden erubescence of his pallid, ill-fed cheek, and the alarming brightness of his eyes, I twigged at once that *he* didn't himself know what it meant. So I put the question myself, and was not surprised to find that not one of them, from Dougal up to a young strapping shepherd of eighteen, knew what it was!

I told them that Sheffield was famous for making knives and scissors, and razors, and that cutlery meant the manufacture of anything that cuts. Presto! and the blinds were all up, and eagerness, and *nous*, and brains at the window. I happened to have a Wharncliffe, with 'Rodgers and Sons, Sheffield,' on the blade. I sent it round, and finally presented it to the enraptured Dougal. Would not each one of those boys, the very boobiest there, know that knife again when they saw it, and be able to pass a creditable competitive examination on all its ins and outs? and wouldn't they remember 'cutlery' for a day or two? Well, the examination over, the minister performed an oration of much ambition and difficulty to himself and to us, upon the general question, and a great many other questions, into which his Gaelic subtlety fitted like the mists into the hollows of Ben-a-Houlich, with, it must be allowed, a somewhat similar tendency to confuse and conceal what was beneath; and he concluded with thanking the Chief, as well he might, for his generous support of 'this aixlent CEMETERY of aedication.' Cemetery indeed! The blind leading the blind, with the ancient result; the dead burying their dead

Now, not greater is the change we made from that low, small, stifling, gloomy, mephitic room, into the glorious open air, the loch lying asleep in the sun, and telling over

gleg, Scot. dialect = quick-witted.

again on its placid face, as in a dream, every hill and cloud, and birch and pine, and passing bird and cradled boat; the Black Wood of Rannoch standing 'in the midst of its own darkness,' frowning out upon us like the Past disturbed, and far off in the clear ether, as in another and a better world, the dim shepherds of Etive pointing, like ghosts at noonday, to the weird shadows of Glencoe;—not greater was this change, than is that from the dingy, oppressive, weary 'cemetery' of mere word-knowledge to the open air, the light and liberty, the divine infinity and richness of nature and her teaching.

We cannot change our time, nor would we if we could. It is God's time as well as ours. And our time is emphatically that for achieving and recording and teaching man's dominion over and insight into matter and its forces—his subduing the earth; but let us turn now and then from our necessary and honest toil in this neo-Platonic cavern where we win gold and renown, and where we often are obliged to stand in our own light, and watch our own shadows as they glide, huge and mis shapen, across the inner gloom; let us come out betimes with our gold, that we may spend it and get 'goods' for it, and when we can look forth on that ample world of daylight which we can never hope to overrun, and into that overarching heaven where, amid clouds and storms, lightning and sudden tempest, there are revealed to those who look for them, lucid openings into the pure, deep empyrean, 'as it were the very body of heaven in its clearness'; and when, best of all, we may remember Who it is who stretched out these heavens as a tent to dwell in, and on whose footstool we may kneel, and out of the depths of our heart cry aloud,

TE DEUM VENERAMUR,
TE, SANCTE PATER![1]

we shall return into our cave, and to our work, all the better of such a lesson, and of such a reasonable service, and dig none the worse.

Science which ends in itself, or still worse, returns upon its maker, and gets him to worship himself, is worse than none; it is only when it makes it more clear than before who is the Maker and Governor, not only of the objects, but of the

[1] ['We worship Thee, O God, Thee, Holy Father.]

subjects of itself, that knowledge is the mother of virtue. But this is an endless theme. My only aim in these desultory hints is to impress parents and teachers with the benefits of the *study*, the personal engagement—with their own hands and eyes, and legs and ears—in some form or another of natural history, by their children and pupils and themselves, as counteracting evil, and doing immediate and actual good. Even the immense activity in the Post-Office-stamp line of business among our youngsters has been of immense use in many ways, besides being a diversion and an interest. I myself came to the knowledge of Queensland, and a great deal more, through its blue two-penny.

If any one wishes to know how far wise and clever and patriotic men may occasionally go in the way of giving 'your son' a stone for bread, and a serpent for a fish,—may get the nation's money for that which is not bread, and give their own labour for that which satisfies no one; industriously making sawdust into the shapes of bread, and chaff into the appearance of meal, and contriving, at wonderful expense of money and brains, to show what can be done in the way of feeding upon wind,—let him take a turn through certain galleries of the Kensington Museum.

'Yesterday forenoon,' writes a friend, 'I went to South Kensington Museum. It is really an absurd collection. A great deal of valuable material and a great deal of perfect rubbish. The analyses are even worse than I was led to suppose. There is an ANALYSIS OF A MAN. First, a man contains so much water, and there you have the amount of water in a bottle; so much albumen, and there is the albumen; so much phosphate of lime, fat, haematin, fibrine, salt, &c., &c. Then in the next case so much carbon; so much phosphorus—a bottle with sticks of phosphorus; so much potassium, and there is a bottle with potassium; calcium, &c. They have not bottles of oxygen, hydrogen, chlorine, &c., but they have cubical pieces of wood on which is written "the quantity of oxygen in the human body would occupy the space of 170 (e.g.) cubes of the size of this," &c., &c.' And so with analysis of bread, &c., &c. What earthly good can this do any one?

No wonder that the bewildered beings whom I have seen wandering through these rooms, yawned more fre-

quently and more desperately than I ever observed even in church.

So then, cultivate observation, energy, handicraft, ingenuity, outness in boys, so as to give them a pursuit as well as a study. Look after the blade, and don't coax or crush the ear out too soon, and remember that the full corn in the ear is not due till the harvest, when the great School breaks up, and we must all dismiss and go our several ways.

VI

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

(1811–1863)

NIL NISI BONUM

[William Makepeace Thackeray, novelist and miscellaneous writer both in prose and verse, was born in Calcutta on July 18, 1811, where his father was in the East India Company's service. He came to England as a child, and was educated at the Charterhouse School, London, which school figures in almost all his novels. From there he went to Cambridge, but took no degree. He studied art in Paris, and did much miscellaneous writing, chiefly for *Punch*, before he wrote his first novel, *Vanity Fair*, illustrated by himself, in 1847–8. After that followed a series of novels which rank among the most famous in English literature—*Pendennis*, *Esmond*, *The Newcomes*, and *The Virginians*. In 1860 he became the first editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, and in his capacity as editor wrote the *Roundabout Papers*, of which the present essay was one; good judges have given him a place among English essayists no less distinguished than his place among novelists, and this both because of the ease and yet dignity of his style, and the mingling of a strain of moralizing with its gentle humour. A tribute to Thackeray by Mr. Birrell will be found on pp. 163–4 of the present book, and a reader of *The Newcomes* may find one of its characters discussed by Mr. G. S. Street on pages 230, 232.

Thackeray died on December 24, 1863, leaving his novel *Denis Duval* unfinished.]

ALMOST the last words which Sir Walter spoke to Lockhart, his biographer, were, 'Be a good man, my dear!' and with the last flicker of breath on his dying lips, he sighed a farewell to his family, and passed away blessing them.

Two men, famous, admired, beloved, have just left us, the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time.[1] Ere a few

[1] Washington Irving died November 28, 1859; Lord Macaulay died December 28, 1859.

(*De mortuis*) *nil nisi bonum*, Lat. = (Of the dead) nothing but good.

weeks are over, many a critic's pen will be at work, reviewing their lives, and passing judgement on their works. This is no review, or history, or criticism: only a word in testimony of respect and regard from a man of letters, who owes to his own professional labour the honour of becoming acquainted with these two eminent literary men. One was the first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old. He was born almost with the republic; the *pater patriae* had laid his hand on the child's head. He bore Washington's name: he came amongst us bringing the kindest sympathy, the most artless, smiling goodwill. His new country (which some people here might be disposed to regard rather superciliously) could send us, as he showed in his own person, a gentleman, who, though himself born in no very high sphere, was most finished, polished, easy, witty, quiet; and, socially, the equal of the most refined Europeans. If Irving's welcome in England was a kind one, was it not also gratefully remembered? If he ate our salt, did he not pay us with a thankful heart? Who can calculate the amount of friendliness and good feeling for our country which this writer's generous and untiring regard for us disseminated in his own? His books are read by millions [1] of his countrymen, whom he has taught to love England, and why to love her. It would have been easy to speak otherwise than he did: to inflame national rancours, which, at the time when he first became known as a public writer, war had just renewed: to cry down the old civilization at the expense of the new: to point out our faults, arrogance, shortcomings, and give the republic to infer how much she was the parent state's superior. There are writers enough in the United States, honest and otherwise, who preach that kind of doctrine. But the good Irving, the peaceful, the friendly, had no place for bitterness in his heart, and no scheme but kindness. Received in England with extraordinary tenderness and friendship (Scott, Southey, Byron, a hundred others, have borne witness to their liking for him), he was a messenger of goodwill and peace between his country and ours. 'See, friends!'

[1] See his *Life* in the most remarkable *Dictionary of Authors*, published lately at Philadelphia, by Mr. Ahbone.

pater patriae, Lat. = the father of the country.

he seems to say, 'these English are not so wicked, rapacious, callous, proud, as you have been taught to believe them. I went amongst them a humble man; won my way by my pen; and, when known, found every hand held out to me with kindliness and welcome. Scott is a great man, you acknowledge. Did not Scott's king of England give a gold medal to him, and another to me, your countryman, and a stranger?'

Tradition in the United States still fondly retains the history of the feasts and rejoicings which awaited Irving on his return to his native country from Europe. He had a national welcome; he stammered in his speeches, hid himself in confusion, and the people loved him all the better. He had worthily represented America in Europe. In that young community a man who brings home with him abundant European testimonials is still treated with respect (I have found American writers of wide-world reputation, strangely solicitous about the opinions of quite obscure British critics, and elated or depressed by their judgements); and Irving went home medalled by the king, diplomatized by the university, crowned and honoured and admired. He had not in any way intrigued for his honours, he had fairly won them; and, in Irving's instance, as in others, the old country was glad and eager to pay them.

In America the love and regard for Irving was a national sentiment. Party wars are perpetually raging there, and are carried on by the press with a rancour and fierceness against individuals which exceed British, almost Irish, virulence. It seemed to me, during a year's travel in the country, as if no one ever aimed a blow at Irving. All men held their hand from that harmless, friendly peacemaker. I had the good fortune to see him at New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington,[1] and remarked how in every place he was honoured and welcome. Every large city has its 'Irving House.' The country takes pride in the fame of its men of letters. The gate of his own charming little domain on the beautiful Hudson River was for ever swinging before visitors

[1] At Washington, Mr. Irving came to a lecture given by the writer, which Mr. Filmore and General Pierce, the president and president elect, were also kind enough to attend together. 'Two Kings of Brentford smelling at one rose,' says Irving, looking up with his good-humoured smile.

who came to him. He shut out no one.[1] I had seen many pictures of his house, and read descriptions of it, in both of which it was treated with a not unusual American exaggeration. It was but a pretty little cabin of a place; the gentleman of the press who took notes of the place, whilst his kind old host was sleeping, might have visited the whole house in a couple of minutes.

And how came it that this house was so small, when Mr. Irving's books were sold by hundreds of thousands, nay, millions, when his profits were known to be large, and the habits of life of the good old bachelor were notoriously modest and simple? He had loved once in his life. The lady he loved died; and he, whom all the world loved, never sought to replace her. I can't say how much the thought of that fidelity has touched me. Does not the very cheerfulness of his after life add to the pathos of that untold story? To grieve always was not in his nature; or, when he had his sorrow, to bring all the world in to condole with him and bemoan it. Deep and quiet he lays the love of his heart, and buries it; and grass and flowers grow over the scarred ground in due time.

Irving had such a small house and such narrow rooms, because there was a great number of people to occupy them. He could only afford to keep one old horse (which, lazy and aged as it was, managed once or twice to run away with that careless old horseman). He could only afford to give plain sherry to that amiable British paragraph-monger from New York, who saw the patriarch asleep over his modest, blameless cup, and fetched the public into his private chamber to look at him. Irving could only live very modestly, because the wifeless, childless man had a number of children to whom he was as a father. He had as many as nine nieces, I am told —I saw two of these ladies at his house—with all of whom

[1] Mr. Irving described to me, with that humour and good humour which he always kept, how, amongst other visitors, a member of the British press who had carried his distinguished pen to America (where he employed it in vilifying his own country) came to Sunnyside, introduced himself to Irving, partook of his wine and luncheon, and in two days described Mr. Irving, his house, his nieces, his meal, and his manner of dozing afterwards, in a New York paper. On another occasion, Irving said, laughing: 'Two persons came to me, and one held me in conversation whilst the other miscreant took my portrait!'

the dear old man had shared the produce of his labour and genius.

'*Be a good man, my dear.*' One can't but think of these last words of the veteran Chief of Letters, who had tasted and tested the value of worldly success, admiration, prosperity. Was Irving not good, and, of his works, was not his life the best part? In his family, gentle, generous, good-humoured, affectionate, self-denying: in society, a delightful example of complete gentlemanhood; quite unspoiled by prosperity; never obsequious to the great (or, worse still, to the base and mean, as some public men are forced to be in his and other countries); eager to acknowledge every contemporary's merit; always kind and affable with the young members of his calling; in his professional bargains and mercantile dealings delicately honest and grateful; one of the most charming masters of our lighter language; the constant friend to us and our nation; to men of letters doubly dear, not for his wit and genius merely, but as an exemplar of goodness, probity, and pure life:—I don't know what sort of testimonial will be raised to him in his own country, where generous and enthusiastic acknowledgement of American merit is never wanting: but Irving was in our service as well as theirs; and as they have placed a stone at Greenwich yonder in memory of that gallant young Bellot, who shared the perils and fate of some of our Arctic seamen, I would like to hear of some memorial raised by English writers and friends of letters in affectionate remembrance of the dear and good Washington Irving.

As for the other writer, whose departure many friends, some few most dearly-loved relatives, and multitudes of admiring readers deplore, our republic has already decreed his statue, and he must have known that he had earned this posthumous honour. He is not a poet and man of letters merely, but citizen, statesman, a great British worthy. Almost from the first moment when he appears, amongst boys, amongst college students, amongst men, he is marked, and takes rank as a great Englishman. All sorts of successes are easy to him: as a lad he goes down into the arena with others, and wins all the prizes to which he has a mind. A place in the senate is straightway offered to the young man. He takes his seat there; he speaks, when so minded, without

party anger or intrigue, but not without party faith and a sort of heroic enthusiasm for his cause. Still he is a poet and philosopher even more than orator. That he may have leisure and means to pursue his darling studies, he absents himself for a while, and accepts a richly-remunerative post in the East. As learned a man may live in a cottage or a college common-room; but it always seemed to me that ample means and recognized rank were Macaulay's as of right. Years ago there was a wretched outcry raised because Mr. Macaulay dated a letter from Windsor Castle, where he was staying. Immortal gods! Was this man not a fit guest for any palace in the world? or a fit companion for any man or woman in it? I dare say, after Austerlitz, the old K. K. court officials and footmen sneered at Napoleon for dating from Schönbrunn. But that miserable 'Windsor Castle' outcry is an echo out of fast-retreating old-world remembrances. The place of such a natural chief was amongst the first of the land: and that country is best, according to our British notion at least, where the man of eminence has the best chance of investing his genius and intellect.

If a company of giants were got together, very likely one or two of the mere six-feet-six people might be angry at the incontestable superiority of the very tallest of the party: and so I have heard some London wits, rather peevish at Macaulay's superiority, complain that he occupied too much of the talk, and so forth. Now that wonderful tongue is to speak no more, will not many a man grieve that he no longer has the chance to listen? To remember the talk is to wonder: to think not only of the treasures he had in his memory, but of the trifles he had stored there, and could produce with equal readiness. Almost on the last day I had the fortune to see him, a conversation happened suddenly to spring up about senior wranglers, and what they had done in after life. To the almost terror of the persons present, Macaulay began with the senior wrangler of 1801–2–3–4, and so on, giving the name of each, and relating his subsequent career and rise. Every man who had known him has his story regarding that astonishing memory. It may be he was not ill-pleased that you should recognize it; but to those prodi-

K. K. = *Kaiserliche-Königliche*, Germ. = Imperial and Royal.

gious intellectual feats, which were so easy to him, who would grudge his tribute of homage? His talk was, in a word, admirable, and we admired it.

Of the notices which have appeared regarding Lord Macaulay, up to the day when the present lines are written (the 9th of January), the reader should not deny himself the pleasure of looking especially at two. It is a good sign of the times when such articles as these (I mean the articles in *The Times* and *Saturday Review*) appear in our public prints about our public men. They educate us, as it were, to admire rightly. An uninstructed person in a museum or at a concert may pass by without recognizing a picture or a passage of music, which the connoisseur by his side may show him is a masterpiece of harmony, or a wonder of artistic skill. After reading these papers you like and respect more the person you have admired so much already. And so with regard to Macaulay's style there may be faults of course—what critic can't point them out? But for the nonce we are not talking about faults: we want to say *nil nisi bonum*. Well—take at hazard any three pages of the *Essays* or *History*;—and, glimmering below the stream of the narrative, as it were, you, an average reader, see one, two, three, a half-score of allusions to other historic facts, characters, literature, poetry, with which you are acquainted. Why is this epithet used? Whence is that simile drawn? How does he manage, in two or three words, to paint an individual, or to indicate a landscape? Your neighbour, who has *his* reading, and his little stock of literature stowed away in his mind, shall detect more points, allusions, happy touches, indicating not only the prodigious memory and vast learning of this master, but the wonderful industry, the honest, humble previous toil of this great scholar. He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a line of description.

Many Londoners—not all—have seen the British Museum Library. I speak *à cœur ouvert*, and pray the kindly reader to bear with me. I have seen all sorts of domes of Peters and Pauls, Sophia, Pantheon,—what not?—and have been struck by none of them so much as by that catholic dome in

à cœur ouvert, Fr. = lit 'with open heart,' i.e. frankly.

Bloomsbury, under which our million volumes are housed. What peace, what love, what truth, what beauty, what happiness for all, what generous kindness for you and me, are here spread out! It seems to me one cannot sit down in that place without a heart full of grateful reverence. I own to have said my grace at the table, and to have thanked heaven for this my English birthright, freely to partake of these bountiful books, and to speak the truth I find there. Under the dome which held Macaulay's brain, and from which his solemn eyes looked out on the world but a fortnight since, what a vast, brilliant, and wonderful store of learning was ranged! what strange lore would he not fetch for you at your bidding! A volume of law, or history, a book of poetry familiar or forgotten (except by himself who forgot nothing), a novel ever so old, and he had it at hand. I spoke to him once about *Clarissa*. 'Not read *Clarissa!*' he cried out. 'If you have once thoroughly entered on *Clarissa*, and are infected by it, you can't leave it. When I was in India, I passed one hot season at the hills and there were the governor-general, and the secretary of government, and the commander-in-chief, and their wives. I had *Clarissa* with me: and, as soon as they began to read, the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her *scoundrelly* Lovelace! The governor's wife seized the book *and the secretary* waited for it, and the chief justice *could not read it for tears!*' He acted the whole scene: he paced up and down the Athenæum library: I dare say he could have spoken pages of the book - of that book, and of what countless piles of others!

In this little paper let us keep to the text of *nil nisi bonum*. One paper I have read regarding Lord Macaulay says 'he had no heart.' Why, a man's books may not always speak the truth, but they speak his mind in spite of himself: and it seems to me this man's heart is beating through every page he penned. He is always in a storm of revolt and indignation against wrong, craft, tyranny. How he cheers heroic resistance; how he backs and applauds freedom struggling for its own; how he hates scoundrels, ever so victorious and successful; how he recognizes genius, though selfish villains possess it! The critic who says Macaulay had no heart, might say that Johnson had none: and two men

more generous, and more loving, and
partial, and more noble, do not live in
Those who knew Lord Macaul
tender, and generous,[1] and affe
his business to bring his fa
and call for bouquets from the gallery as he wer

If any young man of letters reads this little sermon—and to him, indeed, it is addressed—I would say to him, 'Bear Scott's words in your mind, and "*be good, my dear.*"' Here are two literary men gone to their account, and, *laus Deo*, as far as we know, it is fair, and open, and clean. Here is no need of apologies for shortcomings, or explanations of vices which would have been virtues but for unavoidable &c. Here are two examples of men most differently gifted: each pursuing his calling; each speaking his truth as God bade him; each honest in his life; just and irreproachable in his dealings; dear to his friends; honoured by his country: beloved at his fireside. It has been the fortunate lot of both to give incalculable happiness and delight to the world, which thanks them in return with an immense kindliness, respect, affection. It may not be our chance, brother scribe, to be endowed with such merit, or rewarded with such fame. But the rewards of these men are rewards paid to *our service*. We may not win the baton or epaulettes, but God give us strength to guard the honour of the flag!

[1] Since the above was written, I have been informed that it has been found, on examining Lord Macaulay's papers, that he was in the habit of giving away *more than a fourth part* of his annual income.

laus Deo, Lat. · praise (be) to God

VII

CHARLES DICKENS

(1812–1870)

LYING AWAKE

[Charles Dickens was born at Portsmouth on Feb. 7, 1812, and lived as a child first in Chatham and afterwards in London. His family experienced both comparative and severe poverty, and it was by his own efforts that Dickens escaped from his unhappy circumstances, and became first a newspaper reporter and then a journalist, and, as it were through that opening, a novelist: his *Sketches by Boz* were pure journalism, while *The Pickwick Papers* only became a novel by the force of his genius: they were begun to supply the letterpress to a series of humorous pictures. Dickens's third book *Oliver Twist* was his first real novel. He wrote a dozen other novels all equally famous, and he has long been the best read of English authors. He was a man of unresting energy, and in becoming a novelist he did not break off his connexion with journalism. He was the first editor of *The Daily News*, and founded and edited two periodicals, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. The present essay appeared in *Household Words*, Oct. 30, 1852, and was included in his *Reprinted Pieces*, which together with his *Sketches by Boz*, and *The Uncommercial Traveller*, constitute his claim to be regarded as an essayist as well as a novelist. He died on June 9, 1870, and his unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, still baffles the ingenuity of those who love to unravel a detective story.]

'My uncle lay with his eyes half closed, and his nightcap drawn almost down to his nose. His fancy was already wandering, and began to mingle up the present scene with the crater of Vesuvius, the French Opera, the Coliseum at Rome, Polly's Chop-house in London, and all the farrago of noted places with which the brain of a traveller is crammed; in a word, he was just falling asleep.'

Thus, that delightful writer, WASHINGTON IRVING, in his Tales of a Traveller. But, it happened to me the other night to be lying: not with my eyes half closed, but with my eyes

wide open; not with my nightcap drawn almost down to my nose, for on sanitary principles I never wear a nightcap: but with my hair pitchforked and touzled all over the pillow; not just falling asleep by any means, but glaringly, persistently, and obstinately, broad awake. Perhaps, with no scientific intention or invention, I was illustrating the theory of the Duality of the Brain; perhaps one part of my brain, being wakeful, sat up to watch the other part which was sleepy. Be that as it may, something in me was as desirous to go to sleep as it possibly could be, but something else in me *would not* go to sleep, and was as obstinate as George the Third.

Thinking of George the Third—for I devote this paper to my train of thoughts as I lay awake: most people lying awake sometimes, and having some interest in the subject—put me in mind of BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, and so Benjamin Franklin's paper on the art of procuring pleasant dreams, which would seem necessarily to include the art of going to sleep, came into my head. Now, as I often used to read that paper when I was a very small boy, and as I recollect everything I read then as perfectly as I forget everything I read now, I quoted 'Get out of bed, beat up and turn your pillow, shake the bed-clothes well with at least twenty shakes, then throw the bed open and leave it to cool; in the meanwhile, continuing undrest, walk about your chamber. When you begin to feel the cold air unpleasant, then return to your bed, and you will soon fall asleep, and your sleep will be sweet and pleasant.' Not a bit of it! I performed the whole ceremony, and if it were possible for me to be more saucer-eyed than I was before, that was the only result that came of it.

Except Niagara. The two quotations from Washington Irving and Benjamin Franklin may have put it in my head by an American association of ideas; but there I was, and the Horse-shoe Fall was thundering and tumbling in my eyes and ears, and the very rainbows that I left upon the spray when I really did last look upon it, were beautiful to see. The night-light being quite as plain, however, and sleep seeming to be many thousand miles further off than Niagara, I made up my mind to think a little about Sleep; which I no sooner did than I whirled off in spite of myself to Drury Lane Theatre, and there saw a great actor and dear friend of mine (whom I had been thinking of in the

day) playing Macbeth, and heard him apostrophizing 'the death of each day's life,' as I have heard him many a time, in the days that are gone.

But, Sleep. I *will* think about Sleep. I am determined to think (this is the way I went on) about Sleep. I must hold the word Sleep tight and fast, or I shall be off at a tangent in half a second. I feel myself unaccountably straying, already, into Clare Market. Sleep. It would be curious, as illustrating the equality of sleep, to inquire how many of its phenomena are common to all classes, to all degrees of wealth and poverty, to every grade of education and ignorance. Here, for example, is her Majesty Queen Victoria in her palace, this present blessed night, and here is Winking Charley, a sturdy vagrant, in one of her Majesty's jails. Her Majesty has fallen, many thousands of times, from that same Tower, which *I* claim a right to tumble off now and then. So has Winking Charley. Her Majesty in her sleep has opened or prorogued Parliament, or has held a Drawing Room, attired in some very scanty dress, the deficiencies and improprieties of which have caused her great uneasiness. I, in my degree, have suffered unspeakable agitation of mind from taking the chair at a public dinner at the London Tavern in my night-clothes, which not all the courtesy of my kind friend and host MR. BATHE could persuade me were quite adapted to the occasion. Winking Charley has been repeatedly tried in a worse condition. Her Majesty is no stranger to a vault or firmament, of a sort of floorcloth, with an indistinct pattern distantly resembling eyes, which occasionally obtrudes itself on her repose. Neither am I. Neither is Winking Charley. It is quite common to all three of us to skim along with airy strides a little above the ground; also to hold, with the deepest interest, dialogues with various people, all represented by ourselves; and to be at our wit's end to know what they are going to tell us; and to be indescribably astonished by the secrets they disclose. It is probable that we have all three committed murders and hidden bodies. It is pretty certain that we have all desperately wanted to cry out, and have had no voice; that we have all gone to the play and not been able to get in; that we have all dreamed much more of our youth than of our later lives; that—I have lost it! The thread's broken.

And up I go. I, lying here with the night-light before me, up I go, for no reason on earth that I can find out, and drawn by no links that are visible to me, up the Great Saint Bernard! I have lived in Switzerland, and rambled among the mountains; but why I should go there now, and why up the Great Saint Bernard in preference to any other mountain, I have no idea. As I lie here broad awake, and with every sense so sharpened that I can distinctly hear distant noises inaudible to me at another time, I make that journey, as I really did, on the same summer day, with the same happy party—ah! two since dead, I grieve to think—and there is the same track, with the same black wooden arms to point the way, and there are the same storm-refuges here and there; and there is the same snow falling at the top, and there are the same frosty mists, and there is the same intensely cold convent with its menagerie smell, and the same breed of dogs fast dying out, and the same breed of jolly young monks whom I mourn to know as humbugs, and the same convent parlour with its piano and the sitting round the fire, and the same supper, and the same lone night in a cell, and the same bright fresh morning when going out into the highly rarefied air was like a plunge into an icy bath. Now, see here what comes along; and why does this thing stalk into my mind on the top of a Swiss mountain!

It is a figure that I once saw, just after dark, chalked upon a door in a little back lane near a country church—my first church. How young a child I may have been at the time I don't know, but it horrified me so intensely—in connexion with the churchyard, I suppose, for it smokes a pipe, and has a big hat with each of its ears sticking out in a horizontal line under the brim, and is not in itself more oppressive than a mouth from ear to ear, a pair of goggle eyes, and hands like two bunches of carrots, five in each, can make it—that it is still vaguely alarming to me to recall (as I have often done before, lying awake) the running home, the looking behind, the horror of its following me; though whether disconnected from the door, or door and all, I can't say, and perhaps never could. It lays a disagreeable train. I must resolve to think of something on the voluntary principle.

The balloon ascents of this last season. They will do to think about, while I lie awake, as well as anything else. I

must hold them tight though, for I feel them sliding away, and in their stead are the Mannings, husband and wife, hanging on the top of Horsemonger Lane Jail. In connexion with which dismal spectacle, I recall this curious fantasy of the mind. That, having beheld that execution, and having left those two forms dangling on the top of the entrance gateway—the man's, a limp, loose suit of clothes as if the man had gone out of them; the woman's, a fine shape, so elaborately corseted and artfully dressed, that it was quite unchanged in its trim appearance as it slowly swung from side to side—I never could, by my uttermost efforts, for some weeks, present the outside of that prison to myself (which the terrible impression I had received continually obliged me to do) without presenting it with the two figures still hanging in the morning air. Until, strolling past the gloomy place one night, when the street was deserted and quiet, and actually seeing that the bodies were not there, my fancy was persuaded, as it were, to take them down and bury them within the precincts of the jail, where they have lain ever since.

The balloon ascents of last season. Let me reckon them up. There were the horse, the bull, the parachute, and the tumbler hanging on—chiefly by his toes, I believe—below the car. Very wrong, indeed, and decidedly to be stopped. But, in connexion with these and similar dangerous exhibitions, it strikes me that that portion of the public whom they entertain, is unjustly reproached. Their pleasure is in the difficulty overcome. They are a public of great faith, and are quite confident that the gentleman will not fall off the horse, or the lady off the bull or out of the parachute, and that the tumbler has a firm hold with his toes. They do not go to see the adventurer vanquished, but triumphant. There is no parallel in public combats between men and beasts, because nobody can answer for the particular beast—unless it were always the same beast, in which case it would be a mere stage-show, which the same public would go in the same state of mind to see, entirely believing in the brute being beforehand safely subdued by the man. That they are not accustomed to calculate hazards and dangers with any nicety, we may know from their rash exposure of themselves in overcrowded steamboats, and unsafe conveyances and places

of all kinds. And I cannot help thinking that instead of railing, and attributing savage motives to a people naturally well disposed and humane, it is better to teach them, and lead them argumentatively and reasonably—for they are very reasonable, if you will discuss a matter with them—to more considerate and wise conclusions.

This is a disagreeable intrusion! Here is a man with his throat cut, dashing towards me as I lie awake! A recollection of an old story of a kinsman of mine, who, going home one foggy winter night to Hampstead, when London was much smaller and the road lonesome, suddenly encountered such a figure rushing past him, and presently two keepers from a madhouse in pursuit. A very unpleasant creature indeed, to come into my mind unbidden, as I lie awake.

—The balloon ascents of last season. I must return to the balloons. Why did the bleeding man start out of them? Never mind; if I inquire, he will be back again. The balloons. This particular public have inherently a great pleasure in the contemplation of physical difficulties overcome; mainly, as I take it, because the lives of a large majority of them are exceedingly monotonous and real, and further, are a struggle against continual difficulties, and further still, because anything in the form of accidental injury, or any kind of illness or disability is so very serious in their own sphere. I will explain this seeming paradox of mine. Take the case of a Christmas Pantomime. Surely nobody supposes that the young mother in the pit who falls into fits of laughter when the baby is boiled or sat upon, would be at all diverted by such an occurrence off the stage. Nor is the decent workman in the gallery, who is transported beyond the ignorant present by the delight with which he sees a stout gentleman pushed out of a two pair of stairs window, to be slandered by the suspicion that he would be in the least entertained by such a spectacle in any street in London, Paris, or New York. It always appears to me that the secret of this enjoyment lies in the temporary superiority to the common hazards and mischances of life; in seeing casualties, attended when they really occur with bodily and mental suffering, tears, and poverty, happen through a very rough sort of poetry without the least harm being done to any one—the pretence of distress in a panto-

mime being so broadly humorous as to be no pretence at all. Much as in the comic fiction I can understand the mother with a very vulnerable baby at home, greatly relishing the invulnerable baby on the stage, so in the Cremorne reality I can understand the mason who is always liable to fall off a scaffold in his working jacket and to be carried to the hospital, having an infinite admiration of the radiant personage in spangles who goes into the clouds upon a bull, or upside down, and who, he takes it for granted—not reflecting upon the thing—has, by uncommon skill and dexterity, conquered such mischances as those to which he and his acquaintance are continually exposed.

I wish the Morgue in Paris would not come here as I lie awake, with its ghastly beds, and the swollen saturated clothes hanging up, and the water dripping, dripping all day long, upon that other swollen saturated something in the corner, like a heap of crushed over-ripe figs that I have seen in Italy! And this detestable Morgue comes back again at the head of a procession of forgotten ghost stories. This will never do. I must think of something else as I lie awake; or, like that sagacious animal in the United States who recognized the colonel who was such a dead shot, I am a gone 'Coon. What shall I think of? The late brutal assaults. Very good subject. The late brutal assaults.

(Though whether, supposing I should see, here before me as I lie awake, the awful phantom described in one of those ghost stories, who, with a head-dress of shroud, was always seen looking in through a certain glass door at a certain dead hour whether, in such a case it would be the least consolation to me to know on philosophical grounds that it was merely my imagination, is a question I can't help asking myself by the way.)

The late brutal assaults. I strongly question the expediency of advocating the revival of whipping for those crimes. It is a natural and generous impulse to be indignant at the perpetration of inconceivable brutality, but I doubt the whipping panacea gravely. Not in the least regard or pity for the criminal, whom I hold in far lower estimation than a mad wolf, but in consideration for the general tone and feeling, which is very much improved since the whipping times. It is bad for a people to be familiarized with such

punishments. When the whip went out of Bridewell, and ceased to be flourished at the cart's tail and at the whipping-post, it began to fade out of the madhouses, and workhouses, and schools, and families, and to give place to a better system everywhere, than cruel driving. It would be hasty, because a few brutes may be inadequately punished, to revive, in any aspect, what, in so many aspects, society is hardly yet happily rid of. The whip is a very contagious kind of thing, and difficult to confine within one set of bounds. Utterly abolish punishment by fine—a barbarous device, quite as much out of date as wager by battle, but particularly connected in the vulgar mind with this class of offence—at least quadruple the term of imprisonment for aggravated assaults—and above all let us, in such cases, have no Pet Prisoning, vain-glorifying, strong soup, and roasted meats, but hard work, and one unchanging and uncompromising dietary of bread and water, well or ill: and we shall do much better than by going down into the dark to grope for the whip among the rusty fragments of the rack, and the branding iron, and the chains and gibbet from the public roads, and the weights that pressed men to death in the cells of Newgate.

I had proceeded thus far, when I found I had been lying awake so long that the very dead began to wake too, and to crowd into my thoughts most sorrowfully. Therefore, I resolved to lie awake no more, but to get up and go out for a night walk—which resolution was an acceptable relief to me, as I dare say it may prove now to a great many more.

VIII

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

(1817–1862)

THE VILLAGE

[Henry David Thoreau was born at Concord, Massachusetts, on July 12, 1817, and died there on May 6, 1862. He was a friend, a disciple, and for some time a housemate, of Emerson. He is best known for his book *Walden*, of which the present essay is a part. The book gives his account of a year spent solitarily in the woods near Concord; and of the thoughts which were his during that time. *Walden* is equally interesting as an 'open-air' book and for its philosophy. A somewhat similar book is *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*; and a third book, in which both the elements noted in *Walden* recur, is his *Essays*. Thoreau led a lonely and somewhat bleak life, and was capable of heroic action, as when he went to prison rather than acquiesce in the State's toleration of slavery; to this he alludes in the present essay. And he was capable of heroic self-effacement. He died at the age of 45, of consumption.]

After hoeing, or perhaps reading and writing, in the forenoon, I usually bathed again in the pond, swimming across one of its coves for a stint, and washed the dust of labour from my person, or smoothed out the last wrinkle which study had made, and for the afternoon was absolutely free. Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homœopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs. As I walked in the woods to see the birds and squirrels, so I walked in the village to see the men and boys; instead of the wind among the pines I heard the carts rattle. In one direction from my house there was a colony of muskrats in the river meadows; under the grove of elms and button-

woods in the other horizon was a village of busy men, as curious to me as if they had been prairie dogs, each sitting at the mouth of its burrow, or running over to a neighbour's to gossip. I went there frequently to observe their habits The village appeared to me a great news-room; and on one side, to support it, as once at Redding & Company's on State Street, they kept nuts and raisins, or salt and meal, and other groceries. Some have such a vast appetite for the former commodity—that is, the news—and such sound digestive organs, that they can sit for ever in public avenues without stirring, and let it simmer and whisper through them like the Etesian winds, or as if inhaling ether, it only producing numbness and insensibility to pain—otherwise it would often be painful to hear—without affecting the consciousness. I hardly ever failed, when I rambled through the village, to see a row of such worthies, either sitting on a ladder sunning themselves, with their bodies inclined forward and their eyes glancing along the line this way and that, from time to time, with a voluptuous expression, or else leaning against a barn with their hands in their pockets, like caryatides, as if to prop it up. They, being commonly out of doors, heard whatever was in the wind. These are the coarsest mills, in which all gossip is first rudely digested or cracked up before it is emptied into finer and more delicate hoppers within doors. I observed that the vitals of the village were the grocery, the bar-room, the post office, and the bank; and, as a necessary part of the machinery, they kept a bell, a big gun, and a fire-engine, at convenient places; and the houses were so arranged as to make the most of mankind, in lanes and fronting one another, so that every traveller had to run the gauntlet, and every man, woman, and child might get a lick at him. Of course, those who were stationed nearest to the head of the line, where they could most see and be seen, and have the first blow at him, paid the highest prices for their places; and the few straggling inhabitants in the outskirts, where long gaps in the line began to occur, and the traveller could get over walls or turn aside into cowpaths, and so escape, paid a very slight ground or window tax. Signs were hung out on all sides to allure him; some to catch him by the appetite, as the tavern and victualling cellar; some by the fancy, as the dry goods store and the jeweller's;

and others by the hair, or the feet, or the skirts, as the barber, the shoemaker, or the tailor. Besides, there was a still more terrible standing invitation to call at every one of these houses, and company expected about these times. For the most part I escaped wonderfully from these dangers, either by proceeding at once boldly and without deliberation to the goal, as is recommended to those who run the gauntlet, or by keeping my thoughts on high things, like Orpheus, who, 'loudly singing the praises of the gods to his lyre, drowned the voices of the Sirens, and kept out of danger.' Sometimes I bolted suddenly, and nobody could tell my whereabouts, for I did not stand much about gracefulness, and never hesitated at a gap in a fence. I was even accustomed to make an irruption into some houses, where I was well entertained, and after learning the kernels and very last sieveful of news, what had subsided, the prospects of war and peace, and whether the world was likely to hold together much longer, I was let out through the rear avenues, and so escaped to the woods again.

It was very pleasant, when I stayed late in town, to launch myself into the night, especially if it was dark and tempestuous, and set sail from some bright village parlour or lecture room, with a bag of rye or Indian meal upon my shoulder, for my snug harbour in the woods, having made all tight without and withdrawn under hatches with a merry crew of thoughts, leaving only my outer man at the helm, or even tying up the helm when it was plain sailing. 'I had many a genial thought by the cabin fire as I sailed.' I was never cast away nor distressed in any weather, though I encountered some severe storms. It is darker in the woods, even in common nights, than most suppose. I frequently had to look up at the opening between the trees above the path in order to learn my route, and, where there was no cart-path, to feel with my feet the faint track which I had worn, or steer by the known relation of particular trees which I felt with my hands, passing between two pines, for instance, not more than eighteen inches apart, in the midst of the woods, invariably in the darkest night. Sometimes, after coming home thus late in a dark and muggy night, when my feet felt the path which my eyes could not see, dreaming and absent-minded all the way, until I was aroused by having to raise my hand

to lift the latch, I have not been able to recall a single step of my walk, and I have thought that perhaps my body would find its way home if its master should forsake it, as the hand finds its way to the mouth without assistance. Several times when a visitor chanced to stay into evening, and it proved a dark night, I was obliged to conduct him to the cart-path in the rear of the house, and then point out to him the direction he was to pursue, and in keeping which he was to be guided rather by his feet than his eyes. One very dark night I directed thus on their way two young men who had been fishing in the pond. They lived about a mile off through the woods, and were quite used to the route. A day or two after, one of them told me that they wandered about the greater part of the night, close by their own premises, and did not get home till toward morning, by which time, as there had been several heavy showers in the meanwhile, and the leaves were very wet, they were drenched to their skins. I have heard of many going astray even in the village streets, when the darkness was so thick that you could cut it with a knife, as the saying is. Some who live in the outskirts, having come to town a-shopping in their wagons, have been obliged to put up for the night; and gentlemen and ladies, making a call, have gone half a mile out of their way, feeling the side-walk only with their feet, and not knowing when they turned. It is a surprising and memorable, as well as valuable experience, to be lost in the woods any time. Often in a snowstorm, even by day, one will come out upon a well-known road and yet find it impossible to tell which way leads to the village. Though he knows that he has travelled it a thousand times, he cannot recognize a feature in it, but it is as strange to him as if it were a road in Siberia. By night, of course, the perplexity is infinitely greater. In our most trivial walks we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands, and if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighbouring cape; and not till we are completely lost, or turned round—for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost—do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature. Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any

abstraction. Not till we are lost—in other words, not till we have lost the world—do we *begin to find ourselves*, and realize where we are, and the infinite extent of our relations.

One afternoon, near the end of the first summer, when I went to the village to get a shoe from the cobbler's, I was seized and put into jail, because, as I have elsewhere related, I did not pay a tax to, or recognize the authority of, the state which buys and sells men, women, and children, like cattle at the door of its senate-house. I had gone down to the woods for other purposes. But, wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions, and, if they can, constrain him to belong to their desperate odd-fellow society. It is true, I might have resisted forcibly with more or less effect, might have run 'amok' against society; but I preferred that society should run 'amok' against me, it being the desperate party. However, I was released the next day, obtained my mended shoe, and returned to the woods in season to get my dinner of huckleberries on Fair-Haven Hill. I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state. I had no lock nor bolt but for the desk which held my papers, not even a nail to put over my latch or windows. I never fastened my door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when the next fall I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious, by opening my closet door, see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed anything but one small book, a volume of Homer, which perhaps was improperly gilded, and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time. I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient, while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed—

'Nec bella fuerunt,
Faginus astabat dum scyphus ante dapes.'[1]
'Nor wars did men molest,
When only beechen bowls were in request.'

'You who govern public affairs, what need have you to employ punishments? Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it, bends.'[2]

[1] [Tibullus, *Carm.* I. x. 7, 8. Literally, 'Nor were there wars, when the beechen bowl stood at the feast.']

[2] [Confucian Analects, XII, xix.—Mr. Perris A. Murons, in *Notes and Queries*, Jan. 1920, has kindly supplied us with this source.]

IX

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

(1818–1894)

A SIDING AT A RAILWAY STATION

[James Anthony Froude, essayist and historian, was born at Dartington, Devonshire, on April 23, 1818. Through his brother, Hurrell Froude, he came under the influence of Newman at Oxford; but after Newman joined the Roman Catholic Church, Froude changed his religious views and relinquished his orders as an Anglican clergyman. He transferred his allegiance from Newman to Carlyle, whose biography he afterwards wrote. His novel *The Nemesis of Faith* was publicly burned at Oxford, and he was asked to resign his fellowship at Exeter College in that University. His *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, in effect a defence of the English Reformation appeared in twelve volumes between the years 1856–1870. Froude was an honest, a vivid, but often an inaccurate historian, and the last paragraph but one of the present essay is his reply to his critics. As an essayist he is represented by four volumes of *Short Studies on Great Subjects*. His life of Carlyle and edition of Carlyle's Reminiscences gave rise to much controversy. He was Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford from 1892 to 1894, and his lectures were published as *The Life and Letters of Erasmus* and *English Seamen of the Sixteenth Century*. Other books were *Oceana* (on England and her Colonies), *Caesar*, and an Irish historical novel, *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy*. The present essay appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1853, and was reprinted in the fourth volume of the *Short Studies*. Froude died on October 20, 1894.]

SOME years ago I was travelling by railway, no matter whence or whither. I was in a second class carriage. We had been long on the road, and had still some distance before us, when one evening our journey was brought unexpectedly to an end by the train running into a siding. The guards opened the doors, we were told that we could proceed no further, and were required to alight. The passengers were numerous, and of all ranks and sorts. There were third class, second, first, with saloon carriages for several great persons of high distinction. We had ministers of state, judges on circuit,

directors, leading men of business, idle young men of family who were out amusing themselves, an archbishop, several ladies, and, a duke and duchess with their suite. These favoured travellers had Pullman cars to themselves and occupied as much room as was allotted to scores of plebeians. I had amused myself for several days in observing the luxurious appurtenances by which they were protected against discomfort—the piles of cushions and cloaks, the baskets of dainties, the novels and magazines to pass away the time, and the profound attention which they met with from the conductors and station-masters on the line. The rest of us were a miscellaneous crowd - commercial people, lawyers, artists, men of letters, tourists moving about for pleasure or because they had nothing to do; and in the third-class carriages, artisans and labourers in search of work, women looking for husbands or for service, or beggars flying from starvation in one part of the world to find it follow them like their shadows, let them go where they pleased. All these were huddled together, feeding hardly on such poor provisions as they carried with them or could pick up at the stopping-places. No more consideration was shown them than if they had been so many cattle. But they were merry enough: songs and sounds of laughter came from their windows, and notwithstanding all their conveniences, the languid-looking fine people in the large compartments seemed to me to get through their journey with less enjoyment after all than their poor fellow travellers. These last appeared to be of tougher texture, to care less for being jolted and shaken, to be better-humoured and kinder to one another. They had found life go hard with them wherever they had been, and not being accustomed to have everything which they wished for, they were less selfish and more considerate.

The intimation that our journey was for the present at an end came on most of us as an unpleasant surprise. The grandees got out in a high state of indignation. They called for their servants, but their servants did not hear them, or laughed and passed on. The conductors had forgotten to be obsequious. All classes on the platform were suddenly on a level. A beggar-woman hustled the duchess as she was standing astonished because her maid had left her to carry her own bag. The patricians were pushed about among the

crowd with no more concern than if they had been common mortals. They demanded loudly to see the station-master. The minister complained angrily of the delay; an important negotiation would be imperilled by his detention, and he threatened the company with the displeasure of his department. A consequential youth who had just heard of the death of his elder brother was flying home to take his inheritance. A great lady had secured, as she had hoped, a brilliant match for her daughter; her work over, she had been at the baths to recover from the dissipation of the season; difficulty had risen unlooked for, and unless she was at hand to remove it, the worst consequences might be feared. A banker declared that the credit of a leading commercial house might fail unless he could be at home on the day fixed for his return: he alone could save it A solicitor had the evidence in his portmanteau which would determine the succession to the lands and title of an ancient family. An elderly gentleman was in despair about his young wife, whom he had left at home; he had made a will by which she was to lose his fortune if she married again after his death, but the will was lying in his desk unsigned. The archbishop was on his way to a synod where the great question was to be discussed whether gas might be used at the altar instead of candles. The altar candles were blessed before they were used, and the doubt was whether gas could be blessed. The right reverend prelate conceived that if the gas tubes were made in the shape of candles the difficulty could be got over, but he feared that without his moderating influence the majority might come to a rash decision. All these persons were clamouring over their various anxieties with the most naïve frankness, the truth coming freely out, whatever it might be. One distinguished-looking lady in deep mourning, with a sad gentle face, alone was resigned and hopeful. It seemed that her husband had been stopped not long before at the same station. She thought it possible that she might meet him again.

The station-master listened to the complaints with composed indifference. He told the loudest that they need not alarm themselves. The State would survive the absence of the minister. The minister, in fact, was not thinking of the State at all, but of the party triumph which he expected;

and the peerage which was to be his reward, the station-master said would now be of no use to him. The youth had a second brother who would succeed instead of him, and the tenants would not be inconvenienced by the change. The fine lady's daughter would marry to her own liking instead of her mother's, and would be all the happier for it. The commercial house was already insolvent, and the longer it lasted the more innocent people would be ruined by it. The boy whom the lawyer intended to make into a rich baronet was now working industriously at school, and would grow up a useful man. If a great estate fell in to him he would be idle and dissolute. The old man might congratulate himself that he had escaped so soon from the scrape into which he had fallen. His wife would marry an adventurer, and would suffer worse from inheriting his fortune. The archbishop was commended for his anxiety. His solution of the candle problem was no doubt an excellent one; but his clergy were now provided with a harmless subject to quarrel over, and if it was adopted they might fall out over something else which might be seriously mischievous.

'Do you mean, then, that you are not going to send us forward at all?' the minister inquired sternly.

'You will see,' the station-master answered with a curious short laugh. I observed that he looked more gently at the lady in mourning. She had said nothing, but he knew what was in her mind, and though he held out no hope in words that her wish would be gratified, he smiled sadly, and the irony passed out of his face.

The crowd, meanwhile, were standing about the platform whistling tunes or amusing themselves, not ill-naturedly, at the distress of their grand companions. Something considerable was happening. But they had so long experienced the ups and downs of things that they were prepared for what fortune might send. They had not expected to find a Paradise where they were going, and one place might be as good as another. They had nothing belonging to them except the clothes they stood in and their bits of skill in their different trades. Wherever men were, there would be need of cobblers and tailors, and smiths and carpenters. If not, they might fall on their feet somehow if there was work to be done of any sort.

Presently a bell rang, a door was flung open, and we were ordered into a waiting-room, where we were told that our luggage was to be examined. It was a large barely furnished apartment, like the *salle d'attente* at the Northern Railway Station at Paris. A rail ran across, behind which we were all penned; opposite to us was the usual long table, on which were piled boxes, bags, and portmanteaus, and behind them stood a row of officials, in a plain uniform with gold bands round their caps, and the dry peremptory manner which passengers accustomed to deference so particularly dislike. At their backs was a screen extending across the room, reaching half way to the ceiling; in the rear of it there was apparently an office.

We each looked to see that our particular belongings were safe, but we were surprised to find that we could recognize none of them. Packages there were in plenty, alleged to be the property of the passengers who had come in by the train. They were arranged in the three classes—first, second, and third - but the proportions were inverted: most of it was labelled as the luggage of the travellers in fustian, who had brought nothing with them but what they carried in their hands; a moderate heap stood where the second-class luggage should have been, and some of superior quality, but none of us could make out the shape of our own trunks. As to the grand ladies and gentlemen, the innumerable articles which I had seen put as theirs into the van were nowhere to be found. A few shawls and cloaks lay upon the planks, and that was all. There was a loud outcry, but the officials were accustomed to it, and took no notice. The station-master, who was still in charge of us, said briefly that the saloon luggage would be sent forward in the next train. The late owners would have no more use for it, and it would be delivered to their friends.

The late owners! Were we no longer actual owners, then? My individual loss was not great, and, besides, it might be made up to me, for I saw my name on a strange box on the table, and being of curious disposition, the singularity of the adventure made it interesting to me. The consternation of the rest was indescribable. The minister

salle d'attente, Fr. = waiting-room.

supposed that he had fallen among Communists, who disbelieved in property, and was beginning a speech on the elementary conditions of society, when silence was called, and the third-class passengers were called to advance, that their boxes might be opened. Each man had his own carefully docketed. The lids flew off, and within, instead of clothes and shoes and dressing apparatus and money and jewels and such like, were simply samples of the work which he had done in his life. There was an account-book also, in which was entered the number of days which he had worked, the number and size of the fields, etc., which he had drained and enclosed and ploughed, the crops which he had reaped, the walls which he had built, the metal which he had dug out and smelted and fashioned into articles of use to mankind, the leather which he had tanned, the clothes which he had woven—all entered with punctual exactness; and on the opposite page, the wages which he had received, and the share which had been allotted to him of the good things which he had helped to create.

Besides his work, so specifically called, there were his actions—his affection for his parents, or his wife and children, his self-denials, his charities, his purity, his truth, his honesty, or, it might be, ugly catalogues of sins and oaths and drunkenness and brutality. But inquiry into action was reserved for a second investigation before a higher commissioner. The first examination was confined to the literal work done by each man for the general good—how much he had contributed, and how much society had done for him in return; and no one, it seemed, could be allowed to go any further without a certificate of having passed this test satisfactorily. With the workmen, the balance in most instances was found enormously in their favour. The state of the case was so clear that the scrutiny was rapidly got over, and they and their luggage were passed in to the higher court. A few were found whose boxes were empty, who had done nothing useful all their lives, and had subsisted by begging and stealing. These were ordered to stand aside till the rest of us had been disposed of.

The saloon passengers were taken next. Most of them, who had nothing at all to show, were called up together, and were asked what they had to say for themselves. A

well-dressed gentleman who spoke for the rest, said that the whole investigation was a mystery to him. He and his friends had been born to good fortunes, and had found themselves, on entering upon life, amply provided for. They had never been told that work was required of them, either work with their hands or work with their heads—in fact, work of any kind. It was right, of course, for the poor to work, because they could not honestly live otherwise. For themselves, they had spent their time in amusements, generally innocent. They had paid for everything which they had consumed. They had stolen nothing, taken nothing from any man by violence or fraud. They had kept the commandments, all ten of them, from the time when they were old enough to understand them. The speaker, at least, declared that he had no breach of any commandment on his own conscience, and he believed he might say as much of his companions. They were superior people, who had been always looked up to and well spoken of, and to call upon them to show what they had done was against reason and equity.

'Gentlemen,' said the chief official, 'we have heard this many times; yet as often as it is repeated we feel fresh astonishment. You have been in a world where work is the condition of life. Not a meal can be had by any man that some one has not worked to produce. Those who work deserve to eat; those who do not work deserve to starve. There are but three ways of living: by working, by stealing, or by begging. Those who have not lived by the first have lived by one of the other two. And no matter how superior you think yourselves, you will not pass here till you have something of your own to produce. You have had your wages beforehand—ample wages, as you acknowledge yourselves. What have you to show?'

'Wages!' the speaker said. 'We are not hired servants; we received no wages. What we spent was our own. All the orders we received were that we were not to do wrong. We have done no wrong. I appeal to the higher court.'

But the appeal could not be received. To all who presented themselves with empty boxes, no matter who they were, or how excellent their characters appeared to one another, there was the irrevocable answer, 'No admittance, till you come better furnished.' All who were in this condition,

the duke and duchess among them, were ordered to stand aside with the thieves. The duchess declared that she had given the finest parties in the season, and as it was universally agreed that they had been the most tedious, and that no one had found any pleasure there, a momentary doubt rose whether they might have answered some useful purpose in disgusting people with such modes of entertainment; but no evidence of this was forthcoming: the world had attended them because the world had nothing else to do; and she and her guests had been alike unprofitable. Thus the large majority of the saloon passengers was disposed of. The minister, the archbishop, the lawyer, the banker, and others, who, although they had no material work credited to them, had yet been active and laborious in their different callings, were passed to the superior judges.

Our turn came next—ours of the second class—and a motley gathering we were. Busy we must all have been, from the multitude of articles which we found assigned to us. Manufacturers with their wares, solicitors with their lawsuits, doctors and clergymen with the bodies and souls which they had saved or lost, authors with their books, painters and sculptors with their pictures and statues. But the hard test was applied to all that we had produced—the wages which we had received on one side, and the value of our exertions to mankind on the other—and imposing as our performances looked when laid out to be examined, we had been paid, most of us, out of all proportion to what we were found to have deserved. I was reminded of a large compartment in the Paris Exhibition where an active gentleman, wishing to show the state of English literature, had collected copies of every book, review, pamphlet, or newspaper which had been published in a single year. The bulk was overwhelming, but the figures were only decimal points, and the worth of the whole was a fraction above zero. A few of us were turned back summarily among the thieves and the fine gentlemen and ladies—speculators who had done nothing but handle money which had clung to their fingers in passing through them, divines who had preached a morality which they did not practise, and fluent orators who had made speeches which they knew to be nonsense, philosophers who had spun out of moonshine systems of the universe, distinguished pleaders

who had defeated justice while they established points of law, writers of books upon subjects of which they knew enough to mislead their readers, purveyors of luxuries which had added nothing to human health or strength, physicians and apothecaries who had pretended to knowledge which they knew that they did not possess,—these all, as the contents of their boxes bore witness against them, were thrust back into the rejected herd.

There were some whose account stood better as having at least produced something of real merit, but they were cast on the point of wages; modest excellence had come badly off; the plausible and unscrupulous had thriven and grown rich. It was tragical, and evidently a surprise to most of us, to see how mendacious we had been: how we had sanded our sugar, watered our milk, scamped our carpentering and mason's work, literally and metaphorically; how in all things we had been thinking less of producing good work than of the profit which we could make out of it; how we had sold ourselves to tell lies and act them, because the public found lies pleasant and truth expensive and troublesome. Some of us were manifest rogues who had bought cheap and sold dear, had used false measures and weights, had made cotton pass for wool, and hemp for silk, and tin for silver. The American pedlar happened to be in the party who had put a rind upon a grindstone and had sold it as a cheese. These were promptly sifted out and placed with their fellows; only persons whose services were on the whole greater than the pay which they had received were allowed their certificates. When my own box was opened, I perceived that though the wages had been small the work done seemed smaller still, and I was surprised to find myself among those who had passed.

The whistle of a train was heard at this moment coming in upon the main line. It was to go on in half an hour, and those who had been turned back were told that they were to proceed by it to the place where they had been originally going. They looked infinitely relieved at the news; but, before they started, a few questions had to be put to them, and a few alterations made which were to affect their future. They were asked to explain how they had come to be such worthless creatures. They gave many answers, which came mainly

to the same thing. Circumstances had been against them. It was all owing to circumstances. They had been badly brought up. They had been placed in situations where it had been impossible for them to do better. The rich people repeated that they had never been informed that any work was expected of them. Their wants had all been provided for, and it was unfair to expect that they should have exerted themselves of their own accord when they had no motive for working. If they had only been born poor all would have gone well with them. The cheating tradesman declared that the first duty of a shopkeeper, according to all received principles, was to make money and better his condition. It was the buyer's business to see to the quality of the articles which he purchased; the shopkeeper was entitled to sell his wares at the highest price which he could get for them. So, at least, it was believed and taught by the recognized authorities on the subject. The orators, preachers, newspaper writers, novel writers, &c., &c., of whom there were a great many, appealed to the crowds who came to listen to them or bought and read their productions. *Tout le monde*, it was said, was wiser than the wisest single sage. They had given the world what the world wished for and approved; they had worked at supplying it with all their might, and it was extremely hard to blame them for guiding themselves by the world's judgement. The thieves and vagabonds argued that they had been brought into existence without their consent being asked: they had not wished for it; although they had not been without their pleasures, they regarded existence on the whole as a nuisance which they would gladly have been spared. Being alive, however, they had to keep alive; and for all that they could see, they had as full a right to the good things which the world contained as anybody else, provided they could get them. They were called thieves. Law and language were made by the property owners, who were their natural enemies. If society had given them the means of living honestly they would have found it easy to be honest. Society had done nothing for them—why should they do anything for society?

So, in their various ways, those who had been 'plucked'

Tout le monde, Fr. = all the world, everybody.

defended themselves. They were all delighted to hear that they were to have another chance; and I was amused to observe that though some of them had pretended that they had not wished to be born, and had rather not have been born, not one of them protested against being sent back. All they asked was that they should be put in a new position, and that the adverse influences should be taken off. I expected that among these adverse influences they would have mentioned the faults of their own dispositions. My own opinion had been that half the misdoings of men came from congenital defects of character which they had brought with them into the world, and that constitutional courage, right-mindedness, and practical ability were as much gifts of nature or circumstance as the accidents of fortune. A change in this respect was of more consequence than in any other. But with themselves they were all apparently satisfied, and they required only an improvement in their surroundings. The alterations were rapidly made. The duchess was sent to begin her life again in a labourer's cottage. She was to attend the village school, and rise thence into a housemaid. The fine gentleman was made a ploughboy. The authors and preachers were to become mechanics, and bound apprentices to carpenters and blacksmiths. A philosopher who, having had a good fortune and unbroken health, had insisted that the world was as good as it could be made, was to be born blind and paralytic, and to find his way through life under the new conditions. The thieves and cheats, who pretended that their misdemeanours were due to poverty, were to find themselves, when they arrived in the world again, in palaces surrounded with luxury. The cup of Lethe was sent round. The past became a blank. They were hurried into the train; the engine screamed and flew away with them.

'They will be all here again in a few years,' the station-master said, 'and it will be the same story over again. I have had these very people in my hands a dozen times. They have been tried in all positions, and there is still nothing to show, and nothing but complaints of circumstances. For my part I would put them out altogether.' 'How long is it to last?' I asked. 'Well,' he said, 'it does not depend on me. No one passes here who cannot prove that he has lived to some purpose. Some of the worst I have known

made at last into pigs and geese, to be fatted up and eaten, and made of use in that way. Others have become asses, condemned to carry burdens, to be beaten with sticks, and to breed asses like themselves for a hundred generations. All animated creatures tend to take the shape at last which suits their character.'

The train was scarcely out of sight when again the bell rang. The scene changed as at a theatre. The screen was rolled back, and we who were left found ourselves in the presence of four grave-looking persons like the board of examiners whom we remembered at college. We were called up one by one. The work which had passed the first ordeal was again looked into, and the quality of it compared with the talent or faculty of the producer, to see how far he had done his best; whether anywhere he had done worse then he might have done and knew how to have done; while besides, in a separate collection, were the vices, the sins, the selfishnesses and ill-humours, with, in the other scale, the acts of personal duty, of love and kindness and charity, which had increased the happiness or lightened the sorrows of those connected with him. These last, I observed, had generally been forgotten by the owner, who saw them appear with surprise, and even repudiated them with protest. In the work, of course, both material and moral, there was every gradation both of kind and merit. But while nothing was absolutely worthless, everything, even the highest achievements of the greatest artist or the greatest saint, fell short of absolute perfection. Each of us saw our own performances, from our first ignorant beginnings to what we regarded as our greatest triumph; and it is easy to trace how much of our faults were due to natural deficiencies and the necessary failures of inexperience, and how much to self-will or vanity or idleness. Some taint of mean motives, too, some desire of reward, desire of praise or honour or wealth, some foolish self-satisfaction, when satisfaction ought not to have been felt, was to be seen infecting everything, even the very best which was presented for scrutiny.

So plain was this that one of us, an earnest, impressive-looking person, whose own work bore inspection better than that of most of us, exclaimed passionately that, so far as he was concerned, the examiners might spare their labour.

From his earliest years he had known what he ought to do, and in no instance had he ever completely done it. He had struggled; he had conquered his grosser faults; but the farther he had gone, and the better he had been able to do, his knowledge had still grown faster than his power of acting upon it; and every additional day that he had lived, his shortcomings had become more miserably plain to him. Even if he could have reached perfection at last, he could not undo the past, and the faults of his youth would bear witness against him and call for his condemnation. Therefore, he said, he abhorred himself. He had no merit which could entitle him to look for favour. He had laboured on to the end, but he had laboured with a full knowledge that the best which he could offer would be unworthy of acceptance. He had been told, and he believed, that a high spirit, not subject to infirmity, had done his work for him, and done it perfectly, and that if he abandoned all claim on his own account, he might be accepted for the sake of what another had done. This, he trusted, was true, and it was his sole dependence. In the so-called good actions with which he seemed to be credited, there was nothing that was really good; there was not one which was altogether what it ought to have been.

He was evidently sincere, and what he said was undoubtedly true—true of him and true of every one. Even in the vehemence of his self-abandonment a trace lingered of the taint which he was confessing, for he was a polemical divine; he had spent his life and gained a reputation in maintaining this particular doctrine. He believed it, but he had not forgotten that he had been himself its champion.

The examiner looked kindly at him; but answered, 'We do not expect impossibilities; and we do not blame you when you have not accomplished what is beyond your strength. Only those who are themselves perfect can do anything perfectly. Human beings are born ignorant and helpless. They bring into the world with them a disposition to seek what is pleasant to themselves, and what is pleasant is not always right. They learn to live as they learn everything else. At first they cannot do rightly at all. They improve under teaching and practice. The best only arrive at excellence. We do not find fault with the painter on account of his first bad copies if they were as good as could be looked

for at his age. Every craftsman acquires his art by degrees. He begins badly; he cannot help it; and it is the same with life. You learn to walk by falling down. You learn to live by going wrong and experiencing the consequences of it. We do not record against a man 'the sins of his youth' if he has been honestly trying to improve himself. We do not require the same self-control in a child as in a man. We do not require the same attainments from all. Some are well taught, some are ill taught, some are not taught at all. Some have naturally good dispositions, some have naturally bad dispositions. Not one has had power to 'fulfil the law,' as you call it, completely. Therefore, it is no crime in him if he fails. We reckon as faults those only which arise from idleness, wilfulness, selfishness, and deliberate preference of evil to good. Each is judged according to what he has received.'

I was amused to observe how pleased the archbishop looked while the examiner was speaking. He had himself been engaged in controversy with this gentleman on the share of 'good works' in justifying a man, and if the examiner had not taken his side in the discussion he had at least demolished his adversary. The archbishop had been the more disinterested in the line which he had taken, as his own 'works,' though in several large folios, weighed extremely little; and, indeed, had it not been for passages in his early life—he had starved himself at college that he might not be a burden upon his widowed mother—I do not know but that he might have been sent back into the world to serve as a parish clerk.

For myself, there were questions which I was longing to ask, and I was trying to collect my courage to speak. I wanted chiefly to know what the examiner meant by 'natural disposition.' Was it that a man might be born with a natural capacity for becoming a saint, as another man with a capacity to become a great artist or musician, and that each of us could only grow to the limits of his natural powers? and, again, were idleness, wilfulness, selfishness, &c., &c., natural dispositions?—for in that case——

But at that moment the bell rang again and my own name was called. There was no occasion to ask who I was. In every instance the identity of the person, his history, small

or large, and all that he had said or done, was placed before the court so clearly that there was no need for extorting a confession. There stood the catalogue inexorably impartial, the bad actions in a schedule painfully large, the few good actions veined with personal motives which spoilt the best of them. In the way of work there was nothing to be shown but certain books and other writings, and these were spread out to be tested. A fluid was poured over the pages, the effect of which was to obliterate entirely every untrue proposition, and to make every partially true proposition grow faint in proportion to the false element which entered into it. Alas! chapter after chapter vanished away, leaving the paper clean as if no compositor had ever laboured in setting type for it. Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs on which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those on which I had laboured least and had almost forgotten, or those, as I observed in one or two instances, which had been selected for special reprobation in the weekly journals. Something stood to my credit, and the worst charge of wilfully and intentionally setting down what I did not believe to be true was not alleged against me. Ignorance, prejudice, carelessness; sins of infirmity—culpable indeed, but not culpable in the last degree; the water in the ink, the commonplaces, the ineffectual sentiments; these, to my unspeakable comfort, I perceived were my heaviest crimes. Had I been accused of absolute worthlessness, I should have pleaded guilty in the state of humiliation to which I was reduced; but things were better than they might have been. I was flattering myself that when it came to the wages question, the balance would be in my favour: so many years of labour - such and such cheques received from my publisher. Here, at least, I held myself safe, and I was in good hope that I might scrape through. The examiner was good-natured in his manner. A reviewer who had been listening for my condemnation was beginning to look disgusted, when suddenly one of the walls of the court became transparent, and there appeared an interminable vista of creatures - creatures of all kinds from land and water, reaching away into the extreme distance. They were those which in the course of my life I had devoured, either in part or

whole, to sustain my unconscionable carcass. There they stood in lines with solemn and reproachful faces - oxen and calves, sheep and lambs, deer, hares, rabbits, turkeys, ducks, chickens, pheasants, grouse, and partridges, down to the larks and sparrows and blackbirds, which I had shot when a boy and made into puddings. Every one of them had come up to bear witness against their murderer; out of sea and river had come the trout and salmon, the soles and turbots, the ling and cod, the whiting and mackerel, the smelts and whitebait, the oysters, the crabs, the lobsters, the shrimps. They seemed literally to be in millions, and I had eaten them all. I talked of wages. These had been my wages. At this enormous cost had my existence been maintained. A stag spoke for the rest. 'We all,' he said, 'were sacrificed to keep this cormorant in being, and to enable him to produce the miserable bits of printed paper which are all that he has to show for himself. Our lives were dear to us. In meadow and wood, in air and water, we wandered harmless and innocent, enjoying the pleasant sunlight, the light of heaven and the sparkling waves: we were not worth much; we have no pretensions to high qualities. If the person who stands here to answer for himself can affirm that his value in the universe was equivalent to the value of all who were sacrificed to feed him, we have no more to say. Let it be so pronounced. We shall look at our numbers, and we shall wonder at the judgement, though we shall withdraw our complaint. But for ourselves we say freely that we have long watched him—him and his fellows—and we have failed to see in what the superiority of the human creature lies. We know him only as the most cunning, the most destructive, and, unhappily, the longest-lived of all carnivorous beasts. His delight is in killing. Even when his hunger is satisfied he kills us for his mere amusement.'

The oxen lowed approval, the sheep bleated, the birds screamed, the fishes flapped their tails. I, for myself, stood mute and self-condemned. What answer but one was possible? Had I been myself on the bench I could not have hesitated. The fatal sentence of condemnation was evidently about to be uttered when the scene became indistinct, there was a confused noise, a change of condition, a sound of running feet and of many voices. I awoke; I was again in the rail-

way carriage; the door was thrown open; porters entered to take our things. We stepped out upon the platform. We were at the terminus for which we had been originally destined. Carriages and cabs were waiting; tall, powdered footmen flew to the assistance of the duke and duchess. The station-master was standing hat in hand and obsequiously bowing; the minister's private secretary had come to meet his right honourable chief with the red dispatch-box, knowing the impatience with which it was waited for. The duke shook hands with the archbishop before he drove away. 'Dine with us to-morrow?' he said. 'I have had a very singular dream. You shall be my Daniel and interpret it for me.' The archbishop regretted infinitely that he must deny himself the honour; his presence was required at the Conference. 'I, too, have dreamt,' he said; 'but with your Grace and me the realities of this world are too serious to leave us leisure for the freaks of imagination.'

X

'GEORGE ELIOT' (MARY ANN CROSS)

(1819–1880)

STORY-TELLING

[Mary Ann Evans, afterwards Mrs. Cross, was born at Arbury in Warwickshire on Nov. 22, 1819. Her father was bailiff to the Newdigate family, and both he and this family figure in her novels. In her early twenties she came under Unitarian influences, and these decided the sphere of her life. In 1846 she published a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. In 1857 she settled in London, and found literary work on the *Westminster Review*. Her first work of fiction, published in 1857, was *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and was signed 'George Eliot.' Its success was so great that its authoress was encouraged to go on with novel-writing, and *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner* followed in the years 1858, 1860, 1861. These all dealt with the life that 'George Eliot' had known as a girl in the English Midlands, and are perfect in their kind. *Romola* (1863), a story of Savonarola and the Renaissance in Italy, is more laboured and to that extent less delightful; while her later novels, *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), lack the direct simplicity of the earlier ones. 'George Eliot' published one book of essays, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), and another has been collected from her incidental writings. The essay given below is from her posthumously published Notebooks. She also wrote a poetic drama, *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), and published a volume of verse, *Jubal, and other Poems* (1874). She died in London on Dec. 22, 1880.]

WHAT is the best way of telling a story? Since the standard must be the interest of the audience, there must be several or many good ways rather than one best. For we get interested in the stories life presents to us through divers orders and modes of presentation. Very commonly our first awakening to a desire of knowing a man's past or future comes from our seeing him as a stranger in some unusual or pathetic or humorous situation, or manifesting some remarkable characteristics. We make inquiries in consequence, or we

become observant and attentive whenever opportunities of knowing more may happen to present themselves without our search. You have seen a refined face among the prisoners picking tow in gaol; you afterwards see the same unforgettable face in a pulpit: he must be of dull fibre who would not care to know more about a life which showed such contrasts, though he might gather his knowledge in a fragmentary and unchronological way.

Again, we have heard much, or at least something not quite common, about a man whom we have never seen, and hence we look round with curiosity when we are told that he is present; whatever he says or does before us is charged with a meaning due to our previous hearsay knowledge about him, gathered either from dialogue of which he was expressly and emphatically the subject, or from incidental remark, or from general report either in or out of print.

These indirect ways of arriving at knowledge are always the most stirring even in relation to impersonal subjects. To see a chemical experiment gives an attractiveness to a definition of chemistry, and fills it with a significance which it would never have had without the pleasant shock of an unusual sequence such as the transformation of a solid into gas, and vice versa. To see a word for the first time either as substantive or adjective in a connexion where we care about knowing its complete meaning, is the way to vivify its meaning in our recollection. Curiosity becomes the more eager from the incompleteness of the first information. Moreover, it is in this way that memory works in its incidental revival of events: some salient experience appears in inward vision, and in consequence the antecedent facts are retraced from what is regarded as the beginning of the episode in which that experience made a more or less strikingly memorable part. 'Ah! I remember addressing the mob from the hustings at Westminster—you wouldn't have thought that I could ever have been in such a position. Well, how I came there was in this way—': and then follows a retrospective narration.

The modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images and pictures in grasping the attention—or, one might say with more fundamental accur-

acy, from the fact that our earliest, strongest impressions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images added to more or less of sensation. These are the primitive instruments of thought. Hence it is not surprising that early poetry took this way—telling a daring deed, a glorious achievement, without caring for what went before. The desire for orderly narration is a later, more reflective birth. The presence of the Jack in the box affects every child: it is the more reflective lad, the miniature philosopher, who wants to know how he got there.

The only stories life presents to us in an orderly way are those of our autobiography, or the career of our companions from our childhood upwards, or perhaps of our own children. But it is a great art to make a connected strictly relevant narrative of such careers as we can recount from the beginning. In these cases the sequence of associations is almost sure to overmaster the sense of proportion. Such narratives *ab ovo* are summer's day stories for happy loungers; not the cup of self-forgetting excitement to the busy who can snatch an hour of entertainment.

But the simple opening of a story with a date and necessary account of places and people, passing on quietly towards the more rousing elements of narrative and dramatic presentation, without need of retrospect, has its advantages which have to be measured by the nature of the story. Spirited narrative, without more than a touch of dialogue here and there, may be made eminently interesting, and is suited to the novelette. Examples of its charm are seen in the short tales in which the French have a mastery never reached by the English, who usually demand coarser flavours than are given by that delightful gaiety which is well described by La Fontaine[1] as not anything that provokes fits of laughter, but a certain charm, an agreeable mode of handling which lends attractiveness to all subjects even the most serious. And it is this sort of gaiety which plays around the best French novelettes. But the opening chapters of the *Vicar*

[1] 'Je n'appelle pas gayeté ce qui excite le rire, mais un certain charme, un air agréable qu'on peut donner à toutes sortes de sujets, mesme les plus serieux.'—Preface to Fables. ['I do not call gaiety that which excites laughter, but a certain charm, an agreeable air, that one can give to all sorts of subjects, even the most serious.']

of Wakefield are as fine as anything that can be done in this way.

Why should a story not be told in the most irregular fashion that an author's idiosyncrasy may prompt, provided that he gives us what we can enjoy? The objections to Sterne's wild way of telling *Tristram Shandy* lie more solidly in the quality of the interrupting matter than in the fact of interruption. The dear public would do well to reflect that they are often bored from the want of flexibility in their own minds. They are like the topers of 'one liquor.'

XI

JOHN RUSKIN

(1819–1900)

MY FIRST EDITOR

An Autobiographical Reminiscence

[John Ruskin was born in London, Feb. 8, 1819. He was an only child, and was somewhat too anxiously educated and trained. His father was a wine-merchant who travelled through England in his own carriage to take orders, his wife and child accompanying him. And each year they travelled for a holiday through France, Switzerland, and Italy. These experiences, and the fact that his father was a collector of pictures, largely helped to fix Ruskin's interest in landscape and art. He went to Oxford as a gentleman-commoner of Christ Church, and in 1843 published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, over the signature of 'A Graduate of Oxford.' The book was completed in six volumes (1843 to 1860), and it exalts Turner and other moderns, but also some early painters, above other painters whom it was then fashionable to praise. Two other works of similar importance are *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (in three volumes, 1851–3). In 1860 he published *Unto this Last*, an attack on the current theories of political economy, and thenceforward he wrote as much on social subjects as on art, and he has become one of the greatest influences on modern thought. He held office as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford from 1870 to 1879 and from 1883 to 1884, and published eight volumes of lectures. Almost all his work has the eloquence of passionate earnestness, and it was but seldom that he could write in the quiet reminiscent tone of the present essay. Other examples of his prose will be found on pages 134, 189, of this present book. He died at Coniston, Jan. 20, 1900.]

1*st February*, 1878.

In seven days more I shall be fifty-nine;—which (practically) is all the same as sixty; but, being asked by the wife of my dear old friend, W. H. Harrison, to say a few words of our old relations together, I find myself, in spite of all these years, a boy again,—partly in the mere thought of, and renewed sympathy with, the cheerful heart of my old literary master,

and partly in instinctive terror lest, wherever he is in celestial circles, he should catch me writing bad grammar, or putting wrong stops, and should set the table turning, or the like. For he was inexorable in such matters, and many a sentence in *Modern Painters*, which I had thought quite beautifully turned out after a forenoon's work on it, had to be turned outside in, after all, and cut into the smallest pieces and sewn up again, because he had found out there wasn't a nominative in it, or a genitive, or a conjunction, or something else indispensable to a sentence's decent existence and position in life. Not a book of mine, for good thirty years, but went, every word of it, under his careful eyes twice over—often also the last revises left to his tender mercy altogether on condition he wouldn't bother me any more.

'For good thirty years': that is to say, from my first verse-writing in *Friendship's Offering* at fifteen, to my last orthodox and conservative compositions at forty-five. But when I began to utter radical sentiments, and say things derogatory to the clergy, my old friend got quite restive—absolutely refused sometimes to pass even my most grammatical and punctuated paragraphs, if their contents savoured of heresy or revolution; and at last I was obliged to print all my philanthropy and political economy on the sly.

The heaven of the literary world through which Mr. Harrison moved in a widely cometary fashion, circling now round one luminary and now submitting to the attraction of another, not without a serenely erubescent lustre of his own, differed *toto cælo* from the celestial state of authorship by whose courses we have now the felicity of being dazzled and directed. Then, the publications of the months being very nearly concluded in the modest browns of *Blackwood* and *Fraser*, and the majesty of the quarterlies being above the range of the properly so-called 'public' mind, the simple family circle looked forward with chief complacency to their New Year's gift of the Annual a delicately printed, lustrously bound, and elaborately illustrated small octavo volume, representing, after its manner, the poetical and artistic inspiration of the age. It is not a little wonderful to me, looking back to those pleasant years and their bestowings, to measure the difficultly imaginable distance between the periodical literature of that day and ours. In a few words, it may be summed by saying

that the ancient Annual was written by meekly-minded persons, who felt that they knew nothing about anything, and did not want to know more. Faith in the usually accepted principles of propriety, and confidence in the Funds, the Queen, the English Church, the British Army and the perennial continuance of England, of her Annuals, and of the creation in general, were necessary then for the eligibility, and important elements in the success, of the winter-blowing author. Whereas I suppose that the popularity of our present candidates for praise, at the successive changes of the moon, may be considered as almost proportionate to their confidence in the abstract principles of dissolution, the immediate necessity of change, and the inconvenience, no less than the iniquity, of attributing any authority to the Church, the Queen, the Almighty, or anything else but the British Press. Such constitutional differences in the tone of the literary contents imply still greater contrasts in the lives of the editors of these several periodicals. It was enough for the editor of the *Friendship's Offering* if he could gather for his Christmas bouquet a little pastoral story, suppose, by Miss Mitford, a dramatic sketch by the Rev. George Croly, a few sonnets or impromptu stanzas to music by the gentlest lovers and maidens of his acquaintance, and a legend of the Apennines or romance of the Pyrenees by some adventurous traveller who had penetrated into the recesses of those mountains, and would modify the traditions of the country to introduce a plate by Clarkson Stanfield or J. D. Harding. Whereas nowadays the editor of a leading monthly is responsible to his readers for exhaustive views of the politics of Europe during the last fortnight; and would think himself distanced in the race with his lunarian rivals, if his numbers did not contain three distinct and entirely new theories of the system of the universe, and at least one hitherto unobserved piece of evidence of the nonentity of God.

In one respect, however, the humilities of that departed time were loftier than the prides of to-day—that even the most retiring of its authors expected to be admired, not for what he had discovered, but for what he was. It did not matter in our dynasties of determined noblesse how many things an industrious blockhead knew, or how curious things a lucky booby had discovered. We claimed, and gave, no

honour but for real rank of human sense and wit; and although this manner of estimate led to many various collateral mischiefs—to much toleration of misconduct in persons who were amusing, and of uselessness in those of proved ability, there was yet the essential and constant good in it, that no one hoped to snap up for himself a reputation which his friend was on the point of achieving, and that even the meanest envy of merit was not embittered by a gambler's grudge at his neighbour's fortune.

Into this incorruptible court of literature I was early brought, whether by good or evil hap, I know not; certainly by no very deliberate wisdom in my friends or myself. A certain capacity for rhythmic cadence (visible enough in all my later writings) and the cheerfulness of a much protected, but not foolishly indulged childhood, made me early a rhymester; and a shelf of the little cabinet by which I am now writing is loaded with poetical effusions which were the delight of my father and mother, and I have not yet the heart to burn. A worthy Scottish friend of my father's, Thomas Pringle, preceded Mr. Harrison in the editorship of *Friendship's Offering*, and doubtfully, but with benignant sympathy, admitted the dazzling hope that one day rhymes of mine might be seen in real print, on those amiable and shining pages.

My introduction by Mr. Pringle to the poet Rogers, on the ground of my admiration of the recently published *Italy*, proved, as far as I remember, slightly disappointing to the poet, because it appeared on Mr. Pringle's unadvised cross-examination of me in the presence that I knew more of the vignettes than the verses; and also slightly discouraging to me because, this contretemps necessitating an immediate change of subject, I thenceforward understood none of the conversation, and when we came away was rebuked by Mr. Pringle for not attending to it. Had his grave authority been maintained over me, my literary bloom would probably have been early nipped: but he passed away into the African deserts; and the Favonian breezes of Mr. Harrison's praise revived my drooping ambition.

I know not whether most in that ambition, or to please my father, I now began seriously to cultivate my skill in expression. I had always an instinct of possessing considerable word-power; and the series of essays written about

this time for the *Architectural Magazine*, under the signature of Kata Phusin, contain sentences nearly as well put together as any I have done since. But without Mr. Harrison's ready praise, and severe punctuation, I should have either tired of my labour, or lost it: as it was, though I shall always think those early years might have been better spent, they had their reward. As soon as I had anything really to say, I was able sufficiently to say it; and under Mr. Harrison's cheerful auspices, and balmy consolations of my father under adverse criticism, the first volume of *Modern Painters* established itself in public opinion, and determined the tenor of my future life.

Thus began a friendship, and in no unreal sense, even a family relationship, between Mr. Harrison, my father and mother, and me, in which there was no alloy whatsoever of distrust or displeasure on either side, but which remained faithful and loving, more and more conducive to every sort of happiness among us, to the day of my father's death.

But the joyfullest days of it for *us*, and chiefly for me, cheered with concurrent sympathy from other friends—of whom only one now is left—were in the triumphal Olympiad of years which followed the publication of the second volume of *Modern Painters*, when Turner himself had given to me his thanks, to my father and mother his true friendship, and came always for *their* honour, to keep my birthday with them: the constant dinner party of the day remaining in its perfect chaplet from 1844 to 1850, Turner, Mr. Thomas Richmond, Mr. George Richmond, Samuel Prout, and Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Harrison, as my literary godfather, who had held me at the Font of the Muses, and as answerable to the company for my moral principles and my syntax, always made 'the speech'; my father used most often to answer for me in few words, but with wet eyes: (there was a general understanding that any good or sorrow that might come to me in literary life were infinitely more his) and the two Mr. Richmonds held themselves responsible to him for my at least moderately decent orthodoxy in art, taking in that matter a tenderly inquisitorial function, and warning my father

Kata Phusin (κατὰ φύσιν), Gr. = according to nature.

solemnly of two dangerous heresies in the bud, and of things really passing the possibilities of the indulgence of the Church, said against Claude or Michael Angelo. The death of Turner and other things, far more sad than death, clouded those early days, but the memory of them returned again after I had well won my second victory with *The Stones of Venice*; and the two Mr. Richmonds, and Mr. Harrison, and my father, were again happy on my birthday, and so to the end.

In a far deeper sense than he himself knew, Mr. Harrison was all this time influencing my thoughts and opinions, by the entire consistency, contentment, and practical sense of his modest life. My father and he were both flawless types of the true London citizen of olden days: incorruptible, proud with sacred and simple pride, happy in their function and position; putting daily their total energy into the detail of their business duties, and finding daily a refined and perfect pleasure in the hearth-side poetry of domestic life. Both of them, in their hearts, as romantic as girls; both of them inflexible as soldier recruits in any matter of probity and honour, in business or out of it; both of them utterly hating radical newspapers, and devoted to the House of Lords; my father only, it seemed to me, slightly failing in his loyalty to the Worshipful the Mayor and Corporation of London. This disrespect for civic dignity was connected in my father with some little gnawing of discomfort—deep down in his heart—in his own position as a merchant, and with timidly indulged hope that his son might one day move in higher spheres; whereas Mr. Harrison was entirely placid and resigned to the will of Providence which had appointed him his desk in the Crown Life Office, never in his most romantic visions projected a marriage for any of his daughters with a British baronet or a German count, and pinned his little vanities prettily and openly on his breast, like a nosegay, when he went out to dinner. Most especially he shone at the Literary Fund, where he was Registrar and had proper official relations, therefore, always with the Chairman, Lord Mahon, or Lord Houghton, or the Bishop of Winchester, or some other magnificent person of that sort, with whom it was Mr. Harrison's supremest felicity to exchange a not unfrequent little joke—like a pinch of snuff—and to indicate for them the shoals to be avoided and the channels to be

followed with flowing sail in the speech of the year; after which, if perchance there were any malignant in the company who took objection, suppose, to the claims of the author last relieved, to the charity of the Society, or to any claim founded on the production of a tale for *Blackwood's Magazine*, and of two sonnets for *Friendship's Offering*; or if perchance there were any festering sharp thorn in Mr. Harrison's side in the shape of some distinguished radical, Sir Charles Wilke, or Mr. Dickens, or anybody who had ever said anything against taxation, or the Post Office, or the Court of Chancery, or the Bench of Bishops,—then would Mr. Harrison, if he had full faith in his chairman, cunningly arrange with him some delicate little extinctive operation to be performed on that malignant or that radical in the course of the evening, and would relate to us exultingly the next day all the incidents of the passage of arms, and vindictively (for him) dwell on the barbed points and double edge of the beautiful episcopalian repartee with which it was terminated.

Very seriously, in all such public duties, Mr. Harrison was a person of rarest quality and worth; absolutely disinterested in his zeal, unwearied in exertion, always ready, never tiresome, never absurd; bringing practical sense, kindly discretion, and a most wholesome element of good-humoured, but incorruptible honesty, into everything his hand found to do. Everybody respected, and the best men sincerely regarded him; and I think those who knew most of the world were always the first to acknowledge his fine faculty of doing exactly the right thing to exactly the right point—and so pleasantly. In private life, he was to me an object of quite special admiration, in the quantity of pleasure he could take in little things; and he very materially modified many of my gravest conclusions, as to the advantages or mischiefs of modern suburban life. To myself scarcely any dwelling-place and duty in this world would have appeared (until, perhaps, I had tried them) less eligible for a man of sensitive and fanciful mind than the New Road, Camberwell Green, and the monotonous office work in Bridge Street. And to a certain extent, I am still of the same mind as to these matters, and do altogether, and without doubt or hesitation, repudiate the existence of New Road and Camberwell Green

in general, no less than the condemnation of intelligent persons to a routine of clerk's work broken only by a three weeks' holiday in the decline of the year. On less lively, fanciful, and amiable persons than my old friend, the New Road and the daily desk do verily exercise a degrading and much to be regretted influence. But Mr. Harrison brought the freshness of pastoral simplicity into the most faded corners of the Green, lightened with his cheerful heart the most leaden hours of the office, and gathered during his three weeks' holiday in the neighbourhood, suppose, of Guildford, Gravesend, Broadstairs, or Rustington, more vital recreation and speculative philosophy than another man would have got on the grand tour.

On the other hand, I, who had nothing to do all day but what I liked, and could wander at will among all the best beauties of the globe—nor that without sufficient power to see and to feel them—was habitually a discontented person, and frequently a weary one; and the reproachful thought which always rose in my mind when in that unconquerable listlessness of surfeit from excitement I found myself unable to win even a momentary pleasure from the fairest scene, was always: 'If but Mr. Harrison were here instead of me!'

Many and many a time I planned very seriously the beguiling of him over the water. But there was always something to be done in a hurry—something to be worked out—something to be seen, as I thought, only in my own quiet way. I believe if I had but had the sense to take my old friend with me, he would have shown me ever so much more than I found out by myself. But it was not to be; and year after year I went to grumble and mope at Venice, or Lago Maggiore; and Mr. Harrison to enjoy himself from morning to night at Broadstairs or Box Hill. Let me not speak with disdain of either. No blue languor of tideless wave is worth the spray and sparkle of a South-Eastern English beach, and no one will ever rightly enjoy the pines of the Wengern Alp who despises the boxes of Box Hill.

Nay, I remember me of a little rapture of George Richmond himself on those fair slopes of sunny sward, ending in a vision of Tobias and his dog—no less—led up there by the helpful angel. (I have always wondered, by the way, whether that blessed dog minded what the angel said to him.)

But Mr. Harrison was independent of these mere ethereal visions, and surrounded himself only with a halo of sublunary beatitude. Welcome always he, as on his side frankly coming to be well, with the farmer, the squire, the rector, the—I had like to have said, dissenting minister, but I think Mr. Harrison usually evaded villages for summer domicile which were in any wise open to suspicion of Dissent in the air, but with hunting rector, and the High Church curate, and the rector's daughters, and the curate's mother and the landlord of the Red Lion, and the hostler of the Red Lion stables, and the tapster of the Pig and Whistle, and all the pigs in the backyard, and all the whistlers in the street—whether for want of thought or for gaiety of it, and all the geese on the common, ducks in the horse-pond, and daws in the steeple, Mr. Harrison was known and beloved by every bird and body of them before half his holiday was over, and the rest of it was mere exuberance of festivity about him, and applauding coronation of his head and heart. Above all, he delighted in the ways of animals and children. He wrote a birthday ode—or at least a tumble-out-of-the-nest-day ode—to our pet rook, Grip, which encouraged that bird in taking such liberties with the cook, and in addressing so many impertinences to the other servants, that he became the mere plague, or as the French would express it, the 'Black-beast,' of the kitchen at Denmark Hill for the rest of his life. There was almost always a diary kept, usually, I think, in rhyme, of those summer hours of indolence; and when at last it was recognized, in due and reverent way, at the Crown Life Office, that indeed the time had drawn near when its constant and faithful servant should be allowed to rest, it was perhaps not the least of my friend's praiseworthy and gentle gifts to be truly capable of rest; withdrawing himself into the memories of his useful and benevolent life, and making it truly a holiday in its honoured evening. The idea then occurred to him (and it was now my turn to press with hearty sympathy the sometimes intermitted task) of writing these Reminiscences[1]: valuable—valuable to whom, and for what, I begin to wonder.

[1] [This paper appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine*, April, 1878, as a preface to a series of Mr. W. H. Harrison's Notes and Reminiscences.

For indeed these memories are of people who are passed away like the snow in harvest; and now, with the sharp-sickle reapers of full shocks of the fattening wheat of metaphysics, and fair novelists Ruth like in the fields of barley, or mischievously coming through the rye[1]—what will the public, so vigorously sustained by these, care to hear of the lovely writers of old days, quaint creatures that they were?—Merry Miss Mitford, actually living in the country, actually walking in it, loving it, and finding history enough in the life of the butcher's boy, and romance enough in the story of the miller's daughter, to occupy all her mind with, innocent of troubles concerning the Turkish question; steady-going old Barham, confessing nobody but the Jackdaw of Rheims, and fearless alike of Ritualism, Darwinism, or disestablishment; iridescent clearness of Thomas Hood—the wildest, deepest infinity of marvellously jestful men; manly and rational Sydney,[2] inevitable, infallible, inoffensively wise of wit; they are gone their way, and ours is far diverse; and they and all the less known, yet pleasantly and brightly endowed spirits of that time, are suddenly as unintelligible to us as the Etruscans—not a feeling they had that we can share in; and these pictures of them will be to us valuable only as the sculpture under the niches far in the shade there of the old parish church, dimly vital images of inconceivable creatures whom we shall never see the like of more.

[1] [There are veiled allusions here to Mrs Gaskell's novel, *Ruth* (1853), and to Mrs Helen Mather's novel, *Comin' thro' the Rye* (1875).]

[2] [*i.e.* Sydney Smith.]

XII

HERBERT SPENCER

(1820–1903)

GRACEFULNESS

[Herbert Spencer, philosopher, was born in Derby on April 27, 1820. He early showed what was to be a lifelong preference for scientific over literary studies, and after a short experience as a schoolmaster he became a civil engineer (1837–1841). At the end of this time he turned his attention to political speculation, as at once a liberal and an individualist. He was appointed sub editor of *The Economist*, and became acquainted with Huxley and Tyndall, with Lewes and 'George Eliot.' In 1851 he began that series of works which have made him famous, and which he wrought into a system of 'Synthetic Philosophy,' —*Social Statics*, *The Principles of Psychology*, *First Principles*, *The Principles of Biology*, *The Study of Sociology*, *The Data of Ethics* (which became Part I of *The Principles of Ethics*), *The Principles of Sociology*: these titles of some of his books witness to the great task he set himself and to the patience with which he carried through what was nothing less, in Mr. Frederic Harrison's words, than 'the framing a *Synthesis* of Knowledge—a Science of the Sciences—a System whereby all human ideas, scientific, moral, and social, could be harmonized in one dominant concatenation or correlation.' Of more popular appeal are his book on *Education* (1861) and on *Man versus the State* (1884). The first has been translated into the chief languages of the world, including Arabic. Herbert Spencer suffered from ill-health all his life and it was only by the most systematic husbanding of his strength that he was able to accomplish his work. He died at Brighton, aged 83, on Dec. 8, 1903. During his life he refused many offers of public honour, but after his death Mr. Shyamaji Krishnavarma endowed a 'Herbert Spencer Lectureship' at Oxford University, and a lecture has been delivered annually since 1905, either on Spencer or on the subjects with which his books are concerned.

The present essay first appeared in *The Leader*, Dec. 25, 1852.]

WE do not ascribe gracefulness to cart-horses, tortoises, and hippopotami, in all of which the powers of movement are relatively inferior; but we ascribe it to greyhounds, antelopes, race-horses, all of which have highly efficient loco-

motive organs. What, then, is this distinctive peculiarity of structure and action which we call Grace?

One night while watching a dancer, and inwardly condemning her *tours de force* as barbarisms which would be hissed, were not people such cowards as always to applaud what they think it the fashion to applaud, I remarked that the truly graceful motions occasionally introduced, were those performed with comparatively little effort. After calling to mind sundry confirmatory facts, I presently concluded that grace, as applied to motion, describes motion that is effected with economy of force; grace, as applied to animal forms, describes forms capable of this economy; grace, as applied to postures, describes postures which may be maintained with this economy; and grace, as applied to inanimate objects, describes such as exhibit certain analogies to these attitudes and forms.

That this generalization, if not the whole truth, contains at least a large part of it, will, I think, become obvious, on considering how habitually we couple the words *easy* and *graceful*; and still more, on calling to mind some of the facts on which this association is based. The attitude of a soldier, drawing himself bolt upright when his sergeant shouts 'attention,' is more remote from gracefulness than when he relaxes at the words 'stand at ease.' The *gauche* visitor sitting stiffly on the edge of his chair, and his self-possessed host, whose limbs and body dispose themselves as convenience dictates, are contrasts as much in effort as in elegance. When standing, we commonly economize power by throwing the weight chiefly on one leg, which we straighten to make it serve as a column, while we relax the other; and to the same end, we allow the head to lean somewhat on one side. Both these attitudes are imitated in sculpture as elements of grace.

Turning from attitudes to movements, current remarks will be found to imply the same relationship. No one praises as graceful, a walk that is irregular or jerking, and so displays waste of power; no one sees any beauty in the waddle of a fat man, or the trembling steps of an invalid, in both of which effort is visible. But the style of walking we admire is moderate in velocity, perfectly rhythmical, unaccompanied by violent swinging of the arms, and giving us the impression that there is no conscious exertion, while there is no force thrown away. In dancing, again, the prevailing difficulty

—the proper disposal of the arms—well illustrates the same truth. Those who fail in overcoming this difficulty give the spectator the impression that their arms are a trouble to them; they are held stiffly in some meaningless attitude, at an obvious expense of power; they are checked from swinging in the directions in which they would naturally swing; or they are so moved that, instead of helping to maintain the equilibrium, they endanger it. A good dancer, on the contrary, makes us feel that, so far from the arms being in the way, they are of great use. Each motion of them, while it seems naturally to result from a previous motion of the body, is turned to some advantage. We perceive that it has facilitated instead of hindered the general action; or, in other words—that an economy of effort has been achieved. Any one wishing to distinctly realize this fact, may readily do so by studying the action of the arms in walking. Let him place his arms close to his sides, and there keep them, while walking with some rapidity. He will unavoidably fall into a backward and forward motion of the shoulders, of a wriggling, ungraceful character. After persevering in this for a space, until he finds that the action is not only ungraceful but fatiguing, let him allow his arms to swing as usual. The wriggling of the shoulders will cease; the body will move equably forward; and comparative ease will be felt. On analyzing this fact, he may perceive that the backward motion of each arm is simultaneous with the forward motion of the corresponding leg. If he will attend to his muscular sensations, he will find that this backward swing of the arm is a counterbalance to the forward swing of the leg; and that it is easier to produce this counterbalance by moving the arm than by contorting the body, as he otherwise must do.

The action of the arms in walking being thus understood, it will be manifest that the graceful employment of them in dancing is simply a complication of the same thing; and that a good dancer is one having so acute a muscular perception as at once to feel in what direction the arms should be moved to counterbalance any motion of the body or legs.

This connexion between gracefulness and economy of force, will be most clearly recognized by those who skate. They will remember that all early attempts, and especially the first timid experiments in figure-skating, are alike

awkward and fatiguing; and that the acquirement of skill is also the acquirement of ease. The requisite confidence, and a due command of the feet having been obtained, those twistings of the trunk and gyrations of the arms, previously used to maintain the balance, are found needless. The body is allowed to follow without control the impulse given to it; the arms to swing where they will; and it is clearly felt that the graceful way of performing any evolution is the way that costs least effort. Spectators can scarcely fail to see the same fact, if they look for it.

The reference to skating suggests that graceful motion might be defined as motion in curved lines. Certainly, straight or zig-zag movements are excluded from the conception. The sudden stoppages which angular movements imply, are its antithesis; for a leading trait of grace is continuity, flowingness. It will be found, however, that this is merely another aspect of the same truth; and that motion in curved lines is economical motion. Given certain successive positions to be assumed by a limb, then if it be moved in a straight line to the first of these positions, suddenly arrested, and then moved in another direction straight to the second position, and so on, it is clear that at each arrest, the momentum previously given to the limb must be destroyed at a certain cost of force, and a new momentum given to it at a further cost of force; whereas, if, instead of arresting the limb at its first position, its motion be allowed to continue, and a lateral force be impressed to make it diverge towards the second position, a curvilinear motion is the necessary result; and by making use of the original momentum, force is economized.

If the truth of these conclusions respecting graceful movements be admitted, it cannot, I think, be doubted, that graceful form is that kind of form which implies relatively small effort required for self-support, and relatively small effort required for movement. Were it otherwise, there would arise the incongruity that graceful form would either not be associated at all with graceful movement, or that the one would habitually occur in the absence of the other; both which alternatives being at variance with our experience, we must conclude that there exists the relationship indicated. Any one hesitating to admit this, will, I think, do so no longer on remembering that the animals which we consider graceful, are those so

slight in build as not to be burdened by their own weight, and those noted for fleetness and agility; while those we class as ungraceful, are those which are alike cumbrous and have the faculty of locomotion but little developed. In the case of the greyhound, especially, we see that the particular modification of the canine type in which economy of weight is the most conspicuous, and in which the facility of muscular motion has been brought to the greatest perfection, is the one which we call most graceful.

How trees and inanimate objects should come to have this epithet applied to them, seems less obvious. But remembrance of the fact that we commonly, and perhaps unavoidably, regard all objects under a certain anthropomorphic aspect, will help us to understand it. The stiff branch of an oak tree standing out at right angles to the trunk gives us a vague notion of a great force expended to keep it in that position; and we call it ungraceful, under the same feeling that we call the holding out an arm at right angles to the body ungraceful. Conversely, the lax drooping boughs of a weeping-willow are vaguely associated with limbs in attitudes requiring little effort to maintain them; and the term graceful, by which we describe these, we apply by metaphor to the boughs of the willow.

I may as well here venture the hypothesis, that the idea of Grace as displayed by other beings, has its subjective basis in Sympathy. The same faculty which makes us shudder on seeing another in danger—which sometimes causes motions of our own limbs on seeing another struggle or fall, gives us a vague participation in all the muscular sensations which those around us are experiencing. When their motions are violent or awkward, we feel in a slight degree the disagreeable sensations which we should have were they our own. When they are easy, we sympathize with the pleasant sensations they imply in those exhibiting them.

XIII

WALTER BAGEHOT

(1826–1877)

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON

[Walter Bagehot, economist, banker, and essayist, was born at Langport, Somersetshire, on Feb. 3, 1826, and died there on March 24, 1877. At the age of 16 he entered University College, London, and took his B.A. degree, with the mathematical scholarship, in 1846, and his M.A. degree, with the gold medal in intellectual and moral philosophy and political economy, in 1848. He was called to the Bar, but did not practise, joining his father in his banking and ship-owning business at Langport. He was a man of business at least as much as a man of letters, and his *Lombard Street* (1873), a study of the money-market, is no less readable than those literary studies which he himself published under the title of *Estimates of some Englishmen and Scotchmen* (1858). He edited *The Economist* for the last seventeen years of his life, and was consulted by Chancellors of the Exchequer of both parties. Others of his books were *The English Constitution* (1867) and *Physics and Politics* (1872), while after his death his miscellaneous writings were collected and classified as 'literary,' 'biographical,' and 'economic' studies. His friend, Richard Holt Hutton, said of him, 'He was one of the best conversers of his day . . . not only vivid, witty, and always apt to strike a light in conversation, but he helped in every real effort to get at the Truth, with a unique and rare power of lucid statement.' The latter part of this eulogy is true of Bagehot's books in general; the first part is certainly reflected in this present essay. It first appeared, as a book-review, in the *Fortnightly Review*, August 1869.]

PERHAPS I should be ashamed to confess it, but I own I opened the three large volumes of Mr. Robinson's memoirs with much anxiety. Their bulk, in the first place, appalled me; but that was by no means my greatest apprehension. I knew I had a hundred times heard Mr. Robinson say that he hoped something he would leave behind him would 'be published and be worth publishing.' I was aware too—for it was no deep secret—that for half a century or more he

had kept a diary, and that he had been preserving correspondence besides; and I was dubious what sort of things these would be, and what—to use Carlyle's words—any human editor could make of them. Even when Mr. Robinson used to talk so, I used to shudder; for the men who have tried to be memoir-writers and failed are as numerous, or nearly so, as those who have tried to be poets and failed. A specific talent is as necessary for the one as for the other. But as soon as I had read a little of the volumes, all these doubts passed away. I saw at once that Mr. Robinson had an excellent power of narrative-writing, and that the editor of his remains had made a most judicious use of excellent materials.

Perhaps more than anything it was the modesty of my old friend (I think I may call Mr. Robinson my old friend, for though he *thought* me a modern youth, I *did* know him twenty years)—perhaps, I say, it was his modesty which made me nervous about his memoirs more than anything else. I have so often heard him say (and say it with a vigour of emphasis which is rarer in our generation even than in his)—'Sir, I have no literary talent. I cannot write. I never *could* write anything, and I never *would* write anything,'—that being so taught, and so vehemently, I came to believe. And there was this to justify my creed. The notes Mr. Robinson used to scatter about him—and he was fond of writing rather elaborate ones—were not always very good. At least they were too long for the busy race of the present generation, and introduced Schiller and Goethe where they need not have come. But in these memoirs (especially in the Reminiscences and the Diary—for the moment he gets a letter the style is worse) the words flow with such an effectual simplicity, that even Southey, the great master of such prose, could hardly have written better. Possibly it was his real interest in his old stories which preserved Mr. Robinson; in his letters he was not so interested and he fell into words and amplifications; but in those ancient anecdotes, which for years were his life and being, the style, as it seems to me, could scarcely be mended even in a word. And though, undoubtedly, the book is much too long in the latter half, I do not blame Dr. Sadler, the editor and biographer, for it, or indeed blame any one. Mr. Robinson had led a very long and very varied life, and

some of his old friends had an interest in one part of his reminiscences and some in another. An unhappy editor entrusted with 'a deceased's papers,' cannot really and in practice omit much that any surviving friends much want put in. One man calls with a letter 'in which my dear and honoured friend gave me advice that was of such inestimable value, I hope, I cannot but think you will find room for it.' And another calls with memoranda of a dinner—a most 'superior occasion,' as they say in the north—at which, he says, 'there was conversation to which I never, or scarcely ever, heard anything equal. There were A. B. and C. D. and E. F., all masters, as you remember, of the purest conversational eloquence; surely I need not hesitate to believe that you will say something of that dinner.' And so an oppressed biographer has to serve up the crumbs of ancient feasts, though well knowing in his heart that they are crumbs, and though he feels, too, that the critics will attack him, and cruelly say it is his fault. But remembering this, and considering that Mr. Robinson wrote a diary beginning in 1811, going down to 1867, and occupying thirty-five closely written volumes, and that there were 'Reminiscences' and vast unsorted papers, I think Dr. Sadler has managed admirably well. His book is brief to what it might have been, and all his own part is written with delicacy, feeling, and knowledge. He quotes, too, from Wordsworth[1] by way of motto—

> A man he seems of cheerful yesterdays
> And confident to-morrows; with a face
> Not worldly-minded, for it bears too much
> Of Nature's impress,—gaiety and health,
> Freedom and hope;—but keen, withal, and shrewd.
> His gestures note,—and hark! his tones of voice
> Are all vivacious as his mien and looks.

It was a happy feeling of Mr. Robinson's character that selected these lines to stand at the beginning of his memoirs. And yet in one material respect—in this case perhaps the most material respect—Dr. Sadler has failed, and not in the least from any fault of his. Sydney Smith used to complain that 'no one had ever made him his trustee or executor:' being really a very sound and sensible man of business, he felt that it was a kind of imputation on him, and that he was

[1] [*The Excursion*, vii. 557–563.]

not appreciated. But some one more justly replied, 'But how could *you*, Sydney Smith, expect to be made an executor? Is there any one who wants their "remains" to be made fun of?' Now every trustee of biographical papers is exactly in this difficulty, that he cannot make fun. The melancholy friends who left the papers would not at all like it. And besides, there grows upon every such biographer an 'official' feeling—a confused sense of vague responsibilities—a wish not to impair the gravity of the occasion, or to offend any one by levity. But there are some men who cannot be justly described quite gravely; and Crabb Robinson is one of them. A certain grotesqueness was a part of him, and unless you liked it you lost the very best of him. He is called, and properly called, in these memoirs, Mr. Robinson; but no well judging person ever called him so in life. He was always called 'old Crabb,' and that is the only name which will ever bring up his curious image to me. He was, in the true old English sense of the word, a 'character;' one whom a very peculiar life, certainly, and perhaps also a rather peculiar nature to begin with, had formed and moulded into something so exceptional and singular that it did not seem to belong to ordinary life, and almost moved a smile when you saw it moving there. 'Aberrant forms,' I believe, naturalists call seals and such things in natural history: odd shapes that can only be explained by a long past, and which swim with a certain incongruity in their present *milieu*. Now 'old Crabb' was (to me at least) just like that. You watched with interest and pleasure his singular gestures, and his odd way of saying things, and muttered, as if to keep up the recollection, 'And *this* is the man who was the friend of Goethe, and is the friend of Wordsworth!' There was a certain animal oddity about 'old Crabb' which made it a kind of mental joke to couple him with such great names, and yet he was to his heart's core thoroughly coupled with them. If you leave out all his strange ways (I do not say Dr. Sadler has quite left them out, but to some extent he has been obliged, by place and decorum, to omit them), you lose the life of the man. You cut from the negro his skin, and from the leopard his spots. I well remember poor Clough, who was

milieu, Fr. = surroundings.

then fresh from Oxford, and was much puzzled by the corner of London to which he had drifted, looking at 'old Crabb' in a kind of terror for a whole breakfast time, and muttering in mute wonder, and almost to himself, as he came away, 'Not at all the regular patriarch.' And certainly no one could accuse Mr. Robinson of an insipid regularity either in face or nature.

Mr. Robinson was one of the original founders of University College, and was for many years both on its senate and council; and as he lived near the college he was fond of collecting at breakfast all the elder students especially those who had any sort of interest in literature. Probably he never appeared to so much advantage, or showed all the best of his nature, so well as in those parties. Like most very cheerful old people, he at heart preferred the company of the very young; and a set of young students, even after he was seventy, suited him better as society than a set of grave old men. Sometimes, indeed, he would have—I do not say some of his contemporaries, few of them even in 1847 were up to breakfast parties, but persons of fifty and sixty—those whom young students call old gentlemen. And it was amusing to watch the consternation of some of them at the surprising youth and levity of their host. They shud lered at the freedom with which we treated him. Middle-aged men, of feeble heads and half-made reputations, have a nice dislike to the sharp arguments and the unsparing jests of 'boys at college'; they cannot bear the rough society of those who, never having tried their own strength, have not yet acquired a fellow-feeling for weakness. Many such persons, I am sure, were half hurt with Mr. Robinson for not keeping those 'impertinent boys' more at a just distance; but Mr. Robinson liked fun and movement, and disliked the sort of dignity which shelters stupidity. There was little to gratify the unintellectual part of man at these breakfasts, and what there was was not easy to be got at. Your host, just as you were sitting down to breakfast, found he had forgotten to make the tea, then he could not find the keys, then he rang the bell to have them searched for; but long before the servant came he had gone off into 'Schiller-Goethe,' and could not the least remember what he had wanted. The more astute of his guests used to breakfast before they came, and then there

was much interest in seeing a steady literary man, who did not understand the region, in agonies at having to hear three stories before he got his tea, one again between his milk and his sugar, another between his butter and his toast, and additional zest in making a stealthy inquiry that was sure to intercept the coming delicacies by bringing on Schiller and Goethe.

It is said in these memoirs that Mr. Robinson's parents were very good-looking, and that when married they were called the handsome couple. But in his old age very little regular beauty adhered to him, if he ever had any. His face was pleasing from its animation, its kindness, and its shrewdness, but the nose was one of the most slovenly which nature had ever turned out, and the chin of excessive length, with portentous power of extension. But, perhaps, for the purpose of a social narrator (and in later years this was Mr. Robinson's position), this oddity of feature was a gift. It was said, and justly said, that Lord Brougham used to punctuate his sentences with his nose; just at the end of a long parenthesis he *could*, and did, turn up his nose, which served to note the change of subject as well, or better, than a printed mark. Mr. Robinson was not so skilful as this, but he had a very able use of the chin at a conversational crisis, and just at the point of a story pushed it out, and then very slowly drew it in again, so that you always knew when to laugh, and the oddity of the gesture helped you in laughing.

Mr. Robinson had known nearly every literary man worth knowing in England and Germany for fifty years and more. He had studied at Jena in the 'great time,' when Goethe, and Schiller, and Wieland were all at their zenith: he had lived with Charles Lamb and his set, and Rogers and his set, besides an infinite lot of little London people; he had taught Madame de Staël German philosophy in Germany, and helped her in business afterwards in England; he was the real friend of Wordsworth, and he had known Coleridge and Southey almost from their 'coming out' to their death. And he was not a mere literary man. He had been a *Times* correspondent in the days of Napoleon's early German battles, now more than 'seventy years since;' he had been off Corunna in Sir John Moore's time; and last, but almost first it should have been, he was an English barrister, who had for years a considerable business, and who was full of picturesque stories about old

judges. Such a varied life and experience belong to very few men, and his social nature—at once accessible and assailant—was just the one to take advantage of it. He seemed to be lucky all through; in childhood he remembered when John Gilpin came out; then he had seen—he could not hear—John Wesley preach; then he had heard Erskine, and criticized him intelligently, in some of the finest of the well-known 'State trials;' and so on during all his vigorous period.

I do not know that it would be possible to give a better idea of Mr. Robinson's best conversations than by quoting almost at random from the earlier parts of these memoirs:—

'At the Spring assizes of 1791, when I had nearly attained my sixteenth year, I had the delight of hearing Erskine. It was a high enjoyment, and I was able to profit by it. The subject of the trial was the validity of a will—Braham *v.* Rivett. Erskine came down specially retained for the plaintiff, and Mingay for the defendant. The trial lasted two days. The title of the heir being admitted, the proof of the will was gone into at once. I have a recollection of many of the circumstances after more than fifty-four years; but of nothing do I retain so perfect a recollection as of the figure and voice of Erskine. There was a charm in his voice, a fascination in his eye, and so completely had he won my affection that I am sure had the verdict been given against him I should have burst out crying. Of the facts and of the evidence I do not pretend to recollect anything beyond my impressions and sensations. My pocket-book records that Erskine was engaged two and a half hours in opening the case, and Mingay two hours and twenty minutes in his speech in defence. E.'s reply occupied three hours. The testatrix was an old lady in a state of imbecility. The evil spirit of the case was an attorney. Mingay was loud and violent, and gave Erskine an opportunity of turning into ridicule his imagery and illustrations. For instance, M. having compared R. to the Devil going into the Garden of Eden, E. drew a closer parallel than M. intended. Satan's[1] first sight of Eve was related in Milton's words—

> Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
> In every gesture dignity and love;

[1] [*For* Satan's *read* Adam's. *See* Par. Lost, viii. 488–9.]

and then a picture of idiotcy from Swift was contrasted. But the sentence that weighed on my spirits was a pathetic exclamation—"If, gentlemen, you should by your verdict annihilate an instrument so solemnly framed, *I should retire a troubled man from this court.*" And as he uttered the word *court*, he beat his breast and I had a difficulty in not crying out. When in bed the following night I awoke several times in a state of excitement approaching fever—the words "*troubled man from this court*" rang in my ears.

'A new trial was granted, and ultimately the will was set aside. I have said I profited by Erskine. I remarked his great artifice, if I may call it so; and in a small way I afterwards practised it. It lay in his frequent repetitions. He had one or two leading arguments and main facts on which he was constantly dwelling. But then he had marvellous skill in varying his phraseology, so that no one was sensible of tautology in the expressions. Like the doubling of a hare, he was perpetually coming to his old place. Other great advocates I have remarked were ambitious of a great variety of arguments.

'About the same time that I thus first heard the most perfect of forensic orators I was also present at an exhibition equally admirable, and which had a powerful effect upon my mind. It was, I believe, in October, 1790, and not long before his death, that I heard John Wesley in the great round Meeting-House at Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up, having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible. But his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind I never saw anything comparable to it in after life.'

And again:—

'It was at the Summer Circuit that Rolfe made his first appearance. He had been at the preceding Sessions. I have a pleasure in recollecting that I once foresaw that he would become a distinguished man. In my Diary I wrote, "Our new junior, Mr. Rolfe, made his appearance. His manners

are genteel; his conversation easy and sensible. He is a very acceptable companion, but I fear a dangerous rival." And my brother asking me who the new man was, I said, "I will venture to predict that you will live to see that young man attain a higher rank than any one you ever saw upon the circuit." It is true he is not higher than Leblanc, who was also a puisne judge, but Leblanc was never Solicitor-General; nor, probably, is Rolfe yet at the end of his career. One day, when some one remarked, "Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land," Rolfe said to me, "Were you ever employed to draw an indictment against a man for not loving his neighbour as himself?"

'Rolfe is, by universal repute, if not the very best, at least one of the best judges on the Bench. He is one of the few with whom I have kept up an acquaintance.'[1]

Of course, these stories came over and over again. It is the excellence of a reminiscent to have a few good stories, and his misfortune that people will remember what he says. In Mr. Robinson's case an unskilled person could often see the anecdote somewhere impending, and there was often much interest in trying whether you could ward it off or not. There was one great misfortune which had happened to his guests, though he used to tell it as one of the best things that had ever happened to himself. He had picked up a certain bust of Wieland by Schadow, which it appears had been lost, and in the finding of which Goethe, even Goethe, rejoiced. After a very long interval I still shudder to think how often I have heard that story; it was one which no skill or care could long avert, for the thing stood opposite our host's chair, and the sight of it was sure to recall him. Among the ungrateful students to whom he was so kind, the first question always asked of any one who had breakfasted at his house was, 'Did you undergo the *bust*?'

[1] 'Since writing the above, Baron Rolfe has verified my prediction more strikingly by being created a peer, by the title of Lord Cranworth, and appointed a Vice-Chancellor. Soon after his appointment, he called on me, and I dined with him. I related to Lady Cranworth the anecdote given above, of my conversation with my brother, with which she was evidently pleased. Lady Cranworth was the daughter of Mr. Carr, Solicitor to the Excise, whom I formerly used to visit, and ought soon to find some mention of in my journals. Lord Cranworth continues to enjoy universal respect.—H. C. R. 1851.'

A reader of these memoirs would naturally and justly think that the great interest of Mr. Robinson's conversation was the strength of his past memory; but quite as amusing or more was the present weakness. He never could remember names, and was very ingenious in his devices to elude the defect. There is a story in these memoirs:—

'I was engaged to dine with Mr. Wansey at Walthamstow. When I arrived there I was in the greatest distress, through having forgotten his name. And it was not till after half an hour's worry that I recollected he was a Unitarian, which would answer as well; for I instantly proceeded to Mr. Cogan's. Having been shown into a room, young Mr. Cogan came—"Your commands, sir?"—"Mr. Cogan, I have taken the liberty to call on you in order to know where I am to dine to-day." He smiled. I went on: "The truth is, I have accepted an invitation to dine with a gentleman, a recent acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten; but I am sure you can tell me, for he is a Unitarian, and the Unitarians are very few here."'

And at his breakfasts it was always the same; he was always in difficulty as to some person's name or other, and he had regular descriptions which recurred, like Homeric epithets, and which he expected you to apply to the individual. Thus poor Clough always appeared—'That admirable and accomplished man. You know whom I mean. The one who never says anything.' And of another living poet[1] he used to say: 'Probably the most able, and certainly the most consequential, of all the young persons I know. You know which it is. The one with whom I could never *presume* to be intimate. The one whose father I knew so many years.' And another particular friend of my own always occurred as —'That great friend of yours that has been in Germany—that most accomplished and interesting person—the most able and excellent young man. Sometimes I like him, and sometimes I *hate* him. You,' turning to me, 'know whom I mean, you villain!' And certainly I did know; for I had heard the same adjectives, and been referred to in the same manner, very many times.

Of course a main part of Mr. Robinson's conversation was

[1] [Easily identifiable as Matthew Arnold.]

on literary subjects; but of this, except when it related to persons whom he had known, or sonnets to 'the conception of which he was privy,' I do not think it would be just to speak very highly. He spoke sensibly and clearly—he could not on any subject speak otherwise; but the critical faculty is as special and as peculiar almost as the poetical; and Mr. Robinson in serious moments was quite aware of it, and he used to deny that he had one faculty more than the other. He used to read much of Wordsworth to me; but I doubt—though many of his friends will think I am a great heretic—I doubt if he read the best poems; and even those he did read (and he read very well) rather suffered from coming in the middle of a meal, and at a time when you wanted to laugh, and not to meditate. Wordsworth was a solitary man, and it is only in solitude that his best poems, or indeed any of his characteristic poems, can be truly felt or really apprehended. There are some at which I never look, even now, without thinking of the wonderful and dreary faces which Clough used to make while Mr. Robinson was reading them. To Clough certain of Wordsworth's poems were part of his inner being, and he suffered at hearing them obtruded at mealtimes, just as a High Churchman would suffer at hearing the collects of the Church. Indeed, these poems were among the collects of Clough's Church.

Still less do I believe that there is any special value in the expositions of German philosophy in these volumes, or that there was any in those which Mr. Robinson used to give on such matters in conversation. They are clear, no doubt, and accurate, but they are not the expositions of a born metaphysician. He speaks in these memoirs of his having a difficulty in concentrating his 'attention on works of speculation.' And such books as Kant can only be really mastered, can perhaps only be usefully studied, by those who have an unusual facility in concentrating their mind on impalpable abstractions, and an uncommon inclination to do so. Mr. Robinson had neither; and I think the critical philosophy had really very little effect on him, and had, during the busy years which had elapsed since he studied it, very nearly run off him. There was something very curious in the sudden way that anything mystical would stop in him. At the end of a Sunday breakfast, after inflicting on you much which

was transcendental in Wordsworth or Goethe, he would say, as we left him, with an air of relish, 'Now I am going to run down to Exeter Street to hear Madge. I shall not be in time for the prayers; but I do not so much care about that; what I do like is the sermon; it is so clear.' Mr. Madge was a Unitarian of the old school, with as little mystical and transcendental in his nature as any one who ever lived. There was a living piquancy in the friend of Goethe—the man who *would* explain to you his writings—being also the admirer of 'Madge'; it was like a proser, lengthily eulogizing Kant to you, and then saying, 'Ah! but I do love Condillac; he is so clear.'

But, on the other hand, I used to hold I was reading law at the time, and so had some interest in the matter—that Mr. Robinson much underrated his legal knowledge, and his practical power as a lawyer. What he used to say was, 'I never knew any law, sir, but I knew the practice. . . . I left the bar, sir, because I feared my incompetence might be discovered. I was a tolerable junior, but I was rising to be a leader, which I was unfit to be, and so I retired, not to disgrace myself by some fearful mistake.' In these memoirs he says that he retired when he had made the sum of money which he thought enough for a bachelor with a few wants and not a single expensive taste. The simplicity of his tastes is certain; very few Englishmen indeed could live with so little show or pretence. But the idea of the gross incompetence is absurd. No one who was so ever said so. There are, I am confident, plenty of substantial and well-satisfied men at the English bar who do not know nearly as much law as Mr. Robinson knew, and who have not a tithe of his natural sagacity, but who believe in themselves and in whom their clients believe. On the other hand, Mr. Robinson had many great qualifications for success at the bar. He was a really good speaker: when over seventy I have heard him make a speech that good speakers in their full vigour would be glad to make. He had a good deal of the actor in his nature, which is thought, and I fancy justly thought, to be necessary to the success of all great advocates, and perhaps of all great orators. He was well acquainted with the petty technicalities which intellectual men in middle life in general cannot learn, for he had passed some years in

an attorney's office. Above all, he was a very thinking man, and had an 'idea of business'—that inscrutable something which at once and altogether distinguishes the man who is safe in the affairs of life from those who are unsafe. I do not suppose he knew much black-letter law; but there are plenty of judges on the bench who, unless they are much belied, know very little either—perhaps none. And a man who can intelligently read Kant, like Mr. Robinson, need not fear the book-work of English law. A very little serious study would have taught him law enough to lead the Norfolk circuit. He really had a sound, moderate, money-making business, and only a little pains was wanted to give him more.

The real reason why he did not take the trouble, I fancy, was that, being a bachelor, he was a kind of amateur in life, and did not really care. He could not spend what he had on himself, and used to give away largely, though in private. And even more, as with most men who have not thoroughly worked when young, daily, regular industry was exceedingly trying to him. No man could be less idle; far from it, he was always doing something; but then he was doing what he chose. Sir Walter Scott, one of the best workers of his time, used always to say that 'he had no temptation to be idle, but the greatest temptation, when one thing was wanted of him, to go and do something else.' Perhaps the only persons who, not being forced by mere necessity, really conquer this temptation, are those who were early broken to the yoke, and are fixed to the furrow by habit. Mr. Robinson loitered in Germany, so he was not one of these.

I am not regretting this. It would be a base idolatry of practical life to require every man to succeed in it as far as he could, and to devote to it all his mind. The world certainly does not need it; it pays well, and it will never lack good servants. There will always be enough of sound, strong men to be working barristers and judges, let who will object to become so. But I own I think a man ought to be able to be a 'Philistine' if he chose; there is a sickly incompleteness about people too fine for the world, and too nice to work their way in it. And when a man like Mr. Robinson had a real sagacity for affairs, it is for those who respect his memory to see that his reputation does not suffer from his modesty, and that his habitual self-depreciations—which, indeed, ex-

tended to his powers of writing as well as to those of acting —are not taken to be exactly true.

In fact, Mr. Robinson was usefully occupied in University College business and University Hall business, and other such things. But there is no special need to write on them in connexion with his name, and it would need a good deal of writing to make them intelligible to those who do not know them now. And the greater part of his life was spent in society where his influence was always manly and vigorous. I do not mean that he was universally popular; it would be defacing his likeness to say so. 'I am a man,' he once told me, 'to whom a great number of persons entertain the very strongest objection.' Indeed he had some subjects on which he could hardly bear opposition. Twice he nearly quarrelled with me: once for writing in favour of Louis Napoleon, which, as he had caught in Germany a thorough antipathy to the first Napoleon, seemed to him quite wicked; and next for my urging that Hazlitt was a much greater writer than Charles Lamb—a harmless opinion which I still hold, but which Mr. Robinson met with this outburst: 'You, sir, you prefer the works of that scoundrel, that odious, that malignant writer, to the exquisite essays of that angelic creature!' I protested that there was no evidence that angels could write particularly well, but it was in vain, and it was some time before he forgave me. Some persons who casually encountered peculiarities like these, did not always understand them. In his last years, too, augmenting infirmities almost disqualified Mr. Robinson for general society, and quite disabled him from showing his old abilities in it. Indeed, I think that these memoirs will give almost a new idea of his power to many young men who had only seen him casually, and at times of feebleness. After ninety it is not easy to make new friends. And, in any case, this book will always have a great charm for those who knew Mr. Robinson well when they were themselves young, because it will keep alive to them the image of his buoyant sagacity, and his wise and careless kindness.

XIV

ALEXANDER SMITH

(1830–1867)

A LARK'S FLIGHT

[Alexander Smith, poet and essayist, was born at Kilmarnock on Dec. 31, 1830. The son of a lace-pattern designer, he himself followed this trade at first, but soon gave it up for literature. He secured work on a Glasgow newspaper, and also contributed poetry to two London periodicals. In 1853 he published a volume of poems, including *A Life Drama*. This had at first an astonishing vogue, which has not proved enduring. He followed it up with three other books of verse, *Sonnets on the* (Crimean) *War* (in conjunction with Sydney Dobell, 1855), *City Poems* (1857), the city being Glasgow, and *Edwin of Deira* (1861). In 1855 Prof. W. E. Aytoun published a pretended review of a forthcoming poem, 'Firmilian,' and later the supposed 'poem' itself. The review and the poem were a satire on Smith, Dobell, and the author of *Festus* (Philip James Bailey), for whom Aytoun invented the nickname, 'The Spasmodic School,' and Smith's fame has suffered ever since. It must be said, however, that Smith took the satire in good part, and that Aytoun subsequently proved friendly. The poet turned now to prose, and produced a book of essays, *Dreamthorp* (1863), as well as a book on the isle of Skye, and a novel. Alexander Smith died on Jan. 5, 1867, and a second volume of essays, *Last Leaves*, was published posthumously in 1868. Prof. Hugh Walker rates Smith very highly as an essayist and says that his supreme achievement is the passage describing the lark's flight in the essay printed below. 'I have compared it,' he says, 'to the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*: for I have found nothing else in literature comparable to these two passages.']

RIGHTLY or wrongly, during the last twenty or thirty years a strong feeling has grown up in the public mind against the principle, and a still stronger feeling against the practice, of capital punishments. Many people who will admit that the execution of the murderer may be, abstractly considered, just enough, sincerely doubt whether such execution be expedient, and are in their own minds perfectly certain that it cannot fail to demoralize the spectators. In consequence of this, execu-

tions have become rare; and it is quite clear that many scoundrels, well worthy of the noose, contrive to escape it. When, on the occasion of a wretch being turned off, the spectators are few, it is remarked by the newspapers that the mob is beginning to lose its proverbial cruelty, and to be stirred by humane pulses; when they are numerous, and especially when girls and women form a majority, the circumstance is noticed and deplored. It is plain enough that, if the newspaper considered such an exhibition beneficial, it would not lament over a few thousand eager witnesses: if the sermon be edifying, you cannot have too large a congregation; if you teach a moral lesson in a grand, impressive way, it is difficult to see how you can have too many pupils. Of course, neither the justice nor the expediency of capital punishments falls to be discussed here. This, however, may be said, that the popular feeling against them may not be so admirable a proof of enlightenment as many believe. It is true that the spectacle is painful, horrible; but in pain and horror there is often hidden a certain salutariness, and the repulsion of which we are conscious is as likely to arise from debilitation of public nerve, as from a higher reach of public feeling. To my own thinking, it is out of this pain and hatefulness that an execution becomes invested with an ideal grandeur. It is sheer horror to all concerned—sheriffs, halbertmen, chaplain, spectators, Jack Ketch, and culprit; but out of all this, and towering behind the vulgar and hideous accessories of the scaffold, gleams the majesty of implacable law. When every other fine morning a dozen cut-purses were hanged at Tyburn, and when such sights did not run very strongly against the popular current, the spectacle *was* vulgar, and could be of use only to the possible cut-purses congregated around the foot of the scaffold. Now, when the law has become so far merciful; when the punishment of death is reserved for the murderer; when he can be condemned only on the clearest evidence; when, as the days draw slowly on to doom, the frightful event impending over one stricken wretch throws its shadow over the heart of every man, woman, and child in the great city; and when the official persons whose duty it is to see the letter of the law carried out perform that duty at the expense of personal pain,—a public execution is not vulgar, it becomes positively sublime. It is dreadful of course; but its dread-

fulness melts into pure awfulness. The attention is taken off the criminal, and is lost in a sense of the grandeur of justice; and the spectator who beholds an execution, solely as it appears to the eye, without recognition of the idea which towers behind it, must be a very unspiritual and unimaginative spectator indeed.

It is taken for granted that the spectators of public executions — the artisans and country people who take up their stations over-night as close to the barriers as possible, and the wealthier classes who occupy hired windows and employ opera-glasses — are merely drawn together by a morbid relish for horrible sights. He is a bold man who will stand forward as the advocate of such persons — so completely is the popular mind made up as to their tastes and motives. It is not disputed that the large body of the mob, and of the occupants of windows, have been drawn together by an appetite for excitement; but it is quite possible that many come there from an impulse altogether different. Just consider the nature of the expected sight — a man in tolerable health probably, in possession of all his faculties, perfectly able to realize his position, conscious that for him this world and the next are so near that only a few seconds divide them — such a man stands in the seeing of several thousand eyes. He is so peculiarly circumstanced, so utterly lonely — hearing the tolling of his own death-bell, yet living, wearing the mourning clothes for his own funeral — that he holds the multitude together by a shuddering fascination. The sight is a peculiar one, you must admit, and every peculiarity has its attractions. Your volcano is more attractive than your ordinary mountain. Then consider the unappeasable curiosity as to death which haunts every human being, and how pathetic that curiosity is, in so far as it suggests our own ignorance and helplessness, and we see at once that people *may* flock to public executions for other purposes than the gratification of morbid tastes: that they would pluck if they could some little knowledge of what death is: that imaginatively they attempt to reach to it, to touch and handle it through an experience which is not their own. It is some obscure desire of this kind, a movement of curiosity not altogether ignoble, but in some degree pathetic; some rude attempt of the imagination to wrest from the death of the

criminal information as to the great secret in which each is profoundly interested, which draws around the scaffold people from the country harvest-fields, and from the streets and alleys of the town. Nothing interests men so much as death. Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale it. 'A greater crowd would come to see me hanged,' Cromwell is reported to have said when the populace came forth on a public occasion. The Lord Protector was right in a sense of which, perhaps, at the moment he was not aware. Death is greater than official position. When a man has to die, he may safely dispense with stars and ribbands. He is invested with a greater dignity than is held in the gift of kings. A greater crowd *would* have gathered to see Cromwell hanged, but the compliment would have been paid to death rather than to Cromwell. Never were the motions of Charles I so scrutinized as when he stood for a few moments on the scaffold that winter morning at Whitehall. King Louis was no great orator usually, but when on January 2, 1793, he attempted to speak a few words in the Place de la Révolution, it was found necessary to drown his voice in a harsh roll of soldiers' drums. Not without a meaning do people come forth to see men die. We stand in the valley, they on the hill-top, and on their faces strikes the light of the other world, and from some sign or signal of theirs we attempt to discover or extract a hint of what it is all like.

To be publicly put to death, for whatever reason, must ever be a serious matter. It is always bitter, but there are degrees in its bitterness. It is easy to die like Stephen with an opened heaven above you, crowded with angel faces. It is easy to die like Balmerino with a chivalrous sigh for the White Rose, and an audible 'God bless King James.' Such men die for a cause in which they glory, and are supported thereby; they are conducted to the portals of the next world by the angels, Faith, Pity, Admiration. But it is not easy to die in expiation of a crime like murder, which engirdles you with trembling and horror even in the loneliest places, which cuts you off from the sympathies of your kind, which reduces the universe to two elements—a sense of personal identity, and a memory of guilt. In so dying, there must be inconceivable bitterness; a man can have no other support than what strength he may pluck from despair, or from the iron with

which nature may have originally braced heart and nerve. Yet, taken as a whole, criminals on the scaffold comport themselves creditably. They look Death in the face when he wears his cruellest aspect, and if they flinch somewhat, they can at least bear to look. I believe that, for the criminal, execution within the prison walls, with no witnesses save some half-dozen official persons, would be infinitely more terrible than execution in the presence of a curious, glaring mob. The daylight and the publicity are alien elements, which wean the man a little from himself. He steadies his dizzy brain on the crowd beneath and around him. He has his last part to play, and his manhood rallies to play it well. Nay, so subtly is vanity intertwined with our motives, the noblest and the most ignoble, that I can fancy a poor wretch with the noose dangling at his ear, and with barely five minutes to live, soothed somewhat with the idea that his firmness and composure will earn him the approbation, perhaps the pity, of the spectators. He would take with him, if he could, the good opinion of his fellows. This composure of criminals puzzles one. Have they looked at death so long and closely, that familiarity has robbed it of terror? Has life treated them so harshly, that they are tolerably well pleased to be quit of it on any terms? Or is the whole thing mere blind stupor and delirium, in which thought is paralysed, and the man an automaton? Speculation is useless. The fact remains that criminals for the most part die well and bravely. It is said that the championship of England was to be decided at some little distance from London on the morning of the day on which Thurtell was executed, and that, when he came out on the scaffold, he inquired privily of the executioner if the result had yet become known. Jack Ketch was not aware, and Thurtell expressed his regret that the ceremony in which he was chief actor should take place so inconveniently early in the day. Think of a poor Thurtell forced to take his long journey an hour, perhaps, before the arrival of intelligence so important!

More than twenty years ago I saw two men executed, and the impression then made remains fresh to this day. For this there were many reasons. The deed for which the men suffered created an immense sensation. They were hanged on the spot where the murder was committed—on a rising

ground, some four miles north-east of the city; and as an attempt at rescue was apprehended, there was a considerable display of military force on the occasion. And when, in the dead silence of thousands, the criminals stood beneath the halters, an incident occurred, quite natural and slight in itself, but when taken in connexion with the business then proceeding, so unutterably tragic, so overwhelming in its pathetic suggestion of contrast, that the feeling of it has never departed, and never will. At the time, too, I speak of, I was very young; the world was like a die newly cut, whose every impression is fresh and vivid.

While the railway which connects two northern capitals was being built, two brothers from Ireland, named Doolan, were engaged upon it in the capacity of navvies. For some fault or negligence, one of the brothers was dismissed by the overseer—a Mr. Green—of that particular portion of the line on which they were employed. The dismissed brother went off in search of work, and the brother who remained Dennis was the Christian name of him—brooded over this supposed wrong, and in his dull, twilighted brain revolved projects of vengeance. He did not absolutely mean to take Green's life, but he meant to thrash him to within an inch of it. Dennis, anxious to thrash Green, but not quite seeing his way to it, opened his mind one afternoon, when work was over, to his friends—fellow-Irishmen and navvies—Messrs. Redding and Hickie. These took up Doolan's wrong as their own, and that evening, by the dull light of a bothy fire, they held a rude parliament, discussing ways and means of revenge. It was arranged that Green should be thrashed—the amount of thrashing left an open question, to be decided, unhappily, when the blood was up and the cinder of rage blown into a flame. Hickie's spirit was found not to be a mounting one, and it was arranged that the active partners in the game should be Doolan and Redding. Doolan, as the aggrieved party, was to strike the first blow, and Redding, as the aggrieved party's particular friend, asked and obtained permission to strike the second. The main conspirators, with a fine regard for the feelings of the weaker Hickie, allowed him to provide the weapons of assault—so that by some slight filament of aid he might connect himself with the good cause. The unambitious Hickie at once applied himself

to his duty. He went out, and in due time returned with two sufficient iron pokers. The weapons were examined, approved of, and carefully laid aside. Doolan, Redding, and Hickie ate their suppers, and retired to their several couches to sleep, peacefully enough no doubt. About the same time, too, Green, the English overseer, threw down his weary limbs, and entered on his last sleep little dreaming what the morning had in store for him.

Uprose the sun, and uprose Doolan and Redding, and dressed, and thrust each his sufficient iron poker up the sleeve of his blouse, and went forth. They took up their station on a temporary wooden bridge which spanned the line, and waited there. Across the bridge, as was expected, did Green ultimately come He gave them good morning; asked, 'why they were loafing about?' received no very pertinent answer, perhaps did not care to receive one; whistled the unsuspecting man' thrust his hands into his breeches pockets, turned his back on them, and leaned over the railing of the bridge, inspecting the progress of the works beneath. The temptation was really too great. What could Irish flesh and blood do? In a moment out from the sleeve of Doolan's blouse came the hidden poker, and the first blow was struck, bringing Green to the ground. The friendly Redding, who had bargained for the second, and who, naturally enough, was in fear of being cut out altogether, jumped on the prostrate man, and fulfilled his share of the bargain with a will. It was Redding it was supposed who sped the unhappy Green. They overdid their work - like young authors - giving many more blows than were sufficient, and then fled. The works, of course, were that morning in consternation. Redding and Hickie were, if I remember rightly, apprehended in the course of the day. Doolan got off, leaving no trace of his whereabouts.

These particulars were all learned subsequently. The first intimation which we schoolboys received of anything unusual having occurred, was the sight of a detachment of soldiers with fixed bayonets, trousers rolled up over muddy boots, marching past the front of the Cathedral hurriedly home to barracks. This was a circumstance somewhat unusual. We had, of course, frequently seen a couple of soldiers trudging along with sloped muskets, and that cruel glitter of steel

which no one of us could look upon quite unmoved; but in such cases, the deserter walking between them in his shirt-sleeves, his pinioned hands covered from public gaze by the loose folds of his great-coat, explained everything. But from the hurried march of these mud-splashed men, nothing could be gathered, and we were left to speculate upon its meaning. Gradually, however, before the evening fell, the rumour of a murder having been committed spread through the city, and with that I instinctively connected the apparition of the file of muddy soldiers. Next day, murder was in every mouth. My schoolfellows talked of it to the detriment of their lessons; it flavoured the tobacco of the fustian artisan as he smoked to work after breakfast; it walked on 'Change amongst the merchants. It was known that two of the persons implicated had been captured, but that the other, and guiltiest, was still at large; and in a few days out on every piece of boarding and blank wall came the 'Hue and cry' describing Doolan like a photograph, to the colour and cut of his whiskers, and offering £100 as reward for his apprehension, or for such information as would lead to his apprehension—like a silent, implacable bloodhound following close on the track of the murderer. This terrible broadsheet I read, was certain that *he* had read it also, and fancy ran riot over the ghastly fact. For him no hope, no rest, no peace, no touch of hands gentler than the hangman's; all the world is after him like a roaring prairie of flame! I thought of Doolan, weary, foot-sore, heart-sore, entering some quiet village of an evening: and to quench his thirst, going up to the public well, around which the gossips are talking, and hearing that they were talking of *him*; and seeing from the well itself, IT glaring upon him, as if conscious of his presence, with a hundred eyes of vengeance. I thought of him asleep in out-houses, and starting up in wild dreams of the policeman's hand upon his shoulder fifty times ere morning. He had committed the crime of Cain, and the weird of Cain he had to endure. But yesterday innocent, how unimportant; to-day bloody-handed, the whole world is talking of him, and everything he touches, the very bed he sleeps on, steals from him his secret, and is eager to betray!

Doolan was finally captured in Liverpool, and in the Spring Assize the three men were brought to trial. The jury found them guilty, but recommended Hickie to mercy on account of

some supposed weakness of mind on his part. Sentence was, of course, pronounced with the usual solemnities. They were set apart to die; and when snug abed o' nights—for imagination is most mightily moved by contrast—I crept into their desolate hearts, and tasted a misery which was not my own. As already said, Hickie was recommended to mercy, and the recommendation was ultimately in the proper quarter given effect to.

The evening before the execution has arrived, and the reader has now to imagine the early May sunset falling pleasantly on the outskirts of the city. The houses looking out upon an open square or space, have little plots of garden-ground in their fronts, in which mahogany-coloured wall-flowers and mealy auriculas are growing. The side of this square, along which the City Road stretches northward, is occupied by a blind asylum, a brick building, the bricks painted red and picked out with white, after the tidy English fashion, and a high white cemetery wall, over which peers the spire of the Gothic Cathedral: and beyond that, on the other side of the ravine, rising out of a populous city of the dead, a stone John Knox looks down on the Cathedral, a Bible clutched in his outstretched and menacing hand. On all this the May sunset is striking, dressing everything in its warm, pleasant pink, lingering in the tufts of foliage that nestle around the asylum, and dipping the building itself one half in light, one half in tender shade. This open space or square is an excellent place for the games of us boys, and 'Prisoners' Base' is being carried out with as much earnestness as the business of life now by those of us who are left. The girls, too, have their games of a quiet kind, which we hold in huge scorn and contempt. In two files, linked arm-in-arm, they alternately dance towards each other and then retire, singing the while, in their clear, girlish treble, verses, the meaning and pertinence of which time has worn away—

The Campsie Duke 's a-riding, a-riding, a-riding,

being the oft-recurring 'owercome' or refrain. All this is going on in the pleasant sunset light, when by the apparition of certain wagons coming up from the city, piled high with blocks and beams, and guarded by a dozen dragoons, on whose brazen helmets the sunset danced, every game is dismembered, and we are in a moment a mere mixed mob of boys and girls,

flocking around to stare and wonder. Just at this place something went wrong with one of the wagon wheels, and the procession came to a stop. A crowd collected, and we heard some of the grown-up people say that the scaffold was being carried out for the ceremony of to-morrow. Then, more intensely than ever, one realized the condition of the doomed men. *We* were at our happy games in the sunset, *they* were entering on their last night on earth. After hammering and delay the wheel was put to rights, the sunset died out, wagons and dragoons got into motion and disappeared; and all the night through, whether awake or asleep, I saw the torches burning, and heard the hammers clinking, and witnessed as clearly as if I had been an onlooker, the horrid structure rising, till it stood complete, with a huge cross-beam from which two empty halters hung, in the early morning light.

Next morning the whole city was in commotion. Whether the authorities were apprehensive that a rescue would be attempted, or were anxious merely to strike terror into the hundreds of wild Irishry engaged on the railway, I cannot say; in any case, there was a display of military force quite unusual. The carriage in which the criminals (Catholics both) and their attendant priests were seated, was guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets; indeed, the whole regiment then lying in the city was massed in front and behind, with a cold, frightful glitter of steel. Besides the foot soldiers, there were dragoons, and two pieces of cannon; a whole little army, in fact. With a slenderer force battles have been won which have made a mark in history. What did the prisoners think of their strange importance, and of the tramp and hurly-burly all around? When the procession moved out of the city, it seemed to draw with it almost the entire population; and when once the country roads were reached, the crowd spread over the fields on either side, ruthlessly treading down the tender wheat braird. I got a glimpse of the doomed, blanched faces which had haunted me so long, at the turn of the road, where, for the first time, the black cross-beam with its empty halters first became visible to them. Both turned and regarded it with a long, steady look; that done, they again bent their heads attentively to the words of the clergyman. I suppose in that long, eager, fascinated gaze they practically *died*—that for them death had no additional bitterness,

When the mound was reached on which the scaffold stood, there was immense confusion. Around it a wide space was kept clear by the military; the cannon were placed in position; out flashed the swords of the dragoons; beneath and around on every side was the crowd. Between two brass helmets I could see the scaffold clearly enough, and when in a little while the men, bareheaded and with their attendants, appeared upon it, the surging crowd became stiffened with fear and awe. And now it was that the incident so simple, so natural, so much in the ordinary course of things, and yet so frightful in its tragic suggestions, took place. Be it remembered that the season was early May, that the day was fine, that the wheat-fields were clothing themselves in the green of the young crop, and that around the scaffold, standing on a sunny mound, a wide space was kept clear. When the men appeared beneath the beam, each under his proper halter, there was a dead silence every one was gazing too intently to whisper to his neighbour even. Just then, out of the grassy space at the foot of the scaffold, in the dead silence audible to all, a lark rose from the side of its nest, and went singing upward in its happy flight. O heaven! how did that song translate itself into dying ears? Did it bring in one wild burning moment father, and mother, and poor Irish cabin, and prayers said at bed-time, and the smell of turf fires, and innocent sweethearting, and rising and setting suns? Did it but the dragoon's horse has become restive, and his brass helmet bobs up and down and blots everything; and there is a sharp sound, and I feel the great crowd heave and swing, and hear it torn by a sharp shiver of pity, and the men whom I saw so near but a moment ago are at immeasurable distance, and have solved the great enigma and the lark has not yet finished his flight: you can see and hear him yonder in the fringe of a white May cloud.

This ghastly lark's flight, when the circumstances are taken into consideration, is, I am inclined to think, more terrible than anything of the same kind which I have encountered in books. The artistic uses of contrast as background and accompaniment, are well known to nature and the poets. Joy is continually worked on sorrow, sorrow on joy: riot is framed in peace, peace in riot. Lear and the Fool always go together. Trafalgar is being fought while Napoleon is

sitting on horseback watching the Austrian army laying down its arms at Ulm. In Hood's poem, it is when looking on the released schoolboys at their games that Eugene Aram remembers he is a murderer. And these two poor Irish labourers could not die without hearing a lark singing in their ears. It is Nature's fashion. She never quite goes along with us. She is sombre at weddings, sunny at funerals, and she frowns on ninety-nine out of a hundred picnics.

There is a stronger element of terror in this incident of the lark than in any story of a similar kind I can remember.

A good story is told of an Irish gentleman—still known in London society—who inherited the family estates and the family banshee. The estates he lost—no uncommon circumstance in the history of Irish gentlemen,—but the banshee, who expected no favours, stuck to him in his adversity, and crossed the channel with him, making herself known only on occasions of death-beds and sharp family misfortunes. This gentleman had an ear, and, seated one night at the opera, the *keen*—heard once or twice before on memorable occasions—thrilled through the din of the orchestra and the passion of the singers. He hurried home of course, found his immediate family well, but on the morrow a telegram arrived with the announcement of a brother's death. Surely of all superstitions that is the most imposing which makes the other world interested in the events which befall our mortal lot. For the mere pomp and pride of it, your ghost is worth a dozen retainers, and it is entirely inexpensive. The peculiarity and supernatural worth of this story lies in the idea of the old wail piercing through the sweet entanglement of stringed instruments and extinguishing Grisi. Modern circumstances and luxury crack, as it were, and reveal for a moment misty and aboriginal time big with portent. There is a ridiculous Scotch story in which one gruesome touch lives. A clergyman's female servant was seated in the kitchen one Saturday night reading the Scriptures, when she was somewhat startled by hearing at the door the tap and voice of her sweetheart. Not expecting him, and the hour being somewhat late, she opened it in astonishment, and was still more astonished to hear him on entering abuse Scripture-reading. He behaved altogether in an unprecedented manner, and in many ways

terrified the poor girl. Ultimately he knelt before her, and laid his head on her lap. You can fancy her consternation when glancing down she discovered that, *instead of hair, the head was covered with the moss of the moorland*. By a sacred name she adjured him to tell who he was, and in a moment the figure was gone. It was the Fiend, of course diminished sadly since Milton saw him bridge chaos—fallen from worlds to kitchen-wenches. But just think how in the story, in half-pity, in half-terror, the popular feeling of homelessness, of being outcast, of being unsheltered as waste and desert places, has incarnated itself in that strange covering of the head. It is a true supernatural touch. One other story I have heard in the misty Hebrides: A Skye gentleman was riding along an empty moorland road. All at once, as if it had sprung from the ground, the empty road was crowded by a funeral procession. Instinctively he drew his horse to a side to let it pass, which it did without sound of voice, without tread of foot. Then he knew it was an apparition. Staring on it, he knew every person who either bore the corpse or who walked behind as mourners. There were the neighbouring proprietors at whose houses he dined, there were the members of his own kirk-session, there were the men to whom he was wont to give good-morning when he met them on the road or at market. Unable to discover his own image in the throng, he was inwardly marvelling whose funeral it *could* be, when the troop of spectres vanished, and the road was empty as before. Then, remembering that the coffin had an invisible occupant, he cried out, 'It is my funeral!' and, with all his strength taken out of him, rode home to die. All these stories have their own touches of terror; yet I am inclined to think that my lark rising from the scaffold foot, and singing to two such auditors, is more terrible than any one of them.

XV

LORD AVEBURY

(1834–1913)

THE BLESSING OF FRIENDS

[Lord Avebury, better known as Sir John Lubbock, son of the third baronet, and member of a well-known banking family, was born in London, April 30, 1834. He was educated at Eton, and entered his father's bank at the age of 15; he became a partner at 22, and at the time of his death was the head of the firm. He succeeded to the baronetcy in 1865, and was Member of Parliament for Maidstone from 1870 to 1880 and afterwards for London University. In 1900 he was raised to the Peerage. His business and political life left him leisure for science and literature. He was a neighbour and friend of Charles Darwin, and many of his books such as those on ants, bees, and wasps, on English wild-flowers, on insects, are on subjects similar to those Darwin treated. Others of his books are didactic in tone and intention: such are *The Pleasures of Life*, *The Use of Life*, *The Beauties of Nature*. It is from the first of these that the present essay is taken: the substance of it was first delivered as a lecture at the Working Men's College, London. In England his name is always associated with the Bank Holidays Act (1871) by which four new statute holidays were added to the two previously in existence. A wider fame attaches to his List of the Hundred Best Books. He died at Margate on May 28, 1913.]

They seem to take away the sun from the world who withdraw friendship from life; for we have received nothing better from the Immortal Gods, nothing more delightful.—CICERO.[1]

MOST of those who have written in praise of books have thought they could say nothing more conclusive than to compare them to friends.

All men, said Socrates,[2] have their different objects of ambition—horses, dogs, money, honour, as the case may be; but for his own part he would rather have a good friend than all these put together. And again, men know 'the number of

[1] [For the sources of this and other quotations see end of essay, p. 134.]

their other possessions, although they might be very numerous, but of their friends, though but few, they were not only ignorant of the number, but even when they attempted to reckon it to such as asked them, they set aside again some that they had previously counted among their friends; so little did they allow their friends to occupy their thoughts. Yet in comparison with what possession, of all others, would not a good friend appear far more valuable?'

'As to the value of other things,' says Cicero,[3] 'most men differ; concerning friendship all have the same opinion. . . . What can be more foolish than, when men are possessed of great influence, by their wealth, power, and resources, to procure other things which are bought by money—horses, slaves, rich apparel, costly vases and not to procure friends, the most valuable and fairest furniture of life?' And yet, he continues, 'every man can tell how many goats or sheep he possesses, but not how many friends.' In the choice, moreover, of a dog or of a horse, we exercise the greatest care: we inquire into its pedigree, its training and character, and yet we too often leave the selection of our friends, which is of infinitely greater importance—by whom our whole life will be more or less influenced either for good or evil—almost to chance.

It is no doubt true, as the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*[4] says, that all men are bores except when we want them. And Sir Thomas Browne[5] quaintly observes that 'unthinking heads, who have not learnt to be alone, are in a prison to themselves, if they be not also with others; whereas, on the contrary, they whose thoughts are in a fair and hurry within, are sometimes fain to retire into company, to be out of the crowd of themselves.' Still I do not quite understand Emerson's[6] idea that 'men descend to meet.' In another place, indeed, he qualifies the statement, and says, 'Almost all people descend to meet.' Even so I should venture to question it, especially considering the context. 'All association,' he adds, 'must be a compromise, and, what is worse, the very flower and aroma of the flower of each of the beautiful natures disappears as they approach each other.' What a sad thought! Is it really so? Need it be so? And if it were, would friends be any real advantage? I should have thought that the influence of friends was exactly the reverse: that the flower of a beautiful nature

would expand, and the colours grow brighter, when stimulated by the warmth and sunshine of friendship.

It has been said that it is wise always to treat a friend, remembering that he may become an enemy, and an enemy, remembering that he may become a friend; and whatever may be thought of the first part of the adage, there is certainly much wisdom in the latter. Many people seem to take more pains and more pleasure in making enemies, than in making friends. Plutarch,[7] indeed, quotes with approbation the advice of Pythagoras 'not to shake hands with too many,' but as long as friends are well chosen, it is true rather that

> He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare,
> And he who has one enemy will meet him everywhere,[8]

and unfortunately, while there are few great friends there is no little enemy.

I guard myself, however, by saying again - As long as they are well chosen. One is thrown in life with a great many people who, though not actively bad, though they may not wilfully lead us astray, yet take no pains with themselves, neglect their own minds, and direct the conversation to petty puerilities or mere gossip; who do not seem to realize that conversation may by a little effort be made instructive and delightful, without being in any way pedantic; or, on the other hand, may be allowed to drift into a mere morass of muddy thought and weedy words. There are few from whom we may not learn something, if only they will trouble themselves to teach us. Nay, even if they teach us nothing, they may help us by the stimulus of intelligent questions, or the warmth of sympathy. But if they do neither, then indeed their companionship, if companionship it can be called, is mere waste of time, and of such we may well say, 'I do desire that we be better strangers.'[9]

Much certainly of the happiness and purity of our lives depends on our making a wise choice of our companions and friends. If badly chosen they will inevitably drag us down; if well they will raise us up. Yet many people seem to trust in this matter to the chapter of accident. It is well and right, indeed, to be courteous and considerate to every one with whom we are brought into contact, but to choose them as real friends is another matter. Some seem to make a man a

friend, or try to do so, because he lives near, because he is in the same business, travels on the same line of railway, or for some other trivial reason. There cannot be a greater mistake. These are only, in the words of Plutarch,[10] 'the idols and images of friendship.'

But though one cannot be friends with every one, it is better to be friendly than unfriendly, and those who have ever really loved any one will have some tenderness for all. There is indeed some good in most men. 'I have heard much,' says Mr. Nasmyth[11] in his charming autobiography, 'about the ingratitude and selfishness of the world. It may have been my good fortune, but I have never experienced either of these unfeeling conditions' Such also has been my own experience

> I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning.[12]

I cannot, then, agree with Emerson[13] when he says that 'we walk alone in the world. Friends such as we desire are dreams and fables But a sublime hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere, in other regions of the universal power, souls are now acting, enduring, and daring, which can love us, and which we can love.'

No doubt, much as our worthy friends add to the happiness and value of life, we must in the main depend on ourselves, and every one is his own best friend or worst enemy.

Sad, indeed, is Bacon's[11] assertion that 'there is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals, which was wont to be magnified. That that is, is between superior and inferior, whose fortunes may comprehend the one to the other.' But this can hardly be taken as his deliberate opinion, for he elsewhere says, 'but we may go further, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness.' Not only, he adds, does friendship introduce 'daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts;' it 'maketh a fair day in the affections from storm and tempests:' in consultation with a friend a man 'tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly;

he seeth how they look when they are turned into words: finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation.' . . . 'But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth, for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.'

With this last assertion I cannot altogether concur. Surely even strangers may be most interesting! and many will agree with Dr. Johnson[15] when, describing a pleasant evening, he summed it up—'Sir, we had a good talk.'

Epictetus[16] gives excellent advice when he dissuades from conversation on the very subjects most commonly chosen, and advises that it should be on 'none of the common subjects—not about gladiators, nor horse-races, nor about athletes, nor about eating or drinking, which are the usual subjects; and especially not about men, as blaming them;' but when he adds, 'or praising them,' the injunction seems to me of doubtful value. Marcus Aurelius[17] more wisely advises that 'when thou wishest to delight thyself, think of the virtues of those who live with thee; for instance, the activity of one, and the modesty of another, and the liberality of a third, and some other good quality of a fourth. For nothing delights so much as the examples of the virtues, when they are exhibited in the morals of those who live with us and present themselves in abundance, as far as is possible. Wherefore we must keep them before us.' Yet how often we know merely the sight of those we call our friends, or the sound of their voices, but nothing whatever of their mind or soul.

We must, moreover, be as careful to keep friends as to make them. If every one knew what one said of the other, Pascal assures us that 'there would not be four friends in the world.' This I hope and think is too strong, but at any rate try to be one of the four. And when you have made a friend, keep him. 'Hast thou a friend,' says an Eastern proverb, 'visit him often, for thorns and brushwood obstruct the road which no one treads.' The affections should not be mere 'tents of a night.'

Still less does friendship confer any privilege to make ourselves disagreeable. Some people never seem to appreciate their friends till they have lost them. Anaxagoras described the Mausoleum as the ghost of wealth turned into stone.

But 'he who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust.'[18]

Death, indeed, cannot sever friendship. 'Friends,' says Cicero,[19] 'though absent, are still present; though in poverty, they are rich; though weak, yet in the enjoyment of health; and, what is still more difficult to assert, though dead they are alive.' This seems a paradox, yet is there not much truth in his explanation? 'To me, indeed, . . . Scipio still lives, and will always live; for I love the virtue of that man, and that worth is not yet extinguished. . . . Assuredly, of all things that either fortune or nature has bestowed on me, I have none which I can compare with the friendship of Scipio.'

If, then, we choose our friends for what they are, not for what they have, and if we deserve so great a blessing, then they will be always with us, preserved in absence, and even after death, in the amber of memory.

[[1]; [3]; [19] Cicero, *De Amicitia* ('Of Friendship'), sections xiii; xv, xvii; vii, xxvii;—tr. C. R. Edmonds.

[2] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II. iv, tr. J. S. Watson.

[4] Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894), *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1857), 'World's Classics' edition, p. 5.

[5] *Christian Morals*, III. ix.

[6], [13], Emerson, Essay on Friendship.

[7], [10], Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'On Abundance of Friends,' § 6; 'Of Brotherly Love,' § 3.

[8] 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib, tr. R. W. Emerson.

[9] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, iii. 2 275.

[11] James Nasmyth (1808–1890), engineer; inventor of the steam-hammer.

[12] Wordsworth, *Simon Lee*.

[14] Bacon, Essay on Friendship.

[15] See the note on p. 176.

[16] Epictetus, *The Encheiridion*, or *Manual*, section 33, tr. G. Long.

[17] Marcus Aurelius, *Thoughts*, vi. 47, tr. G. Long.

[18] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. I, end of Chapter I.]

XVI

BRET HARTE

(1836–1902)

A BOYS' DOG

['Bret Harte'—properly Francis Brett Hart—story-writer and poet, was born in Albany, New York, on August 25, 1836. He left school at thirteen and entered a merchant's counting-house, but followed his family to San Francisco in 1854, where he found various employments, as school-teacher, as clerk, and in a newspaper office. California supplied him with the setting and the subjects of his first and most famous stories and poems. *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, *Mliss*, and *Miggles* : stories Dickensian in sentiment. His comic and dialect poems are among the best of their kind : such are the 'Truthful James' poems (including 'The Heathen Chinee') among the comic ones, while the dialect poems have sometimes a very real pathos or poignancy ; other poems in ordinary English, such as 'Dickens in Camp' and 'Relieving Guard' are not the less true poetry that their author's name is generally associated with humour rather than with high imagination. In 1871 Bret Harte left San Francisco for the Eastern States. Later he held the post of American Consul first at Crefeld in Prussia (1878–1880), and afterwards in Glasgow (1880–1885). From 1885 till his death (on May 5, 1902) he lived in London, where he was much seen in society. The present essay, from his early volume, *Bohemian Papers* (1867), illustrates the elastic quality of the term 'essay' ; it might more strictly be called a 'sketch.']

As I lift my eyes from the paper, I observe a dog lying on the steps of the opposite house. His attitude might induce passers-by and casual observers to believe him to belong to the people who live there, and to accord to him a certain standing and position. I have seen visitors pat him, under the impression that they were doing an act of courtesy to his master, he lending himself to the fraud by hypocritical contortions of the body. But his attitude is one of deceit and simulation. He has neither master nor habitation. He is a very Pariah and outcast ; in brief, 'A Boys' Dog.'

There is a degree of hopeless and irreclaimable vagabondage expressed in this epithet, which may not be generally understood. Only those who are familiar with the roving nature and predatory instincts of boys in large cities will appreciate its strength. It is the lowest step in the social scale to which a respectable canine can descend. A blind man's dog, or the companion of a knife-grinder, is comparatively elevated. He at least owes allegiance to but one master. But the Boys' Dog is the thrall of an entire juvenile community, obedient to the beck and call of the smallest imp in the neighbourhood, attached to and serving not the individual boy so much as the boy element and principle. In their active sports, in small thefts, raids into back-yards, window-breaking, and other minor juvenile recreations, he is a full participant. In this way he is the reflection of the wickedness of many masters, without possessing the virtues or peculiarities of any particular one.

If leading a 'dog's life' be considered a peculiar phase of human misery, the life of a Boys' Dog is still more infelicitous. He is associated in all schemes of wrong-doing, and unless he be a dog of experience, is always the scapegoat. He never shares the booty of his associates. In absence of legitimate amusement, he is considered fair game for his companions; and I have seen him reduced to the ignominy of having a tin kettle tied to his tail. His ears and tail have generally been docked to suit the caprice of the unholy band of which he is a member; and if he has any pluck, he is invariably pitted against larger dogs in mortal combat. He is poorly fed and hourly abused; the reputation of his associates debars him from outside sympathies; and once a Boys' Dog, he cannot change his condition. He is not unfrequently sold into slavery by his inhuman companions. I remember once to have been accosted on my own doorsteps by a couple of precocious youths, who offered to sell me a dog which they were then leading by a rope. The price was extremely moderate, being, if I remember rightly, but fifty cents. Imagining the unfortunate animal to have fallen into their wicked hands, and anxious to reclaim him from the degradation of becoming a Boys' Dog, I was about to conclude the bargain, when I saw a look of intelligence pass between the dog and his two masters. I promptly stopped all negotiations, and drove the youthful

swindlers and their four-footed accomplice from my presence. The whole thing was perfectly plain. The dog was an old, experienced, and hardened Boys' Dog, and I was perfectly satisfied that he would run away and rejoin his old companions at the first opportunity. This I afterwards learned he did, on the occasion of a kind-hearted but unsophisticated neighbour buying him; and a few days ago I saw him exposed for sale by those two Arcadians in another neighbourhood, having been bought and paid for half a dozen times in this.

But, it will be asked, if the life of a Boys' Dog is so unhappy, why do they enter upon such an unenviable situation, and why do they not dissolve the partnership when it becomes unpleasant? I will confess that I have been often puzzled by this question. For some time I could not make up my mind whether their unholy alliance was the result of the influence of the dog on the boy, or vice versa, and which was the weakest and most impressible nature. I am satisfied now that at first the dog is undoubtedly influenced by the boy, and, as it were, is led, while yet a puppy, from the paths of canine rectitude by artful and designing boys. As he grows older and more experienced in the ways of his Bohemian friends, he becomes a willing decoy, and takes delight in leading boyish innocence astray, in beguiling children to play truant, and thus revenges his own degradation on the boy nature generally. It is in this relation, and in regard to certain unhallowed practices I have detected him in, that I deem it proper to expose to parents and guardians the danger to which their offspring are exposed by the Boys' Dog.

The Boys' Dog lays his plans artfully. He begins to influence the youthful mind by suggestions of unrestrained freedom and frolic which he offers in his own person. He will lie in wait at the garden gate for a very small boy, and endeavour to lure him outside its sacred precincts by gambolling and jumping a little beyond the enclosure. He will set off on an imaginary chase and run around the block in a perfectly frantic manner, and then return, breathless, to his former position, with a look as of one who would say, 'There! you see how perfectly easy it's done!' Should the unhappy infant find it difficult to resist the effect which this glimpse of the area of freedom produces, and step beyond the gate, from that moment he is utterly demoralized. The Boys'

Dog owns him, body and soul. Straightway he is led by the deceitful brute into the unhallowed circle of his Bohemian masters. Sometimes the unfortunate boy, if he be very small, turns up eventually at the station-house as a lost child. Whenever I meet a stray boy in the street looking utterly bewildered and astonished, I generally find a Boys' Dog lurking on the corner. When I read the advertisements of lost children, I always add mentally to the description, 'was last seen in company with a Boys' Dog.' Nor is his influence wholly confined to small boys. I have seen him waiting patiently for larger boys on the way to school, and by artful and sophistical practices inducing them to play truant. I have seen him lying at the schoolhouse door, with the intention of enticing the children on their way home to distant and remote localities. He has led many an unsuspecting boy to the wharves and quays by assuming the character of a water-dog, which he was not, and again has induced others to go with him on a gunning excursion by pretending to be a sporting dog, in which quality he was knowingly deficient. Unscrupulous, hypocritical, and deceitful, he has won many children's hearts by answering to any name they might call him, attaching himself to their persons until they got into trouble, and deserting them at the very moment they most needed his assistance. I have seen him rob small schoolboys of their dinners by pretending to knock them down by accident; and have seen larger boys in turn dispossess him of his ill-gotten booty for their own private gratification. From being a tool he has grown to be an accomplice; through much imposition, he has learned to impose on others; in his best character he is simply a vagabond's vagabond.

I could find it in my heart to pity him as he lies there through the long summer afternoon, enjoying brief intervals of tranquillity and rest, which he surreptitiously snatches from a stranger's door-step. For a shrill whistle is heard in the streets, the boys are coming home from school, and he is startled from his dreams by a deftly thrown potato, which hits him on the head, and awakens him to the stern reality that he is now and for ever—a Boys' Dog.

XVII

ANDREW LANG

(1844–1912)

LONGFELLOW

[Andrew Lang, poet and man of letters, and one of the most diverse writers in English, was born at Selkirk, on March 31, 1844. He was educated at Edinburgh, at St. Andrew's University, and at Balliol College, Oxford. His most ambitious poetical attempt, *Helen of Troy*, was published in 1882; his other poems are, for the most part, light verse, except when they deal with Joan of Arc, to whom he had a life-long devotion, expressed in poetry, fiction, and biography. He was a serious anthropologist and writer on folk-lore (the few lines towards the end of the present essay, following the quotation from *Hiawatha*, reflect his very real interest in such subjects), an historian of Scotland, a student of historical mysteries, a translator of Homer, and at the same time an untiring journalist and miscellaneous writer. His collections of fairy tales for children, under the titles of *The Blue Fairy Book*, *The Green Fairy Book*, &c., a dozen or more altogether, are well known. The present essay is taken from his *Letters on Literature* (1889); and its epistolary form further illustrates the elasticity of the essay. Other similar books of essays on literature are *Letters to Dead Authors*, *Lost Leaders*, *Books and Bookmen*, and *Old Friends*. He died at Banchory, Deeside, on July 20, 1912.]

To Walter Mainwaring, Esq., Lothian College, Oxford.

MY DEAR MAINWARING,—You are very good to ask me to come up and listen to a discussion, by the College Browning Society, of the minor characters in 'Sordello;' but I think it would suit me better, if you didn't mind, to come up when the May races are on. I am not deeply concerned about the minor characters in 'Sordello,' and have long reconciled myself to the conviction that I must pass through this pilgrimage without hearing Sordello's story told in an intelligible manner. Your letter, however, set me a-voyaging about my bookshelves, taking up a volume of poetry here and there.

What an interesting tract might be written by any one who could remember, and honestly describe, the impressions that the same books have made on him at different ages! There is Longfellow, for example. I have not read much in him for twenty years. I take him up to-day, and what a flood of memories his music brings with it! To me it is like a sad autumn wind blowing over the woods, blowing over the empty fields, bringing the scents of October, the song of a belated bird, and here and there a red leaf from the tree. There is that autumnal sense of things fair and far behind, in his poetry, or, if it is not there, his poetry stirs it in our forsaken lodges of the past. Yes, it comes to one out of one's boyhood; it breathes of a world very vaguely realized—a world of imitative sentiments and forebodings of hours to come. Perhaps Longfellow first woke me to that later sense of what poetry means, which comes with early manhood.

Before, one had been content, I am still content, with Scott in his battle pieces; with the ballads of the Border. Longfellow had a touch of reflection you do not find, of course, in battle poems, in a boy's favourites, such as 'Of Nelson and the North,' or 'Ye Mariners of England.' His moral reflections may seem obvious now, and trite; they were neither when one was fifteen. To read the 'Voices of the Night,' in particular—those early pieces—is to be back at school again, on a Sunday, reading all alone on a summer's day, high in some tree, with a wide prospect of gardens and fields.

There is that mysterious note in the tone and measure which one first found in Longfellow, which has since reached our ears more richly and fully in Keats, in Coleridge, in Tennyson. Take, for example,

> The welcome, the thrice prayed for, the most fair,
> The best-beloved Night!

Is not that version of Euripides exquisite—does it not seem exquisite still, though this is not the quality you expect chiefly from Longfellow, though you rather look to him for honest human matter than for an indefinable beauty of manner?

I believe it is the manner, after all, of the 'Psalm of Life' that has made it so strangely popular. People tell us, excellent people, that it is 'as good as a sermon,' that they

value it for this reason, that its lesson has strengthened the hearts of men in our difficult life. They say so, and they think so: but the poem is not nearly as good as a sermon; it is not even coherent. But it really has an original cadence of its own, with its double rhymes; and the pleasure of this cadence has combined, with a belief that they are being edified, to make readers out of number consider the 'Psalm of Life' a masterpiece. You—my learned prosodist and student of Browning and Shelley—will agree with me that it is *not* a masterpiece. But I doubt if you have enough of the experience brought by years to tolerate the opposite opinion, as your elders can.

How many other poems of Longfellow's there are that remind us of youth, and of those kind, vanished faces which were around us when we read 'The Reaper and the Flowers'! I read again, and, as the poet says,

> Then the forms of the departed
> Enter at the open door;
> The beloved, the true-hearted,
> Come to visit me once more.

Compare that simple strain, you lover of Théophile Gautier, with Théo's own 'Château de Souvenir' in 'Emaux et Camées,' and confess the truth, which poet brings the break into the reader's voice? It is not the dainty, accomplished Frenchman, the jeweller in words; it is the simple speaker of our English tongue who stirs you as a ballad moves you. I find one comes back to Longfellow, and to one's old self of the old years. I don't know a poem 'of the affections,' as Sir Barnes Newcome would have called it, that I like better than Thackeray's 'Cane-bottomed Chair.' Well, 'The Fire of Driftwood' and this other of Longfellow's with its absolute lack of pretence, its artful avoidance of art, is not less tender and true.

> And she sits and gazes at me
> With those deep and tender eyes,
> Like the stars, so still and saintlike,
> Looking downward from the skies.

It is from the skies that they look down, those eyes which once read the 'Voices of the Night' from the same book with us, how long ago! So long ago that one was half-frightened by the legend of the 'Beleaguered City.' I know the

ballad brought the scene to me so vividly that I expected, any frosty night, to see how

> The white pavilions rose and fell
> On the alarmed air;

and it was down the valley of Ettrick, beneath the dark 'Three Brethren's Cairn,' that I half-hoped to watch when 'the troubled army fled'—fled with battered banners of mist drifting through the pines, down to the Tweed and the sea. The 'Skeleton in Armour' comes out once more as terrific as ever, and the 'Wreck of the Hesperus' touches one in the old, simple way after so many, many days of verse-reading and even verse-writing.

In brief, Longfellow's qualities are so mixed with what the reader brings, with so many kindliest associations of memory, that one cannot easily criticize him in cold blood. Even in spite of this friendliness and affection which Longfellow wins, I can see, of course, that he does moralize too much. The first part of his lyrics is always the best; the part where he is dealing directly with his subject. Then comes the 'practical application' as preachers say, and I feel now that it is sometimes uncalled for, disenchanting, and even manufactured. Look at his 'Endymion.' It is the earlier verses that win you:

> And silver white the river gleams
> As if Diana, in her dreams,
> Had dropt her silver bow
> Upon the meadows low.

That is as good as Ronsard, and very like him in manner and matter. But the moral and consolatory *application* is too long—too much dwelt on:

> Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,
> Love gives itself, but is not bought.

Excellent; but there are four weak, moralizing stanzas at the close, and not only does the poet 'moralize his song,' but the moral is feeble, and fantastic, and untrue. There are, though he denies it, myriads of persons now of whom it cannot be said that

> Some heart, though unknown,
> Responds unto his own.

If it were true, the reflection could only console a schoolgirl.

A poem like 'My Lost Youth' is needed to remind one of what the author really was, 'simple, sensuous, passionate.' What a lovely verse this is, a verse somehow inspired by the breath of Longfellow's favourite Finnish 'Kalevala,' 'a verse of a Lapland song,' like a wind over pines and salt coasts:

> I remember the black wharves and the slips,
> And the sea-tides tossing free,
> And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
> And the beauty and the mystery of the ships,
> And the magic of the sea.

Thus Longfellow, though not a very great magician and master of language—not a Keats by any means—has often, by sheer force of plain sincerity, struck exactly the right note, and matched his thought with music that haunts us and will not be forgotten:

> Ye open the eastern windows,
> That look towards the sun,
> Where thoughts are singing swallows
> And the brooks of morning run.

There is a picture of Sandro Botticelli's, the Virgin seated with the Child by a hedge of roses, in a faint blue air, as of dawn in Paradise. This poem of Longfellow's, 'The Children's Hour,' seems, like Botticelli's painting, to open a door into the paradise of children, where their angels do ever behold that which is hidden from men—what no man hath seen at any time.

Longfellow is exactly the antithesis of Poe, who, with all his science of verse and ghostly skill, has no humanity, or puts none of it into his lines. One is the poet of Life, and everyday life; the other is the poet of Death, and of *bizarre* shapes of death, from which Heaven deliver us!

Neither of them shows any sign of being particularly American, though Longfellow, in 'Evangeline' and 'Hiawatha,' and the 'New England Tragedies,' sought his topics in the history and traditions of the New World.

To me 'Hiawatha' seems by far the best of his longer efforts; it is quite full of sympathy with men and women, nature, beasts, birds, weather, and wind and snow. Everything lives with a human breath, as everything should live

in a poem concerned with these wild folk, to whom all the world, and all in it, is personal as themselves. Of course there are lapses of style in so long a piece. It jars on us in the lay of the mystic Chibiabos, the boy Persephone of the Indian Eleusinia, to be told that

> the gentle Chibiabos
> *Sang in tones of deep emotion!*

'Tones of deep emotion' may pass in a novel, but not in this epic of the wild wood and the wild kindreds, an epic in all ways a worthy record of those dim, mournful races which have left no story of their own, only here and there a ruined wigwam beneath the forest leaves.

A poet's life is no affair, perhaps, of ours. Who does not wish he knew as little of Burns's as of Shakespeare's? Of Longfellow's there is nothing to know but good, and his poetry testifies to it—his poetry, the voice of the kindest and gentlest heart that poet ever bore. I think there are not many things in poets' lives more touching than his silence, in verse, as to his own chief sorrow. A stranger intermeddles not with it, and he kept secret his brief lay on that insuperable and incommunicable regret. Much would have been lost had all poets been as reticent, yet one likes him better for it than if he had given us a new 'Vita Nuova.'

What an immense long way I have wandered from 'Sordello,' my dear Mainwaring, but when a man turns to his books, his thoughts, like those of a boy, 'are long, long thoughts.' I have not written on Longfellow's sonnets, for even you, impeccable sonneteer, admit that you admire them as much as I do.

XVIII

RICHARD JEFFERIES

(1848–1887)

THE JULY GRASS

[Richard Jefferies, naturalist and essayist, was born near Swindon on Nov. 6, 1848. As a boy he was restless and unsettled, so much so that he ran away to France with the idea of walking to Moscow, and then altered his direction towards America. His remarkable traits attracted local attention, and he was given work on a newspaper. He planned and wrote novels, but the first two or three published were failures. Success came in 1877 with his *Gamekeeper at Home*, and this was the first of a series of books on outdoor and animal life. *Wild Life in a Southern County* (1879), *Round about a Great Estate* (1880), *The Life of the Fields* (1884), *The Open Air* (1885): these titles sufficiently explain themselves. The present essay is taken from the posthumous collection of his last essays, *Field and Hedgerow* (1889). His books *Bevis* (1882) and *The Story of my Heart* (1883) are idealized versions of his own boyhood and youth, written in prose of great beauty. Illness, and consequent poverty, stoically endured, make the record of the last six or seven years of his life painful reading. He died of consumption at Goring in Sussex, on Aug. 14, 1887. An obituary notice in *The Athenaeum* called him a modern White of Selborne, a prose Wordsworth.]

A JULY fly went sideways over the long grass. His wings made a burr about him like a net, beating so fast they wrapped him round with a cloud. Every now and then, as he flew over the trees of grass, a taller one than common stopped him, and there he clung, and then the eye had time to see the scarlet spots—the loveliest colour—on his wings. The wind swung the bennet and loosened his hold, and away he went again over the grasses, and not one jot did he care if they were *Poa* or *Festuca*, or *Bromus* or *Hordeum*, or any other name. Names were nothing to him; all he had to do was to whirl his scarlet spots about in the brilliant sun, rest when he liked, and go on

again. I wonder whether it is a joy to have bright scarlet spots, and to be clad in the purple and gold of life; is the colour felt by the creature that wears it? The rose, restful of a dewy morn before the sunbeams have topped the garden wall, must feel a joy in its own fragrance, and know the exquisite hue of its stained petals. The rose sleeps in its beauty.

The fly whirls his scarlet-spotted wings about and splashes himself with sunlight, like the children on the sands. He thinks not of the grass and sun; he does not heed them at all—and that is why he is so happy—any more than the barefoot children ask why the sea is there, or why it does not quite dry up when it ebbs. He is unconscious; he lives without thinking about living; and if the sunshine were a hundred hours long, still it would not be long enough. No, never enough of sun and sliding shadows that come like a hand over the table to lovingly reach our shoulder, never enough of the grass that smells sweet as a flower, not if we could live years and years equal in number to the tides that have ebbed and flowed counting backwards four years to every day and night, backward still till we found out which came first, the night or the day. The scarlet-dotted fly knows nothing of the names of the grasses that grow here where the sward nears the sea, and thinking of him I have decided not to wilfully seek to learn any more of their names either. My big grass book I have left at home, and the dust is settling on the gold of the binding. I have picked a handful this morning of which I know nothing. I will sit here on the turf and the scarlet-dotted flies shall pass over me, as if I too were but a grass. I will not think, I will be unconscious, I will live.

Listen! that was the low sound of a summer wavelet striking the uncovered rock over there beneath in the green sea. All things that are beautiful are found by chance, like everything that is good. Here by me is a praying-rug, just wide enough to kneel on, of the richest gold inwoven with crimson. All the Sultans of the East never had such beauty as that to kneel on. It is, indeed, too beautiful to kneel on, for the life in these golden flowers must not be broken down even for that purpose. They must not be defaced, not a stem bent; it is more reverent not to kneel on them, for this carpet prays itself. I will sit by it and let it pray for me. It is so common, the bird's-foot lotus, it grows everywhere; yet if I

purposely searched for days I should not have found a plot like this, so rich, so golden, so glowing with sunshine. You might pass it by in one stride, yet it is worthy to be thought of for a week and remembered for a year. Slender grasses, branched round about with slenderer boughs, each tipped with pollen and rising in tiers cone-shaped—too delicate to grow tall—cluster at the base of the mound. They dare not grow tall or the wind would snap them. A great grass, stout and thick, rises three feet by the hedge, with a head another foot nearly, very green and strong and bold, lifting itself right up to you: you must say, 'What a fine grass!' Grasses whose awns succeed each other alternately; grasses whose tops seem flattened; others drooping over the shorter blades beneath; some that you can only find by parting the heavier growth around them; hundreds and hundreds, thousands and thousands. The kingly poppies on the dry summit of the mound take no heed of these, the populace, their subjects so numerous they cannot be numbered. A barren race they are, the proud poppies, lords of the July field, taking no deep root, but raising up a brilliant blazon of scarlet heraldry out of nothing. They are useless, they are bitter, they are allied to sleep and poison and everlasting night; yet they are forgiven because they are not commonplace. Nothing, no abundance of them, can ever make the poppies commonplace. There is genius in them, the genius of colour, and they are saved. Even when they take the room of the corn we must admire them. The mighty multitude of nations, the millions and millions of the grass stretching away in intertangled ranks, through pasture and mead from shore to shore, have no kinship with these their lords. The ruler is always a foreigner. From England to China the native born is no king; the poppies are the Normans of the field. One of these on the mound is very beautiful, a width of petal, a clear silkiness of colour three shades higher than the rest—it is almost dark with scarlet. I wish I could do something more than gaze at all this scarlet and gold and crimson and green, something more than see it, not exactly to drink it or inhale it, but in some way to make it part of me that I might live it.

The July grasses must be looked for in corners and out-of-the-way places, and not in the broad acres—the scythe has taken them there. By the wayside on the banks of the lane,

near the gateway—look, too, in uninteresting places behind incomplete buildings on the mounds cast up from abandoned foundations where speculation has been and gone. There weeds that would not have found resting-place elsewhere grow unchecked, and uncommon species and unusually large growths appear. Like everything else that is looked for, they are found under unlikely conditions. At the back of ponds, just inside the enclosure of woods, angles of cornfields, old quarries, that is where to find grasses, or by the sea in the brackish marsh. Some of the finest of them grow by the mere roadside; you may look for others up the lanes in the deep ruts, look too inside the hollow trees by the stream. In a morning you may easily garner together a great sheaf of this harvest. Cut the larger stems aslant, like the reeds imitated deep in old green grass. You must consider as you gather them the height and slenderness of the stems, the droop and degree of curve, the shape and colour of the panicle, the dusting of the pollen, the motion and sway in the wind. The sheaf you may take home with you, but the wind that was among it stays without.

XIX

EDMUND GOSSE

(1849-)

TENNYSON—AND AFTER [1]

[Mr. Edmund Gosse, poet, essayist, biographer, and critic, was born in London, Sept. 21, 1849. He is the son of the late Philip Henry Gosse, the zoologist. He has told the story of his early years in his book *Father and Son* (1907), a work of poignant interest, which has been crowned by the French Academy. He was an Assistant Librarian at the British Museum, 1867–75; a translator to the Board of Trade, 1875–1904, Clark Lecturer in English Literature at Cambridge, 1884–1890, and Librarian to the House of Lords, 1904–1914. Apart from his numerous studies in English literature, the long list of his writings shows him to be a specialist in the Scandinavian languages and in modern French literature, and a connoisseur of all modern literature. He has written the biography of Donne, and more recently of Swinburne, and shorter lives of Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, Ibsen, and Coventry Patmore. His friendship with Stevenson is reflected in Stevenson's essay 'Talk and Talkers,'—see p. 185 of the present book. The present essay is taken from his *Questions at Issue* (1893). Other books of essays are *Critical Kit-kats* (1896), *French Profiles* (1905), and *Portraits and Studies* (1912)]

As we filed slowly out of the Abbey on the afternoon of Wednesday, the 12th of October, 1892, there must have occurred to others, I think, as to myself, a whimsical and half-terrifying sense of the symbolic contrast between what we had left and what we emerged upon. Inside, the grey and vitreous atmosphere, the reverberations of music moaning somewhere out of sight, the bones and monuments of the noble dead, reverence, antiquity, beauty, rest. Outside, in the raw air, a tribe of hawkers urging upon the edges of a dense and inquisitive crowd a large sheet of pictures of the pursuit of a flea by a 'lady,' and more insidious salesmen doing a brisk trade in what they falsely pretended to be 'Tennyson's last poem.'

[1] [*From* QUESTIONS AT ISSUE. London Heinemann.]

Next day we read in our newspapers affecting accounts of the emotion displayed by the vast crowds outside the Abbey—horny hands dashing away the tear, seamstresses holding the 'little green volumes' to their faces to hide their agitation. Happy for those who could see these things with their fairy telescopes out of the garrets of Fleet Street. I, alas!—though I sought assiduously—could mark nothing of the kind. Entering the Abbey, conducted by courteous policemen through unparalleled masses of the curious, we distinguished patience, good behaviour, cheerful and untiring inquisitiveness, a certain obvious gratitude for an incomprehensible spectacle provided by the authorities, but nothing else. And leaving the Abbey, as I say, the impression was one almost sinister in its abrupt transition. Poetry, authority, the grace and dignity of life, seemed to have been left behind us for ever in that twilight where Tennyson was sleeping with Chaucer and with Dryden.

In recording this impression I desire nothing so little as to appear censorious. Even the external part of the funeral at Westminster seemed, as was said of the similar scene[1] which was enacted there nearly two hundred years ago, 'a well-conducted and uncommon public ceremony, where the philosopher can find nothing to condemn, nor the satirist to ridicule.' But the contrast between the outside and the inside of the Abbey, a contrast which may possibly have been merely whimsical in itself, served for a parable of the condition of poetry in England as the burial of Tennyson has left it. If it be only the outworn body of this glorious man which we have relinquished to the safeguard of the Minster, gathered to his peers in the fullness of time, we have no serious ground for apprehension, nor, after the first painful moment, even for sorrow. His harvest is ripe, and we hold it in our granaries. The noble physical presence which has been the revered companion of three generations has, indeed, sunk at length:

> Yet would we not disturb him from his tomb,
> Thus sleeping in his Abbey's friendly shade,
> And the rough waves of life for ever laid.[2]

[1] [The funeral of Dryden, May 13, 1700. The quotation is from Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Dryden*.]

[2] [Matthew Arnold, *Westminster Abbey*, adapted.]

But what if this vast and sounding funeral should prove to have really been the entombment of English poetry? What if it should be the prestige of verse that we left behind us in the Abbey? That is a question which has issues far more serious than the death of any one man, no matter how majestic that man may be.

Poetry is not a democratic art. We are constantly being told by the flexible scribes who live to flatter the multitude that the truest poetry is that which speaks to the million, that moves the great heart of the masses. In his private consciousness no one knows better than the lettered man who writes such sentences that they are not true. Since the pastoral days in which poets made great verses for a little clan, it has never been true that poetry of the noblest kind was really appreciated by the masses. If we take the bulk of what are called educated people, but a very small proportion are genuinely fond of reading. Sift this minority, and but a minute residue of it will be found to be sincerely devoted to beautiful poetry. The genuine lovers of verse are so few that if they could be made the subject of a statistical report, we should probably be astounded at the smallness of their number. From the purely democratic point of view it is certain that they form a negligible quantity. They would produce no general effect at all if they were not surrounded by a very much larger number of persons who, without taste for poetry themselves, are yet traditionally impressed with its value, and treat it with conventional respect, buying it a little, frequently conversing about it, pressing to gaze at its famous professors, and competing for places beside the tombs of its prophets. The respect for poetry felt by these persons, although in itself unmeaning, is extremely valuable in its results. It supports the enthusiasm of the few who know and feel for themselves, and it radiates far and wide into the outer masses, whose darkness would otherwise be unreached by the very glimmer of these things.

There is no question, however, that the existence in prominent public honour of an art in its essence so aristocratic as poetry—that is to say, so dependent on the suffrages of a few thousand persons who happen to possess, in greater or less degree, certain peculiar qualities of mind and ear—is, at the present day, anomalous, and therefore perilous.

All this beautiful pinnacled structure of the glory of verse, this splendid position of poetry at the summit of the civil ornaments of the Empire, is built of carven ice, and needs nothing but that the hot popular breath should be turned upon it to sink into so much water. It is kept standing there flashing and sparkling before our eyes, by a succession of happy accidents. To speak rudely, it is kept there by an effort of bluff on the part of a small influential class.

In reflecting on these facts, I have found myself depressed and terrified at an ebullition of popularity which seems to have struck almost everybody else with extreme satisfaction. It has been very natural that the stupendous honour apparently done to Tennyson, not merely by the few who always valued him, but by the many who might be supposed to stand outside his influence, has been welcomed with delight and enthusiasm. But what is so sinister a circumstance is the excessive character of this exhibition. I think of the funeral of Wordsworth at Grasmere, only forty-two years ago, with a score of persons gathering quietly under the low wall that fenced them from the brawling Rotha; and I turn to the spectacle of the 12th, the vast black crowd in the street, the ten thousand persons refused admission to the Abbey, the whole enormous popular manifestation. What does it mean? Is Tennyson, great as he is, a thousand times greater than Wordsworth? Has poetry, in forty years, risen at this ratio in the public estimation? The democracy, I fear, doth protest too much, and there is danger in this hollow reverence.

The danger takes this form. It may at any moment come to be held that the poet, were he the greatest that ever lived, was greater than poetry; the artist more interesting than his art. This was a peril unknown in ancient times. The plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries were scarcely more closely identified with the men who wrote them than Gothic cathedrals were with their architects. Cowley was the first English poet about whom much personal interest was felt outside the poetic class. Dryden is far more evident to us than the Elizabethans were, yet phantasmal by the side of Pope. Since the age of Anne an interest in the poet. as distinguished from his poetry, has steadily increased; the fashion for Byron, the posthumous curiosity in Shelley and

Keats, are examples of the rapid growth of this individualization in the present century. But since the death of Wordsworth it has taken colossal proportions, without, so far as can be observed, any parallel quickening of the taste for poetry itself. The result is that a very interesting or picturesque figure, if identified with poetry, may attract an amount of attention and admiration which is spurious as regards the poetry, and of no real significance. Tennyson had grown to be by far the most mysterious, august, and singular figure in English society. He represented poetry, and the world now expects its poets to be as picturesque, as aged, and as individual as he was, or else it will pay poetry no attention. I fear, to be brief, that the personal, as distinguished from the purely literary, distinction of Tennyson may strike, for the time being, a serious blow at the vitality of poetry in this country.

Circumstances have combined, in a very curious way, to produce this result. If a supernatural power could be conceived as planning a scenic effect, it could hardly have arranged it in a manner more telling, or more calculated to excite the popular imagination, than has been the case in the quick succession of the death of Matthew Arnold, of Robert Browning, and of Tennyson.

> Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?
> Thy shaft flew thrice; and thrice our peace was slain.[1]

A great poet was followed by a greater, and he by the greatest of the century, and all within five years. So died, but not with this crescent effect, Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Raleigh; so Vanbrugh, Congreve, Gay, Steele, and Defoe; so Byron, Shelley, and Keats; so Scott, Coleridge, and Lamb. But in none of these cases was the field left so exposed as it now is in popular estimation. The deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron were really momentous to an infinitely greater degree than those of Arnold, Browning, and Tennyson, because the former were still in the prime of life, while the latter had done their work; but the general public was not aware of this, and, as is well known, Shelley and Keats passed away without exciting a ripple of popular curiosity.

The tone of criticism since the death of Tennyson has been very much what might, under the circumstances, have been

[1] [Edward Young (1683–1765), *Night Thoughts* (1742), ll. 210–11, adapted.]

expected. Their efforts to overwhelm his coffin with lilies and roses have seemed paltry to the critics, unless they could succeed, at the same time, in laying waste all the smaller gardens of his neighbours. But when we come to think calmly on this matter, it will be seen that the offering up of the live poets as a burnt sacrifice to the memory of their dead master is absurd and grotesque. We have boasted all these years that we possessed the greatest of the world's poets since Victor Hugo. We did well to boast. But he is taken from us at a great age, and we complain at once, with bitter cries—because we have no poet left so venerable or so perfect in ripeness of the long-drawn years of craftsmanship—that poetry is dead amongst us, and that all the other excellent artists in verse are worthless scribblers. This is natural, perhaps, but it is scarcely generous and not a little ridiculous. It is, moreover, exactly what the critics said in 1850, when Arnold, Browning, and Tennyson had already published a great deal of their most admirable work.

The ingratitude of the hour towards the surviving poets of England pays but a poor compliment to the memory of that great man whose fame it professes to honour. I suppose that there has scarcely been a writer of interesting verse who has come into anything like prominence within the life-time of Tennyson who has not received from him some letter of praise—some message of benevolent indulgence. More than fifty years ago he wrote, in glowing terms, to congratulate Mr. Bailey on his *Festus*; it is only yesterday that we were hearing of his letters to Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. William Watson. Tennyson did not affect to be a critic—no man, indeed, can ever have lived who less *affected* to be anything—but he loved good verses, and he knew them when he saw them, and welcomed them indulgently. No one can find it more distasteful to him to have it asserted that Tennyson was, and will be, 'the last of the English poets' than would Tennyson himself.

It was not my good fortune to see him many times, and only twice, at an interval of about twelve years, did I have the privilege of hearing him talk at length and ease. On each of those occasions, however, it was noticeable with what warmth and confidence he spoke of the future of English

poetry, with what interest he evidently followed its progress, and how cordially he appreciated what various younger men were doing. In particular, I hope it is not indiscreet to refer to the tone in which he spoke to me on each of these occasions of Mr. Swinburne, whose critical conscience had, it must not be forgotten, led him to refer with no slight severity to several of the elder poet's writings. In 1877 Mr. Swinburne's strictures were still recent, and might not unreasonably have been painfully recollected. Yet Tennyson spoke of him almost as Dryden did two hundred years ago to Congreve:

> And this I prophesy—thou shalt be seen
> (Though with some short parenthesis between)
> High on the throne of wit, and, seated there,
> Nor mine (that's little), but thy laurel wear.

It would never have occurred to this great and wise man that his own death could be supposed to mark the final burning up and turning to ashes of the prophetic bays.

These are considerations, however—to return to my original parable—for the few within the Abbey. They are of no force in guiding opinion among the non-poetical masses outside. These, dangerously moved for the nonce to observe the existence of poetry, may make a great many painful and undesirable reflections before the subject quits their memory. There is always a peril in a popular movement that is not founded on genuine feeling, and the excitement about Tennyson's death has been far too universal to be sincere. It is even now not too early for us to perceive, if we will face it calmly, that elements of a much commoner and emptier nature than reverence for a man of genius have entered into the stir about the Laureate's burial. The multitude so stirred into an excited curiosity about a great poet will presently crave, of course, a little more excitement still over another poet, and this stimulant will not be forthcoming. We have not, and shall not have for a generation at least, such another sacrifice to offer to the monster. It will be in the retreat of the wave, in the sense of popular disappointment at the non-recurrence of such intellectual shocks as the deaths of Browning and Tennyson have supplied, that the right of poetry to take precedence among the arts of writing will for the first time come to be seriously questioned.

Our critics will then, too late, begin to regret their sacrifice to the Muses; but if they try to redeem their position by praising this living poet or that, the public will only too glibly remind them of their own dictum that 'poetry died with Tennyson.'

In old days the reading public swept the literature of its fathers into the dust-bin, and read Horace while its immediate contemporaries were preparing work in prose and verse to suit the taste of the moment. But nowadays each great writer who passes out of physical life preserves his intellectual existence intact and becomes a lasting rival to his surviving successor. The young novelist has no living competitor so dangerous to him as Dickens and Thackeray are, who are nevertheless divided from him by time almost as far as Milton was from Pope. It is nearly seventy years since the earliest of Macaulay's *Essays* appeared, and the least reference to one of them would now be recognized by 'every schoolboy.' Less than seventy years after the death of Bacon his *Essays* were so completely forgotten that when extracts from them were discovered in the common-place book of a deceased lady of quality, they were supposed to be her own, were published and praised by people as clever as Congreve, went through several editions, and were not detected until within the present century. When an age made a palimpsest of its memory in this way it was far easier to content it with contemporary literary excellence than it is now, when every aspirant is confronted with the quintessence of the centuries.

It is not, however, from the captious taste of the public that most is to be feared, but from its indifference. Let it not be believed that, because a mob of the votaries of Mr. Jerome and Mr. Sims have been drawn to the precincts of the Abbey to gaze upon a pompous ceremonial, these admirable citizens have suddenly taken to reading *Lucretius* or *The Two Voices*. What their praise is worth no one among us would venture to say in words so unmeasured as those of the dead Master himself, who, with a prescience of their mortuary attentions, spoke [1] of these irreverent admirers as those

> Who make it seem more sweet to be
> The little life of bank and brier,
> The bird who pipes his lone desire
> And dies unheard within his tree,

[1] [In his poem, *To —, after reading a Life and Letters.*]

Than he that warbles long and loud,
And drops at Glory's temple-gates,
For whom the carrion-vulture waits
To tear his heart before the crowd.

If this is more harsh reproof than a mere idle desire to be excited by a spectacle or by an event demands, it may nevertheless serve us as an antidote to the vain illusion that these multitudes are suddenly converted to a love of fine literature. They are not so converted, and fine literature —however scandalous it may sound in the ears of this generation to say it—is for the few.

How long, then, will the many permit themselves to be brow-beaten by the few? At the present time the oligarchy of taste governs our vast republic of readers. We tell them to praise the Bishop of Oxford[1] for his history, and Mr. Walter Pater for his essays, and Mr. Herbert Spencer for his philosophy, and Mr. George Meredith for his novels. They obey us, and these are great and illustrious personages about whom newspaper gossip is continually occupied, whom crowds, when they have the chance, hurry to gaze at, but whose books (or I am cruelly misinformed) have a relatively small circulation. These reputations are like beautiful churches, into which people turn to cross themselves with holy water, bow to the altar, and then hurry out again to spend the rest of the morning in some snug tavern.

Among these churches of living fame, the noblest, the most exquisite was that sublime cathedral of song which we called Tennyson; and there, it is true, drawn by fashion and by a choral service of extreme beauty, the public had formed the habit of congregating. But at length, after a final ceremony of incomparable dignity, this minster has been closed. Where will the people who attended there go now? The other churches stand around, honoured and empty. Will they now be better filled? Or will some secularist mayor, of strong purpose and an enemy to sentiment, order them to be deserted altogether? We may, at any rate, be quite sure that this remarkable phenomenon of the popularity of Tennyson, however we regard it, is but transitory and accidental, or at most personal to himself. That it shows any change in the public attitude of reserved or grumbling respect

[1] [William Stubbs, 1825–1901.]

to the best literature, and radical dislike to style, will not be seriously advanced.

What I dread, what I have long dreaded, is the eruption of a sort of Commune in literature. At no period could the danger of such an outbreak of rebellion against tradition be so great as during the reaction which must follow the death of our most illustrious writer. Then, if ever, I should expect to see a determined resistance made to the pretensions of whatever is rare, or delicate, or abstruse. At no time, I think, ought those who guide taste amongst us to be more on their guard to preserve a lofty and yet generous standard, to insist on the merits of what is beautiful and yet unpopular, and to be unaffected by commercial tests of distinction. We have lived for ten years in a fool's paradise. Without suspecting the truth, we have been passing through a period of poetic glory hardly to be paralleled elsewhere in our history. One by one great luminaries were removed—Rossetti, Newman, Arnold, Browning sank, each star burning larger as it neared the horizon. Still we felt no apprehension, saying, as we turned towards Farringford :

'Mais le père est là-bas, dans l'île.'[1]

Now he is gone also, and the shock of his extinction strikes us for the moment with a sense of positive and universal darkness.

But this very natural impression is a mistaken one. As our eyes grow accustomed to the absence of this bright particular planet, we shall be more and more conscious of the illuminating power of the heavenly bodies that are left. We shall, at least, if criticism directs us carefully and wholesomely. With all the losses that our literature has sustained, we are, still, more richly provided with living poets of distinction than all but the blossoming periods of our history have been. In this respect we are easily deceived by a glance at some chart of the course of English literature, where the

[1] [Lit. 'But the father is yonder in the isle.' The refrain of the twenty-ninth of the *Trente-Six Ballades Joyeuses* of Théodore de Banville, 1873. The reference is to Victor Hugo, in Guernsey. Andrew Lang 'adapted' the poem, as a 'Ballade for the Laureate' (*Longman's Magazine*, April, 1887), applying it, as Mr. Gosse does, to Tennyson, in the Isle of Wight. He translates the refrain : 'The master's yonder in the Isle.']

lines of life of aged writers overlap those of writers still in their early youth. The worst pessimist amongst us will not declare that our poetry seems to be in the utterly and deplorably indigent condition in which the death of Burns appeared to leave it in 1796. Then the beholder, glancing round, would see nothing but Crabbe, grown silent for eleven years, Cowper insane, Blake undeveloped and unrecognized; the pompous, florid Erasmus Darwin left solitary master of the field. But we, who look at the chart, see Wordsworth and Coleridge on the point of evolution, Campbell and Moore at school, Byron and Shelley in the nursery, and Keats an infant. Who can tell what inheritors of unfulfilled renown may not now be staining their divine lips with the latest of this season's blackberries?

But we are not left to these conjectural consolations. I believe that I take very safe ground when I say that our living poets present a variety and amplitude of talent, a fullness of tone, an accomplishment in art, such as few other generations in England, and still fewer elsewhere, have been in a position to exult in. It would be invidious, and it might indeed be very difficult and tedious, to go through the list of those who do signal honour to our living literature in this respect. Without repeating the list so patiently drawn up and so humorously commented upon by Mr. Traill,[1] it would be easy to select from it fifteen names, not one of which would be below the fair meridian of original merit, and many of which would rise far above it. Could so much have been said in 1592, or in 1692, or in 1792? Surely, no. I must not be led to multiply names, the mere mention of which in so casual a manner can hardly fail to seem impertinent; yet I venture to assert that a generation which can boast of Mr. Swinburne and Miss Christina Rossetti, of Mr. William Morris and Mr. Coventry Patmore, of Mr. Austin Dobson and Mr. Robert Bridges, has no reason to complain of lack of fire or elevation, grace or versatility.

It was only in Paradise, so we learn from St. Basil, that roses ever grew without thorns. We cannot have the rose

[1] [H. D. Traill (1842–1900). His article, 'Our Minor Poets,' in the *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1892, contained a list of sixty-five contemporary poets which aimed at enumerating all the then living poets of every degree, minor and major.]

of such an exceptional life as Tennyson's without suffering for it. We suffer by the void its cessation produces, the disturbance in our literary hierarchy that it brings, the sense of uncertainty and insufficiency that follows upon it. The death of Victor Hugo led to precisely such a rocking and swaying of the ship of literature in France, and to this day it cannot be said that the balance there is completely restored. I cannot think that we gain much by ignoring this disturbance, which is inevitable, and still less by folding our hands and calling out that it means that the vessel is sinking. It means nothing of the kind. What it does mean is that when a man of the very highest rank in the profession lives to an exceptionally great age, and retains his intellectual gifts to the end, combining with these unusual advantages the still more fortuitous ones of being singular and picturesque in his personality and the object of much ungratified curiosity, he becomes the victim, in the eyes of his contemporaries, of a sort of vertical mirage. He is seen up in the sky where no man could be. I trust I shall not be accused of anything like disrespect to the genius of Tennyson—which I loved and admired as nearly to the pitch of idolatry as possible—when I say that his reputation at this moment is largely mirage. His gifts were of the very highest order; but in the popular esteem, at this moment, he holds a position which is, to carry on the image, topographically impossible. No poet, no man, ever reached that altitude above his fellows.

The result of seeing one mountain in vertical mirage, and various surrounding acclivities (if that were possible) at their proper heights, would be to falsify the whole system of optical proportion. Yet this is what is now happening, and for some little time will continue to happen *in crescendo*, with regard to Tennyson and his surviving contemporaries. There is no need, however, to cherish 'those gloomy thoughts led on by spleen' which the melancholy events of the past month have awakened. The recuperative force of the arts has never yet failed the human race, and will not fail us now. All the *Tit-Bits* and *Pearson's Weeklies* in the world will not be able to destroy a fragment of pure and original literature, although the tastes they foster may delay its recognition and curtail its rewards.

The duty of all who have any influence on the public is now clear. So far from resigning the responsibility of praise and blame, so far from opening the flood-gates to what is bad—on the ground that the best is gone, and that it does not matter—it behoves those who are our recognized judges of literary merit to resist more strenuously than ever the inroads of mere commercial success into the Temple of Fame. The Scotch ministry preserve that interesting practice of 'fencing the tables' of the Lord by a solemn searching of would-be communicants. Let the tables of Apollo be fenced, not to the exclusion or the discomfort of those who have a right to his sacraments, but to the chastening of those who have no other mark of his service but their passbook. And poetry, which survived the death of Chaucer, will recover even from the death of Tennyson.

XX

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

(1850–)

THE MUSE OF HISTORY

[Mr. Augustine Birrell, politician, essayist, and biographer, was born near Liverpool, Jan. 19, 1850. He graduated at Cambridge in 1872, was called to the Bar 1875, and held the post of Quain Professor of Law in University College, London, 1896–9. He entered Parliament in 1889, was President of the Board of Education, 1905–7, and Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1907–16. His volumes of essays are as follows: *Obiter Dicta*, two series, 1884, 1887; *Res Judicatae*, 1892; *Men, Women, and Books*, 1894; and *In the Name of the Bodleian*, 1905. 'The Muse of History' is from *Obiter Dicta*, second series. Mr. Birrell has also written short lives of Charlotte Brontë (1885), William Hazlitt (1902), and Andrew Marvell (1905).]

Two distinguished men of letters, each an admirable representative of his University—Mr. John Morley and Professor Seeley—have lately published opinions on the subject of history, which, though very likely to prove right, deserve to be carefully considered before assent is bestowed upon them.

Mr. Morley, when President of the Midland Institute, and speaking in the Town Hall of Birmingham, said: 'I do not in the least want to know what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day,' and this same indifference is professed, though certainly nowhere displayed, in other parts of Mr. Morley's writings.[1]

Professor Seeley never makes his point quite so sharp as this, and probably would hesitate to do so, but in the *Expansion of England* he expounds a theory of history largely based upon an indifference like that which Mr. Morley professed at Birmingham. His book opens thus: 'It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method,

[1] *Critical Miscellanies*, vol iii. p. 9.

should pursue a practical object—that is, it should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future. Now. if this maxim be sound, the history of England ought to end with something that might be called a moral.'

This, it must be admitted, is a big thing. The task of the historian, as here explained, is not merely to tell us the story of the past, and thus gratify our curiosity, but, pursuing a practical object, to seek to modify our views of the present and help us in our forecasts of the future, and this the historian is to do, not unconsciously and incidentally, but deliberately and of set purpose. One can well understand how history, so written, will usually begin with a maxim, and invariably end with a moral.

What we are afterwards told in the same book follows in logical sequence upon our first quotation—namely, that 'history fades into *mere literature*' (the italics are ours) 'when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics.' In this grim sentence we read the dethronement of Clio. The poor thing must forswear her father's house, her tuneful sisters, the invocation of the poet, the worship of the dramatist, and keep her terms at the University, where, if she is really studious and steady, and avoids literary companions (which ought not to be difficult), she may hope some day to be received into the Royal Society as a second-rate science. The people who do not usually go to the Royal Society will miss their old playmate from her accustomed slopes, but, even were they to succeed in tracing her to her new home, access would be denied them; for Professor Seeley, that stern custodian, has his answer ready for all such seekers. 'If you want recreation, you must find it in Poetry, particularly Lyrical Poetry. Try Shelley. We can no longer allow you to disport yourselves in the Fields of History as if they were a mere playground. Clio s enclosed.'

At present, however, this is not quite the case; for the old literary traditions are still alive, and prove somewhat irritating to Professor Seeley, who, though one of the most even-tempered of writers, is to be found on p. 173 [1] almost angry with Thackeray, a charming person, who, as we all know, had, after his lazy literary fashion, made an especial study of Queen

[1] [i.e. in first edition, 1883; p. 199 in 1895.]

Anne's time, and who cherished the pleasant fancy that a man might lie in the heather with a pipe in his mouth, and yet, if he had only an odd volume of the *Spectator* or the *Tatler* in his hand, be learning history all the time. 'As we read in these delightful pages,' says the author of *Esmond*[1], 'the past age returns; the England of our ancestors is revivified; the Maypole rises in the Strand; the beaux are gathering in the coffee-houses;' and so on, in the style we all know and love so well, and none better, we may rest assured, than Professor Seeley himself, if only he were not tortured by the thought that people were taking this to be a specimen of the science of which he is a Regius Professor. His comment on this passage of Thackeray's is almost a groan. 'What is this but the old literary groove, leading to no trustworthy knowledge?' and certainly no one of us, from letting his fancy gaze on the Maypole in the Strand, could ever have foretold the Griffin. On the same page he cries: 'Break the drowsy spell of narrative. Ask yourself questions, set yourself problems; your mind will at once take up a new attitude. Now, modern English history breaks up into two grand problems—the problem of the Colonies and the problem of India.' The Cambridge School of History with a vengeance!

In a paper read at the South Kensington Museum in 1884, Professor Seeley observes: 'The essential point is this, that we should recognize that to study history is to study not merely a narrative, but *at the same time* certain theoretical studies.' He then proceeds to name them: Political philosophy, the comparative study of legal institutions, political economy, and international law.

These passages are, I think, adequate to give a fair view of Professor Seeley's position. History is a science, to be written scientifically and to be studied scientifically in conjunction with other studies. It should pursue a practical object and be read with direct reference to practical politics—using the latter word, no doubt, in an enlightened sense. History is not a narrative of all sorts of facts—biographical, moral, political—but of such facts as a scientific diagnosis has ascertained to be historically interesting. In fine, history, if her study is to be profitable and not a mere pastime, less exhausting than

[1] [In his *English Humourists*: "Steele."]

skittles and cheaper than horse exercise, must be dominated by some theory capable of verification by reference to certain ascertained facts belonging to a particular class.

Is this the right way of looking upon history? The dictionaries tell us that history and story are the same word, and are derived from a Greek source, signifying information obtained by inquiry. The natural definition of history, therefore, surely is the story of man upon earth, and the historian is he who tells us any chapter or fragment of that story. All things that on earth do dwell have, no doubt, their history as well as man; but when a member, however humble, of the human race speaks of history without any explanatory context, he may be presumed to be alluding to his own family records, to the story of humanity during its passage across the earth's surface.

'A talent for history'—I am quoting from an author whose style, let those mock at it who may, will reveal him—'may be said to be born with us as our chief inheritance. History has been written with quipo-threads, with feather pictures, with wampum belts, still oftener with earth-mounds and monumental stone-heaps, whether as pyramid or cairn; for the Celt and the Copt, the red man as well as the white, lives between two eternities, and warring against oblivion, he would fain unite himself in clear, conscious relation, as in dim, unconscious relation he is already united, with the whole future and the whole past.'

To keep the past alive for us is the pious function of the historian. Our curiosity is endless, his the task of gratifying it. We want to know what happened long ago. Performance of this task is only proximately possible; but none the less it must be attempted, for the demand for it is born afresh with every infant's cry. History is a pageant, and not a philosophy.

Poets, no less than professors, occasionally say good things even in prose, and the following oracular utterance of Shelley is not pure nonsense: 'History is the cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men. The past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with her harmony.'

If this be thought a little too fanciful, let me adorn these pages with a passage from one of the great masters of English

prose—Walter Savage Landor. Would that the pious labour of transcription could confer the tiniest measure of the gift! In that bundle of imaginary letters Landor called *Pericles and Aspasia*, we find Aspasia writing to her friend Cleone as follows:

'To-day there came to visit us a writer who is not yet an author; his name is Thucydides. We understand that he has been these several years engaged in preparation for a history. Pericles invited him to meet Herodotus, when that wonderful man had returned to our country, and was about to sail from Athens. Until then it was believed by the intimate friends of Thucydides that he would devote his life to poetry, and, such is his vigour both of thought and of expression, that he would have been the rival of Pindar. Even now he is fonder of talking on poetry than any other subject, and blushed when history was mentioned. By degrees, however, he warmed, and listened with deep interest to the discourse of Pericles on the duties of a historian.

'"May our first Athenian historian not be the greatest," said he, "as the first of our dramatists has been, in the opinion of many. We are growing too loquacious, both on the stage and off. We make disquisitions which render us only more and more dim-sighted, and excursions that only consume our stores. If some among us who have acquired celebrity by their compositions, calm, candid, contemplative men, were to undertake the history of Athens from the invasion of Xerxes, I should expect a fair and full criticism on the orations of Antiphon, and experience no disappointment at their forgetting the battle of Salamis. History, when she has lost her Muse, will lose her dignity, her occupation, her character, her name. She will wander about the Agora; she will start, she will stop, she will look wild, she will look stupid, she will take languidly to her bosom doubts, queries, essays, dissertations, some of which ought to go before her, some to follow, and all to stand apart. The field of history should not merely be well tilled, but well peopled. None is delightful to me or interesting in which I find not as many illustrious names as have a right to enter it. We might as well in a drama place the actors behind the scenes, and listen to the dialogue there, as in a history push valiant men back and protrude ourselves with husky disputations. Show me rather how great projects were executed, great advantages gained, and

great calamities averted. Show me the generals and the statesmen who stood foremost, that I may bend to them in reverence; tell me their names, that I may repeat them to my children. Teach me whence laws were introduced, upon what foundation laid, by what custody guarded, in what inner keep preserved. Let the books of the treasury lie closed as religiously as the Sibyl's; leave weights and measures in the market-place, Commerce in the harbour, the Arts in the light they love, Philosophy in the shade; place History on her rightful throne, and at the sides of her, Eloquence and War." '

This is, doubtless, a somewhat full-dress view of history. Landor was not an author who liked 'to be seen in his dressing-gown and slippers.' He always took pains to be splendid, and preferred stately magnificence to chatty familiarity. But after allowing for this, is not the passage I have quoted infused with a great deal of the true spirit which should animate the historian, and does it not seem to take us by the hand and lead us very far away from Professor Seeley's maxims and morals, his theoretical studies, his political philosophy, his political economy, and his desire to break the drowsy spell of narrative, and to set us all problems? I ask this question in no spirit of enmity towards these theoretical studies, nor do I doubt for one moment that the student of history proper, who has a turn in their directions, will find his pursuit made only the more fascinating the more he studies them—just as a little botany is said to add to the charm of a country walk; but—and surely the assertion is not necessarily paradoxical—these studies ought not to be allowed to disfigure the free-flowing outline of the historical Muse, or to thicken her clear utterance, which in her higher moods chants an epic, and in her ordinary moods recites a narrative which need not be drowsy.

As for maxims, we all of us have our 'little hoard of maxims' wherewith to preach down our hearts and justify anything shabby we may have done; but the less we import their cheap wisdom into history the better. The author of the *Expansion of England* will probably agree with Burke in thinking that 'a great empire and little minds go ill together,' and so, surely, *a fortiori*, must a mighty universe and any possible maxim. There have been plenty of brave historical maxims before Professor Seeley's, though only Lord Boling-

broke's has had the good luck to become itself historical.[1] And as for theories, Professor Flint, a very learned writer, has been at the pains to enumerate fourteen French and thirteen German philosophies of history current (though some, I expect, never ran either fast or far) since the revival of learning.

We are (are we not ?) in these days in no little danger of being philosophy-ridden, and of losing our love for facts simply as facts. So long as Carlyle lived, the concrete had a representative, the strength of whose epithets sufficed, if not to keep the philosophers in awe, at least to supply their opponents with stones. But now it is different. Carlyle is no more a model historian than is Shakespeare a model dramatist. The merest tyro can count the faults of either on his clumsy fingers. That born critic, the late Sir George Lewis, had barely completed his tenth year before he was able, in a letter to his mother, to point out to her the essentially faulty structure of *Hamlet*, and many a duller wit, a decade or two later in his existence, has come to the conclusion that *Frederick the Great* is far too long. But whatever were Carlyle's faults, his historical method was superbly naturalistic. Have we a historian left us so honestly possessed as he was with the genuine historical instinct, the true enthusiasm to know what happened; or one half so fond of a story for its own sake, or so in love with things, not for what they were, but simply because they were? 'What wonderful things are events!' wrote Lord Beaconsfield in *Coningsby*; 'the least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations.' To say this is to go perhaps too far; certainly it is to go farther than Carlyle, who none the less was in sympathy with the remark; for he also worshipped events, believing as he did that but for the breath of God's mouth they never would have been events at all. We thus find him always treating even comparatively insignificant facts with a measure of reverence, and handling them lovingly, as does a book-hunter the shabbiest pamphlet in his collection. We have only to think of Carlyle's essay on the

[1] 'I will answer you by quoting what I have read somewhere or other, in Dionysius Halicarnassensis I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples.' See Lord Bolingbroke's *Second Letter on the Study and Use of History*.

Diamond Necklace to fill our minds with his qualifications for the proud office of the historian. Were that inimitable piece of workmanship to be submitted to the criticisms of the new scientific school, we doubt whether it would be so much as classed, whilst the celebrated description of the night before the battle of Dunbar in *Cromwell*, or any hundred scenes from the *French Revolution*, would, we expect, be catalogued as good examples of that degrading process whereby history fades into mere literature.

This is not a question, be it observed, of style. What is called a picturesque style is generally a great trial. Who was it who called Professor Masson's style Carlyle on wooden legs? What can be drearier than when a plain matter-of-fact writer attempts to be animated, and tries to make his characters live by the easy but futile expedient of writing about them in the present tense? What is wanted is a passion for facts; the style may be left to take care of itself. Let me name a historian who detested fine writing, and who never said to himself, 'Go to, I will make a description,' and who yet was dominated by a love for facts, whose one desire always was to know what happened, to dispel illusion, and establish the true account—Dr. S. R. Maitland, of the Lambeth Library, whose volumes entitled *The Dark Ages* and *The Reformation* are to history what Milton's *Lycidas* is said to be to poetry: if they do not interest you, your tastes are not historical.

The difference, we repeat, is not of style, but of aim. Is history a pageant or a philosophy? That eminent historian, Lord Macaulay, whose passion for letters and for 'mere literature' ennobled his whole life, has expressed himself in some places, I need scarcely add in a most forcible manner, in the same sense as Mr. Morley. In his well-known essay on history, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1828, we find him writing as follows: 'Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value.' And again: 'No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future.' These are strong passages; but Lord Macaulay was a royal eclectic, and was quite out of sympathy with the majority of that brotherhood who are content to tone down

their contradictories to the dull level of ineptitudes. Macaulay *never toned down* his contradictories, but, heightening *everything all* round, went on his sublime way, rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, and well knowing that he could give anybody five yards in fifty and win easily. It is, therefore, no surprise to find him, in the very essay in which he speaks so contemptuously of facts, laying on with his vigorous brush a celebrated purple patch I would gladly transfer to my own dull page were it not too long and too well known. A line or two taken at random will give its purport:

'A truly great historian would reclaim those materials the novelist has appropriated. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon and for their phraseology in *Old Mortality*, for one half of King James in Hume and for the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. . . . Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest, from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw, from the throne of the legate to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders, the stately monastery with the good cheer in its refectory, and the tournament with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold, would give truth and life to the representation.' It is difficult to see what abstract truth interpenetrates the cheer of the refectory, or what just calculations with respect to the future even an upholsterer could draw from a cloth, either of state or of gold; whilst most people will admit that, when the brilliant essayist a few years later set himself to compose his own magnificent history, so far as he interpenetrated it with the abstract truths of Whiggism, and calculated that the future would be satisfied with the first Reform Bill, he did ill and guessed wrong.

To reconcile Macaulay's utterances on this subject is beyond my powers, but of two things I am satisfied: the first is that, were he to come to life again, a good many of us would be more careful than we are how we write about him; and the second is that, on the happening of the same event, he would be found protesting against the threatened domination of all things by scientific theory. A Western American, who was once compelled to spend some days in Boston, was accustomed in after-life to describe that seat of polite learning to his horrified companions in California as a city in whose streets

Respectability stalked unchecked. This is just what philosophical theories are doing amongst us, and a decent person can hardly venture abroad without one, though it does not much matter which one. Everybody is expected to have 'a system of philosophy with principles coherent, interdependent, subordinate, and derivative,'[1] and to be able to account for everything, even for things it used not to be thought sensible to believe in, like ghosts and haunted houses. Keats remarks in one of his letters with great admiration upon what he christens Shakespeare's 'negative capability,' meaning thereby Shakespeare's habit of complaisant observation from outside of theory, and his keen enjoyment of the unexplained facts of life. He did not pour himself out in every strife. We have but little of this negative capability. The ruddy qualities of delightfulness, of pleasantness, are all 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' The varied elements of life—the

> Murmur of living,
> Stir of existence,
> Soul of the world!
>
> [M. Arnold, *The Youth of Man.*]

seem to be fading from literature. Pure literary enthusiasm sheds but few rays. To be lively is to be flippant, and epigram is dubbed paradox.

That many people appear to like a drab-coloured world hung round with dusky shreds of philosophy is sufficiently obvious. These persons find any relaxation they may require from a too severe course of theories, religious, political, social, or now, alas! historical, in the novels of Mr. W. D. Howells, an American gentleman who has not been allowed to forget that he once asserted of fiction what Professor Seeley would be glad to be able to assert of history, that the drowsy spell of narrative has been broken. We are to look for no more Sir Walters, no more Thackerays, no more Dickens. The stories have all been told. Plots are exploded. Incident is over. In moods of dejection these dark sayings seemed only too true. Shakespeare's[2] saddest of sad lines rose to one's lip:

> My griefs lie onward and my joy behind.

Behind us are *Ivanhoe* and *Guy Mannering*, *Pendennis* and

[1] [It was this that Mr. Frederic Harrison said (in 1867) he sought vainly in Matthew Arnold.]

[2] [Sonnet 50.]

The Virginians, Pecksniff and Micawber. In front of us stretch a never-ending series, a dreary vista of *Foregone Conclusions*, *Counterfeit Presentments*, and *Undiscovered Countries*[1]. But the darkest watch of the night is the one before the dawn, and relief is often nearest us when we least expect it. All this gloomy nonsense was suddenly dispelled, and the fact that really and truly, and behind this philosophical arras, we were all inwardly ravening for stories was most satisfactorily established by the incontinent manner in which we ffung ourselves into the arms of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, to whom we could almost have raised a statue in the market-place for having written *Treasure Island*.

But to return to history. The interests of our poor human life, which seems to become duller every day, require that the fields of history should be kept for ever unenclosed, and be a free breathing-place for a pallid population wellnigh stifled with the fumes of philosophy.

Were we, imaginatively, to propel ourselves forward to the middle of the next century, and to fancy a well-equipped historian armed with the digested learning of Gibbon, endowed with the eye of Carlyle, and say one-fifteenth of his humour (even then a dangerous allotment in a dull world), the moral gravity of Dr. Arnold, the critical sympathy of Sainte-Beuve, and the style of Dr. Newman, approaching the period through which we have lived, should we desire this talented mortal to encumber himself with a theory into which to thrust all our doings as we toss clothes into a portmanteau, to set himself to extract the essence of some new political philosophy, capable of being applied to the practical politics of his own day, or to busy himself with problems or economics? To us personally, of course, it is a matter of indifference how the historians of the twentieth century conduct themselves; but ought not our altruism to bear the strain of a hope that at least one of the band may avoid all these things, and, leaving political philosophy to the political philosopher and political economy to the political economist, remember that the first, if not the last, duty of the historian is to narrate, to supply the text not the comment, the subject not the sermon, and proceed to tell our grandchildren and remoter issue the story of our lives? The clash of arms will resound through his pages as musically

[1] [Titles of novels by W. D. Howells (1837–1920).]

as ever it does through those of the elder historians as he tells of the encounter between the Northern and Southern States of America, in which Right and Might, those great twin-brethren, fought side by side; but Romance, that ancient parasite, clung affectionately with her tendril-hands to the mouldering walls of an ancient wrong, thus enabling the historian, whilst awarding the victor's palm to General Grant, to write kindly of the lost cause, dear to the heart of a nobler and more chivalrous man, General Lee, of the Virginian army. And again, is it not almost possible to envy the historian to whom will belong the task of writing with full information, and all the advantage of the true historic distance, the history of that series of struggles and heroisms, of plots and counter-plots, of crimes and counter-crimes, resulting in the freedom of Italy, and of telling to a world, eager to listen, the life-story of Joseph Mazzini?

> Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
> That he could give
> Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead
> Mother might live.
> But this man found his mother dead and slain,
> With fast sealed eyes,
> And bade the dead rise up and live again
> And she did rise.[1]

Nor will our imaginary historian be unmindful of Cavour, or fail to thrill his readers by telling them how, when the great Italian statesman, with many sins upon his conscience, lay in the very grasp of death, he interrupted the priests, busy at their work of intercession, almost roughly, with the exclamation, 'Pray not for me. Pray for Italy!'—whilst if he be one who has a turn for that ironical pastime, the dissection of a king, the curious character, and muddle of motives, calling itself Carlo Alberto, will afford him material for at least two paragraphs of subtle interest. Lastly, if our historian is ambitious of a large canvas and of deeper colours, what is there to prevent him, bracing himself to the task,—

> As when some mighty painter dips
> His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse,[2]

from writing the epitaph of the Napoleonic legend?

[1] [Swinburne, *Lines on the Monument of Giuseppe Mazzini.*]

[2] [Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam*, V, xxiii.]

But all this time I hear Professor Seeley whispering in my ear, 'What is this but the old literary groove, leading to no trustworthy knowledge?' If by trustworthy knowledge is meant demonstrable conclusions, capable of being expressed in terms at once exact and final, trustworthy knowledge is not to be gained from the witness of history, whose testimony none the less must be received, weighed, and taken into account. Truly observes Carlyle: 'If history is philosophy teaching by examples,[1] the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, and, aiming only at some picture of the thing acted, which picture itself will be but a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret.' 'Some picture of the thing acted.' Here we behold the task of the historian: nor is it an idle, fruitless task. Science is not the only, or the chief, source of knowledge. The *Iliad*, Shakespeare's plays, have taught the world more than the *Politics* of Aristotle or the *Novum Organum* of Bacon.

Facts are not the dross of history, but the true metal, and the historian is a worker in that metal. He has nothing to do with abstract truth, or with practical politics, or with forecasts of the future. A worker in metal he is, and has certainly plenty of what Lord Bacon used to call 'stuff' to work upon; but if he is to be a great historian, and not a mere chronicler, he must be an artist as well as an artisan, and have something of the spirit which animated such a man as Francesco Francia of Bologna, now only famous as a painter, but in his own day equally celebrated as a worker in gold, and whose practice it was to sign his pictures with the word Goldsmith, after his name, whilst he engraved Painter on his golden crucifixes.

The true historian, therefore, seeking to compose a true picture of the thing acted, must collect facts, select facts, and combine facts. Methods will differ, styles will differ. Nobody ever does anything exactly like anybody else; but the end in view is generally the same, and the historian's end is truthful narration. Maxims he will have, if he is wise, never a one; and as for a moral, if he tells his story well, it will need none; if he tell it ill, it will deserve none.

[1] [Carlyle's word is 'Experience,' not 'examples.' This and other quotations throughout this essay are not exact.]

The stream of narrative, flowing swiftly as it does, over the jagged rocks of human destiny, must often be turbulent and tossed; it is, therefore, all the more the duty of every good citizen to keep it as undefiled as possible, and to do what in him lies to prevent peripatetic philosophers on the banks from throwing their theories into it, either dead ones to decay, or living ones to drown. Let the philosophers ventilate their theories, construct their blow-holes, extract their essences, discuss their maxims, and point their morals as much as they will: but let them do so apart. History must not lose her Muse, or 'take to her bosom doubts, queries, essays, dissertations, some of which ought to go before her, some to follow, and all to stand apart.' Let us at all events secure our narrative first—sermons and philosophy the day after.

XXI

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(1850–1394)

TALK AND TALKERS

[Robert Louis Stevenson, novelist, essayist, and poet, was born in Edinburgh, Nov. 13, 1850. His father was one of a celebrated family of civil engineers. Stevenson at first intended to follow his father's profession, but later it was decided he should read for the Bar instead. In 1873 his health broke down, and he was ordered to the Riviera. All through his life he suffered from ill-health and had to live much abroad. It may be said that all of his own life, his relations with others, and the scenes of his travels, are reflected in his writings. The volume of essays from which the first of two essays on 'Talk and Talkers' is here reprinted, is called *Memories and Portraits*, and each of the 'talkers' mentioned is an identifiable portrait, and all of Stevenson's memories went into his books: his childhood into his *Child's Garden of Verses*, historic Scotland into his great novels, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *Weir of Hermistoun*; actual Edinburgh into a book so called; his first travels in search of health into his essay 'Ordered South' and so with all his later voyagings. To name the books in which they are recounted would be to crowd out other works of pure fancy and imagination: *Treasure Island* (one of the best of all adventure books), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Prince Otto*, and *The New Arabian Nights*. With very real labour Stevenson made himself a master of style; and certain moral qualities, chiefly courage, no less than his purely literary quality, have made him one of the best beloved of English writers: see Mr. Birrell's tribute to him on p. 172 of the present book. He died, suddenly, of an hæmorrhage, at Vailima in Samoa on Dec. 3, 1894.]

Sir, we had a good talk.—JOHNSON.[1]

As we must account for every idle word, so we must for every idle silence.—FRANKLIN.[2]

THERE can be no fairer ambition than to excel in talk; to be affable, gay, ready, clear, and welcome; to have a fact, a thought, or an illustration, pat to every subject; and not only to cheer the flight of time among our intimates, but bear our part in that great international congress, always sitting, where public wrongs are first declared, public errors first corrected, and the course of public opinion shaped, day by

[1] [In Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, under 1768: 'Well, (said he,) we had good talk.']

[2] [Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1738.]

day, a little nearer to the right. No measure comes before Parliament but it has been long ago prepared by the grand jury of the talkers; no book is written that has not been largely composed by their assistance. Literature in many of its branches is no other than the shadow of good talk; but the imitation falls far short of the original in life, freedom, and effect. There are always two to a talk, giving and taking, comparing experience and according conclusions. Talk is fluid, tentative, continually 'in further search and progress'; while written words remain fixed, become idols even to the writer, found wooden dogmatisms, and preserve flies of obvious error in the amber of the truth. Last and chief, while literature, gagged with linsey-woolsey, can only deal with a fraction of the life of man, talk goes fancy free and may call a spade a spade. Talk has none of the freezing immunities of the pulpit. It cannot, even if it would, become merely aesthetic or merely classical like literature. A jest intervenes, the solemn humbug is dissolved in laughter, and speech runs forth out of the contemporary groove into the open fields of nature, cheery and cheering, like schoolboys out of school. And it is in talk alone that we can learn our period and ourselves. In short, the first duty of a man is to speak; that is his chief business in this world; and talk, which is the harmonious speech of two or more, is by far the most accessible of pleasures. It costs nothing in money; it is all profit; it completes our education, founds and fosters our friendships, and can be enjoyed at any age and in almost any state of health.

The spice of life is battle; the friendliest relations are still a kind of contest; and if we would not forgo all that is valuable in our lot, we must continually face some other person, eye to eye, and wrestle a fall whether in love or enmity. It is still by force of body, or power of character or intellect, that we attain to worthy pleasures. Men and women contend for each other in the lists of love, like rival mesmerists; the active and adroit decide their challenges in the sports of the body; and the sedentary sit down to chess or conversation. All sluggish and pacific pleasures are, to the same degree, solitary and selfish; and every durable bond between human beings is founded in or heightened by some element of competition. Now, the relation that has the least root in matter is undoubtedly that airy one of friendship; and hence, I suppose,

it is that good talk most commonly arises among friends. Talk is, indeed, both the scene and instrument of friendship. It is in talk alone that the friends can measure strength, and enjoy that amicable counter-assertion of personality which is the gauge of relations and the sport of life.

A good talk is not to be had for the asking. Humours must first be accorded in a kind of overture or prologue; hour, company, and circumstance be suited; and then, at a fit juncture, the subject, the quarry of two heated minds, spring up like a deer out of the wood. Not that the talker has any of the hunter's pride, though he has all and more than all his ardour. The genuine artist follows the stream of conversation as an angler follows the windings of a brook, not dallying where he fails to 'kill.' He trusts implicitly to hazard; and he is rewarded by continual variety, continual pleasure, and those changing prospects of the truth that are the best of education. There is nothing in a subject, so called, that we should regard it as an idol, or follow it beyond the promptings of desire. Indeed, there are few subjects; and so far as they are truly talkable, more than the half of them may be reduced to three · that I am I, that you are you, and that there are other people dimly understood to be not quite the same as either. Wherever talk may range, it still runs half the time on these eternal lines. The theme being set, each plays on himself as on an instrument; asserts and justifies himself; ransacks his brain for instances and opinions, and brings them forth new-minted, to his own surprise and the admiration of his adversary. All natural talk is a festival of ostentation; and by the laws of the game each accepts and fans the vanity of the other. It is from that reason that we venture to lay ourselves so open, that we dare to be so warmly eloquent, and that we swell in each other's eyes to such a vast proportion. For talkers, once launched, begin to overflow the limits of their ordinary selves, tower up to the height of their secret pretensions, and give themselves out for the heroes, brave, pious, musical, and wise, that in their most shining moments they aspire to be. So they weave for themselves with words and for a while inhabit a palace of delights, temple at once and theatre, where they fill the round of the world's dignities, and feast with the gods, exulting in Kudos. And when the talk is over, each goes his way, still

flushed with vanity and admiration, still trailing clouds of glory; each declines from the height of his ideal orgie, not in a moment, but by slow declension. I remember, in the *entr'acte* of an afternoon performance, coming forth into the sunshine, in a beautiful green, gardened corner of a romantic city; and as I sat and smoked, the music moving in my blood, I seemed to sit there and evaporate *The Flying Dutchman* (for it was that I had been hearing) with a wonderful sense of life, warmth, well-being, and pride; and the noises of the city, voices, bells, and marching feet, fell together in my ears like a symphonious orchestra. In the same way, the excitement of a good talk lives for a long while after in the blood, the heart still hot within you, the brain still simmering, and the physical earth swimming around you with the colours of the sunset.

Natural talk, like ploughing, should turn up a large surface of life, rather than dig mines into geological strata. Masses of experience, anecdote, incident, cross-lights, quotation, historical instances, the whole flotsam and jetsam of two minds forced in and in upon the matter in hand from every point of the compass, and from every degree of mental elevation and abasement—these are the material with which talk is fortified, the food on which the talkers thrive. Such argument as is proper to the exercise should still be brief and seizing. Talk should proceed by instances; by the apposite, not the expository. It should keep close along the lines of humanity, near the bosoms and businesses of men, at the level where history, fiction, and experience intersect and illuminate each other. I am I, and You are You, with all my heart; but conceive how these lean propositions change and brighten when, instead of words, the actual you and I sit cheek by jowl, the spirit housed in the live body, and the very clothes uttering voices to corroborate the story in the face. Not less surprising is the change when we leave off to speak of generalities—the bad, the good, the miser, and all the characters of Theophrastus—and call up other men, by anecdote or instance, in their very trick and feature; or trading on a common knowledge, toss each other famous names, still glowing with the hues of life. Communication is no longer by words, but by the instancing of whole biographies, epics, systems of philosophy, and epochs of history, in bulk. That which is understood excels that which is spoken in quantity and quality alike; ideas thus

figured and personified, change hands, as we may say, like coin; and the speakers imply without effort the most obscure and intricate thoughts. Strangers who have a large common ground of reading will, for this reason, come the sooner to the grapple of genuine converse. If they know Othello and Napoleon, Consuelo and Clarissa Harlowe, Vautrin and Steenie Steenson, they can leave generalities and begin at once to speak by figures.

Conduct and art are the two subjects that arise most frequently and that embrace the widest range of facts. A few pleasures bear discussion for their own sake, but only those which are most social or most radically human; and even these can only be discussed among their devotees. A technicality is always welcome to the expert, whether in athletics, art, or law; I have heard the best kind of talk on technicalities from such rare and happy persons as both know and love their business. No human being ever spoke of scenery for above two minutes at a time, which makes me suspect we hear too much of it in literature. The weather is regarded as the very nadir and scoff of conversational topics. And yet the weather, the dramatic element in scenery, is far more tractable in language, and far more human both in import and suggestion than the stable features of the landscape. Sailors and shepherds, and the people generally of coast and mountain, talk well of it; and it is often excitingly presented in literature. But the tendency of all living talk draws it back and back into the common focus of humanity. Talk is a creature of the street and market-place, feeding on gossip; and its last resort is still in a discussion on morals. That is the heroic form of gossip; heroic in virtue of its high pretensions; but still gossip, because it turns on personalities. You can keep no men long, nor Scotchmen at all, off moral or theological discussion. These are to all the world what law is to lawyers; they are everybody's technicalities; the medium through which all consider life, and the dialect in which they express their judgements. I knew three young men who walked together daily for some two months in a solemn and beautiful forest and in cloudless summer weather; daily they talked with unabated zest, and yet scarce wandered that whole time beyond two subjects—theology and love. And perhaps neither a court of love nor an assembly of divines would have granted their premisses or welcomed their conclusions.

Conclusions, indeed, are not often reached by talk any more than by private thinking. That is not the profit. The profit is in the exercise, and above all in the experience; for when we reason at large on any subject, we review our state and history in life. From time to time, however, and specially, I think, in talking art, talk becomes effective, conquering like war, widening the boundaries of knowledge like an exploration. A point arises; the question takes a problematical, a baffling, yet a likely air; the talkers begin to feel lively presentiments of some conclusion near at hand; towards this they strive with emulous ardour, each by his own path, and struggling for first utterance; and then one leaps upon the summit of that matter with a shout, and almost at the same moment the other is beside him; and behold they are agreed. Like enough, the progress is illusory, a mere cat's cradle having been wound and unwound out of words. But the sense of joint discovery is none the less giddy and inspiriting. And in the life of the talker such triumphs, though imaginary, are neither few nor far apart; they are attained with speed and pleasure, in the hour of mirth; and by the nature of the process, they are always worthily shared.

There is a certain attitude, combative at once and deferential, eager to fight yet most averse to quarrel, which marks out at once the talkable man.[1] It is not eloquence, not fairness, not obstinacy, but a certain proportion of all these that I love to encounter in my amicable adversaries. They must not be pontiffs holding doctrine, but huntsmen questing after elements of truth. Neither must they be boys to be instructed, but fellow-teachers with whom I may wrangle and agree on equal terms. We must reach some solution, some shadow of consent; for without that, eager talk becomes a torture. But we do not wish to reach it cheaply, or quickly, or without the tussle and effort wherein pleasure lies.

The very best talker, with me, is one whom I shall call Spring-Heel'd Jack.[2] I say so, because I never knew any one who mingled so largely the possible ingredients of converse. In the Spanish proverb, the fourth man necessary to compound a salad, is a madman to mix it: Jack is that madman. I know not which is more remarkable; the insane lucidity of

[1] [Cf. Macaulay on Lord Holland, p. 18 of the present book.]
[2] [His cousin, R. A. M. Stevenson.]

his conclusions, the humorous eloquence of his language, or his power of method, bringing the whole of life into the focus of the subject treated, mixing the conversational salad like a drunken god. He doubles like the serpent, changes and flashes like the shaken kaleidoscope, transmigrates bodily into the views of others, and so, in the twinkling of an eye and with a heady rapture, turns questions inside out and flings them empty before you on the ground, like a triumphant conjurer. It is my common practice when a piece of conduct puzzles me, to attack it in the presence of Jack with such grossness, such partiality, and such wearing iteration, as at length shall spur him up in its defence. In a moment he transmigrates, dons the required character, and with moon-struck philosophy justifies the act in question. I can fancy nothing to compare with the vigour of these impersonations, the strange scale of language, flying from Shakespeare to Kant, and from Kant to Major Dyngwell—

> As fast as a musician scatters sounds
> Out of an instrument— [1]

the sudden, sweeping generalizations, the absurd irrelevant particularities, the wit, wisdom, folly, humour, eloquence, and bathos, each startling in its kind, and yet all luminous in the admired disorder of their combination. A talker of a different calibre, though belonging to the same school, is Burly.[2] Burly is a man of a great presence; he commands a larger atmosphere, gives the impression of a grosser mass of character than most men. It has been said of him that his presence could be felt in a room you entered blindfold; and the same, I think, has been said of other powerful constitutions condemned to much physical inaction. There is something boisterous and piratic in Burly's manner of talk which suits well enough with this impression. He will roar you down, he will bury his face in his hands, he will undergo passions of revolt and agony; and meanwhile his attitude of mind is really both conciliatory and receptive; and after Pistol has been out-Pistol'd, and the welkin rung for hours, you begin to perceive a certain subsidence in these spring torrents, points of agreement issue, and you end arm-in-arm, and in a glow of mutual admiration. The outcry only serves to make your

[1] [Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, iv. 524.] [2] [W. E. Henley.]

final union the more unexpected and precious. Throughout there has been perfect sincerity, perfect intelligence, a desire to hear although not always to listen, and an unaffected eagerness to meet concessions. You have, with Burly, none of the dangers that attend debate with Spring-Heel'd Jack; who may at any time turn his powers of transmigration on yourself, create for you a view you never held, and then furiously fall on you for holding it. These, at least, are my two favourites, and both are loud, copious, intolerant talkers. This argues that I myself am in the same category; for if we love talking at all, we love a bright, fierce adversary, who will hold his ground, foot by foot, in much our own manner, sell his attention dearly, and give us our full measure of the dust and exertion of battle. Both these men can be beat from a position, but it takes six hours to do it; a high and hard adventure, worth attempting. With both you can pass days in an enchanted country of the mind, with people, scenery, and manners of its own; live a life apart, more arduous, active, and glowing than any real existence; and come forth again when the talk is over, as out of a theatre or a dream, to find the east wind still blowing and the chimney-pots of the old battered city still around you. Jack has the far finer mind, Burly the far more honest; Jack gives us the animated poetry, Burly the romantic prose, of similar themes; the one glances high like a meteor and makes a light in darkness; the other, with many changing hues of fire, burns at the sea-level, like a conflagration; but both have the same humour and artistic interests, the same unquenched ardour in pursuit, the same gusts of talk and thunderclaps of contradiction.

Cockshot[1] is a different article, but vastly entertaining, and has been meat and drink to me for many a long evening. His manner is dry, brisk, and pertinacious, and the choice of words not much. The point about him is his extraordinary readiness and spirit. You can propound nothing but he has either a theory about it ready-made, or will have one instantly on the stocks, and proceed to lay its timbers and launch it in your presence. 'Let me see,' he will say. 'Give me a moment. I *should* have some theory for that.' A blither spectacle than the vigour with which he sets about the task, it were hard to fancy. He is possessed by a demoniac energy,

[1] The late Fleeming Jenkin [1833–1885].

welding the elements for his life, and bending ideas, as an athlete bends a horse-shoe, with a visible and lively effort. He has, in theorizing, a compass, an art; what I would call the synthetic gusto; something of a Herbert Spencer, who should see the fun of the thing. You are not bound, and no more is he, to place your faith in these brand-new opinions. But some of them are right enough, durable even for life; and the poorest serve for a cock-shy—as when idle people, after picnics, float a bottle on a pond and have an hour's diversion ere it sinks. Whichever they are, serious opinions or humours of the moment, he still defends his ventures with indefatigable wit and spirit, hitting savagely himself, but taking punishment like a man. He knows and never forgets that people talk, first of all, for the sake of talking; conducts himself in the ring, to use the old slang, like a thorough 'glutton,' and honestly enjoys a telling facer from his adversary. Cockshot is bottled effervescency, the sworn foe of sleep. Three-in-the-morning Cockshot, says a victim. His talk is like the driest of all imaginable dry champagnes. Sleight of hand and inimitable quickness are the qualities by which he lives. Athelred,[1] on the other hand, presents you with the spectacle of a sincere and somewhat slow nature thinking aloud. He is the most unready man I ever knew to shine in conversation. You may see him sometimes wrestle with a refractory jest for a minute or two together, and perhaps fail to throw it in the end. And there is something singularly engaging, often instructive, in the simplicity with which he thus exposes the process as well as the result, the works as well as the dial of the clock. Withal he has his hours of inspiration. Apt words come to him as if by accident, and, coming from deeper down, they smack the more personally, they have the more of fine old crusted humanity, rich in sediment and humour. There are sayings of his in which he has stamped himself into the very grain of the language; you would think he must have worn the words next his skin and slept with them. Yet it is not as a sayer of particular good things that Athelred is most to be regarded, rather as the stalwart woodman of thought. I have pulled on a light cord often enough, while he has been wielding the broad-axe; and between us, on this unequal division, many a specious fallacy

[1] [Sir Walter Simpson, 1843–1898.]

has fallen. I have known him to battle the same question night after night for years, keeping it in the reign of talk, constantly applying it and re-applying it to life with humorous or grave attention, and all the while, never hurrying, nor flagging, nor taking an unfair advantage of the facts. Jack at a given moment, when arising, as it were, from the tripod, can be more radiantly just to those from whom he differs; but then the tenor of his thoughts is even calumnious; while Athelred, slower to forge excuses, is yet slower to condemn, and sits over the welter of the world, vacillating but still judicial, and still faithfully contending with his doubts.

Both the last talkers deal much in points of conduct and religion studied in the 'dry light' of prose. Indirectly and as if against his will the same elements from time to time appear in the troubled and poetic talk of Opalstein.[1] His various and exotic knowledge, complete although unready sympathies, and fine, full, discriminative flow of language, fit him out to be the best of talkers; so perhaps he is with some, not *quite* with me—*proxime accessit*, I should say. He sings the praises of the earth and the arts, flowers and jewels, wine and music, in a moonlight, serenading manner, as to the light guitar; even wisdom comes from his tongue like singing; no one is, indeed, more tuneful in the upper notes. But even while he sings the song of the Sirens, he still hearkens to the barking of the Sphinx. Jarring Byronic notes interrupt the flow of his Horatian humours. His mirth has something of the tragedy of the world for its perpetual background; and he feasts like Don Giovanni to a double orchestra, one lightly sounding for the dance, one pealing Beethoven in the distance. He is not truly reconciled either with life or with himself; and this instant war in his members sometimes divides the man's attention. He does not always, perhaps not often, frankly surrender himself in conversation. He brings into the talk other thoughts than those which he expresses; you are conscious that he keeps an eye on something else, that he does not shake off the world, nor quite forget himself. Hence arise occasional disappointments; even an occasional unfairness for his companions, who find themselves one day giving too much, and the next, when they are wary out of season, giving perhaps too little. Purcel[2] is in another class from any

[1] [John Addington Symonds.] [2] [Mr. Edmund Gosse.]

I have mentioned. He is no debater, but appears in conversation, as occasion rises, in two distinct characters, one of which I admire and fear, and the other love. In the first, he is radiantly civil and rather silent, sits on a high, courtly hilltop, and from that vantage-ground drops you his remarks like favours. He seems not to share in our sublunary contentions; he wears no sign of interest; when on a sudden there falls in a crystal of wit, so polished that the dull do not perceive it, but so bright that the sensitive are silenced. True talk should have more body and blood, should be louder, vainer, and more declaratory of the man; the true talker should not hold so steady an advantage over whom he speaks with; and that is one reason out of a score why I prefer my Purcel in his second character, when he unbends into a strain of graceful gossip, singing like the fireside kettle. In these moods he has an elegant homeliness that rings of the true Queen Anne. I know another person who attains, in his moments, to the insolence of a Restoration comedy, speaking, I declare, as Congreve wrote; but that is a sport of nature, and scarce falls under the rubric, for there is none, alas! to give him answer.

One last remark occurs: It is the mark of genuine conversation that the sayings can scarce be quoted with their full effect beyond the circle of common friends. To have their proper weight they should appear in a biography, and with the portrait of the speaker. Good talk is dramatic; it is like an impromptu piece of acting where each should represent himself to the greatest advantage; and that is the best kind of talk where each speaker is most fully and candidly himself, and where, if you were to shift the speeches round from one to another, there would be the greatest loss in significance and perspicuity. It is for this reason that talk depends so wholly on our company. We should like to introduce Falstaff and Mercutio, or Falstaff and Sir Toby; but Falstaff in talk with Cordelia seems even painful. Most of us, by the Protean quality of man, can talk to some degree with all; but the true talk, that strikes out all the slumbering best of us, comes only with the peculiar brethren of our spirits, is founded as deep as love in the constitution of our being, and is a thing to relish with all our energy, while yet we have it, and to be grateful for for ever.

XXII

G. W. E. RUSSELL

(1853–1919)

A MIDSUMMER DAY'S DREAM

(JUNE 21, 1911)

[George William Erskine Russell, essayist, diarist, and biographer, was born in London, Feb. 3, 1853. He was a grandson of the sixth Duke of Bedford, was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and entered Parliament in 1880. He was Under-Secretary of State for India, 1892–4. He published a biography of Matthew Arnold, the life of Sydney Smith in the series of *English Men of Letters*, and many biographies of eminent Churchmen. As an essayist he is represented by *A Londoner's Log-book* (1902), *An Onlooker's Notebook* (1902), *Collections and Recollections*, two series (1898, 1909), *A Pocketful of Sixpences* (1907), and *Afterthoughts* (1912), from which last book our present essay is taken. He died on March 17, 1919.]

MIDSUMMER DAY this year is to be marked by such a spectacle as may well set Englishmen a-dreaming. The King of England, himself a sailor, is to review his fleet. The hereditary Sovereign of the Seas will see marshalled round his floating throne the most wonderful creations of science and skill and wealth and courage that the world has ever known—the science of the designer, and the skill of the artificer, and the courage as keenly tested in construction as in action, and the national wealth which buys all these. Truly there is a magic in this Pomp of the Sea which stirs the Viking-blood of Englishmen as no tramp of cavalry, no blare of trumpets, no crash of artillery can stir it. The salt water sets our veins a-tingle; the most lethargic wax delirious, and the most prosaic dream dreams. No one can escape the contagion. It goes rollicking down all our national minstrelsy, from Shakespeare, who, though a son of the Midlands, yet recks of 'the rude imperious surge,' to Swinburne, whom, in spite of his cosmopolitanism,

the sea inspires with something dangerously like the strain of insularity.

> Let Prussian with Russian
> Exchange the kiss of slaves:
> But sea-folk are free folk
> By grace of winds and waves.[1]

'Rule, Britannia,' shares the rank of a National Anthem with what Frenchmen called 'Le godsave.' Tennyson is never more majestic than when he chants the repulse of the insolent Armada:

> Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came.
> Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame;
> Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame.

Less stately, indeed, but as passionately patriotic, are Dibdin, and Campbell, and Cunningham, and the nameless bard who claimed the Sovereignty of the Seas in a verse beloved by schoolboys:

> Oh! 'tis a wonderful Island—
> All of 'em long for the Island,
> Hold a bit there: let 'em take fire and air,
> But we'll have the Sea and the Island.

Lord Beaconsfield handled this vein of maritime Imperialism with characteristic humour[2]:

'I must say,' said Waldershare, 'it was a grand idea of our kings making themselves sovereigns of the sea. The greater portion of this planet is water; so we at once became a first-rate Power. We owe our Navy entirely to the Stuarts. King James the Second was the true founder and hero of the British Navy. He was the worthy son of his admirable father, that Blessed Martyr, the restorer at least, if not the inventor, of ship-money—the most patriotic and popular tax that ever was devised by man. The Nonconformists thought themselves so wise in resisting it, and they have got the Naval Estimates instead!'

That last is a barbed sentence which strikes home to-day.

[1] [Swinburne: "A Word to the Country," in *A Midsummer Holiday*, etc., 1884.]

[2] [In *Endymion* (1880), chap. xciv.]

We may be pardoned if, dazzled by the splendour of our Midsummer Day's pageant, we forget for a moment the uses to which ships are, or may be, applied, and think of them only in their intrinsic strength and beauty.

'Take it all in all, a ship of the line is the most honourable thing that man, as a gregarious animal, has ever produced. By himself, unhelped, he can do better things than ships of the line; he can make poems and pictures, and other such concentrations of what is best in him. But, as a being living in flocks, and hammering out, with alternate strokes and mutual agreement, what is necessary for him in those flocks to get or produce, the ship of the line is his first work. Into that he has put as much of his human patience, common sense, forethought, experimental philosophy, self-control, habits of order and obedience, thoroughly-wrought handiwork, defiance of brute elements, careless courage, careful patriotism, and calm expectation of the judgement of God, as can well be put into a space of three hundred feet long by eighty broad. And I am thankful to have lived in an age when I could see this thing so done.'

It is Ruskin who is speaking,[1] and I can rejoice with him in the contemplation of these magnificient masterpieces of human skill. But what is the next step? Having built our ship, and christened her, and manned her with our best flesh and blood, and crowned her with the Threefold Cross which is the emblem of our sovereignty, what are we to do with her? In another place, and writing under a different inspiration, Ruskin tells us that wherever there is war there must be injustice on the one side or the other, or on both. 'War,' he says, in words which might well have been written during the South African frenzy—'war may be so involved with national prejudices, or ignorances, that neither of the contending nations can conceive injustice as attaching to their cause; nay, the constitution of their governments, and the clumsy crookedness of their political dealings with each other, may be such as to prevent either of them from knowing the actual cause for which they have gone to war.'[2]

[1] [*Harbours of England*, 1856. Introduction.]
[2] [*Modern Painters*, vol. iii. pt. iv. ch. xviii. § 32.]

Wars of self-defence—wars for the maintenance of home and freedom and national existence—may be necessary and even noble. But of all the wars which can be traced down the long, red battle-line of human history, how many can be justly called wars of self-defence? How many have been created by insensate ambition, by the lust of aggrandizement, by cruel and clamorous jealousies, by the blundering diplomacy of miscalled statesmen? If we believed that our British fleet was to be employed for purposes of challenge or attack, we ought to pray that the lightning of heaven might send it to the bottom.

But that England should be 'confident from foreign purposes,' and impregnably secure against aggression, is a duty which she owes to God, to the world, and to herself. 'The white wake of her vessels is the avenue to her palace-front, along which no enemy may approach.' A few years ago, fear and doubts and misgivings on this score would have been unthinkable. It seemed as if the nations of the world had learnt the lesson of mutual forbearance, had recognized the obligation of the strong to the weak, and had realized that war is the greatest calamity which can afflict the human race. But all these optimistic dreams—all these Beatific Visions of the Brotherhood of Man already existing and operating on earth—were dispelled in an instant by the tragedy of South Africa. We learned in three years of agony that the brutal passions of mankind are as strong as ever, that the idea of chivalry towards the weak and the defenceless had perished from the minds of men, and that the ministers of the Prince of Peace could be the shrillest inciters to bloodshed. What we did then, other countries may do now. After that miserable experience, it is folly to indulge in millennial dreams; and, as we gaze on the assembled battle-ships of England, we are forced to consider the possibility that, on some unforeseen alarm, arising at a moment's notice in a district severed from us by half the compass of the globe, they may be forced to strike in defence of an Empire which, just because it is world-wide, is also vulnerable.

It was the contemplation of some such possibility as this that suggested to George Canning, speaking at Plymouth in 1823, one of the noblest images in the oratory of the ancient or the modern world:

'Our present repose,' he said, 'is no more a proof of inability to act, than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town is a proof they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted for action. You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses, now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion—how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage—how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awaken its dormant thunder. Such as is one of those magnificent machines when springing from inaction into a display of its might—such is England herself, while, apparently passive and motionless, she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion. But God forbid that that occasion should arise.' [1]

[1] [*Times*, Nov. 3, 1823; *Annual Register*, 1823.]

XXIII

'VERNON LEE'

(1856–)

READING BOOKS

['Vernon Lee' (Miss Violet Paget) was born in 1856. She has published plays, stories, studies of the Renaissance and of the eighteenth century in Italy, philosophical dialogues and miscellaneous essays. She lives in Italy, and her essays reflect Italian and continental life at least as much as English. Browning has introduced her name into his *Asolando* as a writer on Italian landscape to be mentioned in the same breath with Ruskin. The present essay is taken from her *Hortus Vitae* (1903); other books are *Euphorion* (1884), *Limbo* (1897), *Genius Loci* (1905), and *Gospels of Anarchy* (1908).]

THE chief point to be made in this matter is: that books, to fulfil their purpose, do not always require to be read. A book, for instance, which is a present, or an *hommage de l'auteur*, has already served its purpose, like a visiting-card or a luggage label, at best like a ceremonial bouquet; and it is absurd to try and make it serve twice over, by reading it. The same applies, of course, to books lent without being asked for, and, in a still higher degree, to a book which has been discussed in society, and thus furnished out a due amount of conversation; to read such a book is an act of pedantry, showing slavishness to the names of things, and lack of insight into their real nature, which is revealed by the function they have been able to perform. Fancy, if public characters had to learn to snuff—a practice happily abandoned—because they occasionally received gifts of enamelled snuffboxes from foreign potentates!

But there are subtler sides to this subject, and it is of these

hommage de l'auteur, Fr. = 'with the author's compliments,' i.e. a presentation copy.

I fain would speak. We are apt to blunt our literary sense by reading far too much, and to lessen our capacity for getting the great delights from books by making reading into a routine and a drudgery. Of course I know that reading books has its utilitarian side, and that we have to consider printed matter (let me never call it literature!) as the raw material whence we extract some of the information necessary to life. But long familiarity with an illiterate peasantry like the Italian one, inclines me to think that we grossly exaggerate the need of such book-grown knowledge. Except as regards scientific facts and the various practices—as medicine, engineering, and the like, founded on them—such knowledge is really very little connected with life, either practical or spiritual, and it is possible to act, to feel, and even to think and to express one's self with propriety and grace, while having simply no literature at all behind one. That this is really no paradox is proved by pointing to the Greeks, who, even in the time of Plato—let alone the time, whenever that was, of Homer—had not much more knowledge of books than my Italian servant, who knows a few scraps of Tasso, possesses a *Book of Dreams; or Key to the Lottery*, and uses the literature I have foolishly bestowed upon him as blotters in which to keep loose bills, and wherein occasionally to do addition sums. So that the fact seems to be that reading books is useful chiefly to enable us to wish to read more books!

How many times does one not feel checked, when on the point of lending a book to what we call uneducated persons, by wondering what earthly texture of misapprehension and blanks they will weave out of its allusions and suggestions? And the same is the case of children. What fitter reading for a tall Greek goddess of ten than the tale of Cupid and Psyche, the most perfect of fairy stories with us; wicked sisters, subterranean adventures, ants helping to sort seeds, and terrible awaking drops of hot oil spilt over the bridegroom? But when I read to her this afternoon, shall I not see quite plainly over the edge of the book, that all the things which make it just what it is to me—the indescribable quality of the South, of antiquity and paganism—are utterly missed out; and that, to this divine young nymph, *Cupid and Psyche* is distinguishable from, say, *Beauty and the Beast* only by the unnecessary addition of a lot of heathenish names and the words which she does not even

want to understand? Hence literature, alas! is, so to speak, for the literate; and one has to have read a great, great deal in order to taste the special exquisiteness of books, their marvellous essence of long-stored-up, oddly mixed, subtly selected and hundredfold distilled suggestion.

But once this state of things reached, there is no need to read much; and every reason for not *keeping up*, as vain and foolish persons boast, "with literature." Since, the time has come, after planting and grafting and dragging watering-pots, for flowering and fruition; for books to do their best, to exert their full magic. This is the time when a verse, imperfectly remembered, will haunt the memory; and one takes down the book, reads it and what follows, judiciously breaking off, one's mind full of the flavour and scent. Or, again, talking with a friend, a certain passage of prose—the account of the Lambs going to the play when young, or the beginning of *Urn Burial*, or a chapter (with due improvised skippings) of *Candide*—comes up in conversation; and one reads it rejoicing with one's friends, feeling the special rapture of united comprehension, of mind touching mind, like the little thrill of voice touching voice on the resolving sevenths of the old duets in thirds. Or even when, remembering some graver page—say the dedication of *Faust* to Goethe's dead contemporaries—one fetches the book and reaches it silently to the other one, not daring to read it out loud. . . . It is when these things happen that one is really getting the good of books; and that one feels that there really is something astonishing and mysterious in words taken out of the dictionary and arranged with commas and semicolons and full stops between them.

The greatest pleasures of reading consist in re-reading. Sometimes almost in not reading at all, but just thinking or feeling what there is inside the book, or what has come out of it, long ago, and passed into one's mind or heart, as the case may be. I wish to record in this reference a happy week once passed, at vintage time, in the Lower Apennines, with a beautiful copy of *Hippolytus*, bound in white, which had been given me, regardless of my ignorance of Greek, by my dear Lombard friend who resembles a faun. I carried it about in my pocket; sometimes, at rare intervals, spelling out some word in *mai* or *tatos*, and casting a glance on the interleaved crib; but more

mai, tatos, frequent Greek terminations.

often letting the volume repose by me on the grass and crushed mint of the cool yard under the fig tree, while the last belated cicala sawed, and the wild bees hummed in the ivy flower of the old villa wall. For once you know the spirit of a book, there is a process (known to Petrarch with reference to Homer, whom he was unable to understand) of taking in its charm by merely turning over the pages, or even, as I say, in carrying it about. The literary essence, which is uncommonly subtle, has various modes of acting on us; and this particular manner of absorbing a book's spirit stands to the material operation called *reading*, much in the same way that *smell*, the act of breathing invisible volatile particles, stands to the more obvious wholesale process of *taste*.

Nay, such is the virtuous power of books, that, to those who are initiated and reverent, it can act from the mere title, or more properly, the binding. Of this I had an instance quite lately in the library of an old Jacobite house on the North Tyne. This library contained, besides its properly embodied books, a small collection existing, so to speak, only in the spirit, or at least in effigy; a door, to wit, being covered with real book-backs, or, more properly, backs of real books of which the inside was missing. A quaint, delightful collection! *Female Traits*, two volumes; four volumes (what dinners and breakfasts, as well as suppers, of horrors!) of Webster's *Vittoria Corombona*, etc., the *Siege of Mons*, *Ancient Mysteries*, *The Epigrams of Martial*, *A Journey through Italy*, and Crébillon's novels. Contemplating these pseudo shelves of pageless tomes, I felt acutely how true it is that a book (for the truly lettered) can do its work without being read. I lingeringly relished (why did not Johnson give us a verb to *saporate*?) this mixed literature's flavour, humorous, romantic, and pedantic, beautifully welded. And I recognized that those gutted-away insides were quite superfluous: they had yielded their essence and their virtue.

XXIV

MARY ELIZABETH COLERIDGE

(1861–1907)

GIFTS

[Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, poet, novelist, and essayist, and a grand-niece of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was born in London on Sept. 23, 1861. She early showed signs of literary gifts in verses and stories, and was much helped by the tuition of William Johnson Cory, the poet and Eton schoolmaster. Her first novel, *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*, a fantastic romance, appeared in 1893, to be followed by others of a like sort. In 1896 and 1897 she published two little books of exquisite poems, over the pseudonym 'Anodos.' In 1900 was published the book of essays, *Non Sequitur*, from which the present essay is taken. She wrote many essays, reviews, and short stories, which appeared in different papers and magazines, and a selection from her unpublished or little-known works was published after her death under the title of 'Gathered Leaves.' She died, unmarried, on Aug. 25, 1907, and towards the end of the year a collected edition of her poems was issued under the editorship of Sir Henry Newbolt.]

THERE are gifts that are no gifts, just as there are books that are no books. A donation is not a gift.

A portrait painted - a teapot presented by subscription, is not a gift. The giving is divided among too many. The true gift is from one to one. Furthermore tea, sugar, and flannel petticoats are not gifts. If I bestow these conveniences on one old woman, she may regard them in that aspect; but if I bestow them on eleven others at the same time, she looks upon them as her right. By giving more I have given less. The dole is no more like the gift than charity is like love. A £50 cheque on the occasion of a marriage between Blank and Blank is not a gift; it is a transfer of property.

And why is it *de rigueur* that if somebody I like goes into partnership with somebody she likes, I must give her an enormous silver buttonhook when she has six already? The

pleasure I confer on her by doing so is not worth the value of the penny stamp which she must, equally *de rigueur*, waste on informing me that she is pleased. It is not within the bounds of possibility that a human being can appreciate more than—say fifty presents at a time, when she has to write notes for them all. The line should be drawn at fifty—for large and generous natures at seventy; and all friends who have not sent in their buttonhooks before a certain date should be requested to distribute them over the coming years instead. As a lily in winter, so is the unexpected gift. But the gift that arrives by tens and tens of tens is a nightmare and an oppression.

Again, the periodical gift is never refreshing; it is too much of the nature of tribute. A present on Midsummer Day would be worth two at Christmas.

The free gift only cometh of the free.

The articles of furniture—lamps, matchboxes, footstools, and so on—duly exchanged between members of the same family, at certain seasons, are not gifts. They are a kind of tax levied by duty on liking, and duty claims the credit of them. Liking responds with what is called gratitude—a doubtful virtue at best, impossible between true friends—too near obsequiousness in the poor, too hollow for sincerity in the rich. There is no element of surprise about these presents. The spirit of giving is killed by regularity. How can I care—except in a material way—for what is part of my annual income? The heart is not interested. I get these things because my name is down on a piece of paper, not because some one is possessed with an impatient desire to please or to share pleasure.

Rarely, among the many things that are passed from hand to hand, is one a gift; and the giver is not so common as he was. System has attacked and ruined him even in the nursery. Santa Claus no longer comes down the chimney on Christmas Eve as he (or she) did when the child was never sure what might be in his stocking. As soon as he can write at all—or sooner—the child writes a list of "Christmas wishes," and these are conscientiously fulfilled by his father and mother, who know a great deal more than his grandfather and grandmother knew, only they do not know—unless he tells them—what it is that he wants. A feeling of depressed amazement stole over me

one day when I heard a little girl enumerating the items on her list :—

A Writing-desk.
A Muff.
A Prayer-book.
A Whole Family of Giraffes.

What sort of mother could that have been who was not aware that her daughter wanted A Whole Family of Giraffes unless she saw it in black and white ? And as for the Writing-desks and Muffs and Prayer-books, the child ought to have had them anyhow. We should never have thought such things were presents at all when we were young ; the bare necessities of life !

No. A gift to be a gift must not be asked for. Dante laid down this rule, with many others, which lead one to reflect that it must have been difficult to give him a present. The request is payment ; he who receives in this case buys, though he who gives cannot be accused of selling. The poet also decrees that a gift which is not so valuable to the recipient as it would be to the giver is no true gift. Romantic generosity would have been spared many a pang, had she considered this precept. *The Falcon*[1] would not have been cooked for dinner ; the life of *The Kentucky Cardinal* might have been saved. People who have pearls are curiously fond of stringing them together and offering them to pigs. It makes the pig unhappy in the end.

There is a third saying of Dante, which is a counsel of perfection ; the face of the gift should resemble the face of him to whom the gift is given. If this be so, only those who understand each other's appearance should venture to give. My friend, who has an expression like a beautiful sermon, must not present me with a volume of Lightfoot when French novels are written all over my speaking countenance. Neither must I inflict on her the works of 'Gyp.'

It is a complicated business altogether. Three minutes of serious thinking make it impossible for anyone to give anyone anything. Yet the deed is done every year boldly and

[1] [In Boccaccio's story, versified in English by Patmore and Longfellow, and dramatized by Barry Cornwall and Tennyson. *The Kentucky Cardinal* is a novel by James Lane Allen (1900)]

openly, and few are sensible that they have undertaken a more delicate transaction than the robbery of a Bank in broad daylight.

When Rosalind, at a moment's notice, gave Orlando the chain from her neck, the action was perfect on her side and on his. Any man a little lower than Shakespeare would have made Orlando show it and talk about it in the forest; he would not have let it pass without a single further allusion. Celia remembers, she teases Rosalind; but the two lovers will never speak of it again. There was no merit in Rosalind; she gave because she could not help herself. How could Orlando thank her except in silence? Like another young gentleman in the same circumstances, he had been little happy could he have said how much.

There is in some natures a high intolerance of the airy fetters cast round the heart by the constant memory of beneficence. They give freely, but freely they do not receive. They must send something by return of post, like the two friends in *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, who regularly transmitted to each other the same candlestick and the same note-book turn about, as each anniversary chimed the hour on their clocks—whereby they saved an incalculable amount of time, money, and emotion. One sweet lady goes so far as to say that all presents should be of perishable character—a basket of fruit, a bunch of flowers—that they may be at once forgotten

Yet, if the truth were known, it might be found that the smaller, the more insignificant the gift, the longer it is remembered. There may be many motives for keeping the Golden Rose; there can be only one for keeping a rose-leaf. Thus was it said by a man of old time who knew what a woman liked and gave her a distaff: 'Great grace goes with a little gift, and all the offerings of friends are precious.'

XXV

WALTER ALEXANDER RALEIGH

(1861–)

'MIGHT IS RIGHT'

[Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh, Professor of English Literature at Oxford since 1904, was born in 1861, educated at University College, London, and King's College, Cambridge. He has been Professor of Modern Literature at University College, Liverpool, and of English Literature at Glasgow University, and has published books on *The English Novel* (1894), on *Robert Louis Stevenson* (1895), on *Style* (1897), on *Milton* (1900), on *Wordsworth* (1903), on *Shakespeare* in 'The English Men of Letters' series (1907), *Essays on Johnson* (1910), on *Romance* (1917), and pamphlets on the European war, one of which is here reproduced with slight omissions. He received a knighthood in 1911. Sir Walter Raleigh has written expressly on *Style*, but it is from every one of his books that the student may best learn the art of writing. For a further critical opinion see the note prefaced to essay XXXI in this book, p 235 Of the present essay Mr. E. V. Lucas makes one of the characters in his book, *The Vermilion Box*, say, 'If you want the clearest idea of the war from the ethical and historical points of view you must . . . in particular get Walter Raleigh on *Might and Right*.' It was first published in October, 1914.]

It is now recognized in England that our enemy in this war is not a tyrant military caste, but the united people of modern Germany. We have to combat an armed doctrine which is virtually the creed of all Germany. Saxony and Bavaria, it is true, would never have invented the doctrine; but they have accepted it from Prussia, and they believe it. The Prussian doctrine has paid the German people handsomely; it has given them their place in the world. When it ceases to pay them, and not till then, they will reconsider it. They will not think, till they are compelled to think. When they find themselves face to face with a greater and more enduring strength than their own, they will renounce their idol. But

they are a brave people, a faithful people, and a stupid people, so that they will need rough proofs. They cannot be driven from their position by a little paper shot. In their present mood, if they hear an appeal to pity, sensibility, and sympathy, they take it for a cry of weakness. I am reminded of what I once heard said by a genial and humane Irish officer concerning a proposal to treat with the leaders of a Zulu rebellion. 'Kill them all,' he said, 'it's the only thing they understand.' He meant that the Zulu chiefs would mistake moderation for a sign of fear. By the irony of human history this sentence has become almost true of the great German people, who built up the structure of modern metaphysics. They can be argued with only by those who have the will and the power to punish them.

The doctrine that Might is Right, though it is true, is an unprofitable doctrine, for it is true only in so broad and simple a sense that no one would dream of denying it. If a single nation can conquer, depress, and destroy all the other nations of the earth and acquire for itself a sole dominion, there may be matter for question whether God approves that dominion; what is certain is that He permits it. No earthly governor who is conscious of his power will waste time in listening to arguments concerning what his power ought to be. His right to wield the sword can be challenged only by the sword. An all-powerful governor who feared no assault would never trouble himself to assert that Might is Right. He would smile and sit still. The doctrine, when it is propounded by weak humanity, is never a statement of abstract truth: it is a declaration of intention, a threat, a boast, an advertisement. It has no value except when there is some one to be frightened. But it is a very dangerous doctrine when it becomes the creed of a stupid people, for it flatters their self-sufficiency, and distracts their attention from the difficult, subtle, frail, and wavering conditions of human power. The tragic question for Germany to-day is what she can do, not whether it is right for her to do it. The buffaloes, it must be allowed, had a perfect right to dominate the prairie of America, till the hunters came. They moved in herds, they practised shock-tactics, they were violent, and very cunning. There are but few of them now. A nation of men who mistake violence for strength, and cunning for

wisdom, may conceivably suffer the fate of the buffaloes, and perish without knowing why.

To the English mind the German political doctrine is so incredibly stupid that for many long years, while men in high authority in the German Empire, ministers, generals, and professors, expounded that doctrine at great length and with perfect clearness, hardly any one could be found in England to take it seriously, or to regard it as anything but the vapourings of a crazy sect. England knows better now; the scream of the guns has awakened her. The German doctrine is to be put to the proof. Who dares to say what the result will be? To predict certain failure to the German arms is only a kind of boasting. Yet there are guarded beliefs which a modest man is free to hold till they are seen to be groundless. The Germans have taken Antwerp; they may possibly destroy the British fleet, overrun England and France, repel Russia, establish themselves as the dictators of Europe—in short, fulfil their dreams. What then? At an immense cost of human suffering they will have achieved, as it seems to us, a colossal and agonizing failure. Their engines of destruction will never serve them to create anything so fair as the civilization of France. Their uneasy jealousy and self-assertion is a miserable substitute for the old laws of chivalry and regard for the weak, which they have renounced and forgotten. The will and high permission of all-ruling Heaven may leave them at large for a time, to seek evil to others. When they have finished with it, the world will have to be remade.

We cannot be sure that the Ruler of the world will forbid this. We cannot even be sure that the destroyers, in the peace that their destruction will procure for them, may not themselves learn to rebuild. The Goths, who destroyed the fabric of the Roman Empire, gave their name, in time, to the greatest mediaeval art. Nature, it is well known, loves the strong, and gives to them, and to them alone, the chance of becoming civilized. Are the German people strong enough to earn that chance? That is what we are to see. They have some admirable elements of strength, above any other European people. No other European army can be marched in close order, regiment after regiment, up the slope of a glacis, under the fire of machine guns, without flinching, to certain death. This corporate courage and corporate discipline is

so great and impressive a thing that it may well contain a promise for the future. Moreover, they are, within the circle of their own kin, affectionate and dutiful beyond the average of human society. If they succeed in their worldly ambitions, it will be a triumph of plain brute morality over all the subtler movements of the mind and heart.

On the other hand, it is true to say that history shows no precedent for the attainment of world-wide power by a people so politically stupid as the German people are to-day. There is no mistake about this; the instances of German stupidity are so numerous that they make something like a complete history of German international relations. Here is one. Any time during the last twenty years it has been matter of common knowledge in England that one event, and one only, would make it impossible for England to remain a spectator in a European war—that event being the violation of the neutrality of Holland or Belgium. There was never any secret about this, it was quite well known to many people who took no special interest in foreign politics. Germany has maintained in this country, for many years, an army of spies and secret agents; yet not one of them informed her of this important truth. Perhaps the radical difference between the German and the English political systems blinded the astute agents. In England nothing really important is a secret, and the amount of privileged political information to be gleaned in barbers' shops, even when they are patronized by Civil servants, is distressingly small. Two hours of sympathetic conversation with an ordinary Englishman would have told the German Chancellor more about English politics than ever he heard in his life. For some reason or other he was unable to make use of this source of intelligence, so that he remained in complete ignorance of what every one in England knew and said.

Here is another instance. The programme of German ambition has been voluminously published for the benefit of the world. France was first to be crushed; then Russia; then, by means of the indemnities procured from these conquests, after some years of recuperation and effort, the naval power of England was to be challenged and destroyed. This programme was set forth by high authorities, and was generally accepted; there was no criticism, and no demur.

The crime against the civilization of the world foreshadowed in the horrible words 'France is to be crushed' is before a high tribunal; it would be idle to condemn it here. What happened is this. The French and Russian part of the programme was put into action last July. England, who had been told that her turn was not yet, that Germany would be ready for her in a matter of five or ten years, very naturally refused to wait her turn. She crowded up on to the scaffold, which even now is in peril of breaking down under the weight of its victims, and of burying the executioner in its ruins. But because England would not wait her turn, she is overwhelmed with accusations of treachery and inhumanity by a sincerely indignant Germany. Could stupidity, the stupidity of the wise men of Gotham, be more fantastic or more monstrous?

German stupidity was even more monstrous. A part of the accusation against England is that she has raised her hand against the nation nearest to her in blood. The alleged close kinship of England and Germany is based on bad history and doubtful theory. The English are a very mixed race, with enormous infusions of Celtic and Roman blood. The Roman sculpture gallery at Naples is full of English faces. If the German agents would turn their attention to hatters' shops, and give the barbers a rest, they would find that no English hat fits any German head. But suppose we were cousins, or brothers even, what kind of argument is that on the lips of those who but a short time before were explaining, with a good deal of zest and with absolute frankness, how they intended to compass our ruin? There is something almost amiable in fatuity like this. A touch of the fool softens the brute.

The Germans have a magnificent war-machine which rolls on its way, crushing all that it touches. We shall break it if we can. If we fail, the German nation is at the beginning, not the end, of its troubles. With the making of peace, even an armed peace, the war-machine has served its turn; some other instrument of government must then be invented. There is no trace of a design for this new instrument in any of the German shops. The governors of Alsace-Lorraine offer no suggestions. The bald fact is that there is no spot in the world where the Germans govern another race and are

not hated. They know this, and are disquieted; they meet with coldness on all hands, and their remedy for the coldness is self-assertion and brag. The Russian statesman was right who remarked that modern Germany has been too early admitted into the comity of European nations. Her behaviour, in her new international relations, is like the behaviour of an uneasy, jealous upstart in an old-fashioned quiet drawing-room. She has no genius for equality; her manners are a compound of threatening and flattery. When she wishes to assert herself, she bullies; when she wishes to endear herself, she crawls; and the one device is no more successful than the other.

Might is Right; but the sort of might which enables one nation to govern another in time of peace is very unlike the armoured thrust of the war-engine. It is a power compounded of sympathy and justice. The English (it is admitted by many foreign critics) have studied justice and desired justice. They have inquired into and protected rights that were unfamiliar, and even grotesque, to their own ideas, because they believed them to be rights. In the matter of sympathy their reputation does not stand so high; they are chill in manner, and dislike all effusive demonstrations of feeling. Yet those who come to know them know that they are not unimaginative; they have a genius for equality; and they do try to put themselves in the other fellow's place, to see how the position looks from that side. . . . England has done her best, and does feel a disinterested solicitude for the peoples under her charge. She has long been a mother of nations, and is not frightened by the problems of adolescence.

The Germans have as yet shown no sign of skill in governing other peoples. Might is Right; and it is quite conceivable that they may acquire colonies by violence. If they want to keep them they will have to shut their own professors' books, and study the intimate history of the British Empire. We are old hands at the business; we have lost more colonies than ever they owned, and we begin to think that we have learnt the secret of success. At any rate, our experience has done much for us, and has helped us to avoid failure. Yet the German colonial party stare at us with bovine malevolence. In all the library of German theorizing you will look in vain

for any explanation of the fact that the Boers are, in the main, loyal to the British Empire. If German political thinkers could understand that political situation, which seems to English minds so simple, there might yet be hope for them. But they regard it all as a piece of black magic, and refuse to reason about it. How should a herd of cattle be driven without goads? Witchcraft, witchcraft! . . .

Another thing that the Germans will have to learn for the welfare of their much-talked Empire is the value of the lone man. The architects and builders of the British Empire were all lone men. Might is Right; but when a young Englishman is set down at an outpost of Empire to govern a warlike tribe, he has to do a good deal of hard thinking on the problem of political power and its foundations. He has to trust to himself, to form his own conclusions, and to choose his own line of action. He has to try to find out what is in the mind of others. A young German, inured to skilled slavery, does not shine in such a position. Man for man, in all that asks for initiative and self-dependence, Englishmen are the better men, and some Germans know it. There is an old jest that if you settle an Englishman and a German together in a new country, at the end of a year you will find the Englishman governor, and the German his head clerk. A German must know the rules before he can get to work.

More than three hundred years ago a book was written in England which is in some ways a very exact counterpart to General von Bernhardi's notorious treatise. It is called *Tamburlaine*, and, unlike its successor, is full of poetry and beauty. Our own colonization began with a great deal of violent work, and much wrong done to others. We suffered for our misdeeds, and we learned our lesson, in part at least. Why, it may be asked, should not the Germans begin in the same manner, and by degrees adapt themselves to the new task? Perhaps they may, but if they do, they cannot claim the Elizabethans for their model. Of all men on earth the German is least like the undisciplined, exuberant Elizabethan adventurer. He is reluctant to go anywhere without a copy of the rules, a guarantee of support, and a regular pension. His outlook is as prosaic as General von Bernhardi's or General von der Goltz's own, and that is saying a great deal. In all the German political treatises there is an immeasurable

dreariness. They lay down rules for life, and if they be asked what makes such a life worth living they are without any hint of an answer. Their world is a workhouse, tyrannically ordered, and full of pusillanimous jealousies.

It is not impious to be hopeful. A Germanized world would be a nightmare. We have never attempted or desired to govern them, and we must not think that God will so far forget them as to permit them to attempt to govern us. Now they hate us, but they do not know for how many years the cheerful brutality of their political talk has shocked and disgusted us. I remember meeting, in one of the French Mediterranean dependencies, with a Prussian nobleman, a well-bred and pleasant man, who was fond of expounding the Prussian creed. He was said to be a political agent of sorts, but he certainly learned nothing in conversation. He talked all the time, and propounded the most monstrous paradoxes with an air of mathematical precision. Now it was the character of Sir Edward Grey, a cunning Machiavel, whose only aim was to set Europe by the ears and make neighbours fall out. A friend who was with me, an American, laughed aloud at this, and protested, without producing the smallest effect. The stream of talk went on. The error of the Germans, we were told, was always that they are too humane; their dislike of cruelty amounts to a weakness in them. They let France escape with a paltry fine, next time France must be beaten to the dust. Always with a pleasant outward courtesy, he passed on to England. England was decadent and powerless, her rule must pass to the Germans. 'But we shall treat England rather less severely than France,' said this bland apostle of Prussian culture, 'for we wish to make it possible for ourselves to remain in friendly relations with other English speaking peoples.' And so on—the whole of the Bernhardi doctrine, explained in quiet fashion by a man whose very debility of mind made his talk the more impressive, for he was simply parroting what he had often heard. No one criticized his proposals, nor did we dislike him. It all seemed too mad; a rather clumsy jest. His world of ideas did not touch our world at any point, so that real talk between us was impossible. He came to see us several times, and always gave the same kind of mesmerized recital of Germany's policy. The grossness of the whole thing

was in curious contrast with the polite and quiet voice with which he uttered his insolences. When I remember his talk I find it easy to believe that the German Emperor and the German Chancellor have also talked in such a manner that they have never had the smallest opportunity of learning what Englishmen think and mean.

While the German doctrine was the plaything merely of hysterical and supersensitive persons, like Carlyle and Nietzsche, it mattered little to the world of politics. An excitable man, of vivid imagination and invalid constitution, like Carlyle, feels a natural predilection for the cult of the healthy brute. Carlyle's English style is itself a kind of epilepsy. Nietzsche was so nervously sensitive that everyday life was an anguish to him, and broke his strength. Both were poets, as Marlowe was a poet, and both sang the song of Power. The brutes of the swamp and the field, who gathered round them and listened, found nothing new or unfamiliar in the message of the poets. 'This,' they said, 'is what we have always known, but we did not know that it is poetry. Now that great poets teach it, we need no longer be ashamed of it.' So they went away resolved to be twice the brutes that they were before, and they named themselves Culture-brutes.

It is difficult to see how the world, or any considerable part of it, can belong to Germany, till she changes her mind. If she can do that, she might make a good ruler, for she has solid virtues and good instincts. It is her intellect that has gone wrong. Bishop Butler was one day found pondering the problem whether a whole nation can go mad. If he had lived to-day, what would he have said about it? Would he have admitted that that strangest of grim fancies is realized?

It would be vain for Germany to take the world; she could not keep it; nor, though she can make a vast number of people miserable for a long time, could she ever hope to make all the inhabitants of the world miserable for all time. She has a giant's power, and does not think it infamous to use it like a giant. She can make a winter hideous, but she cannot prohibit the return of spring, or annul the cleansing power of water. Sanity is not only better than insanity; it is much stronger, and Might is Right.

Meantime, it is a delight and a consolation to Englishmen

that England is herself again. She has a cause that it is good to fight for, whether it succeed or fail. The hope that uplifts her is the hope of a better world, which our children shall see. She has wonderful friends. From what self-governing nations in the world can Germany hear such messages as came to England from the Dominions oversea? 'When England is at war, Canada is at war.' 'To the last man and the last shilling, Australia will support the cause of the Empire.' These are simple words, and sufficient; having said them, Canada and Australia said no more. In the company of such friends, and for the creed that she holds, England might be proud to die; but surely her time is not yet.

Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide:
And whether Earth's great offspring, by decree,
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,
Not argument but effort shall decide.
They number many heads in that hard flock:
Trim swordsmen they push forth: yet try thy steel.
Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel
The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew
A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,
And bring the army of the faithful through.[1]

[1] [George Meredith, *Sonnet to J. M.*]

XXVI

JAMES ALFRED SPENDER

(1862–)

A TALK ABOUT MONEY

[James Alfred Spender, journalist and author of *The Comments of Bagshot* (two series, 1907 and 1911), was born at Bath in 1862. He was educated at Bath College and Balliol College, Oxford. He has edited *The Westminster Gazette* since 1896. The *Comments* appeared serially in that newspaper, as did also his *A Modern Journal, by Greville Minor* (1904). Others of his books are *The Indian Scene* and *The New Fiction, and other Papers*. *The Comments of Bagshot* profess to be fragments from the notebooks, and reminiscences of the conversation, of an imaginary retired Civil Servant of the name of Bagshot, but they may be legitimately regarded as a series of essays in the tradition of Addison's imaginary Mr. Spectator, Will Wimble, and Sir Roger de Coverley and Steele's imaginary Mr. Bickerstaff.]

LET me for a moment suspend my selection from Bagshot's notebooks to recall a talk which has stamped itself on my memory as revealing more of my friend than he generally let us see. We were three in number—B., myself, and a friend of his and mine, whom I will call Slackford, an eminent official well known in the public service for his extreme competence and affected cynicism. It was a June evening, and we had gone down to dine with Bagshot at his house in the country, and were sitting in the garden after dinner, smoking his excellent cigars. For a time everything was placid, then something or other set Slackford going about the iniquities of the working man, whom he declared to be idle and greedy. B. became Socratic, and induced him, in particular, to denounce a certain set of workmen to whom, he said, a Government Department had just made a base surrender. B. then observed that the case had come before him, and he had discovered that the men in question had

earned, on the average, rather less than 4*s*. for a day of nine hours. Slackford blustered and declared it was quite as much as they were worth, whereupon Bagshot made a rough calculation of Slackford's wage, which worked out at about £6 for a day of seven hours. Granting a whole world of difference between Slackford's value to the public and the value of the aforesaid labourers, was a man 'greedy and idle' who wanted a very little more than a thirtieth part of what Slackford received (and what he was known to complain of bitterly as a most inadequate salary)?

Slackford said with some justice that this *argumentum ad hominem* put him in a false position, and immediately changed his tack to a sweeping assertion that we were all equally greedy together in these days, and that there really was nothing worth having in life except money and the things that money bought. Small blame to them, then, if they tried to get more, and small blame to us if we tried to prevent them from getting more. Slackford then launched out against the 'cant' which was talked by preachers and writers about money being an evil, when everybody knew that nobody believed it, and all the world spent the whole of its time in seeking to get money and keep it. 'Every one,' said Slackford comprehensively, 'was either greedy or needy; those who weren't greedy were needy, and those who weren't needy were greedy. Most of us were both greedy and needy.'

Bagshot was not to be drawn, and at first he returned a chaffing answer. But Slackford persisted, and was presently denouncing Radicals and Socialists, first for their dishonesty and then for their foolish ignorance of human nature. Then Bagshot's patience broke, and he marched to the attack. His exact words I cannot, of course, remember at this distance of time, but the general tenor of the conversation is vividly in my mind. 'If,' he said, 'I had to make the choice—which, mercifully, I have not—I would far rather live in a country in which Socialism was a failure than in a country in which materialism was a success. To say that money is the only thing that counts in this world is not only not true, but a particularly foolish kind of paradox.' 'A dull platitude, on

argumentum ad hominem. See 'argument' in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

the contrary,' growled Slackford. 'Let's test it, then,' said B. 'By all means,' replied the other. 'Well, then, is there any man who, standing by the death-bed of a wife he loved, would hesitate for one moment to take all he had and throw it into the sea, if by so doing he could bring her back?' 'You put it too high,' said Slackford. 'But you said the "greatest thing in the world,"' was the retort. 'Take another case, if you will. Did the rich young men who went to South Africa show the white feather in order to be sure of going home and enjoying their wealth? Notoriously not. Or would you, the cynic, commit one paltry crime in order to save the whole of your miserable salary?' One after another came a torrent of typical cases, till Slackford was protesting that he had been misunderstood, while Bagshot, breathless but triumphing, was declaiming upon the blessed inaccessibility to the money motive of all that really mattered in life. He got himself finally to the point of saying that the very importance, *on their own plane*, of the things that money could buy makes the refusal of average decent people to get money at the cost of self-respect a more shining virtue. Slackford found courage to say that a vast number of people had no such scruple, but Bagshot insisted that his 'average decent people' were an immense majority.

Since Slackford still muttered, Bagshot took another illustration. 'In my Utopia,' he said, 'I would so order Nature that people, in bequeathing their property, should be able to bequeath also their characters, dispositions, and personal appearance, let us say—to make it easy—at the best time of their lives. I would make it a condition that the legatee should not be allowed to accept the one without at the same time accepting the other, and that, in default of this acceptance, the property should revert to the State,' 'Now,' he said, addressing himself to Slackford, 'supposing X.'—naming a notorious millionaire—'left you the whole of his millions on condition that you took his cruel chin and snub nose and rascally disposition and predisposition to gout, would you accept them?' 'I'm d——d if I would,' was the emphatic reply; 'which means,' pursued Bagshot quietly, 'that you would not for all his money change places with him. But let us take a less acute case not involving present company. Would my charming niece Molly, who is sadly impecunious,

and greatly desires to marry a most deserving but wholly unendowed young officer, take her Aunt Sarah's thousand a year if she had also to assume Sarah's honoured countenance and evangelical disposition? We will take dear Sarah at her best—say, aged thirty. I have a photograph of her over there, and you can judge for yourselves.' Swiftly we judged, and declared that Molly would go penniless all her days, scrub floors, sweep crossings, and die at the last in a workhouse rather than take up that forbidding heritage. Bagshot pursued the theme with a wealth of illustration. Was there any painter, poet, musician, or man of letters worth his salt who would exchange his talents for the endowed Philistinism of Mr. T.? The initial concealed an extremely undesirable personality, and Slackford and I exclaimed together that the offer would scarcely tempt even a starving journalist. 'Right, of course,' said Bagshot; 'and now perhaps Slackford begins to see what I am driving at. In my Utopia the State grows enormously rich from repudiated estates, and all social problems are solved without taxing anybody, simply because, when it comes to the point, almost everybody is quite convinced that no money can possibly compensate them for the loss of beauty, health, happiness, good temper, and other things that really count.' I have never seen Bagshot happier than when he had wrung the admission of this edifying platitude out of the cynic Slackford. Slackford, in fact, gave it up. 'It must,' he remarked, 'be extremely mortifying for the ghosts of those Utopian aunts and uncles to watch the effect of their dispositions, if that is permitted in the place to which they go.' 'It is, of course, permitted,' said Bagshot; 'and it makes an excellent beginning of purgatory.'

XXVII

'ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH' (A. G. GARDINER)

(1865–)

ON CATCHING THE TRAIN

[It is only recently that the identity of 'Alpha of the Plough' with Mr. A. G. Gardiner, editor of the London *Daily News* from 1902 to 1919, has been disclosed. His articles over this signature appeared in *The Star*, a London evening newspaper, and have been collected into two volumes under the titles of *Pebbles on the Shore* (1916) and *Leaves in the Wind* (1918). Of the first he says: 'This selection is a sort of informal diary of moods in a time of peril. They are pebbles gathered on the shore of a wild sea'—in brief, they are essays. For long their authorship was a matter of conjecture, and it was Mr. Gardiner's whim to conceal it, and there are references to this mystification in the present essay.]

THANK heaven! I have caught it. . . . I am in a corner seat, the compartment is not crowded, the train is about to start, and for an hour and a half, while we rattle towards that haven of solitude on the hill that I have written of aforetime, I can read, or think, or smoke, or sleep, or talk, or write as I choose. I think I will write, for I am in the humour for writing. Do you know what it is to be in the humour for writing—to feel that there is a head of steam somewhere that must blow off? It isn't so much that you have something you want to say as that you must say something. And, after all, what does the subject matter? Any peg will do to hang your hat on. The hat is the thing. That saying of Rameau[1] fits the idea to perfection. Some one was asking that great composer if he did not find difficulty in selecting a subject. 'Difficulty? A subject?' said Rameau. 'Not at all. One subject is as good as another. Here, bring me the *Dutch Gazette*.'

That is how I feel now, as the lights of London fade in our

[1] [Jean Philippe Rameau (1683–1764).]

wake and the fresh air of the country blows in at the window. Subject? Difficulty? Here, bring me the *Dutch Gazette*. But while any subject would serve, there is one of particular interest to me at this moment. It came into my mind as I ran along the platform just now. It is the really important subject of catching trains. There are some people who make nothing of catching trains. They can catch trains with as miraculous an ease as Cinquevalli catches half-a-dozen billiard-balls. I believe they could catch trains in their sleep. They are never too early and never too late. They leave home or office with a quiet certainty of doing the thing that is simply stupefying. Whether they walk, or take a bus, or call a taxi, it is the same: they do not hurry, they do not worry, and when they find they are in time and that there's plenty of room they manifest no surprise.

I have in mind a man with whom I once went walking among the mountains on the French-Italian border. He was enormously particular about trains and arrangements the day or the week before we needed them, and he was wonderfully efficient at the job. But as the time approached for catching a train he became exasperatingly calm and leisured. He began to take his time over everything and to concern himself with the arrangements of the next day or the next week, as though he had forgotten all about the train that was imminent, or was careless whether he caught it or not. And when at last he had got to the train, he began to remember things. He would stroll off to get a time-table or to buy a book, or to look at the engine—especially to look at the engine. And the nearer the minute for starting the more absorbed he became in the mechanism of the thing, and the more animated was his explanation of the relative merits of the P.L.M. engine and the North-Western engine. He was always given up as lost, and yet always stepped in as the train was on the move, his manner aggravatingly unruffled, his talk pursuing the quiet tenor of his thought about engines or about what we should do the week after next.

Now I am different. I have been catching trains all my life, and all my life I have been afraid I shouldn't catch them. Familiarity with the habits of trains cannot get rid of a secret conviction that their aim is to give me the slip if it can be

done. No faith in my own watch can affect my doubts as to the reliability of the watch of the guard or the station clock or whatever deceitful signal the engine-driver obeys. Moreover, I am oppressed with the possibilities of delay on the road to the station. They crowd in on me like the ghosts into the tent of King Richard. There may be a block in the streets, the bus may break down, the taxi-driver may be drunk or not know the way, or think I don't know the way, and take me round and round the squares as Tony Lumpkin drove his mother round and round the pond, or—in fact, anything may happen, and it is never until I am safely inside (as I am now) that I feel really happy.

Now, of course this is a very absurd weakness. I ought to be ashamed to confess it. I am ashamed to confess it. And that is the advantage of writing under a pen name. You can confess anything you like, and nobody thinks any the worse of you. You ease your own conscience, have a gaol delivery of your failings look them, so to speak, straight in the face, and pass sentence on them—and still enjoy the luxury of not being found out. You have all the advantages of a conviction without the nuisance of the penalty. Decidedly, this writing under a pen name is a great casement of the soul.

It reminds me of an occasion on which I was climbing with a famous rock climber. I do not mind confessing (over my pen name) that I am not good on rocks. My companion on the rope kept addressing me at critical moments by the name of Saunders. My name, I rejoice to say, is not Saunders, and he knew it was not Saunders, but he had to call me something, and in the excitement of the moment could think of nothing but Saunders. Whenever I was slow in finding a handhold or foothold, there would come a stentorian instruction to Saunders to feel to the right or the left, or higher up or lower down. And I remember that I found it a great comfort to know that it was not I who was so slow, but that fellow Saunders. I seemed to see him as a laborious, futile person who would have been better employed at home looking after his hens. And so in these articles, I seem again to be impersonating the ineffable Saunders, of whom I feel at liberty to speak plainly. I see before me a long vista of self-revelations, the real title of which ought to be 'The Showing Up of Saunders.'

But to return to the subject. This train-fever is, of course, only a symptom. It proceeds from that apprehensiveness of mind that is so common and incurable an affliction. The complaint has been very well satirized by one who suffered from it. 'I have had many and severe troubles in my life,' he said, '*but most of them never happened.*' That is it. We people who worry about the trains and similar things live in a world of imaginative disaster. The heavens are always going to fall on us. We look ahead, like Christian, and see the lions waiting to devour us, and when we find they are only poor imitation lions, our timorous imagination is not set at rest, but invents other lions to scare us out of our wits.

And yet intellectually we know that these apprehensions are worthless. Experience has taught us that it is not the things we fear that come to pass, but the things of which we do not dream. The bolt comes from the blue. We take elaborate pains to guard our face, and get a thump in the small of the back. We propose to send the fire-engine to Ulster, and turn to see Europe in flames. Cowper put the case against all 'fearful saints' (and sinners) when he said:

> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and will break
> With blessings on your head.

It is the clouds you don't dread that swamp you. Cowper knew, for he too was an apprehensive mortal, and it is only the apprehensive mortal who really knows the full folly of his apprehensiveness.

Now, save once, I have never lost a train in my life. The exception was at Calais when the Brussels express did, in defiance of the time-table, really give me and others the slip, carrying with it my bag containing my clothes and the notes of a most illuminating lecture. I chased that bag all through Northern France and Belgium, inquiring at wayside stations, wiring to junctions, hunting among the mountains of luggage at Lille. It was at Lille that—— But the train is slowing down. There is the slope of the hillside, black against the night sky, and among the trees I see the glimmer of a light beckoning me as the lonely lamp in Greenhead Ghyll used to beckon Wordsworth's Michael. The night is full of stars, the landscape glistens with a late frost: it will be a jolly two miles' tramp to that beacon on the hill.

XXVIII

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

(1865–)

A VISIONARY

[Mr. William Butler Yeats, poet and essayist, was born at Dublin on June 13, 1865. He was educated at Hammersmith and Dublin, and was for three years an art student, but left art for literature at the age of 21. His first volume appeared in 1886 and his latest in 1919, and he has published many poetic dramas. Both poems and plays have a wonderful beauty They are specifically Irish and mystic, and these preoccupations govern his prose. One of his first books (written in collaboration with Mr. E J. Ellis) was an interpretation of William Blake's mystical writings, and he has since written much on magic, and on the Irish belief in fairies Of recent years he has given most of his time to the furtherance of an Irish Theatre which shall uphold an artistic and national ideal, unhindered by commercial considerations. The present essay is taken from his volume, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893)].

A YOUNG man came to see me at my lodgings the other night, and began to talk of the making of the earth and the heavens and much else. I questioned him about his life and his doings. He had written many poems and painted many mystical designs since we met last, but latterly had neither written nor painted, for his whole heart was set upon making his mind strong, vigorous, and calm, and the emotional life of the artist was bad for him, he feared. He recited his poems readily, however. He had them all in his memory. Some indeed had never been written down. They, with their wild music as of winds blowing in the reeds,[1] seemed to me the very inmost voice of Celtic sadness, and of Celtic longing for infinite things the world has never seen. Suddenly it seemed to me that he

[1] I wrote this sentence long ago. This sadness now seems to me a part of all peoples who preserve the moods of the ancient peoples of the world. I am not so preoccupied with the mystery of Race as I used to be, but leave this sentence and other sentences like it unchanged. We once believed them, and have, it may be, not grown wiser.

was peering about him a little eagerly. 'Do you see anything, X——?' I said. 'A shining, winged woman, covered by her long hair, is standing near the doorway,' he answered, or some such words. 'Is it the influence of some living person who thinks of us, and whose thoughts appear to us in that symbolic form?' I said; for I am well instructed in the ways of the visionaries and in the fashion of their speech. 'No,' he replied; 'for if it were the thoughts of a person who is alive, I should feel the living influence in my living body, and my heart would beat and my breath would fail. It is a spirit. It is some one who is dead or who has never lived.'

I asked what he was doing, and found he was clerk in a large shop. His pleasure, however, was to wander about upon the hills, talking to half-mad and visionary peasants, or to persuade queer and conscience stricken persons to deliver up the keeping of their troubles into his care. Another night, when I was with him in his own lodging, more than one turned up to talk over their beliefs and disbeliefs, and sun them as it were in the subtle light of his mind. Sometimes visions come to him as he talks with them, and he is rumoured to have told divers people true matters of their past days and distant friends, and left them hushed with dread of their strange teacher, who seems scarce more than a boy, and is so much more subtle than the oldest among them.

The poetry he recited me was full of his nature and his visions. Sometimes it told of other lives he believes himself to have lived in other centuries, sometimes of people he had talked to, revealing them to their own minds. I told him I would write an article upon him and it, and was told in turn that I might do so if I did not mention his name, for he wished to be always 'unknown, obscure, impersonal.' Next day a bundle of his poems arrived, and with them a note in these words: 'Here are copies of verses you said you liked. I do not think I could ever write or paint any more. I prepare myself for a cycle of other activities in some other life. I will make rigid my roots and branches. It is not now my turn to burst into leaves and flowers.'

The poems were all endeavours to capture some high, impalpable mood in a net of obscure images. There were fine passages in all, but these were often embedded in thoughts which have evidently a special value to his mind, but are to other

men the counters of an unknown coinage. To them they seem merely so much brass or copper or tarnished silver at the best. At other times the beauty of the thought was obscured by careless writing as though he had suddenly doubted if writing was not a foolish labour. He had frequently illustrated his verses with drawings, in which an imperfect anatomy did not altogether hide extreme beauty of feeling. The fairies in whom he believes have given him many subjects, notably Thomas of Ercildoune sitting motionless in the twilight while a young and beautiful creature leans softly out of the shadow and whispers in his ear. He had delighted above all in strong effects of colour: spirits who have upon their heads instead of hair the feathers of peacocks; a phantom reaching from a swirl of flame towards a star; a spirit passing with a globe of iridescent crystal—symbol of the soul half shut within his hand. But always under this largess of colour lay some tender homily addressed to man's fragile hopes. This spiritual eagerness draws to him all those who, like himself, seek for illumination or else mourn for a joy that has gone. One of these especially comes to mind. A winter or two ago he spent much of the night walking up and down upon the mountain talking to an old peasant who, dumb to most men, poured out his cares for him. Both were unhappy: X—— because he had then first decided that art and poetry were not for him, and the old peasant because his life was ebbing out with no achievement remaining and no hope left him. Both how Celtic! how full of striving after a something never to be completely expressed in word or deed. The peasant was wandering in his mind with prolonged sorrow. Once he burst out with 'God possesses the heavens God possesses the heavens—but He covets the world'; and once he lamented that his old neighbours were gone, and that all had forgotten him: they used to draw a chair to the fire for him in every cabin, and now they said, 'Who is that old fellow there?' 'The fret' [Irish for doom] 'is over me,' he repeated, and then went on to talk once more of God and heaven. More than once also he said, waving his arm towards the mountain, 'Only myself knows what happened under the thorn-tree forty years ago;' and as he said it the tears upon his face glistened in the moonlight.

This old man always rises before me when I think of X——.

Both seek—one in wandering sentences, the other in symbolic pictures and subtle allegoric poetry—to express a something that lies beyond the range of expression; and both, if X—— will forgive me, have within them the vast and vague extravagance that lies at the bottom of the Celtic heart. The peasant visionaries that are, the landlord duellists that were, and the whole hurly-burly of legends—Cuchulain fighting the sea for two days until the waves pass over him and he dies, Caolte storming the palace of the gods, Oisin seeking in vain for three hundred years to appease his insatiable heart with all the pleasures of faeryland, these two mystics walking up and down upon the mountains uttering the central dreams of their souls in no less dream-laden sentences, and this mind that finds them so interesting—all are a portion of that great Celtic phantasmagoria whose meaning no man has discovered, nor any angel revealed.

XXIX

H. G. WELLS

(1866–)

MY FIRST FLIGHT

(EASTBOURNE, FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 1912)

[Mr. Herbert George Wells, novelist and publicist, was born at Bromley, Kent, on Sept. 21, 1866. He was educated at the Midhurst Grammar School and the Royal College of Science, where he attended Huxley's lectures. He published a textbook of Biology in 1893. His early journalistic work appeared in *The Pall Mall Gazette* and was followed by a series of fantastic scientific stories, like *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Invisible Man* (1897), the *War of the Worlds* (1898). His later books of the same order have more serious purpose, looking always to the amelioration of the social order through the exercise of intelligence: such are *The Food of the Gods* (1904) and *In the Days of the Comet* (1905). In still later novels the fantastic element is omitted, and Mr. Wells's imagination concerns itself with the actual modern world, whether in such novels as *The New Machiavelli* (1911) or in his book *An Englishman looks at the World* (1914). But always Mr. Wells is interested in the actual attainments and the possible future development of science, as in his *Anticipations* (1902), and as in the subjoined essay, which appeared first in the *Daily Mail*, August 5, 1912.]

HITHERTO my only flights have been flights of imagination, but this morning I flew. I spent about ten or fifteen minutes in the air; we went out to sea, soared up, came back over the land, circled higher, planed steeply down to the water, and I landed with the conviction that I had had only the foretaste of a great store of hitherto unsuspected pleasures. At the first chance I will go up again, and I will go higher and further.

This experience has restored all the keenness of my ancient interest in flying, which had become a little fagged and flat by too much hearing and reading about the thing and not enough participation. Sixteen years ago, in the days of

Langley and Lilienthal, I was one of the few journalists who believed and wrote that flying was possible—it affected my reputation unfavourably, and produced in the few discouraged pioneers of those days a quite touching gratitude. Over my mantel as I write hangs a very blurred and bad but interesting photograph that Professor Langley sent me sixteen years ago. It shows the flight of the first piece of human machinery heavier than air that ever kept itself up for any length of time. It was a model, a little affair that would not have lifted a cat; it went up in a spiral and came down unsmashed, bringing back, like Noah's dove, the promise of tremendous things.

That was only sixteen years ago, and it is amusing to recall how cautiously even we out-and-out believers did our prophesying. I was quite a desperate fellow; I said outright that in my lifetime we should see men flying. But I qualified that by repeating that for many years to come it would be an enterprise only for quite fantastic daring and skill. We conjured up stupendous difficulties and risks. I was deeply impressed and greatly discouraged by a paper a distinguished Cambridge mathematician produced to show that a flying machine was bound to pitch fearfully, that as it flew on, its pitching *must* increase until up went its nose, down went its tail, and it fell like a knife. We exaggerated every possibility of instability. We imagined that when the aeroplane wasn't 'kicking up ahind and afore' it would be heeling over to the lightest side wind. A sneeze might upset it. We contrasted our poor humble equipment with the instinctive balance of a bird, which has had ten million years of evolution by way of a start. . . .

The waterplane in which I soared over Eastbourne this morning with Mr. Grahame-White was as steady as a motor-car running on asphalt.

Then we went on from those anticipations of swaying insecurity to speculations about the psychological and physiological effects of flying. Most people who look down from the top of a cliff or high tower feel some slight qualms of dread, many feel a quite sickening dread. Even if men struggled high into the air, we asked, wouldn't they be smitten up there by such a lonely and reeling dismay as to lose all self-control? And above all, wouldn't the pitching and tossing make them quite horribly sea-sick?

I have always been a little haunted by that last dread. It gave a little undertow of funk to the mood of lively curiosity with which I got aboard the waterplane this morning—that sort of faint, thin funk that so readily invades one on the verge of any new experience; when one tries one's first dive, for example, or pushes off for the first time down an ice run. I thought I should very probably be sea-sick—or, to be more precise, air-sick; I thought also that I might be very giddy, and that I might get thoroughly cold and uncomfortable. None of those things happened.

I am still in a state of amazement at the smooth steadfastness of the motion. There is nothing on earth to compare with that, unless—and that I can't judge—it is an ice yacht travelling on perfect ice. The finest motor-car in the world on the best road would be a joggling, quivering thing beside it.

To begin with, we went out to sea before the wind, and the plane would not readily rise. We went with an undulating movement, leaping with a light splashing pat upon the water, from wave to wave. Then we came about into the wind and rose, and looking over I saw that there were no longer those periodic flashes of white foam. I was flying. And it was as still and steady as dreaming. I watched the widening distance between our floats and the waves. It wasn't by any means a windless day; there was a brisk, fluctuating breeze blowing out of the north over the downs. It seemed hardly to affect our flight at all.

And as for the giddiness of looking down, one does not feel it at all. It is difficult to explain why this should be so, but it is so. I suppose in such matters I am neither exceptionally steady-headed nor is my head exceptionally given to swimming. I can stand on the edge of cliffs of a thousand feet or so and look down, but I can never bring myself right up to the edge nor crane over to look to the very bottom. I should want to lie down to do that. And the other day I was on that Belvedere place at the top of the Rotterdam skyscraper, a rather high wind was blowing, and one looks down through the chinks between the boards one stands on upon the heads of the people in the streets below; I didn't like it. But this morning I looked directly down on a little fleet of fishing boats over which we passed, and on the crowds assembling on the beach, and on the bathers who stared up at us from

the breaking surf, with an entirely agreeable exaltation. And Eastbourne, in the early morning sunshine, had all the brightly detailed littleness of a town viewed from high up on the side of a great mountain.

When Mr. Grahame-White told me we were going to plane down I will confess I tightened my hold on the sides of the car and prepared for something like the down-going sensation of a switchback railway on a larger scale. Just for a moment there was that familiar feeling of something pressing one's heart up towards one's shoulders and one's lower jaw up into its socket and of grinding one's lower teeth against the upper, and then it passed. The nose of the car and all the machine was slanting downwards, we were gliding quickly down, and yet there was no feeling that one rushed, not even as one rushes in coasting a hill on a bicycle. It wasn't a tithe of the thrill of those three descents one gets on the great mountain railway in the White City. There one gets a disagreeable quiver up one's backbone from the wheels, and a real sense of falling.

It is quite peculiar to flying that one is incredulous of any collision. Some time ago I was in a motor-car that ran over and killed a small dog, and this wretched little incident has left an open wound upon my nerves. I am never quite happy in a car now; I can't help keeping an apprehensive eye ahead. But you fly with an exhilarating assurance that you cannot possibly run over anything or run into anything—except the land or the sea, and even those large essentials seem a beautifully safe distance away.

I had heard a great deal of talk about the deafening uproar of the engine. I counted a headache among my chances. There again reason reinforced conjecture. When in the early morning Mr. Travers came from Brighton in this Farman in which I flew I could hear the hum of the great insect when it still seemed abreast of Beachy Head, and a good two miles away. If one can hear a thing at two miles, how much the more will one not hear it at a distance of two yards? But at the risk of seeming too contented for anything I will assert I heard that noise no more than one hears the drone of an electric ventilator upon one's table. It was only when I came to speak to Mr. Grahame-White, or he to me, that I discovered that our voices had become almost infinitesimally small.

And so it was I went up into the air at Eastbourne with the impression that flying was still an uncomfortable, experimental, and slightly heroic thing to do, and came down to the cheerful gathering crowd upon the sands again with the knowledge that it is a thing achieved for everyone. It will get much cheaper, no doubt, and much swifter, and be improved in a dozen ways we *must* get self-starting engines, for example, for both our aeroplanes and motor-cars—but it is available to-day for anyone who can reach it. An invalid lady of seventy could have enjoyed all that I did if only one could have got her into the passenger's seat. Getting there was a little difficult, it is true; the waterplane was out in the surf, and I was carried to it on a boatman's back, and then had to clamber carefully through the wires, but that is a matter of detail. This flying is indeed so certain to become a general experience that I am sure that this description will in a few years seem almost as quaint as if I had set myself to record the fears and sensations of my First Ride in a Wheeled Vehicle. And I suspect that learning to control a Farman waterplane now is probably not much more difficult than, let us say, twice the difficulty in learning the control and management of a motor-bicycle. I cannot understand the sort of young man who won't learn how to do it if he gets half a chance.

The development of these waterplanes is an important step towards the huge and swarming popularization of flying which is now certainly imminent. We ancient survivors of those who believed in and wrote about flying before there was any flying used to make a great fuss about the dangers and difficulties of landing and getting up. We wrote with vast gravity about 'starting-rails' and 'landing-stages,' and it is still true that landing an aeroplane, except upon a well-known and quite level expanse, is a risky and uncomfortable business. But getting up and landing upon fairly smooth water is easier than getting into bed. This alone is likely to determine the aeroplane routes along the line of the world's coast-lines and lake groups and waterways. The airmen will go to and fro over water as the midges do. Wherever there is a square mile of water the waterplanes will come and go like hornets at the mouth of their nest. But there are much stronger reasons than this convenience for keeping over water. Over water the air, it seems, lies in great

level expanses; even when there are gales it moves in uniform masses like the swift, still rush of a deep river. The airman, in Mr. Grahame-White's phrase, can go to sleep on it. But over the land, and for thousands of feet up into the sky, the air is more irregular than a torrent among rocks; it is—if only we could see it—a waving, whirling, eddying, flamboyant confusion. A slight hill, a ploughed field, the streets of a town, create riotous, rolling, invisible streams and cataracts of air that catch the airman unawares, make him drop disconcertingly, try his nerves. With a powerful enough engine he climbs at once again, but these sudden downfalls are the least pleasant and most dangerous experience in aviation. They exact a tiring vigilance.

Over lake or sea, in sunshine, within sight of land, this is the perfect way of the flying tourist. Gladly would I have set out for France this morning instead of returning to Eastbourne. And then coasted round to Spain and into the Mediterranean. And so by leisurely stages to India. And the East Indies. . . .

I find my study unattractive to-day.

XXX

G. S. STREET

(1867–)

THE PERSISTENCE OF YOUTH

[Mr. George Slythe Street, essayist and story-writer, was born at Wimbledon on July 18, 1867, and educated at the Charterhouse and at Exeter College, Oxford. He was one of the writers for *The National Observer*, under W. E. Henley's editorship. Together with Mr. Henley he edited the works of G. W. Steevens (see Essay XXXII). He has edited Congreve's Comedies, has himself written a play, and has been Joint-Examiner of Plays since 1914. His own fiction—for instance, *The Autobiography of a Boy* (1894) and *The Trials of the Bantocks* (1900)—is delightful comedy. His books of essays include one so called, published in 1902 (from which 'The Persistence of Youth' is taken), *Books and Things* (1905), *People and Questions* (1910), and *On Money and other Essays* (1914). A recent critic [1] speaks of Mr. Street as 'a thorough Briton with the stuff of Addison in his essays,' and says that he reads Mr. Street's portraits of Mr. Alfred Chudder 'with as much pleasure as any pages on which Sir Roger de Coverley appears.' Throughout this essay its date (1902) must be borne in mind.]

In all ages and in all languages the praises of youth have been joyously or pathetically sounded. From time immemorial men have been exhorted to make the most of their youth, remembering that it would quickly pass away, and the catalogue of the ills which old age brings with it has been drawn out with dismal iteration. In a sort of half-hearted way men learned the lesson. They enjoyed themselves as much as possible when they were young, and when they were old made things as unpleasant as they could for their juniors, to revenge their own shortcomings in the joy of youth, and spent the rest of their time grumbling to one another. But it has been reserved for our practical age and for us practical Anglo-Saxons to learn the lesson in its fullness, and to draw the

[Mr. Orlo Williams, in *The Essay* (Martin Secker, 1915).]

proper conclusion. We have determined to remain young until we die, and already the success we have achieved is remarkable. We made up our minds twenty years ago at most, and already the percentage of young men who have defied all the prosaic limitations of their ancestors is amazing. By young men I mean, of course, men who are visibly and characteristically young, who by the mere tale of years may be anything up to sixty. For some time I have diligently read the lists of new books, and looked through tables of contents in the sterner reviews, in the hope that some philosopher might be found explaining the extraordinary duration of youth in the present day. I have been disappointed in my search, and am driven to make a few poor suggestions of my own, somewhat as a man wishing to study law takes a pupil instead of a tutor: by dint of writing about the matter I may haply light upon some cause or causes other than the determination which I have mentioned and which is not sufficient in itself, since in other ages men have tried to remain young and have somehow or other failed.

But let us first review the facts. I propose to confine myself to men, because in regard to women the change has been already noted and much exaggerated, and in their case it is confused with literary and other conventions and fashions. Moreover, that branch of the subject has the danger that one's philosophical intention might be confused with a spirit of uncouth and vulgar sarcasm, which is far from one. We will keep to men. Now, in the early part of last century a man was a man at twenty or so, a middle-aged man at thirty, and old at fifty. At the present time he is a boy up to about thirty-five, a young man up to fifty, and he is hardly regarded as old until he has exceeded David's maximum of life by six or seven years.

For the first half of my statement I refer my readers to the literature of the period *passim*.

> Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
> Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty,

says Byron.[1] Is anybody now regarded as a confirmed bachelor on account of his age? Not, I am certain, under seventy. But one might quote for ever. Even in the middle

[1] [*Don Juan*, I, lxii.]

of the century Thackeray made elaborate fun of his Paul de Florac for posing as a young man at forty. I am acquainted with a young fellow whose friends and relations are making serious efforts to wean him from dissipation and bad companions and settle him in some regular business, and he is fifty-four.

As to the second part of the statement, my readers can supply their own instances by the thousand from their observation, the newspapers, and the conversation of their friends instances of a youthful persistence which would have amazed our grandfathers. In the year 1900, when the Ministry was being re-formed, the newspapers were all commenting on the extraordinary youthfulness of Mr. Wyndham and Lord Selborne. It was thought really audacious of Lord Salisbury to give high office to these lads. They are both about forty, and Pitt and Fox were in the blaze of their reputation and influence fifteen years earlier in their lives. It is, of course, a commonplace that we are served by older politicians than was the case in past times, but the interesting thing is that the comments on Lord Selborne and Mr. Wyndham referred to their absolute, not their comparative youth, rejoiced in the vigour and capacity for receiving new ideas which their youth implied, and were inclined to be nervous about the want of caution to which it might expose them. The same thing happened in Lord Randolph Churchill's case. I well remember hearing, when he resigned the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, people complain of his boyish petulance. I well remember it, because I was in my teens myself, and was rather disturbed by the length of time which had to elapse before I should be grown up. Lord Randolph was about forty at that time.

These instances, however, though they are properly germane to the subject, may be suspect because of the convention of politics, as of the bar, which speaks of men as young when all that is meant is that they are comparatively young at their trade. Let us take, therefore, a calling which notoriously can be and is pursued by anybody over seventeen. There is a 'dramatic critic' who is about forty-five years old and has been a dramatic critic for about twenty years, I believe Until a very few years ago he was always referred to as a 'young gentleman.' That reminds me of Mr. Max Beerbohm

(if he will not object to my mentioning it), who is thirty or so, and who is generally described as a 'youth.' If an author of twenty were to burst upon the world (such things have been), the critics would hardly admit that he was born.

These instances show the public tendency. They are, perhaps, partly explained by public intelligence. It takes the average person about three years to grasp a simple change in facts, if it is mentioned to him at least twice a week. Years and years ago I was a dramatic critic for a few months, and have still numerous acquaintances who have consulted me regularly ever since on the merits of every new play, though on every such occasion I have mentioned that I seldom go to the theatre. Suppose, then, when Mr. Wyndham was twenty-one, the average man was informed that he was a year older than when he was twenty. The average man could not grasp that fact until Mr. Wyndham was twenty-four. Accordingly, when Mr. Wyndham was forty the average man would have only advanced to the fact that he was twenty-six. Some such explanation may be brought against me when I advance my own theory that these men are called boys and youths and young gentlemen because they really are so.

I will therefore abandon these public instances and refer my readers to the host of men with whom they and I are personally acquainted, who are over forty and who are, veritably and actually, still very young men in appearance, in habits, and in conversation. You must know them. Let me describe one. He has a slight, youthful figure, dressed in the latest mode. His face is smooth and bland, adorned with an adolescent moustache. He has neat, smooth hair, growing quite low on his forehead, and showing as little tendency to baldness as when he was sixteen. He has bright, amiable, and absolutely expressionless eyes. His habits are as simple as his face. He rises at a reasonably early hour, and after a good breakfast reads all about cricket or football, as the case may be, in the paper. He reads rather slowly, and this occupation, together with answering a few invitations to play games—he writes more slowly than he reads—takes up his time till lunch. After lunch he plays an athletic game. In the evening he may possibly go to a play, avoiding those which are suspected of having anything

clever in them, or he may dance, or play a mild game of cards. If he has no such amusement, he is quite willing to talk from dinner to bed-time about the game he has played in the afternoon. This is his life in London: healthy and English. In the country there are more games and less newspapers. He never talks or listens to others talking about politics, or literature, or anything of that kind, not so much because it bores him as because he does not understand a word of it. I doubt if he was really aware until lately that anybody really cared for anything except games. The war[1] forced him to recognize that other transactions take place in life, but I think he will soon forget it. For the moment he has slightly modified his habit of estimating all men according to their proficiency in some game or sport, but the habit will reassert itself before long. Even now he never mentions General Baden-Powell without adding that he kept goal at Charterhouse.

Such is an acquaintance of mine. Such he has been and looked for twenty years, and such he will be and look for twenty years more. On his own subject he is full of impetuosity. I have known him return to the house after a long day's fishing and say as he entered the room, 'Papers come? What's the cricket? For Heaven's sake tell me the cricket!' He has a son at the University, and I often think what an ideal parent he must have seemed to his son's schoolmasters. No nonsense about intellect, or education, or that sort of thing. If his son learned to play football skilfully the school was the best of all schools in this best of all educated countries.

If all young men of forty were like this one the explanation would be easy. Devotion to athletic games would account for it all. But I know vicious young men of forty—young men who smoke too many cigars and sit up late and play cards for high stakes, like M. le Vicomte de Florac. Thackeray was, of course, mistaken in supposing that these practices were ever peculiar to youth. It is a lamentable fact that no age or country has universally accepted our own ideal of regular work and economical habits as the perfection of human life. But what is significant in the young men to whom I refer is that they do these things with the high spirits of youthful enjoyment, and in spite of their vices continue to look young.

[1] [The South African War, 1899–1902.]

Dissipation in middle life used to become a habit, a necessity —not a joyous affair at all. And the middle-aged dissipators used generally to have, or affect, some more serious interest. Caesar, for example, happened to rule the world and change its constitution. Charles Fox was a serious statesman with ideas in which he believed. Even 'Old Q.' had his side and interest in politics. Moreover, Caesar was bald and Charles Fox was fat. But these slim, smooth-faced, bright-eyed young debauchees of forty, who neither have nor pretend to have any interest in life but their dissipation, how do they do it? I remember hearing a woman refer to one of them as 'a nice boy.' I doubted his niceness and his boyhood, but she was right in her sense. There was nothing really wicked in his dissipation: it was the exuberance of a boy; and from a civilized point of view he had no claim, except the physical, to be thought a man.

These by no means exhaust the types of young men of forty; and if one passes from extreme cases to those in which boyishness is modified, a little and at times, by the rather serious pursuit of a profession or trade, one may include in the ranks of these young men the greater number of Englishmen belonging to the comfortable classes. How many are there, for example, who profess some sport or game as by far the chief interest of their lives—and I am loath to think them all hypocrites. If they are induced to talk on any other subject at all it will be in half-ideas, loosely expressed in comprehensive slang—just, in fact, as schoolboys talk. They have the intolerance of schoolboys for ideas not traditional and familiar to themselves, and the pride of schoolboys in their own ignorance. This may sound like harsh criticism, but I mean it for praise. Youth is everything. These young men of forty—nay, of fifty and sixty—are not naturally stupid, I am sure; but they feel instinctively that brains make a man grow old, and are determined to avoid them accordingly. One merely admires their astounding success. It is conceivable, indeed, that the national distrust and contempt of intellect may not be conducive to our continuance in high place in the competition of nations. But what a pity that is! If the world would only recognize that the accomplishment of perpetual youth is a far greater thing than the elaboration of intelligence, and, instead of taking advantage of our nobler

work, seek with a whole heart to follow in our footsteps, how wise the world would be!

There is one consequence of this duration of youth over which one chuckles. The merely young in years, those who had the exclusive title of youth a few generations ago, no longer, so to speak, have the place to themselves. The young man of twenty no longer triumphs in his young-manhood over his seniors. They are all young men too. Young men of forty bar his way and elbow him aside. It is very good for him. But this odd revenge of time tends to disappear, since at twenty a man nowadays is more and more a child. The extreme youth of undergraduates strikes every older person who revisits his University. It is quite common to meet young men, as they once were, of twenty, who tell you they intend to smoke when they are thirty. Such young men are of opinion that their enjoyments must be literally confined to athletic games for the next ten years or so, and have no desire to compete with the young men twenty years their seniors.

We grow up more slowly – there is no doubt of that. But that is a little off my subject, which is not the slow development of youth, but its persistence at the same point. How is it done? I have half suggested the neglect of the intellect and the studious cultivation of stupidity, which certainly becomes more and more the quality most sympathetic to the majority of our contemporaries. Almost anything will be forgiven a man of whose stupidity our world is convinced, and our high places are always at his service. But it is possible that this may be a consequence and not a cause of our perpetual youth, or both may be consequences of a common cause. Perhaps we work less than our fathers; for it is one of the numerous facts with which nature mocks our ideals that hard work ages a man more quickly than most things. But then we are told that our fathers were more leisurely than we are. Or we drink less? True that we no longer sit over our wine like gentlemen, but prefer horrible mixtures at odd times, like bar loafers; but the doctors say that a bottle of sound wine after dinner did our fathers less harm than the casual 'drink' does ourselves. We play games more; but then our play is hard work. . . . In fine, I give the explanation up, and must be content merely to admire.

XXXI

E. V. LUCAS

(1868–)

DIANA SHOAL

[Mr. Edward Verrall Lucas, editor, essayist, and anthologist, was born June 12, 1868, and educated privately, and at University College, London. He has edited what is one of the best editions of Charles Lamb, has written the life of Lamb (1905) and a book on *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* (1898). In 1899 he brought out *The Open Road*, the first of a delightful series of anthologies of mixed prose and verse: this dealt with the country; another with *The Friendly Town*; a third, *The Gentlest Art*, is an anthology of letters. More recently he has written novels, and one of these, in the form of letters written during the war, is quoted from in the prefatory note on p. 200 of this book. The present essay is taken from the collection entitled *One Day with Another* (1909). Other collections are *Old Lamps for New* (1911), *Loiterer's Harvest* (1913), *Cloud and Silver* (1916), and *A Boswell of Baghdad* (1917). A recent writer on 'The Decay of Syntax'[1] speaks of Mr. Lucas with, amongst others, Sir Walter Raleigh and Mr. Hilaire Belloc, as among the best living writers of English prose, 'having regard to their manner only,' and says that they have clearly formed their style by the study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century models; and as prose style must be formed upon models, their prose is good, because their models are good. But they are in no way archaistic, they abstain from no modernism that really aids their expression.']

THERE are names with which one feels one will never get upon terms of natural ease: names such as, to take examples from the teeming life around us, Homer Herring, which I noticed recently over a provincial milliner's window, or L. G. Chiozza Money, the prophet of Free Trade, or a tonsorial artist of Kensington, Ciccognani Smart. These names hold one as it were at arm's length, or at any rate such attraction as they exert with one hand is counterbalanced by the other.

And then there are names which directly one hears them one feels at home with; which become instantly as familiar

[1] [*The Times Literary Supplement*, May 8, 1919.]

as household words. We each have our taste, and you may think differently; but to me Diana Shoal is such a name.

Have you heard it before? How do you picture her? Divinely tall and fair—a huntress—a lady shedding sweet influence. Is Diana—your Diana—like that? In whose studio do you see her regally seated—in Mr. Sargent's, in Mr. Shannon's, or in John's?[1] (Don't say John's.)

Diana Shoal! How is it that when a woman's name is suddenly flashed at us we always think of her as young, while a man may be any age? Because, of course, you are thinking of Diana Shoal as young, and of course beautiful. I am not saying anything as to her age, but it amused me just now to see you imagining such summer radiance for her. I should like to proffer her as a new heroine to a number of novelists, and see what they made of her. How Mr. James would develop her introspective tendency and that odd trick she had of inserting adverbs in the unexpected place. Don't you see Mr. Barrie giving her the prettiest impulses, and Mr. Hope the gayest insouciant talk? In Mr. Galsworthy's hands the poor thing would be trapped within the iron bars of a social system hopelessly selfish and insincere; while in Mr. Mason's she would inspire a romantic young hero to travel all over the world and back again to Cornhill. Mrs. Humphry Ward would marry her to an ambitious young statesman, and Mr. Eichens, if we allowed him to deal with her (which we shouldn't), would move heaven and earth to get her into trouble.

'I know!' I seem to hear some one say, 'Diana Shoal is a new actress. All this farrago about her is a puff.' An actress? *The old father of Mr. Luther Busk was impayable; and of his bewitching daughter as played by Miss Diana Shoal, a newcomer at the theatre, what shall we say? There is only one word, and that, as usual, is a French one, to describe her essential charm: espièglerie. Miss Shoal is adorable, even if a little lacking, to a hypercritical sense, in what Aristotle called* . . . and so forth. Do you see that kind of criticism about Diana Shoal? No, sir, she is not an actress.

Nor is she a suffr—— But you never thought that.

But who *is* Diana Shoal? you ask with that suspicion of irritation which we keep—and very properly—for superior

[1] [Mr. Augustus John, President of the National Portrait Society.]

persons who play with our ignorance. Reader, I will be frank with you. I have only just discovered for myself. Yesterday I was as ig— as uninformed as you.

One hears from time to time strange stories of bank-notes that are found in old books bought for a few pence. M. Uzanne tells one in his fascinating volume on the Bouquinistes of the Paris quais; and they occur with some regularity in the papers. Thus:—

'A young mechanic at Oswestry has just had the good fortune to find a five-pound note between the pages of an old copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* which he had bought for twopence. The windfall was shared equally between the purchaser and the bookseller, to whom the finder honourably and generously told the story.'

That is the kind of thing—except that the conclusion is a little too good for human nature's daily food; I added it myself, having a leaning towards the impossible. And in the brave stories of treasure-trove, the key to the hiding-place, a map painfully traced on yellow paper, falls from the family Bible or the folio Hakluyt; while sometimes it is the missing will.

Although I have bought in my time many hundreds of volumes from Twopenny and Fourpenny Boxes, and many hundreds of volumes from the more patrician shelves inside the bookseller's shop, no bank-notes ever fluttered from their leaves. But in a book which I bought yesterday in Maryle-bone Lane (not a bad little street to hunt in), I found the story of Diana Shoal.

It runs thus, on a single broadsheet:—

NOTICE TO MARINERS

(*The bearings are Magnetic, and those concerning the visibility of lights are given from seaward*)

NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

Unsuccessful Search for Diana Shoal

Information has been received from Captain A. Mostyn-Field, H.M. Surveying Vessel *Penguin*, that, in August 1897,

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[*Bouquiniste*, second-hand bookseller; *quai*, embankment. The Paris second-hand booksellers have their shops on the embankment of the Seine.]

he sounded over an area embracing 80 miles in longitude and nearly 40 miles in latitude, in the vicinity of Diana Shoal, originally reported in 1852 as having a depth of 6 feet on it, and as being situated in lat. 8° 40′ N., long. 157° 20′ W.

The Penguin spent five days in the search, obtaining soundings of from 2560 to 2946 fathoms at distances of 7 to 10 miles apart, and observing no indication of a shoal in any part of the locality.

In view of the above, and the fact that schooners have plied for many years between Honolulu and Fanning island over the position of the shoal, and that it has not been seen since the first vague report, Diana Shoal has been expunged from the Admiralty Charts.

By Command of their Lordships,
W. J. L. WHARTON, *Hydrographer.*

So my first intimation, you see, concerning Diana Shoal was the news that she was no more; it is like the *Times* obituary column, which introduces us every morning to strangers of distinction whom now we have for ever lost the chance of meeting. But you see why I laughed when you were so certain she was young and beautiful.

XXXII

G. W. STEEVENS

(1869–1900)

THE MONOTYPE

[George Warrington Steevens, journalist and man of letters, was born at Sydenham, Dec 10, 1869. He was educated at the City of London school, where he won an extraordinary number of medals and scholarships. He was elected a Scholar of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1888 and a Fellow of Pembroke College in 1893. In the same year he took over the editorship of *The Cambridge Observer*, and later joined the staff of *The Pall Mall Gazette* (1893–5), writing also for Mr. W. E. Henley's papers, *The National Observer* and *The New Review* (in which last the present essay appeared, November, 1897). In 1896 he was invited to join the staff of *The Daily Mail*. For this paper he went as a special correspondent to the United States and to Turkey, and as a war-correspondent to the Sudan campaign of 1898, writing his well-known book, *With Kitchener to Khartoum*. He watched and reported the Dreyfus trial of 1899, went to India and wrote his book *In India* in the same year, and still in the same year accompanied the army to South Africa and was in Ladysmith during the siege, and died there of enteric on Jan. 15, 1900. His book, *From Capetown to Ladysmith* was published posthumously. Not all his work was journalism: his *Monologues of the Dead* (1895) are imaginative literature. Of his journalism Sir Sidney Lee has said: 'It was his endeavour . . . to present in words of all possible vividness, frankness, and terseness what he saw, thought, and felt.']

It is so complete and provident, foreseeing every difficulty and surmounting it, aware of every advantage and seizing it, that you can hardly help feeling it to be a portent, inexplicable, born out of season, without father or mother, or beginning of days.

Yet, though its inventor is a statistician, who came upon it not through the study of printing, but in the devising of calculating machines, the monotype, like every seeming

prodigy, is the issue of a long development, the offspring of a hundred ancestors. Revolution is the child of evolution in printing as everywhere else.

The machine looks modest, and, to anybody capable of understanding machines, very simple. It stands perhaps 4 feet high, it is 3 feet 8 inches long by 3 feet broad, and it weighs only 900 lb. It requires very little power to drive it. The buzz of its driving-belt and the click, click of the work it is doing hardly makes itself heard at your ear above the clatter of Leadenhall Street. Altogether it is one of the least ostentatious machines that ever made a revolution. But if you look at it closer and realize what it is doing, that machine is one of the greatest marvels of all the marvellous history of machinery, the crown of over five centuries' development in the most vital of all civilizing arts. The machine is casting and setting type all by itself—setting it, too, more regularly, more cleanly, more cheaply, and more untiringly than written words have ever been set before.

Click, click, click; and with each click a fire-new, shining letter slides out into its place in a line of print. Click, click, click, till a line is finished; the line slides up into its place in a column, and the machine, before you have finished watching the line fall in, has pushed out nearly half the next. Nobody is touching it—nobody telling it what to say. It just goes on clicking out words and words, thoughts and thoughts. It is the most human of all machines and the most inhuman. It is human in its seemingly self-suggested intelligence, inhuman in its deliberate yet unresting precision. Unprompted and unchecked, it might be clicking out life-giving truth or devilish corruption, and clicking it out for ever.

Its full name is the Lanston monotype machine; its familiars call it briefly the monotype. It is almost a relief—so much you are hypnotized by the apparent spontaneity of the thing—to learn that it is not saying just what it likes; that it is, after all, like other machines, man's servant. There is a paper roll being unwound and re-wound on the top of it, punched with holes in various positions like the drum of a musical box, which is telling it what to say. There is a kind of tank where from time to time it must be fed with metal to cast its types from. But within these limitations its activity is only bounded by the time required for each type to cool;

give it words to set and metal to set them with, and it will go on unaided till you like to stop it.

To get a vague idea of its working you must begin with the perforated roll. There is a keen-faced, clean-shaven young man in spectacles working what appears to be a typewriter in one corner of the room: that is the captain of the setting machine, and the man is the captain of that. The two parts make really one machine, and yet the one is perfectly independent in place or time of the other.

The machine's master begins by setting an index: the index fixes the length of the line required. Then he begins playing on the keys as with a typewriter; only each key, instead of writing a letter, punches two round holes in the roll. So he taps letter after letter till he has punched a word; then he taps a space and on to the next word. Presently, when he is coming to the end of a line, a bell rings. You notice a semi-circular dial, just above the bank of keys, with a pointer travelling across it. The bell means this: the line has now progressed so far that another syllable would fill it too full. You must now 'justify,' as printers call it—that is, equalize the spaces between the words of the line. The monotype's method of doing this is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all its beauties. There is a registering scale which has been following all the movements of the operator: it now reveals on the dial, first, how much space is over, to be divided equally among the spaces between the words; and second, the number of spaces between the words among which the residuary space is to be divided. Say there is one-tenth of an inch over and there are ten spaces: an addition of one-hundredth of an inch to each will justify the line. To do such a thing by hand means time and distraction of attention, and probably inaccuracy after all; to the monotype it is child's play. The operator simply taps a key which punches yet another hole in the ribbon. When the ribbon comes to control the setting machine, that hole ensures that the word-spaces shall be just one-hundredth above normal size, and the line will be justified with absolute mathematical exactness. When the ribbon is punched full it is lifted off the key-board and fixed on to the casting and setting machine. The holes in it correspond mathematically with a set of dies comprising all the characters and symbols used in type-setting. These are carried in a case

mounted on a compound slide, the parts of which move at right angles. Air is shot through these holes by a pneumatic tube, and the force brings the die required under a jet of molten metal. The metal is forced into the mould, the type is cast and shot out into the galley. The whole thing comes out hind part before and upside down; the justifying holes at the ends of each line are thus the first to come under the observation of the machine, which casts all the space-types of the lines accordingly. If there is a mistake as to the length of the line, the monotype refuses. It stops dead; the minder puts the error right, and the sagacious creature starts on again. When the whole galley is set, a proof is pulled and corrected in the ordinary way; each type is an individual, so there is no need of re-casting. When the type is done with, it can either be retained for use, being every bit as good as foundry type, or melted up and used over again. By reason of its facilities for changing the measure of lines, and its accuracy of justification, the monotype can set tabular matter and over-run illustrations better than this can be done by hand. It is the only machine which can make full use of capitals and italics as supplied in a full fount of type. Other machines can produce but 100 characters with a hundred different movements: it can produce 225 with thirty. To cut technicalities, the monotype can do everything that printing can ask. It is the child of evolution. Since very early in the century machinery has fought the compositor; and though the man has kept his head up hitherto, like the man he is, it was certain that in the end he must go down. Not down altogether, of course, but down as a hand-compositor: a man's a man, and will earn his bread whether he trims sails or stokes furnaces, whether he picks types out of a box into a stick or sits on a seat and hits keys. But the earliest efforts of machinery left the compositor by hand still easy master of the situation.

There have been two main families of these, which may conveniently be styled the spout kind and the wheel kind. The original begetter of the first, Dr. Church, was an American, like Mr. Lanston to-day; the inventors who brought it into practice, Young and Delcambre, were, again like him, not professional printers. Their machine, once more like its triumphant descendant of to-day, started with a key-board; the types were lying in grooves according to their kinds, and a

touch on the key released the first in the groove. The letters, successively released were conducted through devious passages, which finally all united in the spout. Thence they issued in an endless line; a second operator sat at the end of the spout to cut them up into lengths as they emerged, and justify the lines so made. It was magnificent, but it did not work. Types are more unruly than those who know them only as printed letters usually conceive. An *m* and an *i*, for instance, are of very different sizes and very different weights. The spout had to be broad enough for *m*, and so *i* slewed round and stuck in the middle, and had to be prised out with a bodkin; meanwhile, portly *m* was emerging with a thud into the receiver and ricochetting into the inane. Sometimes the operator at the key-board operated too fast, and then while *m* and *i* were struggling through their tunnels, *g* came bounding along and slipped in at the junction before them. If the type was sticky or the passages damp all these things became worse. So that the spout type of machine, though not unused, never conquered the human hand.

The wheel type was born in 1858, its inventor being a journalist, Dr. Mackie. In this family the types were arranged round a wheel—whether a disc or a grooved revolving pillar—which is spun round and arranged so that the right type stops opposite the receiver and slides in. Despite the irrelevant suggestions of Monte Carlo and the Buddhist praying-machine, this was a much faster and more practical kind of machine than the other. But even this found difficulties in working. It wore away the feet of the type in the grooves, so that they went 'off their feet,' as the phrase is, and you cannot take a type's shoes off and turn it out to grass. A type is not a butterfly either; but it can be broken on a wheel, and often is, in this kind of machine. The wheel machine, from these and other causes, was very expensive, and the human hand remained undismayed.

It was a different matter when the linotype arrived. This machine may be said to mark the transition from old to new, for it gave up the struggle with insubordinate, jamming, breaking types, and cast its own type as it went along. The operator taps his key, and the tap releases a die and brings it into place. The line when set is justified by driving up widening steel wedges between the words. The molten

metal is injected into the line of dies, forming a bar of type representing the line. This bar must be trimmed, and then it is ready to take its place in the galley. The dies are mechanically conveyed back to their own place. This machine was plainly a very great advance. It saved the labour involved in justification and the distribution of types, after being used, into their proper cases ready for use again. It saved cost of type, wear and tear of plant, and especially floor space. Its victory was neither immediate nor complete, for reasons which will appear in a moment; but, for the first time, it established an advantage for the machine over the hand.

Thus was the way prepared for the crowning achievement of the monotype. If it appears inferior in speed to the linotype because it involves the separate operations with the key-board and the casting-and-setting machine, it takes its revenge in the quality of the printing, in the range of its characters, in economy, and in convenience. The types are clean cut and deep in the shoulder, as it is called, so that they offer the promise of the very clearest and finest impression. The dies, being held in rows in a square case, require mechanical movements equal to only double the square root of their total number. If there are 225 characters—fifteen rows of fifteen apiece—there are fifteen horizontal and fifteen perpendicular movements to bring the dies under the jet of metal, or thirty in all. So with forty movements you could use 400 characters; with fifty, 625. The linotype needs a separate mechanical movement for each character: this necessarily limits the number of characters employed, and therewith—as, for instance, by the exclusion of italics—the range and attractiveness of the printing. In point of economy the monotype requires less labour than any other machine. Eight expert key-board operators can punch rolls enough to keep ten machines going; one man can feed and mind ten. That means nine men to ten complete machines—a complete machine run by a decimal fraction of a man! With this and other economies the cost of production works out roughly at something like one-quarter of that of hand-work. But perhaps the most attractive vista of possibility before the monotype is opened by the separability of its parts. Small printers can combine in the purchase and up-

keeping of a casting machine, each having his own key-board and sending its rolls to the central depot to be cast at leisure. This same roll can be stored away and kept to infinity.

It is virtually printed matter, and ready to go on the machine and come out in type at any moment. With other methods, whether linotype, wheel, spout, or hand, if you want to preserve matter—say for the second edition of a book—you must store away the type itself, taking up space for which you must pay rent, and spending money on stereotype plates on which you lose the interest. With the monotype you just put away the rolls on a shelf. When you want to reprint you just take down the rolls, put them on the machines, leave a man sitting up to feed them, and go to bed; when you wake up the monotype has done the rest.

In this light the apparent slowness involved in the separate parts of the monotype turns out a real gain in speed. All other setting machines are limited in their capacity by the endurance of their human operators. Imagine a press of work: when your linotypists are tired out you must let your machine stand idle while they sleep: your monotypists in the meantime, with their whole attention fixed on the mental processes of the key-board, with no distraction to the mechanical processes of the casting, may be presumed to have held out longer, at higher pressure, to have punched more than the other men have linotyped. When they go home to bed the casting machine will click serenely on all night; it wants no food but copy and metal, and no sleep at all.

And now for the most wonderful dream of all. No compositor at all, but every author his own printer! If the divine fire can be struck out on the keys of a typewriter, why not on the keys of a monotype? The sage of the future will unlade his wisdom in the form of little round holes in a brown-paper roll. He will send down the roll to his editor or publisher: it will be put on the machine, and the machine will turn it out in print without the touch of any hand but his own. If this can be, our valued friend the compositor turns out only a superfluous middleman after all. His profit must be cut off: he must go. After all, in this literary age, it is increasingly easy for him to become a popular author—a profession sometimes cleaner than his present one, and very often better paid.

Still, there will always remain one place for the compositor: he will make the author's corrections in the columns which the monotype has set up. The linotype abolishes the cost of corrections by abolishing the corrections themselves, and therewith incidentally abolishing literature also. In theory, correction is possible with it: it sets its type in solid lines, and if you want to add or subtract a comma, the whole line must be set over again. In practice, the resetting and re-casting of the whole line means too much trouble and time and expense; therefore the comma is not corrected, and bad work is the result. The reader is annoyed or confused or misled by mistakes, or else he is taught to believe that, in the art of writing, trifles don't matter. The writer is forced to acquiesce in the same heresy. He must not revise and correct, and in time, by dint of seeing many scandalous blunders in his work, learns to accept blunders in spelling, in grammar, in style, as a necessary condition of literature—of which disease literature must eventually die.

You who have seen your noblest sentiments, your most resounding phrases, pass under the harrow of the linotype will confess that this is no exaggeration. The linotype made for bad writing: the monotype, giving out work as easy of correction as hand-set types, if it does not make directly for good writing, at least it does not make against it. It does affirmatively make for good printing. In the meantime, it is permitted to welcome a machine which, whilst, like most of its breed, it makes life swifter and more exciting, does not, like many, leave it uglier than it found it.

[The reader may be interested to know that the present book has been set up by monotype. It is hoped that very few printers' errors may be found in it.]

XXXIII

HILAIRE BELLOC

(1870-)

THE BOOK

[Mr. Hilaire Belloc, historian, essayist, poet, novelist, and politician, was born of half-French parentage, at St. Cloud, near Paris on July 27, 1870. He was educated at the Oratory School, Edgbaston, and on leaving school served in the French artillery. In 1892 he proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford, where he gained the Brackenbury History Scholarship, 1895. In 1895 he published a small book of *Verses and Sonnets*, and in 1910 a larger book of *Verses*. He has written monographs on Danton, Robespierre, and Marie Antoinette, and a smaller book on the French Revolution, as well as a novel, *The Girondin*, concerned with the same period. He has been an untiring and unconventional traveller, as may be seen in his *Path to Rome* (1902), *Esto Perpetua* (1906), and *The Pyrenees* (1909). His knowledge of the Continent served him in good stead in a series of weekly articles on the European War, of which also he is writing the history (Vols I and II published 1915–16). He has published books of essays, *On Nothing*, *On Everything*, *On Something*, on *This and That* (from which the present essay is taken), and no one else has written essays in so many diverse styles. Apart from *The Girondin*, his novels are political satires. Mr. Belloc was a Member of Parliament from 1906 to 1910, and the head of the English Literature Department at the East London College from 1911 to 1913.]

THIS is written to dissuade all rich men from queering the pitch of us poor litteratoors, who have to write or starve. It is about a Mr. Foley: a Mr. Charles Foley, a banker and the son of a banker, who in middle life, that is at forty, saw no more use in coming to his office every day, but began to lead the life of a man of leisure. Next, being exceedingly rich, he was prompted, of course, to write a book. The thing that prompted him to write a book was a thought, an idea. It took him suddenly as ideas will, one Saturday evening as he was walking home from his Club. It was a fine night and the idea seemed to come upon him out of the sky. This was

the idea: that men produce such and such art in architecture and society and so forth, on account of the kind of climate they live in. Such a thought had never come to him before and very probably to no other man. It was simple like a seed—and yet, as he turned it over, what enormous possibilities.

He lay awake half the night examining it. It spread out like a great tree and explained every human thing on earth; at least if to climate one added one or two other things, such as height above the sea and consequent rarity of the air and so forth—but perhaps all these could be included in climate.

Hitherto every one had imagined that nations and civilizations had each their temperament and tendency or genius, but those words were only ways of saying that one did not know what it was. *He* knew: Charles Foley did. He had caught the inspiration suddenly as it passed. He slept the few last hours of the night in a profound repose, and next day he was at it. He was writing that book.

He was a business man - luckily for him. He did not speak of the great task until it was done. He was in no need of money - luckily for him. He could afford to wait until the last pages had satisfied him. Life had taught him that one could do nothing in business unless one had something in one's hands. He would come to the publisher with something in his hands, to wit, with this MS. He had no doubt about the title. He would call it, 'MAN AND NATURE.' The title had come to him in a sort of flash after the idea. Anyhow, that was the title, and he felt it to be a very part of his being.

He had fixed upon his publisher. He rang him up to make an appointment. The publisher received him with charming courtesy. It was the publisher himself who received him; not the manager, nor the secretary, nor any one like that but the real person, the one who had the overdraft at the Bank.

He treated Mr. Charles Foley so well that Mr. Foley tasted a new joy which was the joy of sincere praise received. He was in the liberal arts now. He had come into a second world. His mere wealth had never given him this. When the publisher had heard what Mr. Charles Foley had to say, he scratched the tip of his nose with his forefinger, and

suggested that Mr. Foley should pay for the printing and the binding of the book, and that then the publisher should advertise it and sell i , and give Mr. Foley so much.

But Mr. Foley would have none of this. He was a business man and he could see through a brick wall as well as anyone. So the publisher made this suggestion and that suggestion and talked all round about it. He was evidently keen to have the book. Mr. Foley could see that. At last the publisher made what Mr. Foley thought for the first time a sound business proposition, which was that he should publish the book in the ordinary way and then that he and Mr. Foley should share and share alike. If there was a loss they would divide it, but if there was a profit they would divide that. Mr. Foley was glad that he came to a sensible business decision at last, and closed with him. The date of publication also was agreed upon: it was to be the 15th of April. 'In order,' said the publisher, 'that we may catch the London season.' Mr. Charles Foley suggested August, but the publisher assured him that August was a rotten time for books.

Only the very next day Mr. Foley entered upon the responsibilities which are inseparable from the joys of an author. He received a letter from the publisher, saying that it seemed that another book had been written under the title 'Man and Nature,' that he dared not publish under that title lest the publishers of the other volume should apply for an injunction.

Mr. Foley suffered acutely. He left his breakfast half finished; ran into town in his motor, as agonized in every block in the traffic as though he had to catch a train; was kept waiting half an hour in the publisher's office because the principal had not yet arrived, and, when he did arrive, was persuaded that there was nothing to be done. The Courts wouldn't allow 'Man and Nature,' the publisher was sure of that. He kept on shaking his great big silly head until it got on Mr. Foley's nerves. But there was no way out of it, so Mr. Foley changed the title to 'ART AND ENVIRONMENT' —it was the publisher's secretary who suggested this new title.

He got home to luncheon, to which he now remembered he had asked a friend—a man who played golf. Mr. Foley did not want to make a fool of himself, so he led up very

cautiously at luncheon to his great question, which was this: 'How does the title "Art and Environment" sound?' He had a friend, he said, who wanted to know. On hearing this, Mr. Foley's golfing friend gave a loud guffaw, and said it *sounded* all right; so did the *Origin of Species*. It came out about the year . . . and then he spent three or four minutes trying to remember who the old johnny was who wrote it, but Mr. Foley was already at the telephone in the hall. He was not happy; he had rung up the publisher. The publisher was at luncheon. Mr. Foley damned the publisher. Could he speak to the manager? To the secretary? To one of the clerks? To the little dog? In his anger he was pleased to be facetious. He heard the manager's voice:

'Yes, is that Mr. Foley?'

'Yes, about that title.'

'Oh, yes, I thought you'd ring up. It's impossible, you know, it's been used before; and there's no doubt at all that the University printers would apply for an injunction.'

'Well, I can't wait,' shouted Mr. Foley into the receiver.

'You can't what?' said the manager. 'I can't hear you, you are talking too loud.'

'I can't wait,' said Mr. Foley in a lower tone and strenuously. 'Suggest something quick.'

The manager could be heard thinking at the end of the live wire. At last he said, 'Oh! anything.' Mr. Foley used a horrible word and put back the receiver.

He went back to his golfing friend, who was drinking some port steadily with cheese, and said: 'Look here, that friend of mine I have just been telephoning to says he wants another title.'

'What for?' said the golfing friend, his mouth full of cheese.

'Oh, for his book of course,' said Mr. Foley sharply.

'Sorry, I thought it was politics,' answered his friend, his mouth rather less full. Then a bright thought struck him.

'What's the book about?'

'Well, it's about art and . . . climate, you know.'

'Why, then,' said the friend stolidly, 'why not call it "Art and Climate"?'

'That's a good idea,' said Mr. Foley, stroking his chin.

He hurried indecently, turned the poor golfing friend out, hurried up to town in his motor in order to make them call

the book 'Art and Climate.' When he got there he found the real publisher, who hummed and hawed and said: 'All this changing of titles will be very expensive, you know.' Mr. Foley could not help that, it had to be done, so the book was called 'Art and Climate,' and then it was printed, and seventy copies were sent out to the Press and it was reviewed by three papers.

One of the papers said:

'Mr. Charles Foley has written an interesting essay upon the effect of climate upon art, upon such conditions as will affect it whether adversely or the contrary. The point of view is an original one and gives food for thought.'

Mr. Foley thought this notice quite too short and imperfect.

The second paper had a column about it, nearly all of which was made out of bits cut right out of the book, but without acknowledgement or in inverted commas. In between the bits cut out there were phrases like, 'Are we however to believe that . . .' and 'Some in this connexion would decide that . . .' But all the rest were bits cut out of his book.

The third review was in *The Times*, and in very small type between brackets. All it did was to give a list of the chapters and a sentence out of the preface.

Mr. Foley sold thirty copies of his book, gave away seventy-four and lent two. The publisher assured him that books like that did not have a large immediate sale as a novel did; they had a slow, steady sale.

It was about the middle of May that the publisher assured him of this. In June the solicitors of a Professor at Yale acting for the learned man in this country, threatened an action concerning a passage in the book which was based entirely upon the Professor's copyright work. Mr. Foley admitted his high indebtedness to the Professor, and wore a troubled look for days. He had always thought it quite legitimate in the world of art to use another person's work if one acknowledged it. At last the thing was settled out of court for quite a small sum, £150 or £200, or something like that.

Then everything was quiet and the sales went very slowly. He only sold a half-dozen all the rest of the summer.

In the autumn the publisher wrote him a note asking whether he might act upon Clause 15 of the contract. Mr. Foley was a business man. He looked up the contract and there he saw these words:

'If after due time has elapsed in the opinion of the publisher, a book shall not be warrantable at its existing price, change of price shall be made in it at the discretion of the publisher or of the author, or both, or each, subject to the conditions of clause 9.'

Turning to Clause 9, Mr. Foley discovered the words:

'All questions of price, advertisements, binding, paper, printing, etc., shall be vested in Messrs. Towkem, Bingo and Platt, hereinafter called the Publishers.'

He puzzled a great deal about these two clauses, and at last he thought, 'Oh, well, they know more than I do about it,' so he just telegraphed back, 'Yes.'

On the first of the New Year Mr. Foley got a most astonishing document. It was a printed sheet with a lot of lines written in red ink and an account. On the one side there was 'By sales £18,' then there was a long red line drawn down like a Z, and at the bottom, '£241 17*s*. 4½*d*., and in front of this the word 'Balance,' then the two were added together and made £259 17*s*. 4½*d*. Under this sum there were two lines drawn.

On the other side of the document there was a whole regiment of items, one treading upon another's heels. There was paper, and printing, and corrections, binding, warehousing, storage, cataloguing, advertising, travelling, circularizing, packing, and what I may call with due respect to the reader, 'the devil and all.' The whole of which added up to no less than the monstrous sum of £519 14*s*. 9*d*. Under this was written in small letters in red ink, 'Less 50% as per agreement,' and then at the bottom that nasty figure, '£259 17*s*. 4½*d*., and there was a little request in a round hand that the balance of £241 17*s*. 4½*d*. should be paid at Mr. Foley's convenience.

Mr. Foley, white with rage, acted as a business man always

should. He wrote a short note refusing to pay a penny, and demanding the rest of the unsold copies. He got a lengthier and stronger note from Messrs. Towkem and Thingummebob, referring to his letter to Clause 9 and to Clause 15, informing him that the remainder of the stock had been sold at a penny each to a firm of paper-makers in the North of England, and respectfully pressing for immediate payment.

Mr. Foley put the matter in the hands of his solicitors, and they ran him up a bill for £37 odd, but it was well worth it because they persuaded him not to go into court, so in the long run he had to pay no more than £278 17*s.* 4½*d.*, unless you count the postage and the travelling.

Now you know what happened to Mr. Foley and his book, and what will happen to *you* if you are a rich man and poach on my preserves.

XXXIV

MAX BEERBOHM

(1872–)

SEEING PEOPLE OFF

[Mr. Max Beerbohm was born in London on Aug. 24, 1872, and educated at Charterhouse and at Merton College, Oxford. He is a half-brother of the late Sir Herbert Tree, the actor and for many years he wrote theatrical criticism for *The Saturday Review* (an allusion is made to this in the present essay). His books of essays are whimsically entitled *The Works of Max Beerbohm* (1896), *More, by Max Beerbohm* (1899), and *Yet Again* (1909). The present essay is taken from this last-named book. A recent writer on Addison[1] has said that one may 'pick up the first weekly journal, and the article upon the "Delights of Summer" or the "Approach of Age" will show his [Addison's] influence. But it will also show, unless the name of Mr. Max Beerbohm, our solitary essayist, is attached to it, that we have lost the art of writing essays.' That Mr. Beerbohm is a master of prose is proved no less by his parodies of other writers (*A Christmas Garland*, 1912) than by his essays. In his writing, as in his caricature, there is a certain freakish humour, grounded in hard thought, which is therefore real criticism. There is this same humour in prose of exquisite beauty in his novel *Zuleika Dobson* (1911).]

I AM not good at it. To do it well seems to me one of the most difficult things in the world, and probably seems so to you, too.

To see a friend off from Waterloo to Vauxhall were easy enough. But we are never called on to perform that small feat. It is only when a friend is going on a longish journey, and will be absent for a longish time, that we turn up at the railway station. The dearer the friend, and the longer the journey, and the longer the likely absence, the earlier do we turn up, and the more lamentably do we fail. Our failure is in exact ratio to the seriousness of the occasion, and to the depth of our feeling.

[1] [*The Times Literary Supplement*, June 19, 1919.]

In a room, or even on a door-step, we can make the farewell quite worthily. We can express in our faces the genuine sorrow we feel. Nor do words fail us. There is no awkwardness, no restraint, on either side. The thread of our intimacy has not been snapped. The leave-taking is an ideal one. Why not, then, leave the leave-taking at that? Always, departing friends implore us not to bother to come to the railway station next morning. Always, we are deaf to these entreaties, knowing them to be not quite sincere. The departing friends would think it very odd of us if we took them at their word. Besides, they really do want to see us again. And that wish is heartily reciprocated. We duly turn up. And then, oh then, what a gulf yawns! We stretch our arms vainly across it. We have utterly lost touch. We have nothing at all to say. We gaze at each other as dumb animals gaze at human beings. We 'make conversation'—and *such* conversation! We know that these friends are the friends from whom we parted overnight. They know that we have not altered. Yet, on the surface, everything is different; and the tension is such that we only long for the guard to blow his whistle and put an end to the farce.

On a cold grey morning of last week I duly turned up at Euston, to see off an old friend who was starting for America.

Overnight, we had given him a farewell dinner, in which sadness was well mingled with festivity. Years probably would elapse before his return. Some of us might never see him again. Not ignoring the shadow of the future, we gaily celebrated the past. We were as thankful to have known our guest as we were grieved to lose him; and both these emotions were made manifest. It was a perfect farewell.

And now, here we were, stiff and self-conscious on the platform; and framed in the window of the railway-carriage was the face of our friend; but it was as the face of a stranger—a stranger anxious to please, an appealing stranger, an awkward stranger. 'Have you got everything?' asked one of us, breaking a silence. 'Yes, everything,' said our friend, with a pleasant nod. 'Everything,' he repeated, with the emphasis of an empty brain. 'You'll be able to lunch on the train,' said I, though the prophecy had already been made more than once. 'Oh, yes,' he said with conviction.

He added that the train went straight through to Liverpool. This fact seemed to strike us as rather odd. We exchanged glances. 'Doesn't it stop at Crewe?' asked one of us. 'No,' said our friend, briefly. He seemed almost disagreeable. There was a long pause. One of us, with a nod and a forced smile at the traveller, said 'Well!' The nod, the smile, and the unmeaning monosyllable, were returned conscientiously. Another pause was broken by one of us with a fit of coughing. It was an obviously assumed fit, but it served to pass the time. The bustle of the platform was unabated. There was no sign of the train's departure. Release—ours, and our friend's—was not yet.

My wandering eye alighted on a rather portly middle-aged man who was talking earnestly from the platform to a young lady at the next window but one to ours. His fine profile was vaguely familiar to me. The young lady was evidently American, and he was evidently English; otherwise I should have guessed from his impressive air that he was her father. I wished I could hear what he was saying. I was sure he was giving the very best advice; and the strong tenderness of his gaze was really beautiful. He seemed magnetic, as he poured out his final injunctions. I could feel something of his magnetism even where I stood. And the magnetism, like the profile, was vaguely familiar to me. Where had I experienced it?

In a flash I remembered. The man was Hubert Le Ros. But how changed since last I saw him! That was seven or eight years ago, in the Strand. He was then (as usual) out of an engagement, and borrowed half-a-crown. It seemed a privilege to lend anything to him. He was always magnetic. And why his magnetism had never made him successful on the London stage was always a mystery to me. He was an excellent actor, and a man of sober habit. But, like many others of his kind, Hubert le Ros (I do not, of course, give the actual name by which he was known) drifted seedily away into the provinces; and I, like every one else, ceased to remember him.

It was strange to see him, after all these years, here on the platform of Euston, looking so prosperous and solid. It was not only the flesh that he had put on, but also the clothes, that made him hard to recognize. In the old days, an imi-

tation fur coat had seemed to be as integral a part of him as were his ill-shorn lantern jaws. But now his costume was a model of rich and sombre moderation, drawing, not calling, attention to itself. He looked like a banker. Any one would have been proud to be seen off by him.

'Stand back, please!' The train was about to start, and I waved farewell to my friend. Le Ros did not stand back. He stood clasping in both hands the hands of the young American. 'Stand back, sir, please!' He obeyed, but quickly darted forward again to whisper some final word. I think there were tears in her eyes. There certainly were tears in his when, at length, having watched the train out of sight, he turned round. He seemed, nevertheless, delighted to see me. He asked me where I had been hiding all these years; and simultaneously repaid me the half-crown as though it had been borrowed yesterday. He linked his arm in mine, and walked me slowly along the platform, saying with what pleasure he read my dramatic criticisms every Saturday.

I told him, in return, how much he was missed on the stage. 'Ah, yes,' he said, 'I never act on the stage nowadays.' He laid some emphasis on the word 'stage,' and I asked him where, then, he did act. 'On the platform,' he answered. 'You mean,' said I, 'that you recite at concerts?' He smiled. 'This,' he whispered, striking his stick on the ground, 'is the platform I mean.' Had his mysterious prosperity unhinged him? He looked quite sane. I begged him to be more explicit.

'I suppose,' he said presently, giving me a light for the cigar which he had offered me, 'you have been seeing a friend off?' I assented. He asked me what I supposed *he* had been doing. I said that I had watched him doing the same thing. 'No,' he said gravely. 'That lady was not a friend of mine. I met her for the first time this morning, less than half an hour ago, *here*,' and again he struck the platform with his stick.

I confessed that I was bewildered. He smiled. 'You may,' he said, 'have heard of the Anglo-American Social Bureau?' I had not. He explained to me that of the thousands of Americans who annually pass through England there are many hundreds who have no English friends. In the old days they used to bring letters of introduction. But the English are so inhospitable that these letters are hardly

worth the paper they are written on. 'Thus,' said Le Ros, 'the A.A.S.B. supplies a long-felt want. Americans are a sociable people, and most of them have plenty of money to spend. The A.A.S.B. supplies them with English friends. Fifty per cent of the fees is paid over to the friends. The other fifty is retained by the A.A.S.B. I am not, alas! a director. If I were, I should be a very rich man indeed. I am only an employé. But even so I do very well. I am one of the seers-off.'

Again I asked for enlightenment. 'Many Americans,' he said, 'cannot afford to keep friends in England. But they can all afford to be seen off. The fee is only five pounds (twenty-five dollars) for a single traveller; and eight pounds (forty dollars) for a party of two or more. They send that in to the Bureau, giving the date of their departure, and a description by which the seer-off can identify them on the platform. And then—well, then they are seen off.'

'But is it worth it?' I exclaimed. 'Of course it is worth it,' said Le Ros. 'It prevents them from feeling "out of it." It earns them the respect of the guard. It saves them from being despised by their fellow-passengers—the people who are going to be on the boat. It gives them a *footing* for the whole voyage. Besides, it is a great pleasure in itself. You saw me seeing that young lady off. Didn't you think I did it beautifully?' 'Beautifully,' I admitted. 'I envied you. There was I——' 'Yes, I can imagine. There were you, shuffling from head to foot, staring blankly at your friend, trying to make conversation. I know. That's how I used to be myself, before I studied, and went into the thing professionally. I don't say I'm perfect yet. I'm still a martyr to platform fright. A railway station is the most difficult of all places to act in, as you have discovered for yourself.' 'But,' I said with resentment, 'I wasn't trying to act. I really *felt*.' 'So did I, my boy,' said Le Ros. 'You can't act without feeling. What's-his-name, the Frenchman—Diderot, yes—said you could; but what did *he* know about it? Didn't you see those tears in my eyes when the train started? I hadn't forced them. I tell you I was *moved*. So were you, I dare say. But you couldn't have pumped up a tear to prove it. You can't express your feelings. In other words, you can't act. At any rate,' he added kindly,

'not in a railway station.' 'Teach me!' I cried. He looked thoughtfully at me. 'Well,' he said at length, 'the seeing-off season is practically over. Yes, I'll give you a course. I have a good many pupils on hand already; but yes,' he said, consulting an ornate note-book, 'I could give you an hour on Tuesdays and Fridays.'

His terms, I confess, are rather high. But I don't grudge the investment.

NOTES

PAGE **2.** 7. *Syllabical :* clearly pronounced, emphatic.

12. That you did not claim special intimacy with him.

23. *patient :* used in its original sense. One who endures.

30–.0. The hearty shaking of a stranger's hand may be insincere, but it shows a kind nature and undeserved kindness is better than unpleasant truth (such as the 'I do not like you' implied by a flabby handshake). We cannot always know the truth, so our unpleasant 'truth' may be false; but we can always be kind · and kindness, if sincere, is pleasant. Though kindness will not always gain what we want, it is a good thing to aim at.

PAGE **3.** 11. A hand which does not grasp a friend's, but lies in it passively, is often compared to a dead fish. A fish-slice is a silver or plated knife used for cutting up fish at table.

PAGE **5.** 32. *quoad . . . :* so far as his consciousness is concerned.

41. *début :* first appearance.

PAGE **6.** 1. In 'Murder considered as One of the Fine Arts' de Quincey satirizes the pleasure people take in reading of murders, and feigns himself a member of a club formed to study them and compare the 'art'—i.e. the horror and originality –of one murder with another. The next twenty lines are written in this spirit.

31. *the poor beetle : Measure for Measure,* III. i. 79.

PAGE **7.** 3. *with its (his) petrific mace : Paradise Lost,* X. 294.

18. *a more proportionable antagonist :* a more complete contrast, to make the wickedness of Macbeth *proportionate* to the innocence of Duncan.

20. *'the deep damnation . . .' : Macbeth,* I. vii. 20.

PAGE **8.** 29. *racked into a dread armistice :* forced into a cessation of its activities. 'Racked' (tortured) and 'armistice' (a truce) are both used in unusual ways to crown the climax.

PAGE **11.** 14. At the Congress of Verona (1822), Great Britain finally separated herself from her allies in the Napoleonic wars, by refusing to share in their proposed intervention in favour of the royal power in Spain.

26. *emancipation :* removal from Catholics of restrictions as to holding public office, etc.

PAGE **12.** 13. *exclusions :* e.g. of Catholics.

26. *the first Lord Holland :* Henry Fox, 1705–1774. Entered Parliament at the age of thirty. Raised to the peerage as Baron

Holland for inducing the House of Commons to accept the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

29. The subject of this essay. Grandson of the first Lord Holland, and nephew of Charles James Fox.

PAGE 13. 2. Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1723–1792. A noted portrait-painter. Joseph Nollekens, 1737–1823. A sculptor.

30. *cant:* insincerity.

PAGE 14. 20. *Strafford*, Earl of. Lord Deputy of Ireland in the reign of Charles I. Took the side of the King against Parliament. Advocated bringing an Irish Army into England. Impeached for this, and executed in 1641.

33. *Gray*, Thomas. Author of the 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard.' The lampoon referred to is a satire suggested by some mimic ruins built by Holland near the North Foreland.

PAGE 15. 17. John Wilkes, M.P. for Middlesex, having been sentenced to imprisonment for publishing an obscene essay, was expelled from the House of Commons (1769). He was re-elected, but declared incapable of sitting. Middlesex, however, elected him a third and fourth time, and after the fourth election Parliament declared his opponent, Colonel Luttrell, duly elected, though he had only received 296 votes against Wilkes's 1,143.

23. *Bute*, John Stewart, Earl of. George III's favourite adviser in the first years of his reign. Prime Minister, 1761–3. Most unpopular.

24. *Mansfield*, William Murray, Earl of: a distinguished lawyer. Of a Jacobite family. Leader of the House of Commons, 1754–5. Macaulay describes him as 'the father of modern Toryism, of Toryism modified to suit an order of things in which the House of Commons is the most powerful body in the State.'

PAGE 16. 28. i.e. till the death of Fox.

PAGE 17. 1. The Irish Parliament, by the Constitution of 1782, consisted of two Houses. The House of Commons was unrepresentative, the Catholics having no vote, and many members being returned by single individuals or nominated by Government. The House of Lords was even less independent, being controlled by certain bishops.

7. *Onslow*, A. Speaker (i.e. chairman) of the House of Commons, 1728–61.

PAGE 18. 11. Lancaster has its own Court of Chancery, which formerly had considerable powers. Lord Holland was for four years Chancellor of the Duchy.

13. The term 'esoteric' is applied to philosophical doctrines taught only to a select few.

14. To 'split a hair' means to make a subtle distinction.

PAGE 19. 1. Lord Holland acquired large plantations in Jamaica by his marriage.

15. *antique structures:* Holland House, Kensington, was built by Sir W. Cope in 1607, and enlarged by his son-in-law, Henry Rich, Earl of Holland. It was occupied by Generals Fairfax and Lambert,

and came into Addison's possession on his marriage with the Countess Dowager of Warwick.

30. *a water-privilege :* right to use water for turning machinery, etc.

in Michigan : a land of lakes and rivers. Its population increased nearly sevenfold between 1830 and 1840—just before the date of this essay.

may soon displace : Holland House still stands, though London now extends far beyond it.

PAGE **20.** 15. *who have put life . . . :* sculptors and painters.

23. *Scribe,* Augustin Eugène : a French dramatist, 1791–1861.

Wilkie, Sir David : a Scottish painter, 1785–1841.

24. *Baretti :* Secretary to the Royal Academy of Painting, and friend of Dr. Johnson. His portrait, by Reynolds, is at Holland House.

Mackintosh, Sir James, journalist, philosopher, and politician. 'One of the most cultured and catholic-minded men of his time.' 1765–1832.

25. *Thomas Aquinas :* a thirteenth-century philosopher and theologian.

Talleyrand : a French diplomatist. 1754–1838.

26. *Barras :* a French nobleman, who took the side of the people at the Revolution, and was a member of the 'Directory' which governed France from 1795 to 1799.

Luxembourg : a palace in Paris. Seat of the Directory.

27. *Lannes :* a French marshal under Napoleon I.

Austerlitz : where Napoleon defeated the Austrians and Russians in 1805.

PAGE **21.** 8. A reference to some lines found on Holland's table after his death :

> 'Nephew of Fox, and friend of Grey.
> Enough my meed of fame
> If those who deigned to observe me say
> I injured neither name.'

Charles Grey was a friend of Fox, and his successor as leader of the Whigs.

PAGE **22.** 24. *Beaumont and Fletcher :* contemporaries of Shakespeare.

27. Roderigo and Pedro are rival lovers in *The Pilgrim* ; Valerio a character in *The Coxcomb.*

30. *slag :* the refuse when the metal has been smelted from ore.

PAGE **23.** 1, 2. Plays written in whole, or in part, by Fletcher. 'Sophocles' is the hero of *The Triumph of Honour.*

14. *Ariadne's crown :* a group of seven stars.

16. *with this :* apparently a handkerchief.

my sight : abstract for concrete.

42–5. *O love . . .* may be roughly paraphrased : Dorigen's virtue, as well as her beauty, wins my love. But I will tear my heart from my bosom rather than sever the holy tie which binds her to her husband.

PAGE **24.** 14. *vents* = has published.

15. *a great many flutes . . . :* much sweet, but no inspiring, poetry.

19. *portrait of Lord Evandale :* see *Old Mortality,* chapter xxii.

24. *the Harleian Miscellanies :* a selection from the tracts and pamphlets collected by Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford, with a preface by Dr. Johnson.

25. *Simon Ockley :* an oriental scholar. 1678–1720.

28. He seems to think that as a Christian he ought to abhor Islam.

31. Plutarch was born at Chaeronea, in Beotia, about A.D. 46. The most valuable of his many works is his *Parallel Lives*—pairs of biographies, one member of each pair being a Greek and the other a Roman.

37. *Stoicism :* indifference to pleasure and pain.

not of the schools : practical, not a mere philosophical theory.

39. *tart* = severe ; *cathartic* = cleansing ; *virtue* = inherent power.

PAGE **25.** 17. *defying the thunder :* a reference to the story of Ajax Oileus. To punish him for impiety the goddess Pallas struck his ship with lightning. He swam to a rock and boasted that he was safe despite the gods. He was then cast into the sea by the sea-god, and drowned.

38. *to go behind them* = to seek out their causes.

PAGE **26.** 3. *censure :* judgement, criticism : not necessarily blame, though in modern writings it always means severe criticism.

29. *Plotinus* was a Neoplatonist philosopher of the third century. His doctrines bear a strong resemblance to Hinduism. From God, who is without attributes, proceeds the world of thought : from this the soul. The soul may become entangled with matter, but can free itself by virtue and asceticism, and can become 'God' by contemplation and utter passivity.

30. *cat's-cradle* is a child's game, played with a piece of string. Here used figuratively for trifling amusements.

36. *the great hoar :* life, which seems so important, but is worthless when spent in trifles.

PAGE **27.** 24. St. Matthew xxv. 34–40.

PAGE **28.** 2. *John Eliot :* the first missionary to the North American Indians. 1604–1690.

5. 2 Samuel, xxiii. 14–17.

24. Lucius, brother of Scipio Africanus, was charged with peculation. Africanus destroyed his accounts in the court, and so offended the judges, who fined Lucius heavily.

27. Socrates (about 469–399 B.C.) was accused of corrupting Athenian youths by his teaching, and convicted. It was then the duty of the prosecutor and the accused to name a punishment. The prosecutor named death, and Socrates spoke as mentioned in the text. The Prytaneum was a hall where ambassadors and deserving citizens were maintained at the public expense.

29. Sir Thomas More (*d.* 1535) was condemned to death for treason. Laying his head on the block, he put his beard on one side, saying : 'Pity that should be cut ; it has never committed treason.'

PAGE 29. 3. *Blue Laws :* Puritanical laws, enacted in Connecticut in 1732, to stamp out 'heresy' and enforce Sunday observance.

27. *Epaminondas :* a Theban general. His army was victorious at Mantinea, but he was slain (362 B.C.).

29. It was in New Jersey that Washington defeated Lord Cornwallis in 1776.

35, 36. *Pericles :* the great Athenian statesman (*d.* 429 B.C.). See p. 166 and note. *Xenophon* (soldier and historian) accompanied Cyrus in his expedition against his brother Artaxerxes, King of Persia. After the defeat and death of Cyrus at Cunaxa (401 B.C.), Xenophon led 10,000 Greek mercenaries to the Black Sea. *Columbus* discovered America—or, rather, the W. Indies—in 1492. *Bayard* (1476–1524), 'the knight without fear and without reproach.' A most distinguished French soldier. Sir Philip *Sidney*, a great scholar. Author of *The Arcadia* and *A Defence of Poetry*. Friend of Spenser. When mortally wounded at Zutphen, in Flanders, he gave the water which was brought him to a dying soldier, saying 'Thy necessity is greater than mine' (*d.* 1586). John *Hampden* resisted the tyranny of Charles I, refusing to make a 'forced loan' or to pay 'ship-money.' He was killed in a skirmish with the Royalists in 1643.

PAGE 30. 7. *Colossus :* originally a gigantic statue of Apollo at Rhodes. Hence any large statue, or, as here, a giant.

10. Gave up their ideals for practical work

16. *Sappho*, a Greek poet. Mesdames *de Staël* and *de Sévigné*, distinguished French writers.

19. *Themis :* a personification of divine justice.

30. *strike sail :* surrender to an enemy.

PAGE 31. 8. *Phocion :* see Plutarch's *Life of Phocion*, chap. xxiii.

PAGE 32. 13. To coat an unpopular man with tar and feathers is a grotesque punishment inflicted by American mobs.

PAGE 33. 17. It was said that there was a school for magicians at Padua. The students were made to race along a hall, and were pursued by the devil, who usually caught the hindmost. Sometimes, however, he could only catch his shadow, and then the shadowless man became a very skilful magician.

18. 'Would' for 'should.' Scottish idiom.

20. *blood colt :* i.e. of good pedigree.

28. *first the blade* . . . Mark iv. 28.

29. *Dr. Temple :* afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was head master of Rugby at the date of this essay.

PAGE 34. 5. 'Delightful task' to rear the tender thought,
And teach the young idea how to shoot.'
THOMSON'S *Spring*.

12. Education should aim at making a good man, not a child-prodigy.

13. *Montaigne :* French essayist of the sixteenth century.

PAGE 35. 4. The logic of Buckle's *History of Civilization* has been much criticized.

PAGE **36.** 20. *Sydney Smith* (1771–1845) : Canon of St. Paul's, and a noted humorist. See pp. 96, 104–5.

36. *Edward Forbes* (1815–1854) : Naturalist.

PAGE **37.** 23–31. As familiar with the Greek philosophers as we are with our contemporaries. Not paying the old Greeks undue honour because of their antiquity, nor despising them because we have learned what they were ignorant of. *Paulus* was a noted Greek surgeon of the fourth century A.D. *Hippocrates* was the most distinguished physician of antiquity (*b.* about 460 B.C.).

PAGE **38.** 8. As a Londoner who adopts Highland dress.

31. *Ferrier, J. F. . . . :* Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews University.

32. *reflex ego.* A mind conscious of self.

PAGE **39.** 1. *Dougal :* a wild Highlander in Scott's *Rob Roy.* Another character in the book always spoke of him as 'the creature,' or 'the Dougal creature.'

19. *nous* = mind (Greek).

35. St. Matthew xv. 14.

PAGE **40.** 6. *shepherds of Etive :* hills just south of Glencoe.

14. Genesis i. 28.

16. Plato, in his *Republic,* compares men, unenlightened by philosophy, to captives, chained from birth in a cave, unable to turn and see real objects behind them, and knowing things only by the shadows on the cave wall, which shadows they take for realities. This suggests to Dr. Brown a 'neo-Platonic' parable. We, our minds full of our daily work, know neither ourselves (seeing only our misshapen shadows), nor Nature, nor God. Only by leaving our 'cave' at times can we benefit by the gold we win, and enjoy the contemplation of realities.

26. See Exodus xxiv. 10.

PAGE **41.** 1. Subject = mind, as contrasted with the objects of which it thinks.

15–16. Matthew vii. 9, 10 and Isaiah lv. 2.

PAGE **45.** 39. *Two Kings . . . :* from *The Rehearsal,* by the Duke of Buckingham.

PAGE **47.** 24. *Bellot :* a French explorer who perished in an Anglo-French Arctic expedition at the age of twenty-seven, in 1853.

PAGE **48.** 15. *Schönbrunn :* an imperial palace in Vienna.

PAGE **49.** 36. The church of Peter and Paul in Rome, the Mosque of San Sophia in Constantinople, and the Panthéon in Paris.

38. *catholic* = all-embracing.

dome in Bloomsbury : that of the British Museum Library.

PAGE **50.** 9. *dome* = skull.

16 *The History of Clarissa Harlowe,* by Samuel Richardson (1689–1761).

PAGE **53.** 3. spread wildly—like hay spread with a pitchfork.

PAGE **54.** 1. *Macbeth,* II. ii. 39.

24 *Mr. Bathe :* presumably host of the London Tavern.

PAGE **55.** 16. Dogs trained to search for travellers lost in the snow.

PAGE **57.** 26. *Pantomime :* a farcical dumb-show.

27, 30. *pit* and *gallery :* the cheapest parts of the theatre.

32. The window of a room which is reached by two flights of stairs.

PAGE **58.** 4. The gardens (at Chelsea) whence the balloons ascended.

13. *the Morgue :* the place (in Paris) where bodies found dead, are exposed for identification.

23. The tale tells how a noted shot aimed at a racoon (colloquially called a 'coon). The beast, knowing its fate was sealed, said : 'Don't shoot, Colonel. I'll come down.'

PAGE **59.** 1. *Bridewell* = gaol.

14. *pet prisoning :* indulgence of criminals. Treating them well in the hope that they will be reformed by kindness.

PAGE **60.** 17. *stint* = a set task (American).

28. *muskrats :* not the Indian muskrat, but a water-beast allied to the beaver.

PAGE **61.** 2. *prairie dogs* are not 'dogs,' but burrowing creatures which live in colonies. Rodents, or 'gnawing animals,' like rats, rabbits, beavers, etc.

12. *Etesian winds :* north-westerly winds, which blow for six weeks, in the summer, in the Mediterranean.

30. To run the gauntlet was a military punishment. The culprit ran between two ranks of soldiers, each of whom struck him as he passed.

41. *dry goods :* draper's goods (American).

PAGE **62.** 8, 10. Orpheus, in Greek mythology, was a bard whose songs were so sweet that even trees followed him. The sirens were monsters with forms like fair women. By their songs they lured seamen to their island, and then devoured them.

20–30. Nautical language.

PAGE **63.** 24. *side-walk :* raised path for foot-passengers, beside the road. The word is chiefly used in America.

PAGE **64.** 13. The Order of Oddfellows is a mutual aid society, with secret ritual, passwords, etc. The State and its laws are for mutual assistance. Perhaps that is why it is here compared to the Oddfellows.

25 *fall :* autumn (American).

PAGE **67.** 4. *Pullman cars :* luxurious railway carriages named after their inventor, G. M. Pullman, an American, *b.* 1831.

PAGE **68.** 9 *her work :* i.e. taking her daughter to balls, dinners, etc., where she might find her a husband.

22. *great question :* a satire on the imitations of Roman Catholic ritual in the English Church : and on the trifling nature of many religious quarrels.

PAGE **72.** 12. *commandments :* Exodus xx. 3–17.

PAGE **73.** 40. *spun out of moonshine :* invented systems not based on facts.

PAGE **74.** 16. *literally* refers to merchants, etc.; *figuratively* to authors who 'adulterated' their good writing with inferior matter.

PAGE **76.** 30. *Lethe:* a river in hell (in Greek mythology) which caused forgetfulness.

PAGE **78.** 15. *a high spirit:* Christ.

25. *the taint:* the desire to shine in controversy.

PAGE **79.** 22–4. Ironical. A pun on 'works' = deeds, and 'works' = writings.

PAGE **80.** 5. *veined:* closely intermingled, as ore is veined, or streaked, with metal.

PAGE **82.** 12. *Daniel:* see the 2nd and 4th chapters of the Book of Daniel for his interpretations of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

PAGE **85.** 8. *Jack in the box:* a child's toy. On unfastening the lid of a box it flies open, and a grotesque figure springs up.

17. *ab ovo* usque ad mala (Horace, *Satires*, I. iii. 6): from the egg to the apples; i.e. from first to last. Roman banquets began with eggs and ended with fruit. But the reference may be to 'telling the Tale of Troy from Leda's egg.' Helen, the cause of the siege of Troy, was hatched from an egg produced by her mother Leda.

36. *The Vicar of Wakefield:* a novel by Goldsmith.

PAGE **86.** 9. They cannot readily change the current of their thoughts to follow those of the author. They are not 'catholic' in their tastes, but are like drunkards who, being used to arrack, care nothing for toddy.

PAGE **88.** 3. Spiritualists say that the dead communicate with the living by making tables turn round, rapping on them, etc.

25. Certain comets visit the solar system from without. After approaching the sun in hyperbolic orbits they recede, and, his attraction being too small to draw them back, pass off into space, travelling almost in straight lines till they are drawn towards some other star.

28 *toto coelo:* by the whole heaven; i.e. as widely as possible. 'Celestial' and 'dazzled' keep up the metaphor of the suns and comets.

30. *concluded:* enumerated completely.

PAGE **89.** 4. *the Funds:* the National Debt (as a means of investment).

6. *her Annuals:* humorously classed with 'England' and 'creation in general,' as if of similar importance.

8. *blowing* = blossoming.

9. *candidates . . . moon:* line 28 implies that this means monthly papers, though as there are four changes of the moon in a month it might mean 'weekly.'

26 The editor would adapt the story to the picture, instead of getting a picture drawn to illustrate the story.

27. *Clarkson Stanfield* (1793–1867): marine and landscape painter. Famous for his cloud-forms.

J. D. Harding (1798–1863): landscape painter and lithographer.

31. *lunarian:* monthly.

PAGE **90.** 24. *Rogers, Samuel* (1763–1855) : author of *The Pleasures of Memory*. Much thought of in his lifetime. Offered the laureateship on the death of Wordsworth.

36. *Favonian* = westerly.

PAGE **91.** 21. *Olympiad :* in Greece, the interval between two celebrations of the Olympic games. Strictly four years, but here used for six.

27. *Turner, Thomas Richmond, George Richmond,* and *Prout.* All artists.

31. *held me at the Font of the Muses :* initiated me into the art of literature. A godfather, on the presentation of a child for baptism, promises on its behalf obedience to the Christian faith. The confusion of a Christian rite and Greek mythology is, of course, humorous.

PAGE **92.** 2. *of the Church :* keeping up the metaphor of baptism. Claude and Michael Angelo were ' sacred ' to the art-world.

26. Mr. Ruskin was a trifle ashamed of his connexion with trade. Mr. Harrison was satisfied to be a mere official of an Insurance Company.

PAGE **93.** 2. *malignant :* malicious person ; mischievous critic.

13. *extinctive operation :* device for his humiliation.

41. *repudiate :* perhaps in its original sense of ' am ashamed of.' Such places are a disgrace to civilization. There is neither good architecture nor the beauty of nature in them.

PAGE **94.** 13. *grand tour :* a tour through Europe.

39. In the Jewish story of Tobit (Apocrypha) it is told how Tobit sent his son Tobias on a journey. Tobias hired a servant (who proved to be an angel) and took his dog with him. As a reward for Tobit's piety the angel cured his blindness, and secured a wife for Tobias. (Several of Richmond's pictures were of Biblical scenes.)

PAGE **95.** 4. *to be well* = to be on good terms with—so that they might say, ' Well come ! '

PAGE **96.** 13. *Barham,* the Rev. R. H. : author of *The Ingoldsby Legends,* one of which is ' The Jackdaw of Rheims.'

14. Untroubled by the controversies in which other clergymen were engaged.

21. *Etruscans :* the people of Etruria or Tuscany, whose civilization preceded that of the Romans. It is not known whence they came ; and, despite much labour, little has been done towards interpreting their inscriptions.

PAGE **98.** 4. *tours de force :* feats of strength—or skill (French).

23. *gauche* = awkward (French).

PAGE **99.** 41. *figure-skating :* twisting and turning on the ice ; describing circles, figures of eight, threes, etc.

PAGE **101.** 20. *weeping-willow :* the epithet ' weeping ' is applied also to other trees, the weeping-ash, and the weeping-birch, whose boughs hang down. It is probably suggested by comparison with a man bowing his head in grief.

PAGE **103.** 3. In *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle professes to have been asked to edit an immense mass of notes left by Herr Teufelsdröckh.

28. *Schiller and Goethe:* German poets. Robinson, inheriting a small sum of money, gave up his work in a solicitor's office and went to Germany. He was introduced to these great men at Weimar. In 1802 he graduated at Jena. There he met Madame de Stael (see p. 30) and taught her German philosophy. He was not called to the Bar till his thirty-eighth year

PAGE **105.** 2. *Sydney Smith.* See **36.** 20 and **93.** 17. 'Remains' = corpse, with a punning allusion to 'literary remains,' an author's manuscripts left unpublished at his death.

25. *by a long past:* the ancestors of seals seem to have been ordinary quadrupeds, but by living in the sea for many generations they have come to resemble fish in some respects.

38. Jeremiah xiii. 23.

39. *poor Clough* (1819–1861): a poet of considerable abilities. Involved in financial troubles after his father's death in 1842. Resigned his fellowship and tutorship at Oxford on account of religious scruples. Died of paralysis six years after his marriage.

PAGE **106.** 22. Robinson was then seventy-two years of age.

PAGE **107.** 38. In 1808 Sir John Moore advanced from Lisbon to Salamanca to aid the Spanish against Napoleon. He arrived too late, and made a disastrous retreat to the coast. There he fought the battle of Corunna, in which he was killed; but the battle enabled the remainder of his forces to embark safely.

PAGE **108.** 34. There is some confusion here. 'M.' obviously stands for Mingay; but he cannot have compared his own client, Rivett, to the devil. If we may alter 'R.' to 'B.' we can see that Rivett was the old lady's heir; that Braham (an attorney) produced a will signed by her in his own favour, disinheriting Rivett. 'There was peace between the lady and her heir,' says Mingay, 'till Braham made mischief, as Satan did by tempting Eve.' He went on to argue that the lady was imbecile and unfit to make a will. Erskine retorted (illogically enough) by pointing out that Eve was by no means an imbecile.

PAGE **109.** 25. *John Wesley* (1703–1791): a clergyman of the Church of England. Founder of the Methodist Society, which afterwards became a separate sect

PAGE **110.** 10. A reductio ad absurdum.

PAGE **112.** 22. To the 'Churchman' who takes a 'High' view of the rites and worship of the Church, it would seem a profanation to use the sacred language of prayer in the familiar intercourse of meal-times. Collects are short prayers.

24. *Clough's Church:* his school of thought. He belonged to no church.

38. *run off him:* left him unaffected; like water which 'runs off' a duck's back.

PAGE **113.** 10, 11. *Kant* and *Condillac*: respectively German and

French philosophers of the eighteenth century. The nature of the former's writings is indicated on p. 112.

PAGE **114.** 5. *black-letter law :* old law. 'Black-letter' was the type used in early printed books, and in MSS. before the invention of printing.

36. *Philistine :* (1) an inhabitant of S.W. Palestine, and an enemy of the Jews ; hence, (2) a name given by German students to non-students (shop-keepers, etc.), whom they regard as uncultured and of a different caste to themselves. Here 'men who earn their living in conventional ways.'

PAGE **115.** 18. *Hazlitt,* W. (1778–1830) : essayist. A friend of Lamb, though for some years they were estranged. He professed great love of liberty, but upheld Napoleon, regarding him as the enemy of the 'divine right of kings.' For Leigh Hunt's opinion of him see p. 3.

PAGE **117.** 3. *turned off* = hanged (slang).

25. *Jack Ketch* = the executioner. This seems to have been the real name of an executioner in the seventeenth century.

PAGE **119.** 5. *Age cannot wither . . . : Antony and Cleopatra,* II. ii. 240.

17. *Louis* XVI of France : For a description of his execution by the Revolutionaries see Carlyle's *French Revolution,* Part III, Bk. II, chap. viii.

28. *Stephen :* the first Christian martyr. Acts vii. 56.

30. *Balmerino :* Arthur, 6th Lord · took part in Jacobite rising of 1715. Pardoned and returned to Scotland in 1733, but joined revolt of 1745 ; was taken prisoner at Culloden, and executed. The White Rose is the badge of a Jacobite Society.

PAGE **120.** 9. *alien elements :* things apart from the death he is to suffer.

27. *championship :* probably in prize-fighting.

PAGE **121.** 27. *bothy :* a temporary house for navvies.

32. *mounting* = ambitious. See line 41.

PAGE **122.** 28. *young authors :* who have not yet learnt to restrain their pens.

PAGE **123.** 34. *weird* = doom. *Cain :* see Genesis iv. 12.

PAGE **124.** 20. *John Knox* (1505–1572) : Scottish Reformer and historian.

34. *The Campsie Duke :* Campsie Fells is a region near Stirling. But the meaning of the line is lost

PAGE **125.** 34. *braird :* first shoots of a crop (Scottish)

PAGE **126.** 40. *Lear and the fool :* tragedy and satire In Shakespeare's *King Lear,* the king, driven mad by his undutiful daughters, wanders over the country accompanied by the Court jester.

41. The battle of Trafalgar (October 21, 1805) established the sea power of Britain, and ultimately brought about Napoleon's downfall. The capitulation at Ulm, on October 18, was followed by the destruction of the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz

PAGE **127.** 13. *banshee :* a spirit (according to Irish superstition) attached to a particular family, who is always heard to wail before one of them dies.

19. *keen :* lamentation for the dead (Irish).

31. *Grisi :* an opera singer (1811–1869).

PAGE **128.** 7. But it was Sin and Death who bridged chaos. (See *Paradise Lost*, Bk. X, referred to on p. 7, line 3.) Satan journeyed across it without a bridge—no mean feat (see Bk. II).

22. *kirk-session :* the governing body of a Presbyterian congregation.

PAGE **137.** 8. *Arcadians :* Arcadia is a pastoral region of Greece, and shepherds are supposed (by poets) to be very simple and innocent.

PAGE **139.** 23. *Sordello :* one of Browning's most difficult poems. The opening line is, 'Who will, may hear Sordello's story told.'

24. *May races* = University boat races.

PAGE **140.** 11. *forsaken lodges :* a phrase suggested, perhaps, by 'Hiawatha.' An Indian wigwam or hut is called a 'lodge.'

20–21. 'The Battle of the Baltic' and 'Ye Mariners of England' are poems by Thomas Campbell (1777–1844).

PAGE **141.** 17–20 and 33–6. From *Footsteps of Angels.*

23. *brings the break . . . :* makes him weep.

29. *Sir Barnes Newcome :* a character in Thackeray's novel, *The Newcomes.*

40. *the Beleaguered City :* the poem tells of a legend that an army of ghosts encamps at night by the river outside the city of Prague, and vanishes like mist when the bells ring for morning prayers.

PAGE **142.** 5. *Three Brethren's Cairn :* a cairn is a heap of loose stones—a boundary mark, a monument, or the mark of a grave. Lang refers to a cairn familiar to him in his childhood.

22 *Endymion* was, according to a Greek myth, a beautiful youth, who was loved by Diana, the goddess of the moon.

27. Pierre de *Ronsard* (1524–1585) : a French poet.

PAGE **143.** 6. *Kalevala :* the national epic of Finland.

11. Strike out 'the' before 'mystery.' It is a misprint.

22. *Botticelli :* a Florentine artist (1446–1510).

26. *their angels . . . :* Matthew xviii 10.

29. *Poe*, Edgar Allan. American writer of prose and verse (1809–1849)

32. *bizarre :* grotesque, fantastic (French).

PAGE **144.** 4–6. Chibiabos, beloved by Hiawatha, was a musician who taught the birds and the brooks their music. Evil spirits, envying Hiawatha and his friends, broke the ice under Chibiabos when he was hunting, and drowned him. Hiawatha called up his spirit from the bottom of the lake, and made him ruler of the dead. In Greek legend the King of Hades bore off Persephone and made her his bride The *Eleusinia* were a festival and mystic rites, originally held at Eleusis,

in honour of Persephone and her mother Demeter, the goddess of agriculture.

19. *his chief sorrow :* the loss of his first wife.

23. *Vita Nuova :* Dante, the great Italian poet, tells in this work of his love for Beatrice and of her death.

26. *long, long thoughts :* from 'My Lost Youth.'

PAGE **145.** 26. *bennet,* like the Latin words which follow, is the name of a kind of grass.

PAGE **147.** 12. *awns :* scales enclosing flowers. One on the right and the next on the left side of the stem.

16. *kingly :* their flowers of the royal red proclaim their rank, as a herald's 'blazoning' of a coat-of-arms does that of a king.

21. *allied to sleep and poison :* producing opium.

32. The ruling caste in the cornfield, as the Normans were among the Saxons.

PAGE **148.** 15. For 'grass' read 'glass.' The allusion is to old vessels in which coloured figures are imbedded in the glass.

17. *panicle :* a branching flower stem.

PAGE **149.** 24. *vitreous :* pertaining to glass. Darkened by the coloured glass of the windows.

30. *'Tennyson's last poem' :* probably 'Crossing the Bar.' This was written two years before his death.

PAGE **150.** 4. *green volumes :* it is said that many people in the Abbey spent the time before the service in reading 'In Memoriam.'

6. *Fleet Street :* where there are many newspaper offices.

PAGE **152.** 8. *bluff :* pretence to be or have more than is really the case (colloquial).

21. October 12, 1892.

27. *Hamlet,* III. ii. 240.

PAGE **153.** 21. They died in 1888, 1889, and 1892 respectively.

27. *Shakespeare,* etc. (1616–18); *Vanbrugh,* etc. (1726–31); *Byron,* etc. (1821–4); *Scott,* etc. (1832–4).

30. *so exposed :* so destitute of poets.

PAGE **154.** 1–4. His critics, not content with praising him, have depreciated all living poets.

9. *Victor Hugo* (1802–1885): French poet and novelist.

17. *in* 1850 *:* i.e. on the death of Wordsworth.

28. *Mr. Bailey* (Philip James, 1816–1902) poet. Author of 'Festus,' 'The Angel World,' etc. (The 'Mr.' indicates that he was alive at the date of the essay.)

29. *Rudyard Kipling* (*b.* in Bombay, 1865): poet and writer of short stories. Some of his earlier works are *Departmental Ditties, Soldiers Three, The Jungle Book,* etc. (Sir) *William Watson :* poet (*b.* 1858).

PAGE **155.** 17. *bays :* the bay (or laurel) was sacred to Apollo, the god of poetry. Hence the crowns of poets were made of its leaves.

PAGE **156.** 22. William Congreve (1670–1729) wrote one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, and many comedies.

24. *palimpsest:* a parchment written upon twice, the earlier writing having been erased to make way for the second. 'When people forget all the literature of earlier ages.'

27. *quintessence:* what is best and finest.

31. Jerome K. *Jerome* (*b.* 1861): a popular author. He tells, in one of his best novels, how he was driven by the taste of the public to abandon serious, in favour of humorous, writing. G. R. *Sims* (*b.* 1847): a contributor to newspapers, and writer of plays and short stories.

38. In these verses Tennyson complains of biographers who publish facts about the private lives of authors—facts which ought to be kept secret. Compare Browning's poem 'House.'

PAGE **157.** 15–17. *W. Pater* (1839–1894): author of *The Renaissance, Imaginary Portraits*, etc. *H. Spencer* (1820–1903): see p 97. *George Meredith* (1828–1909): author of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, The Egoist*, etc.

34. *secularist:* one who rejects all forms of religion. The thought seems to be: 'The living poet is like a church: his poetry like the worship in it. Now that Tennyson can write no more, will the public listen to surviving poets? Or will some unsentimental critic persuade them that poetry is worthless, as the secularist strives to persuade them that religion is?'

PAGE **158.** 4. *Commune:* anarchy, such as followed the downfall of Napoleon III. Violent revolutionaries established the 'Paris Commune,' declaring the city independent of the rest of France. Their misrule lasted from March to May 1871.

20. *Farringford:* Tennyson's home in the Isle of Wight.

32. *blossoming periods:* such as the days of Queen Elizabeth.

PAGE **159.** 26. *meridian:* perhaps a slip for 'horizon.' As the meridian passes through the zenith, it is difficult to see how anything could be far above it. The meritorious poets seem to be compared to stars (see **158.** 28)—which are invisible till they cross the horizon.

32–4. *Charles Algernon Swinburne* (1837–1909): author of *Atalanta in Calydon, Songs before Sunrise*, etc. *Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894): author of *Goblin Market*, etc. *William Morris* (1834–1896) author of *The Earthly Paradise, The Life and Death of Jason, Sigurd the Volsung*, etc. *Coventry Patmore* (1823–1896): author of *The Angel in the House*, etc. *Austin Dobson* (1840–): author of *Vignettes in Rhyme*, etc. *Robert Bridges* (*b.* 1844; Poet Laureate, 1913): author of *Prometheus the Fire-giver, Eros and Psyche*, etc.

36. *St. Basil:* Bishop of Cæsarea (A.D. 330–379).

PAGE **160.** 8–9. Confusion of two constructions.

32. *in crescendo:* increasingly.

38. *Tit-Bits and Pearson's Weeklies:* popular papers of no literary value.

PAGE **161.** 6. *inroads . . . Fame:* extolling as praiseworthy that which is popular and therefore sells well.

8–13. 'In Scotland the unworthy are excluded from the holiest

rites of religion. Let us see that an acknowledged place in literature is granted to the worthy only, not to those who merely make it pay.'

PAGE **163.** 19. *Clio :* the Muse of History. The Muses, in Greek mythology, were nine goddesses who presided over poetry, music, etc. Also over history and astronomy.

25. *the Royal Society :* the oldest scientific society in Great Britain. Founded a little before 1660, and approved by King Charles II in that year.

27. *accustomed slopes :* the slopes of Mount Parnassus, which was sacred to the Muses.

PAGE **164.** 5. *the author of 'Esmond' :* because in that book Thackeray identifies himself with the hero, adopting the point of view and language of a contemporary of Steele and Addison.

12. *Regius Professor :* University professor. The name 'Regius,' or royal, was originally given to certain professorships founded by Henry VIII.

16. The maypole was a pole which, in former times, was decked with flowers on May 1, and about which young people danced. The Griffin is an ugly monument in the Strand. It marks the site of the old city gate called Temple Bar, which was demolished some twelve years before the publication of this essay. The reference to the maypole and the Griffin is a concrete example which condemns Thackeray as a historian if we accept Seeley's maxim on p. 162, l. 28–p. 163, l. 3.

PAGE **165.** 16. Carlyle. The quotation is from the opening paragraph of his essay 'On History,' published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1830, and reprinted in his *Miscellanies*, vol. ii.

36. *cyclic* = recurring.

38. *rhapsodist* = singer.

PAGE **166.** 5–17. *Landor* puts a description of Athenian Society in the fifth century B.C. into the mouth of *Aspasia*, the mistress of Pericles. *Thucydides*, as the text implies, was a distinguished historian. *Herodotus*, a traveller, historian, and geographer. *Pericles*, the leading man in Athens, distinguished both as a soldier and a reformer. He did much towards beautifying the city. *Pindar* was a lyric poet, born about 522 B.C.

27. *Antiphon :* a Greek poet. Sixteen orations are attributed to him, but are probably not his work.

30. *Agora :* an open space in Greek towns, used for public meetings and as a market-place.

PAGE **167.** 7. The Sibyls were prophetesses. One of them sold certain books to Tarquinius Superbus, the last King of Rome. These were carefully preserved, and consulted whenever the State was in danger.

33. 'With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart' (Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, line 94). 'Cousin Amy' had forsaken her lover, married for money, and would, so the lover thought, teach her daughter to do the same.

PAGE **168.** 15. *Sir George Lewis :* 2nd Baronet (1806–1863): author. Editor of the *Edinburgh Review* (1852–5). M.P. Held various offices under Liberal governments.

PAGE 169. 5. *classed :* placed (even in the third or lowest class) of a University honours list.

12. *Carlyle on wooden legs :* i.e. a clumsy attempt to imitate Carlyle's style.

40. *eclectic :* one who selects opinions from different systems of thought.

41. *tone down . . . :* make themselves ridiculous by trying to reconcile their inconsistencies.

PAGE 170. 8. Horace, in his *Art of Poetry*, condemns the insertion of ' a purple patch ' in a poem ; i.e. introducing a piece of fine writing which is out of keeping with the rest of the work. Mr. Birrell (judging from the word ' brush ') seems to have in mind the work of a painter, not of a tailor ; and he does not seem to condemn the ' patch.'

PAGE 171. 16. *Hamlet*, : i. i. 85.

PAGE 172. 1. *Pecksniff* and *Micawber :* characters in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *David Copperfield* respectively.

16. The figure is suggested by the necessity of open spaces in and near great towns like London, to enable the public to get away from the smoke for a while.

23–4. *Dr.* (Thomas) *Arnold* (1795–1842) · Head Master of Rugby. The ' Head ' in *Tom Brown's Schooldays.* Father of Matthew Arnold. Wrote and lectured on history. *Sainte-Beuve*, C. A. (1804–1869) : French literary critic. The greatest critic of modern times. *Dr.* (Cardinal J. H.) *Newman* (1801–1890). Controversial writer. Author of works on Church history and some beautiful poems.

26. Distorting his account of our doings to make them agree with his theory, as we crush clothes to make them fit into a trunk.

PAGE 173. 2. The Northern States fought against slavery and the claim by the Southerners of the right to break up the republic. But there was much that was picturesque in the society of the South (based though it was on slavery) and in the valour of its armies, as there is much beauty in the ivy clinging to a ruin.

10–34. In the first half of the nineteenth century Italy was divided into various kingdoms, states ruled by the Pope, and a part under Austrian rule. In 1861 Victor Emmanuel was declared King of Italy by an Italian Parliament, but Rome and Venetia were only united to the kingdom later. From 1829 (when he was twenty-four years of age) till his death in 1872, *Joseph Mazzini* was plotting, writing, and sometimes fighting for a united Italian Republic. It is said that ' it was Mazzini who prepared the soil, Garibaldi who did most of the harvesting, and Cavour who entered into their labours.' Cavour was a statesman, and not a republican. He worked by constitutional and diplomatic means, and wore himself out in the struggle, but lived long enough to see its success. Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia, was asked by Mazzini to head the movement for unity, but declined. Later he declared war on Austria, but was defeated, and was compelled to abdicate in favour of his son, Victor Emmanuel (in 1849).

39. *the Napoleonic legend :* the idea of a Napoleonic dynasty. Napoleon III, nephew of Napoleon I, sought to imitate his great-uncle.

In 1870 he declared war against Prussia. The French armies never left French territory, and the force which he commanded in person was surrounded and put out of action at Sedan. Napoleon was taken prisoner and deposed.

PAGE 175. 5. *peripatetic philosophers:* the followers of Aristotle were so called, but the word 'peripatetic,' by its derivation, only means 'walking about,' and probably little more is meant here. However, Aristotle considered history to be 'the description of facts preparatory to philosophy.'

8. *blow-holes:* holes by which foul air escapes from underground passages. Suggested by the word 'ventilate.'

PAGE 178. 14. *to kill:* i.e. to catch a fish.

41. *Kudos* = honour and glory (Greek).

PAGE 179. 1. *trailing clouds of glory:* from Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality.' (Of course quoted humorously.)

4. *entr'acte:* an interval between two acts of a play or opera.

7. *The Flying Dutchman:* an opera (or musical drama) by the celebrated German composer Wagner, based on the old legend of a ship doomed, for some crime committed on board her, to sail the seas till the world's end. *evaporate* = give out the music (as water does steam), so that it seemed to blend with the noises of the city.

34. *Theophrastus* (372–286 B.C.): a Greek naturalist and philosopher, who inherited all the manuscripts of Aristotle. The reference here is to his *Thirty Characters*, a delineation of various moral types.

PAGE 180. 5. *Consuelo:* heroine of a (French) novel by George Sand (Baronne Dudevant, 1804–1876). *Clarissa Harlowe*, see p. 50. *Steenie Steenson*, see Scott's *Redgauntlet*, letter 11. *Vautrin:* the rascally hero of Balzac's *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes* (1843).

40. *court of love:* mock courts which were held in Provence about the twelfth century to discuss questions concerning love and lovers.

PAGE 181. 15. *cat's cradle.* See p. 26, line 30.

27. *pontiffs* = popes; i.e. people who claim to be infallible.

37 The first man (I write from memory) is a prodigal to pour out the oil; the second a miser to measure the vinegar; the third a philosopher to add the salt.

PAGE 182. 17. *Major Dyngwell:* apparently a character in fiction, but his name has not been traced.

35. *Pistol:* for the character see *Henry V*; for the phrase, *Hamlet*, III. ii. 16.

PAGE 183. 35 'The stocks' are the timber framework on which a ship rests when being built.

PAGE 184. 13. *taking punishment:* enduring your blows. A phrase used of prize-fighters, like 'in the ring,' 'glutton,' and 'facer.'

32. *crusted* wine is old wine, whose age is shown by the sediment, or 'crust,' in it.

38. Pulled the cord fixed to the top of the tree while he cut through the trunk.

PAGE 185. 6 Jack, in his mad arguments, seems to be compared

to the priestess of Apollo, who stood on a tripod, and, possessed for the time by the god, uttered his oracles.

13. *'dry light' :* in Bacon's essay on Friendship he says: 'Heraclitus saith in one of his Ænigmaes, Dry light is ever the best.' He interprets the phrase elsewhere as meaning the light of the intellect, uninfluenced by the passions.

19. *proxime accessit* = he came very near. A University phrase, applied to a man who nearly, but not quite, obtained a prize.

24. *Sirens :* see p. 62, line 10, and note. *Sphinx:* a monster said to have infested the neighbourhood of Thebes. She had a woman's head, a dog's body, and so on. She killed all travellers who could not solve a riddle she asked them, and dashed her own brains out when, at length, it was answered.

25. *Byronic* = pessimistic. *Horatian :* like that of the Roman poet, Q. Horatius Flaccus (or Horace).

28. *Don Giovanni :* an opera by Mozart. *A double orchestra* = two bands, one on the stage playing lighter music, the other playing graver music, suggestive of the music of Beethoven.

31. *war in his members :* St. James, iv. 1.

PAGE **186.** 20. *rubric :* rule or direction (originally printed or written in red ink in Prayer Books. Latin, *ruber* = red). Here, the rules of conversation laid down above.

33–5. *Falstaff*, in *Henry IV* ; *Mercutio*, in *Romeo and Juliet* ; *Sir Toby* Belch, in *Twelfth Night* ; and *Cordelia*, in *King Lear*. We cannot associate anything gross, or even humorous, with the noble character of Cordelia.

35. Like the sea-god Proteus, who could assume any form he pleased.

PAGE **187.** 27. *the rude imperious surge :* Second Part of *Henry IV*, III. i. 20.

PAGE **188.** 11. Tennyson's 'The Revenge.' 'The Armada' referred to in line 10 is not, of course, 'The Invincible Armada.'

35. The whole passage is ironical. 'We have now to pay heavy taxes to keep up the navy, so are no better off than Hampden and his contemporaries, who were called on to pay ship-money.' The only difference is that Englishmen are now taxed by their own representatives instead of by the Sovereign.

PAGE **189.** 25 *the Threefold Cross :* the Union Jack, which bears the crosses of St. George (red on a white ground), St. Andrew (white and X-shaped), and St. Patrick (red and X-shaped), the patron saints of England, Scotland, and Ireland, respectively.

PAGE **190.** 31. *millennial dreams :* fancies of an age of peace like that predicted in Rev. xx. 6.

PAGE **193.** 20. The poorer classes in Italy know of no form of investment except the government lotteries. Dreams and omens will, they think, help them to gamble successfully.

31. The story of Cupid and Psyche (originally told by Apuleius) may be found in W. Morris's 'Earthly Paradise,' and in Bridges' 'Eros and Psyche.'

39. *Beauty and the Beast* is a tale of an enchanted prince, condemned to take the form of a monster till he could win the love of a maid.

PAGE **194.** 15. *the Lambs.* See *Essays of Elia, My First Play.*
16. *Urn Burial:* by Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682). An essay on funeral customs, suggested by the discovery of some old cinerary urns.
17. *Candide:* a novel by Voltaire.
21. A simile only intelligible to one with a knowledge of the theory of music.
36. *Hippolytus:* a tragedy by Euripides.
38. Fauns were rural deities of the Romans.

PAGE **195.** 3. *sawed:* made a harsh noise by rubbing its wing-cases with its legs.
24–6. *Webster,* John (1580–1625): the work referred to is a play called *The White Devil... with the Life and Death of Vittoria Corombona.* Martial and Crébillon were a Roman poet and a French novelist respectively, so that the collection of book-backs was a varied one.
30. *saporate:* of course the question is not asked seriously, but we have the verb *savour,* which is derived from the Latin *sapor* through the French.

PAGE **196.** 16. *books that are no books:* see Lamb's *Essays of Elia,* 'On Books and Reading,' para. 3.
28 *de rigueur:* French Compulsory.

PAGE **197.** 33. Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, is said to visit houses where there are children every Christmas Eve, and fill with presents the stockings tied to their beds. (The English have borrowed the fancy from Germany.)

PAGE **198.** 25. St. Matthew, vii 6.
34. '*Gyp*': pen-name of Madame de Martel, author of some seventy novels, sketches, etc.

PAGE **199.** 4. Rosalind and Orlando: *As You Like It,* I. ii. 263.
12. 'I were little happy if I could say how much.' Said by Claudio when promised the hand of Hero. *Much Ado about Nothing,* II. i. 318.
19. *Elizabeth and her German Garden:* by the Countess von Arnim.
29. *the Golden Rose:* a bunch of roses carved in gold, and given each year by the Pope to the Princess who deserves best of the Church.

PAGE **202.** 33. Gothic architecture is distinguished by its pointed arches, spires, flying buttresses, and generally by its lightness and grace. Most of the churches built in Europe in the Middle Ages are in this style.

PAGE **203.** 26. Barbers are proverbially talkative, and many barbers in England were Germans—possibly spies.

PAGE **204.** 14. *Gotham:* a town in Nottinghamshire, whose people

are said to be noted for folly. For instance, a tale is told of their trying to keep a cuckoo in a bush by standing round it with joined hands.

PAGE **206.** 27. *General von Bernhardi's notorious treatise : Germany and the Next War*, which is a glorification of war as a civilising agent, and maintains that 'aspirations for peace threaten to poison the soul of the German people.'

28. *Tamburlaine* (Timur) : Marlowe's tragedy, published 1590.

40. *General von der Goltz :* author of *The Nation in Arms.*

PAGE **207.** 18. *Machiavel :* a Florentine statesman (1469–1527) : author of *The Prince*, in which 'the most treacherous acts of the ruler are justified by the wickedness and treachery of the governed.'

PAGE **208.** 9. *Nietzsche :* a German poet-philosopher, who taught that all the gentler virtues are 'slave virtues.' 'Master-morality,' that of the 'superman,' who is to rule mankind, regards pity, unselfishness, etc., as vices. War is good and necessary, as only force can decide between rival theories of the supermen. Perhaps Nietzsche was always mad. Certainly he ended his career in a mad-house.

36. . . it is excellent
To have a giant's strength ; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.
Measure for Measure, II. ii. 107.

PAGE **210.** 25. Asked a string of questions, after the manner of Socrates, leading Slackford to say what he wished him to say.

PAGE **212.** 25. *Utopia :* literally 'nowhere.' The name of an imaginary republic described by Sir Thomas More (see p. 28, line 29, and note).

PAGE **213.** 12. *Philistinism :* see p. 114, line 36, and note.

PAGE **214.** 15. Suggested by 'the haven under the hill,' in Tennyson's lines, 'Break, break, break.'

PAGE **215.** 8. *Cinquevalli :* a famous juggler.

32. *P.L.M.* = Paris—Lyons—Marseille Railway.

PAGE **216.** 6. *King Richard III*, v. iii.

9. *Tony Lumpkin :* a character in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer.*

17. *gaol delivery :* bringing prisoners before a grand jury, that they may either be discharged or brought to trial.

PAGE **217.** 9. *Christian :* in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* The lions referred to were chained.

18. There was fear of civil war in Ireland, owing to Ulster's dislike of 'Home Rule,' just before the outbreak of the Great War.

PAGE **220.** 9. *Thomas of Ercildoune :* a Scottish poet of the thirteenth century. Fabled to have been taken to Fairyland, and kept there three years.

PAGE **221.** 7. *Cuchulain* : the most heroic figure in Irish romance, a great warrior.

8. *Caolte* : a warrior ; cousin of Oisin.

9. *Oisin*, or Ossian : a semi-mythical bard and warrior, who lived about the end of the third century.

PAGE 223. S. P. *Langley* experimented with models (which he called aerodromes) in America, from 1889 to 1903. Otto *Lilienthal*, relying on gravity for his motive power, experimented with 'gliders.' He made over 2,000 glides, but was killed in 1896, his machine being overturned by a gust of wind.

11. *Noah's dove:* see the story of the deluge in Genesis viii., and how the dove proved that the waters were subsiding by bringing Noah an olive leaf.

PAGE 224. 35. *Belvedere:* a turret, or erection, on the top of a house, open at the sides to afford a view. A *sky-scraper* is a very tall building.

PAGE 225. 5. To *plane down:* to glide down, after stopping the engines.

11. *the White City:* an exhibition ground in the west of London, so called from the colour of its buildings. There is a switch-back railway there.

32. *Farman:* an aeroplane made by the Brothers Farman.

PAGE 229. 23. Our ideas as to any change which may have taken place in women are influenced by what we read in modern novels and other writings.

31. *David's maximum:* 'The days of our years are threescore years and ten. . . .' Psalm xc. 10.

34. *passim* = in different places, here and there (Latin).

PAGE 230. 1. *Paul de Florac:* a character in *The Newcomes*.

27. In 1884, at the age of thirty-five. He resigned because Government would not reduce expenditure as he wished.

41. *Max Beerbohm.* See p. 254.

PAGE 232. 15. He regards the General's skill at football as of little less importance than his defence of Mafeking. *Charterhouse* is a school, formerly in London, now at Godalming.

PAGE 233. 6. *Old Q.:* William Douglas, fourth Duke of Queensberry. Notorious for dissipation, gambling, horse-racing, etc. Even when over seventy his interest in such things remained unchanged. It is said that C. J. Fox learnt to love gambling from 'Old Q.'

PAGE 236. 1. 'Familiar in his mouth as household words'
Henry V, IV. iii. 52.

15–27. The persons named are all modern novelists, peculiarities of whose style are cleverly hit off in a few words.

30. *impayable:* invaluable, excellent (French).

34. *espièglerie:* roguishness, playfulness (French).

PAGE 237. 16. See Wordsworth's 'She was a phantom of delight.'

20. Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, first published 1589.

22. *Twopenny and Fourpenny Boxes:* boxes in which second-hand books, valued at 2*d.* and 4*d.*, are exposed for sale.

PAGE 239. 26. *without father*, etc.: like Melchisedec. See Hebrews vii. 3.

PAGE **240.** 10. *Leadenhall Street :* one of the busiest streets in the City of London.

PAGE **242.** 12. *galley :* an oblong tray which receives matter from the composing-stick, and on which it is arranged in a column or page.

a proof is pulled = an impression is taken.

13. *an individual :* in the monotype each letter is cast separately. In the linotype, described below, a whole line was cast in one piece.

18. *over-run illustrations :* illustrations printed on a page of letter-press, and so interfering with the lengths of lines.

23. *To cut* = to leave.

31. *a stick :* a metal instrument on which the compositor arranges a line of print.

PAGE **243.** 13. *ricochetting into the inane :* to ricochet is to rebound, as a shot moving nearly horizontally does, on striking the earth or the surface of the water. Inane = empty space. Steevens merely means 'jumping out of its proper place.'

25. *Monte Carlo :* notorious for its gambling tables. The game of roulette played there depends on the revolution of a wheel.

28. The 'foot' of a type is the base of it, on which it rests.

30. *take a type's shoes off . . .* as if it were a horse.

31. *butterfly :* to break on the wheel was a cruel mode of execution. The victim was tied to a wheel, and his limbs broken by blows. To 'break a butterfly on the wheel' is a proverbial phrase for using unnecessary force to crush a feeble foe. In lines 13, 25, 30, and 31 Steevens is deliberately talking nonsense.

PAGE **246.** 24. The 'it' before 'does' should be struck out. Neither Steevens nor the monotype is responsible for the error, which crept into a posthumous collection of his writings.

PAGE **247.** 22. *queering the pitch :* a slang expression used by beggars, showmen, etc., meaning to spoil one's chance of business, generally by forestalling one. In keeping with the phrase is the misspelling of the French word *littérateurs*—literary men.

PAGE **250.** 5. *The Origin of Species :* by Charles Darwin. The remark seems to have been suggested by the fact that Darwin discussed the effect of environment on living beings.

PAGE **254.** 22. *Waterloo* is the London terminus of the London and South-Western Railway; *Vauxhall* the next station, hardly a mile away.

PAGE **258.** 31. *platform-fright :* a phrase coined on the analogy of 'stage-fright'—the terror which actors often feel on their first appearance.

36. *Diderot*, Denis (1713–1784) : a French writer. A distinguished member of the 'Philosophe' party, which advocated freedom of opinion in religion and politics.

Printed by M. N. Kulkarni, at the Karnatak Printing Press,
318/A Thakurdwar, Bombay.