

ROMANCE AND REALITY

HOLBROOK JACKSON



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ROMANCE AND REALITY



# ROMANCE AND REALITY

ESSAYS AND STUDIES

BY

HOLBROOK JACKSON



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UTOPIAN

*“ I could never content my contemplation with those general pieces of wonder, the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, the increase of Nile, the conversion of the Needle to the North ; and have studied to match and parallel those in the more obvious and neglected pieces of nature, which without travel I can do in the Cosmography of myself. We carry with us the wonders we seek without us : there is all Africa and her prodigies in us ; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a compendium what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume.”—Sir THOMAS BROWNE, “ Religio Medici.”*

## HERE AND NOW

**I** LIKE to do nothing. To sit by a fire in winter, or in a garden in summer; to loaf on a sea-beach with the sun on me; to hang over the wall of a pier-head and watch the waves in their green and white tantrums; to sit in a brasserie on a Parisian boulevard with a common bock, and the people moving to and fro; to idle in parks or public squares, or in the quadrangles and closes of colleges, or the Inns of Court, or the great cathedrals; to forget haste and effort in old empty churches, or drowsy taverns; to rest by a roadside hedge, or in a churchyard where sheep browse; to lie in a punt in the green shade of the willows; to sit on a fence—these things please me well.

My love of doing nothing is deep-rooted: so deep-rooted that I have never thought it necessary to argue about it; besides, there are so many people arguing about so many things. And I am not vain; I desire not to convert. Who, indeed, shall say to what<sup>1</sup> faith one ought to be converted? Faith and faithfulness, to be sure, are often separated in our time, and my private opinion is that the convertible are already converted.

Of course I work—but I make no virtue of that.

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I work because I must. I do not make this admission to invite your sympathy. Even were I rich I might do something, just to give a relish to my real aim in life. . . . As it is, I work to provide a margin to my days, a margin in which I may "taste the vaguely sweet content of perfect sloth in limb and brain."

I know there are people who like work, and I am bound to respect their taste ; but I do not in the least understand them. They do tease me out of thought, as doth Eternity ; and I am silent before them as Keats was before a greater thing. There are many things we are forced to accept with our limited perceptions ; we understand very little in spite of our hurrying here and there, and of our vast knowledge. Doubtless work has rewards unknown to me : my powers of observation may be faulty, for most people seem to be working all their waking hours ; they do nothing only when they sleep, afterwards they begin to work again. I must conclude that they get some pleasure out of it, or they would not work, for we all agree that ours is an age of freedom. It behoves me, therefore, to take the militant worker for granted.

Still I am often tempted to look more deeply into the phenomenon of work, because if the love of work in some moves me to silence, surely the inclusion of work among the rights of man ought to move me to tears—or laughter. But I shall neither weep nor smile nor pursue the matter further, for I am un-



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worthy. One cannot properly understand a subject unless one comes to it with sympathy ; and I have no sympathy for work. I do not hold it among the virtues.

I would be better employed in considering, nay, in emulating the lilies of the field, who have confounded the wisdom of those who toil from the beginning of time. Why, I often ask myself, why has this not been generally accepted ? And in my effort to answer the question, I am forced to admit that it has been generally accepted, though not generally admitted. And, after all, I may not be alone in my faith : perhaps the majority are with me, only some perverse tradition prevents them from avowing it. I am, indeed, quite satisfied that

“ Hearts just as pure and fair  
Do beat in Belgrave Square  
As in the lowly air  
Of Seven Dials ! ”

The whole matter, however, is a mystery, for I find that Seven Dials, using the term as the symbol of a place where work is the sole occupation, is always working, without any very obvious enthusiasm for the performance ; whilst Belgrave Square, using the term as the symbol of a place where work is not the sole occupation, manages to combine an elegant idleness with a remarkable moral enthusiasm for work. The solution of the riddle would require more subtlety than I can command ; it would merely be a vain

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begging of the question were I to charge either with insincerity or folly, especially in the light of the known honour and sincerity of our leisured classes and that shrewdness and almost touching self-interest which are the traditional characteristics of the workers.

The matter is further complicated by the curious fact, common to the most superficial observer, that Seven Dials is no more consistent in its calling than Belgrave Square ; for just as the latter can find time in its idleness to sing the praises of work, so Seven Dials reserves its highest praise and its highest rewards for those who do no work. Human beings are strange creatures ; they pride themselves upon being distinguishable from what they call " the lower animals " by possessing the faculty of reason, yet they remain superbly unreasonable. Yet, in the last resort, there is one consistency between the two forces : the practice of Belgrave Square and the taste of Seven Dials coincide, thus proving that idleness, either voluntary or enforced, is a link, and perhaps the only link, between rich and poor.

Perhaps on this basis a truce might be called in which each might be allowed to follow his own inclinations. We might call it—a Pragmatic Sanction for Idleness. Unless some such agreement is arranged, I greatly fear that rich and poor may do something to each other which they would eternally regret. Their inconsistencies may make slaves of them all. This would not matter so much if we

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who prefer to do nothing were left out of it, but that would be impossible, for slavery is both infectious and contagious, and sooner or later it afflicts every citizen in those States where it has gained a footing. We are threatened with the disease even now, and I think it would be far from unwise if our legislators considered means of arranging for the quarantine of all who were suspected of the taint.

But I do not wish to follow a question which for the moment does not affect me. I am fortunately placed. The gods have been kind to me. They have permitted me to do just sufficient work, and then to loaf, to dream, to do nothing! For this boon I should give praise every moment of my life; and I do—for is not appreciation praise? Hours of voluntary idleness are indeed hours of praise. For in such hours we are in communion with the real world; in them we have done with the time that passeth away, and become one with the time which is eternal. The priests of old knew this when they instructed their acolytes in the art of meditation. Walt Whitman knew it when he loafed on "fish-shaped Paumanok" observing a spear of summer grass; Thoreau knew it in his hut by Walden Pond; William Blake knew it when he saw the angels on Peckham Rye.

It is only when life is overwrought with the tyranny of doing that we miss the joy of being; and it is only the consciousness of being that makes us capable of any worthy action. That is why the great ones of

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the earth have always been men of a wide leisure, men who have had a margin to their days, like the margin about the page of a well-built book. The men who do anything worth doing are just the men it is easiest to catch doing nothing. But I did not even set out to make a virtue of doing nothing. Virtues are to the virtuous; and it may be that some of us are unworthy of work as others are certainly unworthy of idleness.

One cannot settle such questions; they must be left to settle themselves. So I end as I began. I like doing nothing, and the one who likes doing nothing has time to appreciate everything—even time. He is at one with the long silences; kin with the world. . . .

## GOING TO NOWHERE

I WAS walking along a familiar English highroad, when the sound of wheels caused me to move unconsciously to the greensward on the right. Presently a friend in a dogcart appeared. "Hello!" he said, with good-humour, "where are you going?" "To Nowhere," I replied cheerfully. "Oh, thought you'd like a lift," said he, whipping up his mare and getting away rapidly. He no doubt concluded I was in a churlish mood. But I was never less churlish nor more truthful. I was actually going to Nowhere, and that my admission of the fact could excite ill-feeling is a curious reflection upon our times.

But a moment's thought and the matter becomes quite clear. This is an age in which everybody is going Somewhere, and Nowhere, as a destination, has become a term of evasion. You say you are going Nowhere to the over-curious, the inquisitive; and the word, used in this sense, means just the opposite. It is a piece of protective irony, and thus a part of the modern convention of purposeful gadding about.

The man who is not going Somewhere nowadays is very rare indeed. The habit is rapidly becoming an

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instinct. I hardly ever meet people who are not going Somewhere ; or if they are not actually doing so it is merely because circumstances are against them ; they have work to do, money to earn, masters to serve, homes to support. As it is they devote their spare moments to planning journeys to remote places for the holidays. Journeying has become a part of the ritual of life. The wedding trip is as much a circumstance of getting married as the honeymoon used to be ; and you no longer hear of merchants retiring from business and taking things easily ; they retire from business, nowadays, to devote themselves to travel. This journeying is always, as I say, purposeful ; people are always going Somewhere ; and, just as the act of going Somewhere has become a kind of social ritual, so certain places have become the symbols and impedimenta of the ritual. Their names are adorably familiar to all purposeful travellers—Florence and Rome ; the Bernese Oberland and the Trossachs ; parts of Holland, Belgium, France ; Cairo, Morocco, the Land of the Midnight Sun (*vide* Guide-Books), and even, for the extra wealthy, Japan. It is a far-flung list, but yet a narrow one, for the ritual of going Somewhere, or, to give it its real name, the art of the tourist, imposes upon you the necessity of keeping on the beaten track. Somewhere is a place to which everybody has been or “ ought ” to go ; it has been written about, praised, defined.

Now when I say that I prefer going to Nowhere, I

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would not have you jump to the conclusion that I am a contrary person. Were you to do so you would do me an injustice. Nowhere is simply my favourite destination, and I get so much pleasure in going there, that it is not easy for me to imagine why people put themselves to so much trouble in going elsewhere. Perhaps it is all due to the rapidity and cheapness of modern travel conditions. You merely push a little money through a pigeon-hole in a railway station, and utter the name of the desired Somewhere, when lo ! like the result of an occult incantation, a slip of pasteboard will drop into your hand, which in turn, by the simple process of showing it to a number of uniformed men, will be the means of translating you to the place where you would be. Who would not be overcome by such a magic ? Yet I have a magic, beside which the magic of touring slips into the limbo of futile things. Let me tell you of it ; not for the sake of conversion, but out of gratitude.

My magic is involved in going to Nowhere, which is quite a different thing to not going Anywhere. Others know of it, but they keep quiet. They are in no hurry, in the patois of commerce, to let the public in. But I dislike such privacy and break it down wherever I can. The difficulty, however, in this case is greater than usual, for money will not buy the requirements for the journey to Nowhere. You either have them or lack them, and there is an end of the matter. Neither are they the things you throw into a ruck-sack at the last moment, though

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to be sure such things are not to be despised even by the Nowherer. They are the strange things a man carries in the cells of his brain or beneath the wings of his imagination. They are no more tangible than these, and yet they have all the authority of money, as well as the grip of that which religious people understand by a call, which is something greater than money.

Once you possess these things you may safely set out to Nowhere. And then the miracle will happen, in this wise : Somewhere will come to you ! For I have invariably found that in persistently going to Nowhere you not only ignore the object of travel, which is to get Somewhere, but you actually accomplish the fact by reversing the process. In going to Nowhere, Somewhere let me repeat, indeed Everywhere, comes to you. This is no vain paradox ; it is a mild statement of common fact, and because of this, and for no other reason, it sounds astounding.

Everybody knows that even the adorable destinations of tourists rarely come up to expectations. Somehow or other it is the places by the wayside upon which the lingering eye is cast. And at this let us cease to wonder, for we are near the heart of the mystery. The most beautiful places are not those which you go to see deliberately, but those which visit you. They are the places which rise out of the shadowy plain to greet you unawares ; the places that steal upon you like dreams, that flood your vision like sunlight. They are, like all memorable things, the places that happen. If you go to



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meet them you are almost certain to miss them ; for they are coy and shy, like beauty or joy, or a maiden new to love. You pursue them and they retreat before you. But just wait awhile and they will peep at you over the hill-tops or between the pines : you will feel their presence stealing upon you like a new joy, and in a flash you will see a vision, and that vision is the vision of Nowhere.

This experience comes rarely or not at all to those who are for ever going Somewhere. The material of such experiences, to be sure, exists everywhere, but constant harping on approved destinations blunts the faculty of vision ; and this is a great loss to those who go a-journeying. And it is not only the person who goes Somewhere who is damaged by the act. Somewhere also is injured. Deterioration is contagious, and places are destroyed or renovated by the spirit of the people who go to them. I know as fair an island as ever graced the sea. Once that island was Nowhere, and in those days it was peopled by fisher-folk and farmers who spoke their own language, sang their own songs, told each other their own tales, and provided each other with their own natural food : the fish of the sea, the sheep of the pastures, and the fruit of the plains. Since then the delectable island has become Somewhere, and its people are no longer fishermen and farmers ; most of them are touts and flunkeys, attending and exploiting a strange, noisy people for one-third of the year, and awaiting the return of the strangers for

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the rest. They are forgetting their own tongue, songs and tales, as they talk more and more the language, sing more and more the ditties and read more and more the newspapers of the invaders. There are also other signs of evil, but anyone can see these in any Somewhere, so I will save my ink for less obvious things. My island is but one example of a modern ill which is spreading over the whole earth; no fair place is immune; those who gad about settle upon them like a blight, and peace and beauty shrink before their advance.

For that and for other reasons I go to Nowhere.

Anyone can go a journey, but every journey is a pilgrimage for those who go to Nowhere. To set out for Nowhere requires courage, therefore those who go there may be said to be alive. They are ready to take their chance and do not barter with a guide-book for promises of scenery, antiquities, or other conventional reward, at the end of the day's march. Enough for them the open road and the things life offers by the wayside. The violet shadows of the woodland path flecked with silver light; the tonic breath of the heath and the smell of peat; the shrill green of the new fronds among the crumpled tan of last year's bracken; the staccato flutter of hurried wings in the hedgerows; the fragrance of hay and cattle from the shippens; the buildings mellowed by time; the roll of down and the sway and rhythm of the sea; the murmuring music of dingles full of leaves, faint breezes, birds, and bees

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and lapping waters ; the arrogance of mountains, and the hovering loneliness of sky-swept plains ; these are the treasures Life offers to him who goes forth to Nowhere.

But Nowhere is not only to be sought in country places or by the sea ; to believe that would be to join issue with those absurd people who insist upon separating man and his works from Nature and her works, which is like separating the tree from its leaves, or the bird from its nest. All the things made by man are as much a part of nature as the things you read about in the natural history books. And deep in the heart of his masterpiece, the city, hides also the genius of Nowhere. No one knew this better than Charles Dickens, who devoted, literally, years to tramping to Nowhere in London, and the results are to be found in that immortal series of novels which constitute the Iliad of the Metropolis. And when wise old Dr Johnson set a walk down Fleet Street against a walk to any Somewhere in England, he knew quite well, although Boswell has not recorded the fact, that the Nowhere of Fleet Street was the whole world.

I know not how many times I have walked to Nowhere in London, but this I do know, that every time I have done so some new revelation of the great city-county has come to me. London is strangely elusive to the tourist. Indeed, I know of no place, save Paris, which eludes those who come to see her so effectually as London. She deliberately lures

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them from her track by throwing what are popularly known as "sights" in their way. And they go back to the provinces thinking they have seen her, when they have only seen the Tower, Crystal and Buckingham Palaces, the Poets' Corner, Madame Tussaud's, and such things as your proper Londoner has only heard of but never seen. Paris also tricks the tourist after her manner by showing him sordid and wearisome things called "pleasures," which have very little to do with the real life of the sober and industrious capital of France.

Yes, a thousand pitfalls and boredoms await the tourist, but he who goes to Nowhere is immune from such evils. He is under a spell which is irresistible. It is as though he were set apart, like a knight-errant in an age devoid of such orders. Indeed, as yet, these essential saunterers, wayfarers, ramblerers or whatever you may call them, are not conscious of their aim or condition, neither do they know one another by name. But, scattered and nameless as they are among men, a subtle bond links them together in an informal fellowship, and by chance signs they come to know each other when they meet on the open road. The Holy Grail lies in Nowhere, and those who go thither must needs belong to the same fellowship.

I never yet felt lonely on my journeys to Nowhere. Still it is pleasant to think that there are others going my way and that perchance we shall meet if not there at least on the road. Occasionally we have met and spoken, as they say of ships on the High Seas. One of

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these days, in sooth, I am quite prepared to find that the fellowship is much larger than I thought. Why not ?

Everyone who is engaged in the great pilgrimage of Life—and what better thing can happen to any of us ?—is marching to the same goal. It is the goal which is the repudiation of all goals, the great pathless way, unnamed on maps, unpraised in guide-books ; it is the goal to which every man is destined. But most men prefer to go Somewhere, they have so little faith. How fruitless are their efforts they themselves will tell you. Nowhere is akin to wisdom, it is the wisdom of place, and like wisdom the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Its beauties are real and enduring, yet they are not to be set down in words. Some say they have been revealed in music, but I doubt it. Nowhere has been defined in the happy bearing of those who have been there. Perhaps some day a great change will come over humanity, and all rushing hither and thither will cease. All the guide-books will be burnt, and scenery and antiquities will no longer be sought by weary tourists. In that hour shall Nowhere be discovered.

## SOUTHWARD HO!

### I

THOSE who remember Liverpool before the multi-domed Dock Offices and the skyscraper of the Royal Liver Insurance Company flaunted themselves on the pier-head, overtopping the tallest spars of the fleetest barques of the South Sea trade, and making even the colossal red funnels of the *Mauretania* look like toys, will remember also the St George's Dock. And if they are further touched with a sentimental regard for old familiar things, as which of us is not, they will no doubt resent somewhat the intrusion of those arrogant monsters of iron and stone, modern hybrids of building construction, half engineering and half architecture, usurping the place of that same old rectangular basin of muddy green water. For do they not stand precisely where it once stood? Are they not the monstrous gravestones of the cosiest dock in the whole world?

Well, it was in this dock, in the corner beside the swing bridge which used to connect James Street with Mann Island, in the shadow of the Goree Piazzas, that I first beheld the craft which after-

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wards took me to the South Seas. I was just out of my teens and had come over the water from the Cheshire side and was crossing from Mann Island into the City of Ships. I had passed the hut where the ancient gentleman sells cheap Bibles and Testaments and other accounts of the True Faith, and stood turning over the battered volumes on the stall of the second-hand bookseller which at that time stood in a row of stalls, most of which displayed glowing pyramids of oranges and apples presided over by plump old dames with immobile, wind-tanned faces, who seemed to do nothing but sit staring all day at the pleasant row of sailors' dram-shops opposite. Even in those days I had a keen scent for a good book, and almost the first I touched on the stall was a musty copy of "Typee," by Herman Melville. I had never heard of it before, but was attracted by the name. "Typee," I murmured, "Typee suggests something childlike and exotic," and turning over the pages I came across this passage :

"There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilised man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honour, in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knock-

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ing their heads together; no poor relations everlastingly occupying the spare bedchamber, and diminishing the elbow-room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors' prison; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or, to sum up all in one word—no money! That 'root of all evil' was not to be found in the valley."

"A sort of Socialist Utopia," I thought, and dipped again. I caught this the second time:

"To begin with the morning. We were not very early risers—the sun would be shooting his golden spikes above the Kappar mountains ere I drew aside my tappa robe, and, girding my long tunic about my waist, sallied out with Fayaway and Kory-Kory and the rest of the household, and bent my steps towards the stream. Here we found congregated all those who dwelt in our section of the valley; and here we bathed with them. The fresh morning air and cool flowing waters put both soul and body in a glow, and after a half-hour employed in this recreation, we sauntered back to the house—Tinor and Marheyo gathering dry sticks by the way for firewood; some of the young men laying the cocoa-nut trees under contribution, as they passed beneath them; while Kory-Kory played his outlandish pranks for my particular diversion, and Fayaway and I, not arm-



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in-arm, to be sure, but sometimes hand-in-hand, strolled along, with feelings of perfect charity for all the world, and especially good-will towards each other."

"How much?" I inquired of the patient merchant.

"Threepence," said he.

As I crossed the swing bridge I saw, lying in her accustomed berth, the schooner *Eostre*, as I had seen her many times on her periodical visits, for this corner berth seemed hers by historic right, like the berths of the Dutch Eel-Schuyts in the Pool of London by Billingsgate Wharf. She looked just the same as ever, neither older nor younger, indeed she had reached that age when time seems to pass by unheeding and unheeded, as is often the case with hearty old women. Her grey mainsail flapped loosely and untidily, with its square brown patch in the right-hand corner, as it always did when she was in dock; and her blue-jerseyed crew were disembarking her familiar cargo of bundles of boardlike salted fish. Her sides, as usual, were almost guiltless of paint, and inclined to portliness; they bulged, unnaturally for a schooner, from a square stern, on which was painted in yellow letters on a blue ground, "*Eostre—Christiania*," but they made amends by tapering rather gracefully to the bows, from which a new jib shot out with obvious coquetry. I recrossed the bridge late that evening with "Typee" in my pocket, which I had been devouring all the afternoon at the risk of commercial disaster in a fragrant smoking

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café, and on my way to the pier-head I had bought at a bookshop "Omoo," which, I learned from the title-page of "Typee," was by the same author. The *Eostre* still lay at her berth, but a light now shone into the twilight from her binnacle, and only one of her crew was in sight; he leaned over the starboard side meditatively watching the traffic on Mann Island, puffing a pipe and spitting into the dock. That night I went to bed early, propped myself up with pillows, placed the light in a convenient position, read "Typee" to the end and "Omoo" half through before the guttering of the candle forced me to close my smarting eyes on the glories of the South Seas.

### II

Doubtless there are people who, having read "Typee," are not moved with an urgent desire to take ship for the Marquesas, but I have yet to hear of them. But there can be none in the early twenties who are so tame. Anyhow I was not of their number. I had barely got half through the book when the South Seas filled my imagination with an overpowering longing. I seemed to have known them all my life; Herman Melville, most delightful and discursive of chroniclers, simply relit my memory. He made it all quite clear and revealed my destiny. My longing was no vague desire for novelty, it was simply homesickness.

It all came back to me in the café between the

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dream-pauses of my reading; I felt like a foreigner whose mind constantly harked back homewards. Vision after vision of the luscious archipelagoes of Polynesia flashed across my mind. My thoughts were a perpetual cinematograph of lagooned islands in wine-deep seas; of palm-trees rising above the eternal surf of the endless Pacific; of forests garlanded with flowers; of palm-leaf houses, cocoa-nuts, yams, bananas, and bread-fruit; of lithe men beautifully tattooed in strange arabesques of blue and green and red; and of olive women with red, laughing mouths and bright, soft eyes—a cleanly, idle, gentle folk, who did nothing in the world but live, rounding off their perfect lives by occasionally eating one another.

### III

There are several ways of going to the South Seas. You may travel over the great antipodean ferries in floating hotels, from London or Liverpool, through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, or round the Cape of Good Hope. Or you may cross over the Atlantic Ferry to New York, from thence going overland to San Francisco, where you may again ship comfortably. Or, better, you may take the old route of the navigators round the Horn, meeting the icy gales, smelling the Antarctic almost, as a vantage and a standard for future contrasts, when the good ship turns her nose up to the Line. That way went I;

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but in no ocean-going Savoy or Carlton. I roughed it deliciously in the *Eostre*, who, as long as I could remember, had been beating the channels of the British archipelago, exchanging at Christiania and Liverpool cargoes of dried fish and the factored goods of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

### IV

Southward Ho ! What greater joy than in those words ! Down the Mersey we tacked on a high tide ; and I watched with riotous glee the towers and domes of the great city fade behind us. The river tossed and tumbled, scattering spindrift like confetti of silver. Over towards the North Fort we sped, peeped into the mouths of the big guns, and with a fluttering of patched sails, tacked and scurried across towards the Perch Rock Battery, bidding adieu as it were to the watch-dogs of Liverpool, and so out into the Channel ; and I turned and saw old England dissolve itself into the nothing it had become for me. Rio first ; then, in an heroic curve, we tacked down to the Plate, glimpsed into Buenos Ayres for water and fresh meat, and off round the Horn on swift mysterious wings. No storm checked the little weather-ripened *Eostre*. It was like a dream, I kept saying, and our tiny schooner, bearing the name of a goddess, fore and aft, was a ship o' dreams. I sprang on to her prow as we rounded the historic cape, and looked ecstatically at the Queen of Oceans.

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There before me she lay, league after shimmering league, incalculable, illimitable, invincible, wearing, as I knew, over her heart, the clustered jewels of the Marquesas.

It was Northward Ho! now, but northward in the rich South Seas. Flying-fish leaped out of the blue-green swell before us, as if the *Eostre* were a faery boat and they her steeds; and behind floated a milk-white albatross, like an attendant beautiful aeroplane. The ghostly bird took a fancy to us outside the Rio Plato and never left us till we sighted our Hesperides. Ever and anon Leviathan rose out of the deep in the vast arena of ocean through which we sailed, coming into existence like a phantom island, spouting aloft a cascade of spray which would have put the fountains of Versailles to shame, and then, beating the Pacific with monstrous horizontal tail, was gone to reveal, anon, his slate-grey form a dozen miles away.

These were the incidents of our voyage, the "sights" of the ocean. These and the eternal memories of the great navigators, Cook, Vancouver, Cabot, and the rest, and best of all, Mendaña, who discovered the Marquesas. They were no longer memories, however, but realities. The South Seas are theirs, their ships surrounded us, a motley flotilla of all ages, beckoning, speeding, hailing our ship o' dreams. Presently we sped along those highways of the southern ocean, the Trade Winds; with all sails spread we were hurled by the great

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forces, day after day, into the tropical heat, as if we were sailing into the sun ; night after starry night, with the Southern Cross above and strange constellations dancing and singing around us. And then, lo ! a mystery ! The air was transfigured ! Not alone the salt breath of the mighty ocean Queen, but a warm fragrance to which the salt was but savour. All the gardens of the Riviera and Surrey, the Tyrol in spring, England in Maytime, distilled into one voluptuous scent, and steeped in odours new and strange. No land in sight ; nothing but the encircling sea, the flying-fish, the albatross, the big whales, and the swift glancing of the shark. But we knew what it was. It was the Marquesas calling to us ; it was the spirit of Typee, the home of Fayaway, it was the voice of the Syrens distilled into a magical fragrance, greeting the *Eostre*.

Presently they rose out of the ocean. A huddle of purple hills in the sea ; and as we drew near they changed colour with every league, as though they signalled us. Purple, mauve, blue, green, opal, mother-of-pearl. Then they assumed form and detail. Forests running up the sides of mountains ; deep valleys, luscious and dark. Nearer still we came, with eyes, ears, nostrils strained to meet them. I saw, heard, smelt the wonderland. Curves of roaring surf ; air like that of a Yorkshire moor ; and a palisade of palms, leaning towards the lagoon or holding aloft their feathered heads like noble dames. We did not put into the larger islands of

## SOUTHWARD HO!

Hivaoa or Nukahiva, but sallied farther north to the cluster of islets of the Washington Group where the natives are less affected by the customs of their French masters.

### V

And at length the voyage ended. A little island was our destination ; it stood on the very frontier of the Marquesas, rising out of the sea as easily as Leviathan, but permanently and beautifully. Perhaps they knew I was coming, I could have believed anything of the Marquesans. They guessed it was no mere trader, no potential beach-comber, but me, the Marquesan, lost in the great universe, exiled through countless incarnations, homing at last ! It was a mystery and they understood. Anyhow they came out to meet us ; outside the reef the sea was populous with canoes, some few with lateen sails, but most of them propelled by paddles. We sailed slowly through them like a monarch through her courtiers. I noted how the carved bows of the canoes were newly painted in bright dyes, and how nearly all were decked with leaves and flowers. Slowly we glided through the doorway of the reef into the still chrysoprase of the lagoon, the canoes following, and the water about us full of swimming youths and maidens. Diving, floating, splashing, laughing, they encircled the *Eostre*, like irresponsible angels who had somehow got into a misplaced heaven,

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or a rightly placed one for all I knew. I watched their mad capers. Marvellously active they were, darting under the surface like fish, their lithe bodies flashing like polished shagreen, the long dark hair of the girls streaming behind them as they rushed along, or curling about them as they turned and rose, laughing, with flashing teeth.

Then with a rattle of chains the anchor dropped to the coral bed of the lagoon; I descended into a waiting canoe and was paddled swiftly ashore. Surrounded by joyous and inquisitive crowds, men graceful and symmetrical, some bearded and their beards plaited, or cut short and square and pointed, smooth limbed, easy of carriage, briefly clad. Women in loose white tappa robes revealing here and there glimpses of olive bodies which they declared with the frankness such beauty deserved; hair long, straight, and dark, and into the tresses were woven the scarlet flowers of the hybiscus, which contrasted delightfully with full, dark eyes, smiling with the vital smiles of superb health and natural joy.

### VI

So I was there at last. I looked around me at the forests which came down to the beach, at the cocoa-palms, at the little tent-like houses of bamboo thatched with palmetto leaves; and as I walked along to the chief's house, I noted the colour of the woods. They were not green, like the woods of



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England, but rainbow-hued; the very shadows were painted like the wings of a butterfly. All the trees seemed linked together with garlands of flowers. Strange birds sang and hopped and fluttered before me. Insects of metallic lustre sported in the sun. The bamboos rattled on either hand, and the Marquesans laughed and shouted; some ran and jumped; others gathered bread-fruit and cocoa-nuts; some spanked each other with long palmetto leaves. I saw no signs of work, nothing but idleness and play. I sighed out of very joy; here I was at last, free for ever of the fever and fret of England, where one puts on clothes because of the cold, where one works because one must, and hypocritically says one likes it; I laughed joyfully with the Marquesans. I could have embraced them all, I was so happy. As we neared the big house of the chief on the hillside, raised on its pi-pi of stones, another crowd ran to meet us; they scattered flowers as they came, and ahead of them sped the most beautiful damsel of them all. Quickly they came on, and straight she made for me. At first I felt nervous. Then, as she drew nearer, I seemed to recognise her. It was Fayaway, the beautiful Fayaway of Typee, Herman Melville's lovely savage. She approached, laughing, panting, in a shower of flowers, laid two soft hands in mine, held up her red lips—and then, then, as they say, I woke up.



# PETERPANTHEISM

*“Be young, dear my soul : soon will others be men, and  
I being dead shall be dark earth.”*—From the Greek Anthology,  
J. W. MACKAIL'S translation.

## PETERPANTHEISM

**W**HAT ill turn in the trend of evolution gave man the aspiration to grow up? It must have been an evil chance, for the secret desire of all is for eternal youth. No one surely who had his will of life would dream of growing up, and yet we all not only do it, but succeed in persuading ourselves that we like doing it.

We have even gone so far as to wean the imaginations of children from their rightful heritage and make them wish to become big, like father, or good, like mother. These ambitions are now commonplaces of childish imagination. But in spite of it all, the evidence is still against growing up. The purpose of the child is to live, to feel the mysterious presence of life in every limb, and in so far as he does this he is happy. But the purpose of the adult has become a febrile pursuit of the symbols of life. Real life fills him with dread, and success in his endeavour is his undoing.

Age is a tragedy; and the elderly person strives heroically to make the best of it by covering his retreat with pathetic attempts at superiority and wisdom, little arrogances and vanities which at bottom deceive nobody, not even himself. For well

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he knows, as he casts wistful glances at the pranks of childhood, that in spite of his imposing cry of "Eureka!" he has found nothing. What profit has a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own youth? Perhaps, indeed, it would be more becoming in those who have grown up to admit the fact with fitting lamentation and humility, and, instead of flaunting their age with pomp and circumstance, cover their bodies with sackcloth and put ashes in their hair.

The great difficulty, however, is that men persist, in spite of bitter experience, in looking upon growing up as a worthy thing. Women are their superiors in this respect. Intuitively they know that age is a *cul-de-sac*, that it leads not even to heaven, for to get there one has to become as a little child. This, probably, is why most women disown the passing years.

Still even they grow up; indeed, are not women always a little older than men? Both nature and society seem to have conspired to make them so. But that is no excuse. Human beings ought not to be content to remain the slaves of either. Surely it is by the constant flouting of such authorities that new variations of life are attained. Neither gods nor millenniums are the outcome of passivity. Therefore, gentle women, put by your subterfuges about age, for you have been found out; we know you to be older than we men are, and our immemorial desire is that you should be younger.

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Few serious attempts to restore the golden age have been made in modern times, but one of the greatest of these is that of Mr Barrie. *Peter Pan* is more than a Christmas pantomime; it is a contribution to religious drama. It is a mystery play, giving significance to the childlike spirit of the universe. Peter Pan is a symbol of eternity, of that complete, unchangeable spirit of the world which is superior to the illusion of growing up: that dim vision which has set bounds to the imagination of humanity ever since the elderly person usurped the throne of the child. *Peter Pan* reminds us again that the world has no final use for grown-up things, that cities and civilisations pass away, that monuments and institutions crumble into dust, that weeds are conquering the Coliseum, and that the life of the immemorial Sphinx is but a matter of time. Peter Pan is the emblem of the mystery of vitality, the thing that is always growing, but never grown.

He came among us some years ago, when our faith in the child had nearly gone. But even to-day we shall see that there is no place for little children in the average home, and that when a place is provided for them it is provided because they are a nuisance and a burden to the grown-ups. It might as well be admitted that children irritate us; and this means that we are no longer capable of entering into their kingdom. We revenge ourselves by teaching them all sorts of worthless knowledge. But we teach them nothing so worthless as this facile

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art of growing up. That is the final and unforgivable act of our hopelessly bewildered lives. We make our peace with the children by moulding them to our own image ; perhaps, one of these days, for all things are possible, we shall become wise enough to permit the children to return the compliment.

The desire to make them as we are is the fatal desire of a lost cause. It means that communications with the child-world have been cut off, which is only another way of saying that we have abandoned our alliance with the main tendency of life. We have ceased to grow. We have, in fact, grown up, and are fit only for life's scrap-heap.

We talk of evolution ; but half of the idea of evolution is illusion, and the other half the assertion of the child-spirit. It is the child-spirit building castles in the air. And our talk of that little sister of evolution, progress, is not any more helpful ; for progress is generally nothing more than a vain endeavour to put the clock forward. The only really vital thing in life is the unconscious abandonment of young things—the spirit of play. And if we think for a moment we shall see that it is play, or the contemplation of play, that gives us most joy. We never tire of watching the play of children or of young animals. That is sane and healthy : there are no better things to watch. Our approval links us with the living world again, just as our love of children does. That is why our delight in young life is always tinged with melancholy. Whilst we



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approve and love the ways of the young we unconsciously condemn our elderliness. We realise that the most superb adult is a dismal failure beside a child making mud pies, or a kitten chasing its tail. But we rarely admit it ; when there is a chance of our going so far we become frightened, and, shaking ourselves, we murmur something about sentimentality, and speedily commence growing old again, thereby displaying our impotence and our ignorance.

The sign that we have accomplished our ignoble aim, and grown up, is that we no longer have the impulse to play. We go about our business in colourless garments and surroundings, buying and selling and ruling with revolting solemnity. The last glimmering of the spark of play is seen in our shamelessly hiring people to play for us. We hire footballers and cricketers to play games for us, jockeys to ride for us, singers to sing for us, dancers to dance for us, and even pugilists and soldiers to fight for us.

Those who have become as little children will want to do all these things for themselves. They will no more desire to play by proxy than they will desire to live by proxy. Art has been described as the expression of man's joy in his work, and joyful work is the kind of work practised by those who have the courage to be young. It is fundamentally play, and no other kind of work really matters. We have some remote idea of this when we utter the commonplace that success depends largely upon one's doing the work one likes to do. It is also pretty generally

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recognised that there is no joy in what is merely laborious. Beyond all men the artist knows this; not because his work is easy, but because he is happy in his work. It is a wonderful game. "I pray God every day," said Corot, "that He will keep me a child; that is to say, that He will enable me to see and draw with the eye of a child." And France heard him sing as he painted. The childhood of the world was in that song, and in its results.

Children are unconscious artists in living. How to reach this happy state is another matter; precise rules cannot be given, because there are none. Perhaps there is no direct way to the Golden Age, and even if there were, so few of us are worthy. However, there is at least one useful rule—that is, never to look upon the Golden Age as past. For the rest, we might follow Peter Pan, and refuse to grow up.

## MAKE-BELIEVE

**I**T is the prevailing habit nowadays to look upon make-believe with contempt. But then we scorn so many charming things that the value of this attitude should be very carefully discounted by those who are simple enough to be wise. Much better would it be to attempt to discover how far one may wisely believe and at what point make-believe. Such an inquiry might bring us to the conclusion that there is more than a little virtue in the latter.

For myself I have no doubts. I believe make-believe to be the prelude to belief. It is the quickening of faith, an earnest of the growing world. It shines like a prophecy through the eyes of every child, it lights up the path of everyone who has not ceased to wonder. But it is not mere credulity, blind acceptance of things. That is ignorance. Make-believe is wise and coy, it looks whimsically upon its surroundings, and laughs, because it knows them for what they are worth—nothing. That is to say, it knows that things, as they are, are worth nothing until they have been transfigured by human desires; and, furthermore, that our desires are deepened by the colour we throw upon things.

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This throwing of colour, this splashing of the world with design, is the function of make-believe.

You may have observed that one of the earliest amusements of the child is to make-believe it is an adult. Children have a game, and it is a game common to children of all times and places, in which they pretend, with much solemnity, to be fathers and mothers and other elderly persons. And, sure enough, showing what a powerful thing make-believe is, these youngsters do grow up. This is not one of the happiest uses of the faculty, but its familiar and appalling results ought to appeal to all. And is not the sequel to this tragedy revealed in the bitter cry of the elderly person that things were better in his youth? An admission surely that the elderly person is beaten in the race.

It ought to make us realise the possibility of there being a realm, intermingled with the mundane world, about which we are so confident, where substances and appearances yield more readily to the influence of will; a world in which make-believing takes the place of all our ponderous social machinery; where forms are changeable at the instance of a wish, and life finds eternity in itself, and not, as it hopes to do to-day, by piling stone upon stone for a thankless and impossible posterity.

Such a realm does actually exist in our very midst, did we but know. Our cities are not the permanent things we think they are, they are at best little more than clusters of houses made of cards, such as we

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used to build as children, only we do not give ourselves the pleasure of knocking them down as often as we might do. We leave them to fall down, or to be crumbled away in the hands of Time. And we don't even know that the sad joy we feel as we contemplate a ruined castle or abbey is more than half due to the unconscious recognition of the stupendous fact that destiny, also, is playing at card-castles. We have small interest in a building, no matter how noble, until it lies in ruins. Then we are so much in love with it that we are happy if permitted to spend a holiday beside it. The actual process of change gives us, as it should, even more happiness. We rush with almost savage joy to see a house on fire; the sight of the scampering fire-engine fills us with envy because we cannot follow it. And what would we not have given to have seen the easy and tragic contempt with which the fates toppled the beautiful cities of the Straits of Messina to destruction, or to have had reserved seats at the same Olympic game when San Francisco and all her towers and skyscrapers were thrown over as a child wrecks the buildings it has made out of wooden bricks.

There are, however, other and less melodramatic expressions of this mutable world of which I write. They come to us in the stillness of night, when reason has been dethroned by slumber, and material consistency dissolved in a mystery, a mystery out of which is reared up a life infinitely more vivid than the thing we call reality when we are awake. In our

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dreams objects yield to the touch of fancy, as easily and as quickly as the keys of the piano respond to the light touch of a lady's finger-tips. In dreamland we live among familiar things, whose reality has become so intense that it is almost painful to our dull senses. Yet we know, if not during sleep, at least afterwards, that, intensely real as the dream-things are, they are mere airy nothings compared with the same things when met out of dreamland.

Whatever the dream-specialist may say about dreams, and just now he is saying many things, the indisputable fact remains that dreamland is as yet unexplained and unexplored. We do not know why we look upon dreams as airy nothings in our wakeful moments, any more than we know why we live more intensely in our dreams than we do whilst we are awake. These things are mysteries. But I cannot understand why we should pass off so lightly a condition of life which is so much greater in every sense than the round of duties, drudgeries, and hypocrisies which make up our waking hours. Such circumstances seem tiny and ineffectual, seem indeed what they are, compared with the vivid and masterly accomplishments of our dreams.

Everything which means anything to us whilst awake, means ten times as much in dreamland. There is not only a concentration of time, for dreams seem to happen rapidly in the few seconds between waking and wakefulness, but, quite naturally there is also a concentration of life. The life we would spread

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over hours, even years, is forced, in our dreams, into the point of a second. Our remembrance of these experiences is the recollection of immemorial things, yet they have happened like a flash of light or the opening and shutting of a fan. We feel we have lived deeply and experienced greatly. Generally our experiences have been quite familiar, but as different from those of our waking hours as the figures of Michael Angelo are different from ordinary men and women. Yet in spite of it all, in spite of its intense reality, our poor minds cannot contain the memory of it. We remember almost as briefly as we dream, and our minds ache with the effort to retain the slightest souvenir of dreamland, even though the memory be some gigantic terror or pain, for all things are greater there. It is as though we had been living in a land of looking-glass; a realm where all things are one with the play of light on water, the flickering of flames; with shadows, with sounds, with thoughts. . . .

I wonder is life all make-believe? Or are we, as we lie asleep, provoked into an imaginative effort, by mysterious presences, elves, gnomes, fays, pixies, or what not, who delight in our hungry bewilderment? It may be. Yet I think it more probable that dreamland is a foretaste of the sort of life we would live if we could. Dreamland is not make-believe, but reality. Make-believe is an endeavour to enter the enchanted realm by an effort of the will. It is self-conscious dreaming; dreaming by will instead

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by sleep. The word dreaming bears the same relationship to the deeper realities of dreamland, as living does to the mundane world. When we make-believe we build with the material of dreams. The desire to do this exists somewhere in the hearts of us all, in spite of the fact that we devote so much time to denying it. This denial, however, is a false shame, the sort of shame we feel about our relationship with all really vital experiences. In the polite world we only admit the admitted, and therefore polite conversation is trivial. Politics, religion, and love, the three things that matter and into which make-believe enters so largely, though it must be granted not always to the best advantage, are forbidden.

What the world wants at the present moment is not more morals or more leaders, or more reforms, it wants, more than anything else, more of that capacity of wonder, more of that faculty of faith, which expresses itself in the large and abandoned principles of make-believe. Dreamland lies at our frontiers but we have deliberately kept its products out of our markets by the establishment of a tariff of reason and rationalism which is making of our land a humdrum and a barren waste. We are overcome by the pompous mock-permanency of the life we see about us, and we have handed over the reins of government to the dull persons who are the reflection of these ponderous things. These folk have no imagination, and so they fear a change. Their minds are bankrupt, they cannot dream of another and a



## MAKE-BELIEVE

better world. Therefore they have ceased to believe and to build anew. Make-believe is repudiated as child's play; but the defenders of make-believe would be the last to deny this charge. They accept it and say that it is good. The make-believe of the child is creativeness. It is the same power which moves the poet to give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name; that is why, in spite of all our power as adults, we look back wistfully to the days of our childhood. That is why we love children—we see in them what we might have been.

But the greatest evil is not that our governors are dull and doubtful. The evil lies in the fact that our poets and artists, the high priests of make-believe, are content to sing, play, and paint, to the time called by the dullards. Artists have become purveyors of bric-à-brac to the people who have kept imagination out of our daily lives. But one of these days they will awaken to their true destiny. Poets will become what Shelley imagined they were, "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." In that day we shall have conquered a new realm. The centuries of make-believe will be succeeded by centuries of belief; we shall still live amidst familiar things, but those familiar things will have gathered about them the intensity and the mutability of dreams. Then we shall enter dreamland by other doors than the door of sleep.

It is not impossible, this dream of a world grown so young as to have faith in its dreams. Everyone

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who has done any worthy thing has believed in dreams, and the creations of fancy have outlived the so-called creations of reason. Even in our present age of science, our great scientists have rarely made discoveries by means of reason. They have seen the wonders first through the imagination and not the microscope. Reason has been imagination's tool. In an age, therefore, that has imagined and created eyes that can see through the opaque, that can flash messages across the world without wires, that has captured the human voice on a sensitive cylinder, and that has tamed and utilised the most powerful and mysterious of natural forces, in an age that can almost demonstrate the hereafter and create organic life out of dead matter—there is still hope.

Make-believe has gone so far and realised so much, that all things may be expected of it. Already it is becoming absurd to talk of the impossible in the old reasonable sense. Logic tells us that the impossible is impossible. But make-believe is always giving the lie direct to this pessimist by showing that the impossible is the only thing worth attempting. Things are of course impossible to the reason, but that is no argument against the things: it is an argument against reason. Dreams may not stand the test of reason, but why should we not inaugurate the renaissance of make-believe by insisting upon reason standing the test of dreams?

## PLAYTHINGS

**P**LAY is one of the great mysteries, and the toy is its symbol. It is a symbol before which all have bowed ; it is older than the gods and younger than the latest human invention ; packed with the spirit of life it has survived the ages, and full of the same spirit it awaits with invincible patience the ages to come ; it has survived all creeds and will survive everything but life. The individual toy may pass away, for fashions change ; the day before yesterday it was a wooden doll of Dutch extraction, yesterday it was a calico cat, to-day it is a gollywog or a Teddy bear, to-morrow it will be something else ; but these changes are merely the changing of clothes : the essential toy is eternal.

We worship the toy every time we gratify the delight of a child ; but our worship is deeper in those fleeting moments when we stand in a place of toys and look wistfully at them with a look full of bashful wonder which reveals a desire born of the remote past, nay, of the eternal present, a desire to buy one for ourselves !

It is as though the soul, after being driven by necessity or by ambition into all manner of solemn, tedious byways of life, suddenly realised, by

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a magic flash, that all purposes are useless, and that only one thing finally matters. That one thing is play. Some men laugh at this feeling, and put it hastily by with a sense of shame. They would not like to be caught playing. Such men are infidels, for play is of the gods.

It is the expression of the creative spirit, the child of joy, and joy is finally the basis of all religions. When we are full of life, when each sense overflows with vitality, then we become prodigal, we scatter ourselves broadcast, we take chances, risk great odds, love, laugh, dance, write poems, paint pictures, romp with children; in short, we play. It is only the impotent who do not play. The people who play are the creators.

The proper name of toys is playthings. They are quite irrational, and their only justification is that they give happiness—and I have yet to learn of anything better worth giving. But in giving happiness they give life, that is why happiness is worth having. When you play you are happy, while you are happy you are in eternity—for happiness annihilates time and space. Children are the greatest players, they follow their instincts, which tell them that play is recreation. Even adults call games recreations, but they have almost forgotten what the word means. They have so far forgotten the meaning of it that they have set apart a certain time for play and a certain time for work. All work should be recreation; all work should be play.

## PLAYTHINGS

Children are always playing when they are healthy—and we who are older might learn wisdom from them. But as a matter of fact we do just the opposite; we even go to considerable trouble and spend endless money in teaching children how not to play. At the same time we do not deny that unless we become as little children we can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. But we are not lost to all hope: we have not sunk to the lowest depths, because we still look upon at least one feast in the year as a festival of play. When we fill our youngsters' stockings with toys on the eve of Yule we pour libations on the altar of the true faith.

No one ever performs an act without becoming part of the act. We are all but the reflections of the things we do. So when we join in the great ritual of the festival of toys we recreate in ourselves something of the spirit of the joyous children who are the recipients of our bounty. We feel not only benefit from the giving, but from the gift. When we walk through the stored bazaars at Yuletide and hear the babel of sounds, children's happy voices clamouring with the voices of toy dolls and animals, raucous gramophones out-shouting musical boxes, and all the merry noises of Toyland, we are communicants in a great sacrament.

The happy bewilderment we feel at such times is one of the most genuine of all human feelings. It is really a harking back to the child-spirit. We are turning our dull, grown-up wits into the main current

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of life. A revolution is going on in our spirits—we must not arrest it, for we are becoming as little children.

It is indeed remarkable, and even hopeful, that we grown-ups ever do choose aright. It is no easy matter to enter into the ideals of a child at any time, and when we stand in Toyland surrounded by all the bizarre fetishes of childhood, which the stern laws of our workaday lives condemn as absurd, it is a wonder that we do not wish to sweep the whole bauble shop into eternity. But we do not do this. We, for a brief space, become absurd. Happy is the man who can thus make a fool of himself. The world is saved by such acts.

How easy it is to vote "straight," or to do a deal in cotton or corn, or even to buy Consols for the rise, which does not always occur at the appointed moment! But when it comes to a deal in toys, you are up against a new game. It is no easy matter to decide whether little Miss Five-year-old will prefer a gollywog or a Teddy bear, or to speculate on the measure of appreciation some lady of ten years would accord to the pink curves of a dainty rogue in celluloid, in comparison with the more graceful charms of some aristocratic doll from Paris, with immaculate cork stuffing, kid limbs, real hair, and elegant mutable joints. Before such deep questions the trials of commerce pass into nothingness.

Our difficulties are due to inexperience, and these are largely modified when we have to deal with boys.

## PLAYTHINGS

A ball, the greatest of all symbols of play, even a grown-up can appreciate, and we can even see more fun in a toy railway system, steamship, or waggon and horses.

The truest test, however, lies in our capacity for appreciating the irrational playthings. We must be uplifted at the rotund absurdity of Humpty-Dumpty. Gollywog must fill us with wonder and delight. Teddy bear must be our big game. A horse whose body is a stick upon two wheels must be our charger. Noah's Ark must be our Zoo, and Caran d'Ache, rather than the Kennel Club, must decide the points of our dog! We must, in conclusion, not only administer to the child, we must look through the eyes of a child. For children see very clearly, and their play is more serious than our work, and more important. An awakening of a true delight in toys will be the signal to play—and play in the last resort is prayer. Therefore, let us play.

## FESTIVAL OF GIFTS

**I** OFTEN wonder how long society would hold together if the ideal of thrift were pushed to its logical conclusion ; it would not hold together very long, I feel certain, for saving is farther removed from vitality than spending. He who spends well saves, and even he who spends ill saves more than he who saves all. Most people believe this, and old sayings like " 'Tis better to give than to receive " are accepted as truisms. In the mysterious natural economy of social life, generosity must be taken as the basis of our traffic with one another, otherwise the social fabric, or what is worth having of it, would quickly fall to pieces. But at the same time we are all too eager to take the ancient saying that 'tis better to give than to receive, " as read." Our acceptance is so complete that the act of giving has been degraded into a charitable convention, or else entirely suspended. We seem to recognise this failing once in a twelvemonth, when, at Yuletide, the year dies in a burst of splendid generosity. Yuletide has become the symbol of giving, the Feast of Gifts.

It is the season of penance for past niggardliness. It is the appointed hour for the payment of the only genuine debts, the unconscious and inevitable in-



## FESTIVAL OF GIFTS

debtedness of one human being to another. At Yuletide men realise with more unanimity than at any other time their interdependence, their common humanity. Their generosity droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven upon the just and the unjust alike. Distinctions are cast aside, worthiness is out of count, recompense is not expected. They reward each other for being human, for having like desires and similar needs. Humanity becomes a nation.

This spirit is traditional. It has its origin far back in the pagan days, when Yuletide foreran Christmastide, when the pastoral folk gave thanks to the Sun for his bounty, linking the arm of fellowship one with another as a sign of the desired union of hearts. And these early feasts were but the expression of a still more remote recollection of the kinship of man in the lonely spaces of the world.

It is all very well for specially constituted philosophers to deny loneliness, as Thoreau did, because, forsooth, our planet was in the Milky Way! Such pious imaginings will never suffice for the great mass of humanity. We may cast our love up to the stars to our own infinite advantage, but I doubt very much whether we or the stars are affected by the performance. There is only one star, so far as we have any information, that is affected by our love, and that is the star which no man has ever seen shining in the night: the planet Earth. Wheeling through space, she reciprocates the love of men because it is the point at which her love of self be-

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comes conscious. It is this primal thing, this earth-love, which informs all great festival. No matter how degraded a festival become, the spirit at its heart can never be finally eradicated; and not till the joy of life itself be dead can the inner mystery of Yuletide, though snowed under no matter how many vulgarities and insincerities, be a thing of indifference.

All this seems very reasonable. But the Christmas spirit is not reasonable at all. Standing apart from it you can explain and diagnose; you can trace its descent from "the dim red dawn of man," but after all, that is a mere act of erudition or mental ingenuity, valuable enough as a tag upon which to hang your conception of a thing. But to Santa Claus and his laughing host of gift-gathering parents, sons, daughters, and lovers, romping through Shopland during the joyful crescendo of Christmas week, such ideas are inconsiderable. The bewildered looks on the shining philanthropic faces of the Christmas shoppers are not caused by futile endeavours to track down the remote origins of the impulses which brought them into this wild jungle of gifts. Paterfamilias is pleasantly worried by no primal theory, but by a primal need, as he tries to decide between the pleasure-giving propensities of a toy railway system and a rocking-horse; and the young mother who resists the solicitations of a two-foot-three golliwog, because it will not go into baby's stocking, is filled with a much more subtle emotion than he who endeavours to trace the evolution of the Yuletide spirit.

## FESTIVAL OF GIFTS

Christmas is quite irrational, for that reason it cannot die. For just one week a new currency is in operation. Of course, people do pay for things, but it were unkind to think the keepers of toys and the masters of the great bazaars expected payment. They would all far rather give just in the same spirit as you are going to give. That a small charge is made is a symbol of our low estate. They at least try to sell you things in the spirit of presentation. This is brought out in some instances, when the fine feeling of certain toy merchants has taken the form of providing means for what really amounts to surreptitious payment. At the bottom of their hearts they know that to receive money for commodities during Christmas week is a vulgar necessity—almost an irregular commission. So some of them have built wonderful grottos, or other semblances of Fairyland, wherein you enter, if you are young enough, with some kindly adult who secretly pays an entrance fee, and you meet Santa Claus himself scattering largesse of wondrous coloured parcels containing untold treasures. And to my own knowledge there are halls of dazzling brightness, full of the desired things of all the earth, where no one is asked to buy; where you may walk down avenues full of strange beasts and weird persons, elephants and tigers, Teddy bears, jabberwocks, Humpty-Dumpties, and golliwogs; dolls of all nations, and all the wonders of science from locomotives to aeroplanes; and where the air is full of merry sounds:

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the persevering harmony of the gramophone, and that music of the spheres, the happy laughter of children.

I know quite well that again, if you are young enough—for you remember that it is necessary to become as a little child before you can enter the kingdom of heaven—if you are quite young enough then, and like any particular thing well enough, that thing is quite certain to be either in your stocking or on your bed on Christmas morning. There are many authentic instances; one quite fresh in my own experience is that in which an elephant was miraculously translated from the town to the suburbs in this way without any obvious payment!

And are not the bankers also in the happy conspiracy? Do they not, during this irrational week, give you bright new money, obviously made to be given away? Fresh threepenny pieces to add to the flavour of the Christmas pudding; star-like sixpences and shillings for errand boys who come mysteriously into your life at this season; moon-like florins and crowns for postmen and policemen who, like new planets, swim into your ken on Christmas morning; fresh, bright sovereigns, so gorgeous that they look worth at least twenty-five shillings, for rich uncles with deserving nephews; and last of all, those new pennies, bright and beautiful as four-pound pieces, made expressly for distribution among street urchins and beggars, vendors of "wax-lights" and newspapers. It were profanation to

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use such splendid coinage for any purpose save these.

And later comes the good cheer, the best gift of all, the sanctification of all presents. Without this all the rest were as naught, and the Festival of Gifts nothing but a weariness of the flesh. In the festival of Yule we raise the gift to a higher level. We give ourselves. This is the consummation of the gift of life itself, and "the moral of it is," as the Duchess used to say to Alice, that sooner or later we shall learn that there is no reason why this special form of present should be confined to one season, to almost one day. The currency of good fellowship and good cheer now peculiar to Christmas Day may yet be consecrated upon many other days, upon the other three hundred and sixty-four, for instance. Why not ?

## APOSTLE TO THE PAGANS

“ **A** BIT of fire’s very nice,” said Frank, hugging himself before the flaming hearth like a luxurious cat.

Outside it was leaden and raw, and a slab of damp mist hung over the fields like wet wool. The same insistent but elusive element clung to the bare hedgerows and the tree-tops, and in the half lights of the December afternoon the country-side had the dreary effect of the scene of a fire the morning after, when the water-sodden ruins are still steaming.

“ My one objection to summer is that fires are then impossible,” said Merrion, by way of assent. Merrion was an alleged paradoxist, and everyone smiled.

“ Do you know,” said Hargreaves to nobody in particular, as he sat in the corner pressing his half-baked trousers against his legs, “ do you know, if I wanted an object of worship, I should worship fire.”

“ Here, I say !” said Frank admonishingly, for Frank, like most luxurious persons, was rather orthodox.

“ Why not ?” asked Merrion. “ Fire is everything and everything is fire. Without the eternal conflagrations in the centre of the earth, and that

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eternal circle of flame caused by the fire-ball we call the sun, outside the earth—there would be no life at all. Fire is the only creator we know, and the only destroyer. Without light and warmth there is no growth—and light and warmth are the outward signs of the Almighty Fire. I worship power, and the greatest power is fire—it drives the motor of the world. It can as easily burn the orchid and the alligator into existence as it can reduce man and all his puny works to ashes. If it were not for fire——”

“Steady on, old chap!” This interjection seemed to come from all.

“I was only going to say that if it were not for fire we should have had no Christmas——”

“Let’s leave religion out of it,” said Frank. Merrion’s invincible logic made his ideals wince.

“Will you let me tell you a story?” asked the fire-worshipper.

“Fire away!” said a voice.

“Once upon a time and a very long time ago, but not so very long after orthodox Rome had been moved to righteous indignation by the blasphemies of a sect of revivalists called Christians, who preached what was then (as it is now) a kind of new theology, a devotee named Glycon, moved by the fervour of his new-found faith, set forth to convert the pagans of the North.

“Bearded was Glycon, and dour, as befitted the apostle of a gospel of joy; bare of foot also was he, and clad soberly in a loose robe of grey cloth. He

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carried naught with him save a long staff of birch, and with this he would mark the sign of the cross on the earth from time to time and always before addressing another person. So Glycon journeyed from the land of the olive and the pomegranate to carry the glad tidings to the heathen North.

“ ‘ Alleluia,’ he cried as he passed through Alpine vales ; ‘ Alleluia,’ as he wended his way through great forests and verdant coppices ; ‘ Alleluia, Alleluia,’ in the wilderness, where the wolves shrank from him, and in the settlements, where the men laughed at him and the women sighed for lack of argument. ‘ Alleluia,’ he cried in a loud voice as he entered the domain of men. ‘ Repent ye and rejoice, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, wherein no man nor woman nor child is heavy of heart or sad. Alleluia !’

“ The simple pastoral folk were so ignorant that they did not know they were happy, and, despite their burdened lives, knew not that the kingdom of heaven was not here and now, and they clustered curiously about the strange teacher. ‘ Alleluia,’ he cried to the ignorant peasants. ‘ Have ye not heard that the old gods are no more, and that a new life is opened unto ye all, a life of gladness and great joy, because sinless ? Alleluia, the kingdom of heaven is at hand !’

“ Glycon was a gentle creature, or the people would have driven him forth. So they laughed instead, and went about their ways husbanding the earth and hunting and propitiating their gods as of



## APOSTLE TO THE PAGANS

old time. But here and there the good Glycon won followers, and under his guidance they peered into the mystery of life and saw more mystery ; and they were filled with an unfamiliar kind of unrest which Glycon called ' peace ' ; and they acquired the power of contemplating their lives and of labelling this action as good and that as bad ; and they talked much of their happiness. . . . But only those who were sad of heart joined the good apostle.

“ Glycon nevertheless pushed on, carrying the glad tidings into still wilder regions, where thinking and acting had not been separated from one another at all. Here the pagan folk tilled the field, hunted the boar and the bear and the savage wolves, tended the cattle, as simply and as satisfactorily as they engaged in the deeper recreations of love and worship. They would have none of Glycon's teaching, but they did not molest him. On the contrary, they even allowed him to abide in their midst, particularly as his wants were limited to a cave for sleeping purposes and a very little food.

“ But one morning after the fall of the year he saw that a great change had come over the people. He had gone out into a clear space that he knew of in a wood, where he had erected a rude cross, and there he had intended remaining all day in prayer, in celebration of the birthday of his Saviour—for the day was Christmas Day.

“ But as he went forth to his lonely temple he met bands of merry folk chanting joyful songs and carry-

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ing garlands of holly and great branches of mistletoe. The maidens wore laurel in their hair and the young men carried branches of pine. Everyone seemed astir, and radiant happiness shone on the faces of all. The hills echoed back their songs, and their merry shoutings were thrown about the woods by invisible hands. All seemed to be wending their way to the centre of the village, and Glycon, filled with human curiosity, followed, and as he went along he sang aloud of the Nativity. 'Alleluia, I bring ye good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.'

"The people were in a good humour, and nodded their encouragement to the good prophet. Soon they came to the meeting-place where an altar had been raised and a great fire blazed. The priests of the people were there, and standing high above the throng they gave thanks to their gods for the bounty of the earth, and in that hour of the darkest winter day they rejoiced the more for out of its full darkness was the Sun born and the earth again replenished.

"When the priests had done, a great shout went up, and fires were kindled all over the village, and around each romped a mad rout of pagans, laughing and singing in joyful fellowship. Gifts were exchanged, and there was drinking and junketing. And foremost among the revellers was Glycon. The pagans rejoiced because the good prophet had thrown off his sombre habit, and hailed him one of themselves, a brand from the burning, a convert to

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the only true faith. Shortly after the great festival of good-will, Glycon returned to the land of the olive and the pomegranate, filling his co-religionists with joy by his accounts of the miraculous conversion of the pagans of the North to the true faith on Christmas Day."

Merrion stopped. "Go on," said a voice.

"That's all," said he.

"I call it highly blasphemous," said Frank.

"What I want to know," said Hargreaves, "is, where does the fire-worshipping come in?"

"It doesn't come in," said Merrion; "it's there all the time."

## BETWEEN WAKING & AWAKE

IT came about in this way. The red face of a winter dawn peered through the window as I responded (vocally) to the signal of the domestic tyrant whose duty it is to break into one's dreams with a *réveillé* rapped out briskly on the bedroom door. My response evidently carried small conviction with it, for she knocked again.

"Right-o!" I cried, snuggling into the bedclothes and cosily yielding to the seductive influence of the last (positively the last) forty winks—all the joys of rest, as everyone knows, are distilled into those last forty winks—those luxurious forbidden fruits of sleep before the matutinal dip, breakfast and work.

There was another rap at the door—a little lighter this time—a muffled staccato sound—but determined.

"All right!" I shouted, with some show of feeling, throwing the blame on the diligent awakener.

The rap was again repeated. Now I have the courage of my desires, and my desire then was to complete those forty winks—had I not snuggled in for them? Were they not, therefore, mine by right?

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Well, I was just on the point of proving this by a masculine demonstration of forceful language—when the door gently, almost shyly, opened, revealing the slight form of my lady Marjorie.

There she stood, as I looked at her none too pleasantly from over the curve of the down quilt. She was just discernible in the gathering dawn, her little red slippers peeping under the hem of her night robe, her eyes sparkling elfishly, and all her locks a-tangle. She came towards me with whimsical seriousness, and as she did so my irritation died down, for I thought I could see a faint nimbus round her head—but this may have been illusion. I waited patiently though curiously. Then that small full voice, the voice I could easily distinguish from all the voices of earth, spoke.

“Come from the Land of Nod,” it said; then paused. “I am a fairy,” it said again, and there was a caressing note like the coo of a dove. “I am a fairy and I come to take you to fairyland.”

Perhaps I had better explain that my lady Marjorie is five years old.

Her words and manner took me by surprise, and I remember Keats’ lines from “*La Belle Dame sans Merci*” passed through my mind; you know how they go:

“I met a lady in the meads  
Full beautiful, a faery’s child.”

I pulled myself together.

“But how,” I began with some confusion, “how

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can we get there?" Adding rather meanly, I thought afterwards, "and I hope it's not far."

"Oh no," said my lady sweetly. "It's not very far—besides, we can fly."

"Airships?" I murmured.

"You're a fairy prince," she explained.

"Oh! thought I was daddy."

"No, a fairy prince." Then imperatively, "Come along!"

I meekly obeyed. The sex has ever had its will of me, just as it has of other men, only I admit it and don't struggle. A girl child is even more compelling. A little soft hand, frog-cold, was thrust into mine, and the voice again commanded me, this time, to fly.

I bungled at first, but the process was quite simple. We made little jumps about the room, much as they do in *Peter Pan*, waving our arms as though swimming in air. Presently we glided upwards, and soon reached the Jacobean oak chest with the crude fleur-de-lis on its sides, which stands in the window bay overlooking the garden.

"This is the place," said my lady, in a business-like way, and she croodled close to me.

I took the little form in my arms and sat cross-legged on top of the old oak chest like an Oriental god, my lady in my lap like a symbol of some new beautiful faith.

"What now?" I asked, trying to warm her cold hands in mine.

## BETWEEN WAKING & AWAKE

She looked very demure and very happy. There were some love passages. Each of us vowed eternal fidelity and confessed the complete sufficiency of the other's company. I am ashamed to admit it, but we went such lengths as to make mothers unnecessary.

"We seem to be getting along famously," I said.

"Don't we?" echoed my lady.

There we sat above the tree-tops. I remember a bullfinch came on to the window-sill and looked at us in a friendly way before he descended upon the yew crest just below. We talked and talked. It was not merely stories but the record of our experiences, which were most strange and wonderful. I grew more and more absorbed in the adventure, and my lady was in an ecstasy of happiness.

The red dawn turned to gold. Sunrays shot through the window, making light blue squares on the deeper peacock of the carpet. I had seen sunbeams many a time, but never such sunbeams as these. Or perhaps I had never looked at them from the same angle. Anyhow the wonder of sunbeams was enhanced a hundredfold, and sunbeams are always wonderful.

These teemed with life, and with such life, it was life in essence, the rare and ultimate reality. They were populous with delightful beings. Brownies, elves, fays, hobgoblins, tiny satyrs, fauns, and centaurs, and all manner of charming people, dancing and gambolling and sliding down the bright

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shafts of light like hoydens down a banister rail. They were dashed on to the light patches on the floor in sprawling and hilarious heaps, only to jump up again and glide up another sunbeam with as much ease as they had slid down !

Some danced in a ring, as they coursed down, binding each other together loosely with garlands of red and yellow roses ; others pelted each other with confetti of tiny flowers and glittering stars, whilst still more scattered fragrant red clover into the riot of the slide. A queer little hairy fellow, with goat-legs and mischievous green eyes peeping through a ravel of brown hair, romped about on a blue hobby-horse, bumping into everyone and being received with laughs and banter. Six dainty creatures, with the quaint heads and big absolute eyes of the opossum and the black and gold fur and translucent wings of the humble-bee, flashed down the bright gradient of the sunbeam on a toboggan.

There were aeroplanes crowded with reckless elves filling the light with coloured fire and mad laughter ; and swift, strangely coloured motor cars, sea-green, opal, chrysoprase, blue, with goggled brownies at the wheel, rushing up and down continually, with no other object save the love of speed, and instead of passing each other side by side, they passed over one another like fishes at play, and instead of sounding toots through a pneumatic horn, there was a perpetual tootling from a silver clarion, which was blown by a smaller brownie, who rode astraddle the



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radiator in front of the car. Anon there was a great buzzing, and a flight of blue dragon-flies passed, each one ridden bareback by a vividly-spangled harlequin holding on perilously to a golden rein. And satyrs rode on the backs of prancing centaurs.

Then came an endless concourse of fairies tripping down in military order. Their officers rode upon green lizards with flame-coloured wings, but the rank and file were afoot, divided into battalions of about a hundred, each of which carried a great coil of daisy chain. They came swiftly towards where we sat, and, before we knew what had happened, they had advanced upon us, entangled us in the daisy chains, and hauled us on to a sunbeam.

Immediately, without any fear, we entered into the fun. I placed my lady upon my shoulders, and led all fairyland in a grand slide down the shaft of light. Away we went, an avalanche of shrieking merriment! Oh, the invigorating rush of air! The wild delight—when, bump! We crashed on the floor!

I commenced to rub myself and to look for my lady at one and the same time, but the sun got into my eyes, and something was poking me in the ribs—I turned round, and there beside my bed stood my lady Marjorie, fully dressed, and childish consternation on her face.

“Come, Daddy Lazybones,” she said, with reckless familiarity, “breakfast is ready, and mother says, you’ll never catch the nine-fifteen.”



READINGS IN EARTH

*"The exceeding beauty of the Earth, in her splendour of life,  
yields a new thought with every petal."*—RICHARD JEFFERIES,  
The Life of the Fields."

## WINTER GLAMOUR

*“ There is winter in the air :  
Frost and sunshine everywhere,  
Rime with branches intertwined,  
And the frolic of the wind  
Forcing into merrie trot,  
All the warm blood man hath got ;  
And the sunshine everywhere,  
Rarely warm and debonair—  
Therefore youths and maids be gay  
On a winter holiday.”*

Old Song.

**O**UR love of summer in England is rarely tried by overmuch familiarity ; were it so I doubt not that our poets would tune their languorous notes to cooler themes. For summer is a flamboyant goddess loved best at a distance ; I love her best when she is no nearer than Morocco ; at that distance she has charms which almost move me to song ; but when she draws nearer, as she is wont to do, sometimes, with her pageantry of fiery flower-decked days, my love becomes indifferent.

I long then to see her foliage heaped in great brown piles and sending forth the sacrificial incense of autumn ; I long to see the hot dust her golden chariots have raised on the highways laid low again with the rain of less amorous days, and to hear the

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same highways ring once more with the tread of hoofs on frost-bound surface, and, better still, to see once more the trees stand bare and graceful, with never a leaf to hide their sinuous loveliness, as the soft lights spread over wood and glade, and over brown arable lands and grey streets, the sun no longer a proud god too bright for human eyes, but a friend to walk with in equal fellowship.

Surely the excessive worship of summer to the detriment of winter is a sign of frailty. It is fleshly fear of the frank strength of the cold: a physical recognition of unfitness for the necessary effort demanded by winter in her traffic with man. Or from another point of view, it is akin to a confession of moral weakness in the face of that which is naked and unashamed. Most objections to winter are but the querulousness of the invalid, for winter is no less beautiful than other seasons, no less bountiful to those who are not subdued by the abuse of Nature, and no less uncomfortable.

What a folly it is to suppose that winter is the dead season—indeed, the poets are much to blame in this matter, for they have stimulated the false doctrine in no small degree. For winter is no more dead than summer is. It is certainly not so much alive in the blossoming sense, but it is quick enough in other ways. Changed, to be sure, is the face of Nature—her greenness is confined to the fields and the lichen-covered tree-trunks. In place of the assertive verdure of June there is the prevailing

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brown, Nature's predominant note in northern latitudes, the colour of earth, with its familiar earthy fragrance full of I know not what suggestions of man's immemorial kinship with the mysterious mother.

This colour of earth, so elusive in summer, when its homely scents are lost in the fragrance of the flowers, and its strangely friendly mould labours beneath the foliage of a myriad growths, comes upon us in winter-time with the surprise of revelation. It is the old, old earth again, more akin to man than perhaps any organic thing save man, more close to man than any other thing. For the spirit of the earth is in him, he is bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, her child to whom she is revealed again after the leaves are fallen, after his eyes have feasted upon the innumerable phases of her progeny in the periods of foliage and blossom.

This perhaps is why certain natures feel a new joy at the sight of the fresh-turned corn lands. To see the sturdy horses plod dreamily over the stubble into which the ploughman drives his blade, leaving behind him long fragrant furrows of fertile mould, is to them a joy, a devout exercise. It is not merely the stalwart labour they see, but the whole rhythm of the earth; the association of man with organic life, the very genesis of the processes of growth. For to them the old earth is never dead, least of all in winter, the period of preparation for her continuance in the flowers and songs of summer.

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It is but a sleep, a sleep of health and hope, like that of a growing child whose growth continues the while, or that of a healthy man weary with sane labour—it is, in fact, the beauty sleep of life.

And the woodland beauty of June is redundant compared with the fine reticence of December. The artificers of the winter forests have a rare taste in illumination, they allow nothing to come between the inmost grace of branch and trunk, and the tempered light of the winter sun. They seem to have exercised a process of reduction, in much the same manner as the sculptor who chisels away the superfluities of the block of marble until the goddess within stands free in splendid ultimate beauty. So have the winter woods been treated. The masses of foliage have been stripped from the branches, and strewn like the fragments of marble around a statue; then rises out of its soft brown carpet in all the uncloaked majesty of a perfect thing, the leafless tree, intricate yet symmetrical, graceful yet strong, a symbol of infinite beauty.

This is but one joy of the winter woods; it is the joy in beauty of form. No less beautiful is the colour of the woods when the trees are bare. For then the soft browns of the fallen leaves blend with all the more delicate shades of green peculiar to shy mosses and furtive lichens, and the grey distances reveal purple boles and mysterious blue branches, illuminated with startling clusters of yellow fungi. Then do the pines wave dark-plumed



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heads above limbs of flame, and the white arms of the dancing birch-trees glisten in the sun. The laurels cluster in hillocks of polished green, and the scarlet berry of the holly shines like a beacon over all the woodland peace.

Then again there is the beauty of frost when the rime traces its delicate white lines over everything; when all the world becomes a study in black and white, and one goes forth to walk or skate with a new sense of life; with a strange impulsive vigour, an epicurean sense of resistance towards some kindly yet indomitable antagonist. It is like going into a contest with a conscious determination to taste its every phase; with the sure knowledge also that Jack Frost, though fully intending to play the game and lay you low if he can, is nevertheless all the better pleased when you conquer him with quick, hot blood coursing through your delighted veins and resisting him laughingly at every point.

But these are outside joys, and they are but half of the fascinations of winter. There is another side, a side more intimate and fully as beautiful, a side that welcomes the shortening of the days and the cooling of the sunbeams, because it is happily haunted with a piquant vision full of tender memories and comfortable delights. For as the brown earth of winter days is a revelation to man of his kinship with all things, so is the blazing hearth a revelation of his kinship with all men. And it is around this altar of flame that those inner joys of winter cluster,

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bringing into prominence the essential fellowship of man, the *camaraderie* of the true social life.

It is most fitting that this symbolism should have its great feast. And when we have taken our delight in the beauty of winter sunshine aslant upon echoing woods and furrowed earth, we take our memories of it, in great nests of mistletoe and branches of holly, into our homes, which, by this act, cease to be castles and become temples whose altar is the blazing hearth.

Far back in the dawn of that conscious state which made man possible was born a new power, a new knowledge, almost a new sense—the sense of fire. The animals and even the vegetables knew the use of water and air, and used these elements fearlessly. But it was reserved for man to use and love fire. And now when the hearth burns with a rich glow and the chairs circle round the warmth, in the twilight when it seems a fault to light up, man harks back to his dim beginnings. His contented silence as he watches the embers form strange fantasies to fit his dreams, his sense of peace and comfort, are charged with a thousand memories born out of the unfathomable past. His peace at such times is built out of the unrecognised memories of ancestral bivouacs beside darkling caves, of his jousts and junketings, of all the ages that have contributed their energies to the building of the present.

Summer can give us roses and long fair days of

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the sun ; autumn gives us of the earth's bounty, golden cornfields, stored granaries, and sun-kissed fruits ; spring comes with wind-swept robes of dainty emerald, recalling us to the rebirth of material things ; but no season save winter can bring us the long, warm fireside evenings, when all social life seems concentrated in a triumphant cosiness. And as though man had recognised this, we have not his words or his songs, but we have his most memorable festival established in the heart of this abused season. What is May Day, or Midsummer Day, or Michaelmas Day compared with Christmas Day ? They are almost as immaterial as the equator, so much so that we are hardly aware of them until the day after. But what proper man, or better, what proper child, ever forgot it was Christmas Day ? The idea is absurd. Christmas is an entity among days with a distinct and deliberate flavour that brooks no denying. It is a real thing, like Santa Claus, and not a myth like the May Queen, who, as often as not, is merely some pretty village damsel playing at masquerade. I have not had the good fortune to see Santa Claus myself, but I know a little girl who has, and that is sufficient evidence for me. Besides, she showed me the presents he brought her, all cunningly stuffed into a stocking, and just the things she wanted : an orange, and chocolates, a picture book and a wonderful Japanese doll. Of course they "couldn't all get into the stocking," I was informed, and I tried to

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think what other season possessed so kindly an attendant spirit ; but it made my head ache trying to discover the impossible, and I was glad to be consoled with some of the self-same chocolates brought by Santa Claus.

## HEDGEROWS

**I** SOMETIMES wonder what England would be without her hedgerows ; and particularly does the thought arise when those illimitable walls of life are bursting into leaf and song. The thought of such an England, an England fenced with iron instead of whitethorn, fills me with dismay. England without hedgerows would be like England without Shakespeare.

And yet, how many of us are properly conscious of this great boon ? How many of us realise what it means when we are moved again and again by the first glimmer of green on the hedgerows, that green which blends magically with the deepening notes of blackbird and thrush, as if all were one musical strain ? At such moments our joy is something more than a response to the call of beauty at the birth of new life : it is, consciously or unconsciously, a response also to one of the most remarkable manifestations of our national genius.

For the hedgerow in the modern world is English—as English as Shakespeare, and as great. I am proud of many English things, but of none more than this. In our hedgerows I see all that is great in our race and all that is beautiful. I see in them

## ROMANCE AND REALITY

nature turned to the will of man with such inevitability that both man and nature are benefited ; I see the creation of a beautiful thing by a whole people, and not by any special individual ; I see, in short, beauty springing naturally, as it always does, out of skill running hand-in-hand with utility and common-sense.

The idea of the hedgerow itself is not English. It is one of those many ideas which, though born elsewhere, have come to our land for full fruition. For just as Shakespeare was a part of the Renaissance which began in Italy, so are the hedgerows the consummation of an idea which also began in that sunny land.

They guarded the vineyards of ancient Rome, as they guard to this day those of modern Italy. When the Romans colonised Britain and conferred upon this land the inestimable boon of a roadway the hedgerow was part of the gift. Dangerous and indefinite parts of the Roman roads were guarded and marked by walls of living trees, and the institution of the hedgerow was born in our midst. But the idea took centuries to develop, and it did not become general until the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth.

Once thoroughly appreciated, the hedgerow rapidly grew in use, until it marked the boundaries of nearly all our tracts of land. England has so surpassed other countries in its adoption of this beautiful method of fencing in fields that she may

## HEDGEROWS

be said to have made the hedgerow her own. All those who set eyes on our shores for the first time know this. Hedgerows dominate our lowlands and climb up our hills to something like a thousand feet, gladdening the eye more permanently than any other of our products.

I can imagine nothing more beautiful than these walls of living green. Similar as they are to the casual glance, they are, in reality, as infinite in variety as they are illimitable in extent ; and where there is a well-grown hedgerow there is life, for in themselves they contain a whole world of natural things—all the more interesting for being interwoven with the life and habits of man.

The hedges are associated not only with orderly agriculture, noble parks, or trim gardens. They are intimately linked up with other phases of human life, particularly with that element which borders the social hem as they border the fields. Vagabonds and others who stand beyond the prim fences of society are known as hedge-folk, just as the wandering priests of the common people in the Middle Ages were known as hedge-priests. And many of those things in human life which are a little wild are associated with the hedgerows, not least of which is new love, for we know that

“ Every lover tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale ”

in the bright, untamed days before domesticity sets in.

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As for Nature, she herself has returned man's compliment of the hedgerow, by making the hedgerows her home. They teem with vitality. Mysterious walls of life in a double sense, housing, as they do, a far greater number of wild things than any other place or object in our land. It is in the hedges that most of our familiar birds nest, from the cheerful and friendly hedge sparrow up to those incorrigible melodists, the thrush and the blackbird. Most of the finches make their homes in those walls of green; the nightingale sings his passionate prelude to summer in their branches; the wrens and the tom-tits fuss up and down their quickset lanes, and the robin nests cosily in the ivy-clad banks from which they spring.

It is in the hedgerows also that our smaller animals love to find a home; rats, dormice, weasles, stoats, hedgehogs, are all to be found there. And amidst the infinite song and chatter and squeak which accompanies the affairs of all these little creatures, we have a constant humming of innumerable hedge-loving insects, the whispering of bordering sedges, and the eternal music of the breeze sighing gently through their dense foliage.

But the wonder of the hedgerows is not in the life they draw to them, it is in themselves. The life they attract is but an evidence of their own inherent vitality and variety. The hedges are growing walls, that is their chief call for wonder; and then comes their variety. Almost every tree that grows



## HEDGEROWS

in England has been induced to lend its strength and beauty to their cause.

The queen of the hedgerows, as we all know, is the whitethorn. Greater is she than hazel, or holly, or sloe-plum; greater still because she allows all these and every other tree that has been honoured by service in her ranks to grow and flourish by her side. The hedgerow is never a single growth, it is as composite as the English race. The flowers and creepers of the hedge banks are as much a part of it as the whitethorn; and no hedgerow is complete unless it is decked with bramble and eglantine, honeysuckle and travellers' joy.

At all seasons of the year are the hedgerows beautiful, but at none are they so beautiful as in early spring when the young leaves flash from the brown tangle of branches like green fire. More beautiful are they then even than when covered with the fragrant snow of the may, the delicate pink stars of the June dew-rose, or the scarlet hips and haws of autumn. Then do they seem most alive, you almost feel them growing; and their green fire seems to be a part of the riot of song which swells from their hearts.

## SPRING

I HAVE watched her coming shyly over the tree-tops these many days, and now she is here. You could almost feel the sap tingling in the branches as she drew nigh, and when she was within hailing distance the happy trees greeted her by hanging upon their branches a myriad tiny lanterns of sparkling green.

Sometimes I caught a glimpse of her in a gown of shimmering white; but she generally wore sober russet, touched cunningly here and there with green. Sobriety, however, ended with her gown, for her whole being was intoxicated with young life. She came romping like a hoyden among the shivering shrubs, her tempestuous petticoats shaking the remnant of last autumn's leaves and catkins out of their stark hands.

A merry child, this Spring, full of pranks and whims, and, like all children, an eternal problem. She will and she won't, like a maiden, like a woman; but generally she won't. That is why she sets the bards a-singing. When she will she is beautiful with the beauty of young things, and when she won't she is also beautiful, with the beauty, the more seductive beauty, of promise unfulfilled.

## SPRING

But over and above every one of her moods she never allows you to forget that she is the girlhood of the year, and she reminds you as well that all girls worth their salt are coquettes at heart.

How she flirts and teases! See her smile and pout; see her coax—and scratch! Now she leans forward with beckoning lips, you advance, and she is gone, and the breeze is full of her laughter. Again she meets you with gay crocuses in her hands, and as you go to take her gifts she hits you with a snowball, or leaves you blinking in a shower of rain; and in the midst of your surprise you catch sight of her shaking her curls at you from a sunny patch over the hazel hedge.

Yet you cannot resist her; she still lures you on with renewed hope, scattering fair promises behind her. Your faith in her is immortal; you feel she will not always be so capricious, and that anon she will pelt you with kingcups and cowslips, with daisies and buttercups, instead of with hailstones and snowballs. And you know surely that the tender green, which now only glints among the russet folds of her gown, will soon robe her completely, and that it will be decorated with dew-roses and flounced with cloths of blue and gold; and on her head will shine a coronet of hawthorn blossom and laburnum.

Meantime she is maiden Spring. Her gown is the colour of life, the colour of the awakening earth; its peeping green the symbol of creation. Her growth is marked by this spreading greenness of things.

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Green is for us the universal colour. It follows the ploughman like a beneficent fairy, and creeps wonderfully over the tree-trunks, giving them a richer beauty; it tingles in the branches until they burst into leaf as birds burst into song. It broods mysteriously over waste places in strange devices, and lurks elfishly in the hearts of the flowers; it lights up the eyes of animals, and shimmers over the wings of the raven and the rook, and on the soft breast of the dove.

But this maiden Spring, who makes the world green again, is not only coy and whimsical; she is brave and warlike, a Joan of Arc, if you will, battling against tyrannical winter, in the name of the only true faith, which is life. For does she not come with a flourish of swords and the glancing of many spears? Indeed she is the veriest of Amazons leading a host of warriors against the brown battlements of winter.

Mark how her legions advance. First come the fair ranks of the snowdrop, an advance guard of light infantry pushing strong delicate lances through the frost-bound earth. Then follow company after company of hardy troops, crocus, jonquil and daffodil, marching in gallant array; then the solid ranks of the veteran grass blades, flanked by the gleaming swords of the iris; whilst overhead glance the green arrows of the beech and the assagais of the chestnut.

Sun and rain wait upon her armies, tempering their spears and swords, and quenching their thirst; and all the birds lift up their voices in a mighty war-song,

## SPRING

half rebellious “Ça ira,” half chant of praise and jubilation.

True, the birds are never wholly silent in our favoured land, but they never sing so bravely as they do during this great annual contest. Even the good sparrows and the robins, who never desert us in our darkest hours, chirp more bravely, and sing a fuller melody; and throstle and blackbird tune their merry notes to richer themes; whilst the skylark, “singing of summer with full-throated ease,” urges from above the hosts of Spring with spurs of silver song. All the little warblers and finches pipe their jolly marching ditties, or blow their bugles in the hedgerows; the rooks shout their advice from their watch-towers in the elm-trees; and the starling with infinite virtuosity repeats everything he hears in exaggerated terms like an enterprising war correspondent.

And as the legions of the Amazon add victory unto victory, the music swells in mightiness, augmented after each triumph by the string orchestras of the insect world, until the last citadel is taken, when the movement changes and the great war-song dreams itself away in a hymn of praise. The renewal of life is accomplished, Spring has conquered.

The birds that went on furlough in the autumn begin to come back to the army. A butterfly flaps lazily in the sun; a swallow skims over the tarn; the cuckoo rings her monotonous wedding bell; you linger out of doors as the sun sets in a golden haze

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and watch the angular capers of the flittermouse. A new note of passion has come into life. The trees are fully clothed with foliage, you can no longer see their graceful limbs. The air is rich, the grass is deep and ripe ; the year is no longer cool and slim and energetic ; the spears of Spring are gone, and Spring herself, though still beautiful, is plump and voluptuous. You admire her still, but your admiration, though just as deep, perhaps deeper, is not so bright, it is clouded with melancholy.

You know not why this should be so ; but it is quite natural. Your melancholy is mortal dread of change. You will get over it. But standing as you do at that mysterious moment of life when you can feel the transfiguration of the girlhood of the year into something new and strange, you cannot but feel sad. At one moment she was with you, elfish, capricious, coy, and, even as you stood in adoration, her wildness fell from her, the coronet of may-blossom dropped from her head, the violets faded out of her hands, and in a flash she was gone, and where she stood stands a ripe beauty with a crown of roses on her brow.

BEFORE DAWN

*“Creatures shall be seen upon the earth who will always be fighting one with another with very great losses and frequent deaths on either side. These shall set no bounds to their malice; by their fierce limbs a great number of the trees in the immense forests of the world shall be laid level with the ground; and when they have crammed themselves with food it shall gratify their desire to deal out death, affliction, labours, terrors, and banishment to every living thing. And by reason of their boundless pride they shall wish to rise towards heaven, but the excessive weight of their limbs shall hold them down.”—*

From the Note-Books of LEONARDO DA VINCI—EDWARD M'CURDY'S translation.



## DESERTS OF NOISE

**T**HE maddest place in all England is Cheapside. If you were to describe it accurately and put it in a book no one would believe you. Yet there it is—a monstrous huddle of noisome traffic—a roaring canyon of commerce. Sometimes I go there, but I always come away with the feeling that I have been riding the nightmare.

The last time I was there I met a friend at the corner of Gutter Lane. "Listen to it," I said to him, waving my right arm, to the peril of the passer-by, "is it not monstrous?" He looked at me, stupidly, I thought. "Come down here," I continued, putting my arm through his and conducting him towards a subterranean café; "let us, like hunted things, escape to earth!" And down there, over the coffee and cigarettes, amid tobacco clouds and the rasp and clatter of dominoes, I told him about Cheapside. He listened meditatively, with a pained expression coming and going on his face, and as we left he said with tragic conviction, "It will be a sad day for England when there is no noise in Cheapside!" With a sigh, I went my ways.

What is happening in Cheapside is happening everywhere. Cheapside is but the symbol of the

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high noises of modernity And we have become inured to them; they have mastered us like a fatality: our indifference is resignation.

So triumphant is the clangour that it is now almost impossible to realise its pressure on the senses except by sudden contrast. So certain is the grip of noise that a gradual unloosening after flight to some hushed rural place, although giving relief, does not awaken us to the tyranny of the thing itself. Nothing will do this save a sudden change from noise to quiet.

In London, where the clamour of the age meets in a triumphant crash, such an experience is still possible. It can be tried by anyone who is not quite tone-deaf, by the simple process of passing from the hubbub of Holborn into the rich stillness of Staple Inn. The change is as though the dance of life had suddenly abandoned rag-time for the stately movement of a minuet.

When you leave the fussy pavement of the great thoroughfare, and turn under the age-worn archway beneath the familiar timbered houses, you feel a sharp and definite relief; and, by the time you have fully entered the grey, cobble-stoned quadrangle with its flagged pathways laced and flecked with the green shadows of the plane-trees, you find relief giving place to wonder. It is almost a physical wonder—"born of the very sigh that silence heaves," and you taste it deliberately as you taste the first moments of peace following bodily or mental pain.

## DESERTS OF NOISE

The sudden releasing of the grip of noise brings you face to face with the essential fulness of quiet. You are surprised to find that quietness is full of low sounds, like the murmuring of bees or mountain streams—sounds which are a real part of life and which have been obliterated by the outside clamour. And you realise that your own soul, which up to now you had somehow overlooked, is not one with the noise, but kin to this living silence. You, in short, possess yourself.

At other times you own not yourself; you are possessed by the legioned devils of noise who clamour indecently in the public places for your soul. Every time you give way to them, every time you live them down, they conquer you. There is no escape save flight.

I do not advise flight because noise in itself is evil. That would be folly, for evil, like other abstract terms, is purely relative. Besides, are there not noises which we all know to be good? Noises which spring from the harmony of life, or from the contest of healthy forces—the cheers of a multitude with a united purpose, the cries and counter-cries of political meetings. These are music. But the clatter of a modern city is not music any more than its smoke and grime are decorative art.

The noise of a modern city is nothing but the creaking of the wheels of commerce; it is a shuffling, a colliding, a groaning, a dissonance of expletives. . . . It is the scurry of an age which rushes hither

## ROMANCE AND REALITY

and thither after it knows not what ; the tumult of a people who have forgotten the meaning of utility in their haste to buy and sell. Life has become a market-place, a stock exchange, and repose, reticence, and quietness have been lost in a maze of tradesmen's war-whoops, each wildly striving to outshout the other.

Gladly would I ignore it, if that were possible. But the hucksters' age insists upon breaking into one's dreams. The clamour is everywhere—even in the silences. It is reflected in our cleverness, our smartness, our pushfulness. I walk down the street and it yells at me from the advertising hoardings. It shrieks at me from the columns of the Press, the pages of books, and the frames of pictures ; it roars from platform and pulpit, and clatters across the stage. Each individual sound seems to say it is the biggest, or, that, for it is not easy to distinguish clearly, something it has to sell is the biggest. In vain I say that I am not out for the biggest, that I am quite content with the best, and can find that out for myself. Heedless, the noise goes on, until I realise that society has ceased to be a social thing, it has become a strident confusion of rattles of all sizes, each shaking against the other for prizes which demand more noise—the chatter of privilege, the loudness of riches.

But do not imagine that I would substitute a Trappist silence. I have no such desire. My love of sane and healthy sounds is too deep-rooted for

## DESERTS OF NOISE

that. The noises of our strident age are not healthy : they are a disease, a form of waste. Shouting is not progress, much less discordant shouting. At times I am inclined to the belief that all this noise is a sign of failure, an elegy of despair. The discord of modern life, whether it be the roar of the street, the bickering of the Stock Exchange, the shouting of the advertiser—that specialist of noise—or the crowing of fashion, is probably nothing more than the wailing of a lost multitude, of a people who have mislaid life's highway, and, like the blind folk in Maeterlinck's play, are calling pitiful and chimerical directions to each other.

In the meantime I shall resist the temptation of adding my cry to the tumult—no one would hear me. I shall keep quiet, and occasionally retreat under the old archway by Holborn Bars and taste the stillness of Staple Inn. I shall rest awhile on the seat surrounding the centre plane-tree, and reflect securely upon the blind, mad age outside, with which I shall have no traffic.

## TORPOR

**I**N a little cluster of mean streets packed in between the lower end of Shaftesbury Avenue and New Oxford Street, amid a welter of coster stalls loaded with vegetables and fish, reeking eating-houses with bubbling pans of sausage in their windows, and tenth-rate dram-shops, stands the Church of St Giles, Bloomsbury. Its columned Renaissance spire, weathered to that rich, shadowy greyness which makes the stones of London a joy for ever, rises aloft majestically like a piece of wrought silver. The beauty of its eaves mingles pleasantly with the green of the foliage in the little churchyard, which reposes like an oasis in a desert of brick and asphalt.

Across this desert wayfarers are continually passing and repassing—hungry folk and weary, who seem doomed to wander up and down the town like bewildered ghosts. To-day there are more than usual, and as I walk through the oasis of the churchyard of St Giles I notice the seats are all occupied. But still more weary ones come with starved looks, seeking rest, only to pass on hopelessly with shuffling gait to the bigger oases of the Thames Embankment or the great parks, where they can

## TORPOR

rest within the shadow of royal palaces and the gathering places of the Olympians.

There is a quietness in St Giles' churchyard, a religious peace, lulled gently by the eternal song of London, that grinding orchestration of its immense traffic, reduced here to a piping melody that can scarcely hold its own with the cheerful and incessant bickering of the sparrows. The poor have yielded to the calming influences, and they sleep. Busy people pass through the churchyard and look upon the sleepers generally with superior scorn, but sometimes they try to avert their faces with a pained look, as though they were accidentally made privy to a shameful thing. A telegraph boy enters the gateway whistling merrily, but stops suddenly and hurries through the sorry dormitory with a blush on his cheeks. A policeman stands motionless beside the church door, like a new kind of ecclesiastical symbolism; and a grey cat glides suspiciously among the sleepers.

I pass along unostentatiously, noting the seats and their occupants. On the first are three men—one an old man with a long beard yellow with neglect, and pale, gaunt cheeks; he sleeps like a child, his battered and greasy felt hat resting idly in his lap; next to him, his head resting upon his arm, which lies along the back of the seat, is a decently-clad young man with a face like a death-mask; and in the far corner a ruddy and hairy-faced tramp in ragged corduroys snoring luxuriously.

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Farther along on the opposite side is another group of human wreckage. There are four here: three men, two of whom hang limply over the arms at either end, and an old and wrinkled woman, sitting upright, and muttering in her sleep. Three women occupy the next seat; all are in rags and filth that shame the day. They are awake; two are talking listlessly, one adjusting her grotesquely dilapidated bonnet the while, with a pitifully automatic reminiscence of past coquetry. The third is a half-crazed creature of about thirty; her tangled black hair is streaked with grey; upon her feet are a pair of men's heavy boots, ridiculously broken and worn, and tied round the insteps with pieces of faded red rag; she wears a rent black skirt and a mangy blue woollen coat pinned together and open at the throat, showing a leaden, stringy neck, but no sign of any under-garment. She is eating a faded apple, and as I pass she leers inanely, and says with vindictive affability, "'Ere we are, sir, all a-blowin' and a-growin'."

So I pass on. Seat after seat, each with its scrap-heap of useless humanity, line the pathway; it is like walking through an avenue of the dead. Happily they sleep, a comfortless sleep, to be sure, but such as it is it brings oblivion. I can see only one other person awake. He is a hopeless man in shiny black, a decayed clerk, probably, and he turns over a bundle of soiled letters, characters, letters of recommendation, maybe, full of ironical praise



## TORPOR

of his virtues and capabilities. He, hopeless though he is, has obviously not yet given up hope—he is the one tragic figure of the place, because the sense of contest in him is still alive; he alone amid all those derelict beings is conscious of the will to live.

The rest are alive, but dead: the will to live has flickered out of their consciousness; they are indifferent to all sense of contest, and the desire of conquest is no more; they have surrendered to circumstances in the unequal battle for bread, and lie here broken, useless, scrapped.

Why do they go on living, I wonder, as I turn from this human scrap-yard. Death is such a simple thing compared with this. Besides, they are indifferent to pain—ah, that is it. They are indifferent to pain, they no longer feel the pain of life, therefore they do not think of death. People who are happy or in pain think of death—the rest are dead.

Outside in High Street, Bloomsbury, an organ is playing Mr Harry Lauder's song, "I know a Lassie," and a number of ragged but merry children are dancing. Up and down the pavement they go, shaking their skirts and kicking their heels like a mad rout of elves. They take up snatches of the chorus:

*"As sweet as the heather,  
The bonnie purple heather,  
Mary, my Highland belle,"*

## ROMANCE AND REALITY

and the bright-faced Italian woman who plays the organ smiles appreciatively as their shrill voices rise over the din of the street.

Suddenly the organ stops and the dancing ceases. Men remove their hats and look thoughtful. A funeral is passing. When it is out of sight the music begins again.

. . . . .  
I cross the road towards Oxford Street, and before turning the corner I look back at St Giles'. The silver-grey spire looks peaceful and beautiful in the sunny autumn noon. The policeman has walked out of the churchyard and he is "moving on" some derelicts who have been resting against the railings. I catch a last glimpse of the sleepers—the seats look like open graves, and I feel the whole of society is being affected by their decay. . . .

"Move along, there, move along," I can just hear the officer. But over the gateway of St Giles' I see an unwritten legend: "Rubbish may be shot here."

## HUNGER-TAMENESS

**I**T was one of those familiar spring days which belie the calendar. There was a wind, a keen and penetrating wind; a wind that discovered your weaker spots with wonderful precision. It caught up little patches of dust in the roadways, whirled them round until they looked like ghostly Dervishes, and then scattered them into oblivion. It was a merry wind, but its humour was vindictive. It stung my face as I stood indecisively in a diminutive maze of crossing streets between the Law Courts and Kingsway; and it seemed to be enjoying itself so heartily as it scampered along a little lane, after an invigorating romp over the vacant spaces of the Strand "improvement," that I marvelled at its spite.

As I stood for a moment taking my bearings, which the most habitual Londoner is forced to do every now and then in this wilderness of streets, I became conscious of a certain raggedness about me. It was not in the actual locality, that bore marked evidences of rebuilding and was still neat and clean; neither was it in the atmosphere, for such a wind had no mercy on stray wisps and remnants of fog, even had they shown any desire to hang

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themselves about at the time, which they certainly had not. I eventually realised that it was in the people; not the rapid passer-by, but the loiterers who are to be found in every street, and who may be said to be the street's inhabitants as distinct from the inhabitants of the houses. They were not ordinary loiterers, however, men lapped in a sort of Nirvana of idleness, but loiterers with a purpose. At every corner they stood; eager little groups of dejected men of all ages, but mostly middle-aged to old, or that indefinite age which is a characteristic of so many poor adults, and they seemed to be watching, hungrily, I imagined, a stout constable who paced serenely up and down the middle of the broadest of the adjoining streets, sometimes stopping and looking about him with blank severity.

I had hardly time to reflect on this curious and scattered dejectedness, which struck me suddenly in the manner of a dream, when something happened; it was something very simple—the policeman raised a hand aloft; but the effect was like the releasing of a spring which sets an intricate machine in motion. The ragged men seemed to be awaiting this signal, for they were suddenly thrown into activity. In a moment every avenue in the vicinity shot forth a stream of abject humanity—greasy, ragged, careworn, dilapidated human beings, who shuffled—I could not call it running—towards a spot near the constable. Their very eagerness was

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unclean, their presence unseemly. Yet in some strange way I felt linked with them and their destiny; not in brotherhood, but in kind; I was of their species and I felt ashamed, ashamed of them, ashamed for them, and ashamed of myself.

The constable stood in the roadway, a plump, haughty figure. The tatterdemalions darted past him from all directions, colliding against one another in the gutter before the door of a religious mission. A silent, half-hearted little struggle followed; the cluster of shuffling beings looked like a writhing heap of rags, like offal disturbed by decomposition. The policeman eyed it critically; and a few passers-by stopped before going on their way. Soon the human tangle unravelled itself into a queue of fifty or sixty men, in the gutter.

"Why do they wait?" I said, approaching the portly officer.

"For soup," he replied simply, sardonically.

"When do they get it?" I asked.

"At half-past four."

It was just three o'clock.

"Have they been waiting long?" I inquired.

"All day."

This is heroic, I thought, and I walked over to look at the thin grey line. What a crew! There was not a decent garment among them, not a clean body. The line was but an anxious empty stomach covered with rags and filth. It emitted a foetid odour like a midden. Unclean, unkempt, unfed,

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it stood and shivered—almost unrecognisable as human.

The individuality of the separate members of the ragged queue, such as it was, was, as usual in crowds, merged in the individuality of mass. There were different features and certain ludicrous distinctions among the rags which covered their limp bodies. There were shades of pallor and greyness in the faces; degrees in the sunkenness of cheeks; grades in beards, from grisly stubble to flowing yellowy white; some high cheek-bones shone blue with cold; there were red noses, sore eyes, and festering necks.

Among the garments were frock coats, and tweed lounge coats; some had great rents, others were patched carelessly; one buttonless frock coat was threaded up the front with string; through a broken seam in the back I could see the man's pallid flesh: he wore no under-garments. Trousers hung baggy, limp, and frayed; and boots were manifold in abject characteristics—all were burst, none had heels; one creature wore tennis shoes tied about the instep with strips of dirty calico, another wore the sorriest patent leathers I had ever seen. Their hats were grotesque in their battered and greasy variety.

These details had to be sought out; to the casual glance they did not exist. The queue was a thing in itself, a silent, patient thing; a tabid line of men; a wrecked, wasted line of superfluous humanity; an

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evil-smelling scrap-heap gradually decomposing. It sidled and snivelled ; sometimes it laughed hoarsely and sometimes it swore ; it spat and grunted and swayed slightly, shuffling from one foot to the other ; here and there it smoked, in foul little pipes, discarded bits of tobacco and cigar ends, picked up in the gutter. It was long-suffering, but tame ; it was dirty and hungry, but patient.

My shame deepened as I reviewed the sorry line. I felt as though in the presence of deformed nakedness. I had an impulse to take the thing into an eating-house and gorge it with food. I smiled as I thought of the consternation of the manager of the Holborn Restaurant if we marched into his sumptuous halls. I walked away some paces and then stood looking back at it. I was spell-bound. It overpowered me. I wanted to talk to someone about it, but everybody was in a hurry, none seemed to care, and few to notice. I was not so much impressed by its squalor as by its tameness—the slow decay, the evil-smelling tameness of the thing, obsessed me.

I thought of certain animals and how hunger makes them fierce and brave. I saw a hungry tigress with her cubs. I saw her spring upon another animal, rending and devouring it, and the little ones dabbled appreciatively in the blood, before snuggling into their dam's replenished breasts. Hungry savages peopled my brain, but none stood in queues awaiting soup. They were fierce, they

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did not wait for food to be given them, they took it. Sometimes there was no food and nothing to kill; then they lay down and died; but whilst there was the least chance of food they took it, even if in the taking of it they were killed. That struck me as splendid. But these men starved patiently. There was food all about them—in the warehouses, in the shop windows, in the eating-houses; they knew it was there, they could see it, smell it, but not eat it—and they became tame, not fierce like the animals.

I felt that Nature had produced in them something new; she had produced patience with hunger, she had made it possible for beings to fester and decompose without resistance, to be acquiescent in a living death. She had created something lower than the brutes.

I took another look at the ragged thing, and left it standing there, watched by the portly constable, awaiting the coming of charity.



## IMMORTAL RUSSIA

(1908)

### I

I WAS sitting in a little café in a little street just off the Rue Sainte Honoré; one of those streets which are familiar in the centre of Paris, more like a chasm than a street; one of those cafés common to every town in France, a little narrow place with little tables and white cloths, awaiting diners, and a row of smaller round tables and iron chairs between two wooden partitions abutting on to the pavement of the street. I sat at one of these.

My eyes had wandered up the tall stucco front of the opposite house. It had a double door with upper panels of fretted ironwork, behind which was glass, and the rows of tall windows had shutters painted a dull red. One of the shutters was unhinged, and swung to and fro—I wondered idly why no one fastened it. The house was painted grey—Parisian grey, the grey that looks as if it had once been white, which it probably had been; the grey that turns to purple and blue with the changing light. I again wondered why. I wondered why it did not turn green and pink and saffron—and saw no reason

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why it should not do so, or even chequer and line and foliate—why not ?

No, it was not absinthe. It was bock, *le bon bock*—a pointed flagon and a golden liquid—and, as yet, I had not touched it. It was simply idleness. I had nothing else to do, and I was the only customer. Presently, however, two young men sauntered in and occupied chairs in the corner on my right. They were dressed in the sober black of the gay city, with black soft hats, dilapidated of brim, and flowing black ties hanging over their coats. One was clean-shaven, the other the same, save for a line of black hair on the upper lip, like a strayed eyebrow. In a little while they were joined by a third, a tall, heavy-featured young man, also all black, except for his hair and beard, which were flaming red; the first cropped short, the last wild and bushy. He was clearly a Russian; if his beard had been black, he would have been the Russian of fiction. The others were Russian also, but, after the manner of Russians in Paris, they looked like Frenchmen, and spoke the language of France. They talked very quietly but earnestly. I could only catch a word or so. The youth with the moustache seemed dejected. “What’s the use?” he kept on asking. The red Russian was reasonable, rational, argumentative; whilst the clean-shaven man showed something like passion; he seemed to burn with a fierce enthusiasm which now looked like hate and now like the sort of love you give to a child. I only caught

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one burning phrase from his lips: "Russia is immortal!" It was uttered with the irrational finality of conviction. And just as I had thought idly about the swinging shutter and the iridescent greyness of the house opposite, I thought, or rather felt, about Russia.

### II

I saw that great country in a fresh light. Her wracked and tortured body no longer represented a shuddering people awaiting the coming of a leader. It was the expression of the long agony of the pathway to Freedom. Russia has no supreme pathway to Freedom. Russia, I thought, has no supreme man because she is a supreme nation—what has individual supremacy to do with her great courage, her eternal revolt, her savage determination and patience? One of these days we shall know that these qualities have made the Russians the master-people of civilisation. If the Revolution fail, Russia will still be supreme. She will be supreme in spite even of victory, as she is supreme in spite of defeat, because she can abandon herself with eternal hope and without regret. Russia has the spirit to take great risks and to make great sacrifices. She has courage: courage in power and weakness, in virtue and vice, in ignorance, in knowledge, in imagination; she thrives on destruction, like an admiral who survives by burning his ships.

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The very weakness of Russia is a kind of strength. The Governors are strong in their mortality before the bullet and the bomb; the people are strong in their tortured bodies and in the long silences of Siberia. The personality of Russia is a flaming sword—its metal has been fired by revolt and tempered by snow—it shines like a beacon over the world. It shines in a noble and passionate art, which Russians do not only make for themselves, if they make it at all for themselves, which I sometimes doubt. Perhaps they do not want art because they are too busy living and dying. Art is civilised and tame; art is for Paris, for London, for Vienna, not for Warsaw and Moscow and Odessa. Russia thrives on sacrifice, not art. She conquers the invader by burning down Moscow and the Revolution by precipitating it.

There is, however, an art she keeps for herself. It is the great ironic art—the art of tragedy. Tragedy is her normal state. No other nation as a nation can love and hate like Russia. No other nation could bear such sufferings with dry eyes and with laughter. Her life to the outer world looks like an infinite succession of deaths—yet of no people does the world expect so much. Russia is the prophet out of the Galilee of civilisation—her cross lies heavy on her, but she does not cry out that she is forsaken of God—she laughs.

The throne of Russia is fenced about by lies, glorified by the priests, and defended by rifles,

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whips, and swords. The Czar withholds from his people a freedom he has given to the Cossacks in exchange for their services as the instruments of his tyranny. The peasants, after having been freed from one form of slavery and thrown into another, are shot down because they cry out in their bondage of want, and their little starving communes are destroyed. And so it is always; what one hand of the Little Father gives the other takes away. Yet he cannot kill his people any more than they can kill him or his system. But, after all, he is not killing them, he is creating them. The Russian people is not yet born; the pains of Russia are the pains of labour. Russia is a woman in agony.

Again, paradox that she is, she is more than this. She is not wholly woman, although the central figures of her drama are women, Sophie Perovskaya and Marie Spiridinova: she is almost a god. She kills and laughs. Assassination with her is virtue. She rushes into the fiery furnace, certain that one day she will come out unscathed, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did. Individually her people are like satyrs; in the mass, Dionysos—that is why they sacrifice themselves with joy.

Death stalks through her cities. It dogs the footsteps of student and peasant and workman, and of the Cossacks marching bomb-file through the streets of Warsaw—yet the cafés are crowded, and hilarious shouting and the clatter of glasses almost drowns the orchestra screaming madly

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*La Matchiche* or dreaming voluptuously *Quand l'Amour Meurt*; and over the smouldering chaos of Baku, over the pain and death of the desolate city, floats like a challenge the ribald song of a *chanteuse*.

### III

Thus I saw Russia, in a swift series of ideas and pictures, as one sees life from the window of a railway train whilst discussing the changing view with a friend, and then my eyes drifted again towards the swinging shutter of the house opposite; no one came to fasten it; but I no longer wondered why, I took it for granted as one takes life for granted, as the world takes Russia for granted. The little tables began to attract people; they sat in twos and threes chatting, smoking, drinking. A plump woman sat next to a plump man; she ate olives dreamily out of a white paper in her hand, between appreciative draughts of bock. The man read *L'Aurore*, every now and then reading a passage aloud for her ears. An elderly gentleman drank black coffee out of a tumbler, and looked into space through clouds of cigarette smoke. A dejected person with lank hair dropped water out of a bowl on to an oblong piece of sugar held in a spoon over a glass of absinthe, his eyes following the delicate green clouding of his liquor with enthusiasm. "*Le Matin*?" queried a newsvendor at my elbow. "No,

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thanks," I said forgetfully in English. His face lit up intelligently, and he offered me first the *Daily Mail*, then some mildly indecent picture postcards. He recognised my nationality.

The three men were still drinking and talking, talking, talking—every word a dream of Russia—every thought a pain. Russia is immortal, I reflected, as I turned down an empty glass. "*Vive la Russie*" were the parting words I heard as the three were joined by another, and I walked away into the laughter of Paris.





## INTRODUCTIONS



## MAURICE MAETERLINCK

### I

**I**T is customary in our time to classify certain writers as modern, and by the use of the word we probably mean to indicate those writers whose work, whilst being in the tradition of great art, is primarily moved by the ideas, feelings, and aspirations of our own age. No art, any more than life itself, can be quite independent of its forbears; art, like life, builds on old foundations, and traditions may be modified but they are rarely scrapped. Those who are called modern simply vary the texture of the edifice, give a new turn to the foliation, a fresh balance to the design, or a different accent to the corner-stone. Maurice Maeterlinck belongs to such moderns. His ideas and his art are obviously linked with the past both immediate and remote, yet together they form an art-work which is peculiar to our day and to its author. That is why it is misleading to give him an ancestral label, as some critics have desired to do. There are better grounds for calling him, at least in so far as his ideas are concerned, a Belgian Emerson, as Mr James Huneker has done, than a Belgian Shakespeare, after the

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manner of his earliest and most enthusiastic French critic, M. Octave Mirbeau. All such attempts to pigeon-hole genius are, however, unsound. Maeterlinck is a Flemish Maeterlinck, with all the leanings of his race towards the practical side of mysticism. He was born in Belgium, and it was the Admirable Ruysbroeck, the passionate and austere Flemish mystic, who first fired his inward vision.

The city of his birth was Ghent, one of those cities which stand between two eras, that of modern commerce, with its workshops and machines, and that of the slow industry of the peasant past, much as it lies between the mediæval dream of Bruges and the brisk wakefulness of Parisian Brussels. These accidents of locality have woven themselves into the art of Maurice Maeterlinck, for a man becomes a part of the city and country in which he has lived and dreamed. He was born on 29th August 1862, of old Flemish stock, and trained for the law. But he soon abandoned the legal gown and went to Paris, where he became an associate of the Symbolist group of writers, collaborated in the production of *Pleiade*, one of those short-lived reviews whose importance is only recognised years after their death, and in 1889, when he was twenty seven years old, he ventured into separate print with a small volume of poems bearing the suggestive title "Serres Chaudes." Moth-like little poems they were, beating soft wings against the dim-lit windows of a new realm of consciousness, and

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obviously related to the indefinite symbolism of Stephane Mallarmé and the ill-fated Arthur Rimbaud ; yet in them is to be found the first glimmering of that strange light which he afterwards threw upon the helplessness of man before the blows of destiny.

But these poems were also the outcome of earlier and deeper influences. Maeterlinck had brooded alone in the silence of the cloud-swept plains of his native Flanders. Sauntering along the still canals where the barges drifted lazily, or among quiet farmlands where the slow peasants seemed one with the brooding landscape, and in his father's garden, he cultivated unconsciously that inward-looking habit which, though latent in all men, becomes conscious only in the few, and which would seem to be an intimate part of the lives of those who live in countries where the sky sweeps magnificently over long rolling plains. The homely things of the countryside moved him to wonder and delight, the cottage flowers, the bees, the faithfulness of dogs, and the busy and ancient craftsmanship of the lacemakers. And every now and then noble relics of the past would come in his way, feudal castle and Gothic minster, forming the scenario of a mind which was already peopled with a romantic *dramatis personæ*.

He was naturally drawn towards minds of his own kin ; and besides Ruysbroeck the Admirable, he consorted with Novalis, Swedenborg, Jacob Boehme, Plato, Plotinus, and our own Emerson,

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Coleridge and Carlyle. He brooded over the spiritual deeps of these sages until he saw in them the reflection of his own ideas. But he was not only drawn towards the mystics: his reading was as catholic as it was profound. He sat long at table with the modern French writers, and longer still with the great dramatists of the Renaissance, more particularly Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, with whom he drank deep, and thus laid the foundations of that intimacy with the works of our national poet which astounds English readers of his essays.

His early interest in the mystics found separate expression in his translations of works by Ruysbroeck and Novalis in 1891 and 1895, to both of which he added sympathetic and illuminating introductions. But whilst he was studying the mystics and translating their works, other matters engaged his attention; for as in after life his concern for art is never far removed from an equal concern for practical ideas, so in those young days absorption of mystical wisdom impelled him towards artistic expression; and side by side with his translations from Ruysbroeck and Novalis came poems and stories and plays which brought him fame in his own country and France, the country of his adoption, long before *Pelleas and Melisanda* gave him English and American repute. His first published play, *The Princess Maleine*, appeared in 1890, and the same year saw the issue of *The Sightless* and *The Intruder*. Between the first play and the two

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latter there is a marked difference. The former, like his early story, "The Massacre of the Innocents," is obsessed by death and violence, and it is only in certain vivid flashes of dialogue that we get a hint of the essential Maeterlinck who begins to come into his kingdom in the two little plays of the same year.

With *The Sightless* we get a fuller glimpse of the genius which was destined to create that perfect tragedy, *The Death of Tintagiles*: the Maeterlinck who created something like a clairvoyante drama, a drama of the spirit, revealing material things in essence, ghostly little bodies consumed by ardent souls which he visualises for his readers or audiences, men as marionettes swung and jerked by Destiny. Such were the themes and aspects of the cycle of plays which now came in steady succession: *The Seven Princesses*, in 1891; *Pelleas and Melisanda*, in 1892; *Alladine and Palomides*, *Interior*, and *The Death of Tintagiles*, in 1894; and *Aglavaine and Selysette*, in 1896.

Then came a change: it had been perceptible even in the last-named play, where a tendency to discursiveness seems to replace the intuitive directness of the earlier plays. Maeterlinck reaches the summit of the art which is peculiarly his own in *The Death of Tintagiles*; its wizardry still, however, dominates *Aglavaine and Selysette*, and it even casts a glamour at times over *Sister Beatrice* and *Ariane and Barbe Bleue*, which appeared in 1901. But somewhere

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between 1896 and 1901 Maeterlinck the dramatist of mysticism died, and with the issue of *Monna Vanna*, in 1902, a new cycle begins; he is still engaged with the mystery of life, but from the point of view of the psychologist rather than that of the mystic. And in the successors to *Monna Vanna*, *Joyzelle* (1903), and *The Blue Bird* (1908), he has not returned to his original attitude.

During the time of this dramatic production he has been expounding his ideas and his drama by means of essays, and the change which I have noted, though less definite, is to be seen here also. The first essay volume, "The Treasure of the Humble" (1897), is an exposition of the attitude which produced the marionette plays, it is a book full of mystic suggestion and hope, it reads at times like a scripture foretelling immediate revelation. With his next book, "Wisdom and Destiny" (1898), he attempts to formulate his ideas into a working philosophy, and he is gradually drawn away from mysticism with its introspection, to a more objective moral psychology, which in succeeding volumes—"The Life of the Bee" (1901), "The Buried Temple" (1902), "The Double Garden" (1904), and "The Intelligence of Flowers" (1906)—becomes almost entirely absorbed in an outward view of life, a kind of transcendental rationalism.



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## II

With the deepening of the personal note, which is one of the marked features of modern art, the ideas of the artist become more intimately associated with his art, and it becomes less and less advisable to attempt their segregation. This is quite obvious in the work of Maeterlinck. His plays have, of course, a marked glamour of their own apart from any ideas which may be held by their author ; just as much as his essays, which possess independent literary charms of form, delicacy of expression and vocabulary. But, even were it possible, it would be as wholly undesirable to accept the mere charm of the essays and neglect their ideas, as it would be to attempt to enjoy the beauty and mystery of the early plays without realisation of their deeper meaning.

Maeterlinck, like Ibsen and Bernard Shaw, is a type of the artist-philosopher. He is a man with a message. He does not trust, however, to the action and symbolism of his drama revealing the whole of his ideas, as Ibsen did, but like Bernard Shaw, he expounds his aims in his essays.

But as a philosopher he is not strikingly original, except in the sense that originality and sincerity are accounted one. He has added little of note to our stock of ideas, but drawing as he has done largely on the wells of the older mystics and some modern sages,

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he has distilled their thoughts in the alembic of his own temperament and applied the result to life in his own way. His accomplishment amounts to a more intimate revelation of the spirit of man and, in his essays, of animals and flowers. In no other plays do you feel so close to the spiritual essence of life as in the early plays of Maeterlinck; so acutely does he manifest the reality of the soul that you feel at times that he alone among artists has come closest to the unseen and the unknown. The human soul moves through these plays like an actual presence; tragic and tormented it is, to be sure, but it is a vivid reality, more real indeed than the ghostly bodies of his characters, which fade before the fervour of their awakened inner consciousnesses. You feel yourself instinctively pitying their pains; not the pains of the flesh, but, for the first time in a theatre, the pains of the spirit, and this again, as distinct from emotional pain. The creation of such an attitude is Maeterlinck's original contribution to art.

All mystics have been conscious of the soul, but none in quite the same way as Maeterlinck. They have generally looked upon it as a religious counter with a purely formal destiny; he looks upon it with the eye of the naturalist. Where the older mystics are theological Maeterlinck is secular. Consciously or not he has attempted the secularisation of mysticism, but under his touch it is none the less religious in the deeper sense. Everything for him has spiritual significance, yet never for a moment does

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he pretend to revealed or superhuman knowledge : he is untiring in his watchfulness, but brings no news of final certainty ; and although he is sensibly credulous, " I know not " is ever on his lips, punctuating his aspiration with something like pathos. Still, he is never without hope, something may happen at any moment. Humanity after passing through many vicissitudes stands on the threshold of wisdom.

At the same time Maeterlinck anticipates no sudden change ; catastrophic revivalism has no place in his outlook ; his awakening is progressive, a gradual unrolling, as it were, of the inner vision. He sees this awakening in many directions : in the discoveries of science ; the growth of psychological knowledge ; the spread of humanism ; the desire for fellowship among men and nations ; and the higher regard we pay to women who have, he is convinced, guarded through the ages a fuller sense of the mystic value of life.

Into this spiritual sensitiveness he weaves his idea of Destiny—the unknown determining force of life. But he gives no detailed scheme of predestination except in the simple symbolism of *The Blue Bird*. Destiny, for Maeterlinck, is immanent and closely related to the will and personal power. Our Destinies are to be guided and controlled by wisdom, which is love, and truth, and justice. He is progressive both as a fatalist and as a mystic ; Destiny is, he believes, constantly being conquered by individuality, by science, by invention, and by every addition to human power.

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Such is the philosophy behind his drama. It dominates those early plays which flutter in a wizard twilight on the very frontiers of consciousness, just as much as the later plays. But it is the early plays which, as I have said, stand alone. They have the quality of uniqueness and, in "The Treasure of the Humble," Maeterlinck has shown that they have a philosophy and an æsthetic which is peculiar to them. Like Ibsen's plays, they have a simple and realistic movement and the inevitability of all great drama, but the contest, despite the violence in which it usually culminates, is largely static. Material action is reduced to a minimum, but it is not substituted by discussion as in the later plays of Shaw and Granville Barker, it is replaced by abrupt self-revealing dialogue and long silences. Silence is the chorus of the Maeterlinckian drama.

The tragedy in these plays is the outcome of contest with the unknown and the foreordained. But it is almost tragedy and life in the abstract. His people are like children in peril, symbols of man battling against nature. You do not see the photographic realism of Ibsen, but a clairvoyante realism; you become an initiate whilst reading Maeterlinck's early plays, and see what is ordinarily unperceived; indeed ordinary sight is almost unnecessary for these plays. Walter Pater has said that "All art constantly aspires to the condition of music," and in Maeterlinck's plays for marionettes you see this aspiration at the very parting of the ways. The

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dramatist himself, however, as M. Gérard Harry has pointed out in his admirable essay just issued by Messrs George Allen, is practically deaf to music, especially opera, so it cannot be assumed that he has left the static drama for the drama of action deliberately because he felt he had pushed his art as far in the direction of music as it would go. But he may have felt unconsciously that any further development along those lines must be continued by musicians like Claude Debussy, whose operatic treatment of *Pelleas and Melisanda* does actually carry the theme into deeper realms of consciousness. But whatever may have been his motive, he no longer reveals upon his stage man as an anxious marionette whipped and scourged by Destiny.

His later plays are purely romantic ; clairvoyance has entirely disappeared, and in its stead we have passion and will stalking across the stage after the old dramatic method, dependent upon plot and costume and scenery, as bravely as in any of the masterpieces of stage-craft which we associate with the art of Victorien Sardou. There is one exception, however, to this rule, and that is in his latest play, *The Blue Bird*, which synthesises the Maeterlinckian idea of Destiny in a kindergarten fairy play of intense charm.

But the poet in Maeterlinck, it would seem, is destined to give place to the humanist and psychologist. There were always two sides to his genius, even in the early days : the introspective and the

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objective. The latter has prevailed, and Maeterlinck, apart from his drama, has become a new type of scientist ; his essays reveal something like a marriage between science and poetry. "The Life of the Bee" is perhaps the best example of the work of the new Maeterlinck, for in it he has given us, not only excellent natural history, but social philosophy and mysticism as well, wrapped in a prose which alone would have made his reputation as a writer. And if his dramatic genius no longer dives for pearls in the perilous deep, but is content to investigate the surface of the waters of life, we may be sure that whatever he does will have the quality of great art, and that he has not ceased beating at the doors of mystery.

1910

## G. K. CHESTERTON

### I

**I**T is generally agreed that there is an intimate relationship between happiness and the circumference of a man's waist. But if there were any doubt about it this could easily be settled by reference to the massive proportions of Gilbert Chesterton. He strikes one as being the happiest and heaviest of men. There is something altogether prodigious in his hilarity, his genius, and his person. One feels impelled to speak of him in superlatives. He looms upon the vision, just as he bestrides modern journalism, like a Colossus. You cannot get away from him, even if you desired to do so, which is inconceivable. You may not be able to see eye-to-eye with him, but there is a fascination in his point of view. His genius is interesting, suggestive, provocative, and never dull.

He plays with ideas just as Cinquevalli plays with billiard balls. And his skill is just as irresistible. At the same time, his skill in making sentences and ideas fly through the intellectual air like the inspired billiard balls of the famous juggler is not a complete thing in itself, delightful as it is. When G. K. C.

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balances two or more ideas on the end of his intellect, if I may be permitted the image, he does not perform this interesting feat for the sake of the mere skill of the thing, delighted as he undoubtedly is with that part of the performance. He juggles with ideas to show his readers not how clever he is, but how wise he is. He, in fact, has something to teach ; he is a missionary, and his method of conveying his gospel of glad tidings to men is by a process of mental equilibrium in cap and bells.

At one time I doubted in the existence of G. K. C. I listened to the stories of him as one listens to the yarns of men who have been in the ends of the earth. And even now, after I have looked upon him with my own eyes, I have to nudge myself to realise his probability. He has the reality of one of those dragons or fairies in which he has such invincible faith. I first beheld him on a Yorkshire moor far from his natural element, which is London. He was in the locality on a holiday, and I had gone over to verify his existence just as one might go to the Arctic regions to verify the existence of the North Pole or the North-West Passage.

He was staying at the house of a Bradford merchant adjoining the moor, and I was to meet him there. It was April, and raining. I trudged through the damp furze and heather up to the house only to find that the object of my pilgrimage had disappeared without leaving a trace behind him. No alarm was felt, as this was one of his habits. Sometimes he would go



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down to the railway station, and, taking a ticket to any place that had a name which appealed to him, vanish into the unknown, making his way home on foot or wheel as fancy or circumstance directed. On this occasion, however, nothing so serious had happened. Therefore I adjourned with the lady of the house and Mrs Chesterton to an upper hall, where a noble latticed window commanded a wide vista of the moor. I peered into the wild, half hoping that I should first behold the great form of Gilbert Chesterton looming over the bare brow of the wold, silhouetted against the grey sky like the symbol of a new large faith.

You see my imagination was somewhat overwrought, and I was not to be thus gratified. G. K. C. did not fill the high horizon of the far wold, he did not burst upon our ken like a titan gradually growing bigger as he came nearer into our vision. His coming was not melodramatic; it was, on the contrary, quite simple, quite idyllic, and quite characteristic. In fact, he did not come at all, rather was it that our eyes, and later our herald, went to him. For quite near to the house we espied him, hatless and negligently clad in a Norfolk suit of homespun, leaning in the rain against a budding tree, absorbed in the pages of a little red book.

This was a more fitting vision. It suited admirably his unaffected, careless, and altogether childlike genius. He came into the house shortly afterwards

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and consumed tea and cake like any mortal and talked the talk of Olympus with the abandonment and irresistibility of a child. I found his largeness wonderfully proportionate, even, as is so rarely the case with massive men, to his head. This is amply in keeping with the rest of his person. He wears a tangled mass of light brown hair prematurely streaked with grey, and a slight moustache. His grey-blue eyes laugh happily as his full lips unload themselves of a constant flow of self-amused and piquant words. Like Dr Johnson, whom he resembles so much in form, he is a great talker. But while I looked at him I was not reminded of the lexicographer, but of Balzac. And as his monologue rolled on and we laughed and wondered, I found myself carried away to a studio in France, where the head of Chesterton became one with the head of Rodin's conception of France's greatest literary genius.

Since then I have seen G. K. C. many times. I have seen him standing upon platforms defending the peoples' pleasures against the inroads of Puritanism. I have seen him addressing men from a pulpit, and on one memorable occasion at Clifford's Inn Hall I saw him defending the probability of the liquefaction of the blood of St Januarius in the teeth of a pyrotechnic heckling from Bernard Shaw. Again I have seen his vast person dominating the staring throng in Fleet Street like a superman; and I have seen the traffic of Ludgate Circus held up for him, as he strolled by in cloak and sombrero

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like a brigand of Adelphi drama or a Spanish hidalgo by Velasquez, oblivious alike of critical 'bus-driver and wonder-struck multitude.

But best is it to see him in his favourite habitat of Bohemian Soho. There in certain obscure yet excellent French restaurants, with Hilaire Belloc and other writers and talkers, he may be seen, sitting behind a tall tankard of lager or a flagon of Chianti, eternally unravelling the mysterious tangle of living ideas; now rising mountainously on his feet to overshadow the company with weighty argument, anon brandishing a wine-bottle as he insists upon defending some controversial point until "we break the furniture"; and always chuckling at his own wit and the sallies of others, as he fights the battle of ideas with indefatigable and unconquerable good-humour.

## II

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born at Camden Hill, Kensington, on 29th May 1874. His parents are English, and his father has been long and honourably associated with Kensington as an estate agent. On his mother's side he inherits foreign blood, his maternal grandmother, Marie Louise Grosjean, being Swiss. There is no indication that his literary talent is inherited, and the only instance of a writer among his immediate relatives is that of his great-uncle, Captain Chesterton, who was a governor of

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Coldbath Fields Prison, and who occasionally plied his pen in the cause of prison reform. But he is not the sole exponent of the literary art in the present generation of the Chestertons, for his younger brother, Cecil, is an author and journalist and socialist propagandist of pronounced individuality and ability.

Gilbert Chesterton was educated at St Paul's School, and it was at this famous scholastic establishment that his precocious and versatile literary genius first made itself known. Besides taking the Milton Prize for poetry, he was the founder and chief combatant of a particularly lively debating circle called the Junior Debating Club, and his earliest published work appears in the pages of the society's journal, *The Debater*. There were twelve members of the "J.D.C.," as the club was familiarly termed, and each one of them seems to have been more or less inspired by the optimism of their leader. Some of these early friends of the "J.D.C." have already, like Messrs E. C. Bentley, Lucien Oldershaw, Laurence Soloman, and Robert Vernéve, made positions for themselves in journalism and education; and even to-day the club is not dead. For the original twelve, and the wives of those who have made the matrimonial venture, meet at an annual dinner, for which occasions G. K. C. draws weird invitation cards with an appropriate and humorous picture for each member.

But long before he went to St Paul's School Gilbert Chesterton commenced writing. He is a

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young man now, with a name familiar to the reading public of two continents, but he was a literary prodigy and the marvel of his parents at the tender age of five. He wrote romances when he was a baby, and he has been following the vocation of a lord of language ever since.

After leaving St Paul's he went for a term or so to the Slade School, where he received some instruction in drawing, but fortunately not enough to destroy the delicious irresponsibility and individuality of his amazing pencil. The drawings of G. K. C. are as distinct and remarkable as his literary work, and he turns them out as prodigally and as easily as he writes. They are a kind of laughing and grotesque efflorescence of his wonderfully active personality. In some ways they recall the nonsense drawings of Edward Lear, and again the humorous sketches of Sir Frank Lockwood. But they are not quite the same in spirit. They are more barbarous and more childish. They are the hilarious and spontaneous by-products of a genius that can laugh at the whole world and love it at the same time. They are an eminently Gothic product, the inevitable grotesques of a cosmic and human personality. They spring naturally out of his pencil in his spare time; they cover the envelopes and scraps of paper in his pockets; and while he is talking to one they gradually and unconsciously appear upon whatever smooth surface lies near to his hand.

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After leaving the Slade School he went into the office of Mr T. Fisher Unwin with the intention of learning the publishing business, and it was during the spare hours of his apprenticeship to that amiable profession that he discovered his literary work had a market value; or rather that this was discovered for him, for it was his friend Mr Lucien Oldershaw who first urged him to send articles to the Press. His earliest contributions, apart from his work for *The Debater*, appeared in *The Bookman* and *The Speaker*. He was "discovered" by *The Daily News* in 1900, and he has contributed a weekly article to that paper ever since, and on the death of L. F. Austin he succeeded to the weekly control of "The Pocket Book" in the *Illustrated London News*.

In 1900 he published his first book. This was the unique volume of poems called "The Wild Knight." He struck a new note in poetry. The mock humility of the minor poet, the yearning, "the light loves, and little errors" of so much modern verse, were quite absent from his song. He had humility, but it was a strange, proud humility; he was romantic, but he did not yearn; he was serious, but he laughed; he was humble before the world, yet insolent as a god. After this came "The Defendant," a reprint of his contributions to *The Speaker*. Here for the first time the public were introduced to Gilbert Chesterton's brilliant gift of dialectic and of paradox. The volume is a series of triumphant defences of indefensible subjects.

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It was after the publication of "The Wild Knight" that G. K. C. received the greatest compliment ever paid to a young and nearly unknown author. Viscount Morley, then plain John Morley, invited him to write the study of "Browning" for the English Men of Letters Series, a series of books famous wherever the English language is spoken, not one of which had hitherto been written by an author who was not at the time weighed down with literary and academic honours. The editor of the Men of Letters Series was rewarded for his courage and insight by a volume of analytical and interpretive criticism equal to the best volumes in the series, and perhaps the finest contribution to the literature that has grown about the genius of Robert Browning.

### III

There is much of the child in Gilbert Chesterton. He is the Peter Pan of modern philosophy: he won't grow up. This is so rare a thing in this weary and elderly age that one ought to be very thankful. Indeed, on the first appearance of any signs of G. K. C. getting out of, say, his teens, I would gladly advocate some scheme of State subsidy that would encourage him to remain a child. But there is not much need for fear on that score. His youthfulness will last for ever. He will be cutting capers on the Patmos of his own imagination when we are weary

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even of our small sins and yearning for some chance of good works that will bring, as a reward, eternal peace.

His essays teem with the unexpectedness of the child. You are never certain how his sentences will end. His similes are the familiar similes of babes and sucklings. Into some high discourse upon will and destiny he will drag in pigs and cabbages and lamp-posts with fearful and wonderful appropriateness; as though the deep, mysterious wisdom that shines through the frank eyes of a child had become articulate and found expression in the first homely objects of self-consciousness: the simple things of everyday life. That, indeed, is his attitude towards life. He sees the wonder, mystery and utility of common, everyday things, just as a child does, and he is not afraid of proclaiming his delight to the whole world. "There is only one thing," he says, "it requires real courage to say, and that is a truism." Gilbert Chesterton's mission in life is to revalue the truisms—the beliefs that are so commonly accepted as to be almost lifeless—and to proclaim them still and for ever true.

So great is his power of reasoning that you feel he could prove anything, and so he could. But he is too busy proving his own theories and enjoying them to waste time in that way. He is not deceived about logic, he knows logic is but a means and not an end. He could prove that black is white, and probably has done so already. And he may or may



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not be convinced that twice two are not four. Such excursions, however, would be the merest incidentals of his game. His main concern is to save the world from the designs of modern tendencies, in the first place because they are tendencies, and in the second place because they are pessimistic. "Seriousness is the special and secret seal of Satan," he says.

He is the first apostle of the New Romanticism. And he has come bounding and laughing into the camp of the heretics with the direct intention of hauling down their flag. He advocates mysticism against materialism, Christianity against Agnosticism. In politics he is a Liberal. He loves the common people and common things. The world for him is a great paradox, a monstrous, irrational thing cloaking mysteriously the sanity of God, who reveals Himself to those who can face great odds and laugh. In his own words, he has heard "the call of that buried and subconscious happiness which is in all of us, and which may emerge suddenly at the sight of the grass of a meadow or the spears of the enemy."

### IV

His personal life is like his teaching. He fights for his cause joyfully with the weapon he knows best how to use, his pen. He mixes freely with the people and lectures here, there, and everywhere.

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He carries on the propaganda of faith and happiness, by being happy and having faith. Careless in his dress and of all the superfluous details of life, he is yet an earnest and consciously careful writer, taking endless pains in the final quality of his work, much of his writing for book form being diligently written and rewritten until his severest self-criticism is satisfied.

Yet he hardly lives the life of the methodical literary man. He rarely works in his study, most of his essays being written at odd times and in odd places, in restaurants, clubs, electric cars, and tube railway trains. He writes rapidly, and is surprisingly careless of his manuscript. Waiters in cafés and clubs are continually finding sheets of valuable "copy" which he has shed during his sojourn in such places. Method is apparently not a feature of the dreamful game of life which he plays. Yet he gets his work done. He seems to have read everything, and has a memory like the British Museum Library. But nowadays his chief reading is Dickens, Thackeray and Scott, of whom he never tires, and few men know their way about the works of these masters so well.

His days are like incidents in a great game. The seriousness of life he leaves to take care of itself; he plays. And he would have all men play so happily that a new colour should come into their days, finding a symbolism in their brightly coloured garments, in the waving of flags, and the singing

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of songs. The essence of life is the sane hilarity of man laughing at the "vast stupidity of things."

In his hilarious way he is serious about everything, but about one thing he is specially serious: that thing is the right of men to enjoy life. He has a toy theatre, of which he is not only sole lessee and proprietor, but scene-painter, playwright, general manager and manipulator all rolled into one. His favourite toy play is *St George and the Dragon*. This may be taken as a symbol of his life and his point of view. The play's the thing, but the play is the eternal play of the triumph of light over darkness. Gilbert Chesterton plays in real life his puppet play of *St George and the Dragon*. He goes forth to slay the dragon of despair every day. That is his romance, that is his joy. Even if the end of the fight is but the beginning of the fight again, his faith for ever tells him that the New Jerusalem is just round the next corner, and that all comrades in arms shall meet ultimately and drink "from the great flagons in the tavern at the end of the world."

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## H. G. WELLS

(BEFORE "TONO BUNGAY")

### I

"All this world is heavy with the promise of greater things, and a day will come—one day in the unending succession of days—when beings, beings who are now latent in our thoughts and hidden in our loins, will stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool, and laugh and reach out their hands amidst the stars."—H. G. WELLS, "The Discovery of the Future."

**T**HE attitude of H. G. Wells towards social life is, fundamentally, the same now as it was in 1895 when a new planet swam into our ken in the form of his masterly short story, "The Time Machine." That book was the result of a formula which has been used in the production of each of his succeeding scientific romances. Wells developed early a scientific habit of mind; he first came up to London as a student at the Normal School of Science, where his natural scientific tendency was drilled and systematised with the intention of bringing him up to the accepted standard of a first-class scientist.

This, as we know to our advantage, did not happen. Wells' imagination was too much for the Normal School of Science; and although he took a degree,

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he never in reality became a scientist ; he became a writer—an artist. But he never lost his scientific habit of mind. It is there to this day, as those who follow his tales of aerial battle and magic food-stuffs know so well. But added to this scientific sense there is that other sense—the artist’s sense of vision. Wells, instead of allowing science to dominate him, has made science the handmaiden of imagination. And the formula at the back of his scientific romances is a combination of these two qualities. He gives his theme a normal scientific basis, then extends it into the realms of fancy. ✓

“The Time Machine” is a good example of this method. In this tale he carefully observes the facts of our social conditions, and he notices, as Karl Marx before him noticed, what would seem to be the tendency of the means of ease and luxury to fall into the hands of one section of the people, whilst the remaining section has to toil and struggle for the necessaries of life. Karl Marx, in his rôle of political economist, generalised years before from these facts, that society must, under the existing capitalist system, more and more augment this differentiation of classes, with the result that, with the growth of the class consciousness of the toiling section, a state of war would come about—the Class War which would end in the workers seizing the means of wealth and administering them for the welfare of all.

Karl Marx was as imaginative in his deductions

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as H. G. Wells; the only difference is that he was neither such an artist nor did he permit his imagination to go so far. It is perhaps impossible to say at what point science reaches the frontiers of the imaginative realm. One thing is certain, however, and that is, the scientist cannot wholly do without the imaginative faculty. It is highly probable, if we could only analyse the beginnings of scientific ideas, that the great discoveries of science—such as the law of gravitation and the theory of evolution—were in the earliest stages concepts of the imagination.

Wells being an artist then, was able to make the necessary scaffolding for his dreams. So, starting where Karl Marx did, he gradually increases the gap between the two hypothetical classes, ignoring the revolutionary possibilities of a class war, which the mere scientist could not afford to do, until in the illimitable future he gives us an amazing picture of a class segregation so complete as to have produced two distinct races: the one dainty and delicate, living playfully for ease and love, without labour and without care save fear of the other class; the other brutalised by long centuries of degrading toil, and living in an underground world of dim passages and the clangour of machines. They have large luminous eyes which, cat-like, probe the dark, and at night time they come to the surface of the earth and prey horribly upon the dainty upper classes.

This era in the earth's history is reached by an ingenious person who has pondered much upon ideas

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of dimension, and, ultimately concluding that the fourth dimension is in time, constructs a time machine and rides into futurity. The journey into the future is described with an imaginative power unsurpassed in any of Wells' later works, and it is an excellent example of his method of building an imaginative structure upon a scientific basis. He speaks of the peculiar sensation of time-travelling, of how, by pulling a lever, the traveller sees night following day "like the flapping of a black wing" and the "sun hopping across the sky" every minute, and every minute marking a day.

"Then in the intermittent darkness, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars. Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous colour like that of twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch in space; the moon, a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a bright circle flickering in the blue.

"The landscape was misty and vague. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour: now brown, now green; they grew, spread, shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed—melting

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and flowing under my eyes. . . . Presently I noted that the sunbelt swayed up and down, from solstice to solstice, in a minute or less, and that, consequently, my pace was over a year a minute ; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the world, and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring."

And so on, the story culminating in that dim future, eight hundred thousand years hence, past the age of the cannibals, when the heat of the sun has failed, and the weary earth is a desert of ice in a twilight world, whose sole inhabitant is a huge crab-like creature with monstrous tentacles—the Caliban of a sun-forgotten waste.

This process of constructing new worlds upon a basis of fact, of taking a plain fact and making it grow into whatever wonder the fancy may conceive, is behind all of the scientific romances of Wells. In "The Food of the Gods" he is perhaps less scientific and less plausible ; this is worth noting, because it is not so much the imaginative side of his stories that is convincing, but the fact that the imaginative structure is built upon a foundation of science. But the other stories are more convincing than fact ; stranger, yet more plausible than truth. It is always possible for the events in these tales to happen because the writer is so scrupulous about his first hypotheses. But he does not give them to you as hypotheses, but as facts. The consummate art,



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the artfulness with which he plays the confidence trick upon his readers at the point where he takes them over the quicksands that lie between fact and fancy, amounts to genius.

One remembers in this instance the clever way in which he disposes of his Martians in "The War of the Worlds," after they have wreaked as much ruin as the story can stand. He plays upon the scientific idea of survival by resistance. The Martians come from a planet which has no disease germs, consequently the uncanny planetary visitors, never having had to resist disease, are an easy prey to the energetic bacilli of Mother Earth. And after all our means of defence against them have done their best and failed, our ancient enemy, Disease, becomes our ally for once and brings about the destruction our science of war failed to accomplish. Similarly, in the same book, Mr Wells disposes of that other visitant from Mars, the Red Weed. This plant, coming from the dry atmosphere of that planet, indulges in an orgy of growth in our humid climate. It dams the Thames and causes devastating floods in the adjoining valleys, it creeps over buildings, completely shrouding them in its red leaves until its abnormal powers of growth finally act as a check and it ultimately dies of its own excess—of over-population.

Once having done this successfully a novelist can do what he likes with his imagination, so long as he keeps his details in structural accord with his original facts. Wells seems to have been born with this

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gift. He did not grow into it. It is an accomplishment in "The Time Machine." It is quite convincing in "The Island of Dr Moreau" and "The War of the Worlds," in "The First Men in the Moon," "The Invisible Man," and "When the Sleeper Wakes," not to mention the thrilling matter-of-factness of many of the short stories, several of which are equal to anything he has done, and one or two ranking with the best short stories in the language.

It is the convincing quality of these stories which is mainly responsible for their place on the plane of adult fiction. Jules Verne dealt with similar themes, but he never, in England at least, succeeded in winning the attention of any but schoolboys. It is doubtful if Wells is read at all by youths; he is the Jules Verne of grown-ups. One reason for this is that he is more convincing, the other that he is more of a philosopher. Jules Verne was interested in the problem of things, H. G. Wells is interested in the problem of man. To Jules Verne men were pawns; they were almost unnecessary: to Wells they are the most important pieces in the game, and in spite of his airships and his handling-machines, his main concern is for the effect of his super-scientific changes upon the ways of men.

### II

The senses of fact and fancy are constantly active in the art of Wells, and very often in open conflict.

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But in spite of his overweening sense of fact, which ever impels him towards something like an apotheosis of science, he is fundamentally a story-teller. The love of tales for their own sake is deeply embedded in his nature. The world for him is a story book, and all the men and women merely fairy tales. He resembles Robert Louis Stevenson in this respect. And like the author of "Treasure Island" he is a careful, almost a punctilious stylist. He is a mighty hunter of phrases, and would lay the dictionary waste in his hunt for unique words.

His sentences are like finely-clad persons who peacock themselves upon their appearance. They strut. They also possess little mannerisms, curious little turns, of which they are apt to boast. They belong to the realm of conscious art and practically remind one of the skill and care which has made them what they are. They are dandified sentences wearing their conceits like epaulettes or feathers. One could imagine Mr Wells stepping back from one of his highly finished periods, as Whistler was wont to do before his canvases, and saying, "Amazing!"

His method of telling a story is ingratiating. He does not spring it upon you suddenly, but leads you up to it by easy stages, gradually raising the slides, like an operator of a magic lantern, until the full theme is revealed. At other times he is like a genial lecturer who, although not quite certain of his audience's intelligence, gives it the credit of possess-

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ing imagination. "You must figure to yourselves," he has a habit of saying, and then comes one of his immaculate descriptions in all the pride of its polished phraseology, until a point is reached when it would seem words were inadequate, and a row of dots appears along which the reader's imagination can disport itself. . . .

The effect of this manner is to create in one's mind an idea of exactitude, a particular care as to detail, a refining "process," to use one of his pet words, which in the end becomes almost a primness. Wells is never vulgar, he has a disconcerting horror of vulgarity. This expresses itself in his prose, in that conscious pride of which I have spoken; but it also leads to the elimination of everything in his writings in the nature of superfluous ornament or flourish. His style, though dandified, is not loud, it never raises its voice, its purple patches are subdued, they are mauve and dove-grey, it is the Beau Brummell of prose.

Wells' self-consciousness always turns his novels into criticisms of conduct. His shorter stories are more in the nature of stories for the story's sake. As a novelist his outlook upon life reminds one of Charles Dickens, but his range is narrower. He has at least one advantage over Dickens: he never attempts what he cannot do. He is too conscious an artist for that. He is an example of the dictum that true genius reveals itself by working within limits. Wells, like Dickens, knows those social drudges, the lower-

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middle class, the small traders and their dependants, but, unlike Dickens, he gives one the impression of being ashamed of them.

He has a nice faculty for laying bare their little foibles, their pitiful vanities, and small ambitions. "Love and Mr Lewisham," "The Wheels of Chance," and "Kipps," his three novels proper, are full of a keen insight into such things. But under all his satire, there is genuine concern for the finer qualities of his people. One laughs at the amiable vanities of Hoopdriver and Kipps, but all the time one is forced to feel that they are very nearly related to one's own precious weaknesses. But Wells reserves his deepest pity for the domestic "slavery," and her big sister, the most tragical figure in our civilisation, the mother-drudge: the careworn woman who spends her life grubbing about an impoverished home in a mean street, with uncertain health, uncertain pay, and no future.

In such books he is following his true vocation as artist. As the student, critic, and interpreter of certain phases of lower-middle class life, he is supreme among modern writers, so supreme that one begrudges every deviation on his part from this work. Yet here we come in contact with the complex nature of his genius. Wells is not finally an artist, he is a man with a mission. He is a lover of order. His hatred of vulgarity reaches out to a hatred of the vulgarity of unseemly social conditions, of the vulgar display of

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idle riches no less than vulgar acceptance of laborious poverty.

Each succeeding scientific romance and novel betrays his growing irritation with such things. He was always conscious of them, but in his earlier books he was conscious of them largely from the spectacular point of view. Later he came to think out ways of giving our social chaos the magic yet practical touch that would create order. At first he experimented with the almost immediately practical issues which might reasonably be expected to follow modern inventions in locomotion and similar things, and he published his conclusions in that suggestive volume, "Anticipations." Since then the growth of his ideas from separate and individual schemes to complete social organisms has made of him the first of living Utopists.

### III

Somewhere between the issues of "Anticipations" and "Mankind in the Making," Wells became a Socialist. In 1903 he avowed his new faith by joining the Fabian Society. All the distributed satire, invective and social criticism of his novels were concentrated in the practical endeavour to reorganise society on a newer and less wasteful foundation. And quite naturally he arrives at this conclusion by the pressure upon his imagination of the numerous depressing incidents of our poverty-

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ridden age. Nowhere does he state his case, and incidentally the working of the scientific imagination, better than in the essay called "This Misery of Boots," contributed first to *The Independent Review* in 1905, and afterwards reprinted by the Fabian Society as a tract.

Socialism was inevitable to a man of Wells' temperament. You can feel it tugging at his coat-tails in most of his books. His earlier studies in experimental sociology were not avowedly socialistic, but throughout "Anticipations" and "Mankind in the Making" the demands made upon the State and the social consciousness of the people were so great as inevitably to impel him into collectivism, if not into the larger freedom of Socialism. The New Republicanism of "Mankind in the Making," although in the first instance based upon the will of a finer social type, whose life shall be saturated with conscience and discipline, and who shall be ruled by duties and "a certain ritual," looks to the increase of this type until ultimately it shall embrace the whole State. The volume is an essay on the cultivation of social psychology.

The final position of this phase of Wells' growth towards Socialism is recorded in "A Modern Utopia," which is a picture of the ideas in the two previous volumes as a going concern. He has adopted the imaginative method of his scientific romances, and extended the theories and tendencies of his studies to Utopia. "Anticipations" and "Mankind in the

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Making" are the bricks and mortar out of which he has built his ideal kingdom—or rather republic.

"A Modern Utopia" depicts a State based upon a code of privileges which aim at the administration of affairs for the welfare of all. The government is in the hands of the New Republicans of "Mankind in the Making," who have become an order of Samurai, living a life of exalted discipline and service. The social system of this Utopia is what might be called class-socialism. It is the organisation of humanity into a series of four grades, in keeping with certain observable psychological tendencies.

At the bottom of the social scale there are those people who are by nature morally deficient; these are graded as the Base. Next to them are that vast host of honest folk who are incapable of initiative but willing to be instructed and directed; these are called the Dull, and with the Base Class they form the Lower Classes. There are two higher classes: the Kinetic Class, composed of the practical administrative people, and the Poietic or people of ideas. The last is the highest of all. The Samurai are a patrician class drawn from the two upper classes by personal worthiness and examination. And just as it is possible for the Kinetics or Poietics to become Samurai, society is so arranged as to make a constant movement possible of the lower classes to the higher, and of all classes to finer states of social life.

The greatest privileges in "A Modern Utopia" are awarded to the higher classes, whose members are



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expected to bear the greater social responsibilities. There is no poverty, and labour and industry are carried on under a system of perfect organisation. All the material dreams of "Anticipations" are actual facts, just as the psychological dreams of "Mankind in the Making" are facts. "A Modern Utopia" is a vision of a completed human growth; it is mankind not in the making, but made. It is the dream of a country in which the most powerful men act from generous and unselfish motives, according to a given recipe; it is life by formula, as against life by instinct.

From this systematic vision Wells turns to a dream of a fuller freedom; and in "In the Days of the Comet" he abandons system and principle and gives us a picture of a world grown young again. He takes the world as we know it, the struggling, anxious world of commercial effort, and by the magic sweep of a comet's tail he inspires it with an immaculate goodwill towards all men, expressing itself in a serene and beautiful communism. All men are equal, and all are happy. Poverty and the diseases, spiritual and physical, which poverty and the fear of poverty bring in their train are no more. Commercial strife and the waste of competition are at an end. A wonderful picture is given of the dawn of this new era, and of how men set about destroying every vestige of the ugly past, and then remoulding the world nearer to the desires of hearts and minds that are free for ever from the tyranny of private ambition.

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One is inclined to believe that at one time Wells had faith in the possibility of a change of heart that might make such dreams suddenly practicable. But in his latest phase his Utopianism is a pious belief, a dream for Sundays. Utopia is something we may hope for as a reward of long years of training in worthy citizenship: a target for our faith, an ideal, but not a practical scheme. Nothing short of a visit of Martians or the sweep of a comet's tail could make us suddenly realise our common humanity so clearly as to impel us to inaugurate for ourselves the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

The formula which turned Wells' science into romance, and his sociology into a modern Utopia, has at length been directed to actual social affairs, and it would turn these into Socialism. Its method of manipulating tendencies and processes is practically the same. Wells has become a practical Utopist. But he is not going to shatter the world to bits and then remould it nearer to his heart's desire. He is going to build his new world gradually, brick by brick, street by street, town by town, until the old world is crowded out.

As a Socialist, he believes in educational and constitutional methods of propaganda, and in spite of the fact that he uses the word "revolution," he is a revolutionist only in the sense of that word meaning change. He repudiates anything in the nature of sudden social changes by means of insurrection. In "New Worlds for Old," his most recent book, and

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the one in which he sets forth his full Socialistic faith, he adopts the propagandist methods of the Fabian Society, that is to say, he would teach the ideas of Socialism and at the same time use whatever parliamentary, municipal, or other authorised administrative means for the practical application of those ideas. He looks to the growth of the sense of service, what he calls "goodwill," as the motive power behind the movement towards Socialism. ✓

Its basis should be sensitive and conscious recognition of the claims of the future. We must build for the future, we must look upon life as a garden that can be trained and cultivated. That really is the spirit in which H. G. Wells approaches the question of applied Socialism. He is a social puritan demanding a clean and orderly citizenship; his practical politics are a constant concern for, and the fullest possible application of the most vital means of promoting cleanliness, health and decency in mind and body, and seemliness and good taste in the building of the city and the nation.

1908

## ROBERT BLATCHFORD

### I

**I** SIT in a great hall, shaped somewhat like an amphitheatre ; in fact, the place is an obsolete circus in a northern city, now given over to political "demonstrations" and other monster forgatherings of the people. Reminiscences of past pomp still exist in its canvas ceiling, scrawled over with crude rococo designs in faded reds and blues and golds, and from the highest point in the centre still hangs a garish cluster of gas jets. All around is a dense mass of people—far denser than it had ever been in those past days when Whimsical Walker made the house rock with laughter at his clownish antics, or when some fair equestrienne dazzled the youth as she leaped lightly from the arena on to the plump haunches of her docile horse ; tier upon tier they rise, six thousand strong, like a mountain terraced with human faces, until they fade into the dim heights and mingle with the rococo cherubs in the canvas sky.

The vast audience is familiar, genial, cheerful, yet full of an enthusiastic tiptoe expectancy. It is no ordinary political meeting. I had seen many

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such in this hall, and the difference is quite marked. I remember Lord Randolph Churchill coming to the same place to meet a throng as great as this. The enthusiasm ran high, but it was of a different order. It was self-confident to cocksureness; but it left one with the feeling that it had been stage-managed. You felt the people admired "Randy," and that was all. It was here also that I heard Gladstone, as an old man, mighty in his wrath, hold a vast crowd spell-bound for over an hour, as he denounced the Armenian massacres. But that, I remember thinking, was a personal triumph. Gladstone was admired, respected, revered, and the magnetism of his personality was inspiring; but it ended in that monumental eloquence which was its means of expression. Once that stopped, all was over and nothing done.

Here, however, the case is different. Conviction shines from the earnest faces of all. They have not come to learn anything; they have come to reassert what they already know. They have not come to be aroused; they have come to show that they are aroused. One personality, however, is marked out as the point to which the whole interest of the audience is directed, and, amidst the beating of those waves of chatter which always act as a prelude to such gatherings, one name—or, rather, three names for one person—can be heard above the genial babble: "Nunquam," "Blatchford," and "Robert." The expectancy clusters around these

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names, for the objective of the assembly is to meet Robert Blatchford. All the difference between this and other political meetings lies in that simple fact. Its enthusiasm has a certain note peculiar to the fact ; it is a note born not only of admiration and respect but of love. Robert Blatchford is not an aristocrat or a statesman come to talk through them for the benefit of Press or Cabinet ; he is one of themselves, a big brother who has given a voice and direction to their dreams and aspirations.

The enthusiasm grows keener as the time for the arrival of the guest of the evening draws near. There is a constant hustle of excitement marked by such incidents as hand-clapping at the arrival of familiar personages on the platform, the rustling of hand-bills and newspapers, predominant among which is "Nunquam's" *Clarion*. Greetings are thrown merrily across the hall, and snatches of song every now and then float out of the mass. The songs have a revolutionary accent ; they breathe the hopes and aspirations of the Socialists, and when one has ended with more than usual gusto, someone calls out "Boots !" to which there is a hilarious reply of "Spurs !" after the manner of the testing of wakefulness in the barrack-room of Robert Blatchford's soldier tales.

At length the appointed hour arrives, and amidst tremendous cheering, clapping of hands, and waving of handkerchiefs and hats, the whole audience standing, "Nunquam" appears. He is a short,

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thick-set man of swarthy complexion ; he wears a heavy moustache and close-cropped hair, both of which are intensely black, and his expression would be stolid, almost sardonic, were it not for the peculiar and sympathetic light of his eyes. He walks behind the chairman towards the little green-cloth-covered table, in the middle of the platform, on which rests a water-bottle and glass, and a vase containing three spikes of flaming red gladioli. The thunderous reception probably dazes him for a moment ; he stands for a while contemplating the scene in apparent bewilderment. Then he smiles pleasantly, shakes his head, and moves his hands in a deprecating way, and sits down. In a moment the chairman is on his feet, and in the temporary stillness announces the Socialist hymn, "England, Arise!" This is greeted with stormy approval, and the plaintive air of Edward Carpenter's song becomes robust and virile with the enthusiasm of the moment. There is a compelling note in the prophetic demands of the song :

"England, arise ! The long, long night is over,  
Faint in the East behold the dawn appear.  
Out of your evil dream of toil and sorrow,  
Arise, O England, for the day is here.  
From your fields and hills  
Hark ! the answer swells :  
Arise, O England, for the day is here."

And, as the last words die away, renewed cheering breaks over the assembly. Robert Blatchford is

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now on his feet again, a little dark speck in the vast crowd, yet the centre of all this wild enthusiasm. "Good old Robert!" someone calls out affectionately. "Hear, hear!" responds everyone else. "Three cheers for 'Merrie England'" are demanded and given; then three more for "Socialism and the Revolution." "Nunquam" stands immobile, like a small statue in ebony with face and hands of ivory. Now he raises aloft a hand—and silence falls over the audience; he utters his opening words: "Comrades and friends——" "Boots!" calls out someone up among the cherubs. "Spurs!" thunders back the audience. "Hip, hip, hurrah!"—then quietness, and with this final assurance of wakefulness, Robert Blatchford begins his speech—which everyone takes for granted, but only half can hear. "Nunquam" is no speaker, but that is a detail. He is Nunquam the Well-Beloved, and his audience is quite content merely to be in the same room with him.

## II

Robert Blatchford, whose name is a household word among the ever-growing ranks of Socialism, and one of horror among the orthodox, is a thorough-going son of the people. He wields a pen which is mighty because of its trenchant, earnest simplicity. It is really the pen of the people, proud of being of them and happy only when busy in their cause. No one



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who has read any one of his books can doubt that for a moment, and no one who knows the simplicity of his life and its whole-hearted devotion to this cause can fail to be moved by its earnestness, its thoroughness, and its prophetic self-confidence. For Blatchford is not meek. He is absolutely and irrevocably certain that he is right. This gives his unvarnished Socialist writings a certain arrogance which, did they lack the sweet reasonableness of their lucid dialectic, might reduce considerably their propaganda value.

As it is, it does not repel, but rather does it affect the susceptible reader with a like brusque self-confidence. The burden of his message, reiterated in his own direct phrase a thousand times, is: "Socialism is the only remedy." There is no hedging, or prevarication. Blatchford, like Ibsen's Brand, demands "All or nothing." In his vision of society he sees only the rich and the poor—the rich on the backs of the poor—and he looks upon philanthropy and charitable legislation as so much dross in the way of the realisation of the new Golden Age when there shall be no more poor. He sees in such things but the exemplification of Tolstoy's dictum that "The rich will do anything for the poor—but get off their backs." Robert Blatchford's mission is to make the rich get off the backs of the poor. In his fight for this ideal he is indefatigable and incorruptible. It is said that every man has his price: this is probably true, but all men are not to be bought with money. Blatchford does not want

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money ; he became a poor man for Socialism. The lures which sometimes destroy other men do not affect him. Flattery leaves him unmoved. There is only one means by which you could buy "Nunquam"—that is by giving him Socialism.

Those who have been cradled in poverty and afterwards attained material success are generally most indifferent to the sufferings of the poor. Whatever be the cause, whether it be that they become "tight-fisted" out of fear of reversals which might bring them to poverty again, or whether they are convinced that success depends upon righteousness, I do not know ; the irony of the thing is none the less. But when a man who has been poor and who has had imagination enough to hate his condition attains success without loss of imagination (a very rare thing, by the way), then the causes of poverty are in danger. Robert Blatchford is of this order.

He was born at Maidstone on 17th March 1851, the son of poor travelling actors. His mother was Italian, and his father an Englishman who died when the boy was two years old. His early years were spent going up and down the land with his mother in search of a precarious livelihood. Some attempt was made to teach him stage dancing, but this came to nothing. What little schooling he had was of small use to him, and by sheer doggedness he taught himself how to read when he was nine years old, but, it is interesting to note, he did not learn how to write until he was nearly sixteen.

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The life of the child up to this time must have been a trial, but with the birth of his new accomplishment a new heaven and a new earth were opened unto him. He revelled in books, and he devoured all reading matter that came in his way. As he grew older he appeared on the stage, and at the age of eleven he sang at a London music hall ; but just after this his mother retired from the stage and settled at Halifax, where young Robert was sent to learn a trade. He worked for two years at a lithographic printer's, and afterwards was apprenticed to the brushmaking trade, at which he remained until he was twenty years old, when he could endure it no longer, so, without ceremony, he shook the dust of Halifax off his feet and the bristles of the brushmaker out of his clothes, and, with a light heart and a still lighter pocket, tramped to London.

Here luck was against him, and he sank lower and lower into the mire of poverty, and on one occasion almost sought shelter in a casual ward at Clerkenwell. He had actually gone to the police office for the necessary ticket when an old woman dissuaded him from this resolve. "There was a crowd of casuals round the police office," he says, "a miserable crew ; and amongst them a pale, thin, ragged woman, who sat upon the pavement. This woman noticed me, and at last said, ' You are not going into the ward, are you ? ' I said I was. She looked at me earnestly, and said, ' My poor boy, you

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don't know what you are going to do. Don't go there—don't ye go there; it's no place for you. See, I know these places, and I have had boys of my own, and you must not go into this ward; it is the worst in London. Be advised by me.' So I thanked the woman and went away. I slept that night standing up under the portico of the Opera House."

Shortly after this experience he joined the army and served in the 103rd Fusiliers and the 96th Regiment for nearly seven years, attaining the rank of sergeant, and being placed on the reserve in 1877. His life in the army was the turning-point in his career; it rescued him from poverty, and gave him experiences which he afterwards used so well in his delightfully humorous "Soldier Tales," and in his masterly novel of barrack life, "Tommy Atkins of the Ramchunders," which Sir Evelyn Wood found the truest picture of soldier life he had seen. It was also while in the army that his mind was awakened to the deeper problems of life by reading Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero-worship," lent to him by a fellow-sergeant. On leaving the army he received an appointment as timekeeper on the Weaver Navigation at Northwich at thirty shillings a week, and married in the year 1880.

### III

He did not start writing until he was some thirty-three years of age, when for a few months he contri-

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buted sketches to *The Yorkshireman* and *Toby*, and in 1885 he joined the staff of *Bell's Life*, on which he rapidly made a name. On the staff of this paper also he made the acquaintance of Edward Francis Fay, the big-hearted Rabelaisian, who eventually became endeared to readers of *The Clarion* under the name of "The Bounder," and whose life now forms the subject of one of Blatchford's most delightful books, "The Bounder: the Story of a Man, by his Friend." In the August of the same year *The Manchester Sunday Chronicle* was started, and he became its chief contributor, writing under the pen-name of "Nunquam." The *Chronicle* was an immediate success, and "Nunquam" became the best-known writer in the north of England. Gradually his view of life changed, and towards 1890 he was openly advocating Socialism in the *Sunday Chronicle*. This was an unheard-of thing in those days, and his action invoked the wrath of his proprietors. Robert Blatchford had, however, received the call; and rather than sell his pen he renounced his position, which was worth a thousand pounds a year, and with three friends, one of whom was "The Bounder," and the other Alexander M. Thompson ("Dangle"), who had followed him into Socialism, he started *The Clarion* in 1891.

That was an heroic and, in many ways, a memorable performance. In the first place, the paper was started relatively without funds, the capital being something like three hundred pounds, a sum which

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would have proved very inadequate to any but those who were prepared to rough it. Secondly, *The Clarion* was something new in journalism: it was, and is, unique. It was unique then as being a Socialist paper, which could be read with pleasure by people of all shades of political thought; but it was more remarkable in that it had a personality quite different to anything previously known to journalism. Usually the personality of a paper is the personality of its editor, but the personality of *The Clarion* is a family affair, in which all the members of the staff take a share. It is, in itself, the expression of a kind of Socialism in which each member of the community is provided with the conditions under which he may best develop his own individuality. The result in *The Clarion* has entirely justified the original experiment, for all *The Clarion* personalities have thriven under it in an exceptional way.

Robert Blatchford's subsequent life was to be wrapped up in *The Clarion*! That has been his platform, although he is by no means unknown to the platforms of Socialist meetings, and in the year of *The Clarion's* birth he was adopted as Parliamentary candidate for East Bradford, but withdrew before the contest. *The Clarion* started with a circulation of about thirty thousand, and this has gradually increased until to-day it stands at about eighty thousand. No other English paper has quite the same hold upon its readers, and no other paper has succeeded in

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making its readers feel themselves to be collaborators in *The Clarion* idea, for *The Clarion* is not merely a paper—it is a movement, with a language and humour of its own. Its ramifications spread all over the country, and embrace such varied activities as cycle clubs, field clubs, guilds of handicraft, scouts for the propagation of Socialism, cinderellas, through which numberless poor children are fed every year, reading and correspondence circles, and *The Clarion* Fellowship, which was intended to weld the various groups into something like a homogeneous organisation.

### IV

The editor of *The Clarion*, and uncrowned king of all these activities, is one of the few living writers who can write in simple language with distinction and charm. His “Merrie England,” and his other popular expositions of Socialism and Determinism, “Britain for the British,” “God and my Neighbour,” and “Not Guilty,” are masterpieces of simple and lucid English—and few books of modern times have created so much controversy as they have. These four volumes have created a revolution in the mental outlook of hundreds of thousands of working men; in fact, they have gone far towards making thinking beings of the members of the vast working populations of the north of England.

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“Merrie England” is a book that has already made history. Over a million copies have been sold in England alone, and probably twice as many in America. Besides this, it has been translated into Welsh, Dutch, German, Swedish, French, Spanish, Hebrew, Danish, and Norwegian. The effect of the volume, with its amazingly lucid exposition of the idea of Socialism, was electric. It has been said that one year before its publication there were not more than a thousand Socialists in Lancashire; twelve months after there were known to be fifty thousand.

Whether in his novels or his essays, the predominant features of Robert Blatchford’s writings are goodwill and tolerance. At the same time he is no slave to dogma, even to the dogma of free thought. His goodwill is not inconsistent with a good fight, and he has scandalised many of his comrades in Socialism by his consistent militarism. He sees mankind as the creatures of circumstance, and the basis of his attack upon modern society is a plea for better human conditions. He does not blame anyone for these conditions. They are all a part of a system which is wrong. Robert Blatchford’s mission is to show people why this is wrong, and how the wrong may be righted. Addressing John Smith, of Oldham, the typical working man, he says :

“Your duty, it seems to me, is clear enough. First of all, having seen that misery and wrong exist, it is your duty to find out *why* they exist. Having found out why they exist, it is your duty to



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seek for means to abolish them. Having found out means to abolish them, it is your duty to apply these means, or, if you have not yourself the power, it is your duty to persuade others to help you.”

The appeal of Robert Blatchford is to the humanity and common-sense of men. He is convinced that the human heart is finally good, but that it has lost its way in a jungle of selfishness and ignorance. If one could only make it realise this, all would be well. That is his desire and his faith. That is the motive behind the work of his life.

1908

## PAVLOVA AND THE DANCING SPIRIT

**I**T is impossible to describe a great dancer or a great dance—I mean in words. It can be done in music, and Degas and one or two others have done it in paint. More particularly is it beyond the art of letters to describe Pavlova. There is nothing upon which words can hang themselves; she is intangible as air, as light and as wonderful. Genée, Polaire, and Isidora Duncan are also great dancers, but it is easier to capture some of their characteristics in a noose of words, because they have that something which we call individuality. They are dancers of a kind, individualists of dancing; personality dominates their art.

Pavlova is dancing incarnate; she is all the others in one; she is the very spirit of the dance, neither classical, traditional, nor modern, but all three—an ever-changing trinity of enraptured motion. She does not make you think of herself; she sets you dreaming of all the dancing that has ever been, of all the dancing that is. Whilst watching her I could not help thinking she was not merely following the rules of an art, but that she was following the rules of life. The leaves dance in the breeze, the

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flowers dance in the sun, the worlds dance in space, and Pavlova dancing is a part of this cosmic measure.

Everybody in the theatre must have felt something similar—especially when she and Michael Mordkin, her superb consort in the art, danced together the *Bacchanale* of Glazounov. I imagine also those dim segments of faces in the darkened auditorium, many of them reflecting the frigid morality of English respectability, would be touched to strange emotions. Their staid owners would feel a new wakefulness, recalling as in a dream all that had ever happened to them of passion or beauty, all that might have happened to them had they followed their real desires, their sacred whims. You could indeed feel the heart of the audience in its very happiness linking itself with memory and regret, for in the very temple of delight, as Keats knew, veiled Melancholy hath her sovran shrine.

But for myself, regret was ever tinged with a fuller joy. I felt all the laughter of the world coursing through me; I was pulled back into a younger period, when men and gods were on speaking terms with one another :

“ And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers : the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—  
’Twas Bacchus and his crew !  
The nearest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—  
’Twas Bacchus and his kin !

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Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame ;  
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
To scare thee, Melancholy !<sup>22</sup>

The swaying form of Pavlova rhymed and romped with life and joy, with love and beauty. O the wild flight across the stage, the hot pursuit, the sweet dalliance, and then the rich luxury of capture and supreme surrender ! The very essence of life was there : life so full of joy that it overflowed with blissful abandonment until it sank from the only pardonable excess—excess of happiness.

She dances with soul as well as body ; her beautiful slight form is but the instrument upon which she plays the psalm of life. And her face dances too, dances in joy and fear, in surrender, and in the rapture of accomplished passion. She is the first dancer I have seen whose face also dances. Rarely does one see such a vivid facial expression of absolute joy, never before in a dancer. Most other dancers' faces are too preoccupied with their steps. Pavlova looks as if she has no preoccupations—she just lives. For her there is neither future nor past, only the mad rhythmic present.

That really is what dancing should be. Dancing is rhythmic life. When life is most intense, when it is master of its own destiny, then it sways and rhymes and dances, it becomes lyrical. Dancing is the song of the body, the lyric of form. It bears the same relation to motion as the flower does to the plant :

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it is a phase of efflorescence, a sign of ripeness. William Blake got very near the heart of this mysterious thing when he said, "Exuberance is Beauty."

People only dance when they feel the exuberance of life coursing through their veins. And there is a very real link between the *Danse Bacchanale* of Pavlova and Michael Mordkin and the circling scamper of the children on the village green to the delicious eternal nonsense of :

" Here we dance—Looby Loo !  
And here we dance—Looby Light !  
Here we dance—Looby Lum !  
All on a Saturday night ! "

But the conventional measures of the modern ballroom are not dancing : they are as far removed from the spirit of dance as an orgy in a modern gin-palace is from a festival of Dionysos. The ballroom is a fashion, like rinking, and it will go the way of all fashions. It is a kill-time for those who are too weary to live, an amusement for those who have no life to spare, for people whose vitality is exhausted or atrophied. Now and then you do see a bit of genuine dancing in a ballroom : two lovers are mysteriously moved by some strain in a common waltz tune, and they begin to dance. But a whisper immediately goes round the room, starting from the dowagers' chairs, where elderliness is stamping on happiness, and the burst of exuberance is called improper !

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Far otherwise is it, however, in the "sixpenny hops" of those who have no respectability to maintain. In the reeking atmosphere of the dancing-rooms of the East End you will see dancing that has little art, but much life. It is gross and graceless, but it possesses what the ballroom lacks—passion, joy. I often think that our comfortable middle-class people should not attempt to dance. They no longer live: their ideals are money, appearance, prestige, and these things have nothing to do with life. It is only those who have never had or who have long since abandoned these ideals that can dance: children, simple peasant folk, common East End Cockneys, and the elect—those who create, those who have the exuberance which is life and beauty. But the rest are still fortunate, for just as they live by proxy, so can they dance by proxy. Pavlova and the great dancers are very kind—they will dance before them, if not exactly for them.

"I will only believe in a God who can dance," said Nietzsche; and those who are alive to the real issues of life will be with him. One should dance because the soul dances. Indeed, when one thinks of it, what are any real things but dances? I mean the only realities—moments of joy, acts of pleasure, deeds of kindness. Even the long silences, the deep quietness of serene souls, are dances; that is why they seem so motionless. When the top dances most perfectly it seems most still; just as the apparently still earth is dancing round itself and round the sun;

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just as the stars dance in the night. All art is a dance; the painter is but a ballet-master marshalling the dance of light and colour; a poem is a dance of words; music a dance of tones. And why, therefore, should we not have gods that dance? Perhaps Pavlova and her sisters in the great art will teach them.

But maybe they dance already, only we cannot see them. Who knows? Let us not forget that religion and dance have often gone hand in hand. There have been many guesses at the riddle of life, and there will be many more; for mystery still lies around us and about—it lies within us and above, it throws dust in our eyes, and lays in our path barricades that seem invincible. But we shall not cease striving to peer through that veil of dust, to mount those barricades: to light the lamp of vision, after our own manner. I also shall guess. Indeed I have done so a thousand times, as which of us has not? Sometimes I fancy life is nothing after all but a glorious dance, a carnival of motion beginning in dance, continuing in dance; and when the end comes it is but a signal from the Master of the Ballet that the dance shall begin again, for there is no end. Yes, there can be no further doubt, the gods are always dancing, and the great dancers are among the true prophets.

1910

## THE LITHOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS OF WILL ROTHENSTEIN

**A**S the hurrying years strip the inessentials from the records of man and his doings we find that high up in the scale of the things that endure are the records of personality in art. Men have always been curious about each other, and three parts of art is an infinite capacity for taking and comparing notes. And, in spite of Attica, in spite of the Parthenon and Praxiteles, the personal element in art endures. An artist must of course be master of his materials first, he must know of a certainty how to use the media of his art with never-failing deftness and fastidious care; but once that is attained, it is the quality of his personality which comes into sway. Great vision must be woven in the texture of his skill, or his effort were vain—a thing of a day.

Matthew Arnold's dictum, that poetry at bottom is a criticism of life, is applicable to all art. And this is just where the personal element comes in. The artist does not only create, he discriminates. Art is always a series of choices between definite ways of interpreting life. This act of choice is an act of criticism. It is an assertion of preference, the most intensely personal assertion of the way of



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doing a thing known to a man. And just as far as the artist, once he is an artist, has an attractive personality, to that extent does his art interest his fellows. That art which endures longest is a combination of the most perfect balance between technique and personality.

This is borne out in the arts of painting and drawing, in the interest taken in the actual pictures of men and women, although personality need not necessarily express itself in that way. But in the portrait of a man we have a dual personality, that of the sitter and that of the painter, a fact which explains the immense and constantly growing interest in the art of portraiture. Every year the Royal Academy seems to grow nearer to the ideal of the National Portrait Gallery, and it is an open secret that painters, with few exceptions, could hardly subsist at all but for this all-pervading desire of the counterfeit presentment.

The art of Mr Will Rothenstein is largely confined to the art of portraiture, but not necessarily of known men and women. He is intensely curious of personality; he wants to record the innermost secret of everyone he sees. He is possessed of an inquisitiveness that will not let him rest. It is as though he were a Joseph constantly meeting people who are dreams to be interpreted for the understanding of Pharaoh—but in this case the Pharaoh is himself. I doubt if Mr Rothenstein gives a thought to any other Pharaoh. He dreams his own dreams, and interprets them for himself.

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The idea of interpretation always suggests itself when considering his work. In all his pictures there is a strong intellectual element; he is a painter who thinks as well as sees. But he is too much of an artist ever to allow the mind to dominate the imagination. At the same time, his more purely æsthetic work is to be seen in those subjects which demand less of the intellect, such as landscape. Here his art abandons itself to the sensuous charm and delight of his theme. The mind does not interfere with the mysterious and beautiful arrangement of colour from a palette which seems to have come from the Orient by way of Paris, catching, on its way, some of the subtle and daring tones of the French impressionists.

But in his portraits and studies of men, particularly in that fine series of pictorial interpretations of Jewish life in the East End of London, there is no such complete freedom of the imagination. In almost all of these paintings the artist is half a philosopher. One is constantly reminded of Watts, yet Mr Rothenstein is never so frank a symbolist, and rarely such an idealist. Indeed, he is a realist who sees beneath the surface of things. He is a realist who gives significance to that often forgotten reality, the spirit of man, rather than making a fetish of his physical qualities.

There is, however, a still further resemblance between the work of Mr Will Rothenstein and that of George Frederick Watts; and again it is in reference to portraiture. Both painters have made

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pictorial records of the notable men of their day, and, as the years pass away, it will, without doubt, be seen that the younger artist's work is no less sincere and earnest in its motive, nor less capable in its art, than that of the older artist, whose portraits are the chief glory of the National Portrait Gallery. So important are these lithographs of Mr Rothenstein's that some means ought to be found for securing a complete series for permanent hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. These lithographic portraits are as representative of the personal genius and ability of the age as it is possible for such a series to be. Mr Rothenstein has practically drawn everybody whose name stands for anything in modern imagination and thought. The wisdom of his choice, and the excellence of his portraiture, have been recognised in many directions. This may be seen in the growing number of volumes which are appearing graced with reproductions of his drawings. One remembers the fine drawing of Coquelin in Mr Arthur Symons' "Plays, Acting and Music," and that of Ernest Dowson in the collected edition of the poet's work, also the study of Mr George Moore which appeared as the frontispiece to "Sister Teresa."

Most of the portraits were drawn in the eighteen-nineties, and it is of that lively decade in British art that they are most representative. And very fittingly many of them first appeared between the famous covers of the Yellow Book. A folio, with a selection, was issued later on by Mr Grant

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Richards ; and those who are alive to any genuinely worthy note in journalism will not easily forget the first (and only) illustrated supplement of *The Saturday Review*, issued for Christmas 1896, which contained, among other treasures, Mr Rothenstein's portraits of "John Oliver Hobbes" and Mr Beerbohm Tree, not to mention a delightful lithographic drawing of a lady, reproduced in a delicate shade of green, and the bold and original cover design, produced in two tones, and representing in strong, beautiful lines the lady of the lithograph brooding over the page. These drawings alone should make this unique number of a famous journal an artistic treasure. But apart from what, after all, is a remarkably meagre publicity for such a series of portraits, the main body of this side of Mr Will Rothenstein's work is practically unknown to even the cultured public. It must be noted, however, that this printing-press publicity has been, from time to time, augmented by exhibitions, where a more representative collection of the drawings has appeared. Among the chief of these displays was that at the Cartwright Memorial Hall, Bradford (the artist's native town), where a room was practically devoted to his lithographs.

The representative nature of the series could only be conveyed on paper by a list of eminent names which would fill a page or more. Among the leading British writers there are drawings of George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, Ernest Dowson, W. B. Yeats, A. E. Housman, W. H. Hudson, R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Joseph Conrad, John Morley, Robert Bridges,

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Prof. Gilbert Murray, W. H. Lecky, Bernard Shaw, W. E. Henley, John Davidson, and H. G. Wells. Painters and artists are represented by Walter Crane, John S. Sargent, Charles H. Shannon, Max Beerbohm, Aubrey Beardsley, and others. Then there are drawings of Lord Kelvin, Alfred Russel Wallace, and other leaders of science; and musicians like Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Villiers Stanford. Besides this, Mr Will Rothenstein has gone abroad, and included many of the distinctive personalities in literature, painting, and the drama on the Continent. In this section there are Rodin, Coquelin, Fantin Latour, Paul Verlaine, Adolf von Menzel, Hauptmann, and Ernest de Goncourt.

In looking through this series of drawings, one is first struck by its amazingly representative nature. Mr Will Rothenstein has really done more than Watts, who practically confined himself to the highest points of genius — those lofty peaks which do not represent so much the active intelligence of an age as its most eminent aspirations. A Browning, a John Stuart Mill, a Newman, or a Tennyson, are the consummation of a human period: they are the symbols of accumulated genius and culture, and more properly the final effect of an era, rather than an era in being. Mr Rothenstein's pencil has given us a fuller utility than even the brush of Watts, because it has recorded for us an era in being. He has not merely glorified what is already accepted, but he has sought out and given personal significance to energies that were, and in many cases still are,

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to become more fully known. All the vital tendencies of the decade covered by his series are represented in these drawings.

Next, one is impressed by Mr Rothenstein's draughtsmanship: the delicate and subtle strength of his line, his amazing skill in the use of his materials, and the consummate art with which he has brought out the nicest possibilities of the lithographic process. In this last alone he has produced a work which must rank with the great series of lithographs of Whistler, and on lines quite as individual as those of that master.

Then one begins to realise the immense interpretative nature of the series; the whole activity of the best elements in a nation's genius passes before the eye in a procession of strikingly impressive faces and nervous, communicative hands. There is one feature that is common to all these portraits, it is in the nature of a dominant refinement of the intelligence of the subjects to a point of almost conscious fastidiousness. Mr Rothenstein sees the personal intellect and imagination of his age as a kind of supersensitiveness. Each of his subjects fulfils the idea of the artist as the critic of life. Marius the Epicurean lurks behind the features of all of his people, refining, rejecting, and paring away, in their own several ways, the grossness, the inessential, the otiose matter, until the ultimate reality, the final beauty of things is revealed.

This quality is obvious in almost every one of the portraits—in the large workman-like figure of

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Rodin, no less than in the shrinking figure of Ernest Dowson; in the almost athletic pugnacity of Coquelin, and in the scholarly wistfulness of Robert Bridges; in the aristocratic aggressiveness of Cunninghame Graham, in the almost supercilious *franchise* of W. H. Lecky, and in the direct and bluff attitude of William Ernest Henley, as well as in the nonchalant and audacious pose of Bernard Shaw. In all it is the same, revealing in unmistakable terms the underlying and natural aristocratic nature of genius. Mr Rothenstein sees and reveals the master.

Individually one is naturally drawn by personal preference to one portrait more than another. But for sheer ability and clever drawing it would be difficult to find any that excel the Coquelin, with its delicate suggestion of rude strength, and what might be termed cosmic humour; and the portrait of Mr Charles H. Shannon, with its uncommon pose and its rare and dainty arrangement of sinuously rhythmic lines. The portrait of Henley brings out the virile personality of the poet, and more especially the masterful qualities which went to the making of the most discriminating of editors. There are several drawings of Rodin, and one, at least, is a masterpiece. It represents the sculptor seated sideways, with his massive, intelligent hand resting lovingly upon a torso, whilst his eye looks critically towards a stooping model just suggested in the distance. There is more of the real Rodin in this drawing than in any portrait I have seen. It

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indicates his immense power—the power of a man who makes statues in the spirit of an inspired workman, not for the sake of art and the valuations of critics, be they never so superior, but for the sake of some joyful and irresistible impulse towards creative work.

The drawing of Mr Bernard Shaw is not so satisfying. Mr Rothenstein seems to be too conscious of the challenging side of the playwright-philosopher. He has allowed his intellect to dominate his pencil overmuch. At the same time, he has caught the piquant and combative attitude of our leading controversialist. That of Mr H. G. Wells is a later product, having been done so recently as 1904. It is an excellent likeness, in heavier line than the earlier work, and gives a good idea of the thought-burdened imagination of the novelist, peering beneath deep brows into some distant Utopia, with a note of prophetic earnestness. The clear-cut drawing of Mr R. B. Cunninghame Graham is a delightful interpretation of this writer and thinker, cleverly suggesting his superior and impatient attitude towards our social follies. And in the easy attitude of the portrait of Mr W. H. Hudson, with its fine imaginative seriousness, we can see with Mr Rothenstein one of the deepest intelligences of our time.

The note of realism in these drawings is always coloured by the personal view of the artist. There is a reverence in his attitude, a kind of critical hero-worship, which not only sees but reveals. But the



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personality of the draughtsman never forces itself upon one; rather does it take one by the hand and place one in the same point of vantage as that occupied by the artist. It is in the nature of an invitation to look in such a way; an unobtrusive hint as to position and light.

1908

## A NOTE ON DANDIES

**A** DANDY is an artist whose media are himself and his own personal appearance. The use of such materials has laid him open to the contempt of sedate and uniform ages, but his claims to existence are as justifiable as those of any other artist. There seems to be some irritability in those who dislike him because he shamelessly exploits himself in his art, but surely he shares the distinction with all artists. Every artist expresses himself in his art, so does the Dandy, but he admits it. Perhaps the opponents of dandyism feel, unconsciously, that man is too insignificant and ephemeral a material for the purposes of art, and they may be right, but I very much doubt it. We are here only for a very brief while, to be sure, but is that any reason why we should not act our little parts during the small period we are upon the stage as splendidly as possible? It is the tragedy and not the fault of dandyism that it is brief, but the dandy shares the brevity of his art with the actor, the singer, the musical performer, the dancer, and the orator.

The art of the Dandy is the art of putting forward the best personal appearance, of expressing oneself in one's clothes, in one's manners, in one's talk ;

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it is, in short, the faculty of being able to become, in the phrase used by Mr Arthur Symons to describe Oscar Wilde, an artist in attitudes. Clothes are only the outer envelope of dandyism; the real Dandy begins within, his dandyism is the result of an attitude of mind, a conviction that man is, as the poets have often hinted, a creature of splendour and flame, and a desire to act accordingly. It is, like town planning, an eminently social art, and should be honoured and revered as such. Your true Dandy looks upon his personality as a movement in the pageant of life, to be planned and arranged as carefully as a city in Utopia. He is, indeed, Utopia become man; his is a man *in excelsis*, man glorified and peacocked into something as beautiful as a sea-shell, as light, as delicate, and as sufficient as a feather. Which all amounts to one thing, and that one thing is that the Dandy above all men is the one most proud of being man.

He must not, however, be confused with the mere creature of fashion; such poor fellows are not Dandies at all. The Dandy proper is beyond fashion: but in a fashionable throng he never looks out of place; that is because he is the individualist and not the anarchist of dress. Slaves of fashion are but parrots, they dress by rote. Women have been the greatest offenders, but who ever heard of a woman dandy? The very thought is ridiculous. Women are far too earnest, far too rational, to break the laws imposed by custom. I say "are," but should, remembering the militant

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feminism of to-day, say have been, for women are changing; and, now I come to think of it, I have noticed a certain new and individual quality about the gowns of those women who form the vanguard of the revolt. Is this the beginning of female dandyism?

It has often happened that the fop has been mistaken for the Dandy. One should be careful of such pitfalls. Fops and Dandies are only superficially allied. The Dandy, as I have hinted, begins from within, his external splendour is the consummation of some inward glow, of that intense need of personal expression for the sake of expression, which impels other artists to recreate themselves in music, in painting, in poetry. He dreams only in terms of himself and those things which are most intimately associated with himself. The glory of the fop, if such it be, is extraneous, superimposed. It has been provoked from without, bought at a shop at the dictation of a salesman, it is bespoke dandyism, spurious and insufferable; and I imagine most people who denounce Dandies are really denouncing fops. Anyhow, I will be generous and think so.

At the same time I have a very promising suspicion that there is an honest objection to dandyism among the great majority of people. The Dandy, you observe, is an individual, and the crowd has resented individuality ever since Dionysos last appeared—and before. Perhaps the crowd is right. I leave the question open. The individual may absorb too much of life and his persecution is a

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kind of supertax on the unearned increment of personality. Be it so or not, I shall not strive to reduce so elegant a theme to economics, only the fact noted above must be remembered in all considerations of the Dandy.

But such persecution as the individual has suffered in the past has, perhaps, not been entirely the expression of resentment against individuality as such. A great deal of it has, I feel sure, been due to the average man's traditional incapacity to weather variations in his surroundings and his habits. He gets into a groove, as we say, that is the prerogative of the average man, and so long as his grooves are inoffensive no one should gainsay him. The Dandy would never do so; he is not out to teach or even to correct—the simple and effective act of being is all in all to him. He requires his stage and audience, of course, but he asks not the flattery of imitation, but of admiration, and not always that; the quality of what is said affects him very little, enough for him that he is noticed.

Now the man in the groove does not like such an attitude towards life. Life is real, life is earnest, says he, therefore let us get about our business. And so we should, if we feel that way. But what if we don't? Ay, there's the rub! For if our souls promote us to attitudinise in rare and distinct apparel, to discourse elegantly of things that hardly matter, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of whim and fancy, who shall say we are not as much in earnest as those who are content to be serious about

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serious things? So might the Dandy argue, and he would be right.

Such a life, it might be reasoned, is open to grave moral temptations, and the argument might be substantiated by many apt examples. The Dandies of the Restoration, for instance, had not the nicest of moral habits. Sedley, Dorset, Buckingham, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester are shocking even as historical associates. Bath, in the great days of Beau Nash, was not above reproach, as we know. And both Brummell and D'Orsay would be seriously discounted by an ethical society.

But such lapses from the straight paths of moral rectitude are not, after all, the outcome of dandyism. The Dandy has too often been mixed up with the rake and the cad, and I must admit there have been very good reasons for doing so. But there are rakes and cads who are not Dandies, just as there are Dandies who are not rakes and cads.

Barbey D'Aurevilly, a Dandy himself, as well as a philosopher and historian of Dandies, has thrown the light of his own genius upon the question of dandyism and morals, and, speaking as he does from the inside, as one having authority, we must hear him. "Dandyism," he says, "while still respecting the conventionalities, plays with them. While admitting their power, it suffers from and revenges itself upon them, and pleads them as an excuse against themselves; dominates and is dominated by them in turn. To play this twofold and changing game requires complete control of all the suppleness which

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goes to the making of elegance, in the same way as by their union all shades of the prism go to the making of the opal. This Brummell possessed. Heaven-born elegance was his, such as social trammels often spoil, and he was thus able to supply the capricious wants of a society bored and too severely bent under the strict laws of decorum. He proved that truth which matter-of-fact people always forgot, namely, if fancy's wings are clipped, they will grow half as long again. His was that charming familiarity which touches everything and profanes nothing."

Let us not then rush into the error which supposes dandyism to be a vicious and an unnecessary thing. Dandyism is an expression of social life; it is social life, in fact, at white heat, the union of all the shades which go to the making of the opal. But although the Dandy of history is generally a person of means and elegance, even though his means have occasional and tiresome aberrations and estrangements, there is no real reason why the Dandy should have either means or be elegant in the luxurious sense. Elegant he will always be in the eternal sense, even though he be threadbare, for his dandyism is from within.

We have all known those tattered beaux on the fringe of comfortable life; real Dandies they, who contrive to be elegant on clothes a decade old, and who dine off a chop and porter with all the distinction of a Brummell at the table of Alvanley's fat friend, the royal Dandy, George IV. Such Dandies, although unwritten and unsung, are in the great tradition, eternal devotees of the art of attitude and personality.

NOTE.—The essays in this volume have already appeared either in *Black and White*, *The Bookman*, *The Booklover's Magazine*, *The Beau*, *The Idler*, *The New Age*, *The Morning Leader*, *The Daily Dispatch*, *The Yorkshire Weekly Post*, *The Sheffield Telegraph*, *The Woman Worker*, *The Odd Volume*, or *The Tramp*, but they have been revised and rewritten, some becoming entirely new essays in the process. I am indebted to the editors of the aforementioned journals for permission to reprint them.

The studies in the section called "Introductions," dealing in the main with living artists, have been written during the last five years, and although the writers have added to their works since these essays were written I have not thought it necessary to alter their original form; but I have placed the date of composition at the end of each study for the guidance of the reader.

H. J.





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