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OVER THE FIRESIDE

WITH SILENT FRIENDS

BY RICHARD KING

WITH A "FOREWORD" BY

SIR ARTHUR PEARSON, BART., G.B.E.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

WITH SILENT FRIENDS THE SECOND BOOK OF SILENT FRIENDS PASSION AND POT-POURRI

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Many of the following Essays appear by kind permission of the Editor of "The Tatler."

Fifty per cent. of the author's profit on the sale of this book will be handed over to the National Library of the Blind, Tufton Street, Westminster, S.W.

I DEDICATE,

THIS LITTLE BOOK TO THOSE V.A.D.'S WHO, THOUGH THE WAR IS OVER, STILL "CARRY ON" AND TO THOSE OTHER MEN AND WOMEN WHO, LIVING IN FREEDOM, HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN THE MEN WHO FOUGHT OR DIED FOR IT

FOREWORD

BY SIR ARTHUR PEARSON, BART., G.B.E.

Those who buy "Over the Fireside" will purchase for themselves the real joy of mentally absorbing the delightful thoughts which Mr. Richard King so charmingly clothes in words. And they will purchase, too, a large share of an even greater pleasure—the pleasure of giving pleasure to others—for the author tells me that he has arranged to give half of the profits arising from the sale of this book to the National Library for the Blind, thus enabling that beneficent Institution to widen and extend its sphere of usefulness.

You will never, perhaps, have heard of the National Library for the Blind, and even if it so happens that you are vaguely aware of its existence, you will in no true degree realise all that it means to those who are compelled to lead lives, which however full and interesting, must inevitably be far more limited in scope than your own. Let me try to make you understand what reading means to the intelligent blind man or woman.

Our lives are necessarily narrow. Blind people, however keen their understanding, and however clearly and sympathetically those around them may by description make up for their lack of perception, must, perforce, lead lives which lack the vivid actuality of the lives of others. To those of them who have always been blind the world, outside the reach of their hands, is a mystery which can only be solved by description. And where shall they turn for more potent description than to the pages in which those gifted with the mastery of language have set down their impressions of the world around them?

And for people whose sight has left them after the world and much that is in it has become familiar to them, reading must mean more than it does to any but the most studious of those who can see. Some are so fortunate as to be able to enlist or command the services of an intelligent reader, but this is not given to any but a small minority, and even to these the ability to read at will, without the necessity of calling in the aid of another, is a matter of real moment, helping as it does to do away with that feeling of dependence which is the greatest disadvantage of blindness.

All this Mr. Richard King knows nearly as well as I do, for he has been a splendidly helpful friend to the men who were blinded in the War, and none know better than he how greatly they have gained by learning to read anew, making the fingers as they travel over the dotted characters replace the eyes of which they have been despoilt.

Disaster sometimes leads to good fortune, and the disaster which befell the blinded soldier has given to the service of the blind world generally the affection and sympathy which Mr. Richard King so abundantly possesses. Your reading of this book—and if you have only borrowed it I hope that these words may induce you to buy a copy—will help to enable more blind folk to read than would otherwise have been the case, and thus you will have added to the happiness of the world, just as the perusal of "Over the Fireside" will have added to your own happiness.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Draw your chair up nearer to the fireside.

It is the hour of twilight. Soon, so very soon, another of Life's little days will have silently crept behind us into the long dim limbo of half-forgotten years.

We are alone—you and I. Yet between us—unseen, but very real—are Memories linking us to one another and to the generation who, like ourselves, is growing old. How still the world outside seems to have grown! The shadows are lengthening, minute by minute, and presently, the garden, so brightly beautiful such a little time ago in all the colour of its September beauty, will be lost to us in the magic mystery of Night. Who knows? if in the darkest shadows Angels are not standing, and God, returning in this twilight hour, will stay with us until the coming of the Dawn!

Inside the room the fire burns brightly, for the September evenings are very chilly. Its dancing flames illumine us as if pixies were shaking their tiny lanterns in our faces.

DON'T you love the Twilight Hour, when heart seems to speak to heart, and Time seems as if it had ceased for a moment to pursue its Deathless course, lingering in the shadows for a while!

It is the hour when old friends meet to talk of "cabbages and kings," and Life and Love and all those unimportant things which happened long ago in the Dead Yesterdays. Or perhaps, we both sit silent for a space. We do not speak, yet each seems to divine the other's thought. That is the wonder of real Friendship, even the silence speaks, telling to those who understand the thoughts we have never dared to utter.

So we sit quietly, dreaming over the dying embers. We make no effort, we do not strive to "entertain." We simply speak of Men and Matters and how they influenced us and were woven unconsciously into the pattern of our inner lives.

So the long hour of twilight passes—passes. . . . . .

And each hour is no less precious because there will be so many hours "over the fireside" for both of us, now that we are growing old.

But we would not become young again, merely to grow old again.

No! NO!

Age, after all, has MEMORIES, and each Memory is as a story that is told.

Do you know those lovely lines by John Masefield—

"I take the bank and gather to the fire,
Turning old yellow leaves; minute by minute
The clock ticks to my heart. A withered wire,
Moves a thin ghost of music in the spinet.
I cannot sail your seas, I cannot wander
Your cornfield, nor your hill-land, nor your valleys
Ever again, nor share the battle yonder
Where the young knight the broken squadron rallies.
Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers."

And so I hope that a few of the embers in this little book will help to warm some unknown human heart.

And that is all I ask!

CONTENTS

OVER THE FIRESIDE

Books and the Blind

Strange as the confession may appear coming from one who, week in, week out, writes about books, I am not a great book-lover! I infinitely prefer to watch and think, think and watch, and listen. All the same, I would not be without books for anything in this world. They are a means of getting away, of forgetting, of losing oneself, the past, the present, and the future, in the story, in the lives, and in the thoughts of other men and women, in the thrill and excitement of extraneous people and things. One of the delights of winter—and in this country winter is of such interminable length and dreariness that we hug any delight which belongs to it alone as fervently as we hug love to our bosoms when we have reached the winter of our lives!—is to snuggle down into a comfy easy-chair before a big fire and, book in hand, travel hither and thither as the author wills—hate, love, despair, or mock as the author inveigles or moves us. I don't think that most of us pay half enough respectful attention to books seeing how greatly we depend upon them for some of the quietest pleasures of our lives. But that is the way of human nature, isn't it? We rarely value anything until we lose it; we sigh most ardently for the thing which is beyond our reach, we count our happiest days those across the record of which we now must scrawl, "Too late!" That is why I always feel so infinitely sorry for the blind. The blind can so rarely get away from themselves, and, when they do, only with that effort which in you and me would demand some bigger result than merely to lose remembrance of our minor worries. When we are in trouble, when we are in pain, when our heart weeps silently and alone, its sorrow unsuspected by even our nearest and dearest, we, I say, can ofttimes deaden the sad ache of the everyday by going out into the world, seeking change of scene, change of environment, something to divert, for the nonce, the unhappy tenor of our lives. But the blind, alas! can do none of these things. Wherever they go, to whatever change of scene they flee for variety, the same haunting darkness follows them unendingly.

The Blind Man's Problem

It is so difficult for them to get away from themselves, to seek that change and novelty which, in our hours of dread and suspense, are our most urgent need. All the time, day in, day out, their perpetual darkness thrusts them back upon themselves. They cannot get away from it. Nothing—or perhaps, so very, very few things—can take them out of themselves, allow them to lose their own unhappiness in living their lives for something, someone outside themselves. Their own needs, their own loss, their own loneliness, are perpetually with them. So their emotions go round and round in a vicious circle, from which there is no possible escape. Never, never can they *give*. They have so little to offer but love and gratitude. But, although gratitude is so beautiful and so rare, it is not an emotion that we yearn to feel always and always. We want to give, to be thanked ourselves, to cheer, to succour, to do some little good ourselves while yet we may. There is a joy in *giving* generously, just as there is in *receiving* generously. Yet, there are many moments in each man's life when no gift can numb the dull ache of the inevitable, when nothing, except getting away—somewhere, somehow, and immediately—can stifle the unspoken pain which comes to all of us and which in not every instance can we so easily cast off. Some men travel; some men go out into the world to lose their own trouble in administering to the trouble of other people; some find forgetfulness in work—hard, strenuous labour; most of us—especially when our trouble be not overwhelming—find solace in art, or music, and especially in books. For books take one suddenly into another world, among other men and women; and sometimes in the problem of their lives we may find a solution of our own trials, and be helped, encouraged, restarted on our way by them. I thought of these things the other day when I was asked to visit the National Library for the Blind in Tufton Street, Westminster. It is hidden away in a side street, but the good work it does is spread all over the world. And, as I wandered round this large building and examined the thousands of books—classic as well as quite recent works—I thought to myself, "How the blind must appreciate this blessing!" And from that I began to realise once more how those who cannot see depend so greatly on books—that means of "forgetting" which you and I pass by so casually. For *we* can seek diversion in a score of ways, but *they*, the blind, have so few, so very few means of escape. Wherever they go, they never find a change of scene—merely the sounds alter, that is all. But in books they can suddenly find a new world—a world which *they can see*.

Dreams

I can remember talking once to a blinded soldier about dreams. I have often wondered what kind of dreams blind people—those who have been blind from birth, I mean—dream, what kind of scenes their vision pictures, how their friends, and those they love, look who people this world of sleeping fancy. I have never had the courage to ask those blind people whom I know, but this soldier to whom I talked, told me that every night when he goes to bed he prays that he may dream—because in his dreams he is not blind, in his dreams he can see, and he is once more happy. I could have sobbed aloud when he told me, but to sob over the inevitable is useless—better make happier the world which is a fact. But I realised that this dream-sight gave him inestimable comfort. It gave him something to think about in the darkness of the day. It was a change from always thinking about the past—the past when he could laugh and shout, run wild and enjoy himself as other boys enjoy their lives. And this blinded soldier used to be reading—always reading. I used to chaff him about it, calling him a book-worm, urging him to go to theatres, tea-parties, long walks. He laughed, but shook his head. Then he told me that, although he never used to care much for reading, books were now one of the comforts of his life. "When I feel blind," he said—"and we don't always feel blind, you know, when we are in the right company among people who know how to treat us as if we were not children, and as if we were not deaf—I pick up a book, and, if I stick to it and concentrate, I begin to lose remembrance and to live in the story I am reading and among the people of the tale. And—*it is more like seeing the world than anything else I do!*"

How to Help

I must confess, his remark gave me an additional respect for those huge volumes of books written in Braille which he always carried about with him than I had ever felt before. When you and I are "fed up" with life and everybody surrounding us—and we all have these moods—we can escape open grousing by taking a long walk, or by seeing fresh people and fresh places, watching, thinking, and amusing ourselves in a new fashion. But the blind have only books—they alone are the only handy means by which they can get away from the present and lose themselves amid surroundings new and strange. All the more need, then, for us to help along the good work done by the National Library for the Blind. It needs more helpers, and it needs more money. Working with the absolute minimum of staff and outside

expenses, it is achieving the maximum amount of good. As a library, I have only to tell you that it contains 6,600 separate works in 56,000 volumes, supplemented by 4,000 pieces of music in 8,000 volumes—a total of 64,000 items, which number is being added to every week as books are asked for by the various blind readers. And in helping this great and good work, I realise now that, to a certain extent, you are helping blind people *to see*. For books do take you out of yourself, don't they? They do help you to lose cognizance of your present surroundings, even if you be surrounded perpetually by darkness, they do transplant you for a while into another world—a world which you can *see*, and among men and women whom, should the author be great enough, you seem to know as well. Books are a blessing to all of us—but they are something more than a blessing to the blind, they are a deliverance from their darkness. And we can all give them this blessing, if we will—thank Heaven, and the women who give their lives to the work of the National Library for the Blind!—this blessing, which is not often heard of, is a work which will grow so soon as it is known, a work the greatness and goodness of which are worthy of all help.

On Getting Away from Yourself

I always feel so sorry for the blind, because it seems to me they can never get away from themselves by wandering in pastures new. It is trite to say that the glory of the golden sunsets, the glory of the mountains and the valleys, the coming of spring, the radiance of summer—all these things are denied them. They are. But their great deprivation is that none of these things can help them to get away from themselves, from the torments of their own souls, the haunting dreadfulness of their own secret worries. We, the more fortunate, not only can fill our souls with beauty by the contemplation of beautiful things, but, when the tale of our inner-life possesses the torments of Hell, we can turn to them in our despair because we know that their glory will ease our pain, will help us to forget awhile, will give us renewed courage to go on fighting until the end. But where all is blackness, those inner-torments must assume gigantic proportions. Nothing can take them away—except time and the weariness of a soul too utterly weary to care any longer. But time works so slowly, and the utter weariness of the soul is often so prolonged before, as it were, the spirit snaps and the blessed numbness of indifference settles down upon our hearts. People who can see have the whole of the wonder of Nature working for them in their woe. It is hard to feel utterly crushed and broken before a wide expanse of mountain, moorland, or sea. Something in their strength and vastness seems to bring renewed vigour to our heart and soul. It is as if God spoke words of encouragement to you through the wonder which is His world. But blind—one can have none of these consolations. All is darkness—darkness which seems to thrust you back once more towards the terror of your own heart-break. Sometimes I wonder that the blind do not go mad. To them there is only music and love to bring renewed courage to a heart weary of its own conflict. To get away from yourself—and not to be able to do it—oh, that must be Hell indeed! Verily sometimes the human need of pity is positively terrifying.

Travel

We know what it would be were we never for a single instant able to get away from the too-familiar scenes and people who, unconsciously, because of their very familiarity, drive us back upon ourselves. In each life there are a series of soul crises, when the spirit has to battle against some great pain, some great trouble, some overwhelming disillusion—to win, or be for ever beaten. But few, very few souls are strong enough to win that battle unaided. A friend may do it—though friends to whom you would tell the secret sorrows of your life are rare! But a complete change of scene and environment works wonders. Nature, travel, work—all these things can help you in your struggle towards indifference and the superficially normal. But where Nature and travel are useless, and work—well, work has to be something all-absorbing to help us in our conflict—is the only thing left, I wonder how men and women survive, unless, with sightlessness, some greater strength is added to the soul, some greater numbness to the imagination and the heart. But this I so greatly doubt. Truthfully, as I said before, the need for pity seems sometimes overwhelming, surpassing all imagining. I am sure that I myself would assuredly have gone mad had I not been able to lose myself a little in travel and change of scene. When the heart is tormented by some great pain, the spirit seems too utterly spiritless to do anything but despair. But life teaches us, among other things, some of the panaceas of pain. It teaches us that the mind finds it difficult to realise two great emotions at once, and that, where an emotion helps to take us out of ourselves, by exactly the strength of that emotion, as it were, is the other one robbed of its bitterness and its pain. Some people seek this soul-ease one way and some people by other means, but seek it we all must one day or another, and it seems to me that one of the wonders of the natural world, the sunlight and the stars, is that they are always there, magnificent and waiting, for the weary and the sorrowing to find some small solace in their woe.

Work

Work and Travel, Travel and Work—and by Work I mean some labour so absorbing as to drug all thought; and by Travel I mean Nature, and books, and art, and music, since these are, after all, but dream-voyages in other men's minds—they alone are for me the panacea of pain. Not the cackle of the human tongue—that for ever leaves me cold; not the sympathy which talks and reproves, or turns on the tap of help and courage by the usual trite source—that never helps me to forget. But Work, and Travel, and (for me) Loneliness—these are the three things by which I flee from haunting terrors towards numbness and indifference. Each one, of course, has his own weapons—these are mine. Years ago, when I was young and timid, I dreaded to leave the little rut down which I wandered. Now experience has given me the knowledge that Life is very little after all, and that it is for the most part worthless where there is no happiness, no forgetfulness of pain, no inner peace. The opinion of other people, beyond the few who love me, leaves me cold. The praise or approbation of the world—what is it worth at best, while it is boring nearly always? Each year as it passes seems to me, not so much a mere passing of time and distance, but a further peak attained towards some world, some inner vision, which I but half comprehend. Each peak is lonelier, but, as I reach it and prepare to ascend the next, there comes into my soul a wider vision of what life, and love, and renunciation really mean, until at last I seem to *see*—what? I cannot really say, but I see, as it were, the early radiance of some Great Dawn where everything will be made clear and, at last and at length, the soul will find comfort, and happiness, and peace. And the things which drag you away from this inner-vision—they are the things which hurt, which age you before your time, which rob you of joy and contentment. As a syren they seem to beckon you into the valleys where all is sunshine and liveliness, and if you go . . . if you go, alas! it is not long before once more you must set your face, a lonelier and a sadder man, towards the mountain peaks. That seems to me to be the story of—oh, so many lives! That seems to me to be the one big theme in a tale which superficially is all jollity and laughter.

Farewells!

When Youth bids "Good-bye" to anything, it is usually to some very *tremendous thing*—or at least, it seems to be tremendous in the eyes of Youth. But Age—although few people ever suspect—is always saying Farewell, not to some tremendous thing, because Age knows alas! that very few things are tremendous, but to little everyday pleasures which Youth, in the full pride of its few years, smiles at complaisantly, or ignores—for will they not repeat themselves again and again, tomorrow perhaps, certainly next year? But the "I Will" of Youth has become the "I may" of Old Age. That is why Old Age is continually saying "Farewell" secretly in its heart. Nobody hears it bid "Adieu" to the things which pass; it says "Addio" under its breath so quietly that no one ever knows: and Old Age is very, very proud. And Youth, seeing the smile by which Old Age so often hides its tears, imagines that Age can have no sadness beyond the fact of growing old. Youth is so strong, so free, so contemptuous of all restraint, so secretly uncomprehending face to face with the tears which are hastily wiped away. "For, what has Age to weep over?" it cries. "After all, it has lived its life; it has had its due share of existence. How stupid—to quarrel with the shadows when they fall!" But Old Age hearing that cry, says nothing. Youth would not understand it were it to speak a modicum of its thoughts. Besides, Old Age is fearful of ridicule; and Youth so often mistakes that fear for envy—whereas, Old Age envies Youth so little, so very, very little! Would Old Age be young again? Yes, yes, a thousand times *Yes*! But would Age be young again merely *to grow old again*? No! A hundred thousand times No! Old Age is too difficult a lesson to learn ever to repeat the process. Resignation is such a hard-won victory that there remains no strength of will, no desire to fight the battle all over again. And resignation *is* a victory—a victory which nothing on earth can rob us. And because it is a victory, and because the winning of it cost us so many unseen tears, so many pangs, so much unsuspected courage, it is for Age one of the most precious memories of its inner-life. No; Age envies Youth for its innocence, its vigour and its strength; for its well-nigh unshakable belief in itself, in the reality of happiness and of love: but Age envies it so little—the mere fact of being young. It knows what lies ahead of Youth, and, in that knowledge, there can be no room for envy. The Dawn has its beauty; so too has the Twilight. And night comes at length to wrap in darkness and in mystery the brightest day.

The "Butters"

Of all the human species—preserve, oh! preserve me from the monstrous family of the Goats. I don't mean the people who go off mountain climbing, nor those old gentlemen who allow the hair round their lower jaw to grow so long that it resembles a dirty halo which has somehow slipped down over their noses; nor do I mean the sheepish individuals, nor those whom, in our more vulgar moments, we

crossly designate as "Goats." No; the people I really mean are the people who can never utter a favourable opinion without butting a "but" into the middle of it; people who, as it were, give you a bunch of flowers with one hand and throw a bucket of cabbage-water over you with the other. People, in fact, who talk like this: "Yes, she's a very nice woman, *but* what a pity she's so fat!" or, "Yes, she's pretty, *but*, of course, she's not so young as she was!" Nothing is ever perfect in the minds of these people, nor any person either. For one nice thing they have to say concerning men, women, and affairs, they have a hundred nasty things to utter. They are never completely satisfied by anything nor anybody, and they cannot bear that the world should remain in ignorance of the causes of their dissatisfaction.

It isn't that they know there is often a fly in the amber so much as that they perceive the fly too clearly, and that amber, even at its best, always looks to them like a piece of toffee after all. How anybody ever manages to live with these kind of people perpetually about the house I do not know. And the worst of it is there seems no cure for the "Goats," and, unlike real Goats, nothing will ever drive them into the wilderness for ever. Even if you do occasionally drive them forth, they will return to you anon to inform you that the wilderness, to which you have never been, is a hundred times nicer than the cultivated garden which it is your fate to inhabit. The most beautiful places on this earth are, according to them, just those places which you have never visited, nor is there any likelihood of you ever being fortunate enough to do so. If you tell them that the most lovely spot you have ever seen is Beaulieu in May, when the visitors have gone, they will immediately tell you that it isn't half so lovely as Timbuctoo—even when the visitors are there. Should you talk to them of charming people, they will describe to you the people they know, people whom you really would fall violently in love with—only there is no chance of you ever meeting them, because they have just gone to Jamaica. They "butt" their "but" into all your little pleasures, and even when you really are enjoying yourself, and the "but" would have to be a bomb to upset your equanimity, they will throw cold water upon your ardour by gently hinting that you had better enjoy yourself while you can, because you won't be young much longer. Ough! Even when one is dead, I suppose, these "Goats" will stand round you and say: "It's very sad . . . *But* we all have to die some time." And if they do, I hope I shall come back suddenly to life to butt in with my own "but" . . . "*But* I hope I shan't meet YOU in Heaven."

But I suppose these "butters" enjoy themselves, even though other people don't enjoy them. They love to take you by the hand, as it were, and lead you from the sunshine into the shady side of every garden. Not their delight is it to work the limelight. Rather they prefer to cast a shadow—when they can't turn out the lights altogether. And, strangely enough, these people are the very people whose life is passed in the pleasantest places. It may be that, metaphorically speaking, they have been so long used to the Powers of existence that they delight in treasuring the weeds. Well, I, for one, wish that they could live among these weeds for just so long a time as to become quite sick of them—when, doubtless, they would return to us only too anxious to see nothing but the simple flowers, and each simple flower an exquisite joy in itself—although it fades!

Age that Dyes

So many women seem to imagine that when they dip their heads in henna twenty years suddenly slips from off them into the mess. As a matter of fact, they invariably pick up an additional ten years with the dye every time. After all, the hair, even at its dullest and greyest, shows fewer of the painful signs of Anno Domini than almost any part of the body. The eyes and the hands, and, above all, the mind—these tell the tale of the passing years far more vividly for those who pause to read. But then, so very many women make the mistake of imagining that if their hair is fully-coloured and their skin fairly smooth the world will be deceived into taking them for twenty-nine. As a matter of fact, the world is far too lynx-eyed ever to be taken in by any such apparent camouflage. On the contrary, it adds yet another ten years to the real age, and classes the dyed one among the "poor old things" for evermore. No, the truth of the matter is that, to keep and preserve the illusion of youthfulness long after youth has slipped away into the dead years behind us, is a far more difficult and complicated matter than merely painting the face, turning brown hair red, and being divorced. Perhaps one of the most rejuvenating effects is to show the world, while trying to believe it yourself, that you don't honestly really care tuppence about growing old. To show that you do care, and care horribly, is to look every second of your proper age, with the additional effect of a dreary antiquity into the bargain. It isn't sufficient to be strictly economical with your smiles for fear lest deep lines should appear on your face (deep lines will come in spite of your imitation of a mask), or to dye your hair a kind of lifeless golden, or to draw your waist in, dress as youthfully as your own daughter, and generally try to skip about as giddily as your own grandchildren. No, if you want to seem youthful—and where is the woman who doesn't?—you must *think* youthfully all the time. This doesn't mean that you must *act* youthfully as well. Oh, dear me, no! Old mutton skipping about like a super-animated young lamb—that, indeed, gives an impression of old

age which approaches to the antiquity of a curio. No, you must keep your intelligence alert, your sympathies awake; you must never rust or get into a "rut"; above all, you must keep in touch with the *aims* of youth, without necessarily merely imitating its *antics*—then a woman will always possess that interest and that charm which never stales, and which will carry her through the years with the same triumph as her youth once did, or her beauty—if she ever possessed any. And if *she* must use the artificial deceptions of chemists, which deceive nobody, let her do it so artfully that, metaphorically speaking, she preserves the lovely mellow atmosphere of an "old picture," not the blatant colouring of a lodging-house daub.

But, of course, one of the hardest problems of a woman's life is to realise just when she must acknowlege that her youthful prime is past. Some women never seem able to solve it. They either hang on to the burlesque semblance of twenty-five, or else go all to pieces, and take unto themselves "views" as violent as they are sour. When they cannot command the uncritical admiration of the gaping crowd, they descend from their thrones to shy brickbats at everyone who doesn't look at them twice. A wise woman realises that although at forty she cannot be the centre of attraction for her youthfulness alone, she can yet command a circle of true friends, which, though smaller in number, is more deeply devoted in intention. But she will never be able to keep even these unless her sympathies are wide, her heart full of understanding, unless she keeps herself mentally alert and her sense of humour perpetually bright. Should she do so, hers will be the triumph of real charm; and, providing that she grows older not only gracefully but also cheerfully, not by plastering herself over with chemical imitations of her own daughter's youth, but by shading becomingly, as it were, the inevitable ravages of time, which nothing on earth will ever hide; by dressing not more than five years younger than she really is—then her attractiveness will continue until she is an old, old woman. And I would back her in the race for real devotion against all the flappers who ever flapped their crêpe de chine wings to dazzle the eyes of that cheapest of feminine prey—the elderly married man.

Women in Love

Have you noticed how a woman displays much more "sang froid" in love than a man? Her heart may be aflame, but there always seems to be a tiny lump of ice which keeps her head cool. Only when a woman is not quite sure of her captor does she begin to lose her feminine "un-dismay." So long as she is being chased she can always remain calm and collected, perhaps because she knows that, however hot her lover may be in pursuit, the race began by giving her a long start, and, being well ahead, she can listen in camouflaged amusement to the man's protestations of her "divinity" as he "galollups" madly after her. When you come across lovers in that state of oblivion to staring eyes—as you do come across them so often during these beautiful warm evenings—it is always the man who looks supremely sheepish; the woman doesn't "turn a hair." She simply stares at the intruder as if she wanted him to see for himself how very attractive she is. The man, on the other hand, never meets the stranger's eyes. His expression invariably shows that he is wishing for the earth to open—which, in parenthesis, it never does when you most want it to. But the girl is quite unembarrassed. Even when it is she who is making love, a staring and smiling crowd will not force her to desist. She just goes on stroking her lover's face and kissing him. But the man looks a perfect fool, and, I am sure, feels it. It seems indeed, as if he would cry to the onlookers, "Don't blame me. It's human nature. I shall get over it quite soon!" But the girl seems to say: "By all means—watch us! This, for me, is 'Der Tag'!" No, you can't disconcert a woman in love—it makes her quite vain-glorious.

I wonder why love always seems such a splendid "joke" to those who are out of it, when it was a paralysing reality while they were in it. And yet, as one looks back upon one's love affairs one invariably refers to the incident as the time when "I made a fool of myself." And yet love is no laughing matter. Considering that ninety-nine per cent. of our novels and plays are about nothing else; considering that our songs and our poetry, and the scandal we like to hear, all centre around this one theme, we really ought to take it more seriously. But if we see two lovers making love to each other we laugh outright. It is very strange! I suppose it is that everybody else's love affairs are ridiculous; only our own possess the splendour of a Greek tragedy. Perhaps we share with Nature her sense of humour, which makes love one of the biggest practical jokes in life. So we jeer at love in order to hide our own "soreness," just as we laugh at the man who sits down suddenly in Piccadilly because his foot stepped on a banana skin—we laugh at him because it wasn't we who sat down. Altogether love is a conundrum, and we laugh at the answer Fate gives us because we dare not show the world we want to cry. Laughter is the one armour which only the gods can pierce. Lovers never laugh—at least, they never laugh at love—that is why we can turn them into such glorious figures of fun.

But I always wonder why a woman of a "thousand loves" assumes a kind of "halo," when a man of equal passion only gets called a "libertine," if not worse things. I suppose we think it must have been so clever of her. We speak of her as *inspiring* love, though a man who inspires the same wholesale

affection isn't considered nice for young women to know. It is, apparently because we realise that a woman very rarely loses her head in love. She may have had a thousand lovers, but only made herself look a "silly idiot" over one. But a man looks a "silly idiot" every time. We know he must have uttered the usual eternal protestations on each occasion. But a woman only has to *listen*, and can always hear "the tale" without losing her dignity. She merely begins to talk when a man comes "down to earth." While his "soul" had soared verbally she enjoyed him as she enjoys a "ballad concert," those love songs which say so much and mean so very little.

Pompous Pride in Literary "Lions"

I always think that the author who places his own photograph as an illustrated frontispiece to his own book must be either an exceedingly brave man or an exceedingly misguided one. At any rate, he runs a terrible risk, amounting almost to certain calamity, in regard to his literary admirers. I have never yet known an author—and this applies to authoresses as well—whose face, if you liked his work, was not an acute disappointment the moment you clapped eyes upon it. For example, I am a devoted admirer of "Amiel's Journal", but it is years since I have torn Amiel's photograph from the covers of his book. I could not bear to think that such lovely, such poetical thoughts, should issue from a man who, in his portrait, anyway, looks like nothing so much as a melancholy Methodist minister, the most cheerful characteristic of whom is "Bright's disease."

In the days of my extreme youth I admired a well-known authoress—*in public*, be it understood, as is the way of youth. The world was given to understand that in her seductive heroines she really drew her own portrait. This same world lived long in blissful ignorance that what was stated to be a fact was only the very small portion of a half-truth. For years this famous lady *refused* to have her photo published. She even went so far as to tell the world so in every "interview" which journalists obtained from her—either regarding her views on "How best to obtain an extra sugar-allowance in war-time," or concerning "Queen Mary's noble example to English women to wear always the same-sort-of-looking hat." This extreme modesty piqued the curiosity of her ten million readers enormously. The ten million, of which I was a member, imagined that she must be too beautiful and too elegant to possess brains, unless she were a positive miracle. We pictured her as tall and graceful, with a lovely willowy figure and an expression all sad tenderness when it wasn't all sweet smiles.

Then one fatal day the famous authoress decided—too late, I'm afraid, by more than twenty years—to show her face to the ten million worshippers who demanded so greatly to see it. The irrevocable step being taken, disillusion jumped to our eyes, as the French say, and nearly blinded us. Instead of the goddess we had anticipated, all we saw was, gazing at us out of the pages of an illustrated newspaper, an over-plump, middle-aged "party" with no figure and a fuzzy fringe, who stood smiling in an open French window, and herself completely filling it! The shock to our worship was so intense that it made most of us think several times before spending 7_s_. on her new love story, were it ever so romantic. And so that was the net result of *that*!

Wiser far is the other well-known authoress, who apparently had her last photograph taken somewhere back in the early nineties, and still sends it forth to the press as her "latest portrait study," which, perhaps, if she be as wise as she is witty, it will for ever be.

No, I think that authors who insist upon their own photographs appearing in their own books are either very foolish or puffed out with pompous pride. Nobody really wants to look at them a second time; or, even if they do, nine times out of ten those who stay to look remain to wish they hadn't. I have never yet known an author's face which compared in charm and interest with the books he writes. Taking literature as a professional example, it cannot truthfully be said that beauty often follows brains. In the case of authors, as in so many other cases, to leave everything to the imagination is by far the better policy in the long run. But there is this consolation, anyway—we are what we are, after all, and our faces are very often libels on our "souls."

Granting this, the theory of the resurrection of the body always leaves me inordinately cold. As far as I, myself, am concerned, the worms can have my body—and welcome. May I prove extremely indigestible, that's all! Preferably, I want to "cease upon the midnight without pain," in the middle of a dynamite explosion. I want, as it were, to return to the dust from which I came in one big bang! And if I must have a Christian burial, then I hope that all of me which remains for my more or less sorrowing relatives to bury, decently and in order, will, at most, be one—old boot! Of course, if I do die in the middle of an explosion, I grant that, if the resurrection of the body really be a fact, then I shall find it extremely tiresome to hunt everywhere for my spare parts. It will be such a colossal bore having to worry all the other people, also busy collecting themselves, who went up with me in the "bang," by keeping on demanding of them the information, "Excuse me, but have you by any chance seen anything

of a big-toe nail knocking about?" I always feel so sorry for those Egyptian princesses whose teeth and hair, whose jewels and old bones, proved such an irresistible attraction to the New Zealand and Australian soldiers when they were in camp near Cairo, that they stole out at night to rob their tombs, and sent the plunder thus obtained "way back home to the old shack" as souvenirs of the Great War. It will be so perfectly aggravating for these royal ladies to resurrect in a tomb which, in parenthesis, they had purposely constructed to last them until the Day of Judgment—to resurrect therein, only to discover that some of their necessary parts are either in Auckland, or in Sydney, or in Melbourne, or, perhaps, in all three cities. It will be but poor consolation to learn that the rest of them may, perhaps, be discovered among the sands of the desert—that is to say, if they scratch about long enough looking for them. Personally, if I get the chance, I shall immediately go about purloining other people's physical perfections, so that, when at last I am ready for the next move onward, I shall consist of one part Hercules and three-parts Owen Nares! I shall indeed look lovely, shan't I? In the meanwhile, I realise that, physically speaking, I am far better imagined than understood. Not that I am very much worse than the average? on the other hand, I am certainly not much better—so who would be the happier for gazing at my photograph? No, indeed, it cannot be for their beauty that authors insert their own photographs—sometimes, even, on the outside covers of their own books! For what beauty they do possess has usually been lost somewhere on the original negative. If they still yearn to let themselves be *seen*, as well as *read*, I would suggest that the frontispiece be the one page in the book to be uncut, so that their readers, should they wish to peep at the author's physiognomy for curiosity's sake, may—if that curiosity prove its own punishment—leave those first pages uncut until the book falls to pieces on the bookshelf. For myself, I hate to read some beautifully written thought, only to have the author's distinctly unbeautiful face always protruding between me and my delight—like some utterance of the commonplace in the middle of a discussion on "souls."

I suppose it is that authors—like everybody else—cannot understand that how they look to themselves and to those who love them, and so are used to them, they will not necessarily look to other people, who merely want to gaze upon their photograph because they cannot look upon their waxwork. We all get so used to our own blemishes by seeing them every morning when we brush our hair that we have long since ceased to regard them seriously. But ten to one a stranger will notice nothing else. That is always the way of a stranger's regard. But, after all, to fail to impress someone who knows you and loves you is nothing at all; to fail, however, to impress someone who yearns to become acquainted with you, is very often to lose a possible friend. Better a thousand times that an adoring reader should keep yearning to know what her favourite author looks like than, having at last satisfied her curiosity, she should exclaim disappointedly, "*Gosh! To think that he could look like that!!*"

If an author feels that indeed he must show the world what he looks like, let him issue to the public merely a "vague impression" of himself—a Cubist one for preference. A Cubist portrait can look like anything . . . but to look like anything is infinitely preferable to looking like *nothing on this earth*, isn't it?

Seaside Piers

The only real excitement I can ever perceive about a Seaside Pier is when the sea washes half of it away. To me, Seaside Piers are the most deadly things. You pay tuppence to go on them, and you generally stay on them until you can stay no longer because—well, because you *have* paid tuppence. Having walked along the dreary length of the tail-end which joins the shore, there seems really nothing to do at the end of your journey except to spit over the side. Of course, there are always those derelict kind of amusements such as putting a penny in a slot and being sprayed with some vile scent; or putting a ha'penny in another slot and seeing a lead ball being shot into any hole except the one in which, had it disappeared therein, you would have got your money back. For the rest, I am sure that half the people remain on them for the simple reason that tuppence is tuppence in these days or any other days. Of course, there is generally a band which plays twice, sometimes three times, a day; but it is not a band which ever does much more than blast its way through a selection from "Carmen," or a fantasia on "Faust." Of course, if you like crowds—well, a pier is for you another name for Paradise. Nobody uses the tail-part except to walk to the end, or *from* it, on the side which is protected from the wind. But the end of a pier—where it swells and the band plays—is a kind of receptacle which receives the human debouch. There you have the spectacle of what human beings would look like if they were put into a bowl, like goldfish, and had nothing to do but swim round and round.

I suppose there *is* an amusement in such a picture—because, look at the women who come there every morning and bring their knitting! And the "flappers" and the "knuts"—they seem never to tire of seeing each other pass and re-pass for a solid hour on end! Why do they go there? It cannot be to see clothes, because the most you see, as a rule, is a white skirt and blouse and a brown neck all peeling with the heat! They must go there, then, because to go on the pier is all part and parcel of the seaside

habit—and an English seaside, anyway, is one big bunch of habits, from the three-mile promenade of unsympathetic asphalt, with its backing of houses in the Graeco-Surbiton style, to the railway station at the back of the town, where antiquated "flies" won't take anybody anywhere under half-a-crown. It belongs, I suppose, to that strain of fidelity which runs through the British "soul"—a fidelity which finds expression in facing death sooner than forego roast beef on Sunday, and will applaud an old operatic favourite until her front teeth drop out. It is all very laudable, but it has its "trying" side. One becomes rather tired of the average seaside resort, which is built and designed rather as if the "authorities" believed that God made Blackpool on the Seventh Day, and it was their religious duty to erect replicas of His handiwork up and down the coast. And under this delusion piers, I suppose, were born.

Well, certainly they are convenient to throw yourself off the end of them. Happily—or unhappily, whichever way you look at it—the town council never seem to know quite what to do with them. Beside the penny fair and the brass band, they only seem to be the haven of rest for fifth-rate theatrical touring companies, who manage to pay for their summer outing in the theatre erected at the end. Otherwise their importance consists chiefly in being a convenient place for the "flapper" to "meet mother," and to carry on a violent flirtation, without the slightest danger, with any Gay Lothario in lavender socks who kind o' tickles them with his eyes and makes them giggle. But for myself, who have no mamma to meet, nor any desire to flop about with "flappers," piers are deadly things. Their great excitement is when the sea washes half of them away at a moment when, apparently, five thousand people living in boarding-houses had only just vacated them. And sometimes even that miraculous escape seems a pity! What do you think?

Visitors

I always think that visitors are charming "interruptions." They are delightful when they arrive; they are equally delightful—perhaps more so—when they go. Only on the third day of their visit are they tiresome, and their qualities distinctly below the par we expected. Almost anybody can put up with almost anybody for three days. There is the delight of showing him over the house, bringing out all our treasures and listening the while our visitor shows us his envy (or his hypocrisy) by his compliments; there is the pleasure of taking him round the garden and pointing out our own pet plants and bulbs. Even the servants can keep smiling through three days of extra work. But the second night begins to see us becoming exhausted. We have said everything we wanted to say. We have taken him up to the attic and to the farthest ends of the pig sty, we have laid down the law concerning our own pet enthusiasms and tolerated him while he told us about his own. But a sense of boredom begins to creep into our hearts at the end of the second evening, which, if there were not the pleasure of bidding him "Good-bye" on the morrow to keep our spirits up, would end in exasperation to be fought down and a yawn to be suppressed. The man who invented "long visits" ought to be made to spend them for the rest of his life as a punishment. There is only one thing longer—though it sounds rather like a paradox to say so—and that is a "long day." To "spend a long day" with anyone sees both you and your hostess "sold up" long before the evening. Happily, that infliction is a country form of entertainment, and is reserved principally for relations and family friends who might otherwise expect us to ask them for a month.

You see, most of us are creatures possessing habits as well as a liver. Visitors are a fearful strain on both—after forty-eight hours. The strain of appearing at our most hospitable and best—from the breakfast egg in the morning to the "nightcap" at night—is one which only those who are given a bed-sitting-room and a door with a key in it can come through triumphantly. Visitors usually have nothing to do, while we have our own work—and the two can rarely mate for long. Of course, there are visitors who seem born with a gift for visiting; they give us of their brightest and best for forty-eight hours and have "letters to write" up in their bedroom during most of the subsequent days of their sojourn. Also there are hostesses who seem born with the "smile of cordiality" fixed on to their mouths. They also give of their best and brightest for forty-eight hours and then, metaphorically, give their guests a latch-key and a time-table of meals, and wash their hands of them until they meet again on the door-step of "farewell." But the majority of visitors seem incapable of leading their own lives in any house except their own. They follow you about and wait for you at odd corners, until you are either driven to committing murder or going out to the post-office to send a telegram to yourself killing off a great aunt and giving an early date for her funeral. Also there are some hostesses who cannot let their guests alone; who must always be asking them "What are they going to do to-day," or telling them not to forget that Lady Sploshykins is coming to tea especially to meet them! Frantic for our entertainment, they invite all the dull people of the neighbourhood to meals, and drag us along with them to the dull people's houses on the exchange visit. They are always terrified that we are "feeling it dull," whereas the dulness really comes of our not being allowed to stupefy in peace.

"Never outstay your welcome" is one of the social adages I would impress upon all young people; and

"Be extremely modest concerning the length to which that welcome would be likely to extend" is an addenda to it. Failing any other calculation, forty-eight hours of being a "fixture" and twelve hours of packing up are generally the safe limit. Following that advice, you will generally enjoy the dullest visit and will want to come again; following that advice, also, your hostess will enjoy seeing you and hope you will. Not to follow it is to risk losing a friend. Everybody hates the visitor who comes whenever he is asked and stays far too long when he arrives.

The Unimpassioned English

I have just been to see the latest musical comedy. Of course, I feel in love with the heroine. Could I help myself? Even women have fallen in love with her—so what chance has a mere male, and one at the dangerous age at that? But what struck me almost as much as the youthful charm and cleverness of the new American "star" and the invigoratingly "catchy" music, was the way in which *all the young men on the stage put both their hands into their trouser pockets the moment they put on evening clothes*! They didn't do it in their glad day-rags . . . or, at least, only one hand at a time, anyway. But immediately they appeared *en grande tenue*, both their hands disappeared as if by magic! *C'ètait bien drôle, j'vous assure!* Perhaps . . . who knows? . . . they were but counting their "moneys." . . . For the chorus ladies are certainly rather attractive, and even a svelte figure *has been known* to hold a big dinner! But the fact still remains . . . if one night some wicked dresser takes it into his evil head to stitch up their trouser pockets, every one of the young men will have to come on and do physical "jerks," or go outside and cut his own arms off!

But then, most Englishmen seem at a loss to know what to do with their limbs when they are not using them for anything very special at the moment. Have you ever sat and watched the "niggly" things which people—especially Englishmen—do with their hands when they don't know what to do with them otherwise? It is very instructive, I assure you. I suppose our language does not lend itself to anything except being spoken out of our mouths. Unlike Frenchmen, we have not learnt to talk also with our hands. We consider it "bad form" . . . *like scratching in public where you itch*! Well, perhaps our decision in this respect has added to the general fun of existence. In life's everyday, one doesn't notice these things, maybe. One has become so habituated to "Father" drumming "Colonel Bogey" on the chair-arm; or "Little Willee" playing "shakes" with two ha'pennies and a pen-knife—that one has ceased to pay any attention to these minor irritations. And, when we are among strangers, we are so busy watching that people don't put *their* hands into *our* pockets, that we generally put our own hands into them for safety. . . . Which, perhaps, accounts for the Englishman's habit . . . who knows?

But on the stage, this custom is an almost mesmeric one to watch. We certainly do see other people at a disadvantage when they are strutting the Boards of Illusion . . . men especially. But to a foreigner, who is not used to seeing a man's hands disappear the moment he is asked to stand up, the sight must come with something of a shock. For my own part, I think his amazement is justified. Surely God gave a man two hands for other needs than to pick things up with or hide them?

Personally, I always think that it is a thousand pities that men are not expected to knit. They grew up to be idle in the drawing-room, I suppose, in times when every other woman was a "Sister Susie." But the "Sister Susie" species is nowadays almost extinct. It requires a German offensive to drive the modern woman towards her darning needles.

In a recent literary competition in EVE, the subject was "Bores, and how to make the best of them." Well, personally, I could suffer them—if not more gladly, at least with a greater resignation—if I were allowed to recite, "Two plain; one purl" so long as their infliction lasted. As it is, I am left with nothing else to do except furtively to watch the clock, and secretly to ring up "OO Heaven" to send down a bombing party to deliver me.

Men of the Latin races are far more wise in this respect. If you tied the hands of a Frenchman, or an Italian, or even a Spaniard, up behind his back, the odds are he would be struck dumb! But we Englishmen—we only seem able to become eloquent when, as it were, we have voluntarily placed our own hands into the handcuffs of our own trouser pockets. Even Englishwomen are singularly un-self-revealing with anything except their tongues. You have only to watch an Englishwoman singing to realise how extremely limited are her powers of expression. She places both hands over her heart to represent "Love," and opens them wide to illustrate every other emotion.

And this self-restriction—especially when you can't hear what she is singing about, which is not seldom—leads more quickly to the wrinkles of perplexity than even does the problem of how to circumvent the culinary soarings of Mrs. Beaton, and yet obtain the same results . . . with eggs at the price they are! If some producing genius had not conceived the idea of ending off nearly every musical-

comedy song with a dance, and yet another genius of equally enviable parts had not created the beauty chorus, I don't know how many a prima donna of the lighter stage would ever be able to get through her own numbers. For, to dance at the end of her little ditty, and to have the chorus girls relieve her of further action at the end of the first verse, brings as great a relief to her as well as to the audience, as do his trouser pockets to the young man who makes-believe to love her for ever and for ever . . . and then some, on the stage.

And, because we have taken the well-dressed "poker" as our ideal of masculine "good form" in society, English men and women always seem to exude an atmosphere of "slouching" indifference to everything except their God—and football. It has such a very chilling effect upon exuberant foreigners when they run up against it. Emotionally, I am sure we are as developed as any other nation . . . look at our poetry, for example! But we have so long denied the right to express it, that we have forgotten how it should be done.

"*I shall love you on and on . . . throughout life; after death; until the end of eternity . . . !*" declares the impassioned Englishman, the while he carelessly shakes the dead-end off his cigarette on to somebody else's carpet.

"*And for you, Egbert, the world will be only too well lost. I will willingly die with you . . . at any time most convenient to yourself,*" answers his equally-impassioned mistress, gently replacing an errant kiss-curl behind her left ear.

Well, I suppose it does take another Englishman to realise that these two are preparing for a *crime passionel*. But a simple foreigner, more used to the violence of the "movies" in everyday life than we are, might be excused if he merely believed them to be protesting a preference for prawns in aspic over prawns without.

Not, however, that it really matters . . . so long as the lovers, like Maisie, "get right there" at the finish. For, after all, does not passion mostly end in the same kind of old "tripe" . . . either here in England or . . . well, let us say . . . the tropics?

Relations

Our Relations are a race apart. They are not often our friends; rarer still are they our enemies. They are just "relations"—men and women who treat our endeavours towards righteousness with all the outspoken hostility of those who dislike us, whom yet we do not want to quarrel with because then there may be nobody left except the village doctor to bury us.

Relations always seem to know us too little, and too well. The good in us is continually warped by the bad in us—which, in parenthesis, is the only one of our secrets relatives ever seem able to keep. To tell the world of our faults would be like throwing mud at the family tree. Moreover, relations always seem born with long memories. There is no one in this world who remembers quite so far back, nor quite so vividly, as a mother-in-law. And one's relations-in-law are but one's own relations in a concentrated and more virulent form. And yet everybody is somebody's relation. You consider that remark trite, perhaps? Well, "trite" it undoubtedly is, and yet it is extremely difficult to realise. The middle-aged woman whom you find so charming, so sympathetic, so very "understanding," may send her nephews and nieces fleeing in all directions the moment she appears among them. The man you look upon as being an insufferable bore may still be Miss Somebody-or-other's best beloved Uncle John. It is so hard to explain. It is almost as hard to explain as the charm of the man your closest woman-friend marries. What she can see in him you cannot for the life of you perceive, while he, on his part, secretly wonders why the woman he loves ever sought friendship with such a pompous, dull ass as you are. Love is blind, so they say. Well, so is friendship—so are relations—blind to everything except your faults.

Another odd thing about relations is that only very rarely can you ever make friends with them. At best, your intimacy amounts to nothing more than a truce. You are extremely lucky if it isn't open warfare. They know at once too little about you and too much. They never by any chance acknowledge that you have changed, that you are a better man than once you were. What you have once been, in their opinion, you will always be—so help-them-heaven-to-hide-the-wine-cellar-key! You may change your friends as you "grow out" of them, or they "grow out" of you; but your relations are for ever immutable. The friends of your youth you have sometimes nothing in common with later on, except "memories"; and except for these "memories" there is little or no tie between you. But the "memories" of friends centre around pleasant things, whereas the "memories" of relations seem to specialise at all times in the disagreeable. Moreover, relations will never acknowledge that you have ever really *grown up*. This is one of their most tiresome characteristics. To them you will always be the little boy who

forgot to write profusive thanks for the half-a-crown they gave you when you first went to school. You can always tell the man or woman who live among their relatives. They possess no individuality, no "vision"; they are narrow, self-centred, pompous, clannish—with that clannishness which means only complete self-satisfaction with the clan. They take their mental and moral "cue" from the oldest generation among them. The younger members are, metaphorically speaking, patted on the head and told to believe in grandpapa as they believe in God.

No, the great benefit of having relations is to come back to them. To visit them is like stirring up once more the memories of your lost youth, which time and distance have rendered faint. And to return once more to one's youth is good for every man. It makes him realise himself, and the "thread" which has been running through his life linking all the incidents together. And, as I said before, relations are agreeable adjuncts at your own funeral, since you may always depend upon them saying nice things about you when it's too late for you to hear them. Friends will never do that. They don't need to. They carry your epitaph with them written on their own hearts. The "nice" things have been said—they have been said to YOU.

Polite Conversation

A man may live to be a hundred; he may have learnt to speak twelve different languages—all badly; he may know, in fact, everything a man ought to know, and have done everything a man ought to have done; but one thing he probably won't have learnt—or, if he has done so, then he ought to be counted among the Twelve Apostles and other "wonders"—and that is the fact that, what interests him enormously to talk about won't necessarily be anything but a bore for other people to listen to. Most people talk a great deal and tell you absolutely nothing you want particularly to know. The man or woman who can talk *impersonally* is as rare as a psychic phenomenon when you want to see it but won't *pay for* a manifestation! Most people can talk of nothing but themselves because nothing else really interests them. I don't mean to say that they boast, but, what they talk about is purely their own personal affair—ranging from golf to grandchildren. That is what makes dogs the most sympathetic listeners in the world. Could they speak, I fear me they would only tell us about their puppies, or of their new bone, or of the rat they worried to death the last time they scampered through the wood. Cats are far more egotistical, and consequently far more human. They can't talk, it is true; neither can they listen. By their manner we know exactly what interests them at the moment, and if they appear to sympathise with us, it is only because what we want at the moment fits in admirably with their own desires. And so many people are just like cats in this. They invite us to their houses, presumably because they desire our company, but, in reality, in order that they may relate to us at length the incidents, big or small, which have marked the calendar of their recent very everyday existence.

But we, on our side, are not without our means of revenge. We invite them back again, under protestations of friendship, and, when we have got them, and, as it were, chained them down with the fetters of politeness, we relate to them in our turn everything which has happened to us and ours. We never ask ourselves if our children, or our cook, or our new hat, or our next summer holiday can interest anybody outside the radius of their influence. We demand another human being to smile when we smile, show anger when we show anger, echo our own admiration for our new hat, and generally retrace with us our life in retrospect and journey with us into the problematical future. For, as I said before, the wisdom which realises that the incidents of our own life need not—very probably do not, although they may be too polite to show it—interest other people, is the rarest wisdom of all. Most people will never, never learn it. And the more people love their own affairs, the more they seek the world for listeners whom, as it were, they may devour. They usually have hundreds of intimates, and boast at Christmas of having sent off a thousand cards! As a matter of fact, they very probably have not one real friend. But that does not trouble them. They don't require friendship. They only need, as it were, a perpetual pair of ears into which to pour the trivialities of their daily life. Personally, I get so tired of listening to stories of children I have never seen; golfing "yarns" which I have heard before; servants—all as bad as each other; Lloyd George; new clothes; ailments; what Aunt Emily intends to do with last year's frock, and of little Flora's cough. I wish it were the fashion for people to ask their friends to *do* something, instead of securing their society, with nothing to do with it when they've got it, except to offer hours for conversation with literally nothing to say on either side. I should like to read a book in company, it is nice to work in company; a visit to a theatre with a congenial companion is delightful—and this, of course, applies to concerts, lectures, picture galleries, even shopping. But the usual form of friendly entertainment is a deadly thing. Only a cook, who at the same time is an artist, can make them possible. For you can endure hours of little other than the personal note in conversation with the compensation of a culinary *chef' d'oeuvre* in front of you. That is why you so often hear of a "perfectly charming woman with a simply wonderful cook." It's the cook, I fancy, who is the real charmer.

Awful Warnings

Old Age is bad enough, but a dyspeptic Old Age—that surely is fate hitting us below the belt! For with advancing years the love of adventure leaves us; the "Love of a Lifetime" becomes to us of more real consequence than our pet armchair—but the *love of a good dinner*, that, at least, can make the everyday of an octogenarian well worth living. Young people little realise the awful prophecy implied in that irritating remark—"Don't gobble!" There is another one, almost equally irritating to youth—"Go and change your socks!" But, if the truth must be told, you regret the "No" you said to Edwin when he asked you to "fly with him"; the louis you failed to place *en plein* on thirty-six, which you *felt* was coming up, infinitely less than that you still persisted to "gobble" when you were warned not to, and you failed to change your socks while there was yet time. Now it is too late, alas! How true it is, the saying—"If Youth knew how, and Age only could." The trouble is that, when elderly people would warn youth, they rarely ever give concrete examples. They always imply some *moral* loss which will happen to young people if they do not follow their elders' advice. But youth would be far more impressed if age drew a vivid picture of their own physical and digestive decrepitude. But, of course, age won't do that. Why should it? No one likes to think that their "every movement tells a story."

Personally, I can foresee a new profession open to those elderly people who are the victims of their own early indiscretions. Why should they not tour the country as a collection of *awful warnings*! Fancy the joy there would be in the hearts of all those who, as it were, stand bawling at the cross-roads that the "narrow path" is the broader one in the long run, if they woke up and saw on the hoardings some such announcement as this:—

Coming! Coming!! Coming!!!

FOR ONE WEEK ONLY!

The Awful End of the Man who
Gobbled his Food!

Mary of the Hooked Figure; or, the Girl who Wouldn't
Change her Wet Socks!

A Picture of Living Vermin; or, the Man who
Never Washed!

The End of the Girl who Would Take the
Wrong Turning!

Parents, Free. Children, One Penny. Schools and
Large Parties by Arrangement.

It would ease the burden of parenthood enormously. It might even "Save the Children." Maybe they would thank their mother from the bottom of their hearts because she took them to see these living examples of youthful folly instead of lugging them to a dull lecture on hygiene. For half the silly things we do, we do because we don't realise the consequences. The man who *knows everything* would gladly give up all his knowledge if he could turn back the hands of the clock, and, instead of studying the origin of Arabic, learn to recognise a pair of damp sheets when he got in between them; while a Woman of a Thousand Love Affairs would forego the memory of nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine of these if she could return to the early days and drink a glass of hot water between every meal! For, as I said before, Love leaves us and enthusiasms die; but Old Age which can sit down to a good dinner and thoroughly enjoy it without having to have a medical bulletin stuck up outside its bedroom door for days afterwards, is an Old Age which no one can call really unhappy. To eat is, at last, about the only joy which is left to us. The "romantic" will shudder at my philosophy, I know; but the "romantic" have generally such a lot to live for beside their meals. Old Age hasn't. That is why elderly people who can begin to look forward to their dinner—say at five o'clock in the afternoon—can be said to have reached the "ripe old age" of the Scriptures. If they *can't*?—well, over-ripe to *rottenness* is the only description.

It's oh, to be out of England—now that spring is here!

I don't know if you, fair reader, find that in the spring your fancy turns to thoughts of love—I know mine doesn't! On the contrary, it turns to thoughts of sulphur tablets and camomile tea and other sickly or disagreeable circumventions of the "creakiness" of the human body. For among the things I could teach Nature is that, when she made man, she did not permit him to "flower" in the spring and start

each year with something at least resembling his pristine vigour—if he ever had any. But, whereas the spring gives a new glory to birds, and trees, and plants, she only gives to us—built in the image of God—spots, a disordered liver, and a muddy complexion. It seems a piece of gross mismanagement, doesn't it? It would be so delightful if, once a year, we were filled with extra energy; if our hair sprouted once more in the colour with which we were born; if the old skin shed itself and a new one came on so beautiful as to ruin the business of all the "Mrs. Pomeroys" of this world. But Nature seems, once having made us, to leave us severely alone; to let us wither on our stalks, as it were, until we drop off them and are swept away into the dustbin of the worms and weeds. The mind is a far kinder ally. Oh, no; say what you will in the praise of spring, to all those who, as it were, have commenced the "bulge" of anno domini, it is a very trying season. Besides—here in England anyway—it is as uncertain as a flirt. Sometimes it suddenly comes upon us in the early days of March or lets mid-winter pay us a visit in the lengthening days of May. One never quite knows what spring is going to do. One never knows what kind of clothes to wear to please it. So often one sallies forth arrayed in winter underwear, because the morning awoke so coldly, only to spend the rest of the day eating ices to keep the body calm and cool. Or, again, the spring morning greets us with the warmth of an August day; we jump up gaily, deck ourselves out in muslin, sally forth, take a sudden "chill," and spend the rest of the week in bed!

One is always either too hot or too cold. It is the season of the unaccountable draught. True, it often turns the fancy towards sweet thoughts of love—but the fancy usually ends with an influenza cold through indulging in sentimental dalliance upon the grass. On the whole, I always think that spring in England is nicer to sing about than experience. It is delightful as a season of "promise"—but, like humanity, it often treats its promises like pie-crusts. Still, it *is* spring, and—although the body rarely recognises the fact except to ruin by biliousness the romance which is surging in its heart—summer is, as it were, knocking at the door. And from June to mid-July—that surely is the glory of the year! After July, summer becomes a little dusty at the hem. Still, dusty, or even dirty, it makes life worth living. Nevertheless, I only wish that it were greedier and stole three months away from winter. For winter is too long, and spring is too uncertain, and autumn too full of "Farewell."

But summer never palls. And we have five summers to make up for, haven't we? For no one could really enjoy anything during the war except the war news—when it was favourable. But now we can—well, if not enjoy ourselves, at least lie back, just whispering to ourselves that, when the sun shines the world is a lovely place, and, so far as England is concerned, there is at any rate a kind of camouflaged peace. And so we have to be very very old if we cannot feel in our hearts a breath of youth and spring. After all, when the sun shines, we are, or feel we are, of any age—or of no age whatever. And if we cannot burst into flower like the roses, we can at least enjoy the beauty of the rose when it blooms—which other roses cannot do. Thus, with a few small mercies, life is very good when the sun shines, isn't it?

Bad-tempered People

I would sooner live with an immoral man or woman than a bad-tempered one. An immoral person can often be a very charming companion, quite easy to live with—if you take the various excuses for sudden absences at their face value, and don't probe too deeply into the business; in fact, if you are not in love with the absentee. A bad-tempered person in the house may have the morality of the angels—but life with him is a daily "hell," like always living with strangers, or a mad dog, or in a room full of those ornaments which belong, almost exclusively, to lodging-houses everywhere. Briefly, he is always *there*—ready to burst into flames at any moment, ready to misunderstand everything anybody does or says, a perpetual bugbear; and not even the emotional repentances, which are often the only partially saving grace of bad-tempered people, can atone for the atmosphere of disturbance which they always inflict. And the man or woman who loses his temper whenever anything goes in the slightest bit wrong—well, from them may the Lord deliver me for ever, Amen! They carry their ill-nature about with them all day and under all circumstances. Sometimes they seem to imagine that their spirit of disagreeableness is a sign of the super-man, or of that dominating personality of which Caesar and Napoleon are historical examples. They frequent restaurants and harry the already over-harried waiters. It is such a very easy victory—the victory over a paid servant. But the conquerors stamp themselves for ever and for ever among Nature's "cads" nevertheless. Anybody who is rude enough can give a quelling performance of "God Almighty" before menials. Some people delight to do so, apparently. They possess everything except an instinctive respect for a man and woman, however lowly, who are earning their own living. And the lack of it places them among the inglorious army of the "bounders" for all time. When there is no "inferior" upon whom to vent the outbursts of their own supreme egoism, they find their wives extremely useful. In the days when the divorce laws are "sensible," freedom will be granted for perpetual bad temper sooner than for occasional unfaithfulness.

Of course, we all have our days when we are like nothing so much as gunpowder looking for a match.

We can't be perfect and serene all the time. And if ever, as I have just hinted, we do wake up in the morning feeling as if we could get up and quarrel with a bee because it buzzes, a Beecham pill will probably soon put us in a regular "click" of a humour. ("Mr. Carter" never offered me anything; nor did Sir Thomas Beecham. But being fond of grand opera, I mention the pills "worth a guinea a box" for preference. Besides, they tell us a "Beecham at night makes you sing with delight!" So there!) That is one of the reasons why I always advocate a "silence room" in every household which otherwise is large enough to put the biggest room aside to play billiards in. I would have it quite small, and decorated in restful, neutral tints, with the finest view from the window thereof that the house could supply. I would also have a little window cut out of the door, through which food could be pushed in to the sufferer without him having to tell the domestic that it is a fine day and that he hopes her bunion's better. This little room would be devoted to those inmates of the house who got up on the wrong side of the bed because both sides were "wrong sides" that morning. There he, or she, would stay until the world seemed to be bright again. And they would come forth in their new and serener state of mind, blessing the idea with all their hearts. For if, as they have to do now, they had come downstairs in the mood in which they woke up, the whole house would have known of it to curse it, and most of its members would not be on polite speaking terms for days afterwards. Of course, the idea could be recommended also for those people whose temper is always in a state of uproar. The only difficulty, however, would be, then—they might live in the silence room all their lives and die there—beloved, because *unseen*. But that is the only thing to do with an habitually disagreeable person—*lock him up*, and, if you be wise, *take away the key of the dungeon with you*!

Polite Masks

You never really know anybody—until you have either lived with them, travelled with them, or drunk a glass of port with them quietly over the fireside. In almost every other instance, what you become acquainted with is one of a variety of *masks*! And everyone has a fine assortment of these, haven't they? For the most part you don them unconsciously—or rather, you have got so used to assuming them suddenly that you have lost all consciousness of effort. But they are *masks*, nevertheless—and a mask always hides the truth, doesn't it? Not that I am one of those, however, who dislike camouflage because it *is* camouflage. In fact, most of the time I thank Heaven for it—my own and other people's! The "assumed" is so often so much more agreeable than the natural, and nine times out of ten all you require of men and women is that they should at least *look* pleasant. You've got to get through this life day after day somehow, and time passes ever so much quicker for everyone if the hypocrite be a smiling hypocrite at all times. At every moment of the everyday—preserve me from the *sour*-visaged saint.

After all, only love and friendship and the law demand the truth and nothing but the truth. Among acquaintances, among all the many thousands you meet through life only to discuss the weather and your own influenza symptoms—all you ask of them is that they should bring out their smiling mask as readily as you struggle to assume your own. Only, as I said before, in love and friendship and the courts of law is the mask an insult, a tragic disillusion and a sham. In every other circumstance it is usually a blessing. Without it society, as a social entertainment, would become impossible. For society is but a collection of men and women wearing masks, each one vying with the others to make his mask the most attractive, and, at the same time, the most concealing. But the worst of wearing masks is, that we become tired at last of holding them in front of our features. This makes the entertainment of watching the truth peering through the camouflage one of the most amusing among the many unpremeditated amusements of the social world. After all, as I said before, so long as your lover and your friend, and the witnesses you have subpoenaed on behalf of your own case, show you *truth*—all you ask of the others is the most agreeable mask they can put on for the occasion. But even lovers and friends may deceive you, while some witnesses' idea of the truth in the law courts hasn't that semblance of reality possessed by the Medium's description of life in the world beyond. That is what makes matrimony often such a gamble with loaded dice, and holidays so often more tedious than work. To be in the company of one's lover for one ecstatic hour tells one nothing of what he will be when, day after day, one has to live with him in deadly intimacy until death doth part us both.

Neither do you really know how much, or how little, your friend means to you, until you have been with her on a cold railway station for hours, when fate has done its best to make you both lose your tempers and your luggage. Only a very *real* love can survive smiling through that period when, from almost maudlin appreciation, a husband gradually sinks into the commonplace mood of taking his soul's mate "for granted." Only *real* friendship can live through the disillusionment of irritable temper, lack of imagination, and boredom so often revealed while travelling in the company of friends. More than half the mutual life of lovers and friends is spent behind masks—for masks are sometimes necessary to keep love and friendship great and true. But one must, nevertheless, know *something* of the real man and

woman *behind the mask*—even though that which lies behind it may prove disappointing—before you can prove that your love is *real* love, that your friendship is *real* friendship, that you love your lover or your friend, not only for what they are, but also in spite of what they are *not*.

The Might-Have-Been

It is rare to come across anybody with very definite ideas; it is rarer still to meet a man and woman brave enough to put their ideas into practice. The hardest battle in life—and one of the longest—is the battle to live your own life. No one realises what fighting really means until they stand in battle-array face to face with relations. But most of us have to fight this battle sooner or later, and if we fight and yet make a "hash" of the victory we gain, is it not better so? Relations always think they know what is best for you. Well, perhaps they do, if the "best" be a circumspect kind of goodness. But they rarely know what you *want*, and, until you have got what you really want, even though you find it is "Dead Sea fruit" after all, the thought always haunts the disappointed Present by visions of the glorious Might-Have-Been.

Relatives always seem to imagine that, when you say you want to lead your own life, it is always a "bad" life you want to lead. They seem to think that a girl leading her own life is a girl entertaining men friends, until goodness knows what hour of the night, alone in her bachelor flat, they picture a man leading his own life as a man whose memoirs would send shudders down a really nice woman's spine. They never realise that there is happiness in personal freedom and liberty—happiness which is happy merely in the independent feeling of self-respect which this freedom and liberty gives. They would like boys and girls to continue to maturity the same life which they led when they were children, subject to the same restrictions, bowing to the same parental point of view. No one knows of what he is capable until he has begun the battle of life in the world of men, independent and on his own. Better make a "hash" of everything; better suffer and endure and grow old in disappointment, than live in a gilded cage with clipped wings, while kind-hearted people feed you to repletion through the bars.

A girl or boy, who has no occupation, other than the occupation of mere amusement, who has no Ideal; who has no interest other than the interest of passing the time, is not only useless, but detestable as a member of human society, while his old age is of unhappiness the most unhappy. For what is Old Age worth if it has no "memories"; and what are "memories" worth if they are not memories of having lived one's life to the full? To me, to live one's own life is to live—or, perhaps I ought to say, to strive to live—all those ideals which Reflection has shown you to be good, and Nature has given you the power to accomplish. That to me is the fight to live your own life—the fight to realise yourself, to live the "best" that is in you. For a man and woman must be able to hold up their heads high, not only face to face with the world, but face to face with their own selves, before they can say that Life is happy, that Life has been worth while. The tragic cases are those who cannot live their own lives because the lives of other people demanded their sacrifice, a sacrifice which cannot be withheld without loss of self-respect, of that good fellowship with your own "soul" which some people call Conscience.

This sacrifice is generally a woman's sacrifice. You may see the victims of it in any church, in any town, at almost any hour of the day. They are grey-haired, and sad, and grim, and they hold the more tenaciously to the promise of happiness in After Life because they have sacrificed, or permitted to pass by, the happiness of this. To a great extent it is a "Victorian" sacrifice. They are victims of that passing Belief which was convinced that a girl of gentle birth ought to administer to her parents, pay calls, uphold the Church, and do a little needlework all her life, unless some man came along to marry her and give her emancipation. The happiness which goes with a career, even if that career fails, is saving daughters from this parentally imposed "atrophy." They are learning that to live one's own life is not necessarily to live a "bad" life, but a "fuller" life. Thus the young are teaching the Old People wisdom—the knowledge that youth has its Declaration of Rights no less than Middle Age.

Autumn Sowing

I sometimes think the man who first said that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" must have said it in November. The autumn is full of good intentions—just as spring is full of holiday and hope, and summer of heat and *dolce far niente*. But, just as the first warm day in June fills you with a physical vitality which you feel convinced that you must live for ever, so autumn makes you realise that life is fleeting and the mind has not yet reached its full development, nor intellectual ambition its complete fruition. Perhaps it is the touch of winter in the air which braces your mind and soul and gives you the impression that, given the long autumn evenings over the fire undisturbed, your brain will soon be capable of tackling the removal of mountains. If you are unutterably silly (as so many of us are—

alas! for the world's sanity; but thank heaven for the world's humour!) you will plan a whole curriculum of intellectual labour for the quiet evenings over the fireside. Oh, the books—good books, I mean—you will read! Oh, the subjects you will study! Perhaps you will learn Russian, or maybe something strange and out-of-the-ordinary, like Arabic! You dream of the moment when, speaking quite casually, you will inform your friends that you are reading the whole of the novels of Balzac; that you are studying for the law and hope to pass your "Final" "just for the fun of the thing"; that you are learning Persian, and intend to retranslate the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám and discover other Eastern philosophers. In fact, there is no end to the things you intend to do in the autumn evenings over the fireside when your labours of the day are over. Briefly, you are going to "cultivate your mind"; and when people talk about "cultivating their minds," they usually regard the mind as a kind of intellectual allotment which anyone can till—given determination, an easy-chair near a big fire, and the long, long autumn evenings.

What You Really Reap

But alas! all you do . . . all you *really* do, is . . . Well, as I said before, the man who first said that "the way to hell is paved with good intentions," must have said it in the autumn, or perhaps, in the spring, when he realised how few of the good intentions he had lived up to. Well, maybe the most enjoyable part of going to hell is paving the way with, as it were, your back turned to your eventual goal. And sometimes I rather fancy, in spite of all the moralist may say, the paving-stones of good intent that you have laid on your way to perdition will be counted in your favour, and the Recording Angel will place them to your credit—which she can't do if, metaphorically speaking, you have not paved a way anywhere, but just been content to live snugly on the little plot upon which Fate planted you at the beginning, and you were too dully inert either to cultivate hot-house orchids thereon or even let it become overgrown with wild oats and roses. And I think sometimes that on good intentions we eventually mount to heaven. I certainly know that the good intentions of the early autumn make me very nearly forgive the cycle of the seasons which robs me of summer and its joys. And after all, there is always this to be said for a good intention, nobody knows, yourself least of all, if you may not one day fulfil it. That is what makes dreaming so exciting. In your dreams you *have* learnt Russian; you *have* read all the novels of Balzac; you *will* be able to understand Sir Oliver Lodge when he leaves the realms of spiritualism and talks about the stars. And maybe—who knows?—by the time that your dreams have materialised into reality and spring has just arrived, you *will* be able to tell Lenin, if you happen to meet him, that you have "seen the daughters of the lawyer and lost the pen of your aunt"; and you *will* have read the books of Paul de Kock because you couldn't struggle through Balzac; and you *will* know the composition of the moon and the impossibility of there being a man in it—which, after all, is a far greater achievement than having played countless games of bridge, learnt sixty-two steps of the tango, evolved a racing system, and arrived at loving the Germans, isn't it?

Autumn Determination

But unless your determination be something Napoleonic, you won't have achieved very much more than this. It has all been so invigorating and delightful to contemplate; and the way of your decline has been so cosy and so comfortable, and it has so often ended in a glass of hot "toddy" and so to bed. You had stage-managed your self-education so beautifully. You had brought the most comfortable easy-chair right up to the fire; you had put on your "smoking"—not that garment almost as uncomfortable as evening-dress, but that coat which is made of velvet, or flannel, softly lined with silk and deliciously padded: you had brought out all your books—the "First Steps to Russian," "How to appreciate Balzac," "Introduction to Astronomy"—put your feet on the fender, cut the end of your best cigar. Everything simply invited peace and comfort and an intellectual feast. Then, just *one more* glimpse at the evening paper—and you would begin . . . oh yes! you *would begin*! And so you read about the threatened strike; the murder in East Ham; the leading article, the marriage of Lady Fitzclarence-Forsooth to—well, whoever she married, the funny remark the drunken woman made to the judge when he fined her two-and-six for kissing a policeman; Mr. Justice Darling's latest *mot*; the racing, the forthcoming fashions; the advertisement of Back-Ache Pills; Mr. C. B. Cochran's praise of his own productions, Mr. Selfridge's praise of his own shop; the "Wants," the "Situations Vacant," the . . . Then somebody woke you up to ask if you were asleep . . . which, of course, you *weren't* . . . Well . . . well . . . It is past midnight! So what can one do now? What *can* one do? Why, go to bed, of course. Another autumn evening is over. But then, there are plenty more . . . oh, plenty more. "Good-night."

Two Lives

I often wish that we could all of us lead two lives. I don't mean I wish that we could live twice as long—though, in reality, it would come to the same thing. But I would like to live the two lives which I want to lead, and only do lead in a sort of patchwork-quilt kind of way. I would like to live a life in which I could wander gipsy-like over the face of the globe—seeing everything, doing everything, meeting everybody. I should also like to live a purely vegetable existence in some remote country village—sleeping away my life in happy domesticity, away from the crowd, free from care, tranquil, and at peace. I suppose that, even as dreams, they are only too futile—but they are very pleasant dreams nevertheless. I know that they *are* dreams—since I am quite sure that the reality would be far less satisfactory than it seems in anticipation. There is "always a fly in the amber" as the saying goes, and my experience is, that the truth more nearly resembles a great big fly with a tiny speck of amber sticking somewhere to its back. For in our dream voyages we overlook the fleas, the mosquitoes, the hunt for lodgings, the struggle with languages, the hundred-and-one disturbances of the spirit which are inseparable from real voyages of any kind and bombard our inner tranquillity at every turn. In the same way, when we gaze at the peaceful landscape of some hidden-away English countryside, we yearn to live among such peacefulness, forgetting that, though life in the country may *look* peaceful to the stranger's eye, experience teaches us that gossip and scandal and the continual agitation round and round the trivial—an agitation so great that the trivial becomes colossal—at last rob life of anything resembling *dolce far niente* mid country lanes and in the shadow of some country church. In fact, it seems to me that the emotion which we seek—the emotion of strange wonderplaces, the emotion of utter restfulness which falls upon the soul like a benediction—do come to us from time to time, but at the most unexpected moments and in the most unlikely places. They come—and we hug them in our memory like precious thoughts. And sometimes we try to reproduce them artificially, only to discover that "never anything twice" is one of the lessons of life—and quite the last one we ever learn, even if we ever do learn it—which is doubtful.

Backward and Forward

Thus for the most part, things look most beautiful when we anticipate them, or as we look back upon them in memory over the fireside. For distance lends enchantment, not only to most views, but also to memories and love. As, metaphorically, we stand on the Mount of Olives gazing down at the city of Jerusalem, thinking of all that tiny corner of the earth has meant to men and women, we forget—as we look back—the beastly little mosquito which bit us on the nose, the interruption or our companion who wondered what the stones might tell us if they could only speak. So (also metaphorically), as we set our faces towards the Holy City, filled with the anticipation of those sublime thoughts and emotions which would surge through our souls when we eventually arrived there, we were happy in our ignorance of the fact that, when we did arrive, we felt unutterably dirty and our head ached, and the corn on our little toe felt more like a cancer than a corn! Meanwhile, the emotion of the soul, which we expected to find upon the Mount of Olives, has sometimes come to us quite unexpectedly while standing in the middle of Clapham Common in the moonlight; and that glorious spirit of adventure, which to us means "travel," we have felt riding on a motor-bike through the New Forest at nightfall when the forest seemed full of pixies and the fading sunset was red and grey and golden like the transformation scene of a pantomime. But alas! the next day we found the forest unromantic, and Clapham Common looked indescribably common in the morning sunlight. Our mood had vanished, and although we tried to reproduce the same uplifting emotion the following evening, we couldn't—we had a headache and the gnats were about. So, although I often yearn to live *two* lives—one full of travel and adventure, and the other peacefully over the fireside mid the peace and beauty of the country—I am quite sure that, were my wish granted, I should find both lives just the same mixture of unexpected happiness and unanticipated disappointment which I find this one to be, yet still go smiling on. Very rarely the Time and the Place and the Mood. But when they do happen to come together—well, life is so wonderful and so beautiful that to throw in the "Loved one" too would seem like gilding the rose—a heaven worth sacrificing every stolen happiness in life for.

When?

One of the greatest—perhaps *the* greatest—problems which parents have to face is—when to tell their children the truth about sexual life; how to tell it; how little to tell—how much. And most parents, alas! are content to drift—to trust to luck! They themselves have got through fairly well; the probabilities are, then, that their children will get through fairly well too. So they, metaphorically speaking, fold their hands and listen, and, when any part of the truth breaks through the reticence of intimate conversation, they shake their heads solemnly, strive to look shocked—and often are; or else they make a joke of it—believing that their children regard the question in the same reasonable light as

they do themselves. But ignorance is never reasonable, and half ignorance is even more excited. There is a "mystery" somewhere, and ignorant youth is hot after its solution. And the "mystery" is solved for them in a dozen ways—all more or less dirty and untrue. Better far be too frank, so long as your frankness isn't the frankness of coarse levity, than not to be frank enough. The reticence of parents towards their children in this matter has turned many a young life of brilliant promise into a life-long hell. We don't *see* this hell for the most part, and, because we don't see it, we fondly believe that it does not exist—or, if it does exist, that it exists so rarely as scarcely to demand more than a passing condemnation and a sigh. We hear a great deal about the Hidden Plague. We hear of the 80,000 cases of syphilis which are registered every year in the United Kingdom. But we don't know any individual sufferer—or we *think* we don't; and so, although we take the figure as an acknowledged fact, we nevertheless don't realise it—and in any case, it isn't a nice subject of debate, and, should the word be even mentioned in the presence of our dear, dear children, we would ask the speaker to leave the house immediately and never again return! I, too, was one of these poor fools—although I have no children to suffer from my foolishness. I knew it was a fact, but like others I didn't realise that fact—like we didn't realise the horror and filth and tragedy of war, we who never were "out there"; we who never "went over the top." But lately I have had to visit a friend in one of the largest lock hospitals in London. And one day I was obliged to walk through the waiting-room where the men are forced to sit until they are summoned to see the doctor. And truly I was appalled! There were *hundreds of them* of all ages—from 16 to 60. They were not the serious cases, of course, and we should pass them in the street without realising that they were any but physically sound men, often of a very splendid type. But each one represented a blighted life—a future robbed of splendid promise, a present of misery and unhappiness stalking through the world like shame beneath a happy mask. I tell you, it brought the truth home to me in a way mere figures and statistics could never do. As I said before, I was appalled: I was also very angry. For I knew that ignorance was at the bottom of many of these sad tragedies—the criminal reticence of the people *who know*, too mock-modest to discuss openly a fact of life which, beyond all other facts of life, should be spoken of bluntly, honestly, therefore decently and cleanly.

The Futile Thought

Too many fond parents like to imagine that their children know nothing at all of sexual matters—that they are clean and innocent and ignorant, and that, as long as they can be kept so, they will not run into danger and disgrace. But no parent really knows how much or how little their children know of this matter. Children have ears and imagination, and once they know anything at all—which is at any time from eight years of age, sometimes, alas! earlier—they should be told everything, not in a nasty, furtive fashion, glossing over the ugly part and elevating the decent side until it is out of all proportion to the truth, but quietly, with dignity, laying stress on the fact that sexual morality is not a thing of religion and of God, but of self-respect, of care for the coming generation, and, especially, of that great love which one day will come into their lives. It should not be called a "sin"; at the same time it should not be laughed at and made the subject of a whispered jest. Sexual laxity should be treated in the same way as dishonesty and untruthfulness—a sin against oneself, against the beauty of one's own soul, and against those who believe in us and love us and are our world. Children should be taught to respect the dignity of their own bodies, of their own minds and soul; not by leaving them in half-ignorance, but by telling them everything, and telling them it in the right way—which is the clean and truthful way.

The London Season

If only the people who repeat the words of wisdom uttered by philosophers lived as if they believed them, how much happier the world would be! It is, however, so much easier to give, or to repeat, advice, than to follow it, isn't it? Conventionality is far stronger than common sense, and a fixed habit more powerful than a revolution. Besides, most people realise that to give advice is a much more impressive ceremony than merely to receive it. And I think that the majority of people would far sooner look *impressive* than be *wise*. The *appearance* of a thing sometimes pleases them far more than the thing itself. Besides, to give advice is a rather pleasant proceeding, and those who habitually indulge in it seem incapable of discouragement. They will inform the "rolling stone" that if he continues his unresisting methods he will gather no moss, but the rolling stone usually continues to roll merrily onward. They will protest to the ignorant that "to be good is to be happy," but very few of them will go out of their way to do good, if, by being "bad," they can snatch a personal advantage without anybody being any the wiser. "Life would be endurable if it were not for its pleasures," they declare in the face of a pile of social invitations. Yet they still endure that treadmill of entertainments which makes up a London season, only showing their real feelings by moaning to themselves in the process. They freely acknowledge that very few of these entertainments really entertain, but to miss being seen at them

would be to risk a disaster which they would not dare to take. So they go wearily smiling to amusements which don't amuse, to dances which are too crowded to dance at, to dinner parties at which they pay in boredom for the food they eat; to "at homes" which are the most "homeless" things imaginable—travelling here and there, from one entertainment to another which proves as unutterably dull as the first one. Not content with these things, they must perforce be seen at the Opera—although they *hate* music; visit all the exhibitions of art—when Maude Goodeman is their favourite painter; talk cleverly of books which they would never read did not people talk about them, and generally follow for three long months a time-table of "enjoyment" which very few of them really enjoy. In the meanwhile, the only affairs which give them pleasure are the little impromptu ones arranged on the spur of the moment between friends.

Of course I am not speaking of the débutante. She, "sweet young thing," always enjoys any entertainment at which there are plenty of young men and ices. Nor, judging from observation, do I include among those who willingly go through the three months' hard labour of a London season those henna haired ladies—thickening from anno domini—who seem perfectly happy in the delusion that their juvenile antics are still deliciously girlish, and whose décolleté dresses would seem to declare to the world that, though their faces may begin to show the wear and tear of life, their plump backs don't look a day over twenty-five. The one is so young that she will enjoy anything which requires the endurance of youth. The other is of that age which is happy hugging to its bosom the adage that a woman can't possibly look a day older than champagne makes her feel.

No, the person whose life of amusement I pity is the person who accepts invitations because she daren't refuse them. If the world doesn't see her in all places where she *should be* seen, the world always presumes her to be dead—and people would rather die in reality than live to be forgotten. But what a price they have to pay to keep their memories green.

No, as I said before, the only entertainments which people really enjoy are those at which they can be perfectly natural—natural, because they are perfectly happy. Rarely are they fixed affairs, advertised weeks beforehand. Mostly are they unpremeditated—-delightful little impromptu amusements made up of people who really desire to meet each other. Large entertainments are almost invariably dull. Upon them hangs the heavy atmosphere or a hostess "paying off old debts in *one*." The only really amusing part of them is to watch the amazement on the faces of one half of the guests that the other half is there at all! That is invariably funny. In the big affairs the chef and the champagne are the real hosts of the evening. If England went "dry," I think the London season would join the dodo—people couldn't possibly endure it on ginger "pop" and cider. But champagne and a good chef could, I believe, make even a Church Congress seem jolly. They only bring an illusion of happiness—but what's the odds? A London season is but an illusion of joy after all.

Christmas

Christmas comes but once a year—and the cynic cries, "Thank God!" And so, perhaps, do the very lonely. But then Christmas is not a festival for either the cynic or the desolate. The cynic is as welcome at the annual feast of turkey and plum pudding as Mr. "Pussyfoot" would be at a "beano"; while the lonely—well, one likes to imagine that there are no lonely ones at Christmas-time; or, if there are—that somebody has asked them out, or they have toothache and so wouldn't appreciate even the society of jolly seraphims. Christmas, except to the young, is essentially a festival of "let's pretend"—let's pretend that we love everybody, that everybody loves us, that Aunt Maria isn't a prosy old bore, that Uncle John isn't a profiteer; that everybody has his or her good points and that all their bad ones are not sticking out, as they usually appear to us to be, as painfully apparent as those on the back of a porcupine should you happen to sit down upon one in a bathing costume! And it is quite wonderful how this spirit of good will towards all men can be self-distilled, as it were! You try to feel it, and, strangely enough, you do feel it—at least, up to tea time. The public exhibition of ecstacy you give at receiving a present you don't want seems to come to you quite easily and naturally on Christmas morning. Even Aunt Maria can pretend enthusiasm quite convincingly at the gimcrack you have given her which her artistic soul loathes, the while she furtively examines its base to discover if peradventure you have forgotten to erase the price. You yourself declare, while regarding the sixpenny pen-wiper, that it is not the gift so much as the *thought* which pleases you, and you can declare this lie to the satisfaction, not only of yourself, but, more difficult by far, to the satisfaction of the wealthy donor who gave it to you because she couldn't think what to give you—and because, as she piously declares, "Thank God, you have everything you want!" Yes, indeed, there is something about Yuletide which makes all men benign, and the joyful hypocrisy of Christmas Eve sounds quite the genuine emotion when uttered on Christmas Day. I am bound, however, to confess that the "good will" becomes a trifle strident towards nightfall. Many things conduce to this. The children are suffering from overfeeding; Mother is sick of Aunt Maria, her husband's sister; and Father is more than fed up with the pomposity of Uncle John. There is a

general and half-uttered yearning among everybody to go upstairs and lie down. The jollifications of the coming evening, when the grown-ups come into their own and the children are being sick upstairs, presume the necessity for such a retirement—a kind of regeneration of that charitable energy required for the festival "jump off." After which the digestive organs begin to realise what sweated labour means, and Father makes a speech about his pleasure at seeing so many members of the family present, and Mother weeps silently for some trouble which always revives over Christmas dinner and nobody has yet been able to sympathise with, because nobody has yet known what it is. And, because Christmas night would otherwise prove somewhat trying even to a family determined to be loving or to die in the attempt, somebody or other has invented champagne. It is quite wonderful how the dullest people seem to take unto themselves wings after the third bottle of Veuve Clicquot has been opened.

So Christmas Day is thus brought to a triumphant conclusion of good will. And the next morning, of course, is Boxing Day—a most appropriately named event. Even if fighting isn't strictly legal, backbiting unfortunately is. Still, the wise relation seeks the frequent seclusion of his own bedroom during that mostly inglorious day of Christmas aftermath. You see, there is no knowing what sparks may fly when the digestions of a devoted family have gone on strike!

Only the children seem to be able to raise the jolly ashes of their dead selves, phoenix-like from the carcase of the devoured turkey (whose bones in the morning light of Boxing Day resemble somewhat the Cloth Hall at Ypres by the end of the war). Even they (bless 'em!) seem able to recover from the fact that the lovely toys which Uncle John gave them lie broken at their feet because Uncle John would insist upon playing with them all by himself. Children can always become philosophers in half a day. It is their special genius.

Only grown up people have forgotten how to forget. And Christmas, although the most lovable of all the festivals of the year, is also the saddest—and the most lonely, alas! There are so many "gaps"—so many empty places in the heart which the passing of the years will never, never be able to fill. That is why Mother weeps—it is her privilege. And, truth to tell, so many people would like to weep too, only they dare not—they dare not. So they throw themselves into the feverish jollity which Christmas seems to demand for the sake of the children, and for the sake of the young people who, because they were so young, will never realise the aftermath of loneliness which to-day elder people know *meant war*! So they say to themselves, "Let us eat and drink and appear merry because to-morrow . . . to-morrow—who knows?—peradventure we may all meet again!" Thus the true spirit of Christmas is always as a benediction.

The New Year

There is something "tonic" about the New Year which there isn't about Christmas, and Birthdays certainly do not possess. After thirty, you wake up on Christmas morning, look back into the Long Ago, and sigh; after forty, you wake up on the morning of your birthday, look forward, and ofttimes despair. But New Year's Day has "buck" in it, and, when you wake up, you lay down the immediate future with those Good Intentions which somebody or other once declared paved the way to Hell, but are nevertheless a most invigorating exercise. Christmas, besides, has been seized upon by tradesmen and others in whose debt you happen to be to remind you of the fact. I suppose they hope that the Good Will of the Season will make you think kindly of their account—which, in parenthesis, perhaps it might, did not that same Good Will run you into debt in other directions. As for Birthdays—well, the person who remembers Birthdays is the person at whose head I should like to hurl the biggest and heaviest paving-stone with which, as I lie in bed on New Year's morning, I lay out my way to Hell. No, as I said before, Christmas Days and Birthdays are failures so far as festivity goes. The former brings along with it bills and accounts rendered, and you are fed with rood which immediately overwhelms any feeling of kindliness you may happen to have in your heart, while the latter is like a settlement day with Time, and Time certainly lets you have nothing off your account. But New Year's Day, except in Scotland, where, I believe, you are expected to go out and get drunk—always an easy obligation!—brings with it nothing but another year, and possesses all the "tonic" quality of novelty, besides the promise of a much happier and luckier one than the Old Year which has just been scratched off the calendar. It is like an annual Beginning Again, and beginning again much better. Besides, New Year's Day seems to be an anniversary which belongs to you alone, as it were. On Christmas Day you are expected to do things for other people, and you do (usually just the things they don't want); while on Birthdays people do things for you (and you wish to Heaven they'd neglect their duty). But New Year's Day doesn't belong to anybody but yourself, and you prospect the future with no reference to anybody whomsoever, and, better still, with no one likely to refer to you. Oh, the New Leaves you are going to turn! The blots you are going to erase! The copy-books you are going to keep spotless! The Big Things you are going to do with what remains of your life, and the big way you are going to do them! Besides, say what you will, there comes to you on New Year's Day the very first breath of Spring. The Old Year is dead, and you

kick its corpse down the limbo of the Past and Done-with the while you plan out the New. So, looking forward in anticipation, you feel "bucked." You aren't expected to show "good will to all men" after a previous night's debauch on turkey, plum-pudding, and sweet champagne. Nobody comes down to breakfast on New Year's morning and weeps because "Dear Uncle John" was alive (and an unsociable old bore) "this time last year." Nobody adds to the day's joy by wondering if they will be "alive next New Year's Day," nor become quite "huffy" if you cheerfully remark that they very probably *will*. It doesn't invite the melancholy to become reminiscent, nor the prophet to assume the mantle of Solomon Eagle. New Year's Day belongs to nobody but yourself, and what you are going to make of the 365 days which follow it. You regard the date as a kind of spiritual Spring Cleaning, and to good housewives there is all the vigorous promise of a Big Achievement even in buying a pot of paint and shaking out a duster. And, though Fate usually helps to enliven Christmas-time by arranging a big railway accident or burning a London store down, and the newspapers, in search of something to frighten us now that the war is over, by referring to Germany's "hidden army" and an unprecedentedly colossal strike in the New Year, the human spirit soars above these things on the First of January, and Hope, figuratively speaking, buys a "buzzer" and makes high holiday. Who knows if the New Year may not be your year, your *lucky* year? And in this feeling you jump out of bed, clothe yourself in your "Gladdest Rags," collect your "Goodest" intentions, and sally forth. Nobody wishes you anything, it's true, but you wish yourself the moon, and in wishing for it you somehow feel that the New Year will give it to you.

February

February is the month when, cold-red are the noses—and so (oh help!) are the "toes-es." No one ever sings about February: scarcely anyone speaks about It. It is indeed unspeakable. Its only benefit is that, once every four years, it keeps people younger a day longer. If you're thirty-nine, you're thirty-nine for an extra twenty-four hours, and at that period of life you're glad of any small mercy. It is the month when the new-rich depart to sun themselves in their new-found sun, and the new-poor, and others who are quite used to poverty, swear at them in secret. Oh, yes, indeed! If the Clerk of the Weather has a left ear it must surely at this moment be as 'ot as 'ell! Nobody likes February—it is the step-child of the months.

One simply lives through it as one lives through a necessary duty. It's a month—and that's all. Thank Heaven! somebody once made it the shortest! By the end of January most people have had more than enough of the English Winter even if the English Winter thinks we can ever have enough of it, and comes back saying "Hello!" to us right into Summer, and starts ringing us up, as it were, to tell us it's coming back again as early as October. Just as if we didn't know—just as if we ever wanted to know! The English Summer is far more modest. Usually it's gone before we have, so to speak, washed our hands, tidied our hair, and dressed ourselves up to meet it. But Winter in England not only comes before it is wanted, but outstays its welcome by weeks. And of all the months it brings with it, February, though the shortest, seems to linger longest. March may be colder, but the first day of Spring is marked on its calendar; and we wait for it like we wait for a lover—a lover in whose embrace we may not yet be, but who is, as it were, downstairs washing his hands, he has arrived, he is here—and so we can endure the suspense of waiting for him with a grin. April may fill the dykes fuller than February, whose skies are supposed to weep all day long, but generally only succeed in dribbling, but April belongs to Spring—even though our face and hands and feet are still in Mid-Winter.

February always reminds me of the suburbs—appalling but you've got to go through them to get to London. Were I a rich man, I would follow Spring round the World. In that way I should be able to smile through life like those people who, in snapshots from the Riviera, seem composed principally of wide grins and thin legs, and whose joie de vivre is usually published in English illustrated journals in seasons when the English weather makes you feel that Life is just a Big Damn in a mackintosh. To follow Spring round the world would be like following a mistress whose charms never palled, whose welcome was never too warm to be sultry, whose friendship was never too cold to freeze further promise of intimacy. What a delightful chase! and what a sweet-tempered man I should be! For, say what you will, the weather has a lot to do with that spotless robe of white which is supposed to envelop saints. If you can't be pure and good and generous and altogether delightful in the Spring, you might as well write yourself off for evermore among the ignoble army of the eternally disgruntled. And if you *can* be all these things in weather that is typically English and typically February, then a hat would surely hide your halo.

And this is about all the good that February does, so far as I can see. True, once in four years it also allows old maids to propose. But the three years when they had to wait to be asked have usually taken all their courage out of them. Besides, the married people and others who are otherwise hooked and secure have turned even that benefit into a joke—and no woman likes to place all her heart-yearnings at the mercy of a laugh. So that, what Leap-Year once allowed, people have turned into a jeer. But then,

that is all part and parcel of February. Somebody once tried their best to make it as attractive as possible, even if it could only be so once every four years. But everybody else has since done their best to rob it of its one little bit of anaemic joy. Perhaps we ought not to blame them! Nobody ought to be blamed in February. It is a month which brings out the very worst in everybody.

Tub-thumpers

I often wonder what born tub-thumpers are like in their own homes. Perhaps they are as meek and mild as watered buttermilk. Thinking it over, I think they must be. No self-respecting woman could be tub-thumped at daily without eyeing furtively the nearest meat-carver. For the genius of a tub-thumper is that he is usually born deaf. I don't mean to say that he cannot hear, but he only hears what is convenient for his own arguments to hear, and the more an explanation is convincing the more he tries to shout it down, deafening himself as well as the poor fool who is struggling to make his meaning clear. Each one of us, I suppose, has to "let off steam" some time somewhere, and round about the Marble Arch, where fiery orators "let themselves go," must be the safety-valve of many an obscure home. Occasionally I go there—just to listen to men and women giving an example of that proverb about "a little knowledge being a dangerous thing." Moreover, there is a certain psychological interest in this rowdy corner of a peaceful park. It is typical of England, for one thing. I don't mean to say that tub-thumping is typical of England, but England is certainly the harbour of refuge of the crank. You can see there the crankiest of cranks being as cranky as they know how to be; and you can see also the utterly good-humoured indifference with which the crowds who listen to them regard their crankiness —which also has its meaning. The other evening a middle aged woman of untidy locks was crying that England alone was responsible for the war. Another—in this instance a young man—was deploring the recent blockade of Germany, viewing at the same time in quite a tender light the Zeppelin raids on towns and villages and the bombardment of undefended ports. In any other country, I think, these people would have been lynched. But D.O.R.A., as a strenuous female, is now as dead as 1914 fashions, and the people who heard these friends or Germany crying out their friendliness listened to them in laughing tolerance, which must have annoyed the speakers considerably, seeing that laughter renders unconvincing the very fiercest argument. But they laughed, and, passing on their way, heard God being described as an "old scoundrel," and this seemed to amuse them even more.

I Wonder If . . .

But I sometimes wonder if this indifference towards the facts which are "big" to so many people and ought, perhaps, to be "big" to everybody, be a sign of national weakness or of national strength. Personally, I longed, metaphorically speaking, to tear that female limb from limb and send that young man to a village under bombardment, there to make him stay a week in the very hottest portion of Hell's Corner. But had I done so, I realised that I should not have accomplished the very slightest good. The moment that you take a crank seriously, from that very moment he imagines that his "crankiness" is divinely inspired. Far better laugh at him and let him alone. Laughter is the one unanswerable contradiction, and ridicule is a far more deadly thing to fight against than fury, no matter if fury wields a hatchet. Perhaps this utter indifference to the firebrand is our national strength—even though it comes from a too-sluggish imagination, a too great imperviousness to new dangers. English people possess too great a sense of humour ever to become Bolshevik. They may not be witty and vivacious and effervescingly bright, but they possess an innate sense of the ridiculous which is their national safeguard against any very bloody form of revolution. So we suffer infuriated cranks—if not gladly, at least, in the same manner as we suffer baboons in the Zoo—interesting, and even amusing in their proper place, but to be shot at sight should they venture to play the "baboon" amid those hideous red-brick villas which have been termed an Englishman's castle and his home. After all, every new system has its ridiculous side, and strangely enough, it is this ridiculous side which is most apparent at the outset. Only after you have delved below the "comic froth" do you begin to realise that there is a very vital truth hidden beneath. Well, a sense of humour blows away that froth in time, and then—as for example after the Suffragette antics—the real argument behind the capers and the words becomes known. Thus in England all revolutions are gradual, and in their very slowness lies their incalculable strength of purpose.

Types of Tub-thumpers

But the various types of cranks always provide a psychological interest to the student of intellectual

freakishness. There are the "cranks" you laugh at; others who make you wish to murder them outright. Then there are a few pathetic cases—elderly men, who bring their own little wooden box as well as the vast majority of their own audience, including a wife, a sister, and a convert in spectacles—men who, in a mild tone of voice, earnestly strive to paint as a real story the fable of Jonah and the Whale to a few casual passers-by—those same passers-by who, because there is no real "fun" to be got out of such lecturers, pass by with such unsympathetic rapidity. Yet I always love to listen to these speakers. They are such an illustration of "a voice crying in the wilderness," and they are so dead-in earnest, and they mean so well—two direct invitations, as it were, to the world's ridicule. You can't help admiring them, although mingled with your admiration there is a strong streak of pity. The simplicity of their faith is colossal. They believe *everything*. They believe in the miraculous conversion of drunkards in a single night through one verse of the Gospel; they believe that we shall all rise again and sing on and on eternally; they believe that all men and women are born to evil, and they would feel positively indignant were not the whitest soul among us really steeped in double-dyed sin. And how they believe in God!—Oh, yes, how they do believe in God! I cannot say whether they bring God into their daily lives, but they certainly drag Him to the Marble Arch. And all the while a very sedate, middle-aged woman and a grim bespectacled maiden of forty-five try their utmost—or seem so to do—to look as if they had led lives of the most scarlet sinfulness until they had heard their elderly friend preach The Word. Nothing ever disturbs these meetings. They just go on to their appointed close, when the "stand" is promptly taken by someone who believes in nothing at all, God least of all, and will tell you the reasons of his disbelief for hours and hours, and still leave you unconvinced.

If Age only Practised what it Preached!

The Boy Scouts have, I believe, a moral injunction to do at least one good action every day. Older people applaud that injunction wildly. It is so admirable—*for Boy Scouts*. They consider it to be so admirable, indeed, that they declare it should form part of the moral curriculum of every young boy and girl. In fact, they declare it to be applicable to everyone—everyone except themselves. Personally, I think it would be even more admirable when followed by grown-up people. But most grown-up people seem to consider that they have done their one world-beneficial action when they get out of bed in the morning. The rest of the day they will be unselfish—if it suits their purpose. If only grown-up people practised what they preached to children we should have the millennium next Monday. If the world is still "wicked," it isn't because there are not enough moral precepts being flung about all over it. The trouble is that the people to whom they most apply pass them on. They consider they don't apply to them at all.

If only children could chastise their parents for telling lies, and being greedy and selfish, and doing the hundred and one things which they ought not to have done, ninety-nine per cent. of the mothers and fathers, spiritual pastors and masters, and "all those who are set in authority over them"—would not be able to sit down without an "Oo-er!" for weeks. Happily children are born actors, and can simulate an air of belief, even in the face of their elders' most bare-faced inconsistency. But—if you can cast back your memory into long ago—you will remember that one of the most "shattering" moments or your youth was the time when it first burst upon your inner vision that all men, and especially grown-up men, are liars. Certainly, if we really do come "trailing clouds of glory," the clouds soon evaporate and we lose the glory, not through listening to what men tell us, but in watching what men *do*.

Selfishness is surely of the deadly sins the most deadly. Yet selfishness is what elder people tell youth to avoid most carefully. If everyone only lived up to half the moral "fineness" which they find so admirable in the tenets of the Boy Scouts, the world would be worth living in to-morrow. Think of the hundreds of millions of unselfish acts which would then take place every day! In a short time there would surely be hardly any more good to do! As it is, a few kind-hearted, generous, sympathetic people are kept so busy trying to leaven the selfishness, the hardness, the all-uncharitableness of those who are out to live entirely for themselves, that, poor things, they are usually worn to a shadow long before their time!

The virtues are very badly distributed. Some people have so many, and in such "chunks," and others possess so few and even seem determined to get rid of those they have as soon as they can. If only youth had a sense or humour it would surely die from laughing. But it hasn't. It has only faith. Besides, as I said before, it is a born actor—and in face of the big stick it is far safer to pretend faith than show ridicule. If we can have children in the next world—and I have just received a communication from an ardent spiritualist informing me that an earthly wife can become a mother through keeping in touch with her dead husband—I think that, metaphorically speaking, the paternal cane will be "sloshed" both ways. That is to say, Little Johnny, who has been laid across mother's knee and beaten by her with a slipper for stealing jam, will, in his turn, strike mother across the knuckles with a ruler when she, too, is caught "pinching" half-a-crown out of father's trouser pocket. If heaven be nothing else, it will surely

be a place of justice. The trouble with this old earth is that justice is only meted out by those who have not yet been found out. In heaven I hope that people who preach will be punished if they do not put their preaching into practice. It will, I fear, empty any number of pulpits—alike in the churches, the public parks, and the home.

But heaven will be none the worse for a little silence. As it is, we earth-wallahs hear such a lot of high-falutin and observe so much low cunning that no wonder youth, as it grows more "knowing," becomes more cynical. It is only when a young man has arrived at years of discretion that he realises that the most discreet thing to do is to be indiscreet while holding a moral mask up. When he realises this, he will find it more politic to keep one eye closed. Brotherly love has to be blind in one eye. Justice finds it safer to be blind in both. And the fool is he who keeps both eyes open, yet sees nothing. And so most grown-up people are fools! That is why they stick together in war-time and always *quarrel* at a Peace Conference.

Beginnings

Beginnings are always difficult—when they are not merely dull. People worth knowing are always hard to get to know. On the other hand, people with whom you become friendly at once usually end by boring you unto death by the end of the first fortnight. People whom it is easy to get to know, as a rule know so many people that to be counted among their acquaintances is like belonging to a friendly host, each one of whom ought to wear around his neck a regimental number to differentiate him from his neighbour. But the friend who is born a friend—and some people are born friends, just as other people are born married—dislikes to be one of a herd. Friendship, like love, is among autocrats, the most autocratic. There is no such thing as communism among the passions. But, as I said before, the people worth getting to know are so difficult to get to know. One has to hack away, as it were, and keep on hacking away, until one breaks through the crusts of reserve and prejudice and shyness which always surround the "soul" of pure gold—or, in fact, the "soul" of any type or quality. But "to hack" is a very dull occupation: that is why I say all beginnings are difficult when they are not merely drab. I always secretly envy the people who let themselves be known quite easily, although I realise that, when you get to know them, there is usually very little worth knowing. But there are so many lonely men and women wandering through this sad old world of ours who are lonely, not because there is not plenty of sympathy and understanding ready, as it were, to be tapped by the rod of friendship and love, but because they are too shy to make friends, too reserved to show the genius of friendship which burns within them. So they go through the world with open arms which merely clasp thin air. They are too difficult to get to know, and they do not possess the key which unlocks the secret of dignified "self-revelation." Between them and the world there is thrust a mask of reserve and shyness—a mask the expression of which they positively hate, but are unable to tear it down from their faces. Thus they live lonely in a world of other lonely souls; no one can help them, and they are too timid of rebuff to help themselves.

But Friendship cannot be cultivated and tended by a third party—that is an axiom. It either springs to life inevitably or, metaphorically speaking, it doesn't turn a hair. The well-meaning person who introduces one friend to another with the supreme assurance that they will both get on splendidly together, usually begins by making two people enemies. The friends of friends are very rarely friends with one another. And jealousy is not entirely the cause of this immediate estrangement. One friend appeals to one side of your nature and another friend appeals to a different side, but very, very rarely do you find two people who make the same appeal—since Heaven only knows how great is the physical attraction in Friendship as well as in Love! On the whole, then, the wise man and woman keep their friends apart. And this for the very good reason, that, either the two friends will become friends with each other, leaving you out of their soul-communion altogether, or else they will wonder in a loud voice what on earth you can find in your other friend to make him seem so attractive to you! In any case, a tiny thread or malignity is woven into that fabric of an inner life in which there should be nothing whatever malign.

Friendship resembles Love in the fact that there are usually three stages. The first stage seems thrilling—but how thankful you are, when you look back upon it, that it is over! The second stage is full of disappointment—how different the friendship realised is from the friendship anticipated! The third stage is philosophical, peaceful, and so happy!—since the worst is known and the best is known, but how immeasurably the best outweighs the worst! and how deliciously restful it is to realise that you, too, are loved, as it were, in spite of yourself and for those qualities in you which are the *real* you, although you need must hide them under so much dross. Thus you both find happiness and peace. And surely friendship—true friendship—is the happiest and most peaceful state in life? It is the happiest and most peaceful part of Love: it is the one thing which, if you really find it, makes the Everyday of life seem worth the while; seem worth the laughter and the tears, the failures and the victories, the dull

beginnings, and the even more tedious beginnings-over-again, which are, alas! inevitable, except in the Human Turnip, who, in parenthesis, is too pompously inert ever to make a start.

A very well-known actress once confessed to me that, no matter how warm had been her welcome, she invariably felt a feeling of hostility between the audience and herself when she first walked on the stage. But I rather think that everyone, except the Human Turnip, who feels nothing except thirst and hunger and cold, has that feeling at the beginning. No matter if your advent has been heralded by a fanfare of trumpets, you invariably feel within yourself that your *début* has been accompanied by the unuttered exclamation: "Oh, my dear! Is that all?" It wears off in time, of course; but it only bears out my theory that beginnings are always difficult—when they are not merely dull. I can quite imagine that the first day in Heaven will be extremely uncomfortable. I know there is no day so long as the first day of a holiday—or any day which seems so short as the last one. For one thing, at the beginning of anything you are never your true, natural self. The "pose," which you carry about with you amid strange surroundings, hangs like a pall upon your spirits, to bore you as much as it bores those on whom you wish to make the most endearing impression. Later on, it wears off—and what you are—*you are*! and for what you are—you are either disliked intensely or adored. But you are never completely happy until you are completely natural, and you are never natural at the beginning. That is why you should forgive beginnings, as you, yourself, hope to be forgiven when you, yourself, begin.

Unlucky in Little Things

They say it is better to be born lucky than beautiful. Which contains, by the way, only small consolation for those of us who have been born both lucky and ugly. For, after all, to have been born beautiful is a nice "chunk" of good luck to build upon, and anyway, if you are a woman, constitutes a fine capital for the increase of future business. But to have been born lucky is much more exciting than to have been born beautiful; moreover the capital reserve does not diminish with time. All the same, I don't want to write about either lucky people or beautiful ones. There are already too many people writing about them as it is. I want to write about the *unlucky* ones—because I consider myself one of them. I do so in the hope that my tears will find their tears, and, it we must drown, metaphorically speaking, it is a crumb of comfort to drown in company.

Most unlucky people when they speak about their ill-luck always refer to such incidents as when they backed the Derby "favourite" and it fell down within a yard of the winning post. True, that is ill-luck amounting almost to tragedy. But there is another kind of unlucky person—and about him I can write from experience, because it is my special brand of misfortune. He is the unlucky person who is unlucky in *little things*. After all, not many of us back horses, and presently fewer of us than ever will be able to do more in the gambling line than play Beg-o'-my-Neighbour with somebody's old aunt for a thr'penny-bit stake. Let me give a few instances of this ill-luck, in the hope that my plaint will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of those who read this page.

(*a*) If I am sitting on the top of a 'bus and a fat man gets on that 'bus, that fat man will sit down beside me as sure as houses! (*b*) If I am sitting in a railway carriage hugging to my heart the hope that I may have the compartment to myself throughout the long non-stop run, for a surety, at the very last moment, the Woman-with-the-squalling-brat will rush on the platform and head straight for me! Or, I have only to see the Remarkably Plain Person hesitating between two tables in a restaurant to know that she will invariably choose *mine*! (*c*) If there is a bad oyster—*I get it*! If a wasp flies into the garden seeking repose—I always look to it like a Chesterfield couch! If one day I have not shaved—my latest "pash" *is sure to call*! Should I invest my hard-earned savings in Government Stock it is a sign for an immediate spread of Bolshevism, and consequent depreciation in all Government securities. If one day I plan to make a voyage to Cythere—I will surely catch a cold in my head the night before and, instead of quoting Swinburne, shall only sneeze and say, "Dearest, I do hope I didn't splash you!" I fully expect to wake up and find myself rich and famous—the day I "wake up" to find myself *dead*! And of course, like everybody with a grievance, I could go on talking about it for ever. Still, I have given a sufficient number of instances of my ill-luck for ninety per cent. of people to respond in sympathy. The "big things" so seldom happen that one can live quite comfortably without them.

But the "Little Things" are like the poor—they are always with us; or like relations—perpetually on the doorstep on washing day. Perhaps one ought to live as if one were not aware of them. To have your eyes fixed steadfastly on some "star" makes you oblivious, as it were, to the creepy-crawly things which are creepy-crawling up your leg. The unfortunate thing, however, is, that there seem so few stars on which to fix your gaze. If you are born beautiful, or born lucky—you have no use for "stars." To a certain extent you are a "star" in yourself. But for *nous autres* there only remains the exasperation of Little Things which perpetually "go wrong." The only hope, then, for us is to cultivate that state of despair which can view a whole accumulation of minor disasters with indifference. When you are

indifferent to "luck" it is quite astonishing what good fortune comes your way. Luck is rather like a woman—it is, as it were, only utterly abject before a "shrugged shoulder."

Wallpapers

Life is full of minor mysteries—conundrums of the everyday which usually centre round the problem: "Why on earth people do certain things and what on earth makes them do them?" And one of these mysteries is that of their choice in wallpapers. Of course some wallpapers are so pretty that it is not at all difficult to realise why people chose them. On the other hand, some are so extraordinarily hideous that one would really like to see, for curiosity's sake, the artist who designed them and the purchaser whose artistic needs they satisfied. Those bunches of impossible flowers linked together by ribbons, the whole painted in horrible combinations of colour—how we all know them, and how we marvel at their creation! One imagines the mental difficulty of the purchaser as to which among the many designs most appealed to her artistic "eye." Then one pictures how her choice wavered among several. One figures to oneself how she sat in consultation with that friend whom most people take with them when they go out to choose wallpapers, asking her opinion concerning the design which showed nightmare birds swarming about among terrible trees, and the one which illustrated brown roses with blue buds growing in regulated bunches on trellis-work of a most bilious green. One can almost hear the arguments for and against, and at last, the definite conclusion that the one with the brown roses and blue buds was the more uncommon—therefore the better of the two. And one day fate leads your steps towards the bedroom wherein that wallpaper hangs. As you throw yourself into the one easy chair you take out your cigarette case to enjoy that "just one more" which is the more enjoyable because it symbolises that feeling of being "enfin seul" which always follows conversations with landladies or several hours making yourselves agreeable to hostesses.

Then you see it!

At first you are amusedly contemptuous. "How perfectly hideous," you say to yourself. And then, in your idleness of mind, your eye follows the roses and ribbons in horrible contortions from the skirting board to the ceiling. Realising what you are doing, and knowing that in that direction madness lies, you immediately turn your gaze towards the window. You imagine that you have gained the day. But, alas! *you are wrong*! Comes a moment in the early morning when you wake up two hours before you wanted to, with nothing else to do except to lie awake thinking. And all the while the brown roses with their blue buds have unconsciously stretched their tendrils to seize your wandering regard. Before you realise what they are doing, your eyes are riveted on that horrible bunch half-way up the wall which being cut in half by the sudden termination of the width of one paper roll, does not exactly fit the corresponding half of the other. How it suddenly begins to irritate you—this break in the symmetry of the design! You force your eyes from contemplating its offence, only to discover that the bunches of roses which are exposed between the sides of the picture representing "The Soul's Awakening" and the illuminated text painted by your hostess when she was young, make *an exact square*. Above the pictures you perceive that these same bunches form a "diamond," resting on one of its right angles! That there are only five of these terrible bunches between the side of "The Soul's Awakening" and the corner of the wall, and *six* between that of "Trust in the Lord" and the door. And all the time you are becoming more and more irritable. You cannot close your eyes because you know that when you open them again the same illustrations from Euclid will await you. The only thing that comforts you is the determination to write immediately to your Member of Parliament insisting that he drafts a Bill creating a censor of wallpapers, with dire penalties for any "circumventors" of the law. That at least would put every seaside landlady in prison.

Our Irritating Habits

Far more than the Big Things are the Teeny Weeny Little Ones which more quickly divide lovers. A woman may conveniently overlook the fact that her husband poisoned his first wife in order to marry her, when she cannot ignore the perpetual example which he gives her of the truth that Satan finds some evil still for idle hands to do—by always picking his teeth. All of us possess some little irritating personal habit, which makes for us more enemies than those faults for which, on our knees, we beg forgiveness of Heaven. A woman can drink in the poetry of her lover's passionate eloquence for ever and ever, amen. But if, in the middle of the night, she wakes up to find her eloquent lover letting forth the most stentorian snores she, metaphorically, immediately sits up in bed and begins seriously *to wonder*. And the moment love begins to ask itself questions, it is, as it were, turning over the leaves of the time-table to discover the next boat for the Antipodes. As I said before, more homes are broken up, not by the flying fire-irons, but by the irritating little personal idiosyncrasies which men and women

exhibit when they are, so they declare, "quite natural and at their ease." Only a mother's love can survive the accompaniment of suction noises with soup. Vice always makes the innocent suffer, but suffering is often bearable, and sometimes it ennobles us; but chewing raw tobacco—even perpetually chewing chewing gum—is unbearable, and has a most ignoble effect on the temper, especially the temper of life's Monday mornings.

Even for our virtues do we sometimes run the risk of being murdered by those who, because they think they know us best, consequently admire us least. Virtue which is waved overhead like a banner is always a perpetual challenge, and the moment we seem to issue a challenge—even though we merely challenge the surrounding ether—someone in the concrete bends down somewhere to pick up a brickbat and, gazing at us, mutters, "How far? Oh Lord, how far?" Even the expressions of love, in the wrong place, have been known to hear hatred as their echo. I once knew a man who left his wife because she could never speak to him without calling him "darling." She had so absorbed Barrie's theory that the bravest man is but a "child," that "home" for her husband became a kind of glorified nursery. At last his spirit became bilious with the cloying sweetness of it all. The climax came one evening when, after accidentally treading on her best corn and begging her pardon, she got up, put her loving arms around his neck and, kissing him, whispered, "*Granted*, darling, *granted* before you did it!" Soon after that he left her for a woman who, herself, trod on every corn he possessed, and had not the least inclination to say she was sorry. Of course, he lived to regret his first wife. Most men do.

"Tact," I suppose, is at the bottom of all the difficulty—tact not only to know instinctively what to do and when to do it, but when to realise that a wife is still an "audience" and when to realise that, so far as being completely natural in her company is concerned, she has absolutely ceased to exist. But, alas! no one has the heart to teach us this necessary lesson in "tact." We can tell a man of his sin when we dare not tell him it were the better plan to go right away by himself when he wishes to take his false teeth out. A wife will promote an angry scene with her husband over the "other woman"—of whom she is not in the least bit jealous—when she will never dream of telling him that he doesn't sufficiently wash—which was the real cause of their early estrangement. Everybody knows his own vices, whereas most people are blissfully ignorant of their own irritating idiosyncrasies. I would far sooner be told of my nasty habits than of my own special brand of original sin. Sin has to be in very disgusting form to evoke lasting dislike, whereas a "nasty habit" breeds DISGUST, which is a far more terrible emotion than hatred.

Away—Far Away!

"The bird was there, and rose and fell as formerly, pouring out his melody; but it was not the same. Something was missing from those last sweet languishing notes. Perhaps in the interval there had been some disturbing accident in his little wild life, though I could hardly believe it since his mate was still sitting about thirty yards from the tree on the five little mottled eggs in her nest. Or perhaps his midsummer's music had reached its highest point and was now in its declension. And perhaps the fault was in me. The virtue that draws and holds us does not hold us always nor very long; it departs from all things, and we wonder why. The loss is in ourselves, although we do not know it. Nature, the chosen mistress of our heart, does not change towards us, yet she is now, even to-day—

Less full of purple colour and hid spice,

and smiles and sparkles in vain to allure us, and when she touches us with her warm caressing touch, there is, compared with yesterday, only a faint response." I cull this paragraph from Mr. W. H. Hudson's enchanting book, "Birds in Town and Village," because, or so it seems to me, it expresses in beautiful language a fact which has puzzled me all through my life, making me fear to dare in many things, lest the enthusiasm I then felt were not repeated when the time for action arrived. We are all more or less creatures of mood, some more than others, and I, alas! among the moodiest majority. All through the long, dark, chilly, miserable winter I live in town, longing sadly, though rapturously, for the summer to come again, and with its advent my own migration into rural solitudes, far away from the crowd, surrounded by Nature and lost in her embrace. Yet the end of each summer finds me with my pilgrimage not yet undertaken. Something has held me back—a friendship, business, links which were only imaginary fetters, a host of trivial unimportances masquerading in my mood of the moment as serious affairs. So the summer has come and gone, and only for an all-too-brief period have I "got away." Nor have I particularly enjoyed my respite from the roar of omnibuses, the tramp, tramp, tramp of the crowded pavements. Somehow or other the war has robbed me of my love of solitude Somehow or other the peace and beauty and solitude of Nature still "hurt" me, as they used to hurt me during the years of the great world tragedy when, across the meadows brilliant with buttercups and daisies, there used to come the booming of the guns not so very far away "out there." So, in order to force my mood, and perhaps deaden remembrance of its pain, I have taken along with me some human companion, only

once more to realise that, when with Nature, each of us should be alone. One yearns to watch and listen, listen and watch, to lie outstretched on the hill-side, gazing lazily, yet with mind alert, at every moving thing which happens to catch one's eye. You can rarely do this in company. So very, very few people can simply exist silently without sooner or later breaking into speech or falling fast asleep. Alone with Nature books are the only possible company—books and one's own unspoken thoughts.

"*Family Skeletons*"

The worst of keeping a "Family Skeleton" shut up in a cupboard is that the horrid thing *will insist* on rattling its old bones at the most inopportune moments—just, for example, when you are entertaining to tea the nearest local thing you've got to God—whether she be an "Honourable" (in her own right, mark you!) or merely the vicar's wife! Whatever family skeletons do or do not possess, they most assuredly lack *tact*. They are worse than relations for giving your "show away" at the wrong moment. If relations do nothing else, they at any rate sit tightly together around family skeletons, if only to hide them from full view by the crowd. But, of course, the crowd always sees them. The crowd always sees *everything* you don't want it to see, and is quite blind to the triumphal banners you are waving at it out of your top-room window. Sometimes I think that the better plan in regard to family skeletons is to expose them to public view without any dissembling whatsoever, crying to the world at large, and to the "woman who lives opposite" in particular, "There! that's *our* family disgrace! Everybody's got one. What's *yours*?" I believe that this method would shut most people up quite satisfactorily. People only try to learn what they believe you do not want them to know. If you push the truth before them, they turn away their heads. To pretend is usually useless. Not very many of us get through life without experiencing a desire to hide something which everybody has already seen. Wiser far be honest, even if it costs you a disagreeable quarter of an hour. Better one disagreeable quarter of an hour than months and years sitting on a bombshell which any passer-by can explode. Honesty is always one of the very few invulnerable things. No pin-pricks can pierce it—and pin-pricks are usually the bane of life. It's like laughter, in that nobody has yet been found to parry its blows successfully. Shame is a sure sign of possible defeat—and the world always ranges itself every time on the side of the probable victor. If you once show people that you *can't* be hurt in the way they are trying to hurt you, they soon leave off trying, and begin to think of your Christian virtues in general and their own more numerous ones in particular. It's only when your courage is sheer camouflage that the world tries to penetrate the disguise. Not until a woman dips her hair in henna and, metaphorically speaking, cries, "See how young I look now!" that other women begin to remark, "You know, dear, she is *not so youthful as she was*!" It's only when the rumour goes round that a man has had a financial misfortune that everybody to whom he owes anything fling in their bills. And thus it is with family skeletons. If, as it were, you ask them to live with you downstairs, everybody ignores them and finds them "frightfully dull." But the moment you relegate them into the topmost attic—lo and behold, every single one of your acquaintances expresses a desire to rush upstairs, ostensibly to look at the view.

Everybody has something which they do not want to expose—like dirty linen. But everybody's linen gets dirty—that is always something to remember. There are some poor old fools, however, who really do seem to imagine that they and theirs are alone immaculate. How they manage to do so I can never for the life of me imagine. They must be very stupid. But stupid people are a very great factor in life's everyday, and we must always try to do something with them, like the left-over remnants of Sunday's dinner. And, unless we do something with them, they—like Sunday's dinner—meet our gaze every time we go into the kitchen. At last we hate the sight of them. But, just as the remnants clinging to an old mutton-bone lose their terror when Monday arrives without the butcher, so these interfering old fools sometimes fade away into harmless acquaintances when you show them that you and your family skeleton are part and parcel of the same thing, and if they wish to know the one they'll have to accept the other. In any case, it's usually useless to try and pretend that Uncle George died of heart failure when he really died of drink, or that the young girl whom Aunt Maria "adopted" was a waif-and-stray, when everybody knows she is her own daughter; or that your first wife isn't still alive—probably kicking—or that your only child suddenly went to Australia because he was seized by the wander-lust, when everybody knows he had to go there or go to prison. You may, of course, pretend these things, and if you don't mind the perpetual worry of always pretending, well and good. But if you imagine for one instant that your pretending deceives the gallery, you'll be extremely silly. Why, every time they speak of you behind your back they'll preface their remarks with information of this kind: "Yes, yes . . . a *charming* family. What a thousand pities it is that they all *drink*!"

But the "skeletons" of our own character—*they* are the ones which no cupboard can hold, nor any key lock in. Some time, sooner or later, out they will come to do a jazz in front of the whole world. The life we lead in the secret chambers of our own hearts we shall one day enact on the house-roof. Strive as we may to conform to the conventional ideal of public opinion, we cannot conform *all* the time, and our

lapses are our undoing—or maybe, our happy emancipation, who knows? We cannot hide the pettiness of our nature, even though we profess the broadest principles. Only one thing can save the ungenerous spirit, and that is to be up against life single-handed and alone. To know suffering, spiritual as well as physical; to know poverty, to know loneliness, sometimes to know disgrace, broadens the heart and mind more than years spent in the study of Greek philosophy. Life is the only real education, and the philosophy which we evolve through living the only philosophy of any real importance in the evolution of "souls."

The Dreariness of One Line of Conduct

We have lots of ways of expressing that a man is in a "rut" without ever giving the real reason of our adverse criticisms. An author who has "written himself out," an artist whose pictures we can recognise without ever looking at the catalogue, the "conventional," the "dull," the lovers who have fallen out of love—these are all so many victims of the "rut" in life. It is not their fault either. "Ruts" seem so safe, so delightful—*at the beginning*. We rush into them as we would rush into Heaven—and Heaven surely will be a terrible "rut" unless people have described it wrongly! But, although "ruts" may often mean a comfortable existence, they are the end of all progress. We dig ourselves in, and make for ourselves a dug-out. But people in dug-outs are only *safe*; they've got to come out of them some time and go "over the top" if they want to win a war. Unfortunately, in everyday life, the people who deliberately leave their dug-outs generally get fired at, not only by their enemies but also by their friends. But they have to risk that. So few people can realise the terrible effect which "staleness" has upon certain minds. Staleness is the breeding ground for all sorts of social diseases which most people attribute to quite other causes. There is a staleness in work as well as in amusement, in love as well as in hate. Variety is the only real happiness—variety, and a longing for the improbable. What we have we never appreciate after we have had it for any length of time. Doctors will tell you that an illness every nine years is a great benefit to a man. It makes him appreciate his health when it returns to him; it gives his body that complete rest which it can only obtain, as a rule, during a long convalescence, while "spiritually" it brings him face to face with death—which is quite the finest thing for clearing away the cobwebs which are so apt to smother the joy and beauty of life. In the same way a complete change in the mode of living keeps a man's sympathies alive, his mental outlook clear, his enthusiasms bright; it gives him understanding, and a keener appreciation of the essentials which go to make up the real secret of happiness, the real joy of living. The people we call "narrow" are always the people whose life is deliberately passed in a "rut." They may have health, and wealth, and nearly all those other things which go to make a truce in this battle we call Life, but because they have been used to all these blessings so long, they have ceased to regard them. And a man who is not keenly alive to his own blessings is a man who is neither happy nor of much good to the world in which he lives. You have to be able to appreciate your own good fortune in order to realise the tragedy of the less fortunate.

The Happy Discontent

What is the happiest time of a man's life? Not the attainment of his ambitions, but when the attainment is *just in sight*. Every man and woman must have something to live for, otherwise they become discontented or dull. People wonder at the present unrest among the working classes. But to me this unrest is inevitable to the conditions in which they live. They have no ideal to light up their drudgery with glory. They cannot express themselves in the dull labour which is their daily task. They just have to go on and on doing the same monotonous jobs, not in order to enjoy life, but just in order to live at all. Their "rut" is well-nigh unendurable. Of what good, for example, is education, an appreciation of art and beauty, any of those things, in fact, which are the only things which make life splendid and worth living, if all one is asked to do, day in, day out, is to clean some lift in the morning and pull it up and down all the rest of the day! To me the wonder of the working classes is, not that they are restless, but that they are not all *mad*! Were they doing their tasks for themselves, I can imagine even the dullest work might become interesting, because it would lead, if well done, to development and self-expression. But to do these mechanical labours solely and entirely for other people, and to know that you must keep on doing them or starve, well, it seems to me a man needs for his own sanity everything *outside* his work to make life worth living. The man who is working for himself, no matter how dreary his occupation may be, is rarely restless. He has ambition; there is competition to keep his enthusiasms alive, he feels that, however lowly his labour may be, it belongs to him, and its success is his success, too. But can anyone imagine what a life must be, we will say, cleaning other people's windows for a wage which just enables him to live? I can imagine it, and, in putting myself in that position, I cast envious eyes on the freedom of tramps! It seems to me that, until the world wakes up to the necessity of enabling work-people to fill their leisure hours with those

amusements and pleasures, of the intellect as well as of the body, which are the reward of wealth, there will always be a growing spirit or revolution in the world. I could endure almost any drudgery for eight hours provided during the rest of the day I could enjoy those things for which my spirit craved. But to do that same drudgery, day in, day out, with nothing but a Mean Street to come home to, nothing but a "pub" to give me social joy, while people who appear to live entirely for enjoying themselves bespatter me with mud from their magnificent motor-cars as they drive past me with, metaphorically speaking, their noses in the air, I think I, too, should turn Bolshevik, not because I would approve of Bolshevism, or even understand what it meant, but because it would seem to give me something to live for. Except for the appalling suffering, the death, the disease, the sad "Good-byes" of those who loved one another, I am beginning to realise that the world was a finer place in war time. It mingled the classes as they have never been mingled before, for the untold benefit of every class, it brought out that spirit of kindness and self-sacrifice which was the most really Christian thing that the world has seen on such a large scale since the beginning of Christianity; it seemed to give a meaning to life, and to make even the meanest drudgery done for the Great Cause a drudgery which lost all its soul-numbing attributes—that horrible sense of the drudgery of drudgery which is sometimes more terrible to contemplate than death. Religion ought to give to life some, if not all this noble meaning. But, alas! it doesn't. I sometimes think that only those who are persecuted for their beliefs know what real religion is. The Established Church doesn't, anyway. The world of workers is *demanding* a faith, but the Church only gives it admonition, or a charming address by a bishop on the absolute necessity of going to church. The clergy never seem to ask themselves what the people are going to receive in the way of rendering their daily toil more worth while when they do go to church. But the people have answered it with tragic definiteness. They *stay away*! Or perhaps they go to see a football match. Well, who shall blame them, after the kind of work which they have been forced to do during the week? I always think that if only the Church followed the crowd, instead of, metaphorically speaking, banging the big drum outside their churches and begging them to come inside, they would "get hold" of their flock far more effectively. After all, why should religion be so divorced from the joy of life? Death is important, but life is far more so. If the clergy entered into the *real life* of the people they would benefit themselves through a greater understanding, and the people would benefit by this living example of Christianity in their midst. But so many of the clergy seem to forget the fact that the leisured classes possess, by their wealth alone, the opportunity to create their own happiness. The poor have not this advantage. Their work is, for the most part, deadening. The surroundings in which they live offer them so little joy. They have only the amusements which they can snatch from their hours of freedom to make life worth living at all. And these amusements are the all-important things, it seems to me. If you can enter into the hours of happiness of men and women, they will be willing to follow you along those pathways which lead to a greater appreciation of the Christ ideal. I always think that if the Church devoted itself to the happiness of its "flock" it would do far more real good than merely devoting itself to their reformation. Reformation can only come when a certain amount or inner happiness has been attained.

Book-borrowing Nearly Always Means Book-stealing

Whenever I lend a book—and, in parenthesis, I never lend a book of which I am particularly fond—I always say "good-bye" to it under my breath. I have found that, whereas the majority of people are perfectly honest when dealing with thousands, their sense of uprightness suddenly leaves them when it is only a question of a thr'penny-bit. As for books and umbrellas, people seem to possess literally no conscience in regard to them. Umbrellas you *may*, perhaps, get back—if you were born under the "lucky star" with a "golden spoon" in your mouth, and had an octogenarian millionaire, with no children, standing—or peradventure *propped up*—as god-parent at your christening. Few people have qualms about asking for the return of an umbrella, whereas a book always gets either "Not-quite-finished-been-so-busy" for an answer, or else the borrower has been so entranced by it that he has "taken the liberty" to lend it to a friend because he knew you wouldn't *mind*! (Of course you don't—you only feel like murder!) Nor do you really mind, providing that you are indifferent as to the ultimate fate of the volume. If you are not indifferent . . . well, you won't have lent it, that's all; it will recline on the bookshelf of the literary "safe"—which is in your own bedroom, because your own bedroom is the only place where a book ever is really safe. (Have you noticed how reluctant people always are to ask for the loan of a book which lies beside your bed? It is as if this traditional lodgment of the family Bible restrained them. Usually they never even examine bedside books. They are always so embarrassed when they happen to pick up a volume of the type of "Holy Thoughts for Every Day of the Year." They never know what to say to that!) But a book which lies about downstairs is the legitimate prey of every book "pincher" who strays across your threshold. Moreover, no one has yet invented a decent excuse for refusing to lend a book. I wish they had; I would use it until it was threadbare. You can't very well say what you really think, since no one likes to be refused the loan of anything because the owner feels convinced that he will never get it back. So, unless you have a particular gift for the Lie-Immediate,

which embraces either the assertion that the book in question does not belong to you or else that you have promised it to somebody else, you meekly utter the prayer that you will be delighted if the borrower thereof will only be kind enough to let you have it back soon, which, all the time, you know he won't, and he knows he won't, and you know that he knows he won't, and he knows that you know that he won't—all of which passes through your respective minds as he pockets the book, and you in your heart of hearts bid it a fond farewell!

Other People's Books

I have come to the conclusion that the only books which people are really fond of are those which rightly belong to other people. To them they are always faithful. They are faithful to them not *in spite of themselves*, which is the way with those "classics" which everybody is supposed to have read while they were young, and which most people only know by name, because they belong to that dim and distant future in which are included all those things which can be done when they are old—they are faithful to them for the reason that nobody wants to borrow them; they belong to the literature which people seek in *free* libraries, if they seek it at all. The books they really adore are those which somebody else has purchased. Nor are they ever old books. On the contrary, they are "the very latest." You see it gives a room a certain *cachet* if it includes the very recent literary "sensation," the "novel of the season," which everybody is reading because everybody is talking about it. So they stick to the books which you yourself have purchased, under the fond delusion that what you buy is necessarily yours to do what you like with. Alas! you have forgotten the borrowing fiend. The borrowing fiend is out for borrowed glory—and few things on earth will ever stop the progress of those who are out for self-glorification. True, I once knew a book-lover who was not afraid of telling the would-be borrower that he *never lent books*. Needless to say, he had very few literary friends. But his bookshelves were filled with almost everything worth reading that had been published.

The Road to Calvary

She was sitting half dreaming, half listening to the old preacher, when suddenly one sentence in a sermon, otherwise prosy and conventional, arrested her attention. For the moment she could not remember it, and then it came to her. "All roads lead to Calvary." Perhaps he was going to be worth listening to at last. "To all of us sooner or later," he was saying, "comes the choosing of the ways: either the road leading to success, the gratification of desires, the honour and approval of our fellow men—or the path to Calvary." And yet it seems to me that the utterance is only a half-truth after all. It is the half-truth which clergymen like to utter. They always picture worldly success as happiness, the gratification of desires happiness also, but gained at the price of one's own "soul." But there they are wrong. It seems to me that all roads do lead to Calvary—yes, even the road of the worldly success, the limelit path of gratification. Whichever path you take, it leads to Calvary—though there is the Calvary which, as it were, has peace behind its pain, and the Calvary which has merely loneliness and regret. But life, it seems to me, leads to Calvary whichever way you follow—the best one can do is merely to bring a little ray of happiness, ease a little the pain, share the sorrow and the solitude of those who walk with us along the rough-hewn pathway. If you live only for yourself you are lonely; if you live only for others you are also left lonely at last. For it seems to me that the "soul" of every man and woman is a lonely "soul," no matter if their life be one long round of pleasure-seeking and success, or merely renunciation. Only occasionally, very, very occasionally—maybe only once in a lifetime!—do we ever really feel that our own "soul" and the "soul" of another has met for an all-too-brief moment, shared for a flash its "secret," mutually sympathised and understood. For the rest—well, we live for the most part holding out, as it were, shadowy arms towards shadows which only *seem* to be substance. The road to Calvary is a lonely road, and each man and woman is forced to follow it. There remains then only God—God who knows us for what we are; God—and the faith that in a life beyond we shall by our loved ones be also recognised and known. For the rest, we but look at each other yearningly through iron bars—and from a long, long distance. The least lonely road which leads to Calvary is the road which leads to God; the least lonely pilgrims are those who walk with Him. But not everybody can believe in God, no matter how they yearn. They seek "soul" realisation in success, in self-gratification, in the applause and passion of the crowd. The "religious" men condemn and despise them. But they are wrong. They are more to be pitied. For they do not find consolation in the things by which they have sought to drug the loneliness of their inner life. Their Calvary is often the most terrible of all. So it seems to me that Calvary is at the end of whichever road we take. We are wise when we realise that it is in our own power to make that road brighter and happier for others, and that there are always halts of interest and delight, entertainment and joy, dotted along it for ourselves as well—if we look for them. But we do not escape Calvary even though we struggle for success, gratify our own desires, seek the honour and

approval of our fellow-men. It is just the Road of Life, and, provided that we harm no other man in so doing, let us realise ourselves in worldly ambition and in love and in enjoyment as often as we may. That is my philosophy, but it is no less lonely in reality than other people's. Old age is each man's Calvary.

Mountain Paths

And the worst of that road to Calvary which we all of us must follow, whether it be a long or short way, is that it is always, as it were, a lonely journey into the Unknown. It is a mystery—a terrific mystery—and sometimes it frightens us so terribly that men and women have been known to kill themselves rather than take it. But there is always this to be said of sorrow—like happiness, it looms so very much larger when seen from a long way off. As we approach it it becomes smaller. When we reach it, sometimes it does not seem so very terrible after all; either it is small or else Nature or God gives to all of us some added courage which helps us to bear even the greatest affliction. For several years past I have been intimately associated with a tragedy which most people regard as well-nigh unsurmountable even by the bravest heart. I have thought so myself—and there are moments when I think so still, in spite of my long familiarity with it, and the miracles of bravery I have seen displayed in hearts so young and so tender that one would have thought they must of necessity fall helpless beneath the burden laid upon them by Fate. I speak, of course, of the Blinded Soldier—than whom no better example of courage on the road to Calvary could possibly be given. Personally, I feel that I would sooner be dead than blind; but I realise now that I only feel this way because I still, thank Heaven, have remarkably good sight. Were I to lose my eyes, I hope—perhaps I *know*—that I should still strive to fight cheerfully onward. And this, not because I am naturally brave—I am not—but because I have lived long enough to see that when, metaphorically speaking, the axe falls, some added strength is given to the spirit which, granted bodily health, can fight and go on fighting an apparently overwhelming foe. This is one of the most wonderful miracles of Human Life, and I have myself seen so many instances of it that I know it to be no mere fiction of an optimistic desire, but an acknowledged fact. And this miracle applies to nations as well as to individuals. In Maurice Maeterlinck's new volume of essays there is one on "The Power of the Dead." "Our memories are to-day," he writes, "peopled by a multitude of heroes struck down in the flower of their youth and very different from the pale and languid cohort of the past, composed almost wholly of the sick and the old, who had already ceased to exist before leaving the earth. We must tell ourselves that now, in every one of our homes, both in our cities and in the country-side, both in the palace and in the meanest hovel, there lives and reigns a dead young man in the glory of his strength. He fills the poorest, darkest dwelling with a splendour of which it had never ventured to dream. His constant presence, imperious and inevitable, diffuses and maintains a religion and ideas which it had never known before, hallows everything around it, makes the eyes look higher, prevents the spirit from descending, purifies the air that is breathed and the speech that is held and the thoughts that are mustered there, and, little by little, ennobles and uplifts the whole people on a scale of unexampled vastness." Surely, in beautiful words such as these, Maeterlinck but echoes the consolation of many a very lonely heart since the tragedy of August, 1914. Without "my boy"—many a desolate heart imagined that it could never face the road of Calvary which is life now that he is gone. And yet, when the blow came, something they thought would have vanished for ever still remained with them. They could not tell if it were a "presence," felt but unseen, but this they *knew*—though they could not argue their convictions—that everything which made life happy, which lent it meaning, was not lost, had not faded away before the life-long loneliness which faced them; it still lived on—lived on as an Inspiration and as a Hope that one day the road to Calvary would come to an end, that they would reach their journey's end—and find their loved one *waiting*.

The Unholy Fear

She didn't object to the celebrations for the anniversary of the signing of Armistice—in fact, she quite enjoyed them—but she did object to the few minutes' silent remembrance of the Glorious Dead. It depressed her. She brought out the old "tag" so beloved of people who dread sadness, even reverential sadness, that "the world is full enough of sorrow without adding to it unnecessarily!" Not much sorrow had come her way, except the sorrow of not always getting her own way; and the anniversary of the Armistice meant for her the Victory Ball at the Albert Hall, a new dress of silver and paste diamonds, a fat supper, and that jolly feeling of believing that a real "beano" is justified because, after all, *we* won the war, didn't we? Therefore, she disliked this bringing back to the world of the tragic fact—the fact of what war really means beyond the patriotic talk of politicians, the Victory celebrations, the rush to pick up the threads which had to be dropped in 1914, and the excitement of getting, or missing, or declining the O.B.E. The war is over, she keeps saying to herself, thus inferring to everybody that they ought to

forget all about it now. So she ignores the maimed and the wrecked, the war poor, the sailors and the soldiers, war books, war songs, all reference to the war, in fact, and most especially the dead. "Why should we be depressed?" she keeps crying, "the world is sad enough. . . ." Well, you know the old "tag" of those who are not so much frightened of sorrow as frightened by the fact that they can neither sympathise with it nor understand it. She is an exceptional case, you declare. But alas! she isn't. There are thousands of men and women who, behind a plea of war-weariness, really mean a desire to forget all those memories, all those obligations, all that work and faith in a New and Better World which alone make justified—this war, or any other war. She has not forgotten, so much as never realised what men suffered and endured in order that she, and all the rest of her "clan" who remained at home, might live on and rebuild the happiness and fortunes of their lives. So she dislikes to be reminded of her obligations to the Present and the Future; she dislikes to remember in reverence and sorrow the men and boys who, without this war, would now be continuing happily, safe and sound, the even tenor of their lives. "The world is sad enough," she again reiterates, and . . . oh, well, just BOSH!

The Need to Remember

For myself, I consider that it would do the world good if it had one whole *day* of silent remembrance each year. And if it be depressing—well, that will be all to the good. The world will come to no harm if it be depressed once a year—depressed for such a noble cause. After all, we give up one day per year to the solemn remembrance of the One who died for us—it would not, therefore, do anything but good if we were to give up one day a year to the memory of those millions who died for us no less. Sunday, too, is kept as a quiet day, in order that the world may be encouraged to contemplate those ideals for which it has erected churches in which it bows the knee. Well, one whole day in the year given up to the memory of those who died that the civilised world might live—who also died for an ideal—will help us to remember that they died at all. Without some such enforced remembrance, the world will, alas! only too quickly forget. And in forgetting *how* they died, will also forget *what they died for*. Some people—the vast majority perhaps—will never remember unless remembrance is forced upon them. And if the world ever forgets the Glorious Dead, and the "heritage" which these Glorious Dead left to those who still live on—well, don't talk to me of Christianity and civilisation and the clap-trap of those high ideals which everyone prates of, few understand, and still fewer strive to live up to. If the war has not yet taught the political and social and Christian world wisdom, nothing ever will; and, moreover, it does not deserve to learn. Yet, only the other day, I heard some elderly gentlemen discussing the next war—as if the last one were but a slight skirmish far away amid the hills of Afghanistan. Well, better an era of the most revolutionary socialism than that the world should once again be plunged into such another tragedy as it has passed through during the last five years.

Humanity

"Humanity is one, and an injury to one member is an injury to the whole." I cull this line from Mr. Gilbert Cannan's book, "The Anatomy of Society." And I quote it because I believe that it sums up in a few words, not only the world-politics of the future, but the religion—the real, practical religion, and therefore the only religion which counts in so far as this life is concerned—of the future as well. The snowball—if I may thus describe it symbolically—has just begun to roll, but it will gather weight and impetus with every succeeding year, until, at last, there will be no nations—as we understand nations to-day—but only *one* nation, and that nation the whole of the human race. The times are dead, or rather they are dying, which saw civilisation most clearly in such things as the luxury of the Ritz Hotels, the parks and palaces of Europe, the number of tube trains and omnibuses running per hour along the rail and roadways of London, and the imitation silk stockings in which cooks and kitchenmaids disport themselves on Sundays. A New Knowledge is abroad—and that New Knowledge is a fuller realisation that the new world is for all men and all women who work and do their duty, for all humanity, and not merely for the few who get rich upon the exploitation of poverty and helplessness of the masses. And this realisation carries with it the realisation that the governments of the future will be more really governments of the people for the people—and by people I do not mean merely those of Britain or France, or whichever nation men happen to belong to, but humanity all over the world. The things which nowadays only money can buy must be brought within the grasp of the poorest, and civilisation must be recognised as coming *from the bottom upwards*, and not only from the *top*—a kind of golden froth which strives to hide the dirt and misery and suffering beneath. So long as slums exist, so long as poverty is exploited, so long as the great masses of men and women are forced to lead sordid, unbeautiful, cramped, hopeless, and helpless lives, as they are forced to live now—call no nation civilised. So long as these things exist—call no nation religious. The one is a mockery of human life; the other is a mockery of God.

It always strikes me that the greatest lack in all education—and this applies to the education of princes as well as paupers—is the spirit of splendid vision. Most things are taught, except the "vision" of self-respect and responsibility. The poor are not taught to respect themselves at all, and certainly their lives do not give them what their education has forgotten. They are never encouraged to learn that each individual man and woman is not only responsible to him and herself, but to all men and all women. Certainly the rich never teach it them. For the last thing which rich people ever realise is that their wealth carries with it human obligations, human responsibilities, as well as the gratifications of their own appetites and pleasures. The only objects of education seem to be to teach men to make money, nothing is ever done to teach them how best to make life full of interest, full of human worth, full of those "visions" which will help to make the future or the human race proud in its achievements. The failure of education as an intellectual, social, and moral force is best shown the moment men and women are given the opportunity to do exactly as they please. Metaphorically speaking, the poor with money in their pockets immediately go on the "booze," and the rich "jazz." And men of the poor work merely for the sake of being able to booze, and the rich merely for the sake of being able to jazz. And the rich condemn the poor for boozing, and the poor condemn the rich for jazzing—but this, of course, is one of life's little ironies.

Responsibility

Personally, I blame the poor for boozing less than I blame the rich for "jazzing." If I had to live the lives which millions of working men and women lead, and amid the same surroundings, and with the same hopeless future—I would booze with the booziest. You can't expect the poor to respect themselves when the rich do not respect them. Without any feeling of human responsibility in the wealthier classes, you cannot expect to find any human responsibility in the lower orders. And by human responsibility I do not mean some vague thing like "Government for the People," or subscriptions to hospitals, or bazaars for the indigent blind, or anything of that sort—though these things are excellent in themselves. I mean something more practical than that. Hospitals should be state-owned, and the indigent blind should be pensioned by the state. These things should not be left to private enterprises, since they are human responsibilities and should be borne by humanity. I mean that all owners of wealth should be made to realise their moral responsibilities to their own workmen—the men and women who help to create their wealth—and that with poverty there should not go dirt and drudgery and that total lack of beauty and encouragement to a cleaner, finer life without which existence on earth is Hell—Hell being preached at from above.

The Government of the Future

The worst of government by the people is that the moment the people put them into power they are gracefully forgotten. The only *real* government by the people comes through the people themselves in the form of disturbances and strikes and revolutions. Then, alas, the tiny craft of Progress is borne towards the ocean on a river of bad blood—which means waste and unnecessary suffering, and leaves a whole desert of anger and revenge behind it. The most crying need of the times is the very last to be heard by governments. They are so engrossed in the financial prosperity of the country that they forget the social and moral prosperity altogether—and financial prosperity without social and moral progress is but the beginning of bankruptcy after all. A government, to be a real government and so to represent authority in the eyes of the people, has not only to nurse and to harbour, but also to *rebuild*. It does something more than govern. It has been placed there *by the people* in order that it may help rebuild the lives *of the people*—so that, besides helping capital to increase and develop, it at the same time safeguards the people against exploitation by capital, and sees to it that, through this capital, the people are enabled to live cleaner, better, happier lives, are given an equal chance in the world, and encouraged and given the opportunity to live self-respecting lives—lives full not only of responsibility to themselves, but to humanity at large. That to my mind is the true socialism—and it is a socialism which could come within the next ten years, and without any sign of revolution, were the Government to realise that it is something more than the foster-mother of capital—that it is also a practical rebuilder of the human race—yes, even though it has to cut through all the red-tape in the world and throw the vested interests, owners and employers, on the scrap-heap of things inimical to human happiness in the bulk. Sometimes I think that the franchise of women will do a great deal towards this juster world when it comes. Women have no "political sense," it is said. Well, thank God they haven't, say I! They have the *human sense*—and that will be the only political sense of any importance in the world of to-morrow.

And this war has been the great revelation. Masses of men and women who never thought before—or, rather, who thought but vaguely, not troubling to put their thoughts into words—have by war become

articulate. They are now looking for a leader, and upon their faces there is the expression of disappointment. They do not yet realise that they have discovered within their own minds and hearts that Splendid Vision which once came through one, or, at most, a small group of individuals. This vision is the vision of humanity as apart from the vision of one special nation. It sees a new world in which science, the practical knowledge and the material advancement of the West, combine with the greater peace and happiness of the East, to make of this world an abiding place, an ideal nearer the ideal of Heaven. Man, after all, possesses mind. His failure has been that, so far, he has not learned wisdom—the wisdom to employ that mind for the realisation of his own soul—that realisation without which life becomes a mockery and civilisation a sham.

The Question

Can a man love two women at the same time? If he be married to one of them—Yes. If he isn't—well, I cannot imagine it possible. Nor can I imagine that every man is capable of this double passion. Some people (in parenthesis, the lucky ones!) have characters so simple, so direct, so steadfast, so very peaceful. Their soul is not torn asunder, first this way, then that, perfectly sincere in all its varying moods, though the mood changes like the passing seasons. Once having liked a thing, they like it always, and the opposite has no attraction for them. These people are, as it were, born husbands and born wives. They are faithful, though their fidelity may not be exciting. This type could hardly love two people, though they are quite capable of loving twice. As individuals they are to be envied, because for them the inner life is one of simplicity and peace. But there are other people who, as it were, seem to be born *two people*. They are capable of infinite goodness; also they are capable of the most profound baseness. And never, never, never are they happy. For the good that is in them suffers for the bad, and the bad also suffers, since it knows that it is unworthy. So their inner life is one long struggle to attain that ideal of perfection which they prize more than anything else in the world, but are incapable of reaching—or, rather, they are incapable of *sustaining*—because, within their natures, there is a "kink" which always thwarts their good endeavour. Thus for ever do they suffer, since within their souls there is a perpetual warfare between the good which is within them and the bad. These people, I say, can love two people at the same time, since two different people seem to inhabit the same body, and both yearn to be satisfied; both *must* be satisfied at some time or another. The Good within them will always triumph eventually, even though the Bad must have its day. But do not blame these people. They suffer far more than anyone can suspect. They suffer, and only with old age or death does peace come to them. If there are people born to be unhappy in this world, they are surely in the forefront of that tragic army!

The Two Passions

Yet these people, as I said before, *must be married* to one of the two Adored, if their sentiment for each can be called Love. Love, in which passion plays the larger part, is so all-absorbing while it lasts, that only the deep affection and respect which may come through the intimacy of matrimony can exist within the self-same heart great enough to be called Love. A man may adore and worship the woman who has proved herself a perfect mate, who is the mother of his children, and yet be unfaithful to her—not with any woman who crosses his path and beckons, but with the *One* who appeals to the wild, romantic adventurer which is also part of his nature, though neither the best part, nor the strongest. But I cannot imagine a man adoring and respecting a woman who is not his wife the while he loves with a burning passion another woman who promises rapture, passion, and delight. Passion is so intense while it lasts that there is in the heart of man no equal place for another woman who holds him by no legal and moral tie. But a man, having a double nature, can worship his wife, yet love with passion another woman—even though he hates and despises himself for so doing. But it is rare, if not impossible, for one woman to completely satisfy the man whose nature is made up of good and bad, of high ideals and low cravings, of steadfast fidelity, yet with a yearning for the wild, untrammelled existence of the mountain tops. With such a man—and how many there are, if we but knew!—the woman he respects will always win in the end, even though the woman who entices has also her day of victory. The Good Woman will suffer—God knows she will! But the man will suffer too. A man has to be wholly bad to thoroughly enjoy evil. The man who is only half a saint—secretly goes through hell. That is his punishment, and it is far more difficult for him to bear than the finger pointed in contempt. Therefore, I believe that the happiest men and women are the men and women who are born good and steadfast, simple and true, or those who cultivate with delight scarcely one unselfish thought. That is why the vast majority of people live so really lonely, so secretly sad at heart and soul. Only the born-good or the born-bad know the blessedness of inner peace.

Our "Secret Escapes"

I suppose that we all of us have our own little secret "dream-sanctuary"—our way-of-escape which nobody knows anything about, and by which we go when we are weary of the trivialities of the domestic hearth and sick unto death of the "cackle-cackle" of the crowds. When we are very young we long to share this secret little dream-sanctuary with someone else. When we are older and wiser, we realise that if we don't keep it to ourselves we are spiritually lost; for, with the best intentions in the world, the best-beloved, to whom in rapture we give the key, either, metaphorically speaking, leaves the front gate open or goes therein and turns on a gramophone. We come into this world alone, and we leave it by ourselves; and the older we grow the more we realise that, in spite of our own heart's longing to share, we are most really at peace when we are quite alone in our own company. When we are young we hope and expect our "dreams" to become one day a glorious reality. When we are older we realise that our "dreams" will always remain "dreams", and, strange as it may sound, they become more real to us, even as "dreams," than do any realities—except bores and toothache. For the "dreams" of youth become the "let's pretend" of age. And the person who has forgotten the game of "let's pretend" is in soul-colour of the dulness of ditch-water. And "let's pretend" is a game which we can best play by ourselves. Even the proximity of a living being, content to do and say nothing, robs it of its keenest enjoyment. No, we must be by ourselves for the world around us to seem really inhabited by people we love the most amid surroundings nearest our ideal. There are no bores in our dream-world. Nothing disagreeable happens there. And, thank Heaven, we can enter it almost anywhere—sometimes if we merely close our eyes! And we can be our real selves in this dream-world of ours too, there is nobody to say us nay; there are no laws and no false morals; we are fairy kings and queens in a fairy kingdom. I always pity the man or woman who is no monarch in this very real kingdom of shadows which lies all around us, and which we can enter to reign therein whenever the human "jar" is safely out of the way. There we can be our true selves and live our true life, in what seems a very real world—a world, moreover, which we hope one day will be the reality of Heaven.

My Escape and Some Others

Everybody, as I said before, has his or her own receipt for "getting away." Some find it in long "chats" over the fireside with old friends; some in reading and music and art; some in travel, some in "good works" and just a few in "bad" ones. A new hat will often lift a woman several floors nearer to the seventh heaven. A good dinner in prospect will sometimes elevate the spirit of man out of the dreary "rut" and give that *soupçon* of something-to-live-for which can take the ordinary everyday and turn it into a day which belongs to the *extraordinary*. For myself, I like to get out into the country alone; or, if I can't do that, or the weather sees to it that I shan't, I like to get by myself—anywhere to dream, or, preferably, to explore some unknown district or street or place in my own company. Sometimes I find that to open a new book or a favourite old one, soon takes the edge off "edgyness," and makes me see that the pin-pricks of life are merely pin-pricks, from which, unless there are too many of them, I shan't die, however much I may suffer. But even when reading—I like best to read alone—I am never really at ease when at any moment a companion may suddenly break the silence and bring me back to reality by asking the unseen listening gods "if they've locked the cat out?" You condemn me? Well, perhaps I am wrong. And if you can find happiness perpetually surrounded by people, then I envy you. It is so much easier to go through life requiring nothing but food, friends, and a bank balance, than always to hide misanthropic tendencies behind a social smile. I envy you, because I realise that the fight to be alone, the fight to be yourself, is the longest fight of all—and it lays you open to suspicion, unfriendliness, even dislike, everywhere you go. But, if I must be honest, I will confess that I *hate* social pastimes. To work and to dream, to travel, to listen to music, to be in England in the springtime, to read, to give of myself to those who most specially need me—if any there be?—that is what I now call happiness, the rest is merely boredom in varying degree. My only regret is that one has generally to live so long to discover what the constituents of happiness are, or what is worth while and what worthless; what makes you feel that the everyday is a day well spent, and not a day merely got through somehow or other. You lose so much of your youth, and the best years of your life, trying to find happiness along those paths where other people informed you that it lay. It takes so many years of experience to realise that most of the things which men call "pleasure" are but, as it were, tough dulness covered with piquant sauce—a tough mess of which, when you tire of the piquant sauce the toughness remains just so long as you go on trying to eat it.

Over the Fireside

Most especially do I feel sorry for those people who cannot find a certain illusion of happiness in

reading. I thank whatever gods there be that I can generally find the means of "getting-away" between the covers of a book. A book has to be very puerile indeed if I cannot enjoy it to a certain extent—even though that extent be merely a mild ridicule and amusement. I can even enjoy books about books—if they are very well done, which is rare. I am not particularly interested in authors—especially the photographs of authors, which usually come upon their admirers with something approaching shock—because I always think that the most interesting part of an author is what he writes, not what he looks like. What he writes is generally what he *is*. You can't keep everything of yourself out of anything you may write—and thank Heaven for it! Apart from the story—often indeed, before the story itself—the most delightful parts of any book are the little gleams of the writer's point of view, of his philosophy, of his own life-experiences, which glint through the matter in hand, and sometimes raise a commonplace narrative into a volume of sheer entrancing joy. And perhaps one of the most difficult things to write is to write about books—I don't mean "reviews." (Almost anybody can give their opinion on books they have read, and tell you something about them—which is nine hundred and ninety per cent. of literary reviews.) But to write about books in a way which amuses you, or interests you, and makes you want immediately to read the book in question—that is a more difficult feat. And sometimes what the writer about books says about books is more entertaining than the books themselves. But then that is because of those little gleams of the personal which are always so delightful to find anywhere.

Faith Reached Through Bitterness and Loss

Looking back on one's life, I always think it is so strange that just those blows of fate which logic would consider as certain to destroy such things as Faith and Belief, optimism and steadfastness of soul-vision, so many times provide their very foundations. How often those whose Belief in a Life Hereafter is the firmest have little reason to encourage that belief. We often find through sorrow, a happiness—no, not happiness, but a peace—which is enduring. When the waves of agnosticism and atheism have broken over our souls, the ebb tide is so often Faith and Hope. And, as we approach nearer and nearer to the time when, in the ordinary course of events, we so soon *shall know*, there creeps into our hearts a certainty that all is not ended with life, a belief which defies reason, and logic, and common sense, and which, to outsiders, often appears to be merely a clutching at straws. But these straws save us, and, through their means, we eventually reach the shore where doubts cannot flourish and agnosticism gives way to a Faith which we *feel* more than we can actually define.

Aristocracy and Democracy

I believe in the *heart* of democracy, but I am extremely suspicious of its *head*. Popular education among the masses is the most derelict thing in all our much-vaunted civilisation. To talk to the masses concerning anything outside the radius of their own homes and stomachs is, for the most part, like talking to children. It is not their fault. They have never had a real chance to be otherwise. When I contemplate the kind of education which the average child of the slums and country villages is given—and the type of man and woman who is popularly supposed to be competent to give it—I do not wonder that they are the victims of any firebrand, crank, or plutocrat who comes to them and sails into the Mother-of-All-Parliaments upon their votes. For the last six years I have been placed in circumstances which have enabled me to observe the results of what education has done for the average poor man. The result has made me angry and appalled. The figure is low when I declare that ninety per cent. of the poor not only cannot write the King's English, but can neither read it nor understand it—beyond the everyday common words which a child of twelve uses in his daily vocabulary. Of history, of geography, of the art and literature of his country, of politics or law, of domestic economy—he knows absolutely nothing. Nothing of any real value is taught him. Even what he knows he knows so imperfectly that absolute ignorance were perhaps a healthier mental state. Until education is regarded with the same seriousness as the law, it is hopeless to expect a new and better world. For education is the very foundation of this finer existence. You can't expect an A1 nation among B3 intellects. Ornamental education is not wanted—it is worse than useless until a *useful education* has been inculcated. And what is a useful education? It is an education which teaches a man and woman to be of some immediate use in the world; to know something of the world in which they live, and how best to fulfil their duty as useful members of a community and in the world at large. At present the average boy and girl are, as it were, educationally dragged up anyhow and launched upon the world at the first possible moment to earn the few shillings which two hands and an undeveloped intelligence are worth in the labour market. No wonder there is Bolshevism and class war and anarchy and revolution. Where the ruled are ignorant and the ruling selfish—you can never expect to found a new and happier world.

Duty

As for a sense of duty, to talk to the average man and woman, no matter what may be their class in life, of a sense of duty, is rather like reading Shakespeare to a man who is stone deaf. And yet, an education which does not at the same time seek to teach duty—duty to oneself, to the state, to humanity at large—is no real education at all. But in the world in which we live at present, a sense of duty is regarded as nonsense. Labour does not realise its duties, neither does wealth; neither does the Church, except to churchmen; nor Parliament, except to the party which provides its funds. And yet, as I said before, a sense of duty is the very foundation of all real education.

Even if the children of the poor were taught the rudiments of some trade while they were at school, the years they spend there would not be so utterly and entirely wasted. Even though they did not follow up that trade as their occupation in life, it would at any rate give them some useful interest in their hours of recreation. As it is they know nothing, so they are interested in nothing. And this, of course, applies to the so-called educated people as well. It always amuses me to listen to the well-to-do discussing the working classes. To hear them one would think that the working classes were the only people who wasted their time, their money, and their store of health. It never seems to strike them that the working classes for the most part live in surroundings which contain no interest whatsoever—apart from their work. They are given education—and *such* education! They are given homes—and *such* homes! They are plentifully supplied with public houses—and ye gods, such public houses! The Government hardly realises yet that it is there, not to listen to its own voice and keep its own little tin-pot throne intact, but as a means by which the masses may arrive at a healthier, better, more worthy state of existence. The working-classes are not Bolshevik, nor do I think they ever will be; but deep down in their hearts there is a determination that they and their children shall receive the same educational advantages, the same right to air and light and decent amusement, as the children of the wealthy. Because I am poor, they say to themselves, why should I therefore have to inhabit a home unfit for decent habitation, receive education utterly useless from every practical point of view—be forced to live in surroundings which absolutely invite degradation of both mind and body? There will always be poverty, but there ought never to be indecent poverty. Better education; better housing; better chances for healthy recreation—these are the things for which the masses are clamouring. Why is it wrong for a workman who has made money during the war to buy a piano—and to hear people talk that seems to be one of their most dastardly crimes—when it is quite all right for his employer, who has made more money out of the war, to pay five pounds for one good dinner, or a night's "jazzing"?

Sweeping Assertions from Particular Instances

And this mention of the piano-crime among the munition-makers brings me to another fact—how utterly impossible it is for the majority of people to judge any big scheme without having regard to the particular instances which threaten its success. Because some working people are so utterly bestial that they are unfit to live in decent homes—so the majority of poor people are unworthy of better surroundings. You might just as well judge the ruling classes by the few units who advertise their own extravagant tom-fooleries! In all questions of reform you have to work, as it were, up to the vision of an ideal. The real, however disappointing at the outset, will eventually reach the higher plane—of that I am certain. And in no question am I more certain of this than in the question of the working classes. The heart of democracy, as I said before, is absolutely in the right place; only its "head" is as yet undeveloped. Its mental "view" is restricted—and no wonder! Everything that has so far been done has helped to restrict that view. This war has let more "light" into the "soul" of democracy than all the national so-called education which has ever been devised and made compulsory. Confiscation of property and all those other tom-fool cries are but the screams of a handful of silly Bolsheviks. There is no echo in the heart of the real labouring men and women. If they applaud it, it is only that these cranks, at least, seem to be fighting for that human right to an equal share of the common good things of this life which ought to be the possession of all labour, however lowly. Take the education of the masses out of the hands of the for the most part ignorant men and women who nowadays make it their profession to teach it; raise the standard of payment so that this all-important branch of citizenship will encourage educated and refined men and women to take up that duty—and give the working classes decent homes, plenty of air, and the chance of healthful recreation close at hand, and you have solved the most vital labour problems of this old world of ours and laid the foundation stones of the new.

How I came to make "History"!

Only those who have worked in the offices of an important newspaper, know that the Power Behind the Throne—which is the Editorial Chair—is rarely the Church, scarcely ever the State, infrequently the

Capitalist, and *never* Labour,—but simply the Advertisement Department.

I was sitting the other afternoon—dreaming, as is my wont; and smoking cigarettes, which is one of my bad habits,—when the head-representative of this unseen Power rushed into my sanctum.

"Will you do something for me?" he demanded, with that beneficent smile on his face which, through experience, I have discovered to be the prelude of most disagreeable demands.

"Certainly," I answered, inwardly collecting my scattered brains preparatory to a brilliant defence. "What is it?"

Without more ado he, as it were, threw his bomb.

"Will you write me an Essay on Corsets?"

"On *what*?" I asked incredulously—knowing that he had been a distinguished soldier, and suspecting that he had suddenly developed what the soldiers describe as "a touch of the doolally."

"On *Corsets*!"

"But I don't know anything about them," I protested, "except that I should not like to wear them!"

"That doesn't matter," he answered reassuringly. "All we want is a page of 'matter.'"

Then he proceeded to explain that he had secured several highly-paid advertisements from the leading corsetières, and that his "bright idea" was to connect them together by an essay illustrated by their wares, in order that those who read might be attracted to buy.

Then he left me.

"Just write a history of corsets," he cried out laughing. Then, by way of decorating the "bitter pill" with jam, he added: "I'm *sure* you'll do it *splendidly*!"

"Splendidly" I know I could not do it, but to do it—rather amused me.

After all, there is one benefit in writing of something you know nothing about (and you are certain that ninety-nine per cent. of your readers will not be able to enlighten you) the necessity for accuracy does not arise. And so, I settled myself down to invent "history," and, if my historical narrative is all invention, I can defend myself by saying that if it isn't *true*—it *might be*. And many historical romances cannot boast even that defence.

Most people who write about the early history of the world have to guess a good deal; so I don't see why I shouldn't state emphatically that, after years and years and years of profound research, the first corset "happened" when Eve suddenly discovered that she was showing signs of middle-age in the middle. So she plaited some reeds together, tied them tightly round her waist-line, and, sure enough, Adam had to put off making that joke about "Once round Eve's waist, twice round the Garden of Eden" for many moons. But Eve, I suppose, discovered later on, as many a woman has also discovered since her day, that, though a tight belt maketh the waistline small, the body bulgeth above and below eventually. So Eve began making a still wider plait—chasing, as it were, the "bulge" all over her body. In this manner she at last became encased in a belt wide enough to imprison her torso quite _un_comfortably, but "she kept her figure"—or thought she did—and thus easily passed for one hundred and fifty years old when, in reality, she was over six hundred.

And every woman who is an "Eve" at heart has followed in her time the example of the mother of all of 'em. As they begin to fatten, so they begin to tighten, and the inevitable and consequential "bulge" is imprisoned as it "bulgeth" until no *corsetière* can do more for them than hint that men like their divinities a trifle plump in places. But to arrive at this—the last and only consolation—a woman has to become rigidly encased from her thighs almost to her neck. She can scarcely walk and she can hardly breathe, and the fat which must go somewhere has usually gone to her neck, but—thank Heaven!—"she has kept her figure" (or she likes to think she has), and many a woman would sooner lose her character than lose her "line."

You may think that this only applies to frivolous and silly women, but you are wrong. It applied even to goddesses! Historians inform us that the haughty Juno, discovering that her husband, Jupiter, was going the way of all flesh and nearly every husband, borrowed her girdle from Venus, with the result that when Jupiter returned home that evening from business, he stayed with his wife—the club calling him in vain. Thus was Juno justified of her "tightness."

But then, many a wife has cause to look upon a well-cut corset as her best friend. And many a

husband, too, has every reason to be grateful to that article of his wife's apparel which the vulgar *will* call "stays." In earlier days a husband used to lock his wife in a pair of iron-bound corsets when he went away from home, keeping the key in his pocket, and thus not caring a tinker's cuss if his home were simply overflowing with handsome gentleman lodgers! The poor wife couldn't retaliate by locking her husband in such a virtuous prison, because men never wore such things—which, perhaps, was one or the reasons why they didn't, who knows?

Also, the corset—or rather, the "bulge" of middle-age, which was the real cause of their ever being worn—has always strongly influenced the fashions. I don't know it as a positive fact, though I suspect it to be true nevertheless, that the woman of fashion who first discovered that no amount of iron bars could keep her from bulging in the right place, but to the wrong extent, suddenly, thought of the pannier and the crinoline and—well, that's where *she* found that she was laughing. For almost any woman can make her waist-line small: her trouble only really comes when she has to tackle other parts of her anatomy which begin to show the thickening of Anno Domini. Panniers and the crinoline save her an enormous amount of mental agony. On the principle of "What the eye doesn't see, to the imagination looks beautiful"—the early Victorian lady was wise in her generation, and her modern sister, who shows the world most things without considering whether what she exhibits is worth looking at, is an extremely foolish person. One thing, however, which women have never been able to fix definitely, is *exactly where* her waist should be. Men know where it is, and they put their arms round it instinctively whenever they get the chance. But women change their mind about it every few years. Sometimes it is down-down-down, and sometimes it is under their armpits. A few years ago a woman who had what is known as a "short waist" was referred to by other women as a "Poor Thing." Then the short-waisted woman came into fashion—or rather, fashions fashioned themselves for her benefit—and her long-waisted sister had to struggle to make her waist look to be where really her ribs were. Only a few weeks back a woman's waist and bust and hips had all to be definitely defined. Nowadays they bundle them all, as it were, into clothes cut in a sack-line, and are the very last letter of the very latest word in fashion. I can well imagine that a few years hence women will be as severely corseted as they were a short time ago.

I can well remember the time when a woman who held "views" and discarded her stays sent a shudder through the man who was forced to dance with her—though whether they were pleasurable shudders or merely shuddery shudders I do not know. Nowadays, the woman who wears an out-and-out corset, tightly laced, is either a publican's wife or is just bursting with middle age. The corset of to-day is little more than the original plaited grass originated by Mother Eve—in width, that is; in texture it is of a luxury unimaginable in the Garden of Eden.

Women are not so concerned nowadays that their waist should be the eighteen inches of 1890 beauty as that their figure elsewhere should not presume their condition to be at once national and domestic. The modern corset starts soon and finishes quite early. Thus the cycle from Mother Eve is now complete. "As we were" has once more repeated itself.

The only novelty which belongs to to-day is that *men* are wearing corsets more than ever. A well-known *corsetière* has opened a special branch for her male customers alone. Their corsets, too, are of a most beautiful and elaborate description—ranging from the plain belt of the famous athlete to the brocade, rosebud-embroidered "confection" of a well-known general. Perhaps—say fifty years hence—my grandson will be writing of male lingerie, and men will rather lose their reputations than lose their figure. Well, well! if we live in a topsy-turvy world—as they say we do—let's all be topsy-turvy!

The Glut of the Ornamental

How strange it is that human endeavour is, for the most part, always expended upon accomplishing something for which no one has any particular use, while the things which, as it were, are simply begging to be done, are usually among the great "undone" for which we ask forgiveness every Sunday morning in church—that is, presuming we go to church. While there is a world shortage of cooks, the earth is stuffed with lady typists far beyond repletion. Whereas you can always buy a diamond necklace (if you have the money), you can hardly find a tiny house, even if you throw "love" in with the payment. Where you may find a hundred people to do what you don't want, you will be extremely lucky if you come across even one ready and willing to do what you really require done. Nobody seems to like to be merely useful; they would far sooner be ornamental—and starve. Where a man can have the choice of a thousand girls who can't even stitch a button on a pillow-case, the feminine expert in domestic economy will go on economising all by herself, until the only man who takes any real interest in her is the undertaker! It is all very strange, and very unaccountable. But I suppose it will forever continue thuswise until the world ceases to lay its laurels at the foot of Mary and to give Martha the "go by."

I never can quite understand why the bank clerk who marries a chemist's "lady" assistant is not considered to marry very much beneath him, whereas if he elopes with a cook we speak of it as a complete mésalliance. But the cook would, after all, prove extremely useful to him, whereas the chemist's "lady" assistant could only make use other knowledge to poison him one evening without pain. In the same way, if a bankrupt "Milord" takes in "holy matrimony" a barmaid with a good business head, the world wonders what heaven was doing to make such an appalling match. Should, however, he marry "a lady of title" who is entitled to nothing under the will of her late father, the Duke of Poundfoolish-pennywise, and can't earn anything herself, the marriage is spoken of as a romance, and the Church blesses it—and so does the most exclusive society in Balham. Utility seems never to be wanted. The world only asks for ornaments.

It is the same in the drama, where Miss Peggy Prettylegs of the Frivolity Follies will draw the salary of a Prime Minister for showing her surname, while Miss Georgiana de Montmorency, the actress who knows Shakspere so intimately that she mutters "Dear old Will" in her sleep, is resting so long in her top flat in Bloomsbury that if she lived on the ground floor she would inevitably take root.

It is the same in literature, where "Burnt Out Passion" runs through sixty editions and dies gloriously in a cheap edition with a highly-coloured cover on the railway book-stalls, while Professor I. Knowall's wonderful treatise on "What is the Real Origin of Life?" has to be bought by subscription, with the Professor's rich wife as principal purchaser.

It is the same in love, where the worst husbands have the most loving wives, and a good wife lives for years with a positive "horror," and is never known really to smile until she lies dead in her bed!

It is the same in art . . . and yet it is not quite the same here, because the picture which "sells," and is reproduced on post cards, generally inculcates a respectable moral, even though the sight of it sends the artistic almost insane. And yet, where you can find a hundred houses the interiors of which are covered in wallpapers which make you want to scream, you will find only a comparative few who prove by their beauty of design just exactly why they were chosen—and these rooms, in parenthesis, are never let as lodgings.

Not that there seems any cure for this world-wide rage for the useless. We have just to accept it as a fact—and *wonder*! Meanwhile we have to make the best of the men and women who, metaphorically speaking, would far sooner sit dressed in the very latest fashion, underclothed in cheap flannelette, than buy dainty, real linen "undies," and make last year's "do-up" do for this year's "best."

On Going "to the dogs"

I always secretly wonder what people mean when they say they are "going to the dogs." Do they mean that they are going to enjoy themselves thoroughly, with Hell at the end of it?—or do they mean that they are going to raise Hell in their neighbourhood and prevent everybody else from enjoying themselves? Personally, I always think that it is a very empty threat—one usually employed by disillusioned lovers or children. From the casual study I have made of the authorised "dogs," I find them unutterably boring "bow-wows." Of course, I am not exactly a canine expert. Like most men, I have ventured near the kennels once or twice, and made good my escape almost at the first sound of a real bark. People who are habitually immoral, who make a habit of breaking all the Commandments, are rarely any other than very wearisome company. What real lasting joy is there in a "wild night up West" if you have a "head" on you next morning that you would pay handsomely to get rid of, and a "mouth"? . . . "Oh, my dear, *such a* 'mouth'! Appalling!" Besides, the men and women who are in the race with you are usually such dreary company. Either they are so naturally bad that they do not possess the attraction of contrast or variety, or else they are so bitterly repentant that one has to sit and endure from them long stories proving that they are more sinned against than sinning, or that they all belong to old "county families," or are the left-handed offspring of real earls. In any case, one must needs open yet another bottle to endure the fiction to the end.

No, I have long since come to the conclusion that most people don't really enjoy themselves a bit when they are *determined* to do so. They only have a thoroughly "good time" unexpectedly, or when they oughtn't to have it. Of course, there is always the question whether people are most happy when they don't *look so,* and whether they are usually most miserable when apparently smiling their delight. At any rate, if there be one day, or days, in the whole year when all England looks utterly miserable, it is on a fine Bank Holiday or at a picnic. Of course, the newspapers will tell you, for example, that Hampstead Heath was positively pink with happy, smiling faces. But if you did find yourself in the midst of the Bank Holiday crush, you would be struck by the hot, irritated, bored, and weary look of this "happy crowd." Even at the Derby, the only people you see there who, if they are not happy, at least

look so, are those who have just come out of the saloon bar. Occasionally, someone here or there will let the exuberance of his "spirits" overflow, but he won't get much encouragement from the rest of his listeners squashed together in the same char-a-banc. At the most they will look at each other and smile in a half-discouraging manner, as if to say, "Yes, dear, he *is* very funny. But what a common man!" It is all rather depressing. Only a street accident or standing in a queue will make the majority of English people really animated. No wonder that foreigners believe that we take our pleasures sadly. They only observe us when we are out to enjoy ourselves. But if they could see us at a funeral, or when we're suffering from cold feet, then they'd see us smiling and singing! No wonder the French have never really recovered from the gaiety of the British soldier as he went into battle. But if they really want to see the average Britisher looking every bit as phlegmatic as his Continental reputation, they should look at him when he's out for a day's gaiety. No wonder that men, when they "go to the dogs," go to Paris. "The dogs" at home are too much like a moral purge to make a long stay in the "kennel" anything but a most determined effort of the will. We possess, as a nation, so strangely the joie de mourir without much knowledge of the joie de vivre.

A School for Wives

All marriage is a lottery—that is why the modern tendency is to examine both sides of the hedge before you ask someone to jump over it with you. A single man may be said to have his own career in his own hands; but once married, he runs the risk of having to begin all over again, and recommence with a load on his back. A good wife can make a man, but a bad wife can undo a saint. And how's he to know if she be a good wife or a bad 'un *until she's his wife*, which is just too late, as the corpse said to the tax collector. You see, a man has nothing to go on, except to look at what might be his mother-in-law. A girl is far more fortunate. If a man can afford to keep a wife, he's already passed the examination as a "highly recommended." He, at any rate, has to take marriage seriously. No man wants to put his hard-earned savings into a purse with a hole at the bottom, nor live with a woman who begins to "nag" the moment she ceases to snore. If only women were brought up with the idea that marriage is a very serious business, and not merely the chance to cock-a-snook at Mamma, marriage would be far less often a failure. But most girls are brought up to regard the serious business of matrimony from the problematical point of view of whether her husband will earn enough money to give her a "good time." If it be a "serious business," as Mamma and Papa and the parish priest assert it to be, then let her begin as she would begin a business, by starting to learn it. I don't see why there shouldn't be a School for Wives, and no girl be allowed to marry until she has at least passed the fourth standard. After all, it is only fair on the man that he should know that with the sweetest-dearest-loveliest-little-darlikins-in-the-whole-world he is also getting a woman who knows how to boil an egg, and make an old mutton bone and a few potatoes go metaphorical *miles*. The knowledge would be a great comfort to him when his little "darlikins'" feet-of-clay began to show through her silk stockings. As it is, marriage to him is little but a supreme example of buying a pig in a poke, followed by an immediate slump in his own special purchase.

I never can understand why women immediately become "ruffled" when a mere man suggests that, if marriage be a serious business, the least a girl can do is to learn the business side of that business before she enters into partnership. But "ruffle" they do. Also they think that you have insulted the sex, rather as if you had accosted a goddess with a "tickler," or stood before the Sphynx and, regarding her mysterious smile, said, "Give it up, old Bean!" For, after all, if the man has to pay the piper, it's up to the woman to know how to make a tune! As it is, so many husbands seem to make money for their wives to waste it. No wonder there are so many bachelors about, and no wonder there is an outcry to "tax them." Even then many men will pay the tax gladly, plus an entertainment tax if necessary—who knows? For elder people are so fond of drilling into the ears of youth the truism that passion dies and that marriage, to be successful, must be founded upon something more enduring than a feeling of delirium under the stars. That is why a School for Wives would be so useful. After passion is dead, it would be a poor creature of a husband who couldn't find comfort living in the same house with a woman who had obtained her certificate for economical housekeeping and sock-mending. You see, the home is the wife's part of the business. The husband only comes in on sufferance, to pay the bills, listen to complaints, and be a "man about the place," should a man be required. A happy home, a comfortable home, that is a wife's creation. But she can't create the proper atmosphere merely by being an expert on Futurism in music, nor by possessing a back which it would be a crime of fashion not to lay bare. She has got to know the business side of housekeeping and home economics before an indifferent husband can be turned into a good one. You ask, why not a School for Husbands? Well, husbands have passed their "final" when they have earned enough money to keep a wife. The husband provides the house and the wife makes the home. But most wrecked homes are wrecked through ignorance, so why not let wisdom be taught? A well-run home is three parts of a happy one. And if the other part be missing—well, let's have a divorce. Easy divorce certainly encourages domestic mess-ups, but they are

not half such a "mess" as the mess of a matrimonial "hash." The home is the other side of a man's business, the side which his wife runs. Well, as he has had to study to work up his side, why let hers be such a "jump in the dark," for him? Let the home become a study, even a science, and let not so many wives reach a forgivable level of domestic excellence on the "dead bodies" of so many unforgivable "bloomers." Remember that in matrimony, as in everything else it is the premier "bloomer" which blows up les châteaux en Espagne. Afterwards you have to use concrete—and build as you may.

The Neglected Art of Eating Gracefully

Were it not for the fact that we are usually eating at the same time, and so in no mood to criticise the mastication of others, I am sure that not half so many people would fall into love, nor be able to keep up the passionate illusion when fate had pushed them into it. For to watch people eat is, as a rule, to see them at the same disadvantage as the housemaid sees them when she calls them in the morning. Very few people can eat prettily. The majority "munch" in a most unbecoming fashion. For, say what you will, to eat may possibly be delightful, but it is certainly not a romantic episode of the everyday. True, restaurants have done their best to add glamour to our daily chewing. And the better the cuisine, the less time we have for regarding others. That is why hostesses are usually so harassed over their menus. Very few guests arrive really hungry. So she has to entice, as it were, the already replete stomach by delicacies which it really doesn't want, but is not too distended to enjoy. Thus they are kept busy all the time, and have no leisure to observe. But I always wish that part of our education included a course of lessons in the art of eating enough, and of eating it elegantly. Not one person in a hundred is anything but a monstrous spectacle in front of a plateful of stewed tripe. But, as I said before, we are, happily, so busy with our own plateful at the time that we have usually no leisure to regard their stuffing. Personally, I always think that the only way to enjoy a really good dinner is to eat it alone. People are delightful over coffee, but I want only my dreams with salmon mayonnaise.

Of course you *can* eat *and* talk, but only the exceptionally clever people can talk and enjoy what they eat. I always envy them. Many an excellent dinner have I lost to all intents and purposes because my companion insisted on being "lively," and expected a "certain liveliness" on my front at the same moment. If you *must* eat in company—then two is an ideal number. But don't place your companion opposite you. Many a "sweet nothing" has been lost in bitterness because the person to whom it was addressed saw inevitably a morsel of caviare preparing to become nourishment. No, the best place for a solitary companion at meals is, either on the right or on the left, never immediately in front. I have sat opposite some of the most handsome people, and wished all the time that I could have changed them into a "view of sheep"—even one of a brick wall would have been better than nothing. When you are talking to someone at your side, you can turn your face in their direction for the first few words, and then look at something else for the rest of the sentence. But if you turn your head away while talking to someone immediately in front of you—if not necessarily rude, it gives at least the impression that you are merely talking because to talk is expected of you, otherwise you are slightly bored. I know that the popular picture of an Ideal Dinner for Two is one of an exquisitely gowned woman sitting so close to the man-she-loves that only a spiral table decoration prevents their noses from rubbing; with a quart bottle of champagne reclining in a drunken attitude in a bucket of ice, and a basket of choice fruit untouched on the table. But if you examine that picture of the ideal, you will always discover that the artist has missed the ugly foundations of his fancy, as it were, by jumping over the soup and fish, the joint, the entrée, and the sweet, and has got his lovers to the coffee, the cigar-and-liqueur stage, when, if the truth be known, all the hurdles over which the "horse of disillusion" may come a nasty cropper have been passed. So, if you be wise, sit on the side of your best-beloved until the nourishing part of your gastronomic "enfin seul" is over; and then, if you must gaze into his eyes and he into yours, move your seat round—and your evening will probably end by both of you being in the same infatuated state in which you began it. It is only by the strictest attention to the most minor among the minor details of life, that a clever woman is able to keep up the reputation of charm and beauty among her closest intimates. She realises that Nature has given to very few people a "sneeze" which is not something of an offence, and that not even one possessing the loveliness of Ninon de l'Enclos can look anything but a monstrous spectacle when a crumb "goes down the wrong way." But there are other "pitfalls" which it is in the power of all of us to avoid, and the "pitfall" of eating ungracefully is not the least among them.

Modern Clothes

I often think that, if those "Old walls only could speak"—as the "tripper" yearns for them to do, because he can't think of anything else to remark at the moment—all they would say to him would be the words, "For God's sake, you guys, CLEAR OUT!" As a matter of fact, it is just as well that old walls

can't talk, or they might tell us what they thought of us; and you can't knock out a stone wall—at least, not with any prospect of success—in a couple of rounds. For we must look very absurd in the eyes of those who have watched mankind get more absurd and more absurd-looking throughout the ages. Take, for example, our clothes. No one could possibly call them comfortable, and, were we not so used to seeing them ourselves, we should probably call them ugly as well. In the autumn of 1914 we suddenly woke up to the fact that we belonged to a very good-looking nation. It was, of course, the cut of the uniform which effected this transformation. It not only showed off a man's figure, but it often showed it up—and that is the first and biggest step towards a man improving it. Sometimes it gave a man a figure who before possessed merely elongation with practically no width. But the days of khaki are over—thank God for the cause, but aesthetically it's a pity. We have returned to the drab and shoddy days of dress before the war, and men look more shoddy and more drab than ever.

Surely clothes are designed, apart from their warmth, to make the best show of the body which is in them. Having discovered that style in which the average man or woman looks his very best, it seemed so needlessly ridiculous to keep changing it. Beauty and comfort—that surely is the *raison d'être* of apparel—apart from modesty, which, however, a few fig leaves can satisfy. Fashion opens the gate, as it were, and we pass through it, one by one, like foolish sheep—without a sheep's general utility. Mr. Smith, who is short, fat, and podgy, dresses exactly like Mr. Brown, who is tall, muscular, and well proportioned. Mr. Smith would not look so dreadful if he wore a coat well "skirted" below the waist, with tight-fitting knickerbockers and stockings. Mr. Brown's muscles and fine proportions are very nearly lost in a coat and trousers, which only make his muscular development look like fat and his fine proportions merely breadth without much shape. Mrs. Smith, who is modelled on the lines of Venus, bares her back at the dictates of some obscure couturiere in Paris, and the result gives a certain aesthetic pleasure. Mrs. Brown, determined also to be in the fashion, valiantly strips herself, and looks like a bladder of not particularly fresh lard! Were she to wear a modified fashion of the mode 1760 she would probably look almost charming.

And so we might go on citing examples and improvements until we had tabulated and docketed every human being. For an absolute proof that the present mode of dressing for both men and women is generally wrong, is, that the men and women who look best in it are those who possess bones without flesh, length with just that one suggestion of a curve common to all humanity. And think how much more interesting the world would be were each of us to dress in that style which showed our good points to advantage. For, after all, what is the object of clothes, apart from modesty and warmth—which a blanket and a few safety pins could satisfy—if it be not to create an effect pleasant to the eye. And why, when once we have discovered a style which certainly makes the majority of people look their best, should we wilfully discard it and return to the unimaginative and drab? We complain that the world of to-day, whatever may be said in its favour, cannot possibly be called picturesque. Well let us *make* it picturesque! And having made it more beautiful—for Heaven's sake let us *KEEP* it beautiful. Let it be a sign of cowardice—not one of the greatest signs of courage of the age—to fail to put on overalls, if we look our best in them! After all, every reform is in our own hands. But most people seem so entirely helpless to do anything but, metaphorically speaking, flick a fly off their own noses, that they leave reformation to God, and look upon their own unbeautiful effect and the unbeautiful effect of other men as an act of blind destiny. So we, as it were, sigh "Kismet"—in front of garments which a monkey, with any logic or reason in his composition, would not deign to wear. Yes, certainly, if "these old walls could only speak," they would tell us a few home truths. Our ears would surely burn at their eloquence.

A Sense of Universal Pity

Nearly everybody can "feel sorry"—some, extremely so! Lots of people can exclaim, "How ghastly!" in front of a mangled corpse—and then pass shudderingly on their way with a prayer in their hearts that the dead body isn't their own, nor one belonging to their friends and acquaintances. But very few people, it seems to me, possess what I will call a sense of universal pity, which is the intuition to know and sympathise with people "who have never had a chance"; with men and women who have never had "their little day"; with the poor, and hungry, and needy; with those whom the world condemns, and the righteous consider more worthy of censure than of pity. That is to say, while nearly everybody can sympathise with a tragedy so palpable that a dog could perceive it, there are very few people who can sympathise with the misery which lies behind a smiling face, that sorrow of the "soul" which would sooner die than be found out. They can realise the tragedy of a broken back, but they cannot realise the tragedy of a broken heart, still less of a broken spirit. And if that heart and that spirit struggle to hide their unshed tears behind a mask of cheerfulness, or bravado, or assumed—and sometimes very real—courage, they neither can perceive it nor realise it, and the well-spring of their sympathy, should it be pointed out to them, is a very faint and uncertain trickle indeed. Most of us like to take the sorrows of

other people merely at their face value, and if the face be cheerful our imagination does not pierce behind that mask to take, as it were, the secret sorrow in its all-loving arms. But personally, to my mind, the easiest sorrows of all to bear are the sorrows which need not be hidden, which, maybe, cannot be hidden, and which bring all our friends and neighbours around us in one big echoing wail. The sorrows which are the real tragedies are the sorrows which we carry in our hearts every hour of our lives, which stalk beside us in our days of happy carelessness, and add to the misery of our days of woe. We do not speak of them—they are too personal for that. We could not well describe them—their history would be to tell the whole story of our lives. But we know that they are there nevertheless. And the men or women who are our intimates, if they do not perceive something of this shadow behind our smiles, can never call themselves our friends, although we may live in the same house with them and exist side by side on the most friendly terms. That is why, if we probe deep down into the hearts of most men and women, we discover that, in spite of all their gaiety and all their outward courage, inside they are very desolate, and in their hearts they are indescribably lonely.

The Few

But just a few people seem to be enabled to see beneath the surface of things. Around them they seem to shed an extraordinary kind of understanding sympathy. They are not entirely the "people in trouble" who appeal to them; rather they seem able to perceive the misery of a "state of life"—something which obtains no sympathy because people either condemn it or fail to realise the steps which led up to it—in the long, long ago. To them, everybody unfortunate—whether it be by their own fault or by the economic, moral, or social laws of the country—arouses their sympathy. It would seem as if Nature had given them the gift of intuition into another's sorrow—especially when that sorrow is not apparent to the outside world. You will find these people working, for the most part, among the poor and needy, in the slums of big cities, in the midst of men and women whose life is one long, hard struggle to keep both ends meeting until death releases them from the treadmill which is their life. They do not advertise themselves nor their philanthropy. One often never hears of them at all—until they are dead. They do not seek to hide their light under a bushel, because to them all self-advertisement is indecent. They do not realise that what they do is "light" at all. But the world does not realise all that it owes to these unknown men and women, whose sympathies are so wide, so all-absorbing, that they can give up their lives to minister to the sorrows and hardships of others—and, in succouring them, find their only reward. I have known one or two of these people in my life, and they have given me a clearer insight into the nobility inherent in human nature than all the saints whose virtues were ever chronicled, than all the wealthy philanthropists whose gifts and generosity were ever overpraised.

The Great and the Really Great

I always think that one of the most amusing things (to watch), in all life, is what I term the "Kaiser-spirit" in individuals. Nearly everyone mistakes the trimmings of greatness for the real article, and most people would sooner expire than not be able to flaunt these wrappings, or the rags or them, before somebody's eyes. And this spirit exists in individuals in almost every grade of society; until you get to the rock bottom of existence, when the immediate problems of life are so menacing that men and women dare not play about with the gilded imitations. This "Kaiser-spirit"—or the spirit which, if it can't inspire homage, will buy the "props" of it and sit among the hired gorgeousness in the full belief that their own individual greatness has deserved it—is everywhere. Very few men and women are content to be simply men and women. They all seek strenuously to be mistaken for Great Panjandrums. The woman who takes a little air in the park in the afternoon with two full-grown men sitting up, straight-backed and impassive, on the box of the carriage, is one example of this. The chatelaine of a jerry-built villa, who is pleased to consort with anybody except servants and the class below servants, is another. The majority of people need money, not in order to live and be happy, but in order to impress the crowd that they are of more value than those who are thereby impressed. The drama which goes on around and around the problem of whom to "call upon" and whom to "cut," fills the lives of more men and women than the problem of how to make the best of life and pave one's way to the hereafter. If Christ came back to earth, He would have to choose one set or another—Belgravia, Bayswater, or Brixton.

Love "Mush"

I was standing outside a music shop the other day, gazing through the windows at the songs "everybody is singing." Their titles amused me. Not a single one promised very much real sense. They were all what I will call love "mush"—"If you were a flowering rose," and "Come to my garden of love," were two typical examples. The remainder of the verses—with which the suburban sopranos will doubtless break the serenity of the suburban nights this summer—were of a "sloppy" sentimentality combined with a kind of hypersexual idiocy unparalleled except in an English ballad of the popular order. On such belief, I said to myself, are young lovers brought up. Well, I suppose it would be difficult for a youthful soprano to put "her soul" into a song which asked, "What shall I give my dear one every morning for his breakfast?" or, "Who'll soothe your brow when the Income Tax is due, dear?" And yet, sooner or later, she will be faced with some such problems, and then her beloved won't ask her if she be a flowering rose or invite her into his garden of love unless she can find an answer which will carry them both over to the next difficulty fairly successfully. But to live in an eternal state of love-mush is what young people are brought up to regard as matrimony. The plain facts of matrimony are carefully hidden from them, as either being too "prosaic" or too indelicate. The most responsible position in all life for a man and a woman is entered upon by them with an ignorance and an irresponsibility which are neither dignified nor likely to be satisfactory. A woman goes in for several years' training before she can become a cook; a worker in every grade of life has to go through a long period of initiation before she can be said to be really fit for her "job." But any girl thinks she is fit to become a wife, with no other qualification except that she is a woman, and can return endearment for endearment when required. She is not expected to know or do anything else. But her husband expects many and more important things from her if he is not to live to regret his bargain. He may not know it when he is asking her to live with him in his garden of love, but he will realise it a few years later, especially if she has turned that garden of love into a wilderness of expensive weeds.

Wives

The wife of a poor man really can be a helpmate, but the wife of a rich man is so often only asked to be a mistress who can bear her husband legitimate children. Everything which a woman can do, a rich woman pays other women to do for her, while she graces the results of their labour with a studied charm which receives its triumph in the envy of her husband's male friends. No wonder there are so many wild and discontented wives among the middle and upper classes. Where a man or a woman has no "ideal," where they have nothing to do which is really worth doing, they always approach the primitive in morals. We may pretend to spurn the *cocotte*—but to look as nearly as she looks, to live as nearly as she lives, to resemble her and yet to place that resemblance on a legal and, consequently, secure foundation, is becoming more and more the life-work of that feminine "scum" which the war stirred up and peace has caused to overflow. Beneath it all I know there is a strata of the Magnificent, but the surface-ground is weedier than ever. I am not a prude (I think!), but the eternally amusement-seeking and irresponsible lives led by many of the rich, and the really appalling looseness of morals now being led by girls without a qualm, bode very seriously ill for the future of that New World which we were promised the war would make safe for—well, I believe we were told it was to be Democracy, but the Government official and the profiteer still seem the most firmly dug in of us all. I go to the fashionable West-end haunts, and I see the crowds of wealthy women getting as near the nude as they and their dressmakers can manage; I go to the poor parts of London, and I am really shocked by the immense number of girls, some only children, who are practically and *voluntarily* on the streets. These may only be the minority of women and girls, I admit, but they are a minority which is having, and is going to have, a very sinister influence on the future—and the peace and beauty of that future. For the out-and-out prostitute one can feel understanding, and with understanding there is a certain respect; but these amateur "syrens" are a menace and a disgrace to the "homes" which breed them so carelessly, and look after them so ill.

Children

I suppose the most absurd fetish of modern so-called democratic politics is that fetish of the liberty of the subject. In theory it is ideal—let there be complete liberty of ideas by all means; but when that liberty, as is nearly always the case, means that the liberty of one man is gained by the sacrifice of another—then it is the enemy of humanity as well as of nature. I always consider that, in the really Socialistic state, children will not entirely belong to their parents, but will also be guarded and looked after as an asset to the world. This will, of course, give complete liberty to *good* parents, but it will prevent *bad* parents from wrecking the lives of their children, as is the case to-day, unless the parents' wickedness is so disgracefully bad that they come under the eye of the N.S.P.C.C. But the law always shields the wrong-doer. We are far more concerned that mothers and fathers should have complete

control of their children even when they have proved themselves unfit to bring up children, than that the children themselves should be protected. We are far more concerned that the drunkard should be given complete freedom to go out and get drunk than that the misery which his drunkenness causes to innocent people should be punished, or prevented. The helpless must always suffer for the selfishness of other people—that is one of the "divine" laws of civilisation. The liberty of the subject is not only a farce, but a crime, when the liberty jeopardises the lives of the minority. The liberty to harm others will be a "liberty" punishable by law in the state which is anything more than democratic, except as a political catchword.

One of the Minor Tragedies

One of the minor tragedies of life (or is it one of the *major*?) is the way we grow out of things—often against our will, sometimes against our better judgment. I don't mean only that we grow out of clothes—that, after all, is nothing very serious, unless you have no younger brother to whom to hand them on; but we also grow out of desires, out of books, out of pictures, out of places, friendships, even love itself—oh, yes, most often out of love itself. You never seem to be able to say to yourself and the world: "There! this is what I yearn for; this is what I desire; this is what I adore; this is what I shall never tire of—shall always appreciate, to which I shall always show my devotion." Or rather, you *do* say this in all sincerity *at the moment*. Only the passing of time shows you that you were wrong. You seem to grow out of everything which is within your reach, and are only faithful to those things which have just eluded your grasp. It is human nature, I suppose; but it is a dreadful bore, all the same! It would seem as if the brain could not stand the same mental impression for very long; it becomes wearied, eventually seeking to throw off the impression altogether. They tell us that everything we do, or hear, or say—every thought, in fact—is photographed, as it were, on the brain as a definite picture. And if this be true, the same impression must affect the same part of the brain—that part of the brain which becomes tired of this same impress, until it eventually seeks to throw it off as the body throws off disease. Take a very simple instance—that of a popular song. Experience has taught you to realise that, although the melody haunts you deliciously at first, you will eventually grow to hate it, and the tune which once sent you swaying to its rhythm will at last bore you to the point of anaesthesia. I often wonder why that is so? The answer must be physical, since the melody is just the same always—and, if it be really physical, then that surely is the answer to the weariness which always comes with repetition of even the greatest blessings of life in both people as well as things. If only we understood the psychology of boredom we might attain the eternal delight of never being bored, and what we loved once we should always love, until the end of our life's short chapter. And that would simplify problems exceedingly, wouldn't it?

The "Glorious Dead"

For a long time past people have been—and, I suppose, for a long time hence people will be—dusting their imaginations in order to discover the most fitting tribute their and other people's money can erect to the memory of the sailors and soldiers who died so that they and their children might live. And yet it seems to me that in most of these tributes the wishes of the "Glorious Dead," or what might easily be regarded as their wishes, have rarely been consulted. The wishes of the living have prevailed almost every time. Thus the "Glorious Dead" have, as it were, paid off church debts, erected stained-glass windows in places of worship which are beautified considerably thereby, paid for statues of fallen warriors which have been placed in the middle of open market-places to attract the passing attention of pedestrians and the very active attention of small birds. A thousand awkward debts have been wiped out by the money collected for the memory of deeds which for ever will be glorious, and yet, it seems to me, in most of the cases the wishes of the wealthy living—and of a very narrow circle of the living—were at all times the primary, albeit the unconscious, object which lay behind the tribute. And the worst of it is that so many of these memorials to "Our Glorious Dead" are as "dead" as the heroes whom they wish to commemorate. In ten years' time they will, for all practical purposes be ignored. Maybe some little corner of the world is more lovely for their being, but the world, the new and better world, for which the "Glorious Dead" died, is just as barren as ever it was. Rarely, only rarely, have these memorials been at all worthy of the memory which they desire to keep alive. And these rare instances have not been popular among the wealthy and the Churchmen, whose one cry was that "something must be done"—something beautiful, but useless, for preference. Mostly, they constitute some wing added to a hospital; hostels for disabled soldiers; alms-houses, and other purely practical benefits which afford nothing to gape at and not very much to talk about. People infinitely prefer some huge ungainly statue or some indifferently stained glass window, any seven-days' wonder in the way of marble, granite, or glass. They would like the Cenotaph to fill St. James's Park, and fondly believe that

the "Glorious Dead" would find pride and pleasure in such a monstrosity. But it seems to me that any memorial to the dead heroes falls short of its ideal which does not, at the same time, help the living in some real practical and unsectarian way. Heroes didn't die so that the parish church should have a new window or the market place a pump; they died so that the less fortunate of this world should have a better chance, find a greater health, a greater happiness, a wider space in the new world which the sacrifice of their fathers, brothers, and chums helped to found.

Always the Personal Note

The longer I live the more clearly I perceive the extreme difficulty reformers have to interest people in philanthropic schemes which do not place their religion, their brand of politics, or they themselves in prominent positions on the propaganda. It seems to be very much the fashion among those who desire to help others that they do so in the belief that they will thereby be themselves saved. So few, so very few, help the less fortunate on their way without cramming their own religion, or their own politics, or their own munificence down their throats at the same time. They cannot be kind for the sake of being kind; they cannot help others up without seeking to brand them at the same time with their own pet views and beliefs. And then they wonder why the poor will not be helped; why they are suspicious, or ungrateful, or allow themselves to be helped only that they may help themselves at the same time—and to something more than their individual share. Humility and tolerance—and tolerance is, after all, but one aspect of humility—are the rarest of all the human virtues. So much philanthropy merely means the giving of a "bun" on the condition that he who takes the bun will also stop to pray, to become Conservative, and to give thanks. Good is so often done for the sake of doing good, not to right a social wrong—which should be the end of all goodness. Even then, so many people are content to do good from a distance; or if, perhaps, they do come among the objects of their unselfishness, they do so with, as it were, the dividing-line well marked—with them, but not *of them*, and with the air of regarding themselves as being extremely kind-hearted to be there at all. It is their "bit"—not to help on the peace, of course, but to help themselves into Heaven. The poor are but the means to this end.

Clergymen

I always feel so sorry for clergymen—the clergymen who are inspired to their calling, not, of course the "professional" variety who are clergymen because they preferred the Church to the Stock Exchange. They carry with them wherever they go the mark of the professional servant of God, and it creates a prejudice, between them and those who really need their succour, which is almost unsurmountable. Many clergymen, I know, adore the trimmings of their profession—the pomps and vestments, the admiration of spinster ladies, and opportunity to shake the friendly finger at Mrs. Gubbins and regret that she hasn't been seen in church lately—this same Mrs. Gubbins who works sixteen hours a day to bring up a large family in the greatest goodness and comfort her mother's heart can supply, and, so it seems to me, *lives* her prayers—which is a far finer thing than merely uttering them in public and respectability. But the clergyman whose heart is in his work, who lives for the poor and needy, and finds no greater joy than in bringing joy into the lives of others, has to make those he wishes to *forget* first of all that he is a clergyman and not merely a man ready, as it were, to barter a bun for an attendance at church. Until he does this he cannot surmount that prejudice, that suspicion, and that atmosphere of unnaturalness without which no lasting comfort and good is ever done. For how can he live among the poor as one of the poor when at the same time he has to keep in the "good books" of the wealthy, who pay the pew rents, and the evil-minded "do-nothings," who are ever ready to declare that he is demeaning himself and their Church when he breaks down the barrier of caste and position in his efforts to live and suffer and work as do the men and women he wishes to make happier and better? He can do it, if he possesses the right personality, but it is a fight which, for the most part, seems so hopeless as not to be worth while. You have only to watch the restrained jollity of his flock the moment a clergyman enters the room to realise the crust which he will have to break through in order to bring to light the jewel of human nature which really shines so brightly in the hearts of the very poor.

Their Failure

It is so difficult for men and women, as it were, to really help the East-end while living in West-end comfort. It is so difficult for religious people to realise that the finest prayer of all is to "play the game." But the poor understand the wonder of that prayer full well; it is, indeed, I rather fancy, the only prayer

that they really do understand, the only one which really and truly touches them and helps them on their way. And, when I see among the very poor the simply magnificent human material which is allowed to run to waste, misunderstood, unheeded, I sometimes feel that the only hope of real lasting good will be found by those who work *outside* the Church, not among those who work within it. For those who have worked within it have let so many generations of fine youth run to seed, that the time has come for practical lay-workers to take on the job. The poor need more practical schemes for their guidance and their good, and fewer prayer-meetings and sing-songs from the hymnals. For, to my mind, the very basis of all real religion is a practical basis. It is useless to live with, as it were, your head in Heaven if you stand knee-deep in filth. Of what good is your own personal salvation if you have not done your best to make the world better and happier for others? To worry about their salvation is less than useless—if that be possible. Providing they have something to live for, something to make life worth living, surroundings which bring out all that is best and bravest and finest in their natures, their heavenly salvation will take care of itself. The pity is that there is so much magnificent youthful promise which prejudice and tradition and social wrongs never allow to be fulfilled. There is only one real religion, and that is the religion of making life happier and more profitable to others. You may not make them pray in the process, you may not make them sing hymns—prayers and hymn-singing are merely beautiful accompaniments—in a practical uplifting of the human state, the human "soul." "Love"—that is the only thing which really matters, Love—with Charity, and Self-sacrifice, and Unselfishness, and Justice—which are, after all, the attributes of this Love.

Work in the East-end

It seems to me that the poor need a friend more urgently than they need a pastor, or, if they must have a pastor—then the pastor must be completely disguised as a friend. I always wonder why it is the popular fallacy that the poor need religion more than the wealthy. My own experience is that you will find more real Christianity in Shoreditch than you will ever find in Mayfair—even though the "revealers" of it may drink and swear and otherwise lead outwardly debased lives. Well, the surroundings, the "atmosphere" in which they have been forced to live, encourage them in their blasphemy. I never marvel that they are often profane; I wonder more greatly that they are not infinitely more so. But it seems to me that you will "uplift" them far more by pulling down their filthy habitations than by preaching the "Word of God" at them at every available opportunity. They are the landlords, the profiteers, the members of Society who do so little to cleanse and purify the human life among the tenements, who require the "Word" more urgently than the enforced dwellers therein. Only the other evening I paid a visit to one of the general committee of the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission in the little flat which he occupies at the top of a huge building called "flats." These flats consist of only two rooms, a bedroom and a kitchen. There are no "conveniences"—except some of an indescribably filthy nature which are mutually shared by the inhabitants of several flats, to their own necessary loss of self-respect and decency. And in these two-roomed flats families ranging from three to twelve members are forced to live, and for this benefit they must pay six shillings a week. How can youth reach its full perfection amid such surroundings—surroundings which can be multiplied hundreds of times in every part of London and our big cities? And when I *know* the magnificent "promise" of which this same youth is capable—the war showed it in one side of its greatness—and see the surroundings in which it must grow and expand, physically as well as spiritually, I marvel at its moral achievements and I hate the society which permits this splendid human material only by a stroke of luck ever to have its chance. For what has this youth of the slums got to live for? He can have no home-life amid the pigsties which are called his "home", his strength is mostly thrust into blind alley occupations which he is forced to take, since his education has fitted him for nothing better, and he must accept them in order to live at all; and for his recreation, he is given the life of the streets and the public-house—nothing else. It is only such groups of unselfish men as are represented by the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission and by the men who run the London Working Boys' Clubs in the poorest parts of London, together with those other men and women, clergymen and laymen, who are struggling to bring a little happiness and light into the lives of the men and boys of the East-end by providing them with comfort and warmth in the club houses and with healthy recreation for their hours of freedom, who are helping to kill Bolshevism at its roots. For it seems to me that youth is the supreme charge of those who have grown old. The salvation of the world will come through the young; the glory of the old is that age and experience have taught them to perceive this fact. Give the majority of men something noble to live for, and the vast majority will live up to their "star."

Mysticism and the Practical Man

I wish the Mystics and the Practical Men could meet, fraternise, and still not yearn to murder one

another. It would be of immense benefit to you and me and the rest of us who make up the "hum-drum" world. For the Practical Man who is not something of a mystic is at best a commonplace nuisance, and at his worst a clog on the wheels of progress. And the mystic who is only mystical is even less good to anyone, since his Ideals and his Theories, and often his personal example, fade away in the smoke of factory chimneys belching out the sweat of men and women's labour into the pure air of heaven. No, the Mystic who is to do any good to his brother men must be at the same time a practical man, just as the practical man must possess some Big Idea behind his commerce and his success in order to escape the ignominy of being a mere money-maker, the inglorious driver of sweated labourers. If only these two could meet—*and agree*—there might possibly be some hope for the Dawn of that New World which the War surely came to found and the washy kind of Peace which followed seems to have thrust back again into darkness. True, there are some business men who perceive behind their business a goal, an ideal, in which there is something more than their own personal wealth and glory, the be-diamonding of a fat wife, and the expensive upbringing of a spoilt family. They make their wealth, but they seek to make it justly, to make it cleanly, and, having amassed their fortune, strive to benefit the lot of those by whose labour they amassed it, and whose future, and the future of whose children, are at once their charge and their most profound interest. But these men are so few—they are so few that almost everybody knows their names. The great masses of practical business men possess the "soul" of a lump of lead, the ideals of little money-grubbing attorneys, the "vision" of a chimpanzee in a jungle. They are "cute," and, for the end towards which they strive, they are clever. But they are nothing more. And, because of them, there is this "eternal unrest" for which the ignorant blame "labour" and the still more ignorant blame "modern education." (Ye gods—what is it?)

Abraham Lincoln

Success and fame which are purely personal are always abortive in the long run. Unless a Big Achievement has some splendid Vision behind it, it is soon almost as completely forgotten as if it had never been. Or it may remain in the memory of posterity as a name only, without influencing that mind in the very slightest degree. A mystic must be a practical man as well, if his "vision" is not to be lost in the smoke of mere words and theories; just as a practical man must at the same time be something of a mystic if his labour is to live and bear fruit a hundredfold. Abraham Lincoln was a mystic as well as a practical man. That is why the ideal of statesmanship for which he lived has influenced the world since his time far more than men equally famous in their day. It was this "invisible power" behind his ideal which triumphed over all opposition at last, and which continues to triumph in spite of the pigmy-souled crowd of party politicians who still wrangle in the political arena. Nothing lasting is ever accomplished without "vision," and the spiritual, though long in coming, will yet triumph over ignorance and prejudice and selfishness, even though it comes through war and the overthrow of capitalists and autocrats. The life and the ideals of Abraham Lincoln are yet one more piece of evidence of this.

Reconstruction

And just so far as modern Socialism possesses this "mystical power" just so far will it go—inevitably. But, personally, I always think that Socialism (so-called) is far too busy attacking the elderly and decaying, both in men and traditions. It should attack youth; or, rather, it should fight for youth, and for youth principally and almost alone. You cannot found the New World in a day, but if the youthful citizen is taken in hand, educated, inspired, and given all possible advantages both for intellectual improvement and bodily health, this New World will come without resistance, inevitably, and of its own accord and free will. To a certain extent the ideals of the British Empire succeed only for the socialistic "vision" which inspires it. But the chief fault of this "vision" is that it is so busy making black men clean and "Christian" that it has no vigour left to clean up and "Christianise" the dirt and heathenism at home. It would rather, metaphorically speaking (I had vowed never to use that expression again in the New Year, but—well, there it is!), bring the ideals of Western civilisation into the jungles of Darkest Africa than tackle the problems of the slums of Manchester. And this, not so much because a "civilised" Darkest Africa will have money in it, as because in tackling the problem of the slums it will have to fight drastically the rich and poor heathens at home—with all the tradition and prejudice, ignorance, and selfishness with which they are bolstered up and deluded with the cry of "Freedom" and "Liberty," and that still greater illusion—Legal "Justice."

Education

Education of the mind, education of the body—to stop at the very beginning that tragic waste of human material, both physical, mental, and spiritual, which forces youth into blind-alley occupations or into occupations unworthy of physically fit men and women—that is the first stone in the foundation of the New World—a step far more important than the confiscation of capital, which seems to be the loudest cry of those who, in their ignorance, claim to be Socialists. Socialism is *constructive* not *destructive*—but the construction must have the vision of the future always before its eyes, and that future must be prepared for—drastically, if need be.

The Inane and Unimaginative

In every mixed crowd there always seems such a large percentage of the unimaginative and the inane that I am never surprised that the silliest superstitions still flourish, "the Thing" is rampant, and that, in every progress towards real civilisation, the very longest way round is taken with the very feeblest results. It is not that this percentage is wicked, nor is it strikingly good, neither is it necessarily feeble-minded, but it shows itself so entirely unimaginative and inane that it is no wonder that the charlatan in religion, politics, and education rampages over the world through a perfect maelstrom of bouquets. Nothing impersonal ever seems to stir the sluggishness of their "souls." They feel nothing that does not hit them straight between the eyes. They never perceive the tragedy behind the smile, the wrong behind the justice of the law, the piteousness and helplessness of men and women. The price of currants stirs them to revolt far more rapidly than that disgrace to civilisation which are the slums. Air raids were the greatest injustice of the war—air raids, when they never knew from one moonlight night to another if they might not join unwillingly the army of the heroic dead in heaven. That is why so many of them secretly believe that they endured far more at home than the ordinary common soldier did in the front-line trenches. They cannot realise *his* tragedy; they can, however, fully realise their own. That is why they talk of it with so much greater eloquence; that is why, when they listen to his recitals of dirt and hunger and indescribable pain, they do so with a suppressed yawn and a secret conviction that they have heard quite enough about the war. As for tragedy—their apotheosis of the tragic is reached in a street accident at which they can stand gaping, nursing the details for the moment when they can retail them with gusto at home; but I verily believe that, if the dying man cut rather a ridiculous figure, *some of them would have to laugh*. But then, this inane and unimaginative percentage among the crowd is always ready *to laugh*. Their special genius is that they will always guffaw in the wrong place. Or, if they do not laugh, they will let fall some utterly stupid remark—so stupid that one wonders occasionally if nature by mistake has given them a bird's brain without giving them at the same time a bird's beautiful plumage. And the worst of it is one is up against this inane percentage in every walk of life—this unimaginative army of men and women who can perceive *nothing* which does not absolutely concern themselves and their own soul's comfort.

Life's Great Adventure

I hope when I am old that Fate will give me a garden and a view of the sea. I should hate to decay in a suburban row and be carried away at the end of all my mostly fruitless longings in a hearse; the seven minutes' wonder of the small children of the street, who will cry, "Oo-er" when my coffin is borne out by poor men whose names I can't ever know! Not that it really matters, I suppose; and yet, we all of us hope to satisfy our artistic sense, especially when we're helpless to help ourselves. Yes, I should like to pass the twilight of my life in a garden from which there would be a view of the sea. A garden is nearly always beautiful, and the sea always, always promises adventure, even when we have reached that time of life when to "pass over" is the only chance of adventure left to us. It seems to beckon us to leave the monotonous in habits, people and things in general, and seek renewed youthfulness, the thrill of novelty, the promise of romance amid lands and people far, far away. And we all of us hope that we may not die before we have had one *real* adventure. Adventure, I suppose, always comes to the really adventurous, but so many people are only half-adventurous; they have all the yearning and the longing, but Nature has bereft them of the power to act. So they wait for adventure to come to them, the while they grow older and staler all the time. And sometimes it never does come to them; or, perhaps, it only comes to them too late. There are some, of course, who never feel this wild longing to escape. They are the human turnips; and, so long as they have a plot of ground on which to expand and grow, they look for nothing else other than to be "mashed" from time to time by someone of the opposite sex. These people are quite content to live and die in a row, and to have an impressive funeral is to them a sufficient argument for having lived at all. But their propinquity is one of the reasons why I should not like to grow old in a crowd. I know there are turnips—human turnips, I mean—living amid the Alps. But these don't depress you, for the simple reason that, besides them, you have the Alps anyway. And the Alps have something of that spirit of eternity which the sea possesses.

Travel

Do you know those men and women who, to paraphrase Omar Khayyám, "come like treacle and like gall they go"? Well, it seems to me that life is rather like such as they. You may live for something, you may live for someone, but some time, sooner or later, you will be thrown back upon your own garden, the "inner plot" of land which you have cultivated in your own heart, to find what flowers thereon you may. Live for others, yes! but don't live entirely for them. No. For if you live altogether for someone, it stands to reason that they cannot well live for you—or, if they can, then they don't trouble, since you are such a certain asset in their lives. So they will begin to live for someone else. For this living for people is part of the nature of all hearts which are not the hearts of "turnips." And then, what becomes of you? No, the wise man and woman keep a little for themselves, and that "little" is barred to permanent visitors. You may allow certain people to live therein for a while, but, as you value your own joy and happiness, your own independence and peace, do not deliver up to them the key. Keep that for yourself, so that, when the loneliness of life comes to you, as come it will—that is part of the tragedy of human life—you may not be utterly desolate, but possess some little ray of hope and delight and joy to illumine the shadows of loneliness when they fall across your path. And, for what they are worth to me for consolation, I thank Heaven now for the long years which I spent practically alone in the world, so far as congenial companionship went. Solitude drove me back upon myself, and since all of us must have some joy, natural or merely manufactured, in order to go on living, it forced me to cultivate other interests, which, perhaps, had I been happy, I should have neglected for brighter but more ephemeral joys. So I am not frightened of my own society, and that, though a rather dreary achievement, is by no means to be despised. It enables me to wander about alone and yet be happy; it permits me to travel with no one but my own company and the chance acquaintances I pick up *en route*, and yet not be entirely depressed. It helped me to achieve that philosophy which says: "If I may not have the ideal companion, then let me walk with no one but myself"—and that is the philosophy of a man who can never really feel lonely for a long time, even though he may be quite alone.

The Enthralling Out-of-reach

Everybody *knows* that they could improve human nature. I don't mean, of course, that they could necessarily improve their own, nor that of the lady who lives next door, nor that of Mr. Lloyd George, nor of Miss Marie Lloyd, nor even of Lenin and Trotsky; but human nature as it is found in all of us and as it prevents heaven on this earth lasting much longer than five and twenty minutes! I know—or rather I think—that I could improve it. And I should begin at that unhappy "kink" in all of us which only realises those blessings which belong to other people, or those which we ourselves have lost. Nobody really and truly knows what Youth means until they have reached the age which only asks of men and women to subside—gracefully, if possible, and silently as an act of decency. We never love the people who love us, to quite the same extent anyway, until, either they love us no more, or love somebody else, or go out and die. We never realise the splendour of splendid health until the doctor prescribes six months in a nursing home as the only alternative to demise. We never appreciated butter until profiteers and the war sent the price up to four-and-sixpence for a pound. The extra five hundred a year which seems to stand in the way of our complete happiness—when we receive it, we realise that our happiness really required a thousand. Fame is a wonderful and beautiful state, until we become famous and find out how dull it is and what a real blessing it is to be a person of only the least importance. Life, I can understand, is never so sweet as it is to those who, as it were, have just been sentenced to be hanged. Our ideals are always thrilling until one day we wake up to find them accomplished facts; and the only real passion of our life is the woman who went off and married somebody else. I exaggerate, perhaps, but scarcely too much, I believe. For, as I said before, there is a certain "kink" in human nature which casts a halo of delight over those things which we have lost, or, by the biggest stretch of dreaming-fancy can we ever hope to possess. I suppose it means that we could not possibly live up to the happiness which we believe would be ours were we to possess the blessings we yearn for with all our hearts. All the same, I wish that human nature were as fond of the blessings it throws away unheeded, as it would be could it only regain possession of them once it fully realises they are lost. Half our troubles spring from our own fault—though they were not really our own fault, because we did not know what we were doing when we did those things which might have saved us all our tears. That is where the tragedy of it all came in. We never *realised* . . . we never *knew*! But Fate pays not the slightest heed to our ignorance. We just have to live out our mistakes as best we may. And nobody really pities us; we only pity ourselves.

The Things which are not Dreamed of in Our Philosophy

The other day I received a most extraordinary spirit picture anonymously through the post. I cannot describe this picture—it is well-nigh indescribable. The effect is wonderful, though the means are of the simplest. Apparently the artist had upset a bottle of ink over a large piece of white cardboard, and then, with the aid of a sharp penknife, cut his way across it in long narrow slashes until the effect is that of rays of light which, seen from a distance, have the effect of luminosity in a most extraordinary degree. In the corner there is the figure of Christ on the Cross, to which this method has given the most marvellous effect of light and shadow. Indeed, the whole picture is almost uncanny in its effectiveness and in the simplicity of the means to this end. You ask me if I believe it to be really and truly a spirit picture? Well, honestly, I do not know. I realise the beauty of the picture—everyone must realise this who sees it; but, whether the artist who designed it and transmitted his idea through a human hand be a spirit I should not like to declare, for the simple reason that I understand so little of spiritualism—except that side of spiritualism which *I do not believe*—that I should be foolish to be dogmatic when all the time I realise that I am yet in ignorance. But of the genuineness of the "medium" through whose hand the spirit picture was transmitted I am certain. He thoroughly believed in the phenomenon that a spirit from another world was using him to convey messages to the inhabitants of this. You ask me why I believe in his conviction—well, my answer would be so mundane that you might perhaps laugh at my logic. But one at least I can give, and it is this; that, in my experience of mediums and professional spiritualists, one always, as it were, hears the rattle of the collection-box behind the "messages" from another sphere—either that, or the person is so eccentric that "mediumship" in his case has become merely another form of mental affliction. Well, the artist who sent me this picture is, except for this fixed idea that he is a medium between this world and the next, as normal as you or I, and his belief not only is making him poorer each day—the "spirit" firmly forbidding him either to sell or exhibit his pictures—but is gently, yet inevitably, leading him straight towards the workhouse.

Faith

A few days after the receipt of the picture I discovered the artist and went to "beard him in his den." While I was talking with him, he declared that he had just received a "message" from this spirit to draw me a picture which, it was inferred, would convey some "recollection" to me. Sitting at the other side of an ordinary desk, the artist picked up one piece of chalk after another, making a series of circular marks over the paper. This went on for nearly an hour-and-a-half. Occasionally something like a definite design seemed to come out of all this chaos in chalk, if I may so express it, only to be rubbed out again immediately, the circular movements still continuing. Then at last, a few vigorous strokes, and suddenly a definite picture came out, a picture which was continued until it was finally complete. This picture represented a tall arch, through which the artist had painted the most beautiful effect of evening sky—the evening sky when sunset is fading into blue-green and the first stars are twinkling. And around this arch was chalked a kind of heavy festoon of drooping ostrich feathers. The picture when finished was certainly very beautiful, and I have it in my possession at the present moment. *But it conveyed absolutely nothing to me*, and certainly brought back no recollection to my memory of a previous life whatsoever. But the "medium" so thoroughly believed in his "power to convey" that I felt quite unhappy about having to confess my unfamiliarity. In fact, I left the studio—if studio it could be called—convinced by the beauty of the pictures, but still unconvinced that they were really pictures painted by a spirit artist. The only belief I did come away with was the belief that the "medium" thoroughly believed in himself and the reality behind his belief. And, in a way, I envied him; yes, I envied him, even though his faith may prove but illusory after all. For I have reached the age when I realise that I am not at all sure that men and women do really want *truth*, and that a faith which gives comfort and happiness is, for the practical purpose of going through life happily and dying in hope, a far more comforting philosophy. I, alas! *cannot believe* what I am not convinced is a scientifically proved fact; but I am to be pitied far more than envied for my—temperamental limitation—shall I call it? The man or woman who possesses a blind faith in something above and beyond this world is the man and woman to be envied, even though everybody cannot emulate their implicit trust.

Spiritualism

All the same, I do not think I shall ever dare to become a spiritualist. If you can understand my meaning, so much, so very much depends upon the truth and veracity of its tenets that I cannot go blindly forward, as so many people seem to be able to do, because I realise that disillusion would mean something so terrible that a kind of instinctive faith in another life, without reason, without scientific demonstration, seems far safer for the peace of mind. To believe in spiritualism, and then to be deceived, would be so unsettling, so devastating to the "soul," that, in my own self-defence, I prefer to be sceptical unreasonably than to be equally unreasonably believing. So many people, who have loved

and lost, rush towards spiritualism demanding no real evidence whatsoever, bringing to it a kind of passionate yearning to find therein some kind of illusion that their loved ones, who are dead, still live on waiting for reunion in another world. Such a yearning is very human, very understandable, very forgivable; but these people are the enemies of true spiritualism as a new branch of scientific speculation. I would not rob them of the glamour of their faith, since, as I have just written, I have reached that time of life when I realise that humanity does not necessarily want truth for the foundation of its happiness, but a whole-hearted faith, a belief sufficiently sublime to make the common Everyday significant in the march forward toward the Great Unknown. But I, alas! am not one of those who can merely believe because without belief my heart would be broken and my life would be drearier than the loneliest autumn twilight. I find a greater comfort in uncertain hope and a more uncertain faith. If I ever really and truly believed in spiritualism and then found, as so many people have done, alas! that the prophet of it was himself a fraud, I should be cut, as it were, from all my spiritual bearings, to flounder hopeless and broken-hearted mid the desolate wastes of agnosticism. I cannot give myself unless I am convinced that the sacrifice is for something which *I must believe* in spite of all doubt; not entirely what I *want to believe* because belief is full of happiness and comfort. I am of those who demand "all, or not at all." I cannot go on struggling to find security by just holding on to one false straw after another. I prefer to hope and to trust, and, although it is a dreary philosophy, I could not, if I would, exchange it for something which is false, however wonderful and beautiful.

On Reality in People

My one great grievance against people in the mass is that they are so very seldom real. I don't mean to say, of course, that you can walk through them like ghosts, or that, if they "gave you one straight from the shoulder," you wouldn't get a black eye. But what I mean is, that they are so very rarely their true selves; they so very rarely say what they think—or indeed think anything at all! They are so very rarely content to be merely human beings, and not some kind of walking-waxwork figure with a gramophone record inside them speaking the opinions which do not belong to them, but to some mysterious "authority" whom it is the correct thing to quote. Have you ever watched the eyes of friends talking together? I don't mean friends who are *real* friends, friends with whom every thought is a thought shared—but the kind of familiar acquaintance who passes for a friend in polite society, and passes out of one's life as little missed in reality as an arm-chair which has gone to be repaired. In their eyes there is rarely any "answering light"—just a cold, glassy kind of surface, which says nothing and is as unsympathetic and as unfamiliar as a holland blind. You can tell by their expression that, in spite of all their apparent air of friendly familiarity, they are merely talking for talking's sake, merely being friendly for the sake of friendship; that, if they were never to see each other again, they would do so without one heartbreak. Perhaps I am unsociable, perhaps I am a bit of a misanthrope; but those kind of friends, those kind of people, bore me unutterably. I am only really happy in the society of bosom friends, or in the society of interesting strangers. The half-and-halves, the people who claim friendship because circumstances happened to have thrown you together fairly frequently—and one of us has a beautiful house and the other an excellent cook—these people press upon my spirit like a strait-waistcoat. I gabble the conventional small-talk of polite sociability, and I thank God when they are gone! They are called "friends," but we have absolutely nothing in common—not even a disease!

So much polite conversation is merely "polite," and can by no stretch of imagination be rightly called "conversation." It consists for the most part in exaggerated complimentary remarks—which, it is hoped, will please you—or in one person waiting impatiently while the other person relates all he and his family have been doing until he, in his turn, can seize a momentary pause for breath to begin the whole recent history of his own affairs in detail. But neither of them is really at all interested in the story of the other's doings—you can see that in their eyes, in the kind of fixed smile of simulated interest with which they listen, the while they furtively take note of the grey hair you are trying to hide, the shirt button which will leave its moorings if something isn't done for it before long, the stain on your waistcoat denoting egg-for-breakfast and an early hurry—all the things, in fact, which really interest them to an extent and are far more thrilling anyway than the things you are telling them in so much thraldom on your own part and with so much gusto.

Some people are artificial through and through; it may be said of them that they are only really real when they are having a tooth pulled. But the majority of people only hide themselves behind a kind of crust of artificiality; beneath that crust they were real live men and women. And the war—thank God! (that is to say, if one ever can thank God for the war)—cracked that crust until it fell away, and was trampled under the feet of real men and women living real lives, honestly with themselves and *vis-à-vis* the world. That is one of the reasons why the war has made social life a so much more vital and interesting state. Of course, there are some people who still strive to revive the social life of "masks," but they are the people whose crust of artificiality was only cracked—or rather chipped—by the horror

and reality of war. War never really reached them, except through their stomachs and their motor cars, or perhaps in the excuse it gave them for flirting half-heartedly with some really useful human labour. They never went "over the top" in spirit, and their point of view still reeks of the point of view of the farthest back of the base. These people will be more real when they are *dead* than while they are alive—if you can understand my meaning? But thank Heaven! their ranks are thinned. They belong to the "back of beyond," to the "frumps," the "washouts," and the "back numbers."

Life

Life is rather like a rocket; it shoots into the sky, flares, fades, and falls to the ground in dust so unnoticeable that you can hardly find its remnants, search how you may. Of course, I know that our lives don't really shoot upwards towards the stars to illumine the heavens by their own resplendent beams, but we usually think they're going to, sometimes we think they do, and then, when our dreams settle down to reality, we discover that our fate has been scarcely different from the crowd, and that our life stands out about as unique as one house is in a row of houses all built on the same pattern. But I sometimes think that our dreams are our real life, and that what we do is a matter of indifference to what we think and suffer and feel. Some days, when you sit in a railway carriage on the underground railways and gaze at the rows of stodgy, expressionless, flat kind of faces which the majority of the travellers possess, you say to yourself, "These people can have had no history; these people cannot have really lived; they cannot have suffered and struggled and hoped and dreamed and renounced, renounced so often with the heart frozen beyond tears." And yet you know they must have done—perhaps they are living a whole lifetime of mental agony even as you watch them, who can tell?—because you have been "through the mill" too, you too have walked to Amaous, sat desolate in the Garden of Gethsemane, seen all your fondest dreams crucified on the Cross of Reality, and risen again, lonelier, sadder, wiser maybe, but with a wisdom which is more desolate than the wilderness. You have been through Hell, and no one has guessed, no one has seen, no one has ever, ever known. And these people, so stodgy, so expressionless, so dreary and conventional, must have been through it too. For it seems to me that we must all go through it some time or other, and the bigger, the braver your heart the greater the Hell; the more sensitive, the more susceptible you are to the love which links one human being with another, the greater your pain, the more desolate your renunciation. And, as I said before, nobody guesses, nobody believes, nobody ever, ever knows.

So very, very few people can see beyond the outward and visible signs of pain. They see the smile, the fretfulness—and yet they think the smile means happiness and the fretfulness an ugly, tiresome thing. They do not perceive that often the smile is as a cry to Heaven, and that fretfulness is but the sign of a soul breaking itself against the jagged rocks of hopelessness and doubt. I often listen to the people speaking of blindness and the blind. They only see that the eyes are gone, that the glory which is spring is for ever dead; they perceive the hesitating walk, the outstretched groping hand which, to my mind, is more pitiful than the story of the Cross, and inwardly they murmur, "How awful!" and sometimes they turn away. But they have never seen the real tragedy which lies behind the visible handicap. Only their imagination is stirred by the outward and visible side of the tragedy; never—or rather, very rarely—is it haunted by the realisation of the despair which is struggling to find peace, some solution of the meaning of it all, struggling to bring back some reasoned hope and gladness, some tiny ray of light in the mental and physical darkness, without which we none of us can believe, we none of us can live. Perhaps they are wise to see so little of the real sorrow which dogs so many lives, but they, nevertheless, are blind in their turn. They are wise, because there is a whole wise philosophy of a sort in being deaf to the song within the song, blind to the tears which no one sees, to the trembling lip which is the aftermath of—oh, so many smiles. The philosopher perceives just enough of the heart-beat of the world to keep the human touch, but not enough to kill the outbursts of unreasoned joy which make the picture of life so exhilarating and jolly. And yet . . . and yet . . . oh yes, happiness *does* lie in remembering little, perceiving less, and in pinning your love and faith in God—in human love, in human gratitude, in human unselfishness scarcely at all. Happiness, I say, lies thus—but alas! not everybody can or ever will be happy. They feel too greatly—and if in intense feeling there is divine beauty, there is also incalculable pain. When the "ingrate" is turned out of Heaven they do not send him to Hell, they send him to Earth and give him imagination and a heart.

Dreams and Reality

So many people imagine that their love is returned, that their innermost thoughts are appreciated and understood, when lips meet lips in that kiss which brings oblivion—that kiss which even the lowliest man and woman receive once in their lives as a benediction from Heaven. So many people

imagine that they have found the Ideal Friend when they meet someone with an equal admiration for the poems of Robert Browning; or the Russian Ballet, or one who places the music of Debussy above the music of Wagner. But, I fear, they are often disappointed. For the longer I live, the more convinced I become that Love and Friendship are but "day dreams" of the "soul,"—that all we can ever possess in Life is the second-best of both. Nobody in Love, or in the first throes of a new friendship, will believe me, of course. Why should they? There are moments in both love and friendship when the "dream" does seem to become a blissful reality. But they pass—they pass . . . leaving us once more lonely in the wilderness of the Everyday, wondering if, after all, those splendid moments which are over were ever anything more than merely the figments of our own imagination and had nothing whatever to do with the love we believed was ours, the friendship which seemed to come towards us with open arms—that the Dream and the Hope, and the fulfilment of both, merely lived and died in our own hearts alone—in our own hearts and nowhere . . . alas! nowhere else. I often think it must be so. Our love is always the same; only the loved-one changes. God alone is a permanent Ideal because He lives within us—we never meet Him as a separate entity. Thus we can never become disillusioned.

Love of God

Yet, it seems to me sometimes that even our ideal of God changes with the fleeting years. When we were young, and because He was thus presented to us by our spiritual pastors and masters, we figured Him as some tragically revengeful elderly gentleman, who appeared to show His love for us by always being exceedingly vindictive. Then when Fate, as it were, thrust us from the confines of our homes into the storm of life alone, we came to think of the God-Ideal in blind anger. We cried that He was dead, or deaf; that He was not a God of Love at all, but cruel . . . more cruel than Mankind. Sometimes we denied that He had ever existed at all; that all the Church told us about Him was so much "fudge," and that Heaven and Hell, the punishment of Sin, the reward of Virtue, were all part of the Great Human Hoax by which Man is cheated and ensnared. "We will be hoaxed no more!" we cried, little realising that this is invariably the Second Stage along the road by which thinking men approaches God.

The Third Stage, when it came, found us older, wiser, far less inclined to cry "Damn" in the face of the Angels. We began to realise that through pain we had become purified; through hardship we had become kind; through suffering, and in the silence of our own thoughts we had become wise; through our inner-loneliness—that inner-loneliness which is part of the "cross" which each man carries with him through Life, we had found the *blind necessity* of God.

And in this fashion he returns to us. He is not the same God as of old (we listen to the pictures of this Old God as He is so often described from the pulpit, in contemptuous amazement, tinged by disdain), but a far greater God than He—greater, for the reason that we have become greater too. We no longer seek to find Him in our hours of happiness—the only hours when, long ago, we sought to feel His presence. We *know* that we shall only find Him in our hours of loneliness, in our hours of desolation, in our hours of black despair. Now at last we realise that God is not some Deity apart, but some spirit within *us*, within every man and woman whose "vision" is turned towards the stars. He is the "Dream" which is clearer to us than reality, none the less clear because it is the "Dream" which never in life comes true. He belongs to us and to the whole world. He is everywhere, yet nowhere. He is the "soul" in Man, the silent message in beauty, the miracle in all Nature. He is not a Divinity, living in some far off bourne we call the sky. He is just that "spirit" in all men's hearts which is the spirit of their self-sacrifice, of their charity, of their loving kindness, of their honesty, their uprightness and their truth. It is the "spirit" which, if men be Immortal, will surely live on and on for ever. Nothing else is worthy immortality.

The Will to Faith

I wish that the great Shakespeare had not written that "immortal" line:

"*The wish is father to the Thought.*"

It haunts you throughout your life. Like a flaming sign of interrogation it burns upon the Altar of Faith Unquestioning, before which, in your perplexity, Fate forces you—at least once in your life—to bow the head. It makes us wonder if we should believe all the evidences of Immortality we do—were Immortality really a state of Punishment and not of Happiness unspeakable. It is so hard, so very hard, to disentangle our own desires from our own beliefs; so easy to confuse what we *ought to believe* with what, beyond all else, *we want to believe*. It sometimes makes one chary of believing anything—in questions Human as well as Eternal. The "Personal Bias"—ever in our heart of hearts can we at all

times decide where it ends and impartiality begins? Even our so-called impartiality is tinged by it—or what we fondly believe to be our impartial Faith. Doubt strikes at the root of Justice and of Love—not the doubt that is the half-brother to Disbelief, but the doubt which wonders always and always if we believe most easily what we *want to believe*, and if our firmest conviction against such Belief is not, more than anything else, yet one more manifestation of what we desire so earnestly *to doubt*.

Sometimes I am in despair regarding the whole question of my own individual Faith.

I am firmly convinced that there *ought to be a God* and a Life Hereafter. But my faith in such facts is paralysed by the haunting doubt that they may both be such stuff as dreams are made of, after all.

On the whole, I believe the best way is not to think about them at all—or as little as we may. The one question which really and truly concerns us—and most certainly only concerns God, if there be a God—in His relation to ourselves, is *this life* and what we make of it for ourselves and for other people. Don't ask yourself always and for ever *if* there be a God? *Act as if He existed*! So far as possible, *play His part on earth*. Then all will surely be well with your Immortal Soul in the Long Here After!

And, if the reward of it all—if "reward" is what you seek—be but a Sleep Eternal, do not weep. If you have done your best, you will have left the world happier and better, and so more beautiful. To those around you, to those who walked with you a little way along the Road of Life, you will have brought Hope where before you came there was only resignation and despair; you will have brought laughter to eyes long dimmed by tears; you will have brought Love into lives so lonely and so desolate until you came. God surely can ask of no man more than this.

That, at least—is my Faith. That is also my "religion." Theology is unimportant: FACTS, concerning the reality of God and a Life Hereafter—matter little or nothing at all.

What is all-important is that *here on Earth*—in the world of men and women around us—there are many less happy than we; many infinitely lonelier, poorer, more desolate and depressed. To these—even the lowliest among us can give comfort, bring into their darkness some little ray of "light"—however small.

Let the "Christian" Churches quarrel as they may. The uproar of their differences in Faith, each seeking to be justified, is stilled before the Great Reality of those really and truly in Human NEED. Let us do all the good we may—nor ask the reason why, nor seek a heavenly reward. At every step we take along the Road of Life—there is someone we can help, someone we can succour, someone we can forgive. A truce to violent controversy around and around the Trivial. True religion is an *Act*—even more than a Belief, infinitely more than mere articles of Faith. By the greatness of our sacrifice, by the unselfishness of our Love; by the way we have tried to live up to "the best" within us; by our earnest wish at all times, and with all men—to "play the game"—surely by these things alone shall we be judged?

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