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PENGUIN PERSONS & PEPPERMINTS

BY

WALTER PRICHARD EATON



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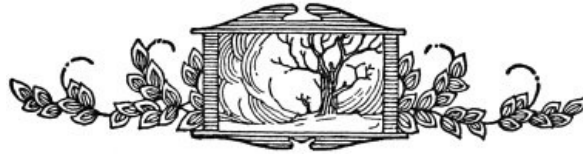
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*To
My Little Sister
who was born just in time*

*to know the old, quiet ways of life
in their gentle decline—to
know and to love
them*



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Author's Foreword

IT is not a little unfortunate that no one can attempt the essay form nowadays, more especially that type of essay which is personal, reminiscent, "an open letter to whom it may concern," without being accused of trying to write like Charles Lamb. Of course, if we were ever accused of succeeding, that would be another story! There is, to be sure, no doubt that the gentle Elia impressed his form and method on all English writers who followed him, and still reaches out across a century to threaten with his high standards those who still venture into this pleasant and now so neglected field. Such are the rigors of triumphant gentleness. Still—and he would have been the first to recognize the fact—it is rather unfair to demand of every essayist the revelation of a personality like Lamb's. Fundamentally, all literature, even naturalistic drama, is the

revelation of a personality, a point of view. But it is the peculiar flavor of the essay that it reveals an author through his chat about himself, his friends, his memories and fancies, in something of the direct manner of a conversation or a letter; and he himself feels, in writing, a delightful sense of intimacy with his future readers. That Lamb was a master of this art like no other, without a visible or probable rival, hardly constitutes a reason for denying to less delightful men and gifted artists the right also to practice it, to put themselves and their intimate little affairs and idiosyncrasies into direct and personal touch with such few readers as they may find. For the readers of his essays are the author's friends in a sense that the readers of his novels or dissertations, or the witnesses of his plays, can never be. There will be no story to hold them, no fictional, independent characters, no ideas nor arguments on high questions of policy. There will be only a joint interest in the minutiae of life. If I like cats and snowstorms, and you like cats and snowstorms, we are likely to come together on that mutual ground, and clasp shadow hands across the page. But if you do not like cats and snowstorms, why then you will not like me, and we needn't bore each other, need we?

The little papers in this volume, issued from the peaceful town of Sewanee atop the Cumberland plateau, between Thumping Dick Hollow and Little Fiery Gizzard Creek, have been written at various times and places in the past fifteen years, many of them while I still dwelt in New York, and babbled o' green fields, many before, and some few after, the outbreak of the Great War. That War, you will perhaps discover, finds in them no reflection. It has been consciously excluded, for though the world can never be the same world again, as we are in no danger of forgetting, there are some things which even war and revolution cannot change, such as the memories of our childhood, the joy of violets in the Spring, the delight in melody, the humor of small dogs, the coo of babies. I have fancied we are sometimes by way of forgetting that. At any rate, of such matters, in hours when he has no thought but to please himself, the essayist chats, and shall chat in the happy years that are to come again, or all our bloodshed has been in vain. If, at the same time, he chances to please an editor also, and then to make a few friends who like what he likes, smiles sympathetically at what makes him smile, why, that is clear again!

This author has been fortunate enough to please several editors in the past, and to all of them, who have given him permission to reprint such papers in this volume as have appeared in their periodicals, he extends his gratitude. They are specifically, the editors of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's, House and Garden*, *The Dial*, *Ainslee's*, *The Scrap Book*, *The Boston Transcript* and *The New York Tribune*.

W. P. E.

Twin Fires,
Sheffield,
Mass.



Penguin Persons

AFTER all, one knows so little about a man from his printed works! They are the gleanings of his thoughts and investigations, the pick of his mind and heart; and they are at best but an impersonal and partial record of the writer. Even autobiography has something unsatisfactory about it; one feels the narrator is on guard always, as it were, and, aware of an audience cold and of strangers, keeps this back and trims up that to make himself more what he should be (or, in some perverse cases, what he should not be). But probably no man who is worthy of attention sits down to write a letter to a good friend with one eye on posterity and the public. In his intimate correspondence he is off guard. Hence, some day, when he has died, the world comes to know him by fleeting glimpses as he was,—which is almost as near, is it not, as we ever get to knowing one another?—knows him under his little private moods, in the spell of his personal joys and sorrows, sees his flashes of unexpected humor,—even, it may be, his unexpected pettinesses Thus dangerous and thus delightful is it to publish a great man's letters.

Such letters were Ruskin's to Charles Eliot Norton, which Professor Norton has given to the world. No one can fail from those letters to get a more intimate picture of the author of *Modern Painters* than could ever be imagined out of that work itself, and out of the rest of his works besides, not excepting the wonderful *Fors Clavigera*; and not only a more intimate, but a different picture, touched with greater whimsicality, and with infinite sadness, too. Not his hard-wrung thoughts and theories, but his moods of the moment—and he was a man rich in the moods of the moment—tell most prominently here. And with how many of these moods can the Ordinary Reader sympathize! Again and again as the Ordinary Reader turns the pages he finds the great man under the thralldom of the same insect cares and annoyances which rule us all, until he

realizes as perhaps never before that poet and peasant, genius and scribe, are indeed one in a common humanity, and sighs, with a lurking smile of satisfaction, "So nigh is grandeur to our dust!"

One of the points of convergence between Ruskin and the Ordinary Reader which has appealed to me with peculiar force occurs in a letter from London dated in 1860. "When I begin to think at all," Ruskin writes, "I get into states of disgust and fury at the way the mob is going on (meaning by the mob, chiefly Dukes, crown-princes, and such like persons) that I choke; and have to go to the British Museum and look at Penguins till I get cool. I find Penguins at present the only comfort in life. One feels everything in the world so sympathetically ridiculous; one can't be angry when one looks at a Penguin."

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Why, of course one can't! It is absurdly true, when one comes to think of it, this beneficent influence of penguins, stuffed penguins, at that, which cannot even waddle. I dare say few readers ever thought of this peculiar bird (if it is a bird) in just that light before Mr. Ruskin's letter came to view; I'm sure I never did. But few readers will fail to recall at a first reading of the words that picture of a penguin which used to adorn the school geographies, and presently will come to them the old sensation of amusement at the waddly fellow propped up on his impossible feet, the smile will break over their lips, and they will be one in mood with Mr. Ruskin. They may affirm that of course the author was only indulging in a little whimsicality, and they may two thirds believe it, as it is no doubt two thirds true; but just the same, unless I am much mistaken, the image of a penguin will persist in their minds, as it persisted in Ruskin's mind—else how did he come to write of it in this letter?—and they will be the better and the happier for the smile it evokes, as Ruskin was the better and the happier. Indeed, that letter was his cheeriest for months.

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For me, however, the image has not faded with the passing of the mood, or rather it has changed into something more abiding. It has assumed, in fact, no less a guise than the human; it has become converted into certain of my friends. I now know these friends, in my thoughts of them, as Penguin Persons. I find they have the same beneficent effect on me, and on others around them, as the penguins on Ruskin. I mean here to sing their praises, for I believe that they and their kind (since everyone enters on his list of friends, as I do, some Penguin Persons) have, even if they do not know it, a mission in the world, an honorable destiny to fulfill. They prevent us from taking life too seriously; they make everything "sympathetically ridiculous"; they are often "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But, at the very outset, I would not be misunderstood. I do not mean that a Penguin Person must resemble the amusing bird in physical aspect. There are, I know, certain people, a far more numerous class than is generally supposed, who see in almost everybody a resemblance to some animal, bird, or fish. I am one of these people myself. It is on record as far back as the fourth generation that some one of my successive ancestors had the same unhappy faculty, for it is unhappy, since it imposes on the person who resembles for us a pig, in our thoughts of him, the attributes of that beast, and so on through the natural history catalogue. It is not pleasant to watch a puma kitten sitting beside you in the opera house, especially when your mere brain tells you she is probably a sweet, even-tempered little matron, or to wait in pained expectancy for your large-eared minister to bray, even though you know he will not depart from his measured exposition of sound and sane doctrine. However, the Penguin Persons are such by virtue of their moral and mental attributes solely, of the similar effect they produce on those about them by their personalities. I have never met a man yet who physically resembled a penguin, though I fancy the experience would be interesting.

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Still less would I have it understood that Penguin Persons are stupid. Far from it. Dr. Crothers declares, in his *Gentle Reader*, that he would not like to be neighbor to a wit. "It would be like being in proximity to a live wire," he says. "A certain insulating film of kindly stupidity is needed to give a margin of safety to human intercourse." I do not think that Dr. Crothers could have known a Penguin Person when he wrote that. The Penguin Person is not a wit, there is no barb to his shafts of fun, no uneasiness from his preternatural cleverness, for he is not preternaturally clever. You never feel unable to cope with him, you never feel your mind keyed to an unusual alertness to follow him; you feel, indeed, a sense of comforting superiority, for, after all, you *do* take the world so much more seriously than he! And yet he is not stupid; he is bright, alert, "kindly," to be sure, but delightfully humorous, deliciously droll. Life with him appears to be one huge joke, and there is an unction about him, a contagion in his point of view, that affects you whether you will or no, and when you are in his presence you cannot take life seriously, either,—you can but laugh with him. He does you good. You say he is "perfectly ridiculous," but you laugh. Then he smiles back at you and cracks another of those absurd remarks of his, and you know he is "sympathetically ridiculous." Perhaps you were out of sorts with life when you met him, but one cannot be angry when one looks at a Penguin Person.

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But do you say that the original bird is not like that at all, that he is the most stupid of fellows? Ah! then you have never seen a penguin swim! He is grace and beauty and skill in the water. If it were only his stupidity that made us smile, not he, but the hen, would be the most amusing of God's creatures. It is something more subtle, more personal, than that. It can only be described as Penguinity.

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Penguinity! The word is not in the dictionaries; it is beyond the pale of the "purists"; in coining it I am fully aware that I violate the canons of the Harvard English Department, that I fly in the face of philology, waving a red rag. Yet I do it gladly, assertively, for I have confidence that some

day, when Penguin Persons have taken their rightful place in the world's estimation, the world will not be able to dispense with my little word, which will then overthrow the dictionary despotism and enter unchallenged the leather strongholds of Webster and Murray.

Yet before that day does come, and to hasten its coming, I would record a tribute to my first and firmest Penguin friend,—my friend and the friend of how many others?—long and lank of limb, thin and high-boned of face, alert, smiling, ridiculous. On the nights when steamships were sunk in the East River, or incipient subways elevated suddenly above ground, or other exciting features of New York life came clamoring for publicity, he would sit calm and smiling, coatless, a corncob pipe between his teeth, and read “copy” with the speed of two ordinary men. The excited night city editor would rush about, shouting orders and countermanding them; reporters would dash in and out; telegraph instruments would buzz; the nerve-wracking whistle of the tube from the composing room would shrill at sudden intervals, causing everybody to start involuntarily each time and to curse with vexation and anger; the irritable night editor, worried lest he miss the outgoing trains with his first edition, would look furtively at the clock at three-minute periods and plunge his grimy hand over his sweating forehead; but the Penguin Person would sit smiling at his place by the “copy” desk, blue pencil in hand, serene amid the Babel. And when the tension was greatest, the strain nerve-breaking to get the big story, in all its complete and coherent details, into the hungry presses that seemed almost visible, though they waited the stroke of one, ten stories down, in the sub-basement, the Penguin Person would sit back in his chair, grin amiably, and say with a drawl, “Hell, ain't it, fellers? D' you know what I'm going to do tomorrow, though? I'm going to put on my asbestos collar, side track some beaut, take her to the theatre, and after the show, thanks to the princely salary I'm paid for keeping split infinitives out of this sheet, I'm going to rush her round to Sherry's or Delmonico's and blow her to a glass of beer and a frankfurter.”

Then as if by magic the drawn faces of all his associates would clear, the night editor would laugh and forget to look at the clock, we would resume our toil, momentarily forgetful of the high pressure under which we labored, and working the better for the forgetfulness; and the Penguin Person, the smile still expanding his mouth, would tilt down his chair and work with us, only faster. If he had serious thoughts, he never disclosed them to us—seriously. When he opened his lips we waited always in the expectation of some ridiculous remark, even though it should clothe a platitude or a piece of good, common-sense advice. And we were never disappointed. Life with him was apparently one huge joke, and it came about that when we thought of him or spoke of him among ourselves, it was always with a smile. Yet now he is gone—and what a hole! Other men can do his work as well, if not as quickly. The paper still goes to press and the public sees no change; but we, who worked beside him, see it nightly. By twelve o'clock on a busy night, nervous, drawn faces surround the central desk, and profanity is snapped crossly back and forth. There is no alleviation of cheerful inanity. Presently somebody looks up, remarking, “I wish Bobbie Barton was back.” And somebody else replies with profane asperity and lax grammar, “I wish he was!” Bobbie, meanwhile has become a lawyer, and can now afford a whole plate of frankfurters at Delmonico's. But we are the poorer, and, I do not hesitate to declare, the worse men for the loss of his Penguinity.

Then there is David. David is penguinacious by fits and starts, not wholly to be depended on, sometimes needing himself to be cheered with the Penguinity of others, but, when the mood is on him, softly, fantastically ridiculous, like the nonsense verse of Lewis Carroll, a sort of *Alice in Wonderland* person. I should not hesitate to recommend him to Dr. Crothers as a neighbor; indeed I suspect the good doctor is almost such a man himself,—too gentle, too fantastic in humor to suggest, however remotely, a “live wire,” and yet how far from being stupid! David's mind works so unexpectedly. You are quite sure you know what he is going to say, and yet he never says it, giving his remark a verbal twist which calls up some absurdly impossible picture, and evokes, not a laugh, but a deep, satisfying smile. There is something quaint and refreshing about such a mind as David's. It does not so much restore one's animal spirits, or one's good nature, as it rejuvenates the springs of fancy, brings back the whimsical imagination of childhood. David will people a room with his airy conceits, as Mr. Barrie peopled Kensington Gardens with Peter Pan and his crew; and it is as impossible not to forget anger and care, not to feel sweeter and fresher, for David's jests, as for *The Little White Bird*. Only a Penguinity like David's is subtle, a little unworldly, and, like most gracious gifts, fragile. There are days when the world is too much for David, when his jests are silent and his conceits do not assemble. Then it is that he in turn needs the good cheer of another's Penguinity, and it is then my happy privilege to reward him by hunting up Bobbie Barton, if I can, and joining them at a dinner party. Bobbie's Penguinity is based on an inexhaustible fount of animal spirits, he is never anything but a Penguin. He usually has David put to rights by the roast.

The other day, while Bobbie was running on in his ridiculous fashion, in an idiom all his own that even Mr. Ade could not hope to rival, telling, I believe, about some escapade of his at Asbury Park, where he had “put the police force of two men and three niggers out of business” by asking the innocent and unsuspecting chief the difference between a man who had seen Niagara Falls, and one who hadn't, and a ham sandwich, I fell to musing on Ruskin's unhappy lot, who did not know Bobbie, nor apparently anybody like him. Poor Ruskin! After all, there is more pathos than humor in his periodic visits to the penguins. Isolated, from childhood, by parental care, from the common friendships and associations of life, still further isolated in mature years by his own genius and early and lasting intellectual eminence, the wonder is that he was not more unhappy, rather than less. He had few friends, and those few, like Professor Norton, were intellectual companions as well, always ready and eager to debate with him the problems of Art and Life

which were forever vexing him. Their companionship must often have been a stimulant—when he needed, perhaps, a narcotic. Their intercourse drove him continually in upon himself, where there was only seething unrest, when he needed so often to be taken completely out of himself, where there was peace. And, in his hours of need, he turned to the Alps, and the penguins. But both were dumb things, after all, that could not quite meet his mood, could not quite satisfy that hunger which is in all of us for the common association of our kind, for the humble jest and cheery laugh of a smiling humanity. Neither of them was Bobbie, who adds personality to the penguin, and satisfies a double need.

Bobbie would not have talked Art with Ruskin, and for a very good reason,—he knows nothing about it. Bobbie would not have cared a snap about his Turners, though he would have been greatly reverent of them for their owner's sake. But Bobbie would have enjoyed tramping over the mountains with him, an eager and alert listener to all his talks about geology and clouds, and ten to one Bobbie would have made friends of every peasant they met, every fellow traveler on the road, and taught Ruskin in turn a good bit about humdrum, picturesque mankind. And he would have made him laugh! Possibly you think it incongruous, impossible, the picture of happy-go-lucky, ridiculous Bobbie, with his slang and his grin and his outlook on life, and Ruskin, the great critic, the master of style, the intellectual giant. But then you reckon without Bobbie's quality of Penguinity, and without Ruskin's humanness. It is alike impossible to withstand the contagion of Bobbie's Penguinity, and to fancy a genius so great that he does not at times yearn for the common walks and the common talks of his humbler fellow creatures. He may not always know how to achieve them, his own greatness may be a barrier he cannot cross, or his temperament and circumstances may hinder; but be sure that he feels the loss, though he may not himself, for all his genius, be quite aware of it. That Ruskin lived in moody isolation, while Shakespeare caroused in an alehouse, does not prove Ruskin the greater man or the deeper seer; it only shows that one knew how to achieve what the other did not,—contact with the everyday, merry world, escape from the awful and everlasting solemnity of life. Ruskin could not achieve it for himself, he did not know how; but Bobbie, all unknown to either of them, would have shown him. Bobbie would have made life for him “sympathetically ridiculous,” for Bobbie is a Penguin Person. And Bobbie would have been a living, breathing human being, by his side and ready to aid him, even to creep into his heart; not a stuffed biped on a shelf in a musty museum. Poor Ruskin, how much life robbed him of when it made it impossible for him to win in his youth the careless, unthinking, but undying friendship of a few men like Bobbie, a few Penguin Persons!

Ah, well! “The dice of God are always loaded.” Doubtless we must always pay for greatness by isolation, or some more bitter toll. And for our insignificance, in turn, come the Bobbies as reward. It behooves those of us, then, who are insignificant, to appreciate our blessing, to cherish our penguins, the more since we, when “the world is too much with us,” when the tyranny of economic conditions oppresses and the wrongness of life seems almost more than we can bear, have not that inward strength, that Titanic defiance, which is the possession of the great, ultimately to fall back upon, and so sorely need to be shown a joke somewhere, anywhere, in the universal scheme, to find something that is “sympathetically ridiculous.” That is why the Penguin Persons are sent to us; thus we can see in them the swing of the Emersonian pendulum.

But they are naturally modest, and doubtless have no idea of their mission, further than to realize that “people are glad to have them around,” as Bobbie would express it, and that it is “up to them” (in the same idiom) to be cheerful,—not a hard task, since cheeriness sits in their soul. It is awful to think how self-consciousness might ruin the flavor of their Penguinity if they ever were awakened to a realization of the fact that they were involved in anything so serious as the Law of Compensation! Though I do believe that David at his best could make the eternal verities look ridiculous. No, when the Penguin Persons do become aware of their Penguinity, it is in a funny, shamefaced fashion, as if they had been up to boyish tricks their manhood should blush for. Came Bobbie to me the other day and confessed that he had about made up his mind to be “serious.”

“Everybody thinks I'm a joke,” he said, with a melancholy grin; “they always expect me to say something asinine, and get ready to laugh before I speak. What shall I do?”

“Do!” I cried. “Do what you've been doing, only do it more. Keep right on being a Penguin, and God bless you!”

Bobbie looked perplexed and a little hurt; but I was too wise to explain, and three minutes later he was rattling off some delicious absurdity to my four-year-old hopeful, who had fallen down on his nose and needed comforting—and a handkerchief. Bobbie was supplying the latter from his pocket, and from his penguinacious brain the former was effectively coming in the shape of a description of Rocky Mountain sheep, which, according to Bobbie, have right-side legs much shorter than their left-side legs, so they can run along the mountain slopes without ever falling on *their* noses.

“But how do they get back?” asks the hopeful, still bleeding, but eager for information.

“They put their heads between their hind legs and run backward,” says Bobbie. “They have long necks, you know.”

That, of course, may be unnatural history, but it was a very present help in time of trouble. Indeed, it made Bobbie, as well as the boy, forget, and I have heard no more of his dreadful intention to be serious.

Some one—probably it was Emerson—once said, “Each man has his own vocation. The talent is

the call." It is no small thing, in this grim world, to make people smile, to be absurd for their alleviation, to render all things "sympathetically ridiculous" for a time, to bear in a chalice of mirth the water of Lethe. If one's talent lies that way, why, the call should be clear! The Penguin Person should have no doubt or shame of his vocation, nor should anyone else allow him to. Little Joe Weber, who was on the stage the most perfect example of Penguinity, was as a stage character beloved of all the thousands who saw him. He heard his call and followed his vocation, and honor and wealth and fame are now his. The merry host of Penguin Persons who move outside the radius of the spluttering calcium, whose proscenium is the door frame of a home, may earn neither wealth nor fame by doing as he has done, but they will win no less a reward, for they will have lightened for all around them the burdens of life, they will have smoothed the gathering frown and summoned the forgotten laugh, they will have made of the ridiculous a little religion, and out of Penguinity brought peace.

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Spring Comes to Thumping Dick

WHEN the ordinary American who "does things"—atrocious phrase, symbol of our unrecking materialism that does not consider the value of the things done—wants to give a place a name, he affixes his own, or that of his sister-in-law or the congressman from his district. Thus our noblest North American mountain is called McKinley, though it already bore a beautiful Indian name—Denali, "The Great One"; and thus in Glacier Park we find a Lake McDermott, a Lake McDonald, and a Mount Jackson, to contrast painfully with such beautiful titles as Going-to-the-Sun Mountain, Rising Wolf Mountain, and Morning Eagle Falls. The Indians expressed their poetry in their names. The pioneers and the colonial rural Americans expressed, if not poetry, at least a fine, spicy flavor of the local tradition; their names grew out of the place. In the corner of New England where I was born we had a Slab City, a Tearbreeches Hill, a Puddin' P'int—well-flavored names, all of them, descriptive and significant, even the last, which strangers mispronounced Pudding Point. Even in old New York there were once such names rich in historical association as Long Acre Square, now reduced to Times Square to please the vanity or cupidity of a newspaper. But, save the Indians, no body of people on this continent, not even the old-time cowboys and prospectors with their Bright Angel Trail, have ever rivaled the southern highlanders, the mountain folk of the Blue Ridge, the Great Smokies and the Cumberlands, in the bestowal of picturesque titles. It is hard, sometimes, to say whether the southern mountaineers are poets or humorists or realists; they may be one or the other, or all three at once. But they never fail with the inevitable appellation. Not Flaubert with his one right word, not the school "gang" with its nicknames, can equal them.

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Thumping Dick Hollow, Milk-sick Hollow, Little Fiery Gizzard Creek, Falling Water Cove, Maniac's Hell, Lost Creek Cove, Jump Off Point, Rainbow Hollow, Slaughterpen Hollow—they come back to me in picturesque array, and with them come back the memories of the gray cabins, the clear bright water on the race, the silent forests, the billows of laurel, the song of the brown thrashers, the shy children in a dusky doorway, the lean pigs not shy at all, the bloodroot underfoot, the soft, hazy sky overhead, the sense that here life was always as it is, and always will be, with no change but the changing seasons. I remember once more how I met the Spring at Thumping Dick, like a dryad dancing through the wood, caught her in the very act of climbing up from the cove below to find a road to take her north. So we loitered together for one whole, blissful day, and when I came back to the college campus I wore her violets in my hat.

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But first I must tell you how Thumping Dick Hollow got its name. That is more important even than knowing where it is. Many, many years ago, so long ago that all traces of his cabin have disappeared, a man called Dick dwelt beside the little brown brook which flows through a slight hollow on its way to the cove below. Now, this Dick was averse to over-much effort, unless it were effort connected with the pursuit of bears or panther, and being of an ingenious turn of mind he invented a labor-saving device to pound his corn. (Unfortunately, he still had to grow it himself.) He took a hollow log and pivoted it across the brook, at a little fall, in such a way that the upper end would rest in the water while the lower end projected over the rocks below the falls. Then he fastened a board across the lower half of this lower opening, and underneath the log, also at the lower end, he fixed a pestle. He then placed his mortar on a stone directly beneath. The water, flowing into the hollow log, ran to the lower end and piled up against the board till there was weight enough to tip the entire log down. Then enough ran out to tilt the log back again. Of course, each time the lower end of the log descended the pestle struck a blow in the mortar. All Dick had to do was now and then to empty out his pounded grain and put in a fresh supply. The log kept at its solemn seesaw night and day, its dull thumps resounding through the woods. So Thumping Dick Hollow it is to this day, and being close to Sewanee, Tennessee, instead of New York City, Thumping Dick Hollow it will remain, instead of becoming the Pratt Street section of Elmhurst Manor.

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To be precise, it is four miles from Sewanee, and to be more precise, Sewanee is eight miles straight up hill from Cowan, and to be still more precise, Cowan is thirty-five or forty miles from Chattanooga, and now you begin to know where you are. Chattanooga, as you know, is in Tennessee, and sits beside the superb Moccasin Bend of the Tennessee River, under the shadow of Lookout Mountain, entirely surrounded by freight trains. It runs Schenectady, New York, a close race for the title of the noisiest city in the United States. But after you have taken a west-bound train in the quaint old station of the N. C. & St. L. railroad you pass rapidly into silence, down the gorge of the splendid river, and then into the broken, ragged hills. At Cowan a pig meets you on the platform, with the amiable curiosity of the small-town resident toward the arriving stranger. Here you change to the little branch line which runs north, up the side of the gorge, to the coal mines. Up and up the train climbs, puffing and straining, through a tall forest of hardwoods, and eventually reaches an almost level plateau. Once on this plateau, you lose all sense of mountain country and if you had not been aware of the steep climb to get here, you would not believe that you were on the southern nose of the Cumberland Range. Presently you reach a station—and that is Sewanee.

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There are no academic squatters at Sewanee, in their \$100,000 cottages, as there are at Princeton. It is too far removed from any cities, in the midst of its timbered mountain domain. There is a little hotel, much frequented in summer, to be sure, but for the most part the town is the university and its preparatory academy, and the university is the town. Here is the Gothic chapel, the ivy-clad scholastic buildings, the tree-shaded campus walks, the wandering groups of hatless boys, the encircling street lined with professors' houses—all the traditional flavor of a college, in a setting of forest. For it is one of the unique charms of Sewanee that a walk of a mile in any direction is a walk back into the ancient order, into the wilderness of the southern mountaineer, into the eighteenth century. A class that studies Shaw's plays in the morning may even catch the vocabulary of Shakespeare in the afternoon, repeated unconsciously by the lips of mountain children in the coves.

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The word *cove* is omnipresent here. Even the mountain folk are called cove-ites. It needs but a short walk to show you why. The lower Cumberlands, on the southern border of Tennessee, are unlike any other mountain region, with a charm all their own, inherent in their topography. Apparently an almost level stretch of timbered country along the little railroad, in reality this level is the plateau top of a great rock wall, a kind of huge mesa extending north and south. If you walk to the edge, you discover that it suddenly falls away with startling abruptness, sometimes in sheer descents of several hundred feet till the top of the ancient shale pile is reached (now covered deep with soil) and then dropping away more gradually with that lovely curve of *débris*. But nowhere is this Palisade-like wall continuous, and here is where the southern Cumberlands get their unique flavor. The descending water from the plateau top has eroded deep into the precipice every mile or even every half mile, each brook in the course of ages eating far back into the mountain mass, forming a V-shaped depression called a cove, and between two coves thus formed is a reverse Λ , called a point, always, naturally, composed of the hardest rock, and not infrequently ending in a literal point so sharp that it is like a vast granite bowsprit thrust out into the green plains far below, terminating in a sheer precipice of several hundred feet. Roughly, then, you may visualize this section of the Cumberlands as a giant double-edged saw, a thousand feet thick, laid down across the State, each tooth a "point," each V between the teeth a "cove." Standing far out on one of these rock bowsprits, in the soft, hazy air of the southern mountains, you look over the far valley lands below, you look north and south at the other thrusting bowsprits growing bluer and more mysterious as they recede, you look to left and right down into the timbered green lushness of the coves, where invisible water tinkles.

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But the simile of the saw is only a rough one, after all, because erosion is never mathematical, some coves have bitten back far deeper than others, side coves have developed, and if you follow down the mystery of some brown brook, Little Fiery Gizzard Creek, let us say, for love of the name, you may very soon precipitate yourself into such a maze of coves, such a tangle of tough, tearing shrubbery (the term "laurel hell" is the mountaineer as realist), that you will regret, perhaps, the day you abandoned what in this region is euphemistically called a road. But you will hardly forget the view from some inland point, where you look, not out over the Tennessee plains, but over a branching cañon of coves, cut like the Grand Cañon out of an apparent plain, but, unlike that epic of naked magnificence, timbered with great, upstanding hardwoods from floor to rim, a soft, silent, hazy green hole where the forest floor has sunk a thousand feet, to rise again in the smoky distance and melt into the blue. There is no sign of human habitation, though in those coves, where the forest mould is rich to clear and cultivate and the springs are never dry, the cove-ites dwell, stock of the highlanders who are almost a race apart in the fastnesses of our southern Appalachians. They have no roads, only dim trails or footpaths. The protecting forest hides their little clearings. Only a hawk sails on silent wings over the leafy depths, and perhaps the faintest thread of smoke winds up and is lost in the haze of the air, a haze which seems faintly tinged with the all-pervading green.

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But I wander as aimlessly as the enchanted visitor to Sewanee, and am by way of forgetting that it was Spring I set out to recapture with my pen—as if one could recapture the vanished Aprils! It was April, to be sure, early April, very cold in the Berkshires, with great, dirty drifts of snow still lingering on the northern sides of walls and hedges, and ice on the pools of a morning. Down here on the Cumberland plateau the trees were still bare, too, and the mornings chill, though you could easily find a blade of grass "big enough to blow," and the brown thrashers sang in the dooryards. But there came a day when the sun rose misty and hot, and I wandered out through the woods, by a dim, sandy cart track, missing the solemn evergreen note of our

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northern forests but happy in the fragrance of life reviving under last year's leaves—that peculiar odor of the woods in Spring. The little brown brook at Thumping Dick was softly vocal, and it, too, smelled of leaves. After a time I reached a point which jutted out directly over the tops of the trees growing on the débris pile below. These trees were as tall as masts, and as straight, though they were hardwoods, and from my rocky perch I looked through their upper tracery of budding twigs, as through a veil of faint green and red, out on the brown and green plains of Tennessee shining in the sun, or left and right across the canons of the coves to the stately procession of receding headlands. Then I cast about for a way down into one of the coves, and presently came upon a footpath.

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It led down the headwall by sharp switchbacks till it reached the easier declivity below, passed a gushing spring where a tin dipper hung on a twig proclaiming unseen passers, and presently picked up the bed of a tumbling brook. It was when I reached this brook that I was aware of Spring coming up the slope. I could see ahead, and to either side, a considerable distance through the open woods, and, lo! the Judas trees were in flower, stray bursts of purplish pink lighting up the forest floor like bright-robed, wandering dryads. (The mountain folk call this shrub the red-bud.) I loitered on down the brook side, through moist leaf-mould and rocks, while overhead the trees began to cover me with their frail, new foliage, and under foot the forest floor began to burgeon with bloom. Great double bloodroots came first—I stepped suddenly into a garden of them and hastily stooping crushed some juice on my fingers. Next the umbrella tops of the May apple leaves began to push up. There was a great dogwood tree in full bloom beside the path. A hedge-like bank of azaleas were showing bud. Then came the violets, yellow violets, wood violets, but especially the birdfoot variety, with their pink-tinged blue petals ubiquitous amid the leaves. To me this violet is particularly dear, for it was the flower which in my childhood was culled to fill those bright-colored May baskets we hung upon our sweethearts' doors at the festival of Spring, gathering them in the village cemetery, where they grew in great beauty and profusion, quite as Omar would have expected. Now I gathered a handful again, for memory's sake, and stuck them in the band of my hat, before I resumed my journey down the cove.

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The first intimation I had of coming habitation was a pig, a lean, black, razor-back pig which grunted at my intrusion beneath his oak tree and went racing off at a great pace, almost gracefully, I might say, for even a pig which wanders on a mountainside develops something of the agility of a wild creature. Not far beyond I came quite suddenly upon such a picture as you may see nowhere in the world but in our southern highlands, in the Spring. Aware of my coming, if I was not aware of their proximity, six tow-headed, bare-footed, single-garmented children, the eldest a girl not over ten, the youngest an infant just able to stand, were ranged in solemn row, like a flight of steps, upon the top of a large flat stone at the edge of a little clearing, in perfect silence watching me approach, the violets and bloodroot blossoms they had been gathering dangling in loose bunches from their hands. Behind them, just across the brook which ran, like a road, in front of the gate, stood a weathered-gray cabin, of rough boards, with a central doorway and windows without sashes. At one end was an outside chimney of field-stone, laid, it seemed, with clay. Surrounding this cabin was a rough picket fence, again of untrimmed boards, with a gate opening on the brook and stepping stones across to the path. In the little compound thus enclosed, and almost overtopping the cabin, were half a dozen peach and plum trees, veritable geyser jets of pink and white bloom. Behind, in a small clearing, was the stubble of last year's corn. Squalid and poor and mean enough a dwelling, a shiftless clearing, a dirty family of children—yes. But under its geyser jets of blossom that little gray cabin was the essence of the picturesque, with the forest wall rising behind it, and behind that the great headwall of the cove. It was weathered and old and primitive and lovely; and the six little shy ragamuffins on the stone, still staring at me with the eyes of timid animals, were—well, they were six little shy ragamuffins, and that is nice enough!

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“Hello,” said I, “I see you've got the baby out to gather wild flowers, too.”

The eldest girl found speech, after an effort. “That ain't the baby,” she said, with a show of scorn for my ignorance. “The baby's in the house with maw.”

My respect for the capacity of that little cabin was still further increased by this revelation. I asked the eldest girl some questions about the way, finding her directions for spotting a trail in this forest maze remarkably lucid, and went again on my wanderings, my last backward glimpse of the mouse-gray cabin under its pink and white geysers of blossom still showing the six little tow-headed, barefooted youngsters standing like six little patiences on a pedestal, staring after me. But when I had disappeared down the trail I heard from far off, mingling with the murmur of the brook, the shrill sound of childish glee, as they resumed their search for wild flowers. Then it was that Spring smiled, and gave my fingers a little squeeze!

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So I wandered on, with Spring for company, all that blissful day, through forests of oak and chestnut where the Judas trees danced, past dogwood thickets and over beds of violets, into unexpected little clearings where always the same gray cabin of rough, weathered boards sat under its geyser jets of pink and white, while shy, pretty children peeped like startled rabbits from the dim doorway and the pig ran off through the woods (when he did not follow me), and finally up the steep slope at the head of a cove again, into the region of the earliest bloodroots, and so to the final shin up the last precipitous wall to the plateau above. As I reached the summit and looked back, I saw the cove was green, and the veil I had gazed through that morning was hazier now; Spring had climbed with me back up the slope and even here on the two-thousand foot rim the trees were bursting into leaf. There was a carpet of brilliant red stonecrop on the rock at my feet. As I came once more to the brook in Thumping Dick I saw a bloodroot on the

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bank, with the dead leaf it had that day pushed up still clinging to it. Yes—and here was a tiny bed of violets, in a warm, sheltered glade, opening to the sun. I gathered them all, and redecorated my hat. Then I bathed my hot face in the brook and lay listening to a thrasher for a while, as the long shadows of afternoon crept like lean, ghostly fingers through the forest and between me and the sky I could see the lacework of the budding twigs, with here and there a tree that actually showed leaf. No one passed me on the trail. The thrasher and I had the woods all to ourselves, except, of course, for Spring, who sat beside me singing *mezza voce*, to herself, a song curiously like the ripple of a brook.

At last I rose and followed the dim trail back toward the college, entering the campus as the evening lights were coming on in the dormitory windows, and somewhere a group of boys were singing, not lustily but with the plaintive quality that sometimes steals into the voices of the young and happy at the twilight hour. I tossed my hat on a table, and saw my withered violets falling dejectedly over the band. But I did not care. Back below Thumping Dick was a cove full on the march, coming up the slope, the blue battalions of the Spring. Outside, in the smoky, warm dusk, a thrasher still sang. Spring had left me, for she had far to go, but all the way north I should see the signs where her feet had trod, and when at last I reached once more my northern mountain home, I should find her waiting with a smile, perhaps with just a trillium in her hand to offer me, before she sped on again toward Labrador. But, I thought, I could never know her quite so well again as I had this day; she would not loiter with me quite so familiarly, with her dear, friendly squeeze of my fingers as the childish voices drifted with the brook song down the cove. I had kept tryst with Spring at Thumping Dick, for once the favored of all her myriad lovers.

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The Passing of the Stage Sundial

IT has been many years since I have seen a sundial on the stage. There was a time when the stage could not get along without them; but styles have changed. "Iram indeed has gone with all his rose," and Eddie Sothern, best beloved of romantic actors in your generation and mine, has written his theatrical memoirs, which is the player's method of saying farewell. *The Melancholy Tale of Me*, he calls them, perhaps because they are not in the least melancholy—a good and sufficient reason. Yet Mr. Sothern strangely neglects the subject of sundials in his book, although they were his prop in how many a play back in the golden Nineties!—the golden, promise-laden, contradictory Nineties, that *fin-de-siècle* decade when Max Nordau thundered that we were going to the dogs of degeneracy, and we youngsters knew that we were headed not alone for a new heaven, but what is much more important, a new earth.

My school and college days fell entirely in the Nineties, or almost entirely, for I finally emerged with a sheepskin written in Latin I could no longer translate, in June, 1900. I saw my first modern realistic play in 1893, when I was a little junior middler at Phillips Andover. It was *Shore Acres*, and I have not yet forgotten, after a quarter of a century, the thrill of that revelation. It was almost as if my grandfather's kitchen had been put upon the stage, and with Herne himself to play the leading rôle, to blow on the frosty pane that he could peer into the night, to bank the fires, tip the stove lids, lock the door, and climb slowly up to bed while the old kitchen, in semi-darkness, seemed like a closing benediction before the downrush of the final curtain, I caught the poetry of the commonplace, I had my first unconscious lesson in literary and dramatic fidelity. And I ended my college days, a much more sophisticated person, championing Pinero and Jones, rushing eagerly to special performances of Ibsen, and ardently admiring the plays of G. B. Shaw, two of which, *Arms and the Man* and *The Devil's Disciple*, had been acted in America by Richard Mansfield before the end of the century.

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Considering these plays now, and their effect upon me—and not forgetting, either, the passionate admiration, almost the worship, we young men of twenty had in those days for the acting of Mrs. Fiske—it would be easy to infer that the whole period of the Nineties for us youngsters was a period of revolt and forward-urging, that we were crusaders for what Henry Arthur Jones called "the great realities of modern life" in art. Crusaders we were, to be sure. I well remember long debates with my father, a man of old-fashioned tastes in poetry, and a particular fondness for Burns, over the merits of Kipling's poems. (Think of considering Kipling's poems revolutionary! Indeed, think of considering some of them poems!). We debated from still more divergent viewpoints over the novels of d'Annunzio. In college, in my last year or two, some of us even adopted the views of Tolstoy in his *What is Art?* and under the urge of this new sociological passion we took volunteer classes in night schools. I remember instructing a group of Jewish youths in the principles of oral debate, or, rather, debating the principles of debating with them, for being unblest with an expensive preparatory school and college education, and being Jews into the bargain, they did not propose to take anything on faith. I used to return to my room in the college Yard wondering just why it was that these working lads, mere "foreigners", of a

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race infinitely inferior, of course, to the Anglo-Saxon, and without the precious boon of a Harvard training, had so much more real intellectual curiosity and mental grasp than any of us "superior" youths. These classes interfered seriously with my academic work, yet it seems to me now that they were infinitely more profitable.

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However, it was a curious paradox of the Nineties that while we were discovering Pinero, Ibsen, Shaw, Tolstoy, we were also reading *The Prisoner of Zenda* and yielding ourselves with luxurious abandon into the arms of honey-sweet romance. At the very time when the new, realistic drama was leading us out of a pasteboard world into something approximating an intelligent comment on life, the cloak-and-sword drama was having a fine little reactionary renaissance, the calcium moon was shining down on many a gleaming garden and flashing blade, and ears were rapturously strained to catch the murmur of love-laden words. Then it was that the stage sundial flourished in all its glory, generally flooded, to be sure, with moonlight—that peculiar moonlight of the American theatre which turns grease-paint to a horrible magenta—and we youths, with the divine flexibility of imagination only youth can know, responded alike to *Hedda Gabler* and *An Enemy to the King*.

Do you remember the sundial, exactly at stage centre, in the latter play? In what dulcet tones, love-laden, the future Hamlet and Macbeth murmured to his lady fair! Even the sword duel in the last act, all over the chamber, across the great bed ripping down the curtains, back and forth with flash of steel and rattle of blade, was not so thrilling as that moonlit scene across the dial plate. My constant companion in those days was a boy who to-day preaches each week from a famous pulpit, with gravity and eloquence. He is a man of substantial parts, on whom life's bitter realities press very hard as he battles to relieve them. Does he now recall, I wonder, how for weeks after we had hung from the gallery rail at *An Enemy to the King* he even said "Thank you," when somebody passed him a piece of bread, in the deep, long-drawn tones of Sothorn's romantic passion? He was a handsome youth, and I know not what mischief he wrought that winter in gentle bosoms, with his vocabulary enlarged and romanticized, his tones colored with emotion, as he sought secluded corners at our dances and practised his new art. Our Tolstoian moods were not for dances, you may be sure! We lived in a dual universe. In one world were sundials and moonlight and the thrill of a woman's eyes; there was slow music and the ache of unfilled desire ever about to be gratified by some hoped-for miracle. In the other world were only facts, hard facts, and the scorn of considering them emotionally, of considering them in any way but with the intellect. I fear in those days our moods did not connect intellect and the fair sex. Perhaps youth never does. And perhaps youth is right, not in thus passing judgment on women, for that is not what is done, but in refusing to surrender any portion of the divine romantic mystery of sex at two-and-twenty to the cold light of reason. When Shaw and Ibsen wrote, they wrote of daily life, and we were learning to accept their contention that it should be written about truthfully. But there was no lie in these other plays, these sundial romances, for they were not daily life, they were ages long ago and far away, they belonged to the Never-Never-Land of romantic fable—of dreams and the heart's desire. There is no such thing as a complete realist at twenty. Or, if there is, he should be interned as an enemy alien.

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A generation has passed since the Nineties, and there are no stage sundials any more. Perhaps that is but another way of saying that I am middle-aged, but, upon my word, I do not think so. Do you remember the sundial over which Dolly and Mr. Carter philandered, the one which bore the motto—

Horas non numero nisi serenas?

I reread that dialogue the other day, and captured some of the ancient thrill. No, the real trouble is that a generation of realism, or what has passed for realism on our American stage, has done its deadly work. It has killed romance. That is not at all what realism was intended to do. Indeed, to the larger view, romance is a part of the reality of life. Realism was a reaction against sham and falsity and sentimentalism, and, above all, perhaps, triviality of theme. But the net result, so far as the American drama is concerned, seems to have been the substitution of a realistic setting and dialogue for a false one, and then a continuance of the old sham, sentimentalism, triviality. How else can we account for the success of Mr. Belasco? But the taste engendered by the realistic settings and dialogue has banished the cloak and sword and sundial, stripped romance of its charm and allure; and once stripped of these, it ceases to be romance, for it ceases to reach the heart through the sense of beauty and of mystery. We have succeeded in substituting a chocolate caramel for the apples of Hesperides.

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Yet it cannot be that this condition will be permanent. Comes a little play like *The Gypsy Trail*, wherein even through the realistic setting a strain of romance strikes, and all hearts respond. Youth will not be denied, but, like Sentimental Tommy, will "find a way." It may be that the old dualism of the Nineties was the sane solution, as so many of the modern "art theatre" directors maintain, at least by their practice, and the realistic drama should stick relentlessly to its last, while romance flourishes untroubled by any fetters, in free, fantastic, perhaps poetic, form. I do not know. I only know that the sundial must come back to the stage, not, it may be, as the garden ornament of old, but in some guise to further the dreams and dear delusions of our beauty-hungry hearts. For, as you may have guessed, the sundial is a symbol.

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On Singing Songs with One Finger

JAMES Huneker has pointed out that lovers of the drama, who are sound judges as well, too frequently have so little taste in music that they tolerate or even approve the most atrocious noises emitted in the name of musical comedy; while lovers and sound judges of music are quite as often woefully remiss in their knowledge of stagecraft, accepting scenery and stage management in their opera which would put men less skilled in the creation of theatric illusion than David Belasco to the blush.

How true it is that unto him who hath shall be denied, and unto him who hath not shall be given what the other man could use to such advantage! The composer who can both pucker the lips of the gallery-gods and satisfy the ears of the musical critics, how infrequent a visitor on this planet! so that Offenbach and Sullivan must often have suffered from loneliness. The singer who can also act, how rare a song-bird! The interpreter of the *lieder* of Franz or Schubert or Grieg who will sacrifice vocal display to the composer's meaning, and who has the fineness of soul to grasp and make manifest the mood of the lyric, how welcome a guest! And yet those who could write undying comic music if only they were composers, who could lift the hearts of their hearers into the skies with "Hark, hark, the lark," if only they could sing, are legion in number. How often, in short, like those two in Lord Houghton's poem, are temperament and technique—"strangers yet."

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So are they in me, alas! total strangers. From my earliest years I have been filled with the joyous impulse of song, but never were ears more false to the one true pitch than mine, never was voice less commensurate with ambition. My youthful dreams, when they were not of foot-ball or swimming, were all of the Sirens, and I deemed Ulysses, if prudent, none the less a lack-sentiment sort of hero, not inspiring to know, because he stopped his ears to their song. The jeers of my fellows long ago taught me the bitter lesson to keep my melody to myself, but the impulse is still in me to sing, the myriad moods of music are still mine, and I still consider Ulysses the first of the Philistines.

For some time I thought my own case unique, but acquaintance with a music critic who cannot hum a tune, and with a celestial tenor (such tenors are so rare I fear this may be too personal for print) who was the most stupid of men, without the slightest capacity for high passion of any sort, convinced me of my error: and many subsequent conversations with men and women like myself incapacitated by nature for self-expression, as well as much listening to bad singers with good voices, have but forced conviction home. And now, when unfeeling relatives and scoffing friends smile the superior smile of the "musically talented" at sight of my piano which I play with one finger, and at the pile of music upon it, I let them smile, calm in the assurance that songs and instrument are mine by better right, perhaps, than theirs, who can raise voices quite on pitch to the accompaniment of eight fingers and two thumbs.

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For, when none of them is by, I play with my one finger the airs of the world's great *lieder*, and hear from that slight suggestion the songs as they should be sung. As I would rather read *Hamlet* in my library than see the average actor attempt the part, so I would rather play *Der Atlas* with one finger, with my own imagination calling forth the tragic power and grief, the superb climax of surprise and thunder, than hear it sung by any man at present on the concert stage. The poignant sadness cross-shot with humor of another of Schubert's songs, *The Hurdy Gurdy*, vanishes in the concert room, melts hopelessly into the dulcet tones of the young lady soprano, whose friends titter when she is done, "What a pretty song." But my one-fingered rendering—aided in this song by occasional jabs with three fingers of the left hand—brings to my inward ear the pathos of the barrel-organ, heard over the distant hum of a careless city, laden with the sorrow of all the world; brings memories, too, of that consummate singer of songs, Marcella Sembrich. Under the touch of my blunt forefinger the songs of MacDowell distill their delicate melancholy, that in the homes of my friends, where daughters ripple well-dusted piano keys and display expensive voices, yield only treacle and honey. Why should I mind the supercilious smile of my neighbor next door when he occasionally catches me at my unidigital performance, he who is a soloist in a noted church choir, but who, I very well know, prefers *The Palms* or *Over There* to Purcell's *I'll sail upon the Dog Star*, if, indeed, he ever heard the madly melodious boast of the "roaring boy"?

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After all, there is nothing wonderful in this. It but shows that the genius which creates and the imagination which appreciates are akin, even as Professor Spingarn has asserted. Even operas and symphonies were composed at a piano. Strauss heard the one hundred and five instruments which are called on to represent the cry of the baby in his *Symphonia Domestica* all tooting and scraping in the notes his ten fingers evoked from his piano keys. (Personally I should rather have heard them so!) And why cannot I hear at least a simple little song in the melody that my one finger plays? The numerical ratio is in my favor, surely, although my neighbor would doubtless rudely suggest that I am not Richard Strauss. At any rate, for me there is a great joy in singing songs as they ought to be sung, if only with one finger, which has done much to console me for the technical powers nature has so plentifully denied me. I offer the same solution to all others who are in my case, only suggesting that it would be wise of them, perhaps, to learn while they are yet plastic the use of all ten fingers. They will not thereby secure ten times as much enjoyment, but their families will thank them.

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The Immorality of Shop-windows

At the heart of morality lies content. That is a statement either optimistic or cynical, as you choose to look at it; but it is a statement of fact. Even the reformer seeks to allay his discontent, which does not arise from the morality in him, but from the immorality in other people. Anybody who has lived with a reformer knows this. Therefore are modern shop-windows—by steel construction made to occupy the maximum amount of space, to assault by breadth and brilliance the most callous eye—one of the most immoral forces in modern city life.

This is especially true of the shop-windows on Fifth Avenue, New York. For these windows, even at night illuminated like silent drawing-rooms vacant of people, expose to the view of the most humble passer on the curb as well as to the pampered rich racing by in motors, the spoils of all the world. Here are paintings by the old masters and the new; rare furniture and marbles from Italian palaces; screens from Japan; jewels and rugs from the Orient; silk stockings, curios, china, bronzes, hats, furs; and again more curios, cabinets, statues, paintings; things rare and beautiful and exotic from every quarter of the globe, "from silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon." And they are not collections, they are not the treasures of some proud house, although they might have been once; they are for sale; they may be bought by anybody—who has the price.

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But who has the price? That stout woman riding by in her limousine, with a Pomeranian on her lap instead of a baby? That fifteen-dollar-a-week chorus-girl in a cab, half buried under a two-thousand-dollar chinchilla coat? That elderly man who hobbles goutily out of his club and walks a few short blocks to his house on Murray Hill, "for exercise"? Assuredly, somebody has the price, for the shops are ever open, the allurements of their windows never less. But not you, who gaze hungry-eyed at these beautiful objects, and then go to a Sixth Avenue department store and wonder if you can afford that Persian rug made in Harlem, marked down from \$50 to \$48.87; or that colonial mahogany bookcase glistening with brand new varnish. Envy gnaws at your heart. And yet you had supposed that yours was a comfortable sort of income—maybe four thousand dollars a year. Your father, on that income, back in a New England suburb, was counted quite a man in the community, and you put on airs. He selected the new minister, and you set the style in socks. But now you are humiliated, embittered. You rave against predatory wealth. Thus shop-windows do make Socialists of us all.

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Nor are you able to accept the shop-windows educationally, recalling that when you went to Europe you saw nothing that had not already stared at you through plate-glass on Fifth Avenue—for sale. Who wants to view one of the chairs that a Medici sat in, only to recall that months before he saw its mate in a shop-window at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-first Street; or to contemplate a pious yellow heathen bowed down before the image of Buddha, while the tinkly temple bells are tinkling, only to have rise in his mind the memory of a much larger and more venerable Buddha which used to smile out inscrutably at the crossing of Twenty-ninth Street, below a much sweeter string of tinkly temple bells?

We've a bigger, better Buddha in a cleaner (!), greener (!!) land,
Many miles from Mandalay.

There is no romance in an antique, be it god or chair or China plate, when it is exposed for sale in a shop-window. And there is no romance in it amid its native surroundings when you realize that any day it may be carried *off* and so exposed. Thus do shop-windows destroy romance.

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But in the humbler windows off the Avenue there is an equal, if grosser, element of immorality. For these are the windows where price-tags are displayed. The tag has always two prices, the higher marked through with red ink, the lower, for this very reason, calling with a siren voice.

The price crossed off is always just beyond your means, the other just within it. "Ah," you think, swallowing the deception with only too great willingness, "what a bargain! It may never come again!" And you enter the fatal door.

Perhaps you struggle first. "Don't buy it," says the inhibition of prudence. "You have more neckties now than you can wear."

"But it's so cheap," says impulse, with the usual sophistry.

And you, poor victim that you are, tugged on and back by warring factions in your brain,—poor refutation of the silly old theological superstitions that there is such a thing as free will,—vacillate on the sidewalk till the battle is over, till your mythical free will is down in the dust. Thus do shop-windows overthrow theology.

Then you enter that shop, and ask for the tie. Or perhaps it is something else, and they haven't your size. You ought to feel glad, relieved. Do you? You do not! You are angry. You feel as if you had lost just so much money, when in reality you have saved it. Thus do shop-windows destroy logic.

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This has been a particularly perilous season for the man with a passion for shirts. By some diabolic agreement, all the haberdashers at one and the same time filled their windows with luscious lavenders and faint green stripes and soft silk shirts with comfortable French cuffs, and marking out \$2.00 or \$3.00, as the case might be, wrote \$1.50 or \$2.50 below. The song of the shirt was loud in the land, its haunting melody not to be resisted. Is there any lure for a woman in all the fluffy mystery of a January "white sale" comparable to the seduction for a man of a lavender shirt marked down from \$2.00 to \$1.50? I doubt it. Heaven help the woman if there is! So the unused stock in trunk or bureau drawer accumulates, and the weekly reward for patient toil at an office dribbles away, and the savings-bank is no richer for your deposit—and the shop-windows flare as shamelessly as ever. There is only one satisfaction. The man who sells shirts always has a passion for jewelry. And that keeps him poor, too!

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A Forgotten American Poet

I HAVE written the title, "A forgotten American poet," and I shall let it stand, though I am not sure that he was ever well enough known to be spoken of now as forgotten. Ten or a dozen years ago a friend of mine who was working on an anthology of American poetry, at the John Carter Brown library in Providence, wrote to me with great enthusiasm of a poet he had "discovered," and of whom he had never heard before. "His name is Frederick Goddard Tuckerman," my friend said, "and you will not find him in Stedman's anthology, though it seems incredible that Stedman left out anybody or anything. Get a copy of his poems if you can—Ticknor and Fields, 1860."

I sent in my order for the book, to Goodspeed's, and then forgot the incident. But Goodspeed didn't. A year later the book came. Evidently it is an infrequent item at the auctions. The copy I received was a second edition, dated 1864 (which seems to indicate the poems had found some readers), but still in the familiar brown of Ticknor and Fields, matching my first American editions of *The Angel in the House*. This copy was of special interest because it was a presentation copy from the author to Harriet Beecher Stowe. The leaves had been opened, but if Mrs. Stowe read, she had made no marginal comments. The only addition to the book was an old newspaper clipping pasted in the back—a condensed history of the Beecher family! I read the volume myself with increasing interest and enthusiasm, and at the close I desired to learn more of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, not of the Beechers. Mr. Stedman's complete omission of these poems could only have been explained, I felt, by an equally complete ignorance of their existence. Compared to the poems of Henry T. Tuckerman, included by Stedman, the verses of his unknown cousin were as gold to copper. Why, I wondered, had this man been so completely obliterated by Time, or why had he failed in his life to reach a niche where Time could not utterly efface him?

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I wrote to Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who, I discovered, had been a classmate of Tuckerman's at Harvard, and who of course knew practically everybody of consequence in the literary world of his generation. Colonel Higginson was able to supply some data, but not much. Tuckerman was born in 1821, of a rather well-known Boston family. Joseph Tuckerman, philanthropist and early Unitarian clergyman, was his uncle. He was a younger brother of Edward Tuckerman, long famous as a professor of botany at Amherst College, and who gave his name to Tuckerman's Ravine on Mount Washington. Frederick Goddard Tuckerman entered Harvard with the class of 1841, but remained only a year, passing over to the Law School a little later where he secured his LL.B. in 1842, and for a period evidently practised law in Boston. "I remember he came back among us at some kind of gathering during our college course," Colonel

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Higginson wrote, "and seemed very friendly and cordial to all. I remember him as a refined and gentlemanly fellow, but did not then know him as a poet. I see him put down as a lawyer in Boston (in Adams's *Dictionary of American Authors*), but I have no recollection of that fact."

It was not until I had written and published in the *Forum* magazine a little appreciation of his poetry that I learned from his son, now a resident of Amherst, Massachusetts, that Frederick Tuckerman, even as his verses seemed to imply, early moved away from cities to the beautiful valley under the shadow of the Holyoke Range, and there passed his days, evidently the world forgetting, and by the world forgot. He issued his single volume of poems in 1860, when he was thirty-nine, just before the outbreak of the Civil War, but no shadow of that coming contest crosses their pages, as it crossed the pages of Whittier and Emerson, or as it affected the active life of his classmate Colonel Higginson. The second edition, in 1864, was still unaffected by the great struggle. He produced his slender sheaf of poems amid the fields, in quiet introspection, and he might well be accused of a species of Pharisaism, were these poems not so artlessly and passionately sincere, and often so tinged with religious awe. His withdrawal, in his verse, from the life of his times was the act of a natural recluse.

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At the time Tuckerman's poems were issued, it is interesting to consider briefly some of the poetic influences which affected the public. The two best-selling poets just then, even in America, were Tennyson and Coventry Patmore, the latter represented, of course, by *The Angel in the House*. Indeed, the poems of these two sold better than novels! Whitman was hardly yet an influence. Julia Ward Howe had written, and Booth had accepted, a drama in blank verse. Our minor poets still wrote in the style of Pope, and the narrative shared honors with the moral platitude in popular regard. Tennyson, of course, was a great poet, and Patmore no mean one, even at that time, but it is questionable whether the huge popular success of their works, such as *The Princess* and *The Angel in the House*, was due to their strictly poetic merits. At any rate, the poetry of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, lacking narrative interest, palatable platitudes, lyric lilt, but being, rather, contemplative, aloof, delicately minor and in many ways curiously modern, must have fallen on ears not attuned to it. He had none of the Bolshevik revolutionary vitality of Whitman, to thrive and grow by the opposition he created. He could have aroused no opposition. It would have been his happy fate to find men and women who could appreciate his delicate observation of nature, his golden bursts of imaginative vigor, his wistful, contemplative melancholy, his disregard of academic form less because it hampered him than because he was careless of anything but the exact image. Such readers it was apparently not his fate to find in sufficient numbers to bring him fame. He was, in a sense, a modern before his time, but without sufficient consciousness of his modernity to fight. He was a mute, inglorious Robert Frost—like Frost for one year a Harvard student, like him retiring to the New England countryside, like him intent chiefly on rendering the commonplace beauty of that countryside into something magical because so true. Only he lacked Frost's dramatic sense, and interest in human problems.

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Tuckerman's favorite medium was the sonnet; but a sonnet to him was a thing of fourteen five-foot iambic lines, and there all rules ended. Sometimes he even crowded six feet into a line. It is possible his laxness of form was due to ignorance, but more likely that it was due to a greater interest in his mood than in the "rules" of poetry. Many of his sonnets were in sequence, one flowing into the next. Here are two, thus unified, which show in flashes his sweep of imaginative phrase, and his transcendental bent:

[56]

The starry flower, the flower-like stars that fade
And brighten with the daylight and the dark—
The bluet in the green I faintly mark,
The glimmering crags with laurel overlaid,
Even to the Lord of light, the Lamp of shade,
Shine one to me—the least, still glorious made
As crowned moon or heaven's great hierarch.
And so, dim grassy flower and night-lit spark,
Still move me on and upward for the True;
Seeking through change, growth, death, in new and old
The full in few, the statelier in the less,
With patient pain; always remembering this—
His hand, who touched the sod with showers of gold,
Stippled Orion on the midnight blue.

And so, as this great sphere (now turning slow
Up to the light from that abyss of stars,
Now wheeling into gloom through sunset bars)
With all its elements of form and flow,
And life in life, where crown'd yet blind must go
The sensible king—is but a Unity
Compressed of motes impossible to know;
Which worldlike yet in deep analogy
Have distance, march, dimension and degree;
So the round earth—which we the world do call—
Is but a grain in that which mightiest swells,
Whereof the stars of light are particles,
As ultimate atoms of one infinite Ball
On which God moves, and treads beneath His feet the All!

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Turning the page we come on a poem called *The Question*. "How shall I array my love?" he asks, and ranges the earth for costly jewels and silks from Samarcand; but because his love is a

simple New England maid, he rejects them all as unworthy and inappropriate, and closing sings:

The river-riches of the sphere,
All that the dark sea-bottoms bear,
The wide earth's green convexity,
The inexhaustible blue sky,
Hold not a prize so proud, so high,
That it could grace her, gay or grand,
By garden-gale and rose-breath fanned;
Or as to-night I saw her stand,
Lovely in the meadow land,
With a clover in her hand.

Have not these lines a magic simplicity? It seems so to me. They flow rippling and bright to the inevitable finish, and there is no more to say.

Tuckerman's power of close yet magical observation, used not so much in the Tennysonian way (for Tennyson was a close observer, make no mistake about that) as in what we now think of as the modern way, that is, as a part of the realistic record of homely events, with beauty only as a by-product, is well illustrated in the opening lines of a narrative poem called *The School Girl, a New England Idyll*. Here again a kinship with Frost is seen, rather than with Tuckerman's contemporaries:

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The wind, that all the day had scarcely clashed
The cornstalks in the sun, as the sun sank
Came rolling up the valley like a wave,
Broke in the beech and washed among the pine,
And ebb'd to silence; but at the welcome sound—
Leaving my lazy book without a mark,
In hopes to lose among the blowing fern
The dregs of headache brought from yesternight,
And stepping lightly lest the children hear—
I from a side door slipped, and crossed a lane
With bitter Mayweed lined, and over a field
Snapping with grasshoppers, until I came
Down where an interrupted brook held way
Among the alders. There, on a strutting branch
Leaving my straw, I sat and wooed the west,
With breast and palms outspread as to a fire.

These powers of observation are again illustrated in a poem of quite different import, called *Margites*, a lyric of thirteen stanzas, some of which are inexcusably crude. It begins:

I neither plow the field nor sow,
Nor hold the spade nor drive the cart,
Nor spread the heap, nor hill nor hoe,
To keep the barren land in heart.

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After four more stanzas in similar vein, comes this bit of magic word-painting, so instinct with our New England Autumn, yet so entirely the work of a realist, with his eye on the object:

But, leaning from my window, chief
I mark the Autumn's mellow signs—
The frosty air, the yellow leaf,
The ladder leaning on the vines.

The maple from his brood of boughs
Puts northward out a reddening limb;
The mist draws faintly round the house;
And all the headland heights are dim.

The poem then continues to its close:

And yet it is the same as when
I looked across the chestnut woods,
And saw the barren landscape then
O'er the red bunch of lilac buds;

And all things seem the same. 'Tis one
To lie in sleep, or toil as they
Who rise beforetime with the sun,
And so keep footstep with their day;

For aimless oaf and wiser fool
Work to one end by differing deeds;—
The weeds rot in the standing pool;
The water stagnates in the weeds;

And all by waste or warfare falls,
Has gone to wreck, or crumbling goes,
Since Nero planned his golden walls,
Or the Cham Cublai built his house.

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But naught I reckon of change and fray;

Watching the clouds at morning driven,
The still declension of the day;
And, when the moon is just in heaven,

I walk, unknowing where or why;
Or idly lie beneath the pine,
And bite the dry brown threads, and lie
And think a life well lost is mine.

“A life well lost”! The phrase is perhaps pathetically revealing—and prophetic. Or are we stretching the poet's ambitions to be known as a poet? That he published what he wrote indicates a normal desire for recognition, yet it can hardly be doubted, either, that he was an amateur in verse, whose life was rather centred in his contemplative, retiring existence among the fields and hills of Amherst. There may even seem to some a delicate Pharisaism about this sonnet, a Pharisaism removed from the robustness of Thoreau, who would certainly have argued the point with the farmer:

“That boy,” the farmer said, with hazel wand
Pointing him out, half by the haycock hid,
“Though bare sixteen can work at what he's bid
From sun till set, to cradle, reap or band.”
I heard the words, but scarce could understand
Whether they claimed a smile or gave me pain;
Or was it aught to me, in that green lane,
That all day yesterday, the briers amid,
He held the plough against the jarring land
Steady, or kept his place among the mowers;
Whilst other fingers, sweeping for the flowers,
Brought from the forest back a crimson stain?
Was it a thorn that touched the flesh? or did
The poke-berry spit purple on my hand?

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Yet, as we have said, Tuckerman was far from Pharisaism of any sort, either of the aesthete or nature-lover. His mind was too genuinely occupied with spiritual problems. Take, for example, this closing sonnet in a sequence depicting the discords of Nature:

Not the round natural word, not the deep mind,
The reconcilment holds: the blue abyss
Collects it not; our arrows sink amiss;
And but in Him may we our import find.
The agony to know, the grief, the bliss
Of toil, is vain and vain! clots of the sod
Gathered in heat and haste, and flung behind,
To blind ourselves and others—what but this,
Still grasping dust and sowing toward the wind?
No more thy meaning seek, thine anguish plead;
But leaving straining thought and stammering word
Across the barren azure pass to God;
Shooting the void in silence, like a bird—
A bird that shuts his wings for better speed!

Here, surely, is poetry that would not seem the least among the myriad hosts in Mr. Stedman's hospitable anthology! The rhyme scheme may be quite unorthodox, but the poet's lips have been touched by a coal from the high altar, none the less.

The volume closes with a sonnet sequence which is poignantly intimate; almost it is a diary of the poet's grief for the loss of the woman he loved, and in its stabbing intensity holds a hint of such poems as Patmore's *The Azalea*. Here is one:

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Again, again, ye part in stormy grief
From these bare hills and bowers so built in vain,
And lips and hearts that will not move again—
Pathetic Autumn and the writhled leaf;
Dropping away in tears with warning brief:
The wind reiterates a wailful strain,
And on the skylight beats the restless rain,
And vapour drowns the mountain, base and brow.
I watch the wet black roofs through mist defined,
I watch the raindrops strung along the blind,
And my heart bleeds, and all my senses bow
In grief; as one mild face, with suffering lined,
Comes up in thought: oh, wildly, rain and wind,
Mourn on! she sleeps, nor heeds your angry sorrow now.

Such use of pictorial observation as “the raindrops strung along the blind,” and “the wet black roofs through mist defined,” is something you will look for in vain through the pages of Longfellow, for instance. This is the sonnet of a realist. So, also, is this one, which does not seem to me to deserve oblivion, and certainly so long as my memory retains its power will have that little span of immortality:

My Anna! when for thee my head was bowed,
The circle of the world, sky, mountain, main,
Drew inward to one spot; and now again

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Wide Nature narrows to the shell and shroud.
 In the late dawn they will not be forgot,
 And evenings early dark; when the low rain
 Begins at nightfall, though no tempest rave,
 I know the rain is falling on her grave;
 The morning views it, and the sunset cloud
 Points with a finger to that lonely spot;
 The crops, that up the valley rolling go,
 Ever toward her slumber bow and blow!
 I look on the sweeping corn and the surging rye,
 And with every gust of wind my heart goes by!

It must not be supposed that the predominant note in Tuckerman's poetry is elegiac; rather is it a note of tender, wistful, and scrupulously accurate contemplation of the New England countryside, mingled with spiritual speculation. But as the volume closed with the elegiac poems, and as thereafter no more poems were published, it may be surmised that the poet's will to create was smothered in the poignant ripple of his personal sorrow. Had it not been, and had his pen continued to write, one cannot help wondering how much closer he would have come to the modern note in poetry. That he already felt a tendency to progress from the old metres to freer forms is constantly apparent; and this tendency, combined with his unconsciously scrupulous realism, might well have brought him near to the present. I should like to close this little paper to his memory with one of his lyrics which throws over rhyme altogether, and strictly formal metre, also, though the fetters are still there. It is the stab of grief which comes through to haunt you, the bare simplicity and the woe. Objective it certainly is not, as the modernists maintain they are. Yet the personal note will always be modern, for it has no age. This lyric belongs to you and me to-day, not in the pages of a forgotten book, on the shelves of a dusty library. I would that some of our *vers libre* practitioners could equal it:

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I took from its glass a flower,
 To lay on her grave with dull, accusing tears;
 But the heart of the flower fell out as I handled the rose,
 And my heart is shattered and soon will wither away.

I watch the changing shadows,
 And the patch of windy sunshine upon the hill,
 And the long blue woods; and a grief no tongue can tell
 Breaks at my eyes in drops of bitter rain.

I hear her baby wagon,
 And the little wheels go over my heart:
 Oh! when will the light of the darkened house return?
 Oh! when will she come who made the hills so fair?

I sit by the parlor window,
 When twilight deepens and winds grow cold without;
 But the blessed feet no more come up the walk,
 And my little girl and I cry softly together.

[65]



New Poetry and the Lingerin Line

I HAVE one grave objection to the "new poetry"—I cannot remember it. Some, to be sure, would say that is no objection at all, but I am not of the number. It would hardly become me, in fact, since I have, in a minor pipe, committed "new poetry" myself on various and sundry occasions, or what I presume it to be, particularly when I didn't have time to write in rhyme or even metre. The new poets may object all they like, but it *is* easier to put your thought (when you happen to have one) into rhythm than into rhyme and metre. If, indeed, as the *vers libre* practitioners insist, each idea comes clothed in its own inevitable rhythm, there can be very little trouble about the matter. The poem composes itself, and your chief task will be with the printer! I don't say the rhythmic irregularity is not, perhaps, more suitable for certain effects, or at any rate that it cannot achieve effects of its own; I certainly don't say that it isn't poetry because it does not trip to formal measure. Poetry resides in deeper matters than this. I recall Ibsen's remark when told that the reviewers declared *Peer Gynt* wasn't poetry. "Very well," said he, "it will be." Since it now indubitably is, one is cautious about questioning the work of the present, such work as Miss Lowell's, for instance. Of course the mere chopping up of unrhythmic prose into capitalized lines without glow, without emotion, is not poetry, any more than the blank verse of the second-rate nineteenth-century "poetic drama," which old Joe Crowell, comedian, described as "good, honest prose set up hind-side foremost." We may eliminate that from the discussion once and for all. But the genuine new poets, who know what they are about, and doubtless why they are about it, I

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regard with all deference, hailing especially their good fight to free poetry of its ancient inversions, its mincing vocabulary, its thous and thees, its bosky dells and purling streams, its affectations and unrealities, both of speech and subject. But I do say they miss a certain triumphant craftsman's joy at packing precisely what you mean, hard enough to express in unlimited prose, into a fettered, singing line; and I do say that I can't remember what they write.

At least, nobody can dispute this latter statement. He may declare it the fault of my memory, which has been habituated to retain only such lines as have rhyme and metre to help it out. But I hardly think his retort adequate, because, in the first place, the memory is much less amenable to training and much more a matter of fixed capacity and action than certain advertisements in the popular magazines would have the "twenty-dollar-a-week man" believe, and in the second place, because my case, I find, is the case of almost everybody with whom I have talked on the subject. The solution, I believe, is perfectly simple. Nearly anyone can remember a tune; even I can, within limits. At least, I can do better than Tennyson, who could recognize, he said, two tunes; one was "God Save the Queen" and the other wasn't. But when music is broken into independent rhythms, irregular and oddly related phrases, it is only the person exceptionally endowed who can remember it without prolonged study. The very first audience who heard *Rigoletto* came away humming "Donna e mobile." And the very last audience who heard *Pelléas et Mélisande* came away humming—"Donna e mobile." It is the law. Needless to say, I enjoyed *Pelléas et Mélisande*, but I cannot whistle it. What I recall is a mood, a picture, a vague ecstasy, a hushed terror. It was James Huneker, was it not, who, when asked what he thought of the opera, replied that Mary Garden's hair was superb.

"But the music?" he was urged.

"Oh, the music," said he, "—the music didn't bother me."

But the new poetry does bother me, because I strive to remember not the mere mood or picture of the poem, but the actual words which created them, and I cannot. I want to compel again, at will, the actual poetic experience, and I cannot, without carrying a library in my pocket. The words hover, sometimes, just beyond the threshold of my brain, like a forgotten name ("If you hadn't asked me, I could have told you"—you know the sensation); but they never come. I have no comfort of them in the still hours of the day when I would be whispering them to myself. Instead, I have to fall back upon the old-fashioned Golden Treasury. I cannot remember a single line that Amy Lowell has written about her Roxbury garden, but I shall never forget what Wordsworth said about that field of gold he passed; I repeat his lines, and then my heart, too, with pleasure fills and dances with his daffodils.

It is an immemorial delight, this pleasure in the lingering line, in the haunting couplet, in the quatrain that will not let you forget. By sacrificing it, the new poetry has sacrificed something precious, something that a common instinct of mankind demands of the minstrel. It will not suffice for the new poets to deny that they are minstrels, to assert that they write for the eye, not speak for the ear, that it is not their mission to emit pretty sounds but so to present their vision of the world that it shall etch itself on men's minds with the bite of reality. Such a creed is admirable, but defective. It is defective because, in the first place, if the new poets did not write for the ear quite as much as the old poets, there would be no excuse even for rhythm. Any reader who is sensitive enough to care to read poetry is sensitive enough to hear it with his inward ear even as he sees it with his outward eye, and his after-pleasure, as it were, his lingering delight, will be in proportion as his ear retains the echo of the song. All poets are minstrels, still. Such a creed is defective, in the second place, because it has always been the mission of genuine poets to impress their vision of the world vividly on mankind, though their vision included more, sometimes, than what the realists choose to consider reality. There is nothing new in such an effort. In slack ages of poetic inspiration, however, the versifiers have no vision of the world, but only of its pale mirrored reflections in visions dead and gone, and some jolt is needed to bring the poets back to first-hand observation. Such a jolt are the new poets. *Spoon River* is a medicine, a splendid tonic. But the form of *Spoon River* is not conditioned by eternal needs, only by temporary ones. Its complete absence of loveliness, of lines that linger, will be its greatest handicap to immortality—for poetic immortality to-day as much as ever is not in the pages of a book on a library shelf, but on the lips of men and women. A poem from which nobody ever quotes is a poem forgotten.

Tennyson was something of an Imagist at times, presenting his mood or picture with a Flaubertian precision of epithet that even Amy Lowell could not criticise. Consider, for example, his famous *Fragment* on the eagle:

He clasps the crag with crooked hands
Close to the sun in distant lands,
Ringed with the azure world he stands.

Beneath, the wrinkled ocean crawls,
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

The precision of wording here, the tremendousness of scene evoked with stark economy of means, the triumphant vividness of the adjective "wrinkled," transporting the reader at once to a great height above the plain of the sea, the complete absence of any touch of the "poetic" (surely the beautiful word *azure* may be admitted in modern company), make this poem a masterpiece without date or time. It is as "new" as the latest Imagist anthology. And, be it noted, I have

quoted it correctly, I feel confident, from memory. My copy of Tennyson is in storage, and I have not read the fragment probably in ten or a dozen years. Yet whenever I wish to relive its mood, to see again its incomparable picture, I have only to move my lips, even only to repeat the lines inwardly, in silence, and the poem is mine again.

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But I have just been reading the latest Imagist anthology, especially the *Lacquer Prints* by Amy Lowell, not ten years, but hardly ten minutes ago—and I cannot repeat one of them. I could learn them, of course, by an effort. But that is not the way man desires to remember music and poetry. It must come singing into his head and heart—and remain there without his effort. Here is a “Lacquer Print” called *Sunshine*. It is indeed vivid, though (quite properly, of course) a little garden pool to Tennyson's vast ocean.

The pool is edged with blade-like leaves of irises.
If I throw a stone into the placid water
It suddenly stiffens
Into rings and rings
Of sharp gold wire.

Here is a vivid picture, here is economy and scrupulous selection of epithet, here is no “poetic” diction of the despised sort. But something is lacking, none the less. It does not haunt you, it does not ingratiate itself with your ear, you do not find yourself repeating it days and months later. Close the book—and the poem perishes, even as those rings subside on the pool.

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It would be only too easy to find much more striking examples in the new verse. Take, for instance, the opening stanza of Ezra Pound's poem, *The Return*:

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

It is doubtful if any reader will fail to see the trouble in the pace of these lines! No doubt it was exactly the effect the poet desired, but it will forever effectually prevent the repetition of his poem by anybody without the book. When a woman once boasted that she could repeat anything on a single hearing, Theodore Hook rattled off the immortal nonsense, beginning, “She went into the garden patch to get a cabbage head to make an apple pie, and a great she bear coming up the road thrust her head into the shop and cried ‘What, no soap?’ and so he died—” and the woman was floored. Such a poem as *The Return* would have floored her quite as completely. I find, after reading carefully all the twenty pages assigned to Ezra Pound in *The New Poetry Anthology*, edited by Miss Monroe (a greater space, I believe, than was awarded to any other poet), that I can now repeat just one line—or, rather, two lines, such is Mr. Pound's odd way of phrasing his rhythms. Here they are:

[73]

Dawn enters with little feet
Like a gilded Pavlova.

There is a certain humorous charm of epithet here, and a rhythmic suggestion of metrical beat to follow. That, no doubt, is why the line has stuck in my memory. But the metrical beat did not follow, and the rest of the stanza has gone from me. I am sure even a gilded Pavlova would be at some difficulty to dance to Mr. Pound's rhythms.

But Miss Monroe is catholic in her choice of new poets. She includes, for instance, Walter de la Mare, if in less than two pages. She selects his wonderful poem *The Listeners*, and the quaint, haunting, *Epitaph*. It is a little hard to see just why *The Listeners* is new poetry, except chronologically. Its odd, apparently simple but really intricate and triumphantly fluid metrical structure, so unified that there is no break from the first syllable to the last; its lyric romanticism of subject; its obvious delight in tune; even its occasional lapses into the ancient “poetic” vocabulary (the traveler “smote” the door, the listeners “hearkened,” and so on), are all a part of the nineteenth-century tradition of English verse. It is no more modern than *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*—which, to be sure, is quite modern indeed to some of us. And it has lyric beauty, it has lines of unforgettable musical loveliness, it creeps in through the ear and echoes in the memory. You surely remember the close:

[74]

Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the stillness surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Is there really any loss of sharpness in the imagery here because of the rhyme and metre? Could any phrase, of any rhythm, however free, render any better and more economically the peculiar noise of a horse turning on a hard drive and starting away in the night, than “the sound of iron on stone”? The last two lines, surely, are close to perfection. A genuine new poet would probably have hunted long for a less hackneyed word than “plunging,” but though it would possibly have sharpened his final image, it would, at the same time, in all probability, have robbed it of that very vagueness sought and captured. No, the passage pictorially and emotionally is as near perfection as it is often permitted mortals to approach, and it lingers and echoes in the memory,

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it will not be forgotten. It has the lilt of music, the chime of tune, the immemorial loveliness of song. If the precise image, the desired emotional effect, the intellectual content can be imparted in fettered verse, and, in addition, the ancient loveliness can be retained, which the new verse lacks, can it be possible that the world will long endure to read *vers libre* when *vers libre* has done its work of bringing poets back to first-hand reality for their subjects, relating the minstrels to the spirit of their age? I cannot think so. I cannot but believe that any poetry long to endure must be memorable, in the literal sense, and that is just what the new poetry is not. Already, it seems to me from my acquaintance with under-graduates and the just-graduated, *vers libre* is a little the cult of the middle-aged, while youth, the future, is swinging back gladly to the fetters of metre and rhyme, and probably forgetful that the public which awaits their effort has been prepared anew for poetry by this revolt from what was stale in tradition. I believe that memorable poetry always has been, and always must be, irradiated by

The light that never was on sea or land,

which is but another way of saying that it must have elevation and the haunting mystery of beauty. The trouble is, of course, to catch this authentic radiation, instead of some pale reflection from Patmore or Rossetti. It was against the sham of second-hand mood and subject, rather than the great truth of music and loveliness, that the new poets broke into unmetrical protest. They have done a brave and needed work,—but they have produced astonishingly little quotable poetry, they have sung their way not far into the hearts of their listeners. The lingering, lovely line is not for them. No, for still,

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The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

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The Lies We Learn in Our Youth

THE world for a great many years has accepted the dictum of the poet, that—

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: It might have been.

Even those people who refused to accept the rhyme have accepted the reason. But the fact is that the reason of this copybook couplet is as bad as the rhyme. It would be much nearer the truth to say that of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: He's succeeded again. Here, too, the rhyme may be questioned, but the reason is sound. An entirely successful man is the most pitiful object in the universe. Not only has he nothing to look forward to, but he has nothing to look back upon. Having no regrets, no shadows, in his life, he has no chiaroscuro, no depth, no solidity in his picture. It is painted in the flat. "Regret," says George Moore, to change the figure a little, "is like a mountain top from which we survey our dead life, a mountain top on which we pause and ponder." He has no point of view, then, either. So after all the words, "It might have been," do bear a sadness about them in his case; his life might have been a success if it had only been a failure. "It might have been" thus becomes sad when it reflects back upon itself, when it means there might have been a might have been but there was only a was. So life whirls into paradox!

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Let any man in honesty retire into the solitude of his soul and reflect on his joys that might have been and those that were, and let him then answer whether any of his realizations were the equal of his anticipations. Therefore, if he had achieved the anticipated but lost delights which form the burden of his "Might have been," they, too, would have been as ashes in the mouth. The truth is that the essence of delight is in the anticipation, the best of life is the vision, not the reality. It is pathetic not to have entertained the vision, but more pathetic, perhaps, to have attained it. Wasn't it Oscar Wilde who said that there is only one thing more tragic than failure—success?

Did our regretful poet dream at twenty-one of being the perfect lover? In his dreams he was the perfect lover, then. Yet actually what was he? What was she? What was their courtship, their marriage? You, prosy, contented, forty and forgetful, by your prosy hearth or shaking down the furnace fire, while the children are being put to bed, you dare to call "It might have been" the saddest words of tongue or pen? Those now almost forgotten dreams of what might have been are the best you ever were. Remember them as often as you can, as bitterly, as happily, for your soul's salvation. Without them you are the lowest of God's creatures, a mere married man.

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Or take the case of Maud Muller herself, and her judge. We learn that the judge—

Wedded a wife of richest dower,

Who lived for fashion, as he for power.

Maud, on the other hand,—

Wedded a man unlearned and poor,
And many children played round her door.

Probably in both cases this was for the best. Only the wildest sentimentalist could in seriousness urge that Maud would have made a good wife for the judge. Being a man who “lived for power,” the probable unpresentableness of Maud in a town house would have been a constant thorn in his flesh. She could not appear barefooted at his receptions, and the feet that have gone bare through an agricultural girlhood do not readily adapt themselves to the size of shoe which urban fashion dictates. Moreover, the vague yearnings of a young girl for an alliance with a handsome stranger above her station, do not fit her to speak the speech and think the thoughts and meet the social demands of that station. No, Maud would have been a constant thorn in the judge's side. Summer sunshine, the smell of hay, a drink of cold water, a pretty, barefoot girl—the mood is compounded. An uneducated farmer's daughter for a wife—the reality is accomplished.

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And as for Maud, who will say for certain that she would not eventually have eloped with the coachman because he praised her pies instead of criticising her grammar?

So to each of them—barefoot girl and bald-headed judge (he probably was bald-headed, though the poem omits to say so) did what was best, and the school children for several generations have been taught to waste unnecessary sympathy over their fate, have been inculcated with a false view of the whole matter. Both of them found far more happiness in dreaming of what might have been than ever they could have found in the realization; for each of them this dream brought undoubted sadness, but the sadness which is really pleasure, the sadness, that is, which comes over all of us when “we realize that though we have missed certain ideals in our lives we are still able to recall those ideals, we are still not like all the dead, forgetful clods around us, our wives and husbands and neighbors and friends. We live with these people as one of them, of course, but we might have been so much better than they! Such reflections as these are a great comfort. They bring a sadness which makes us mournfully happy. They reconcile us with the scheme of things. They are the outcroppings of that secret vanity which the best and the worst of us nourish, and of which is born our self-respect, our happiness, our heroism.”

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Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a town called Abdera. The good people of the town were so much upset at seeing a performance of the *Andromeda* of Euripides that they caught a sort of tragic fever. This began with bleeding and perspiration and was followed in about a week's time, according to the course of the disease, by an uncontrollable desire to recite. The effect upon Abdera was surprising. The people walked about in the streets day and night reciting pages of Euripides until the epidemic was cured by a return of the cold weather. Well, Tolstoy would have us believe that the European and English-speaking world to-day is about in this condition regarding Shakespeare, and that there is little hope of a cold spell. A second-rate fellow, this Bard of Avon, according to Tolstoy, whom by a gigantic process of hypnotic suggestion we have been taught to think great, till we go about quoting him as the law and the prophet, while he fills some hundred and seventeen pages of Bartlett.

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There is undoubtedly something in this view of the matter. Without holding a brief either for the alleged immortal William or the author of *What Is Art?*, it may safely be hazarded that at least fifty per cent of the “familiar quotations” we children laboriously copied into ruled blank books in our school days and have ever since regarded as nuggets of truth and gems of poetry are neither true nor, beyond the fact of rhyme, poetic. Something as a wave of suggestion passed over Europe and sent thousands of little ones down to their deaths in the Children's Crusades, thousands of youngsters in our schools to-day are hypnotized into a lasting belief in the poetic value of numberless couplets of second-rate verse, and never come to know real poetry at all. Having been forced to swallow rhymed platitudes in the belief that they are poetry, a permanent and perfectly natural repulsion for the very name of poetry is too often the children's only acquisition. In fact, it is a pretty question if the decline of poetic appreciation cannot be directly traced to the rise of the memory-gem book.

How well I remember my own sense of weariness and repulsion when I was compelled at the tender age of ten to copy out the whole of *The Psalm of Life*, unconsciously committing it to memory as I did so.

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Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.—

My infant lips muttered the meaningless words while my poor little brain and imagination tried to find some joy, some picture, some tangible delight, some inspiration in the mournful, oppressive poem. If I had then been assigned intelligible verses to copy, an Elizabethan lyric, a song that sang because it had to, a bit of imagery, my childish fancy would have been fired, and I should not have had to wait till I was eighteen years old before I read a single poem voluntarily. And I should not have detested *The Psalm of Life* all the rest of my days—at least I don't think I should. Longfellow when I was a child was a particularly prolific mine of memory gems, running as high as three thousand quotations to the ton. I never had a teacher who didn't know her Longfellow with an intimacy almost as great as her ignorance of Keats, Shelley, Herrick, Lovelace, Suckling,

Herbert, Campion, Coleridge, Burns and the rest of the kings who lived before Agamemnon. Longfellow was a lovely soul, and, within his limits, a very true poet. But I was fed on his platitudes. I was daily informed that—

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight.—

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Just as if I cared, at ten, whether they were or not. I was told in tripping measures of the village chestnut tree, to the total exclusion of the linden and ilex; and as for the land where the citrons bloom, and golden oranges are in the gloom, and the long silences of laurel rise—"Kennst du das Land?" Not I! The spreading chestnut tree alone cast its oppressive shadow across my childish fancy.

Another memory gem that I remember with a lasting grudge was—

Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

This I knew was false, and to be forced glibly to chatter the words before the class shamed and angered me. Had not a maiden aunt of mine, after many trips to the library of the New England Genealogical Society, traced back our line to William the Conqueror? Was there another boy or girl in the school who had descended from William the Conqueror? No, sir! Several of them had kind hearts, and doubtless simple faith—whatever that was—but side of my Norman blood this counted for nothing. It is a vastly superior thing to have Norman blood, and as for coronets—well, it may be that the new age will wipe them literally out in a surge of Democracy—some of us hope so—but to the romantic heart of childhood they are a symbol not of caste and oppression but of dignity and beauty and the heroic. Certainly they are not to be eliminated by throwing at the child's head such adult platitudes in rhyme as these, and telling him it is poetry. Alas! he believes you, and that is why he hates the very word poetry all the rest of his days.

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My memory-gem book lies before me as I write, saved I know not how out of the wreck of boyhood. I have searched it in vain for a single quotation of lyric song, a single scrap of verse that paints the world in rosy colors and lets moral platitudes go hang, a single strain of "Celtic magic." Instead, I learn that as a boy I was taught that—

We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time.

I find that at eleven years of age—

I held it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp of divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

Indeed, I must have been a very remarkable child, how remarkable I had not hitherto suspected! Evidently, too, I displayed an early tendency to melancholia, for I find I was admonished in the following words, with their incontestable statement of fact:

Be still, sad heart, and cease repining,
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining.

[86]

Whether my sadness was caused by too much reflection on the fact that life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal, or on the fact that Bill Carter's air-gun cost more than mine, I cannot now recall. Either cause would have been sufficient. At any rate I apparently braced up and smiled once more, for the next page is blank. That means I went fishing!

Poor kiddies! Shall we grown-ups never learn that their minds don't work as ours do, and what may be poetry for some of us is cod-liver oil for them? Why must we be forever nagging them at home with "Don't do this" and "Don't do that," and forever preaching at them in school with ponderous prose platitudes cut up into lengths? How much wiser than we they are, who know that life is free and pleasant and full of melody and beautiful things, and dreams more real than reality, and reality born of the dream! Yet we try our best to convince them that they are wrong. We see to it that Longfellow lies about them in their infancy.

But perhaps all this is changed since my day, and the nightmare this battered memory-gem book recalls to my mind is no longer a load on the children of the present. I profoundly hope so. Can it be that the present revival of poetry is due to the passing of the memory-gem book? At least, no teacher would have the courage to set her class the task of copying Amy Lowell or *The Spoon River Anthology*!

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The Bad Manners of Polite People

ALL my life I have suffered from politeness—not my own, but the politeness of other people. So far as I know, nobody has ever accused me of being polite. I suspect that I must be, however, for hitherto I have borne the politeness of other people without a protest. But I must protest now, if only to vindicate my lack of politeness; in other words, to prove my good manners.

For what I object to in polite people is their bad manners. It is this I have suffered from, as, I suspect, have many thousands of my fellows, to whom life is real and earnest, and gabble not its goal. As a rule, the politer the person the worse are his (or more often, perhaps, her) manners. The limit is reached when the amateur is sunk entirely in the professional, and that curious product of “Society” is developed, the professional hostess. I cannot better illustrate my theme than with a description of the professional hostess.

I call her professional because all the joy of entertaining for its own sake has gone out of her work. She does not invite people to her parties because she is glad to see them, because she is interested in them, or wishes to give them pleasure. She invites them because to entertain them is a part of her day's work—whether her work be to get into a certain social stronghold, to keep that stronghold against assault, or merely to kill time, her arch-enemy. And, in performing this task of hers, she has developed a technique of politeness which is to the amateur's technique what the professional golf-player's style is to the form of the mere bumblepuppy. Her politeness is astonishingly brilliant, flexible, resourceful. It is aspired to by the lowly and aped on the stage. And yet her manners are the worst in the world. [88]

Let us suppose her about to give a dinner. She is trimmed down to the fashionable slenderness (perhaps), and brilliant with jewels. Cannel coal snaps pleasantly in the drawing-room grate, and the lights are gratefully shaded. A guest or two arrive, whom she greets with affable handshake. The man moves over to the fire, warming his back; his wife talks to the hostess rapidly, in the way women have when they seem to think it better to say anything than not to speak at all. But the hostess is quite at her ease. Her politeness is triumphant. Presently she turns to the man, who is, perhaps, an author. [89]

“Your new book,” she begins, as if she had been waiting all day to ask that question, “—what is it going to be about? I'm tremendously eager to know.”

Already the genial fire has warmed the noted author after his chilling ride in a street car to this mansion of luxury. The kindly question positively expands him. He launches eagerly into his answer.

“You see,” he begins, “the great modern question is—”

But suddenly he is aware that he has no listener. His hostess has gone toward the door with outstretched hand, and his own wife is gazing at the gowns of the women entering. The author turns and prods the grate with his toe. Perhaps, if he is new at being “entertained,” he fancies that his hostess will presently return to hear his answer. He holds it in readiness. Poor man!

The newcomers are brought into the circle. When introductions are necessary, they are made with studied informality. And then the author hears the hostess say to a big, energetic woman, who is among the arrivals, “Oh, dear Miss Jones, I have heard so much about your perfectly splendid work down there among the horrid poor! I did *so* want to hear you talk about it at the Colonial Club, this afternoon, but I simply *couldn't* get there. Won't you tell me just a bit of what you said?” [90]

The tone of entreaty betrays the utmost interest. The big, energetic woman smiles, and begins, “Well,” she says, “I was just trying to get the members interested in our new health-tenement for consumptives. You see, we need—”

Then she, too, becomes aware that her audience has departed toward the door. She turns about to see if anybody else was listening, but nobody was. The other women are engaged in inspecting the newcomers. The men are looking uncomfortable, or chatting with one another. Only the author's sympathetic gaze meets hers.

The guests have all gathered by now, but dinner is not yet announced. The hostess moves easily among them, stopping by each with a winning smile, to ask some carefully chosen personal question. Each as politely replies, only to find himself talking to the empty air.

There is soon a confused babble of voices, a whirl of windy words—and no one hears.

The author watches her, still curious to know whether she will remember that she has not yet heard his answer. But she has quite forgotten. She moves, the incarnate spirit of politeness, about the room, rousing trains of eager ideas in her guests, and as speedily leaving them to run down a side-track into a bumper.

She has no real interest in any of them, probably she has no real understanding of them. She thinks her manners are above reproach, that she is treating her guests in the most exemplary fashion. In reality, nothing could be worse than her manners, and she is treating her guests most shabbily. By being polite, she ends by being rude. For nothing is so rude in this world as to ask a man a question about some subject close to his heart when you have no intention of listening to [91]

his answer, nor any interest in it. The hostess thinks to feed his vanity; she ends by wounding it. She thinks to make her guests comfortable; she ends by making them uncomfortable.

The best manners I have ever seen were possessed by the most impolite man I have ever known. As a result, nobody that he ever invited to his house felt uncomfortable there. He was interested in all kinds and conditions of people, all kinds and conditions of activities. If he asked you a question, it was because he wanted to hear your answer. He paid you the compliment of assuming that it was worth listening to, and other people waited till you were through. At his table you weren't supposed to confine your talk to the sweet young thing on your left, who was more interested in the gay young blade on *her* left, nor to the sedate, elderly female person on your right, who was more interested in the bishop on *her* right. Talk was largely for the whole table; and if you hadn't some definite contribution to make, you were usually glad to keep still.

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I say nobody ever felt uncomfortable in his house. That is not quite true. Occasionally the person who expressed an opinion on a subject he knew nothing about must have felt uncomfortable. For, though he was listened to gravely while speaking, conversation was at once resumed as if nothing whatever had been said.

Nothing could have been more conventionally impolite. And yet the act was so utterly free from sham that it seemed the only decorous and decent thing to do. Thus was the dignity of conversation maintained; thus was each man and woman made to feel his or her worth along personal lines of endeavor; thus was a true democratic spirit preserved, which is the real essence of good manners. True democracy consists in bringing each man out, not in reducing him to a common level of inanity. Good manners consist in showing him respect for what is worthy of respect in him, treating him as a rational human being, not as a mere social unit who deposits his hard-won opinions, along with his hat and stick, in the care of the butler when he enters the house.

That is why men have, as a rule, better manners than women, though they are far less polite. A man respects the judgment of a specialist on any given subject, and he is rather intolerant of the snap judgments of the dabbler or the dilettante. He listens, if forced to, with unconcealed impatience to the babbling of his pretty neighbor at table about art, perhaps, or engineering, or some other topic concerning which her ignorance is as profound as her cocksureness is lofty. But, after all, to be polite to her is to insult a whole race of engineers or artists! Put one of them beside him, and see how readily he will listen.

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Politeness too often consists of shamming. Good manners are the absence of sham. It is not the gentleman's place, certainly, to insult the lady. Good manners seldom go quite so far as that. But even politeness cannot expect him to endure the torture for more than a limited time, especially if the topic chosen chances to be his own specialty. It is his place to lead the conversation, as gently as possible, back upon more neutral ground, where he may find what consolation he can in sprightly personalities—while praying for the coffee.

I enjoy the privilege of acquaintance with a very charming person, who has never paid a compliment to her sex except by being a woman. Some of her sex say that she is a delightful hostess and very beautiful. Others say that she is atrociously rude, and they "can't see what it is people admire in her." Most men adore her. She herself says that the only people she cares to entertain are those who have earned their own living. Her reasons are, I believe, interesting and significant.

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She earns her own living, I may state, and a very considerable one, for she is famous and highly successful in her branch of artistic endeavor. Socially, one may say of her, in that atrocious phrase which implies a queer jumble of values, that she is "very much in demand." But, though a man in livery opens her front door, the street-cars bring quite as many guests to her house as do expensively purring motor-cars.

"For," as she puts it, "I can stand the talk of the average woman in 'Society' just about fifteen minutes, and then I have to scream. I don't know how the fiction arose that American women of the leisure classes are so superior mentally to the women of other nations. The fact is, they are not. The fact is, that they are so superficial that a person who has really *done* something—I don't mean who has played at it, but who has really under the spur of necessity got to the bottom of some one subject—can hardly endure their conversation. They chatter, chatter, chatter, about everything under heaven, and if you happen to know anything about any of the subjects, it is simply torture to listen.

"Life is too short, and too interesting, and the world too full of real people, to bother with the folks who don't know their business. The man or woman who has had to be self-supporting has got to the bottom of some branch of activity, however small, and learned humility. To learn that mastery of even a tiny subject requires effort and concentration and skill, is to learn respect for other subjects; and it is to learn, too, how to listen.

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"Nobody can listen who isn't truly interested, and who hasn't the grasp of mind to appreciate the complexities of a craft not his own, who doesn't know enough to know when he doesn't know anything. If I'm going to talk my shop, I want to talk it with folks who've been in it. If I'm going to hear some other shop discussed, it must be by someone who is familiar with that, not by directoire dabbles who, you feel after three minutes have elapsed, don't know a thing about the subject. If politeness consists in letting them suppose that I take any stock in what they say, then I plead guilty to being a boor."

Probably no one who has experienced the awful ordeal of listening to some female chatter about his chosen subject, or who has undergone the even worse ordeal of dropping great thoughts of his own into the deep, deep pools of her incomprehension, will fail of sympathy with my friend.

"But I tire you," said an incessant gabbler one day to the great Duc de Broglie.

"No, no," replied the duke; "I wasn't listening."

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On Giving up Golf Forever

LAST season I gave up golf forever two days before our course opened in May, on the evenings of June 17th and July 4th, at noon on July 27th, on the evenings of August 2nd, 9th, 15th, and 21st, at 11:15 A.M. on Labor Day, again Labor Day evening, on September 19th, 23rd, 30th, and October 3rd, 11th and 18th. I am writing this in mid-January, when the drifts are piled five feet deep over our bunkers, and the water-carries are frozen solid. I have played my last game of golf. The coming season I shall devote to the intensive cultivation of my garden. The links have no allure for me.

"And if," says my wife, "I could believe that, I should be happier than ever before in the long years of my golf widowhood."

"But you can," I answer, with grieved surprise.

She looks at me, with that superior and tolerant smile women know so well how to assume.

"You men are all such children!" is her, it seems to me, somewhat irrelevant retort.

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I fell to musing on my friend, the noted war correspondent (now a Major in the United States Army in France). All things considered, he was the most consistent, or perhaps I should say persistent, quitter the game of golf has ever known. He used to quit forever on an average of three times a week, and I have known him to abandon the game twice during a round, which is something of a record. He played every summer on our beautiful Berkshire course, which crosses and recrosses the winding Housatonic, not to mention sundry swamps, and boasts the most luxuriant fairway, and by the same token the rankest rough, in all America. It is the course Owen Johnson once immortalized in his story, *Even Threes*.

How well I remember that peaceful, happy May, back in 1914! Our course had emerged from its annual spring flood, newly top-dressed with rich river silt, and a few warm days brought the turf through the scars and made the whole glorious expanse of fairway, winding through the silver willows, a velvet carpet. I had given my orders to the greens-keepers, and gone to New York for a day or two—reluctantly, of course—and there met the famous war correspondent, in those peaceful times out of a regular job and turned novelist *pro tem*. He had just relieved himself of his final chapter, and readily yielded to my persuasions to return with me to the velvet field and the whistling drive. We "entrained," as he would say in one of his military dispatches.

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As far as the Massachusetts-Connecticut state-line he talked of Mexican revolutions, Theodore Roosevelt, Japanese art, *vers libre*, mushrooms, and such other topics as were of interest in the spring of 1914. But at the state-line, chancing a look out of the window, he saw the doming billow of blue mountains which marks the entrance to our Berkshire intervales, and a strange gleam came into his eyes. His square jaws set. His whole countenance was transformed. Turning back to me, he half hissed, grimly,—

"I am *not* going to press this season!"

I knew he was fairly on his way to giving up golf forever.

Of course, when a man hasn't played all winter, but has been engaged in the mild and harmless exercise of writing a novel, his hands become soft. Then, when he suddenly begins to play thirty-six holes a day, and takes a lock-grip on his clubs as tightly as if he supposed somebody was trying to snatch them away from him, he is apt to develop certain blisters. To a war correspondent and traveler over the Dawson Trail, such blisters are nothing. To a golf player they are of profound importance. The next day, in our foursome, they affected the war correspondent's game. He became softly querulous.

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"I wish you wouldn't talk when I am about to drive," he complained to a caddie.

"This mashie is too heavy for me," he muttered to himself.

"Every time I make a stroke, that crack on the third finger of my left hand, above the top joint, opens and pains me," he declared to anybody who would listen.

His drive from the eighteenth tee went kerplunk into the mud, and buried itself like a startled woodchuck. He said nothing, but took a left-handed club from his bag—for he began the game left-handed, and had switched over the year before, upon hearing our professional say that no left-handed player could ever become a great golfer. With this fresh implement, he began to dig. He finished the hole left-handed, with three perfect shots! We tried to cheer him up, but he was not to be cheered.

"What's the use!" he wailed. "Here I've spent a year and a fortune unlearning how to play left-handed. I'm never going to play the confounded game again!"

And, by way of token, he began to talk about Theodore Roosevelt.

That was his first renunciation for 1914. The next few days the game went well, and so did work on a new novel he had commenced, fired by his success in getting off seventeen perfect tee-shots. But he reached his fourth chapter and an off afternoon on the same fair Saturday. What a lovely day it was!—you know, one of those early June days that invariably causes some woman to quote Lowell. But the famous war correspondent saw no charm in the leafy luxury around him, in the blue sky, the lush grass. He heard no pipe of birds nor whisper of the breeze. His driver wasn't working right. Then his over-worked mashie went back on him. By the fourth green he was taking three putts, and by the eighth he was picking up. His face was a thundercloud; his vocabulary disclosed a richness gleaned from camp and field which was a revelation even to our caddies; and that is no insignificant accomplishment.

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Our tenth hole in those days was close to the club-house, and the tee was but 195 yards away—a good iron to the green. By the time we reached this tee, the war correspondent had very nearly exhausted even the stock of expletives he had acquired on the Dawson Trail, and had declared seven times that he was *through, yes, forever!*

"Oh, come on and play just this hole—keep going to the club-house anyway," we pleaded.

"Well," he said, "I'll take one more shot—it's my last—positively. I'm going back to New York tomorrow."

He tossed a scarred, cut, battered ball on the turf, scorning to make a tee. Yanking a cleek from his bag, he stepped up with the speed of Duncan and swung. To our amazement, the ball flew like a bullet to the mark and disappeared over the lip of the green, headed straight for the pin. But he never saw it. He wasn't watching.

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"Good shot!" we cried, with real enthusiasm.

"I wasn't looking, where'd it go?" he asked, with an attempt at scorn, which, however, was manifestly weakening.

"Got a putt fer a two," said his caddie.

The noted man cast a withering look at this object of his previous invective. He still suspected something. We backed the caddie up, and he strode down the fairway with a certain reviving spring in his step.

There on the green, not six inches from the cup, reposed his battered ball!

"Been anybody else it would have gone in!" he muttered, as he sank it for a two.

That was his proud surrender. He said no more. He strode ahead to the next tee, and tore out a long, straight drive. Then he lit a cigarette and remarked that he had never seen the willows more beautiful, more silvery in the afternoon light.

Ah, well, poor chap, he did give up golf on the first of August, if not forever at least for the longest period of abstinence in his career on the links. On our last afternoon over the velvet together, before he left for the steamer that was to take him into the maelstrom, he paid little attention to his game, and a surprised and, I fancied, even a slightly disappointed caddie followed him. (He was always most generous to his caddie when he had most abused him, like the hero of Goldoni's comedy.)

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"I sha'n't see nice, sweet, unscarred green sod again for a long time," he said, digging up a huge divot with unconscious irony. "I'm going to my last war, though."

"Gracious," said I, "are you going to give up War forever, too?"

"The world is going to give it up forever, after this one," he replied.

I have seen him twice since, once when he was still a correspondent, once more recently when he came back in the uniform of Uncle Sam. And each time his greeting has been the same:—

"Have you got rid of that hook yet?"

Then he smiled—a wistful, tragic smile, and asked where all the new traps and bunkers are, how we contrived to lengthen the course, whether the new sixth green is in play yet, all the pathetically unimportant little gossip of our eighty acres of green meadow.

"Ah," he said the last time we parted, "some day I'm coming back and make that 79 at last! Anybody can go over the top, but to break 80 at Stockbridge—!"

Then he left for the trenches of France.

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I have another good friend who, unlike the Major, has never given up golf forever. This, as he himself admits (or I should not dare offer the explanation), is because he has never yet really played it. He, too, is rather well known at his avocation of play-writing; but golf is his real business in life when the season once gets under way. He has enabled several professionals to buy motor-cars, he has sent numerous fore-caddies through the high school, he has practised by the hour with individual clubs, but still, after almost a quarter of a century, he has never broken 90 on a first-class course. From my superior position (I have on three never-to-be-forgotten occasions broken 80, one of them at Manchester!), I sometimes wonder what keeps him at the game. Then I play with him, and realize. He has the divine, inexplicable faculty, once or twice in a round, of tearing off an astounding drive of 300 yards, by some subtle miracle of timing, which after hours of rolling finally comes to rest far out beyond any other ball in the foursome, or even the professional's drive. What does it matter if he scruffs his approach? What does it matter if he takes three putts? He has the memory of that drive, the unexpected, thrilling feel of it in arms and body, the tingling vision of the day when he will find out how he did it, and be able to repeat at will! That keeps him going—that, and a trophy he once achieved by winning the beaten eight division of the sixth sixteen. It was a little pocket match-safe, but it is more precious in his eyes than pearls, aye, than much fine gold or his reputation as perhaps the deftest writer of dialogue on the American stage. It represents definite achievement in the game of Golf.

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You may suppose, dear Reader, if by some miracle you are not a golfer, that I have been pressing the essayist's privilege and indulging in an attempt at whimsicality. Nothing, I assure you, could be farther from the fact. I am, in this chapter, a realist. All I have here set down is a record of actuality. Nay, I have erred on the other side. I have said nothing whatever about my own reasons for giving up golf forever. Nor have I told the story of the elderly gentlemen at a course near Boston, whom I once observed in an exhibition of renunciation that perhaps deserved recording.

This course was of nine holes (it is now the site of several apartment houses), and the last hole called for a carry over a little pond, to a green immediately in front of the club-house. The somewhat elderly and irascible gentleman in question, playing in a foursome, had reached this ninth tee on the shore of the pond, and even from the club veranda it was evident that his temper was not of the best. Things had not been going right for him. His three companions carried the pond. Then he teed up, and drove—splash!—into the water. A remark was wafted through the still air. He teed again—another splash. Then followed an exhibition which I fear my wife would describe as childish. First this elderly gentleman spoke, in a loud, vexed voice. Then he hurled his driver into the pond. Then he snatched his bag of clubs from the caddie's shoulder, seized a stone from the pond side, stuffed it into the bag, grasped the strap as a hammer-thrower the handle of his weight, swung the bag three times around his head, and let it fly far out over the water. It hit with a great splash, and sank from sight. His three companions, respecting his mood, discreetly continued their game, while he came up to the club-house, sought a far corner of the veranda, and with a face closely resembling a Greek mask of Tragedy, sank down huddled into a chair.

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On the veranda, too, his grief was respected. No one spoke to him. In fact, I think no one dared. We were careful that even our mirth did not reach his ears. He was alone with his thoughts. The afternoon waned. His three companions again reached the ninth tee, drove the pond, and came into the club-house to dress. The caddies were about to depart. Then a strange thing happened; at its first intimation we tiptoed to a window to observe. He roused himself, leaned over the rail, and called a caddie.

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"Boy," we heard him say, in a deep, tragic voice, "can you swim?"

"Yes, sir," the caddie replied.

"All right. About thirty feet out in front of the ninth tee there's a bag at the bottom of the pond. Go get it for me, and I'll give you five dollars."

The caddie ran, peeling his garments as he went. Modestly retaining his tattered underclothes, he splashed in from the tee, while the somewhat elderly golf player gesticulated directions on the bank. Presently the boy's toes detected something, and he did a pretty surface dive, emerging with the bag strap in his right hand. He also rescued the floating driver, and we saw the promised bill passed to him, and watched him drag on his clothes over his wet undergarments. Slowly, even tenderly, the somewhat elderly gentleman emptied the water and the stone from his bag, and wiped the clubs on his handkerchief. With the wet, dripping burden over his shoulder he came across the foot-bridge and into the locker room, while we hastened to remove our faces from the door and windows, and attempted to appear casual.

He entered in silence, and strode to his locker. The silence grew painful. Somebody simply had to speak, or laugh. Finally somebody did speak, which was probably the safer alternative.

"Decided to try again, eh?"

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The somewhat elderly gentleman wheeled upon the assemblage, his dripping bag still hanging from his shoulder.

"Yes, damn it!" he thundered.

Well, I have never thrown my clubs into a pond, and I am sure you have never done anything so childish, either. But how many times have you and I both given up golf forever, and then returned to links the following day—"damn it"! We do not play for the exercise, we do not play because it "keeps us out in the open air." Neither motive would hold a man for a week to the tantalizing, costly, soul-racking, nerve- and temper-destroying game. We play it because there is some diabolical—or celestial—fascination about the thing; some will-o'-the-wisp of hope lures us over swamp and swale, through pit and pasture, toward the smooth haven of the putting green; some subtle, mysterious power every now and then coördinates our muscles and lets us achieve perfection for a single stroke, whereafter we tingle with remembrance and thrill with anticipation. Golf is the quest of the unattainable, it is a manifestation of the Divine Unrest, it spreads before us the soft green pathway down which we follow the Gleam. That is why you and I shall be giving it up forever on our eightieth birthday.

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"Grape-Vine" Erudition

You may recall that Mr. Ezra Barkley acquired a great reputation for learning by imparting to the spinsters of Old Chester such astonishing facts as the approximate number of roe contained in a shad. His sister-in-law, in her ignorance, supposed there were only two hundred! Ezra also knew who first kept bees, and many other important things, usually of a statistical nature. I cannot recall that Mrs. Deland has told us where Ezra acquired his erudition, and I used at one time to wonder. But now I know. He read the "grape-vine" in the first editions of our daily papers.

Perhaps you don't know what "grape-vine" is? I rejoice in my ability to tell you. It is the name given by newspaper men to the jokes and squibs and bits of information clipped by the busy exchange reader, and put into type, making short paragraphs of varying lengths, which are dropped in at the bottom of a column to fill up the vacant space when the need arises. This need most often arises in preparing the first edition, the one which catches the early trains for the country. By the time the city edition goes to press sufficient news of battles, carnage, and sudden death, of politics and stock exchanges, has been prepared to fill every inch of available space. The city reader, therefore, sees little of this "grape-vine." Thus we have a new argument for country life.

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I am now a resident of the country, one hundred and fifty miles removed from New York and as far from Boston; and I am by way of becoming nearly as erudite as Ezra Barkley. I am, indeed, almost bewildered with the mass of information I am acquiring. This morning I read a column about the European war, all of which I have now forgotten. But how can I ever forget the two lines of "grape-vine" at the very bottom which filled out an otherwise vacant quarter inch? I am permanently a wiser man.

"Many Filipino women catch and sell fish for a living."

Amid a world at war, too, how peaceful and soothing is this tabloid idyl of piscatorial toil!

After the acquisition of this morsel of learning I set diligently to work on the day's papers, both the morning editions and those "evening" editions which come to us here by a train leaving the city early in the afternoon, to see how much erudition I could accumulate in one sun's span. I think you of the cities will be astonished. I was myself. In a few weeks I shall read the encyclopædia advertisements with scorn instead of longing. For instance, I have learned that "A new tooth-brush is cylindrical and is revolved against the teeth by a plunger working through its spirally grooved handle." Obviously, just the implement for boys interested in motor-cars (as all boys are). They will play they are grinding valves and run joyously to brush their teeth.

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I have learned that "In the last five years our national and state lawmaking bodies have passed 62,550 laws." The surprising thing about this information is that the number is so small!

I have learned that "Russia has ten thousand lepers, taken care of by twenty-one institutions."

I have acquired these valuable bits of ornithological lore: "The frigate-bird is capable of getting up a speed of ninety-six miles an hour with hardly a movement of its wings. The greater part of its life is spent in the air." "The swallow has a larger mouth in proportion to its size than any other bird."

I have, from the bottom of a single column, gleaned these three items of incalculable value: "By harnessing a fly to a tiny wagon an English scientist found it could draw one hundred and seventy times its own weight over smooth surfaces."

"Missouri last year produced 195,634 tons of lead, a fairly heavy output."

"The United States has five hundred and seventeen button-factories."

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The New York *Times* staggers me with this statistical line: "One Paris motion-picture plant produces an average of three million feet of films weekly." (This strikes me as a kind of "French frightfulness.")

The New York *Evening Post* contributes to my welfare and domestic comfort this item: "Both an electric range and a refrigerator are included in a new kitchen cabinet, but are hidden from view by doors when not in use."

I am certainly a wiser man for knowing that "The Mexican seacoast on the Pacific and the Gulf of California is 4,575 miles." And I am at least interested in the fact that "An Englishman has invented a cover for hatchways on vessels that operates on the principle of a roll-top desk." If this hatchway operates on the principle of the only roll-top desk I ever possessed, God help the poor sailors when the storm breaks!

Such items as these disclose to me the extent of my previous ignorance:—

"Bolivia is producing about one-third of the world's output of tin."

"Records disclose that for several centuries an infusion of nutgalls treated with sulphate of iron composed the only known ink."

"The first job held by William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, was that of a newsboy selling the Macon *Morning Telegraph*. His next job was that of a farm laborer."

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"There are 2,500,000 freight-cars in the country, and their average life is somewhere about twenty years."

"Since gold was discovered in the Auckland province, in 1852, there has been exported from that district gold to the value of \$116,796,000."

I should, to be sure, be more completely educated if I could find somewhere, under the sporting news, or at the base of the obituaries, a statement of where Auckland is. But perhaps that information will come to-morrow.

Well, I have presented here only a tithe of the knowledge I have to-day gleaned from the daily press, that hitherto (by me, at least) underestimated institution. I haven't stated that I now know who first used anthracite coal as a fuel, and when. You don't know that, I am sure. Neither do you know how many acres of corn were planted in England and Wales in 1915 and 1916, nor how many government employees there were in France before the war, nor that "A bundle of fine glass threads forms a new ink-eraser."

However, I must share with you my choicest acquisition. It seems little less than a crime to keep such knowledge from the world at large, to bury it at the bottom of a column on the ninth page of the first edition of the Springfield *Republican*. So I rewrite it here. For oral delivery, I shall save it till some caller comes whom I particularly desire to impress. Then, with all the Old-World courtesy of Mr. Ezra Barkley, I shall offer this guest a chair, and as I do so I shall remark, with the careless casualness of the truly erudite: "Guatemala has only one furniture factory. It employs a hundred and fifty men."

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Business Before Grammar

WE HAVE just been perusing a copy of a certain magazine which proclaims on its cover that it has

doubled its circulation in twenty months. Within, the editor sets forth what he believes to be the reasons for this gratifying growth. "The magazine accepts man as he is—and helps him," says the editor. "The magazine is edited to answer the questions that keep rising and rising in the average man's head. It is not edited with the idea of trying to force into the average man's head a lot of information which he does not hanker for and cannot make use of."

Having always considered ourself an average man, we turned the pages hopefully, only to find a considerable amount of information we had never "hankered" for, and could not make use of, as, for instance, how to become the biggest "buyer" in the universe, or how a certain theatrical manager wants you to think he thinks he got on in the world (there is, to be sure, a quite unintentional psychological interest here), or how to remember the names of a hundred thousand people—dreadful thought! So we decided we were not, after all, an average man, and shifted to the fiction. [115]

There were four short stories and a serial in this issue, and not one of them concerned itself with people who could speak correct English. Some of the stories confined their assaults upon our mother tongue to the dialogue, one was told by a dog (which, of course, excuses much, in prose as well as verse), and one was entirely written in what we presume to be a sort of literary Bowery dialect, which we have since been informed by friends more extensively read than ourself is now the necessary dialect of American magazine humor, as essential, almost, as the bathing-girl on the August cover.

"I think we got about everything. I'll see that the things is packed in them wardrobe trunks an' sent to your hotel to-morrow morning. An' believe me, it's been *some* afternoon, Mr. Bentley!"

—This, at random, from one of the two stories which dealt with the "business woman," whose motto seems to be, "Business Before Grammar," even as it is the motto of the editor. The other "business woman" was not quite so lax. She tried as hard to speak correctly as the author could let her, and won a certain amount of sympathy for her efforts. [116]

But the gem, of course, was the story told all in the literary Boweryese. A lack of acquaintance with past performances by our author prevented us from feeling quite sure who the supposed narrator might be, without reading the entire story, but we gathered from early paragraphs and from the illustrations that the guy was a pug. (You see, it's contagious.) At any rate, this is how the story began:—

"The average guy's opinion of himself reaches its highest level about five minutes after the most wonderful girl in the world gasps 'Yes!' He always thought he was a little better than the other voters, but now he knows it! Of course, he figures, the girl couldn't very well help fallin' for a handsome brute like him, who'd have more money than Rockefeller if he only knew somethin' about oil. He kids himself along like that, thinkin' that it was his curly hair or his clever chatter that turned the trick. Them guys gimme a laugh!

"When Mamie Mahoney or Gladys Van de Vere decides to love, honor and annoy one of these birds, she's got some little thing in view besides light house-keepin'. Some dames marry for spite, some because they prefer limousines to the subway, and others want to make Joe stop playin' the races or the rye. But there's always *somethin'* there—just like they have to put alloy in gold to hold it together. Yes, gentle reader, there's a reason!

"But if you're engaged, son, don't let this disturb you. I've seen some dames that, believe me, I wouldn't care *what* they married me for, as long as they did!"

Having proceeded thus far, we turned back to the table of contents for affirmation of what we vaguely remembered to have read there. Yes, we *had* read it! The tale was labeled by the editor, "A funny story." [117]

So this is fiction for "the average man," and on this spiritual fare his cravings for literature are fed! So this is the sort of thing which doubles the circulation of a popular magazine in twenty months! Such melancholy reflections crossed our mind, coupled with the thought that with no speech at all in the movies, and such speech as this in his magazines, the "average man" will either have to read his Bible every day or soon forget that there was once such a thing as the beautiful English language. And alas, the circulation of the Bible hasn't doubled in the past twenty months! "This magazine accepts man as he is—and helps him"—so reads the editor's self-puffery. What an indictment of man—and what an idea of help! We would hate to go to bed with his conscience,—if editors have such old-fashioned impediments.

But suddenly we caught a ray of light amid the encircling gloom. The editor hadn't stated what his circulation was twenty months ago! We recalled how Irvin Cobb once told us that the attendance at his musical comedy had doubled the previous evening—the usher had brought his sister. Doubtless the new circulation isn't more than a million,—and what is a mere million nowadays? [118]



Wood Ashes and Progress

"ONCE man defended his home and hearth; now he defends his home and radiator." The words stared out of the bulk of print on the page with startling vividness, a gem of philosophy, a "criticism of life," in the waste of jokes which the comic-paper editor had read and doubtless paid for, and which the public was doubtless expected to enjoy. The Man Above the Square laid aside the paper, leaned toward his fire, took up the poker (an old ebony cane adorned with a heavy silver knob which bore the name of an actor once loved and admired) and rolled the top log over slowly and meditatively. The end of the cane was scarred and burned from many a contest with stubborn logs, and the Man Above the Square looked at the marks of service with a smile before he stood the heavy stick again in its place by the fireside.

"It isn't every walking-stick which comes to such a good end," he said aloud.

Then either because he was cold or in penitence for the pun, he walked over to the windows to pull down the shades. But before he did so he looked out into the night, his breath making a frosty vapor on the pane. Below him the Square gleamed in white patches under the arc-lamps, and across these white patches here and there a belated pedestrian, coat collar turned up, hurried, a black shadow. The cross on the Memorial Church gleamed like a cluster of stars, and deep in the cold sky the moon rode silently. A chill wind was complaining in the bare treetops beneath him and found its way to his face and body through the window chinks. He drew down the shades quickly and pulled the heavy draperies together with a rattle of rings on the rods. Then he turned and faced his room.

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A scarf of Oriental silk veiled the light of the single lamp, set low on his desk, and the fire had its own way with the illumination. It sent dancing shadows over the olive walls, it made points of light of the picture-frames and a glowing coal of the polished coffee-urn in the corner; it pointed pleasantly out the numberless books, but told nothing of their contents; it made dark the spaces where the alcoves were, but suffused the little radius of the hearth that was bounded by an easy chair and a pipe-stand with a glow and warmth and comfort which were irresistible. The Man Above the Square came quickly into this charmed radius and sank again into the chair. "And some people insist on steam heat!" he said.

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Then he looked into the rosy pit of wallowing, good-natured flames, and fancied he was meditating. But in reality he was going to sleep. When he woke up the fire was out and he was cramped and cold. He stumbled to a corner, turned on the steam in a radiator, that the room might be warm in the morning, and returned to his chamber.

"After all, you have to build a fire; but the steam just comes," he growled, as he crawled sleepily into bed.

Toward morning the steam did come, but some hours before he was ready to rise. It came at intervals, forcing the water up ahead and thumping it against the top of the radiator with the force of a trip-hammer and the noise of a cannon. The Man Above the Square woke up and cursed. The intervals between thumps he employed in wondering how soon the next report would come, which effectively prevented his going to sleep again. Presently the thumping ceased, and he dozed off, to awake later in ugly temper. He went out into the sitting room and found it cold as an ice-box.

"Where in blazes is all that steam which woke me up at daylight?" he shouted down the speaking-tube to the janitor. The answer, as usual, admitted of no reply, even as it offered no satisfactory explanation. He dug into the wood-box and on the heap of feathery white ashes which topped the pile in the fireplace like snow—"the fall of last night" he called it—he laid a fire of pine and maple. In three minutes he was toasting his toes in front of the blaze, and good nature was spreading up his person like the tide up a bay.

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"Modern conveniences would be all right," he chuckled, looking from the merry fire to the ugly radiator, "if they were ever convenient!"

Then he swung Indian clubs for a quarter of an hour, jumped into a cold plunge, and went rosy to his breakfast and the day's work, with the cheeriness of the fire in his heart.

But while he was gone there entered the chambermaid, and sad desecration was wrought. Chambermaids are another modern inconvenience. The Pilgrim Fathers got along without chambermaids; and even at a much later period chambermaids worked at least under the supervision of a mistress of the household. But nowadays they have their own way, even in abodes where there is one who could be a mistress if she would, or time from social duties and the improvement of her mind permitted. Of course, in the abode of a bachelor the chambermaid is supreme, for bachelors, at least in New York, have of necessity to live in apartments, not private boarding houses presided over by a careful mistress. Probably most of them prefer to; but that does not prove progress, none the less. But the Man Above the Square was not of this class. He had a sharp elbow bone, in the first place, which is to signify that he was a "good house-keeper," as they say in New England. And in the second place, he knew the value to the æsthetic and moral sense of personality in living rooms, of an orderly, tasteful arrangement of inanimate objects, carpets, pictures, furniture, which, through weeks of comparative changelessness, takes on the human aspect of a friend and silently welcomes you when you return at night, saying

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comfortably, "I am here, as you left me; I am home."

So when he entered his room again that evening and turned up the gas, his immediate utterance was not strictly the subject for reproduction. To begin with, the chambermaid had, in disobedience to his strict orders, taken up the centre rug and sent it up on the roof for the porter to beat. Being an expensive rug, the Man Above the Square did not particularly relish having it frequently beaten. But still less did he relish the way it had been replaced. It was not in the centre of the room, so that two legs of the library desk in the middle stood on the border and two on the diamond centre. One end was too near the piano, the other consequently too far from the hearth. And in trying to tug it into position the maid had managed to pull every edge out of plumb with the lines of the floor. Of course, the photographs on the piano had smooches on the margins, where the maid's thumb had pressed as she held them up to dust beneath. Pudd'n-Head Wilson would alone have prized them in their present state. On the mantel each object was just far enough out of its proper place to throw the whole decorative scheme into a line of Puritanic primness. And the chairs, silent friends that are so companionable when an understanding hand places them in position, were now facing at stiff angles of armed neutrality, as if mutually suspicious. Not one of them said, "Sit in me."

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But the worst was yet to come. Walking over to the fireplace, the Man Above the Square looked in and groaned.

"She's done it again!" he cried. "I'd move out of this flat to-night if I wasn't sure that any other would be as bad, this side of the middle of last century."

It was, indeed, a sorry piece of work. The splendid pile of gray and white wood ashes which that morning had been heaped high over the arms of the fire-dogs, and which drifted high into each corner and out upon the hearth, was no more. A little pile remained, carefully swept into the rear of the fireplace, but the bulk of the ashes had been removed and the arms of the fire-dogs stood inches above what was left.

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"I told her not to do it; confound it! I told her not to do it!" he muttered aloud, storming about the room. "Here I've been since Christmas collecting that pile of ashes, and it had just reached the point where I could kindle a fire with three sticks of kindling and burn only one log if I wished. And then that confounded chambermaid disobeys me—distinctly disobeys me—and shovels it all out!"

He rang angrily for the chambermaid, whose name was Eliza, and who was tall and angular.

"Didn't I tell you under no consideration to take away any of my ashes?" he demanded.

"But I swept the room into them, and they got all dirty," she protested.

"Then don't sweep the room again!" he interposed. "I want the ashes left hereafter."

"But the fire will burn better without so many ashes; they chokes it," said Eliza. "Most people like 'em cleaned out every week."

"Most people are fools," said the Man Above the Square. "You may go now."

The loss of his ashes had so irritated him that it was a long time before he could yield himself to the influence of the blaze, which leapt merrily enough, in spite of the too clear hearth. He filled his pipe and smoked it out and filled it again; he tried the latest autobiography and Heine's prose and the current magazines; and still his mind would not settle to restfulness and content. Then suddenly he remembered the date, the 20th of January. He took down his Keats. The owl, for all his feathers, might well have been a-cold on that night, too, for a shrill wind was up without. He glanced at his fire. Already the kindlings were settling into glowing heaps beneath the logs, a good start on a fresh pile of ashes. He snuggled more comfortably into his chair and began once more the deathless poem.

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The clock ticked steadily; the wind sent crashing down the limb of an elm tree outside and shrieked exultingly; a log settled into the fire with a hiss and crackle of sparks. But he heard nothing. Presently he laid the book aside, for the poem was finished, and looked into the fire. It was sometimes a favorite question of his to inquire who ate Madeline's feast, a point which Keats leaves in doubt; but he did not ask it to-night.

"Yes, it was ages long ago," he said at length. "Ages long ago!"

Then he leaned forward, poking the fire meditatively, and added: "Steam heat in Madeline's chamber? Impossible! But there might have been just such another fire as this!"

And was it a sudden thought, "like a full-blown rose," making "purple riot" in his breast, too, or was it simply the leap of the firelight, which caused his face to flush?

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"I wonder where they are now?" he whispered. "'They are together in the arms of death,' a later poet says. But surely the world has not so far 'progressed' that they do not live somewhere still."

Then he recalled a visit he once made to a young doctor in a fine old New-England village. The doctor was not long out of college, and he had brought his bride to this little town, to an old house rich in tiny window panes, uneven floors and memories. Great fireplaces supplied the heat for the doctor and his wife, as it had done for the occupants who looked forth from the windows

to see the soldiery go by on their way to join Washington at the siege of Boston. And when the Man Above the Square came on his visit he found in the fireplace which warmed the low-studded living room, that was library and drawing room as well, a heap of ashes more than a foot high, on which the great cordwood sticks roared merrily.

The doctor and his wife, sitting down before the blaze, pointed proudly to this heap of ashes, and the doctor said, "I brought Alice to this house a year ago, on the day of our wedding, and we kindled a fire here, on the bare hearth. Since then not a speck of ashes has been removed, except little bits from the front when the carpet was invaded. That pile of ashes is the witness to our year-long honeymoon."

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Then Alice smiled fondly into the rosy glow, herself more rosy, and they kissed each other quite unaffectedly.

The Man Above the Square, when his memory reached this point, let the ebony poker slide from his grasp. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "her name was really Madeline!"

Again he looked into the fire. "Could the ashes have been preserved if Madeline had not given the matter her personal attention, but had trusted to a housemaid?" he thought. What further reflections this question inspired must be left to conjecture. He did not speak again.

But presently he got up, went to his desk, and wrote a letter. He was a long time about it, consulting frequently with the fire and smiling now and then. When it was done he took it at once to the elevator to be mailed. Perhaps he thought it unsafe to wait the turning of the mood.

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The Vacant Room in Drama

I AM content to let Mr. John Corbin sing the praises of the stage without scenery; I prefer to sing the praises of the stage without actors. Ever since I was a little boy, nothing in the world has been for me so full of charm and suggestiveness as an empty room. I remember as vividly as though it were week before last being brought home from a visit somewhere, when I was four years old, and arriving after dark. My mother had difficulty in finding the latch-key in her bag (I have since noted that this is a common trait of women), and while the search was going on I ran around the corner of the house and peered in one of the low windows of the library. The moonlight lay in two oblong patches on the floor; and as I pressed my nose against the pane and gazed, the familiar objects within gradually emerged from the gloom, as if a faint, invisible light were being turned slowly up by an invisible hand. Nothing seemed, however, as it did by day, but everything took on a new and mysterious significance that bewildered me. I think it must also have terrified me, for I recall my father's carrying me suddenly into the glare of the hall, and saying, "What's the matter with the boy?" And to-day I cannot enter a theatre, even at the prosaic hour of ten in the morning, when the chairs are covered with cloths and maids are dusting, when the house looks very small and the unlit and unadorned stage very like a barn, without a thrill of imaginative pleasure. I have even mounted the stage of an empty theatre and addressed with impassioned, soundless words the deeply stirred, invisible, great audience, rising row on row to the roof. At such moments I have experienced the creative joy of a mighty orator or a sublime actor; I have actually felt my pulses leap. And then the entrance of a stage-hand or a scrub-woman would shatter the illusion!

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But it is when I am one of a real audience, and the stage is disclosed set with scenery but barren of players, that I derive, perhaps, the keenest pleasure. A few playwrights have recognized the power of the vacant room in drama, but on the whole the opportunities for such enjoyment are far too rare. This is odd, too, with such convincing examples at hand. There is, for instance, the close of the second act of *Die Meistersinger*, when the watchman passes through the sleepy town after the street brawl is over, and then the empty, moon-bathed street lies quiet for a time, before the curtain closes. Of course, here there is music to aid in creating the poetic charm and soothing repose of that moment. But at the end of *Shore Acres* there was no such aid. Who that saw it, however, can forget that final picture? After Nat Berry—played by Mr. Herne, the author—had scratched a bit of frost off the window-pane to peer out into the night, locked the door, and banked the fire, he climbed with slow, aged footsteps up the stairs to bed. At the landing he turned to survey the old kitchen below, that lay so cozy and warm under the benediction of his eye. Then he disappeared with his candle, and the stage grew quite dim, save for the red glow from the fire. Yet the curtain did not fall; and through a mist of tears, tears it cleansed one's soul to shed, the audience looked for a long, hushed moment on the scene, on the now familiar room where so much of joy and grief had happened,—deserted, tranquil, but suddenly, in this new light of emptiness, realized to be how vital a part of the lives of those people who had made the play! It used to seem, indeed, as if the drama had not achieved full

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reality until the old kitchen had thus had its say, thus spoken the epilogue.

It is strange to me that more playwrights have not profited by such examples. The cry of the average playgoer is for "action," to be sure; but even "action" may be heightened by contrast, by peace and serenity. Certainly the vitality, the illusion, of a scenic background on the stage can be enhanced by drawing a certain amount of attention to it alone; and something as Mr. Hardy, in *The Return of the Native*, paints Egdon Heath—"Haggard Egdon"—in its shifting moods before he introduces a single human being upon the scene of their coming tragedy, it is quite possible for the modern playwright, with an artist to aid him, to show the audience the scene of his drama, to let its suggestive beauty, its emotional possibilities, charm or fire their fancies before the speech and action begin. So also, as Wagner and Mr. Herne have demonstrated, there can be a climax of the vacant stage. I look to the new stage-craft to develop such possibilities.

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On Giving an Author a Plot

THERE are two people who annoy an author more than any others—the person who calmly supposes that everything he writes is biographical, or even autobiographical, and the person who declares, "I've got a dandy plot for you"—and proceeds to tell it.

The first person, of course, is annoying, because an author's stories always *are* either biographical or autobiographical, and he never cares to admit, even to himself, how true this is. To be sure, his characters are composites, and his self-revelations are rather possibilities (or even, alas, Freudian wishes!) than records of actuality. But fancy trying to explain that to a gushing female who has developed a sudden passion for calling on your wife, and is heard to remark, "Oh, is that where he writes?" as you flee by a back door, down the garden!

The second person is annoying not so much because most of the "dandy plots" that he or she tells are hoary with age, or even because most writers don't start with a 'plot' at all, and couldn't define a plot if they had to; but rather because a writer, however humble, has to feel the idea for a story come glowing up over the horizon of his brain out of the east of his own subconsciousness, or it is never his, it never acquires the necessary warmth to interest him, the color and light to make it real. This is a curious fact, and one which your modest writer shrinks from trying to explain to his well-meaning friend, lest he seem egotistical. Only the blessed publicity of print could draw him out. Yet the psychology involved perhaps deserves some attention.

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Suppose it is my common method, in writing a story, to start from some social situation which illumines a strata of life; suppose, let us assume, that I am present at a dinner party where a radical has got in by mistake and says something which profoundly shocks some capitalistic pirate who honestly feels himself a pillar of law and order, and in this situation I see an irony which gradually demands fictional expression, as imagined characters and more extensive clashes begin to shape in my brain. There you have a not at all impossible evolution of a story. But now suppose that instead of my being present at this party, a friend had been present, quite as alive as I to the ironies of the situation, and suppose my friend later repeated the incident to me—why should it not serve me just as well, why should it not start the fictional urge, the gestation of character and incident?

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Generalizing is dangerous work. Of course, there may be authors in whom it would start the process. But I have never known one. Even in so exceptional a case as this—of course, the usual friendly suggestion has no real meat of fiction in it at all—something is lacking to fire the imagination. It is exactly as if your nose were called upon to sense, or your retina to image, an odor or a scene described to you and not directly experienced. Your brain accepts the description, but there is no warmth in the reaction, no tingle of life. Just so, it would almost seem, the conception for a story, a poem, no doubt for a picture, too, or a strain of music, is something less, or more, than merely mental; it is in some subtle way sensory, as if the brain had fingers which must themselves touch the thing directly to get the feel of it. Is it not, perhaps, this fact which has caused so many artists, consciously or unconsciously, to believe in "inspiration"?

The singing line walks from nowhere into the poet's head, the perfect situation comes to the writer of fiction when he is least expecting it. To take a humble example, I was once sitting in an editor's office, listening while he expounded to me a grand "plot" for a series of stories. I looked across the street from his window to avoid his eyes, lest I should show my lack of appreciation, and there beheld a slight incident which I instantly knew was a starting-point. It turned out to be worth a year's income to me. Yet, to a merely impersonal judgment, the editor's idea was more interesting and worth while than mine. Only it wasn't mine; that's the point. It was foreign born, and could never become a citizen of my mental commonwealth. I have not quite reached the pitch

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of calling my ideas inspirations, but I long ago recognized that unless they were my ideas from the dim days before their birth they could never be mine, and it was only a waste of time to wrestle with them. So when a friend declares he has a dandy plot for me, I summon what patience I may and pretend to listen, while planning a better succession of perennials for next year's garden, or mentally reviewing the prospect of cutting three strokes off my golf score.

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The Twilight Veil

NEW YORK! How few of us call it home! We have been sucked into it, as into a whirlpool, and as we spin round and round on its mighty unrest our hearts and fancies find repose in memory—the memory of an old New England village, or a corn field and a split-rail fence and then the level prairie, or cotton fields and the red handkerchiefs of the negroes, or the vineyard slopes of Sicily, or the great white surf beating up the cliffs of Connemara. It may be that the second and third generations of immigrants, born on the East Side, are true New Yorkers, just as a vanishing generation of elderly men and women on Murray Hill and the Avenue are true New Yorkers. But the great majority of New York's five millions cherish in their hearts either the memory or the hope of some spot far away to which they give the allegiance of home love. Ours is a curious city in that respect. Perhaps, indeed, it is a fortunate one. Without such memory or such hope, the flat-dwelling imposed on most New Yorkers by economic necessity would be a deadly thing—or shall we say, a more deadly thing?

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If you desire a curious experience, go into a New York club like the Yale or Harvard or Players' club, and collect a dozen men at random, asking each for a little word-sketch of his childhood home. Seldom enough will the scene of that sketch be in New York City, and you will probably be surprised to find how infrequently it will be in any city. A kind of urban consciousness gets complete possession of us after we have lived long on Manhattan Island, and we are prone to forget what a geographically tiny spot it is. We forget the country. It comes as a surprise when we discover how many of our fellows were, like us, country bred. We are still a nation, at bottom, of little white dwelling houses, if not any longer of little white school houses. (I know the phrase is little red school houses, only they never were red, but white!) This is probably one reason why our æsthetic sense is not adjusted to find more beauties than we do in the physical aspects of New York City. Deep in our consciousness, if not rather our subconsciousness, lies the ache for green vistas and gardens, for low sky lines and quiet streets. When we speak of the picturesque in New York, we most often refer (aside from the obviously striking aspect of the lower city from the harbor) to the old brick houses on Washington Square or the quaint streets of Greenwich Village. Yet we do both the city and ourselves an injustice by this more or less unconscious attitude. Let us consider picturesque to mean what is shaped by chance and the play of light into a beautiful picture, and, if we but walk the town with eyes upraised and open, we shall see the picturesque on every side.

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There is the Plaza Hotel, for example. Every New Yorker and every visitor to New York knows it,—a great, white, naked sky-scraper, with a green hip-roof, rising close to the Park and St. Gaudens' golden bronze of General Sherman. But how many know that it is probably the one sky-scraper in the world which can gaze at its own reflection in still water, and that to the spectator looking at it over this water-mirror it becomes a gigantic but ethereal Japanese design, even to the pine limb flung across the upper corner?

They say there is an hour at twilight when all men appear noble, and all women beautiful. Certainly there is such a twilight hour when New York City is veiled, oftentimes, in loveliness; and most lovely at this hour is the Plaza mirrored in the pool. The view is not easy to find, unless you are one of those who know your Central Park. But a little searching will uncover it. You will see in the southeast corner of the Park a lake, and just beyond this lake you will find a path turning west. That path leads to a stone bridge over a northward-stretching inlet of the pond. Cross the bridge a few paces and turn your face to the south. At your feet the bank goes down sharply to the still, dark water. Across the pond the bank rises steep and rocky, covered with thick shrubbery and trees. Shooting up apparently out of these trees is the white wall of the Plaza, three hundred feet into the air, and down into the water sinks its still reflection, to an equal depth. It rises alone, open sky to left and right, and there is just room in the lake for its replica. The picture is impressive by day, but as twilight begins to steal over the scene, as the sky takes on a pearly softness, and the shadows creep through the trees in the Park, and the lights in half the windows up that white cliff wall begin to gleam in golden squares, the great building becomes curiously ethereal, the pine limb flung into the foreground of the design catches the eye, the reflection in the water is as real as the reality. The Plaza, monstrous tons of steel and stone, floats between two elements. Then darkness gathers, the reflected lights in the blackening water grow more golden, and suddenly, perhaps, a duck swims across a tenth story window and

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sets it dancing in golden ripples. You may fare far among the ancient and "picturesque" cities of the earth without finding a rival for this strange bit of beauty in New York, an ethereal skyscraper in white and gold gazing at its own reflection in the forest pool!

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Twilight in the Park, indeed, converts more than one building into a thing of beauty, and the Plaza into a thing of beauty from more than one view. For instance, as you pass into the Park, seeking the spot we have described, turn back before you have advanced far, and see the great cliff wall going up beyond the slender tracery of young trees, with the street lights, just turned on, making a level strip of golden shimmer at its base, curiously suggestive of crowds and gaiety. There is at all hours a certain charm to be found in the long line of high hotels and apartment houses which line the Park to the west, when you view them over treetops, rock ledges, and running brooks, or over white fields of snow. It is as if the city had crested in a great wave along the green shore of the country, ready to curl and fall and dash onward, but had been suddenly arrested by some more potent King Canute. Loveliness, however, is hardly a word you would apply till twilight steals across the scene. Down side streets into the west the golden sunset glows for a time, and the shadows on the snow are amethyst. Then the glow fades. The arc lamps come on with a splutter, and they, too, at first are amethyst. But in the gathering dark they change to blue. The sky changes to the deep blue of approaching night. The dim bulks of the buildings change to blue. The shadows about you are but a deeper blue. Even the snow at your feet is blue. In the great apartments and hotels the golden window squares appear, and the looming procession of blue shadow bulks might be a fleet of giant liners going by you in the night.

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There is always a mystery and poignant charm about our parks in New York, if you let them have their way with your imagination, which you do not find in other parks intrinsically, perhaps, more beautiful. No doubt this comes from violent contrast between our city and the hush and peace of trees. Our streets are all treeless, and our great heave of masonry comes up to the very edge of our green oases. Even the smaller parks which fill but a block or two, when twilight enfolds them, blurring the harsher outlines and conjuring out the shadows, can captivate the senses. If you chance to wander in Brooklyn—which no self-respecting inhabitant of Manhattan permits himself to do except under compulsion!—you may come upon Fort Greene Park when the evening shadows are stealing down the streets to meet you, and the Martyrs' Monument strangely converted into a pagan altar, silhouetted against the sky amid its guardian druid grove wherein the lamps glow and twinkle and dark figures move mysteriously.

But it is not even necessary to enter the parks of New York to find the picturesque and lovely. Such open areas as Washington and Madison Squares hold varying aspects of beauty and imaginative suggestion, from sunrise to moonset. Large enough to admit the play of light and to blur a bit the building lines at their further side, these squares reward the seeing eye with many an unguessed delight.

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For ten years my rooms were six stories up on the east side of Washington Square, and for ten years, at all seasons and all hours, I walked daily up-town through Madison Square to the Rialto, and back again. I have often regretted that I kept no note-book of the changing aspects of these two oases, as one keeps a note-book of the seasons in the country. Spring comes in Washington and Madison Squares with signs no less unmistakable than the hepaticas by the woodland road. The western wall of the Flatiron Building has its autumnal colorings; and though the first snow fall may be black mud by noon, at sun-up those brick-bounded areas laugh in white and the aged trees arch their fantastic tracery.

Spring in the Square! The central fountain is playing again its rainbow jet of spray, the tulips are a jaunty ring about it, the benches have put forth a strange, sad foliage of humanity (you must not think too much of the benches nor look at them too long!), the shrill children are everywhere, the green 'busses are gay with sight-seers atop, and as you stand by the fountain and look northward through the Washington Arch, you see that an amazing thing has come to pass. The great arch spans the vista of the Avenue, lined here with red brick dwellings and the sunny white bulk of the old Brevoort House. Far off, the sky-scrapers begin to loom, whipping out flags and steam plumes. It is a treeless vista, yet it is hazed with spring! Imagination, you scoff—and dust. Yet you look again, and it is not imagination, and it is not dust. It is the veil of spring, cast with delicate hand over the city. These laughing sight-seers atop the green 'bus now going under the arch feel it, too. These children screaming round your feet, as they dash through the wind-borne fountain spray, are aware of it. There is an answering benignity in the calm, red brick dwellings up the vista of the Avenue. Wait for a few hours, let the sun sink behind the heights of Hoboken, and then wander once more into the Square. Twilight, a warm, balmy twilight, is upon your spirit. Look through the arch southward now. There is still plenty of light left in the sky, but the great, springing, Roman masonry is dusky. It frames the sweeping curve of the asphalt around the fountain, and beyond that the Judson Memorial tower, graceful, Italian, bearing its electric cross against the failing day like a cluster of timid evening stars. It is a tower from the plains of Lombardy, or from an island in the Tiber, seen through an arch of ancient Rome. Do you object to that in an American city? I cannot argue the point. I only know that when I see them so, the one framing the other, in the spring twilight, or in the early dusk of a winter day, my heart is very glad, and my spirit feels a touch of that peace and calm the poet felt among the Roman ruins,

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"Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles
Miles on miles..."

How often in New York it is a tower which gathers the picture together! Ours is a city of towers. We hide Trinity spire in a well, and Henry Arthur Jones, the playwright, once complained that the windows of his hotel room on the Avenue looked down upon the pinnacle of a church steeple. Yet our towers rise just the same, new ones leaping up as far above the new three-hundred-foot sky-line as Trinity steeple once lifted above lower Broadway. We aspire still. Nor is the old Judson tower on Washington Square yet dwarfed. How many red sunsets have I seen glow through its belfry windows, while the tower itself was a black silhouette against the sky, and down in the shadowy Square the night lamps began to come out, or the asphalt, drenched by a shower, shone as if molten copper had been rained upon it! In how many deep, starlit nights have I thrown open my window for a fresher breath and a moment of meditation, to see the deserted Square below me, its white arch faintly gleaming in the radiation of the arc lamps, the long stretch of city roofs beyond, the twinkling lamps on the far heights of Hoboken, and there in the centre of the picture the dark, silent tower, keeping quiet watch and bearing its steady cross like a star-cluster in the night! Many a time I have gone to bed with its beautiful image behind my eyelids.

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The Metropolitan tower in Madison Square is less intimate. It has its moods, but they are the moods of the mountain. It has dwarfed the graceful, Spanish tower of the Madison Square Garden, without a doubt, and taken the proud Diana down a peg. But there are compensations in its mightiness. Have you ever seen it on a foggy day going up out of sight into the driving vapors? Have you stood in ancient Gramercy Park—still a bit of the old, domestic New York of the '70's—and seen it booming up over the red brick dwellings, white and confident into the sun? Have you ever come down through Madison Square late at night, when the relic of a moon was rising behind the tower, and the ghostly shaft stood up tremendous against the pale, racing cloud-rack? Have you seen it with the last pink glow of sunset upon it, and upon the western wall of the Flatiron Building, and upon nothing else, all lower buildings being in shadows of obscuring twilight? That is one of its delicate mountain moods, when it seems to lift above our earth-bound vision and look over those western cloud ranges into the Land Beyond the Sunset.

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Have you seen it, too, down Madison Avenue in the mysterious twilight hour of blue and gold when all New York is beautiful? The street lamps have come on; the dark figures of home-going pedestrians hurry past you; there are lamps in the windows of houses. A filmy blue veil of twilight obscures the distances, so that they are soft, alluring. The tower is pale, almost ethereal, at the end of the vista. Its great clock, pricked out with golden lamps, seems scarce a third of the way up its side. The white walls rise on, and on, with here and there a spot of gold, and taper into nothing. They are lost in the gloom of coming night. But still they must go on, for far aloft you see the lantern glowing like a star, hung between earth and heaven. In this twilight hour of blue and gold the tower is the mighty guardian spirit of the scene, sending down sonorous word of the hours as they pass, and lifting our eyes, like its steady lantern, toward the watch-towers of Eternity. Must we be forever reminded that those glowing window squares up its flanks denote lawyers toiling late at their briefs, or mining stock promoters planning a new cast of the net? Must we be forever told that this is not a spire in praise of God but a monument in praise of Mammon? Aspiration is in its lines, beauty in its sky-borne shaft of blue and gold, wonder in its shrouded summit.

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"They builded better than they knew—
The conscious stone to beauty grew."

It is enough. Let us wonder and be glad.

There are many odd views of the tower to be had for a little searching, spots where its peak appears in unexpected places, or with unusual suggestion. There is just one point in Union Square, for example, about halfway round "dead man's curve," where you see the tapering pyramid and the golden lantern overtopping the high buildings between. You do not see it again, if you are walking up Broadway, till you are close to Madison Square. Then, if you lift your eyes, you are suddenly aware of it looming far aloft over the cornice-line to your right, shredding the mists on a stormy day, or by night lifting its lantern up with the stars. There is always an added impressiveness about a tower when we cannot see the base. The sheer drop of its sides is left to our imagination, and the human imagination may generally be trusted to embroider fact. For that reason alone, the view of the tower from a certain point on East Thirty-first Street, between Madison and Fourth Avenues, would be worth the searching out. But it has another and unique charm. If you will walk along Thirtieth Street toward Fourth Avenue you will see, tucked in between larger and more modern buildings on the south side, a little two-story-and-a-half wooden cottage, set back a few feet behind an iron fence. It must have stood there many years, for the wooden age in New York was long, long ago. It is a quaint little dwelling, with quaint pseudo-Gothic ornamentations, and until recently was used as an antique shop. A large weather-stained Venus stood upon the front porch, ironically beside a spinning-wheel! Now the house is untenanted, so that you lift your eyes the sooner to look above and beyond it. It occupies, of course, a slit between higher buildings. Through that slit, as you stand on the opposite curb, you look over a few spindly black chimney-stacks in the foreground directly to the Metropolitan Tower, booming up suddenly and unexpectedly. You see only that for a moment, because of its Titanic size and white impressiveness. Then you notice something outlined against it, a lower tower, much more slender, a mere tracery of delicate shafts and belfries, and crowning it, her bow forever poised, the lovely limbed Diana. Whence either of these towers come, you see not. They merely spring up into the vision over the roof of the little wooden house, the darker one outlined against the other for comparison. Between and around them steam plumes from unseen

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buildings drift like clouds. Diana turns a little, and points her shaft into the wind anew. The might of the new tower is mightier for this close comparison. Yet the other tower, too, does not suffer, its femininity is the more alluring. But lift your eyes as you walk through this commonplace cross-street of New York, and you may see as picturesque a vista, over the quaint wooden cottage, as any city, anywhere, affords—forty stories looking down on two and a half, and between them, in intermediate flight, St. Gaudens' bronze Diana.

Snow in the city! We in New York think of bespattered boots, of horses falling down, of dirty piles, more black than white, lining the streets like igloos till the tip-carts come and carry them off. "The frolic architecture" of the snow is a thing of memory, not of present fact. Like Whittier, we recall the hooded well-sweep or fantastic pump, and the great drifts by the pasture wall. Yet, once again, it is the seeing eye we lack, nor do we need even to enter the Park to discover the snow at its artistic handiwork. Let Sixty-fifth Street enter the Park for you, from the east, and do you stand upon Fifth Avenue and note the conversion from ugliness to beauty of a paved road, dipping into a dugway between dirty stone walls. The soiled pavement is hidden now, each rough stone on the bounding walls is softly outlined with white, not far into the Park a graceful stone foot-bridge spans the sunken street, supporting a second and more graceful arch of snow, and the street curves alluringly into the trees which rise beyond, a gray wall of misty shadow, the eye is satisfied with a clean, well-composed, strongly lined picture, and the imagination almost deluded into a belief of its rusticity. [150]

I remember once walking down Broadway late at night, after an evening at some tiresome play and supper at some yet more tiresome and tawdry restaurant. I had been having what is popularly supposed to be a "good time," and I was bored. There had been a recent deep fall of snow. The night was clear and cold. Below Herald Square I met comparatively few pedestrians, and those few were not of the sort to dispel my despondent mood.

"Back home," I thought, "the moon should be shining on the white, clean hills, and underneath my boots the snow-crust would squeak. Perhaps a screech-owl would whistle his plaintive call in the ghostly orchard. How beautiful there the night would be! But here—" and I flung out my arm instinctively toward the walls which hemmed me in.

But as I drew near Madison Square, and lifted my eyes to the soaring ship's-prow of the Flatiron Building, I noted suddenly that its upper stories were bathed in a pale, golden glow; and coming full into the square, I saw the moon, riding small and high beyond the white tower. The next strip of canon street shut it out once more, but at Union Square it was waiting to greet me, and as I entered the slit of Broadway to the south and drew near Eleventh street, I was aware of the snow-covered northward pitch of Grace Church roof gleaming in its light, a great rectangle of pale radiance at the bend of the street. Above the roof the Gothic spire stood up serenely. There were no passers at the moment, not even a trolley-car. The greatest traffic artery in town was hushed as death. The high buildings about were dark and shadowy. At the angle commanding the vista in either direction the church slept in the moonlight. [151]

"Deep on the convent roof the snows
Are sparking to the moon."

Tennyson's lines came to me instinctively, for here in the heart of town was their very picture and their simple magic. A little shamefaced for my sceptic blindness, I passed on toward home.

Somebody, probably Emerson, said that we bring from Europe only what we take to it. But need one go to Europe to demonstrate the principle? We in New York, who are often our city's harshest critics, find pretty much what we look for. We do not look for beauty, and we do not find it. Then, too, man is no less conventional about beauty than about other things. If he believes that the beauty of a city lies in a level cornice-line, converging vistas, malls of trees, "civic centres," of what use to tell him that there may be a beauty as well of non-conformity, when the magic veil of twilight wraps the city round, and twinkling lamps climb unbelievable heights and all the town is a mighty nocturne in blue and gold? We would not be thought to say that New York is always beautiful, or that a great deal of it is not much of the time ugly beyond hope. But there is not a street of it from end to end but has some point of pictorial charm, whence one may see a span of the Brooklyn Bridge leaping over the tenements, or the scholastic Gothic spire of the City College chapel crowning the rocks at the close of the vista, or just a rosy sunset over the Hoboken hills. And there are parks and squares of almost constant charm, though it be a charm not of the old world, but the new, of the uprearing steel city of the twentieth century. And finally there are certain hours when kindly Nature takes a hand at coloring our drab mortar piles and softening out distances and making our forests of masonry no less wonderful to look upon than her own forests of timber. Such an hour is the blue twilight, such an hour may be the wet evening when the pavements shine with molten gold and the electric signs along upper Broadway, like King Arthur's dragoned helmet, make "all the night a steam of fire," and round the tall tower of the Times Building the vapour clouds drift, now concealing, now revealing some beam of light from a window high aloft. After all, it is no great credit to any of us to find the ugliness in New York. The ugliness is rather obvious. To find the beauty is a worthier task, and might make us more keen to cherish and to expand it. It is there for the seeing eye. [152] [153]



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Spring in the Garden

NO DAFFODILS “take the winds of March with beauty” in our Berkshire gardens. What daffodils we have in that month of alternate slush and blizzard bloom in pots, indoors. But one sign of spring the gardens holds no less plain to read, even if some people may not regard it as so poetic—over across the late snow, close to the hotbed frames, a great pile of fresh stable manure is steaming like a miniature volcano. To the true gardener, that sight is thrilling, nay, lyric! I have always found that the measure of a man's (and more especially a woman's) garden love was to be found in his (or her) attitude toward the manure pile. For that reason I put the manure pile in the first paragraph of my praise of gardens in the spring.

That yellowish-brown, steaming volcano above the slushy snow of March promises so much! I will not offend sensitive garden owners who hire others to do their dirty work, by singing the joy of turning it over with a fork, once, twice, perhaps three times, till it is “working” evenly all through. Yet there is such joy, accentuated on the second day by the fact that the thermometer has taken a sudden jump upwards, the snow is melting fast, and in the shrubs and evergreen hedge the song-sparrows are singing, and the robins. Last year, I remember, I paused with the steaming pile half turned, first to roll up my sleeves and feel the warm sun on my arms—most delicious of early spring sensations—and then to listen to the love-call of a chickadee, over and over the three notes, one long and two short a whole tone lower. I answered him, he replied, and we played our little game for two or three minutes, till he came close and detected the fraud. Then a bluebird flashed through the orchard, a jay screamed, as I bent to my toil again. Beside me were the hotbed frames, the glasses newly washed, the winter bedding of leaves removed, and behind them last year's contents rotted into rich loam. Another day or two, and they would be prepared for seeding—if I only could bring myself to work hard enough until then!

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How much hope goes into a hotbed in late March, or early April! How much warmth the friendly manure down under the soil sends up by night to germinate the seeds, though the weather go back to winter outside—as it invariably does in our mountains! Last year, for example, we had snow on the ninth of April, and again on the twenty-third and twenty-ninth, while the year before, on the ninth, six inches fell. In the lowland regions gardening is easier, perhaps, but yet there is a certain joy in this fickle spring weather of ours,—the joy of going out in the morning across a white garden and sweeping the snow from hotbed mats, lifting the moist, steaming glass, and catching from within, strong against your face, the pungent warmth and aroma of the heated soil and the delicate fragrance of young seedlings. How fast the seeds come—some of them! Others come so slowly that the amateur gardener is in despair, and angrily decides to try a new seed house next year. The vegetable frames are sown in rows—celery, tomatoes, cauliflowers, lettuce, radishes, peppers, coming up in tiny green ribbons, the radishes racing ahead. The flower frames, however, are sown in squares, each about a foot across, and each labeled and marked off with a thin strip of wood. These are the early plantings of the annuals, for we cannot sow out-of-doors till the first or even the second week in May in our climate. Sometimes, indeed, we do not dare to sow even in the frames till well into April. The asters are usually up first, racing the weeds. The little squares make, in a week or so, a green checker-board, each promising its quota of color to the garden, and very soon the early cosmos, thinned to the strongest plants, has shot up like a miniature forest, towering over the lowlier seedlings, sometimes bumping its head against the glass before it can be transplanted to the open ground in May. But most prolific, most promising, and most bothersome, are the squares labeled “antirrhinum,” coral red, salmon pink, white, dark maroon, and so on; tiny seeds

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scattered on the ground and sprinkled with a little sand, they come up by the hundred, and each seedling has to go into a pot before it goes into the ground.

There is work for an April day! I sit on a board by the hotbed, cross-legged like a Turk, while the sun is warm on my neck and I feel my arms tanning, and removing a mass of the seedlings on a flat mason's trowel, I lift each strong plant between thumb and finger, its long, delicate white root dangling like a needle, and pot it in a small paper pot. When two score pots are ready, I set them in a cold-frame, sprinkle them, stretch the kink out of my back, listen to the wood-thrush a moment (he came on the fourteenth and is evidently planning to nest in our pines), and then return to my job. Patience is required to pot four or five hundred snapdragons; but patience is required, after all, in most things that are rightly performed. I think as I work of the glory around my sundial in July, I arrange and rearrange the colors in my mind—and presently the job is done.

But the steaming manure pile is not the only sign of spring, nor the hotbeds the only things to be attended to. If they only were, how much easier gardening would be—and how much less exciting! There is always work to be done in the orchard, for instance, some pruning and scraping. I always go into the orchard on the first really warm, spring-like March day, with a common hoe, and scrape a little, not so much for the good of the trees as for the good of my soul. The real scraping for the scale spray was, of course, done earlier. There is a curious, faintly putrid smell to old or bruised apple wood, which is stirred by my scraping, and that smell sweeps over me a wave of memories, memories of childhood in a great yellow house that stood back from the road almost in its orchard, and boasted a cupola with panes of colored glass which made the familiar landscape strange; memories of youth in that same house, too, dim memories “of sweet, forgotten, wistful things.” My early spring afternoons in the orchard are very precious to me now, and when the weather permits I always try to burn the rubbish and dead prunings on Good Friday, the incense of the apple wood floating across the brown garden like a prayer, the precious ashes sinking down to enrich the soil.

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The bees, too, are always a welcome sign of the returning season, hardly less than the birds, though the advent of the white-throated sparrow (who delayed till April twenty-first last year) is always a great event. He is first heard most often before breakfast, in an apple tree close to the sleeping-porch, his flute-like triplets sweetly penetrating my dreams and bringing me gladly out of bed—something he alone can do, by the way, and not even he after the first morning! But the bees come long before. The earliest record I have is March thirty-first, but there must be dates before that which I have neglected to put down. Some house plant, a hyacinth possibly, is used as bait, and when the ground is thawing out beneath a warm spring sun we put the plant on the southern veranda and watch. Day after day nothing happens, then suddenly, some noon, it has scarcely been set on the ground when its blossoms stir, and it is murmurous with bees. Then we know that spring indeed has come, and we begin to rake the lawns, wherever the frost is out, wheeling great crate loads of leaves and rubbish upon the garden, and filling our neighbors' houses with pungent smoke.

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There is a certain spot between the thumb and first finger which neither axe nor golf-club nor saw handle seems to callous. The spring raking finds it out, and gleefully starts to raise a blister. My hands are perpetually those of a day-laborer, yet I expect that blister every spring. Indeed, I am rather disappointed now if I don't get it, I feel as if I weren't doing my share of work. The work is worth the blister. I know of few sensations more delightful than that of seeing the lawn emerging green and clean beneath your rake, the damp mould baring itself under the shrubbery, the paths, freshly edged, nicely scarrowed with tooth marks; then of feeling the tug of the barrow handles in your shoulder sockets; and finally, as the sun is sending long shadows over the ground, of standing beside the rubbish pile with your rake as a poker and hearing the red flames crackle and roar through the heap, while great puffs of beautiful brown smoke go rolling away across the garden and the warmth is good to your tired body. Clearing up is such a delight, indeed, that I cannot now comprehend why I so intensely disliked to do it when I was half my present age. Perhaps it was because at that time clearing up was put to me in the light of a duty, not a pleasure.

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There is alas, too often a tempering of sadness in the joy of taking the covers off the garden. One removes them, especially after a cold open winter, with much the same anxious excitement that one opens a long-delayed letter from a dear friend who has been in danger. What signs of life will the peonies show under their four inches of rotted manure, and the Japanese irises by the pool, and the beds of Darwins, so confidently relied upon to ring the sundial in late May and early June, before the succeeding annuals are ready? How will the hollyhocks, so stately in midsummer all down the garden wall, have withstood the alternate thaws and freezes which characterized our abominable January and February? Then there are those two long rows of foxgloves and Canterbury bells, across the rear of the vegetable garden, where they were set in the fall to make strong plants before being put in their permanent places—or rather their season's places, for these lovely flowers are perversely biennials, and at least seven times every spring I vow I will never bother with them again, and then make an even larger sowing when their stately stalks and sky-blue bells are abloom in summer! Tenderly you lift the pine boughs from them on a balmy April day (it was not until almost mid-April last year), when snow still lingers, perhaps, in dirty patches on the north side of the evergreens. Will they show frozen, flabby, withered leaves, or will their centers be bright with new promise? It is a moment to try the soul of the gardener, and no joy is quite like that of finding them all alive, nor any sorrow like that of finding them dead. At first I used to give up gardening forever when the perennials and biennials were winter-killed, just as a beginner at golf gives up the game forever each time he makes a vile score. Then I

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began to compromise on a garden of annuals. Now I have learned philosophy—and also better methods of winter protection. Likewise, I have learned that a good many of the perennials which were stone-dead when the covers were removed have a trick of coming to life under the kiss of May, and struggling up to some sort of bloom, even if heroically spindly like lean soldiers after a hard campaign. The hollyhocks, especially, have a way of seeding themselves undetected, and presenting you in spring with a whole unsuspected family of children, some of whom wander far from the parent stem and suddenly begin to shoot up in the most unexpected places. An exquisite yellow hollyhock last summer sprouted unnoted beneath our dining-room window, and we were not aware of it till one July morning when it poked up above the sill. A few days later, when we came down to breakfast, there it was abloom, nodding in at the open window.

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Another spring excitement in the garden is the pea planting, both the sweet peas and what our country folk sometimes call "eatin' peas." No rivalry is so keen as that between pea-growers. My neighbors and I struggle for supremacy in sweet peas at the flower show in July, and great glory goes to him who gets the first mess of green peas on his table. We have tried sweet-pea sowing in the fall, and it does not work. So now I prepare a trench in October, partially fill it with manure, and cover it with leaves, which I remove at the first hint of warm weather in March. The earth-piles on either side thaw out quickly, and I get an early sowing, putting in as many varieties as I can afford (my wife says twice as many as I can afford), jealously guarding the secret of their number. The vegetable peas are planted later, usually about the first or second day of April, as soon as the top soil of the garden can be worked with a fork, and long before the plowing. We put in first a row of Daniel O'Rourke's, not because they are good for much, but because they will beat any other variety we have discovered by two days at least. Then we put in a row of a better standard early variety. How we watch those rows for the first sprouts! How we coddle and cultivate them! How eagerly we inspect our neighbors' rows, trying to appear nonchalant! And doubtless how silly this sounds to anyone who is not a gardener. Last summer we got our first mess of peas on June twenty-first, and after eating a spoonful, we rushed to the telephone, and were about to ring, when somebody called us. "Hello," we said into the transmitter. A voice on the other end of the wire, curiously choked and munchy, cried, "We are eating our first peas! My mouth's full of 'em now!"

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"That's nothing," we answered, "we've got our first mouthful all swallowed."

"Well, anyhow," said our disappointed neighbor, "I called up first! Good-bye."

How is that for a neck-and-neck finish at the tape?

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As April waxes into May, the garden beds are a perpetual adventure in the expected, each morning bringing some new revelation of old friends come back, and as you dig deep and prepare the beds for the annuals, or spade manure around the perennials, or set your last year's plantings of hollyhocks, larkspur, foxgloves and campanulas into their places, you move tenderly amid the aspiring red stalks of the peonies, the Jason's crop of green iris spears, the leaves of tulips and narcissuses and daffodils, the fresh green of tiny sweet William plants clustered 'round the mother plant like a brood of chicks around the hen. You must be at setting them into borders, too, or putting the surplus into flats and then telephoning your less fortunate friends. One of the joys of a garden is in giving away your extra plants and seedlings.

One morning the asparagus bed, already brown again after the April showers have driven the salt into the ground, is pricked with short tips. That is a luscious sight! Inch by inch they push up, and thick and fast they come at last, and more and more and more. My diary shows me that we ate our first bunch last year on May ninth. On that day, also, I learn from the same source, the daffodils were out, the Darwin tulips were budding, and we spent the afternoon burning caterpillars' nests in the orchard—one spring crop which is never welcome, and never winter-killed. At this date, too, we are hard at work spraying, and sowing the annuals out-of-doors in the seed beds, and planting corn (the potatoes are all in by now), immediately following the plowing, which was delayed till the first of May by a belated snowstorm. Winter with us is like a clumsy person who tries over and over to make his exit from a room but does not know how to accomplish it. It is a busy time, for no sooner are the annuals planted, and the vegetables, than some of the seedlings from the hotbeds have to be set out (such as early cosmos), and the perennial beds already have begun to bloom, and require cultivation and admiration, and the flowers in the wild garden—hepaticas and trilliums and bloodroot and violets—are crying to be noticed, and, confound it all, here is the lawn getting rank under the influence of its spring dressing, and demands to be mowed! Yes, and we forget to get the mower sharpened before we put it away in the fall.

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"May fifteen"—it is my diary for last year—"apple blossoms showing pink, and the rhubarb leaves peeping over the tops of their barrels this morning, like Ali Baba and the forty thieves."

Well, well; straight, juicy red stalks the length of a barrel, fit for a pie and the market! It is our second commercial product, the asparagus slightly preceding it. The garden is getting into shape now, indeed; the wheel-hoe is traveling up and down the green rows; the hotbed glasses are entirely removed by day; and the early cauliflower plants are put into the open ground at the first promise of a shower. The annuals are up in the seed beds; the pool has been cleaned and filled, the goldfish are once more swimming in it, the Cape Cod water-lily, brought from its winter quarters in the dark cellar, has begun to make a leaf, and we have begun to hope that maybe *this* year it will also make a blossom, for we are nothing in mid-May if not optimistic.

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The earlier Darwins are already in bloom. The German irises follow rapidly. June comes, and we

work amid the splendors of the Japanese irises and the flame-line of Oriental poppies, setting the annuals into their beds, from the tender, droopy schyzanthus plants to the various asters and the now sturdy snapdragons. The color scheme had been carefully planned last winter, and is as cheerfully disregarded now, as some new inspiration strikes us, such as a border of purple asters against salvia, with white dahlias behind—a strip of daring fall color which would delight the soul of Gari Melcher, which delighted me—and which my wife said was horrible.

So spring comes and goes in the garden, busy and beautiful, ceaseless work and ceaseless wonder. But there is a moment in its passage, as yet unmentioned, which I have kept for the close because to me it is the subtle climax of the resurrection season. It usually comes in April for us, though sometimes earlier. The time is evening, always evening, just after supper, when a frail memory of sunset still lingers in the west and the air is warm. I go out hatless upon the veranda, thinking of other things, and suddenly I am aware of the song of the frogs! There are laughing voices in the street, the tinkle of a far-off piano, the pleasant sounds of village life come outdoors with the return of spring; and buoying up, permeating these other sounds comes the ceaseless, shrill chorus of the frogs, seemingly from out of the air and distance, beating in waves on the ear. Why this first frog chorus so thrills me I cannot explain, nor what dim memories it wakes. But the peace of it steals over all my senses, and I walk down into the dusk and seclusion of my garden, amid the sweet odors of new earth and growing things, where the song comes up to me from the distant meadow making the garden-close sweeter still, the air yet more warm and fragrant, the promise of spring more magical. The garden then is very intimate and dear, it brings me into closer touch with the awakening earth about me, and all the years I dwelt a prisoner in cities are but as the shadow of a dream.

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The Bubble, Reputation

A GREAT dramatist is authority for the statement that—

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.

That is no doubt in a measure true; yet it would be grossly unfair to blame personally certain great ones of the past for the evil that has lived after them and borne their names. For instance, it may be doubted whether Louis XIV of France was all that he should have been. His private life would hardly have escaped censure in Upper Montclair, N. J., or West Newton, Mass., and his public acts were not always calculated to promote social justice and universal brotherhood. But to blame him for all the gilt furniture which has ever since stood around the walls of hotel ballrooms and borne his name is a libel even on that lax and luxurious monarch. Yet such is his fate. You who are familiar with history, I who know next to nothing about it, are alike in this—when we hear the words *Louis XIV* we do not think of a great monarch with a powdered wig and a powdered mistress, of magnificent fountains and courtiers and ladies dancing the gavotte, of a brilliant court and striking epoch. Not at all. We think, both of us, of a gilt chair with a brocaded seat (slightly worn), and maybe a sofa to match. If you say that you don't, I must politely but firmly—well, differ with you.

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Alas! poor Louis XIV was not the only worthy (or unworthy) of the past who has come down to the present, not as a personality but as a piece of furniture, a dog, a boot, or some other equally ignominious thing. Speaking of furniture, there's the Morris chair. The man who made the Morris chair was a great and good man—not because he made the Morris chair, but in spite of it! He composed haunting poems, he wrote lovely prose romances of the far-off days of knights and ladies and magic spells, such as that hight *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, a right brave book mayhap you have not perused, to your exceeding great loss, for beautiful it is and fair to read and full of the mighty desire of a man for a maid. Beside all this, he printed lovely books by other writers, and designed wall-paper, and painted pictures, and thundered against the deadening effect on men of mechanical toil, and in social theories was far in advance of his age. Such a man was William Morris—known to-day to the mass of mankind for one of the most accursed articles of furniture ever devised by human ingenuity gone astray! Every day, in a million homes, men and women sit in Morris chairs (made by machinery) and read Robert W. Chambers and Florence Barclay. Such, alas, is fame!

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Then there was Queen Anne—in many respects an estimable woman, though leaving much to be desired as a monarch. She had her Rooseveltian virtues, being the mother of seventeen children (none of whom lived to grow beyond infancy, to be sure); and she had what the world just now has come to regard as the monarchical vice of autocracy. In her reign science and literature flourished, though without much aid from her, and the English court buzzed with intrigue and politics. But speak the name *Queen Anne* aloud, and then tell me the picture you get.

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Is it a picture of the lady or her period? Is it a picture of Pope and Dryden sitting in a London coffee-house? No, it is not—that is, unless you are a very learned, or a very young, person. It is a picture of a horrible architectural monstrosity built about thirty or forty years ago in any American city or suburb, and bearing certain vague resemblances to a home for human beings. Whatever else Queen Anne was, she was not an architect, and she wasn't to blame for those houses, any more than she was to blame for Pope's "Essay on Man." But that doesn't count. She gets the blame, just the same. She is known forever now by those gables and that gingerbread, those shingles and stains.

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She had a predecessor on the English throne by the name of Charles. Like Louis in France, he wasn't all he should have been, and there were those in his own day who didn't entirely approve of him. But it wasn't because of his dogs. However, if you mention King Charles now, it is a dog you think of—a small, early dog, with somewhat splay feet and a seventeenth-century monarchical preference for the society of ladies and the softest cushion. Maybe the royal gentleman didn't deserve anything better of posterity; but, anyhow, that's what he got.

St. Bernhard fared better. If one had to be remembered by a dog, what better dog could he select, save possibly an Airedale? Big, strong, faithful, wise, true to type for centuries, the most reliable of God's creatures (including Man by courtesy in that category), the St. Bernhard is a monument for—well, not for a king, and a king didn't get him; for a saint, rather. It is doubtful if the old monk is playing any lamentations on his harp.

But I'm not so sure about that peerless military leader, General A. E. Burnside. When you have risen to lead an army corps against your country's foes, when you have commanded men and sat your horse for a statue on the grounds of the state capitol or the intersection of Main and State Streets, it really is rather rough to be remembered for your whiskers. Of course, as a wit remarked of Shaw, no man is responsible for his relatives, but his whiskers are his own fault. Nevertheless, how is a great general to know that his military exploits will be forgotten, while his whiskers thunder down the ages, as it were, progressing in the course of time with the changing fashions from bank presidents to Presbyterian elders, and finally to stage butlers? At last even the stage butlers are shaving clean, and a stroke of the razor wipes out a military reputation, blasts a general's immortality! Fame is a fickle jaded.

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An artistic reputation lasts longer, and resists the barber, proving the superiority of the arts to militarism. "Van Dyke" is still a generally familiar appellation and sounds the same, no matter which way you spell it. Of course, there's no rhyme nor reason in it—artist and whiskers should be spelled the same way. Only they're not. "Something ought to be done about it." However, to resume.... If you tell me John Jones has a Vandyke, I don't visualize John as an art-collector standing in his gallery in rapt contemplation of a masterpiece by the great Flemish painter. I visualize him as a man with a certain type of beard. I may later think of the master who put these beards upon his portraits. Then again, I may not. Exactly the same would be true if I told you John Jones had a Vandyke, instead of the other way about. Don't contradict me—you know it's so. It is nearly as difficult to-day to own a Van Dyke canvas as it is to paint one, but anybody can raise a Vandyke beard. In fact, many still do, and thus keep the master's memory green. "By their whiskers ye shall know them."

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A military reputation, as we have already proved by the case of General Burnside, is a precarious thing. How many patrons of Atlantic City, I wonder, know the hero of the wars in the Low Countries and his greatest triumph by a certain hotel on the Board Walk, and would be hard put to say which half of the hyphenated name was the general and which the battle? Then there was Wellington, who at one time threatened to be remembered for his boots, and Blucher who still is remembered for his. A certain Massachusetts statesman (anybody elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives is a statesman) once said that the greatest triumph of Napoleon was when Theodore Roosevelt stood silent at his tomb. This is witty, but like most witty sayings, not quite true. It was a great triumph, of course, but rather spectacular. The greatest triumphs are not showy. What actually proves Napoleon's greatness is the fact that he is still remembered as a commander after generations have selected from the tray of French pastry the detectable and indigestible morsel of sugar, flour and lard that bears his name. To have a toothsome article of food named after you, and then to be still remembered for your actual achievements, is the ultimate test of human greatness. Only a Napoleon can meet it. Even Washington might not now be known as the father of his country if his pie had been a better one.

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Who was King, for instance? Was he the cook, or the man cooked for? I fancy I knew once, but I have forgotten. But chicken-à-la-king will live to perpetuate his name as long as there are chickens to be eaten and men to eat them. Even Sardou, spectacular dramatist, for all his *Toscas* and *Fédoras* (and ten to one you think of Fedora as a hat!), lives for me, a dramatic critic, by virtue of eggs Victorien Sardou, a never-to-be-too-much-enjoyed concoction secured at the old Brevoort House in New York. He may actually have invented this recipe himself, for he was a great lover of the pleasures of the table. If so, it was his masterpiece. An egg is poached on the tender heart of an artichoke, and garnished with a peculiar yellow sauce, topped with a truffle. Around all four sides are laid little bunches of fresh asparagus tips. What is *Tosca* compared to this?

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Then, of course, there was Mr. Baldwin. Who was Mr. Baldwin? The people of Wilmington, Mass., know, because there is a monument to the original tree in that town. But we don't know, any more than we know who Mr. Bartlett was, when we eat one of his pears, or Mr. Logan, father of the wine-red berry. In this case the Scripture is indeed verified, that by their fruits shall ye

know them.

Two or three times a year my wife gets certain clothes of mine from the closet and combs them for moths, hangs them flapping in the breeze for a while, and puts them back. Among the lot is a garment once much worn by congressmen, church ushers and wedding guests, known to the fashion editors as "frock coats", and to normal human beings as Prince Alberts. Doubtless, in the flux of styles (like a pendulum, styles swing forth and back again), the Prince Albert will once more be correct, and my wife's labor will not have been in vain, while the estimable consort of England's haircloth sofa and black-walnut bureau queen will continue to be remembered of posterity by this outlandish garment. Poor man, after all, he achieved little else to be remembered by!

And as for the queen herself, she will be remembered by a state of mind. Already "mid-Victorian" has little or nothing to do with Victoria, and is losing its suggestion, even, of a time-period. It is coming to stand for a mental and moral attitude—in fact, for priggishness and moral timidity. Queen Victoria was a great and good lady, and her home life was, as the two women so clearly pointed out when they left the theatre, totally different from that of Cleopatra. But she is going to give her name to a mental attitude, just the same, even as the Philistines and the Puritans. It pays to pick the period you queen it over rather carefully. Elizabeth had better luck. To be Elizabethan is to be everything gay and dashing and out-doory and adventuresome, with insatiable curiosity and the gift of song. Of course, Shakespeare, Drake, Raleigh, ought to have the credit—but they don't get it, any more than Tennyson comes in on the Victorian discredit. The head that wears a crown may well lie uneasy.

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The memory of many a man has been perpetuated, all unwittingly, by the manufacturers and advertising agencies. Here I tread on dangerous ground, but surely I shall not be accused of commercial collusion if I point out that so "generously good" a philanthropist as George W. Childs became a name literally in the mouth of thousands. He became a cigar. Then there was Lord Lister. He, too, has become a name in the mouths of thousands—as a mouth wash. And how about the only daughter of the Prophet? Fatima was her name.

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Who was Lord Raglan, or was he a lord? He is a kind of overcoat sleeve now. Who was Mr. Mackintosh? Was it Lord Brougham, too? Gasolene has extinguished his immortality. Gladstone has become a bag, Gainsborough is a hat. The beautiful Madame Pompadour, beloved of kings, is a kind of hair-cut now. The Mikado of Japan is a joke, set to music, heavenly music, to be sure, but with its tongue in its angelic cheek. An operetta did that. You cannot think of the Mikado of Japan in terms of royal dignity. I defy you to try. Ko-ko and Katisha keep getting in the way, and you hear the pitty-pat of Yum-Yum's little feet, and the bounce of those elliptical billiard balls. Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta is perhaps the most potent document for democracy since the Communist Manifesto!

The other day I heard a woman say that she had got to begin banting. A nice verb, to bant, though not approved of by the dictionary, which scornfully terms it "humorous and colloquial". The humor, to be sure, is usually for other people, not for the person banting. Do you know, I wonder, the derivation of this word? It means, of course, to induce this too, too solid flesh to melt, by the careful avoidance of farinaceous, saccharine and oily foods, and occasionally its meaning is stretched by the careless to include also rolling on the bedroom floor fifteen times before breakfast, and standing up twenty minutes after meals. Yet the word is derived from the name of William Banting, who was a London cabinet-maker. Cabinet-making is a worthy trade; indeed, it is one of the most appealing of all trades; in fact, it's not a trade, it's an art. I haven't a doubt that William made splendid furniture, especially chairs, for nobody appreciates a nice, roomy, strong chair like a fat man. I haven't a doubt that it was his ambition in life to be remembered for his furniture, even as the brothers Adam, as Chippendale and Sheraton. But it was not to be. In an unfortunate moment, William discovered that by eating fewer potatoes and cutting out two lumps of sugar from his tea he could take off some of the corpulence that troubled him. He told of his discovery—and the world knows him now as a method of getting number 44 ladies into a perfect 38. I have always felt sorry for William Banting. He is one of the tragic figures of history.

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Of course, there are many more, if none other quite so poignant, but you must recall them for yourself. For some paragraphs now I have been working up to a climax of prophecy. I have been planning to predict what Kaiser William II will be noted for in the days that are to come. It seemed to me that would make rather a neat conclusion for this little essay. But, Gentle Reader, I've got to turn that job over to you, also. Not that the space is lacking, but after long and painful concentration I have been unable to think of anything bad enough. It may turn out that he will be known simply by the meek and nourishing kaiser roll on the breakfast table—the only surviving relic of a monarchical vocabulary in a peaceful and democratic universe. Perhaps, for him, that would be the bitterest fate of all, the ultimate irony.

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The Old House on the Bend

I WONDER if other wayfarers through New England greet, as I do, with special affection the old house on the bend of the road? It is so characteristic of an earlier civilization, so suggestive of a vanished epoch—and withal so picturesque! Even if you are unfortunate enough to “tour” in a motor-car, which of course is far from the ideal way to savor the countryside, still you cannot miss the old house on the bend, even though you do miss the feel of the land, the rise and dip of the road, the fragrance of the clematis by the wall, the already fading gold of the evening primroses when you start off after breakfast.

Even for a motorist, however, the old house on the bend stands up to view, especially if you are on the front seat with the driver. The car swings into a straightaway, lined, perhaps, with sugar-maples and gray stone walls. Between the trunks are vistas of the green fields and far hills. But the chief vista is up the white perspective of the road, which seems to vanish directly into the front door of the solid, mouse-gray house on the bend.

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The ribbon of road rushes toward you, as if a great spool under your wheels were winding it up. The house rushes on with it; grows nearer; details emerge. You see the great square chimney; the tiny window-panes, six to a sash, some of them turned by time, not into the purple of Beacon Hill but into a kind of prismatic sheen like oil on water; the bit of classic egg-and-dart border on the door-cap; the aged texture of the weathered clapboard; the graceful arch of the wide woodshed entrance, on the kitchen side; the giant elm rising far above the roof. You rush on so near to the house, indeed, that the car seems in imminent danger of colliding with the front door, when suddenly the wheels bite the road, you feel the pull of centrifugal force, and the car swings away at right angles, leaving an end view of the ancient dwelling behind you, so that when you turn for a final glance you see the long slant of the roof at the rear, going down within six or eight feet of the ground.

Such is the view from the motor-car. If you are traveling on foot, however, there is much more to be observed, such as the great doorstep made from a broken millstone, the gigantic rambler by the kitchen window, the tiger-lilies gone wild in the dooryard, and above all, the view from the front windows. Since the house was visible far up the road, conversely a long stretch of the road is visible from the house. Standing in front of it, you can see a motor or wagon approaching a mile away, and from the end windows, too, can be seen all approaching vehicles from the other angle. Moreover, if you lived within, you could not only see who was coming, but you could step out of your door a pace or two and converse with him as he passed. The old house is strategically placed.

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When it was built, a century or even a century and a half ago, no motors went by on that road, and not enough of any kind of traffic to raise a dust. The busy town to the south, the summer resort to the north, were alike small villages, given over to agriculture. There were no telephones, no newspapers even. Fortunate indeed was the man whose farm abutted on a bend, for there he could set his house, close to the road, viewing the approaches in either direction, and no traveler could get by him, or at any rate by his wife, without yielding the latest gossip from the town above or below, perhaps from the greater world beyond. The highroad was then the sole artery of commerce, of communication, of intercourse of man with man.

How neighborly was the house on the bend, shedding its parlor-candle rays like a beacon by night down the mile of straightaway, or flapping its chintz curtains in the June sunshine! What a testimony it is, in its present gray ruin, to the human hunger for news and gossip and friendliness!

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The old order has changed, indeed. We no longer build on the bend. We don't have bends if we

can help it. They are dangerous and hard to maintain. A house on one would be uninhabitable with the dust. We do not seek the neighborliness of the road, but retire as far as we can to the back of our lot, with our telephone and newspaper. The old house on the bend now stands deserted. From country estates dimly seen in their remote privacy of trees and gardens, the stone highway leads to other estates equally remote and scornful of publicity. Between them the motors rush. The old house is dusty and falling into ruin, and every passing car kicks up some bit of crushed stone into its tangled dooryard. It looks pathetically down the road with unseeing eyes, the last relic of a vanishing order.

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Concerning Hat-trees

IT is well sometimes, when we are puffed up with our achievements as a race,—our conquest of the elements, our building of mighty bridges and lofty sky-scrapers, our invention of wireless telegraphy and horseless carriages and aéroplanes and machine guns and secret diplomacy and wage slavery and war,—it is well to indulge in the chastening reflection that there are still some things we cannot achieve. We may reflect that the appleless Eden has not yet been discovered, or that the actor without vanity is yet unborn, or the “treasonless” Senate yet unassembled. My own method is to reflect that the ideal hat-tree has never been constructed.

At present I have no hat-tree, because I live in an old farm house where there is a square piano and a hall closet, and we don't need one. In New York I never had one, either, because there is never room in the hall-way of a modern apartment both for a hat-tree and a passage-way. But occasionally I visit at the homes of friends who boast one of these arboreal adornments, and renew my acquaintance with the species. I was to take a walk with one of these friends the other day.

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“Wait,” he said, pausing in the hall, “till I get a pair of gloves.” Stooping over, he pulled at the hat-tree drawer. First it stuck on one side; then it stuck on the other side; then it yielded altogether, without warning. My friend sat down on the floor, the ridiculously shallow drawer in his hand, between his feet a sorry array of the odds and ends of the outside toilet,—broken hat pins, old veils, buttons, winter gloves rolled into wads, old gloves, new gloves, gloves pulled off in a hurry with the fingers inside out, dirty white gloves belonging to his charming sister. I turned away, feeling that I gazed on a domestic exposure. My friend spoke softly to the drawer.

“Sh!” said I, “your family! Put the drawer back.”

“I will not put it back,” he said. “We would never get started. Let the—”

Again I cautioned him, and we set out on our walk leaving the litter on the floor; and as we tramped through the marvelous sky-scraper wilderness which is Manhattan, we talked of hat-trees, and the futility of human effort, and sighed for a new Carlyle to write the philosophy of the hat-tree drawer.

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How well I remembered the hat-tree that sheltered my caps in youth, beneath the protecting foliage of the paternal greatcoat and the maternal bonnet! I did not always use it; the piano was more convenient, or the floor. But there it stood in the hall in all its black-walnut impressive ugliness, with side racks for umbrellas, and square, metal drip-pans always full of the family rubbers. There was a mirror in the centre, so high I had to climb three stairs to see how uncle's hat fitted my small head. There were pegs up both sides; but, as is the way with hat-trees, only the top ones were useful; whatever was hung on them buried everything below. The only really safe place was the peak on top, just above the carved face of Minerva. Sometimes the paternal greatcoat lovingly carried off the maternal shawl of a morning, which would be found later somewhere between the door and the station. And this hat-tree also had a drawer, of course. There was the rub, indeed!

Summer or winter, wet or dry, that drawer always stuck. It had but one handle,—a ring in the middle. First one side would come out too far, and you would knock it back and pull again. Then the other side would come out too far, and you would knock that back. Then both sides, by diabolical agreement, would suddenly work as on greased ways, and you stood with an astonishingly shallow drawer dangling from your finger, its long-accumulated contents spread on the floor. The shock usually sent down two derbies and a bonnet to add to the confusion. When you had gathered up the litter and stuffed it back, wondering how so small a space ever held so much, the still harder task confronted you of putting the drawer in its grooves again. Sometimes you succeeded; more often you left it “for mother to do”—that depended on your temper and the time of your train. The drawer was a charnel-house of gloves and mittens and veils. When you cut your finger you were sent to it to get a “cot”, and it had a peculiar smell of its own, the smell of

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the hat-tree drawer. A whiff of old gloves still brings that odor back to me, out of childhood, stirring memories of little garments worn long ago, of a great blue cape that was a pride to my father's heart and a wound to my mother's pride,—but most of all of lost temper and incipient profanity caused by the baulky drawer.

My friend's recollections but supplemented and reinforced my own. We called to mind other hat-trees in houses where we had visited, and one and all they were alike perverse, ridiculous, ill-adapted for their mission in life. We thought of various substitutes for the hat-tree, such as a pole with pegs in it, which tips over when the preponderance of weight is hung on one side; the cluster of pegs on a frame suspended from the wall like a picture, while a painted drain-pipe courts umbrellas in a corner; a long, low table (only possible in a palatial hall) on which the garments are placed by the butler in assorted piles, so that you feel like asking him for a check; the settle, often disastrous to hats. We found none of them satisfactory, though they eliminate the perils of the drawer.

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Only the wooden pegs which were driven in a horizontal row into the board walls of grandfather's back entry ever approximated the ideal. But such a reversion to primitive principles would now be considered out of the question, even in my farm house—by the farmer's wife, at least. The problem of a satisfactory hat-tree, which baffled the genius of Chippendale, is still unsolved in Grand Rapids, and it probably will remain unsolved to the end of time, unless Eden should be found again, where the hat-tree is the least of the arboreal troubles.

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The Shrinking of Kingman's Field

"It was rats," said I.

"It was warts," said Old Hundred.

"I know it was rats, I tell you," I continued, "because my uncle Eben knew a man who did it. His house was full of rats, so he wrote a very polite note to them, setting forth that, much as he enjoyed their excellent society, the house was too crowded for comfort, and telling them to go over to the house of a certain neighbor, who had more room and no children nor cats. And the rats all went."

Old Hundred listened patiently. "That's precisely right," said he, "except it must have been warts. You have to be polite, and also tell them where to go. You rub the warts with a bean, wrap the bean up in the note, and burn both, or else throw them in the well. In a few days the warts will leave you and appear on the other fellow. My grandfather, when he was a boy, got warts that way, so he licked the other boy."

"Rats!" said I.

"No, warts," persisted Old Hundred.

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So that was how we two aging and urbanized codgers came to leave the comfortable club for the Grand Central Station, whence we sent telegrams to our families and took train for the rural regions north-eastward. The point had to be settled. Besides, I stumped Old Hundred to go, and he never could refuse a stump.

But Old Hundred was fretful on the journey. We called him Old Hundred years ago, because he always proposed that tune at Sunday evening meetings, when the leader "called for hymns." I address him as Old Hundred still, though he is a learned lawyer in line for a judgeship. He was fretful, he said, because we were sure to be terribly disillusioned. But he is not a man accustomed in these later years to act on impulse, and the prospect of a night on a sleeping car, without pajamas, did not, I fancy, appeal to him, now that he faced it from the badly ventilated car aisle, instead of the club easy-chair. Yet perhaps he did dread the disillusionment, too. It was always I, even when we were boys, who loved an adventure for its own sake, quite apart from the pleasure or pain of it—taking a supreme delight, in fact, in melancholy. I have still a copy of Moore's poems, stained with tears and gingerbread. Some of the happiest hours of my childhood were spent in weeping over this book, especially over "Go Where Glory Waits Thee," which affected me with an incomprehensible but poignant woe. Accordingly it was I who rose cheerful in the morning and piloted a gloomy companion to breakfast and a barber, and so across Boston to the dingy station where dingy, dirty cars of ancient vintage awaited, and in one of which we rode, with innumerable stops, to a spot off the beaten tracks of travel, but which bore a name that thrilled us.

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When we alighted from the train, a large factory greeted our vision, across the road from the railway station. We walked up a faintly familiar street to the village square. There we paused,

with wry faces. Six trolley lines converged in its centre, and out of the surrounding country were rolling in great cars, as big almost as Pullmans. All the magnificent horse-chestnut trees that once lined the walks were down, to expose more brazenly to view the rows of tawdry little shops. These trees had once furnished shade and ammunition. I had to smile at the sign above the new fish-market—

IF IT SWIMS—WE HAVE IT.

But there was no smile on Old Hundred's face. Here and there, rising behind the little stores and lunch rooms, we could detect the tops of the old houses, pushed back by commerce. But most of the houses had disappeared altogether. Only the old white meeting-house at the head of the common looked down benignly, unchanged.

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"The trail of the trolley is over it all!" Old Hundred murmured, as we hastened northward, out of the village.

After we had walked some distance, Old Hundred said, "It ought to be around here somewhere, to the right of the road. I can't make anything out, for these new houses."

"There was a lane down to it," said I, "and woods beyond."

"Sure," he cried, "Kingman's woods; and it was called Kingman's field."

I sighted the ruins of a lane, between two houses. "Come on down to Kingman's, fellers," I shouted, "an' choose up sides!"

Old Hundred followed my lead. We were in the middle of a potato patch, in somebody's back yard. It was very small.

"This ain't Kingman's," wailed Old Hundred, lapsing into bad grammar in his grief. "Why, it took an awful paste to land a home run over right field into the woods! And there ain't no woods!"

There weren't. Nevertheless, this was Kingman's field. "See," said I, trying to be cheerful, "here's where home was." And I rooted up a potato sprout viciously. "You and Bill Nichols always chose up. You each put a hand round a bat, alternating up the stick, for the first choice. The one who could get his hand over the top enough to swing the bat round his head three times, won, and chose Goodknocker Pratt. First was over there where the wall isn't any more."

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"Remember the time we couldn't find my 'Junior League'," said Old Hundred, "and Goodknocker dreamed it was in a tree, and the next day we looked in the trees, and there it was? I wonder what ever became of old Goodknocker?"

He moved toward first base. The woods had been ruthlessly cut down, and the wall dragged away in the process. We climbed a knoll, through the stumps and dead stuff. At the top was a snake bush.

"Here's something, anyhow," said Old Hundred. "You were Uncas and I was Hawk Eye, and we defended this snake bush from Bill's crowd of Iroquois. We made shields out of barrel heads, and spears out of young pine-tree tops. Wow, how they hurt!"

"About half a mile over is the swamp where the traps were," said I. "Let's go. Maybe there's something in one of 'em."

"Then times would be changed," said he, smiling a little.

We walked a few hundred feet, and there was the swamp, quite dried up without the protection of the woods, a tangle of dead stuff, and in plain view of half a dozen houses. "Why" cried Old Hundred, "it was miles away from *anything!*"

I looked at him, a woeful figure, clad in immaculate clothes, with gray gloves, a cane in his hand. "You ought to be wearing red mittens," said I, "and carrying that old shot-gun, with the ramrod bent."

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"The ramrod was always bent," said he. "It kept getting caught in twigs, or falling out. Gee, how she kicked! Remember the day I got the rabbit down there on the edge of the swamp? It made the snow all red, poor little thing. I guess I wasn't so pleased as I expected to be."

"I remember the day you didn't get the wood pussy—soon enough," I answered.

Just then a whistle shrieked. "Good Lord," said Old Hundred, "there's one of those infernal trolleys! It must go right up the turnpike, past Sandy."

"Let's take it!" I cried.

He looked at me savagely. "We'll walk!" he said.

"But it's miles and miles," I remonstrated.

"Nevertheless," said he, "we'll walk."

It was difficult to find the short cut in this tangle of slaughtered forest, but we got back to the road finally, coming out by the school-house. At least, we came out by a little shallow hole in the ground, half filled with poison-ivy and fire-weed, and ringed by a few stones. We paused sadly by the ruins.

"I suppose the trolley takes the kids into the village now," said I. "Centralization, you know."

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"There used to be a great stove in one corner, and the pipe went all across the room," Old Hundred was saying, as if to himself. "If you sat near it, you baked; if you didn't, you froze. Do you remember Miss Campbell? What was it we used to sing about her? Oh, yes—

Three little mice ran up the stairs
To hear Biddy Campbell say her prayers;
And when they heard her say Amen,
The three little mice ran down again.

And, gee but you were the punk speller! Remember how there was always a spelling match Friday afternoons? I'll never forget the day you fell down on 'nausea.' You'd lasted pretty well that day, for you; everybody'd gone down but you and Myrtie Swett and me and one or two more. But when Biddy Campbell put that word up to you, you looked it, if you couldn't spell it!"

"Hum," said I, "I wouldn't rub it in, if I were you. I seem to recall a public day when old Gilman Temple, the committee man, asked you what was the largest bird that flies, and you said, 'The Kangaroo.'"

Old Hundred grinned. "That's the day the new boy laughed," said he. "Remember the new boy? I mean the one that wore the derby which we used to push down over his eyes? Sometimes in the yard one of us would squat behind him, and then somebody else would push him over backward. We made him walk Spanish, too. But after that public day he and I went way down to the horse-sheds behind the meeting-house in the village, and had it out. I wonder why we always fought in the holy horse-sheds? The ones behind the town hall were never used for that purpose."

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This was true, but I couldn't explain it. "We couldn't always wait to get to the horse-sheds, as I remember it," said I. "Sometimes we couldn't wait to get out of sight of school."

I began hunting the neighborhood for the hide-and-peek spots. The barn and the carriage-shed across the road were still there, with cracks yawning between the mouse-gray boards. The shed was also ideal for "Anthony over." And in the pasture behind the school stood the great boulder, by the sassafras tree. "I'll bet you can't count out," said I.

"Pooh!" said Old Hundred. He raised his finger, pointed it at an imaginary line of boys and girls, and chanted—

"Acker, backer, soda cracker,
Acker, backer, boo!
If yer father chews terbacker,
Out goes you.

And now you're it," he finished pointing at me.

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I was not to be outdone. "Ten, twenty, thirty, forty,—" I began to mumble. Then, "One thousand!" I shouted.

"Bushel o' wheat and a bushel o' rye,
All 't 'aint hid, holler knee high!"

I looked for a stick, stood it on end, and let it fall. It fell toward the boulder. "You're up in the sassafras tree," I said.

"No," said Old Hundred, "that's Benny."

Then we looked at each other and laughed.

"You poor old idiot," said Old Hundred.

"You doddering imbecile," said I, "come on up to Sandy."

Somehow, it wasn't far to Sandy. It used to be miles. We passed by Myrtie Swett's house on the way. It stood back from the turnpike just as ever, with its ample doorway, its great shadowing elms, its air of haughty well-being. Myrtie, besides a prize speller, was something of a social queen. She was very beautiful and she affected ennui.

"Oh, dear, bread and beer,
If I was home I shouldn't be here!"

she used to say at parties, with a tired air that was the secret envy of the other little girls, who were unable to conceal their pleasure at being "here." However, Myrtie never went home, we noticed. Rather did she take a leading part in every game of Drop-the-handkerchief, Post Office, or Copenhagen—tinglingly thrilling games, with unknown possibilities of a sentimental nature.

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"If I thought she still lived in the old place, I'd go up and tell her I had a letter for her," said Old Hundred.

"She'd probably give you a stamp," I replied.

"Not unless she's changed!" he grinned.

But we saw no signs of Myrtie. Several children played in the yard. There was the face of a strange woman at the window, a very plain woman, who looked old, as she peered keenly at the

two urban passers.

"It *can't* be Myrtie!" I heard Old Hundred mutter, as he hastened on.

Sandy was almost the most wonderful spot in the world. It was, as most swimming holes are, on the down-stream side of a bridge. The little river widened out, on its way through the meadows, here and there into swimming holes of greater or less desirability. There was Lob's Pond, by the mill, and Deep Pool, and Musk Rat, and Little Sandy. But Sandy was the best of them all. It was shaded on one side by great trees, and the banks were hidden from the road by alder screens. At one end there was a shelving bottom, of clean sand, where the "little kids" who couldn't swim sported in safety. Under the opposite bank the water ran deep for diving. And in mid-stream the pool was so very deep that nobody had ever been able to find bottom there. In the other holes, you could hold your hands over your head and go down till your feet touched, without wetting your fingers. But not the longest fish-line had ever been long enough to plumb Sandy's depths. Indeed, it was popularly believed that there was *no* bottom in Sandy, and a mythical horn pout, of gigantic proportions, was supposed to inhabit its dark, watery abysses.

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Old Hundred and I stood on the bridge and looked down on a little pool. "I could jump across it now," he sighed. "But I wish it were a warmer day. I'd go in, just the same."

There was a honk up the road, and a touring car jolted over the boards behind us, with a load of veils and goggles. The dust sifted through the bridge, and we heard it patter on the water below.

"I fancy there's more travel now," said I. "And the alder screen seems to be gone. Perhaps we'd better not go in."

Old Hundred leaned pensively over the white rail—the sign of a State highway; for the dusty old Turnpike was now converted into a gray strip of macadam road, torn by the automobiles, with a trolley track at one side.

"There's a lucky bug on the water," he said presently. "If we were in now, we might catch him, and make our fortunes."

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"And get our clothes tied up," said I.

"As I recall it, you were the prize beef chawer," he remarked. "I never could see why you didn't go into vaudeville, in a Houdini act. I used to soak the knots in your shirt and dry 'em, and soak 'em again; but you always untied 'em, often without using your teeth, either."

"You couldn't, though," I grinned.

 "Charlo beef,
 The beef was tough,
 Poor Old Hundred
 Couldn't get enough!

"How many times have you gone home barefoot, with your stockings and your undershirt, in a wet knot, tied to your fish-pole?"

"Not many," said he.

"What?" said I.

"It wasn't often that I wore stockings and an undershirt in swimming season," he answered. "Don't you remember being made to soak your feet in a tub on the back porch before going to bed, and going fast asleep in the process?"

"If you put a horse hair in water, it will turn to a snake," I replied, irrelevantly.

"Anybody knows that," said Old Hundred. "If you toss a fish back in the water before you're done fishing, you won't get any more bites, because he'll go tell all the other fish. Bet yer I can swim farther under the water 'n you can. Come on, it isn't very cold."

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I looked hesitantly at the pool.

"Stump yer!" he taunted.

I started for the bank. But just then the trolley wire, which we had quite forgotten, began to buzz. We paused. Up the pike came the car. It stopped just short of the bridge, by a cross-road, and an old man alighted. Then it moved on, shaking more dust down upon the brown water. The old man regarded us a moment, and instead of turning up the cross-road, came over to us.

("Know him?" I whispered.)

("Is it Hen Flint, that used to drive the meat wagon with the white top?" said Old Hundred. "Lord, is it so many years ago!")

"How are you, Mr. Flint?" said I.

"Thot I didn't mistake ye," said the old man, putting out a large, thin, but powerful hand. "Whar be ye now, Noo York? Come back to look over the old place, eh? I reckon ye find it some changed. Don't know it myself, hardly. You look like yer ma; sorter got her peak face."

"Where's the swimming hole now?" asked Old Hundred.

"I don't calc'late thar be any," said the old man. "The gol durn trolley an' the automobiles spiled the pool here, an' the mill-pond's no good since they tore down the mill, an' bust the dam. Maybe the little fellers git their toes wet down back o' Bill Flint's; I see 'em splashin' round thar hot days. But the old fellers have to wash in the kitchen, same's in winter."

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"But the boys must swim somewhere," said I.

"I presume likely they go to the beaches," said Henry Flint. "I see 'em ridin' off in the trolley."

"Yes," said I, "it must be easy to get anywhere now, with the trolleys so thick."

"It's too durn easy," he commented. "Thar hain't a place ye can't git to, though why ye should want to git thar beats me. Mostly puts high-flown notions in the women-folks' heads, and vegetable gardens on 'em."

He shook hands again, lingeringly. "Yer father wus a fine man," he said to Old Hundred—"a fine man. I sold yer ma meat before you wus born."

Then he moved rather feebly away, down the cross-road. Presently a return trolley approached.

"Curse the trolleys!" exclaimed Old Hundred. "They go everywhere and carry everybody. They spoil the country roads and ruin the country houses and villages. Where they go, cheap loafing places, called waiting-rooms, spring up, haunted by flies, rotten bananas and village muckers. They trail peanut shells, dust and vulgarity; and they make all the country-side a back yard of the city. Let's take this one."

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We passed once more the hole where the school had been, and drew near a cross-road. I looked at Old Hundred, he at me. He nodded, and we signalled the conductor. The car stopped. We alighted and turned silently west, pursued by peering eyes. After a few hundred feet the cross-road went up a rise and round a bend, and the new frame houses along the Turnpike were shut from view. Over the brambled wall we saw cows lying down in a pasture.

"It's going to rain," said I.

"No," said Old Hundred, "that's only a sign when they lie down first thing in the morning."

Then we were silent once more. Into the west the land, the rocky, rolling, stubborn, beautiful New England country-side, lay familiar—how familiar!—to our eyes. To the left, back among the oaks and hickories, stood a solid, simple house, painted yellow with green blinds. To the right almost opposite was a smaller house of white, with an orchard straggling up to the back door. And in one of them I was born, and in the other Old Hundred. Down the road was another house, a deep red, half hidden in the trees. Smoke was rising from the chimney now, and drifting rosily against the first flush of sunset.

"Betsy's getting Cap'n Charles's supper," said Old Hundred.

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"Then Betsy's about one hundred and six," said I, "and the Cap'n one hundred and ten. Oh, John, it was a long, long time ago!"

"It doesn't seem so," he answered. "It seems only yesterday that we met up there in your grove on Hallow-e'en to light our jack-lanterns, and crept down the road in the cold white moonlight to poke them up at Betsy's window. Remember when she caught us with the pail of water?"

"I remember," said I, "the time you put a tack in the seat of Cap'n Charles's stool, in his little shoemaker's shop out behind the house, and he gave you five cents, to return good for evil; so the next day you did it again, in the hope of a quarter, but he decided there were times when the Golden Rule is best honored in the breach, and gave you a walloping."

"It was some walloping, too," said Old Hundred, with a reminiscent grin. "It would be a good time now," he added, "to swipe melons, if Betsy's getting supper. Though I believe she had all those melon stems connected with an automatic burglar-alarm in the kitchen. She ought to have taken out a patent on that invention!"

He looked about him, first at his house, then at mine. "How small the orchard is now," he mused. "The trees are like little old women. And look at Crow's Nest—it used to be a hundred feet high."

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The oak he pointed at still bore in its upper branches the remains of our tree-top retreat, a rotted beam or two straddling a crotch. "Peter Pan should rebuild it," said I. "I shall drop a line to Wendy. Do you still hesitate to turn over in bed?"

"Always," Old Hundred confessed. "I do turn over now, but it was years before I could bring myself to do it. I wonder where we got that superstition that it brought bad luck? If we woke in the night, up in Crow's Nest, and wanted to shift our positions, we got up and walked around the foot of the mattress, so we could lie on the other side without turning over. Remember?"

I nodded. Then the well-curb caught my eye. It was over the well we dug where old Solon Perkins told us to. Solon charged three dollars for the advice. He came with a forked elm twig, cut green, and holding the prongs tightly wrapped round his hands so that the base of the twig stuck out straight, walked back and fourth over the place, followed by my father and mother, and

Old Hundred's father and mother, and Cap'n Charles and Betsy, and all the boys for a mile around, silently watching for the miracle. Finally the base of the twig bent sharply down. "Dig there," said Solon. He examined the twig to see if the bark was twisted. It was, so he added, "Bent hard. Won't have ter dig more'n ten foot." We dug twenty-six, but water came. And such water!

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"I want some of that water," said I. "I don't want to go into the house; I don't even know who lives in it now. But I must have some of that water."

We went up to the well and lowered the bucket, which slid bounding down against the cool stones till it hit the depths with a dull splash. As we were drinking, an old man came peering out of the house. Old Hundred recognized him first.

"Well, Clarkie Poor, by all that's holy!" he cried. "We've come to get our hair cut."

Clarkson Poor blinked a bit before recognition came. "Yes," he said, "I bought the old place a couple o' year back, arter them city folks you sold it to got sick on it. Too fer off the trolley line for them. John's house over yon some noo comers 'a' got. They ain't changed it none. This is about the only part o' town that ain't changed, though. Most o' the old folks is gone, too, and the young uns, like you chaps, all git ambitious fer the cities. I give up cuttin' hair 'bout three year back—got kinder onsteady an' cut too many ears."

A sudden smile broke over Old Hundred's face. "Clarkie," he said, "you were always up on such things—is it rats or warts that you write a note to when you want 'em to go away?"

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"Yes, it's rats, isn't it?" I cried, also reminded, for the first time, of our real quest.

"Why," said Clarkie, "you must be sure to make the note very partic'lar perlite, and tell 'em whar to go. Don't fergit that."

"Yes, yes," said we, "but is it warts or rats?"

"Well," said Clarkie, "it's both."

We looked one at the other, and grinned rather sheepishly.

"Only thar's a better way fer warts," Clarkie went on. "I knew a boy once who sold his. That's the best way. Yer don't have actually to sell 'em. Just git another feller to say, 'I'll give yer five cents fer yer warts,' and you say, 'All right, they're yourn,' and then they go. Fact."

We thanked him, and moved down to the road, declining his invitation to come into the house. Westward, the sun had gone down and left the sky a glowing amber and rose. The fields rolled their young green like a checkered carpet over the low hills—the sweet, familiar hills. For an instant, in the hush of gathering twilight, we stood there silent and bridged the years; wiping out the strife, the toil, the ambitions, we were boys again.

"Hark!" said Old Hundred, softly. Down through the orchard we heard the thin, sweet tinkle of a cow-bell. "There's a boy behind, with the peeled switch," he added, "looking dreamily up at the first star, and wishing on it—wishing for a lot of things he'll never get. But I'm sure he isn't barefoot. Let's go."

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As we passed down the turnpike, between the rows of cheap frame houses, we saw, in the increasing dusk, the ruins of a lane, and the corner of a small, back-yard potato patch, that had been Kingman's field. We hastened through the noisy, treeless village, and boarded the Boston train, rather cross for want of supper.

"I wonder," said Old Hundred, as we moved out of the station, "whether we'd better go to Young's or the Parker House?"

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Mumblety-peg and Middle Age

OLD HUNDRED and I were taking our Saturday afternoon walk in the country—that is, in such suburbanized country as we could achieve in the neighborhood of New York. We had passed innumerable small boys and not a few small girls, but save for an occasional noisy group on a base-ball diamond none of them seemed to be playing any definite games.

"Did we use to wander aimlessly round that way?" asked Old Hundred.

"We did not," said I. "If it wasn't marbles in spring or tops in autumn it was duck-on-the-rock or stick-knife or——"

"Only we didn't call it stick-knife," said Old Hundred, "we called it mumblety-peg."

"We called it stick-knife," said I.

"Your memory is curiously bad," said Old Hundred. "You are always forgetting about these important matters. It was mumblety-peg."

"My memory bad!" I sniffed. "I suppose you think I've forgotten how I always licked you at stick-knife?"

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Old Hundred grinned. Old Hundred's grin, to-day as much as thirty years ago, is a mask for some coming trouble. He always grinned before he sailed into the other fellow, which was an effective way to catch the other fellow off his guard. I presume he grins now before he cross-questions a witness. "I'll play you a game right now," he said softly.

"You're on," said I.

We selected a spot of clean, thin turf behind a roadside fence. It was in reality a part of somebody's yard, but it was the best we could do. I still carry a pocket-knife of generous proportions, to whittle with when we go for a walk, and this I produced and opened, handing it to Old Hundred. "Now begin," said I, as we squatted down.

He held the knife somewhat gingerly, first by the blade, then by the handle. "Wha—what do you do first?" he finally asked.

"Do?" said I. "Don't you remember?"

"No," he replied, "and neither do you."

"Give me the knife," I cried. I relied on the feel of it in my hand to awaken a dormant muscular memory to help me out. But no muscular memory was stirred. Old Hundred watched me with a smile. "Begin, begin!" he urged.

"Let's see," said I, "I think you took it first by the tip of the blade, this way, and made it stick up." I threw the knife. It stuck, but almost lay upon the ground.

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"You've got to get two fingers under it," said Old Hundred. He tried, but there wasn't room. "You fail," he cried. "There's a point for me."

"Not till you've made it stick," said I.

We grew interested in our game. We threw the knife from our nose and chin, we dropped it from our forehead, we jumped it over our hand, we half-closed the blade and tossed it that way, and finally, when the tally was reckoned up in my favor, I began to look about for a stick to whittle into the peg.

Old Hundred rose and dusted his clothes. "Here," I cried. "You're not done yet!"

"Oh, yes I am!" he answered.

"Quitter, quitter, quitter!" I taunted.

"That may be," said he, "but a learned lawyer of forty-five with a dirty mug is rather more self-conscious than a boy of ten. I'll buy you a dinner when we get to town."

"Oh, very well," said I, peevishly, "but I didn't think you'd so degenerated. I'll let you off if you'll admit it was stick-knife."

"I'll admit it," said Old Hundred. "I suppose in a minute you'll ask me to admit that prisoners'-base was relieveo."

"What was relieveo, by the way?" I asked.

"Relievo—relievo?" said Old Hundred. "Why that was a game we played mostly on the ice, up on Birch Meadow, don't you remember? When we got tired of hockey, we all put our coats and hockey sticks in a pile, one man was It, and the rest tried to skate from a distant line around the pile and back. It the chap who was It tagged anybody before he got around, that chap had to be It with him, and so on till everybody was caught. Then the first one tagged had to be It for a new start."

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"I remember that game," said I. "I remember how Frank White, who could skate like a fiend, used to be the last one caught. Sometimes he'd get around a hundred boys, ducking and dodging and taking half a mile of ice to do it, but escaping untouched. Sometimes, if there weren't many playing, he'd go around backwards, just to taunt us. But I don't think that game was relieveo. That doesn't sound like the name to me."

"What was it, then?" said Old Hundred.

"I don't know," I answered. "It's funny how you forget things."

By this time we were strolling along the road again. "Speaking of Birch Meadow," said Old Hundred, "what glorious skating we kids used to have there! I never go by Central Park in winter without pitying the poor New York youngsters, just hobbling round and round on a half-acre pond where the surface is cut up into powder an inch thick, and the crowd is so dense you can scarcely

see the ice. Shall you ever forget that mile-long pond in the woods, not deep enough to drown in anywhere, and frozen over with smooth black ice as early as Thanksgiving Day? How we used to rush to it, up Love Lane, as soon as school was out!"

"Do you remember," said I, "how we passed it last year, and found the woods all cut and the water drained off?"

"Don't be a wet blanket," said Old Hundred, crossly. "The country has to grow."

I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. The mood of memory was on him. I repented of my speech. "Yes," I answered. "No doubt the country has to grow. The colleges now play hockey on ponds made by the fire department. But there isn't that thrilling ring to your runners nor that long-drawn echo from the wooded shores when a crack crosses the ice."

"I can see it all this minute," said Old Hundred. "I can see my little self like a different person [which, indeed, he was!] as one of the crowd. We had chosen up sides—ten, twenty, thirty on a side. Stones, dragged from the shores, were put down for goals. Most of us had hockey sticks we had cut ourselves in the woods, hickory, with a bit of the curved root for the blade. You were one of the few boys who could afford a store stick. We had a hard rubber ball. Bobbie Pratt was always one goal because he had big feet. And over the black ice, against the sombre background of those cathedral aisles of white pine, we chased that ball, charging in solid ranks so that the ice sagged and protested under the rush of our runners, wheeling suddenly, darting in pursuit of one boy who had snaked the ball out from the maze of feet and was flying with it toward the goal, all rapid action, panting breath, superb life. It really must have been a beautiful sight, one of those hockey games. I can still hear the ring and roar of the runners as the crowd swept down in a charge!"

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I smiled. "And I can still feel the ice when somebody's stick got caught between my legs. 'Hi, fellers, come look at the star Willie made!' I can hear you shouting, as you examined the spot where my anatomy had been violently super-imposed on the skating surface."

Old Hundred smiled too. "Fine little animals we were!" he said. "I suppose one reason why we don't see more games nowadays is because we live in the city. Even this suburbanized region is really city, dirtied all over with its spawn. Lord, Bill, think if we'd been cramped up in an East Side street, or reduced to Central Park for a skating pond! A precious lot of reminiscences we'd have to-day, wouldn't we? They build the kids what they call public play-grounds, and then they have to hire teachers to teach 'em how to play. Poor beggars, think of having to be taught by a grown-up how to play a game! They all have a rudimentary idea of base-ball; the American spirit and the sporting extras see to that. But I never see 'em playing anything else much, not even out here where the suburbs smut an otherwise attractive landscape."

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"Perhaps," I ventured, "not only the lack of space and free open in the city has something to do with it, but the fact that the seasons there grow and change so unperceived. Games, you remember, go by a kind of immutable rotation—as much a law of childhood as gravitation of the universe. Marbles belong to spring, to the first weeks after the frost is out of the ground. They are a kind of celebration of the season, of the return to bare earth. Tops belong to autumn, hockey to the ice, base-ball to the spring and summer, foot-ball to the cold, snappy fall, and I seem to remember that even such games as hide-and-seek or puss-in-the-corner were played constantly at one period, not at all at another. If you played 'em out of time, they didn't seem right; there was no zest to them. Now, most of these game periods were determined long ago by physical conditions of ground and climate. They stem us back to nature. Cramp the youngsters in the artificial life of a city, and you snap this stem. My theory may be wild, all wrong. Yet I can't help feeling that our games, which we accepted and absorbed as a part of the universe, as much as our parents or the woods and fields, *were* a part of that nature which surrounded us, linking us with the beginnings of the race. Most kids' games are centuries upon centuries old, they say. I can't help believing that for every sky-scraper we erect we end the life, for thousands of children, of one more game."

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Old Hundred had listened attentively to my long discourse, nodding his head approvingly. "No doubt, no doubt," he said. "I shall hereafter regard the Metropolitan Tower as a memorial shaft, which ought to bear an inscription, 'Hic jacet, Puss-in-the-corner.' Yet I saw some poor little duffers on the East Side the other day trying to play soak with a tattered old ball, which kept getting lost under the push carts."

"They die hard," said I.

We had by this time come on our walk into a group of houses, the outskirts of a town. Several small boys were, apparently, aimlessly walking about.

"Why don't they *do* something," Old Hundred exclaimed, half to himself. "Don't they know how, even out here?"

"Suppose you teach 'em," I suggested.

Again Old Hundred grinned. He walked over among the small boys, who stopped their talk and regarded him silently. "Ever play duck-on-the-rock?" he asked, with that curiously embarrassed friendliness of the middle-aged man trying to make up to boyhood. After a certain period, most of us unconsciously regard a small boy as a kind of buzz-saw, to be handled with extreme care.

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The boys looked at one another, as if picking a spokesman. Finally one of them, a freckle-faced,

stocky youngster who looked more like a country lad than the rest, replied. "They dunno how," he said. "They're afraid the stones'll hurt 'em. We used to play it up State all the time."

"There's your theory," said Old Hundred in an aside to me.

"You're a liar," said one of the other boys. "We ain't afraid, are we Bill?"

"Naw," said Bill.

"Who's a liar?" said the first speaker, doubling his fists. "I'll knock your block off in about a minute."

"Ah, come on an' do it, Rube!" taunted the other.

Old Hundred hereupon interfered. "Let's not fight, let's play," he said. "If they don't know how, we'll teach 'em, eh Rube? Want to learn, boys?"

They looked at him for a moment with the instinctive suspicion of their class, decided in his favor, and assented. Like all men, Old Hundred was flattered by this mark of confidence from the severest critics in the world. He and Rube hunted out a large rock, and placed it on the curb. Each boy found his individual duck, Old Hundred tried to count out for It, couldn't remember the rhyme, and had to turn the job over to Rube, who delivered himself of the following:

"As I went up to Salt Lake
I met a little rattlesnake,
He'd e't so much of jelly cake,
It made his little belly ache."

When It was thus selected, automatically and poetically, Old Hundred drew a line in the road, parallel to the curb, It put his duck on the rock, and the rest started to pitch. Suddenly one demon spotted me, a smiling by-stander. "Hi," he called, "Old Coattails ain't playin'."

"Quitter, quitter, quitter!" taunted Old Hundred.

I started to make some remark about the self-consciousness of a learned *litterateur* of forty-five, but my speech was drowned in a derisive howl from the buzz-saws. I meekly accepted the inevitable, and hunted myself out a duck.

After ten minutes of madly dashing back to the line pursued by those supernaturally active young cubs, after stooping again and again to pick up my duck, after dodging flying stones and sometimes not succeeding, I was quite ready to quit. Old Hundred, flushed and perspiring, was playing as if his life depended on it. When he was tagged, he took his turn as It without a murmur. He was one of the kids, and they knew it. But finally he, too, felt the pace in his bones. We left the boys still playing, quite careless of whether we went or stayed. We were dusty and hot; our hands were scratched and grimed. "Ah!" said Old Hundred, looking back, "I've accomplished something to-day and had a good time doing it! The ungrateful little savages; they might have said good-bye."

"Yet you wouldn't pull up the mumblety-peg for me," I said.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "that is quite different. To take a dare from a man is childish. Not to take a dare from a child is unmanly."

"You talk like G. K. Chesterton," said I.

"Which shows that occasionally Chesterton is right," said he. "Speaking of dares, I'd like to see a gang of kids playing dares or follow-your-leader right now. Remember how we used to play follow-your-leader by the hour? You had to do just what he did, like a row of sheep. When there were girls in the game, you always ended up by turning a somersault, which was a subtle jest never to be too much enjoyed."

"And Alice Perkins used to take that dare, too, I remember," said I.

"Alice never could bear to be stumped," he mused. "She's either become a mighty fine woman or a bad one. She was the only girl we ever allowed to perform in the circuses up in your backyard. Often we wouldn't even admit girls as spectators. Remember the sign you painted to that effect? She was the lady trapeze artist and bareback rider. You were the bareback, as I recall it—or was it Fatty Newell? Anyhow, one of her stunts was to hang by her legs and drink a tumbler of water."

I felt my muscles. "I wonder," said I, "if I could still skin the cat?"

"I'll bet I can chin myself ten times," said Old Hundred.

We cast about for a convenient limb. There was an apple-tree beside the road, with a horizontal limb some eight feet above the ground. I tried first. I got myself over all right, till I hung inverted, my fountain-pen, pencil, and eyeglass case falling out of my pocket. But there I stuck. There was no strength in my arms to pull me up. So I curled clean over and dropped to the ground, very red in the face, my clothes covered with the powdered apple-tree bark. Old Hundred grasped the limb to chin himself. He got up once easily, he got up a second time with difficulty, he got up a third time by an heroic effort, the veins standing out on his forehead. The fourth time he stuck two inches off the ground.

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"You are old, Father William," I quoted.

He rubbed his biceps sadly. "I'm out of practice!" he said with some asperity. But we tried no more stunts on the apple-tree.

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Beyond the orchard was a piece of split-rail fence, gray and old, with brambles growing at the intersections—one of the relics of an elder day in Westchester County. Old Hundred looked at it as he put on his coat.

"There ought to be a bumblebees' nest in that fence," he said. "If we should poke the bees out we'd find honey, nice gritty honey, all over rotted wood from our fingers."

"Are you looking for trouble?" I asked. "However, if you hold your breath, a bee can't sting you."

"I recall that ancient superstition—with pain," he smiled. "Why does a bee have such a fascination for a boy? Is it because he makes honey?"

"Not at all; that's a secondary issue. It's because he's a bee," I answered. "Don't you remember the fun of stoning those gray hornets' nests which used to be built under the school-house eaves in summer? We waited till the first recess to plug a stone through 'em, and nobody could get back in the door without being stung. It was against the unwritten law to stone the school-house nests in vacation time!"

"Recess!" mused Old Hundred. "Do you know, sometimes in court when the judge announces a recess (which he pronounces with the accent on the second syllable, a manifest error), those old school-days come back to me, and my case drops clean out of my head for the moment."

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"I should think that would be embarrassing," said I.

"It isn't," he said, "it's restful. Besides, it often restores my mislaid sense of humor. I picture the judge out in a school-yard playing leap-frog with the learned counsel for the prosecution and the foreman of the jury. It makes 'em more human to see 'em so."

"A Gilbertian idea, to say the least," I smiled. "Why not set the whole court to playing squat-tag?"

"There was step-tag, too," said Old Hundred. "Remember that? The boy or girl who was It shut his eyes and counted ten. Then he opened his eyes suddenly, and if he saw any part of you moving you became It. On 'ten' you tried to freeze into stiffness. We must have struck some funny attitudes."

"Attitudes," said I, "that was another game. Somebody said 'fear' or 'cat' or 'geography,' and you had to assume an attitude expressive of the word. The girls liked that game."

"Oh, the girls always liked games where they could show off or get personal attention," replied Old Hundred. "They liked hide-and-seek because you came after them, or because you took one of 'em and went off with her alone to hide behind the wood-shed. They liked kissing games best, though—drop-the-handkerchief and post-office."

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"Those weren't recess games," I amended. "Those were party games. You played them when you had your best clothes on, which entirely changed your mental attitude, anyhow. When a girl dropped the handkerchief behind you, you had to chase her and kiss her if you could, and when you got a letter in post-office you had to go into the next room and be kissed. Everybody tittered at you when you came back."

"Well, soak and scrub were recess games, anyhow. I can hear that glad yell, 'Scrub one!' rising from the first boy who burst out of the school-house door. Then there were dare-base, and football, which we used to play with an old bladder, or at best a round, black rubber ball, not one of these modern leather lemons. We used to kick it, too. I don't remember tackling and rushing, till we got older and went to prep school—or you and I went to prep school."

"I'd hate to have been tackled on the old school playground," said I. "It was hard as rocks."

"It was rocks," said Old Hundred. "You could spin a top on it anywhere."

"Could you spin a top now?" I asked.

"Sure!" said Old Hundred. "And pop at a snapper, too."

"It's wicked to play marbles for keeps," said I impressively. "Only the bad boys do that."

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"Poor mother!" said Old Hundred. "Remember the marble rakes we used to make? We cut a series of little arches in a board, numbered 'em one, two, three, and so on, and stood the board up across the concrete sidewalk down by Lyceum Hall. The other kids rolled their marbles from the curb. If a marble went through an arch, the owner of the rake had to give the boy as many marbles as the number over the arch. If the boy missed, the owner took his marble. It was very profitable for the owner. And my mother found out I had a rake. That night it went into the kitchen fire, while I was lectured on the awful consequences of gambling."

"I know," said I. "It was almost as terrible as sending 'comic valentines.' Remember the 'comics'? They were horribly colored lithographs of teachers, old maids, dudes, and the like, with equally horrible verses under them. They cost a penny apiece, and you bought 'em at Damon's

drug store. They were so wicked that Emily Ruggles wouldn't sell 'em."

"Emily Ruggles's!" exclaimed Old Hundred. "Shall you ever forget Emily Ruggles's? It was in Lyceum Hall building, a little dark store up a flight of steps—a notion store, I guess they called it. To us kids it was just Emily Ruggles's. It was full of marbles, tops, 'scholars' companions,' air-guns, sheets of paper soldiers, valentines, fire-crackers before the Fourth, elastic for slingshots, spools, needles and yards of blue calico with white dots, which hung over strings above the counters. Emily was a dark, heavy-browed spinster with a booming bass voice and a stern manner, and when you crept, awed and timid, into the store she glared at you and boomed out, 'Which side, young man?' Yet her store was a kid's paradise. I have often wondered since whether she didn't, in her heart, really love us youngsters, for all her forbidding manner."

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"Of course she loved us," said I. "She loved her country, too. Don't you remember the story of how she paid for a substitute in the Civil War, because she couldn't go to the front and fight herself? Poor woman, she took the only way she knew to show her affection for us. She stocked her little shop with a delectable array which kept a procession of children pushing open the door and timidly yet joyfully entering its dark recesses, where bags of marbles and bundles of pencils gleamed beneath the canopies of calico. Nowadays I never see such shops anymore. I don't know whether there are any tops and marbles on the market. One never sees them. Certainly one never sees nice little shops devoted to their sale. Children are not important any longer."

Old Hundred sighed. We walked on in silence, toward the brow of a hill, and presently the Hudson gleamed below us, while across its misty expanse the hills of New Jersey huddled into the sinking sun. Old Hundred sat down on a stone.

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"I'm weary," he said, "and my muscles ache, and I'm stiff and sore and forty-five. Bill, you're getting bald. Wipe your shiny high-brow. You look ridiculous."

"Shut up," said I, "and don't get maudlin just because you can't chin yourself ten times. Remember, it's because you're out of practice!"

"Out of practice, out of practice!" he said viciously. "A year at Muldoon's wouldn't bring me back the thoughtless joy of a hockey game, would it? No, nor the delight of playing puss-in-the-corner, or following a paper trail through the October woods, or yelling 'Daddy on the castle, Daddy on the castle!' while we jumped on Frank Swain's veranda and off again into his mother's flower-bed!"

"I trust not," said I. "Just what are you getting at?"

"This," answered Old Hundred: "that I, you, none of us, go into things now for the sheer exuberance of our bodies and the sheer delight of playing a game. We must have some ulterior motive—usually a sordid one, getting money or downing the other fellow; and most of the time we have to drive our poor, old rackety bodies with a whip. About the time a man begins to vote, he begins to disintegrate. The rest of life is gradual running down, or breaking up. The Hindoos were right."

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"Old Hundred," said I, "you are something of an idiot. Those games of ours were nature's school; nature takes that way to teach us how to behave ourselves socially, how to conquer others, but mostly how to conquer ourselves. We were men-pups, that's all. For Heaven's sake, can't you have a pleasant afternoon thinking of your boyhood without becoming maudlin?"

"You talk like a book by G. Stanley Hall," retorted Old Hundred. "No doubt our games were nature's way of teaching us how to be men, but that doesn't alter the fact that the process of being taught was better than the process of putting the knowledge into practice. I hate these folks who rhapsodize sentimentally over children as 'potential little men.' Potential fiddle-sticks! Their charm is because they *ain't* men yet, because they are still trailing clouds of glory, because they are nice, mysterious, imaginative, sensitive, nasty little beasts. You! All you are thinking of is that dinner I owe you! Well, come on, then, we'll go back into that monstrous heap of mortar down there to the south, where there are no children who know how to play, no tops, no marbles, no woods and ponds and bees' nests in the fences, no Emily Ruggleses; where every building is, as you say, the gravestone of a game, and the only sport left is the playing of the market for keeps!"

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He got up painfully. I got up painfully. We both limped. Down the hill in silence we went. On the train Old Hundred lighted a cigar. "What do you say to the club for dinner?" he asked. "I ought to go across to the Bar Association afterward and look up some cases on that rebate suit. By Jove, but it's going to be a pretty trial!"

"That pleases me all right," I answered. "I've got to meet Ainsley after the theatre and go over our new third act. I think you are going to like it better than the old."

At the next station Old Hundred went out on the platform and hailed a newsboy. "I want to see how the market closed," he explained, as he buried himself in his paper.



Barber Shops of Yesterday

I HAVE just been to a barber shop,—not a city barber shop, where you expect tiled floors and polished mirrors and a haughty Venus by a table in the corner, who glances scornfully at your hands as you give your hat, coat, and collar to a boy, as much as to say, “Manicures himself!”—but a country barber shop, in a New England small town. I rather expected that the experience would repay me, in awakened pleasant memories, for a very poor hair-cut. Instead, I got a very good hair-cut, and no pleasant memories were awakened at all; not, that is, by the direct process of suggestion. I was only led to muse on barber shops of my boyhood because this one was so different. Even the barber was different. He chewed gum, he worked quickly, he used shaving powder and took his cloths from a sterilizer, and finally he held a hand-glass behind my head for me to see the result, quite like his city cousins. (By the way, was ever a man so brave as to say the cut *wasn't* all right, when the barber held that hand-glass behind his head? And what would the barber say if he did?) No, this shop was antiseptic, and uninteresting. There was not even a picture on the walls!

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But, to the barber's soothing snip, snip, snip, and the gentle tug of the comb, I dreamed of the barber shops of my boyhood, and of Clarkie Parker's in particular. Clarkie's shop was in Lyceum Hall block, one flight up—a huge room, with a single green upholstered barber's chair between the windows, where one could sit and watch the town go by below you. The room smelled pungently of bay rum. Barber shops don't smell of bay rum any more. Around two sides were ranged many chairs and an old leather couch. The chair-arms were smooth and black with the rubbing of innumerable hands and elbows, and behind them, making a dark line along the wall, were the marks where the heads of the sitters rubbed as they tilted back. Nor can I forget the spittoons,—large shallow boxes, two feet square,—four of them, full of sand. On a third side of the room stood the basin and water-taps, and beside them a large black-walnut cabinet, full of shelves. The shelves were full of mugs, and on every mug was a name, in gilt letters, generally Old English. Those mugs were a town directory of our leading citizens. My father's mug was on the next to the top shelf, third from the end on the right. The sight of it used to thrill me, and at twelve I began surreptitiously to feel my chin, to see if there were any hope of my achieving a mug in the not-too-distant future.

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Above the chairs, the basin, the cabinet, hung pictures. Several of those pictures I have never seen since, but the other day in New York I came upon one of them in a print-shop on Fourth Avenue, and was restrained from buying it only by the, to me, prohibitive price. I've been ashamed ever since, too, that I allowed it to be prohibitive. I feel traitorous to a memory. It was a lurid lithograph of a burning building upon which brave firemen in red shirts were pouring copious streams of water, while other brave firemen worked the pump-handles of the engine. The flames were leaping out in orange tongues from every window of the doomed structure (which was a fine business block three stories high), but you felt sure that the heroes would save all adjoining property, in spite of the evident high wind. Another picture in Clarkie's shop showed these same firemen (at least, they, too, wore red shirts) hauling their engine out of its abode; and still another displayed them hauling it back again. On this latter occasion it was coated with ice, and I used to wonder if all these pictures depicted the same fire, because the trees were in full leaf in the others. There also hung on the walls a truly superb engraving of the loss of the Arctic. Her bow (or was it her stern?) was high in air, and figures were dropping off it into the sea, like nuts from a shaken hickory. This was a very terrible picture, and one turned with relief to Maude S. standing before a bright green hedge and looking every inch a gentle champion, or the stuffed pickerel, twenty-four inches long, framed under glass, with his weight—a ponderous figure—printed on the frame.

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Clarkie Parker was in reality a barber by avocation. The art he loved was angling. Patience with a rod and line, the slow contemplation of rivers, was in his blood, and in his fingers. It took him a long time to cut your hair, even when, on the first hot day of June, you bade him, “take it all off with the lawn-mower.” (Do any boys have their heads clean-clipped in summer any more?) But while he cut, he talked of fishing. You listened as to one having authority. He knew every brook, every pool, every pond, for miles around. You went next day where Clarkie advised. And there was no use expecting a hair-cut or a shave on the first of April, when “the law went off on trout.” Clarkie's shop was shut. If the day happened to be Saturday, many a pious man in our village had to go to church upon the morrow unshaven or untrimmed.

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I know not what has become now of Clarkie or his shop. Doubtless they have gone the way of so many pleasantly flavored things of our vanished New England. I only know that I still possess a razor he sold me when my downy face had begun to arouse public derision. I shall always cherish that razor, though I never shave with it. I never could shave with it! But I love Clarkie just the



The Button Box

"HAVE you," said I, "anything like the ones left?"—and I held out to my wife a shirt just back from the laundry, and minus a strategic button.

"I'll look in my button box and see," she answered, taking the shirt.

Her button box! I did not know she had one, and followed her into her retreat to see it. But alas! it was a grievous disappointment, being nothing but a drawer set in some sort of a fancy contraption of chintz-covered pasteboard, like a toy bureau, which stood on her work table. No doubt it contained buttons, and was serviceable. But a button box! To call it that were to libel a noble institution of an elder day.

As I waited for the restoration of my shirt I thought tenderly of the button box of my childhood. It was no dinky six-by-four-inch pasteboard drawer, not two inches deep—no, sir! It was a cylindrical wooden box of the substantial and finished workmanship which went into even such humble things as a butter box a century ago, for mother had inherited it from her mother. It must once have contained ten pounds of butter, but all traces of its original service had long disappeared. The drum, of very thin, tough wood, which had kept its shape uncracked, had been polished a dark nut brown by countless hands. The bottom and cover, of pine, were darkened, too, but without polish. This box dwelt on the second shelf of the old what-not, which, in turn, stood in the closet passage underneath the stairs. When any accident befell our garment fastenings, "Go and get the button box," mother said, as she reached for her needle. Or, on rainy days, when we grew more and more restless and all other devices failed, "You may go and get the button box," mother would say, and we were solaced till supper time.

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No modern patent sewing-table receptacle could possibly hold one quarter of the contents of that button box, the accumulation of at least three generations. It was heavy, and having no handles, you had to grasp it with open palms on either side—hence the polish. It rattled when taken down from its shelf, and the very first thing you did when the lid was off was to plunge your two hands down into the mass, and let fistfuls of buttons trickle through your fingers.

Sometimes we played it was a treasure chest, and these buttons were Spanish doubloons. Sometimes we trickled them just for the cool feel of it, the sound of the rattle, the sensation of plunging fingers into the oddly liquid mass. There were great steel buttons, little pearl buttons, white bone buttons, black suspender buttons, cloth buttons, silk buttons, crocheted buttons, elongated crystal buttons (which we held to the light "to make prisms"), lovely agate buttons, brass military buttons with the U. S. eagle upon them, wooden buttons, either once covered or yet to be covered, shoe buttons (which invariably were in practical demand and invariably had sunk to the bottom of the box), strange great buttons from some long-forgotten garment of grandmother's, familiar buttons from some newly remembered garment of our own.

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It seems odd, when I think of it now, the endless delight we children got just from the contemplation and discussion of those buttons. Sometimes, of course, we picked out the suitable ones, and strung them in long chains. Sometimes we used them for counters in games. But often we just turned them over and over, or tipped them out on a paper spread on the floor, and from the hints they gave us reconstructed ancient garments or recalled forgotten clothes of our own.

"Oh, that one used to be on my winter jacket!"

"Look, here's one of papa's pants buttons—it says 'Macullar and Parker' on it!"

"Hi, there's my old brown overcoat!"

"Oh, dear, I wish I still had that pretty gray suit, with those steel buttons on it!"

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The silly talk of children—and how like some conversations the propinquity of piazzas has since forced me to listen to!

To find just the button she wanted was sometimes a long task for mother, and father, it must be admitted, had varied the proverbial needle simile for our domestic establishment, to read, "like hunting for a button in your mother's button box." But still the odd buttons continued to go in, and only the ones needed came permanently out. You never could tell, to be sure, when the most unlikely button would come in handy. Sometimes there were days when the village dress-maker arrived after breakfast and remained till almost supper time, converting the upstairs front chamber into a maze of threads and snippings, and requisitioning the button box in long searches

for "a set of six". That was a fine game! Sometimes it was easy. Sometimes only five could be found of the type she particularly desired. But never did the box fail completely; always there were enough of *some* button that, she said, without dropping the pins from her mouth, would do, "though it ain't quite what I wanted."

All this flashed through my memory as I waited for my wife to reestablish connections on my shirt. As she finally finished, and pushed in her silly little drawer, I said:

"Do you call that thing a button box? Why don't you have a real one?"

"That's quite large enough when you have to find a match," said she, "and too large when you drop it."

Women are practical creatures; there is no sentiment in them. Their alleged possession of it is the most spurious of all the arguments against equal suffrage.



Peppermints

I HAVE just purchased a little bag of peppermints, and returned with them to my rooms above the Square. I did not purchase them at the promptings of a sweet tooth, but of a hungry heart. They take me back into the forgotten Aprils of my life, where I often love to loiter, not from any resentment that I have been unable to emulate Peter Pan and remain a boy forever, but because this great town is drab and dusty and imprisoning, and it is sweet to escape down the green lanes of April, even if only in a memory. A physical sensation—the sound of a voice, a hand patting us to the rhythm of "Tell Aunt Rhody", an odor—can plunge us deeper and swifter down to the buried places of our memory than any process of deliberate recollection. No robin sings against my window of a morning here—only the noisy sparrows twitter and quarrel, reminding me of the curb market. No lilac sheds its perfume on the still air. I am perforce reduced to peppermints. The taste of peppermints on my tongue, the pungent fragrance of them in my nostrils, have the power, however, to transport me far from this maze of mortared cañons, back across the years, to a land where the robins sang against the spacious sky and a little boy dreamed great dreams.

So now I am sitting high up above the Square, with my little bag of peppermints before me (somewhat diminished in quantity already), and think, between slow, sipping nibbles, of that little boy.

In his day, in the land where he came from, peppermints were almost a symbol of life's best things—of grandmothers and other dear old ladies who kept cookies in cool stone crocks in sweet-smelling "butt'ries" (sometimes foolishly called pantries by those who put on airs); of Christmastides when to the joy of peppermint sticks was added the unspeakable delight of sucking barley toys,—red dogs, golden camels that lost their humps and elephants that lost their trunks as the tongue went succulently 'round and 'round them; of the wonderful village "notion" store, presided over by a terrible female person with a deep bass voice, who asked you over the counter as you entered, "Which side, young man?" It was bad enough to be called "Bubbie", but to be called "young man" in this ironic bass was almost insufferable. Yet you bore it nobly, for the sake of the pound of shot for your air-gun or the blood-alley or the great pink and white peppermints, two for a cent, that reposed in a glass jar on the left side of the shop. Was Miss Emily so terrible a person, I wonder now? She was always looked upon a little askance by the ladies of our village because she was "so masculine". But if she did not conceal a softness for children under her stern exterior why did she keep a stock of so many things dear to the childish heart, from paper soldiers (purchased by the yard) to sleds and shot? Perhaps that fantastic stock of hers was her curious expression of the Eternal Motherly. After she died, every year on the 30th of May the "Vet'rans," as they marched two by two in annually dwindling lines about the cemetery, placed a fresh print flag and a basket of geraniums on her grave, because she had sent a substitute to the War. To us youngsters this substitute used to explain why she kept shot for sale; she was by nature a bellicose person, and, we were sure, her great grief was her sex.

In my own family peppermints were directly connected, by legend, with feminine attractiveness. A great grandmother on my mother's side had been in her day a famous beauty. And when asked the secret of her charm, as she frequently was (to my infant imagination she appeared as a superhumanly radiant vision who walked about the streets in a hoop-skirt with an admiring throng in her wake, constantly being forced to explain why she was beautiful), she did not utter testimonials for anybody's soap, nor for a patent dietary system, nor even for outdoor exercise. She replied simply, "Peppermints". Great grandmamma died when my mother was a girl, and to mother fell the task of going through the old lady's possessions. She says it was a task; probably it was a privilege. At any rate, my mother records that she found peppermints

everywhere, in every kind of wrapper, stowed in the different receptacles, in boxes, bags, trunks, in bureau drawers and writing desks and "secretaries". They were among letters and laces, in the folds of silk gowns and even the table linen. Some of the peppermints had crumbled and almost evaporated. Some had "ossified", as mother says. "And," she used to add, telling the tale to large-eyed, hungry-mouthed little me, "I have not seen so many peppermints outside a candy shop since that day."

"But did the peppermints really make great grandmamma beautiful?" I would ask.

"She always said so," my mother would reply, "and she was certainly very beautiful."

"Is that why you eat peppermints?" I then inquired, on a day when I had detected her with a bag of the confection.

At this point there was a masculine chuckle from the armchair by the bookcase. Also, a peppermint was promptly produced for my personal consumption. I had a great fondness for the memory of my beautiful ancestor.

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Peppermints, too, are intimately connected with the religious experiences of my childhood; or, perhaps I should say, with the religious observances of my childhood. Our minister's whiskers always interested me more than his discourses. As I nibble a peppermint from the bag before me—lingeringly, for the supply is being fast depleted—and the frail yet pungent odor fills my nostrils, I am once more in that half-filled church, on a Sabbath morning in early Spring, dozing through the sermon, with my head tumbling sleepily now and then against my father's shoulder. Slowly the scene comes back, in every least detail, the smallest sights and sounds of that morning all here, but all thin and faint and frail, spun of the gossamer web of memory. Can I hold them till they are set down? I shall have to eat another precious white lozenge from my bag.

My cheek had bumped my father's shoulder again when I caught a sudden whiff of peppermint drops and raised my head just in time to see an old lady across the aisle whisk her dress down over her petticoat pocket. For a few moments I watched her in envy, for her mouth was moving ever so little and I could fancy the delicious taste. But how could she enjoy the candy and not make her mouth go more than that, I wondered. I did not shut my eyes again, but sat very still against my father's arm and let my eyes wander around the church.

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Ours was one of the "new" churches. The beautiful old "meeting house" at the head of the village green, with its exquisite white spire and its pillard pulpit and windows of "common" glass, purpling with age, was the property of the Methodists—which in some manner I could not then understand (and do not clearly yet) was always a source of resentment in our congregation. Our church had stained windows, a chocolate brown field with white stars in the centre and around the edges tiny squares of many colors, atrocious reds, blues and yellows. These windows were opened a little at the top, and through the openings came soft sounds of Spring, the wind racing among the budding branches, the sudden call of a bird, and occasionally the crooning, sleepy cackle of hens from a distance. Now and then a cloud drifted by, across the sun, dimming the interior for a moment, so that the minister's voice seemed to come from farther off. The sunlight through the stained glass projected colored splotches here and there. I wondered if the people knew how homely they looked with those splotches on their faces, like great birth-marks. That suggested a pastime to relieve the monotony.

Starting with the choir (which consisted of four people, boxed in before the organ at the right of the pulpit) I began to count people with colored spots. First there was the tenor with a purple spot on his left cheek and on his sandy hair and beard. But the organist and soprano were splashed with scarlet. Then I forget to count, because I noticed that the 'alto had a new violet hat, which eclipsed the soprano's old green one. I wondered whether she had gone to Boston to buy it, or had "patronized home industries"—a phrase I had just discovered with pride in our local paper. The bass was nodding and letting his hymn book slip toward a fall. I hoped slyly that it would fall, and braced my nerves for the crash. But he woke with a funny jerk, like my jack-in-the-box, just in time to catch it, and began listening intently to the sermon as if he had been awake all the while. The soprano smiled at someone in the congregation, whispered to the tenor, and then sat silent again.

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My gaze wandered to the minister's pleasant face, with its great square-cut gray beard, which always suggested to me—why, I don't know—one of the minor prophets; and then past him to the gilded cross that was painted on the apsidal wall behind him. I knew that if I looked at this cross, with its gilded rays spreading out in all directions, long enough the rays would begin to melt together and then to turn 'round and 'round in a kind of dizzy dance. So I looked steadily, till I had to shake the sleep out of my eyes with a great effort. Then I fell to speculating on the tablets painted at the left of the pulpit, to balance the organ. These tablets were encased in a design that suggested a twin tombstone. On one of them were the words, "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," a sentence which had always given me great difficulty. But this morning I interpreted it at last to my satisfaction. It meant, I decided, that a man must first die and become a ghost, a spirit, before he could tell what church he really ought to go to. I wondered if, in that spirit region, there would be any Methodists.

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Directly below the tablets, in a front pew, sat Miss Emily, she of a bass voice and the "notion" store. Her Paisley shawl was folded tightly around her broad, bony shoulders, and made the lower half of a diamond down her back, the pattern exactly in the middle. If the pattern had not been exactly in the middle I am sure the service would have stopped automatically, till it was

adjusted. She sat very straight and looked with partly turned head, showing her masculine profile, sternly at the minister, as if defying him to be unorthodox. I tried to picture her asking *him*, as he entered her shop, "Which side, old man?" Would she dare, I wondered? And what would he reply? A few pews behind Miss Emily sat "the spilled-over old lady". My sister had first called her the spilled-over old lady, because she seemed to have been crowded out by the six old ladies in the pew behind, and to have been permanently soured by the slight. Her hair was done up in a tight, emphatic pug, her profile suggested vinegar—or perhaps it was her complexion. At any rate, when I looked at her I thought of vinegar. I wondered if she ever ate peppermints, and if they tasted the same to her as to other people.

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Presently I leaned forward and extracted a hymn book from the rack attached to the back of the pew in front. This rack contained, besides hymn books, a pair of old gloves done into a wad wrong side out, two fans, "leaflets" of all sorts, and little envelopes for the collection. Most of the "leaflets" were appeals for charity, I fancy. At any rate, many of them were full of pictures of poor little city children suffering from all sorts of diseases, and oppressed me horribly. But I could always rely on the hymn book. My first consciousness that there is any difference between prose and poetry except in the matter of rhyme came from reading the hymn book, from Whittier's,—

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

I had no idea what kind of a palm a fronded palm is, but I fancied it something much grander and taller than other palms; and the whole hymn filled my mind with a large, expansive imagery, breathed over my little spirit an ineffable serenity. This hymn I now read while the minister talked away behind his minor-prophet whiskers;—this, and Wesley's,—

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A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

This stanza always made me want to get up and shout. I read and re-read it, repeating it, with noiseless lips. The tune it went to seemed inadequate, the more so as in our church tunes were always dragged to the limit of non-conformist dolorousness. The stanza seemed to me, even then, happy, hopeful, staccato, jubilant. I wonder what I should have thought had I known its author was a Methodist? Could good come out of Nazareth, after all? Instead, I fell to wondering about the after life in the sky. Heaven I pictured as a city builded on a cloud. If, on a very clear day, the cloud should dry up what, I speculated, would the angels walk on? Then it occurred to me that they do not walk, they fly. So they would go flying about streets out of which the bottoms had dropped, and look right through far down to the earth, which to their sight would doubtless resemble the raised map of America in our school, that stood on a table in the corner and always had chalk dust, like snow, in the inch-deep ravines of the Rocky Mountains. I wondered if the lower stories of the houses would have any floors. The cellars wouldn't, anyway. What kept the furnaces in position? Perhaps they didn't need furnaces in heaven; it was the other place where the furnaces were. Then I dozed.

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In our church Sunday School began at noon, immediately following the church service, in a large room at the rear, known as the vestry. The first small boy on his way to school stamped by on the walk outside, with what sounded like defiant aggressiveness. I roused from my doze in time to see the old man in front of me wake up with a start at the sound and reach quickly for his hymn book, as if he supposed the sermon were over. Then the stamping of other children was heard on the walk. The scholars passed in groups, talking shrilly. I knew it must be nearly twelve o'clock. In the congregation there was a rustle of gathering restlessness; women put on their gloves, tried to glance back at the clock without seeming to do so, stirred in their seats. The last vestige of sleep mysteriously yielded to this influence and left me. At last the minister came to the conclusion of his discourse, and instantly there was a sound all over the church as of waters released and hurrying over dead leaves. It was the congregation shifting their positions, expelling their breaths, and turning the pages of their hymn books. I listened curiously for the next sound. It was the clearing of a hundred throats, getting ready to sing. I too arose and in my tuneless treble made a joyful noise unto the Lord. Then church was over.

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And my peppermints are all eaten, too, and the gossamer web of memory dissolves, the picture fades, and I see before me this room of mine, littered with some learned literature but more pipes and prints and miscellaneous rubbish, and I hear outside in the Square, not the spring wind racing among the budding branches, but the coughing of a consumptive motor car, the penetrating squeak of a trolley rounding a curve on a dry track, the irritating jolt of heavy drays, and a great, subdued, never-ceasing rumble and roar, the key-note of the giant city. Only the little bag remains. Shall I blow it up and "bust" it? That act, with a final pop, will bring back a flash of my childhood. Here goes....

It didn't pop nicely at all. It exploded in a kind of a spudgy collapse, with very little noise. Ah, well, you cannot eat your peppermints and have them too—nor the bag! But it has been very pleasant to eat them, to wake up with a whiff and a nibble the memory of those vanished days, those voices and peaceful paths of life very far from here and now. It may be true that we mount on our dead selves to higher things, but it is well to hold little Memorial Days now and then, and on the graves of our dead, especially of those who died young in the flower of innocence, to leave

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a peppermint, as the soldiers leave on the grave of Miss Emily a print flag and a basket of geraniums. A cemetery need not be a mournful place. Maids were wooed and won in *our* cemetery, and the high school pupils ate their lunches out of collapsable tin boxes every noon on the tomb of Major Barton, he of Revolutionary fame, who horse-whipped the British captive when he refused to eat beans. Noble New Englander! And perhaps my own peppermint feasts are not so much memorial banquet, after all, as ceremonial rites in honor of my native land. For I cannot think of this great city of New York as my home, I cannot fit into the rushing, roaring cogs and grooves of its machinery without a protest, without a hope that some day I may hear the wheels no longer roar at their cruel revolutions. Thus my peppermints speak to me of home, of quiet, of certain green places and a lilac hedge; there is about them the taste and odor of the ideal. They are for the future as well as for the past. Perhaps in some subtle way they do after all have potency for beauty. I fancy that some day I too shall stow away bags of them amid my worthless precious junk, and when prying hands disturb the dust the nostrils of a youngster now unborn will be greeted by a frail yet pungent aroma. I can only trust that he will know well what it is.

Transcriber's Notes

Since the book is a collection of essays printed at different magazines and at different times, varied spelling has been preserved. Obvious typographic errors have been corrected. See the list below for details.

Issues fixed:

- page 15—typo fixed: changed 'concioussness' to 'consciousness'
- page 16—typo fixed: changed 'hankerchief' to 'handkerchief'
- page 23—spelling normalized: changed 'debris' to 'débris'
- page 38—typo fixed: changed 'captrued' to 'captured'
- page 43—typo fixed: changed 'supurb' to 'superb'
- page 52—typo fixed: changed 'Wentworh' to 'Wentworth'
- page 100—typo fixed: changed 'tremendiously' to 'tremendously'
- page 105—typo fixed: changed 'spash' to 'splash'
- page 107—typo fixed: changed 'tanelizing' to 'tantalizing'
- page 107—typo fixed: changed 'there it' to 'there is'
- page 140—typo fixed: changed 'hadows' to 'shadows'
- page 146—typo fixed: changed 'mountian' to 'mountain'
- page 147—typo fixed: changed 'latern' to 'lantern'
- page 155—typo fixed: changed 'nitnh' to 'ninth'
- page 171—typo fixed: changed 'hourse' to 'horse'
- page 172—typo fixed: changed 'coures' to 'course'
- page 174—typo fixed: changed 'morsal' to 'morsel'
- page 181—typo fixed: changed 'centrifugul' to 'centrifugal'
- page 184—typo fixed: changed 'appartment' to 'apartment'
- page 185—typo fixed: changed 'First is' to 'First it'
- page 191—typo fixed: changed 'innumerable' to 'innumerable'
- page 192—typo fixed: changed 'arouud' to 'around'
- page 192—typo fixed: changed 'lasping' to 'lapsing'
- page 192—typo fixed: changed 'grammer' to 'grammar'
- page 198—typo fixed: changed 'hankerchief' to 'handkerchief'
- page 232—typo fixed: changed 'suberb' to 'superb'
- page 234—typo fixed: changed 'griveous' to 'grievous'
- page 235—typo fixed: changed 'possible' to 'possibly'
- page 236—typo fixed: changed 'bottons' to 'buttons'
- page 239—typo fixed: changed 'rythm' to 'rhythm'
- page 244—typo fixed: changed 'interior' to 'interior'
- page 246—typo fixed: changed 'unothodox' to 'unorthodox'
- page 247—typo fixed: changed 'imagry' to 'imagery'

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PENGUIN PERSONS & PEPPERMINTS ***

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