

# ELIZABETH BISLAND

THE SECRET  
LIFE

Elizabeth Bisland

**The Secret Life**

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# The Secret Life Being the Book of a Heretic

## June 21. L'Enfant Terrible

"The very Devil's in the moon for mischief:  
There's not a day, the longest, not the twenty-first of June,  
Sees half the mischief in a quiet way  
On which three single hours of moonlight smile."

At my age, alas! one no longer gets into mischief, either by moonlight or at midsummer, and yet to-day all the tricksey spirits of the invisible world are supposed to be abroad – tangling the horses' manes, souring the milkmaid's cream, setting lovers by the ears. Some such frisky Puck stirs even peaceable middle-aged blood at this season to mild little secret sins, such as beginning a diary in which to set down one's private naughty views – the heresies one has grown too staid and cautious to give speech to any longer.

All, I think, have some Secret Garden where they unbind the girdle of conventions and breathe to a sympathetic listener the opinions they would repudiate indignantly upon the housetops; but I know of no such kindred soul – indeed my private views are so heretical that I should tremble to whisper them even into the dull cold ear of night, lest I should cause it to turn pink, and thereafter hymns would not purge it. Hence no resource remains to ease my bosom of its perilous stuff but the unprotesting innocence of the blank pages of a diary.

There is a story concerning the king of some ungeographical country, to whom came two adventurers of cynical tendencies, professing to be able – given a certain allowance of jewels and precious metals – to weave a garment of exceeding richness and of such subtle texture that no monarch on earth might hope to match it. Setting up a loom and providing themselves with ample materials from the Royal treasury, they went through the motions of stringing a warp and thereupon industriously threw empty shuttles back and forth.

When the king, accompanied by his court, was summoned to observe the progress of the famous web, the puzzled ruler could see nothing but an empty loom, but before the eager explanations of the enthusiastic weavers, who pointed out here a glowing dye, there a splendid pattern, and having regard to the non-committal countenances of the courtiers, the king nodded sagely and waited developments.

"Best of all, Sire," cried the cheerful rogues, "so magical is this robe we weave, that only those can see it whose tongue has never uttered a lie, whose hands have never taken a bribe."

Rises thereupon instant chorus of praise of the beautiful fabric from a unanimous court. Next day a solemn procession through the streets of the capital to display to the world the magic robe. Amazed multitude staring at the king in pompous dishabille, but hearing the courtiers' admiring cries, no man willing to admit his own blindness – when up speaks Tiresome Child: "Mother, why does the king ride abroad in his shirt?"

General outburst of mortified veracity, and futile search for the discreetly vanished adventurers.

So ends the story. But nothing of the sort really took place. Instead, l'enfant terrible was slapped and put to bed, to meditate upon his ill-timed outspokenness, and next day, and all the days thereafter, sees what his companions see. I know, because I myself am that Tiresome Child, and because my uncomfortable eyes refuse to see the imaginary robe in which so many kings of this world are dressed

I have spent a large part of my life in disgrace. At last and tearfully I have learned to hold my tongue, but when the tricksome spirits of Mid-summer Eve are abroad, I get out pen and paper and, where no pious ear can be violated, secretly vent my elderly naughtinesses. My respectable acquaintances will be all the safer in consequence that I have an inviolable confidant of the real thoughts that lie behind my but slightly wrinkled brow and unrevealing eyes. Thackeray once said, "If women's eyes could only be *dragged*, what queer things one might learn." ... Ah, the Secret Life! – who among us can guess at the thoughts that are concealed behind the clear brows and frank-seeming eyes of even those nearest us?

We live our lives draped and masked in our own bodies; forcing those bodies to speak the words, perform the actions expected from them, while we dwell alone within, thinking and wishing what we never, or rarely, express. It is this that drives us to diaries – the need to somewhere, somehow, speak the truth in a world of conformable lies. It is of no use to slip aside our masks or raise our draperies for an instant, in the hope that our fellows will recognize a hand or an eye like their own, and that thereupon even one of our companions will invite us to come out from under our robe and walk about with him friendlily, without disguise. Instead our companion makes signs of distress and resentment through the veil of his concealment, and we hastily readjust the mask and domino and resist further temptation to find a heart akin.

"It takes," says Thoreau, "two to tell the truth – one to speak and another to hear."

Called upon once to help a grief-stricken mother to lay away the belongings of a boy summoned suddenly out of life, we unearthed among his abandoned treasures a curious collection of odds and ends concerning which we could imagine no value that should have moved him to keep them by him. A shell, a bit of ribbon, a rusty nail; scraps of paper with a scribbled line or two; cuttings, whose printed words referred to nothing which seemed to bear in any way upon what we might guess of as touching his life.

"I thought I knew every fibre of his heart," cried the mother in sudden tears, "and yet of all these strange things he seems to have treasured so carefully I cannot divine the meaning of a single one!" A whole world of ambitions, interests, and sentiments foreign to her he had carried away into eternal silence.

If I shall have persistence sufficient to continue this Heretic Diary, I am afraid it will find itself stuffed with an equally absurd number of my secret loves and hates, of the intolerable opinions for which I have been slapped and put to bed, of all the sentimental rubbish I carry about with me in a fardel under my mask and domino – the poor inconsequential treasures of my secret life.

## July 7. An Optimistic Cynic

Amiel's Journal: – I have been reading it with the half impatient interest which such books always arouse – in me at least. It is a more agreeable book, however, than Marie Bashkirtseff's disingenuous posings, or Rousseau's vulgar, insulting confidences. One is impatient with the bore who talks about himself when one is impatient to bore him about one's own self, and yet, somehow, one is fascinated by the hope of getting behind the mask of personality.

I learned to read French that I might possess the contents of the "Confessions." George Eliot called it the most interesting book she knew, which fired my ambition to read it. With the aid of a dictionary, the four great volumes were got through somehow, and when the task was accomplished, though I loathed Rousseau, I had enough French to serve roughly for both reading and speech.

What ambition and courage one had in those days! I studied French while I did the churning. Remembering the strength and persistency of that time I wonder that I have come to middle age and done nothing. Athletic trainers say that there is in every one only a fixed capacity for development. One may reach that limit readily, and once reached no toil or patience will ever carry the power of the muscles beyond it by the smallest part of a fraction. Mentally, the same probably holds good. My capacity was, no doubt, always small. So far as it went the cramping, unpropitious circumstances of youth had no power to chill it, but prosperity, leisure, opportunity, could not add one jot to its possibilities...

In all these journals what I find interesting is not so much what the writer says as what he reveals unintentionally.

The impression Amiel leaves upon the reader is that he was at least a gentleman – that he had a gentle soul; clean and modest, continent and grave. His melancholy seems neither so profound nor so touching as Mrs. Humphrey Ward and his other critics would have one believe. At least it is neither tragic nor torturing. He gives the impression of saying "I have no bread – but," he adds cheerfully, after a moment's reflection, "the Lord will provide."

He is not rebellious. In moments of the most real gravity, when he is face to face with death, he clings to the egotistic superstition that perhaps – most probably – there is somewhere some wise kind Power deeply interested in his doings, his emotions, his future. He is profoundly convinced that it is important how he feels, how he bears himself. He has no sense at all of the blind nullity of things. He asserts this nullity to be unthinkable.

All this is surprising when one remembers the insistence of his commentators upon the intense modernity of his mind. Is this modern? I cannot see wherein it differs from the spirit of the past. Such natures were not uncommon in other centuries – as was the nature of Erasmus for example...

The man had no passion. He did not marry because, he says, he demanded perfection; could not find or give it, and therefore resigned himself cheerfully to celibacy. Passion, of course, would have blinded his eyes to imperfections; having none, his eyes were always clear... It is perhaps in this passionlessness that he is most modern. Most of us no longer demand perfection. Knowing it to be unattainable, modern common sense cheerfully agrees to abandon desire for it. This is visible in our literature, in art, in love. No one reads or buys long poems any more, therefore the poets never contemplate a new Paradise Lost. No one paints heroic pictures, for they are not salable. The grandiose has no market and therefore grows obsolete. The law of supply and demand rules there as elsewhere. Passion and the perfection it longs and strives for is *démodé*.

## July 20. A Poet Sheep-rancher

F – is dead, and with the announcement by cable this morning comes a belated letter from M – , full of hope and encouragement. A sudden rally had made her believe in a possibility of recovery – no doubt it was that last flare which comes often just as the oil fails and the light is about to go out.

My mind has been full of amazement all day. It is so difficult to realize that a strong, aggressive personality is finally and definitely extinguished. I have been thinking of their odd, romantic story. He must have had great seductive power – not easily realizable now – to have come into her life and have persuaded her to abandon everything to follow him. I have heard her tell the story often. The tall young sheep-rancher from New Zealand, with his burning eyes and his pockets full of sonnets, appearing one morning, and she suddenly abandons her brilliant position, her jointure, her two orphan boys, and goes away, despite the furious outcries of her family and friends, with a man seven years her junior; goes into the wilderness with him, New Zealand of more than a quarter of a century ago being decidedly wilderness, yet she calls those the happiest years of her life – spent in a shanty fifty miles from the nearest neighbour! She likes to recall the wild scrambles among the mountains; the wrestles to save the sheep from the spring floods; the vigils; the dances to which they rode on mountain ponies, sixty or seventy miles; the makeshifts; the caring for flocks and shepherds in the stress of heat and cold, of sickness and sorrow; and the snow-bound nights beside the fire, when the sonnets came to the fore again. After all it was youth, and love, and adventure; why shouldn't she have been happy? And she was justified in her faith. When I came to know them the detrimental young sheep-rancher moved in a world of gilded aides-de-camp, with sentries and mounted escorts attending his steps, surrounded by tropical pomp and spacious luxury, and now, alas! he is but one more unit in the yearly tribute of flesh and blood demanded by England's Equatorial Empire.

A handsome, brilliant, charming creature. The generation is the poorer for the loss of his graceful, cynical wit. He belonged to the generation who formed their ideals of manners upon *Pelham* and *Vivian Grey*. It was Byronism translated into prose. M – says he bore his sufferings – enormous sufferings – with the light and humorous courage with which it was the ideal of the fine gentleman of his period to face all unpleasant situations.



## September 4. An Eaten Cake

The S – s came in last night after dinner. They cling to the old fashion, common in England before the advent of afternoon tea, of having the tray brought in about ten o'clock, so I tried it to-night because of them, and found it not a bad idea.

Simple, agreeable folk they are, of what is called in Scotland the middle classes. That is to say, they follow some commercial calling: I am not sure of its exact nature. They are very well educated in just the way which differentiates the British middle-class education from the other sort – they speak several modern languages fluently, and know little of the classics. All their learning is sound, unornamental, utilitarian. Some reference was made to a kinsman in a foreign town which I had visited. I could not recall any association with the name until the elder brother said quite simply and without any self-consciousness:

"He is Jones of Jones & Co. (a large haberdasher in P – ) – you may have been in his shop."

It was nicely done. I doubt if an American could have achieved it in quite the same way. If he had made the confidence it would have been made with bravado, or he would have explained that the shop was an "emporium."

The girl has such a good restful British calm about her – I felt it after she was gone. It arises, I think, from lack of any special interest in the impression she makes upon others. All the rest of us – we Americans – were desirous of being agreeable, amusing – of making a good effect. We were consciously sympathetic, consciously vivacious, consciously civil. She was just herself; we might take or leave her as she was. It never occurred to her to attempt to be different for our sakes. The result of it is very reposeful. One is always conscious of a sense of strain in American society for this reason. It is because of that desire to impress, to please, that American voices in conversation grow sharp and hurried, that American faces grow keen and lined. We have a tradition that English women are dull and bovine, but no doubt they make the better mothers because of it. They hoard their energies to give to their sons. They bring their children into the world with deep reserves of strength. I have often observed the great superiority of English men over Americans in the capacity for long, sustained, unflinching labour. I am sure they owe that to the immense fund of unexhausted power given them by their mothers, who are profound wells of calm vitality. It is the old story of being unable to eat one's cake and have it too. American women eat their cake in the form of a higher exhilaration in existence, but when the drain of creation comes they have nothing save nervous energy to give. The rest of the cake has already been devoured. There are no reserves for the child to call upon.

I believe that Englishmen – without reasoning upon the matter – feel this instinctively. They vastly prefer their own women as mates. I have rarely known an Englishman to marry an American woman who had not the extrinsic attraction of wealth. They do not hesitate to marry penniless countrywomen of their own.

## **September 12.**

### **Concerning Elbows on the Table**

A – was here to-day. What a formal little soul it is! She can never begin where she left off. One has her acquaintance to make all over again each time she comes.

The depths, the heights of her propriety!.. Always that extremely well behaved look, which never changes. P – says, "A – is too modest to take off and put on expressions in public."

One wonders if there is any privacy so entire that she would consider dishevelment of behaviour permissible. How exhausting to herself such flawless respectability must become!

She is the concentrated essence of the bourgeoisie. A savage can be natural; he knows nothing else, but when his eyes are opened and he sees himself to be naked the reign of the fig-leaf begins. There is something pathetic in that long era of profound distrust of his own nature and impulses. What does he think he would do if he let himself go?

Perhaps he is, underneath all that propriety, still so close to savagery that he dare not trust himself to be natural lest he instantly relapse into barbarism. After many generations of breeding he dare be savage and free again if he like – he is so sure of himself. As Mrs. B – says, he becomes at last "A man who can afford to put his elbows on the table."

When he reaches such a point I notice he is always impatient of the constraint of those still bound by the shackles of self-conscious propriety, forgetting that he owes his own freedom to many generations that laboured in bonds, struggling to slay or subdue the savage...

## **October 14.**

### **An Autumn Impulse**

A bird sat on the balcony rail just outside my window to-day gossiping with an unseen neighbour perched somewhere out of my range of vision. He was rather a grimy little person, and as the day was cold he made a perfect puff ball of himself. I listened to them conversing with great interest, feeling, as I always do when I hear birds talk, that if I only paid a little closer attention it would be possible to understand all they say. It is somewhat the same sensation one has in overhearing a rapid dialogue in French which one is too lazy to try to follow. When I came through I think I left some of the doors ajar behind me, and I remember my bird avatar especially clearly. Even yet, when autumn comes, I am pursued by a fluttering longing to arise and go southward. I feel that something beautiful – some wide splendid ecstasy is calling me if I will only go to meet it. I can remember having that sensation in my earliest childhood. In my dreams I often fly, with beautiful swoopings and balancings, with sudden confident droppings, through the elastic air, and sometimes I am in an enclosed place, beating my wings against the bounds, knowing no other way to get out...

When I look at birds they seem to know me. Not in the way of a mere creature who puts out crumbs in convenient breakfasting places, or who brings strawberries to one's cage, but they meet my eye with that familiarity one sees in the glance of brothers – a look of mutual understanding. My own sense is of kinship of the closest character. I understand how they regard things – what they think and feel. I wish I could so concentrate my attention as to catch what this grimy little citizen is saying to his fellow on the nearby ledge. If I could, what a flood of other memories it would restore that are now dim and confused.

## November 1. John-a'-Dreams

I dreamed last night that I wore upon my breast a great necklace of flat golden plates cut in the shape of winged things, and these were linked together with other flat plates of turquoise. My garments were of white semi-transparent stuff, and my limbs and body showed through it. Before me stood a building of some sort, creamy yellow in colour and of a style of architecture with which I am not familiar – though it seemed familiar enough to me in my dreams. Now I have only a confused sense of low domes set upon massive cubes. I was waiting for the sun to rise. The air was warm and dry and that white glamour of the dawning light lay upon the surrounding country, which seemed flat and not very verdant. Suddenly the rays of the sun, which rose apparently immediately behind this dome, spread out about it like an aureole (Gavin Douglas's "Golden fanys") – and this seemed a signal for me to lift my arms above my head and recite a sort of litany – and then – it all passed away...

Most of one's dreams are confused and blurred by a sense of conflicting personalities. There is generally a sort of impression that while the incidents are apparently happening to one's self, they are happening in reality to some other being, not quite one's self; but this one was very clear, with no *arrière pensée*. I have worked out a theory which seems to me to quite solve the mystery of dreams.

Lifelong familiarity with the phenomena of sleep – with the trooping phantoms that inhabit slumber's dusk realm – has so dulled our wonder at the mystery of our double existence of the dark that night after night we open with calm incuriousness the door into that ghostly underworld, where we hold insane revels with fantastic spectres, babble with foolish laughter at witless jests, stain our souls with useless crime, or fly with freezing blood from the grasp of unnamable horrors, and with the morning we saunter serenely back from these adventures into the warm precincts of the cheerful day, unmoved, unstartled, and forgetting.

The hypnotists, because they can make a man feel pain or pleasure without material cause, are gaped upon with awed surprise by the same man who once every twenty-four hours of his life, with no more magic potion than healthy fatigue, with no greater weapon for wonder working than a pillow, may create for himself phantasmal illusions beside which all mesmeric suggestions are but the flattest of commonplace.

The naive egotism of superstition saw in the movements of the solar system only prognostications concerning its own bean crop, and could discern nothing in the dream-world but the efforts of the supernatural powers to communicate, in their usual shuffling and incompetent fashion, with man. The modern revolt from this childishness has swung the pendulum of interest in dreams so far up the other curve of the arc that there seems now to be a foolish fear of attaching any importance whatever to the strange experiences of sleep, and as a result an unscientific avoidance of the whole subject. The consequence of this absurd revulsion is that in a period of universal investigation one of the most curious functions of the brain is left unexamined and unexplained.

Some dabbling there has been, with results of little more value than were the contents of the greasy, bethumbed dream-books of the eighteenth-century milkmaid or apprentice. The labour bestowed upon the matter has been mainly directed to efforts to prove the extreme rapidity with which dreams pass through the mind, and that it is some trivial outward cause at the very instant of awakening – such as a noise, a light, or a blow – which rouses the brain to this miraculous celerity of imaginative creation.

The persistent assertion that a dream occurs only at the moment of awakening shows how little real attention has been given to the matter, since the most casual observation of "the dog that hunts in dreams" would have shown that he may be "chasing the wild deer and following the roe" in the grey Kingdom of Seeming without breaking his slumbers. He will start and twitch, and give tongue

after the phantom quarry he dreams he is pursuing, and yet continue his sleep without an interval. But have it whichever way one likes, the heart of the mystery is not yet discovered. How do they explain why a noise or a gleam of light – such as the waking senses know familiarly – should at this magical moment of rousing cause the brain to create with inconceivable rapidity a crowd of phantasmagoria in order to explain to itself the familiar phenomena of light and sound?

Dr. Friederich Scholz, in his recent volume upon "Sleep and Dreams," gives an example of rapid effort of the mind to explain the sensations felt by the sleeping body:

"I dreamed of the Reign of Terror, saw scenes of blood and murder, appealed before the Revolutionary Tribunal, saw Robespierre, Marat, Fouquier-Tinville, all the personages of that time of horrors, argued with them, was finally, after a number of occurrences, condemned to death, was carried to the place of execution on a cart through enormous masses of people, was bound by the executioner to the board. The knife fell and I felt my head severed from my body. Thereupon I awoke and found that a loosened rod of the bed had fallen on my neck like the knife of the guillotine, and this had happened, my mother assured me, at the very moment when I awoke."...

That the mind should, merely because of the body's sleep, be able to *create* a whole scene of a terrible drama with a rapidity impossible when all the functions are awake and active is incredible. The only function of the brain capable of this lightning-like swiftness of vision is *memory*. To create requires a certain effort, consumes a certain period of time, but a scene once beheld, an adventure once experienced and vividly impressed upon the memory, can be recalled in its minutest details in a period of time too short to be reckonable.

That the sensitive plate of the brain never loses any clear picture once received, has been demonstrated beyond doubt. The picture, the sensation, may be overlaid and hidden for a long time beneath the heaps of useless lumber that the days and years accumulate in the mind's storehouse, but need or accident, or a similarity of circumstance, will bring the forgotten belonging to light – sometimes with startling effect. There is the well-known instance of a girl who, during an attack of fever delirium, spoke in a language that no one about her could understand. Investigation proved it to be Welsh – a language of which, both before and after her illness, she was totally ignorant. Further investigation showed that being born in Wales she had understood the tongue as a very little child, but had afterwards completely forgotten it.

It is commonly known that in the struggle of the body against death by water, the memory, stirred to furious effort, produces all her stores at once – probably in the frantic endeavour to find some experience which may be of use in this crisis.

It is often broadly asserted that the memory retains each and every experience which life has presented for its contemplation, but this is hardly true. The memory makes to a certain extent a choice, and chooses oftentimes with apparent caprice. To demonstrate the truth of this, let one endeavour to recall the first impression retained by his childish mind and it usually proves to be something extremely trivial. My own first clear memory is a sense of the comfort to my tired little two-year-old body of the clean linen sheets of the bed at the end of a perilous and adventurous journey, of whose startling incidents my memory preserved only one. Often this capricious faculty will seize upon some few high lights in a vivid picture and reject all the unimportant details. As a rule, however, it is the profound stirring of the emotions which wakes the memory to activity. A woman never forgets her first lover. A man to the end of his life can recall his first triumph, or his most imminent danger, and a trifle will often, after the lapse of half a century, fill the eye with tears, make the cheek burn, or the heart beat with the power of the long-passed emotion, preserved living and fresh by the memory.

That the memory uses in sleep the material it has gathered during the day, and during the whole life, no dreamer will deny; but here again it is capricious; some parts of the day's – the life's – experiences are used, others rejected. Added to these natural and explicable possessions of the memory are a mass of curious, conflicting, tangled thoughts, which are foreign to our whole experience of existence, and which, when confused with our own memories, makes of our nights a

wild jumble of useless and foolish pictures. If it be true that it is by some outward impression upon the senses that dreams are evoked, that it is the endeavours of the somnolent mind to explain to itself the meaning of a noise, a light, a blow, which creates that delusion we call dreams, then it is not upon the stores of our own memories alone that the brain draws for material, since the falling rod awoke in the mind of Dr. Scholz a picture of the French revolution, which he had never seen, and different in detail and vividness from any picture his reading had furnished.

Heredity is an overworked jade, too often driven in double harness with a hobby; but the link between generation and generation is so strong and so close that none may lightly tell all the strands of which it is woven, nor from whence were spun the threads that tie us to the past. It is very certain, despite the theories of Weismann, that the acquired characteristics of the parent may be transmitted to the child. The boy whose father walked the quarter-deck is, nine times out of ten, as certain to head for salt water as a seagull born in a hen's nest. The victim of ill-fortune and prisoner of despair who breaks the jail of life to escape fate's malice leaves a dark tendency in the blood of his offspring, which again and again proves the terrible power of an inherited weakness. Women who lose their mind or become clouded in thought at childbirth – though they come of a stock of *mens sana* – transmit the blight of insanity to their sons and daughters both; and not only consumptive tendencies and the appetite for drink are acquired in a lifetime and then handed on for generations, but preferences, talents, manners, personal likeness – all may be the wretched burden or happy gift handed down to the son by the father. Who can say without fear of contradiction that the memories of passions and emotions that stirred those dead hearts to their centre may not be a part of our inheritance? The setting, the connection, is gone, but the memory of the emotion remains. Such and such nerves have quivered violently for such or such a cause – the memory stores and transmits the impression, and a similar incident sets them tingling again, though two generations lie between.

Certainly animals possess very distinctly these inherited memories. A young horse never before beyond the paddock and stables will fall into a very passion of fear when a snake crosses his path, or when driven upon a ferry to cross deep, swift water. He is entirely unfamiliar with the nature of the danger, but at some period one of his kind has sweated and throbbed in hideous peril, and the memory remains after the lapse of a hundred years. He, no more than ourselves, can recall all the surrounding circumstances of that peril, but the threatening aspect of a similar danger brings memory forward with a rush to use her stored warning. When the migrating bird finds its way without difficulty, untaught and unaccompanied, to the South it has never seen, we call its guiding principle instinct – but what is the definition of the word instinct? No man can give it. It but removes the difficulty one step backward. Call this instinct an inherited memory and the matter becomes clear. Such memories, it is plain, are more definite with the animals than with us; but so are many of their faculties, hearing, smell, and sight.

Everyone has felt many times in his life a sense of familiarity with incidents that have had no place in his own experience, and has found it impossible to offer any explanation for the feeling. Coming suddenly around a turn of a hill upon a fair and unknown landscape, his heart may bound with a keen sense of recognition of its unfamiliar outlines. In the midst of a tingling scene of emotion, a sensation of the whole incident being a mere dull repetition will rob it of its joy or pain. A sentence begun by a friend is recognized as trite and old before it is half done, though it refers to matters new to the hearer. A sound, a perfume, a sensation, will awaken feelings having no connection with the occasion.

The first day I ever spent in a tropical country I was charmed with the excessive novelty of everything about me; but suddenly that evening, being carried home in a chair by the coolie bearers, a flood of recognition poured over me like the waves of the sea, and for a few minutes the illusion was so strong as to leave me breathless with astonishment. I had the sense of having often done this before. The warm night, the padding of the bare feet in the dust, the hot smell of leaves, were all an old, trite experience. For days I struggled with that tormenting sense, with which we are all familiar,

of being unable to recall a something, a name, that is perfectly well known – is "on the tip of the tongue," as one says – but all in vain; and in time the recognition grew fainter and more elusive with each effort to grasp it, until it slipped forever away into darkness. If such experiences as these are not inherited memories, what are they?

With sleep, the will becomes dormant. Waking, it guards and governs; chooses what we shall do and be and think; stands sentinel over the mind and rejects all comers with which it is not familiar. Unless the thought comes from within the known borders of the body's own life, the will will have none of it. But overtaken by fatigue and sinking into slumber with the night, his domain is left fenceless and unpatrolled, for with the will goes his troop of watchmen, judgment, logic, deliberation, ethics; and memory, ungoverned and uncontrolled, holds a feast of misrule. The barrier between past and present melts away; all his ancestors are merged into the individual; the events of the day are inextricably tangled with those of two centuries since, and this motley play of time is called a dream.

A man going back but to his great grandparents has already fourteen direct progenitors, and is heir of such strange or striking episodes of their fourteen lives as were sufficiently deeply impressed upon their memories to be transmittable. This alone is enough, one would think, to provide all the nights with material for the queer kaleidoscopic jumbling of leavings, with which the nimble mind diverts itself, turning over the leaves of its old picture-book alone in the dark while its sluggish comrade snores; but there is no reason to believe that there is a limit to these inheritances.

The most vivid sensation my night memory holds is of finding myself standing alone, high up in a vast arena. It is open to the sky and the night is falling swiftly and warm. Everyone has gone but myself, but there is a tremulous sensation in my mind, as of very recent excitement, noise, and tumult. I am waiting for someone who is coming through the arched door on the left, and I rise to go. I feel the rough coolness of the stone beneath my hand as I help myself to rise, and upon my throat and bosom I have a sensation of the light wool of my garment. It has the vivid familiarity of a personal and perfectly natural experience – so strong that, waking, I retain as keen a sense of it as if it were a happening of yesterday. I remember many more dreams of this type – momentary flashes of sensation of the trivial things about me, such as all persons have felt in their waking lives, only that the things about me in my dreams are totally unfamiliar to my waking brain. In one of these I am emerging from the back door of a small white house – intensely white in the glare of a fierce sun. The house seems square and flat-topped, built of stone and with no windows visible here in the rear. It opens on a narrow street of similar residences. A man is with me, dressed in a long black robe and wearing a curious black head-dress. He is reproaching me and remonstrating violently concerning my indifference in regard to religious matters. I look away, annoyed and bored by his vehemence, and the whole picture vanishes. It was as clear, as natural and familiar, as my own waking life, while it lasted... The narrow street of white houses seemed the only possible form for a street. I had no consciousness of anything different or more modern. The man's eager, stern face, with the heavy beard and the high head-dress, looked in no way strange or unfamiliar. With that double consciousness with which we are all familiar when awake, I watched the movement of his lips and the wagging of his beard as he talked, full of a sense of distaste, and thought, while listening to his flow of clear words, "How tiresome these religious men are!"

Another time I was aware of standing in the dark, sword in hand (I seemed to be a man and the seeming was not strange to me), listening with furious pulses to a confusion of clashing blades and stamping of feet. Under the surface of passionate excitement the deeper sub-consciousness said: "All is lost! The conspiracy is a failure!" I was aware of a cool bravado which recognized the uselessness of attempting escape. The dice had been thrown – they had turned up wrong, that was all. Yet so vigorous and courageous was the heart of this man that he was still buoyantly unafraid. There was a rush of bodies by him; the door swung back against him, crushing him to the wall, and a few moments later, under guard, he was passing through a long, low corridor of stone. The torches showed the groined arch above him, and, a cell being unlocked, for the first time he felt afraid. Inside was a big

bear with a collar about its neck, and two villainous-faced mountebanks sat surlily upon the floor. The man was very much afraid at the thought of such companions, for his hands were tied and he had no sword; yet he reasoned jovially with his guards, not wishing to show his real terror. After some protests his sword was returned to him and he stepped inside, again cheerfully confident. The door clanged to behind him and the dream faded. All the conditions of the dream, the change of sex, the strange clothes and faces, the arched corridor, the men with the bear, seemed to my senses perfectly natural. They were quite commonplace, and of course. For the most part, however, my dreams are the fantastic hodge-podge common to dreamers, such as might result from the unsorted, unclassified memories of a thousand persons flung down in a heap together and grasped without choice. One curious fact I have noted is that though I am a wide and omnivorous reader, I have never had a dream or impression in sleep which might not have been part of the experience of some one of European or American ancestry. I am an ardent reader of travel and adventure, but never have I imagined myself in Africa, nor have the landscapes of my dreams been other than European or American.

Mr. Howells, in "True I Talk of Dreams," added confirmation on this point by saying that he had never been able to discover a dreamer who had seen in his dreams a dragon or any such beast of impossible proportions.

It suggests itself —*en passant*— that dragons and other such "fearful wild fowl" are not uncommon in the cataclysmic visions of delirium, but perhaps the potency of fever, of drugs, of alcohol, or of mania, may open up depths of memory, of primordial memory, that are closed to the milder magic of sleep. The subtle poison in the grape may gnaw through the walls of Time and give the memory sight of those terrible days when we wallowed — nameless shapes — in the primæval slime. Who knows whether Alexander the Great, crowning himself with the gold of Bedlam's straws, may not be only forgetful of the years that gape between him and his kingly Macedonian ancestor? Even Horatio's philosophy did not plumb all the mysteries of life and of heredity.

Another interesting fact, in this connection, is that those who come of a class who have led narrow and uneventful lives for generations dream but little, and that dully and without much sensation; while the children of adventurous and travelled ancestors — men and women whose passions have been profoundly stirred — have their nights filled with the movement "of old forgotten far-off things and battles long ago." Again, it is a fact that many persons, while hovering on the borders of sleep, but still vaguely conscious, are accustomed to see pictures of all manner of disconnected things — many of them scenes or faces which have never had part in their waking life — drifting slowly across the darkness of the closed lid like the pictures of a magic lantern across a sheet stretched to receive them, and these, by undiscernible gradations, lead the sleeper away into the land of dreams, the dim treasure house of memory and the past.

If a dream is a memory, then the stories of their momentary duration are easily credible. The falling rod upon the sleeper's neck might recall, as by a lightning flash, some scene in the Red Terror in which his ancestor participated — an ancestor so nearly allied, perhaps, to the victim suffering under the knife as to know all the agonies vicariously, and leave the tragedy bitten into his memory and his blood forever.

When the words heredity or instinct are contemplated in their broad sense they mean no more than inherited memory. The experiences of many generations teach the animal its proper food and methods of defence. The fittest survive because they have inherited most clearly the memories of the best means of securing nourishment and escaping enemies. The marvellous facility gradually acquired by artisans who for generations practise a similar craft is but the direct transmission of the brain's treasures.

In sleep the brain is peculiarly active in certain directions, not being distracted by the multitude of impressions constantly conveyed to it by the five senses, and experiments with hypnotic sleepers prove that some of its functions become in sleep abnormally acute and vigorous. Why not the function of memory? The possessions which during the waking hours were useless, and therefore rejected



by the will, surge up again, vivid and potent, and troop before the perception unsummoned, motley and fantastic; serving no purpose more apparent than do the idle, disconnected recollections of one's waking moments of dreaminess – and yet it may hap, withal, that the tireless brain, forever turning over and over its heirlooms in the night, is seeking here an inspiration, or there a memory, to be used in that fierce and complex struggle called Life.

## November 6. The Fountain of Salmacis

G – was talking yesterday about the "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Liked them. Thought them the high-water mark of Feminine Poetry...

Alas, then, for that capitalized variety of verse!

To me these sonnets are extremely disagreeable. There is a type of man whose love is intolerably odious in all its manifestations to a wholesome woman. She feels that he is too nearly akin to her own sex for his love to seem a natural, virile thing. Other men never appear to guess this cause of persistent lack of success with women.

They say: "Jones is a good fellow – modest, clean-minded, gentle, – why is he so unlucky with women? The truth is, women like brutes."

The underlying femininity of Jones is not repulsive to them. They probably feel, however, the same repugnance for the tendernesses of women who are too nearly akin to themselves.

The Greeks seem to have thought about and observed this. From their keen vision none of the phenomena of life, apparently, was hid, and they were quite aware of this occasional confusion of the nature and person of the sex. As usual they typified it and invented legends about it, though they were not, of course, aware of its cause – the atavistic tendency to throw back to the primordial condition when both sexes existed in the same individual; but then they were poets and not scientists. They got at essential truths by instinct and revealed their knowledge by beautiful suggestion rather than by exact analysis. The dry-as-dusts fail even yet to see that their marbles and legends are as valuable in the study of life as German theses.

"The Sonnets from the Portuguese" give me the unwholesome, uncomfortable sense that one gets from those unlucky feminine men and masculine women. They mingle in a disagreeable fashion the pride and reserve of the woman who receives worship and the abandon and aggressiveness of the man who sues.

One wonders why women cannot write poetry? – or rather, to speak with more exactness – are never poets. Once or twice in their lives, perhaps, they may speak with sacred fire, but they are never, in the full meaning of the word, poets. They cannot rise out of themselves.

Gosse says of Mrs. Browning: "She was not striving to produce an effect; she was trying with all the effort of which her spirit was capable to say exactly what was in her heart."

There is the whole secret of the feminine failure in art. It always degenerates into an attempt to express, not humanity, but the individual woman. Woman is inevitably personal. She still sits alone at the door of her wigwam. Of humanity, she is ignorant, and to it is, moreover, indifferent.

Mrs. Browning was only once shaken out of herself – when she wrote that fine plaint "De Profundis" – voicing the griefs of the many in telling of her own. After all, a portrait of one's self only is not art, or is art in its most limited form. Aurora Leigh and all the rest are simply Elizabeth Barrett masking under other names. However much the hand may resemble Esau's, the voice is always the voice of Jacob.

Byron had these same feminine limitations – "dressing up" (as the children say) as a Pirate, a Turk, or the like, and reciting a rhymed Baedeker for the benefit of the untravelled; but whether Pirate or Giaour, always unmistakably Byron.

What the women with poetic gifts *can* do is to translate delightfully. Mrs. Browning's translations of Heine are quite the best in existence. Emma Lazarus made an English version of "*Une Nuit de Mai*" that is almost more delightful than the original. She might have enriched our treasury of verse with priceless transferences; instead of which she wasted her gifts upon unimportant "expressions of herself."

## November 20. Two Siegfrieds

A – says there is no definite, abstract standard of beauty or perfection.

We were talking of Jean de Reszke's *Siegfried*. A – was completely satisfied with it. I explained that he was so only because he had not seen Alvary in the part. A – was sure that even if he had done so de Reszke might still be best to his taste; asserting again that there was no ideal good in art, but only preference. Of course he does say this for the very reason that I advanced – because he had not seen Alvary.

Poor beautiful young creature! He died recently in Germany in horrible, useless, ridiculous pain. Wagner, I am sure, would have thought him the ideal *Siegfried*, for he never made vocal gymnastics a fetish, but demanded satisfaction for the eye as much as for the ear.

Alvary's *Siegfried* was the very embodiment of splendid, golden, joyous youth. Balmung beaten into shape, he sprang from the forge, whirling it and laughing at its glitter as an ecstatic child might. The splitting of the anvil was the mere sudden caprice of youthful bravado and mischief. He looked about for an instant to find something on which to test his new toy, and struck the iron in half as a boy would snip off the head of a daisy with his new whip. All his movements had the unpremeditatedness of youth.

Drunk with the struggle and the triumph of his contest with the dragon, he killed *Mime* more to sate this new lust of power than to mete out justice or due punishment. He threw himself, sweating with exertion, and swelling with a new realization of his manhood, upon the grasses by the stream, and as the breezes cooled his body and spirit, and the soft peace of the green world stole upon him, romance woke in his face and voice: the rough uncouthness of boyhood fell away like a discarded garment.

Who that once saw and heard it can ever forget those fresh tones or that slim-waisted boy wandering away into the sunlit forest, his beautiful dreaming face lifted yearningly to the thrilling bird voice that sang of love?.. Youth seeking passion – the sleeping woman ringed with fire.

Ah me! – all our hearts ached after him; after our own splendid moment.

It is useless to say that this is not absolute beauty. It is impossible that a heavy-footed tenor (whose belt would have served for a saddle girth) with a square Slav head and pendulous cheeks can be equalized to the other by individual taste. Such taste is simply bad.

## January 6. A Door Ajar

I have been reading Pater's "Greek Studies"; a volume which an amiable friend presented to me as a Christmas gift.

It affects me physically as well as mentally. I must lay the book down now and then, because I find my heart beats and my temples grow moist. It is as if its covers were doors opening into the other world – that world that is always just beyond one.

I don't know whether it is a common experience, but from my earliest childhood I have always had a sort of belief that if one stooped very low, held one's breath, and made a bold spring, one would break through and under the barrier, and be *There*!

Or one might go very suddenly around a corner and be *There*. Always there was the sensation that it was lying just beyond, just outside of one's self, and that only a certain heaviness of the flesh, a certain lack of concentration of attention, prevented one's participation in it.

Twice the door almost opened. I sprang in spirit to cross the threshold, and there was – nothing. The door was slammed in my face, but I never forgot that I had nearly got through. It was like death. As if one's brain and heart had suddenly grown vast and vapourized. Pater's book rouses some echo of those sensations.

I can't define what the other life is. It is all around me. I feel it in the water when I swim – a sentiency. If I could only look close enough into the shifting depths, I should see – a hand clasped quickly enough would grasp – what always just evades.

I feel it around me, breathing and watching in the woods. It is what I cannot quite catch in the talk of the birds. It is what the animals say with their eyes.

The Greeks understood it. They called it Pan, and Cybele, and Dionysus, or dryads in the woods, or nymphs in the fountain, but those were only terms by which they tried to express the inexpressible. It is so subtle – so intoxicating. It is like love – a reblending with all the elements of nature. One aches and strains toward it, and yet feels a delicious, shuddering reluctance to know.

## **January 7. At Time of Death**

Oh High Heart of mine,  
Now list to a wonder!  
Thou shalt vent thy great rages  
In lightning and thunder.  
And the force of thy fury, more mighty than they,  
Shall rock mountains, and rip them asunder.

When thou weepest, oh Heart!  
All thy bitter deploring  
In the white whirling rains  
Shall have anguished outpouring.  
And the salt and the sound of thy grief, like the sea,  
Shake the night with its sullen wild roaring.

When thou lovest, oh Heart!  
Into sudden fierce flower,  
'Neath thy passionate breath  
In one rapturous hour,  
Earth shall blossom, all crimson and trembling with love,  
Stirred to heart by thy rage and thy power.

Then, high Heart, be brave!  
This death is but rending  
Of limits that vexed,  
And the ultimate blending  
With the cosmical passions of Nature thine own,  
Made immortal, insatiate, unending.

## January 10. The Curse of Babel

Boutet de Monvel, who had been lending H – a polite but obviously fatigued attention, got up with alacrity as the clock struck ten and bowed himself out, with that military bend of the hips characteristic of French salutes. H – passed his handkerchief around the top of his collar and said:

"*Damn Babel!*"

We all laughed.

"Now, here," said H – , indignantly, "is a man with a beautiful mind, a man full of beautiful thoughts and visions, and because of those infernal French verb inflections, because they will call tables and chairs 'he' and 'she' instead of 'it,' I can't communicate with him without boring him to death. We English-speaking people are a great deal more lenient. Some of the pleasantest talks I've ever had have been with foreigners who waded through a slaughter of my native tongue to a positive throne in my respect. But no foreigner can ever tolerate broken French or Spanish. They jump to the immediate conclusion that a man who can't speak their abominable gibberish correctly must be either a boor or a fool, and they don't take the pains to conceal that impression. Why don't they learn to speak English, so that a human being could talk to them?"

R – told a story of recent experience in Italy, which he thought suggested an equal arrogance in the Anglo-Saxon.

He had watched a young woman, an American, on the railway platform at Naples, explaining in lucid English to the porter her wishes concerning her luggage. The porter stared, shrugged, and seized a bag. The girl caught his arm.

"Put that down," she said sternly. "I mean that to go in the carriage with me. Those two trunks are to be labelled for Rome and put in the van."

The porter began to gesticulate and gabble.

"There's no use making so much noise," she commented contemptuously. "Just do as I tell you and don't lose time."

The Italian hunched his shoulders, threw his hands out in fan-like gestures, and made volcanic appeals to heaven. R – , who is shy, but chivalrous, and who speaks six Italian dialects, felt called upon to take part.

"Excuse me, Madam," he said, "but you seem to be having some difficulty with your luggage. As I speak Italian, perhaps I may be of service to you."

The girl turned a cold eye upon him and waved him away.

"Thank you," she said, "you are very kind, but all the world has got to speak English eventually, and there is no use indulging these people in their ridiculous Italian now!"

## January 14. The Fourth Dimension

I lunched with Mary R – yesterday and heard a curious story. Mrs. M – , who is ordinarily so amusing, seemed *distract* and disturbed all through the meal, and when the other women had gone, Mary, who is extremely sensitive and sympathetic to the state of mind of everyone about her, led Mrs. M – , in a manner fascinating in its skilfulness, to unpack her overlaid spirit.

She said: "I have been spending the morning with a friend, who is half mad with melancholia. She has had a terrible experience. She is a Philadelphia woman. Her husband was a manufacturer of window glass. He died about five years ago from typhoid fever and left her with a small fortune and two daughters; one fourteen years old, one seventeen – nice, rosy, wholesome, well brought up girls. They had always wanted to travel, but during her husband's lifetime he was too busy and she would never leave him. About a year after his death, they concluded, as the lease of their house had run out, to store their furniture and go abroad for a time, with the idea that the girls could perfect themselves in languages and music and see something of the world.

"I don't want you to think there was anything sensational about them. They were just quiet, middle-class Philadelphians, – you know the type, – modest, conventional, devoted to the proprieties. That's what makes their story all the more tragic.

"They arrived in London; took quiet lodgings in Dover Street, and concluded to spend six months in England, seeing the sights, and making these London lodgings their headquarters. They had been there all through the month of May, doing picture galleries, churches, and the museums, and occasionally a theatre. One Saturday they had tickets for a concert, and as the place was near and the day was fine, they decided to walk to the place where the concert was to be given, stopping at a shop in Regent street on the way to give an order about something being made there. I don't know what it was, or where the shop was situated, but at all events the three were walking abreast, the girls chattering and joking about the order. The sidewalk was very crowded, so that the mother stepped ahead, but heard her daughters' voices at her elbow for several minutes.

"The street grew clearer as she went, and she turned to beckon the girls alongside again. She didn't see them, and stood a few moments for them to catch up. After waiting awhile she walked back and still missed them. It occurred to her that they might have passed ahead without her noticing it, and gone on to the shop where they had planned to stop, so she went there and waited twenty minutes. Then she imagined they might have missed their way, and gone to the concert hall to wait for her. By this time she felt sufficient anxiety to hail a cab, but no one had seen them at the concert hall, and she herself had all three of the tickets, so she returned to their lodgings, sure that they would turn up there eventually in any case.

"At six o'clock they were still absent, and really frightened by this time she visited all the near-by police stations, but could get no news of them.

"That was four years ago, and from that day to this she has never seen or heard of them. She has travelled all over Europe and returned twice to America, has advertised in every possible way, and has employed the best detectives of both continents. Now she has come back for the third time, utterly broken in health and fortune. Their home in Philadelphia has become a boarding-house, and she has taken a room and will spend the rest of her life there, hoping that in that way, if they ever return, they may be able to reach her. Nearly all her money has gone in the search, and her mind is almost equally a wreck. She goes over to Philadelphia this afternoon, and I went in the morning to tell her good-by."

Mary said – her lips were white – "But, good heavens, Emily! where could the girls have gone?"

"That's the terrible part of it," Mrs. M – answered. "One can't imagine. They were both so young. It was in a foreign country: they had no money. As far as the mother knew, neither had, nor

could have had, any reason for going, nor anyone a reason for taking them. If one only had gone one might suspect a lover, or a sudden aberration of mind, but there were two; it was in broad daylight. Three minutes before they had been beside her. There was no struggle, no accident. No one could have silently carried off or made way with *two* grown girls in Regent Street in midday. One minute they were there, laughing, happy, and commonplace, and the next minute they had vanished utterly and forever, without a word or a cry."

"But why has one never heard of it?" I said.

"Well, of course, the mother kept it out of the papers. For a long time she feared they might have been the victims of the sort of person who preys on young girls, and dreaded that there should be a scandal by which their lives should be ruined if they ever returned. To-day I think she would be glad to find them even in the lowest brothel, if she might only see them again."

"Hadn't any of the police or detectives a theory?"

"Oh, thousands at first, but they never bore any fruit. Consider all the circumstances. They were sensible, self-reliant American girls. By this time, if they were alive, they would have found some means of communicating with their mother. She has published guarded appeals, which they would understand, and always in the English language, in about every paper in this country and Europe."

"But what do you think?"

"What can one think? Can you conceive of any solution when you consider all the facts?"

"Has the mother no theory?"

"Well, she has, but then she is hardly sensible, you know, after the strain of such an experience. You've heard of the Fourth Dimension, haven't you? She says if that's not the explanation, she cannot imagine any other. She doesn't really believe it, I think, but she says if they did not stumble into it, where are they? And what answer can one give her?"

By this time it was late, and I came away. Outside the sun was shining and the trolley cars buzzing by. The theory of the Fourth Dimension seemed absurd, but I wondered where those poor young girls could have gone, and felt an oppression in my breathing.



## January 23. The Ant and the Lark

Who, I wonder, was the stupid phrase-maker guilty of saying that Genius was only an infinite capacity for taking pains? And yet Shakespeare, according to tradition, never blotted a line. How much pains had the little Mozart taken when he began his first concert tour? Creation comes swiftly and with heat. The man who must take infinite pains in production is never a genius. Indeed, when one sees how little the creation of beauty, harmony, or ideas is related to their human creator, how little, in a way, he seems related to them, one is almost inclined to imagine that somewhere there exists a great reservoir of force and that the "genius" is merely a cock through which the creative fluid runs. He happens to be the cock that is "turned on" while the handles of the others are left untouched.

There was once a very ambitious and industrious Ant. Its home was in a field where the grass and flowers bloomed.

This Ant had convictions as to the best uses of life, and wasted no time. So many hours a day she devoted to the improvement of her mind, and so many to her life labour, which was to build an ant-hill. Early and late she toiled, and as she toiled she thought very deeply, elaborating numerous excellent and noble theories. All her theories concerned the best use of opportunities, and the doing of some work which should make the world better because she had existed.

Once in a long while, when quite worn out by her labours, she would climb to the top of a blade of grass, and look out into the world. Sometimes the sun was just rising and the field was damascened with the blue and white cups of morning-glories, and sometimes it was evening and the moon silvered the dew-hung grass, which palpitated with fireflies. At such times a divine yearning and great longing filled the heart of the tired little emmet, and she would hurry down to her work at once, saying bravely to herself:

"If I waste a moment my hill will never be high enough to look out upon this beautiful world." And so would toil on without ceasing, taking the greatest pains with every grain of sand, fitting and refitting it into its place with infinite pains, and comforting herself for her slow progress by saying:

"I am really not very old yet. I still have a great many days in which to complete my work." And would make some excuse to herself for going down to stand on the ground beside it and gain encouragement by noting how much greater was the hill than her own stature, and then went happily back to her task.

Near the Ant's hill a lark had built its home – a careless body, who roughly kicked out the earth for a nest, and who, being dull as she sat on her eggs, conversed at times with the Ant, for whom the matron manifested an ill-concealed contempt.

"In heaven's name!" she said, "What is the use of wearing yourself to skin and bone working on that hill? Isn't it quite big enough for your uses already?"

"Yes," replied the Ant, patiently, "but it is every one's duty to make the world as beautiful as they can, and I want to build the biggest and most beautiful ant-hill in the world. And oh!" – she cried, clasping her little paws and with a hungry look in her eyes – "I do so want to be famous!"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" answered the brown bird, contemptuously. "Famous! – what is that? Are you wearing yourself out for such nonsense? As for me, give me a fat worm for breakfast and luck with my eggs, and it's all I ask." Saying which, she tucked her head under her wing and went to sleep, while the Ant hurried away to finish the daily task she set herself.

In course of time a young lark was hatched. A great red, sprawling, featherless thing, with a big bill and no idea but worms. The Ant used to try sometimes, when his mother was absent hunting food, to teach the ugly young thing some of her own excellent theories, but the bird only blinked

sleepily and scornfully and never answered a word, so the Ant was reluctantly obliged to give up the hope of ever inspiring him with the nobler ambitions of life.

She was growing much encouraged about her own work. All the other ants in the field wondered at and admired it, and as one could nearly see out above the grasses by standing upon her hill on tiptoe, the happy insect began to dream of immortality.

By this time, too, the young lark had grown feathers, and one morning he stumbled out of the nest, fluttered a moment to try his wings, and suddenly, bursting into a flood of song, soared upward into the sunlit blue.

The Ant fell to the earth, breathless and paralyzed, but in a moment, stifling her pain and despair, she rose up and began, from mere habit, fitting more grains of sand into her unfinished hill.

A Poet walked in the field that day, meditating some verses upon the divine gift of genius. He cried aloud with joy at the lark's song, and while he gazed upward stumbled over the Ant's hill and demolished it, but in his note-book he wrote:

"Oh, miracle of Genius, that lifts the Sons of God on golden pinions to the gates of heaven, while the dull myriads toil futilely at Babels below."

## January 29. The Döppelganger

I suppose that everyone who has reached maturity has been aware of a sense of a dual personality – of a something within him that is a *me* and a *not me*; of opposing influences that puzzle his judgment, weaken his resolves, and warp his intention. These natures he finds engaged in an eternal conflict which sways him from the course he would instinctively follow, and draws him along lines of thought and conduct satisfying to neither side of his being, and achieving only a helpless compromise between the two.

"To be?" – "Or *not* to be?" contend the two at every crossing of the tangled meshes of existence, and neither disputant is ever convinced by the other's logic.

"To sleep" – says one. "Perchance to dream," replies the other coldly; and so gives pause to Hamlet's swift intentions.

Which is the real man? The Hamlet whose soul lusts for sudden brute revenge, whose promptings are the instinctive play of the natural man, or that frigid censor who checks the impulses of the first speaker and chills him with cold reasons and balancings of right and wrong, so that the sword falls from his nerveless hand at the very moment of opportunity? Or after all, is the real man the one whose actions are a continual endeavour to steer between the two promptings; the Hamlet whose doings are not in direct answer to either voice – are but furious and confused outbursts of indecision?

If it were at all possible to decide between the two, one would incline to think that the second voice, that chilling critic, was another self, alien to us, though entrenched in the very depths of the soul – was the *not me*, in everlasting opposition to the *me* – was the past warring with the present.

The warm, impulsive, blundering *me* we know, but who is that other? Whence comes this double, this *alter ego*, this bosom's lord, and strange, nameless ghost who haunts the house of life? How many thousand deaths have we died to give him life? For he is inexpressibly aged, infinitely sophisticated; and while the *me* still crowns its locks with youth's golden illusions, he is grey with knowledge and hoary with disenchantment. Though a part of our most intimate selves, he is not at one with us. He sympathizes with none of our enthusiasms, is tempted by none of our sins... Sins!... what should he do eating forbidden fruit who is all compounded of the knowledge of good and evil?

"Ye shall be as gods, having eaten of that tree" – and like a god he sits in the dusk of the soul's seat, knowing the past, predicating the future, calmly beholding the fulfilling of our destiny. And yet is his grim wisdom of no avail, since – a shadowy Cassandra – he warns in vain. His deity-ship is of no more worth than that of the Olympian heavens, which might punish or reward, but could not divert the decrees of a power higher than itself. It is indeed the fate of all gods to have their creations caught from between their shaping hands by the blind, fumbling fingers with the shears. Gods may teach; may command; may ban or bless, but the being once made is Fate's creature, not theirs.

This cynical, impotent *döppelganger* goes by many names. His Christian cognomen is Conscience, and his voice is raised to exalt Christian tenets of clean living and high thinking.

"Thou shalt surely die," he declaims from the altar where he wears with cheerful indifference the livery of a faith in which he has no part, and we walk contentedly in the path he designates, flattering ourselves upon being upheld and guided by the voice of omnipotent truth, until passion trips our heels with some hidden snare, and, rolling headlong in the mire, we lift our stained faces in astonishment to behold that calm-lidded countenance all unstirred by our wild mishap. He foresaw, but he was helpless to prevent, nor does he greatly care, since he also knows that age after age every reincarnation of the spirit must be tempted anew by the ever-renewed, ever-lustful, unalterable flesh.

Weissman diverts himself and indulges the Teutonic weakness for word-building by naming this double self the "germ-plasm" – that immortal, eternal seed of life that links the generations in

an unbroken chain; changing and developing only through the unreckonable processes of time, and taking heed not at all of the mere passing accidents of fleeting avatars.

Why should not this germ-plasm, this eternal ghost, be infinitely sophisticated? What surprises can its mere momentary envelope contrive for a consciousness as old as the moon? If temptations seduce the young flesh, though the old, old soul declares with scorn that teeth are set on edge by the eating of sour grapes, it is not surprised at all when the body persists in its will to seize upon the fruit of its desire, having seen in everyone of a myriad generations the same obstinacy and weakness of the flesh, which learns little and very hardly from the spirit.

Now and again – in his moments of exalted seriousness – man listens to this ancient voice of the spirit breathing the accumulated experience of time, and then it imposes upon him the ripened wisdom of its long retrospect of the generations, and man creates religions – by which he does not square his conduct – or philosophies – whose bit he immediately takes between his teeth. But for the most part he stops his ears to the soul's stern, sad preaching with the thick wax of sentimentalism, and that undying determination that life shall be not what it is, but what he wishes it to be – and so stumbles along, through ever-renewed pangs and tragedies, after a mirage in the hard desert of existence, to whose stones and flints, despite his bruises, he will not turn his eyes. And well it is for us that upon many the mantle of flesh lies so warm and thick that this ghost called consciousness of self cannot chill their blood with his dank wisdom breathed from out a world of graves. In the hearts of such as these all the sweet illusions of existence came to full and natural bloom. To their lusty egoism life has all the exhilaration and freshness of a new and special creation.

Far otherwise is it with the haunted man, whose dwelling is blighted by that cold presence with its terrible memory. Forever echoes through his chambers the cry that hope will be unfulfilled, that love will die, the morning fade, that what has been will be again and forever again; that the waters of life will climb the shore only to crawl back again into the blind deeps of eternity; that the unit is forever lost in the eternal ebb and flux of matter. Endeavour can find no footing in this profundity of experience. To all desire, all aspiration, the ghost says in a paralyzing whisper:

"Scipio, remember that thou art a *man* – that everything has been done even if thou doest it not – that everything will be done whether thou doest it or no... Where are the poems that were written in Baalbec? Where the pictures that were painted in Tadmor of the Wilderness? Are there fewer pictures and poems to-day because the men who made them are not? Who was prime minister to the bearded King of Babylon? Where is his fame?.. Ay, drink this cup if you will, but you know well the taste of it is not good at the bottom. You have drunk it a thousand thousand of times, and the taste was never good, and yet you will drink it a thousand times again, hoping always that it will be good."...

And the haunted man sits with idle hands and withered purpose, listening always to the voice, while his neighbours push loudly on to die futilely but gloriously in the unending battle.

"An end-of-the-century disease," say these full-fed, happy egotists with lowered breath and eyes askance as they pass the haunted house. "The mould of age has fallen upon him and made him mad." Yet before the walls of Troy these two – the ghost-ridden, and the happy egotist – battled for the glowing shadow of a woman whom neither man loved nor desired. Achilles, blackly melancholy in his tent, heard the old voice cry

"ἐν δὲ ἡ τιμὴ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἡδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός"

and disdains the greatness of life and the littleness of it. To an iron inevitableness of fate he opposes only indifference and an unbending courage. That which has been will be, and the end is death and darkness. He has no illusions. He wars neither for love of country nor love of Helen. If Troy falls nothing is gained. If the Greeks fail nothing will be lost. In time all the sweat and blood shed upon Ilium's windy plain will evaporate into a mere mist of uncredited legend. In Achilles, the other self, the *alter ego*, is the stronger man. The ghost of dead experience is as living as he.

Not so is it with Hector. All the passions of humanity are as new and fresh to him as if none before himself had known them. He looks neither forward nor back. The present is his concern. What

though men have died and been forgotten, he will not lessen his utmost effort, even to the giving up of his life to save Troy. That is to him the one thing of importance. So robust is his courage, his faith, his love, that the sad spirit of memory within him cannot speak loud enough to make him hear. There is no warring of dual personalities in him; he is aware of but one – that rich momentary incarnation called Hector, more potent than the memories and experiences of the thousands of lives that preceded him, that gave him existence.

What though Achilles was right; what though both be but dust and legend now – who would not choose that flash of being called Hector – Hector dragged at the chariot-heel of Achilles – Hector with wife enslaved and children slaughtered and his city's proud towers levelled with the plain, rather than to have been the haunted victor, triumphing but not triumphant; fighting without purpose or hope? The same end indeed came to both, but one died as he lived, for what he thought a glorious end, while the other too passed away – but with the cold knowledge that both deaths were fruitless and vain.

Troy is a dream, but the battle forever is waged between the fresh incarnation of being and the memories of past being. Every creature wakes out of childhood aware that he lives not alone in even the secretest chambers of his life. Which is the *I* he cannot always say. The two companions are never at one. Sometimes the struggle breaks into open flame. Sometimes the one is victor, sometimes the vanquished. Each fights for Helen, for his ideal of pleasure, of wisdom, or of good, but in the very handgrips of battle a chilling doubt will fall between them whether she for whom they war – call her virtue, beauty, lust, life, what you will – is the real Queen, or only some misleading eidolon whose true self is hid in distant Sparta; and so the grasp relaxes, the tense breath falls free, the selves mingle. Man gropes for truth and finds it vague, intangible, not to be grasped – a dream.

## February 17. "A Young Man's Fancy."

What is that ineffable quality in the air that says *Spring*?

Long ago, as far back as towards the end of January, there came suddenly one day a sense that the winter was conquered. There has been much cold weather since – we shall have much cold still, but there is always a promise in the air.

There is a sad day later in the year when one is aware all at once that summer is ending, and the warm, mild weeks that follow never console for that hour's realization that the apex is crossed and the rest of the path slopes downward. Just such a day comes in one's life, – while one is still young and strong – a sudden sense that youth is done; the climacteric of passion passed. Life has a long Indian summer still, but it's never again the real thing, – that ripening toward fruition; that ecstasy of expansion and growth. There is no visible change for a while, yet every day there is an imperceptible fall in the temperature. Always the nights are growing longer. The flowers drop away one by one – the sap sinks a little, leaving the extreme delicate twigs moribund. No one has seen the leaves fall, yet there are fewer upon the bough – winter is coming.

Age is peaceful, perhaps – but middle age – ! The wave clings to the shore, but the inexorable ebb draws it down relentlessly into the deep. This is the time that men go *musth*, like old elephants. This is the period when both men and women do their mad deeds, which belie all their previous records. It is their one last frantic clutch after vanishing romance and passion. Men buy a semblance of it from young women sometimes, and resolutely endeavour to persuade themselves that it is the real thing – that gold can renew youth, can purchase a second summer – but they know well that it is only a mechanical imitation. Those cruel old satirists, the comedy writers, loved to paint the trembling dotard resolutely shutting his eyes to the lusty young rival hiding behind the jade's petticoats.

As for the women! – who shall tell the real story of the middle age of women? – of the confident coquette, who one day turns away to punish her slave, and finds, when she relents, that his eyes are fixed upon her daughter? – of the bewildered inspection of the mirror, that still tells a fluttering tale of curves and colours, though startled experience shows the eyes of men turning in preference to crude, red-elbowed girls, obviously her inferior in grace and charm? – of the shock of finding that the world is no longer much interested in her – the amazement of the discovery that the handsome lads see little difference between a woman of thirty-five and one of fifty? – of the shame-faced misery of learning that the passion, which she has virtuously resolved to repulse, is given in reality to her niece? Her charm, her sweetness, her well-preserved beauty is as nothing beside mere raw youth. Undeveloped figures, flat chests, blotchy complexions, are of more value than her rounded mellow loveliness. She is pushed from her throne by giggling girls, who stare at her in hard contempt and wonder openly what the old creature does lingering belated in this galley.

Though she be called "a fine woman" still, men of all ages will turn from her to dote upon an empty-headed debutante. Her comprehension and sympathy, her wit and her learning are less enthralling than the vapid babblings of red-cheeked misses just out of pinafores. Her heart is as young as ever; she knows herself capable of a finer, nobler passion and tenderness than the girl can dream of, yet the selfish, egotistic emotions of the self-confident chit awake a rapture that would be dulled by the richest warmth she could give.

"Age, I do abhor thee;  
Youth, I do adore thee;  
O, my love, my love is *young*!"

That she in her turn elbowed the preceding generation from its place comforts her not at all. Oh, for again one hour only of the splendid domination of youth – one rich instant of the power to intoxicate!..

There is nothing for it but to keep such things to one's self, and jog on quietly and respectably to the end. One has had one's turn.

That mad girl Spring has passed up this way  
With a hole in her pockets,  
For here lies her money all strewn in the grass —  
Broad dandelion ducats.

She'll be needing this wealth ere the end of the year  
For a warm winter gown,  
Though now she's content with a breast-knot of buds  
And a violet crown.

She heard in the green blooming depths of the wood  
The voice of a dove,  
And she dropped all these flowering coins as she ran  
To meet summer and love.

'Twill not serve you to gather from out her wild path  
All your two hands can hold —  
Only youth and the Spring may buy kisses and mirth  
With this frail fairy gold.

## **February 18.**

### **An Arabian Looking-glass**

There has been great recrudescence of the Essay of late – none of it very important, I take the liberty of thinking. We moderns have lost the trick of it. All of us, at least, but Stevenson, and he hardly seems a modern, so closely is he related to the great classics, with his inheritance of the Grand Style, like the *bel canto*



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