

ELLIS HAVELOCK

IMPRESSIONS
AND
COMMENTS

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Havelock Ellis

Impressions and Comments

PREFACE

For many years I have been accustomed to make notes on random leaves of the things in Life and Thought which have chanced to strike my attention. Such records of personal reaction to the outer and inner world have been helpful to my work, and so had their uses.

But as one grows older the possibilities of these uses become more limited. One realises in the Autumn that leaves no longer have a vital function to perform; there is no longer any need why they should cling to the tree. So let them be scattered to the winds!

It is inevitable that such Leaves cannot be judged in the same way as though they constituted a Book. They are much more like loose pages from a Journal. Thus they tend to be more personal, more idiosyncratic, than in a book it would be lawful for a writer to be. Often, also, they show blanks which the intelligence of the reader must fill in. At the best they merely present the aspect of the moment, the flash of a single facet of life, only to be held in the brain provided one also holds therein many other facets, for the fair presentation of the great crystal of life. So it comes about that much is here demanded of the Reader, so much that I feel it rather my duty to warn him away than to hold out any fallacious lures.

The fact has especially to be reckoned with that such Impressions and Comments, stated absolutely and without consideration for divergent Impressions and Comments, may seem, as a friend who has read some of them points out, to lack explicit reasonableness. I trust they are not lacking in implicit reasonableness. They spring, even when they seem to contradict one another, from a central vision, and from a central faith too deeply rooted to care to hasten unduly towards the most obvious goal. From that central core these Impressions and Comments are concerned with many things, with the miracles of Nature, with the Charms and Absurdities of the Human Worm, that Golden Wire wherefrom hang all the joys and the mysteries of Art. I am only troubled because I know how very feebly these things are imaged here. For I have only the medium of words to work in, only words, words that are flung about in the street and often in the mud, only words with which to mould all my images of the Beauty and Gaiety of the World.

Such as they are, these random leaves are here scattered to the winds. It may be that as they flutter to the earth one or another may be caught by the hand of the idle passer-by, and even seem worthy of contemplation. For no two leaves are alike even when they fall from the same tree.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

IMPRESSIONS AND COMMENTS

July 24, 1912.—I looked out from my room about ten o'clock at night. Almost below the open window a young woman was clinging to the flat wall for support, with occasional floundering movements towards the attainment of a firmer balance. In the dim light she seemed decently dressed in black; her handkerchief was in her hand; she had evidently been sick.

Every few moments some one passed by. It was quite clear that she was helpless and distressed. No one turned a glance towards her—except a policeman. He gazed at her searchingly as he passed, but without stopping or speaking; she was drunk, no doubt, but not too obtrusively incapable; he mercifully decided that she was of no immediate professional concern to him. She soon made a more violent effort to gain muscular control of herself, but merely staggered round her own escaping centre of gravity and sank gently on to the pavement in a sitting posture.

Every few moments people continued to pass within a few inches of her—men, women, couples. Unlike the priest and the Levite in the parable, they never turned away, but pursued their straight course with callous rectitude. Not one seemed so much as to see her. In a minute or two, stimulated perhaps by some sense of the impropriety of her position, she rose to her feet again, without much difficulty, and returned to cling to the wall.

A few minutes later I saw a decently-dressed young woman, evidently of the working class, walk quietly, but without an instant's hesitation, straight up to the figure against the wall. (It was what, in Moscow, the first passer-by would have done.) I could hear her speaking gently and kindly, though of what she said I could only catch, "Where do you live?" No answers were audible, and perhaps none were given. But the sweet Samaritan continued speaking gently. At last I heard her say, "Come round the corner," and with only the gentle pressure of a hand on the other's arm she guided her round the corner near which they stood, away from the careless stream of passengers, to recover at leisure. I saw no more.

Our modern civilisation, it is well known, long since transformed "chivalry"; it was once an offer of help to distressed women; it is now exclusively reserved for women who are not distressed and clearly able to help themselves. We have to realise that it can scarcely even be said that our growing urban life, however it fosters what has been called "urbanity," has any equally fostering influence on instinctive mutual helpfulness as an element of that urbanity. We do not even see the helpless people who go to the wall or to the pavement. This is true of men and women alike. But when instinctive helpfulness is manifested it seems most likely to reveal itself in a woman. That is why I would like to give to women all possible opportunities—rights and privileges alike—for social service.

July 27.—A gentle rain was falling, and on this my first day in Paris since the unveiling of the Verlaine monument in the Luxembourg Gardens, immediately after I left Paris last year, I thought there could be no better moment to visit the spot so peculiarly fit to be dedicated to the poet who loved such spots—a "coin exquis" where the rain may fall peacefully among the trees, on his image as once on his heart, and the tender mists enfold him from the harsh world.

I scarcely think the sculptor quite happily inspired in his conception of the face of the charming old man I knew of old in his haunts of the Boulevard Saint-Michel. It is too strong a face, too disdainful, with too much character. Verlaine was sympathetic, simple, childlike, humble; when he put on an air of pride it was with a deliberate yet delightful pose, a child's pose. There is an air of almost military rigidity about the pride of this bust; I do not find Verlaine in that trait.

Verlaine's strength was not that of character; it was that of Nature. I could imagine that the Silenus, whom we see with his satellites near by, might be regarded in its expression, indeed in the whole conception of the group—with its helpless languor and yet its divine dominance—as the monument of that divine and helpless poet whom I still recall so well, as with lame leg and stick he would drift genially along the Boulevard a few yards away.

July 31.—At the hotel in Dijon, the flourishing capital of Burgundy, I was amused to note how curiously my room differed from what I once regarded as the type of the French room in the hotels I used to frequent. There is still a Teutonic touch in the Burgundian; he is meticulously thorough. I had six electric lights in different positions, a telephone, hot and cold water laid on into a huge basin, a foot-bath, and, finally, a wastepaper-basket. For the rest, a severely simple room, no ornaments, nothing to remind one of the brace of glass pistols and all the other ugly and useless things which filled my room at the ancient hotel in Rouen where I stayed two years ago. And the "lavabo," as it is here called, a spacious room with an ostentatiously noisy rush of water which may be heard afar and awakens one at night. The sanitary and mechanical age we are now entering makes up for the mercy it grants to our sense of smell by the ferocity with which it assails our sense of hearing. As usual, what we call "Progress" is the exchange of one Nuisance for another Nuisance.

August 5.—It is an idea of mine that a country with a genius for architecture is only able to show that genius supremely in one style, not in all styles. The Catalans have a supreme genius for architecture, but they have only achieved a single style. The English have attempted all styles of architecture, but it was only in Perpendicular that we attained a really free and beautiful native style in our domestic buildings and what one might call our domestic churches. Strassburg Cathedral is thoroughly German and acceptable as such, but Cologne Cathedral is an exotic, and all the energy and the money of Germany through a thousand years can never make it anything but cold, mechanical, and artificial. When I was in Burgundy I felt that the Burgundians had a genius for Romanesque, and that their Gothic is for the most part feeble and insipid. Now, how about the Normans? One cannot say their Romanesque is not fine, in the presence of William the Conqueror's Abbaye aux Hommes, here at Caen. But I should be inclined to ask (without absolutely affirming) whether the finest Norman Romanesque can be coupled with the finest Burgundian Romanesque. The Norman genius was, I think, really for Gothic, and not for what we in England call "Norman" because it happened to come to us through Normandy. Without going to Rouen it is enough to look at many a church here. The Normans had a peculiar plastic power over stone which Gothic alone could give free scope to. Stone became so malleable in their hands that they seem as if working in wood. Probably it really was the case that their familiarity with wood-carving influenced their work in architecture. And they possessed so fine a taste that while they seem to be freely abandoning themselves to their wildest fantasies, the outcome is rarely extravagant (Flaubert in his *Tentation* is a great Norman architect), and at the best attains a ravishing beauty of flowing and interwoven lines. At its worst, as in St. Sauveur, which is a monstrosity like the Siamese twins, a church with two naves and no aisles, the general result still has its interest, even apart from the exquisite beauty of the details. It is here in Gothic, and not in Romanesque, that the Normans attained full scope. We miss the superb repose, the majestic strength, of the Romanesque of Burgundy and the south-west of France. There is something daring and strange and adventurous in Norman Romanesque. It was by no accident, I think, that the ogive, in which lay the secret of Gothic, appeared first in Norman Romanesque.

August 8.—I have sometimes thought when in Spain that in ancient university towns the women tend to be notably beautiful or attractive, and I have imagined that this might be due to the continuous influence of student blood through many centuries in refining the population, the finest specimens of the young students proving irresistible to the women of the people, and so raising the level of the population by sexual selection. At Salamanca I was impressed by the unusual charm of the women, and even at Palencia to some extent noticed it, though Palencia ceased to be the great university of Spain nearly eight centuries ago. At Fécamp I have been struck by the occasional occurrence of an unusual type of feminine beauty, not, it seems to me, peculiarly Norman, with dark, ardent, spiritual eyes, and a kind of proud hierarchical bearing. I have wondered how far the abbots and monks of this great and ancient abbey of Benedictines were occupied—in the intervals of more supra-mundane avocations—in perfecting, not only the ancient recipe of their liqueur, but also the physical type of the feminine population among which they laboured. The type I have in mind sometimes rather recalls

the face of Baudelaire, who, by his mother's family from which he chiefly inherited, the Dufays, belonged, it is held probable, to Normandy.

August 9.—Typical women of Normandy often have a certain highly-bred air. They are slender when young, sometimes inclined to be tall, and the face—of course beautiful in complexion, for they dwell near the sea—is not seldom refined and distinguished. See the proud, sensitive nostrils of that young woman sweeping the pavement with her broom in front of the house this morning; one can tell she is of the same race as Charlotte Corday. And I have certainly never found anywhere in France women who seem to me so naturally charming and so sympathetic as the women who dwell in all this north-western district from Paris to the sea. They are often, as one might expect, a little English-like (it might be in Suffolk on the other side of the Channel, and Beauvais, I recall, has something of the air of old Ipswich), but with a vivacity of movement, and at the same time an aristocratic precision and subtlety one fails to find in the English. When a pretty English girl of the people opens her mouth the charm is often gone. On the contrary, I have often noticed in Normandy that a seemingly commonplace unattractive girl only becomes charming when she does open her mouth, to reveal her softness of speech, the delicately-inflected and expressive tones, while her face lights up in harmony with her speech. Now—to say nothing of the women of the south, whose hard faces and harsh voices are often so distressing—in Dijon, whence I came to Normandy this time, the women are often sweet, even angelic of aspect, looking proper material for nuns and saints, but, to me at all events, not personally so sympathetic as the Norman women, who are no doubt quite as good but never express the fact with the same air of slightly Teutonic insipidity. The men of Normandy I regard as of finer type than the Burgundian men, and this time it is the men who express goodness more than the women. The Burgundian men, with their big moustaches turned up resolutely at the points and their wickedly-sparkling eyes, have evidently set before themselves the task of incorporating a protest against the attitude of their women. But the Norman men, who allow their golden moustaches to droop, are a fine frank type of manhood at the best, pleasantly honest and unspoilt. I know, indeed, how skilful, how wily, how noble even, in their aristocratic indifference to detail, these Normans can be in extracting money from the stranger (have I not lunched simply at the *Hostel Guillaume-le-Conquérant* in the village of Dives for the same sum on which I have lived sumptuously for three days at the *Hotel Victoria* in the heart of Seville?), but the manner of their activity in this matter scarcely seems to me to be happily caught by those Parisians who delight to caricature, as mere dull, avaricious plebeians, "*Ces bons Normands*." Their ancient chronicler said a thousand years ago of the Normans that their unbounded avarice was balanced by their equally unbounded extravagance. That, perhaps, is a clue to the magnificent achievements of the Normans, in the spiritual world even more than in the material world.

August 10.—On leaving France by the boat from Dieppe I selected a seat close to which, shortly afterwards, three English people—two young women and a man—came to occupy deck-chairs already placed for them by a sailor and surrounded by their bags and wraps. Immediately one of the women began angrily asking her companions why her bag had not been placed the right side up; *she* would not have her things treated like that, etc. Her companions were gentle and conciliatory, —though I noticed they left her alone during most of the passage,—and the man had with attentive forethought made all arrangements for his companions' comfort. But, somehow, I looked in wonder at her discontented face and heard with surprise her peevish voice. She was just an ordinary stolid nourishing young Englishwoman. But I had been in France, and though I had been travelling for a whole fortnight I had seen nothing like this. She lay back and began reading a novel, which she speedily exchanged for a basin. I fear I felt a certain satisfaction at the spectacle. It is good for the English barbarian to be chastised with scorpions.

How pleasant at Newhaven to find myself near another woman, a young Frenchwoman, with the firm, disciplined, tender face, the sweetly-modulated voice, the air of fine training, the dignified

self-respect which also involves respect for others. I realised in a flash the profound contrast to that fellow-countrywoman of mine who had fascinated my attention on board the boat.

But one imagines a French philosopher, a new Taine, let us suppose, setting out from Dieppe for the "land of Suffragettes" to write another *Notes sur l'Angleterre*. How finely he would build a great generalisation on narrow premises! How acutely he would point out the dependence of the English "gentleman's" good qualities or the ill-conditioned qualities of his women-folk!

August 15.—I enter an empty suburban railway carriage and take up a common-looking little periodical lying on the seat beside me. It is a penny weekly I had never heard of before, written for feminine readers and evidently enjoying an immense circulation. I turn over the pages. One might possibly suppose that at the present moment the feminine world is greatly excited, or at all events mildly interested, by the suffrage movement. But there is not a word in this paper from beginning to end with the faintest reference to the suffrage, nor is there anything bearing on any single great social movement of the day in which, it may seem to us, women are taking a part. Nor, again, is there anything to be found touching on ideas, not even on religion. There are, on the other hand, evidently three great interests dominating the thoughts of the readers of this paper: Clothes, Cookery, Courtship. How to make an old hat look new, how to make sweetmeats, how to behave when a man makes advances to you—these are the problems in which the readers of this journal are profoundly interested, and one can scarcely gather that they are interested in anything else. Very instructive is the long series of questions, problems posed by anxious correspondents for the editor to answer. One finds such a problem as this: Suppose you like a man, and suppose you think he likes you, and suppose he never says so—what ought you to do? The answers, fully accepting the serious nature of the problems, are kindly and sensible enough, almost maternal, admirably adapted to the calibre and outlook of the readers in this little world. But what a little world! So narrow, so palaeolithically ancient, so pathetically simple, so good, so sweet, so humble, so essentially and profoundly feminine! It is difficult not to drop a tear on the thin, common, badly-printed pages.

And then, in the very different journal I have with me, I read the enthusiastic declaration of an ardent masculine feminist—a man of the study—that the executive power of the world is to-day being transferred to women; they alone possess "psychic vision," they alone are interested in the great questions which men ignore—and I realise what those great questions are: Clothes, Cookery, Courtship.

August 23.—I stood on the platform at Paddington station as the Plymouth Express slowly glided out. Leaning out of a third-class compartment stood the figure that attracted my attention. His head was bare and so revealed his harmoniously wavy and carefully-tended grey hair. The expression of his shaven and disciplined face was sympathetic and kindly, evidently attuned to expected emotions of sorrowful farewell, yet composed, clearly not himself overwhelmed by those emotions. His right arm and open hand were held above his head, in an attitude that had in it a not too ostentatious hint of benediction. When he judged that the gracious vision was no longer visible to the sorrowing friends left behind he discreetly withdrew into the carriage. There was a feminine touch about this figure; there was also a touch of the professional actor. But on the whole it was absolutely, without the shadow of a doubt, the complete Anglican Clergyman.

September 2.—Nearly every day just now I have to enter a certain shop where I am served by a young woman. She is married, a mother, at the same time a businesslike young woman who is proud of her businesslike qualities. But she is also pleasant to look upon in her healthy young maternity, her frank open face, her direct speech, her simple natural manner and instinctive friendliness. From her whole body radiates the healthy happiness of her gracious personality. A businesslike person, certainly, and I receive nothing beyond my due money's worth. But I always carry away something that no money can buy, and that is even more nourishing than the eggs and butter and cream she sells.

How few, it seems to me, yet realise the vast importance in civilisation of the quality of the people one is necessarily brought into contact with! Consider the vast number of people in our present

communities who are harsh, ugly, ineradically discourteous, selfish, or insolent—the people whose lives are spent in diminishing the joy of the community in which not so much Providence as the absence of providence has placed them, in impeding that community's natural activity, in diminishing its total output of vital force. Lazy and impertinent clerks, stuck-up shop assistants, inconsiderate employers, brutal employees, unendurable servants, and no less unendurable mistresses—what place will be left for them as civilisation advances?

We have assumed, in the past, that these things and the likes of these are modifiable by nurture, and that where they cannot be cured they must be endured. But with the realisation that breeding can be, and eventually must be, controlled by social opinion, a new horizon has opened to civilisation, a new light has come into the world, the glimpse of a new Heaven is revealed.

Animals living in nature are everywhere beautiful; it is only among men that ugliness flourishes. Savages, nearly everywhere, are gracious and harmonious; it is only among the civilised that harshness and discord are permitted to prevail. Henry Ellis, in the narrative of his experiences in Hudson's Bay in the eighteenth century, tells how a party of Eskimo—a people peculiarly tender to their children—came to the English settlement, told heart-brokenly of hardship and famine so severe that one of the children had been eaten. The English only laughed and the indignant Eskimo went on their way. What savages anywhere in the world would have laughed? I recall seeing, years ago, a man enter a railway carriage, fling aside the rug a traveller had deposited to retain a corner seat and obstinately hold that seat. Would such a man be permitted to live among savages? If the eugenic ideals that are now floating before men's eyes never lead us to any Heaven at all, but merely discourage among us the generation of human creatures below the level of decent savagery, they will serve their turn.

September 7.—The music of César Franck always brings before me a man who is seeking peace with himself and consolation with God, at a height, above the crowd, in isolation, as it were in the uppermost turret of a church tower. It recalls the memory of the unforgettable evening when Denyn played on the carillon at Malines, and from the canal side I looked up at the little red casement high in the huge Cathedral tower where the great player seemed to be breathing out his soul, in solitude, among the stars. Always when I hear the music of Franck—a Fleming, also, it may well be by no accident—I seem to be in contact with a sensitive and solitary spirit, absorbed in self-communion, weaving the web of its own Heaven and achieving the fulfilment of its own rapture.

In this symphonic poem, "Les Djinns," the attitude more tenderly revealed in the "Variations Symphoniques," and, above all, the sonata in A Major, is dramatically represented. The solitary dreamer in his tower is surrounded and assailed by evil spirits, we hear the beating of their great wings as they troop past, but the dreamer is strong and undismayed, and in the end he is left in peace, alone.

September 10.—It was an overture by Elgar, and the full solemn sonorous music had drawn to its properly majestic close. Beside me sat an artist friend who is a lover of music, and regularly attends these Promenade Concerts. He removed the cigarette from his lips and chuckled softly to himself for some moments. Then he replaced the cigarette and joined in the tempestuous and prolonged applause. I looked at him inquiringly. "It is a sort of variation of the theme," he said, "that he sometimes calls the Cosmic Angels Working Together or the Soul of Man Striving with the Divine Essence." I glanced at the programme again. The title was "Cockaigne."

September 17.—It has often seemed to me that the bearing of musical conductors is significant for the study of national characteristics, and especially for the difference between the English and the Continental neuro-psychic systems. One always feels inhibition and suppression (such as a Freudian has found characteristic of the English) in the movements of the English conductor, some psychic element holding the nervous play in check, and producing a stiff wooden embarrassed rigidity or an ostentatiously languid and careless indifference. At the extreme remove from this is Birnbaum, that gigantic and feverishly active spider, whose bent body seems to crouch over the whole orchestra, his magically elongated arms to stretch out so far that his wand touches the big drum. But even the quietest of these foreign conductors, Nikisch, for example, gives no impression of psychic inhibition,

but rather of that refined and deliberate economy of means which marks the accomplished artist. Among English conductors one may regard Wood (*lucus a non lucendo!*) as an exception. Most of the rest—I speak of those of the old school, since those of the new school can sometimes be volatile and feverish enough—seem to be saying all the time: "I am in an awkward and embarrassing position, though I shall muddle through successfully. The fact is I am rather out of my element here. I am really a Gentleman."

October 2.—Whenever I come down to Cornwall I realise the curious contradiction which lies in this region as at once a Land of Granite and a Land of Mist. On the one hand archaic rocks, primitive, mighty, unchanging, deep-rooted in the bases of the world. On the other hand, iridescent vapour, for ever changing, one moment covering the land with radiant colour, another enveloping it in a pall of gloom.

I can also see two contradictory types of people among the inhabitants of this land. On the one hand, a people of massive and solid build, a slow-moving people of firm, primitive nature, that for all their calm stolidity may give out a fiery ring if struck, and will fearlessly follow the lure of Adventure or of Right. On the other hand, a race of soft and flexible build, of shifting and elusive mind, alert to speak and slow to act, of rainbow temperament, fascinating and uncertain. Other types there may be, but certainly these two, whatever their racial origin, Children of the Granite and Children of the Mist. *October 3.*—It has often interested me to observe how a nation of ancient civilisation differs from a nation of new civilisation by what may be called the ennoblement of its lower classes. Among new peoples the lower classes—whatever fine qualities they may possess—are still barbarians, if not savages. Plebeian is written all over them, in their vulgar roughly-moulded faces, in their awkward movements, in their manners, in their servility or in their insolence. But among the peoples of age-long culture, that culture has had time to enter the blood of even the lowest social classes, so that the very beggars may sometimes be fine gentlemen. The features become firmly or delicately moulded, the movements graceful, the manners as gracious; there is an instinctive courtesy and ease, as of equal to equal, even when addressing a social superior. One has only to think of the contrast between Poland and Russia, between Spain and Germany.

I am frequently reminded of that difference here in Cornwall. Anywhere in Cornwall you may see a carter, a miner, a fisherman, a bricklayer, who with the high distinction of his finely cast face, the mingling in his manner of easy nonchalance and old-world courtesy, seems only to need a visit to the tailor to add dignity to a Pall Mall club. No doubt England is not a new country, and the English lower social classes have become in a definite degree more aristocratic than those of Russia or even Germany. But the forefathers of the Cornish were civilised when we English were a horde of savages. One may still find humble families with ancient surnames living in the same spot as lived, we find, if we consult the Heralds' Visitations, armigerous families of the same name in the sixteenth century, already ancient, and perhaps bearing, it is curious to note, the same Christian names as the family which has forgotten them bears to-day.

So it is that in that innate ennoblement which implies no superiority either of the intellect or of the heart, but merely a greater refinement of the nervous tissue, the Cornish have displayed, from the earliest period we can discern, a slight superiority over us English. Drake, a man of this district if not a Cornish-man, when sailing on his daring buccaneering adventures, dined and supped to the music of violins, a refinement which even his Pole-hunting successors of our own day scarcely achieved. Raleigh, partly a Cornishman, still retains popular fame as the man who flung his rich cloak in the mud for the Queen to step on. To-day a poet of Cornish race when introduced in public to Sarah Bernhardt, the goddess of his youthful adoration, at once kissed her hand and declared to her that that was the moment he had all his life been looking for. But we English are not descended from the men who wrote the *Mabinogian*; our hearts and souls are expressed in *Beowulf* and *Havelok*, and more remotely in the *Chanson de Roland*. We could not imitate the Cornish if we would; and sometimes, perhaps, we would not if we could.

October 4.—I lay with a book on the rocks, overlooking a familiar scene, the great expanse of the sands at low tide. In the far distance near the river was a dim feminine figure in a long coat, accompanied by three dogs. Half an hour later, when I glanced up from my book, I chanced to notice that the slender feminine figure was marching down to the sea, leaving a little pile of garments on the middle of the sands, just now completely deserted. The slender figure leisurely and joyously disported itself in the water. Then at length it returned to the little pile, negligently guarded by the dogs, there was a faint radiance of flesh, a white towel flashed swiftly to and fro for a few moments. Then with amazing celerity the figure had resumed its original appearance, and, decorously proceeding shorewards, disappeared among the sand dunes on the way to its unknown home.

In an age when savagery has passed and civilisation has not arrived, it is only by stealth, at rare moments, that the human form may emerge from the prison house of its garments, it is only from afar that the radiance of its beauty—if beauty is still left to it—may faintly flash before us.

Among pseudo-Christian barbarians, as Heine described them, the Olympian deities still wander homelessly, scarce emerging from beneath obscure disguises, and half ashamed of their own divinity.

October 5.—I made again to-day an observation concerning a curious habit of birds and small mammals which I first made many years ago and have frequently confirmed. If when I am walking along near banks and hedges, absorbed in my own thoughts, and chance suddenly to stand still, any wild creature in covert near the spot will at once scuttle hastily and noisily away: the creature which had awaited the approaching tramp in quiet confidence that the moment of danger would soon be overpast if only he kept quiet and concealed, is overcome by so sudden a panic of terror at the arrest of movement in his neighbourhood that he betrays his own presence in the impulse to escape. The silence which one might imagine to be reassuring to the nervous animal is precisely the cause of his terror. It is a useful adaptation to the ways of the great enemy Man, whether it is an adaptation resulting from individual experience or acquired by natural selection. From the stand-point of wild animality it is the Silence of Man that is ominous.

October 11.—When I come, as now, from Cornwall to West Suffolk, I feel that I have left behind a magic land of sea and sky and exquisite atmosphere. But I have entered a land of humanity, and a land whose humanity—it may be in part from ancestral reasons—I find peculiarly congenial. Humanity is not the chief part of the charm of Cornwall, though sometimes it may seem the very efflorescence of the land. It often seems almost a parasite there. It cannot mould the barren and stubborn soil to any ideal human shapes, or develop upon it any rich harmonious human life, such as I inhale always, with immense satisfaction, in this reposeful and beautifully wrought land of Suffolk.

On this evening of my arrival in the charming old town by the quiet river, how delicious—with remembrance still fresh of the square heavy little granite boxes in which the Cornish live—to find once more these ancient, half-timbered houses reminiscent of the Norman houses, but lighter and more various, wrought with an art at once so admirable and so homely, with such delicate detail, the lovely little old windows with the soft light shining through to reveal their pattern.

The musically voiced bells sound the hour from the great church, rich in beauty and tradition, and we walk across the market-place, this side the castle hill—the hill which held for six hundred years the precious jewelled crucifix, with the splinter of the "True Cross" in its secret recess, a careless English queen once lost from her neck—towards our quiet inn, a real museum of interesting things fittingly housed, for supper of Suffolk ham and country ale, and then to bed, before the long walk of the morrow.

October 14.—The Raphaels and the Peruginos are now ranged side by side along a great wall of the National Gallery. I am able more clearly than ever to realise how much more the early master appeals to me than his greater pupil. I well remember how, as a boy of fifteen, in the old National Gallery, I would linger long before Raphael's "St. Catherine." There was no picture in the whole gallery that appealed to my youthful brain as that picture appealed, with its seductive blend

of feminine grace and heavenly aspiration. But a little later the glory of Rubens suddenly broke on my vision. I could never look again with the same eyes on Raphael. By an intellectual effort I can appreciate the gracious plenitude of his accomplishment, his copious facility, his immense variety, the beauty of his draughtsmanship, and the felicity of his decorative design. But all this self-conscious skill, this ingenious affectation, this ostentatious muscularity, this immense superficiality—I feel always now a spiritual vacuity behind it which leaves me cold and critical. Every famous achievement of Raphael's, when I come upon it for the first time, repels me with a fresh shock of disillusionment. I am unpleasantly reminded of Andrea del Sarto and even of lesser men; I see the frescoes of Vasari in the distance. It is all the work of a divinely gifted youth who swiftly ran to waste, carrying with him all the art of his day and land to the same fatal abyss.

But the art of Perugino is still solid and beautiful, immutably serene. It radiates peace and strength. I neither criticise nor admire; my attitude is much more nearly that of worship, not of Perugino's images, but of a far-away ineffable mystery, which he in his time humbly sought to make a little more symbolically visible to men than any that came before him. For here we are in the presence of a great tradition which a long series of artists have in succession wrought, each adding a little that expressed the noblest insight of his own soul at its highest and best moments, and the newest acquirement of his technical skill. Raphael broke up painting, as later on Beethoven broke up music. Not that that blow destroyed the possibility of rare and wonderful developments in special directions. But painting and music alike lost for ever the radiant beauty of their prime and its unconscious serenity.

In a certain sense, if one thinks, it is the ripeness of Raphael's perfection which falls short of Perfection. In all Perfection that satisfies we demand the possibility of a Beyond which enfolds a further Perfection. It is not the fully blown rose which entrances us, but rather that which in its half-blown loveliness suggests a Perfection which no full-blown rose ever reached. In that the rose is the symbol of all vitally beautiful things. Raphael is the full-blown rose; the only Beyond is Dissolution and the straggling of faded petals.

October 17.—"War, that simple-looking word which lightly comes tripping from the lips of unthinking men, and even women." So writes a famous war-correspondent, a man in the midst of war and telling of war as it really is. Now hear a woman war-correspondent, writing about this same war: "I was so proud to see the first gun fired on Wednesday. ... I liked to hear the shells swishing. ... To women keen on this war it seems almost too good to be true." That is not an extract from one of the poignant satires of Janson. This woman, who writes of war as a girl might write of her first long frock, is an actual woman, a war-correspondent, with a special permit to be at the front. We are told, moreover, that she is, at the same time, actively nursing the wounded in the hospital.

To those psychologists who like large generalisations, how this figure must appeal as a type of the ancient conventional conception of what women are supposed to be—Incarnate Devils, Angels of Mercy, blended together.

October 18.—Stanley Hall has lately pointed out how much we have lost by eliminating the Devil from our theology. He is the inseparable Companion of God, and when faith in the Devil grows dim God fades away. Not only has the Devil been the Guardian of innocent pleasure, of the theatre, of dancing, of sports, Hall observes, but he preserved the virility of God. "Ought not we to rehabilitate and reinstall the Devil?"

There is much psychological truth in this contention, even for those who are not concerned, with Stanley Hall, for the maintenance of orthodox Christian theology. By eliminating one of the Great Persons from our theology we not only emasculate, we dissolve it. We cannot with impunity pick and choose what we will dispense with and what we will preserve in our traditional myths. Let us take another sacred myth, as it may well have been, "Jack and the Bean Stalk." Suppose that our refined civilised impulses lead us to reject Jack, the reckless, mischievous, and irresponsible youth, who, after a brief but discreditable career on earth, climbed up into the clouds and fraudulently deprived the

Great Giant in the sky of his most precious possessions. But if the revolted moral sense rejects Jack, is it likely that even the Great Giant himself will much longer retain our faith?

In any case it must still be said that mere grandeur, creativeness, the apotheosis of virtue and benevolence, fail to constitute an adequate theological symbol for the complex human animal. Man needs to deify not only his moments of moral subjection and rectitude, but his moments of orgy and revolt. He has attained the height of civilisation, not along the one line only, but along both lines, and we cannot even be sure that the virtue line is the most important. Even the Puritan Milton ("a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it," as Blake said) made Satan the real hero of his theological epic, while the austere Carducci addressed a famous ode to Satan as the creator of human civilisation. And if you suspect that European culture may be only an eccentric aberration, then let us wander to the other side of the world, and we find, for instance, that the great Hawaiian goddess Kapo had a double life—now an angel of grace and beauty, now a demon of darkness and lust. Every profound vision of the world must recognise these two equally essential aspects of Nature and of Man; every vital religion must embody both aspects in superb and ennobling symbols. A religion can no more afford to degrade its Devil than to degrade its God.

That is the error Christianity fell into at last. There can be no doubt that the Christian Devil had grown quite impossible, and his disappearance was imperative. Neither Milton nor Carducci could keep him alive. His palmy days were in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, before the Renaissance had grown powerful enough to influence European life. Even during those palmy days he exercised a power that for the most part was not virile, but crushing and inhuman. It has been set forth in Dr. Paul Carus's *History of the Devil*. In the light of such a history as that I doubt much whether even Professor Stanley Hall himself would lift a finger to bring the Devil back among us again.

October 22.—Gaby Deslys is just now a great attraction at the Palace Theatre. One is amused to note how this very Parisian person and her very Parisian performance are with infinite care adapted to English needs, and attuned to this comfortably respectable, not to say stolidly luxurious, house. We are shown a bedroom with a bed in it, and a little dressing-room by the side. Her task is to undress and go to bed. It is the sort of scene that may be seen anywhere in any music-hall all over Europe. But in the capital city of British propriety, and in a music-hall patronised by Royalty, this delicate task is surrounded and safeguarded by infinite precautions. One seems to detect that the scene has been rehearsed before a committee of ambiguously mixed composition. One sees the care with which they determined the precise moment at which the electric light should be switched off in the dressing-room; one realises their firm decision that the lady must, after all, go to bed fully clothed. One is conscious throughout of a careful anxiety that every avenue to "suggestiveness" shall be just hinted and at once decently veiled. There is something unpleasant, painful, degrading in this ingenious mingling of prurience and prudery. The spectators, if they think of it at all, must realise that throughout the whole trivial performance their emotions are being basely played upon, and yet that they are being treated with an insulting precaution which would be more in place in a lunatic asylum than in a gathering of presumably responsible men and women. In the end one is made to feel how far more purifying and ennobling than this is the spectacle of absolute nakedness, even on the stage, yes, even on the stage.

And my thoughts go back to the day, less than two years ago, when for the first time this was clearly brought home to me by a performance—like this and yet so unlike—in a very different place, the simple, bare, almost sordid Teatro Gayarre. Most of the turns were of the same ordinary sort that might be seen in many another music-hall of the long Calle Marques del Duero. But at the end came on a performer who was, I soon found, of altogether another order. The famous Bianca Stella, as the programme announced, shortly to start on her South American tour, was appearing for a limited number of nights. I had never heard of Bianca Stella. She might, to look at, be Austrian, and one could imagine, from some of her methods, that she was a pupil of Isadora Duncan. She was certainly

a highly trained and accomplished artist; though peculiarly fitted for her part by Nature, still an artist, not a child of Nature.

Of fine and high type, tall and rather slim, attractive in face, almost faultless in proportion and detail, playing her difficult part with unfailing dignity and grace, Bianca Stella might in general type be a Bohemian out of Stratz's *Schönheit des weiblichen Körpers*, or even an aristocratic young Englishwoman. She comes on fully dressed, like Gaby Deslys, but with no such luxurious environment, and slowly disrobes, dancing all the while, one delicate garment at a time, until only a gauzy chemise is left and she flings herself on the bed. Then she rises, fastens on a black mantle which floats behind concealing nothing, at the same moment removing her chemise. There is now no concealment left save by a little close-fitting triangular shield of spangled silver, as large as the palm of her hand, fastened round her waist by an almost invisible cord, and she dances again with her beautiful, dignified air. Once more, this time in the afternoon, I went to see Bianca Stella dance. Now there was a dark curtain as a background. She came on with a piece of simple white drapery wound round her body; as she dances she unfolds it, holds it behind her as she dances, finally flings it away, dancing with her fleckless and delicately proportioned body before the dark curtain. Throughout the dances her dignity and grace, untouched by voluptuous appeal and yet always human, remained unfailing. Other dancers who came on before her, clothed dancers, had been petulantly wanton to their hearts' desire. Bianca Stella seemed to belong to another world. As she danced, when I noted the spectators, I could see here and there a gleam in the eyes of coarse faces, though there was no slightest movement or gesture or look of the dancer to evoke it. For these men Bianca Stella had danced in vain, for—it remains symbolically true—only the pure in heart can see God. To see Bianca Stella truly was to realise that it is not desire but a sacred awe which nakedness inspires, an intoxication of the spirit rather than of the senses, no flame of lust but rather a purifying and exalting fire. To feel otherwise has merely been the unhappy privilege of men intoxicated by the stifling and unwholesome air of modern artificiality. To the natural man, always and everywhere, even to-day, nakedness has in it a power of divine terror, which ancient men throughout the world crystallised into beautiful rites, so that when a woman unveiled herself it seemed to them that thunderstorms were silenced, and that noxious animals were killed, and that vegetation flourished, and that all the powers of evil were put to flight. That was their feeling, and, absurd as it may seem to us, a right and natural instinct lay beneath it. Some day, perhaps, a new moral reformer, a great apostle of purity, will appear among us, having his scourge in his hand, and enter our theatres and music-halls to purge them. Since I have seen Bianca Stella I know something of what he will do. It is not nakedness that he will cast out. It will more likely be clothes.

So it is that when I contemplate Gaby Deslys or her sort, it is of Bianca Stella that I think.

November 1.—"The way to spiritual life," wrote George Meredith in one of his recently published letters, "lies in the complete unfolding of the creature, not in the nipping of his passions. ... To the flourishing of the spirit, then, through the healthy exercise of the senses!"

Yes, all that is very good, I heartily subscribe. And yet, and yet, there lingers a certain hesitation; one vaguely feels that, as a complete statement of the matter, it hardly satisfies all the demands of to-day. George Meredith belonged to the early Victorian period which had encased its head in a huge bonnet and girdled its loins with a stiff crinoline. His function was to react vitally to that state of things, and he performed his function magnificently, evoking, of course, from the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* onwards, a doubtless salutary amount of scandal and amazement. The time demanded that its preachers should take their text from the spiritually excessive Blake: "Damn braces, bless relaxes." On that text, throughout his life, Meredith heroically and eloquently preached.

But nowadays that seems a long time ago. The great preacher of to-day cannot react against the attraction to braces, for it no longer exists. We are all quite ready to "damn braces." The moralist, therefore, may now legitimately hold the balance fair and firm, without giving it a little pressure in one direction for wholesome ends of admonition.

When we so look at the matter we have to realise that, biologically and morally alike, healthy restraint is needed for "the flourishing of the spirit" quite as much as healthy exercise; that bracing as well as relaxing is part of the soul's hygiene; that the directive force of a fine asceticism, exerted towards positive and not towards negative ends, is an essential part of life itself.

You might say that a fountain that leaps largely and exquisitely up towards the sky only needs freedom and space. But no, it also needs compression and force, a mighty restrained energy at its roots, of which it is the gay and capricious flower. That, you may say, is not really a vital thing. But take a real flower, the same mechanism is still at work. The flexible convolvulus that must cling to any support from which to expand its delicate bells needs not only freedom to expand but much more the marvellous energy that was wound up and confined, like a spring, in the seed. It will find its own freedom, but it will not find its own force.

Therefore let us hold the moral balance fair and firm. The utmost freedom, the utmost restraint, we need them both. They are two aspects of the same thing. We cannot have freedom in any triumphant degree unless we have restraint. The main point is, that we should not fossilise either our freedoms or our restraints. Every individual needs—harmoniously with the needs of other individuals—the freedoms and restraints his own nature demands. Every age needs new freedoms and new restraints. In the making of New Freedoms and New Restraints lies the rhythm of Life.

November 11.—The psychology of the crowd is interesting, even when it is an educated and well-fed crowd. I take up the newspaper and see the announcement of a "momentous" declaration by the Premier at a Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall. I have the curiosity to read, and I find it to be that the "victors are not to be robbed of the fruits which have cost them so dear." This declaration was followed by "loud and prolonged cheers," as evidently the speaker, being a sagacious lawyer, knew it would be when he chose to put his declaration into this cynical shape, as an appeal to mob feeling, rather than in the form of a statement concerning the rights of the case, whatever the rights may be. Yet not one of those rapturous applauders would for a moment have tolerated that doctrine if it had been proposed to apply it to his own possessions. As a mob they applaud what as individuals they would disclaim with such moral energy as they might be capable of. The spectacle of the big robber is always impressive, and the most respectable of mobs is carried away by it. "Who was ever a pirate for millions?" as Raleigh protested to Bacon.

If we imagine the "victors" in this case to have been on a rather smaller scale the enthusiasm of the Guildhall mob would have been considerably damped. Let us imagine they were a band of burglars who had broken in the night before and carried off the materials for the forthcoming banquet, leaving one of the band behind dead and two wounded. When the guests seated at the bare board heard the emphatic declaration that the victors are not to be robbed of "the fruits which have cost them so dear," would they have raised quite such "loud and prolonged cheers"?

November 12.—The Divine Ironist who surely rules the world seldom leaves Himself without witness. On Lord Mayor's Day this witness appeared in the form of an ignorant ruffian. Within a few yards of the Mansion House, within a few hours of that "momentous declaration" which followed the turtle soup, in Liverpool Street—a street crowded not with ruffians but with business people and bankers' clerks, all the people who carry on the daily routine of civilisation—a man of the people smashed a jeweller's window and flung the jewelry into the street, shouting "Help yourselves." And they helped themselves. In a brief terrific scramble several hundred pounds' worth of jewelry was seized. Two men only of this respectable crowd brought what they had secured into the shop; the rest decamped with the booty. They had scarcely had time to read the "momentous declaration." But they agreed with it. They were not to be "robbed of the fruits which had cost them so dear."

Clearly, again, the Premier had rightly gauged the moral capacities of the mob. We sometimes think that the fundamental instincts of the crowd are, after all, sound; leave them to themselves and they will do the right thing. But, on the other hand, those who despise and condemn the mob will

always have a sadly large amount of evidence to support their case, even in the most "respectable" centres of civilisation.

November 20.—The Archbishop of Canterbury, I understand, has publicly expressed his approval of the application of the lash to those persons who are engaged in the so-called "White Slave Traffic." There is always a certain sociological interest in the public utterances of an Archbishop of Canterbury. He is a great State official who automatically registers the level of the public opinion of the respectable classes. The futility for deterrence or reform of the lash or other physical torture as applied to adults has long been a commonplace of historical criminology, and Collas, the standard historian of flagellation, pointing out that the lash can at best only breed the virtues of slavery, declares that "the history of flagellation is that of a moral bankruptcy." Moreover, criminals who are engaged in low-grade commercial affairs, with the large lure that makes them worth while, can usually arrange that the lash should fall on a subordinate's shoulders. It has been ascertained that the "capitalised value" of the average prostitute is nearly four times as great as that of the average respectable working-girl; how many lashes will alter that? But the sadistic impulse, in all its various degrees, is independent of facts. Of late it appears to have been rising. Now it has reached that percentage of the respectable population which automatically puts the archiepiscopal apparatus in motion. For an Archbishop of Canterbury has a public function to perform (has not Sydney Smith described a "foolometer"?) altogether independent of such reasonable and human functions as he may privately perform.

Is this love of torture, by the way, possibly one of the fruits of Empire? We see it in the Roman Empire, too, and how vigorously it was applied to Christians and other criminals. *Christianos ad leones!* But it was a disastrously unsuccessful policy—or we should not have an Archbishop of Canterbury with us now.

No disrespect for Archbishops of Canterbury is involved in this recognition of their public function, and I have no wish to be (as Laud wrote of one of my ancestors) "a very troublesome man" to archbishops. They act automatically for the measurement of society, merely in the same sense as an individual is automatically acting for the measurement of himself when he states how profoundly he admires Mendelssohn or R. L. Stevenson. He thereby registers the particular degree of his own spiritual state. And when an Archbishop of Canterbury, with all that sensitiveness to the atmosphere which his supreme office involves, publicly Professes an Opinion, he is necessarily registering a particular degree in the Spiritual State of Society. It is an important function which was never vouchsafed to his Master.

One wonders how many centuries it is since an Archbishop of Canterbury was known to express any public opinion on non-ecclesiastical affairs which was not that of the great majority of Respectable People. Of course in ecclesiastical matters, and in political matters which are ecclesiastical, he is professionally bound, and Beckett and Sudbury and Laud—though one was a victim to the hostility of a King, another to the hostility of the lower class, and the third to the middle class—were all faithful to the death to their profession and their class, as an Archbishop is bound to be even when his profession and his class are in a minority; I speak of the things to which he is not so bound. I have no doubt that at some recent period an Archbishop has archiepiscopally blessed the Temperance Movement. He is opposed to drunkenness, because we all are, even Licensed Victuallers, and because drunkenness is fast dying out. But imagine an Archbishop of Canterbury preaching Temperance in the eighteenth century when nearly every one was liable to be drunk! He would have been mistaken for a Methodist. I must confess it would be to me a great satisfaction to find an Archbishop of Canterbury earnestly pleading in the House of Lords in favour of gambling, or the unrestricted opening of public-houses on Sunday, or some relaxation in the prosecution of pornographic literature. Not by any means that I should agree with his point of view. But the spectacle offered of a morally courageous and intellectually independent Archbishop of Canterbury would be so stimulating, the presence of a Live

Person at the head of the Church instead of a glorified Penny-in-the-Slot Machine would be so far-reaching in its results, that all questions of agreement and disagreement would sink into insignificance.

December 5.—I think we under-estimate our ancestors' regard for ease. Whenever I have occasion to go to my "Jacobean" chest of drawers (chests of this type are said really to belong to the end of the seventeenth century) the softness and ease with which the drawers run always gives me a slight thrill of pleasure. They run on grooves along the side of each drawer, so that they can never catch, and when one examines them one finds that grease, now black with age, had been applied to the grooves. (In chests which have passed through the dealers' hands it is not usually easy to find traces of this grease.) The chests of modified "Jacobean" type—belonging, one may suppose, to the early eighteenth century—still show these grooves for the drawers to run on. And then, as the eighteenth century advances, they are no longer found. But that by no means meant that the eighteenth-century craftsman had resolved to be content with such articles of furniture as millions of our patient contemporaries tug and push and more or less mildly curse at. No, the eighteenth-century craftsman said to himself: I have gone beyond those "Jacobean" fellows; I can make drawers so accurately, so exquisitely fitted, that they no longer need grooves, and move as well as though they had them. And he was justified. A beautiful eighteenth-century chest of drawers really is almost as easy to manipulate as my "Jacobean" chest. One realises that the device of grooves, ingenious and successful as it was, rested on an imperfection; it was evidently an effort to overcome the crude and heavy work of earlier imperfect craftsmen.

There is evolution in the vital progress of furniture as in all other vital progress. The Jacobean chest with its oak substance and its panels and its great depth is apparently massive; this is an inherited ancestral trait due to the fact that it developed out of the earlier coffer that really were massive; in reality it is rather light. The later modified Jacobean chest shows only an attenuated appearance of massiveness, and the loss is real, for there are no fresh compensating qualities. But the developed eighteenth-century walnut chest is the unmistakable expression of a new feeling in civilisation, a new feeling of delicacy and refinement, a lovely superficiality such as civilisation demands, alike in furniture and in social intercourse. There is not even the appearance of massiveness now; the panels have gone and the depth has been notably reduced. The final goal of development was reached, and nothing was left to the nineteenth century but degeneration.

An interesting evolution in details is instructive to note. In the Jacobean chest, while the drooping loops of the handles are small and simple, the keyholes are elaborately adorned with beautiful brass scroll-work, the hereditary vestige of mediaeval days when the chest was a coffer, and the key, insistently demanded for security, was far more important than handles, which then indeed had no existence. In the unsatisfactory transitional stage of the later Jacobean chest the keyhole is less beautifully adorned, but the handles remain of similar type. Here, again, the eighteenth-century craftsman shows the fine artist he was. He instinctively felt that the handles must be developed, for not only were they more functionally important than the lock had become, but in dispensing with the grooves for the drawers to run on he had made necessary a somewhat firmer grip. So he made his handles more solid and fastened them in with beautifully-cut fingers of brass. Then he realised that the keyhole with all its fine possibilities must be sacrificed because it clashed with his handles and produced a distracting confusion. He contented himself with a simple narrow rim of brass for his keyholes, and the effect is perfectly right.

Furniture is the natural expression of the civilisation producing it. I sometimes think that there is even an intimate relation between the furniture of an epoch and its other art forms, even its literary style. The people who delighted in Cowley used these Jacobean chests, and in his style there is precisely the same blending of the seemingly massive and the really light, a blending perhaps more incongruous in poetry than in furniture. And the eighteenth-century chests were made for people who had been penetrated by the spirit of the *Spectator*; their craftsmen put into furniture precisely that exquisite superficiality, that social amenity, that fine conventionism which Addison and Steele put into

their essays. I find it hard not to believe that delicate feminine hands once stored away the *Spectator* in these drawers, and sometimes think I have seen those hands on the canvases of Gainsborough and Romney.

December 7.—One is perhaps too easily disquieted by the incompetence and disaster of our typically modern things. Rotten aeroplanes for fools to ride to destruction, motorcars for drunkards and imbeciles to use as the ancient war-chariots were used, telephones and a thousand other devices which are always out of order—our civilisation after all is not made up of these. I take up *Le Rire* and I gaze at its coloured pictures again and again. One realises that these are the things that people will turn to when they think of the twentieth century. Our aeroplanes and our motor-cars and our telephones will no doubt be carefully displayed in a neglected cellar of their museums. But here are things they will cherish and admire, and as one gazes at them one grows more at peace with one's own time.

It is easy to detect the influence of Rowlandson and of Hiroshige and the other Japanese designers in the methods of these French artists of to-day, and there could be no better influences. Rowlandson's *Dr. Syntax* was the delight of my childhood, and is equally a solace to-day when I am better able to understand what that great artist accomplished; Hiroshige's daring and lovely visions of some remote Japanese fairyland are always consoling to take out and gaze at when one is weary or depressed or disgusted. There could be no better influences.

But while it is not difficult to detect such influences in *Le Hire's* best artists at their best moments,—not so very often attained,—they are yet always themselves and true to their own spirit and vision, or they would have no message to deliver. These pictures have their supreme value because, whether or not they are a true picture of French life, they are a true presentation of the essential French spirit, so recklessly gay and so daringly poignant, so happily exquisite in its methods, and so relentlessly direct in its moral. For some people, who take what they are able to receive, the French spirit seems trivial and superficial, merely wanton and gay, chiefly characterised by that Lubricity which worried the pedagogic Matthew Arnold. The French spirit is more specifically distinguished by its profundity and its seriousness. Without profundity and seriousness, indeed, gaiety and wantonness have no significance. If the Seven Sins had not been Deadly, the Christian Church could never have clothed them in garments of tragic dignity. Unless you cut deep into life, wantonness and gaiety lose their savour and are not fit for the ends of art. The French spirit is not only embodied in Rabelais and Montaigne and Molière—if these are your superficial men!—but also in Pascal. Was there so great a gulf between Pascal and Daumier? And I find not only the spirit of Pascal in some of these pictures in *Le Rire*, but sometimes even his very phrases used as the titles of them.

December 9.—The Australians, it appears, have been much worried over Chidley. Here was a man who would not fit into their conventional moulds. He was stern, resolute, inflexible, convinced that he carried a Gospel which Australia and the world at large needed. It was a Gospel so eccentrically related to the accepted scheme of things that only he himself could accept it in its entirety. His method of preaching this gospel, moreover, was as eccentric as the gospel itself. It seemed to him that men need to live closer to Nature, that a simpler diet is necessary to salvation, and less clothing, and greater sexual continence. He approved his gospel by being a model of physical muscular fitness. As I have sometimes seen a Rifian from the hills, with bare magnificent limbs, striding down from the heights carolling a song, to enter the bastardly-civilised city of Tangier, so, it would seem, Chidley descended on to the city of Sydney. Having written a book in which to contain the pith of his message, he proceeded to clothe himself in a sort of scanty bathing dress, to lecture the public in the most fashionable streets of the city, and to sell his book to those who might desire it.

Three centuries ago a man of the same type as Chidley, the eminent Quaker, Solomon Eccles, who had his gospel too, would now and then come to Westminster Hall, "very civilly tied about the privities to avoid scandal" (as Pepys, a great stickler for propriety, noted with satisfaction), to call to repentance the wicked generation of Charles II.'s day. But the people of that day were not altogether

without wisdom. They let the strenuous Quaker alone. He was doubtless the better, and they were none the worse.

Nowadays, it seems, we need more than a loincloth to protect our hyperaesthetic eyes from the Splendour of Nature. The Australians, afflicted by our modern nervous fussiness, could not leave Chidley alone. The police moved him on, worried him as well as they could, invented reasons for locking him up now and then, and finally, by what seemed a masterstroke, they persuaded the doctors to shut him up in the Asylum. That, however, proved to be too much for Australian popular opinion. The voice of the people began to be heard in the press; there were long debates in Parliament; the Premier sent to the Asylum to inquire on what grounds Chidley had been placed there, and the doctors, who really had no evil intent in the matter, though their mental equilibrium had been momentarily disturbed by this unique Chidley, honourably opened the Asylum doors, and Chidley has returned to preach the Gospel in George Street until new reasons can be puzzled out for harassing him, neurotic, without doubt, but now hall-marked sane.

Like the Athenians of old, the Australians are not averse to hearing some new thing, and they have bought Chidley's book by the thousand. But the Athenians, notwithstanding their love of novelty, offered the cup of hemlock to Socrates. Chidley, if not exactly the Australian Socrates, clearly resembles his disciples, those great Cynics who in the Greek market-places were wont to preach and to practise a philosophy of stern simplicity, often akin to his own. The Athenians killed Socrates, but they produced a Plato to idealise and even to immortalise him. The Australians have drawn the line at killing Chidley. So he still awaits his Plato.

December 15.—Like a Gargantuan *casserole* outside, but modelled on a kettle inside, the Albert Hall, more or less filled with people, is often to me a delightful spectacle. It is so at this Sunday afternoon concert, when the lights are blended, and the bottom of the kettle is thickspread with humanity, and sprinkled with splashes of dusky crimson or purple on women's hats, while the sides are more slightly spread with the same humanity up to the galleries. The spectacle so fascinates me sometimes that I cannot listen to the music. At such moments the Albert Hall faintly recalls a miniature Spanish bull-ring. It is a far-off resemblance, even farther than the resemblance of St. Paul's Cathedral, with its enclosed dome and its worrying detail, to the simple and superb strength of the Pantheon, which lives in memory through the years as a great consoling Presence, but it often comes to me and brings with it an inspiring sense of dignity and colour and light before which the actual spectacle grows dim.

January 3, 1913.—I chanced to walk along the village street behind two little girls of the people, evidently sisters, with ribbons round their uncovered heads, filleting the hair which fell in careless ringlets on their backs. It was hair of the bright flaxen sort, which the poets have conventionally called "golden," the hair one sees so often on the angels of the Italian primitive painters—though not so often on living Italians. It is the hair which always seems to me more beautiful than any other, and I felt as if I wanted to follow these plain commonplace children as the rats followed the Pied Piper.

The vision brought to my mind the fact I have so often had occasion to realise, that aesthetic attraction has nothing to do with erotic attraction, however at their origins, it may have been, the two attractions were identical or sprang from the same source, and though they have constantly reacted on, and sometimes deflected, each other. Aesthetically this hair fascinates me; it is an exhilarating delight whenever I meet it. But I have never felt any personal attraction in association with this hair, or any great personal interest in the people it belonged to.

What one aesthetically craves is the outcome of one set of influences, due to one's special vision, one's traditions, one's training and environment, influences that are no doubt mainly objective and impersonal, operative on most of one's fellows. But what one personally craves is the outcome of another set of influences, due to one's peculiar and instinctive organic constitution; it is based on one's individual instinctive needs and may not be precisely the same for any two persons.

The Aestheticians are not here indeed altogether in harmony. But it would seem that, while the aesthetic and the sexual must frequently and legitimately overlap, they are definitely separate, that it is possible to distinguish the aesthetically-from the sexually-attractive in different persons and even in different features of the same person, that while it is frequently natural and right to love a "beautiful" woman, to love a woman because she is beautiful is as unreasonable as to fall in love with a beautiful statue. The aesthetically-attractive and the sexually-attractive tend to be held apart. They are two different "substances," as the mediaeval metaphysician would have said. From the standpoint of clear thinking, and also of social well-being, the confusion of them is, in theological language, damnable. In so far as Beauty is a personal lust it is unfit for wholesome social ends. Only in so far as it is lifted above personal desire is it fitted to become a social inspiration.

January 10.—Yesterday I waited for a friend at a London Underground railway station. She was delayed, and I stood for a quarter of an hour at the bottom of a flight of steps, watching the continuous stream of descending passengers, mostly women, and generally young. Some among the less young were swollen, heavy, and awkward; most were slack, drooping, limp, bony, or bent; a few were lithe and lissom; one or two had the emotional vivacity and muscular tone of abounding vitality. Not one plainly indicated that, stripped of her clothing, she would have transformed those Underground steps into the Golden Stairway of Heaven.

"The average civilised woman sags." That is the conclusion lately reached by Dickinson and Truslow after the examination of a very large number of American women, and it is a conclusion which applies without doubt far beyond the limits of the United States. Her breasts droop down, these investigators assert, her buttocks sweep low, her abdomen protrudes. While these defects are general, the modern woman has cultivated two extreme and opposite defects of physical carriage which Dickinson and Truslow picturesquely describe as the Kangaroo Type and the Gorilla Type. In the kangaroo type of civilised woman the upper part of the trunk is carried too much in front of the line of gravity, and the lower part too much behind that line. In the gorilla type of woman, on the contrary, the upper part of the body is carried too much behind the line of gravity, and the lower part too much in front. So far Dickinson and Truslow.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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