

# VARIOUS

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# Various

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### HOW IS THE WORLD USING YOU?

This is a very common question, usually put and answered with more or less levity. We seldom hear of any one answering very favourably as to the usage he experiences from the world. More generally, the questioned seems to feel that his treatment is not, and never has been, quite what it ought to be. It has sometimes occurred to me, that a great oversight is committed in our so seldom putting to ourselves the co-relative question: What have I done to make the world use me well? What merit have I shewn—by what good intention towards the world have I been animated—what has been the positive amount of those services of mine on which I found my pretensions to the world's rewards? All of these are interrogations which it would be necessary to answer satisfactorily before we could be truly entitled to take measure of the world's goodness to us in return; for surely it is not to be expected that the world is to pay in mere expectancy: time enough, in all conscience, when the service has been rendered, or at soonest, when a reasonable ground of hope has been established that it will not be withheld or performed slightingly. Only too much room there is to fear that, if these questions were put and faithfully answered, the ordinary result would be a conviction that the world had used us quite as well as we deserved.

Men are of course prevented from going through this process by their self-love. Unwillingness to see or own their shortcomings, keeps them in a sort of delusion on the subject. Well, I do not hope to make an extensive change upon them in this respect; but perhaps it may not be impossible to rouse one here and there to the correct view, and thus accomplish a little good.

Let us address ourselves to commercial life first, for the labour by which man lives is at the bottom of everything. Here we meet the now well-recognised principle in political economy, that generally wages, salaries, remunerations of all kinds, are in pretty exact relation to the value of the services performed—this value being of course determined, in a great degree, by the easiness or difficulty of the work, the commonness or rarity of the faculties and skill required for it, the risk of non-success in the profession, and so forth. Many a good fellow who feels that his income is inconveniently small, and wonders why it is not greater, might have the mystery solved if he would take a clear, unprejudiced view of the capacity in which he is acting towards the public. Is he a slave of the desk, in some office of routine business? Then let him consider how many hundreds of similar men would answer an advertisement of his seat being vacant. The fatal thing in his case evidently is, that the faculties and skill required in his situation are possessed by so many of his fellow-creatures. Is he a shopkeeper in some common line of business?—say a draper. Then let him consider how easy it is to be a draper, and how simple are the details of such a trade. While there are so many other drapers in the same street, his going out of business would never be felt as an inconvenience. He is perhaps not doing any real good to the public at all, but only interloping with the already too small business of those who were in 'the line' before him. Let him think of the many hours he spends in idleness, or making mere appearances of business, and ask if he is really doing any effective service to his fellow-creatures by keeping a shop at all. It may be a hardship to him to have failed in a good intention; but this cannot be helped. He may succeed better in some other scheme. Let him quit this, and try another, or set up in a place where there is what is called 'an opening'—that is, where his services are required—the point essential to his getting any reward for his work. We sometimes see most wonderful efforts made by individuals in an overdone trade; for example, those of a hatter, who

feels that he must give mankind a special direction to his shop, or die. Half-a-dozen tortoise-like missionaries do nothing but walk about the streets from morning to night, proclaiming from carapace and plastron,<sup>1</sup> that there are no hats equal to those at No. 98 of such a street. A van like the temple of Juggernaut parades about all day, propagating the same faith. 'If you want a good hat,' exclaims a pathetic poster, 'try No. 98.' As you walk along the street, a tiny bill is insinuated into your hand, for no other purpose, as you learn on perusing it, but to impress upon you the great truth, that there are no hats in the world either so good or so cheap as those at No. 98. The same dogma meets you in omnibuses, at railway platforms, and every other place where it can be expected that mankind will pause for a moment, and so have time to take in an idea. But it is all in vain if there be a sufficient supply of good and cheap hats already in that portion of the earth's surface. The superfluous hatter must submit to the all-prevailing law, that for labours not required, and an expenditure of capital useless as regards the public, there can be no reward, no return.

Sometimes great inconveniences are experienced in consequence of local changes; such as those effected by railways, and the displacement of hand-labour by machinery. A country inn that has supplied post-horses since the days of the civil war, is all at once, in consequence of the opening of some branch-line, deserted by its business. It is a pitiable case; but the poor landlord must not attempt to be an innkeeper without business, for then he would be a misapplied human being, and would starve. Now the world uses him a little hardly in the diversion of his customers; that may be allowed: we must all lay our account with such hardships so long as each person is left to see mainly after himself. But if he were to persist in keeping his house open, and thus reduce himself to uselessness, he would not be entitled to think himself ill-used by reason of his making no profits, seeing that he did nothing for the public to entitle him to a remuneration. The poor handloom weavers—I grieve to think of the hardships they suffer. Well do I remember when, in 1813 or 1814, a good workman in this craft could realise 36s. a week. There were even traditions then of men who had occasionally eaten pound-notes upon bread and butter, or allowed their wives to spend L.8 upon a fine china tea-service. There being a copious production of cotton-thread by machinery, but no machinery to make it into cloth, was the cause of the high wages then given to weavers. Afterwards came the powerloom; and weavers can now only make perhaps 4s. 6d. per week, even while working for longer hours than is good for their health. The result is most lamentable; but it cannot be otherwise, for the public will only reward services in the ratio of the value of these services to itself. It will not encourage a human being, with his glorious apparatus of intelligence and reflection, to mis-expend himself upon work which can be executed equally well by unthinking machinery. Were the poor weavers able so far to shake themselves free from what is perhaps a very natural prejudice, as to ask what do we do to entitle us to any better usage from the public, they would see that the fault lies in their continuing to be weavers at all. They are precisely as the innkeeper would be, if he kept his house open after the railway had taken all his customers another way.

There are many cases in the professional walks of life fully as deplorable as that of the weavers. Few things in the world are more painful to contemplate than a well-educated and able man vainly struggling to get bread as a physician, an artist, or an author. It is of course right that such a man should not be too ready to abandon the struggle as hopeless; for a little perseverance and well-directed energy may bring him into a good position. But if a fair experiment has been made, and it clearly appears that his services are not wanted, the professional aspirant ought undoubtedly to pause, and take a full unprejudiced view of his relation to the world. 'Am I,' he may say, 'to expect reward if I persist in offering the world what it does not want? Are my fellow-creatures wrong in withholding a subsistence from me, while I am rather consulting my own tastes and inclinations than their necessities?' It may then occur to him that the great law must somehow be obeyed—a something must be done for mankind which they require, and it must be done where and how they require it, in order that each

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<sup>1</sup> The upper and under plates of the tortoise are so called by naturalists.

individual may have a true claim upon the rest. To get into the right and fitting place in the social machine may be difficult; but there is no alternative. Let him above everything dismiss from his mind the notion, that others can seriously help him. Let him be self-helpful, think and do for himself, and he will have the better chance of success.

We now come to a second branch of the subject—namely, as regards our conduct and manners in the scenes of social life. One might suppose it to be a very clear thing, that a person possessing no pleasing accomplishment could never be so agreeable a member of society as one who possessed one or more of such qualifications. It might seem very evident, that a person who had never taken any trouble to acquire such accomplishments, did not deserve so much of society as one who had taken such trouble. Yet such is the blinding influence of self-love, that we continually find the dull and unaccomplished speaking and acting as if they considered themselves entitled to equal regard with others who, on the contrary, can contribute greatly to the enjoyments of their fellow-creatures. This is surely most unreasonable—it is, as in the case of the unnecessary shopkeeper or weaver, to desire the reward and yet not perform the service. Were such persons to clear themselves of prejudice, and take an unflattering view of their relation to society, they would see that the reward can only be properly expected where it has been worked for. They might in some instances be prompted to make efforts to attain some of those accomplishments which contribute to make the social hour pass agreeably, and thus attain to a true desert, besides 'advancing themselves in the scale of thinking beings.' If not, they might at least learn to submit unrepiningly to that comparatively moderate degree of notice and regard which is the due of those who are perfectly ordinary in their minds, and fit only to take a place amongst the audience.

Society, as is well known, has its favourites, and also its unpopular characters. If we dissect the character of the favourite, we shall invariably find a great substratum of the amiable. He will probably have accomplishments also, and thus be able to add to the happiness of his fellows. It is not improbable that in many cases a good share of love of approbation will be detected; but this is of no consequence in the matter. The general fact we assume to be, that the genuinely amiable is there in some force. It will, I believe, be likewise found that the unpopular character has something too much of the centripetal system about him—that is to say, desires things to centre in himself as much as possible—and neither has any great natural impulse to the amiable, nor will take the trouble to assume the complaisant. Now, it is not uncommon to observe traces of dissatisfaction in the unpopular characters, as if they felt themselves to be treated unjustly by the world. But can these persons reasonably expect to be received with the same favour as men who are at once gentle and inoffensive in their ordinary demeanour, and actively good among their fellow-creatures? Certainly not. Let us see here, too, the complaining party take an unprejudiced view of his relation to society. Let him understand that he only will be loved if he is lovable, and we may hope to see him taking some pains to correct his selfishness, and both seem and be a kind and genial man. Most assuredly, in no other way will his reputation and his treatment by the world be reversed.

In fine, we would have all who are inclined to doubt whether the world uses them well or not, to ask of themselves, in the first place, how they use the world. If they find that they do little for it—are stupid, illiterate, possessed of not one graceful accomplishment, neither useful nor ornamental, but selfish, sulky, and unamiable, then let them try whether a remedy cannot be found in themselves. It is not to be expected of all that they are to be greatly serviceable in any way to the world, or very agreeable either; but it is the duty of all who desire the world's good treatment, to do the best they can for the general interest, and to be as good and amiable as possible. At the worst, if they cannot make any change on themselves, let them resign themselves to be comparatively poor and neglected, as such is, by the rules of Providence, their inevitable fate.

## THE SISTERS OF CHARITY IN BOHEMIA

In continental countries, much of that charitable ministration which with us is left to rates and institutions, is the work of individuals acting directly under a religious impulse. The difference is perhaps not entirely in favour of the countries of the Romish faith; but there is no denying that it leads to our being presented with pictures of heroic self-devotion and generous self-sacrifice, such as it would be gratifying to see in our own country. Many of the forms of charity met with in Catholic states had their rise in one enthusiastically benevolent man, the celebrated Vincent de St Paul. Born in 1576, on the skirts of the Pyrenees, and brought up as a shepherd-boy—possessed of course of none of the advantages of fortune, this remarkable man shewed a singular spirit of charity before he had reached manhood. He became a priest; he passed through a slavery in one of the African piratical states, and with difficulty made his escape. At length we see him in the position of a parish pastor in France, exerting himself in plans for the improvement of the humbler classes, exactly like those which have become fashionable among ourselves only during the last twenty years. His exertions succeeded, and generous persons of rank enabled him to extend them. In a short time, he saw no fewer than twenty-five establishments founded in his own country, in Piedmont, Poland, and other states, for charitable purposes. Stimulated by this success to increase his exertions, he quickly formed associations of charitable persons, chiefly females, for the succour of distressed humanity. It was a most wonderful movement for the age, and must be held as no little offset against the horrible barbarities arising from religious troubles in the reign of Louis XIII. Among Vincent's happiest efforts, was that which established the *Sisters of Charity*, a sodality of self-devoted women, which exists in vigour at the present day.

During a lengthened residence in Prague, we have had much satisfaction in visiting the establishment of the Sisters, and inquiring into their doings. The house, which was founded in the seventeenth century, and contains seventy inmates, is situated near to the palace of Prince Lobkowitz, in the *Kleine Seite*, or that part of the city which lies on the right bank of the Moldau. It has much the character of a suburban villa, being surrounded by a kind of *plaisance*, enclosed in high walls, and containing shrubberies, alleys, and large clumps of chestnuts. In this pleasant retreat may often be found such of the Sisters as are not engaged in the more pressing kind of duties—never quite idle, however; for, even while seeking recreation, they will be found busied in preparing clothing for the poor, or perhaps in making medicines from herbs, if not imparting instruction to children let loose from the school which forms a part of their establishment. The place is remarkable for its perfumes, there being assembled here not merely the usual amount of roses, lilacs, jasmynes, tuberoses, and lilies, but a profusion of aromatic plants, cultivated either for medicinal purposes, or to serve in the fabrication of essences and powders, which the Sisters distribute over the world in tiny bottles and small pillow-cases and bags, in order to raise funds for the poor.

In the house, which, having been erected for a private family, is not well suited for its present purpose, everything is an example of cleanliness and order. The hospital is in the main part of the building, and is fitted up with every possible convenience. A large apothecaries' hall is attached to it, furnished with every appliance that medical art has devised, and under the superintendence of a highly-educated professional man. It is most affecting to enter the great sick-room, and see the gentle Sisters in their modest attire ministering to the patients, bending over them with their sweet and cheerful countenances, as if they felt that relief from pain and restoration to life and its enjoyments depended on their smiles. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the hospital is almost always full. Sometimes, indeed, the floor is occupied with extra beds; for the Sisters will never close their doors to any who apply, even though they should have to abandon their own simple places of repose to the new-comer, and stretch themselves on the bare floor.

We observed, in one of our visits, an old woman who was lying in one of the beds of the hospital, in a kind of trance, neither sleeping nor waking, apparently suffering no pain, but quite insensible to everything which passed around her. Her complaint was that of extreme old age, mere physical exhaustion. She had been for many years a pensioner, fed and clothed by the Sisters: having outlived all her relations, and having no friends in the world but them, she had come in, as she said herself, 'to die in peace among them.' Not far from her lay a girl, about sixteen or seventeen years of age, whose extreme paleness, or rather marble whiteness, vied with the snowy sheets which covered all but that lily face; and but for the quivering of the little frill of her cap, and the slow movement of her large blue eyes, it would have been difficult to believe that it was not the alabaster figure of some saint that reposed there. The superior looked kindly and sadly upon her, bent down, kissed her pale forehead, and went on; and though the sufferer did not move or speak, nor the feeble head turn, her large blue eyes followed the reverend mother with an expression which was all its own—an expression to be felt, deeply, intensely, but which cannot be described. And who was she, that pale, silent girl? She was an orphan, neglected by the world, betrayed and abandoned by one who appeared the only *friend* she had. Crushed in spirit, enfeebled by want and misery, without a roof to shelter her young drooping head, she had been found by the Sisters of Charity sitting alone, *her eyes fixed on the river*. They took her in, clothed, fed, and warmed her. They poured into her heart the blessed words of peace and comfort, till that poor breaking heart gushed forth in a wild tide of feeling too strong for the feeble frame; and we now saw her slowly recovering from a frightful fever, the result of past sufferings, and of that agitation which even a reaction towards hope had occasioned.

It would be too much for the present sketch to describe the many invalids before whom we passed in our visits to the sick-chambers of the Sisters of Charity, though every single case would be a lesson to humanity. The homeless, the forsaken, the orphan, each had his or her own bitter history, previous to reposing within the sanctuary of that blessed retreat; each was attended by some of those benevolent beings, whose gentle steps and sweet sunny smiles brought peace to their hearts. None who are destitute are rejected at that gate of mercy. Whatever their faults may have been, whatever their frailties, if overtaken by want or sickness—if, deserted and trampled upon, they sink without any visible hand being stretched out to save them from despair and death—then do the Sisters of Charity interpose to succour and to save. To them it is sufficient that the sufferer requires their aid. There every medical assistance is promptly given; every comfort, and even luxury.

Most surprising it is to the common worldling to see these gentle beings thus living entirely for others, seeking no reward but that inspired by Christian promises and hopes. Nor is it mere drudgery and self-denial which constitute their great merit. When humanity calls from the midst of danger, whether in the shape of pestilence or of war, they are equally unflinching. It has been our lot to see a city taken by storm, the streets on fire and half-choked with ruins, and these ruins thickly strewn with the dead and dying. There, before the wild scene had been in the least calmed—amid smoke, and rain, and the frequent rattling fire of musketry—we have seen the black dresses and long white kerchiefs of the Sisters of Charity flitting about, emblems of mercy in a world which might otherwise seem only fit for demons. The place we speak of was Arcis-sur-Aube. Napoleon, who looked on the system of this sisterhood 'as one of the most sublime conceptions of the human mind,' was then in the act of falling back with 30,000 men, after having been attacked the evening before (March 19, 1814) by 130,000 Austrians. He was within three weeks of the prostration of his power, and he must have felt bitterly the crushing reverses he was experiencing. Yet he stopped on the nearly demolished bridge of the town, and ordered 300 Napoleons to be given out of his then scanty resources to the Sisters of Charity, of whose devotion he had been an eye-witness from the commencement of the attack. As he crossed the bridge immediately afterwards, part of it gave way, and he was precipitated into the Aube, but, by the help of his horse, soon gained the safe bank.

The good works of the Sisters do not stop with their exertions for the sick and miserable. They have also their schools for orphans and foundlings. Here the tender human plant, perhaps deserted

by a heartless mother, often gains more than it has lost. It is only to infants in these extraordinary circumstances that they are called upon to give shelter, for the children of the poor in general are provided for in public establishments. When we last visited the convent in Prague, we found about thirty girls entertained as inmates. As soon as they are capable of learning, they are instructed in every branch of domestic economy; and as they grow up, and their several talents develop themselves, they are educated accordingly: some for instructresses, either in music or any general branch of education; others, as seamstresses, ladies-maids, cooks, laundry-maids, house-maids. In short, every branch of useful domestic science is taught.

When the girls attain sufficient age and experience to occupy the several situations for which they have been instructed—that is, from seventeen to eighteen, the superior of the convent procures them a place in the family of some of her friends or acquaintance, and always, so far as lies in her power, with a mistress as much as possible suited to the intelligence and instruction of her *protégée*. The day of separation, however, is always painful. It is, in fact, the parting of a mother and her child. We have seen the orphan cling to her adopted mother, and as she knelt to receive her blessing, bathe her hands in tears of gratitude and affection; while the reverend superior would clasp her to her bosom, and recommend to her adopted child the blessed principles which she had inculcated from her infancy. Nor do they leave the home of their childhood empty. Each girl on quitting the convent is provided with a little *trousseau* or outfit for her first appearance in the world: this consists of two complete suits of clothes—an ordinary and a better one, four petticoats, four chemises, six pair of stockings, the same number of gloves, and two pair of shoes. We have seen many of these orphans and foundlings in after-life; some of them occupying the most respectable situations, as the wives of opulent citizens, and others filling places of the most important trust in some of the highest families of the empire; we have also had several in our own service, and have always had reason to congratulate ourselves on our good-fortune in engaging them.

One of the first principles of education in the orphan schools of the Sisters of Charity is economy: while they spare nothing in the cause of humanity, so far as their means will go, the strictest frugality reigns throughout, and is always inculcated as the foundation of the means of doing good. Consequently, all of whom we have had any experience, who were educated in these charitable institutions, never failed, however humble their situation, to make some little savings: one whom we have at this moment in our eye, and who not many years since served us in the capacity of cook, and fulfilled her charge with great fidelity and zeal, has, by her extraordinary industry and economy, collected in the savings' bank in Prague no less than 700 florins, or L.70 sterling. And yet with all this economy she was so charitable and liberal in giving of her own to the poor, that we have often had to caution her against extravagance in that respect. By this spirit of economy, we have also known several of the orphans and foundlings arrive at a degree of independence which enables them in their turn to assist the deserted generation of to-day, and to do for them as they themselves had been done by. Many also have been the means of rescuing others from crime and starvation by conducting them to that blessed institution, to which, under Heaven, they owe all their prosperity and happiness in life.

Of these charitable communities there are many orders, which differ from the above chiefly in name, and in the Sisters never quitting their sanctuary or the precincts of their gardens. The Sisters of Charity, properly so called, not being vowed to seclusion, are more generally known to the world, who see them, and therefore believe that they exist for charitable purposes, while of those of whom they see nothing they know nothing; and should the casual observer meet in the street on a festival, or day of examination, a column of from 300 to 800 children, from six to ten or twelve years of age, neatly clothed, and whose happy countenances and beautiful behaviour bespeak the care with which their early education has been conducted—it never once occurs to him that these are the children of the poor, the children of the free schools of the 'Sisters' of the Ursuline Convent, or of the Congregation of Notre Dame, or of some other religious establishment of the kind. But perhaps we shall have an opportunity hereafter of introducing these invisible Sisters of Charity to the notice of our readers.

Suffice it now to say, that the 'Sisters of Mercy,' the 'Ursalines,' the 'Congregations of Notre Dame,' the 'English Ladies,' and many others, are all in practice Sisters of Charity.

It is not uncommon to hear their condition deplored, as one from which all earthly enjoyments are excluded, or as a kind of death in life. But personal observation has given us different ideas on this subject. Within those lofty, and sometimes sullen-looking walls which enclose the convents of the sisterhoods we speak of, we have spent some of the most agreeable hours of our life, conversing with refined and enlightened women on the works of beneficence in which they were engaged; everything bearing an aspect of that cheerfulness and animation which only can be expected in places where worthy duties are well performed.

## ADVENTURES OF AN ARMY PHYSICIAN

Robert Jackson, the son of a small landed proprietor of limited income but respectable character in Lanarkshire, was born in 1750, at Stonebyres, in that county. He received his education first at the barony school of Wandon, and afterwards under the care of Mr Wilson, a teacher of considerable local celebrity at Crawford, one of the wildest spots in the Southern Highlands. He was subsequently apprenticed to Mr William Baillie, of Biggar; and in 1766 proceeded, for the completion of his professional training, to the university of Edinburgh, at that time illustrated and adorned by the genius and learning of such men as the Monros, the Cullens, and the Blacks.

In pursuing his studies at this favoured abode of science and literature, young Jackson is said to have evinced all that purity of morals and singleness of heart which characterised him in after-life, and to have resisted the allurements of dissipation by which, in those days especially, the youthful student was tempted to wander from the paths of virtuous industry. His circumstances were, however, distressingly narrow; and not only was he forced to forego the means of professional improvement open only to the more opulent student; but in order to meet the expenses of the winter-sessions, he was obliged to employ the summer, not in the study but in the practice of his profession. He engaged himself as medical officer to a Greenland whaler, and in two successive summers visited, in that capacity, 'the thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;' returning on each occasion with a recruited purse and a frame strengthened and invigorated by exposure and exercise. During these expeditions he occupied his leisure with the study of the Greek and Roman languages, and the careful and repeated perusal of the best authors in both.

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