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HINTS ON THE USEFUL-KNOWLEDGE MOVEMENT

The advocates of the diffusion of useful knowledge among the great body of the people, found one of their greatest difficulties to lie in an inability on the part of the people themselves to see what benefit they were to derive from the knowledge proposed to be imparted. This knowledge consisted of such a huge mass of facts of all kinds, that few could overcome a sense of hopelessness as attending every endeavour to acquire it. Take botany alone, it was said. You have a hundred thousand species of plants to become acquainted with—to learn their names, and to what genera and orders they belong, besides everything like a knowledge of their habitats, their properties, and their physiology. Seeing that this is but one of the sciences, there might well be a pause before admitting that the moral and intellectual regeneration of our people was to be brought about by the useful-knowledge movement.

There was here, however, a mistake on both hands, and one which we are only now beginning to appreciate. It was not observed at first, that there is a great distinction to be drawn between the relations of science to its cultivators or investigators, and those which it bears to the community at large. It is most important that a scientific zoologist like Mr Waterhouse, or a profound physiologist like Professor Owen, should determine and describe every species with the minutest care, even to the slightest peculiarities in the markings of a shell or the arrangements of a joint, because that exactness of description is necessary in the foundations of the science. But it is not necessary that every member of the public should follow the man of science into all these minutiae. It is not required of him, that he should have the names of even the seventy families of plants at his finger-ends, though that is not beyond the reach of most people. Some summation of the facts, some adroit generalisation, if such be attainable, is enough for him. The man of science is, as it were, a workman employed in rearing up a structure for the man of the world to look at or live in. The latter has no more necessary concern with the processes of investigation and compilation, than a gentleman has with the making of the mortar and hewing of the stones used in a house which he has ordered to be built for his residence.

Were the facts of science thus generalised, it is surprising how comprehensive a knowledge of the whole system of the universe every person might have. Only generalise enough, and no one need to be ignorant. Just in proportion as a man has little time to bestow on learning, condense the more what you wish to impart, and the result, where there is any fair degree of preparedness, will be all the better. In the very last degree of exigency, explain that nature is a system of fixed method and order, standing in a beneficial relation to us, but requiring a harmonious conformity on our part, in order that good may be realised and evil avoided, and you have taken your pupil by one flight to the very summit of practical wisdom. The most illustrious *savant*, while knowing some of the intermediate steps by which that wisdom was attained, and having many delightful subjects of reflection in the various phenomena involved in the generalisation, cannot go an inch further.

This is putting the matter in its extreme form. We are entitled to suppose that the bulk of mankind have some time to spend on the acquirement of a knowledge of the natural system of things into which their Maker has thrown them. Grant a little time to such a science, for example, as botany; we would never attempt impressing a vast nomenclature upon them. We would give them at once more pleasure and more instruction in shewing some of the phenomena of vegetable physiology: fundamental and profoundly interesting matters, of which specific distinctions and external characters of all kinds are only accidental results—that is, results determined by the outer phenomena affecting

the existence of plants. A single lesson on the profound wonders of morphology would go further, we verily believe, in making our pupil a man of science, than the committing of the whole Linnæan system to memory. In zoology, again, we would leave the endless details of minute description to the tomes of the scientific naturalist, and be content to sketch animals in broad masses—first, in regard to grades of organisation; and, second, in regard to family types. The Feline Animal, we say, is one idea of the Creator—a destructive creature of wonderful strength in comparison with its bulk—of immense agility, furtive in its movements, furnished with great powers for the destruction of others. Lion, tiger, panther, ounce, lynx, jaguar, cat, are all essentially one creature—not the slightest difference can be traced in their osteological structure, hardly any in their habits. Why dwell, then, on minutiae of external appearances, if time presses, and there be much of more importance to be learned? So, also, is the Cirrhopode one idea of the author of nature. You may find a very respectable quarto account of the family, tracing them in all their varieties; but a page might inform you of all that is essential about the barnacle, curious as its history has been, and you need not ponder on the quarto unless you have some particular curiosity to gratify. The Types of nature, both in her vegetable and animal departments are, after all, few. Describe each comprehensively, group them all in correct relations to each other, and display their various destinies and connections with the rest of creation, and you enable your pupil to learn in a few weeks more than Pliny mastered in a lifetime.

It appears to us that the reason why science is so coldly received in ordinary society is, that either by reason of its unripeness for generalisation, or of the tendency of its cultivators to keep continually analysing and multiplying facts, it has not in general been presented in propositions which the ordinary mind can comprehend or make use of. We should be loath to urge it into generalisations for which it was not prepared; but while this is duly avoided, we would have it to be somewhat more vigilant than it usually is, in taking opportunities of proceeding with those synthetical clumpings of facts which we conceive to be so essential, on mere grounds of convenience, to its success with the multitude. Better be a little dogmatical, than insupportably tedious. Better have your knowledge in some order, though not perhaps beyond correction, than in no order at all. It is to be feared, however, that the thing wanting is not the sufficiency of particulars out of which to make general or comprehensive truths, but that of the requisite intellectual power and habit on the part of the men of science. The constant working towards separate facts seems to disqualify the mind for grouping or clustering them. Hundreds can detect a new sphinx or butterfly in the fauna of a country or a county, and are content with such small results, for one who can lay a few facts together, and make one truth out of all. One could almost believe, that there is a greater want of comprehensive intellect in the walks of science, than in some other fields of labour which make less pretension to an exertion of the mental faculties: for example, merchandise. And does not that very appearance of continual peddling amongst trifles, in some degree prevent the highest kind of minds from going into the fields of science? There is here, it appears to us, a great error to be corrected.

Another cause why science makes little way with the multitude is, that there is too little connection to be observed between the ordinary proceedings of the scientific and learned, and the practical good of the community. The British Association meets, and has its week of notoriety, and when we look into the resulting volume, what do we find? Doubtless, many ingenious speculations and many curious investigations, which may in the long-run prove beneficial in some indirect way. But it must be admitted, that there is hardly anything bearing directly upon the great interests of contemporary humanity. The crying social evils of our time and country obtain no notice from the recognised students of science. To all appearance, the political error which legitimated scarcity would have never been put an end to by them. The sanitary evils which press so severely upon the health and morals of the common people, would apparently go on for ever, for anything that philosophers have to say to the contrary. What concern have they taken in the question of education, either in promoting its extension to the masses, or improving its quality? Our national councils, and every deliberative public body throughout the country, spend one half their time in wrangling about the most contemptible

puerilities, without drawing one word of indignant comment, or one effort at correction, from the learned. The studious are like stars, and dwell apart. Busying themselves in a world of their own, exercising no visible influence on the current of ordinary things, is it to be wondered at that the common people of the world put them and their pursuits almost as entirely out of account as they do the proceedings at Melton Mowbray? We grant it is not desirable that the *cui bono* should be the ruling consideration in matters of science; but we at the same time feel, that it would be well for it if it gave a little more attention to the social and moral questions affecting living interests, or at least endeavoured to bring its results to account in practical improvements of general utility.¹

We must recur after all to the maxim which it is mainly the object of this paper to impress—that judicious generalisation is the indispensable pre-requisite to a more general diffusion of knowledge. To bring it to an apothegm—Let the man of science in seeking to enlighten himself, pursue analysis; in seeking to enlighten the outer public, he has no chance but in synthesis.

¹ We have much pleasure in acknowledging one instance of a movement in the right direction, in connection with the Museum of Economic Geology in London. While nothing can exceed the beauty of the arrangements in that institution, for enabling everybody that chooses to study the science from the actual objects, the professors have, during the last winter, come forward with supererogatory zeal to teach the working-classes, and to illustrate in every possible way the bearings of the subject upon the arts and economy of life.

THE FALSE HAIR:

A TALE

'Pray remember, Monsieur Lagnier, that I wish particularly to go out this morning. It is now past one o'clock, and if you continue endeavouring to do what is quite impossible, my hair will never be dressed. You had much better plait it as usual.'

Adelaide de Varenne pronounced these words in a tone of pettishness very unusual with her, as, giving vent to a long sigh of impatience and weariness, she glanced hastily at the mirror on her toilet-table, and saw there reflected the busy fingers of M. Lagnier, the hairdresser, deliberately unfastening her hair, and preparing once more to attempt the arrangement, which repeated failures had declared to be an impossibility. He looked up, however, as he did so, and seemed to read the expression of her features, for a comic mixture of astonishment and dismay immediately overspread his own.

'Fifteen years,' he exclaimed, 'I have had the honour of daily attending mademoiselle, and she never was angry with me before! What can I have done to offend her?'

'Oh, nothing very serious,' replied the young girl, good-naturedly; 'but really I wish you would not dally so long. It is of very little consequence, I think, how one's hair is worn.'

'Why, certainly every style is equally becoming to mademoiselle,' was the old man's polite reply. 'Nevertheless, I had set my heart upon arranging it to-day according to the last fashion: it would suit mademoiselle *à ravir*.' Adelaide laughed.

'But you see it is impossible,' she said. 'I have so very little hair; and I am sure it is not my fault—nor,' she added archly, 'the fault of all those infallible pomades and essences recommended to me by somebody I know.' M. Lagnier looked embarrassed.

'Mademoiselle is so gay, she finds amusement in everything,' he replied. 'I cannot laugh upon so serious a subject.' Adelaide laughed again more heartily than before, and M. Lagnier continued, indignantly: 'Mademoiselle does not care for the loss of her beauty, then?'

'Oh, I did not know there was any question of that!' and the young girl suddenly resumed an expression of gravity, which completely imposed upon the simple old man.

'You see, mademoiselle,' he continued earnestly, 'I have been considering a long time what is best to be done. It is evident that my pomades, usually so successful, have no effect upon *your* hair; owing, I suppose, to—to— I can't say exactly what it is owing to. It is very strange. I never knew them to fail before. Would mademoiselle object to wearing a slight addition of false hair?' he asked anxiously, after a moment's pause.

'Indeed, I should not like it,' was the reply. 'Besides, Monsieur Lagnier, you have often told me that, in all Paris, it was impossible to obtain any of the same shade as mine.'

'Ah, but I have succeeded at last!' exclaimed he; and as he spoke, he drew triumphantly from his pocket a small packet, in which was carefully enveloped a long lock of soft golden hair.

'How beautiful!' Adelaide involuntarily exclaimed. 'Oh, Monsieur Lagnier, that is far finer and brighter than mine.'

'The difference is very slight indeed; it would be imperceptible when both were braided together,' returned the hairdresser. 'Do, pray, allow me, mademoiselle, to shew you the effect;' and without waiting for a reply, he commenced the operation. In a few moments it was completed, and the old man's delight was extreme. 'There!' he exclaimed in ecstasy. 'I knew the style would suit you exactly. Oh, mademoiselle, pray allow it to remain so; I should be *au désespoir* were I obliged to unfasten it now.'

Adelaide hesitated: it was, however, no conscientious scruple which occasioned her hesitation. She was a Frenchwoman, a beauty, and a little—a very little—of a coquette. To add to her attractions

by the slight *supercheries* of the toilet was, she thought, a very venial sin; it was a thing which, in the society that surrounded her, was looked upon as necessary, and sometimes even considered as a virtue. She was a strange girl, a dreamer, an enthusiast, with a warm heart, and a lively, but perhaps too easily-excited imagination. From her infancy, she had been accustomed to reflect, to question, and to reason; but left almost entirely to her own unguided judgment, the habit was not in every respect favourable to the formation of her character. It was, however, but little injured by it. She was one of those favoured beings whom no prosperity can spoil, no education entirely mislead, and whose very faults arise from the overflowings of a good and generous nature. The thought which agitated her now was one worthy of her gentle heart.

'Monsieur Lagnier,' she said earnestly, 'such beautiful hair could only have belonged to a young person. She must have been in great distress to part with it. Do you know her? Did she sell it to you? What is her name? I cannot bear to wear it: I shall be thinking of her continually.'

'Ah, Mademoiselle Adelaide, that is so like you! Why, I have provided half the young ladies in Paris with false tresses, and not one has ever asked me the slightest question as to how or where they were obtained. Indeed, I should not often have been able to reply. In this case, however, it is different. I bought it myself, and consequently can give you a little information respecting it. Yesterday evening, I was standing at my door in the Rue St Honoré, when a young girl, attracted no doubt by the general appearance of my window, stopped to admire the various articles exhibited there. She had a pretty face, but I scarcely looked at that; I only saw her hair, her beautiful, rich, golden hair. It was pushed carelessly behind her ears, and half concealed beneath a little white cap. "Mademoiselle," I said, accosting her—for I could not bear that she should pass the door—"is there anything that you would like to buy? a pair of combs, for instance. I have some very cheap; although," I added, with a sigh, as she appeared about to move on, "such lovely hair as yours requires no ornament." At these words, she returned quickly, and looking into my face, exclaimed: "Will you buy my hair, monsieur?" "Willingly, my child," I replied; and in another instant she was seated in my shop, and the bright scissors were gleaming above her head. Then my heart failed me, and I felt half inclined to refuse the offer. "Are you not sorry, child, to part with your hair?" I asked. "No," she answered abruptly; and gathering it all together in her hand, she put it into mine. The temptation was too great; besides, I saw that she herself was unwilling that we should break the contract. Her countenance never changed once during the whole time, and when all was over, she stooped, and picking up a lock which had fallen upon the ground, asked in an unflinching voice: "May I keep this, monsieur?" I said yes, and paid her; and then she went away, smiling, and looking quite happy, poor little thing. After all, mademoiselle, what is the use of beauty to girls in her class of life? She is better without it.'

'And her name—did you not ask her name?' inquired Adelaide reproachfully.

'Why, yes, mademoiselle, I did. She told me that it was Lucille Delmont, and that she was by trade a *fleuriste*. It was all the information she would give me.'

'What could she have wanted with the money? Perhaps she was starving: there is so much misery in Paris!' continued Mademoiselle de Varenne, after a pause.

'She was very pale and thin,' said the hairdresser; 'but then so are the generality of our young citizens. Do not make yourself unhappy about it, mademoiselle; I shall see her again, probably, and shall endeavour to find out every circumstance respecting her.' With these words, M. Lagnier respectfully took leave, having by one more expressive glance testified his delighted approval of the alteration which had taken place in the young lady's appearance.

Adelaide, having summoned her maid, continued her toilet in a listless and absent manner. Her thoughts were fixed upon the young girl whose beauty had been sacrificed for hers, and an unconquerable desire to learn her fate took possession of her mind. Her intended disposal of the morning seemed quite to be forgotten; and she was on the point of forming new plans, very different from the first, when the lady to whose care she had been confided during the absence of her father from town, entered the apartment, and aroused her from her reverie by exclaiming: 'Ah, you naughty

girl! I have been waiting for you this half hour. Was not the carriage ordered to take us to the Tuileries?'

'Yes, indeed, it was; but I hope you will excuse me: I had almost forgotten it.' And Adelaide immediately related to her friend the circumstance which had occurred, and begged her aid in the discovery of Lucille. Madame d'Héranville laughed—reasoned, but in vain; and, finding Adelaide resolved, she at length consented to accompany her upon the search, expressing as she did so her entire conviction that it would prove useless and unsatisfactory.

The day was spent in visits to the principal *modistes* of Paris; but from none could any information be gained concerning the young flower-girl. None had ever even heard her name. Adelaide was returning home, disappointed, but not discouraged. Still resolved to continue her endeavours, she had just announced to Madame d'Héranville her intention of visiting upon the following day the shops of an inferior class, when the carriage was suddenly arrested in its course by the crowd of vehicles which surrounded it, and they found themselves exactly before the door of a small warehouse of the description she alluded to. She was about to express a wish to enter, it being still early, when her attention was attracted by two persons who stood conversing near the door, and whose voices, slightly raised, were distinctly audible. They had excited the interest and curiosity of both Adelaide and her companion by the earnestness of their manner, and by the expression of sorrow depicted upon the countenance of the elder speaker, a young man of about twenty-five years of age, who, from his costume, as well as accent, appeared to be a stranger in Paris.

'I have promised—will you not trust me?' he said in a half-reproachful tone; and Adelaide bent eagerly forward to catch a glimpse of the young girl to whom these words were addressed; but her face was turned away, and the large hood of a woollen cloak was drawn over her head, almost completely concealing her features.

'I do trust you,' she said in reply to the young man's words—'I do indeed. And now, good-by, dear André; we shall meet again soon—in our own beautiful Normandie.' And she held out her hand, which he took and held for an instant without speaking.

'May I not conduct you home?' he asked at length.

'No, André; it is better that we should part here. We must not trust too much to our courage, it has failed us so often already.' And as she spoke, she raised her head, and looked up tearfully at her companion, disclosing as she did so a face of striking beauty, although worn and pallid to a painful degree, and appearing even more so than it really was from the total absence of her hair. The tears sprang to Adelaide's eyes. In the careworn countenance before her she read a bitter tale. Almost instinctively, she drew forth her purse, and leaning over the side of the carriage, called 'Lucille! Lucille!' But the young girl did not hear her; she had already turned, and was hastening rapidly away, while André stood gazing after her, as if uncertain of the reality of what had just occurred. He was so deeply engrossed in his reflections, that he did not hear his name repeatedly pronounced by both Adelaide and her friend. The latter at length directed the servant to accost him, and the footman was alighting for that purpose, when two men turned quickly the corner of the street, and perceiving André, stopped suddenly, and one of them exclaimed: 'Ah, good-evening, Bernard; you are just the very fellow we want;' and taking André by the arm, he drew him under the shade of a *porte cochère*, and continued, as he placed a small morocco case in his hand: 'Take care of this for me, André, till I return: I shall be at your lodgings in an hour. Giraud and I are going to the Cité, and as this pocket-book contains valuables, we are afraid of losing it. *Au revoir!*'

André made no reply. He placed the pocket-book carelessly in his bosom, and his two friends continued hastily their way. He was himself preparing to depart, when the footman touched him gently on the shoulder, and told him of Mademoiselle de Varenne's wish to speak to him. André approached the carriage, surprised and half abashed at the unlooked-for honour; then taking off his cap, waited respectfully for one of the ladies to address him. At the same instant, a police-officer seized him roughly by the arm, and exclaimed: 'Here is one of them! I saw them all three together

not two hours ago!' And calling to a comrade who stood near, he was about to lead André away. At first, the young man made no resistance; but his face grew deadly pale, and his lip trembled violently.

'What do you want? What have I done?' he demanded at length, turning suddenly round to face his accuser; but the latter only replied by a laugh, and an assurance that he would know all about it presently. A slight struggle ensued, in the midst of which the pocket-book fell to the ground, and a considerable number of bank-notes bestrewed the pavement. At this sight, André seemed suddenly to understand the cause of his arrest; he stood for an instant gazing at the notes with a countenance of horror; then, with an almost gigantic effort, he broke from the grasp which held him, and darted away in the direction which had before been taken by the young girl. He was immediately followed by the police; but although Adelaide and her friend remained for some time watching eagerly the pursuit, they were unable to ascertain whether he had succeeded in effecting his escape.

'I am sure I hope so, poor fellow!' murmured Adelaide as they drove homewards—'for Lucille's sake, as well as for his.'

'You have quite made up your mind, then, as to its being Lucille that we saw?' said Madame d'Héranville with a smile. 'If it was,' she added, more gravely, 'I think she can scarcely merit all the trouble you are giving yourself on her account. Her friendship for André does not speak much in her favour.'

'Why not? Surely you do not think *he* stole the pocket-book?' asked Adelaide, in undisguised dismay.

'Perhaps not; but his intimacy with those who did, leads one to suppose that he is not unaccustomed to such scenes. You remember the old proverb: "Dis moi qui tu hantes, je te dirai qui tu es."'

'Do you not think we should give information respecting what we saw? He was certainly unconscious of its contents?' asked Adelaide again, after a short silence.

'He appeared so,' returned Madame d'Héranville; 'and I shall write to-morrow to the police-office. Perhaps our evidence may be useful to him.'

'To-morrow!' thought Adelaide; but she did not speak her thoughts aloud. 'And to-night he must endure all the agonies of suspense!' And then she looked earnestly at her companion's face, and wondered if, when hers, like it, was pale and faded, her heart should also be as cold. A strange, sad feeling crept over her, and she continued quite silent during the remainder of the drive. Her thoughts were still busy in the formation of another plan for the discovery of Lucille, when, upon her arrival at home, she was informed that M. Lagnier desired anxiously to see her, having something to communicate.

'Mademoiselle, I have not been idle,' he exclaimed, immediately upon entering the apartment. 'Here is Lucille's address, and I have seen her mother. Poor things!' he added, 'they are indeed in want. Their room is on the sixth floor, and one miserable bed and a broken chair are all the furniture. For ornament, there was a rose-tree, in a flower-pot, upon the window-seat: it was withered, like its young mistress!'

'They are not Parisians?' inquired Adelaide.

'No, no, mademoiselle. From what the mother said, I picked up quite a little romance concerning them. The husband died two years ago, leaving them a pretty farm, and a comfortable home in Normandie. Lucille was very beautiful. All the neighbours said so, and Mrs Delmont was proud of her child. She could not bear her to become a peasant's wife, and brought her here, hoping that her beauty might secure to her a better fate. The young girl had learned a trade, and with the assistance of that, and the money they had obtained upon selling the farm, they contrived to manage very well during the first year. Lucille made no complaint, and her mother thought she was happy. A Parisian paid her attention, and asked her to become his wife. She refused; but as he appeared rich, the mother would not hear of declining the offer. She encouraged him to visit them as much as possible, and hoped at length to overcome Lucille's dislike to the marriage. One evening, however, as

they were all seated together, a young man entered the room. He had been an old lover of Lucille's—a neighbour's son, and an early playmate. She sprang forward eagerly to meet him, and the rich pretender left the place in a fit of jealous anger, and they have not seen him since. Then troubles came, one following another, until at last they fell into the state of destitution in which I found them. André Bernard, who had quarrelled with his parents in order to follow them, could find no work, and every sou that Lucille gained was given to him, to save him, as she said, from ruin or from sin. Last week she sold her hair, to enable him to return home. She had made him promise that he would do so, and to night he is to leave Paris.'

'It is he, then, whom we saw arrested!' exclaimed Adelaide; 'and he will not be able to return home. Oh, let us go to Lucille at once! Do, pray, come with me, Madame d'Héranville!' and turning to her friend, she pleaded so earnestly, and the large tears stood so imploringly in her eyes, that it was impossible to resist. Madame d'Héranville refastened her cloak, and soon afterwards, with Adelaide and M. Lagnier, found herself ascending the steep and dilapidated staircase of the house inhabited by the Delmonts. Adelaide seated herself upon the highest step, to await the arrival of her friend, whose agility in mounting was not quite equal to her own. As she did so, a loud and angry voice was heard proceeding from the apartment to which this staircase led. It was followed by a sound as of a young girl weeping, and then a few low, half-broken sentences were uttered in a voice of heart-broken distress.

'Mother, dear mother,' were the words, 'do not torture me. I am so ill—so wretched, I wish I were dead.'

'Ill! wretched! ungrateful girl!' was the reply. 'And whose fault is it that you are so? Not mine! Blame yourself, if you will, and him, your darling André. What will he do now that you have no more to give? nothing even that you can sell, to supply him with the means of gratifying his extravagance. You will soon see how sincere he is in his affection, and how grateful he feels for all the sacrifices that you have made—sacrifices, Lucille, that you would not have made for me.'

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