LIFE'S CONTRASTS

BY

JOHN FOSTER FRASER

"In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow"

WITH PORTRAIT AND EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LIMITED
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1908

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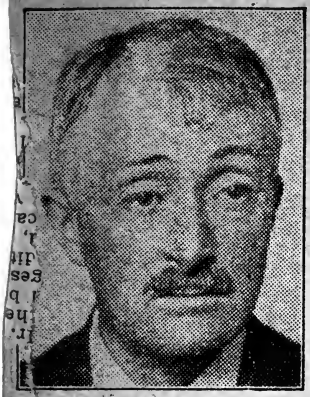

John Masefield.

My last article took us on a Books' Tour round the world, and I have been asked by various correspondents to complete the trip. Accordingly we move on towards Ceylon. "The Pearl on the Brow of India" is the oft-quoted description of the wonderful island. But to those of us who have drunk deep of the beauty of its spicy groves, melodious jungles, and ruined cities it is just Eden. "Golden Tips" is a book about Ceylon which can be picked up second-hand anywhere for a silver trifle. Its author, Henry Cave, also wrote the "Ruined Cities of Ceylon," which cities—though less renowned—are in some ways as remarkable as the remains of Pompeii. There are a number of rivals to Cave's histories, and none with a finer understanding than Still's "The Ancient Capitals of Ceylon," a copy of which I last saw marked at a humble half-crown. For the sweet

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HER (1579-1625).

Yours very truly

John Foster Fraser

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LIFE'S CONTRASTS

CHAPTER I

RATHER PERSONAL

My children were charmingly mysterious this evening. They consulted in corners, and had hurried whisperings with their mother. Evidently a tremendous secret, which they advertised with flushed cheeks, sly looks at me, and sudden exclamations, "Daddy, it is not fair you should listen." When I pretended indignation at being left out of their confidences I was assured I would know all about it to-morrow.

But I know all about it already. To-morrow is my birthday, and I shall be forty years of age. The money-boxes have been opened, and the pennies and half-pennies and sixpences have been pooled. When I go down to breakfast in the morning, by my plate will be lying a package of very crumpled brown paper, tied indifferently with twine by childish fingers, and I shall be all astonishment what it can possibly mean, and simulate excitement, and my two girls will watch

with dancing eyes my tremendous delight when their birthday gift is unfolded.

The mother said they were difficult to get off to sleep to-night. They extracted a solemn promise that she "would not tell." Now all is quiet in the nursery above me. My wife has gone to bed, and the household is still. It is the hour I like to sit alone in my library, not reading, but musing and smoking my pipe.

I shall be forty years of age to-morrow—and that brings thoughts. I remember when forty seemed the years of an old man, and I smile. How easily the years have gone since twenty-five ago, a slim and gawky lad of fifteen, I started earning a few shillings a week in the dingy office of a small country newspaper. I looked forward to the time when, as a real reporter, I would be earning two pounds a week. That was the limit of my ambition. Well, things have been much better than that—oh, a great deal better, though I often wonder why. Things are comfortable. I think I could afford a motor-car if my fancy ran that way—and the possession of a motor-car is the modern criterion of well-doing. But I prefer old furniture and pictures and books.

My books lumber the house, and behind me are shelves with a thousand volumes at least. Many I bought long years ago, cheap editions

of those which are described as classics. The cloth coverings are getting dingy, and dust rests on them. You would make me a little uneasy if you took some of them down, for their leaves have never been cut.

A quaint delight comes as, with pencil in hand, I go through the list of a second-hand bookseller and tick off the volumes I want. When the books arrive I dust them and put them on the shelves, somewhat wistfully, and with a sigh. I wonder when the time will come that I shall read them? Often I look at the long rows and murmur, "Ah, my friends, you and I shall know one another closely—when I have time."

And when will that time be? Will another twenty-five years roll by, and the leaves still be uncut? Alas! I am such a strong, healthy fellow, with sickness never hitting me, that sometimes I wish I could be knocked ill, not very ill, just sufficiently ill to lie in bed and read books, or that some stern doctor would forbid me doing any work for six months, so that I must idle my time in some village on the seashore. What a lot of reading I should then do! I laugh that such luck never comes my way. Meanwhile, there are newspaper articles to be written, commands from editors of magazines to be obeyed,

the publisher of my books—inclined to bully at the lateness in delivery of my manuscript—to be conciliated.

As the lives of writing-men go, I have reason to burn joss-candles before the altars of the gods which have been so good to me. I do not wear long hair or flamboyant ties, or affect the airs of a literary gent—at least, I hope not. My books make no pretence to be other than journeyman work. Some of them are already forgotten, as all of them and I shall be in the fulness of time. But they have brought me friends, have pushed me into the circle of men in English life who are worth knowing—and friendship is the only thing in life we need hold tight.

It is nice to have friends. It is nice to be invited to the houses of great men in the land, not because they are great and their houses are beautiful and costly, and their surroundings the refinement of extravagance, but because of the chuckling satisfaction which the experience brings. Whenever a Buddha-faced, powder-haired, knee-breeched flunkey is helping me off with my coat I want to laugh. For I think of my early days in London, in the early 'nineties.

People talk about the fine tonic it is to a young fellow to have "gone through the mill," how it makes a man of him, develops strength

of character. Sheer rubbish—the sort of stuff talked by prosperous merchants when giving away prizes at technical schools. Poverty never did any man any benefit. None of us are so good as those who love us think we are, and none of us are so bad as, in black half-hours, we accuse ourselves of being. But poverty stirs the gall in our nature. How I hated to be poor, and how I hated and envied those who were rich! Sometimes I have wondered why it was that in those days I did not go right to the devil.

There must be thousands of young fellows in London now in precisely the same condition I was in those days. I was a provincial: had pulled up stakes and come to London to sink or swim. I had a two-roomed flat in a dreary block of buildings in Chelsea, and a drunken charwoman came in the mornings to cook my breakfast and tidy up. One or two newspaper men I knew casually; but I was practically alone. I wrote short stories, generally two a week, and had two a month accepted. There was not a door in London at which I had any claim to knock for friendly admittance.

That is quite an ordinary experience amongst thousands of young men. And what is it to thousands of young women? Above my cupboard flat lived a woman typist. Most of the

day the persistent click-click-click of her machine could be heard. When I came home, after my nightly marching of the streets, and feeding at some cheap restaurant, I would hear the unceasing click-click, lasting sometimes till past one o'clock in the morning. Being a sentimental, impressionable youth, I wove a romance; she was slim and dark and beautiful, toiling lonesome. Maybe she had no more friends than I had. Perhaps she would have been just as glad of a man friend as I often found myself hungering for the friendship of a woman.

Sometimes, after a day of slow and laborious scribbling, when the evening came damp, and I put on my boots to tramp the streets and save myself from the dog of melancholy, I wondered if I dared mount to the next landing, rap at the door, and ask her to come and have a walk. I intended to be chivalrous; but I knew I should be rude —and only one woman in a hundred thousand would not have misunderstood. But one day I met her on the stairs, and the little romance evaporated. She was not slim nor dark nor beautiful. She was drab-faced, and podgy, and dressed badly, and looked sour—just one of the crowd of women who live in dull rooms, struggle for life, lack attraction, and to whom no man has ever muttered a gentle thought.

You often see that kind of woman sitting in the omnibus opposite you, a mite of unappreciated humanity in the muddied cosmos of London. But as I look at her—her character veiled by a dour demeanour—I fall to thinking over the silent tragedy in the cheap lodging where she lives, the indifferent food which makes her skin unhealthy, the rebuffs which make her snappish in her talk, and of the little womanly fire still flickering in the heart, the dream, which she knows will never be more than a dream, of a house of her own, furnished as her fancy tells her it should be furnished, the thought of someone who would do life's battle for her, and the instinct of her nature crying for a child to love. I don't know; but sometimes as I glance at such a woman I fall to wondering.

Well, I am forty years of age to-morrow, middle-aged I suppose, though I like to think there is still much of the boy in me. And my elder girl is possibly dreaming of birthday cakes.

I do not believe it is so much marriage, as the coming of children, which affects a man's life. All the holiness of love between man and maid, husband and wife, is poor stuff till the man sees his first child in the arms of his wife. Men are shy in self-revelation. Many a man

would rather the world thought he was callous than feel the blush which would come to him by a confession of tender-heartedness. But the time when a man grips his fists in agony, and the sweat beads his brow, and he promises God he will be a good man, is when he is sitting alone, pushed out of the way, told to keep out of the way, and when there comes from an adjoining room the cries of anguish, the cruel heralding of a child into the world.

The man had hardly thought of this trial; he will not often think of it in the future. But whenever he does his flesh will chill and tighten, and bands will clasp his heart, and his brain be heavy at the recollection. That night: the crown of thorns! He is the father of pain—begotten with a caress. And there he sits in his study. Servants have been moving with stealthy feet. The lights are left burning in the hall and on the staircase. Midnight; two o'clock in the morning; three o'clock. London is still; the house is very still save for those cries. The man is as one in a trance. He lowers the lights to dimness; he puts coal on the fire with the care of one fearing to awaken a sleeper. He thinks and thinks—how he thinks! The sacrifices the woman has made; the times he has not been so considerate as he might have been; how

tender he will be in days to come; his own unworthiness, the sordidness of some events in his past life. Ghosts wreathe from his distraught imagination.

How slowly the night goes! Will it never be over? How helpless he is! If only he and not she could bear the agony! And the feeling of impotence tears him, writhes him, causes him in tremor of soul to blaspheme, to cry out what wrong has she done that she should so suffer? Through those hours of waiting and waiting—a creature crushed by destiny—he prays from his heart. Surely the trial strains him and makes haggard his cheek? Morning comes—that grey sickly morning which so often creeps over London. The room is hot. Pull the blinds, raise the window and drink fresher air. London is awakening, London with its millions of human beings, the heir of millions who are gone—and were they all born in pain and sorrow like this? There is a tiny knock at the door, and the man, jadedly, opens it. All is well! A little girl. The man goes to the window, leans his elbows on the sill, looks upon the dewy garden and the sombre trees. Is he glad? He cannot say. But things have happened; the great mystery has been revealed. He is not the same man; he knows that. A mighty responsibility has been

placed on him; he straightens himself and knows he will play the man.

I have heard women complain of the unkindness of Nature in giving them all the agony whilst men go free. Most men are too shy to tell them the truth.

Now in those other and lonely days a pretty fantasy played in my mind. I was aware, from novels, that accident threw the most charming of women into the hero's path—and every man is the hero of his own life's story. And I always kept my eye open for that most charming of women, knowing I should not find her, and yet not daring to miss the chance.

Would she be sitting on a doorstep reduced to her last twopence, or would there be a fire, and would I save her life; would she be well-to-do, and would the horse she was riding bolt, and I, at infinite risk, stop it—that seemed a customary way, judging from novels; or would I see her sitting in the park, our eyes meet, and each know we had been waiting for the other through all eternity; or would some distant and wealthy relative leave me much money on condition I married a particular female—sure to be gaunt and elderly—and, in the railway carriage, would I fall in love with the quintessence of damsels, forswear wealth when annexed to gaunt females,

and then amazedly learn that the woman whom the distant and wealthy relative wanted me to marry was this very winsome lass—I seemed to have read, in novels, of that sort of thing happening quite frequently. A nice story for a man to nurse as he wandered the streets and lounged away sultry evenings beneath the trees in Hyde Park! And his total possessions two sovereigns.

Then the black days—the days when the popping of returned manuscripts into my letter-box sapped all energy to work! Newspapers, magazines, wanted articles which were light, airy, gay, flippant. What grim comedy it was sitting at my table, forcing myself to be funny; making the pen guffaw with forced humour; spurring the saddened heart to chirp a merry tune. I have known some jolly dogs of writers in my time, but never one have I known whose rollicking clowning before the public was not thin veneer, and who, beneath it all, was not a serious man, seeing the world as it is, but complacent towards its cruel stupidity. But to feel failure baulking the way, to be heavy of heart in consequence, and yet to shake cap and bells, and treat life as a joke—well, there was humour in the situation, was there not?

In a place of no great honour on my shelves

are half a dozen books of my own. When this book I now propose to write is finished it will join them, and, as the years skip, there will be others, I dare say. Of the making of books there is no end—of course. And I quite agree it might be a good thing for the world if a law were passed that no more books were to be printed for at least ten years. What a delicious time you, my friend, would have in reading the books which you want to read instead of wasting your time—well, on this book if you like: I do not mind you saying so.

For, let me tell you, I have sat down to-night to begin this book, not because I want to please you—I don't know you—but to please myself. A writing man should write at least one book without his eye on the prospective reader, and with never a thought of the critics. I have been a critic. So I know that as a race they are very decent fellows. Some of them have cut up my books, just as I cut up other people's books—before I took to writing books myself—from joy in the cutting. But if I were a critic now I would be more human, and if I could not say a kindly word I do not think I would say anything at all. An author is not like a politician, deliberately inviting people to shy at him, and rather grieved when nobody has a fling. Even

critics are writing men and women, and of the same trade as the book makers.

Yes, there is plenty of rubbish written. The man or the woman took six months or a year, or maybe longer; there were many hours of cramped fingers, writing page by page, many declinings of social attractions that the work might be done, and all along was the mixture of hope and dread whether the book would be praised or condemned. The critic, by long custom, becomes, not cruel, but as careless of pain as surgeons are said sometimes to be. More careless, for he does not administer an anæsthetic. "Hallo! here's a fool; let me give him or her the death by a hundred cuts"—and the critic is so clever with his jewelled rapier that he calls the world to witness how skilfully he has done it—quite forgetful of the torn flesh of the man or woman who writes novels, however foolish, for a living.

I think if I were the editor of a paper I would prohibit "slating" reviews. If a book is foolish and not worth reading, why should space be wasted, and sorrow inflicted in saying so? Say nothing. I have had some terrible wiggings myself, and shall have others and deserve them, say you. Most of the adverse criticisms have been quite just, though I may not have felt so at the time. And though I know I have friends

who write kindly about my books, there are two men in London who can be relied upon to sneer at them because they happen to dislike me personally—so the balance is maintained.

My books are mainly impressions of travel, founded on hurried journalistic experiences in various corners of the world. They are what they are, and make no pretence to be anything else. Some day I may even read them, and try to bring back in memory the adventures of long ago. No, adventures is not the right word, for hairbreadth escapes have never been mine. Yet the rough and tumbles, when they come to recollection, seem like something I must have read about, and not read with much remembrance. Only this afternoon, as I was dressing to go out and make calls in the customary stereotyped garb of the London man, I looked into a drawer for a notebook, and came across an old photograph of myself, hollow-cheeked and hollow-eyed, ghastly, with tousled hair and skimpy beard, and my clothing that of the wilds. I laughed, not at myself with that derring-do visage, but at myself now with neatly brushed hair, and neatly knotted tie, and polished hat, and creased trousers, and shiny boots and——

Tut! That is the artificial creature, the result of living in London, and going out to dull

tea parties and boresome dinner parties. No man should need more than his pipe and a friend to talk to. But it is when I have my pipe, and no friend is by, that I let memory loose to go whither she will concerning the days when I was vagabonding.

There were the days when I roughed it on a tramp ship. We went south, to where the sun made the iron decks so hot that bare feet jumped quickly to escape getting scorched. Then we came north, in winter, with snowstorms and furious gales, the tops of the waves blown into hot spume, the torrents tumbling on us—"Hold hard there!" was the shout when death menaced—and the wind tuned in the rigging with plaintive howl like the shrieks of the irretrievably damned, and the engines were slowed down to three knots an hour, for the butt-nosed old tramp could not face the hammering, and we stood on the bridge with chins against the weather cloth, peering into the blackness till eyes ached with the wind and the salt.

A black ship, the blackness pricked with her few regulation lights, beating up against the fury of the squall; kicking when the stern jumped out of the water and the screw raced in the spume, and old iron-sides quaked. An oil-skinned Swede at the helm, with the reflected compass light

throwing a glow on his sluggish features; the growl of chains as the wheel brings the ship's nose into the rush of the storm; two men, cloaked and hooded on the bridge, moving shortly and impatiently and fumbling in the box for the binoculars to stare into the darkness; the cold with teeth in it, and the wind driving like needles! All the world Cimmerian, and angry waters, and the roar of a mad night at sea. That is how we welcomed Christmas morning when finding a drunken road home across the Bay of Biscay.

The morning crawls to us like a sick dog. Home! Yes, we think of home. And down upon us, running before the gale, comes a troopship, big and bumptious, off to India with soldiers—a jolly crew on board that boat, we swear. The third mate gets the Jack, knots it and hoists the salute. No answer from the troopship. The Jack dips, twice. No answering salute from the troopship; curse her and her officers! She is swaggering with her cargo of soldiers, and scorns to notice a dirty tub of a tramp trailing over the blue-black sweltering sea. And it is Christmas morning! We ought to have been berthed in Liverpool two days before; but these head gales slow us down. Christmas cheer: we have tinned rabbit, and we pour a bottle of stout into wine glasses and

pretend it is port. In the drab of the day we stand on the bridge, and beat our toes to keep warm, as we smoke and laugh.

If I had a son, I would give him a year or two at sea—not on a pretty passenger boat, but on a tramp ship which must go poking her nose into all the ports of the earth, looking for a livelihood. He would forget his manners, and be rough and ungainly; he would learn language which never appears in the frankest of sea stories; he would probably do things he would not care to tell his mother about. But what silliness there was in him would be knocked out of him, what character he had, independence, determination, would have a chance of growing. I know all there is to be said against the life of a sailor on tramp ships; I've been there. There is nothing romantic, but it makes men, real men, with firm lips and steady eyes—and that is better than the mincing youths, with the puke eyes and weak mouths, and conceited inane babbling which are characteristic of the middle-class young man of London.

A good thing it is to recall wild and jolly days. But not always so jolly. I remember the flats of the great dun land of Russia, with the wind ever soughing over the barrenness. Days of slow travelling in carts, visiting the

famine villages beyond the Volga. Nights of bloodshed between Armenians and Tartars in the streets of Baku. Starving on the sleet and sand-swept Gobi desert in a corner of Mongolia. Rapturous, sensuous, poetical evenings in Egypt. With Turkish troops in Armenia, when they were on massacre bent. In the blood-soaked hills of Macedonia, pushing in the chill dawn toward the mountains of Albania—one British writing man and forty Turkish soldiers. Out all night in the snows of central Persia, fighting cold and death. Fever-stricken and hungry in the hills of western China. Filling lungs with the wholesome air when crawling over the great wheatfields in western Canada. Watching the struggling of the gold fiends making for the Klondyke. Out on the prairies with the cowboys of Wyoming. Moving with wonder eyes and deep thoughts through the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Panting with smallpox in an Indian village during the hot months. Thinned to muscle and bone, pressing through the dark jungles of Burma. Crouching in a sleigh and over the snows of Siberia to visit convict settlements. Watching the sea pageant when the dead Queen Victoria was carried over the waters of the Solent. Standing on the hill by Tarsus where Antony first looked into the eyes

of Cleopatra. The last speech Mr. Gladstone gave in the House of Commons. The tussle of political life, the stress of an election—a candidate for Parliament myself, and defeated.

The panorama moves swiftly, somewhat blurred, a little inconsequential, as recollections must be when allowed free rein — sitting in a back room of a London house when all is very quiet.

Friends are coming to dinner to-morrow night —a little birthday party. And I shall shave and get into a stiff, white shirt, and put on a high collar, and give my tie the proper knot.

Do you know the uncomfortableness of going back to civilised garb after you have been without it for nearly two years? Well, it is excruciating. I arrived in Tokio after long months of buffeting in semi-savage lands. I had lived in the loose-necked flannel shirts of the traveller. The Marquis Ito, then Prime Minister of Japan, invited me to dine at his house and meet several of the Ministers. But I was travelling with light kit, and evening dress was not in my baggage. I could not dine with a Prime Minister and wear brown clothes and a flannel shirt! So a good man, editor of a paper published in English in Tokio, lent me an evening suit. It fitted, but the irritation of

being in tight clothes, the maddening tin-canned sensation of being confined within a stiff starched shirt, the gyve-like feeling of the hard cuffs, and oh, the horror of a stand-up collar—the experience will never be forgotten! I believe I would have willingly submitted to instant decapitation, rather than feel a fret-saw was slowly, but deliberately, cutting into my neck. I know that my neck was painful and raw.

After dinner the Marquis Ito asked if I smoked. Of course I did. "Well," he said, "this morning I was given a box of cigars by the Emperor, and I will be delighted if you will have one!" So was I delighted; it is not every day a man has a smoke from an Emperor's cigar box. It was a beautiful box, and the cigars, large, were in gilt-foil. My cigar was black, rather strong. But valiantly I began to smoke—how bitingly pungent that cigar was! The Prime Minister contented himself with a cigarette. Phew! there was a rasping on the roof of my mouth, and I felt the fumes inclining me to dizziness—and I was a persistent smoker, too! We talked.

"Your cigar has gone out," remarked the Prime Minister. So it had—I had let it. I felt it beyond me to say that the Emperor's cigars were altogether too virile in flavour to suit my palate, and that if he did not mind—well, I would

rather not finish it. But I stuck to it. The room heaved; I felt ill. I ought to have laid down the cigar, but I lacked courage. It was relit half-a-dozen times—I absolutely declined to have another—and each time the cigar was relit it was ranker. When I bade my adieux and jumped into my rickshaw I was discourteous to that imperial cigar. But I would not have offended the Marquis Ito, one of the most striking of personalities. Also, I jerked free the collar which was jagging my head off.

How you can get used to things! Years ago, when I was crossing China from the Burmese side, progress was slow and rugged. There was nothing but faint tracks over the mountain to follow—a wind-swept, rain-slashed, fever-stricken region. The food was sparse and badly cooked. The sleeping accommodation was sometimes the wet hillside, sometimes a shed, occasionally the mud floor of a native hut or the bare boards of the floor in a Chinese temple.

Two months after this I reached the *Jesu-tang* of an English missionary. I was grateful to get amongst fellow countrymen, to enjoy the talk, to know the missionaries were almost as glad to see me as I was to see them. That night I was given a clean, homely bedroom. The bed was white and sweet and fresh, and inviting to

a rough man who had slept in his clothes for weeks! It was delicious to get between the soft sheets, lie back and enjoy the luxury of rest. For a long time I lay there, in a Chinese house in western China, but with the aroma of home—for the little pictures on the walls were from English illustrated weekly newspapers. The feather bed, made by the wife of the missionary, was yielding and cosy. I revelled in the satisfaction of comfort—a comfort the like of which I had never before enjoyed. But when I blew out my lamp and sought sleep, sleep would not come. I lay on one side, I tossed to the other. But no sleep. One, two, nearly three hours went, whilst, with the grunts of half-muffled impatience, I worried over my inability to sleep in that soft, white bed. Then an idea struck me. I jumped out of bed, lay on the floor, used a hassock as a pillow, and was off to sleep in a trice.

I remember once having an argument with a United States American about kingship. He, like so many others of his race, could not understand the difference between the king as a man and his office. It was during the Spanish-American war, and he was blustering with scorn that the Spanish people should bow before a boy king "who I guess is just no better than any other boy." So I pointed to the national flag of the

United States, the stars and stripes, shaking in the wind, remarked it was only a piece of cloth, and asked why he would get angry if I pulled that flag down and tore it, but would be only amused if I ripped up fifty yards of other material? "For I guess that, as cloth, it is no better than any other piece," I remarked, endeavouring to quote his own words. I managed to get him to understand the European point of view that it is not the man we honour as the king, but a human being whom we accept as the emblem of the highest dignity in our constitution.

I had drawn the rough and ready parallel because I know of no people who are so proud of their flag as are those of the United States. The stars and stripes are always flying everywhere. "The Star-Spangled Banner" is constantly played in the Republic. The stars and stripes do duty in thousands of advertisements. The man or woman from the States, living in another land, has generally the stars and stripes somewhere about the house. A party of tourists from America usually have little stars-and-stripes flags to wave on every possible opportunity. Frequently an American proclaims the land from which he comes by wearing in his buttonhole a medallion representing the stars and stripes.

This accentuation of nationality, especially

in foreign countries, Europeans are inclined to declare to be "bad form." Certainly, the insistence that people come from the United States, when nobody but themselves care where they come from, gets on one's nerves. And yet there is something very fine about this boyish, jubilant, warm-hearted delight in their country, so genuine and so frank. We can no more call it conceit than we can call a child conceited because it believes its father is the finest man in the world.

Once I was staying in the big railway hotel at Banff, in the Canadian Rockies. A little orchestra played after dinner, and at the close of the programme gave "God Save the King." A friend and myself, being loyal Britons, stood up; but everyone else remained seated. A little later I was waiting for the elevator, and I heard a lady from Minneapolis gush to a companion: "This is the first time I've ever been in a foreign land, and I must say it was real sweet of them two Britishers to stand up out of compliment to us when the band played our national air 'My Country, 'tis for Thee'!" Though the tune was the same, it never struck this good dame that the United States was not being thought of either by the orchestra or "them two Britishers."

Now we British people are inclined toward the other extreme. We have unnecessary re-

pugnance, except in hours of patriotic excitement, to parade our nationality. There is a sub-conscious feeling that it is not quite the right thing to keep waving the Union Jack. It has been only within the last few years that the national flag has flown over the Victoria Tower of Westminster Palace when Parliament is in session. The flag is never seen over public buildings, except on anniversary days. Walk along any of the main streets of London, and you will see few Union Jacks waving over the big hotels or fashionable shops; you will see dozens of stars and stripes, which is a humouring of visitors. Walk up Broadway in New York, or along State Street in Chicago, and never once will you see the British flag. There are plenty of good British people who are deeply grieved at what they consider to be the growth of militarism because, in some of the elementary schools, the children are taught to salute the Union Jack. Perhaps, however, it is because the folks of the United States have only the flag, whilst the British people have the King to honour, which explains the different way the two nations regard their standard banner.

The Briton never understands what the Union Jack really means till he is in a distant land, and has not seen the flag for months, and then, like

the raising of a shutter, he catches sight of the red-and-white-crossed blue. I shall never let slip from memory the thrill which ran through me when, after months in the mountains of China, I arrived at Chung-king-fu, fifteen hundred miles up the great Yangtze river, and there saw the Union Jack hanging idly from the flagstaff over the British Consulate. I had been thinking more of food than of flags during those preceding perilous months. I had got acclimatised in some degree to China and Chinese faces, flapping yellow pennons, and red umbrellas, pagodas, temples, rice fields. The strangeness had gone.

Then to the warren city of Chung-king, narrow-streeted, teeming with life, a babel of noise, awkwardly questioning my way to the British Consulate. There was a handshake waiting there, and the pleasure of talking with a man of my own race. Suddenly up a narrow, darksome way, I was pointed. And there it was, the Union Jack! It was not dancing in the breeze. It was drooping, as though it was tired of shaking itself loose, and was now resting. I stood still, whilst a trembling ran through me. For I was learning what a national flag means to a man.

Did you ever hear of men called "political agents" in the British backlands? They carry

a little flag in their kit. There was one man stationed on the Burmese hills overlooking China —a lonely man, living in a bamboo hut, keeping an eye on the tribes, agreeable even to the dacoits. He had photographs on the walls, and in the corner of the hut was a wheezy old miniature harmonium which he had brought up the Irrawaddy river, not because he could play it, but because the noise amused the natives with whom it was his business to be friendly. He knew from the calendar and the crumpled newspapers which reached him that it was a great day in London—all London seething in patriotism and military display, and bands playing and crowds hurrahing. He was eleven thousand miles from London. But he hung out the crushed Union Jack on the balcony, and it was idle in the hush of the blazing vapourish mid-day. He poured into a horn cup a "peg" of whisky and drank "The King." He went to the wheezy harmonium and with one finger tried falteringly to pick out the key and sound "God Save the King." But thoughts blinded him.

It is a popular impression that Russians are the most brutal and callous people on earth. I am not going to deny any of the appalling stories which reach the western world. I have no right to deny them. But I do not forget that the more

signal kindnesses which have come my way, whilst vagabonding, have been in Russia.

I remember journeying in Manchuria over the ramshackle line which the Russians were hurriedly throwing down preparatory to the disastrous conflict they had with Japan. There was no regular passenger traffic. Goods trains, generally open waggons, were the means by which folk journeyed. The comfort was not great. One night I got a lift in a closed van, grey painted, hard seated, ill ventilated. It was crowded with Russian officers. Most of us sat on bundles of baggage. I was dead tired and I dozed. I was only a casual and unknown foreigner who was straying in the land. But the officers gave up a full seat, and though I made the customary protests, they insisted I should have the seat to lie upon and sleep. One gave me a sheepskin coat as a mattress. The officers themselves lay and slept upon the floor. It was native courtesy to the stranger in the land.

Another time I was cycling in the Crimea. With a couple of companions I had wheeled from Sebastopol, across the field of Balaclava, and by way of the Baidar Gate, where was revealed one of the most wonderful coast views in the world, and made for Yalta, the fashionable sea-

side place for Russians. We were smothered in dust after the long journey. As we slowly pedalled through the little town of Yalta, looking for an hotel, a carriage drawn by three horses dashed by. In the carriage was a general, and his breast was agleam with orders. When he saw us he stopped the carriage, wheeled round, and came after us. We were English; he saw that from our dress; we did not speak Russian —could he be of service? He went with us to an hotel and bargained for rooms. He insisted we should visit his châlet and have lunch. He paid us many courtesies. He was Count N——, a high official at the court of the Czar. I have sometimes wondered whether, if the Lord Chamberlain at the Court of St. James's saw three travel-stained, grimy Russian cyclists at Brighton, he would, because they were foreigners, put himself to so much inconvenience.

Still another experience. I had been at Minsk, which is within the "Jewish Pale" of Russia, and was intending to catch the night express between Warsaw and Moscow. There were sleeping berths on the train. In the morning I saw the station-master, and asked him to reserve me a place. He shook his head. The train was usually filled at Warsaw, and it was only an hour before the train arrived at Minsk that he

received telegraphic communication how many, if any, places were vacant. Somebody had already made application before me. However, if I would arrive at the station half an hour in advance of the train being due he would see what could be done. I went. The station-master was talking to two men, a merchant and an officer. A message had arrived that only one sleeping place was vacant on the train! "I am entitled to it," said the merchant, "because I was the first to apply." "I am entitled to it," said the officer, "because I am returning to my official duties at Moscow." "No," said the station-master, "we must be courteous to this foreign gentleman visiting our country, and he shall have it." And the others agreed that because I was a foreigner it would be improper if they did not step aside and give me the berth.

How the grave jostles the gay. It is rather an old tale that often a heavy heart is hidden by a smiling countenance. Few of us, I daresay, have not been compelled to grin and caper before others when all our wish was to go into a room and lock the door and give relief to sorrow.

Sometimes I lecture—and one of my lectures used to be a frivolous, joking, anecdotal description of when I went jaunting round the world on a bicycle. Truth to tell, the time came when

I got heartily sick of my own jokes. I could have yawned while the audience was roaring with laughter. Yet one got enjoyment watching the appreciation of amusing adventures spread over the audience. I gave that lecture at Jarrow-on-Tyne. I was in the ante-room, chatting with friends, when a telegram was brought to me. My mother was dead.

Well, I'm not going to scribble the usual sentiment; the reader will understand. "Anything serious?" I was asked. "A friend of mine is dead," I answered, afraid to tell the truth. But I was battling with myself, trying to find a reply to the question: Should I lecture? Out of my numbed senses came the feeling I could not; it was impossible to step smilingly upon the platform and tell funny stories whilst my heart was being torn with the saddest news which ever comes to a man. Yet people had come to hear me, the hall was packed; was I right to disappoint the audience? There was no question of lack of respect. A few seconds and I decided. I lectured.

It was an agonising experience. I felt like a lump of clay. But I jerked myself into animation; I told my best stories with double gusto. Whilst talking, my nerves were tense with the excitement of speaking, and the pain was not

cutting. Now and then I told a yarn I had often told before, and the laughter rippled and rattled. Then I had to stand silent till the mirth ebbed. Those were the moments which hurt. I was the play actor, pretending to enjoy the fun. Yet all the time another picture was in my mind —a cold terrorising picture. And incidents, marking what I had lost, came back to memory. The laughter ceased, and I plunged ahead with another amusing experience. And the audience never knew—never guessed—that the man who was making them laugh had his heart cased in ice.

I headed this opening chapter "Rather Personal." It has been purely personal. My experiences are just those of a man who has knocked much about the world. But other men have done that. Well, I am writing this book to please myself, though I trust others may find interest in the ruminations of a man of forty. For to-morrow is my birthday. Nay, to-morrow has come. The night is far spent. And my little ones are asleep, and in a drawer they have the gift which at breakfast they will present to their daddy.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

It was in Central Siberia, at Irkutsk—a raw and straggling town, like the cities of the plains which gauntly rear on the alkali-soaked deserts of Western America.

There we met; he a wistful-eyed, black and scraggy bearded Russian; I a vagabond from England.

Less than a month before I was in the weird city of Moscow, with its quaint-walled Kremlin and golden-domed, bedizened and meretricious churches, where wooden hammers beat on deep-toned bells, and the air is never free from the melodious throbbing.

It was fifteen years since Ivan Ivanovitch was in Moscow, his native city. And now he was going back, for the term of his exile was over.

He was a "political." He had been dangerous, found guilty, without question, of being associated with the makers of bombs and the printers of revolutionary literature. His punishment was

fifteen years in the colds of Yakutsk, far north, where the Lena river surges muddily toward Arctic seas. He had played with rebellion, had lost the game, and had paid the price.

We sat in a corner of the Dekko restaurant in Irkutsk. It was past midnight, and the winds, which ever blow from the north-west, had trailed across the snows of Siberia, and were rattling at the double windows as though challenging the right of warmth within that room. The place was overheated with a thick, nauseating heat. The room reeked with the odour of food, and tobacco smoke, and perspiring bodies, and alcohol. Coming from the frozen night—the cold nipping the lungs as though with icy fist—the restaurant was sickening in its smell. Still it was warm. And nostrils were soon dulled, and it was a thousand times better than the terror of fang-toothed cold. Here were human beings, mostly men in uniform, fleshy Russian officers with coal-black, crimped whiskers, men who were a little drunk, eating noisily, laughing huskily, applauding the girls who, on a little platform, were shrieking indecent Muscovite songs, and willing—eager—to join any admirers in the audience, have supper and clap hands for champagne—it is always champagne the girls order.

A loud, coarse assembly. But these officials,

with their many uniforms, had come, most of them, from posts in far parts of Siberia, stations of dreariness, bleak villages, where the horror of loneliness was ever their companion, the sky drab, the wind moansome, the land a flat stretch of never-ending melancholy.

Now here they were in Irkutsk, in the Dekko restaurant, where there were music, and dancing women from Little Russia, and song, and champagne and revelry. And it brought them forgetfulness.

Ivan Ivanovitch and I supped.

A bottle of Crimean wine stood between us. A plate of Russian cigarettes lay on the table, and we smoked incessantly. Ivanovitch was slouchingly nursing one elbow, whilst with the other hand upraised he tapped the cardboard of the little cigarette against his teeth. Fifteen years he had been north in the colds of Yakutsk, in a world of sadness, shuttered from the real world, unknown by the real world. And now he had come back to civilization—and his first big gulp of it was in a pleasure hall of eating and intoxication and immorality.

His face was that of a dreamer, save the eyes, which were black, and had a light that was ever coming and going, reminding me of the gleam and wither of warning signals from a lighthouse.

Apart from this the countenance was suggestive of pain, but conquered pain, as though he felt it, but was so used to it that he no longer heeded. He had been a good-looking man in his youth. The forehead, deeply grooved with wrinkles, was intellectual. The mouth, thin and a little twisted, indicated refinement. The cheek, seared and blotched and ochred with wild life, was crevassed with a million tiny wrinkles; the flesh had contracted under the skin and left a parched covering.

He sat for long, his body still, except for the twirl of cigarette between finger and thumb, and the rise and fall of light in his eyes. He was of the stuff that visionaries and fanatics and revolutionaries are made. But his hands were coarse and broad, gnarled and uncouth. They were hands which seemed to belong to some other man. They were brutal, foul, hard, repulsive hands.

He did not talk much. When he spoke it was with short, uncouth sentences. Silence had so long enwrapped him that to break through it hurt him.

The man fascinated me. The knowledge that for all those years he had been up in the tundra regions had an eerie attraction. What a life of loneliness! What a tale he could tell the world! Had he learnt anything for his soul's content?

Or was his being consumed with bitterness against those who had sent him to Siberia? Was that deep cogitation the planning of revenge?

Through the smoke clouds we could see a girl in red skirts dancing a furious Muscovite dance, wildly, ecstatically; and the wine-laden spectators were hoarsely bawling their approbation and chinking their glasses. The girl, heated and triumphant, jumped from the platform and ran among the audience, holding out a little Astrakhan-trimmed cap. Roubles were thrown in. Beasts lurched at the girl and gripped her and pulled her on their knees and fondled her. She broke away laughing; she made fun of old whiskered Siberian miners, back from the goldfields in the mountains bordering Mongolia. She got them to order bottles of champagne, which she promised she would help in drinking after she had made a tour of the room. She forgot the aged reprobates.

"Well; what do you think of it?" I asked.

Ivan Ivanovitch did not reply. Slowly he shifted his position, and a thin smile came to his haggard features. With knotted, cruel, gnarled fingers, he lifted another cigarette, gave the cardboard tube the conventional tap, began smoking again, gently, retaining the smoke a long time before it oozed out from between parted jaws.

I filled his glass. "When are you going to tell me the story?" I asked. He emptied the glass.

The orchestra broke into desperate crash. A bearded performer in imitation peasant's clothing was yelling a song in monotonous staccato, a dirty song, and the audience grinned.

"Do you know anything about women?" Ivanovitch asked.

"Lots, I fancy," was my reply.

But I did not joke. There was something in the look of that worn-faced man which touched me with a chill, as though I had been hit with a clod of cold from the howling Siberian blackness outside.

He removed his glance, and the glow of his eyes faded to dullness, and he smoked.

"Up there!"—and he gave a backward jerk of the head which I took to mean the region of the frozen tundra—"I learnt much. More than I knew. For I was mad. Bah!" and he laughed, showing yellow teeth; "but only mad according to the ideas of your world."

He chuckled bitterly.

"Never mind what I had done in Russia. I was caught—like a rat in a trap—and I was sentenced—and the sentence is finished." He spoke with a gasp. "Yes, it's finished," he added in half reverie.

"There have been thousands like me, hundreds of thousands sent to Siberia, and that's the finish—do you hear?—the finish! There's no writing to friends; there are no letters from friends; when you die it isn't you who die; it's a number that is pushed under scraped, iron-frozen earth, and the wolves come in the night—well, it's the finish! You were telling me about Russian novels written in your country of England, and you were saying they were all melodramatic. Yes, yes; there is nothing dramatic in the exile's life in Siberia. That's where your writers are wrong. If ever you write a novel about Russia, tell about the loneliness, the lack of interest, the deadness of the world, the months when there is no sun—my God, the months when you wander through a perpetual and black, snowy hell. Tell that; you hear?—tell them that!"

He put out his savage hand and gripped my arm. The grip was fierce, like the bite of an animal. The glare of his eyes was that of fire. As the glare fell away so his fingers relaxed.

There was plaintiveness in his voice when he added, not much above a whisper, "No, don't tell them that. It would be too sad. Besides, you would not get anybody to believe you—why should they believe you?"

The noise in the concert room, the wag of

tongues, the clamour of the band, the scene, so strange as compared with the life in the north, appeared to be playing on the nervousness of his nature. He showed agitation. Unable to control his feelings, his breathings came quick and almost like a hiss between his closed teeth but slightly parted lips.

"When the truth is told about exile life in Siberia, it won't be the clang of chains, and tramps over the snow, and the crack of the knout which will make men quiver and shudder. It will be the silence, the horror of darkness. Listen!"

He said the word with a snap of a command.

"There are prisons where men, who are too strong in their political beliefs, are kept—you, I know, have seen some of them. So have other men. But when you want to understand what exile means, go to one of the exile colonies up in northern Yakutsk. Oh, the Government are kind, grimly humorous. They put a colony of men and women there, who are told to lead—ha, ha! what do you call it?—the simple life. Think—four months' journey to the north from where we are. Can you think of that? It's cold here; do you know how cold it is there? And soldiers and irons and knouts are not needed to keep us in order, to keep us together, to hinder us from escape. We are free, free to lead the life we wish,

free to put our communist beliefs into practice, free to do what we like—except return to Russia. But who can return? It is snow and ice for ever and ever to the north. It is sand blowing before the icy winds on one side; it is of knotted, sandy, salt soil on the other; it is all dreariness to the south for a thousand miles, except the little Government post stations.

"Escape! To where can a man escape? There we were put, twelve men and eight women, and told to win our food. Starvation? No, the Government did not let us die; that would have been too quick an end; the real finish would have come too soon. They don't want us to die; they want us to go back and to tell the young men and the young women who think they are working to free Russia, what price they will have to pay. Remember, I went mad. The others said I was mad. Oh, I was mad, surely! Laugh; why don't you laugh? There is nothing so laughable as a mad man.

"At first there was savage rancour. We had nursed hopes for the regeneration of Russia. They were crushed. We had been nearly a year on the tramp—a year of marching across the steppes, twenty miles a day for two days, then a rest for a day; then again for two more days, then a rest for a day, and so on, it seemed for ever

over the heaving brown lands—tramping, oh, pleasant in the summer, but in the winter—ah! We stayed at the post houses, the little wooden huts on the track, no road but just a track, from settlement to settlement; we were crowded in the little barns. We were not unhappy, though we had bitterness in the heart against those who had been our undoing. Our clothes were ragged, but our muscles were good; the food was spare but sufficient. We tramped in groups, and the soldiers were our friends. Who told you the Russian soldiers were cruel? That's not true.

"We knew little where we were going: only this, that it was to the north; we would be removed from evil companions, said the captain of the guard, and there we would be a colony to ourselves. And we were all revolutionaries, socialists, communists, scoffers at religion—we told each other we had the real freedom, liberty of brain. We talked of the commune we would create, each for all and all for each; ours would be the ideal life, uncontaminated with the way of the old world. We were young and hopeful. We would start the world afresh. Moscow, from where we came, relatives, friends—all were on the other side of our lives, in a pre-existence, not to worry about any more. From the earth we would gain our bread!"

He halted to light another cigarette. He was unconscious of the roysterers in the room. He seemed to be picturing over again the early years of his exile. With elbows on the table, whilst his crooked fingers fumbled with the cigarette, he spoke as a man recalling old scenes aloud, but unconscious of a listener.

"The world up there seems flat, but round edged. Turning on the plains the eye could see the edge of the world. The vegetation was thin and sparse. But two days' march away was a belt of low trees twisted with the rage of storms. All our wood for building, for fire in the winter months, came from there. The Government gave us tools and we built sheds. We were given seeds and we grew potatoes, even corn. Twice a year a Government official came to the colony and brought food by caravan—just enough to keep the spark of life in us. We had to fight Nature to get the rest, we ignorant students from the Moscow University.

"Ha! Ha! We were clever fellows. We knew how the country should be ruled. But we did not know much how to grow wheat. Ha! Ha! We fought with Nature, we with the clean slate; and—do you know how little man can live upon? We were nice youths at Moscow, but there—there in the north we broadened and roughened, and

our bodies got ungainly, and—look at those hands of mine, look at them. I've stood in the grey of the year, hacking at trees, gathering the scrub, and have then hauled it for two days over the steppes—wood to keep us warm when the black night of winter came.

"We had our summers, short, with the sun circling, dipping, laughing at us, twelve men and eight women living in huts built of thin logs, caked with mud. That first summer we worked; we knew of the terror in front of us. We caught fish in the Lena. The Russian soldiers were good; they were going to leave us when the short days came. They helped us. Once they brought men from another colony, twenty days' march away, to tell us things. But they told us the things we did not want to hear—they told us of the loneliness—it was always the loneliness! Oh, yes, yes! and they told us other things, the curing of fish. And they brought us books—books from the outer world. They had been allowed to have books, books that friends sent, but no political books. We were students, doctors, engineers—two of us professors—and we learnt how to cure fish and trap bears and freeze the flesh in the earth. In the summer, just the surface of the earth softens to the sun. Dig a foot or two and you come to the frozen

ground. We dug, we pickaxed, we made storage. We were a commune."

He rambled. This was not a narrative. He jumbled incidents of the succeeding years into the story of the first year. He spoke slowly, passionately, with a snarl, and yet with little chuckles, as though some fiendish recollection of delight was at the back of his mind.

"It was the first quarrel we had in the commune—the division of those books. Then we hated the books. They made us think of the old life which we would forget, which we were better for forgetting. Remembrance only brings pain —pain!"

He winced.

"I remember the night we burnt those books. Winter was coming to us. The sun always came late, always went early. It had been raining and sleeting and snowing for days. The whole world was sodden. It was as if all the grief in the world had concentrated in one great moan and came howling round our huts; we could hear the shrieks. Sometimes we all went pale. And the books told us of gaiety and love, and the joys of great cities—cursed us by reminding us we were outcasts, forgotten by the world. We hated the world; we said we never wanted to see the world again; our souls were getting seared with

envy. So, late one day, when we were maddened, we flung the books on the flames and we laughed and danced and sang and cried as the leaves burned and curled and flickered and blackened and fell to ashes."

He paused. The music had recommenced. At a neighbouring table three young officers were ordering supper for three of the gay girls of merriment. They, too, were smoking cigarettes and mischievously puffing into the faces of their wine-jolly hosts.

Ivan Ivanovitch watched the officers pour forth the wine, fill glasses overflowing, spilling the wine on the cloth as evidence of recklessness, and his eye seemed to rest on the savoury dishes which were ordered. There was no lustre in the eye.

"Our chief food was a little tea and black bread," he said. He halted again as though he were conjuring some scene to memory.

Suddenly he turned to me.

"Do you know what four months' darkness is like? Constant night! The whole world is snow! And starvation stalking you! We had nothing to do, no books to read. No work but the work of fetching in the wood, to be burnt cautiously, for the fear was close to our hearts it would not last till the spring. No work but bringing in bits

of frozen meat and cooking it. The only light from the flicker of a strip of reed pulp lying over the side of a saucer of oil. Do you know what it is being always with the same men and women, uncouth and haggard, and always with the same faint light making shadows on their faces, whilst they sit round silent, and you watch and watch, and you hear groans moaning over the snows, and you know all those people are going to die, and they, too, will groan in the wind, and you watch and watch their faces till they cease to be human, and become devils, and you expect them to jump up and yell? You want to tear them to death. And you know they are thinking the same thoughts of you.

"You"—and I saw the agony come into the hot gleam of his gaze—"you come from big cities, and you will go back to your big cities, and you will tell soft women, who lounge lazily on couches, something of what I tell you; and the dolls with their pink faces and pretty clothes, and no bother where to-morrow's food comes from, won't believe you. But tell them of women with more brains than they, as good-looking as they are—well, who were as handsome as they are—but with more courage, who have lost their daintiness, whose fingers bleed, whose cheeks are streaked with grime, and whose clothing is the

skin of sheep, tell them to think—tell them to lie awake at nights and think."

A laugh, which suggested the bark of a wolf, broke from him.

"I think," he said slowly, lowering his head and leering at me under thick eyebrows, "I think we all went a little mad that first winter."

He continued to laugh, low and chucklingly. He gripped the tumbler of wine and gulped, and still chuckled.

"I was mad—but not till the third winter. Marie Grodikoff went mad the second winter. She wanted to rebuke the sun for hiding. And she ran away. We followed her over the snow, with the light of the stars showing her trail. When we found her she was sitting, smiling; but she was dead—dead in the snow with her face all a-grin. We laughed. That's the time when men do laugh. It is only half sorrow which makes you weep; when you are face to face with terror you laugh. And that winter night—one long night of four months, we sat round and laughed at one another. It was only by the moan and the hang of the stars that we knew that time was going. There were stretches when the sky was shuttered, and the snows came and never ceased falling, and the winds howled, and the cold—tut, *you* men know nothing of cold. Do

you know what it is to feel your very entrails iced? Do you know what it is to have limbs hard and needing to be thawed? What do you and your kind know of such things?

"Yet the time came when we did not feel the biting grief of memory. Grief dulled; it died. The time came when we forgot the condition to which we had sunk, beasts of the north fighting with Nature for our food. The groaning world, the low lid of lead skies, we got used to. God! we took it as natural. Our faces were hairy, and our hair was long, straggle-ended and limp; we wore coats of skin with the matted hair outside. The cold—wasn't all the world cold? It was a dim and silly dream that there were places where there were warmth and flowers. Everything was all right; all right. My flesh creeps when I look back on the life. But the life then, as we lived it, when we had been there three, four, five, six, I know not how many years, was the thing, the real thing, the only thing.

"And listen—we got to like it. Not to like it as we like health after sickness, but we got used to it, deadened to it, and sometimes the dread would come that one morning we would be driven south to the horror of the towns, where people walked on paths, and had pale faces. We dreaded each other, with the bloodshot eyes of wild beasts

fearing the prey would be snapped from them. Yet our colony prospered—the huts were bigger; we got cows to feed on the rank grass in the few summer months, and we made hay for the night of winter. We had long-haired, stunted Siberian ponies, little beasts that could run for ever and live on pebbles and snow.

"We never thought of escape. But sometimes dark thoughts came to us of killing the Russian soldiers who visited us twice a year. It would have been easy. It would have taken months before the officials here in Irkutsk would have known anything was wrong. They would have sent men to inquire. And we would have killed them. And we would have hidden the bones out on the steppes—for the wolves to play with. And nobody would have known."

Once more Ivan Ivanovitch paused. He was tired with the rush of words, the excitement occasioned by recalling his life. When he went on it was in a softer strain.

"I came to hate my fellow human beings. A cow gave birth to a calf and I tended it. As I got to love the calf, the more I hated man. You don't understand—don't try to understand—but the look in the eyes of the cattle was so soft compared with those which I found staring at me from the flickering shadows of the cabin

which was our common room, where we lay and growled. Oh! if you meet any of those who were with me that winter they will tell you I was mad. Maybe, maybe! So I shirked my kind. I sidled from them like a dog that was hungry and in fear of the whip. I sat in the snows with my skins about me, and laughed at the moon. My hair whitened. I crawled on all fours to the animal shed. The animals knew me, and I talked to them. I lay with my arms round the calf and slept. The men and the women gave me my food; they left it at the door of the cabin. I slunk to it and gulped it, and slunk back to the animal shed. Oh, they said I was mad. Maybe! maybe!"

He began to speak very slowly.

"When the winter night had gone, and the sun came back to the world, it was a world all silver with snow. There was no wind. No birds. No beasts. Nothing but that sea of glistening, billowing snow. Then I knew the men would kill my calf, now growing. So we went away, the calf and I. We went away over the dusty snow; and in the sunshine which was so bright my eyes ached. The calf followed me. We walked in the shining snow; it was so bright. And my eyes ached. Did we walk one day, two days? I know not. But the shining snow was so bright

that a film came over my eyes, and then the snow and the sun were gone. I was blind. I could feel the nip of the cold. So we walked, and the calf led. We walked, and then it ended."

His voice had grown husky and low. He stopped.

All around us was the clamour of drunken jollity. Men bawled their laughter, and painted girls sang, and wine was called for, and the air was thick with the reek of tobacco.

Ivan Ivanovitch had forgotten where he was. To his face came ghastly paleness, showing through the ochreous skin. The eyes had lost their life, and again they were like those of a sightless man, rolling round, meaningless. I clenched my fists in the pain of gazing on this soul's distress. For long he sat, stiff as death, save for those rolling, meaningless eyes. Then came a little laugh, half sneer, and the spell was broken.

"There are nomads in that accursed land of the north. Tawny men and women, flat-faced, ugly, clothed in skins. They know nothing about the world. They cannot read. They scrape existence from the sour and dreary earth. Their faces are melancholy; but they are happy, for they know no other part of the world, and would be miserable if taken away. You see how Nature fits us to our surroundings. That is what people

who want to reform the world sometimes forget —yes, even men like myself; but when you are on the snowy plains, and you are forgotten, and you look into the skies and see the innumerable stars, suns with worlds of their own, you know what a speck of dust this world is, and you ask the question whether it is worth while to struggle. Life would be much happier if God had not given us brains which weave questions.

"And those brown semi-savages of the snows found me and cared for me. I was blind and they led me; I was hungry and they fed me. Close to me was a kind personality. I felt it—like a slight electric thrill. I felt a hand on my arm. Food was put to my lips. Content came to me; peace. I knew when that person was near me; something in the air, some tingle of my blood told me. Our hands met and were clasped, and we did not loosen the clasp. I was nursed back to life. The milky mist went from my eyes and slowly I saw. The one who was kind was a woman.

"I asked if you knew much about women—you, the man from the cities? That woman was not like those dancing girls; no! She was not like the women I now remember to have seen in the lost days in Moscow; no! She——"

He stopped again, and he writhed. But he

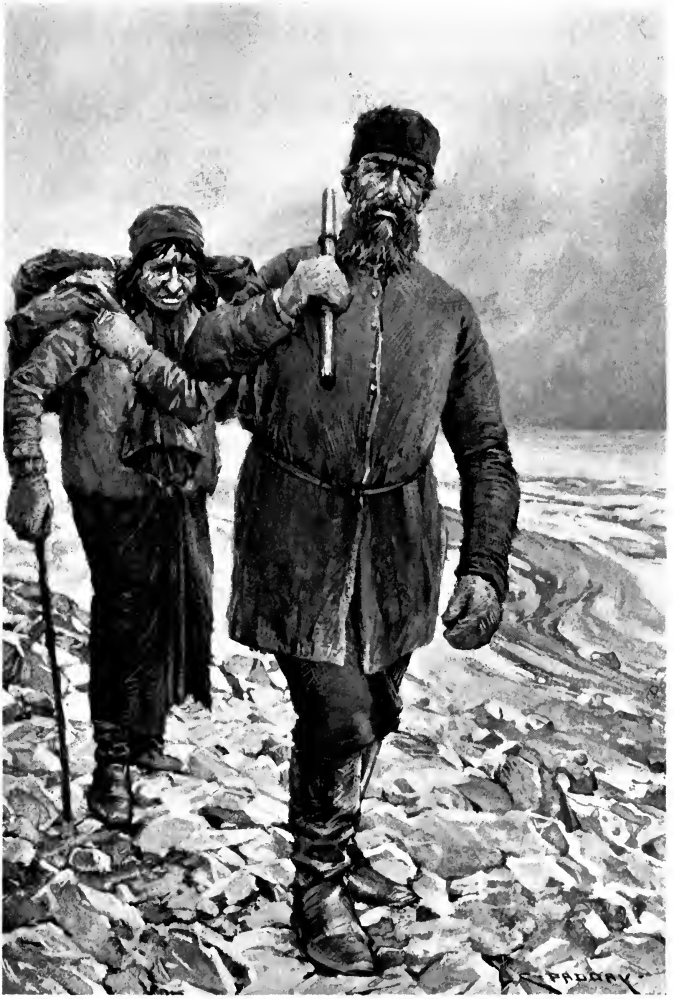
put out his hand, and carefully smoked a little before he continued.

"She was a savage. And not a young savage, and she was not good-looking. She was old, with a skin wrinkled like leather, and her eyes were small and sore, and her voice was cracked, but——. But she was a woman. And she was good to me. Is it strange to you that I should love an old hag?"

"No," I said decisively.

"I didn't think about her being an old hag. That is what she was called by other men, white men, later on. She was a woman, and she was good to me. You understand that. I had never thought about women, in that sense, in my student revolutionary days. The men and women in our commune cared for one another; but I never cared. I never cared for a woman till, with my weak eyes, I looked at her. Often I saw her looking at me, and I read in her eyes what neither of us had words to say. I travelled with those nomads, and she—she became my wife.

"Are you laughing? No! Don't laugh. For it was then I began to understand what life was. My madness—that madness when I hated my fellows and found companionship with the beasts—went. From my love for that woman grew a love for my own people, a love to work, to strive.



"'A crooked old hag with leather skin and sore eyes!'"

But when I looked eagerly to the time—if ever—I got back to Russia, there came the haunting fear that she and I would be parted. It was she who brought back to life the dead manhood that was in me.

"I was strong, and I worked and was happy, and I sang. The melancholy which had warped my being disappeared. I was a man, a real man, strong—oh, I was strong. I saw clearly—I knew—I was filled with a great courage. And—and, she was just a crooked old hag with leather skin and sore eyes! We were ever starving. I thought little of that. She—she sickened. It was not till long after that I knew she sickened from hunger, for she pretended to eat so that I might have enough. I asked you if you knew anything about women. Do you?

"I wanted to remove her from that savage, wandering life, moving the deer from patch to patch of saltish grass in the short summer months, huddling like beasts in our tents in the winter—four months of blackness. I wanted to feel the pride of showing her to those of my own colour, to take her back with me to Russia when the exile was over. That desire, which at first came like an idle thought, grew until it was a passion. When I told her—for I learnt the tongue of her tribe—that I would return to my people, she hung

to me with the wild grief of a woman whose child is being drawn from her breasts to be dashed to death. When I told her that she would go with me she was silent for a great while; then she said that whatever I willed she would do.

"So it was that, after nearly three years' absence, I returned to the camp of exiles on the banks of the Lena, in Yakutsk. Life—ha, ha! it is a breath and is gone. I was almost forgotten. It was taken I was dead. And I, Ivan Ivanovitch, had left them a roving-eyed, man-hating, beast-loving creature, and now came back strong—oh, I was strong! Look at those hands—they are strong hands. They welcomed me kindly; but the old terror was in their eyes. They laughed at my wife; they laughed at me because of my wife. Mad! I was more mad than ever, said they. They laughed at the waddling, savage old woman with wrinkled brown skin and sore eyes.

"But I worked. No man was a braver comrade than I. She was one of us—I insisted. And going back to the settlement—that bundle of bleak shanties on the eternally lonely steppes—was, by contrast, returning to luxury. Here were warmth and comfort and food. Warmth and comfort and food! It was that which killed her. We—funny: why don't you laugh?—had been sent by the Russian Government to that desolation

as a cruel punishment, and she died—not quickly, but slowly, emaciated by her starvation of herself when we were in the wilds, so that I should not hunger, and now incapable of bearing the luxury—the luxury, do you hear?—of a convict settlement! It was only a few months before we scraped the soil and placed her there to rest in the never-ending cold. There she lies—there she lies. And she taught me something about women."

His voice, so croaking and bitter, softened to tenderness. A gentle glow came to his seared face. The light in his eyes dimmed.

The room was hot. The dancing girls had left their little platform, and were capering indecently before their drunken admirers. Fat Russian officers unbuttoned their jackets and lay back and guffawed. There was the stench of bodies and food and wine, and the air was suffocating with tobacco smoke. The band was blatant.

"It is only two o'clock in the morning," I said; "let us have another bottle of wine."

And Ivan Ivanovitch, the man who had come back, drank deeply.

CHAPTER III

THE CLOAKS OF RELIGION

A BURMESE Buddhist priest taught me the beauty of contemplation.

He was lean and cadaverous, and his skin was brown, and the Buddha was his guide. There were hollows in his cheeks, cavities in his shoulders, and the shiny skin showed the ruffle of the bones on his breast. His head was shaven, and he wore no sandals. His only clothing was a long, loose, tawny-yellow robe. So I saw how thin he was. He was frail, except for the strength in his eyes, gleaming and searching.

He was a man of my own age, and we were friends. So, in the dew of the morning, I met him near the Golden Temple of Mandalay—fantastic shrine, weird with much gorgeousness. We walked through the jungle, where the trees grew thick and were dripping. The sun was still behind the hills, but when it climbed, the cool of the new day would be burnt out of the sky, the air of the jungle would be vapourish and

relaxing, and sweating limbs would ache with the pain of tramping.

Dainty temples, with quaint carvings, rose tapering, and tiny bells sang to the play of the breeze. In thick, luxuriant copses were statues of the Buddha, sitting cross-legged, one hand drooping, the other palm upwards, and a look in the eye suggestive of peace—the great quiet. The statues were crude in make, white, but, with the background of wide-leaved vegetation, gently befitting the situation. I had lost my old ignorance about the Buddhists being idolaters. They sit before the statue of the Buddha, not because they are worshipping that clay figure, but because it helps them to remember the Buddha, his meekness, his sacrifice, the peace which came to his soul through contemplation.

The priest and I had talked of the meaning of things. But he was of the mysterious, droning, poetical East, and I was from the busy, energetic, practical West. Religion with him was something to quieten, to slay self, to reduce the spirit till it glides into eternal peace—that was Nirvana. I was all for striving, for action and work—from my tongue fell the jargon about duty, assisting those who were weak, leaving the world better than one found it. We never agreed.

But I esteemed all Buddhist priests because

they were like children, moving in the steps of their master. They put aside the company of women; they never owned money; they were dependent on begging each morning their daily food of rice; they ate sparingly in the morning, and never after high noon, for then the blood was prone to sluggishness and the spirit was drowsy. They had learnt the truth which comes only to ascetics. Well, well; there are good and devoted men in the Roman Church, men in the Anglican Church who make their lives a sacrifice, men in other churches who move toward their ideal. But I never see a comfortable, good-natured old rector in England, with his old-time, restful house, his cosy library, and big chair to doze in, without thinking of the Buddhist priest, who must have no possessions, dependent on charity for food, drinking only water and eating only rice.

We pushed through thick and matted jungle, with clawed branches stretching forth their arms as though they would restrain us, and the air getting hot and odorous with decayed leaves, and the shrill call of a million insects in our ears, and beautiful bedizen-winged butterflies fluttering, and the rich bloom of orchids by our way.

We found a break, a little open patch, and there we sat down. I was tired, and dropped into

a sprawling attitude. The priest sat on his haunches and gathered his yellow robe about him. I pulled out my pipe and smoked.

After a time I looked. The priest was sitting in the Buddha attitude, the whole body at ease, one hand showing the palm, and the other hanging. The figure was slightly bent forward. I would have spoken, but I was held in silence by the man's face. To me there is something of the uncanny in an Eastern face, especially in the brown-to-black eyes, and the ochreous hue in the eyeball, as though there was hidden something which it was not given to men of my colour to understand. But when the face was that of an Eastern who, from boyhood, had subjected the flesh to discipline, when it was haggard, and the head shaven, and the whole demeanour as motionless as that of a statue, and yet in the eyes was a look, unconscious of immediate surroundings, as though he were watching something through a haze, then a sensation ran through one's blood, chastened one to reverent stillness, made one feel it would be impious to break the spell. The priest of Buddha had sunk into contemplation.

The shriek of a startled bird, which dashed upon us and scurried away, caused the priest to raise his head. He awakened out of his reverie. He turned to me and smiled.

I opened the little tin of cooked rice I was carrying, and we squatted opposite each other and, with fingers and thumb, slowly, almost meditatively, ceased our fast. The day warmed; the air was thick and steamy and sultry. The world was in a drowse.

Then he spoke to me: "The duty of the spirit is to ignore the body. So must you remove yourself from the world. It is good for man to contemplate. Come to such a spot as this, where other men will not disturb, and sit thus in the style of the Master. Do not control your thoughts; do not guide them. Keep quiet and let them go where they will. One hour, two hours, three hours will pass—what is time?—and then to the brain comes a hush. All the cares of the world seem to evaporate, the hardness of heart softens, the world is a realm of peace. Then comes an opaqueness of vision, almost a coma, and you feel you are drifting into purity. After that, you may see clearly. It does not come always, and sometimes it comes slowly. So you sit in a trance, all the world forgotten, and your spirit is in peace. Ah! you may sit from sunrise to sun-fall in the adoration of peace. When it is over you walk happily—you have scraped contamination from your spirit; you are kind to the world, but you know the nothingness of it all. To the peaceful

darkness from which you came at your birth so shall you return at your death. Do you ever give a whole day to contemplation, sitting lonely among the woods ? "

"No," I said.

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The organ in the medieval Continental cathedral thundered the music. It reverberated up the great aisle, and the fretted roof flung back the rhapsody.

Cold and stately were the pillars ; the daylight filtered through the stained windows. In the dusky chapels were gaudy figures of saints, and tiny tapers flickered in the gloom.

There was a mighty scraping of feet on the pavements of the cathedral. The devout made obeisance toward the golden cross suspended above the altar. Worshippers were paying for their chairs and hauling them forward noisily. Others were buying candles.

There was a sound of deep, male voices in chant. The procession of choristers, acolytes, priests, bishops, and the cardinal, was making a circuit of the church. There were robes of lawn, gowns of black, vestments of red and gold. Huge candles were carried ; banners with devices of the saints were held on high ; censers were swung, and the smoke of the incense rose in clouds.

The cardinal was a big, stout man, in gorgeous raiment. His head was thrown back; amiability suffused his fleshy, mobile countenance. Behind him walked two dark, cadaverous priests, tonsured, their hands clasped and their heads hanging.

Up in the choir, about the crimson altar steps, on the altar itself, there is a blaze of light. The choir raise the cry of praise, and a weak-voiced old prelate intones. There is a never-ceasing crunch of shoes on the stone pavements, as the great congregation alternately rise and kneel, keeping time to the exercise of worship. There is the hotness of a crowd, the smell of over-perfumed women, the reek of the incense. Through the mist of the incense, and in the glow of the multitude of lights which irradiate the altar, priests in gay garb are bowing and kneeling and standing. There is the holding-up of hands, and the lifting of golden vessels. There is the tinkling of a bell, and a holy act is performed. But the people, called to worship, are noisy. Some are in the grip of piety, but most are formal in their conduct, and many are only heedful of the spectacle.

The ceremony is a solemn Pentecostal festival according to the rites of the Church of Rome.

Just one week before I had gone to a different

service, but I took it the worship was of the same God.

It was held on a Sunday afternoon, on a green, near cross-roads outside a Norfolk village. Summer lay on the land, but the roads were dusty. There was honeysuckle, and there were wild roses in the hedgerows.

The only altar was the green. A big agricultural cart stood beneath a tree, and this did service as pulpit and choir stall. From a schoolroom some benches had been obtained—even some plain kitchen chairs for the old folk.

There was no high ceremonial, and the only incense was the fragrance of the flowers. The raiment of the men in the cart was their Sunday black. Save for a palsied old man with white beard, who sat in a corner resting on his stick, and who often cried "Amen," those who led the service had the stamp of outdoor life upon them. They were stiff-set, awkward men, and they had slowness in their speech. Their cheeks were coloured with the wind and the sun, and their brows were furrowed.

One man, with reddish whiskers and freckled face, was standing to the front of the cart, bareheaded, his eyes closed, and his face screwed into wrinkles with the agony of his thoughts, and he was crying "O Lord!" He was praying eagerly,

with the fervency of his class. His voice was strong, and it travelled over the bent heads of the congregation, beyond where the dust-covered country carts, which had brought so many of the worshippers, were resting on their shafts. The sun fell on the upturned face of the man who prayed, and sweat glistened on it. He beseeched in the simple language of his fathers. The old man called "Amen"; the breeze shook the leaves of the tree overhead; the caw of rooks could be heard, and from the highway came the sharp clatter-clatter of a horse trotting.

When the prayer was over, a "brother" gave an address. He had a black tufted beard, and spoke with pleading. He wanted our hearts to be cleansed from sin. The only thing which could wash away our sin was the precious blood of Christ. Let us turn from our wickedness and live. To-morrow we might die, and then it would be too late. How could we go into the presence of God with souls defiled? Had He not given His only begotten Son for us? Would we not be washed clean in the blood of the Lamb?

An elementary faith—but one that was easily to be understood by the people. Good folks, and with not much sin about them. They were all of the class which works: a tradesman or two, with little shops in adjoining villages, small

farmers and their wives, farm labourers, and, on the outskirts, sitting on the grass, gawky young fellows and their giggling sweethearts.

A happy sight. These people had toiled during the week. Now, on Sunday, they took their relaxation on the village green. No fashionable company, this. The Sunday clothes of the men, honest black, made by the local tailor, or bought ready-made in the market town, had been worn for years. It was easy to note the little attempts at finery made by the buxom women—a new ribbon to deck an old bodice, some new artificial flowers in the bonnet which did service last year. But the thing which was good to look upon was the care of the children. The mothers had darned and patched and made neat their clothes; much scrubbing of faces with cheap soap had brought a polish to the red cheeks of many a lad. The wave of the girls' hair told that the local newspaper was employed on Saturday night to get it to that satisfactory state.

There was no organ. But two young women in the chapel choir raised their shrill voices, and gradually the elders joined in, and the old men croaked, and the old women crooned, and the sweethearts on the fringe shared the penny hymn-books, and over the country-side swelled the song: "There is a fountain filled with blood."

The elder with the feeble voice and the white hair asked a blessing on us all. It was a wailing voice, sounding treble, and the caw of the rooks in the lofty trees of the squire's house seemed to shout comment.

This had been a humble wayside service by East Anglian Dissenters.

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Now the cool of the evening had come, and the dolour which had hung over Jerusalem had gone. Then those of other climes, who had much faith in tradition, went out and were abundantly rewarded.

Each week three Sabbaths are honoured in Jerusalem. This day, Friday, the Mohammedans have been keeping holy; to-morrow, Saturday, is the Sabbath of the Jews; the day after, the Christians will give thanks.

The Mohammedans, who own the city, look with callous eye on the pale Christians of the West, who come and reverently visit the accredited spots associated with the life and the death of the Founder of their hopes for eternity. Those who weep are the Jews.

There is a massive piece of wall on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The boulders are huge; how they were placed is matter for debate. They are black with the centuries and eaten with time.

The Gentiles have their hallowed spots; but this is the sacred place of the Jews. For they believe it is all that remains of the ancient city of Zion. Jehovah, their God, was an angry God, and drove them forth and scattered them upon the face of the earth. But the thoughts of the Jew turn to Jerusalem, as the love of a mother follows her son to unknown lands. And the Jew, who has the traditions of his fathers deep embedded in his heart, and longs achingly for the time when Jehovah will deliver the race out of its bondage, stretches forth his arms in his old age. Sore that the promise has not been fulfilled in his time, he would like to feel with his hands and touch with his lips all that remains of the walls which encompassed Jerusalem before the curse fell, and the city of David fell into the hands of the infidels.

So there are pilgrimages of Jews as well as of Gentiles. The rich Jew comes luxuriously; but the poor Jew from Spain and from Poland also comes. For years he has starved himself to scrape together the money. He has been beaten and reviled. His manner is cringing. Ill treatment has sapped the manhood out of him. But one desire burns clear in his heart—that his feeble eyes may look upon that wall before they are shuttered by death.

And on Friday night, the eve of the Hebrew Sabbath, they drag themselves slouchingly to the wall, and wail over the departed glories of Zion. They are needy and greasy, and their long black cloaks cling to them like shrouds, and lank curls drip from beneath their caps.

It is a pathetic sight. They have come to Jerusalem, and the tears well at the sight of it. They have travelled, tramped for months, or undergone the hardships of dirty steamers. They have been fellows with hardship. But the pain has been buried beneath the joy that they were moving to the city where lived and hoped and believed their sires of centuries ago. They have so longed for the time they might lean their worn cheeks against the wall of Zion that, when the day comes for them to go forth and pray to Jehovah, as countless generations of Jews have prayed, that once more He smile upon His chosen people, there comes to the trembling hearts an awful fear.

I stood on one side and watched. The old men and the crooked women moved forward slowly, shakingly, as though they were entering the presence of Jehovah Himself. There was the wall, big and black, and solemn as eternity. They looked with dread, with struggling passion, with realised hope. Then they ran forward, and beat

the palms of their wizened hands upon the stone, and kissed it and sobbed convulsively. Others were leaning against the stone, woefully happy at the end of a long journey, and the tears were quietly trickling down—for the haven had been reached.

Others have passed the first rapture of their sorrow, and are standing close to the stone with the Talmud in their hands, and they read, fast and mumblingly. The group is like people who have been on a wreck, and despair has been theirs, and now, out of the unknown, comes a rescuing hand.

Above the wailing is heard a voice chanting in Hebrew, "We pray Thee, have mercy on Zion!"

Broken and hoarse comes the response, "Gather the children of Jerusalem."

The voice sounds again. "Haste, haste, Redeemer of Zion." The Jews cry together, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem."

"Make beauty and majesty surround Zion," the leader wails. "Ah! turn Thyself mercifully to Jerusalem," is the shout.

"May the Kingdom soon return to Zion!" "Comfort those who mourn at Jerusalem."

Fingers crawl over the stone, as the blind spread their hands over the beloved face.

"For the walls that are overthrown," sighs the voice.

"We sit in solitude and mourn," weep the Jews.

And the Gentile stands aside and watches.

* * * * * *

This is a pilgrim ship laden with Mohammedans from Constantinople, their faces set towards Mecca. I travel by it, as a deck passenger, for the money is little, only two pounds, and were I to go by the ordinary steamer to Egypt the cost would be seven pounds.

Stamboul, with the domes and minarets of its many mosques, looks very beautiful in the glory of the afternoon sun as the boat moves slowly toward the Sea of Marmora.

There are hundreds of pilgrims, all deck passengers. They are squatting on their bundles, some spinning cigarettes between their fingers, and others sucking hard at hubble-bubble water pipes. They converse in subdued tones, and show an Oriental disregard for time. But I come from a more energetic land, and I search till I find a sheltered corner, and there I spread my mat and put on one side the basket in which I have bread and dried fish and grapes, my provender for the voyage. I squat like an Eastern, and smoke my pipe.

All Turks, but a medley crowd. There is the Constantinople man, dressed like a European, except for the crimson fez. But most of them are Mussulman priests, and they wear the baggy breeches and long cloak and turban of the Orient. Their heads are shaven, and their whiskers cropped to the cheek; they are sallow, but their eyes are large and luminous, and the nails of their fingers are dyed with henna. Several men wear white turbans, which announce their claim to be descendants of the Prophet. Some men wear green turbans, which tell they have been to Mecca before.

When Constantinople is left far behind, the pilgrims begin slowly to arrange their mattings for the journey. There is no hurry, but much politeness. Some of the mats are exquisitely embroidered. There is a man close to me who has one of blue velvet, and he sits in the middle of it with legs crooked beneath him, and in his hand a string of amber beads, which he is running through his fingers almost heedlessly. They are to be shuffled to recitations from the Koran. But the Mussulman trifles with them for another reason; whilst they are being ruffled through the fingers they distract desire to smoke—and, at times, the Moslem feels he smokes too much.

The deck is a mosaic of coloured rugs and men kneeling on them, whilst, in the fall of the

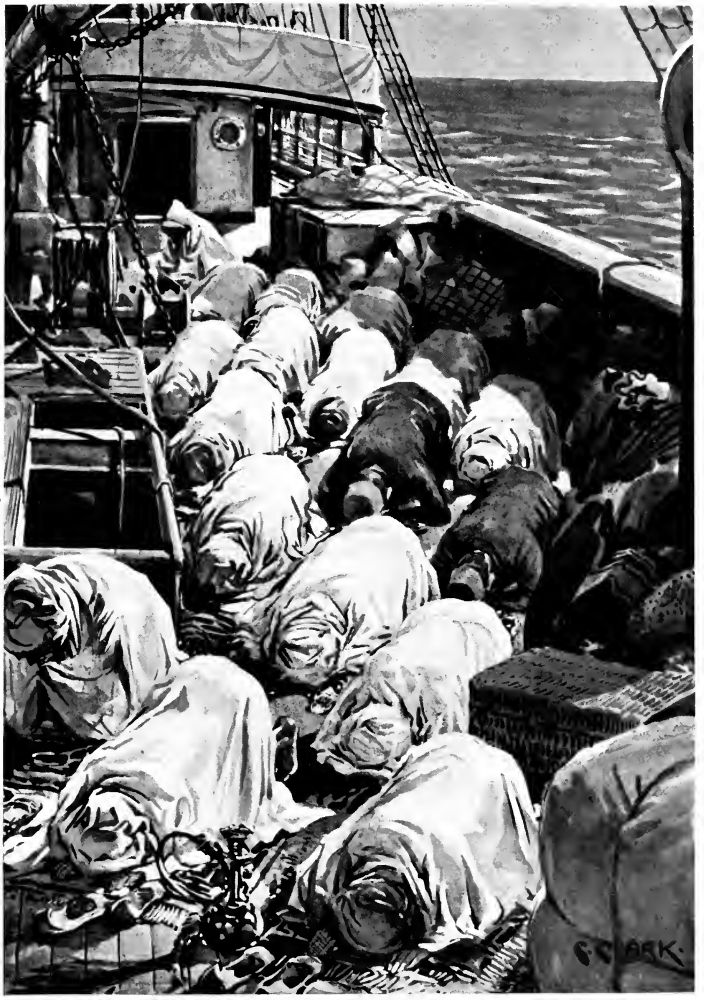
day, the vessel slowly surges her path across the smooth sea. There is no inquisitiveness to watch the sea, or to note passing boats. The Turk is a man of restraint; to hide excitement is one of the arts of life.

At sundown there is slow rising and moving toward a tap of water. It is running continuously, and men take turns in laving the hands. They go back to their mats. There is the noise of the ship cleaving the sea, and there is creaking of the vessel's machinery, and there is the thud and quiver of the engines; yet I am conscious of silence.

There is a solemn straightening of mats. A *muezzin*, or priest, long-robed, and with a turban of green, rises, and sings in a strained, shrill, quavering voice, "*Allaha akbar*—" Allah is great; I testify that there is no God but Allah; and Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah. Come to prayer, come to worship. Allah is great. There is no God but Allah!"

The cry thrills me.

The Mussulmans all rise and remove their shoes, and turn in the direction of Mecca. They poise their hands to their ears. They put their hands to their waists; they bow and recite their prayers. They stand up; they kneel and lower their heads till they touch the mat. In crouching



"'Allah is great. There is no God but Allah!'"

attitude, and in voices just above a whisper, they repeat the first *Sureh* from the Koran: "In the name of God, the merciful and gracious. Praise be to God, the Lord of creatures, the merciful and gracious, the Prince of the day of judgment. We serve Thee and we pray to Thee for help. Lead us in the right way of those to whom Thou hast shown mercy, upon whom no wrath resteth, and who go not astray. Amen."

This is the hour of prayer, the *Maghrib*. It is formal, but meek and impressive.

They sit and smoke and talk. My neighbour with the bright carpet has visitors. As they crouch round, he produces a little lamp and pan, and brings forth miniature cups, and proceeds, deliberately and ceremoniously, to make coffee. When the brown froth has risen thrice to the pot rim, he proceeds to pour the coffee in the cups. He looks at me and smiles, and then, with both hands, he offers me hospitality. I salaam.

So we sip coffee, whilst the sky loses its lights, and darkness comes, and all the figures are shadowy—more shadowy and wonderful by reason of the few dim lamps hanging overhead. There is prayer again, and the voice of the *muezzin* reverberates through the black night. After that the Mussulmans wrap themselves in their blankets and sleep.

I lie awake through the hours of the night, looking into the star-flecked sky. The hours go in beautiful peace. The stars lose their lustre and fade. A little opaqueness grows out of the night, and the new day is born. There is a movement among the recumbent figures. As the day breaks they pray again. "There is no God but one God, Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet."

The Mussulman who is faithful prays five times each day.

* * * * * *

The holy city of Russia is Kiev. It is crowded with gilt, star-bespangled and bulbous-domed churches. There is never an hour of day or night that the air is not broken with the clang of bells calling the faithful to prayer—not rattling bob-majors, with an octave of shrill bells kicking their heels, such as we are used to in England, but deep, sonorous, impressive in their boom, as the heavy wooden mallets beat the silver-laden bells.

Kiev, by the customary contrariness of things, is also one of the most wicked cities in the empire of the Little White Czar. An easily-found explanation is that the women are the best looking in the country—tall, graceful, lithesome, with sparkle in their manner, their eyes and their speech. They are not real Russians; in descent

they are partly Roumanian, but chiefly good-looking remnants of the far-off days when the Kingdom of Poland straggled down to the Black Sea.

Kiev is gay. There are cafés chantants, music-halls, revelry by night. The amusement of all Russians is to listen to girls singing. There are hundreds of troupes of girls moving from town to town all over Russia—and nearly all come from Kiev.

In the poorer districts you see doors smeared with a cross. You think this an evidence of piety. Not at all. It is an indication that the inhabitants are not Jews. For religious and racial passions occasionally blaze in the holy city of Kiev, and then the sturdy Christians set out with bludgeons to massacre the Jews. These are called *pogroms*, and are arranged by the military as a reminder to the Jews they had better keep humble. Besides, the rich merchants are all Jews, and raids have their advantages to the thieving section of the community.

Kiev is full of long-haired, long-robed priests. There are two kinds of priests, the monks, or Black clergy, who have all the best posts, and the parish priests, known as White clergy, who have the worst. The Black clergy are supposed to lead lives of " purely contemplative devotion."

They do no good to anybody. The White clergy, wretchedly paid, are obliged to marry. No priest gets a parish unless he is married. The usual custom is for the young priest to marry the daughter of his predecessor.

No rich Russian joins the priesthood; the clergy are either sons of priests or peasants. In my wanderings about the earth I have never come across any class of religious teachers held in such low esteem as the Russian priesthood.

Outwardly, the Russian is devout. No man ever passes a church without removing his cap and crossing himself, but he will spit on the ground as a priest passes him. The droski-driver will stop in the middle of a swearing combat with another droski-driver in order to cross himself.

The endeavour of the priests is to come as near as possible to a physical resemblance of the accepted likeness of the Founder of Christianity. So they wear their hair to their shoulders, and are bearded. Some of the countenances I have seen were exceedingly refined, the face pale to emaciation, the eyes large, luminous and sad, the brow broad and intellectual. With the long hair and tufted whiskers, one cannot deny the men are much in accord with what we believe Christ looked like.

But the impressive sights in Kiev are the processions of pilgrims. It is always the poor who are the most devout. The *moujik,* scratching an existence on the dun, melancholy steppes of distant provinces, knowing nothing of towns, but ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, often a slave for years, has but one constant and never-flitting hope—of being able to make a pilgrimage to Kiev and reap merit by pressing his lips to the relics of the saints.

It has been my lot to witness many religious ceremonies. But I think the most touching scene I have ever witnessed was near Kiev, because it was human, with no gaudy surroundings—just processions of rough-clad peasantry, laden with baggage, food, clothes, and sleeping blankets, trudging over the plains, hot, sandy, unfertile, until coming in sight of the great golden domes of the Lavra at Kiev, making points of fire with the glisk of the sun, and the peasants, their souls suddenly suffused with the radiance of their faith, fall upon their knees, let their heads touch the ground, and, whilst their eyes are dulled with tears, they pour out their thankful prayers they have been so privileged and so blessed as to reach the holy city. That is not the moment for the onlooker from the West to think of their ignorance, their gross superstitions and childish beliefs. It

is enough to stand aside, hushed and reverent, in the presence of such an outburst of piety.

No shrine in the world attracts so many pilgrims as does Kiev. One million peasants come every year, thousands of them spending months in slow, laborious, foot travel. They are always poor, living on black bread and a little tea. Yet, out of their hard-won and carefully nursed kopecks, they feel repaid if they can make an offering to the great white-and-gold monastery overlooking the sinuous, muddy Dnieper river.

Kiev is the birthplace of Christianity in Russia. That took place by the baptism of Prince Vladimir in 988. The Christianity came from Greece—and that is why all the churches through Muscovy to-day have a strong Byzantine flavour about them. Once there were four hundred churches in Kiev; now there are only sixty. Very quaint and sombre they are. The dark walls are laden with gorgeous, dull gold *ikons*, or sacred pictures; the air is thick with incense; gorgeous-robed priests chant Slavonic in deep bass Gregorian style; the people, crowded, eager, bewildered, the women with their resigned, moon-like faces, and the men, savage, rugged, and hairy, move round, kissing the rims of the *ikons*.

On the festival days *moujiks* come in many

thousands. They camp about the grounds of the monastery under the shadow of the churches, and the priests send them food.

There can never disappear from my mind the recollection of one Sunday morning when I joined the pilgrims. Armed with a candle, I descended into the catacombs. There is a mile of passages, just high and wide enough for a human being to walk. We were all crushed, hundreds of us. Everyone was carrying a tallow candle; the glare was eerie, and the stench sickening. In these catacombs are the remains of over eighty saints. They are in little chapels, little squares dug in the rock. There is a blaze of candles; the priests chant; the worshippers press forward and kiss the breast of the corpse. There is the body of John the Sufferer, buried up to his neck. He is said to have lived in that posture for over thirty years. Other priests lived in closed-up and dark cupboards, with a hole about a foot in diameter, through which food was passed to them. The emotional peasants did reverence at every shrine; they knew nothing about the holy men they reverenced.

The Cathedral of the Assumption is a mass of wealth and tawdriness. Up near the roof, lost in the mist of incense, is a figure of the Virgin, all gold and pearls. It is a precious relic; it is

lowered at times of festival, and the devout are privileged to lay their offerings before it.

Services of impressive ritual are in constant progress. The place is packed to suffocation. The vestments of the priests have gold flowers on a light red ground. On the Feasts of Angels, or the Blessed Virgin Mary, they are of white with gold flowers, or pure white. On days consecrated to Apostles they are yellow; to bishops, white; to a martyr, red; to one of the holy fathers, green. Some of the vestments are studded with diamonds. There are crowns heavy with jewels; one has thirty-six pounds weight of pearls attached to it. Each spring, all the vestments, shrouds and palls are brought from the catacombs and cellars and hung out to dry.

But, picturesque, with an Oriental splendour, though the ceremonies be in the holy city of Russia, there is nothing in them that is elevating or impressive—except the meek-eyed adoration of the peasants.

CHAPTER IV

GLASGOW ON SATURDAY NIGHT

A BLANKET of muggy fog has wrapped Glasgow all day.

It is damp and raw, and the people in the streets, especially the women, have pinched, screwed features. There are black lines under the eyes, and splotches of red on the nose, telling of marrow-chill discomfort. The pavements and the heavy granite setts in the thoroughfare are greasy and foul, as though the soot of the city had grown sodden, fallen, and caked everything with grime.

Lights have been aflame in the shops since morning, and the windows are steamy.

The grey, watery day dwindles to evening. Then the illuminating electric bulbs glow on high, the shops turn on their full lights, designs in electric advertisements glimmer like opals: a flash, darkness, blue, red, orange, smiting the gaze in turn. The electric cars are clanging, hurrying chunks of light. The whole scene lights up the fog, which is opaque, and

gets into the throat, and tickles and causes coughing.

It is Saturday night, and the poor of Glasgow, with what money they have in their pockets, are out shopping, seeking distraction, numbing their senses with alcohol. It is a throng of men in cloth caps, women in cheap finery, and others with shawls over their heads.

Away from the Trongate and at the corner of a narrow street is a crowd. Through the mist can be seen a man on a box. He is dark, sinewy, determined, and his cry, raucous in the wet gloom, is "Give your hearts to Jesus." Around him is a lurching audience, men with blotched faces, women with faces from which all womanliness has been bleached. And nearly everybody is drunk.

A weedy, haggis-faced fellow, with little chin, sucking at an unlighted pipe, and with a trickle of saliva down his chin, stands close up to the preacher, leers at him with blear-eyed contempt, damns religion, and barks it is better social surroundings that the people need. He tries to spit, but the dribble drops down on his waistcoat and makes a snail-like trail.

"Some men say it is better houses that are wanted," shouts the preacher with a smile, "but I'm thinking it is better men to put into

the houses needed first of all. Give your hearts to Jesus!"

"Div ye no think ye'r a hypocrite?" demands an old fellow, with a drunken lunge.

"Shut up, ye bletherskite!" snaps a tubby man over his shoulder.

"Who are you?" asks the other with a sneer.

"As guid a man as you are."

"No damn bit of it. I'm a man, and you're no a man!"

"Och, awa with ye," growls the other.

"Awa wi' yersel'. You a man?"

"Yes, I'm a man!"

The quarrel grows, the two snarl. But it goes no further. Neither removes hands from pockets.

"Ca' yersel' a man! Pshaw!" and coarse sarcasm sputters.

"Give your hearts to Jesus."

"What do ye dae for a livin'?" is a shot from the crowd, and some men laugh.

"Let the man speak," croaks an old woman, elbowing and jerking her way to the front. She is slobberingly drunk. Her grey face is heavy-lined, and her eyes are filmy. A grey shawl has slipped from her head, and matted streaks of grey hair hang limp on her cheeks.

"Aye," she gurgles with alcoholic approval, hitching her shoulders; "ye'r richt, it's religion —och! aye!" and she draws the back of a gnarled old hand across loose wet lips.

"I tell you to give your hearts to Jesus, and all your trouble will go."

"Aye, that's it; gie your hearts. Ye'r richt! Man, I ken it, it's releegion—och, be damned wi' you," and she reels round and slaps viciously at a man trying to haul her back by tugging at her shawl.

"Shut up, ye besom; ye drunken besom!"

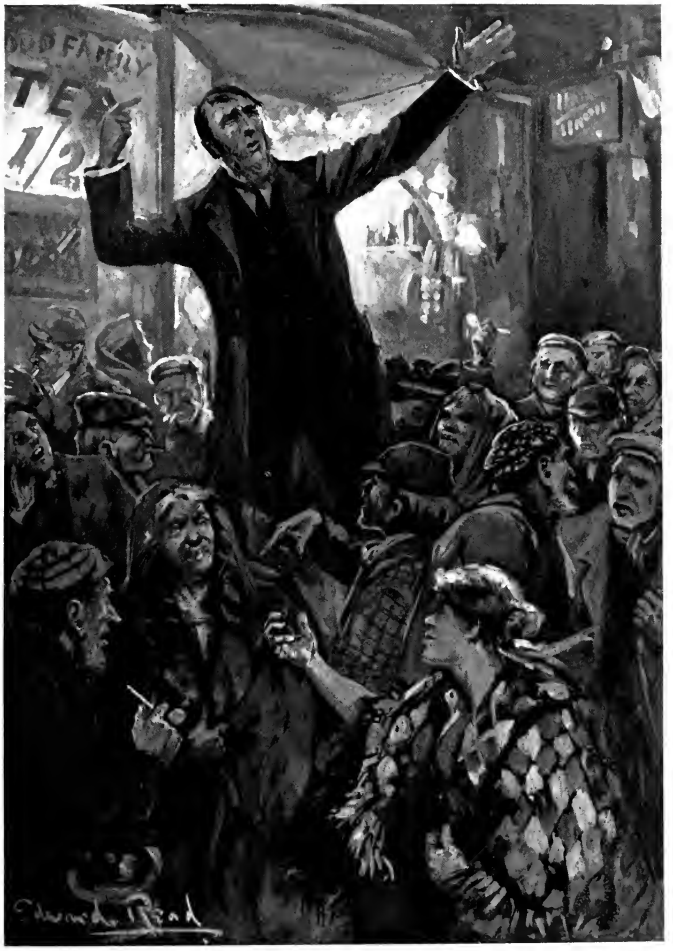
This from a little, dried-up woman, who has listened with raised ear, and is spewing unclean language. A man on the other side gives me a look and a grin; he only sees the comic side. For this woman is drunken, too; not maudlin like the other, but vixenish.

The older woman licks her fingers, pushes a hank of grey hair over an eye, and looks with lack-lustre gaze on her critic.

"I want," she says with a hiccough, "I want to hear the man preach the go-go-gospel."

"Weel, let the man preach the gospel, with none of your noisy clip, you auld cat."

The two women tumble at one another, claw one another, pull the shawls off one another, and tear at one another's hair. The spirit-



"'And this is Christian Glasgow.'"

soaked men push them. The men abuse one another.

"You a man! You're no a man. You're a cur, you doug."

A couple of policemen cut through the crowd, seize the brawling females and fling them apart.

"And this is Christian Glasgow," exclaims the preacher. "Oh, if only you would give your hearts to Jesus!"

The clammy night hangs heavy.

I go wandering the streets. The buildings are high, black, forbidding—cold to repulsiveness. The shops are long-windowed and unattractive. There are tidy women out doing their bits of Saturday night shopping. Their strained expression speaks of years of mute sorrow. They buy cheap meat.

Against the windows of sweet shops, children, thin-clad, barefooted, hoisting their shoulders, slowly stamping their feet and drawing breath with a hiss through blue lips, showing how cold they are, are pressing their dirty noses and getting satisfaction by consuming the gaudy goodies in ravenous imagination. There is a quarrel, and a bullet-headed lad punches a girl of twelve in the face. She curses him, grins, and then comes back.

In an eating-house some tired girls are eating

hot meat pies. The poor of Glasgow are fond of hot meat pies, shaped like a collar box, the pastry well browned, and brittle on the edge. The aroma is savoury and even inviting. The pies are kept warm in tin ovens, gas-heated. The dealer pulls out a tray of them, pours on the crust some brown stuff from a jug; it soaks through a hole to the meat. That is how the gravy is added.

A hot meat pie is a treat; it is warming. When the poor have a few pence they send for meat pies, and the lassie who goes for them will get a bit of the tasty crust, and maybe in a dark turn of the damp-odoured stair leading to the tenements she will tilt a pie and take a suck at the gravy.

The tired girls are sitting with mouths lowered to the table whilst they enjoy the warmth and the seasoning of the pies.

A drunkard reels into the doorway, and sinks, a bundle of incompetence, on the muddy sawdust. He is hoisted on his uncertain legs, hauled to the street, and put against the wall. He props himself with his hands against the wet stonework, and turns a side glance, which is a mixture of idiocy and bestiality. He screws his mouth offensively.

Along the Gallowgate ebbs and flows humanity, old, crooked, wizened, young, fresh and spry, but

all touched with the curse of poverty. There is no happiness, no bright sparkle of the eyes.

Yet there is singing. An aged dame is crooning in the gutter, and holding a bent, lean hand for kindly coppers. Two sailors have their arms round each other's necks, and bawl a nigger song till they break loose and chase a couple of screeching wenches into a passage. From the half-open doors of the dram shops comes a mixed odour of whisky and wet sawdust, and the tipsy monody of some rough-throated fellow who thinks he is jovial.

There is a young man leaning against the wall in a passage; his head is lurched forward, and he is as sick as a dog.

A sot of a woman is in the street reviling someone leaning from the window two storeys above. She has been locked out. She weeps, snivels, pleads, breaks into a furious tirade, swears with all the filth of tongue which drips from women without shame. Children near by laugh at the outburst.

It begins to drizzle, and the lights cast a glaze on the dirt-caked pavements.

At the foot of the stairs stand shapeless women, something defiant in their cross-armed attitude. There are bloated, pursy features, and the hair is wiry and almost brindled. I hesitate for a

moment, fumble with my pipe and matches, so I may have photographed on memory a repulsive visage. The woman leers, gives a jerk of the head, and says something. A shiver goes over me.

A spray of uproar just where the Gallowgate begins to heave. A man and a woman are fighting, and the woman has an infant tightly bound within the greenish tartan shawl which she has round her. She is striking at the man with claw-spread fingers. He pushes her in the breast, and she staggers. She screams and rushes at him like a bull-dog. He smiles palely; pushes again. She grips him by the collar. She cries for the police.

"Do you charge him?" asks a big policeman, used to these scenes and inclined to be good-humoured.

"The dirty beast!" explodes the woman.

"Well, do you charge him with anything?"

"What the devil hev I got to charge him wi'?" demands the woman.

"Well, get awa' hame wi' ye," says the constable; "go and ha' a guid sleep."

The crowd grins as the woman unevenly treads away. The child on her breast has slept all the time.

Argyll Street is an avenue of light and noise. The pavements are packed, and progress is slow.

There is a kerbstone and gutter trade. The poor old chaps, who have been hit with ill-luck in their later days, look piteously at you with watery eyes, and invite you to buy a penny diary and time-table.

Young women sell apples from barrows. Some of them are not to be included in albums of feminine beauty. Yet there are one or two women huskily crying their wares who—with lusty, red-cheeked, good-featured, white-teethed, good-eyed, luxuriant-haired pagan attractiveness—would make dim the beauty of many women far higher in the social scale. Where these women come from I do not know. But there is distinction, individuality, in their looks, coarsened with their methods of livelihood, but women who, if reared in another sphere, with grace of body and culture of manners, would catch many eyes.

I suppose they will take to drink later on. The good looks will disappear before the brutality of the husbands. They will become like the older women.

A surge of lads and lassies are in a place with penny-in-the-slot gramophones and penny-in-the-slot cinematographs. There are some alluring, naughty titles over the latter, and raw lads push in their pennies to gloat. But the pictures are quite deficient in naughtiness. Across the road

is a "twopenny music-hall," with a performance lasting an hour. I pay my twopence, and find that by paying another twopence I can have a front seat.

There is a squeal of barrel organs. There are shows, the equivalent of the American "dime museums." Glasgow has more of these than any other city in Great Britain. There are waxworks, and when you are inclined to be scornful at the startling unlikeness to celebrities you have seen in the flesh, you remember you have only paid twopence for the whole thing. There is a row of murderers — even a blood-stained apron (duly authenticated) worn by a murdered woman. There is an amazing collection of photographs of human monstrosities; bodies joined together; phenomenally fat people; astonishingly skeleton folk; men without legs or arms; women with beards; dog-faced women—sorts of things to give you ghastly nightmare after a heavy supper. There is a blaring pantechnicon of a band, a box of trumpets doing their best to crack your ear-drums.

These Glasgow "dime museums" are full. The people move about with open-mouthed wonder, having a good two-pennyworth. Some drunken men are trying to dance; they gyrate, guffaw, want to fight.

"D'ye call yersel' a man?" seems to be the recognised first step in Glasgow to provoke a quarrel.

I find myself in the Saltmarket—a drab region. The rain, and even the drizzle, has stopped, and bleak, icy fangs strike through clothing.

It is wintry in East Clyde Street. Frost is in the air, and already rime is gathering on the wall which fences the Clyde—so picturesque in painting and song, but black and remorseless, a suicide's grave, here. A string of flaring, spluttering, stenching naphtha lamps spread the length of the gutter. A market of second-hand goods is in full swing. A throng of buyers is about each barrow.

I feel there is a lot of tragedy about many of the things for sale. A clock, mantelpiece, gimcrack ornaments, a plush frame—what reason had you to be cast forth? Somebody was hungry, no doubt, and you went because food had to be got for the bairns. A woman's hat, bodice, dress, boots, once neat and becoming, I'll wager; but what girl wore you; why did she part with you? The old story, eh? There are barrows of work men's second-hand tools, quite good, most of them, and artizans are looking over them, trying their thumbs on the blades of the planes. It is a dismal thought: why did the workmen part with them?

But that the Glasgow people are intellectual is shown by the astonishing number of stalls selling fourth- and fifth-hand books. Here in East Clyde Street is a gathering of men hungry for bargains in cheap books. What a miscellaneous assortment of literature! What a quantity of volumes of sermons by forgotten divines! Hymn-books! Books on medicine, published half a century ago! Piles of technical books, quite out of date!

"Pick where you like, fourpence each; any book you like for fourpence," is the bawl of a huckster. It is just as though he were selling haddocks. Three old sixpenny magazines go for a penny the bunch.

The keenness of the Glasgow Scots for books —hundreds of them round the barrows this chill Saturday night, turning over the volumes and making little dips in reading beneath the fitful glare of the naphtha lamps—is a thing I shall remember.

A move to the poorest part of Glasgow, guided by a friend. Up darksome wynds flicker gas lamps, with glass shields of the old-fashioned, bulbous, fish-tank sort. The gas jets, whistling forth a long blue flame, do no more than accentuate the darkness. We stumble in the gloom.

We climb dismal stairs, matted with mud. There is a thin iron rail, feeble lighting, the walls

are colour-washed. Everything is dreary. The brown doors of the tenements are prison-like. Silence prevails, except for the scrape of our feet as we mount, landing by landing, to the top. There are three doors, and my friend knocks at one.

It is the home of an old couple. There is only one room, with a recess in which is the bed, and a place as big as a box, called a scullery. There is a handful of smouldering fire at the bottom of the grate, and the aged fellow is sitting with his knees close up to it, whilst on the little table stands a feeble lamp, and by it he has been reading a Glasgow evening paper. He is smoking a short discoloured clay pipe with a tin cap, so that not even the dust can escape. The wife, a cheery body, sweeps a chair with her apron.

She wants to show hospitality. "I'll just make a drop of tea, and Jock 'll gang and buy some hot pies."

We decline her offer. We have dropped in casually. My companion has brought me to see these old folk, the man dependent on odd jobs, the pair always on the verge of starvation, the only clothing those in which they are, the furniture mean but clean, and the only decorations two china Highlanders on the mantelpiece, an antique almanac, and one or two faded photographs.

And there are many such-like humble people, walking down the hill of life together, not knowing when the workhouse may separate them, but careful of the bawbees, and taking things as they come with quiet optimism.

"This type is to be thought of when you are considering the life of the poor of Glasgow," says my friend, as we feel our way down the stairs and into the street.

At the door of each of the public-houses is a janitor. He scrutinises the crush of men and women driving into the place. Anyone in drunkenness is thrown back. Many are rejected. Then they stand on the pavement, their bodies swaying. They look disgustedly at the steaming, stenching paradise of alcohol from which they are excluded. Some swear, but most accept their fate with dourness and melancholy.

We run the gauntlet. We are in a bar that is crowded. Everybody is arguing at the top of the voice. There are shouts for more drink, and there is the clash of glasses on the spirit-streaked counter. We have our drinks with the rest.

"Ye think I'm drunk," grunts a man at my elbow, having caught a glint in my eye. "Weel, I am. Tut, man, we'es a' drunk. Damned poor lot we are. Scotland's pride, eh? Ha, ha!"

And he sniggers at the sarcasm. "We're no fichters like our faithers, though we blether a deal. All the best Scotsmen hev ganged tae Canada. We're just drinkin' oursels ta hell. Scotland's pride, he, he! Scotland's pride! Damn it, there'll no be a real Scotsman like our faithers in fifty years. It's ower much eddication, an' tram rides instead o' walkin', an' gettin' drunk o' Saturdays. I'm like the rest. I'm a waster. I ken it. I'm drunk, but I'm no a fool for a' that!"

Ten o'clock! Closing time in Glasgow. Most of us clear out. Others have to be thrown out.

There is a medley of people, mostly drunken, by the Trongate. Huge policemen—from Skye, I am told—drive through them, push, admonish, give that tipsy slattern a shove, grip that maudlin, argumentative man and provide him with a hitch on his way. There is quarrelling.

"Ca' yersel' a man? Yer no a——man! I'm a man!" But no fighting.

It isn't a pretty scene. It makes the heart sick. Yet it is the ordinary Saturday night spectacle. I've knocked about all over the world, and never have I witnessed such drunkenness as I see in Glasgow this ordinary Saturday night.

CHAPTER V

THE LAND OF BREAD

THE buxom woman, who was singing and kneading dough and making scones, brought the whole thing back to me.

I had tramped the moorland since early day, and was tired. Here was a cottage, and I asked for food. The woman said she would bake me a scone and boil two eggs and brew me a pot of tea, and that might serve. I sat by the door and smoked my pipe, and looked upon the heather-fledged hills, and then on this cheery, lonely soul, who sang as she got her bread board, and threw fists of dough upon it, and knuckled it, and patted it, and looked to the fire and tossed kindling upon it, and cleaned the iron plate and put the scone on to bake.

The smell of the new bread was good to the nostrils. I liked the calm business-like way she went about her work, quite confident what she had to do, and how to do it. She was the daughter of a long train of women who had made bread for tired men.

And it was that which made me think of the men who win the bread.

* * * * *

On the other side of the Atlantic, more than half-way across the Dominion of Canada, west of the heaving, giant-baby of a city, Winnipeg, I stood up in the little, wide-wheeled buggy, and from sky-line to sky-line there was nothing but rustling wheat.

This was the great wheat belt.

It stirs the primitive instinct of man, which is a love of conquering, to gaze over as much of the world as the eye can compass, and know that someone has taken the land, which through the ages yielded nothing but grass, and made it yield food for men and women, far off, maybe, in the packed towns of the Old World.

It is an encouraging picture, and it glows in the imagination. The happy earth giving forth food; the West radiant with the falling sun, and the reaping machines out, cutting and binding the sheaves. The men brawny and bronzed, with broad-brimmed hats, and their shirts open at the throats. A land of health and industry and food-giving. The pulse beats a little stronger.

The anæmic man in London town, when he sees the picture and reads the pamphlet, has

the hunger of the adventurer in his heart, and he wishes he were a farmer in that region of promise and fulfilment to the brim, where life is rough and good, instead of being a man who is shot along a tube each morning into the heart of the City, where he sits in a close office, never visited by the sun, and casts figures and writes letters, and barters for money the necessities of life, and then barters again those necessities for a little more money than he has given for them.

He feels contempt for his high-collared, patent-shoed self. And he is shot back to his home along the tube, and reads the evening papers, and goes to the theatres, or walks in the parks and listens to the bands. But sometimes, in the windows of emigration offices, he sees photographs of that wonderful West. He has seen an arch of golden wheat brought from the West. He has muttered his admiration in the great halls of exhibitions when the fruits of that western country have been stacked before him.

He wishes he were a farmer in Manitoba, or Assiniboia, or Saskatchewan, or any other of the tracts with strange Indian names. It is right he should dwell on the gleaming picture. It is right that those of Canada who want the sturdy and the courageous of the old lands to go out, and rear homes, and own farms, and be pros-

perous, should direct attention to this amazing territory, and, with a smile and an outstretched hand, exclaim: "Come here, my friend. Leave those old countries where all the good things are held by somebody else. Come here, where every man has the same chance, where life is free, and the harvests are bounteous. Why be the slave of others when you can be your own master?"

So, when I looked over the sea of wheat, did the thought come to me that I, too, could settle and live the strong life. There is magic in the very air of Canada at such times. One wants to "do things." Many a time, as I wandered and wondered, journeying long days through the wheat area, on the banks of the Saskatchewan river in the north, horsing it over the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains from ranch to ranch, in the mining camps of the wild Kootenay region, that magical, seductive feeling has come.

Whilst in my mind often crawled the worm of criticism, my heart was all panting for the life. The Canadians have the joy. They gloat over the beauty of their land as a mother gloats over her child. As she forgets the pain which she endured when it was brought into the world, so have the Canadians forgotten the strife, and the struggle, and the sweat, and the agony with

which they have brought great stretches of the Dominion into being—a live land.

The Canadian does not thank you for reminding him of the fight he has had, and that others will have, in becoming master of the soil. I have heard him resent, as though the speaker were bent on traducing the country, the suggestion that there are hundreds of miles dreary and sad, that in parts the winters are long—five and six months of snow—and that terror and starvation are the lot of some pioneers. Breezy and optimistic, he will hear nothing of this. You are finding fault, because you are inconsiderate enough to mention a fact. Ah! but talk to him about Canada being the food-tract of the earth, let him know you are acquainted with Canada's progress, and that you believe as much as he does in its fortune, and he is the big boy awkward with happiness. We of the old, stale world, smile; but I always find something lovable in the naïve bumptiousness of the Canadian.

But the battle of the strong in turning that great area into productiveness—that is a finer subject for song than the deeds enrolled in the *Sagas*. A mighty expanse lying dead as a desert. Then the trappers of wild beasts for their skins. Then the railway. Then farming. More railway and more farming. The flood of immigration.

Now railways are spreading like arteries over Canada, and along them comes rumbling life blood, in the shape of waggons laden with wheat. The prairie lies silent in the murk of the night. Away toward the mellow sky appears a point of light. It comes, and it grows. The stillness is broken by a hum, and the hum swells into a roar. The light is the flaming eye of the lamp on the engine-breast. Behind are huge waggons. They sog and they crunch. It is a wheat train, filled heavy and tight, trundling toward Winnipeg.

Space for an epic here.

And the big steamers, breasting the rollers of the Atlantic, have their fore-parts crowded with immigrants. The magnet of Canada has drawn them from the lands with a history, and they are going to the land where another kind of history is to be made. No wastrels these, but the young and the lusty and the confident, brave to leave the soil of their fathers and go to the soil which, at first, grows nothing but hope. The old countries are all the poorer for this loss of healthy young blood.

Room for a dirge here.

What are the thoughts, the aspirations, of these people concerning the future? They are not of the educated class. They are of peasant stock, drained from northern Europe—healthy

human animals, if you care to be crude in your description. But struggle is going to quicken the mind that is sluggish, and children will be bright and sharp, directing great businesses in the cities, rulers of the country from the Parliament House in Ottawa. Their thoughts must be the same as those of the hundreds of thousands who have preceded them. They have heard of the successes; they have been enamoured of the pictures shown them; they hear of the fortunes made; they have one hundred and sixty acres awaiting them in Canada, to be given them free for the asking of it—a quarter of a square mile of the earth to be their very own.

To those who have never had an inch of earth to own there is something noble, impressive, in the very thought of it. One hundred and sixty acres—and with longing eyes they look beyond the prow of the ship, whilst still in mid-Atlantic, as though they would catch a glimpse of that piece of land right ahead of them.

Sometimes the new worker in this land of work has friends. They will help him; under their tutelage he will come to know how different farming in Canada is from the practice of the old world. He will earn a little money, and take up his homestead. Though the fight will be hard, it will be victory well won. When the day comes

that he can sit on his horse, and look round the world and say, "All this is mine," he will have forgotten many things.

But there are others not so fortunate in friends, with little knowledge and less money. There is an office in Winnipeg, and on the wall hangs a map, sectioned into minute squares. Streaks of these sections are coloured, and through the middle of the streak of colour runs a railway line. The tinted and numbered sections mark those which are already occupied. The newcomer can pick an untinted section—one hundred and sixty acres!

He has his first piece of disillusionment. Yes, the hundred and sixty acres are to be given, on condition that they are worked and made productive. But they are twenty-five, thirty, maybe even forty, miles from a railway! Is it good land? Well, all the land is good, isn't it? Yet the foot of man may never have trodden it. There it is, thirty miles from a railway, not a shed on it, no well sunk, nothing but the unsurveyed, sighing prairie, open to the four winds, and the new-comer will have no roof but the sky. And there is not a tree in sight. It is not the same picture as that which made so great an impression in the old land.

There are men who move to their homesteads

slowly. They work for former settlers who have adjoining sections, get the loan of carts, and implements to work the virgin land, in return for a third of the produce, until the time arrives when the new man can build his own shanty, and have his own beasts and agricultural appliances, when he can be sold an adjoining section cheap by the Government, and he gets the assistance of another new-comer who has acquired a section still farther afield.

But I would tell you of men for whose story there is little room in the pageant of prosperity which Canada heralds to the world. They are young men. They have lived in pleasant English homes. They know they have their own careers to make, and farming in Canada is work which appeals to them. Their people are farmers, and they are younger sons who elect to go abroad.

Maybe they buy an improved farm within thirty miles of a station; it is not dear, but the land has been turned and is ready for sowing, a rough shanty for living in erected, a rougher shanty for the beasts, and a well sunk. Neighbouring sections are taken up as claims. So, with one quarter of a square mile purchased cheap, and two quarters of a square mile as claims: the sections they receive from the Government, a couple of young fellows—and there are hundreds, maybe

thousands, of such cases—set out to farm. No neat farm lands here; no rose-decked hedges, no winding lanes, no adjoining village, no old church to go to on Sunday, no friends.

A log cabin, standing in the middle of the wilderness, a spread of land turned by the plough, but all the rest bleached prairie grass. That is their heritage.

So, without flare of music, the great fight begins—the finest of all fights, man in stern combat with Nature. They had gone out in the spring, intent on farming at once. But there are delays; the advice where they should settle is contradictory; negotiations progress and tumble to pieces; there is so much to learn. And autumn has come before they are on the "improved farm," and nothing can be grown this year. But there is much to do: a couple of horses to buy; a visit to Winnipeg, to purchase a plough. It arrives at the bleak railway station ten days after the promised time. It must be hauled slowly to the farm; that takes two days, and the men pass the night in the cart. There is a stove wanted, and cooking utensils; sacks of flour for bread; tinned meats and condensed milk, and pickles, and rough clothing.

Winter will soon come, and fuel be wanted. There is a wood fifteen miles away, and trees

must be slain, and sawn, and hauled—only enough to last for a month or so, for when the snow is down, and the weather clears, it can be pulled sledge-wise over the snows. Grain for seed in the spring must be purchased. Hay must be made for the horses; provender also must be procured. The prairie has to be turned; and the horses tug and sweat, the black land gives reluctantly to the plough, and, for the first time since the prairie was, the herbage is buried to rot, and the furrowed ground gapes in long trenches.

It is a brave life from the dawn to the dusk, when, on the mattresses, the men drop themselves to rest. The weather is clear and invigorating. Health surges in every vein. In the mornings is a tingle of cold, and for an hour the furrows are brushed with a crisp frost.

These men have no time for daintiness. The only food they make is bread; the only vegetables they cook are potatoes. All the meats they have come out of tins. It is not good fare, but they are working too hard, and their appetites are too strenuous for them to mind.

Rainy days come, when ploughing cannot be done; the ground is too heavy, and hauling is out of the question. But they can go forth with their guns, and the prairie chickens, which

are tame because they know nothing of man, are easily killed. So better food is procured.

One morning the skies are low and black, and the wind is icy. It is a day to keep within the hut, and fling logs into the stove. Then the snow comes, in long drifts, and all the earth is whitened. So begins the winter of five months. Five months of lonely life in a hut on the wilderness. Stay-at-homes do not know what that means. Those who do, know it so well that they do not like to talk about it.

There are the horses to care for. When the weather settles, there is fuel to be hauled, even goods to be sledged from the railway. But there are weeks with nothing to do. Why don't the men read? They are not of the sort who bother about books. Besides, they have had other things to think about. And the terror is the loneliness. It enwraps the man and destroys the brain. Talk to old settlers in the West, and they can tell you many stories of lonely men who have gone mad from the loneliness of those short days and long nights during the weary five-months winter. The reckless sell their horses—others surely can be bought in the spring—and go off to the little towns where, at least, there is talk and companionship and drink.

How do they live? Well, they have a bit of

money. Or they get help from home to tide them over the winter. Or they part with their land to some sharp agent. So they lead lazy and lounging lives. When the spring comes, their characters have been enervated; they won't go back to farming; they drift to the big towns, where there are already plenty of men seeking work. Possibly they do well; more likely they are rebuffed, and get sullen and disappointed, and they write home telling their friends Canada is an over-lauded place, and advising sensible people to keep away from it.

But I think of the men who go through the fight stubbornly. It is a harsh but slow combat, as though Nature would crush to death these interlopers upon the silence of the prairie. I've met these men—I've squatted by their fires on the prairie and looked into their eyes. The sun has made their skin of the texture of leather; their features are deep-lined with the winds, and the rains and the snows seem to have bleached their hair to tawniness. But they are straight and sinewy. They have lost the pretty ways of well-reared young men in England. Their hands are coarse, and their language is coarser. They walk with a lurch. They chew tobacco, and squirt brown juice from between their teeth. Still, they are the real stuff, in bone, sinew and

determination. They have looked death between the eyes, and conquered Nature.

When the thaw comes, and the grass shows through the snows, they whistle and yoke their horses to the plough, go out and work, scatter the seed, reap in early autumn, borrow a threshing machine, haul their grain to the elevators—the structures reared by the railway side to hold wheat—sell it to the traffickers, slake their thirst with a long drink at the saloon, and carry their heads as men who are making money by hard work.

Such is the beginning of many a farming life in Canada. Roads across the prairie are just mother earth. Towns spring into existence, unkempt, with wastes of discarded beef tins, and the air redolent with the odour of newly-cut timber. Men are energetic. There is gambling in town lots. There is swollen talk about the future of the town. Then an epidemic. Typhoid comes along as a warning that the sanitary conditions of the town had better be seen to. Companies are formed, and there is a boom—and an occasional burst. Mining towns rear in the hills of British Columbia. Ranches with millions of cattle dot the billowy foot-hills of the Rockies.

There is disease and the lust of health—

and despair the making of fortunes—mighty harvests and the horror of summer frosts.

No, you do not find much which comes within the definition of culture in the West. The texture of the people would be repellent were it not for the magnificent optimism which the mass seem to inherit with the climate.

But the wonder is never-ceasing. Here is a mighty sweep of the world's surface, which lay for generations unheeded and despised. Then the awakening—and half a continent is beginning to show the world what it can do in the growth of wheat. People from all the lands of northern Europe are now there. The railways, like suckers, are crawling west, north, north-west; and wherever they spread, wheat begins to grow for miles on either side—all to be drawn eastwards in the fall of the year.

Europe watches. A frost, a touch of blight, and the woman who made a scone for me in the moorland cottage in the north of England has to pay more for her flour.

All the great trains trundling westward carry human freights, men and women bent on doing their share in stirring Nature to feed them and their children, and let the stupendous surplus go to the cities where the sight of a wheat stalk is unknown. Half-way across the continent rises

Winnipeg, with its giant buildings, and broad avenues, and hustle of business, and tramcars racing—yet within easy memory it was no more than an outpost, and a calling-place for traders in skins: a transformation indeed. It is the Old World which has given Canada the men who have changed the face of the land—a little fact which Canada, in its pride of doing, is sometimes inclined to forget.

There come East a hundred million bushels of wheat, the sap, the quality of the earth-made food. For days and weeks the little sidings are laden. Every waggon is pressed into service. Hundreds of weighty trains bring back the wheat which the men went out to grow. On the banks of Lake Superior, at Fort William, tower the elevators. Titanic machinery grips the waggons, and hoists and spills their contents into mammoth bins, according to the quality. It is graded by several standards. And the grower is paid by the dealer according to the standard declared by Government officials.

The dealer holds documents for quantities of wheat, stored, maybe, in that one elevator, which is capable of holding seven million bushels. He has never seen the wheat. As the yield of the year decides the price, he parts with his scrip to men on the Exchange in Montreal—men who,

maybe, do not know the difference between an ear of wheat and an ear of barley.

Even when the wheat was yet in the green shoot, the farmer may have parted with his prospective crop in return for convenient money. The dealer takes his chance whether the crop be fair or good. It will, however, make but little difference to him, for if the crops of the country be good, prices are disposed to fall, and if there be a thinness the inclination is for prices to rise.

But he has probably parted with his scrip; it has passed to bigger men, who hold it till an ominous whisper of a shortage comes, and those who have paper, which means the supply of so many hundred thousand bushels, sell their strips of paper to men who hold, praying for a further rise in price, when they may sell the paper again with a big margin of profit to themselves. Meanwhile, all the mechanism of the financial world is at work. Fictitious reports on the prospects of the crop jostle on the Stock Exchange with honest reports.

A mighty gamble has begun in the food of the world. In crowded cities, men, hungry for wealth, force up prices. Their enemies set the story going that wheat is to be plenteous and cheap, and down come the prices. They are eager men, calculating, and with quick eyes. It is a

"A mighty gamble . . . in the food of the world."

stern, merciless battle for fractions of a penny on the bushel; but it means thousands of pounds on the sale. And yet the wheat is not ready to cut, and the farmer in distant Manitoba looks at his possessions and sees the wind whistling over the green shoots; the sun is strengthening them, and, in time, will bronze them. And those men with the keen intelligence and quick eyes are betting on God's goodness when the time of harvest shall come.

So, with oscillations of price, and scrip passing through innumerable hands, the day comes when the financier in Montreal has an undertaking to deliver so many hundred thousand bushels of a particular standard of wheat in Liverpool. He knows nothing about the particular patch of the West from which it comes. But wheat of that quality has, according to contract, been housed in one of the elevators at Fort William, and from Fort William he will draw his due in wheat, maybe in a sub-contract with a shipper, who will get it down to the coast, and another shipper who will get it across the Atlantic.

Yes, but the price of wheat in the Liverpool and London markets depends on something beside the Canadian supply. It depends on the wheat crop of the United States, and whether the citizens of that country are bidding for food from Canada.

It depends on the yield from the Argentine, on the weather in South Russia.

The eager men, with quick eyes, who make fortunes and lose them, trafficking in wheat, must keep their fingers on the wheat supply of the world. The United States, which can no longer feed itself, wants wheat. The fields of the Argentine are not as fruitful as was expected. There has been an indifferent harvest in Russia. The quantities from other regions are uncertain. Now close the gates of supply. Hold your hand tight, and a golden shower of wealth will imperceptibly be driven into your pocket.

There are millions of people needing to be fed; they must have bread. They are not stretching out their hands for food, but they will want it. Keep the jaws of those wheat elevators closed, those of you who have the power. That is easy. But there is the dread that other countries will supply the demand, and then your exquisite picture of wealth disappears in thin air like a rainbow, and you must sell, sell for your life, clear out, get rid of your wheat before it slumps to below the price that you paid for it.

Oh, men with the quick eyes and the calculating brains! You know the game, and your actions are quick, but well thought out. You know the wheat supply of the world. You know the con-

sumption of the world. You are the genius which balances the one against the other.

The labourer in the slum of London is told by his wife that the quartern loaf has increased a halfpenny in price, and the baker has told her it will be going up another halfpenny next week. And he, knowing nothing of the intricacies of modern commerce, blames the baker for being greedy and squeezing extra pennies out of the necessities of the poor. Now, the baker has had his profit; and the merchant who supplied him with flour has had his, and the men beyond have had theirs—and in the gambling with scrip some men have made money, and some have lost—but when all allowance is made for freight, train and ship, and labour, there is a large difference, difficult to believe, making you wonder who has got the money, between the price paid the farmer in Western Canada and the price paid for the bread by the consumer in London.

I have watched a gamble in wheat. The room was big, and it was crowded and noisy. Men stood in circles, yelling, bellowing, gesticulating, screeching at one another. On a huge blackboard, swung against the wall, were recorded the world's output of wheat, and the prices that were being paid in the capitals of the earth. At one side was a telegraph room, and the click of the

instruments was like a concert of countless crickets. In those cities were other gamblers in wheat.

And they are all pulling and tugging at the price. A combination of men in Hamburg, hesitating to purchase, succeed in lowering the quotation a fraction. In a few minutes all the wheat pits in the world are affected. But the holders of scrip, the sellers, must keep their nerves firm. If, fearing another fall, they begin to sell rapidly, a stampede will be the result, and on a tumbling market they will sell passionately, recklessly. Then others will buy, hoping the market will steady and recover. But the fury of the stampede takes the colour from their cheeks. Blanched with fright, they, too, want to get out before their loss is great. No instrument ever devised by the cunning hand of man is so delicately fragile, so responsive to a breath, which sends a quiver throughout the entire bread-eating earth, as the machinery for the dealing in wheat.

Look at the men in the wheat pit : these men of the city, whose lives are spent in buying and selling something they have never seen. Many are coatless, some are flushed, others are pale. Some are frantic in their dealings ; many maintain the cold, thin-lipped impassiveness of those who dare most in gambling. There are countenances which can be bright with joviality,

but the mobile rotundity is fixed hard, as though the faces were those of men of stucco. The babel is deafening. Men grip one another and shake one another. They are like maniacs.

The hall is hot and stuffy, and nobody has thought of opening a window. Everyone is too intent on the most absorbing trade of all—money-making. Men wave their scrip, and bawl the price they are willing to sell for. Men watch them cunningly, and shout the price they are willing to buy at. Let the market fluctuate upwards a hairbreadth, and there is a scramble to buy. Eagerness will force the price higher. But let the price drop a hairbreadth and the tremor runs that the man who sells has some special information, he wants to get rid of his wares, knowing there will be a slump, and the throng is touched with panic.

And away out West the prairies are being delved, and wheat is sown and garnered, and men are fighting grim Nature and winning and losing. They smile happily when the slim verdant shoots peep above the ground. When they meet other settlers they talk of the weather and the prospects of the crops. They work hard, and their muscles are weary. They smoke in the calm of the velvety evening, and feel all is well with the world.

CHAPTER VI

A COMMON PAIR OF PICTURES

It was a happy, luxuriant, sensuous night.

The dinner party at the Savoy restaurant was all the rich host and hostess could make it. The room was flooded with chastened light; the decorations were gently melodious; the air was a whirl of gay chatter, laughter, rhapsody of stringed music, the scent of flowers, the perfume from the garments of delicately attired women.

It was a night pagan in its attractiveness. And, as the hour slipped easily, and the wine spurred the blood and tongues loosened in gaiety and eyes glowed, the pagan man and the pagan woman held revelry.

By my side sat a voluptuous woman—a goddess in form, with broad, white shoulders, shoulders that the pagan would love to kiss. I know nothing about jewels; but clusters of stones gleamed white fire, scintillating as they rose and fell on her bosom. There was a rope of pearls round her neck; and more blazing stones were in her hair. It was beautiful hair, jet black and wealthy.

It looked all the more wealthy that the face was small and dainty, and the eyes had a film of languor upon them, except when I interested her and she looked straight into my eyes, and she could tell, from the look in my own, that I was trying to look into her soul, and only half succeeding.

I saw this in the colour which came to the cheeks, and in the quicker rise and fall of the jewelled bosom. A fine pagan woman! A woman of fire. A woman of dainty taste in art, in letters. A self-sacrificing woman, capable even of the heroic in life. The picture of a lovely, graceful, kindly woman.

But she revealed to me a vice. She called it a vice, and laughed while she did so—a girlish laugh, very pleasant in the ears of the man who has been worn with work and anxiety. She has a passion for foods out of season. She told me of her charming weakness quite prettily.

Her voice was liquidly musical as she rattled a list of the things she loved to eat. She was deliciously agreeable. She chattered, for she saw I was interested. One remark I clearly remember: "Oh, it is lovely to have strawberries in the winter, when they are four guineas a basket. I cannot eat them in the summer when they are to be seen on barrows in the street and sold at

fourpence the pound. Oh, he never refuses me anything."

"He" was the woman's husband. He was sitting opposite, but a little way down the table. I knew him—an exceedingly rich man. Older than his wife, fifteen years maybe; that makes him about forty-five—big, broad, browned and healthy-faced. The face is strong, accentuated by the matted eyebrows. There is a coldish, steely glance in the eye—a calculating eye. Money! Oh, he is made of money! Fortunate in speculation, he has also a monopoly in the sale of an article which sells extensively the world over; he has something to do with City companies: floating them, I think. But he is rich—that is the point.

His voice was firm and dominant, and I heard him talking to his neighbour about wines. He admired rare wines—above all, expensive wines. He talked enthusiastically about his cellar. He told the prices he had given for cases of precious vintages—amazing prices. In the good-humoured babble of the dinner table, fragments of the talk crossed the bowls bunched with roses.

"Ha!" he chuckled at one point, "I took that port from him in payment of a bad debt. Good bargain! Didn't give him what, of course, I knew it would fetch at a sale. But more than

he would have got from an agent. Yes, he had good judgment in wines. Wonder what's become of him? Haven't seen him for years. Gone to the devil, I suppose."

A charming dinner party. The atmosphere was redolent of exquisite odours. The flowers and the champagne and the exotic perfumes, the women with enticing eyes, the mirth, the music—what strange effects they have upon the senses! Hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery and dresses. How much the dinners? How much the wines? Curious that one kept thinking of the money value.

But the air is thick with the meaning of money. Somebody with a yacht laughingly complained of the cost. Another described the elaborate equipment of his latest motor-car. A lady looked forward to having a box better situated next year at the Covent Garden Opera, "so that one can really see who is present." A man who had hired a moor in Scotland for the shooting for £4,000, was not quite sure it was worth the money.

You must get a long way from a dinner party at the Savoy to start moralising. Why bother? The world is all right! Why should not the good things of the earth be enjoyed? Are not women to be looked upon with the eyes of admiration?

Is not the glitter of scarce stones pleasing? If wine makes the blood course swiftly and wags the tongue to wit, then drink.

Don't moralise. Be merry.

An exquisite dinner party. The pagan in man and woman revelled in the sensuousness of it. Blessed is money which gives things out of season. We were gay; we told our neatest stories; we munched peaches which cost a guinea apiece. We sipped of dainty and expensive liqueurs. The women puffed Kavala cigarettes; the men blew rings from fragrant cigars. At home I usually smoke a pipe; but I enjoy the cigar which must have cost half a crown.

Money, money! Where had all the money come from to provide so admirable an evening? Yet what does that matter! Shut the door on such thoughts. The woman I had taken into dinner was a captivating creature.

* * * * * * *

"Thank you for a very pleasant time!"

It is past midnight when I stand by the door facing the Embankment and overlooking the Thames, waiting for the carriage to take me home. There is a gentle drizzle, and the air strikes clammy. But I feel a little scorn for the wretchedness of the night. I have dined

"An exquisite dinner party."

well; I have had an entertaining companion; between my lips is a big cigar.

So I lean back in the carriage and feel contented. A nasty, damp night. But the soddenness of the night seems to provide an additional glow of satisfaction.

We spin under one of the arches. I look out. There is something like a caravan, bright with light. The light falls upon a throng of men, ill clad, their pale and pinched features looking all the more haggard under the gleam. The throng is a long string of men, and they are standing in hunched attitudes waiting to be fed.

They are the hungry men of London, with nowhere to sleep, and they have come here to get some food from the charitable.

The contrast between what I have left and what I now see hits me. I gasp with the pain. An awful nausea overtakes me. I fling the cigar out of the window, chiefly because I know it must have cost much money, whilst few of those lean men have any pennies in the world. I am a coward. I cover my face with my hands to shut out the sight of the hungry. I wish I had left the Savoy by another door, so I might have missed seeing the starving—standing there so meek, so mute, casting meaningless, cattle-like eyes about

them—that I might have returned home with nothing but agreeable sensations tingling in my mind.

Most of us try to hide our feelings. To be emotional is to be theatrical. But a violent impulse compels me to stop the carriage, jump out and send it away. I must go back to those men. Really, I do not know what is the cause. Maybe a half-appreciated wish to complete the circle of the night's experiences.

So I turn back. It is raining steadily, and there is a woeful rustling in the leaves of the trees as I tramp the side-walk of the Embankment. The lamps make a smudgy reflection on the wet ground. A policeman is standing with his back close against the wall, and his arms hidden under his cape. There are two men in front of me, lurching and slouching, with the heavy tread of the tramp class. The outer man hangs his head half sideways, as though looking for something. He stops, looks again, and then picks up the stump of a cigar. He rubs it on his coat sleeve, examines it in the misty light of a lamp, and hobbles on, still with his head half sideways, and on the look-out for more cigar stumps.

So back to the crowd of men, waiting, like cattle, to be fed. The van with the food is

bright and cheering. Some good-tempered men are arranging dishes, preparatory to serving the hungry.

Why don't the hungry raid the place, seize the food and eat it? Only men hard pressed, ravenous, knowing not which way to turn, will stand here for an hour or more in the rain, in order to get twopence worth of food. They are kept waiting. It would be so easy to push aside those in charge and satisfy at once their craving for something to eat.

They do not. It appears that all the sap of manhood has been dried up in their beings. These are not working-men out of jobs, reduced to accept charity because they can find no work. Here and there is a countenance with a touch of alertness in it. But most of the men are inert. They are shamble-gaited. Their shoulders are bent forward, and their heads droop. The faces are those of men who have fared badly because they have no energy. Their eyes are dull, and their mouths hang open. There is not sufficient grit in them to have held their own in life's contest.

As I walk along, with tight lips and strained glance, I become obsessed with the idea, irresistible and not to be shaken off, that all these men have been cast in the same mould. There are

outer differences, in feature, in contour, in the shape of the head, but these are mere stucco, only partly hiding the same type of man in all. They do not look drunken. But they do look inept. They are the dross of humanity, the people whom sociologists describe as unemployable, the men who could not earn their living if they had the chance.

At least, this is what I tell myself, as, with furtive glances, I pass the huddled row of silent men waiting to be fed.

But who are they? Are they all slum-bred? Do they all float from the poorer working classes, or are some of them better reared, men who have had their chance, who have had the reins of success put in their hands, and have let them slip, and the horses of fortune have dragged them to waste places?

I turn to look again. Only on this second inspection do I notice resentment in some of the eyes. Most of the men are heedless, but there is no mistaking that one or two dislike being put under review. One man turns savagely and grunts offensively.

A cold shiver touches me, and I smile icily. "Well, you are wrong," I say.

The rain falls slantwise, forced by the wind, and the arch makes a sort of funnel, for the

clamminess drives hard. The men hunch their shoulders, and turn up the collars of their weather-bleached coats. Stray hansom cabs bowl along the dim road, and swing a little drunkenly by reason of the unevenness of the way. Under the few lights the mud has the sodden glisten of lead. The lamps, fringing the Embankment, prick the darkness. Dimly, through the haze, the Houses of Parliament rear; the face of the big clock is smudged, but overhead glows the oriflamme, advertising, to all the world that cares to look, that Parliament is dealing with the affairs of the nation. The House of Commons sits late to-night, attending to special legislation for the welfare of the people.

But here stand a throng of men—with brain and muscle and some will power—huddled together, waiting to be fed by charity.

There is a man apart from the queue. His back is against the wall, his hands are in his pockets. His chin is lowered, and he keeps a fixed look on the pavement.

"Come and have a drink?" I say.

"Eh?"

"I said, will you come and have a drink?"

He grins at me. "Where's your drink?" he asks. He is a man, maybe, of thirty-five years, well-built, though a bit thin. He is like

a mechanic. He has the pale, yellowish, greasy face that is to be noticed about men who work amid hot engines and the smell of oil.

"What is it—a chapter from the Bible, a long prayer, a lecture on thrift, and then a cup of cocoa?" he asks.

There is sarcasm in his tone, and also a touch of contemptuous good humour.

"Whisky or beer, or what you like," I answer.

"What's the go?" he inquires, straightening himself.

Oh, I tell him, it is a wet night, and I've been dining and want a drink myself, and he looks as though a drink would not do him any harm.

He comes along, with the slowness of a man who is doing something to oblige you. A queer customer, who excites my curiosity. There is something hang-dog about his gait, and I mark that he does not remove his hands from his pockets.

I am unacquainted with these parts, but we go up a side street. It is easy to find an inn. I push the door, and he follows me. It is a hot and steamy place, and a couple of maudlin men are leaning against the counter, sipping ale and talking politics, but in agreement.

"Well, what will you have?" I ask my companion, making a show of good fellowship.

"What you care to stand," says he. But he chooses whisky. Also he has a pork pie.

"What's the game?" he inquires, with a mouth full of food.

I explain there is no "game." Just a wish to give him a drink. He looks at me slily, and then says, noting my evening clothes, "You're a toff!" That makes me laugh. Oh, no; I have to work for my living; besides, it is not clothes that make the man.

"Ain't it?" he asks, as though he were ready to disagree with me.

He eats on, not ravenously, but as a man glad to eat, and one who is gratified with the warmth of the inn and the stimulus given by the whisky. "Ain't you eating? And you're not drinking yourself."

I order a pork pie. He has a second. We sit at a little beer-greasy table and eat. The contrast makes me chuckle; somewhat different, this, from the swagger dinner party I have lately left. Two fat, blotchy-faced women come in and leer. They are repulsive. "Ain't he a nice gent," says one, looking at me, "I'm sure he'd like to give two ladies some refreshment. He! he!" I tell them to order what they want. They have gin.

My man is obviously a mechanic, down at heel. However, I want to know.

"How's work?" I ask.

"Don't be funny," is the answer.

"Things are rather bad in the engineering line," I remark.

"Are they?" says he, without looking up.

Then I make a plunge. "What were you doing among that crowd under the arch?"

He looks up swiftly, and something that suggests savagery comes into his eye. "I was waiting to get something to eat because I was hungry. Anything else I can tell you?"

I tell him not to be a fool. I only inquired out of kindliness. He need not be surly. I did not want to borrow any money from him. Have some more whisky.

"No offence," he says quickly. "I've got no call on you for this—but here's to your health. I've got no work; you know that without me telling you. I'm deuced hungry, and——" he gazed round—"well, never mind."

"What is it?"

"Never you mind; it's got nothing to do with you." His manner softened. I guessed what was the matter.

"And your wife is hard hit, too?"

He did not answer for a minute. Then he

said, "It's the talk of men like you that makes me sick. You'll be telling me next about patience, and everybody having their turn, and a lot of rot about silver linings to clouds. I've met a deal of your sort. Very nice gentlemen, and you're very kind, and talking to a chap like me is something to amuse you. Eh? Well, no harm, guv'nor; no harm, sir. But a man gets a bit short in his temper when he sees other men with money and him with none, and the missus at home—humph! Nice home, jolly sort of place, a back room for her and me and the kid, and nine bob owing for rent, and people telling you to keep on hoping for the best—oh, it do make a man cheerful, don't it? It would do you good to see my happy home; it would make you so jealous." He laughs, and it is not pleasant to hear.

He lifts his face, and I see a smirk on it. He has been hungry for so long, and now the food and the whisky are having their effect.

"You come and see my home; it'll do you a lot of good." He half means it. I want to go —it will be a corrective to the earlier hours of the evening.

"I'll go, if you let me take something for the youngster," is the way I put it.

We trudge forth. I recognise the incongruity of the situation. There is something so pathetic

about it that one slips easily over the border of sorrow and becomes amused. So close are laughter and tears. I hardly counted on this when I left the dinner party. I scarcely anticipated that the man who talked to me with resentment should now be so amiable. But I am under no delusion; I am being led into no trap. It is not even a case of trying to arouse my sympathy in order to get money. It is grim humour, provoked by pork pie and whisky.

His tongue is loosened. We tramp across Waterloo Bridge, passing among the throng, for the theatres are well over, and people are making for home. It is not raining, but the gusty, jerky breeze is damp. Once more his hands are in his pockets, and his walk has become more a lurch than a slouch. We talk freely enough.

"Maybe," he says, in answer to my remark that a man like him should have no difficulty in getting work. He tells me he is a joiner by trade; so I was wrong in assuming him to be an engineer.

"I've been out of a job for nearly four months. And now there's little chance—Why? Because I've had to pawn my tools. You see, one can get along with a bit less clothing, and going without a meal now and then, though not exactly pleasant, don't kill you. Men take a lot of killing.

You see men with not a ha'penny in the world, and you meet them again in a month and they are still alive. Oh, don't ask me how they do it. But it's when you've got to pop your tools that you know just about where you are. A man can keep fairly respectable-looking and have a chance so long as he has his tools. When his tools go, all goes. Even if he found work he couldn't do it. Somehow he don't care. He just hangs round, not knowing what he's going to do—like me! I ain't whimpering, mind you. There's plenty of others—and when there's plenty of others like you it don't seem so hard."

We get on the Surrey side of the Thames. We go into streets of squalor. There is a little side street, which seems to shrink from notice as though it had done some villainy and was ashamed to be seen. A quiet street, with the doors all closed and most of the windows darkened. I begin to hesitate, partly because I do not like the look of the place, and partly because I think it hardly fair to go prying into the life of this man and his wife. I mention the latter, hintingly.

"That's all right, guv'nor; come on. We ain't got nothing to be ashamed of, me and my missus. You ain't coming to a banquet. We'll wake the kid up, and you can have a look at him. He's a cheeky little chap."

And so we reach the house—one of a hundred thousand cheap-built, foul houses in London, where the needy live and silent tragedies are played till death croaks and ends it all.

"Here's the lodgings," says the man.

There is a dirty-smelling oil lamp on the wall of the passage, and the boards are bare. The lodging is a single room on the ground floor at the back. A woman jumps up as we enter, and her eye flicks quickly from her husband to me. Just for an instant I see a half-born terror in her look, as though there came the dread that her man had done some evil deed and the law had its grip on him. But it went.

"This is a gentleman I've brought in to see the kid," remarks the man, cheerily.

A little smile comes to her pale, waxen cheeks. The bloodless lips, which are like purple smeared with white, open. I grunt an apology—I had run across her husband and we got talking, and he was proud of his lad, and wanted me to see him.

The child is sleeping on the top of a wooden box in a corner of the room—a fat-faced, snub-nosed youngster, with tousled tawny hair; but the closed eyelids look blue. The father is about to rouse him, but I put out a restraining hand.

"Won't you sit down, sir?"

It is a small room, and three parts of it are occupied with the bed, of iron, with thin bedding. All that is left is a sort of gangway on three sides of it. Against the window is a little table. Two faded battle pictures are on the wall. Over the dead fireplace hang faded photographs. The room is poverty-stricken, and there is a rancid smell. I have the one chair; the husband sits on the edge of the bed, and the wife has a corner of the box on which her child is sleeping.

She is a dull-faced woman, phlegmatic, easy-going, and not too worried with the stress of life. At first she is shy, from suspicion. But when that is overcome she talks readily enough, is even garrulous, and quite unheeds the child. He sleeps through it all.

A bit of a slattern, maybe, for the room is not so tidy as it might be. But, happily, blessed with little imagination. So she laughs, not grimly, at having only elevenpence in the world. The cost of the room is six shillings a week, and a week and a half is owing in rent. But the landlady is "not a bad sort." And the man will perhaps find work, or maybe have to become a sandwich-board man, or sell wire puzzles in the Strand.

There is not hunger in her face; rather an indication of pinchedness, as though for long

she had lived on casual scraps and never had quite enough to eat. The subject of food is broached.

"Oh," she says, "if I go round to the butchers' shops late at night I can get quite a lot of 'bits' for fourpence. And for twopence—why, sir, you wouldn't know the lot of stale bread a baker will give you. It's tea, of course, that costs a lot, but I've no use for them people that can't get two or three brews out of a mash of tea. Of course I wish Jim would get a bit of work. We've had to sell some of our things, but I don't want my wedding ring to go. The boy is good company when Jim is out looking for something. Thank God, he ain't had to want yet." And she puts out her hand and rearranges the coverlet on the child. "It's nice to have money, but I don't envy some of them women as I sees in their finery, a-riding in their carriages and pairs. It ain't money as brings happiness, and some of them fine ladies do look miserable, as though they hadn't had a good meal since goodness knows when. Aye, to-night I went out to buy an onion, but the man wanted a penny. I'm not going to pay no penny; a ha'penny is enough for an onion."

I think of my finely gowned, voluptuous pagan acquaintance.

"Mrs. Riley"—who, I gather, is the landlady—"says as how that old woman what has the garret has the rheumatics so bad she'll have to go into the workhouse, and she thinks maybe she can get me the job of washing the steps of them offices in the Waterloo Bridge Road. That's a shilling a morning. And shillings ain't to be picked up at every street corner."

I think of the half-crown cigar I had been smoking.

There is a soft glow of satisfaction at the prospect of securing scant shillings. "I'd like to get the child a little hat—that thing he has now is so torn—and this afternoon I saw one for ninepence. I've set my heart on it, and if I get the stair-cleaning job I'll have it, if I do go without something to eat, and he'll look like a little prince."

This is not nice listening. I feel like choking. My heart seems cracked, and grit has got in the cracks and is scraping. I'm no moralist, certainly no philosopher, and this quiet cheerfulness on the part of a woman with elevenpence in the world is more affecting than if the woman had slobbered forth the tale of her sorrows. That would have appealed to the softness of my sympathies, but this hooks into my mind and makes me think. There is nothing in this world so awful as

thinking—about some things. As God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, so does He dull the brains of the needy to their own poverty.

I get away—for I am too cowardly to remain. And I walk home, unheeding the "hie-ing" of cabmen, walk through the slushy streets and care nothing for the rain. Fortune-driven beings, men and women, slouch by or huddle in doorways. At a coffee stall working-men are gulping coarse food. A couple are drunk, but most of them are men who work in the night. The wind soughs.

As I cross Piccadilly there is the low blast of a horn. I step quickly to get out of the way, but too late, and I am sprayed with mud. It is a big, closed motor-car, but effulgent with electric light. In it are two men and two women in evening attire. They are laughing. And one of the women is the pagan goddess, with pearls clasping her throat, whom I had sat beside at the dinner party in the Savoy restaurant.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRAGEDY OF THE POTTERIES

I HAD read much about the Potteries—and I did not remember that I had read anything good.

Had I not heard about man and dog fights at Hanley? Had not some parson sobbed from the pulpit his grief at the way the girls of the five, or is it the six, lean, emaciated towns—which straggle like the bones of foul carcases along the green valleys and slopes of North Staffordshire—paid slim regard to their virtue, and many were the children with unknown fathers in consequence? Had there not been talk of drunkenness among the potters? Had I not seen pictures of potters' homes, decrepit, mean, dirty, whole streets of them, with conditions of family life that were nauseating? Had I not listened to debates in the House of Commons on lead-poisoning, and had there not floated before my mind's eye a horrible vision of worn, haggard, and gibbering creatures shaking their weakened hands, and writhing their feeble anæmic frames in the

last agony of poisoning from the deadly lead used in the pottery trade—sixteen shillings a week, and death the reward of industry ?

No, I had not read or heard anything good about the Potteries.

And as the tragic appeals to me, as the mute pathos of so much in our industrial life pulls at the heart-strings, I went to see for myself, to spend quiet days "pottering round the Potteries."

The first sensation which came was a chill to the very soul. I travelled from heather-bound moors, and the clean air of the sea coast, from a bit of England upon which God had smiled, and from amongst people who were ripe in the ruddiness of their manhood and womanhood, healthy, with clean skins and clean minds, a region where skies were blue and eyes were blue.

Suddenly, as though I had been pitched there by some evil genii from the Arabian Nights—so quick came the realisation of the change—I found myself in another world. I was tramping the sinuous ways, long and narrow, which thread the five towns—grim beads on a tangled bit of string.

It was raining, a sullen fall, more mist than downpour. The sky was hidden by a dome of smoke-laden gloom—as if the grime had sagged

the azure sky to just above the housetops and mucked it to the drab of a dirty blanket.

Oh, yes, all that had been written about the Potteries must be true!

What foul streets—squelching, inch-thick, greasy mire beneath the tread! How small and wizened the houses! What rattling, clattering, tin-can electric cars! Everything sombre, wretched, blighted!

I noticed the people. They were not tall and sprightly and lusty with life—rather shimble-shamble in their gait, stunted in their build. And all the faces were sad. Not the melancholy of sudden grief, but settled, dour, something that had grown into the grain—a sadness that was unconscious, and the silent offspring of generations of life amid surroundings which lacked beauty.

Yet in that scrap-heap of humanity there blossomed pretty flowers—the girls. Perhaps it is my pagan eye, but I soon noticed the young women were blessed with a frail loveliness, pale, consumptive, but nevertheless with a refinement of texture, a slimness of figure, soft cheeks, delicate eyes, lips that were thin and cultured. I know of no spot in the sordid industrial world where the women workers flower so delicately. Yet there was no room for joy in my gaze. These girls, most of them, were tainted with the weak-

ness of health that comes from work in a trade which is insidiously, rather than positively, brutally dangerous. It looked as though Nature, conscious the plant she had produced was not sturdy, tried to grant compensation with a native grace.

These girls will marry soon. Child-bearing, continued labour in the pottery firms, trials, deprivations, the wear of striving in that dire effort which comes to most of us, trying to make both ends meet—a strain which never slackens in the Potteries—then sickness, lack of care, early death.

When I thought of that I began looking for the old people of the Potteries, the proud old boys of seventy, and the careful widows of sixty. Now and then I did see an elderly person. The instances, however, were so rare that I cried out within myself, "There are no old people here!"

So I bumped against a tragic fact. The pottery trade, without being swiftly deadly, eats into the life-core of those who surround the potter's wheel. It vitiates the vitality, and most of the people die between forty and fifty —and nearer forty than fifty!

Here is the point, I suppose, to break into fervid denunciations against the greed of the

employers who allow a sacrifice of life so they may be wealthy, live in homes beneath a sky that is blue, own motor-cars, travel abroad, and indulge in the customary vices of the rich. Did I so mind, my pen could skip with agility to that theme.

But I think I know enough of industrial conditions and industrial necessities to understand that the evil of the Potteries is not the fault of anybody. It is the penalty of circumstance; it is the necessary gift to the Moloch of industrialism.

My dear lady—you who are reading this some Sunday afternoon—glance at those pretty china ornaments which you hold so dear; think of your best tea-service which you bring out only when visitors are with you, and of which you are so proud. Have you ever given a thought about the making of them? Do you know about the flints which come from France, the decomposed granite called china clay from Cornwall, the crisp, brittle felspar from Norway, the bones from the Argentine?

They are crunched into pulp; they are mushed in water, drained, squeezed, kneaded and dried until they are all a grey clay. There is the fashioning to multitudinous shapes, generally in moulds, after the manner in which you make your jellies.

The articles are put in saggers, crude earthenware bins, of the shape of those roomy boxes in which hats, bonnets, toques, or whatever the quaint headgear of women is called, are stowed; then stacked, like an over-full box-room, in a brick bottle-shaped kiln, and baked in a fire of terrific heat. The articles are scoured, are dipped in a composition containing lead, and are fired again. Decorations are printed by transfer, or are painted; the things are dipped once more in the leaden composition to give a glaze, and are fired once more. These are the simplest, most baldly stated processes.

But what know you of the after-effects on the lungs of working with stuff as soft as powdered chalk, but really the dust of flint?

Do you know there is a law forbidding the removing of particles after the glaze has been applied, except with a damp cloth, and that in many cases the girls work with their hands under glass shields, and that there are whirring fans to draw the dust, so the operatives do not inhale the poison of lead? You do not know—how can you?—that the sedentary work—in rooms highly heated, amid an atmosphere laden with flint dust and deadly lead—soaks into the fibres of these people, and crumples the system rather than breaks it. It is a good thing you don't. It is a good thing

few of us pay much thought to the agencies whereby our daily wants are supplied. The thoughts would be too terrible to bear.

Factory Acts! Blessed are they, and obedience much insisted on by a zealous army of prying inspectors. Lead poisoning: that is the curse, of course. But what Act was there ever passed in that grand assembly of the wise, the Houses of Parliament, which will hinder a girl, working amid the dust which courts death, from diving her hands into pockets for sweets, and eating the sugared concoctions, negligent that she has smeared the sweetmeat with poison?

It is the law that the girls keep the hair hooded, so that the floating poison be not enmeshed in their tresses. But can the worthy gentlemen of Westminster devise a plan to trepan all female workers, and remove the little bit of brain where vanity is located, so girls will not throw aside the dairymaid bonnets they ought to wear because they look "frights"? They don't look frights. The bonnets are often becoming. But the girls won't believe it, and not all the Factory Acts in creation, nor all the gruesome stories about lead poisoning that were ever written, will force a girl continuously to wear "that thing," if she fancies it injures her personal appearance.

The very precautions insisted upon give

weight to the popular belief that folks, especially women, in the pottery trade, constantly succumb to lead poisoning. It is not so. The cases are really few. Many ailments are called lead poisoning which are nothing of the sort. Genuine cases are usually those of persons sickening in other directions, and death, which occasionally comes, is not the result of, but is rather accelerated by, lead poisoning.

I went rather carefully into this matter, and came to the conclusion that there is a good deal of dramatic nonsense talked about lead poisoning. The evil is there—it has to be reckoned with—it is part of a business which is unhealthy in most of its branches; but that those who work with lead glaze are trafficking with sure death, and that employers have some soulless, sinister motive in using lead glaze when they could do very well without it, is picturesque exaggeration. There is enough that is melancholy in the Potteries without that.

The old system of apprenticeship is fading. Lads drift into factories to this or that job—they are advanced according to their skill—in a few years they have become competent journeymen. They are doing the thing they are likely to do all their working days. At twenty years of age they are as expert as they will be at forty.

As payment is on results, a lad, barely over the verge of manhood, will earn as much as his father. Hence early marriages. The girl is probably a factory worker also. A little home is got together. But as wages are not high—say from 25s. to 30s. a week—and employment not always constant, and as the wife has not sufficient to occupy her in looking after the house, she goes back to the factory. For her to earn from 10s. to 15s. a week is a welcome addition to the week's earnings.

There is the prospect of a baby. But the wife does not stop working. She continues right up to within a short time before the little one enters the world. This is bad for the youngster, who is often undersized and ailing. The mother has little knowledge of the care of children. Her heart is as tender as that of any mother in the land—she is well-meaning and indulgent—but she is pitifully ignorant. The child has improper food. With another mouth to feed, the mother is anxious to get back to the factory to earn more money. Far too often she goes back before she is physically fit, stands long hours in a bad atmosphere, and then—coming from a stock which through generations has been weakened by similar practices— she develops diseases which wither her. The child is put out to nurse.

There are women in the Potteries who earn a living by looking after the babies of women who go to work. The mother leaves her child on her way to the factory, and picks it up again on her way home in the evening. The caretakers mean well, no doubt. They, also, frequently are ignorant. The youngsters are wrongly fed. So their start in life is unpropitious to their being strong and healthy. Many do not survive the early malnutrition. The infant mortality in the Potteries is simply appalling. It is not the consequence of heartlessness; it is woeful lack of knowledge.

There is an easy-going trait about the inhabitants of the five towns which almost amounts to callousness. Houses "as bright as new pins" are to be found among the workers; but a slip-slop casualness, what-happens-to-be-is-good-enough sort of atmosphere pervades too many homes. It seems a survival of the old days, when there was no thought towards improved conditions.

And so it is in providing for the rainy day. I know the silliness of preaching thrift to a man with a wife and six children and only 25s. a week in wages. But when the "Wakes" come—the week of holiday in August—and there is no money laid by for pleasure-making—how can there be?—

and no contribution has been made to the works' fund to supply them with the "needful," the holiday must be had nevertheless. Plenty of moneylenders are about. They make advances, and the poor folks go off for their week's holiday at the seaside, or even to London—a well-deserved breaking away from the sordidness of their customary life—but all the rest of the year they are harried and worried and bullied, paying the debt and the additional drain of heavy interest.

So these workers of the Potteries walk along the drab lane of life, a little footsore, but not, I think, with much aching of the heart.

Little cohesion is to be found among the potters. The disposition is for each to "gang his ain gait." And this, with the why-worry characteristics of the people, accounts for much in the present-day condition of affairs. It is responsible for the avenues of ugliness called streets, and for sanitary conditions which are foully primitive. It explains why the workers have never laid hold of trade unionism as a vital principle in their lives. They are trade unionists; but there is not the earnest aggressiveness found in other trades. Likely enough it is the foundation of the undercurrent of suspicion with which most of the manufacturers regard each other. The "closeness" of some workers, in regard to

processes which are not secrets at all, approaches the absurd. And what was at first a dislike of meddling, or being meddled with, has developed into a kind of jealousy, personal, collective, municipal.

A thing that impressed me was the docility, even the contentedness of the people. I saw no brusqueness—and I went out to search for it. On a dreary, sodden Saturday night I tramped for four hours. The streets were crowded, especially in Hanley, which was the focus of the Saturday night shopping. There was no rowdyism, no flaunting females, no drunkenness. I made particular note of the fact that, though it was Saturday night, and the public-houses were busy, I did not catch sight of a single person even approaching intoxication.

The throng of working folk, neatly dressed, moving from shop to shop was as well-demeanoured as any I have seen anywhere. I sauntered with them, and listened to their talk and their little concerns over the Sunday dinner, the calculations between young husband and wife, whether they could afford the bit of gaudy crockery which takes the woman's fancy, the inspection of the thick-leathered, thick-soled, iron-studded boots for the little son at home, the patient waiting in the grocery stores, and the careful purchases, a

quarter of a pound of tea, two pounds of sugar, half a pound of cheese, three pennyworth of cakes, the careful eyeing of the bit of meat, the merits of which the butcher is yelling with strident lungs, and which he will let them have for 5d. a pound—thousands of tiny purchases at rather insignificant shops, nothing distinctive, but just the ordinary expenditure of the weekly wages, with the bit of 'baccy for the husband; a contented, pleased crowd, reaping the great satisfaction, after a week of work, of gathering provision for the coming week.

I have said it was a dismal, sloppy Saturday night. The conditions of the walk were not congenial. Yet I confess that I, too, reaped something as I wandered the streets of the much-abused Potteries—an appreciation of these kindly, clean-hearted, hard-worked, but ill-made specimens of English manhood and womanhood. At Hanley I found myself in a surge of folks moving among the stalls in the market hall. Everything was very cheap, as was necessary to fit in with the scantily-laden purses. And what, I trust, I shall not easily forget were the crowds round the flower-stalls.

They were common enough flowers, and quite a big bunch could be had for twopence. It was sweet to watch the light come into the haggard

faces of tired women as they selected their posies. It looked as though, when the market basket was full, that, of the remaining money, at least a few coppers must be spared to buy flowers. There was genuine love and appreciation in this desire to get a bunch of blooms to take home—maybe, up some alley never glorified by sunshine—place in a tumbler, and minister to the sense of beauty that lurks somewhere in the breasts of the people.

Whenever I hear or read anything derogatory about folk in the Potteries I know there will instantly float into my mind the recollection of the scene in the market hall at Hanley, the eager crowds—with the sudden glint of pleasure in their eyes—bartering their pennies for bunches of flowers.

Another thing, which no one who wants to see all sides of life in the Potteries can fail to recognise, is a genuine religious strain in the character of the people. It may be said the theology is crude. That is neither here nor there; the point is the genuineness. The Potteries may be labelled Nonconformist, as they have been since the days John Wesley came this way. Indeed, it was within sight of the Potteries that the Primitive Methodists, as a denomination, came into existence. The Pottery people are

fond of their chapels. They are proud of their choirs. Not only do they love singing, but they sing well themselves.

And when I saw the artistic ware, delicate, fragile, with dainty, refined paintings, such as I was shown during one interesting morning at one of the great works—nearly all the productions of artisans born in the Potteries and trained in the local art schools—I realised that when you see the smoke, the filth, the meanness of the Pottery region, you are but looking at the unclean case.

One can never ignore the pall of sadness which has settled upon the Potteries. But understand that you find people—I won't say who have been libelled, but who have been misrepresented because they have been misunderstood—who work hard, earn little, have their faults and their goodnesses, and who, by their patience, with occasional stretchings of the hands through the murk toward the art of their trade, are a worthy, though not often appreciated, section of the industrial world of England.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERER

He had not telegraphed to his friends. Indeed, in all London there was only one family to whom he would have thought of wiring from Southampton: "Have just arrived; will reach Waterloo six-fifteen."

That would have meant someone would have been obliged to have met him, taken him home, made him a guest. It would have been too much like forcing an invitation for hospitality. And the wanderer was a shy man, more shy than he was four years before, when he left England.

Now he had returned.

It was Saturday evening. Waterloo station was full of dampness and fog, and screeching trains, clatter of luggage barrows, newsboys bawling their wares, folks scurrying to catch their trains, freshly-arrived trains vomiting humanity.

The wanderer felt nervous. He smiled sadly to himself at this dose of the "blues." The horrible feeling had laid clammy hold on him this morning when he was packing in his cabin,

pitching his voyage necessities into kit-bags. He was chill and disconsolate as he descended the gangway at Southampton. The railway carriage was cold. England did not look beautiful. It was drab and dingy under a monotonous cloak of greyness. The trees were leafless, and the land seemed to heave like a muggy sea. The man had returned from the coloured East.

He had lived many years in London, but as the train snorted through the dingy suburbs and he looked out, he was appalled. He had never before thought of the chimney-pots—a forest of them, mean and dwarfed, crooked, puffing their reek and drabbing the sky. The train slowed, the wheels crunched. Then there was a stop outside the station. Just for an instant there seemed to be a mighty stillness. He dropped the carriage window, and there came to him a low rumble. It was London groaning under the burden of its traffic. He could see a piece of street, with black houses, cruel in their plainness, the windows without light. A street lamp spluttered, and the gas-jet seemed to whistle.

"Poor devils," said the man, thinking of the people who lived in that grim, evil-haunted patch of London. He saw the end of the street—

a slice of light in a big thoroughfare, rumbling omnibuses, a swishing motor-car, a barrow-load of oranges—"All sweet, all sweet," raucously cried the woman vendor—a shuttling of pedestrians on the path. But the backs of the houses, with fitful lights in some of the dirty windows, the smudged figures inside, the torn and scrappy bits of lace curtains, above all the interminable vista of drunken chimney-pots that sprawled into the gloom, fascinated him. Yet he shivered.

He was interested in his own bewilderment as he stood amid the throng on the platform. There was delay whilst the baggage was pitched out, followed by furious struggles for possession of individual property. He was in no hurry. He stood a little on one side and watched the scramble. Rather a good-natured mob, he thought. Portmanteaux were seized and flung on the roofs of hansom cabs. A lady showed testiness because she thought somebody pushed. Ah! there was one of his fellow passengers: a woman was holding his arm with both hands, and looking up into his face with eyes all love, and ill-restrained tears of happiness, and the husband was giving her hands little squeezes whilst he shouted to a clumsy porter which of the medley of baggage belonged to him. That sight of happiness hurt the wanderer, he felt

a tightness in his breath. Something was missing in his own life.

He was a spare man, and tall. The skin on his cheeks lay thin, you could almost see the bones of the jaw. His colour was tawny, with tiny violet veins on the temple, and tiny red veins on the face. His eyes were blue, and they looked all the bluer because they were sunken, and the frame of his countenance so weather-worn. The eyes were listless, they were those of a man who felt tired. Anyone could see he had just returned from a hot climate; he was angular and rather awkward. His clothes more than hinted they were years old, the ulster he was wearing was the same he wore when he went away four years back. The brown bloodlessness of his skin, the long bony fingers, the deep-delved wrinkles which cut from the nostrils to behind the mouth easily told of hard life, of struggles, of jungle fever.

Four years ago he went to the East, the real East. He had been in the Malay Peninsula, a representative of the British rule. He had done his duty. Now, with health shaky, he came back to England on six months' leave. He had anticipated that six months' leave—at times with gasping desire. At this moment he did not like to probe the reasons, but he was conscious

that perhaps it was a mistake he had come home. He was beginning to understand he was "out of it."

As he was driven in a hansom to an hotel—his two battered leather bags outside—he had the sensations of a man looking upon something that he had been told about long, long ago. Four years' absence, in another climate, spending months away from the presence of any other white man, his thoughts attuned to conversation with dark-skinned, quick-eyed, suspicious Malays, his life in the jungle, with camp pitched by a stream, or in the reed-hut of some tribal head-man who really resented his presence—well, it was all strange!

The shop windows were ablaze. The streets were full of people, mostly theatre-bent. Closed motor-cars, with pretty occupants in evening attire, were speeding to fashionable restaurants. The traffic was a net-work. The noise was like the harsh ripping of a million boards. And he was part of the show, actually riding along the Strand in a hansom cab. Lord! how often, during the years, had he looked forward to riding along the Strand in a hansom cab?

Like a flashlight upon the dim recesses of the brain came another scene. He was tramping through the jungle. He was heavy-booted and

puttied, he had no coat, and his shirt was open at the throat, his brown canvas-covered jungle helmet was on the back of his head. It was just the beginning of the rainy season, and there were alternate deluges of rain and fierce, withering sun-scorchings. The jungle was a steam-bath, the dead vegetation oozed nauseous odours, the great trees were festooned. Millions of insects screamed like an engine in a tunnel. There were gorgeous plumaged birds, huge butterflies with radiant wings, orchids of dainty hues. He had a splitting headache, for fever was on him. In front tramped the lean-limbed carriers, silent men, but with gay bits of colour in their attire. The path was but a trail through the forest land. It was not a friendly country. Some of his carriers had deserted, and those who remained were sullen because they had more work to do. Besides, the dacoits had threatened to kill, the white man had been told. But the chief representative of the British Government had sent him to survey frontier mountain ridges and he had no authority to turn back. The possibility of attack did not worry him. He was weary, the steamy atmosphere made him faint, his eyes burned, and the pain in his head was piercing. But he just tramped, tramped, tramped. Nothing in that, of course, but the picture of it all came

back to him as he sat in a hansom cab threading a way through the traffic of the Strand. He felt a touch of the old inertia. Into his ears came the terrible trill of the insects. He sniffed the sickening smell of dead vegetation.

That momentary obtrudence of the life he had left was wistful. He was conscious of two selves, the latter self in the tangle of Malayan jungle, and his former self, the returned Londoner, slowly, but not pleasantly, reawakening. He thought of Rip Van Winkle, and a smile spread over his sun-dried cheeks.

In the old days he was frolicsome. A free night, a little dinner at a restaurant, an hour or two at a place of amusement where there were pretty chorus girls—nothing suited him better. He had been an ordinary man.

But, as he was being taken to a bedroom in the big caravanserai of an hotel, he realised what a change had come over him. Why, he had become positively serious. Those long months of lonely expeditions in the back-lands of the world had made him silent, morose, a man of contemplation. He had lost much of his boyish humanity. "And I think I have got a bit of a chill, so I had better take a dose of quinine to-night," he muttered as he started to pull his clothes out of the bags.

To-morrow he would call on his friends. He sent a telegram: "Home again. Coming to see you to-morrow afternoon." That sounded cheerful. There was rather a happy ring in it. There was a suggestion of delight at going to the house where he had been a welcome visitor.

Home again!

He did not feel jolly over the fact. "It will be all right in a day or two when I get used to it," he mused whilst shaving. He would have one of his old casual, agreeable Saturday nights—a dawdle about town. When he lay in bamboo huts, far from the borders of civilization, with the smoke of smouldering dampish grass—useful in keeping off the mosquitoes—in his nostrils, how he had let fancy roam! London! The whirl of its traffic; the glare of its houses of entertainment, the orchestras in the big restaurants, the nicely-dressed women who were laughing—he had closed his eyes and seen it all. And here he was back amidst it once more.

Memory was busy as he proceeded to dress. He recalled a night when he sat on the verandah of his bungalow. The dusk had fallen like a cloak of velvet. All the world was hushed. The air was pungent. In the small, bare room—where stood his camp bed, and about the floor lay his travelling accoutrements—hung a little

oil lamp, and thousands of infinitesimal insects were losing their lives in the flame and the heat and the smear of paraffin. He sprawled on his long canvas chair and stretched his arms and smoked. As far as he knew, there was not another white man within a hundred and twenty miles.

He wondered what was happening in his world, the white man's world. Three weeks ago he had received a five weeks' old London *Standard*. The desire he had when first he came East for home newspapers had gone. He found it was quite easy to get along without newspapers. Besides, the old dates at the top of the sheets irritated him. So much had happened since the paper was printed; besides, much of the world's news must have been falsified in the interval. So he did not bother about reading. There was the call of the strenuous, primitive life in the jungle, his fights with resisting Nature, his trudge through tracks where no white man had ever been before, his dealings with the natives, the mutual suspicions —and then how he came to like these chocolate-skinned men of silent tread, liked their childish cunning, and began to understand how the simple savage life was best!

Once he had gone down to Singapore for a fortnight. But the men bored him, and the women were so pasty-faced and insipid that his

main remembrance of Singapore was the delight he had in getting away from it and returning to the jungle. Then he was happy. He laughed at those people at home who commiserated men who risked their lives in Arctic exploration, mapping swamps in Central Africa, undergoing hardships from Gobi Desert sandstorms whilst searching for the buried cities of the past without a history. Tut! Men did these things because they loved to. Livingstone never wanted to be found, did he? Civilization, with its white starched shirts and gaudily dressed women, was all artificial. The real thing—for which the inner heart of man cried out—was life close to Nature, rough clothes, few wants, fighting, killing—ah, that was where the man, who had cracked the veneer, gave rein to his instincts, and could lead the genuine life.

The light cast from the paraffin lamp was scant, but just sufficient to read the headings in the newspaper. He turned its crumpled pages, glancing with uninterested eyes from column to column. "Outposts of Empire" was the subject of one article. Where? Oh, at some spot in the far North-West of Canada. The man dwelt on the loneliness of his life in the long and frigid months of winter. Ha! ha! Funny, a newspaper printing that article. What did

ordinary English people care about the men at the outposts of empire? "There are thousands of us," he thought; "we're peppered, God knows where, about the world. Some of us live, but most of us die from fever. Deuced nice thing 'Empire' is for those chaps at home to jaw about on their political platforms. Suppose they think it's marching with the Union Jack flying, and the band banging for dear life all the time. Wonder how many of them know it is hard work, and half-cooked rice and water that gives you dysentery, and official reprimands if you are a bit too ardent with the natives, and not a blessed word of thanks? Should think my friends at home imagine I'm having a gorgeous time in the picturesque and purple East."

He laughed with a tinge of sarcasm. In front of him heaved the black jungle. There was silence. The world had gone to sleep. Sleep! Why it was only eight o'clock. At eight o'clock London is beginning to enjoy itself. In his mind's eye he saw a rush of hansom cabs along Piccadilly, with the little button lights of green and red at the rear of the lamps. So his thoughts swerved again. To-night, were the cabs chasing along Piccadilly? That was thousands and thousands of miles away—India, Persia, almost all Europe, lying between. The music

halls in Leicester Square—they would be aflame now. He wondered what was the popular play at the theatres?

When would he be going back? How he wished he were back! After all, the glitter of London life was very pleasant. Really, there was no fun in bush-whacking in the Malay Peninsula. His soul began to hunger for the old life. It was all far off; something in another world. He ought to be putting some touches to a map he was making. But he didn't move. He lay back—a lonely man at one of the outposts of empire—keeping his eyes closed tight and picturing, picturing hard, what London was like at eight o'clock in the evening.

Wake up!

It was eight o'clock now. He was back in London. He had his evening clothes on. Wasn't he going out to enjoy himself?

Strange he did not feel excited. He had an unconscious feeling he had drifted into the backwaters of life. The noise of London, the bawling of newspaper vendors, the rattle of cabs, the motor-cars, the omnibuses, the mad, scurrying, selfish throng of humanity saddened him.

As he sauntered past Trafalgar Square, making in the direction of Piccadilly Circus, he felt how lonely he was. Down in his heart he knew he

had been doing good work in the swamps of the East. He straightened himself, and his blood gushed with pride through his veins. But no one knew him, no one had the warm eye of recognition for him.

He found a restaurant—a gay place with much gold in the decoration. The air was hot, and thick with the clapper-tongued chatter of many men and women, all in the lust of life, merry, jolly, laughing too loudly. A band was playing a Hungarian air somewhere, but the only recognition of the music was that voices were raised almost to a shriek, as though in competition with it. Waiters were chasing one another. There was the smell of hot food and wines and cigar smoke. It was Saturday night, and the theatres were soon to commence.

The wanderer ate quietly and with no interest. Course followed course, but the dishes were tasteless to him. Yet the environment began to influence him. The food and the wine drove the damp from his soul. He leaned in his chair and gazed idly around. A smile slowly broke from his thin lips, and a little generous colour came into the wanness of his cheek.

Well, he was back, to the fringe at least, of the happy old London life! He had often been in this restaurant. Except that it had been

redecorated it was just the same; he fancied he recalled some of the faces about him. The buzz of talk and the gaysome laughter cheered him—till he noticed one thing. He was the only person dining alone. There were groups, parties, coteries of friends, in the full swing of enjoyment. But mostly the tables were for two, a man and a woman; always a youngish woman, but the man not always young. It struck him that many of the men were puffy-faced, heavy-lipped and sensuous-eyed. But the women were fragrant with good looks, smiling eyes, and dainty hair-dressing, women with soft bosoms and beautiful frocks. He had always been impressionable. So, whilst he felt some resentment towards the men, his eye rested affectionately on the women.

Just in front of him were a couple, a man of near fifty, and a girl of not much more than twenty. He fell to pondering on their relationship. The man was stout, and his cheeks were flabby, with pouches below the eyes. The wanderer slipped to the conclusion he must be a stockbroker. Without reason, he had an aversion to stockbrokers. The man was leaning with heavy elbows on the table, and was puffing from a big cigar. He turned a lecherous look on the girl as he chatted. Yes, what was their relationship? She was such a sweet girl, fair-haired, blue-eyed,

and when she smiled upon her companion he saw that her teeth were straight and good. She was a little pagan of a woman, very happy in the luxury of the eyes. There were many diamonds on her fingers—too many for a girl. Had that fat beast given them to her?

The man who had come home was angry. The relationship between these two had nothing to do with him. It was so long—so very long—since he had dined in a fashionable restaurant, at a little table for two and with a pretty woman facing him! Oh, those women of other days! They had forgotten him. He had forgotten most of them. He chuckled—sardonically. And now—now he was the most solitary man in London.

He chuckled again. Why should he complain about being solitary, he who had spent most of the last four years removed from the company of white people? He had dined well, surely? He was in the evening garb of civilization, and there was one period in his life when, for eight months, he never wore a stiff collar. Now, he had only to lift his finger and an attendant would bring him whatever he wanted. He lifted it: coffee, a liqueur brandy, a good cigar. This was rather comfortable, compared with times of the past.

There came the memory of the first year

in the East—he lifted his head, and to his nostrils memory wafted the hot, greasy, languid odours of the jungle. He was an assistant then, and his chief was six years his senior. How he had come to hate that man! How often he had lain peering for long hours into the blackness of the Oriental night, whilst murder was biting like a sharp tooth into the very core of his heart!

He now lifted his coffee cup and sipped gently; he smiled: how the chief hated him also! Yet they had been good friends—at the start. The chief was a strong, stubborn fellow. The moroseness which often enwrapped him was the consequence of introspection, the outcome of years in no-man's-land, with no being of his own race and colour at hand, thrown upon his own thoughts for companion, his only human acquaintances the men of brown skin and primitive instincts. The chief had welcomed the newcomer, they had gripped one another's fists like big men, they looked into one another's eye, they each read all would be right.

Nearly a year—eleven months—they spent together. Eleven months out of the world, moving slowly, working, talking to tribesmen, roughing it, sometimes forgetting there were such things as drawing-rooms and nice women in the land which was far behind them. Necessity and orders

sent them out in the rainy season. But the new man was keen; he put romance into every day, he was living the real things which he had read about in a boy's book of adventure. And he got attuned to his surroundings, the clambering of bamboo slopes, the tramp through grass as high as himself, and with all colour bleached from the sword-like leaves, the crude camp, the awful silence of the night. He forgot the romance and knew only of the tiredness. And when fever struck him, and his joints ached to agony, and his brain felt it was being sawn into, and he noted his cheeks were hollowing, and the flesh was going from his limbs, it was the chief who, in a quiet, sullen way, nursed him well again.

Over evening pipes they told one another all the stories they knew. They exhausted criticism of the books they had read. Neither knew much about politics, but they agreed things were "rotten." They ground their corn of conversation until each realised, but tried to hide it from the other, that it was all gone. They got weary of saying over again that the heads of their department were fools. So it came that they trudged in each other's wake for hours and offered no comment, they would sit through the evening and neither be inclined to say a word. Still, their thoughts were busy.

With little else to study, they studied each other. They were worn with work, irritable from ill-health. They got tired of one another, didn't like the other's slouch, became conscious that the other was dodging duty, expecting the other to see to the coolies, and the proper packing of the ponies. They reached the point of believing that the other's manner of eating was hoggish. They came to hate one another. When words were spoken they were short and snappish. The very sight of the other man stirred a choking resentment, a thirst sometimes to rush forward and kill.

Tut! people who live among the crowds cannot understand the antipathy, blind and furious, which surges in the souls of two men who are obliged to live with one another, to eat with one another, sleep in the same tent, but who have nothing more to say to one another. It has always been so; it is the common experience of all travellers. The two men knew it, they had talked about it during the first days of their journey, light-heartedly, and had declared they were not to be so foolish. They often thought of it as the months went, and the estrangement increased, but they never talked about it. Each man knew that his case was different from the instances he had heard and read about, knew

it was the other man who was dull in talk, sulky; that it was the other who had an offensive walk and ate disgustingly, that he was a soulless beast, to whom death would be a welcome riddance.

Often, when their minds were turgid, they would catch the glance of one another, instantly removed, and each understood how the other hated him. Once they quarrelled. Three coolies had deserted. The desertion had nothing to do with either of them; the men had grown homesick and decamped. But the two men accused each other of being the cause, and then the words were hot and recriminatory. They did not speak for three weeks.

When their work was over—good work, mapping a great stretch of hitherto unexplored territory—and they came back to the settlement of white men, they parted without a word, the chief went to the club and the assistant to the little, ramshackle hotel. They never met again. They were sent on separate expeditions. And nearly two years later the wanderer heard that the chief had died from fever somewhere on the Siam-Chinese border, and that the natives buried him without funeral service, piled stones above him to keep off the animals, and then stole the white man's belongings. That was the end—the end of so many Britons in little

known corners of the earth. The wanderer did not feel sorry.

But now it all came back to him like the rush of a big wave. My God! How cruel they had been to one another! What fools! And he was forgotten, dead, with stones piled above him to keep off the beasts!

He woke with a start from his reverie. The restaurant was nearly deserted. The band had ceased, and the musicians gone. Waiters were relaying the tables—for supper after the theatre. An old man, with tired face and thin grey hair, was eating alone, slowly, as though he desired to spend much time. Across the hall, a man and a woman were leaning across an empty cloth, whispering, with faces close.

The wanderer paid his bill and went out. Some of the clammy mist had gone. On the buildings were flaring, blinking, electric advertisements. But there was a lull in the noisy breathing of London life. Empty cabs were crawling along. All the men and women in evening dress had disappeared—the places of amusement had drawn them. He noticed a Continental look on the countenance of the men standing at the street corners. As he went along, women in gaudy clothes whispered something in French or German. He did not heed.

It was after nine o'clock. No good trying to get into a theatre. Besides, he knew nothing about the plays, and he feared seeing something which would only bore him. A music-hall! There, at any rate, he would get frivolity. Why, the last night he was in England, four years ago, he spent at a Leicester Square music-hall with—he had forgotten the names of the men, good fellows, and they had all been dining well and drinking well, and—oh, yes, he distinctly remembered a little red-headed fellow who was afterwards shot in some punitive expedition against a tribe on the Afghan-Indian frontier; what a funny chap he was!

Oh, no! No seats! But of course there was plenty of standing room in the promenade. That would do, certainly! He mounted the broad, dim, luxurious, heavy-carpeted stairs. In front was a silhouette of heads. The audience was strained to stillness. Bravo! and an explosion of applause swung round the house. On the stage, a slim girl in blue had risked her life in an acrobatic feat, and was now pirouetting and smirking and acknowledging the thanks of the crowded Saturday night audience. The atmosphere was close, and thick with smoke.

A throng of men festooned the promenade, and watched the entertainment on the capacious

stage. They were mostly young men, good-limbed, clean-faced, happy-eyed, men in evening dress, who had dined well, and were rather noisy in their humour. Behind them, in the open space of the promenade, ignoring the performance, was a tangled procession of overdressed women, voluptuous, with eyes darting into the eyes of the men—few of whom, however, seemed to take any notice. It was the men who interested, fascinated, the returned wanderer. They were men of his own class. He had been here dozens of times in the old, reckless days. Just the same thoughtless, merry, uproarious boys. But they made him feel old. The thought made him pause with a short, tight breath. Old! It was the first time the thought he was growing old had ever struck—and now it came like a blow in the face. Yet he was only thirty. But he was "out of it." He recalled with what gaiety of heart he came here in the old days—four years ago!

He stood in the double row of men and looked upon the stage. A couple of comedians, dressed like tramps, were making the audience open its mouth and roar with enjoyment. But they were just idiotic. The people laughed because of their pretended stupidity. But they were stupid, silly, and even vulgar. He had no appreciation. He wandered casually. Women caught him look-

ing at them: he was thinking how pale and tawdry they were compared with the warm, brown faces and genuinely laughing eyes of the women in the Malay Peninsula. And once more came to his nostrils the hot, sensuous, rather greasy odour of the East.

In a balcony he came across two chairs and a little table. A couple had just risen. He sat down. A waiter stood by. "Yes, sir." "Oh, anything," said the man who had come home.

"Whisky and soda, sir?" "Anything!" A woman passed, and turned a grinning face upon him, as though he would invite her to be seated. He looked at her with solemn blankness, and she went away. He told the waiter to remove the second chair.

From where he sat he could see the stage—and he gazed through smoke-clouded blackness to the great square of glitter and light and gaudiness and dancing women, with the swing of the orchestra providing sensuousness for the ear as the women were sensuous to the eye. It was all very beautiful, with harmonized colours and swift gyrations and weaving of figures. The principal dancer tripped airily. She gave a wild twirl; the brass in the orchestra banged; the woman threw herself into a strained posture; the spectators yelled their approbation.

But whilst the eye of the returned wanderer lazily feasted on the gorgeousness, his sub-conscious self was back once more in the jungle. It was the appearance on the stage of a bevy of girls, dressed in the radiance of orchids, which set remembrance harking back. He remembered the orchids bespangling the valley slopes like wayside flowers. He had no particular knowledge of flowers. He knew not whether the orchids were rare or common, only he knew they were exquisite.

Ah! he would never forget that afternoon, that night—nearly two years ago now! The day had been more than sultry, and he had kept to his pony, which had moved at a slow stepping pace. The fading afternoon provided a rich glow to the mountain tops. The river was hurrying with silver leaps over the boulders, and the song of the waters was soothing. The track was a brown ribbon running easily by the river bank. The vegetation was thick and yielded odours. The region was friendly. That night he was to be the guest of a chief whose pride it was to call the English his strong brothers. Hours before he reached the little town of rush-huts, he was met by runners, lusty, bronze-skinned men, with brilliant wrappages about the head, and flaming short petticoats from the waist to the knees. They salaamed, and with short trot kept in

front of the procession. It was a compliment to the white man.

The white man was only a Government surveyor. But he was of the Government; he represented the great white race; he was one of the all-powerful English; he was a mighty man. The Englishman always smiled on such occasions. "I'm a viceroy, the representative of the King," he chuckled to himself, and, although he felt it was all rather ridiculous, he enjoyed himself. The chief was a corpulent old fellow, with fleshy features but kindly eyes, and his hair was grizzled. He was very apologetic, much honoured, bowed low and said many extravagant things about the English.

Yes, that was a pleasant memory to the wanderer—now sitting, with slightly glazed eyes, seeing a hundred women in a maze of dancing on a London music-hall stage—the quick-enfolding purple evening, with the western sky ripped into lines of orange and red and blue and green, and he sitting on the low verandah of the chief's house, sipping sweet drinks and munching sweet cakes and watching the passing villagers, women slim and graceful, carrying themselves erect, shoulders back so the curve of the bosom was well shown, and men, happy and singing, driving in the cattle for the night.

And whilst the old man puffed his fat cheroot

wrapped in a rice leaf, the Englishman, languorous from the broiling day in the saddle, lounged in sprawling attitude, after the manner of his race. He smoked a pipe. His whole being responded to the scene. Everything was simple, of the early days. He was back to the real thing; he was loosened from gimcrack civilization. No shrieking trains, no telegraphs, no hotels, no evening newspapers. A smile crept across his worn, ochreous cheek. What did he want with evening newspapers? He got along very well without newspapers. He had noticed, when, after months in the backwoods, he got back to an English settlement, that very little change had occurred in the world's history during his absence. He was quite happy—happy in the ease he was taking after tiredness—happy in the kindly deference paid to him by a great Malayan chief because he was the representative of England.

He sipped his whisky in the music-hall, and slowly lit a cigar. As he puffed out the match-flame he muttered, "Well, one returns to nothingness in London."

That night! Ah, that night! There was not much of the poetic in him. But he knew that night would often come fresh to his consciousness. And here it was, whilst he smoked and watched a London ballet. The evening had

closed to dusk with a hush. Little lamps were hung in the balcony, and as they pierced the blackness the scene was eerie. Lights, incessantly restless, dotted the village. Somewhere, far off, could be heard the plaintive wail of a reed instrument.

The chief had arranged to do honour to his noble guest, the representative of the power of England. There would be a native dance. The top fringe of the trees began to cut through the dark. Soon the fringe was clear cut. The moon was rising, rising, rising, and soon it appeared, a ball of silver hanging just a little overhead, and making a lantern for the dance. Swarthy natives, swinging yellow lamps, came along. The villagers, all mirth and light-heartedness, flocked around. The women were in bunches, curious to see the white man, and they pushed each other forward, and there were retreats with screams of half-pretended fright. The dark skins of the people, the rainbow costumes, the moonlight, the background of tropical trees stirred the instincts of the man from the far country. He sank into a lazy, sensuous drowse. He leaned back, and with half-closed eyes felt that all was well. The dancing girls in their sheeny silks glided in cadence with rhythmic posturing of the slim bodies. They were suggestive, they were

"The man gave her sweetmeats and cakes."

pagan. And the pipes were shrill with forest music and the cymbals clashed.

He called the chief of the dancers to him—a girl taller than the rest, with lissom frame and the tightness of her garb revealing the moulding of her figure. In her black and glistening greasy hair was an orchid. Her cheek showed the ripe, warm blood through the soft, brown skin. Very soft was her skin, peachy, and her lips were passionate, though her eyes were large with dreamy lustre. She squatted in front of him and smiled, showing straight, white teeth. The man gave her sweetmeats and cakes, and made her happy. She was a nice little thing—that sylph of the Malayan jungle.

Pshaw! He broke his reverie with something like a snarl. The women in the music-hall—they were artificial and were redolent of the stench of cheap scent and cosmetics. He moved from his seat and went back to the promenade. He sauntered with hard-set, grim features. He was angry with the world and chiefly with himself. What a fool he was, not to have known that the charming picture of his home-coming, on which he had mused when alone, would be a ghastly disillusionment!

This was his first night back in the old homeland. He had often cried out with his heart in

anticipation of the joy of home-coming. But, as he went through the garish streets, tumultuous cauldrons of humanity, for the theatres were yielding their audiences, he felt he was a strange man in a strange land. He had nothing in common with these people. Civilization—he grinned at the word—was but a husk, and it had been stripped from him, and he was just the human, original man. And his soul was hungry to return again to the East, where man fought with Nature, men fought with each other, and the virtues were primitive. Ha! Ha! Ha!

CHAPTER IX

KEEPING THE BALANCE

THE contrasts are confusing.

This is a brutal and selfish age: mammon worship, money the god, greed, blatancy, licentiousness.

Yet if we look around, and also look a little under the gaudy flowers which smart the eyes, we find that to-day there is more kindliness, courtesy, charity, beauty of life, genuine wish to do the right thing by our neighbours, than ever before in the world's history.

We are "modern." We laugh at the simple faith of our fathers as butter-cup religion, a thing for children. We are advanced; our theology is that of the intellect alone; the Bible is a pretty collection of fairy stories; science is the master; better still, pleasure is the thing: we are here but a short time, and when it is finished we shall be in the shadow through eternity. And good people mourn the irreligion that is settling on us like a blight.

But notice that, whilst all this is a true picture,

the hearts of men and women are struggling to escape the racking fury of unrest by moving toward medievalism, mysticism, the soft, soothing soul-hush which is found in the scented ceremonial of ritual and the Church of Rome. I have friends who speak with anger of the machinations of the priests of Rome, and who are bitter against the Anglican clergy, whom they charge with being papists in disguise, because they love dim lights, and the odour of incense, and raiment that is picturesque, and mummery which is an offence to their eyes. But is not this hunger for misty medievalism—so hard to defend, from the strictly rational point of view—an unconscious revolt against the crudity, the harshness, the flint-like severity of dogmatic science?

These are the days of gorgeous, mammoth steamships. The man who travels by an old boat is smiled at as out of date. We must travel by express trains. A motorist soon feels he is a "back number" unless his car has every improvement and is capable of enormous speed. We neglect the hotels that are drab and drowsy, and patronize those that are gay and gilded, where there is glamour and crash and band-playing, and clothes that are expensive and dazzling.

Yet, what means this craze for antique furniture, old silver, black oak panelling, houses that

are Elizabethan and with histories that bring to the senses the aroma of long ago? Why do we like old-fashioned gardens and rustic seats, and the simple flowers which our grandmothers tended? Why week-ends at country cottages? It seems incongruous that people who will only go to America on the *Lusitania*, only lunch at the Ritz, only go to those theatres where the plays smell of harlotry, only have motor-cars which can pass everything else on the road, are often the people who appreciate the drowse of country life, who love the solitude and peace of the woods, who prefer candles to electric light on the dinner table, who feel a charm in fingering early Georgian silver, who find a sensation of romance in going to rest in a quaintly carved four-poster bed, and who know the world is pretty to look upon when viewed through diamond-paned casements.

Is all this an affectation, a little bit of happy pretence?

It is not. It is just as real as the passion for motor-cars and dinner parties in swagger hotels.

The balance must be maintained, and Nature makes us inconsistent and paradoxical. In the swing of the see-saw we are generally nearer the centre than at the ends. One of the consequences of motoring at sixty miles an hour will be caravaning at twenty miles a day. Indeed, do we not

hear that caravaning has become fashionable? Then, though of course motors will remain, it will be no more the correct thing for a gentleman to drive a motor than it now is for him to drive a hansom cab.

People go from Cairo to the Pyramids on an electric tramcar. By my side is an American typewriter. On my finger is a ring with a scarab taken from the body of a royal Egyptian who died 3,600 years ago. Why do I prefer that scarab to a modern diamond? When you have found the answer to that you have solved a big riddle.

You meet learned folks who tell you that not only does history move in cycles, but so, also, do civilizations. Look at history well within our ken: an age of poetry and chivalry succeeded by one of practicability and drab commonplace. Chivalry is not dead, nor poetry. They will flourish again when drabness and practicability have been forsaken. Nay, each of us in our own lives is ever alternating from one side to the other. What would happen if we went full steam ahead and did not stop or swerve from the path which, in this hour, we may think it right to follow?

If people never changed their political views, and one set of politicians, and their apostolic successors, were to make laws for ever, what a tragedy

it would be! One government is removed because the electorate think its influence is pernicious to the welfare of the nation. But, in the inevitable rise and fall of things, it will come back, because the country arrives at the opinion that the succeeding government is really the pernicious crowd and that the other fellows were sorely misjudged. So it goes on.

Women-folk, who would rather be ugly than wear frocks which have been out of fashion for two years, display sartorial atavism in the cast-back of their fondness for the style of garment beloved by their great-grandmothers. A lady who dresses in the manner of a century ago has the satisfaction of being regarded as quite up to date; whilst if a woman wears a hat of last year's design, her friends inquire among each other if her husband has had misfortune in business.

Ladies gush over the exquisiteness of clothes on the pattern of last century. They are probably no more exquisite than the clothes of last year. But the feminine mind, as soon as it begins to travel fast in the way of clothes, gets a jerk, and it is back to the place where it was three generations ago. Now, women do not go back to these antique costumes because they like going back, but because they cannot help it. Nature insists. Nature, however, is a kind mother, and allows

her daughters to think it is all due to their own artistic appreciation.

Look at the situation. A man's brain calls forward, but his heart is disposed to suggest "backward." We fix our eyes on the future and dream dreams; but our soul's content is always found by dwelling on the past. In moments of egotism we declaim about what the energetic West has given to the sluggish East; but all we hold dear—our religion, our philosophy, our literature, science itself—has come direct from, or had its origin in, the East. We owe more to the East than the East owes to the West.

The moment the mind relaxes it reverts. We have our duties which spur us: it may be in bettering the lot of those less fortunate; it may be in mechanics or physics; it may be in the ordinary avocations of the working-man. A tiny proportion of us employ what we call our leisure in interests which are going to count for something in the future; a good many occupy that leisure in passing the time either in exercise or in ministering to the senses by admiring scenery or by reading novels; but the people who really count, those who have an ever-widening influence among their fellows, become absorbed in something appertaining to the past.

Take the most simple of cases which come to

the mind. First of all, the collecting of rare china. We can be enthusiastic over its colouring; but there is no colouring which cannot be surpassed to-day, though we like to talk about the mellowing effects of age. The principal thing which pulls our fancy is that the china is old or rare. In front of a case of precious antique ware, though often crude in design and manufacture, we have an æsthetic satisfaction which no pile of modern and exquisite ware will produce. Attempt to explain this, remembering that we are constantly telling ourselves that humanity moves to improvement, and you cannot find any reason except that the shock, as it were, of modern life flings us back to find satisfaction, contentment, in the past.

It is the same with old furniture, old pewter, old jewellery, antiques of every sort. None of these things—with sparse exceptions—can vie in workmanship with things of the present day. But the mind refuses to be romantic concerning the present day, whilst it simply cannot resist weaving a fantasy of imagination about the things which are old.

That is something not to be demonstrated; it is felt. It is a beautiful belief that the sanctified odour of an old cathedral, the sensation of peacefulness which comes to the quickest as to

the dullest on entering a venerable and time-gnawed church, is a kind of effluence of the spirit of all the good but mostly forgotten people who have knelt and prayed and worshipped within the walls through the centuries. A piece of quaint furniture, a writing desk—there is a breathing of mystery, and without any conjuring up of visions we have the sensibility of the presence of those who, in the long-forgotten days, sat at the desk, and, with hands now long cold, indited their correspondence to those they loved, who also have long since passed to the shadow. An antique jewel—is there not something peculiarly sacred about it, because we feel that dainty fingers have handled it in centuries gone, and that it may have rested on a bosom which was full of girlish happiness?

Yes; the leaning of the present toward the future must swing in poise to the fascination of the past. It is by contrasts that the balance is maintained. Lift a volume printed and bound three centuries ago. You handle it carefully, much more carefully than you do a modern book, however excellent. And it is not merely sentiment that causes you to do so. Much of science is probing into the past, the immeasurable past when the world was in the making. We are more interested in how the world was than in

how it will be, because the future is vague, whilst the past gives us something we can grip and steady ourselves by. The scholar who pores over Sanskrit, the Egyptologist who unravels the lives of the ancients, the man who follows the intricacies of heraldry with the keenness of a chess-player, the craving for knowledge how our forefathers lived, even the pageants which have become a feature in our cities of ancient birth, and provide a pleasant afternoon for holiday-makers, all have their key of interest in the desire to escape from the wild scurry and hurly-burly of modern life.

The ever-bubbling enthusiasm to see things which depict the past, to read books which provide pictures of life in bygone days, is not a mental affectation ; it is very real, and the appetite must be ministered to, else we perish.

But it is in the matter of modern thought and religion that the contrast is most significant. There never was so much freedom of thought as to-day. Nor was there ever so much real religion. The man who has eyes to see and denies the latter point is finding fault with the pattern, and is ignoring the thing.

CHAPTER X

DANCING IN MANY LANDS

It was late summer, out on the sage-tufted and sandy wastes of Nevada. The day had been parching, and the heat rose and fell over the baked ochre land like the swell of the sea. The Red Indians, who had come from many parts, dozed through the day in a crude encampment.

The picture was not like any that was ever described by Fenimore Cooper. There were no wigwams; the red men and their wives slept in carts or in the shadow of foul cloths stretched from bush to bush. There were no men in feathers and mocassins. They were in ill-fitting "civilized" costume, with slouch felt hats. Some of them smoked ordinary pipes. Not a streak of picturesqueness anywhere. Their womenkind —well, there were no Laughing Waters among them. They looked like slatternly coffee-coloured charwomen. Earlier, I had seen an Indian woman on a bicycle.

All through the heat of the day the encampment lay like a smudge on the land, which had

all colour withered out of it. Occasionally there was the cry of a child, the snap of a dog, and maybe a little curling blue smoke whilst an old fellow crouched and cooked.

With evening the encampment awoke. As the sun disappeared it seemed to see-saw the moon above the horizon—a big, steely moon. Moonlight on the desert, so heavily still, is uncanny.

When night set in, and the world was suffused with moonlight, the Indians danced.

Figures silhouetted quaintly against the light. There was mystery.

Two circles were formed, the inner circle of women holding hands, and the outer circle of men holding hands. A muffled, humming, low-noted song broke slowly.

The human circles began to revolve, the women edging one way and the men the other. Whilst the women piped treble, the men were sonorously bass.

There was no scurrying of feet whilst those great circles spun. It was rather like the laborious winding of a capstan.

The song was doleful, moansome, eerie. The light fell upon faces that were bronzed and eyes that were gleaming—a strange gleam in the moonlight. The song was the only sound on the dead

plain, and it rolled like a chant, in softening eddy, till it also fell to death and was still.

In the encampment yellow-tongued fires flamed. They were the only points of light on the distant black earth.

For hours the two circles moved slowly, and the dirge-melody rose and tumbled.

It was a scene which got photographed on the memory.

* * * * * *

Wonderful is the part that dancing plays in the lives of peoples all over the world.

Outside Cairo I have seen the dancing dervishes, whirling and twisting and shouting, and foaming at the mouth in the ecstasy of religion. In Spain, solemn priests twirl slowly before the altar in ecclesiastical minuet.

David, with holy joy, danced "with all his might" before the Ark. Three thousand hired women whirled away the last days of pleasure-loving Rome. The far-away Australian and the Red Indian leap and shout in their kangaroo and buffalo dances. Tearful, saltatory Egyptian mourners still follow a corpse to the grave. Serious "Shakers" and feather-brained Italians jig and caper. Revolutionists spin in saturnalian revel. Court ladies glide gracefully, soft silks a-rustling. Country lasses bashfully receive the

advances of the awkward youth as he bows before them. Priests, ballet girls, children frisking for pleasure—so the procession goes on for ever.

Dancing in public seems at first to have been ceremonial. But the art itself, even in the days of the Pharaohs, was considered part of a polite education. In the grave of Amenhotep II. at Thebes groups of dancing figures are carved; the music is supplied by hand-clapping. The Jews absorbed the Egyptian customs, and had a festive dance when the Red Sea was crossed. Also they danced round the Golden Calf. At Jerusalem, in temples on Mount Gerizim and Alexandria, were special choirs and special dances. In the early Christian Church, St. Basil told his followers that dancing would be their principal occupation in heaven, and they had better begin practising it on earth.

"The old man dances" was a Roman proverb implying safety. The *Salii* were Roman priests of patrician degree who had to celebrate the rites of Mars on the Palatine Hill. They wore short scarlet cassocks, broad belts clasped with brass buckles, copper helmets, and bore javelins, swords, and targets. When necessity called them away to defend the walls, one was kept dancing. The safety of the city depended on this. It was a propitiatory dance to the gods.

"Dance to honour God; this exercise of peace and piety is becoming to a king," said St. Gregory to the Emperor Julian. But the dances before church doors became, in time, a scandal, particularly the torchlight ones.

The ballet, such as we now see on the stage, came into existence in the fifteenth century, and was taken up by the various European countries. At first it was a combination of revelry, dance, and show, somewhat akin to the masques. From a street pageant it became a court amusement. Then a theatrical representation. It was not introduced into England until 1704, when a ballet dancer came bearing a letter from an abbé to—of all people in London—John Locke, the philosopher. Yet he arranged her business for her, and from that time the ballet was reinforced by Parisian dancers. America had a serious long-skirted ballet in 1794 called "The Huntress, or Tammany's Frolics." But when, in 1827, Hutin, the first French dancer of the day, bounded on to a New York stage in short skirt and silk hose, every lady in the theatre got up and left the house. Before, however, a dozen years had gone by, they sat still and applauded.

London recently was captivated by ladies dancing to classical music. The sway of the

body, the languor, the passion, the heaving breasts and limpid eyes—it was all sensuous, as, indeed, the dance should be.

Yet this dancing, which sent London crazy, is but the *excelsis* of the Oriental dance, such as you find in Egypt or in India. When I saw, in London, a lady in the throes of the Salome dance, I could not fail to recognize it—though better done, with artistic surroundings, and with real poetry in the motion—as an extravagance of the dance I had seen in a Cairene café, with tinsel and silver crescent ornaments, the lights dim, and the air fragrant with aromatic coffee and the smoke of nargilehs. The dance was gliding and rhythmic, dreamy, and lulling; and the girl—with eyes alternately flashing and languid, extremely handsome, with bold striking Eastern beauty, and laden with jewellery on her neck, arms, and ankles, her garments from the waist upwards thin, so you might see every motion of the lithe figure—appeared but as a picture in an appropriate frame. And as she danced, slowly and then vigorously, all the time beating a tambourine, whilst two veiled women sang an accompaniment, the Arabs looked on with sullen, unappreciative eyes, puffing sedately at their pipes.

But I cannot acknowledge that I was cap-

tivated by the nautch dance, as I saw it once—and only once—in India. The dance is principally used to symbolize the origin, growth, successes, and mysteries of love. The bodies of nautch girls are flexible, and their countenances and gestures so well commanded, that the spectator is led almost from the fable of the scene to the reality of life. A long robe of very thin silk goes down to their heels and is slightly fastened with a rich girdle, while the long black hair of the girls is braided and perfumed.

The dance is in accordance with the dreamy character of the people. Its movements are suggestive and slow; the music slowly tinkles out monotonous cadences. The result is a soothing, then a tiring effect. Certainly it was so in my experience. I readily responded to an invitation to see a nautch dance. The room was packed, unventilated, and repellent to the nostrils. The nautch girl was a fat female who perspired. Her slow wriggling and heel stamping and arm waving bored me excessively.

* * * * *

It was delicious, in the beautiful hills of Hungary, to look upon the villagers taking part in the national dance called the *Csardas*. A Hungarian once said: "No foreigner could take one step of the *Csardas*, for the dance must be

in the very blood." Men wear tight, embroidered trousers and high boots, a vest to match the trousers, and a jacket slung from the shoulder with cords, braiding, metal buttons, and a round, be-ribboned hat. The girls braid their hair and wear a white chemise, with a fichu of white silk to match their white apron. Ten full petticoats are considered the holiday complement. The swaying from the hips of this mass of material is graceful. The slippers for dancing are curious, consisting of a thick sole, monstrous heel, but no upper, except a strip across the toes.

The dance lasts for hours, with varying movements. First, the *lassu*, partners hold lightly the other's hand, two steps to the right, two to the left. They part, the girl tiptoes, glides with little languid airs, and the man keeps time with her as she slowly moves away from him. Then comes the *friss*, or quick movement, and the pursuit begins. Opening with a jig step, the music grows wilder, and all sorts of antics are indulged in, sometimes even an actual chase. "Turning partners" is done in a hundred different ways: hand to hand, clasping waist, slily slipping off to another man before the man can turn her, all accompanied by graceful gestures, handkerchief waving, etc. The last turn of all is when the man seizes his partner and lightly

spins round while he holds her in the air. The Magyar woman is no light weight. But the Magyar man has strong muscles.

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The seductive nature of the Spanish fandango is restrained by the natural reticence of the Spanish girls. It is a true love song, rendered by the graceful *abandon* of the males and the shy coquetry of the girls. Glances, smiles, the triumph of love, are shown by infinite modes of expression. The Spaniard learns it naturally, and even the children practise it. "This dance is a disgrace to a religious country," once said the clergy. So it was tried before a Consistory. Everyone was ready to sign against it, when, unluckily, a cardinal suggested they should see a specimen before condemning. At first they watched in grave silence. But the fascination of the music grew too strong, and finally all the prelates joined the dance. So the story goes.

The torch dance, which is seen at Russian weddings, although danced in Germany and France, is a special feature of Russian royal weddings or court balls. Each guest holds, not a torch, but a thick white candle, in a finely wrought holder, and the dance takes the form of a stately polonaise, where the princess, bowing

before the king, invites him to dance, and the bridegroom invites the queen, the guests moving in solemn measure round the room after the various royal couples.

At Tiflis, in the Caucasus, there is a corporation dance. These corporations, or liveries as we should call them, have each their own dancers, and at the end of every occasion when processions have been formed the various corporations form circles, the men holding lighted candles. One or two dancers perform a kind of tapping movement, first with the heel, then with the toe. Then one runs swiftly round the circle, moving her arms like a railway signal, while the others chase. This is supposed to represent Apollo pursuing Daphne, and the lady must maintain throughout an air of modesty, never raising her eyes.

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A lazy afternoon in Burma. The sun has started to dip, and the high trees fling a carpet of shadow on the grass.

We lounge in big chairs and are merry at the antics of a travelling troupe of musicians. Burmese music is a thing to be cultivated if it is to be appreciated, but the ear is soon accustomed, and the tongue ceases to wag derogatory observations. There is much beat of tambours,

and clatter of bells, and pained shriek of reed instruments.

The players wear brilliant-coloured cloths about their loins; short white jackets are about their shoulders, and above their bright, brown countenances their heads are swathed in the gaudiest of kerchiefs.

Though the day is sultry, they play furiously.

We are to see a Burmese dance. The four girls are willowy. Their cheeks are various hues of brown. But the hair is coal-black and glossy, and they wear garlands of flowers. Their bodices are of soft-toned silks, but no strong colours. The skirt is long, and of black, gold threaded, wrapped tight—indeed, providing the impression it is just a square wrapped about them, for in the dance the fold opens and the limbs are revealed.

They glide with sinuous undulations of the body, weaving their arms through the air, as though the hands were as important as the feet in dancing.

There are no "cakewalk" gymnastics. The dance is a convolution of curves. Every movement is like a verse in drowsy rhyme.

No smile is on the faces of these girls. They are as demure as maidens of another land when they go to church. They are very thin-limbed,

"The four girls are willowy."

and their hands are long and bony, but graceful. Wistful, elusive creatures they seem, for no man of the West can guess what thoughts are dancing behind those bronze masks. They are formal, and whilst the dance is soothing, in curved movements, the deliberation of it all has much of the stateliness of the epic. You do not know how it will end; it only stops. But each movement is the natural, the only, sequence of the movement which has gone before.

As one sits lazily and watches the dance through the smoke of a cheroot, the sense of poetry decides that this is better than a crowded ball-room, the atmosphere reeking with perfume, cheeks discoloured through over-exertion, men gripping women, and, with elbows piked out, diving and dodging among the noisy mob.

After watching many dances in the East, I have never been able to get rid of the idea that "civilized" dances, waltzes, two-steps, lancers, and all their family, are anything more than the barbarisms of movement.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOME WORKER

It was a paragraph headed "Child Lace Slaves," in a London paper, which sent me to Nottingham.

In evidence before a Parliamentary Committee, a lady reported that, in Nottingham, it was quite a common thing in the dinner hour to see children busy with lace work, without having stopped to take off hat and jacket. "Children started work at four years of age, and she herself had seen children working at six years old."

Just then a whoop from my own strong-lunged and somewhat riotous youngsters, caused me to look out of my library window into the garden. My younger girl, aged seven, using flower-pots as moulds, had manufactured a wonderful array of dirt cakes, and now with a desire to play shop, wanted me to go down and become a purchaser, for, with childish imagination, she divided the same heaps of potted soil into sponge cake, currant cake, and just cake. She was happy, and had no worries beyond her play.

But the awful thought came to me, as her daddy, gripping me, almost paralysing me: "What if fate had been different, and instead of play she was one of the 'child lace slaves,' giving the hours she was away from her lessons to earning pennies for food?"

So I said I was too busy that day. But I cut that paragraph from the London paper, and decided I would go to Nottingham.

Nottingham is a town I have always liked. Nearly twenty years ago I spent a happy twelve months there as a reporter on one of the newspapers, and kindly impressions have been corroborated by flying visits in later years. It is a clean, healthy town.

The people carry themselves well, are good looking, and the young women have the knack the Paris workgirls possess of dressing neatly and becomingly without a large expenditure of money. Indeed, it has often struck me that Nottingham is the most "Continental" town we have in England. Certainly the people have nothing sordid about them. As a class they are fond of taking life easily, pleasantly, good-humouredly. They like "having a good time," and in their eyes the value of money is not so much its accumulation as the means whereby they can have that "good time." It is sometimes said Notting-

ham folks are improvident and gay. True, they have more sprightliness in them than folks in any other English town. But I would rather see a people gay and merry than grubbingly grave.

However, that story of little ones of four and six years, tender toddlers, having to work for their food got on my nerves. It was such a smudge on the fame of the town.

Now, in my investigations, though they revealed a condition of affairs I had hardly believed possible—a black, abhorrent spot in the life of Nottingham, which the citizens would do well to see to—I found that the allegations about "child lace slaves" were built upon a misunderstanding.

I saw the children working at lace in their homes. In a stroll I happened upon a mite of not much more than three years, a big-eyed, dirty-faced baby, sitting on a step in a place called Coalpit Lane, close to another place called Cur Lane—not appetizing neighbourhoods—armed with a pair of scissors, making little digs at a piece of lace, and doing the work which is known as "clipping"—cutting away the threads which make a jump from one part of the pattern to another, and which if left would interfere with the design.

Ah, here was a case for the lady inspector!

Here was a matter about which questions should be asked in Parliament! The mother was sitting just within the door working at the same thing, and with a great tangle of lace about her feet —a decent, genial woman, who seemed rather entertained at the interest I took in the youngster.

Alas, however, for the cause of sensationalism, I found that baby, with the imitativeness of childhood, was getting satisfaction from "helping mother." And later on, when, under guidance, many houses of the home workers were visited, I saw hundreds of children "drawing," "clipping," and "scalloping." The result in my mind was that most of the employment of children was not due to economic conditions which compelled the lads and the lassies to live out their little lives in hard labour, but chiefly had origin in the childish ambition to "help mother."

Now do not misunderstand me. Not all the children worked because they regarded it as play. I went into homes where the mothers made their children do a bit of work during their play time in the middle of the day, and another hour in the evening after tea.

The help given was valuable, especially in "drawing"—extracting the threads which held together strips of lace, which are made on the machines, not in one long slip, but sometimes in

four or five widths, held together by a thread which must be removed. I penetrated the most miserable houses in Nottingham, and was sick at the sights I saw. But nowhere did I find that exploitation of little children which, with a dread, I had expected to find.

It is hard, of course, that parents should force their children, eight or ten years of age, to sit down on a chair for an hour and pull threads rather than play. It would be absurd, however, to assert it was heavy work, or necessarily injurious to health.

A woman with three youngsters about her, aged thirteen, eleven, and eight, said to me: "I never asks 'em to do more 'n an hour. But they draw for me, and that lets me get on with 'clipping' and 'scalloping,' and it means a few more shillings at the end of the week. Besides, it does 'em no harm, does it?" And honestly I could not say that it did.

I was happy to find myself foiled in my quest for "child slaves." But I came up against the great question of home work.

The first difficulty I encountered was a tremendous divergence of opinion. Social reformers, eager for the welfare of the people, say home work ought to be abolished because the pay is low by reason of the work being done at home, and

that there is a great risk of lace harbouring the germs of disease, because some of the homes in which the work is done are anything but clean. Quite true.

But when I talked to the women, for the benefit of whom the reforms are intended, every one was averse from anything being done which would despoil her of the opportunity of earning a few shillings to help "to feed the children." The women could not work in the mills if all the work were done there; but, allowed to do it at home, they attend to their households, and when they have an hour or two to spare, especially in the afternoon and evening, they can take a bundle of lace and work it. I found myself believing in the continuance of home work—though I pray that the conditions may, before long, be improved.

There are some seven thousand home workers in Nottingham, and most of them are congested in a warren of hovels within an area of half a mile in the poorest part of the town—that of Sneinton. On a fine afternoon hundreds of women may be seen sitting in the yards with bundles of lace tumbling about their knees.

There is no machinery which can do this work. If it were done by hand in the factories it would require a staff of employees. But the

work is not regular. It comes in rushes and spurts, and having a staff would mean times when they would be idle, and other times when there would not be enough hands. So the work is given out to middlewomen. No doubt a good many of these are "sweaters"!—that is, they pay the smallest possible price to the home women, really starvation rates, and keep the balance for themselves. Generally speaking, however, they keep a quarter for themselves, and for this they have to bring the lace from the factory, distribute it, collect it, and return it to the factory.

All payment is on quantity. A woman who picked up the work as a girl by "helping mother," and who, before she married and had children to care for, worked in the mill herself, can skip along with an alacrity which is astonishing. A first rate woman will make as much as 3d. an hour. Half that, however, is nearer the general price. In my interviews with lots of women I found that if, after working for ten hours in the day, they made 1s. 3d., they felt they were doing well.

The tragedy was with the elderly women, who had never been in the lace work till privation compelled them to take to it, because there is little to learn. But the eye is slow, and the fingers awkward. Hundreds of them cannot make more than ½d. an hour.

Allowing a couple of hours for a little halt to eat—if she has anything to eat—an old woman, by working from eight in the morning till ten o'clock at night, plodding awkwardly and slowly, will earn 6d.

Wretched pay, isn't it?

And you, my charming lady reader, who go out shopping in the afternoon, and buy lace to adorn your fal-lals, exclaim light-heartedly, because your little noddle is never troubled with the economies of production: "Really, I wonder how they can make it so cheap!"

I am not a squeamish man, and have seen some of the industrial sores in various parts of the world; the brutal exploitation of labour in Chicago, the Hebrew sweat shops in the East End of London.

But I do not recall having ever been so sick as when, in the fall of a bright, genial September day, I went round the Nottingham slums.

Nowhere in this world have I seen such vile conditions, such decrepit, foul, insanitary houses as I found in an alley in Nottingham. There were two houses, one occupied by a widow and her children, and the other by a blind old woman. Not only were the places dirty beyond words, the furniture scanty and repulsive, but a great many of the windows were broken, and from a burst

water-pipe was a constant drip, making the black earth before the doorway a mush of mire. The sanitary arrangements were appalling. Things were not much better in the adjoining yard.

Here was a spot, shut off from the sun with gaunt buildings, and the air reeking with offensiveness.

I talked with a widowed woman—"a decent hard-working soul," I was told by one who knew her—and, though big of bone, there was the pallor in her cheek which comes from bad food and little of it. She told me that the previous week she earned 4s., and 2s. went in rent—a trifling rent, but too much for such a hovel as she occupied. With the remaining 2s. she had to find food for herself and her children.

Close by, sitting on a stone, was her daughter, a gawky girl of thirteen, shy, pale, weak, whose emaciated figure told how for years she had been living within the starvation line. She was earning a penny or two drawing threads.

What was so pathetic about it was the cheerful humour of the mother. She admitted there was often no food but a piece of dry bread. She did not repine. She did not wail over her fate. "Oh, well, we must take things as they come," was her philosophy.

In another street I spoke to a woman and her two children, who were busy in the doorway. The husband was in the kitchen cobbling his boots. He was out of work, had been for some time, and had to do his bit of mending himself.

"Making plenty of money?" I asked.

"You bet; we're making our fortune, and will soon be retiring," she answered with a laugh. She had been in the lace trade ever since she was a child of eight, and was proud of her quickness. "I can work on black lace as quick as I can on white, and I can make 3d. an hour—of course, if I have the girls to help me." They were a couple of bright children, and I asked them how they liked it. They replied with a vacant smile. "Oh, they like it all right," said the mother. "Anyway, they've got to like it. Work never did me no harm—I never knew it do no harm to nobody—and I make them put in an hour after school."

And all the time her scissors were going click-click-click-click in the work of clipping. She was quite contented, even happy. "I don't envy no one," she said, "so long as I keeps my health."

There was another woman. "I ain't very quick," she said, "and I gets tired. Earn? Oh, I don't earn much. Well, last week I earned

2s. 6d. Yes, the middlewoman gets something; but I ain't got nothing to complain of."

I endeavoured to get her into a complaining mood. But she had nothing to complain about. True, trade was bad; but when there was work the middlewoman, who was her friend, gave her a share. "We can't all be Rothschilds," she laughed.

I found myself in one of the poorer squares. It is a very squalid region.

Sitting at the doors were women who had fallen to the last degradation: drunkenness. Their dresses were greasy, their shoon slipperty-slop; buttons had gone from their jackets, and a careless pin held the clothing to cover their flabby breasts.

Two women attracted my eye. Both had magnificent masses of hair; one dark, the other fair. Once those were fine-looking women; one could see that under their present bestiality. One woman lolled in a chair, folded her arms, and crooned a drunken song. The other, her hair tousled, her clothing unkempt, a creature who had evidently just awakened from intoxicated torpor, was hobbling her way across the yard towards the nearest public house for more ale.

What kind of homes have these women?

What kind of husbands?

Good-looking women, too, and in whose hearts once beat the pure delights of young womanhood. Now—ach! they were unclean. If their husbands hung round the beerhouse, what wonder? If, when they came home, they found the children whimpering in hunger, the money having been spent by the swilling wife, what wonder? If there were quarrels, blows, brutality, what wonder? It was all of a piece.

Yet there were other women to whom the sympathy of one's being went out. There was one dame, past middle age, grey, clean, thin with distress, kindly, who had been forced to take to lace work late in life. She smiled wanly. No; she was not quick, but by keeping at it she managed to earn 4s. a week.

A jolly woman hobbled up.

"And how much have you made?" I asked with a show of jocularity.

"Well, I've worked all day, and I've made 3d., sir."

"Pooh!" I exclaimed unbelievingly.

"It's true, sir; but I've only been at it four months, and I only do 'drawing,' and the thread—I think the devil was in that thread, it broke so often."

Sitting within a dark doorway was an aged body, her work lying in her lap.

"Well, having a rest?" I inquired.

She smiled with a peaceful serenity. "Yes, sir; my eyes is old, and I can't keep at it for long. Besides, my shoulder has been broken in two places, and I have to keep one arm rested, and that hinders me." But she was happy. Though her fingers were gnarled and awkward, her lined, old face was wreathed in contentment. She was living amid all that misery, and yet her outlook on life was one of peace. Her children were grown up; her married daughter was quite expert at "clipping" and "scalloping," which was a good thing, for her man was out of work.

"And you, how much do you make?"

"Well," she said apologetically, looking down at her work, "I can't earn more than half a crown a week."

"But that doesn't keep you," I said.

"No, sir, I gets a bit from somewhere else," hinting, I took it, at the dole she received from the parish.

I mounted some creaking stairs, and found a family in one room. There was no fire in the grate, but a pan of coals stood under the bed. The bed was thin, and the coverings were objectionable. The furniture was of the meanest. The walls were bare. The husband, maybe thirty, was squatting on the floor, "drawing."

"That's not man's work," I remarked.

"No; but I must do something. I've been out of work for eighteen months."

The wife, a simple-faced woman, almost stone deaf, was leaning against the window, catching what light there was to "clip." It was a miserable place.

"These things yours?" I asked, glancing round the shabby room.

"No; we hires the place furnished, and pays 4s. a week."

"How many are there of you?"

"Six of us, sir; me, the wife and four children."

"And where do you sleep?"

"All in that bed, that is until a while ago."

Then I learnt that the eldest boy had been removed by the school authorities, because he was so degraded—his personal habits were those of an untrained cat. Only that day two of the children had been removed to the workhouse, because they were "wasting away," explained the father. He admitted he was behind in his rent, but he was thankful the landlord was not hard on him.

The worst place I visited was the home of a family in a danksome yard. The husband had been in prison for neglecting his children. He had

now "come out," but he had not come home, and the two loaves of bread allowed by the Poor Law authorities whilst he had been "put away" had been withdrawn. A son was in prison for manslaughter, having kicked a girl with such brutality that she died. There remained the mother and several children.

There was not a whole piece of furniture in the place, and only one chair with a back to it. For two furnished rooms—save the mark—5s. a week was paid.

The mother, one of those spare, sinewy, hard-grained women, was holding a two-year-old youngster to her breast. She didn't want her husband back—he had never been any good to her—he was a hawker, and though he could make "good money," she got none of it; many a time he had assaulted her, turned her and her baby into the snow, and put out the fire so that when they came in they would not have the benefit of warmth.

"But," she exclaimed with a touch of frenzy, "I always sees that the children have some bread!"

I extracted from her the information that she had had nothing to eat that day; the acknowledgment brought a gasp and convulsive sob. The children, who had been so quiet, working with their little scissors, burst into weeping also.

My attention fell upon a girl huddled in a corner. She was a cripple, paralysed; her twisted body was hunched over her work. For four years this family had lived in this place, and never once had the cripple been out of the yard!

Let us think of that, those of us who growl when we cannot get away holiday-making—a cripple, clipping the threads from lace, and imprisoned in a sordid, mean, noisome yard in the slums of Nottingham for four years!

Well, these are the conditions under which home work is done in the town which gives England such beautiful lace. The pay is starvation, not because anybody is wicked, but because so many lean fingers are stretched to secure it. That explains why you, my dear lady, can buy it so cheaply.

But I want you to remember one thing, and I hope it will make your flesh creep. That lace goes into dirty homes, and is handled by dirty people. If there is disease, measles, small-pox, it matters not, the lace goes there all the same. When it is returned to the warehouses there is no cleansing or disinfecting. You buy it, and it is just possible that, with your bargain, you may have infection thrown in. I want you to think of that.

CHAPTER XII

THE RICH MAN'S BURDEN

HAS there ever been a great man, or a man who stands out before the world as successful, who can be described as truly happy?

The crowd sees the man on an eminence, and envies him. But I think that what he himself feels most is his loneliness. The finger of admiration is pointed at the man, because he started with little and now has much, because he has crashed through obstacles and gained triumphs, I fancy, however, that when he is alone he is sad, for he ruminates over his failure, the place he has aimed at and missed. The world sees what he has won, but knows little of his aspirations and what has not been achieved.

So dwell on the tragedy of the rich man. He needs our sympathy, sometimes, quite as much as does the poor man. But he does not get it; for he wears a mask and pretends.

One day I was talking to a Spanish gentleman. He said: "I admire you British people. You work so hard; you are so energetic. You

construct great railways; you cover seas with your ships; your thoughts are centred on commerce. But what does it all count for? Does it really matter that you should do things quickly? Are your people healthier, or happier, or more good to one another? I come from a country which is supposed to have had its day. Our men are not rich as your men. We are not in a hurry. In all eternity does it so much matter that a thing should be done to-day instead of to-morrow? Take yourself and myself. You are always working, always worried, always fretting about something. You do things; but are you happier, and are you making those among whom you live happier? What will it all reckon a hundred years hence? I live a long way outside Madrid. I have my family and my gardens. I enjoy the beauties of life. The outer world does not concern me much, and so my spirit is not worn, and I can find pleasure with those who live near to me. To do things—to-day or to-morrow—what does it really matter? I read, I sleep in the heat of the day, I enjoy the fragrance of the evening. I shall live longer than you. And then it will be the same with me as with you. Eh?"

At the top of a sky-scraping building in Chicago I chatted with an American. He was

big and flabby and pale, and spoke with a rush: "Shucks! You English are getting among the back numbers. You're so mighty slow. You take so long doing a thing, it's a wonder you don't drop asleep and get run over. This is the land of vim. We don't let any flies grow on us! We rush up cities. We have great buildings. We think of business from morning to night, and dream about it while we sleep. I have a telephone by my bed so I can talk business before I get up in the morning. We've no time to walk up and down stairs. We use express elevators. Now, just look down into that street. That's State Street. Look at those cars, and at those people hustling. Have you seen our Board of Trade? There's life for you. You want a nerve for that business. You can be ruined in about an hour there, and that keeps a man's wits alive. We've got no time for vacations. We're busy money-making. That's the thing that counts —money! Sir—e—bob, you can do anything with money. We can buy anything you've got with our money. Money makes men afraid of you, and that's good for them. What? Wear out? Well, sir, it is better to wear out than to rust out. We are the greatest money-making nation on earth. Don't you forget that. Grey hairs? 'Course we've got grey hairs. Did you think we

ought to get sunburnt sitting in an office? Bad for the nerves? Well, that all depends on the nerves. There is nothing like pushing ahead, and if the other man gets in your way and is hurt, well, that's his funeral, ain't it?"

Then I remember a talk with a Chinese professor at Hankow, on the banks of the Yang-tsze river in Central China. He was parchment-skinned and slit-eyed, and had long finger-nails and a pig-tail, and he wore a dark blue silk robe. He was one of the old school, who resented the coming of the foreigner. I had been telling him about the modern scientific and industrial achievements of the West. He replied:

"That is just cleverness. An acrobat is clever, and a juggler is clever; but that does not prove they are more civilized than men who cannot juggle and are afraid of trying to be acrobats. It makes Chinese not angry, but contemptuous, when you Western people point to warships, and great cannon, and railway engines, and telegraphs and telephones, as evidence you are more civilized than we are. You seem to think that civilization is to be judged by mechanical skill. In your country, is a man who can make a model of the king's palace out of old corks regarded as of more importance than learned professors at one of your Universities? The professor cannot do it;

the other man is much more ingenious and skilful. Do you say that the professor of history or of ancient languages is less civilized than the man with the corks ?

" But because you Western people can make steamships you think you are more civilized than we who cannot. I've heard that some of the workers in your country are crooked and unhealthy, and die, because of your mechanics. Is that civilization ? Is it not a fact that, in your country, the people you regard as most civilized and most educated are those who know little about mechanics, and are what you call cultured ? What is culture ? Is it not control of oneself, refinement of spirit, consideration for others, acquaintance with the thoughts of great thinkers in the past ? Have not the Chinese these ? Were not we interested in these things, and had we not our philosophers, when your race was savage ?

" The Japanese killed a great many Russians, and you Western people said that was evidence that the Japanese were to be reckoned as a civilized nation. Is killing proof of civilization ? You are now travelling across China and studying it. Have you not noticed how happy the Chinese are ? Do you know any other country where there is such happy family life, where there

is such sobriety, where parents are esteemed and honoured, and where even the poor people are so educated in the philosophy of their great teachers, like Confucius? Don't you think people can have a civilization without being quick? That is what your civilization is—doing quickly the things that do not very much matter. You Western people are still barbarous, and that is why you don't understand."

There you get the different points of view.

What does all this racing and chasing mean? Of course we like to fight and to conquer. The man who becomes a millionaire is not necessarily a money-grubber. He likes to accumulate money, chiefly, because of the excitement, the thrill, its acquirement brings him. You may call him a bad sample of what we have to show in this twentieth century, but it is the spirit of the chase which actuates him, just as it actuated our forefathers who lived in mud huts and had to hunt their breakfast before they ate it. Most of us are engaged in this chase. But we are moving on in years before we discover we are not so skilful as others, and then, Providence being very kind, we decide that money is really a bad thing, that it stunts the finer traits in our nature, and we are inclined to dwell with pharisaical self-satisfaction on the thought that we are not so vulgar in

our tastes as are some of the moneyed men we could name.

And as one of those who are not rich, but have acquaintance with men who are, I can be thankful with the poorest. So I say that I would not willingly exchange my place with many men whose incomes are fifty or even a hundred times greater than my own. For they are not happy men.

One of them, a great London financier, said to me, "I'm not getting so much fun out of life as I did when I was earning two pounds a week. Many a time, when I have five minutes to myself before going to bed, and I am tired after a racking day, I have thought I would like to cut the painter to all my enterprises, and go and live at a little place in the country and grow cabbages. But, of course, I never shall do that. With the morning comes a mass of business; I have company meetings to attend, and I know other financiers are trying to get the better of me, and antagonism is roused, and I am back in the mad whirl of money-making—and liking it. It is only when I am alone, and have time to think, that the dullness, the uselessness of it all, comes over me."

Now, sometimes I am led to imagine that there is a good deal of sympathy wasted over

the poor. It is very easy to be sloppy and sentimental in regard to the hardships of the poor. I might set my pen to an endeavour to draw tears from dear readers by dwelling upon the hunger, the dour surroundings, the cramped outlook on life which hundreds of thousands of poor folk endure. Whenever I see the wealthy rolling in luxury, with apparently no cares but to find new pleasures, I always find a quick mental corrective by thinking for a couple of minutes about the folk at the other end of the scale. Then I can go about my work with a contented and even ardent mind.

But is not poverty very much a matter of degree? One of the stories which affected me as a child was that of a mother in a cellar admonishing her whimpering youngster by saying, "You ought to be thankful you are not like a child who has no nice cellar to shelter in." And those who have eyes to see, know it is a fact that poor people are generally happy people. There are exceptions, but the general statement holds good.

We—those of us who belong to the middle or upper classes—are affected, and our sympathy is moved, because we shrink with horror from the idea of being suddenly transported from our condition to their condition. That is the spring

from which our kindness of heart usually flows. The person who feels the agony of poverty is the man or woman who is quickly hurled from being well-off to being badly-off. The man or the woman who is impoverished in hope, is the tragedy of life—and some of those people are quite well-dressed and live in well-furnished houses. The great class whom we call poor were born in that state, or sink to it gradually, so that their lives—dreadfully forbidding and wretched when regarded from the pinnacle of prosperity—are by no means days of grinding misery. There are mean, ill-nurtured, unhealthy-looking people. Yes, but you will find the same type among the richer classes.

Make this contrast.

During the season of fashion, go into Hyde Park late on a pleasant summer afternoon. The scene is very beautiful. There are shady walks beneath the wide-stretching trees, the cool of the grass is refreshing to the eyes, the flowers are splashes of colour. But particularly take notice of your fellows. You will see health carried jauntily by many. You will see sweet smiles and happiness on many a girlish face. But these are not typical of the mass. The pedestrians and the watchers on the seats are well dressed. You cannot say that they carry the ensign of

joyous living on their countenances. If you study these faces you notice a hardness of feature, a wrinkle at the corners of the mouth, harsh lines on either side of the nose, streaks of care about the eyes, which are all significant.

Now look at the wealthy in the carriages—and there is no finer display in the world of magnificent horses and beautiful vehicles. But take notice of the people in their carriages—the wealthiest people of the wealthiest city on earth, taking a drive, an airing, in the fall of the day, getting a little appetite for dinner and the revelries of the night. An amazingly well-dressed lot of people, are they not? Look closely. There is a woman who gives a formal, waxen smile to someone in a carriage going the opposite way; but the smile ends like the closing of a book, when the carriage has passed. A man shows his teeth and grins and raises his hat as he recognizes an acquaintance.

The thing which will impress you most is the stucco-like demeanour of these people. The women have less expression than the faces of models in hairdressers' windows to advertize the latest style. Is it a pose to pretend to be bored? I do not think there is any pose. These people are bored. Yet they live in expensive houses; they get their clothes from expensive dressmakers;

many of them will be going to expensive dinner parties; the only seats they will patronize at the opera will be the most expensive. But they are not glad.

Come with me on a Sunday afternoon. We will climb to the roof of an omnibus and go to the East End. We drive through the City. The furore of business is hushed. Not a single "City man" do you see. There is no tumult of humanity between the Mansion House and the Bank of England. But there are lots of people about, artisans and their wives, young fellows and their sweethearts, rather a provincial-looking crowd, and most of them are making from their homes in the East to have a look at the fashionable West. Don't talk to me about their attire, the cheap gaudiness of the women, and their imitation jewels. I want you to notice they are happy, that they are laughing, noisily no doubt, but from real ebullition of spirits.

We will go farther East, to the Whitechapel Road. The sun flares and the pavements are baked, and all the dingy side streets and dark alleys have given forth myriads of denizens. Jews and Jewesses by the thousand—and rather better dressed than the most. There is the workman and his missus out with the kids; the man is smoking his pipe, and the woman is amused at

the antics of her youngest born, who toddles in the way of other walkers. Hawkers with hoarse voices are yelling the cheapness and ripeness of fruit. At one street corner a religious service is in progress ; most of the crowd are casual listeners, and there is no horse-play. At another corner is a brass band, composed of working men with a liking for music, and Sunday is the only day they can show what they can do.

We will take a walk along the shady side of one of the poorest streets. It is not appetizing, and the hot odour which rises from the gutter is nauseous. Here are lots of people who are too poor to have any Sunday clothing. The women cackle with one another, and the men, in their shirt-sleeves, lounge and smoke, and enjoy the relief from toil by sucking at their pipes and reading the Sunday papers. You will see more contentment here—the contentment of folk who have worked hard for six days, and are now resting on the seventh—than you will notice on the faces of the rich in Hyde Park. Listen to the song of the larks. Sad that these songsters should be imprisoned in tiny cages ; but this is evidence of a love of birds on the part of their owners. Mark the pots of geraniums and window-sill plants, indicating that the souls of these people are not numbed to beauty.

You may never have heard of Victoria Park. However, we will go to it. It is a fine park, one of the most charming in London. The walks are crowded with a noisy, jostling throng—but such a happy throng. Of course there are wretched beings in rags, woe-begone and slithering. But the crowd is smiling and good-natured. There is plenty of shabbiness, plenty of thin-cloaked poverty. But there is naturalness. These East Enders work too hard to know what boredom is.

What rivalry there is to look well in each other's sight is wholesome. There is none of the anxiety that their position shall be understood—the condescension to those who are not so well off and the eagerness to be greeted by those who are better off—which distinguishes so many inhabitants of the West End, whose pedestal is their pile of gold. What an army of children! As a rule you will find two in each of the wheezy perambulators. A band is playing, and thousands of poor folk stand about and sit about and lie about to listen. They are thoroughly enjoying themselves. You need not talk to me about their crude tastes. The thing is that they are happy.

Oh, they are not the real poor of the East End! Are they not? You are thinking of the exceptions, the class that is talked about on platforms by humanitarians. They exist; I've seen

them; I know about them. Still, this is a true picture of the East Enders enjoying themselves on their Sunday holiday, and I want you to put it in comparison with the way the rich West Enders enjoy themselves in their park. The poor have their pleasures gladly; and the drayman who has taken his wife and his youngsters to listen to the band in Victoria Park on a Sunday night will lie down to rest quite as happy as the millionaire who has been giving a gorgeous party at the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly.

So that is the reason I think that sympathy should occasionally be extended to the rich. I have not so much in mind those who inherit their wealth; rather, the new rich, about whom it is so easy to make cheap jokes. The fact that a man has the faculty of money-making indicates ability, shrewdness, even genius, though we can, if we like, place the genius on a low level. Anyway, the money has generally been made in competition with wits which are almost as sharp.

That man has worries. He may not be scrupulous, but he knows that he is being watched. The richer he is, the more enemies he has. Modern fortunes are not made by the simple process of shovelling gold into a heap. They are secured as wars are won, with losses, heart-strains, rebuffs, disasters, rallies, furious fighting. The men

who achieve these triumphs are always discontented men. It was discontent which forced them into the fray. As they succeed, their ambitions grow. That explains how none ever cry "Halt!" when they have made their "pile." They are more discontented toward the end of their lives than they were at the beginning. There are so many things they have not accomplished.

It is simple human nature that these men should justify themselves in the eyes of the world, that they should proclaim their success. The man with a genius for painting hangs his work upon a wall and the world admires. The singer with genius stands before thousands and reveals his gifts. The brilliant statesman, with genius in his words, is hailed by half the country as the saviour of his race. Yet the feeblest creature can raise a grin by sneering at the man who has genius for money-making.

Are we quite sincere in our scoffing? Is there not something in our conduct to remind us of the fable of the fox unable to reach the grapes? "Oh, they are vulgar and pretentious!" Is not that an excuse? Are there not more people who are vulgar and pretentious and who are not rich? "Oh, but these new rich get their money by sweating the poor." But, honestly, do they get their riches any more by sweating the

poor than the rest of us? "Oh, they are ostentatious." But no more, surely, than other people, with the same amount of wealth, who have acquired it from somebody else. "They are selfish." Is selfishness limited to the rich?

Please do not hurl at me cases to upset the plea I am putting forward. I'll grant you, if you like, that there are plenty of vulgar, selfish and ostentatious rich people. But most of them are nothing of the kind. They do no more in the way of ostentation than any other class of English society possessed of the same means.

What is the mental condition of the man who has worked at money-making all his life, and who, at the age of sixty, is the owner of a fortune? Is he as gentle-souled as the ordinary farm-labourer, who has his fourteen shillings a week, has been unable to save money, is becoming stiff in the limbs? You will say that the farm-labourer is a man of low intelligence. Not necessarily. He is slow, because he has worked so long in close touch with Nature, which also works slowly. If, as a lad, he had been placed in a busy city, he would have been just as spry as any of those who smile at him and call him a yokel.

Well, our rich man has a fine house, horses, motors; he spends much on art, not because he knows much about it, but because his daughters

think they know, and, besides, he knows it is the proper thing. He fills his house with guests, and, as far as money can, gives them "a good time." He hires a moor in Scotland, not that he cares anything for shooting, but because other rich people hire moors. His wife and family dress fashionably and give expensive parties. They have a perfectly human desire to know people of distinction—as most of us have. But they are accused of toadying to titles, and being tolerated only because of their wealth.

Look at one of these great rich men—say, at an "At Home," when half a thousand persons crush into his house during the London season. As a rule, he is the least happy man in the crowd. He is quiet, even retiring, bashful. This is the sort of thing for which he has no appetite. He does not understand it. It is the consequence of having much money. Of that he is aware, but he would much rather be sitting in his office in the City, engaged in what he really does understand.

He is prematurely aged. The sap of enthusiasm has been dried up. He is quick enough to realize that many who come near him and flatter him are parasites—though he does not think of them quite so crudely as that. He is not a religious man; he has no hobbies, no vices, no

relaxations. He is just the successful business man, whom the unthinking crowd, without money, envy, and the thinking crowd, with limited money, despise. He has no taste in literature; books bore him. He looks at the newspapers, but the only interesting columns to him are those devoted to the money market. He has not good health; he must live frugally. His doctor sends him to a Continental spa to drink objectionable waters, and he sits in the hotel garden smoking a cigar, and looking blankly in front of him. He is bored.

Yes, when you have thought of your exceptions, you will see that this is a fairly accurate picture of the man who has accumulated much gold. None of us are ever contented with our lot. But it is beneficently arranged that those who have least money have fewest cares.

CHAPTER XIII

MAINLY ABOUT WOMEN

It is dangerous to venture on broad, dogmatic statements. But, as the artist gets the true effect by accentuation, even exaggeration, so a writer may be allowed to make a bold assertion whilst quite aware that a crop of instances to the contrary will grow forthwith beneath his eyes. So I want to say that the Frenchwoman is the best mother in the world.

Untravelled folk, or those whose acquaintance with France is limited to the most gaudy of pleasure resorts in Paris, have the idea that the Frenchwoman is a giddy creature, fond of dress, and a hater of children. As evidence, we are directed to the amazing costumes to be seen on the boulevards, and to the declining birth-rate in France. In regard to the over-dressed women, they are but a tiny section, but we notice them and remember them, and have our perspective distorted because they strike the mind whilst all the others are unheeded. Though it may be true that lots of women avoid the cares

of motherhood—as, indeed, is the custom among all the wealthier classes in the Western nations—the small families in France are characteristic of the peasantry as well as of the plutocrats. The French, as a race, are ceasing from natural, not from artificial, causes. Transplant these French peasantry to Canada, and large families are the rule. The French settlers in Quebec province have the same external inducements to shirk the burden of rearing large families as in France itself: poverty, economy, the desire to save, to give a good education to what children there are, and to start them well in the world. The struggle for life is harder, certainly, at the outset, and yet the same class who have small families in France have large families in French Canada.

Perhaps it is because the children are limited to one or two that the French mother centres her life in their welfare. She is more self-sacrificing in this direction than any other mothers in other lands who have, in the same way, only one or two children to care for. Take the middle classes of France—and it is always among the middle class of a nation that you can best judge the tone of a people. There is not the same disposition to get either boy or girl off to boarding school, ostensibly, with us, for the sake of discipline and better education, but primarily to push the

youngsters out of the way at the most troublesome age. The children are kept at home whenever possible, and sent to a local school. The mother bestows almost her whole time on her children, and particularly on the son. This surveillance may have a questionable effect on the boy; he is mollycoddled, and inclined to be effeminate. So you get a marked contrast between English and French boys, say, of twelve years of age. One is a determined, independent little ruffian, and the other is sloppy and keeps close to his mother's apron strings. The distinction lessens considerably as they grow older, except in one particular—all through his life the Frenchman displays a more tender solicitude for the welfare and comfort of his mother than is the perceived custom among Englishmen.

But the home life in the British Isles is the ideal condition of affairs. One might say this because it is natural for us all to believe that the ways we ourselves adopt are best. The intelligent foreigner, however, who has seen English home life is invariably moved to admiration. There is less artificiality and restraint than is to be noticed in other lands. The comradeship between boys and girls, the girls joining in their brothers' games and escapades, produces a cleanness of mind which is never to be found in those

countries where the rule is to keep boys and girls more or less apart. The disposition of a father to be a sort of elder brother to his lads, and the disposition of a mother to be a kind of elder sister to both sons and daughters, creates an atmosphere in home life which foreigners see with appreciation, would like to imitate, but never succeed.

You might expect to find this developed in the United States. Americans may resent my statement that they do not know what home life is. Yet they have their own home life: all I say is that it is very different from our own. The dry climate and the tremendous energy of the people give them a restlessness which militates against comfort in the home—and comfort is half the charm of home. I do not want to dogmatize; but the invariable impression I have had in the houses of the United States—bright, happy, with all the conveniences of what we call civilization, with much cheerfulness and good hospitality—is an absence of restfulness. There are the most luxurious of cosy corners, soft settees, and downy cushions. But I could never avoid the idea it was all a sort of stage setting, that the restfulness was planned and arranged, something that was exotic; whereas the restfulness in an English home

similarly circumstanced is natural, and fitting to the surroundings.

I admit a conclusion like this is personal and mental, and I daresay that American people find their corners quite as restful as we do our own. The soft English climate predisposes to restfulness, whilst the invigorating climate of America braces one up. And that explains much when differentiating between the home life of the two countries.

We hear a lot about the bad manners, precocity, and impertinence of the American child. The American child is generally the offspring of a mixture of nationalities, which counts for quickness. The origin was foreign, but the rearing ground is that of a hot-house, and the result is a delicate, nervous, spry, wideawake youngster. The growing custom in some parts of America for families to take meals at a restaurant or hotel, instead of at home, saving the trouble of preparing, but giving the children excitement by having their wits sharpened through coming in contact with all sorts of people, is responsible for much of the agility and "cheekiness" of the American child. Besides, the American man is an exceedingly good-natured father, and however pressed and rushed he may be in business, he unconsciously encourages his offspring by

being amused at their mischievousness and pert sayings.

It is a well-worn truism that nowhere in the world are women given so honoured a place in society as in the United States. The American woman not infrequently says to the travelling Englishman : " I would not be an Englishwoman," —though in the matter of birthplace none of us has much choice—" because all Englishmen look upon women as their inferiors ; it is always the son of the house who is looked after, and the daughter does not count for much except to look after him. Now, with us, the daughters are the first consideration."

There is a sufficiency of truth in all this, so that it is not necessary to be critical. But it is an interesting question whether placing the woman on a pedestal, contrary to all the rules of Nature, however harsh and rude these rules may be, is really good for the American woman and for her country.

We all like to have a prominent place. Accordingly, there is no fault to find with the American woman for making the most of her advantage. But what are the consequences from the wider, national point of view ?

The woman is pampered ; she is given a good time ; as a girl, the best is for her.

She carries this into her married life. Unconsciously, but in fact, and despite all her blitheness of spirit, she becomes selfish. Bringing children into the world is a hindrance to her pleasure. She does not want her pleasure hindered. So she does not have children. Thus we have the extraordinary fact that America, bounding in population, has to rely on the freshcomers from the Old World for the bringing forth of children, whilst the American race, so far as the settled American families are concerned, is absolutely at a standstill. This is what is called "race suicide," against which Mr. Roosevelt has thundered. It is the direct outcome of Americans placing their women in the position they have to-day.

The American woman is better educated, wider read than the American man, and she has a craving for culture. The man admires her for that. He likes her glibness and conversational powers as compared with the Englishwoman, who does not carry her good qualities on her sleeve, but encases herself with ice in the presence of strangers. The American woman travels. Any summer you will find a hundred thousand of her wandering about Europe. Though she be inclined to find fault with the way some things are done on the eastern side of the Atlantic,

she is not uninclined to find fault with the way they do some things in America when she returns home.

Many Englishmen marry American wives. Very few English women marry American husbands. It is not always a case of American heiresses and English peers. Why is it, then, that the educated Englishman finds not the least difficulty in marrying the educated American woman? She is sure to know hundreds more of her own countrymen; she has a much bigger choice among the men of her own land—and, in this case, it is always the woman who has the decision. And if Englishmen look down upon women as their inferiors, how is it that an American woman voluntarily removes herself from a place where she is first to a position where she believes she will be second? Is it that the average Englishman is more cultured than the average American man? Does she get a little tired of the fine, stalwart American who, from the very necessity of the case, has been too busy making money for her to spend, who has had little opportunity for culture, and whose conversation can rarely get beyond dollars? I don't know; but I wonder.

Once a cultured American lady gave me an explanation, which, in lieu of something more

convincing, I have accepted. What she said amounted to this: "By our training we American women feel it is our due that men should pay us special respect, and in theory we dislike the way in which Englishmen are disposed to look down upon women. It appeals to our vanity that the American men should be particularly kind and considerate. We scoff at the idea of being inferiors. But there is one consideration we are inclined to leave out: it is that we are women, with all the qualities of women, although we are American women. And I think the reason why American women prefer English men is that very reason which we will not acknowledge. Lots of women will deny its existence, because they are unconscious of the fact; but the natural woman—American as well as of any other land—really likes to be in the presence of her master. I know this sounds like heresy for a woman of my nationality, but I do believe that American women prefer British husbands because they are not always running after us and paying us compliments, but, by their manner, whilst courteous, act as though there could be no question about their superiority of sex. That is a terrible confession for an American woman to make, is it not? But I think it is the real explanation."

With an eye of pity the Western woman looks upon the woman of the East—especially the Mussulman woman, who is shrouded and cowled and hides her face, and is never allowed to speak to men folk beyond the range of her own family. Curiously enough, however, the Eastern woman has pity for the Western woman, and does not envy her. Of course, it is possible to read magazine articles by emancipated Turkish ladies on the yearning of their countrywomen for freedom; but they no more represent the Turkish ladies than the women who bawl about their rights and their wrongs from the tops of barrels at street corners in London represent the women of England. I do not venture along the thorn-studded path of controversy whether they are right or wrong. I want only to show the frame of mind of different classes of womenfolk.

Now, there comes back to me an afternoon gossip I had with the Turkish governor of a hill-side town called Liasovicki, which is in the borderland between Macedonia and Albania. The population is half Christian and half Mohammedan. I was interested in a number of women tottering from the town well with water-filled casks upon their backs. "Those are Christian women," said the governor, and I thought I perceived the wish to have a dig at me; "the Christians

allow their women to do that ; the Mohammedans, never."

Now, it is only in savage countries, and in Christian countries, that the woman is a drudge. In the savage country, the woman is made to do the work because she is regarded as not much removed from the beasts of burden. In Christian lands, the more she is appreciated and her equality recognized, the more work seems to be thrown upon her. The distressing fact is that where Christian civilization is supposed to be most alive, there the lot of women is most degraded.

The Turk is regarded as a sensuous person, with no thought of woman other than as a creature of pleasure. If he is rich he has more than one wife, and if he is very rich he has various ladies in his harem, where they are fed, clad, and cared for. The Turk has to work for his living, though I think there are millions of people in the West who never think of the Turk except as a podgy individual sitting in the shadow of a tree, sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes. He has to work exceedingly hard. He does not think there is anything wrong about having several women in his household ; but his moral consciousness is shocked at the Western practice of men and women meeting, more or less indiscriminately, whilst a wife, with face and bosom bared, dances

with a comparative stranger. You can no more persuade him of the absence of impropriety in this than you can convince the elderly devout lady in England that the Turk is not something of a beast. In Constantinople, however, it is absolutely impossible to witness in the streets the debauchery, the lewdness, the appalling degradation of women, which can be witnessed every midnight in the cities which are considered the centres of civilization.

The Turkish woman is secluded, rattle-headed and ignorant. That is bad. But, after all, is it any worse than the life to which hundreds of thousands of young women in civilized countries are subjected—typewriting in unhealthy offices for indifferent wages, slaving as seamstresses in fetid atmospheres so that our own rattle-heads may be garnished with fine clothing? The Turkish girl becomes the wife of a man chosen by her parents. Well, it is very much the same thing in France, and, as we know, the results of French marriages are quite as happy as those in England and America, where the young couple have a freer choice. We are scarcely justified, therefore, in deciding that Turkish women are handed over to misery and lifelong sorrow. Ask any lady who is acquainted with life in the East, and she will tell you that Mohammedan wives

are exceedingly contented, and take much trouble over the care of their houses and the welfare of their children.

On the boats which ply the Bosphorus, running along the most lovely streak of water in the world, and between two continents, the back part of the vessel is reserved as the harem. The men lounge about the rickety piers before the steamer arrives, but the women walk straight into a little, iron-barred room, where the key is turned upon them. As soon as the boat comes the men climb on board. Then, when the way is clear, the door is unlocked and the women walk, with downcast head, to the reserved portion of the deck. The Bosphorus is lined with the fantastic residences of pashas, and not infrequently from the water you can see groups of ladies on the flat housetops. More than once, from some dark casement, I have spied a damsel gazing at us through an opera glass; which simply shows that Oriental ladies do not, any less than their sisters of the West, lack curiosity.

There is no Constantinople Hyde Park where ladies may display their finery and lounge in their broughams, pretending to be perfectly oblivious of the admiring glances of ten thousand onlookers. But every Friday afternoon, near the most lovely bit of the Bosphorus, by the banks

of the Sweet Waters of Asia, the aristocratic Turkish ladies gather to gossip and giggle, smoke cigarettes and drink coffee. Under lofty but shady trees, and on a velvet sward, carpets are laid. Around these the ladies sit on cushions, and from the bright smiles and tinkling laughter it is evident life is not disagreeable.

In Stamboul I seldom saw women on foot, unless they were of the poor class. But frequently I got a glimpse of them in coaches, which jogged along at a great pace over the uneven roadway. Even the young Turkish girl, with the olive skin and dark eyes, who comes begging, has a bewitching manner which one never sees in any of the ragamuffins at home. They gambol in front of you, chattering musically, kissing your hand, kissing your coat, so you have not the heart to be angry. The only time of the year Moslem women of all classes go into the streets on foot is during the month of Ramadan—a period of the strictest fast between sunrise and sundown, when not even a cigarette or a drop of water must touch the lips. The evenings, as a set-off, are largely devoted to feasting, and then ladies go into the streets, visiting friends in other harems.

Eastern ladies have certainly much to thank the Prophet for, in that he ordained their faces should be covered. For the covering of the face

is the Eastern woman's salvation. She has exquisite eyes, but the rest of her features are irregular and unattractive. She uses her eyes with all a woman's skill, and no doubt the amorous Moslem is less liable to be deceived than the curious, world-wandering Frank. To the average Briton, fresh from Piccadilly, and with mind all aglow with wonderment at things Oriental, the glance of an Eastern lass is sufficient to pitch him into the seventh heaven.

I once accompanied such an imaginative Londoner to see the Sultan at Constantinople make his weekly pilgrimage to the mosque to pray. It was a picturesque sight, the gaudy troops, the crashing bands, the carriages filled with veiled ladies from the harems, the gleam of sunlight on the white mosque near the Yildiz Kiosk, in the distance the towering minarets of Stamboul and the laughing waters of the Bosphorus, and then the Sultan, dull-clad, dull-eyed, dull-souled, riding solitary and unmoved amid all the pageantry.

When it was all over my friend and I made a dash for our carriage. There was immense confusion. Our carriage got locked in with half a dozen other carriages laden with ladies, from the harems of great pashas, in brilliant greens, orange, and pale blues, and their faces covered

"Love glances danced from carriage to carriage."

with the thinnest of gauze, revealing, as through a creamy mist, all the charm of luscious feature. For these were beauties. My companion was a good-looking man, tall, fair, and with curved moustache. And to my horror, wicked *giaour* that he was, he was exchanging glances with a beautiful and radiant Turkish lady. By the side of her carriage rode two big, tub-stomached, heavy-jowled eunuchs. They looked over the heads of the crowd, and saw nothing. Turkish woman and British man flirted with their eyes. It was terrible.

I expected suddenly to see a couple of sabres flash in the sunlight, and that adventurous Londoner's head roll in the dust.

But no. Love glances danced from carriage to carriage. At last a move was made. The pasha's carriage, with the pride of the harem, moved on, guarded by those unseeing Ethiopians. The lady turned round and smiled sweetly. Then she disappeared.

For three days the stricken, handsome Londoner talked of nothing, thought of nothing, dreamt of nothing, I suppose, but Fatima. All day he walked up and down the Grande Rue de Pera, confident a message would come from his Turkish inamorata. But it never came. And he was disconsolate for a whole fortnight.

Now, my wife knows well I make no secret that I like a pretty woman. I am willing to be captivated by her—till the next pretty woman comes along. And, roaming the wide world over, I now and then have found my eyes straying to the ladies of many lands, and letting a frolicsome fancy run free in weaving romances about veiled beauties.

But only after months of wandering in strange countries, when he is jaded and worn and weary, can a man feel the supreme joy of looking upon an English girl, fresh, cheery, healthy, in the full buoyancy of youth.

I well remember reaching the straggling town of Karachi in India, after months of sore travel across the desolateness of Persia. I was tired, and ragged-clad, and unshaven. There was a feeling of happiness, however, that the dismal land of the Shah had been left behind.

For a few minutes I stood blinking in the sun, and swallowed quantities of the sand that was whirling everywhere. Then suddenly, down the British-made, level road, came spinning a girl on her bicycle. She was English ; she was wearing a straw hat and a white blouse. Her cheek was fresh and pure, her lips bright ; she was just the embodiment of all that is charming and fragrant and attractive in English girlhood. And

for months I had seen nothing but dusky, shrouded, face-shadowed Eastern damsels.

The sight of her came to my eyes with all the sweetness of the evening breeze on the blistered arid desert. Vagabond-like though I was, scrubby-chinned and tatter-clothed, there was a sudden impulse to go up to her and kiss her. I felt like that. But I stuck my hands in my pockets, and slouched by.

More than half the reputation of the Eastern women for beauty is really due to the impressionable *giaour* not being able to see their features. Some years ago, when I dawdled a winter holiday in the semi-Gallic, semi-Oriental city of fantastic Cairo, there used to be a pretty girl who sauntered along the boulevards with graceful swing of body, and a basket of roses resting on her hip. In the glittering flash of the electric light she would stand in front of the hotel verandah and offer her posies for sale to the after-dinner loungers.

She was quite Egyptian. A black hood fell from her forehead down the side of her cheek. A white veil spread over her nose, and covered the mouth and chin. Only a glossy ringlet or two could be seen. Her eyes were large, black, soft, fiery, sensuous, seductive, with a sort of gaze that enthralled. Those eyes were the key

to her features; they must be in harmony, pure, warm, delicate.

My friend and I bought her roses and chatted with her. And every night she came, with those changing, wistful, luscious eyes of hers. One night, however, the suggestion was made she should remove her veil and let us look at her face. With a laugh she refused. The next night the request was repeated, and again she refused. The next night we said we would not buy any more roses if she did not hold aside her veil and allow us a peep. She was coy. She was provoking. Her eyes sparkled with laughter.

At last she consented.

The moment had arrived for me to look upon the most exquisite face of Egyptian womankind. The thought was enthralling! And then she lifted the veil.

What a revelation! She was squat-nosed, her lips were thick and coarse. She was no longer the mysterious Egyptian maid. She was an ugly *fellah!*

I am the only British man, I believe, who has ever been in a Persian *anderun* or harem. But I did not get there by scaling a wall in the dead of night, with the object of making love to some gazelle-eyed damsel of Iran. There was nothing so poetic or romantic about it as that.

It was when I was travelling in the mountains to the north of the Shah's dominions that, one day, I was the guest of the Governor of Zenjan, a quaint, blue-domed city that seemed to be perched on the top of the world. That morning he had sent his ladies, sixty of them, to a summer-house some distance away, and so it came about that, as he was showing me his palace, he showed me through the harem as well. I had rather fantastic and gorgeous ideas about harems. All I knew about them had been gathered from Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh." As to the wonders of Persia, the rose bowers, the graceful minarets, the limpid streams, the ruby wine, the least here said the better. The East is charming in an impressionist picture, even in a photograph, and certainly in poetry.

But the harem of the Governor of Zenjan, supposed to be one of the finest in Persia, was the most shoddy, cheap, gimcrack place imaginable. The decorations were execrably vulgar. The walls were painted in gaudy greens and yellows, and the paintings were of flabby-faced, insipid women. The windows and the doors were of plain, ill-fitting wood. The orange-grove was bedraggled and sad. The glittering, laughing, crystal rivulet was a slothful stream disposed to be muddy. The baths—where all the luxuries

of an Oriental toilet are supposed to be revelled in—were whitewashed, noisome cellars with slabs of badly-fixed and cracked marble.

I entered that harem an expectant and happy man. I came away disillusioned. Pictures of the scented life of the harem only make me laugh.

Persian ladies, when in the street, shroud themselves in black, and hide their faces with the long white lace *chuddar*, so they may walk the bazaars and not even be recognized by their own husbands—which may have its advantages at times. It is the height of impropriety for a man and woman to speak in the streets. This is thought so much of that it is the custom among the little colony of Europeans in Teheran for ladies and gentlemen never to recognize each other when in the streets.

The Persian woman has few duties, but no rights, except those gained by intrigue. She loves rich clothing. Gossip and tobacco are her chief sources of pleasure. Her children are not hers to love, command, or keep. In youth she is a toy, in old age a reproach or a nuisance. One idea she has is natural enough. It is to remain the only wife. To this end all her Oriental cunning is used. She will either persuade the husband that his bride's charms will not yield sufficient return for his money—three hundred pounds

and a whole estate being sometimes paid as *mayrieh* or "milk money" for an exceptionally beautiful girl—or she will employ a professional matchmaker, one of a kind that is regularly attached to every large household, and get her to arrange a match for the girl or widow with someone else. The sense of supreme power makes Persian husbands rather indulgent, and the wife's feeling of complete subjugation leads her to cajole him by every means possible, so as to keep in favour and get a little of her own way if possible. Women are always treated courteously, and given some distinctive title. To European ears, however, the title of "Saifa," or "the weak one," will not sound very complimentary.

Letting my mind go roaming round the world in recollection, I find the ladies of different lands have left very different impressions on my impressionable memory. The prettiest bunch of girls I ever saw were Tunisian Jewesses. A Tunisian Jewess, however, must be caught young. Then she is tall, slender, with a quivering, transparent complexion, with blushes mantling and softening with every word, her eyes liquid and dreamy and caressing, her nostrils delicate and refined, her lips intended for only one imaginable purpose.

But her beauty is as evanescent as the rose.

The northern shores of Africa are like a hothouse, and she is a hothouse plant, fragile and early bloomed. When she is twenty years of age her glory is on the wane. By the time she is twenty-four she is fat, and she looks lazy. At thirty she is corpulent, unwieldy, anything but a Hebe. An English woman at thirty is, I imagine, still lovable. A Tunisian Jewess is not.

The Georgian women, living in the sylvan valleys on the southern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, have a strange beauty. There is, however, no intelligence, no vivacity, no fascination of expression. The skin is delicate, the mouth sweet, the ears tiny, and the eyes are soft and gazelle-like. Rather, to be more accurate, the eyes of the Georgian women always struck me as being like the eyes of cows, exceedingly large, apparently pupilless, and with a watery tenderness about them. I admired the Georgian women as I admire hairdressers' models in Bond Street.

Their next-door neighbours, the Armenians, are more wideawake and less beautiful. Somehow, before I went to Armenia, I got the idea that one of the indirect causes of all the Turkish and Kurdish trouble in that country was that the Armenian maidens were attractive. I never

did have much appreciation for the Turk's fancy in love affairs—his fancy always runs to fat; and the general idea I got of the Armenian woman, when I saw her, was that she was podgy, slothful, and not over cleanly. Indeed, most women of the near East have got much of the drowse of the climate in their natures. It is hard to be vivacious beneath a frizzling sun.

The only damsels who struck me as having a nature strong enough to resist the torpor of continuous summer were the Bedouin women in Syria. The nervous, eager impetuosity of their sires is part of them. No half-asleep drowsing for them. They are always alert, with quick blood in their veins, and the sharp rapier flashes of the eye reveal a sprightliness of temperament and a queenly contempt for difficulties not surpassed since the time of the Amazons.

Take Burma and Japan. These countries are far apart, the great hulking Chinese empire lies between. Yet always was I struck with the similarity between the Burmese and Japanese women. Neither of these races is the aborigines of the land it lives in, and I would not at all be surprised if, some day, learned persons prove that both races are descended from a common stock, that lived somewhere in olden times in the Malay peninsula. There are traits among both Japanese

and Burmese women so alike that they cannot be quite accidental. And these are all the more striking because the traits themselves are in such contrast to the habits of the people who live in the lands between.

Away in the upper end of Burma I have seen other women. The Shan girl, russet-skinned but red-cheeked, plump and jovial, better-looking than either the Burmese or Japanese, lives on the lower slopes of the great hills that slice off China from the rest of the world.

Near to her—indeed, often living in the same villages—is the Kachin girl. The Kachins are an untamable, war-loving race, and much of the history of Upper Burma is the story of bloody depredations by the warrior Kachins on the easy-going, peace-loving Shans. The Shan girl is the pretty cousin of the Burmese. But the Kachin girl is the ugly duckling of that part of the world. She is a sort of rank weed.

And then, far over the Chinese border, near the great southern loop of the Upper Yang-tsze river, I have seen Lolo women—a marvellous race, tall, graceful, with a wonderful pose of body, fair of skin, with nothing of the meek idiocy of the Chinese women, but holding their own among the men. A Lolo woman can become chief of her tribe. She is better at business

than her husband. When she is married, abduction is part of the programme. She climbs into the branches of a tree. Then all her elderly lady relatives stand round. The bridegroom has to climb into the tree, and secure his bride, while all the dames are screaming with laughter and banging the poor groom over the head in a possibly friendly but still irritating manner. These Lolos know they are an immigrant race; but they do not know where they came from. They repudiate being Chinese, and say that long, long ago their ancestors came from the West.

As I write—it is a foggy day, and London is dreary—my recollection rests pleasantly on those months when I was lost to the world away in the skirting mountains of Burma-China. For that little-known corner of the earth is a perfect ethnological museum. Every week took me into new regions, where the races were strange and curious. And yet in those misty fastnesses it was always interesting to find that the little flutterings of heart that I presume English girls experience in love affairs are not unknown among the graceful Lolos, or the winsome Shans, or even the unattractive Kachins.

Distinctly podgy, flabby, and unwieldy are the Chinese women. I could as well imagine the raven cooing as conceive the Chinese woman

being lovable. That, however, is the fault of my imagination. For the Chinese woman can, I have heard, be as sloppily sentimental as any little milliner that ever selected the neighbourhood of the band-stand in Hyde Park as a suitable spot for love-making. Daughters, however, don't count in China. When you ask a Chinaman how many children he has, he may reply: "Three." That means that he has three sons. He may have a dozen daughters, but still his children number three. The chief desire of a father, therefore, is to get rid of his daughter in marriage at the earliest possible moment. When she is married she ceases to be his daughter; she becomes the daughter of her husband's father. She is more or less the servant of the family into which she has married. Should she visit her blood relatives, it is customary for her to take a bundle of sewing, so that her mother and sisters may help her new family. Chinese customs are always topsy-turvy, compared with our customs. Therefore in China it is always the wife who goes in dread of the mother-in-law. Also it is the proper thing for a man to take more notice of his father and mother than of his wife.

Weddings are arranged by "go-betweens," the busy old hags of the district, who get a commission on the amount paid by the groom to

the father of the bride. On the wedding day she is clad in red and carried in a sedan chair covered with red. Anybody, by the way, has a right to turn back the chair curtains and have a look at her. Her hair is elaborately oiled, and so all the other girls throw hay-seeds at her, which stick. On reaching the home of her husband, she has to submit to the candid criticism of the entire family. The wedding ceremony consists in the husband and wife eating rice from each other's bowl, then mixing the rice, and both eating from the same bowl. Of course there is a feast, but it does not cost much, for every guest is expected to contribute something. Once married, the Chinese girl ceases to have a name. She is always referred to as "the mother of So-and-So." If she has no child, she is spoken of as "the aunt of So-and-So," though you never in your life heard of this So-and-So. A wife never refers to her husband by name. She calls him her teacher.

It is a sad thing to write about, but it is nevertheless a fact that the Chinese woman can, on provocation, use the wickedest of wicked language. She swears dreadfully. There is a saying that what Chinese women have lost in the compression of their feet seems to have been made up in the volubility of their tongues.

They have a singular habit of reviling the street. The Chinese woman will mount to the top of her house and shriek for an hour at a stretch. There may not be a soul about, but she keeps at it till she is exhausted. Then she fans herself and starts at it again.

Whereas a Japanese lady stipulates how many gallons of water she shall have to wash with in a day, the Chinese rarely wash themselves. "Do you wash your child every day?" an unsophisticated Englishwoman asked of a Chinese matron. "Wash him every day! Why, he has never been washed since he was born," was the answer.

The Chinese have a poor opinion of their womenkind. They have no respect for them. They have a proverb that "grown-up daughters are as dangerous as smuggled salt." In the Chinese language there are just one hundred and thirty-five characters to denote women. Fourteen of those characters have a meaning implying goodness and the like, eighty-six are indifferent in meaning, and thirty-five are bad. The root from which the Chinese word for woman is taken is connected with roots signifying deceit, treachery, selfishness, intrigue, and unfaithfulness. The ladies of China will have to start a spelling reform movement.

The most unaffected and charming ladies of Europe are the Hungarians. The sunshine has got into their natures without parching up their mirthfulness. They are gay, frolicsome, full of light-heartedness. I went from Hungary to Russia, and a great change was noticeable. The Russian lady is light-hearted also, but the light-heartedness is studied. The dominant note in a Russian woman's temperament is a pathetic sentimentality.

German women and Russian women are the most sentimental creatures on the face of the earth. The German woman, however, is sentimental from an uncontrollable, not-realized sensuousness of disposition. Her physical nature masters her intellect. With the Russian woman her sentimentality is largely intellectual; for the Russian has the inherent sadness one notices in all northern peoples. There is ever a wailing chord of the heart vibrating. And the Russian lady, more delicate, more sensitive than the man, quivers with the excitability that is so often part of saddened natures.

Some day the Russian woman will take rank as a writer of fiction. Her temperament is the novelist's temperament, and among her sex she has the same self-abandoning love-thirst as the most sentimental German school-miss, but always tempered by that nervous intellectuality which is

the dominant characteristic also of the American woman. As a consequence, she is a creature of tangled brain fibres, some day to straighten out into what is our ideal of pure womanhood.

It was one of my pleasures, when in Russia, to witness a marriage. The church was square and white, with big green domes. The decorations were gaudy; there were many *ikons* and figures of saints. There were no seats, and so everybody stood. The bride, dressed in white, was received at the door by the bridegroom, who presented her with a bouquet. They proceeded up the centre of the church and stood at the altar, whilst immense candles were burnt and the choir sang. Suddenly gilt gates were thrown open, and there came forth two big, dark-haired priests in gold vestments. As they advanced all the congregation bowed and crossed themselves.

After much chanting and praying, one of the priests presented ornamented candles to the couple, and they each held these whilst the wax dribbled down their fingers. After that, two rings were brought forth on a silver salver. The elder priest blessed them, and placed them on the third finger of the right hand. After that, two gold crowns were brought. It was the duty of the male friends to hold these over the heads of the couple. It was a tiring proceeding, be-

cause the service was long. It was painful to watch the agony of the men, especially short, fat men, holding the crowns and having to walk round the bride three times, and awkwardly careful the crown did not derange her hair. The sacrament was administered to the couple. They walked round the church, the crowns being still held over them, and the men tripping along, anxiously endeavouring not to step on the bride's train. The crucifix was offered and kissed, prayers were offered, and the ceremony was over.

The bridegroom, leading his wife home, gives her light taps from a whip, saying, "Forget the manners of thine own family, and learn those of mine." She has to take off his boots, and in one of them finds a small whip, symbol of his authority. "I thrash those I love best," is a favourite Russian proverb. An old song describes a wife lamenting her husband's indifference because he never thrashed her.

CHAPTER XIV

IN REGARD TO EATING

I HAVE the honour of the acquaintance of a hostess who makes it a rule, so she flatters her guests, of having only pretty women and clever men at her dinner table.

As eating is one of the obvious things of life, it is well to surround the occasion with pleasantry. We teach our little children table manners, and raise our eyebrows when we see men eating peas with their knives. We know that the young lady who tilts her soup plate away from her has been better reared than the lady who tilts it toward her. The man who sits opposite in the dining-car of a railway train and sprawls his knife and fork, instead of laying them side by side, when the course is concluded, is regarded as capable of a mortal sin. We fold the serviettes at our own table, but we do no such thing with the serviette we use at the house of a friend; it implies niggardliness on the part of a hostess.

The man who walks through life, giving casual glances on either side as he goes, notices these

things and conforms. Conventions are blessed institutions. They save the dull-brained from the necessity of thinking, and they act as a bearing-rein on those who are disposed to startle by an excess of originality. I am not quite sure how many countries I have been in—something near half a hundred—but I have noticed that the table manners of those people who would be considered the leaders always approximate to the manners which are accepted as correct in England. This may be taken as a compliment.

It is difficult, however, for the man or woman of one country to drop into the table ways of another country and pretend to be at ease. Even in England there is usually a poise of indecision at a dinner party when asparagus is served, whether it should be eaten with the asparagus tongs, or the stub end be gripped between finger and thumb and the succulent and wobbling other end waggled into one's mouth.

I was once at a mixed dinner party to British and Japanese people, given by an Englishman, in Tokio. It did not pretend to be a swagger affair, but the gathering was arranged so the British visitors might meet some well-known Japanese. It was a dinner given in English style. The Japanese watched the table customs and carefully imitated them. They did it well, and courage

came. So when, at last, the finger-bowls were placed before them, one lifted his bowl to his lips and drank the contents, and several of his country-people followed suit. I suppose, to be polite, we ought to have done the same. But we were too tickled, and some of us had enormous difficulty in keeping straight countenances.

The gibe has frequently been flung that England has many religions but only one sauce —melted butter. Anyway, I trust we may be forgiven our slackness in the invention of sauces in return for the simplicity of our table customs. As a direct contrast, you should look to China. Everything there is supposed to be contrariwise to the customs of Europe. Certainly it is so in regard to dinner parties. With us, we arrive immediately before dinner, and have our conversation, music and general entertainment afterwards. In China the plan is to arrive an hour or two before the meal and leave immediately afterwards. We start a dinner with soup, and close with sweets. The Chinese begin with sweets and end with soup. In the middle of a Chinese meal, servants pass round with hot and steaming serviettes, with which the guests wipe off the perspiration due to the excess of feeding, and feel consequently refreshed. That is supposed to have much the same effect as the

passing round of a water ice is expected to have in the middle of an English dinner party.

Bread is generally accepted as the staple food of mankind. Nothing of the sort. Rice is. Rice is far more wholesome than the white bread, winnowed of all nutriment, to which most of us are accustomed. But for the man who has been reared on bread to be put on a rice diet for months is to suffer agony. When I was in the borderland of China-Burma, my chief food was maize corn, grilling the cob over a wood fire and then munching it. In China proper, however, and indeed throughout the whole of the East, rice was the staple food. It is savourless, and palls. Besides, I had the greatest difficulty in getting it otherwise than half-cooked—and a meal of half-cooked rice meant subsequent stomachic pains. Yet, who could help being amused at seeing flat-tummied youngsters, brown, naked, and with no shame in them, settling round a pan and gulping rice until their stomachs were distended like balloons? It was impossible to restrain laughter in watching them running about with the miniature paunches of aldermen.

The Chinese eat disgustingly, according to our ideas: holding a bowl of rice up to the chin, shovelling the rice into their mouths with chopsticks, and making singular noises with their

throats. Honestly, I grew heartily sick of rice, and when a missionary at Chung-king-fu presented me with a pot of marmalade, which I could judiciously mix with my rice, I felt blessed indeed. I shall never forget turning up at the western city of Tali-fu. The lady missionary presented my companions and myself with a loaf of bread. We had not tasted bread for quite six weeks. No bread in this world was ever so welcome as that loaf. We wolfed it.

In Turkey, Persia, and Near-Eastern lands, rice is cooked excellently. It is well greased with mutton or goat fat. If you eat according to the manner of the natives, you make little balls of it with the fingers and pop it into your mouth. The best way is to have a lamb killed and cook it entire in a mess of rice, so the flavour is mixed with it. There is a delicious dish called *kabaab.* It ought to be, but is not always, the slice of flesh cut from either side of the spine of a sheep. Then it should be cooked as it was cooked for me by a ferocious-looking Tartar Cossack in Astrakhan, on the banks of the muddy Volga near where it empties itself into the Caspian Sea. With something of the flourish of a public performer, he sliced the meat, skewered it, and, squatting on his haunches, by the side of a desert fire, slowly turned it as it cooked, and never allowed the

gravy to escape. When it was ready he marched forward with long skewer raised aloft, produced his dagger and, with the blade, pushed all the mutton upon my platter of rice.

There is something very fascinating about a meal on the desert. There comes back to recollection the time when I was in Mongolia, crossing the little corner of the Gobi desert—the most melancholy expanse of sand in the world—over which the Russians were about to lay their trans-Manchurian line, running from Port Arthur northwards to join the trans-Siberian railway. Things went wrong. So my Russian friends and I found ourselves stranded on the desert, stretches of sandy flatness with bare hummocks rising in the distance, as though the tops of the hills had been worn, and all the valleys filled with sand. It was near winter, cold and gloomy, with a raw wind, and sleet slapping. We sat on wet rugs on the wet ground, huddling round a damp fire which gave no heat, trying to boil water to make tea. One dusk-time some Mongolian nomads came along with sheep. We bought one and killed it and prepared to make *kabaab*. With the approach of night the gloom faded, and there rose above the desert a tawny-faced moon. Everything was deadly, miserably silent, as we sat close up to the fire, with the mixed light of wood flames and

yellowish moonlight on our grimy countenances, mauling the meat with our dirty hands, cooking it and then gulping chunks of the half-raw flesh.

It is not easy to forget a Persian meal. The glories of Iran have departed, and the houses are now shoddy and the decorations meretricious. You will find better old Persian carpets in England than ever you come across in Persia. The garb of the people is melancholy, dour are their features. When you enter a Persian house you remove your shoes, but keep on your hat. You sit on the floor round a rug on which the food is placed. There are no women present. There are no knives and forks, and only indifferent spoons. There is a bowl of sugared water, which passes for sherbet, and everybody drinks out of the same ladle. From the big dish of lamb and rice everybody seizes a handful and transfers it to his own plate. Likely as not the host will take a piece off a guest's plate and eat it himself—a little intimation there need be no fear as to the food being poisoned. In the middle of the meal it is not at all unusual for the host to find a nice morsel on his plate, and, with finger and thumb, blob it into the mouth of his visitor—a considerable compliment. But the thing which causes the European to squirm takes place at the conclusion of the meal. Not only is the host thanked

for his magnificent dinner, but the guests proceed to show that they have fed to surfeit. They belch, deliberately, thunderously, with pride in their performance. If you do not belch, the host assumes you are not at all satisfied with the fare he has provided.

Of course, the Japanese are quite right in being offended with Western people who do not regard them seriously, but look upon their country as a peepshow. But, so long as the peepshow idea predominated, the foreigner was willing to be appreciative. Now, however, that the Japanese want to be judged by other standards, and are so judged, much of the criticism passed is trenchant and lacking in flattery. "Do not think of Japan as a land of tea-shops and geisha girls," says the Japanese. That is well. But neither should we forget there are tea-houses and geisha girls in Nippon. I liked the tea-houses, and appreciated the artful artlessness of the girls. No ordinary, Adam-descended man need be ashamed of confessing they are dainty, slit-eyed, agreeable creatures, with exquisite manners, and understand the blending of colours, which is rare among ourselves.

Picture a big, heavy, cumbrous Scotsman, as I am, playing pasha among a bevy of these daughters of the East. In London I am a

believer in the rights of women, and can stand in a crowd and listen, appreciatively and amiably, to a fiery lady orator declaiming about the brutality, the selfishness of men, and demonstrating that the reason women are not given the parliamentary franchise is because men are afraid of them. Men are now so often told that they are the inferiors in the human race, that some of us are beginning to dread it must be true. Therefore it is pardonable for the mere man to let eyes wander across the continents to Japan, where, although the people have much that is Western, they have not got a women's suffrage question. We may take it that it just shows, in the eyes of Western women, what fools these Eastern women be in not demanding their rightful place in the political sphere, and being content to be only women, pretty, to dress nicely, to smile, to be subservient to brute men-folk, and to have no other ambition than to make the world a pleasant place to live in by reason of their presence.

It was agreeable to be met at the door of a Japanese inn by the wizened, bath-robed keeper who grinned, and the black-toothed wife who grinned, and several gaudy-frocked Japanese girls who rubbed their knees and bowed and hissed and gave welcome and giggled. It was not unpleasant to be conducted to a chamber composed

of sliding panels covered with tissue paper, where the only furniture was a cushion on the floor, and the only ornament a vase, with a branch laden with blossom, in the corner.

I lay down in no dignified posture. Presently there was the clatter of wooden shoes in the passage, and a stoppage opposite one of the panels. There was a little knock, and I gave permission to enter. The panel was pushed aside, and a plump little Japanese maid was on her knees and touching the floor with her forehead in deference to one evidently of high degree. I liked that. It gave one a sense of dignity. I gave my order for food. But it is lonely sitting in a paper box, and I tired of the sensation. A clap of the hands, a shout "*Hé*," more clatter, the panel slipped and the same forehead bumped on the floor. Yes, two geisha girls should come. They came, waggling their bodies, in soft-hued raiment, and with glossy black hair and chrysanthemums over the ears. They twanged the *samisen* and showed their teeth. Then the maid came with my meal on a tray as large as a card salver, and she served it on a table as high as a footstool. Her name was O-yo-cho-san.

Now, I am one of those hulking fellows who like "square meals," and the food she brought me was a mere provoker of appetite, a diminutive

egg, a grilled minnow (so the fish seemed), a tiny cup of rice with a slice of eel wriggling through it like an escaping worm, one plum, and some tea in a cup from a doll's house. "Is this all?" I asked in English. O-yo-cho-san laughed, for, knowing no English, she thought I was making a joke, and she realised it was her duty to appreciate I had said something terribly funny. "Now, I wonder if you could go forth and repeat this three times over?" I inquired, pointing at the tray and holding up three fingers. Oh, the foreign gentleman was a great humourist! O-yo-cho-san clapped her hands in delight. The geisha girls smiled through their paint, smacked the instruments, and sang blithely. But, unsatisfactory as the occasion was from the aspect of bodily nutriment, I must say the appurtenances were soothing to the instincts of a man.

The Turk gives you coffee when you enter his house. The Greek lady brings a bowl of water, in which to lave your hands, before you are presented with a spoonful of jam and a glass of water. The Russian, when he fills your glass with wine, invariably spills some on the table, for to be careful might suggest he was not reckless in hospitality. The Russian gets into his gastronomical stride with what is called a *sekuski*. He has a glass of vodki and a little caviare, more vodki and a slice

of onion, more vodki and a salt herring, more vodki and a bit of cheese, more vodki and a piece of tomato; then two more vodkis. After that he can do justice to dinner.

Though the poor Russian lives sparsely, tea and black bread being his usual meal, with an occasional onion as a treat, the rich Russian is a gourmand, and he likes food that costs much money. The fashionable restaurants in Petersburg and Moscow are quite as expensive as those of Vienna, Paris and London. The Russian loves gorgeousness, and when he has money nothing delights him more than to give a banquet to his friends. But he is not content with this. He not infrequently gets drunk, and then the night's enjoyment must be wound up with the smashing of the furniture, throwing champagne bottles at the mirrors, and half killing the waiters. Of course, he will have to pay for all this. He will not be ashamed. He will take pride in being pointed to as the man who had to foot an enormous bill for damage, as a wind-up to the entertainment of an evening.

Now, much has been written about the quickness with which they do things in the United States. But the slowest person on earth is the United States waiter. The Americans are great

humourists, and therefore one must accept as a joke the "quick lunch" restaurants, where you are kept waiting longer for your food than anywhere else. Somebody attempted a "quick lunch" restaurant in London. But Englishmen are notoriously devoid of humour, and did not see the joke. The place had to be closed because Londoners could not spare the time to be served with a "quick lunch." I am not going to say there are no quick waiters in the United States. I have no doubt that, with diligent searching, they might be found. But during three years' stay, on and off, in the country, I never came across one. The interesting evening newspapers, however, help to while away the long minutes between the time you have given your order and the time when you have really forgotten what it was and the food arrives.

There are plenty of places which have the old-fashioned English plan of serving an evening meal course by course, so you know how you are getting on, and you regulate your demands according to your appetite. But the plan in many places is to fire off your entire order at once. I never succeeded, but I loved to sit and listen to other men doing it. They would plant their elbows on the table, hold the menu card —with one hundred dishes inscribed on it—in

both hands, and reel off a list of thirteen articles which they intended to consume. Nobody ever expressed any surprise. The waiter took it all in. He listened to the narration of wants from the other man at the table. He took that all in. Then he went off. By the time the men had read through a couple of newspapers he returned, with two huge trays balanced on either hand. He would begin serving out the dishes with the expertness of the ordinary man serving a deck of cards. Of course, most of the warm dishes had got cold by the time you were able to eat them. But you were full of admiration for the waiter's memory.

Yet I do not think the American waiter's memory is to be compared with that of the coloured man who stands at the door of a mammoth restaurant and receives the hats of male consumers of innumerable dishes. There is no checking and no numbering. The man takes your hat, and you may be one of two hundred diners in the great hall. He looks at you and at the hat. That is all. Crowds go out, and other crowds come in before you emerge. Yet he knows which is your hat, and hands it to you. That is a wonderful feat of memory, and, I suppose, is the result of long practice.

The ways of an Indian cook with a fowl are

without end. If it were not for the cocks and hens which crow and cackle all over the Indian Empire I doubt whether Britain would have been able to hold the country for so long. The tired British officer or commissioner, or collector, or doctor, when he finishes a hot day, and at last reaches a *dak*, or rest bungalow, always finds a man in charge. On the least persuasion he will go forth and catch his neighbour's chicken, and soon it can be converted into a meal for the pale face. "Sudden death" is the description given by Anglo-Indians to the chickens which are always scratching round a rest bungalow, as though waiting to be slain in order to produce a hurried meal. I have had a five-course dinner in India, and chicken played principal part in each course.

But even "sudden death" was preferable to a hospitable beverage which was given me when I was in central Siberia among the Kirghees —the wandering people of that lone land. I visited a Kirghee chief, and he was kind. I ate with him. Then, as an honour, he gave me to drink fermented mare's milk. It will be gathered I have tasted many extraordinary things in the course of my wanderings, but never anything with so mouth-twisting a flavour. I am probably exaggerating, but it really seemed to take about

a couple of days before I got the taste off my tongue.

It is strange that whilst, in some countries, a man needs plenty to eat, in others he can get along quite well on comparatively little. A couple of hours in the morning on a Scotch moor produces a ravenous sensation. But when I was travelling from Monastir, the little capital of Macedonia—the very centre of the religious throat-cutting between Bulgarians and Greeks—into the mountains of wild Albania, I was frequently astonished how little a man needed to subsist upon. I was travelling under the escort of Turkish soldiers, trying to learn something about that troubled and unconquered land. It was usually late at night when we brought our tired horses to a halt at some guard station in the hills. It was not long before I was asleep in a corner of a mud-floored room.

As I was travelling fast, my rule was that we should all waken an hour before daybreak. The smouldering fire would be kicked into life; we would make coffee, sip as much as would go into an egg-cup, and smoke a cigarette, and generally, whilst still dark, cold, and teeth-chattering, but with a streak of dawn in the east, we would be in the saddle, putting our horses to the rocky and twisting paths up the

mountain sides. So we would travel for half a dozen hours. Then we would come to a halt for a couple of hours or so, generally by the side of a stream. By that time one ought to have been hungry. But I never was. A chunk of bread, a little potted meat, a handful of raisins, and a drink of water served as midday meal, and then I was glad to lie down under a bush and sleep for an hour. I never ate again, nor did the kindly Turkish soldiers who were with me eat again—and they ate less than I did—till we reached our sleeping place, and then we had fowls caught and killed, and we ate them, semi-savage style, holding the hot, greasy carcase in the fist and gnawing at it. That was the way for three weeks; but I never felt better in my life.

CHAPTER XV

SCENES IN PARLIAMENT

THE Member of Parliament stood on a table.

Around him was a maddened and excited throng, cheering, hat-waving, laughing, singing. A few minutes before he had been declared the victor in the contest for a seat in the British House of Commons.

Now he was among his friends, those of his political way of thinking, men who had worked for him, given him the glory.

The fight was over and he was calm and pale. He had liked the rough and tumble of the campaign, liked the fight for the fight's sake, until sometimes he forgot the great issues for which he had been fighting. But in this moment he remembered. Anybody, by a glance at his white face, would know that he was touched to the heart by the vociferous loyalty which was being volumed round him, and by the great responsibility, which was now his, of being one of the law-makers of the land, the representative of this constituency.

The mob was shouting for a speech, but would not be quiet so he could deliver one. So he stood and waited and smiled wanly. When the shouting became broken through exhaustion, the man was able to be heard.

He spoke in simple words, frankly, genuinely, with no effort at oratory. He was proud to go to the House of Commons. They had given him a great trust. Never till the day of his death would he forget it. He had no interests to serve but theirs; all his time, all his energies, would be given to working for them. Men talked about the strain of Parliamentary life, but he would care nothing for the failure of health if he had their confidence. He would be one of nearly seven hundred men who nightly packed the House of Commons, intent, each according to his light, to advance the welfare of the people. He knew his constituents would expect him to do his duty, and he would not fail them.

He meant all he said.

* * * * *

Look upon the House of Commons some ordinary night, say at half-past eight o'clock.

Possibly you come from the provinces and this is your first sight of the Chamber. You have seen pictures of it in the illustrated weekly papers, with the benches crowded, and some well-known

man, maybe the Prime Minister, addressing it. You have read descriptive articles of the great debates, the attacks, the defences, the scenes of tumult. You had not thought that these thrilling occasions come rarely. Indeed, likely enough, you had a sub-conscious feeling that when you entered the gallery the Prime Minister, or Mr. Balfour, or Mr. Lloyd George, or Mr. John Redmond might be addressing the House.

You are disappointed. Instead of a large and expansive hall it seems ridiculously small, and members appear to be down in a sort of pit.

A suffused light comes through clouded glass and reveals a kind of luxurious dinginess. The benches are covered with dull green leather, the woodwork is brown and sombre. The points of brightness, such as the Mace on the table, rather accentuate the solemnity of the House.

There is an air of languor about the place. The Speaker, in flowing wig, silk-robed, and knee-breeched, looks shadowy under the canopy of the Chair. The bob-wigged clerks are at the table, one writing and the other two advertizing their boredom.

The condition of the table, of the House, and the manners of M.P.'s, would bring tears to the eyes of a tidy housewife. The table is a *mêlée*

of disorder—books, inkpots, blotting pads, writing paper and envelopes, agenda papers, and general litter.

The benches are strewn with copies of "Hansard"—brought from the library so that damning quotations might be flung at an opponent—dishevelled Government papers, a Blue Book or two, and the floors and gangways have bunches of torn letters and crumpled envelopes and old telegrams thrown higgledy-piggledy anywhere.

Where are the great men ?

Oh, yes, that front bench to the right of the Speaker is where the members of the Government sit. There are two men there, one middle-aged, the other rather boyish-looking, and they are engaged in conversation—evidently nothing to do with politics. You do not know who they are, and when you inquire, and are told, you are only aware you have heard the name somewhere. They are Under Secretaries.

Somebody is mumbling in an inaudible monotone. He is a thin, sallow-faced gentleman, and he is melancholy. No one is paying the slightest attention to what he says.

Maybe twenty other men are in the House. They are sitting apart, as though they were sulky, and most of them are wearing their hats.

A stout old gentleman in a corner has his arms folded, and, apparently, is asleep. There is a man with his legs straight out, and hands deep in his pockets, and with a fixed look, as though he is wondering why he is there. Another man is reading his letters, then tearing them into small pieces and throwing them on the floor. No waste-paper baskets are provided in the House of Commons.

Perhaps you feel disgusted at the slouching way in which things are being done in the House. It is so contrary to all you had anticipated. You had long looked forward to this night—"a night in the House of Commons" had a splendid ring about it—and now you marvel how anybody can see anything but dullness in it.

Whom are you looking for? Your member?

You remember him that night he was returned to Parliament and stood upon the table and told his constituents how high he placed the great duty of being a member of Parliament. Well, well, he is only human. He does as others do. Oh, of course he turns up when there is anything exciting, and he votes for his party. But really, would you have him sitting down there, listening to that old fogey?

He is attending a dinner party; but he may be relied upon to put in an appearance about

half-past ten, so he may register his vote when the division is called.

* * * * *

A charming afternoon in the height of the London season, and the terrace of the Houses of Parliament is shady.

There are hundreds of prettily gowned women sitting at little tables, the guests of M.P. friends. They are indulging in that pleasant function "Tea on the Terrace."

The old Thames glides slowly. Heavy barges swing on the tide. There can be seen the crowds on Westminster Bridge, the clanging electric cars, the motor cabs, omnibuses, drays of merchandise. Like a great hum comes the noise of London on a warm afternoon.

So it is good to sit at the little tables on the famous terrace, and sip tea and munch cake, and have some of the celebrities pointed out.

Listen to the talk.

"Oh, how interesting!" exclaims a young lady with a peachy complexion below a wide sweeping hat. "Do tell me all about politics!"

The member smiles and suggests that she should have some more strawberries.

"What law are they passing now?" proceeds the fair inquirer.

"Oh, it's some Irish Bill in which I am not

very much interested. But it is sure to be thrown out by the Lords."

"How do you mean, 'thrown out'?"

"The peers won't like it, and will refuse to pass it; and that will be the end of it."

"Then is all this talk quite useless?"

"Well, I would not say quite useless, because it gives men a chance of speaking—and we are all supposed to love speaking."

"You are a lot of funny men. You are worse than old women. No, I won't have any more cake, thank you. I've had two pieces already—Oh, indeed, is it? I do so like to see great politicians. What a silly I am not to have brought my autograph album. Do you think he would have signed it for me? But he doesn't look at all distinguished; quite commonplace I should say, wouldn't you? Is he such a terrible person as I have heard father say he is?—Oh, when are you going to pass a law giving women the vote? That will be fun. I suppose we shall then be members of Parliament—I mean some of us. Of course we shall make that House of Commons nice and cosy. It certainly does look like a men's place, so bare and so uncomfortable! You want some nice soft cushions, and chintzes in the summer, and there should be bowls of roses on the table—oh, it will be quite a different place then."

"Quite a different place," agrees the man.

There is the shrill rattle of electric bells, and big policemen start bawling "'Shun! 'Shun!"

"I must go now, but I'll be back soon," apologizes the member. "That's a division. I'll have to go. My division list is not very great, for I've been away a lot. I must get an attendance in whenever I can, for I don't want my name too low at the close of the session, and that wretched paper on the other side down in my constituency making out that I am never here at all. Back soon."

He disappears, along with a hundred other members. The Terrace is in possession of women and policemen. It is a delightful experience to the women, sitting on the Thames side and feeling that it is only the call of State affairs which draws the men from their side. The policemen yawn.

Back they come—with apologies.

"Now, tell me what you have been voting about?" invites the peach-faced girl.

"Hanged if I know what it was. Something Irish, I think. I voted with our fellows—so that's all right."

* * * * *

The subject was one which the young member knew a great deal about. The debate was to be

next week. He had taken part in fragmentary discussions. But here was an opportunity to deliver an important speech, to win a reputation, to show that he could talk with something of the authority of an expert.

He must prepare. He must not be too solemn, or he will bore the House. He must not be flippant, or make many attempts at humour. He knows the British public suspects the laughing man of shallowness. The public likes heavy, portentous platitudes, and slowness of thought is regarded as deep thinking.

Still, the House likes a streak of brightness.

He reads the latest "Blue Book" on the subject, and makes notes. He sketches the heads of his speech. He writes it out. But, read aloud, it sounds too much like an essay—and that would be fatal.

In the privacy of his room he tries to address his tobacco jar as "Mr. Speaker," and talk more or less without notes. He is ragged and diffuse; he is positive he would break down if he attempted any such thing in the House. However, he gets one or two good points, and he fancies he expresses them rather neatly.

How he wishes he had the power to jump up and gabble off a speech in the manner of some men! Well, that will perhaps come in time.

Still, his ideas mould. He writes out a précis of the speech. He makes just a note of those parts which he can deliver with the crutch of manuscript. At the end of three or four days he feels he has got together all he has to say. It is not the brilliant speech he had intended. He is rather displeased with it. There are so many points to be explained, but that would take time—and the House of Commons hates explanations and anything like long-windedness.

However, his speech is ready, and by the day of the big debate he knows he will get through somehow.

But he wishes he had not set himself the task. It was thankless. No one would know the time he had spent in preparation. Perhaps there would be a small House, and men would not listen. The newspapers would give him three or four lines, with only a hint of what he had endeavoured to put before the Chamber, and possibly a London paper on the other side of politics would sneer at him, and the sneer would be quoted in the local paper of his constituency, and people would get the idea he had been rather making a fool of himself.

He is all nervousness when he goes down to Westminster. The notes are in the breast-pocket of his coat, but he puts in his hand a dozen times

to make sure they are there. He is one of a crowd of three or four hundred men. Nearly an hour goes in the questioning of Ministers, and he gets irritable.

At last the debate of the night begins. Of course, he had no thought of starting it. It was known two clever speakers, one on either side, would lead off. He has to wait.

There are other men waiting, some sitting quite close to him. He eyes them suspiciously, even with a little resentment. When would his chance come? Would it be before dinner, or in the backwater of the night called the dinner-hour, when few men were present, or late at night? How would he succeed in catching that difficult thing to capture, "the Speaker's eye," and be called upon?

The two speeches are delivered. Now is his chance. He bounces to his feet. But a Minister and an ex-Minister wish to address the House. They have a prior claim because of their positions, and are called upon. So an hour will go before he has another chance.

He strolls out and has some tea. When he returns he finds a third-rate man "in possession." It appears the Minister had not spoken as long as was expected, and the ex-Minister had gone away, knowing he would have his opportunity later.

Now! The third-rate speaker has sat down. The young member springs up. A dozen other men spring up. Someone else is called upon. Well, it is perhaps natural, for the third-rate talker was on his own side, and the Speaker's eye usually oscillates from side to side of the House, giving an opportunity for different points of view to be presented.

He tries again, but misses being called. The ex-Minister saunters in, and, at the next opening, rises. He talks at length. The new man jumps up again. Someone else—and he sinks back with a sigh.

So dinner-time comes. The House thins. All the smaller men, like himself, have been waiting for their chance. If he goes off to dine he is sure to miss an opening. He contents himself with a hurried sandwich at the bar, and rushes back to his place.

Really, he has no luck! The dinner-hour passes, and the bigger men begin to come back. The debate is to be wound up by two Front Bench men—that is the understanding. They are both present, ready for the final oratorical sparring. One begins.

Nobody heeds the young member, who has devoted so much time to preparing a speech on the subject he has studied so fully. He is worn

with vexation, and it is not decreased because he has been listening to a number of debaters who, obviously, have only the most casual acquaintance with the topic.

He goes home with mournfulness in his heart. He wonders how political reputations are made.

* * * * *

Now, this is a night of great political excitement. The Government are forcing through its final stage a measure which has aroused the bitter animosity of the Opposition.

The Chamber is packed. The sombreness in which the place is so often wrapped has been stripped away, and the building is bright, in the turmoil of excitement, with raucous clamour ripping the air, which seems to be charged with electricity.

The House of Commons is greater than any individual in it. It is a compartment into which all the political feelings of the country have been compressed. But it is too small to hold it all. The place seems so charged with passion that it would burst.

Look at those rows of men, sitting tightly wedged, with shoulder braced on shoulder. Strong men, most of them, with the strain of the fighter in them, determined, somewhat ruthless—for the politician is ever disposed to dogmatism and

personal assertion. Most of them past middle life; for it is only then that they can spare the time for political life. Actuated by many motives: personal ambition, social advancement, a filling in of time, zeal to benefit their country. Yet, on the whole, representative of the best there is in Britain, and most of them willing to take the knocks which accompany the life, and the poorer, financially, for taking part in the great game.

Just now the excitement has brought hot gleams into the eyes, and faces are a little taut and pale. Men show their thoughts with a roar which explodes and then rolls gratingly.

The Government contend they have a mandate from the electorate to pass this measure into law. The Opposition repudiate any such mandate. They know that, in the division, they will be defeated, that the Government will be triumphant. They fight against odds, but they fight savagely, hoping they may severely wound, though conscious of their inability to kill.

The two armies sit facing one another. Men are crouching in the gangway and maintaining the parliamentary guerilla war of interruption. Below the bar foemen are standing in a heap, encouraging their champions.

The House is distracted. It is hard to think

that this mob of vehement politicians, bawling and gesticulating, cheering and jeering, with no shred of mercy in them, are quiet and charming men, with strong friendships even between political enemies. Outside they meet each other as gentlemen; here they regard one another with the fury of heated politicians.

One of the chiefs is addressing the House. He stands by the table. Behind him are the ranks of his supporters; across the floor are crowds of his enemies. He explains; and his men hurrah, whilst the others laugh long and ironically. He flings irony at them in turn, and they snarl, but his men yell their delight. As the shout ebbs they stir the yell into another mighty crash.

It is on such occasions you see the temper of the House of Commons. It is a worthy sight. Seldom does it get out of hand. There is hard hitting, but it is all fair hitting, even though the enemy is down and writhing, and his opponents are screeching their delight.

There is what Englishmen like to describe as "playing the game"—putting forth every ounce of effort to win, but scorning an unfair trip, even though it would give the victory. No digs at a man's private life. There are things known against men—everybody knows them—and to

shout them would be to blast reputations. But these are not matters within the arena.

Do men, in the passion of the moment, never forget themselves? Sometimes. But the protest comes like a clap of thunder, and it is the man who would stab that is crushed. The honourable esteem of opponents is the finest quality in the House of Commons.

A speaker steps beyond the bounds. The House will have no more of him. A pert youngster jibes at a Parliamentarian grown old in politics, and the thong of reproof is about his shoulders at once. Members cry "Divide!" If that is the stuff they are to listen to, they wish to finish. "Divide—divide—'vide—'vide—'vide!" comes like a torrent. The offender attempts to breast it. He stands still, ashen and agitated, waiting for a break in the uproar. He makes a jump forward with his speech. "Withdraw! withdraw!" demand one throng of opponents. "Divide! 'vide! 'vide! 'vide!" demand another throng. Maybe what he has said is not a strict breach of parliamentary decorum, and the Speaker does not intervene. But he has offended against the courtesies of the House, and the House either compels him to apologize or it refuses to give him a hearing.

The House has two ways of dealing with the

prosy bore. It does not heed him, and it maintains a babel of loud conversation, so that it is impossible for the man to make himself audible; or it agrees with, and satirically cheers, his commonplaces. The shout of "Agreed! agreed!" is the cruellest of interruptions. It arouses titters; the sham appreciation makes the man ridiculous. There are few debaters who can push against it.

Suddenly someone says something that is stinging. It is a fair swing of the whip, but it hurts. The man hit at tightens his lips, and the colour comes and goes from his cheeks. There is a howl of delight at the well-directed blow; there is furious scorn. The shouts seem to meet in the centre of the House and clap like iron sheets.

The minutes crawl to the hour when the debate must close. Cries, hoarse with passion, shuttle from side to side. Then swiftly, like the drop of a shutter, it is all over. Only the division remains.

The tense expression in the lines of the faces is relaxed. After such a strain the tendency is to laugh. Men do laugh. There is a pell-mell movement of rivals toward the lobbies. Men who have been barking at one another meet and chaff and pass on their way.

Then the rush to Palace Yard. It is half full

of motor-cars, carriages, four-wheelers, and hansom cabs. There is still formal business to be transacted in the House, and the light on the summit of the Clock Tower glows like a great oriflamme, telling London Parliament is at work. The moment the House rises it will be extinguished.

On the pavement gather a crowd of men of all shades of political opinion.

But are these the legislators who, ten minutes ago, were screeching at one another, crying one another down, taunting one another? Surely not!

But they are. Everybody is friendly. Rivals talk with one another about the debate like disinterested onlookers rather than partisans. They repeat the clever sayings and enjoy them, quite independent of whether they were against or in favour of their side.

The House of Commons is full of contrasts.

CHAPTER XVI

FAST AND SLOW

THE flash of the telegraphic message round the world has become such a commonplace that it no longer creates marvel. But the wires that crawl along the ocean bed, crookedly climb mountains, stretch in long, straight lines across the desert, sing with wonderful romance.

To me they have been the only guide I have had for thousands of miles in distant parts of the world. On the hot plains the telegraph poles stand like sentinels, reaching to the horizon, where they look no more than a thread joining eternity. In the jagged mountains of western China, where the trees are many and the road is nothing but a dank track, they jerk from trunk to trunk, fastened carelessly. Many a time, when hundreds of miles from another white man, I have sat and watched the wire with a little simmer of wonder what is happening in the busy world where the ends of those wires are tethered.

Across Persia run wires which have one end in London and the other end in Calcutta. At

stations every two or three hundred miles is a man in charge, sometimes an Englishman, sometimes a German, maybe an Armenian or a Eurasian, and his duty is to see to the repair if there are any breaks within his area—rare in summer, but not infrequent in winter, when the snows and the winds and the cold snap the wires.

It is strange to sit in one of the instrument rooms and listen to the click-click-click of the little machine. Messages are rushing between England and India. To the untrained ear it is meaningless clatter. The man in charge rarely pays attention unless he is "called" from one of the big retransmitting stations. He will sleep soundly whilst the most momentous of news is being hastened along. But let there be the little click-clack which is the call for his station, and he awakes and jumps to the telegraph instrument.

Many Englishmen are engaged on that long route. Once a year they are brought into contact. Just before midnight on December 31st those ten thousand miles of wires lie in stillness. As the clocks in London town strike twelve and January 1st is born, the message "A happy New Year to you" is signalled. It jumps to the end of the first stretch of wire, which is in Germany. It is seized and dispatched across Germany to

Russia; it hastens over the Caucasus Mountains, down into Persia, across Persia to India, from one side of India to the other side, in Calcutta, and, at the end of seven minutes, the message sent from the telegraph operator in London is received by the telegraph operators in the queen city of the East.

But the greatest feat in quickness is the production of a London evening newspaper with the result of the Derby horse-race. Most people know that newspapers are not printed from the type, but from circular lead plates which are the impression of the type. From the time a page of a newspaper is locked in type till a cast is made and the curved lead facsimile sheets are screwed to the cylinders of the printing machine takes anything up to twenty minutes. This time, however, cannot be spared when the public are gasping for the result of a race. So, on one plate there is left an open space, generally headed "Latest News," into which real type can be dropped and fastened. It is the introduction of several lines of real type into the broken columns that makes this part of the newspaper sometimes appear smudgy.

Now, when the result of a race is expected, the arrangements are elaborate. The telegraph instrument worked from the course, opposite the

winning-post, has a duplicate recording instrument, not in the sub-editor's room but in the machine-room itself. There are standing four, five, or six machines, all braced with the leaden sheets, for no one machine, however swift, can turn out newspapers fast enough. So, when the machines are in use, there are half a dozen furiously at work, tugging at the mile-long rolls of paper, printing, cutting, folding, and counting. The names of the running horses are all set in separate rows of type—six sets of these rows, and opposite each horse is a number. One man is in charge of each set, and by his elbow stands a little column-wide brass box called a "fudge." When the race at Epsom begins, the signal to "stand by" arrives. As the horses pass the post a man telegraphs not the names but the numbers—say 7, 4, 9. As these figures arrive, within the twinkling of an eye each man in the machine-room picks up the line of type with the winning horse's name, the seventh is first, the fourth second, the ninth third. These lines are dropped into the "fudge"; a click, and it is locked; the "fudge" itself is stuck into the open space on the leaden page already on the machine, clicked, and locked in turn. A lever is pulled, and the air is a very tornado of uproar whilst the machines are belching out folded copies

of the paper. They are flung on to a hoist, gripped, tossed to a man on a motor-bicycle waiting outside—and they are ready for sale in the streets of London within forty-five seconds after the horses have passed the winning-post at Epsom!

If we had a visitor from Mars and I were asked to show him the most wonderful thing on earth, I would take him to a newspaper office. Everything is apparently in wild confusion. Yet everything is working with the smooth accuracy of a clock. It is not just the matter of filling the paper with articles and news, but getting all the news within proper proportion in a paper which is limited in size. There is no possibility of nice calculations. Everything depends on everything else, and the deciding factor is the latest piece of important news which arrives.

At eleven o'clock at night there may be a general idea of the arrangement of the paper and the relative value of the news. But an hour later, at midnight, all that can be upset by the arrival of most important intelligence which will require at least a couple of columns. The size of the newspaper cannot be hurriedly expanded. Other articles, a column in length, must be reduced to half a column. Half-column news must be written down to a paragraph. Yet nothing of

moment must be left out. The consequence is that in all big newspapers there are many columns set up in type every night which never see the light. There seems to be tremendous scurry and indecision, for orders given half an hour before are ruthlessly countermanded. Yet everything is proceeding in the proper way, and by a certain minute —say 1.25 a.m.—the whole newspaper is ready to "go to bed"—that is, to be printed, so that sufficient copies will be ready in time to catch trains which may be leaving at three o'clock in the morning for distant parts of the provinces.

When I was at Tali-fu, in Western China, it was necessary for me to send important letters to England. The Chinese post is not to be relied upon for safety, and you have no knowledge, to a month or two, when a letter will be delivered. So I decided to send my letters by means of a runner to Mengtsz, which is on the borders of Tonquin, where I knew the parcel would fall into reliable hands and the letters be dispatched home by means of the French post. With difficulty I got a man to run for me, on the understanding that I paid him twice as much as a Chinese would have paid him. Even then the cost was not extravagant—fourpence a day. The distance was reckoned to be 240 miles, and the arrangement was he must run thirty miles a

day; he was to have four days' rest at full pay, and then he was to return at the pace of thirty miles a day and receive payment, which amounted to 6s. 8d. for an absence of twenty days and for covering 480 miles.

This was fast going for China. It was in that part of the world that I travelled as slowly as ever I have done. I was ill, and racked with malaria, and for many days I was carried in a palanquin. It was a little cupboard swung on bamboo poles, shoulder-wide, and three Chinese carried me slowly up the mountain paths and slowly down the other side. It was difficult to discover distances. The Chinese measurement is a *li*—about a third of an English mile. What puzzled me at first was to be told by my carriers that the next halting place was a long ten *li* or a short ten *li*. Once I interviewed some coolies about how far it was to a certain village, for I was not certain my carriers were telling the truth. "Ten *li*," said they. "No, fifteen *li*," insisted my carriers. "No; ten *li*," insisted the others. "Ah, yes," then said my carriers; "it is ten *li* coming down hill but fifteen *li* going up!" And so one learnt that distance was generally counted by the time it took. My calculation was that on level and not difficult ground the carriers covered about ten *li* an hour, or a little

over three miles. That was the quickest I ever got along.

In the hills, where was nothing but a rocky path, the pace was not even at a crawl. Many a time I expected to be pitched over a precipice—indeed, once, when we encountered a mule caravan conveying salt, one of the brutes reared, went over, and was killed. At those places I just sat with tightly-closed eyes and tightly-folded arms.

There will never be effaced from memory one day, when the way seemed to be right up the face of the rocks. A long-poled palanquin is one of the most awkward things in the world to manœuvre, not only because of its shape, but because it is so top-heavy. It had been raining for weeks; the rocks were slippery and the soil was mud. The sun was broiling, but the air was saturated with damp. Ill though I happened to be, it was impossible to expect these men to haul me and the palanquin up the mountain side. Enervated, with aching limbs, and head cracking with pain as a consequence of heavy doses of quinine, I walked. It was necessary to have a rest every quarter of an hour or so, for I was languid and had not an ounce of strength left in me, to say nothing of pity for these semi-naked coolies who were heaving the palanquin up the mountain. We started shortly after dawn,

six o'clock in the morning, and it was about four o'clock in the afternoon when I called a halt. Our distance that day was just seven miles.

Have you ever heard of "bazaar rumour"? Most people acquainted with the East know of it, but nobody has ever yet found an explanation. Some folk smile at it as nothing more than coincidence. An event stirs the whole population of a city, say an assassination, and then, in another city, hundreds of miles away, with no telegraphic communication, with the impossibility of the news having been conveyed on horseback, there runs through the bazaars first a whisper, then a general rumour, then an accepted belief that a particular person has been assassinated.

How does one Eastern city become conscious of what takes place in another and distant Eastern city? The natives cannot tell, nor have they ever been able to trace the origin of the rumours. There are too many well-authenticated and striking cases for the Western man to dismiss them as mere coincidences. In the event of the murder of a great dignitary it is possible some of the plotters may have taken themselves to the far city, aware when the deed was to be done, and set the talk going when they thought it was all over. But that explanation is not sufficient

when sudden death occurs, naturally, nor when there has been a great and distressing accident.

I wonder if the explanation is to be found in what is called telepathy? The Eastern brain is more delicate and impressionable than the Western. As, in wireless telegraphy, an electric current thrown into the air by one instrument acts upon another instrument hundreds of miles away, is it not possible that the agitated brain of an entire population can throw forth a sort of mental electricity which acts upon the receptive brain of another population far distant? If the brain of man can make a machine so fine that it receives electric impressions, why should not the brain itself provide a kind of wireless telegraphy? I do not pretend to know; only I wonder.

Fast and slow! There is a thrilling sensation in swiftness, but dignity is always in the leisurely pace. Disaster comes with a rush, but a blessing approaches as though with hesitation. Few men make a fortune swiftly and dissipate it slowly. But how many are there who laboriously gather together a fortune, and then the whole of it disappears almost within an hour?

The fever of the age is swiftness—everything must be done in a hurry, whether it be the erection of a cathedral or the manufacture of a pair of boots. I remember being in one of the largest

shoe factories in America. Everything was done as though there was a competition. Machinery sliced, moulded, sewed; a machine fastened buttons on boots with the quickness of a thumb removing peas from a shell. The time occupied in converting strips of leather into boots was to be reckoned in minutes. But there is also the remembrance of a shoemaker in a European village, with no machinery except a few tools, working slowly, drowsily almost, and taking the major part of a week in the making of a single pair of shoes. There was something which made the blood tingle in the sight of the alert men and women standing by the machines, which worked as though they were hungry, but, as I sat and smoked my pipe in the cobbler's hut and talked with the old man, I appreciated the dignity of his labour.

Whither is this rivalry between fastness and slowness, in the world of artisanship, leading? The race is to the swift—that we have been told. But where things are done slowly, do you not find craftsmen? and where things are done fast are not the workers reduced to little else than minders of machines?

Those who have read the pages of this volume so far will have remarked the interest I take in comparing the West with the East, and, maybe,

will have noticed that whilst my intelligence palpitates with enthusiasm over the all-conquering powers of the West, where there are the men who dare, all my sentiment is for the ease, the poetry, the calm, the quietude of the mysterious East.

See how we take our holidays. The strain of business racks us for eleven months of the year, and then we need a rest. But those of us who do rest are insignificantly few. The mass seek distraction, furiously, and are further tired in consequence. Everything must be fast; there must be movement, excitement. Hundreds of thousands of people go to the seaside. But if they have only the sea and the tumbling waves and the rocky shore they are bored. They must have crowds of people to entertain the eye; there must be bands of music to feed the ear. Or the holiday is spent in travelling in hot and overcrowded trains, flocking like sheep toward the same little bit of artistic grass, in the picture galleries of the Continent, on which they have been told it is the right thing to feed. There are few who find their pleasure in complete rest —though the heart cries out for it all the time.

I envy the man of the East, who has no desire to visit other climes, who has no craving to go scampering over the continents, but who is happy

to sit in the shade of a tree and let the hours pass unheeded whilst conversing with his friends. Life, we are told, should be reckoned by what is accomplished, and not by the calendar. I am not at all sure. If tempestuous experience made life better, yes ; but it never does. The pleasantest people are those who have led the most uneventful of lives.

We live so fast that, whilst we talk, we have little time to converse. We write letters, but it is only schoolgirls who correspond. We have a contempt for the slow and the gracious. If man controlled Nature he would like to press a button on the first of May and cause all trees to spring into instant and complete foliage.

Truly, it is a bracing experience to do a journey in a great express train. The rush and the swerve and the clamour all sound like the shout of victory. There is the consciousness of irresistibility about an express train. The shriek of the whistle, the passing through stations as though they were being slapped on one side, the rattling jig-jolt over the metals, produce a nervous exhilaration. So you jump from one end of England to the other in half a day.

But have you ever travelled by caravan on the desert ?

The morning came out of the blackness like

a hot kiss. When I looked beyond the tent, the crouching camels were grunting at the Arabs, who were calling the curse of Allah upon them because they did not rise. A wind, like the gasp from a cooling oven, breathed over the desert. We went to the well, beneath a cluster of palms, and drew water and laved our parched features and softened the skin from the dryness of the night. Whilst the tents were folded, and the baggage gathered and piled on the humps of the camels, I breakfasted on sour milk, dry bread, a handful of raisins, a small cup of coffee, and a cigarette. Then into the saddle, and, to the tune of the curses of the sore-eyed camel-drivers, we surged slowly forward over the illimitable desert.

Yes, we surged. That is the only word which properly describes the gentle heave-and-halt,heave-and-halt, of the camel, as it pats its way over the sand. The beast has one pace, measured, undulating; and I doubt if an earthquake would make it increase its gait by a single stride in the hour. I have never become friendly with a camel, and have never met anybody who has succeeded. A horse is soon companionable; but I have not known the most kindly advances received in any other way by a camel than a villainous showing of teeth.

Here is slow travelling. Twenty-five miles a

day at the most; but that allows for three hours' rest when the sun is at its highest. At first the slowness, the delays, the monotony, the glare, are irksome. We are as far away from the energetic world as though we were traversing the moon. We know nothing of what is happening. There are no newspapers.

Very soon, however, you begin to understand that life is not only possible without the morning desire to see what has been happening in the world over-night, and the evening fidgetiness to learn what has been happening in the course of the afternoon, but preferable. It is on the desert that you learn that to-day is much like yesterday, and to-morrow, and many to-morrows, will be the same.

What interested me immensely was the quickness with which I found I adapted myself to the life. I had anticipated my journey with qualms. But I soon "shook myself down" to the long and uneventful days, and then I came to love it.

Who can tell why it is that the desert irresistibly appeals? The desert seems to woo. There is not a hummock of scenery, and the plains are scorched to death. The Arabs are silent men, with contemplation in their countenances. I found them courteous and never forgetful I was a stranger.

Slowly we surged over the sea of sand, whilst the sun rolled over us. One drank the hot air which seemed to jump from the rippled sand. The swing of the body, whilst perched on the top of the camel, made one sweat.

I had no one to talk to, but there was no loneliness. The eye could only idle round the horizon and never grow weary. I suppose one felt the joy of simple, healthy life, with not a thought of the past, not a care for the future, but just the enjoyment of being alive. That is the best of all joys. It is the cleanest pleasure on earth; to put back one's shoulders, breathe deeply, and feel the glow of happy, heedless life.

There was one book in my baggage, but I never read. I had note-books, but I never made a note. I had the delight of a half trance—there was a mixture of reality and dream—and there was no thought of disturbing it.

The midday halt was welcome. Cramped limbs could be stretched, and there was always the shade, though a warm shade, of a clump of palms. We got water in porous jars, and swung them till the evaporation brought coolness to the brownish liquid. We ate dates, and more sour milk, and raisins. The camels were taken on one side, and, with many more calls that Allah should send them to the worst place intended

for camels, forced to rest. Then we slept in the drowse of the afternoon.

Very lazily we started. Out in the glare, to take a handful of sand was something like gripping fire. More calls on Allah, to make those camels rise and start! Then surge, surge, over the plain, till the sun sank, and looked us in the face.

An hour before sundown we halted and pitched camp. No scurry, no haste. My tent was put up and the little canvas bed fixed. A fire was lit, and we cooked our evening meal in the gloaming. The night came quickly. As the black shroud spread over the heavens, the Arabs said their prayers, curled themselves up on their rugs, and went to sleep.

It was then I loved to spread a mat in front of my tent, lie down, and peer into the darkness, which was heavy and sensuous. The cities of the West, the life of my own land, found no call in my heart. I was happy with an Arab camel caravan on the sands of the Sahara.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WOMEN WORKERS OF LANCASHIRE

MORE than half the people employed in the cotton trade are women. They enter the mills as girls. Thousands of them continue to work after they are married women. They work even in pregnancy, and cases have been known where there has been only time to get the woman into a cab and take her home before the child was born.

So there often comes to me the recollection of landing in Liverpool, after some months' absence, and spending several days in the manufacturing districts with an American friend. I noticed something which, as a good Briton, sent a shudder through me. I did not mention it because I was not proud of it.

But my companion from the other side of the Atlantic turned to me and remarked: "Say, these Lancashire people are weedy. They are undersized, they are badly made; look at the pale faces; why, I never saw such a lot of bow-legged men."

I put him off with the observation that he must not compare the physique of men who work in mills with that of the cowboys out on the ranches of western America. But he had blundered on a fact. The mill hands of Lancashire are weedy, they are pale, there is an amazing number of bandy-legged men.

With the recollection of the criticism of my American friend lurid in my mind, I made inquiry in quarters where statistics are to be obtained. I learnt that eight out of every hundred of the children born in Lancashire are deformed, and that twenty-one-and-a-half per cent. never reach the average physique and height of English folk. Less than a quarter, of course. My American had got an exaggerated idea about degeneration. Still, for one in five to be undersized and defective in physique is not satisfactory. For one in twelve of the children to be born with the curse of deformity is saddening.

Let us see how things work.

The majority of girls are born of artisan parents. For generations the father and grandfather and great-grandfather have worked in the mills—hot, steamy, ill-ventilated, with the atmosphere of unhealth everywhere. Perhaps, nay very likely, the mother herself worked in the mill. She also has been affected in health,

and, being an industrious woman, wanting to do her share in making the home comfortable, has worked until a few weeks before the female child is born. You cannot expect a healthy infant.

The mother is anxious to get back to work. She cannot suckle the youngster, who is often brought up on the bottle in the house of a neighbour. When school days come along, the feeding of the lass may be kindly, but casual, and certainly without proper attention. When that girl is between twelve and thirteen years of age, and still growing, she passes Standard IV. at school, and works in a mill either all the morning or all the afternoon for, say, 2s. 9d. a week. At fourteen years of age she can work full time, and for ten hours of work a day she will receive 5s. 9d. a week. She has to be out of bed shortly after five o'clock in the morning in order to be within the mill gates at six o'clock, and it is five in the evening before she is free. Save for the half-hour for breakfast and the hour for dinner she is in the hot, clammy, noisy mill. If she is smart, as most of the Lancashire girls are, she will be earning 17s. a week when she is sixteen. By the time she is eighteen she will be earning 24s. a week—quite good wages for a girl in her teens.

But all this time, while her womanhood is developing, she is standing through long and tiresome hours. She has risen early, and at meal times there is not always opportunity to prepare satisfactory food. She is "courted" by some decent young fellow, perhaps also a mill hand. He is earning 25s. a week. Lumped together there is nearly £2 10s. a week—quite a respectable sum on which to keep house for people in their class. Hence innumerable marriages.

The inevitable baby is expected. The young mother, recognising the extra expense, won't leave her work; she remains at the loom. She repudiates her weariness and denies she is faint. So women may be seen standing at their work "until it ain't respectable," said a woman to me in Burnley, "and the manager ought to be ashamed of himself for allowing it."

Yes, but if he turned the young wife away he would be denounced as a heartless wretch, especially as the extra shillings are so much needed with another mouth to be fed coming along!

So, my lords, ladies and gentlemen, the cycle continues. And at each turn of the wheel of life there is less stamina, less physical energy. There is sufficient change in the people to make the visitor to our shores exclaim "What a weedy lot!"

That is the glaring fact.

But what of the little domestic tragedies which do not get reported in the newspapers? What about the female ailments which are engendered, the anæmia, the consumption, the number of miscarriages, the inability to provide mother's milk for the offspring? Talk to a doctor whose practice is chiefly among cotton operatives, and he will tell you all about these things.

Think of the child.

The mother, eager, hard-working soul, with the weekly wage reduced by nearly half whilst she is laid aside, and the expenses enormously increased—why, it is only natural she should fret to get back to the mill. Long before she is physically strong she is back again—back in that soggy, hot air, where the smell of size is nauseous, and the throb and the clang and the clatter of wondrous machines bring a headache. Even if she can feed her baby at the breast, that idea must be put aside. She must arise at five o'clock in the morning, winter time maybe, wrap the child in a shawl, take it into the black, cold, damp, foggy morning and leave it to be cared for at the house of a friend. A few shillings a week are paid for its food. No doubt the neighbour cares for the child as well as she knows how.

But she is not the mother, and the child is reared artificially instead of naturally.

"Oh, sir," said a woman to me in Oldham, "it's a shame! Why, I've known babies wakened up at five on winter mornings to be taken to a neighbour's house. Now and then in tramcars mothers may be seen with them wrapped up in shawls at half-past five in the morning, taking them to a house before they themselves go to work. Not many, though, and I'll tell you why. Folks don't like babies to be treated that way, and the mothers are a bit ashamed. But you will see them sidling along the back streets, with the little bundles in their arms. No wonder some of the children die. Don't you think there ought to be a law to stop it? Don't you think, sir, there ought to be a law, not to prevent married women working, but to prevent those who are most obviously about to become mothers from working?"

Perhaps!

But, my dear lady, if there were such a law, the first people to shout out against it — who would denounce it as iniquitous because it prohibited them from earning money—would be the women of Lancashire.

Here is a clipping from a local paper recording an inquest held by Mr. H. J. Robinson,

coroner, on the body of a five-months old boy at Burnley :—

> "The mother, who is a weaver, stated that the child had been fed on the bottle, and had had boiled milk.
>
> "The Coroner (to the mother).—You have lost three babies before, haven't you?—Yes.
>
> "Had this child anything to eat on Saturday?—He had some bread and water.
>
> "Don't you know this child was too young to have bread and water?—Well, the child had never ailed anything before.
>
> "Don't you think it would be much better for you to stop at home with your children instead of going to the mill? They would have a better chance of living. You have four alive and lost four. That's a biggish average.
>
> "A verdict of 'Death from natural causes' was returned."

Before me lie some tables of statistics. I find that in Blackburn the average infantile death-rate is 183 per thousand, whilst in Preston and Burnley it is 208 per thousand. In the town of Blackburn two-thirds of the babies are not suckled, because the mothers work in the mills.

Mr. C. Newman, in his book on "Infantile Mortality," points out that in the seven towns of Burnley, Preston, Blackburn, Nottingham, Oldham, Bolton, and Bury, all places where female labour is in demand, the average infantile death-rate for the last ten years is 182 per thousand. In the non-textile towns of Sunderland, Swansea, Lincoln, South Shields, Newport, Cardiff, Barrow-in-Furness, and Burton, the loss was 150 per thousand. The percentage of women who, between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five, follow regular employment are 91.8 in Blackburn, 90.9 in Burnley, 89.4 in Preston, and 88.4 in the other textile towns; whilst in the non-textile towns mentioned the percentage is down to 59.5.

Much of the infantile mortality is due to immaturity at birth. Dr. Bannister, the medical officer for Blackburn, said: "There is already a law to prevent women going to work within a month after childbirth, but the way it is enforced does not lead us to expect too much from an extension of it. In this matter we in England are behind Switzerland. There the period of prohibition has been extended to eight weeks before and eight weeks after confinement, and the change has been attended by a marked improvement in the weight and health of the infants." He further said there had been an

enormous decline in breast-feeding, which had gone down in Blackburn from 63 per cent. to 38 per cent. The effect of this is demonstrated by authorities elsewhere. Dr. Robertson, of Birmingham, says there are thirty deaths of hand-fed babies to one breast-fed baby. Dr. Hope, of Liverpool, says that out of a thousand breast-fed babies twenty may die, but out of a thousand hand-fed babies he would expect three hundred to die. Accordingly, it is not uncommon in Lancashire towns to hear that four or five children out of a family of seven have died. It has been calculated that of the 3,200 Blackburn women who become mothers each year rather more than half belong to the class of millworkers.

Now think of the home life.

A girl—daughter, perhaps, of a mother who herself has been an operative—goes straight to the mill from school, and works there till she is married. What can she really know about the domestic life, the running of a household? And how ignorant must she be concerning the rearing of children! I have heard superior people complain that the Lancashire girls do not care for home-life—that many of them go to the mills, not because of necessity, but because they prefer such work to domestic duties. But take the case of those who are really obliged to earn their

living—and they are the people I have to deal with—what can you expect? It is not fair to criticize the women for not being what they have no opportunity of becoming—domesticated.

And they go about the streets at night! They do. I've seen thousands of them. And they never read an improving book! They don't. The trashiest of novels is their fare.

But what would you have? I know that if my life had been cast in a different mould, and I had to jump out of bed at five each morning and, well or sickly, proceed to work in a noisome shed, amid an uproar of machinery that is deafening, with nothing bright or beautiful in the surroundings, I, too, would be very human, and get distraction and excitement from promenading the streets with my friends. And I am quite sure that after I went home to my tea I would have no desire to read an improving book. I, too, would want to read silly novels about dukes and earls, the fair Gwendoline and the captivating Angelina, and forget my own sordid life by moving into a new and fictitious world, and comparing myself to the most charming characters. It reveals a lack of the sense of proportion to find fault with these women workers for doing the very things the rest of us would do if we were similarly circumstanced.

Some people blame the employers for the present condition of things. I don't. The Lancashire employers, as a class, are as considerate and as sterling a set of men as are to be found anywhere in the field of industry. Of recent years there has been a remarkable improvement in the style of mills, in the sanitation, in the ventilation. They cannot be legitimately charged with cutting wages. Their goods have to be sold in markets where there is sharp competition, prices must be such that they can undersell their competitors, wages must respond to those prices. Women can do certain classes of work as well as and better than can men; they are more deft. Women are practically on an equality with men so far as earning money is concerned. I heard no complaints from men about women workers. There is a recognition that if wages were not low the goods could not be sold at the price they are. Therefore, there would be less work if wages were higher. Sociologists have innumerable remedies for the present condition of affairs—which are not arranged by some evil-disposed persons, but are evolved from conflicting economic causes.

But through the mist of confusion is the flaming sword of facts: That the operatives of Lancashire are disposed to degeneration, and that among the important reasons for this are women

working whilst they are child-bearing, failing to feed children from the natural source, and the mal-nutrition of youngsters, not because of wickedness but because of ignorance.

The humidity of the air in many of the work rooms is relaxing, it saps the energy, it produces a slackness of physical fibre, which causes weariness. Though there be windows for ventilation, these are often closed by the workpeople themselves. Living amid such damp heat they are susceptible to chills, so they shut out the draughts. The air is often charged with steam, which, mixed with the odour of size and the lubricants on the machinery, produces an atmosphere deleterious to the lungs—a stench not much noticed by the workers themselves, because they have got used to it, but very noticeable to the nostrils of an outsider like myself. Many women told me that "steaming" brings about enervation, especially in the afternoon, when the temperature generally tops 70 degrees. This induces constant perspiration, and leads to weakness. The effect on a prospective mother can be imagined.

The coming of children, however, is not looked upon with discontent. Large families are welcome, but not altogether because love of children is strong in the hearts of the parents. For some years it may mean a bit of a struggle

getting enough to feed the yearly arrival, and to provide boots and clothing for Tommy, Annie, Willie, Katie, and the rest. But the parents have their eyes fixed a few years ahead. As soon as Tommy, Annie, and the others can pass Standard IV. they are pushed into the mills. It is by no means infrequent to find small houses occupied by big families, and the weekly incomings from £6 to £7. That is the time looked to, when the children can earn more than their keep. Accordingly, during the last two or three years there has been a considerable increase in the number of boy and girl workers. The little ones go in as "tenters"—helpers of grown-ups in charge of several looms.

Whilst little wisps of girls are to be seen, so are broad-set, grey-haired women. Single, married, or widowed, the Lancashire woman can earn her own living, and often helps to maintain others. There is a streak of independence in her character which one cannot refrain from admiring. But the hot, spongy atmosphere drives age apace, and many a woman of forty is wizened, twenty years before her time. Their mid-day meal for years has generally been bread and tea.

It would be paying a foolish compliment to say the Lancashire working woman has any

polish of manners. She hasn't. But she is honest, straightforward, owns a ready tongue, and has a good eye for the humour of a story.

See her when she is hastening home to dinner, a dark tartan shawl over her head—pulled so close that sometimes she reminds one of the Persian woman hiding her face from the male—whilst the pavements rattle with the metallic music of her clogs. But see the same lass on a Sunday, or when she takes her annual holiday at Blackpool or at Douglas, as I have seen her. Then she is my lady, indeed, in good clothes, silken blouse, neat boots, and feathered hat—not outrageously gaudy after the style of the maid from the Mile End Road in the East End of London, but dressed with taste; and she carries herself with aplomb, and spends her money, and has a good time, and dances in the great halls, and enjoys herself with the frank appreciation that all it costs has been well earned, that the five or six pounds she flings away in a fortnight are her own, and she has good reason to be satisfied with herself. She is generous. To "stand treat" is her delight. Her speech is broad in dialect. But her talk is not silly or gigglish; it is shrewd common sense.

That is the bright picture. But there is another picture. I confess that when I was in Bolton,

Burnley, Blackburn, Preston, Oldham, and other towns, quietly making my inquiries for the purposes of this chapter, I saw little of it; but again and again came the hoarse whisper, the women are drinking more than they did, and many of them, still young, openly enter the public houses and have their glasses of ale. Then come scenes of brawling, even street-fights—scenes over which it is well to pull the curtain of silence.

Yet there are cases—and these, most happily, are the majority—where the husband and wife both work, and are both proudly doing their best to lead industrious and kindly lives. On the Saturday afternoon the husband will give a hand in cleaning the backyard, wash the windows, even blacklead the grate. But on most nights, after he has had his tea, he is free. He can go to his workman's club and pass the evening companionably.

Not so the wife, who also got up at five in the morning. There are little household duties to be performed, there is always a bit of sewing or a bit of darning to be done, or a patch to be put on the little son's knickerbockers.

I recall one Saturday night in Oldham—the streets thronged, the week-end shopping in full swing—walking round with a friend, and up a side street we passed a door, and there in the

kitchen was a woman washing. My friend knew her, and we halted for a few minutes.

"Oh," she said, half apologetically, wiping her soap-sudded hands on her apron, "I'm just washing the children's bit things, so they can dry in the night, and they can have clean pinafores on the Sunday." And that was not unusual.

"Well, we men don't get the worst of it," I said to my friend as we turned away.

I raised my hat to that woman and her class. She was doing her work, cheerfully and uncomplainingly, as thousands of them do.

But I wish women had not to work long hours in the mills, and that among the male children they brought into the world there were fewer with crooked bodies.

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