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Содержание

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AIR AND WATER POLLUTION

We have been lately staying at a pleasant sea-side resort. The stretch of sands on the beach is beautiful, the houses generally well built and commodious, the accommodation for strangers excellent. With much to commend, one thing struck us as very anomalous. There are several factories, including one or two bottle-works, and from these are almost constantly sent forth huge volumes of dense black smoke, which according to the direction of the wind, pour across the otherwise fair scene, and tend greatly to pollute the atmosphere. Now, this we presume to think is a serious encroachment on public rights. Nature beneficently provides a pure atmosphere, which all may enjoy, and that will be favourable to vegetable growth. Despising this primary principle, and acting only from sheer selfishness, certain individuals, ordinarily known as capitalists, set up factories with tall brick chimneys, from which are vomited those hideously dark masses of coal-smoke, in defiance of good taste, decency, and common-sense. We had almost said in defiance of honesty, because the air of heaven is a universal inheritance, and the pollution of it for selfish ends is, morally speaking, little better than picking a pocket. Yet, how much of this aggressive dishonesty is habitually practised! The air of towns and villages is polluted. Some of the most beautiful rural scenes are polluted. Over charming dells, clothed in natural shrubbery and flowers, to which one would like to flee and be at rest, is seen hovering a pall of black smoke, projected from some sort of factory or a paper-mill, and doing its best to transform beauty into ugliness. Surely, to speak mildly, that is a public wrong.

Travelling through England, and entering what are termed the manufacturing districts, we come upon the Smoke Demon in full blast. Who, for example, can forget the revolting aspect presented by Sheffield or Wigan? The sky hidden by dark smoke, the houses begrimed, and the land blighted, as if saturated with coal-culm. Obviously, there is a prevailing sootiness; and speculating as to how people can possibly live amidst such horrors, we think with a feeling of relief of the joy they possibly experience when on Sunday the chimneys cease to smoke, the blue firmament is suffered to be unveiled, and children are able to fill their lungs with air comparatively free from impurity. Even in the neighbourhood of towns not absolutely of the manufacturing class, the tourist is pained to observe what atmospheric deteriorations are caused by smoke. In few places nowadays are there not tokens of industry involving the application of steam-power. Tall chimneys are apt to start up where least expected, with the usual results. These brick chimneys are not usually an embellishment to the landscape; but we raise no objection to them on this ground. Required for purposes of manufacture, and valuable in connection with the employment of large numbers of persons, they may be viewed as indispensable adjuncts in promoting commercial prosperity, and increasing the national wealth. Accordingly, it is not the chimney-stalks we find fault with; it is the vast masses of smoke that needlessly issues from them, which at a very small expense and a slight degree of care, could be effectually prevented. For want of this reasonable amount of care, the green fields in the vicinity of the chimneys cease to be green. The soot falling on the pasturage, defiles the herbage; and the poor sheep and lambs, born to experience the vicissitudes of weather, but at least to wear clean wool upon their backs, are as dingy as professional chimney-sweeps. Unmistakably, they have been besmirched by the Smoke Demon, who in his iniquitous visitations respects neither man nor beast, and is apparently indifferent to what becomes of the whole animal and vegetable creation. Perish the comfort of everybody; let smoke in any measure of density have its sway! That is the doctrine of

greed predominant in this wonderfully advanced nineteenth century, which some people are never done eulogising.

We see a curious instance of the Smoke Demon's proceedings in a reputedly fashionable part of a large city. A piece of land had just been laid out in the building of mansions of a superior class – not one of them valued at less than seven or eight thousand pounds – when lo and behold the purchasers of the newly erected edifices find to their consternation that the tall chimney of an unexpected factory has begun to belch volumes of black smoke into their back-windows all day long! The chimney – that of a perfectly respectable flour-mill, we believe – is unexceptionable as regards chimney architecture. It is tall and handsomely tapered; but what signifies these commendable qualities? There, from morning to night, goes its smoke, polluting the atmosphere in the bedrooms, killing the flowers in the conservatories, odious and sickening in all directions. Very hard this on the purchasers of these splendid mansions. They have got unexceptionably good houses, but with what an atmospheric drawback!

Why, however, should municipal authorities tolerate such abominations? Yes, why should they? There exist in many places police edicts designed to quench the Smoke Demon. Through the vigilance of the authorities, the smoke nuisance in London has been immensely modified within our recollection. In some large provincial towns it has likewise been materially abated. But taking the country at large, it is about as bad as ever. The evil has little chance of being thoroughly mastered by any local magistracy. The very authorities who should stamp out the abomination are likely enough to be the evil-doers themselves, or are at least so compromised by surrounding influences as purposely in this particular to neglect the interests of the community. Besides, to put existing and not very distinct laws in motion, a heavy expense is liable to be incurred. And local authorities of all kinds do not like to encounter litigation unless strongly urged by public clamour and backed by persons of note, who do not mind to take trouble and share part of the cost. We apprehend that no effectual remedy is obtainable in present circumstances.

The true corrective would be to assign the conservancy of the atmosphere and of rivers to officers directly appointed by and responsible to the crown. To this opinion has come Dr Richardson, one of the most eminent promulgators of the laws of health. In a recent lecture on the subject at the Royal Institution, he says very pointedly: 'In the future of sanitary science, the politician must come forward more resolutely than he has done, in order to secure for those he governs three requisites – pure water, pure food, and pure air. It is utterly hopeless to trust to companies in a matter of such vital importance as the supply of water. It is equally hopeless to trust to the undirected action of local authorities.' Proceeding to state that a remedy can be found only in the official action of a supreme authority, he says: 'As to pure air, there is no practical legislation of any kind. The air of our large towns is charged with smoke and impurity. The air of our great factories is charged with dusts which destroy life with the precision of a deadly aim. Dr Purdon, one of the certifying surgeons under the Factory Acts, reports that in flax-working factories under his care, the carders, who are all females, if they get a carding-machine at sixteen years, generally die at thirty years. Could anything be more terrible than such a fact, that a girl of sixteen should have to live by an occupation that will bring her existence to an end in fourteen years, and to that end with all the prolonged wasting, sleeplessness, suffering, incident to the disease consumption of the lungs? If it were the fate of these doomed workers that at the close of fourteen years' work the majority of them were taken forth and shot dead in an instant, their fate were infinitely better than it is. The heart of the nation would thus be aroused, and the law in all its majesty would be put in operation to arrest the progress of the crime and to punish the offenders. Yet, year after year as terrible an offence goes on, and because the result of it is hidden in the sick-room, there is no arrest of its progress, no punishment for its commission.'

In the same lecture, Dr Richardson speaks with equal vehemence on the too prevalent practice of polluting rivers and wells by the influx of sewage from large towns and various kinds of public works, dye-works in particular. Here, again, the action of local authorities is generally hopeless.

Magistrates and town councils will complacently see a river flowing past them loaded with impurities. 'The government,' he says, 'must either produce a process or processes for pure water supply, and insist on every local authority carrying out the proper method; or it must – and this would be far better – take the whole matter into its own hands, so that under its supreme direction every living centre should, without fail, receive the first necessity of healthy life in the condition fitted for the necessities of all who live. By recent legislation we had some security for obtaining fresh animal food, and foods freed of foreign substances or adulterations. The penalties that might be inflicted on those who sell decomposing, diseased, or adulterated foods were beginning to have effect, and much good was resulting.' Similar regulations ought to be applied to water. The fouling of rivers by sewage must be rendered penal. What horrid ideas arise on the consideration that a large part of the population of London are daily using the water of the Thames, into which has been poured the sewage of Oxford and a number of other places! The Clyde below Glasgow offers an example of still greater pollution; but its very badness saves it from use for domestic purposes; and in point of fact this fine river, for the improved navigation of which so much has been done, can now scarcely be spoken of as anything else than a gigantic common sewer, on which ships of large burden are borne to and from the sea. The Irwell at Manchester offers a specimen of an impure river of a different type. Here much of the pollution seems to arise from the liquid refuse of dye and other works. The last time we saw the Irwell, it had all the appearance of a sluggish river of black ink. Its colour, however, is liable to change with the predominating dye-stuffs which it happens to receive. The droll remark is made, that boys who indiscreetly take a fancy for bathing in it are apt to come out blue. Its condition and qualities were some time ago commemorated in a few comic verses in a newspaper, of which a cutting was sent to us. We give them as being too clever to be lost sight of.

SONG OF THE IRWELL

'I flow by tainted, noisome spots,
A dark and deadly river;
Foul gases my forget-me-nots,
Which haunt the air for ever.
I grow, I glide, I slip, I slide,
I mock your poor endeavour;
For men may write, and men may talk,
But I reek on for ever.

I reek with all my might and main,
Of plague and death the brewer;
With here and there a nasty drain,
And here and there a sewer.
By fetid bank, impure and rank,
I swirl, a loathsome river;
For men may write, and men may talk,
But I'll reek on for ever.

I grew, I glode, I slipped, I slode,
My pride I left behind me;
I left it in my pure abode —
Now take me as you find me.
For black as ink, from many a sink,

I roll a poisonous river;
And men may write, and men may talk,
But I'll reek on for ever.

And thus my vengeance, still I seek
Foul drain, and not a river;
My breath is strong, though I am weak,
Death floats on me for ever.
You still may fight, or may unite
To use your joint endeavour;
But I'll be "boss," in spite of Cross,
And poison you for ever.'

We trust that the concluding threat of remaining for ever a poisonous and fetid river is not true of the Irwell any more than the Thames or the Clyde. The subject of river-pollution, as of air-pollution, is too serious to be much longer neglected, and we trust that government, setting aside private, selfish, and factious interests, will soon deal with it in as peremptory a fashion as constitutional forms will admit. As concerns the pollution of the air by smoke from factories, there is not a vestige of excuse. We have shewn again and again with, we fear, tiresome reiteration, that the consumption of smoke is a very simple mechanical process, and has the advantage not only of keeping the air unpolluted, but is attended with such a considerable saving of fuel, as to render the first cost of the appliances of no consequence. If such be the case, and we can prove it by many years' experience, the proprietors of public works at the sea-side resort already mentioned, and hundreds of other factory owners, are clearly chargeable with a shameful degree of disregard to the rights and feelings of their fellow-creatures.

W. C.

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS
CHAPTER XXXVII. – REST AND PEACE

Time has run on since then, and my life has grown fuller and happier. It was a great disappointment to Philip and Lilian to find what my boasted good fortune really was; and nothing would reconcile them to the idea of my remaining at the Home, although they were not able to deny that the work there was congenial to me.

Marian Trafford never forgave me my one day's grandeur, and never again addressed me as an equal when we chanced to meet. She and her husband did not lead the happiest of wedded lives. On the evening of Lilian's wedding-day, Arthur Trafford was found lying on the floor of his dressing-room with an exploded pistol by his side. If he really meant to destroy himself, he had attempted it in the half-hearted way with which he did everything, having only grazed his temples and swooned with fright, and so offended his wife to no purpose. Poor Marian, her married life was neither a long one nor a happy one! No child's voice was heard at Fairview; and the miserable bickerings between the husband and wife were common gossip. She was not the kind of woman to try to conceal her disappointment; and he was not the kind of man to spare her the knowledge that she had never possessed his love. Could he have foreseen, he would doubtlessly have adopted a different policy, and at anyrate kept up some semblance of affection.

A neglected cold and improper clothing for the season brought on an attack of inflammation of the lungs, to which Marian succumbed; and after her death it was found that she had avenged herself. A lawyer was hastily summoned to her bedside, and her will made as soon as her illness was pronounced dangerous. After the funeral it was found that the endeavours of Arthur and his sister to make up for the past by extra attention at the last had been in vain. It was said that she talked to them about the large fortune which they would inherit up to almost the last hour; and their disappointment was bitter in proportion.

All Marian Trafford's wealth was left to Lilian's children. Not to Lilian, as she in a characteristic letter informed her – 'In case your husband should die, and Arthur should get the property after all, for he would be sure to marry you directly. Many and many a time has he taunted me about his love for you; and as good as said I wasn't to be compared! But if he married me for the sake of my money, he won't have much to boast of now. His sister too, Caroline, will be in a fine state; but she's only got herself to thank for what I have done. I *did* mean to leave something handsome to Caroline, till I overheard her talking to her brother about me begging him to have patience a little while longer, because the doctors said that I could not last out many days unless a turn came; and saying ever such things about what she had had to put up with! What she had to put up with, indeed! When she has had such a home at Fairview, and lived upon the best of everything, without its costing her a penny! And as to presents; no one could be more generous than I have been to Caroline; and she knows it, if she would only speak the truth. If I do not get over it, I am determined that *they* shan't be any the better off! I'd sooner leave everything to Miss Haddon, though I should be loath to do that too. Fortunately, there is you, dear; you are my sister after all, and your Ma was not treated well; I have always said that. Besides, I can't forget how kind you were to me, when you thought that it was *my* Ma who went wrong instead of yours. You never shewed off a bit; and it's only right you should be rewarded. I haven't put Aunt Pratt into my will, because one naturally does not care about its being known that any of one's relations are common people; but I should like you to give something handsome to her, and say it came from me;' and so forth, and so forth; a letter we were all only too glad to put out of sight and out of mind as soon as possible.

The Pratts were well taken care of, and not a little astonished at Marian's liberality, as it was interpreted to them by Lilian. Arthur Trafford made a great deal of protestation in the outset about

his repugnance to receiving the annuity which Philip offered; but of course he *did* receive it, and in time came to think that it was much less than he ought to have, always forestalling it. But Philip remained firm, and never increased the amount to more than was at first offered, a sum which he considered sufficient for an idle man to live upon.

How shall I write of the married life of Philip and Lilian? I will only say with the poet:

> Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
> Every moment lightly shaken ran itself in golden sands.

They were not selfish in their happiness, finding plenty of room in their hearts for those outside their own circle; which by the way was now a not very small one. Need I say they held fast to 'Sister Mary;' and though they could not be brought to allow that she had chosen the life she was best fitted for, they did their best to impart to it as much sunshine as they could; and I hope comforted themselves with the belief that my happiness was owing more to their efforts than my work. Was there a word of truth spoken in the jest, sometimes thrown playfully at me, to the effect that I was imbuing my god-child Mary with the notion that she had a mission, as her brothers term it? She was a thoughtful earnest child of fifteen, who had spent a great deal of her time with me, and sometimes said she would choose Aunt Mary's life before all others. It did her no harm to think so for the time being; but I knew that Aunt Mary would choose her mission to be a happy wife and mother. Failing that, I could only hope she would be as happy as Aunt Mary. For notwithstanding an occasional bit of sentiment, I was as happy a woman as could be found in the three kingdoms, with a larger circle of friends than I could well count. And very proud I was of their friendship, though the majority of them could not be said to belong to the upper strata of society. I had a large correspondence too – letters which brought tears of joy and thankfulness to my eyes, though they could not be quoted as elegant specimens of the art of letter-writing; to say nothing of their being addressed in a somewhat eccentric manner, occasionally sealed with a thimble, and so forth.

I imagined that the story of my life would run thus smoothly and evenly on to the end; but the aspect of things changed. First, we lost dear old Mrs Tipper, who passed peacefully away, lovingly tended in her last moments by her children, as she called us. She left everything she possessed to me. Shortly afterwards, Jane Osborne died, bequeathing the bulk of her property for the future maintenance of the Home, and what she termed a competence to me. Five hundred a year appeared to me something more than a competence; and with my dear old friend's legacy it made me a rich woman.

Philip and Lilian would now give me no peace, insisting that I had not the shadow of an excuse for remaining at the Home. Moreover, Hill Side was waiting for me. They had been long engaged in altering and improving Fairview, and had at length taken up their abode there. It was now a large estate, sufficient ground adjoining having been purchased to make a good park; and the trees, planted fifteen years before, were beginning to look respectable. The house itself has been a great deal altered and *subdued*, as Philip calls it, a story being taken away, and wings thrown out, &c.; very greatly to its improvement. It now looks a fitting home for a family of good standing, and as Philip's brother allows, a residence worthy of one who owns the name of Dallas.

In truth they had outgrown Hill Side; two spirited boys and three girls with the necessary arrangements for an education befitting their accumulating wealth, were not contemplated in the first plans; and I could not pretend to think that the change had been made solely on my account; although they threatened to let the place fall to ruin, if I would not go to it. Everything was left just as it was; Lilian took nothing but her mother's portrait, and Philip a portion only of his books; and to this also there was no demurring; Fairview being furnished befitting its size. Whilst I was still hesitating, or fancied that I was hesitating (for I found it very pleasant to dwell upon the idea of ending my days at Hill Side), Robert Wentworth put in an irresistible argument in favour of my yielding to their wishes,

and quitting the Home. He pointed out that I was preventing some poor gentlewoman from earning the income pertaining to the situation. I was not a little surprised at his going over to their side; but, I could not, had I wished to do so, deny the reasonableness of his argument. As soon, therefore, as a lady was found to undertake the office, I resigned it.

My home-coming was made a fête-day in the village. Had a royal visitor been expected, more could not have been done in the way of preparation. The place was gay with flags and evergreens, whilst feasting and bell-ringing were going on all day. And the approach to my future home was arched over with flowers, and 'Welcome' repeated wherever the word could be put, but expressed more delightfully than all in the faces of Philip, Lilian, and their children. It was a busy day too, as 'befitted the coming home of Aunt Mary,' laughingly said the children. A dinner was given to the grown-up people in a large tent on the green; and later on a tea, to which children were invited, with a day's holiday to all and sports between times. Of course Becky and her husband were honoured guests with their eight children. He is now a flourishing market-gardener, very proud of his little woman, though her happy married life does not tend to decrease the size of her mouth, since there is always a smile upon her face.

We had all been very busy, and were glad to take our tea on the terrace in the cool of the evening – just sufficiently distant from the sound of merriment in the village below. After tea, Philip and Lilian, lovers still, stroll down to the green to watch the sports awhile, the tired children electing to remain with Aunt Mary and Uncle Robert. My eyes followed the two as they passed down the path under the flowery arches, husband and wife in all the best sense of the words. Philip was a stately, thoughtful, English gentleman, growing anxious and ambitious for his two boys; a little too ambitious, I told him, in certain directions, since they are but mortal. And his happy wife, beautiful 'with all the soul's expansion,' was worthy to be the mother of girls – confiding to me *her* ambition to fit them to influence the lives of honourable men.

My nieces, as they were called, were to live with me in turn. Lilian says they are very pitiful to such of their friends as have no Aunt Mary. Little Phil was very enthusiastically describing to me the advantages of my new home.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.