VARIOUS

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, VOLUME 07, NO. 43, MAY, 1861

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The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 07, No. 43, May, 1861

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Содержание

Various
The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 07, No. 43, May, 1861 / A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics

AGNES OF SORRENTO

CHAPTER I

THE OLD TOWN.

The setting sunbeams slant over the antique gateway of Sorrento, fusing into a golden bronze the brown freestone vestments of old Saint Antonio, who with his heavy stone mitre and upraised hands has for centuries kept watch thereupon.

A quiet time he has of it up there in the golden Italian air, in petrified act of blessing, while orange lichens and green mosses from year to year embroider quaint patterns on the seams of his sacerdotal vestments, and small tassels of grass volunteer to ornament the folds of his priestly drapery, and golden showers of blossoms from some more hardy plant fall from his ample sleeve-cuffs. Little birds perch and chitter and wipe their beaks unconcernedly, now on the tip of his nose and now on the point of his mitre, while the world below goes on its way pretty much as it did when the good saint was alive, and, in despair of the human brotherhood, took to preaching to the birds and the fishes.

Whoever passed beneath this old arched gateway, thus saint-guarded, in the year of our Lord's grace—, might have seen under its shadow, sitting opposite to a stand of golden oranges, the little Agnes.

A very pretty picture was she, reader.—with such a face as you sometimes see painted in those wayside shrines of sunny Italy, where the lamp burns pale at evening, and gillyflower and cyclamen are renewed with every morning.

She might have been fifteen or thereabouts, but was so small of stature that she seemed yet a child. Her black hair was parted in a white unbroken seam down to the high forehead, whose serious arch, like that of a cathedral-door, spoke of thought and prayer. Beneath the shadows of this brow lay brown, translucent eyes, into whose thoughtful depths one might look as pilgrims gaze into the waters of some saintly well, cool and pure down to the unblemished sand at the bottom. The small lips had a gentle compression which indicated a repressed strength of feeling; while the straight line of the nose, and the flexible, delicate nostril, were perfect as in those sculptured fragments of the antique which the soil of Italy so often gives forth to the day from the sepulchres of the past. The habitual pose of the head and face had the shy uplooking grace of a violet; and yet there was a grave tranquillity of expression, which gave a peculiar degree of character to the whole figure.

At the moment at which we have called your attention, the fair head is bent, the long eyelashes lie softly down on the pale, smooth cheek; for the Ave Maria bell is sounding from the Cathedral of Sorrento, and the child is busy with her beads.

By her side sits a woman of some threescore years, tall, stately, and squarely formed, with ample breadth of back and size of chest, like the robust dames of Sorrento. Her strong Roman nose, the firm, determined outline of her mouth, and a certain energy in every motion, speak the woman of will and purpose. There is a degree of vigor in the decision with which she lays down her spindle and bows her head, as a good Christian of those days would, at the swinging of the evening bell.

But while the soul of the child in its morning freshness, free from pressure or conscience of earthly care, rose like an illuminated mist to heaven, the words the white-haired woman repeated were twined with threads of worldly prudence,—thoughts of how many oranges she had sold, with a rough guess at the probable amount for the day,—and her fingers wandered from her beads a moment to see if the last coin had been swept from the stand into her capacious pocket, and her eyes wandering after them suddenly made her aware of the fact that a handsome cavalier was standing in the gate, regarding her pretty grandchild with looks of undisguised admiration.

"Let him look!" she said to herself, with a grim clasp on her rosary;—"a fair face draws buyers, and our oranges must be turned into money; but he who does more than look has an affair with me;—so gaze away, my master, and take it out in buying oranges!—*Ave, Maria! ora pro nobis, nunc et,*" etc., etc.

A few moments, and the wave of prayer which had flowed down the quaint old shadowy street, bowing all heads as the wind bowed the scarlet tassels of neighboring clover-fields, was passed, and all the world resumed the work of earth just where they left off when the bell began.

"Good even to you, pretty maiden!" said the cavalier, approaching the stall of the orange-woman with the easy, confident air of one secure of a ready welcome, and bending down on the yet prayerful maiden the glances of a pair of piercing hazel eyes that looked out on each side of his aquiline nose with the keenness of a falcon's.

"Good even to you, pretty one! We shall take you for a saint, and worship you in right earnest, if you raise not those eyelashes soon."

"Sir! my lord!" said the girl,—a bright color flushing into her smooth brown cheeks, and her large dreamy eyes suddenly upraised with a flutter, as of a bird about to take flight.

"Agnes, bethink yourself!" said the white-haired dame;—"the gentleman asks the price of your oranges;—be alive, child!"

"Ah, my lord," said the young girl, "here are a dozen fine ones."

"Well, you shall give them me, pretty one," said the young man, throwing a gold piece down on the stand with a careless ring.

"Here, Agnes, run to the stall of Raphael the poulterer for change," said the adroit dame, picking up the gold.

"Nay, good mother, by your leave," said the unabashed cavalier; "I make my change with youth and beauty thus!" And with the word he stooped down and kissed the fair forehead between the eyes.

"For shame, Sir!" said the elderly woman, raising her distaff,—her great glittering eyes flashing beneath her silver hair like tongues of lightning from a white cloud, "Have a care!—this child is named for blessed Saint Agnes, and is under her protection."

"The saints must pray for us, when their beauty makes us forget ourselves," said the young cavalier, with a smile. "Look me in the face, little one," he added;—"say, wilt thou pray for me?"

The maiden raised her large serious eyes, and surveyed the haughty, handsome face with that look of sober inquiry which one sometimes sees in young children, and the blush slowly faded from, her cheek, as a cloud fades after sunset.

"Yes, my lord," she answered, with a grave simplicity,—"I will pray for you."

"And hang this upon the shrine of Saint Agnes for my sake," he added, drawing from his finger a diamond ring, which he dropped into her hand; and before mother or daughter could add another word or recover from their surprise, he had thrown the corner of his mantle over his shoulder and was off down the narrow street, humming the refrain of a gay song.

"You have struck a pretty dove with that bolt," said another cavalier, who appeared to have been observing the proceeding, and now, stepping forward, joined him.

"Like enough," said the first, carelessly.

"The old woman keeps her mewed up like a singing-bird," said the second; "and if a fellow wants speech of her, it's as much as his crown is worth; for Dame Elsie has a strong arm, and her distaff is known to be heavy."

"Upon my word," said the first cavalier, stopping and throwing a glance backward,—"where do they keep her?"

"Oh, in a sort of pigeon's nest up above the Gorge; but one never sees her, except under the fire of her grandmother's eyes. The little one is brought up for a saint, they say, and goes nowhere but to mass, confession, and the sacrament."

"Humph!" said the other, "she looks like some choice old picture of Our Lady,—not a drop of human blood in her. When I kissed her forehead, she looked into my face as grave and innocent as a babe. One is tempted to try what one can do in such a case."

"Beware the grandmother's distaff!" said the other, laughing.

"I've seen old women before," said the cavalier, as they turned down the street and were lost to view.

Meanwhile the grandmother and granddaughter were roused from the mute astonishment in which they were gazing after the young cavalier by a tittering behind them; and a pair of bright eyes looked out upon, them from beneath a bundle of long, crimson-headed clover, whose rich carmine tints were touched to brighter life by setting sunbeams.

There stood Giulietta, the head coquette of the Sorrento girls, with her broad shoulders, full chest, and great black eyes, rich and heavy as those of the silver-haired ox for whose benefit she had been cutting clover. Her bronzed cheek was smooth as that of any statue, and showed a color like that of an open pomegranate; and the opulent, lazy abundance of her ample form, with her leisurely movements, spoke an easy and comfortable nature,—that is to say, when Giulietta was pleased; for it is to be remarked that there lurked certain sparkles deep down in her great eyes, which might, on occasion, blaze out into sheet-lightning, like her own beautiful skies, which, lovely as they are, can thunder and sulk with terrible earnestness when the fit takes them. At present, however, her face was running over with mischievous merriment, as she slyly pinched little Agnes by the ear.

"So you know not yon gay cavalier, little sister?" she said, looking askance at her from under her long lashes.

"No, indeed! What has an honest girl to do with knowing gay cavaliers?" said Dame Elsie, bestirring herself with packing the remaining oranges into a basket, which she covered trimly with a heavy linen towel of her own weaving. "Girls never come to good who let their eyes go walking through the earth, and have the names of all the wild gallants on their tongues. Agnes knows no such nonsense,—blessed be her gracious patroness, with Our Lady and Saint Michael!"

"I hope there is no harm in knowing what is right before one's eyes," said Giulietta. "Anybody must be blind and deaf not to know the Lord Adrian. All the girls in Sorrento know him. They say he is even greater than he appears,—that he is brother to the King himself; at any rate, a handsomer and more gallant gentleman never wore spurs."

"Let him keep to his own kind," said Elsie. "Eagles make bad work in dovecots. No good comes of such gallants for us."

"Nor any harm, that I ever heard of," said Giulietta. "But let me see, pretty one,—what did he give you? Holy Mother! what a handsome ring!"

"It is to hang on the shrine of Saint Agnes," said the younger girl, looking up with simplicity.

A loud laugh was the first answer to this communication. The scarlet clover-tops shook and quivered with the merriment.

"To hang on the shrine of Saint Agnes!" Giulietta repeated. "That is a little too good!"

"Go, go, you baggage!" said Elsie, wrathfully brandishing her spindle. "If ever you get a husband, I hope he'll give you a good beating! You need it, I warrant! Always stopping on the bridge there, to have cracks with the young men! Little enough you know of saints, I dare say! So keep

away from my child!—Come, Agnes," she said, as she lifted the orange-basket on to her head; and, straightening her tall form, she seized the girl by the hand to lead her away.

CHAPTER II

THE DOVE-COT.

The old town of Sorrento is situated on an elevated plateau, which stretches into the sunny waters of the Mediterranean, guarded on all sides by a barrier of mountains which defend it from bleak winds and serve to it the purpose of walls to a garden. Here, groves of oranges and lemons,—with their almost fabulous coincidence of fruitage with flowers, fill the air with perfume, which blends with that of roses and jessamines; and the fields are so starred and enamelled with flowers that they might have served as the type for those Elysian realms sung by ancient poets. The fervid air is fanned by continual sea-breezes, which give a delightful elasticity to the otherwise languid climate. Under all these cherishing influences, the human being develops a wealth and luxuriance of physical beauty unknown in less favored regions. In the region about Sorrento one may be said to have found the land where beauty is the rule and not the exception. The singularity there is not to see handsome points of physical proportion, but rather to see those who are without them. Scarce a man, woman, or child you meet who has not some personal advantage to be commended, while even striking beauty is common. Also, under these kindly skies, a native courtesy and gentleness of manner make themselves felt. It would seem as if humanity, rocked in this flowery cradle, and soothed by so many daily caresses and appliances of nursing Nature, grew up with all that is kindliest on the outward,—not repressed and beat in, as under the inclement atmosphere and stormy skies of the North.

The town of Sorrento itself overhangs the sea, skirting along rocky shores, which, hollowed here and there into picturesque grottoes, and fledged with a wild plumage of brilliant flowers and trailing vines, descend in steep precipices to the water. Along the shelly beach, at the bottom, one can wander to look out on the loveliest prospect in the world. Vesuvius rises with its two peaks softly clouded in blue and purple mists, which blend with its ascending vapors,—Naples and the adjoining villages at its base gleaming in the distance like a fringe of pearls on a regal mantle. Nearer by, the picturesque rocky shores of the island of Capri seem to pulsate through the dreamy, shifting mists that veil its sides; and the sea shimmers and glitters like the neck of a peacock with an iridescent mingling of colors: the whole air is a glorifying medium, rich in prismatic hues of enchantment.

The town on three sides is severed from the main land by a gorge two hundred feet in depth and forty or fifty in breadth, crossed by a bridge resting on double arches, the construction of which dates back to the time of the ancient Romans. This bridge affords a favorite lounging-place for the inhabitants, and at evening a motley assemblage may be seen lolling over its moss-grown sides,—men with their picturesque knit caps of scarlet or brown falling gracefully on one shoulder, and women with their shining black hair and the enormous pearl earrings which are the pride and heirlooms of every family. The present traveller at Sorrento may remember standing on this bridge and looking down the gloomy depths of the gorge, to where a fair villa, with its groves of orange-trees and gardens, overhangs the tremendous depths below.

Hundreds of years since, where this villa now stands was the simple dwelling of the two women whose history we have begun to tell you. There you might have seen a small stone cottage with a two-arched arcade in front, gleaming brilliantly white out of the dusky foliage of an orange-orchard. The dwelling was wedged like a bird-box between two fragments of rock, and behind it the land rose rocky, high, and steep, so as to form a natural wall. A small ledge or terrace of cultivated land here hung in air,—below it, a precipice of two hundred feet down into the Gorge of Sorrento. A couple of dozen orange-trees, straight and tall, with healthy, shining bark, here shot up from the fine black volcanic soil, and made with their foliage a twilight shadow on the ground, so deep that no vegetation, save a fine velvet moss, could dispute their claim to its entire nutritious offices. These trees were the sole wealth of the women and the sole ornament of the garden; but, as they stood there, not only laden with golden fruit, but fragrant with pearly blossoms, they made the little rocky platform seem a perfect

Garden of the Hesperides. The stone cottage, as we have said, had an open, whitewashed arcade in front, from which one could look down into the gloomy depths of the gorge, as into some mysterious underworld. Strange and weird it seemed, with its fathomless shadows and its wild grottoes, over which hung, silently waving, long pendants of ivy, while dusky gray aloes uplifted their horned heads from great rock-rifts, like elfin spirits struggling upward out of the shade. Nor was wanting the usual gentle poetry of flowers; for white iris leaned its fairy pavilion over the black void like a pale-cheeked princess from the window of some dark enchanted castle, and scarlet geranium and golden broom and crimson gladiolus waved and glowed in the shifting beams of the sunlight. Also there was in this little spot what forms the charm of Italian gardens always,—the sweet song and prattle of waters. A clear mountain-spring burst through the rock on one side of the little cottage, and fell with a lulling noise into a quaint moss-grown water-trough, which had been in former times the sarcophagus of some old Roman sepulchre. Its sides were richly sculptured with figures and leafy scrolls and arabesques, into which the sly-footed lichens with quiet growth had so insinuated themselves as in some places almost to obliterate the original design; while, round the place where the water fell, a veil of ferns and maiden's-hair, studded with tremulous silver drops, vibrated to its soothing murmur. The superfluous waters, drained off by a little channel on one side, were conducted through the rocky parapet of the garden, whence they trickled and tinkled from rock to rock, falling with a continual drip among the swaying ferns and pendent ivy-wreaths, till they reached the little stream at the bottom of the gorge. This parapet or garden-wall was formed of blocks or fragments of what had once been white marble, the probable remains of the ancient tomb from which the sarcophagus was taken. Here and there a marble acanthus-leaf, or the capital of an old column, or a fragment of sculpture jutted from under the mosses, ferns, and grasses with which prodigal Nature had filled every interstice and carpeted the whole. These sculptured fragments everywhere in Italy seem to whisper from the dust, of past life and death, of a cycle of human existence forever gone, over whose tomb the life of to-day is built.

"Sit down and rest, my dove," said Dame Elsie to her little charge, as they entered their little inclosure.

Here she saw for the first time, what she had not noticed in the heat and hurry of her ascent, that the girl was panting and her gentle bosom rising and falling in thick heart-beats, occasioned by the haste with which she had drawn her onward.

"Sit down, dearie, and I will get you a bit of supper."

"Yes, grandmother, I will. I must tell my beads once for the soul of the handsome gentleman that kissed my forehead to-night."

"How did you know that he was handsome, child?" said the old dame, with some sharpness in her voice.

"He bade me look on him, grandmother, and I saw it."

"You must put such thoughts away, child," said the old dame.

"Why must I?" said the girl, looking up with an eye as clear and unconscious as that of a three-year old child.

"If she does not think, why should I tell her?" said Dame Elsie, as she turned to go into the house, and left the child sitting on the mossy parapet that overlooked the gorge. Thence she could see far off, not only down the dim, sombre abyss, but out to the blue Mediterranean beyond, now calmly lying in swathing-bands of purple, gold, and orange, while the smoky cloud that overhung Vesuvius became silver and rose in the evening light.

There is always something of elevation and parity that seems to come over one from being in an elevated region. One feels morally as well as physically above the world, and from that clearer air able to look down on it calmly with disengaged freedom. Our little maiden, sat for a few moments gazing, her large brown eyes dilating with a tremulous lustre, as if tears were half of a mind to start in them, and her lips apart with a delicate earnestness, like one who is pursuing some pleasing inner thought. Suddenly rousing herself, she began by breaking the freshest orange-blossoms from the golden-fruited

trees, and, kissing and pressing them to her bosom, she proceeded to remove the faded flowers of the morning from before a little rude shrine in the rock, where, in a sculptured niche, was a picture of the Madonna and Child, with a locked glass door in front of it. The picture was a happy transcript of one of the fairest creations of the religious school of Florence, done by one of those rustic copyists of whom Italy is full, who appear to possess the instinct of painting, and to whom we owe many of those sweet faces which sometimes look down on us by the way-side from rudest and homeliest shrines.

The poor fellow by whom it had been painted was one to whom years before Dame Elsie had given food and shelter for many months during a lingering illness; and he had painted so much of his dying heart and hopes into it that it had a peculiar and vital vividness in its power of affecting the feelings. Agnes had been familiar with this picture from early infancy. No day of her life had the flowers failed to be freshly placed before it. It had seemed to smile down sympathy on her childish joys, and to cloud over with her childish sorrows. It was less a picture to her than a presence; and the whole air of the little orange-garden seemed to be made sacred by it. When she had arranged her flowers, she kneeled down and began to say prayers for the soul of the young gallant.

"Holy Jesus," she said, "he is young, rich, handsome, and a king's brother; and for all these things the Fiend may tempt him to forget his God and throw away his soul. Holy Mother, give him good counsel!"

"Come, child, to your supper," said Dame Elsie. "I have milked the goats, and everything is ready."

CHAPTER III

THE GORGE.

After her light supper was over, Agnes took her distaff, wound with shining white flax, and went and seated herself in her favorite place, on the low parapet that overlooked the gorge.

This ravine, with its dizzy depths, its waving foliage, its dripping springs, and the low murmur of the little stream that pursued its way far down at the bottom, was one of those things which stimulated her impressible imagination, and filled her with a solemn and vague delight. The ancient Italian tradition made it the home of fauns and dryads, wild woodland creatures, intermediate links between vegetable life and that of sentient and reasoning humanity. The more earnest faith that came in with Christianity, if it had its brighter lights in an immortality of blessedness, had also its deeper shadows in the intenser perceptions it awakened of sin and evil, and of the mortal struggle by which the human spirit must avoid endless woe and rise to endless felicity. The myths with which the colored Italian air was filled in mediaeval ages no longer resembled those graceful, floating, cloud-like figures one sees in the ancient chambers of Pompeii,—the bubbles and rainbows of human fancy, rising aimless and buoyant, with a mere freshness of animal life, against a black background of utter and hopeless ignorance as to man's past or future. They were rather expressed by solemn images of mournful, majestic angels and of triumphant saints, or fearful, warning presentations of loathsome fiends. Each lonesome gorge and sombre dell had tales no more of tricky fauns and dryads, but of those restless, wandering demons who, having lost their own immortality of blessedness, constantly lie in wait to betray frail humanity, and cheat it of that glorious inheritance bought by the Great Redemption.

The education of Agnes had been one which rendered her whole system peculiarly sensitive and impressible to all influences from the invisible and unseen. Of this education we shall speak more particularly hereafter. At present we see her sitting in the twilight on the moss-grown marble parapet, her distaff, with its silvery flax, lying idly in her hands, and her widening dark eyes gazing intently into the gloomy gorge below, from which arose the far-off complaining babble of the brook at the bottom and the shiver and sigh of evening winds through the trailing ivy. The white mist was slowly rising, wavering, undulating, and creeping its slow way up the sides of the gorge. Now it hid a tuft of foliage, and now it wreathed itself around a horned clump of aloes, and, streaming far down below it in the dimness, made it seem like the goblin robe of some strange, supernatural being.

The evening light had almost burned out in the sky: only a band of vivid red lay low in the horizon out to sea, and the round full moon was just rising like a great silver lamp, while Vesuvius with its smoky top began in the obscurity to show its faintly flickering fires. A vague agitation seemed to oppress the child; for she sighed deeply, and often repeated with fervor the Ave Maria.

At this moment there began to rise from the very depths of the gorge below her the sound of a rich tenor voice, with a slow, sad modulation, and seeming to pulsate upward through the filmy, shifting mists. It was one of those voices which seem fit to be the outpouring of some spirit denied all other gifts of expression, and rushing with passionate fervor through this one gate of utterance. So distinctly were the words spoken, that they seemed each one to rise as with a separate intelligence out of the mist, and to knock at the door of the heart.

Sad is my life, and lonely!
No hope for me,
Save thou, my love, my only,
I see!

Where art then, O my fairest?
Where art thou gone?

Dove of the rock, I languish
Alone!

They say thou art so saintly,
Who dare love thee?
Yet bend thine eyelids holy
On me!

Though heaven alone possess thee,
Thou dwell'st above,
Yet heaven, didst thou but know it,
Is love.

There was such an intense earnestness in these sounds, that large tears gathered in the wide, dark eyes, and fell one after another upon the sweet alyssum and maiden's-hair that grew in the crevices of the marble wall. She shivered and drew away from the parapet, and thought of stories she had heard the nuns tell of wandering spirits who sometimes in lonesome places pour forth such entrancing music as bewilders the brain of the unwary listener, and leads him to some fearful destruction.

"Agnes!" said the sharp voice of old Elsie, appearing at the door,—"here! where are you?"

"Here, grandmamma."

"Who's that singing this time o' night?"

"I don't know, grandmamma."

Somehow the child felt as if that singing were strangely sacred to her,—a *rapport* between her and something vague and invisible, which might yet become dear.

"Is't down in the gorge?" said the old woman, coming with her heavy, decided step to the parapet, and looking over, her keen black eyes gleaming like dagger-blades info the mist. "If there's anybody there," she said, "let them go away, and not be troubling honest women with any of their caterwauling. Come, Agnes," she said, pulling the girl by the sleeve, "you must be tired, my lamb! and your evening-prayers are always so long, best be about them, girl, so that old grandmamma may put you to bed. What ails the girl? Been crying! Your hand is cold as a stone."

"Grandmamma, what if that might be a spirit?" she said. "Sister Rosa told me stories of singing spirits that have been in this very gorge."

"Likely enough," said Dame Elsie; "but what's that to us? Let 'em sing! —so long as we don't listen, where's the harm done? We will sprinkle holy water all round the parapet, and say the office of Saint Agnes, and let them sing till they are hoarse."

Such was the triumphant view which this energetic good woman took of the power of the means of grace which her church placed at her disposal.

Nevertheless, while Agnes was kneeling at her evening-prayers, the old dame consoled herself with a soliloquy, as with a brush she vigorously besprinkled the premises with holy water.

"Now, here's the plague of a girl! If she's handsome,—and nobody wants one that isn't,—why, then, it's a purgatory to look after her. This one is good enough,—none of your hussies, like Giulietta: but the better they are, the more sure to have fellows after them. A murrain on that cavalier,—king's brother, or what not!—it was he serenading, I'll be bound. I must tell Antonio, and have the girl married, for aught I see: and I don't want to give her to him either; he didn't bring her up. There's no peace for us mothers. Maybe I'll tell Father Francesco about it. That's the way poor little Isella was carried away. Singing is of the Devil, I believe; it always bewitches girls. I'd like to have poured some hot oil down the rocks: I'd have made him squeak in another tone, I reckon. Well, well! I hope I shall come in for a good seat in paradise for all the trouble I've had with her mother, and am like to have with her,—that's all!"

In an hour more, the large, round, sober moon was shining fixedly on the little mansion in the rocks, silvering the glossy darkness of the orange-leaves, while the scent of the blossoms arose like clouds about the cottage. The moonlight streamed through the unglazed casement, and made a square of light on the little bed where Agnes was sleeping, in which square her delicate face was framed, with its tremulous and spiritual expression most resembling in its sweet plaintive purity some of the Madonna faces of Frà Angelico,—those tender wild-flowers of Italian religion and poetry.

By her side lay her grandmother, with those sharp, hard, clearly cut features, so worn and bronzed by time, so lined with labor and care, as to resemble one of the Fates in the picture of Michel Angelo; and even in her sleep she held the delicate lily hand of the child in her own hard, brown one, with a strong and determined clasp.

While they sleep, we must tell something more of the story of the little Agnes,—of what she is, and what are the causes which have made her such.

CHAPTER IV

WHO AND WHAT.

Old Elsie was not born a peasant. Originally she was the wife of a steward in one of those great families of Rome whose state and traditions were princely. Elsie, as her figure and profile and all her words and movements indicated, was of a strong, shrewd, ambitious, and courageous character, and well disposed to turn to advantage every gift with which Nature had endowed her.

Providence made her a present of a daughter whose beauty was wonderful, even in a country where beauty is no uncommon accident. In addition to her beauty, the little Isella had quick intelligence, wit, grace, and spirit. As a child she became the pet and plaything of the Duchess whom Elsie served. This noble lady, pressed by the *ennui* which is always the moth and rust on the purple and gold of rank and wealth, had, as other noble ladies had in those days, and have now, sundry pets: greyhounds, white and delicate, that looked as if they were made of Sèvres china; spaniels with long silky ears and fringy paws; apes and monkeys, that made at times sad devastations in her wardrobe; and a most charming little dwarf, that was ugly enough to frighten the very owls, and spiteful as he was ugly. She had, moreover, peacocks, and macaws, and parrots, and all sorts of singing-birds, and falcons of every breed, and horses, and hounds,—in short, there is no saying what she did not have. One day she took it into her head to add the little Isella to the number of her acquisitions. With the easy grace of aristocracy, she reached out her jewelled hand and took Elsie's one flower to add to her conservatory,—and Elsie was only too proud to have it so.

Her daughter was kept constantly about the person of the Duchess, and instructed in all the wisdom which would have been allowed her, had she been the Duchess's own daughter, which, to speak the truth, was in those days nothing very profound,—consisting of a little singing and instrumentation, a little embroidery and dancing, with the power of writing her own name and of reading a love-letter.

All the world knows that the very idea of a pet is something to be spoiled for the amusement of the pet-owner; and Isella was spoiled in the most particular and circumstantial manner. She had suits of apparel for every day in the year, and jewels without end,—for the Duchess was never weary of trying the effect of her beauty in this and that costume; so that she sported through the great grand halls and down the long aisles of the garden much like a bright-winged hummingbird, or a damsel-fly all green and gold. She was a genuine child of Italy,—full of feeling, spirit, and genius,—alive in every nerve to the finger-tips; and under the tropical sunshine of her mistress's favor she grew as an Italian rose-bush does, throwing its branches freakishly over everything in a wild labyrinth of perfume, brightness, and thorns.

For a while her life was a triumph, and her mother triumphed with her at an humble distance. The Duchess had no daughter, and was devoted to her with the blind fatuity with which ladies of rank at times will invest themselves in a caprice. She arrogated to herself all the praises of her beauty and wit, allowed her to flirt and make conquests to her heart's content, and engaged to marry her to some handsome young officer of her train, when she had done being amused with her.

Now we must not wonder that a young head of fifteen should have been turned by this giddy elevation, nor that an old head of fifty should have thought all things were possible in the fortune of such a favorite. Nor must we wonder that the young coquette, rich in the laurels of a hundred conquests, should have turned her bright eyes on the son and heir, when he came home from the University of Bologna. Nor is it to be wondered at that this same son and heir, being a man as well as a duke's son, should have done as other men did,—fallen desperately in love with this dazzling, sparkling, piquant mixture of matter and spirit, which no university can prepare a young man to comprehend,—which always seemed to run from him, and yet always threw a Parthian shot behind her as she fled. Nor is it to be wondered at, if this same duke's son, after a week or two, did not know

whether he was on his head or his heels, or whether the sun rose in the east or the south, or where he stood, or whither he was going.

In fact, the youthful pair very soon came into that dream-land where are no more any points of the compass, no more division of time, no more latitude and longitude, no more up and down, but only a general wandering among enchanted groves and singing nightingales.

It was entirely owing to old Elsie's watchful shrewdness and address that the lovers came into this paradise by the gate of marriage; for the young man was ready to offer anything at the feet of his divinity, as the old mother was not slow to perceive.

So they stood at the altar, for the time being a pair of as true lovers as Romeo and Juliet: but then, what has true love to do with the son of a hundred generations and heir to a Roman principality?

Of course, the rose of love, having gone through all its stages of bud and blossom into full flower, must next begin to drop its leaves. Of course. Who ever heard of an immortal rose?

The time of discovery came. Isella was found to be a mother; and then the storm burst upon her and drabbled her in the dust as fearlessly as the summer-wind sweeps down and besmirches the lily it has all summer been wooing and flattering.

The Duchess was a very pious and moral lady, and of course threw her favorite out into the street as a vile weed, and virtuously ground her down under her jewelled high-heeled shoes.

She could have forgiven her any common frailty;—of course it was natural that the girl should have been seduced by the all-conquering charms of her son;—but aspire to *marriage* with their house! —pretend to be her son's *wife*! Since the time of Judas had such treachery ever been heard of?

Something was said of the propriety of walling up the culprit alive,—a mode of disposing of small family-matters somewhat *à la mode* in those times. But the Duchess acknowledged herself foolishly tender, and unable quite to allow this very obvious propriety in the case.

She contented herself with turning mother and daughter into the streets with every mark of ignominy, which was reduplicated by every one of her servants, lackeys, and court-companions, who, of course, had always known just how the thing must end.

As to the young Duke, he acted as a well-instructed young nobleman should, who understands the great difference there is between the tears of a duchess and those of low-born women. No sooner did he behold his conduct in the light of his mother's countenance than he turned his back on his low marriage with edifying penitence. He did not think it necessary to convince his mother of the real existence of a union whose very supposition made her so unhappy, and occasioned such an uncommonly disagreeable and tempestuous state of things in the well-bred circle where his birth called him to move. Being, however, a religious youth, he opened his mind to his family-confessor, by whose advice he sent a messenger with a large sum of money to Elsie, piously commending her and her daughter to the Divine protection. He also gave orders for an entire new suit of raiment for the Virgin Mary in the family-chapel, including a splendid set of diamonds, and promised unlimited candles to the altar of a neighboring convent. If all this could not atone for a youthful error, it was a pity. So he thought, as he drew on his riding-gloves and went off on a hunting-party, like a gallant and religious young nobleman.

Elsie, meanwhile, with her forlorn and disgraced daughter, found a temporary asylum in a neighboring mountain-village, where the poor, bedrabbled, broken-winged song-bird soon panted and fluttered her little life away.

When the once beautiful and gay Isella had been hidden in the grave, cold and lonely, there remained a little wailing infant, which Elsie gathered to her bosom.

Grim, dauntless, and resolute, she resolved, for the sake of this hapless one, to look life in the face once more, and try the battle under other skies.

Taking the infant in her arms, she travelled with her far from the scene of her birth, and set all her energies at work to make for her a better destiny than that which had fallen to the lot of her unfortunate mother.

She set about to create her nature and order her fortunes with that sort of downright energy with which resolute people always attack the problem of a new human existence. This child *should be happy*; the rocks on which her mother was wrecked she should never strike upon,—they were all marked on Elsie's chart. Love had been the root of all poor Isella's troubles,—and Agnes never should know love, till taught it safely by a husband of Elsie's own choosing.

The first step of security was in naming her for the chaste Saint Agnes, and placing her girlhood under her special protection. Secondly, which was quite as much to the point, she brought her up laboriously in habits of incessant industry,—never suffering her to be out of her sight, or to have any connection or friendship, except such as could be carried on under the immediate supervision of her piercing black eyes. Every night she put her to bed as if she had been an infant, and, wakening her again in the morning, took her with her in all her daily toils,—of which, to do her justice, she performed all the hardest portion, leaving to the girl just enough to keep her hands employed and her head steady.

The peculiar circumstance which had led her to choose the old town of Sorrento for her residence, in preference to any of the beautiful villages which impearl that fertile plain, was the existence there of a flourishing convent dedicated to Saint Agnes, under whose protecting shadow her young charge might more securely spend the earlier years of her life.

With this view, having hired the domicile we have already described, she lost no time in making the favorable acquaintance of the sisterhood,—never coming to them empty-handed. The finest oranges of her garden, the whitest flax of her spinning, were always reserved as offerings at the shrine of the patroness whom she sought to propitiate for her grandchild.

In her earliest childhood the little Agnes was led toddling to the shrine by her zealous relative; and at the sight of her fair, sweet, awe-struck face, with its viny mantle of encircling curls, the torpid bosoms of the sisterhood throbbed with a strange, new pleasure, which they humbly hoped was not sinful,—as agreeable things, they found, generally were. They loved the echoes of her little feet down the damp, silent aisles of their chapel, and her small, sweet, slender voice, as she asked strange baby-questions, which, as usual with baby-questions, hit all the insoluble points of philosophy and theology exactly on the head.

The child became a special favorite with the Abbess, Sister Theresa, a tall, thin, bloodless, sad-eyed woman, who looked as if she might have been cut out of one of the glaciers of Monte Rosa, but in whose heart the little fair one had made herself a niche, pushing her way up through, as you may have seen a lovely blue-fringed gentian standing in a snow-drift of the Alps with its little ring of melted snow around it.

Sister Theresa offered to take care of the child at any time when the grandmother wished to be about her labors; and so, during her early years, the little one was often domesticated for days together at the Convent. A perfect mythology of wonderful stories encircled her, which the good sisters were never tired of repeating to each other. They were the simplest sayings and doings of childhood,—handfuls of such wild-flowers as bespread the green turf of nursery-life everywhere, but miraculous blossoms in the eyes of these good women, whom Saint Agnes had unwittingly deprived of any power of making comparisons or ever having Christ's sweetest parable of the heavenly kingdom enacted in homes of their own.

Old Jocunda, the porteress, never failed to make a sensation with her one stock-story of how she found the child standing on her head and crying,—having been put into this reversed position in consequence of climbing up on a high stool to get her little fat hand into the vase of holy water, failing in which Christian attempt, her heels went up and her head down, greatly to her dismay.

"Nevertheless," said old Jocunda, gravely, "it showed an edifying turn in the child; and when I lifted the little thing up, it stopped crying the minute its little fingers touched the water, and it made a cross on its forehead as sensible as the oldest among us. Ah, sisters! there's grace there, or I'm mistaken."

All the signs of an incipient saint were, indeed, manifested in the little one. She never played the wild and noisy plays of common children, but busied herself in making altars and shrines, which she adorned with the prettiest flowers of the gardens, and at which she worked hour after hour in the quietest and happiest earnestness. Her dreams were a constant source of wonder and edification in the Convent, for they were all of angels and saints; and many a time, after hearing one, the sisterhood crossed themselves, and the Abbess said, *"Ex oribus parvulorum."* Always sweet, dutiful, submissive, cradling herself every night with a lulling of sweet hymns and infant murmur of prayers, and found sleeping in her little white bed with her crucifix clasped to her bosom, it was no wonder that the Abbess thought her the special favorite of her divine patroness, and, like her, the subject of an early vocation to be the celestial bride of One fairer than the children of men, who should snatch her away from all earthly things, to be united to Him in a celestial paradise.

As the child grew older, she often sat at evening, with wide, wondering eyes, listening over and over again to the story of the fair Saint Agnes:—How she was a princess, living in her father's palace, of such exceeding beauty and grace that none saw her but to love her, yet of such sweetness and humility as passed all comparison; and how, when a heathen prince would have espoused her to his son, she said, "Away from me, tempter! for I am betrothed to a lover who is greater and fairer than any earthly suitor,—he is so fair that the sun and moon are ravished by his beauty, so mighty that the angels of heaven are his servants"; how she bore meekly with persecutions and threatenings and death for the sake of this unearthly love; and when she had poured out her blood, how she came to her mourning friends in ecstatic vision, all white and glistening, with a fair lamb by her side, and bade them weep not for her, because she was reigning with Him whom on earth she had preferred to all other lovers. There was also the legend of the fair Cecilia, the lovely musician whom angels had rapt away to their choirs; the story of that queenly saint, Catharine, who passed through the courts of heaven, and saw the angels crowned with roses and lilies, and the Virgin on her throne, who gave her the wedding-ring that espoused her to be the bride of the King Eternal.

Fed with such legends, it could not be but that a child with a sensitive, nervous organization and vivid imagination should have grown up with an unworldly and spiritual character, and that a poetic mist should have enveloped all her outward perceptions similar to that palpitating veil of blue and lilac vapor that enshrouds the Italian landscape.

Nor is it to be marvelled at, if the results of this system of education went far beyond what the good old grandmother intended. For, though a stanch good Christian, after the manner of those times, yet she had not the slightest mind to see her grand-daughter a nun; on the contrary, she was working day and night to add to her dowry, and had in her eye a reputable middle-aged blacksmith, who was a man of substance and prudence, to be the husband and keeper of her precious treasure. In a home thus established she hoped to enthrone herself, and provide for the rearing of a generation of stout-limbed girls and boys who should grow up to make a flourishing household in the land. This subject she had not yet broached to her grand-daughter, though daily preparing to do so,—deferring it, it must be told, from a sort of jealous, yearning craving to have wholly to herself the child for whom she had lived so many years.

Antonio, the blacksmith to whom this honor was destined, was one of those broad-backed, full-chested, long-limbed fellows one shall often see around Sorrento, with great, kind, black eyes like those of an ox, and all the attributes of a healthy, kindly, animal nature. Contentedly he hammered away at his business; and certainly, had not Dame Elsie of her own providence elected him to be the husband of her fair grand-daughter, he would never have thought of the matter himself; but, opening the black eyes aforenamed upon the girl, he perceived that she was fair, and also received an inner light through Dame Elsie as to the amount of her dowry; and, putting these matters together, conceived a kindness for the maiden, and awaited with tranquillity the time when he should be allowed to commence his wooing.

REST AND MOTION

Motion and Rest are the two feet upon which existence goes. All action and all definite power result from the intimacy and consent of these opposite principles. If, therefore, one would construct any serviceable mechanism, he must incorporate into it, and commonly in a manifold way, a somewhat passive, a somewhat contrary, and, as it were, inimical to action, though action be the sole aim and use of his contrivance. Thus, the human body is penetrated by the passive and powerless skeleton, which is a mere weight upon the muscles, a part of the burden that, nevertheless, it enables them to bear. The lever of Archimedes would push the planet aside, provided only it were supplied with its indispensable complement, a fulcrum, or fixity: without this it will not push a pin. The block of the pulley must have its permanent attachment; the wheel of the locomotive engine requires beneath it the fixed rail; the foot of the pedestrian, solid earth; the wing of the bird rests upon the relatively stable air to support his body, and upon his body to gain power over the air. Nor is it alone of operations mechanical that the law holds good: it is universal; and its application to pure mental action may be shown without difficulty. A single act of the mind is represented by the formation of a simple sentence. The process consists, first, in the mind's *fixing upon and resting in* an object, which thereby becomes the subject of the sentence; and, secondly, in predication, which is movement, represented by the verb. The reader will easily supply himself with instances and illustrations of this, and need not, therefore, be detained.

In the economy of animal and vegetable existence, as in all that Nature makes, we observe the same inevitable association. Here is perpetual fixity of form, perpetual flux of constituent,—the ideas of Nature never changing, the material realization of them never ceasing to change. A horse is a horse through all the ages; yet the horse of to-day is changed from the horse of yesterday.

If one of these principles seem to get the start, and to separate itself, the other quickly follows. No sooner, for example, does any person perform an initial deed, proceeding purely (let us suppose) from free will, than Nature in him begins to repose therein, and consequently inclines to its repetition for the mere reason that it has been once done. This is Habit, which makes action passive, and is the greatest of labor-saving inventions. Custom is the habit of society, holding the same relation to progressive genius. It is the sleeping partner in the great social firm; it is thought and force laid up and become fixed capital. Annihilate this,—as in the French Revolution was attempted,—and society is at once reduced to its bare immediate force, and must scratch the soil with its fingers.

Sometimes these principles seem to be strictly hostile to each other and in no respect reciprocal, as where habit in the individual and custom in society oppose themselves bitterly to free will and advancing thought: yet even here the special warfare is but the material of a broader and more subtile alliance. An obstinate fixity in one's bosom often serves as a rock on which to break the shell of some hard inclosed faculty. Upon stepping-stones of our *slain* selves we mount to new altitudes. So do the antagonisms of these principles in the broader field of society equally conceal a fundamental reciprocation. By the opposition to his thought of inert and defiant custom, the thinker is compelled to interrogate his consciousness more deeply and sacredly; and being cut off from that sympathy which has its foundation in similarity of temperaments and traditions, he must fall back with simpler abandonment upon the pure idea, and must seek responses from that absolute nature of man which the men of his time are not human enough to afford him. This absolute nature, this divine identity in man, underrunning times, temperaments, individualities, is that which poet and prophet must address: yet to speak *to* it, they must speak *from* it; to be heard by the universal heart, they must use a universal language. But this marvellous vernacular can be known to him alone whose heart is universal, in whom even self-love is no longer selfish, but is a pure respect to his own being as it is Being. Well it is, therefore, that here and there one man should be so denied all petty and provincial claim to attention, that only by speaking to Man as Man, and in the sincerest vernacular of the human soul,

he can find audience; for thus it shall become his need, for the sake of joy no less than of duty, to know himself purely as man, and to yield himself wholly to his immortal humanity. Thus does fixed custom force back the most moving souls, until they touch the springs of inspiration, and are indued with power: then, at once potent and pure, they gush into history, to be influences, to make epochs, and to prevail over that through whose agency they first obtained strength.

Thus, everywhere, through all realms, do the opposite principles of Rest and Motion depend upon and reciprocally empower each other. In every act, mechanical, mental, social, must both take part and consent together; and upon the perfection of this consent depends the quality of the action. Every progress is conditioned on a permanence; every permanence *lives* but in and through progress. Where all, and with equal and simultaneous impulse, strives to move, nothing can move, but chaos is come; where all refuses to move, and therefore stagnates, decay supervenes, which is motion, though a motion downward.

Having made this general statement, we proceed to say that there are two chief ways in which these universal opposites enter into reciprocation. The first and more obvious is the method of alternation, or of rest *from* motion; the other, that of continuous equality, which may be called a rest *in* motion. These two methods, however, are not mutually exclusive, but may at once occupy the same ground, and apply to the same objects,—as oxygen and nitrogen severally fill the same space, to the full capacity of each, as though the other were absent.

Instances of the alternation, either total or approximative, of these principles are many and familiar. They may be seen in the systole and diastole of the heart; in the alternate activity and passivity of the lungs; in the feet of the pedestrian, one pausing while the other proceeds; in the waving wings of birds; in the undulation of the sea; in the creation and propagation of sound, and the propagation, at least, of light; in the alternate acceleration and retardation of the earth's motion in its orbit, and in the waving of its poles. In all vibrations and undulations there is a going and returning, between which must exist minute periods of repose; but in many instances the return is simply a relaxation or a subsidence, and belongs, therefore, to the department of rest. Discourse itself, it will be observed, has its pauses, seasons of repose thickly interspersed in the action of speech; and besides these has its accented and unaccented syllables, emphatic and unemphatic words,—illustrating thus in itself the law which it here affirms. History is full of the same thing; the tides of faith and feeling now ascend and now subside, through all the ages, in the soul of humanity; each new affirmation prepares the way for new doubt, each honest doubt in the end furthers and enlarges belief; the pendulum of destiny swings to and fro forever, and earth's minutest life and heaven's remotest star swing with it, rising but to fall, and falling that they may rise again. So does rhythm go to the very bottom of the world: the heart of Nature pulses, and the echoing shore and all music and the throbbing heart and swaying destinies of man but follow and proclaim the law of her inward life.

The universality and mutual relationship of these primal principles have, perhaps, been sufficiently set forth; and this may be the place to emphasize the second chief point,—that the perfection of this mutuality measures the degree of excellence in all objects and actions. It will everywhere appear, that, the more regular and symmetrical their relationship, the more beautiful and acceptable are its results. For example, sounds proceeding from vibrations wherein the strokes and pauses are in invariable relation are such sounds as we denominate *musical.* Accordingly all sounds are musical at a sufficient distance, since the most irregular undulations are, in a long journey through the air, wrought to an equality, and made subject to exact law,—as in this universe all irregularities are sure to be in the end. Thus, the thunder, which near at hand is a wild crash, or nearer yet a crazy crackle, is by distance deepened and refined into that marvellous bass which we all know. And doubtless the jars, the discords, and moral contradictions of time, however harsh and crazy at the outset, flow into exact undulation along the ether of eternity, and only as a pure proclamation of law attain to the ear of Heaven. Nay, whoso among men is able to plant his ear high enough above

this rude clangor may, in like manner, so hear it, that it shall be to him melody, solace, fruition, a perpetual harvest of the heart's dearest wishes, a perpetual corroboration of that which faith affirms.

We may therefore easily understand why musical sounds *are* musical, why they are acceptable and moving, while those affront the sense in which the minute reposes are capricious, and, as it were, upon ill terms with the movements. The former appeal to what is most universal and cosmical within us,—to the pure Law, the deep Nature in our breasts; they fall in with the immortal rhythm of life itself, which the others encounter and impugn.

It will be seen also that verse differs from prose as musical sounds from ordinary tones; and having so deep a ground in Nature, rhythmical speech will be sure to continue, in spite of objection and protest, were it, if possible, many times more energetic than that of Mr. Carlyle. But always the best prose has a certain rhythmic emphasis and cadence: in Milton's grander passages there is a symphony of organs, the bellows of the mighty North (one might say) filling their pipes; Goldsmith's flute still breathes through his essays; and in the ampler prose of Bacon there is the swell of a summer ocean, and you can half fancy you hear the long soft surge falling on the shore. Also in all good writing, as in good reading, the pauses suffer no slight; they are treated handsomely; and each sentence rounds gratefully and clearly into rest. Sometimes, indeed, an attempt is made to react in an illegitimate way this force of firm pauses, as in exaggerated French style, wherein the writer seems never to stride or to run, but always to jump like a frog.

Again, as reciprocal opposites, our two principles should be of equal dignity and value. To concede, however, the equality of rest with motion must, for an American, be not easy; and it is therefore in point to assert and illustrate this in particular. What better method of doing so than that of taking some one large instance in Nature, if such can be found, and allowing this, after fair inspection, to stand for all others? And, as it happens, just what we require is quite at hand;—the alternation of Day and Night, of sleep and waking, is so broad, obvious, and familiar, and so mingled with our human interests, that its two terms are easily subjected to extended and clear comparison; while also it deserves discussion upon its own account, apart from its relation to the general subject.

Sleep is now popularly known to be coextensive with Life,—inseparable from vital existence of whatever grade. The rotation of the earth is accordingly implied, as was happily suggested by Paley, in the constitution of every animal and every plant. It is quite evident, therefore, that this necessity was not laid upon, man through some inadvertence of Nature; on the contrary, this arrangement must be such as to her seemed altogether suitable, and, if suitable, economical. Eager men, however, avaricious of performance, do not always regard it with entire complacency. Especially have the saints been apt to set up a controversy with Nature in this particular, submitting with infinite unwillingness to the law by which they deem themselves, as it were, defrauded of life and activity in so large measure. In form, to be sure, their accusation lies solely against themselves; they reproach themselves with sleeping beyond need, sleeping for the mere luxury and delight of it; but the venial self-deception is quite obvious,—nothing plainer than that it is their necessity itself which is repugnant to them, and that their wills are blamed for not sufficiently withstanding and thwarting it. Pious William Law, for example, is unable to disparage sleep enough for his content. "The poorest, dullest refreshment of the body," he calls it,… "such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even among animals we despise them most which are most drowsy." You should therefore, so he urges, "begin the day in the spirit of renouncing sleep." Baxter, also,—at that moment a walking catalogue and epitome of all diseases,—thought himself guilty for all sleep he enjoyed beyond three hours a day. More's Utopians were to rise at very early hours, and attend scientific lectures before breakfast.

Ambition and cupidity, which, in their way, are no whit less earnest and self-sacrificing than sanctity, equally look upon sleep as a wasteful concession to bodily wants, and equally incline to limit such concession to its mere minimum. Commonplaces accordingly are perpetually circulating in the newspapers, especially in such as pretend to a didactic tone, wherein all persons are exhorted to early rising, to resolute abridgment of the hours of sleep, and the like. That Sir Walter Raleigh slept but five

hours in twenty-four; that John Hunter, Frederick the Great, and Alexander von Humboldt slept but four; that the Duke of Wellington made it an invariable rule to "turn out" whenever he felt inclined to turn over, and John Wesley to arise upon his first awaking: instances such as these appear on parade with the regularity of militia troops at muster; and the precept duly follows,—"Whoso would not be insignificant, let him go and do likewise." "All great men have been early risers," says my newspaper.

Of late, indeed, a better knowledge of the laws of health, or perhaps only a keener sense of its value and its instability, begins to supersede these rash inculcations; and paragraphs due to some discreet Dr. Hall make the rounds of the press, in which we are reminded that early rising, in order to prove a benefit, rather than a source of mischief, must be duly matched with early going to bed. The one, we are told, will by no means answer without the other. As yet, however, this is urged upon hygienic grounds alone; it is a mere concession to the body, a bald necessity that we hampered mortals lie under; which necessity we are quite at liberty to regret and accuse, though we cannot with safety resist it. Sleep is still admitted to be a waste of time, though one with which Nature alone is chargeable. And I own, not without reluctance, that the great authority of Plato can be pleaded for this low view of its functions. In the "Laws" he enjoins a due measure thereof, but for the sake of health alone, and adds, that the sleeper is, for the time, of no more value than the dead. Clearly, mankind would sustain some loss of good sense, were all the dullards and fat-wits taken away; and Sancho Panza, with his hearty, "Blessings on the man that invented sleep!" here ekes out the scant wisdom of sages. The talking world, however, of our day takes part with the Athenian against the Manchegan philosopher, and, while admitting the present necessity of sleep, does not rejoice in its original invention. If, accordingly, in a computation of the length of man's life, the hours passed in slumber are carefully deducted, and considered as forming no part of available time, not even the medical men dispute the justice of such procedure. They have but this to say:—"The stream of life is not strong enough to keep the mill of action always going; we must therefore periodically shut down the gate and allow the waters to accumulate; and he ever loses more than he gains who attempts any avoidance of this natural necessity."

As medical men, they are not required, perhaps, to say more; and we will be grateful to them for faithfully urging this,—especially when we consider, that, under the sage arrangements now existing, all that the physician does for the general promotion of health is done in defiance of his own interests. We, however, have further questions to ask. Why is not the life-stream more affluent? Sleep *is* needful, —but *wherefore*? The physician vindicates the sleeper; but the philosopher must vindicate Nature.

It is surely one step toward an elucidation of this matter to observe that the necessity here accused is not one arbitrarily laid upon us *by* Nature, but one existing *in* Nature herself, and appertaining to the very conception of existence. The elucidation, however, need not pause at this point. The assumption that sleep is a piece of waste, as being a mere restorative for the body, and not a service or furtherance to the mind,—this must be called in question and examined closely; for it is precisely in this assumption, as I deem, that the popular judgment goes astray. *Is* sleep any such arrest and detention of the mind? That it is a shutting of those outward gates by which impressions flow in upon the soul is sufficiently obvious; but who can assure us that it is equally a closing of those inward and skyward gates through which come the reinforcements of faculty, the strength that masters and uses impression? I persuade myself, on the contrary, that it is what Homer called it, *divine*,—able, indeed, to bring the blessing of a god; and that hours lawfully passed under the pressure of its heavenly palms are fruitful, not merely negatively, but positively, not only as recruiting exhausted powers, and enabling us to be awake again, but by direct contribution to the resources of the soul and the uses of life; that, in fine, one awakes farther on in *life*, as well as farther on in *time*, than he was at falling asleep. This deeper function of the night, what is it?

Sleep is, first of all, a filter, or sieve. It strains off the impressions that engross, but not enrich us,—that superfluous *material* of experience which, either from glutting excess, or from sheer insignificance, cannot be spiritualized, made human, transmuted into experience itself. Every man

in our day, according to the measure of his sensibility, and with some respect also to his position, is *mobbed* by impressions, and must fight as for his life, if he escape being taken utterly captive by them. It is our perpetual peril that our lives shall become so sentient as no longer to be reflective or artistic,—so beset and infested by the immediate as to lose all amplitude, all perspective, and to become mere puppets of the present, mere Chinese pictures, a huddle of foreground without horizon, or heaven, or even earthly depth and reach. It is easy to illustrate this miserable possibility. A man, for example, in the act of submitting to the extraction of a tooth, is, while the process lasts, one of the poorest poor creatures with whose existence the world might be taunted. His existence is but skin-deep, and contracted to a mere point at that: no vision and faculty divine, no thoughts that wander through eternity, now: a tooth, a jaw, and the iron of the dentist,—these constitute, for the time being, his universe. Only when this monopolizing, enslaving, sensualizing impression has gone by, may what had been a point of pained and quivering animality expand once more to the dimensions of a human soul. Kant, it is said, could withdraw his attention from the pain of gout by pure mental engagement, but found the effort dangerous to his brain, and accordingly was fain to submit, and be no more than a toe-joint, since evil fate would have it so. These extreme cases exemplify a process of impoverishment from which we all daily suffer. The external, the immediate, the idiots of the moment, telling tales that signify nothing, yet that so overcry the suggestion of our deeper life as by the sad and weary to be mistaken for the discourse of life itself,—these obtrude themselves upon us, and multiply and brag and brawl about us, until we have neither room for better guests, nor spirits for their entertainment. We are like schoolboys with eyes out at the windows, drawn by some rattle of drum and squeak of fife, who would study, were they but deaf. Reproach sleep as a waste, forsooth! It is this tyrannical attraction to the surface, that indeed robs us of time, and defrauds us of the uses of life. We cannot hear the gods for the buzzing of flies. We are driven to an idle industry,—the idlest of all things.

And to this description of loss men are nowadays peculiarly exposed. The modern world is all battle-field; the smoke, the dust, the din fill every eye and ear; and the hill-top of Lucretius, where is it? The indispensable, terrible newspaper, with its late allies, the Titans and sprites of steam and electricity,—bringing to each retired nook, and thrusting in upon each otherwise peaceful household, the crimes, follies, fears, solicitudes, doubts, problems of all kingdoms and peoples,—exasperates the former Scotch mist of impressions into a flooding rain, and almost threatens to swamp the brain of mankind. The incitement to thought is ever greater; but the possibility of thinking, especially of thinking in a deep, simple, central way, is ever less. Problems multiply, but how to attend to them is ever a still greater problem. Guests of the intellect and imagination accumulate until the master of the house is pushed out of doors, and hospitality ceases from the mere excess of its occasion. That must be a greater than Homer who should now do Homer's work. He, there in his sweet, deep-skied Ionia, privileged with an experience so simple and yet so salient and powerful, might well hope to act upon this victoriously by his spirit, might hope to transmute it, as indeed he did, into melodious and enduring human suggestion. Would it have been all the same, had he lived in our type-setting modern world, with its multitudinous knowledges, its aroused conscience, its spurred and yet thwarted sympathies, its new incitements to egotism also, and new tools and appliances for egotism to use,—placed, as it were, in the focus of a vast whispering-gallery, where all the sounds of heaven and earth came crowding, contending, incessant upon his ear? One sees at a glance how the serious thought and poetry of Greece cling to a few master facts, not being compelled to fight always with the many-headed monster of detail; and this suggests to me that our literature may fall short of Grecian amplitude, depth, and simplicity, not wholly from inferiority of power, but from complications appertaining to our position.

The problem of our time is, How to digest and assimilate the Newspaper? To complain of it, to desire its abolition, is an anachronism of the will: it is to complain that time proceeds, and that events follow each other in due sequence. It is hardly too bold to say that the newspaper *is* the modern world, as distinct from the antique and the mediaeval. It represents, by its advent, that epoch in human

history wherein each man must begin, in proportion to his capability of sympathy and consideration, to collate his private thoughts, fortunes, interests with those of the human race at large. We are now in the crude openings of this epoch, fevered by its incidents and demands; and one of its tokens is a general exhaustion of the nervous system and failure of health, both here and in Europe,—those of most sensitive spirit, and least retired and sheltered from the impressions of the time, suffering most. All this will end, *must* end, victoriously. In the mean time can we not somewhat adjust ourselves to this new condition?

One thing we can and must not fail to do: we can learn to understand and appreciate Rest. In particular, we should build up and reinforce the powers of the night to offset this new intensity of the day. Such, indeed, as the day now is has it ever been, though in a less degree: always it has cast upon men impressions significant, insignificant, and of an ill significance, promiscuously and in excess; and always sleep has been the filter of memory, the purifier of experience, providing a season that follows closely upon the impressions of the day, ere yet they are too deeply imbedded, in which our deeper life may pluck away the adhering burrs from its garments, and arise disburdened, clean, and free. I make no doubt that Death also performs, though in an ampler and more thorough way, the same functions. It opposes the tyranny of memory. For were our experience to go on forever accumulating, unwinnowed, undiminished, every man would sooner or later break down beneath it; every man would be crushed by his own traditions, becoming a grave to himself, and drawing the clods over his own head. To relieve us of these accidental accretions, to give us back to ourselves, is the use, in part, of that sleep which rounds each day, and of that other sleep—brief, but how deep! —which rounds each human life.

Accordingly, he who sleeps well need not die so soon,—even as in the order of Nature he will not. He has that other and rarer half of a good memory, namely, a good forgetting. For none remembers so ill as he that remembers all. "A great German scholar affirmed that he knew not what it was to forget." Better have been born an idiot! An unwashed memory,—faugh! To us moderns and Americans, therefore, who need above all things to forget well,—our one imperative want being a simplification of experience,—to us, more than to all other men, is requisite, in large measure of benefit, the winnowing-fan of sleep, sleep with its choices and exclusions, if we would not need the offices of death too soon.

But a function of yet greater depth and moment remains to be indicated. Sleep enables the soul not only to shed away that which is foreign, but to adopt and assimilate whatever is properly its own. Dr. Edward Johnson, a man of considerable penetration, though not, perhaps, of a balanced judgment, has a dictum to the effect that the formation of blood goes on during our waking hours, but the composition of tissue during those of sleep. I know not upon what grounds of evidence this statement is made; but one persuades himself that it must be approximately true of the body, since it is undoubtedly so of the soul. Under the eye of the sun the fluid elements of character are supplied; but the final edification takes place beneath the stars. Awake, we think, feel, act; sleeping, we *become*. Day feeds our consciousness; night, out of those stores which action has accumulated, nourishes the vital unconsciousness, the pure unit of the man. During sleep, the valid and serviceable experience of the day is drawn inward, wrought upon by spiritual catalysis, transmitted into conviction, sentiment, character, life, and made part of that which is to attract and assimilate all subsequent experience. Who, accordingly, has not awaked to find some problem already solved with which he had vainly grappled on the preceding day? It is not merely that in the morning our invigorated powers work more efficiently, and enable us to reach this solution immediately *after* awaking. Often, indeed, this occurs; but there are also numerous instances—and such alone are in point—wherein the work is complete *before* one's awakening: not unfrequently it is by the energy itself of the new perception that the soft bonds of slumber are first broken; the soul hails its new dawn with so lusty a cheer, that its clarion reaches even to the ear of the body, and we are unconsciously murmuring the echoes of that joyous salute while yet the iris-hued fragments of our dreams linger about us. The poet in the morning, if

true divine slumber have been vouchsafed him, finds his mind enriched with sweeter imaginations, the thinker with profounder principles and wider categories: neither begins the new day where he left the old, but each during his rest has silently, wondrously, advanced to fresh positions, commanding the world now from nobler summits, and beholding around him an horizon beyond that over which yesterday's sun rose and set. Milton gives us testimony very much in point:—

> "My celestial patroness, who deigns
> Her nightly visitation unimplored,
> And dictates to me slumb'ring."

Thus, in one important sense, is day the servant of night, action the minister of rest. I fancy, accordingly, that Marcus Antoninus may give Heraclitus credit for less than his full meaning in saying that "men asleep are then also laboring"; for he understands him to signify only that through such the universe is still accomplishing its ends. Perhaps he meant to indicate what has been here affirmed,— that in sleep one's personal destiny is still ripening, his true life proceeding.

But if, as the instance which has been under consideration suggests, these two principles are of equal dignity, it will follow that the ability to rest profoundly is of no less estimation than the ability to work powerfully. Indeed, is it not often the condition upon which great and sustained power of action depends? The medal must have two sides. "Danton," says Carlyle, "was a great nature that could rest." Were not the force and terror of his performance the obverse fact? I do not now mean, however true it would be, to say that without rest physical resources would fail, and action be enfeebled in consequence; I mean that the soul which wants the attitude of repose wants the condition of power. There is a petulant and meddlesome industry which proceeds from spiritual debility, and causes more; it is like the sleeplessness and tossing of exhausted nervous patients, which arises from weakness, and aggravates its occasion. As few things are equally wearisome, so few are equally wasteful, with a perpetual indistinct sputter of action, whereby nothing is done and nothing let alone. Half the world *breaks* out with action; its performance is cutaneous, of the nature of tetter. Hence is it that in the world, with such a noise of building, so few edifices are reared.

We require it as a pledge of the sanity of our condition, and consequent wholesomeness of our action, that we can withhold our hand, and leave the world in that of its Maker. No man is quite necessary to Omnipotence; grass grew before we were born, and doubtless will continue to grow when we are dead. If we act, let it be because our soul has somewhat to bring forth, and not because our fingers itch. We have in these days been emphatically instructed that all speech not rooted in silence, rooted, that is, in pure, vital, silent Nature, is poor and unworthy; but we should be aware that action equally requires this solemn and celestial perspective, this issue out of the never-trodden, noiseless realms of the soul. Only that which comes from a divine depth can attain to a divine height.

There is a courage of withholding and forbearing greater than any other courage; and before this Fate itself succumbs. Wellington won the Battle of Waterloo by heroically standing still; and every hour of that adventurous waiting was heaping up significance for the moment when at length he should cry, "Up, Guards, and at them !" What Cecil said of Raleigh, "He can toil terribly," has been styled "an electric touch"; but the "masterly inactivity" of Sir James Mackintosh, happily appropriated by Mr. Calhoun, carries an equal appeal to intuitive sense, and has already become proverbial. He is no sufficient hero who in the delays of Destiny, when his way is hedged up and his hope deferred, cannot reserve his strength and bide his time. The power of acting greatly includes that of greatly abstaining from action. The leader of an epoch in affairs should therefore be some Alfred, Bruce, Gustavus Vasa, Cromwell, Washington, Garibaldi, who can wait while the iron of opportunity heats at the forge of time; and then, in the moment of its white glow, can so smite as to shape it forever to the uses of mankind.

One should be able not only to wait, but to wait strenuously, sternly, immovably, rooted in his repose like a mountain oak in the soil; for it may easily happen that the necessity of refraining shall be most imperative precisely when, the external pressure toward action is most vehement. Amid the violent urgency of events, therefore, one should learn the art of the mariner, who, in time of storm lies to, with sails mostly furled, until milder gales permit him again to spread sail and stretch away. With us, as with him, even a fair wind may blow so fiercely that one cannot safely run before it. There are movements with whose direction we sympathize, which are yet so ungoverned that we lose our freedom and the use of our reason in committing ourselves to them. So the seaman who runs too long before the increasing gale has thereafter no election; go on he must, for there is death in pausing, though it be also death to proceed. Learn, therefore, to wait. Is there not many a one who never arrives at fruit, for no better reason than that he persists in plucking his own blossoms? Learn to wait. Take time, with the smith, to raise your arm, if you would deliver a telling blow.

Does it seem wasteful, this waiting? Let us, then, remind ourselves that excess and precipitation are more than wasteful,—they are directly destructive. The fire that blazes beyond bounds not warms the house, but burns it down, and only helps infinitesimally to warm the wide out-of-doors. Any live snail will out-travel a wrecked locomotive, and besides will leave no trail of slaughter on its track. Though despatch be the soul of business, yet he who outruns his own feet comes to the ground, and makes no despatch,—unless it be of himself. Hurry is the spouse of Flurry, and the father of Confusion. Extremes meet, and overaction steadfastly returns to the effect of non-action,—bringing, however, the seven devils of disaster in its company. The ocean storm which heaps the waves so high may, by a sufficient increase, blow them down again; and in no calm is the sea so level as in the extremest hurricane.

Persistent excess of outward performance works mischief in one of two directions,—either upon the body or on the soul. If one will not accommodate himself to this unreasonable quantity by abatement of quality,—if he be resolute to put love, faith, and imagination into his labor, and to be alive to the very top of his brain,—then the body enters a protest, and dyspepsia, palsy, phthisis, insanity, or somewhat of the kind, ensues. Commonly, however, the tragedy is different from this, and deeper. Commonly, in these cases, action loses height as it gains lateral surface; the superior faculties starve, being robbed of sustenance by this avarice of performance, and consequently of supply, on the part of the lower,—they sit at second table, and eat of remainder-crumbs. The delicate and divine sprites, that should bear the behests of the soul to the will and to the houses of thought in the brain her intuitions, are crowded out from the streets of the cerebral cities by the mob and trample of messengers bound upon baser errands; and thus is the soul deprived of service, and the man of inspiration. The man becomes, accordingly, a great merchant who values a cent, but does not value a human sentiment; or a lawyer who can convince a jury that white is black, but cannot convince himself that white is white, God God, and the sustaining faiths of great souls more than moonshine. So if the apple-tree will make too much wood, it can bear no fruit; during summer it is full of haughty thrift, but the autumn, which brings grace to so many a dwarfed bush and low shrub, shows it naked and in shame.

How many mistake the crowing of the cock for the rising of the sun, albeit the cock often crows at midnight, or at the moon's rising, or only at the advent of a lantern and a tallow candle! And yet what a bloated, gluttonous devourer of hopes and labors is this same precipitation! All shores are strown with wrecks of barks that went too soon to sea. And if you launch even your well-built ship at half-tide, what will it do but strike bottom, and stick there? The perpetual tragedy of literary history, in especial, is this. What numbers of young men, gifted with great imitative quickness, who, having, by virtue of this, arrived at fine words and figures of speech, set off on their nimble rhetorical Pegasus, keep well out of the Muse's reach ever after! How many go conspicuously through life, snapping their smart percussion-caps upon empty barrels, because, forsooth, powder and ball do not come of themselves, and it takes time to load!

I know that there is a divine impatience, a rising of the waters of love and noble pain till they *must* overflow, with or without the hope of immediate apparent use, and no matter what swords and revenges impend. History records a few such defeats which are worth thousands of ordinary victories. Yet the rule is, that precipitation comes of levity. Eagerness is shallow. Haste is but half-earnest. If an apple is found to grow mellow and seemingly ripe much before its fellows on the same bough, you will probably discover, upon close inspection, that there is a worm in it.

To be sure, any time is too soon with those who dote upon Never. There are such as find Nature precipitate and God forward. They would have effect limp at untraversable distances behind cause; they would keep destiny carefully abed and feed it upon spoon-victual. They play duenna to the universe, and are perpetually on the *qui vive*, lest it escape, despite their care, into improprieties. The year is with them too fast by so much as it removes itself from the old almanac. The reason is that *they* are the old almanac. Or, more distinctly, they are at odds with universal law, and, knowing that to them it can come only as judgment and doom, they, not daring to denounce the law itself, fall to the trick of denouncing its agents as visionaries, and its effects as premature. The felon always finds the present an unseasonable day on which to be hanged: the sheriff takes another view of the matter.

But the error of these consists, not in realizing good purposes too slowly and patiently, but in failing effectually to purpose good at all. To those who truly are making it the business of their lives to accomplish worthy aims, this counsel cannot come amiss,—TAKE TIME. Take a year in which to thread a needle, rather than go dabbing at the texture with the naked thread. And observe, that there is an excellence and an efficacy of slowness, no less than of quickness. The armadillo is equally secure of his prey with the hawk or leopard; and Sir Charles Bell mentions a class of thieves in India, who, having, through extreme patience and command of nerve, acquired the power of motion imperceptibly slow, are the most formidable of all peculators, and almost defy precaution. And to leave these low instances, slowness produced by profoundness of feeling and fineness of perception constitutes that divine patience of genius without which genius does not exist. Mind lingers where appetite hurries on; it is only the Newtons who stay to meditate over the fall of an apple, too trivial for the attention of the clown. It is by this noble slowness that the highest minds faintly emulate that inconceivable deliberateness and delicacy of gradation with which solar systems are built and worlds habilitated.

Now haste and intemperance are the Satans that beset virtuous Americans. And these mischiefs are furthered by those who should guard others against them. The Rev. Dr. John Todd, in a work, not destitute of merit, entitled "The Student's Manual," urges those whom he addresses to study, while about it, with their utmost might, crowding into an hour as much work as it can possibly be made to contain; so, he says, they will increase the power of the brain. But this is advice not fit to be given to a horse, much less to candidates for the graces of scholarly manhood. I read that race-horses, during the intervals between their public contests, are permitted only occasionally and rarely to be driven at their extreme speed, but are assiduously made to *walk* several hours each day. By this constancy of *moderate* exercise they preserve health and suppleness of limb, without exhaustion of strength. And it appears, that, were such an animal never to be taken from the stable but to be pushed to the top of his speed, he would be sure to make still greater speed toward ruin. Why not be as wise for men as for horses?

And here I desire to lay stress upon one point, which American students will do well to consider gravely,—*It is a* PURE, *not a strained and excited, attention which has signal prosperity.* Distractions, tempests, and head-winds in the brain, by-ends, the sidelong eyes of vanity, the overleaping eyes of ambition, the bleared eyes of conceit,—these are they which thwart study and bring it to nought. Nor these only, but all impatience, all violent eagerness, all passionate and perturbed feeling, fill the brain with thick and hot blood, suited to the service of desire, unfit for the uses of thought. Intellect can be served only by the finest properties of the blood; and if there be any indocility of soul, any impurity of purpose, any coldness or carelessness, any prurience or crude and intemperate heat, then base

spirits are sent down from the seat of the soul to summon the sanguineous forces; and these gather a crew after their own kind. Purity of attention, then, is the magic that the scholar may use; and let him know, that, the purer it is, the more temperate, tranquil, reposeful. Truth is not to be run down with fox-hounds; she is a divinity, and divinely must he draw nigh who will gain her presence. Go to, thou bluster-brain! Dost thou think to learn? Learn docility first, and the manners of the skies. And thou egotist, thinkest thou that these eyes of thine, smoky with the fires of diseased self-love, and thronged with deceiving wishes, shall perceive the essential and eternal? They shall see only silver and gold, houses and lands, reputes, supremacies, fames, and, as instrumental to these, the forms of logic and seemings of knowledge. If thou wilt discern the truth, desire IT, not its accidents and collateral effects. Rest in the pursuit of it, putting *simplicity of quest* in the place of either force or wile; and such quest cannot be unfruitful.

Let the student, then, shun an excited and spasmodic tension of brain, and he will gain more while expending less. It is not toil, it is morbid excitement, that kills; and morbid excitement in constant connection with high mental endeavor is, of all modes and associations of excitement, the most disastrous. Study as the grass grows, and your old age—and its laurels—shall be green.

Already, however, we are trenching upon that more intimate relationship of the great opposites under consideration which has been designated Rest *in* Motion. More intimate relationship, I say,—at any rate, more subtile, recondite, difficult of apprehension and exposition, and perhaps, by reason of this, more central and suggestive. An example of this in its physical aspect may be seen in the revolutions of the planets, and in all orbital or circular motion. For such, it will be at once perceived, is, in strictness of speech, *fixed and stationary* motion: it is, as Sir Isaac Newton demonstrated, an exact and equal obedience, in the same moment, to the law of fixity and the law of progression. Observe especially, that it is not, like merely retarded motion, a partial neutralization of each principle by the other, an imbecile Aristotelian compromise and half-way house between the two; but it is at once, and in virtue of the same fact, perfect Rest *and* perfect Motion. A revolving body is not hindered, but the same impulse which begot its movement causes this perpetually to return into itself.

Now the principles that are seen to govern the material universe are but a large-lettered display of those that rule in perfect humanity. Whatsoever makes distinguished order and admirableness in Nature makes the same in man; and never was there a fine deed that was not begot of the same impulse and ruled by the same laws to which solar systems are due. I desire, accordingly, here to take up and emphasize the statement previously made in a general way,—that the secret of perfection in all that appertains to man—in morals, manners, art, politics—must be sought in such a correspondence and reciprocation of these great opposites as the motions of the planets perfectly exemplify.

It must not, indeed, be overlooked or unacknowledged, that the planets do not move in exact circles, but diverge slightly into ellipses. The fact is by no means without significance, and that of an important kind. Pure circular motion is the type of perfection in the universe as a *whole*, but each part of the whole will inevitably express its partiality, will acknowledge its special character, and upon the frankness of this confession its comeliness will in no small degree depend; nevertheless, no sooner does the eccentricity, or individuality, become so great as to suggest disloyalty to the idea of the whole, than ugliness ensues. Thus, comets are portents, shaking the faith of nations, not supporting it, like the stars. So among men. Nature is at pains to secure divergence, magnetic variation, putting into every personality and every powerful action some element of irregularity and imperfection; and her reason for doing so is, that irregularity appertains to the state of growth, and is the avenue of access to higher planes and broader sympathies; still, as the planets, though not moving in perfect circles, yet come faithfully round to the same places, and accomplish *the ends* of circular motion, so in man, the divergence must be special, not total, no act being the mere arc of a circle, and yet *revolution* being maintained. And to the beauty of characters and deeds, it is requisite that they should never seem even to imperil fealty to the universal idea. Revolution perfectly exact expresses only necessity, not voluntary fidelity; but departure, *still deferential to the law of the whole*, in evincing freedom elevates

its obedience into fealty and noble faithfulness: by this measure of eccentricity, centricity is not only emphasized, but immeasurably exalted.

But having made this full and willing concession to the element of individuality in persons and of special character in actions, we are at liberty to resume the general thesis,—that orbital rest of movement furnishes the type of perfect excellence, and suggests accordingly the proper targe of aspiration and culture.

In applying this law, we will take first a low instance, wherein the opposite principles stand apart, rather upon terms of outward covenant, or of mere mixture, than of mutual assimilation. *Man* is infinite; *men* are finite: the purest aspect of great laws never appears in collections and aggregations, yet the same laws rule here as in the soul, and such excellence as is possible issues from the same sources. As an instance, accordingly, of that ruder reciprocation which may obtain among multitudes, I name the Roman Legion.

It is said that the success of the armies of Rome is not fully accounted for, until one takes into account the constitution of this military body. It united, in an incomparable degree, the different advantages of fixity and fluency. Moderate in size, yet large enough to give the effect of mass, open in texture, yet compact in form, it afforded to every man room for individual prowess, while it left no man to his individual strength. Each soldier leaned and rested upon the Legion, a body of six thousand men; yet around each was a space in which his movements might be almost as free, rapid, and individual as though he had possessed the entire field to himself. The Macedonian Phalanx was a marvel of mass, but it was mass not penetrated with mobility; it could move, indeed could be said to have an existence, only as a whole; its decomposed parts were but *débris*. The Phalanx, therefore, was terrible, the constituent parts of it imbecile; and the Battle of Cynocephalae finally demonstrated its inferiority, for the various possible exigencies of battle, to the conquering Legion. The brave rabble of Gauls and Goths, on the other hand, illustrated all that private valor, not reposing upon any vaster and more stable strength, has power to achieve; but these rushing torrents of prowess dashed themselves into vain spray upon the coordinated and reposing courage of Rome.

The same perpetual opposites must concur to produce the proper form and uses of the State,—though they here appear in a much more elevated form. Rest is here known as *Law*, motion as *Liberty*. In the true commonwealth, these, so far from being mutually destructive or antagonistic, incessantly beget and vivify each other; so that Law is the expression and guaranty of Freedom, while Freedom flows spontaneously into the forms of Justice. Neither of these can exist, neither can be properly *conceived of*, apart from its correlative opposite. Nor will any condition of mere truce, or of mere mechanical equilibrium, suffice. Nothing suffices but a reciprocation so active and total that each is constantly resolving itself into the other.

The notion of Rousseau, which is countenanced by much of the phraseology, to say the least, of the present day, was, indeed, quite contrary to this. He assumed freedom to exist only where law is not, that is, in the savage state, and to be surrendered, piece for piece, with every acknowledgment of social obligation. Seldom was ever so plausible a doctrine equally false. Law is properly *the public definition of freedom and the affirmation of its sacredness and inviolability as so defined*; and only in the presence of it, either express or implicit, does man become free. Duty and privilege are one and the same, however men may set up a false antagonism between them; and accordingly social obligation can subtract nothing from the privilege and prerogative of liberty. Consequently, the freedom which is defined as the negation of social duty and obligation is not true regal freedom, but is that worst and basest of all tyrannies, the tyranny of pure egotism, masked in the semblance of its divine contrary. That, be it observed, is the freest society, in which the noblest and most delicate human powers find room and secure respect,—wherein the loftiest and costliest spiritualities are most invited abroad by sympathetic attraction. Now among savages little obtains appreciation, save physical force and its immediate allies: the divine fledglings of the human soul, instead of being sweetly drawn and tempted forth, are savagely menaced, rudely repelled; whatsoever is finest in the man, together with

the entire nature of woman, lies, in that low temperature, enchained and repressed, like seeds in a frozen soil. The harsh, perpetual contest with want and lawless rivalry, to which all uncivilized nations are doomed, permits only a few low powers, and those much the same in all,—lichens, mosses, rude grasses, and other coarse cryptogamous growths,—to develop themselves; since these alone can endure the severities of season and treatment to which all that would clothe the fields of the soul must remain exposed. Meanwhile the utmost of that wicked and calamitous suppression of faculty, which constitutes the essence and makes the tragedy of human slavery, is equally effected by the inevitable isolation and wakeful trampling and consequent barrenness of savage life. Liberty without law is not liberty; and the converse may be asserted with like confidence.

Where, then, the fixed term, State, or Law, and the progressive term, Person, or Freewill, are in relations of reciprocal support and mutual reproduction, there alone is freedom, there alone public order. We were able to command this truth from the height of our general proposition, and closer inspection shows those anticipations to have been correct.

But man is greater than men; and for the finest aspect of high laws, we must look to individual souls, not to masses.

What is the secret of noble manners? Orbital action, always returning into and compensating itself. The gentleman, in offering his respect to others, offers an equal, or rather the same, respect to himself; and his courtesies may flow without stint or jealous reckoning, because they feed their source, being not an expenditure, but a circulation. Submitting to the inward law of honor and the free sense of what befits a man,—to a law perpetually made and spontaneously executed in his own bosom, the instant flowering of his own soul,—he commands his own obedience, and he obeys his own commanding. Though throned above all nations, a king of kings, yet the faithful humble vassal of his own heart; though he serve, yet regal, doing imperial service; he escapes outward constraint by inward anticipation; and all that could he rightly named as his duty to others, he has, ere demand, already discovered, and engaged in, as part of his duty to himself. Now it is the expression of royal freedom in loyal service, of sovereignty in obedience, courage in concession, and strength in forbearance, which makes manners noble. Low may he bow, not with loss, but with access of dignity, who bows with an elevated and ascending heart: there is nothing loftier, nothing less allied to abject behavior, than this grand lowliness. The worm, because it is low, cannot be lowly; but man, uplifted in token of supremacy, may kneel in adoration, bend in courtesy, and stoop in condescension. Only a great pride, that is, a great and reverential repose in one's own being, renders possible a noble humility, which is a great and reverential acknowledgment of the being of others; this humility in turn sustains a higher self-reverence; this again resolves itself into a more majestic humility; and so run, in ever enhancing wave, the great circles of inward honor and outward grace. And without this self-sustaining return of the action into itself, each quality feeding itself from its correlative opposite, there can be no high behavior. This is the reason why qualities loftiest in kind and largest in measure are vulgarly mistaken, not for their friendly opposites, but for their mere contraries,—why a very profound sensibility, a sensibility, too, peculiarly of the spirit, not of nerve only, is sure to be named coldness, as Mr. Ruskin recently remarks,—why vast wealth of good pride, in its often meek acceptance of wrong, in its quiet ignoring of insult, in its silent superiority to provocation, passes with the superficial and petulant for poverty of pride and mere mean-spiritedness,—why a courage which is not partial, but *total*, coexisting, as it always does, with a noble peacefulness, with a noble inaptness for frivolous hazards, and a noble slowness to take offence, is, in its delays and forbearances, thought by the half-courageous to be no better than cowardice;—it is, as we have said, because great qualities revolve and repose in orbits of reciprocation with their opposites, which opposites are by coarse and ungentle eyes misdeemed to be contraries. Feeling transcendently deep and powerful is unimpassioned and far lower-voiced than indifference and unfeelingness, being wont to express itself, not by eloquent ebullition, but by extreme understatement, or even by total silence. Sir Walter Raleigh, when at length he found himself betrayed to death—and how basely betrayed!—by Sir Lewis Stukely, only said, "Sir

Lewis, these actions will not turn to your credit." The New Testament tells us of a betrayal yet more quietly received. These are instances of noble manners.

What actions are absolutely moral is determined by application of the same law,—those only which repose wholly in themselves, being to themselves at once motive and reward. "Miserable is he," says the "Bhagavad Gita," "whose motive to action lies, not in the action itself, but in its reward." Duty purchased with covenant of special delights is not duty, but is the most pointed possible denial of it. The just man looks not beyond justice; the merciful reposes in acts of mercy; and he who would be bribed to equity and goodness is not only bad, but shameless. But of this no further words.

Rest is sacred, celestial, and the appreciation of it and longing for it are mingled with the religious sentiment of all nations. I cannot remember the time when there was not to me a certain ineffable suggestion in the apostolic words, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." But the repose of the godlike must, as that of God himself, be *infinitely* removed from mere sluggish inactivity; since the conception of action is the conception of existence itself,—that is, of Being in the act of self-manifestation. Celestial rest is found in action so universal, so purely identical with the great circulations of Nature, that, like the circulation of the blood and the act of breathing, it is not a subtraction from vital resource, but is, on the contrary, part of the very fact of life and all its felicities. This does not exclude rhythmic or recreative rest; but the need of such rest detracts nothing from pleasure or perfection. In heaven also, if such figure of speech be allowable, may be that toil which shall render grateful the cessation from toil, and give sweetness to sleep; but right weariness has its own peculiar delight, no less than right exercise; and as the glories of sunset equal those of dawn, so with equal, though diverse pleasure, should noble and temperate labor take off its sandals for evening repose, and put them on to go forth "beneath the opening eyelids of the morn." Yet, allowing a place for this rhythm in the detail and close inspection even of heavenly life, it still holds true on the broad scale, that pure beauty and beatitude are found there only where life and character sweep in orbits of that complete expression which is at once divine labor and divine repose.

Observe, now, that this rest-motion, as being without waste or loss, is a *manifested immortality*, since that which wastes not ends not; and therefore it puts into every motion the very character and suggestion of immortal life. Yea, one deed rightly done, and the doer is in heaven, —is of the company of immortals. One deed so done that in it is *no* mortality; and in that deed the meaning of man's history,—the meaning, indeed, and the glory, of existence itself,—are declared. Easy, therefore, it is to see how any action may be invested with universal significance and the utmost conceivable charm. The smaller the realm and the humbler the act into which this amplitude and universality of spirit are carried, the more are they emphasized and set off; so that, without opportunity of unusual occasion, or singular opulence of natural power, a man's life may possess all that majesty which the imagination pictures in archangels and in gods. Indeed, it is but simple statement of fact to say, that he who rests *utterly* in his action shall belittle not only whatsoever history has recorded, but all which that poet of poets, Mankind, has ever dreamed or fabled of grace and greatness. He shall not peer about with curiosity to spy approbation, or with zeal to defy censure; he shall not know if there be a spectator in the world; his most public deed shall be done in a divine privacy, on which no eye intrudes,—his most private in the boundless publicities of Nature; his deed, when done, falls away from him, like autumn apples from their boughs, no longer his, but the world's and destiny's; neither the captive of yesterday nor the propitiator of to-morrow, he abides simply, majestically, like a god, in being and doing. Meanwhile, blame and praise whirl but as unrecognized cloudlets of gloom or glitter beneath his feet, enveloping and often blinding those who utter them, but to him never attaining.

It is not easy at present to suggest the real measure and significance of such manhood, because this age has debased its imagination, by the double trick, first, of confounding man with his body, and next, of considering the body, not as a symbol of truth, but only as an agent in the domain of matter,—comparing its size with the sum total of physical space, and its muscular power with the sum total of physical forces. Yet

"What know we greater than the soul?"

A man is no outlying province, nor does any province lie beyond him. East, West, North, South, and height and depth are contained in his bosom, the poles of his being reaching more widely, his zenith and nadir being more sublime and more profound. We are cheated by nearness and intimacy. Let us look at man with a telescope, and we shall find no star or constellation of sweep so grand, no nebulae or star-dust so provoking and suggestive to fancy. In truth, there are no words to say how either large or small, how significant or insignificant, men may be. Though solar and stellar systems amaze by their grandeur of scale, yet is true manhood the maximum of Nature; though microscopic and sub-microscopic protophyta amaze by their inconceivable littleness, yet is mock manhood Nature's minimum. The latter is the only negative quantity known to Nature; the former the only revelation of her entire heart.

In concluding, need I say that only the pure can repose in his action,—only he obtain deliverance by his deed, and after deliverance from it? The egotism, the baseness, the partialities that are in our performance are hooks and barbs by which it wounds and wearies us in the passage, and clings to us being past.

Law governs all; no favor is shown; the event is as it must be; only he who has no blinding partiality toward himself, who is whole and one with the whole, he who is Nature and Law and divine Necessity, can be blest with that blessedness which Nature is able to give only by her presence. There is a labor and a rest that are the same, one fact, one felicity; in this are power, beauty, immortality; by existence as a whole it is always perfectly exemplified; to man, as the eye of existence, it is also possible; but it is possible to him only as he is purely man,—only as he abandons himself to the divine principles of his life: in other words, this Sabbath remaineth in very deed to no other than the people of God.

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LIGHTS OF THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT

At the opening of the present century, the Lake District of Cumberland and Westmoreland was groaned over by some residents as fast losing its simplicity. The poet Gray had been the first to describe its natural features in an express manner; and his account of the views above Keswick and Grasmere was quoted, sixty years since, as evidence of the spoiling process which had gone on since the introduction of civilization from the South. Gray remarked on the absence of red roofs, gentlemen's houses, and garden-walls, and on the uniform character of the humble farmsteads and gray cottages under their sycamores in the vales. Wordsworth heard and spoke a good deal of the innovations which had modified the scene in the course of the thirty years which elapsed between Gray's visits (in 1767-69) and his own settlement in the Lake District; but he lived to say more, at the end of half a century, of the wider and deeper changes which time had wrought in the aspect of the country and the minds and manners of the people. According to his testimony, and that of Southey, the barbarism was of a somewhat gross character at the end of the last century; the magistrates were careless of the condition of the society in which they bore authority; the clergy were idle or worse, —"marrying and burying machines," as Southey told Wilberforce; and the morality of the people, such as it was, was ascribed by Wordsworth, in those his days of liberalism in politics, to the state of republican equality in which they lived. Excellent, fussy Mr. Wilberforce thought, when he came for some weeks into the District, that the Devil had had quite time enough for sowing tares while the clergy were asleep; so he set to work to sow a better seed; and we find in his diary that he went into house after house "to talk religion to the people." I do not know how he was received; but at this day the people are puzzled at that kind of domestic intervention, so unsuitable to their old-fashioned manners,—one old dame telling with wonder, some little time since, that a young lady had called and sung a hymn to her, but had given her nothing at the end for listening. The rough independence of the popular manners even now offends persons of a conventional habit of mind; and when poets and philosophers first came from southern parts to live here, the democratic tone of feeling and behavior was more striking than it is now or will ever be again.

Before the Lake poets began to give the public an interest in the District, some glimpses of it were opened by the well-known literary ladies of the last century who grouped themselves round their young favorite, Elizabeth Smith. I do not know whether her name and fame have reached America; but in my young days she was the English school-girls' subject of admiration and emulation. She had marvellous powers of acquisition, and she translated the Book of Job, and a good deal from the German,—introducing Klopstock to us at a time when we hardly knew the most conspicuous names in German literature. Elizabeth Smith was an accomplished girl in all ways. There is a damp, musty-looking house, with small windows and low ceilings, at Coniston, where she lived with her parents and sister, for some years before her death. We know, from Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton's and the Bowdlers' letters, how Elizabeth and her sister lived in the beauty about them, rambling, sketching, and rowing their guests on the lake. In one of her rambles, Elizabeth sat too long under a heavy dew. She felt a sharp pain in her chest, which never left her, and died in rapid decline. Towards the last she was carried out daily from the close and narrow rooms at home, and laid in a tent pitched in a field just across the road, whence she could overlook the lake, and the range of mountains about its head. On that spot now stands Tent Lodge, the residence of Tennyson and his bride after their marriage. One of my neighbors, who first saw the Lake District in early childhood, has a solemn remembrance of the first impression. The tolling of the bell of Hawkeshead church was heard from afar; and it was tolling for the funeral of Elizabeth Smith. Her portrait is before me now,—the ingenuous, child-like face, with the large dark eyes which alone show that it is not the portrait of a child. It was through her that a large proportion of the last generation of readers first had any definite associations with Coniston.

Wordsworth had, however, been in that church many a time, above twenty years before, when at Hawkeshead school. He used to tell that his mother had praised him for going into the church, one week-day, to see a woman do penance in a white sheet. She considered it good for his morals. But when he declared himself disappointed that nobody had given him a penny for his attendance, as he had somehow expected, his mother told him he was served right for going to church from such an inducement. He spoke with gratitude of an usher at that school, who put him in the way of learning the Latin, which had been a sore trouble at his native Cockermouth, from unskilful teaching. Our interest in him at that school, however, is from his having there first conceived the idea of writing verse. His master set the boys, as a task, to write a poetical theme,—"The Summer Vacation"; and Master William chose to add to it "The Return to School." He was then fourteen; and he was to be double that age before he returned to the District and took up his abode there.

He had meantime gone through his college course, as described in his Memoirs, and undergone strange conditions of opinion and feeling in Paris during the Revolution; had lived in Dorsetshire, with his faithful sister; had there first seen Coleridge, and had been so impressed by the mind and discourse of that wonderful young philosopher as to remove to Somersetshire to be near him; had seen Klopstock in Germany, and lived there for a time; and had passed through other changes of residence and places, when we find him again among the Lakes in 1779, still with his sister by his side, and their brother John, and Coleridge, who had never been in the District before.

As they stood on the margin of Grasmere, the scene was more like what Gray saw than what is seen at this day. The churchyard was bare of the yews which now distinguish it,—for Sir George Beaumont had them planted at a later time; and where the group of kindred and friends—the Wordsworths and their relatives—now lie, the turf was level and untouched. The iron rails and indefensible monuments, which Wordsworth so reprobated half a century later, did not exist. The villas which stud the slopes, the great inns which bring a great public, were uncreated; and there was only the old Roman road where the Wishing-Gate is, or the short cut by the quarries to arrive by from the South, instead of the fine mail-road which now winds between the hills and the margin of the lake. John Wordsworth guided his brother and Coleridge through Grisedale, over a spur of Helvellyn, to see Ullswater; and Coleridge has left a characteristic testimony of the effect of the scenery upon him. It was "a day when light and darkness coexisted in contiguous masses, and the earth and sky were but one. Nature lived for us in all her wildest accidents." He tells how his eyes were dim with tears, and how imagination and reality blended their objects and impressions. Wordsworth's account of the same excursion is in as admirable contrast with Coleridge's as their whole mode of life and expression was, from first to last. With the carelessness of the popular mind in such cases, the British public had already almost confounded the two men and their works, as it soon after mixed up Southey with both; whereas they were all as unlike each other as any three poets could well be.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.