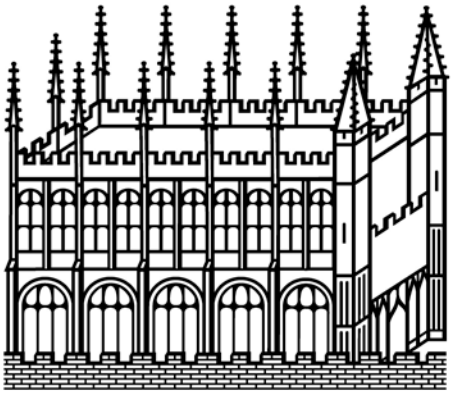
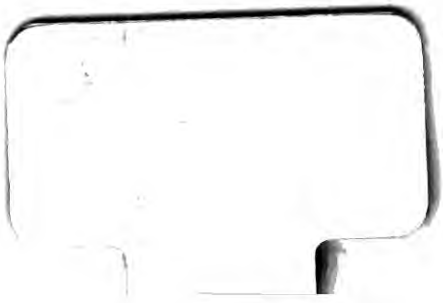


HAZARDS AND HAPPENINGS

REV. JOHN HORNE



HAZARDS AND HAPPENINGS

HAZARDS
AND
HAPPENINGS

by

JOHN HORNE

"Through various hazards and happenings we advance."
Virgil's "Æneid."

"Now I begin to reap the benefit of my hazards."
Bunyan's "Pilgrim."

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" As courage and intelligence are the two best qualities worth a man's cultivation, so it is the first part of intelligence to recognise our precarious estate in life, and the first part of courage to be not at all abashed by the fact."—R. L. STEVENSON.

" To think a thing tolerable and endurable is the way to make it so."—MARCUS AURELIUS.

HAZARDS AND HAPPENINGS

THE IMMENSITIES v. THE SIMPLICITIES

THE scientists are at it again. These learned pundits like to stagger the man in the street occasionally. They seem to delight in telling him how little he knows of the big things. Now and again, however, the unprofessional individual suspects that he is being mystified for no practical purpose; and he is apt to become impatient of the increasing demands to adjust himself to guesses which may or may not turn out to be correct, but which are mean time in the realm of speculation. He likes to reach some stations of finality; and he is in favour of knowledge that can be of near-at-hand service to him.

I

I was reading Sir James Jean's book, *The Mysterious Universe.* It sent me to my knees—in gratitude for its fine spirit and in humility for my puny insignificance. He says: "A few stars are known which are hardly bigger than the Earth, but the majority are so large that hundreds of thousands of Earths could be packed inside each, and leave room to spare; and here and there we come upon a giant star large

enough to contain millions and millions of Earths. . . . Such is the littleness of our home in space when measured up against the total substance of the universe." (Doesn't that leave you stunned?) And in another of his books he says that six particles of dust in Waterloo Railway Station would more than represent the tiny extent of space occupied by all those stars.

Such a dose of astonishment was, I thought, sufficient for the moment; but a few pages further on I was invited to swallow another draught. It seems that our sun is perspiring at a prodigious rate. Our popular luminant has my sincere pity. It is literally wasting away in galloping consumption. The sun, it appears, is pouring out energy at the rate of about 250,000,000 tons a minute. Although this devastating output seems essential for the re-creation of energy, I could not help feeling that old Sol was dreadfully overworked.

I closed the book and took up my newspaper for a diversion. . . . No use! I was not to escape so easily. Again I ran—or, more literally, staggered—into a further astonishment. "The greater part of the atom is space," I read. "Sir Oliver Lodge says that if the void in the atoms comprising our own bodies were done away, and the solid residue left were pressed together, our dimensions would be microscopic. And," added the lecturer, "if this happened to you, and not to me, I would be able to walk off with this company of ministers in my pocket."

I had an instant craving for the open air to cool my agitated brain.

II

At the foot of our garden I had placed an old tray with a miscellaneous assortment of crumbs for the birds. When I went out, the tray was peopled with gossipy starlings, sparrows, and a robin. The appearance of my figure scattered the community—all except the robin. The robin is a homely, confiding little youngster, and I knew he would soon get friendly with me. I stood still. He hopped around me for a spell, then boldly leapt to the toe of my boot. The perky, alert, little rascal! He eyed me up and down blithely, shifted his position to get a better view of me, and was immodestly pleased with himself. His confidence provoked my prompt admiration, and his antics entertained me triumphantly. Such a mite of a thing, too—in a world that was itself only a speck in the universe! Yet his gay performances ministered to my immediate delight.

I began to be amused by my sudden mental adjustment. And to emphasise my diversion, a familiar voice behind me cried in a pleading tone, "Grandpa, will you please mend my dolly for me?" I looked round—now forgetful of stars, suns, and worlds. The child's favourite doll had been injured under the pressure of some emergency, and was painfully in need of repairs. "Mend a doll?" I mused, feeling that the Earth was getting at me more immediately than bigger worlds. "All right, sweetheart; bring it to me." A faint wonder lingered in my mind as to whether the sun would hold out till I had finished the job! In a second or two even that item of the

immensities was blotted out, and I was enjoying myself to the full.

Immensities? Oh yes! But when it comes to genuine happiness, what are big worlds millions of miles distant compared to the bird at your feet, a child at your side—and maybe a dolly to mend!

MOVE ON THERE!

I

THERE is a legend of a knight in the Middle Ages who set out on horseback to track a dragon. The road was long, lonely, and dangerous. As he proceeded his fears invaded his resolution and ultimately unnerved him. He drew up, to deliberate with himself. He decided to turn back; but, on glancing behind him, he was paralysed to discover that there was no road! It had vanished! Compelled to move forward, he made the further discovery that the road faded in his rear at each step of his horse. There was no going back!

There is no going back. That is the first lesson that was planted in the mind of the human race. "Move on there!" cries Time the Custodian. When the gates of Eden were shut they were closed for ever. Never again an open door to any Eden you have left! The little girl chasing butterflies in the field is running away from that happy day with every footstep; it will never return. The bride who is preparing for her wedding is already inviting old age. There is no returning; no, nor standing still. "Move on there!" urges relentless Time. The roadway vanishes under our feet, and every step widens the gap between us and yesterday.

This train has no brakes.

II

Time is as deaf to sovereigns as to shoeblacks. Millions—millions (old and young, feeble and fit, robed and ragged) obey the inevitable momentum: no one is exempt. "There are no birds in last year's nests," says the Spanish proverb. Spend your day as you list, but the sun is wearing steadily to the twilight. The shadow on the sun-dial travels imperceptibly—but it moves, and no art can retard it.

> "The Moving Finger writes; and having writ
> Moves on; nor all thy piety and wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

It would be wearisome to recount the attempts made by humanity to evade the Inevitable. The quest for the Elixir of Life has been the most frenzied and popular. Throughout the centuries alchemists squandered laborious days and nights in a vain search for this elusive hope. The thyroid gland of our own day is the latest manœuvre to outwit the enemy. Every hair-dye placed on the market proclaims the same trend of human determination. Every touch of rouge faintly prolongs it. No beauty specialist who undertakes to erase wrinkles but gives sanction to the fad. At no time has the search slackened. If Joshua had handed down to his successors his secret of getting the sun to stand still, they would be making a turnover of millions every four-and-twenty hours! The most likely way that even he succeeded was to work harder, and thus put two hours' work into one. And when his task was finished he, too, had to move on to the boneyard with the rest of mankind.

You can improve Time; you can even kill it; but you can't cheat it. You must march to its chanters, or fall out and die.

III

You may write it down as a certainty that no experience which is common to humanity is a calamity. Therefore, if you can't stand still you will leave many undesirable circumstances behind you. Bid them a glad good-bye! Every unhappy day or sleepless night you pass has at least one recommendation: it isn't coming back. And there are many such days and nights which, thank God, are past and done with; ay, and many experiences, too. Let them go! There be some moody souls who carry their wretched recollections about with them, as crazy people who refuse to bury their dead and lug the corpses from one place to another. But, however pleasant once, these are no longer endurable. Listen to Time calling "Move on there!" March beyond the passing event and enter new territory. This is life's secret of renewal.

IV

Even if you could rein-in Time, would the triumph add to your felicity? Never to learn a new song or dance! Never to visit a fresh country! Never to make new friendships! It could not be; life would be robbed of its mode of entertainment. Move on you must, or ossify.

When you meet a chum whom you haven't seen for many years you almost rush into his arms; yet all the fine things you were bursting to say to each

other are said in a few minutes. You have both grown so much in the interval! You are not now the boyish chums you were aforetime; you have each experienced a richer life and explored different continents. You have both changed. "It is better to live with the golden memories of childhood," says J. C. Squire, "than attempt to recover the experiences that gave them birth. We regret it, but it is only our lost youth we regret." "Do you remember, Bridget," wrote Charles Lamb, "when we used to laugh at the plays from the shilling seats in Drury Lane? Alas, there are no such plays now." Oh, yes, there are; but what has happened is that Lamb and Bridget have moved on, into other pleasantries. We move on, and so become aware of the gauze and tinsel of childish admiration.

Move on you must, willingly or sulkily. Old Time is a policeman with authority; and his voice announces the edict of the universe. All progress is in that law. And the grandeur of life is hidden in its fulfilment.

The Order of Advance is the order of life, and there is no evading it. We may accept it bravely and march to the pipes gaily, or we may demur and be dragged along as culprits. But move we must. And there is no turning back.

"But once I pass this way,
And then no more.
But once—and then the silent door
Swings on its hinges—
Opens—closes—
And no more
I pass this way!"

"SOLVITUR AMBULANDO"

I

THE rip of old Latin pinned at the head of this chapter is easy to understand. "Solvitur" is forerunner of our own word "solve," and "Ambulando" is the grandfather of our easy-going friend "amble," to walk unhurriedly. And the phrase just means that "Things solve themselves as we proceed."

I suppose the idea had at first a physical application. If you are in an unwelcome cast of mind, for instance, it will serve little purpose to shut yourself up in the wardrobe. Rather, put on your coat and hat, set out for a saunter, and work off your cloudy mood. Many headaches, and other aches also, erase themselves during a wise ramble. Your blood clears in the act of walking; and your mood evaporates. Then you can set to work once more. A motor that has become cold is in need of a few quick turns ere it responds again to its task. Address yourself to movement, and your sulks will furl off. "Solvitur Ambulando."

II

But obviously the suggestion has a wider range. Life is an obstacle race. It is beset with surprises, disappointments, unexpected situations, and recurring

challenges; and life would not be worth having without these. There could be no educative discipline in it, no growth of ability, no freshness or renewal, no experience, no progress—nothing! A father's dying words to his son were: "Learn not to be over-anxious about meeting troubles and solving difficulties which time will meet and solve for you." Rare advice! Don't craze yourself with pondering and hesitating: strike into your work, and it will unfold itself as you proceed. Every castle you need to storm will open its gate as you advance on it, for the key is in the door although you may not know it. Every success is relative, and explains the next. Each victory commits you to another, and reveals the method of accomplishing it. If Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had been lifted from the school where he was teaching and plumped straightway into the Prime Minister's seat, he would have lost his wits. Do you think that if Mr. Thomas had been summoned off the locomotive's footplate and saddled with the responsibilities of our Dominion Affairs, he could have handled these right off? By no means. These men began in lowly offices, gained experience of how to handle the duties that fell to them, and thus gradually equipped themselves for the positions they occupy to-day. Things solved themselves as they proceeded. There is really no other way. Movement devises enlightenment. Action gets there. "Solvitur Ambulando."

III

The discovery of ways of advancement comes by questing and experience. Darwin's suggestion that

the ambition to rise in the blood of the eagle, led ultimately to the development of wings, is significant. When Columbus set sail on his immortal voyage he had no chart to guide him save his own fixed conviction that a new land lay ahead. He met all his occasions, and the mutinies of his crew, with steady resolve. And things solved themselves as he progressed, till his faith was justified. Captain Cook encompassed the world by the simple expedient of turning every new experience to advantage. Things cleared as he sailed.

When Sir David Wilkie was at the apex of his fame he painted his famous picture "Rent Day." While at work on it he discovered himself lacking in some models he required; and he did not know where to find them. In his dilemma he took a walk in the streets, to lament his misfortune. During the drift of his walk he encountered a group of working people—a small family evidently out for an airing, for the oldest female figure had a key in her hand (indicating an empty house). The figures appealed to his mind as those required for the completion of his picture. He engaged them in conversation; and ultimately enticed them to his studio. And there they are in his picture—the key, too, indicating the locked house while the tenant attends to the duty of paying the rent. "Fata viam invenient," said the Latins ("The Fates will find a way"). There are powers behind man working out his destiny. Only let him be faithful and courageous! Trustful souls feel their way along in ways mysterious and marvellous. Life's hardest problems solve themselves in the exercise of faith.

Stick in! Do thoroughly the duty that comes to your hand for execution. Believe in the big laws that work through the agency of resolute souls. When you fear that you are cornered, keep a steady heart and wait for the moment of guidance. Every sincere act sends out a scout to prepare the way for its successor. Even your good intention is a warrant of ascendancy over your perplexities. The spirit of discovery is at work in the effort of all brave adventurers. You will even find out what is to succeed by the things that fail. Only believe, and drive on in faith!

"Solvitur Ambulando." And don't forget it!

WHAT THE TORN NEWSPAPER SAID

I

DURING holiday-time on a Scottish hillside I sat down among the heather to rest. After a spell, a candid little breeze blew the torn page of a newspaper across my feet. Boy-like, I had to inspect the accepted offer of this wandering entertainment. What else the torn rag said to me is of little consequence; but one line of what was evidently a leader inspired me to dig out my pencil and copy it. It was this: "There is a philosophy of Uncertainty, and the sooner you know it the better."

The pronouncement was not new, but it struck motion into the wheels of an indolent mind.

II

The uncertainty attending our brief and troubled life is tantalising, and frequently challenges our faith in the rightness of things. A modern writer says that one-third of life is readable, but the other two-thirds are dark; and our wisdom is not to look round the corner. Uncanny truth!

It would not be strange if *everything* were unreckonable: it is the gaps in our knowledge that upset us. And, strangely enough, it is the more trivial things

that we can be sure of, while the big and vital questions play will-o'-the-wisp with our most anxious scrutinies.

Begin your study of Nature anywhere—at a planet, mountain, flower, or insect—and you soon discover that you are on the track of a Power which works by definite, understandable laws; laws which are invariable and can be relied on for all time.

I visited an observatory recently, and the curator asked me what planet I would like to see. I asked for Venus. He consulted his year-book, as one would turn up a time-table; made a note; went to the telescope; tickled a few screws; then said, "There's Venus!" I looked through the telescope, and the queen of love smiled at me in the centre of the glass.

A chemist is cognisant of all the properties of the medicines he dispenses. A farmer who knows his work is familiar with all the possibilities of the soil and seed, and adapts them accordingly. If you purchase a plant from the nurseryman, he will tell you about the kind of ground and treatment necessary for its growth. A housewife knows precisely how to cook the various articles she prepares for dinner: every potato and carrot has its certain laws. There is no tailor who cannot tell you the correct method of handling different kinds of cloth; every joiner will enlighten you as to the purposes of the various classes of wood. And the laws of your own body are as realisable and autocratic as any others: you easily learn what agrees with you and what does not. In all such affairs our knowledge may be as accurate and final as we care to make it.

In human life and experience, however—and this

is the tantalising exception—the incalculable reigns. Mystery has hidden the keys of knowledge. The most acute mind is almost as benumbed as that of a child. The astronomer may forecast the coming eclipse, but he cannot tell what is to happen to himself in the next five minutes. The chemist cannot guess how soon he may need the medicines he is preparing for others. The farmer is fully aware of the conditions of his labour, but he doesn't know what influence his actions have on the boy working beside him.

Kingsley and his friend Hughes set out for Chelsea one winter night, but became enveloped in a dense fog. "Both of us," said Mr. Hughes, "knew the way well, but we lost it half a dozen times. Kingsley's spirits rose as the fog thickened! 'Isn't this like life!' he exclaimed, after one of our blunders. 'A mystifying fog, many zig-zags and corrections, but yet just enough light to find your way in the end!'"

III

Well, what are we to do? Draw in your chair and have a chat about it.

I say that although Uncertainty may daze us, it is one of the most attractive processes of our advancement. Mystery is as educative as information—and, indeed, more so. It is a challenge to exploration and invention. Our very glory is to confront perplexities and unravel them. Uncertainty is really man's opportunity. It is the cradle of our courage, and the test of our manhood. Certitude is a terminus, uncertainty is a search. "It is better to travel hopefully

than to arrive," wrote Louis Stevenson, very wisely. And said not Cromwell in one of his bursts of inspiration, that a man is never so great as when he doesn't know where he is going? Driven by some divine impulse for an end out of sight and unguessed by him, his mission gradually discloses itself to him in the process. Abraham was styled the father of the faithful because he obeyed that impulse without asking to see the time-table or the programme.

Our primitive sires ventured along the creeks in their dug-outs, in obedience to the urge within them. They did not know that they were laying the keel of the *Mauretania*. The unexplored enticed them, and the same spirit is flushing all our enterprises to-day. My friend, if there were no uncertainties there could be no conquests. Where there is no struggle there can be no hero. Courage clamours for danger. Kingsley was right: as the fog thickened his spirits rose. He was the more incited to find his way. Have you noticed that all Shakespeare's representative characters are caught in a tangle of uncertainties, and only emerge after much courage and perseverance? They would not be true to life otherwise. You and I have to do the same. It is the test placed on the dignity of our manhood.

IV

Yes; but what of the Bigger Uncertainties? We must take them on trust as we do the lesser ones. Nothing is ready-made for us, either for time or eternity. The urge of hunger compelled primitive man to work; and out of that effort have come

all our material comforts—houses, clothing, food, literature, and all forms of art and music. And the spiritual need of man in the emergencies of life drove him to seek strength from the Great Mind enfolding life and the universe. As poet Tennyson sings:

> "We have but faith; we cannot know,
> For knowledge is of things we see."

V

So, then, says the torn newspaper, "there is a philosophy of Uncertainty, and the sooner you know it the better." Be thankful that it is so. If we were presented with our year's programme on the first day of January it would unsettle the best of us. We could not eat or sleep. We would be too excited by prospective good fortune or rendered miserable by the prospect of illness or disillusionment.

An ancient Volume says, "We spend our years as a tale that is told." As a tale! Do you catch it? What is more entrancing than a tale, the very charm of which is suspense!

THE HUMBUG THAT EMBELLISHES LIFE

I

MAKE a note of it! Here it is: "The humbug that embellishes life." It is a remark by Charles Reade in his immortal story *The Cloister and the Hearth.* He is referring to a scene which entailed some display of ceremony. "At the bottom of it all," he admits, "there was a slight touch of humbug; but the humbug that embellishes life." The phrase is catchy; and the distinction it enforces must not be missed.

There is a humbug that falsifies life and degrades it: of that kind we take no notice. But when Barnum declared that he was the biggest humbug in the world we smiled and took him to our hearts. And when he added that the people liked to be humbugged we understood him and gave the sagacious entertainer another hug.

While the dictionaries tell us that "humbug" means a deception or a sham, they also define it as "a hoax; an imposition under fair pretence," etc. In the early days it was classed with play-acting and drollery; and it is in this genial sense that I write of it. What jolly humbugs, for instance, are the students of our Universities when they attack a town

in all manner of jovial extravagances to cajole (another meaning of humbug, by the way) coins from the citizens for the benefit of our hospitals! Every conjurer is a humbug. He deceives your senses for your delight, and you go home marvelling how he manages to do it so deftly. And the best of the fun is that you know he is humbugging you all the time of his performance: yet you enjoy every trick of it. This is a sample of the humbug that adds embellishment to life.

II

Imagine the gaps in our literature were all the diverting humbugs omitted! Ulysses would disappear from the *Odyssey*—and then there wouldn't be enough of it left to be worth printers' ink. Aristophanes would have to quit the stage, with all his caricatures. The half of Shakespeare's plays would be denuded of their fascination. How could we spare rollicking, rascally Falstaff, the most glorious of humbugs? Cervantes wrote many plays, poems, and romances, and all of them distinctive; but the voice of mankind cries ever for his Don Quixote and Sancho Panza—two of the world's most entrancing humbugs. Take out of Dickens the Wellers, Pickwick, Jingle, Winkle, Martin Chuzzlewit, and their lesser cronies, and how much fun would be sacrificed! Scott is not so fertile in diverting characters, but Andrew Fairservice is more than a charm; and he is neighboured by Dominie Sampson, Oldbuck, and many another beguiling humbug. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is one of the most whimsical swindles ever perpetrated in print; and his Uncle Toby, Corporal

Trim, and some minor characters in the book, are all lovable humbugs.

Our own times are replete with up-to-date specimens. Imagine Barrie without his creations of solemn humorists! Wells has given us the jaunty and philosophic Mr. Polly; and Mr. Polly is likely to keep his name green should his argumentative books fail to do so. I wonder if anybody has ever seen in real flesh such entrancing innocents as make the heart laugh in the writings of W. W. Jacobs. I would not like to meet the person who shuts his bosom to the fooling that offers itself per the pen of P. G. Wodehouse. The man who turns his back on a Punch and Judy show should be compelled to inherit a blue pill daily till his liver behaves. And then he should be locked up with copies of *Punch* and *Alice in Wonderland* till he becomes human.

III

Why shouldn't we transfer some of this happy pretence to actual life? Look at your boy; or watch your girl—what a world of make-believe they can call up out of a handful of rags. A broom-handle is all the horse your little man needs to make him a General. A battered doll (though minus arms and legs) is the loveliest baby in the world to the girlie who mothers it. Who in his senses would deprive them of their illusion?

Dr. Johnson was one day enjoying coffee with a company of friends when the subject of play-acting rose to the surface of their talk. He held up the cup from which he was drinking, and said: "The painting

on this cup is of no utility, as the cup would hold the coffee equally well if plain; yet the painting is beautiful." You agree, don't you?

When Queen Alexandra returned from her first visit to Ireland, she said that the loveliest compliment paid to her was uttered by a working man at the ship's gangway. "Let me light me pipe at yer eyes!" he said. "Flattery!" squirts the cynical reader. Doubtless; but how pleasant! That, again, is the humbug that embellishes life.

Beside you at the cinema is an old lady whose curls did not come into the world with her: the hairdresser had something to do with them. "Old hypocrite!" sneers some young swank. But consider the game spirit behind the pretence. Better she should thus appear in public than with the odd patches of baldness with which Time has inflicted her. And consider, too, whether you do not yourself look better with your artificial teeth and a waft of brilliantine in your hair.

Swift's motto ("Vive la bagatelle") might wisely be adopted by us all.

Sir Frederick Treves relates the affecting story of a man who was unusually deformed. He was intensely sensitive about his condition, and shunned the company of his friends. The doctor was interested in his case and gave him a light job in his garden, away from public eyes. He wished to study him unobserved. One day a handsome lady called on the doctor. He said to her: "I want you to do me a favour." He then told her of this cripple and his sensitiveness. "I want you to walk round with me till we meet him. Don't show any surprise at his

deformity—that hurts him; but take notice of his work, and speak to him in as complimentary a manner as the occasion suggests." She agreed. When they came upon him at work the lady spoke to him about his flowers, his ability in rearing them, his deft fingers, and his handsome eyes. When she left the house, the doctor went round to see how his "subject" had taken the experiment. He was crying! He knew that the lady's compliments were intended to divert him; but how her artfulness had touched him! She had not noticed his deformity, either! Now, had you been asked to undertake that kindly bit of feigning, would you have refused? I'm sure you would not. Well, that's the humbug that embellishes life. And if you tell your wife that she is the handsomest woman in the world (although most other men might refuse to take a present of her at a jumble sale!), you would not lessen your domestic happiness. She knows that you have been kissing the blarney stone, but your appreciation pleases her.

IV

Barnum was right. People like to be humbugged in a pleasant way. That is why Charlie Chaplin, the prince of happy humbugs, is such a roaring success. How much lighter life seems to you after you have had a wholesome laugh at his burlesque antics!

Horace (Epistle II, 2) tells of a man who had been a monomaniac for years, imagining himself in a theatre enjoying the most entertaining spectacles. His friends, anxious about his condition, engaged an eminent physician—who restored him to actuality.

Thereupon the victim threatened to bring a lawsuit against them for destroying the happiness of his life! The story has its comic aspect, but it is not without a moral.

Shakespeare has reminded us (what we are apt to forget in our self-importance) that "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Sir, you are merely a player, after all; and so are you, madam. And poets, priests, politicians, philosophers and princes are in the play. And the success of the play depends on all the actors playing up to their parts. Do not disdain the motley, but summon your own level utmost to make a triumph of the gallant show!

V

"Humbug is the sweet oil that helps this whirling world of ours to spin round smoothly."—J. K. JEROME.

THOUGH THE FIDDLES STOP

I

THERE was an old negro melody popular when I was a boy. I never saw it in print, nor do I know the name of its author. I fancy it is something of a growth. There were three verses to it, the second of which ran :

> " Keep on climbing till you reach the top ;
> Keep on acting till the curtains drop ;
> Keep on dancing though the fiddles stop ;
> And you'll get there in the morning ! "

The first line indicates a finality : you can't go higher than the top. The second line also suggests a completion : the play is ended when the curtains fall. But the third line leaves you free to go on dancing though the fiddles stop.

It is easy work dancing while the music plucks you by the feet ; you can hardly resist the invitation. If you walk beside a brass band you involuntarily fall into step : no effort is demanded for that contribution to rhythm. The music carries you along with it. The chap who " gets there in the morning," however, must cultivate an original competency of his own, so that he continues in step after the band has passed. And the dancer who imitates him must get the lilt of the fiddles transferred to his soul so that he can

practise his steps, should he wish, after their music has ceased. In plain English, we must be prepared to carry on our work without accompaniment or the encouragement of an audience.

A black preacher struck the trail neatly when he said: "Dere's many people who blows about de man who has de courage ob his convictions; but recommen' me to de man who has courage when he has *no* convictions!" I will state the recommendation more chastely by a quotation from Mark Rutherford's *Deliverance*. He says: "There are moments in which intelligent conviction in the truth of principles disappears, and we are able to do nothing more than fall back on dogged resolution to go on; not to give up what we have once found to be true. This dogged resolution, which acts independently of enthusiasm, is a precious possession."

II

There are many situations in life where inspiration fails us, and the driving impulse goes vapid. We should then come to a dead stop were we not supported by a stubborn resolve to stride on as if the band were still with us.

When an airman runs into a "pocket," he sets his teeth and keeps control until he finds a favouring atmosphere again; or, failing that, glides carefully to another starting-place. He must not allow himself to get nervy and feckless when the air forsakes him.

The merchant who distributes smiles to the universe when business is brisk, and puts his face

into mourning when the tide recedes, will never "get there in the morning." He is more likely to get to the bankruptcy court.

There must be sufficient momentum in all our enterprises to carry us over the lulls that follow. The arrow will fail of the target if it retain not the necessary force after it has left the bow-string. The recurrence of divorces in our day simply means that people rush into each other's arms with no self-resource. When the marriage ceremony and honeymoon are over—when the fiddles stop—they have no reservoir of real love or even sense to tap. Their staying power gets no further than the honeymoon. You get their portraits in the illustrated papers at their marriage; all ravenous smiles, as if Heaven had at last come down to mankind! The next you hear of them is in the divorce court, utterly sick of each other and of all that love means. They mistook excitement for happiness; and the lovely pool of serenity and tranquillity which they had hoped to wander by, arm in arm, revealed itself as a mud-hole. In clear, flat-footed language, they were silly fools with no true affection, no tolerance, no consideration, no gumption, no reserve of any kind. They built their house without a pantry.

III

But there is another and noble class who keep on dancing, fiddle or no fiddle. "To some, life offers no results," says Goethe. That is to say, there are heroic souls who maintain their labours after applause has been withdrawn, and who die before they see the harvest of their faith. The Covenanters were flushed

with the victory of Drumclog, but they lost every battle afterwards; yet they struggled through blood and contumely, and left a heritage of spiritual liberty to Scotland that has made her a nation. Mozart was hailed as a prodigy and flattered; but he died in poverty and was buried in a pauper's grave, the very site of which is now unknown; yet he bequeathed to the world a legacy of brilliant lyrical music. You see Robert Burns in Edinburgh fawned on by distinguished society; yet, in Dumfries, toward the end, he walks unnoticed on the shady side of the street. But he was a singer to the finish of his tragic career; and no other poet has left to the world such a granary of song. The truth is that to strive for ideals, the full result of which they cannot live to see, is the lot of many persons, gifted and humble alike.

I know a young man whose wife was taken to an asylum after a brief year or two of wedded bliss. The music stopped; but he bears himself with a quiet, serene resolution that makes me ashamed of my petty ills. I know another whose business opened hopefully; but unforeseen events drove him to bankruptcy. To-day he is lashed to a new venture, and is determined to pay all his debts before he allows himself even a holiday. The fiddles have stopped; but *he* hasn't! The pages of human experience are illuminated by thousands of such pictures, most of them from the lives of humble and obscure people.

IV

Now I will give you the complete rhyme—I can hardly call it a poem—as nearly as I can recall it. As

I have said, it seems composite, yet has a completeness of its own :

" Keep on looking for the bright blue skies ;
Keep on hoping that the sun will rise ;
Keep on singing though the whole world sighs ;
And you'll get there in the morning !

Keep on climbing till you reach the top ;
Keep on acting till the curtains drop ;
Keep on dancing though the fiddles stop ;
And you'll get there in the morning !

Keep on giving your brother a shove ;
Keep on trusting in a God of love ;
Keep on tramping to your Home above ;
And you'll get There in the Morning ! "

THE HOUSE OF COURAGE

I

IN the Italian town of Bordighera there is a settlement of British people. Near the centre of this settlement stands a house with the suggestive name of "Casa Coraggio"—meaning, The House of Courage. I do not know anything of its history, or how it came by its arresting name; but I have read that George Macdonald, the Scottish novelist, was fond of occupying it during his residence in the town. He is reported to have had the practice of leaving the door wide open every Sabbath, so that anyone might enter who cared.

The name is descriptive of a Larger House. Its door is also open. Let us peer in and try to recognise some of the figures. They are of all tribes and types, for this House of our imagination is symbolic of courage in the human race. You can detect martyrs, explorers, sufferers, and many others; but I wish to pick out some individual figures that particularly entice my attention.

II

The first figure is a very exceptional one. It is that of a young girl. She is lying on the floor in a pathetic sprawl of heedless, unresponsive deadness. She hears

what no one says, for she is deaf; she cannot answer any word spoken to her, for she is dumb; she can see nothing, for she is blind. No speech; no hearing; no sight! Every avenue to her mind is plugged. Beside her lies a woman, who is experimenting on the hapless girl by means of touch—tapping her body, her hands, her face. This friend is hoping to communicate with the imprisoned soul. Was there ever such a hopeless case? Yet gradually—very, very gradually—"the blind life within the brain" recognises the existence of the outer world and resolves to get knowledge of it. Simple physical habits are first understood; then desires get birth; questions are telegraphed between her and her teacher-friend; the longing to learn strengthens; she attempts some lessons, and succeeds; and slowly ventures further in her enquiries. Life's wider meaning dawns on her awakened mind. After many years she enters a University and graduates with honours. It is unbelievable! I wonder if there is in the history of our race a parallel instance of such patient persistence and courage. Her name is Helen Keller. She is an American.

The next indweller in the House of Courage who captures my admiration is a German. He is Heine, the poet. You see him lying on a mattress, pathetically helpless. In 1845 he was smitten by creeping paralysis; and so relentless was the disease that even his eyelids were affected. In this condition he lay, with slight exchanges, till his death in 1859. He was a complex, sardonic character; and he played gaily with life. But his prolonged dying revealed his true quality. "Amid all his sufferings," writes

his biographer, "Heine's spirit rose triumphant." Spasms, coughs, and vomitings wrecked his already agonised frame. A friend who visited him in his closing days declared that he had "never seen a man bear such horrible pain and misery in such a perfectly unaffected manner." During the early years of his suffering his aged mother was alive; and he caused his amanuensis to write her every month and say that he was well and busy. The old lady died without ever knowing the tragedy that had overwhelmed her brilliant son. Visitors found him with all the appearance of a living corpse: his face was livid and his limbs withered. Yet his courage was undefeated. "Am I about to die?" he asked his physician. The doctor could not hide the certainty from him. "It is well!" he answered. He died with undimmed gallantry. So many years! Amid torture and weakness! And with such unwearying endurance!

There is another in this House of Courage almost similar to Heine. He is Robert Louis Stevenson, a name loved by all Scotsmen. You may see his memorial in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh. It is as strange a monument as was ever set up to any person, for it represents him (a frail, attenuated figure) sitting up in his couch, writing. The representation of him is startlingly fragile. And no marvel. Sir W. Robertson Nicol said that to understand Stevenson one must put up a little blood. There were incessant relapses to weakness and partial blindness; pain in every limb; sleeplessness; straining cough; and bleeding lungs—combining in a constantly-depressing attack on the sufferer's

courage. Yet, as Dr. Kelmen says, "He met it all with a gallant defiance, often whimsical, and always good-natured and exhilarating." No exhaustion or disappointment sufficed to defeat his eagerness to be at work in some form. His intrepidity and courage were inviolate. He had always some encouraging interpretation at hand for every phase of illness. Few have won the right of residence in this House of Courage more worthily than this gay, cavalier Scot.

May I pick out for you one other inmate of this "Casa Coraggio?" She is a woman, and a Japanese. Her story is told by Lafcadio Hearn, professor of English at Tokio. This woman had a paralysed husband to support. She was ugly, Hearne says, and her natural ugliness was increased by the scourge of smallpox. And she was blind. She wore the dress of a peasant when Hearn made her acquaintance; and she was led about by a child, who carried a bundle of ballad sheets—for she was a singer, and the sheets were for sale to her listeners. "The woman sat down on my doorstep," he writes, "and tuned her samisen (Japanese guitar). The folks of the vicinity gathered round her. A spell descended on the people as she sang; and they stared at each other in smiling amazement. For out of these ugly, disfigured lips there gushed and rippled a miracle of a voice. She sang as only a peasant can sing. And as she sang those who listened began to weep silently. A tenderness invisible seemed to gather and quiver about us—feelings not of any time or place in living memory." The song was of the human heart in all ages. Once this woman had been well-to-do and had learned the samisen when a girl. The little boy

who accompanied her was her son. She supported her paralysed husband and her boy. As she moved from place to place she carried the little fellow on her back. Wherever she stopped to sing the people wept and gave her coppers and food. The ballad she sang that morning was of thwarted love and the pity of lives defeated. But her own life was brave and courageous. A mutilated angel!

III

The figures I have identified in the House of Courage have been sufferers in varying classes. And the reason is at hand. It is easy to be courageous when you are in health. Courage is the natural expression of physical fitness. It is honourable, even then; but much more so when it plays on the instrument of a timid, maimed body. Courage is a divine virtue at any time; yet it adds more dignity to human nature when it triumphs amid strangling circumstances, weakness, and pain.

But we have only peered into this remarkable House of Courage. There are many other figures there, poor and rich. Yet we have enough examples of fortitude to make us bow the knee, and pray for some of their inextinguishable courage!

HAVE YOU AN ADIAPHORA?

I

"ADIAPHORA! What's that? Is it a fossil or a disease?" Neither.

It is a word employed by the Stoics to denote things which are of secondary importance—that is, things to which we should train ourselves to be indifferent, if we are to enjoy real living. This list, says Zeno (and here comes the thriller), includes life, death, honours, dishonour, pain, pleasure, forms, ceremonies, riches, poverty, disease, and health.

A staggering list! "But," you retort, "these things are the essentials! Existence would be a mummified affair without them." You're wrong, answers the Stoic. They are desirable in their proper place, but not as essentials. A real mother would surrender the entire list without a second breath, for the well-being of her baby. The sacrifice is secondary: her love is the essential. The martyr to a great cause counts death only an incident. "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley," said Latimer at the stake, "we shall by God's grace light such a candle in England this day as shall not soon be put out!" Their torture was subordinate to lighting that candle. The man of high spirit or of independent mind lives on a level where conventions are only of second-rate importance.

II

It is really a question of selection. Let me suppose that you have a sweet tooth for pastry. You will readily agree that a touch of it gives a pleasant finish to your tea. But what would happen if you disarranged this order, and tried to live altogether on pastry? Indigestion would give you fits; and the doctor would arrive. And if, despite your doctor's advice, you persisted in your fad, the undertaker also would present himself, with the grave-digger at his elbow. Pastry may be a pleasure or a poison: it depends on what place you give it in your menu.

The Romans gave us the word "impedimenta." It meant the baggage-train of an army; but it was a hindrance, although a necessity. Every army requires its baggage-train; but when it becomes cumbersome, or gets out of position, it complicates activity and endangers the success of the campaign. It is sometimes compulsory for a General altogether to cut his army quite adrift from the train of supplies and drive ahead. The impedimenta is a necessity; but all the same, it is secondary. The absorbing concern is to win the tempting victory. Money, for instance, may bring you comforts; but it is just as likely to make you proud and selfish. And if you are looking to it for happiness, you will find it a cheat. It is not your money that really matters, although you may think it does, but the mind behind the money. Happiness is in your spirit, or nowhere. When you make up your own adiaphora, put money in the list of secondary things, and keep it there if you would enjoy its use.

III

Preachers make much of the sin of indifference, I know; and we get thinking of it in that strain. But indifference may be commendable, and even splendid. A noble disdain is a characteristic of every true nature. No heroism, however humble, is possible without it. If you are offered a treacherous tip by which you may gain a dishonourable advantage, how do you act? As an upright man, you will scorn it. Should an indecent book be presented to you, what would be your first impulse? If your soul is clean, you will hustle it into the fire. This is noble indifference. Cultivate it!

We have at times to work with people whose natures irritate us. How are we to overcome their worrying ways? By practising a tolerant indifference to their frailties. Disagreeable duties, too, constantly leap at us. We would gladly avoid them, but we can't. How are we to face up to them? Simply by training ourselves to ignore their unattractiveness. Every day is beset with uninviting tasks; and one of the minor conquests of life is to overcome our aversion to them and go on with our business.

Infinite are the varieties, and insistent the pressure, of appeals to capture our attention. Things loathsome, trivial, insincere, and low bang our door-knocker with unwearied pertinacity. There are sensational newspapers that glory in mucky rumours, sloppy pictures that litter the mind, suggestive plays that trap the unwary, back-door taverns that tempt sneaky drinkers, feverish excitements that tickle the crowd. Healthy disdain is the weapon for warding

off this leprous squad. A courageous indifference to useless and frittering knowledge is the shield of those who resolve to enjoy a clean life. Indifference? Yes! It means grit.

Indifference is the spinal cord of independence. Pisistratus the tyrant sent Philoxonus to prison for criticising his poetry. He afterwards composed a poem which he thought superior to his former effort. He then told the jailer to fetch his critic from prison, expecting now a complimentary opinion from him. Philoxonus listened to the poem, then turned to the jailer. "Take me back to prison!" said the sturdy independent. Such pure-blooded indifference is a match for kings and tyrants alike. It is the hall-mark of a regnant, unbribable nature. And whoso is unbribable is formidable.

IV

You miss both the fun and the dignity of life if you think that position, riches, honours, castles, are the jewels of first importance. Your daily newspaper will tell you a different tale. Every day, for instance, you read of people with all these advantages who are unable to live together, and hunger for divorce. With the entire catalogue of external inducements, they are miserable. Why? Just for lack of love. You cannot put love in the bank, or weigh it in scales, or measure it with a rule. Yet without it castles never become homes; life is unendurable; and all these possessions are changed to vexations and accusations. Secondary things cannot take the role of things primary. Lack of affection has turned many a mansion into a mad-

house ; and millionaires have been known to destroy themselves because their inflated minds have taken offence at some affront to their supposed importance. And Robert Burns supplies the explanation :

" If happiness hath not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be rich or wise or great
But never can be blest."

Have you ever discovered that the power to be happy or unhappy is the one possibility left to your own control? And you cannot exercise it wisely without a trained indifference to opiates that are presented to you as the bread of life.

V

Try your hand at making a list of your own adiaphora. Arrange your acquisitions in their correct order ; and let your interest in real life, and the glow of it, stand against the inferior allurements. To take life with well-arranged ease and detachment is the secret of contentment and power.

AND LIFE IS NEVER THE SAME AGAIN

I

BARRIE begins one of his masterpieces by quoting the report of an old weaver who saw a man and woman pass each other in the square of Thrums. "They didna speak," he said, "but they just gave one another a look, an' I saw the love-licht in their een." And the whole story of "The Little Minister" is about that love-light that glanced between these two—who were to have been married, but remained single. Of such trifles are the dreams of life.

> "The touch of a hand, the glance of an eye,
> Or a word exchanged with a passer-by,
> A glimpse of a face in a crowded street,
> And afterwards life is incomplete."

The real influences that determine our lives and colour our days, are irregular and unexpected. Trivial, too, in their inception. Our outward life is built up of commonplace circumstances—we are cradled, go to school, settle to business, marry, and die; but the inner life is shaped by singularly curious and diversified forces—a wayside thought, an unanticipated meeting, a chance phrase in some book, an angry remark by a cynic, a sudden tragedy.

I doubt if education has much to do with shaping our decisions. Other (and odd) things do the

fashioning work. In one of his self-revealing confessions, the late T. P. O'Connor said that the chief influence of his life had been the river of his native place. He always worked and wrote to the rhythm of its motion. When Spurgeon was a young man, an usher in a school, he wished a college training for the ministry. An appointment was made with Dr. Angus, Principal of Regent's Park College, and on the arranged day Spurgeon called at the doctor's house. A maid showed him into a room, but forgot to announce the visitor to her master. After waiting over an hour, Spurgeon left the house, and on the way home determined to proceed on his natural gifts. One of the most thrilling biographies of the present day is that of Dr. Grenfell of Labrador. When he was a medical student in London, he attended, out of curiosity, a meeting convened by D. L. Moody, the evangelist. When Grenfell entered, an old fellow was praying; and as he seemed rather long-winded Grenfell got up to leave. At that moment Moody rose and said: "While our brother finishes his prayer, we shall sing a hymn." The humour of the stroke tickled the young student and he sat down again. He left the meeting with a new outlook. The result is seen in the magnificent work which has been done in Labrador: the finest piece of medical-missionary enterprise of modern times. The biographies of authors, musicians, painters, philanthropists are made romantic by the trivial incidents which determined their careers.

I am much inclined to question also if a person's creed is of importance in creating the motives which control his life. Says Beaconsfield: "Men

are not ruled by a set of musty maxims, but by temperament" ; and the statement cannot be contradicted. Temperament, of course, suggests the form which our creed is to take ; but the creed itself is more related to the mind than to the heart. There are kind and good people in all the creeds ; as there are also crafty and ugly people. What *happens* to us is of more consequence in urging us to the life we adopt. It is noticeable that the progress of Bunyan's immortal and representative Pilgrim is unfolded by a series of seemingly haphazard happenings. "We only know what we feel," says Matthew Arnold.

There is less deliberate intention in the careers of great men than we suppose. Gibbon wrote : "Our most important actions have been often determined by chance, caprice, or some other inadequate motive." Said Gladstone to Morley : "My life has been in a remarkable degree the reverse of self-guided and self-suggested with reference to all its best known aims." Sir Walter Scott was searching for a fishing-reel in his desk one day, and discovered some leaves of a story he had once attempted to write and had forgotten. He decided to finish it ; and *Waverley* was written—and then all the procession of tales that are a glory to Scotland. When the "Good" Lord Shaftesbury was a young gallant about town, the funeral of a poor man passed him in the street ; he was so stricken by the pitiful show that he resolved to abandon his gay life and devote himself to the betterment of the poor. General Booth was writing a report of his mission in East London, and had occasion to say, "We are an army of salvation." "I must put a capital letter at Salvation," he remarked

to himself; and then, "Why not a capital at Army also?" The sentence looked clumsy to him and he changed it to "Salvation Army"—and the conception of Christian work on the lines of an army was born. He adopted it and the world now sees the outcome. The truth is that the major part of every life is the product of fortuitous and unclassified influences. I think this is true even of the humblest and poorest.

II

It would sometimes seem as if a loose incident in our experience held in it all that was to follow. "In a rain-drop's compass lie a planet's elements" is the teaching of our scientists. What influences us so deeply, for instance, as our marriage? Yet it is often—one might say always—the result of an incidental meeting at some stage of our lives. So much that is real may arise out of what is fugitive! A book of testimonies from men and women as to how they were drawn to each other would be a volume of real romance. And I am sure no book of fiction could equal it in human interest. The incidental would play a leading part in it! The word "happy" comes from "hap"—chance.

III

All through life, our pace is quickened, changed, or retarded by these mysterious intrusions. To many they come after some tragic experience that leaves the heart torn and raw. What strikes the mind then makes a deep cutting. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*

held his listener paralysed because the tale he had to tell had seared him for ever.

Luther strolled unthinkingly into a corner of the library of his monastery, and found a Bible. He read it surreptitiously. Out of that came the Reformation that changed the character of Europe.

Joan of Arc had a vision; and the Miracle of the Maid staggered the world.

IV

In unanticipated fortune, or happy chance, or sudden tragedy, life to most of us is a continual readjustment to the unexpected! And after each readjustment "life is never the same again!"

ARE YOU A SIMPLE-LIFER?

I

PERIODICALLY the public is canvassed on behalf of what is called "The Simple Life." Sometimes it is given a religious cast; anon, it comes before us as a return to the primitive simplicities. Ascetics, hikers, campers, and others translate it according to their various tastes. Generally, the demand is the child of a wholesome instinct; and, put into leading strings, will trek us towards health and reliance.

But, what do we mean by "The Simple Life?"

Life, it is said, has become too complex and distracting: its ostentation, demands, engagements, social duties, and business worries have mastered us, and now harass us. We are, it seems, too ambitious for show and position. We are slaves to the conventions we have ourselves created. We must find escape.

What is proposed, therefore, is that life shall be reduced to its simplest terms. Complexity is to be avoided. Multiplicity of detail must be shunned. Elaboration and display must be relegated to the lumber-room. In short, life must be resolved into its primitive conditions again, as far as possible. All entanglements must go to the pawn-shop. We are no longer to be "troubled about many things." We

are told to cultivate a spirit of pious neutrality to the challenges of our day, to live within our own thoughts, and let the world go by. Everything that does not minister to the ease of the mind and the repose of the soul is to be locked away or ignored. We are to worry about no subject in particular, except to see that nothing disturbs our composure.

II

This is a singularly attractive ideal. What heart does not jump at the very mention of it? Many would gladly join Omar under his tree, and let the days drift casually in sensuous dreaming. Others make for a hut in the hills, to shake off the dust of civilisation. A few envy the ascetic in his cave; no rent, taxes, or grocers' bills. And almost everybody hopes for that villa by the sea, where the sun is always shining, and all one has to do is to watch the vision of ships sailing into the Far Away.

Of course, there is nothing new in this craving for a secluded life: the desire is as old as human history. The patriarchs practised it in their tent life. Diogenes preached it from his tub; and when the Emperor visited him and asked if there was anything he could do for him, he replied, "Yes; don't stand between me and the sunshine!" Simon Stylites perched himself on a pillar, so that he should be removed as far as possible from the business and bustle of the street. Epictetus taught it; Seneca taught it; all the Stoics taught it—their pages are fat with it. In modern days, Thoreau not only taught it, but practised it in his hut at Walden.

III

The proposition has its fascination; but is it desirable, even if attainable? It demands the abolition of difficulties and complexities. Does anybody in good health really want this? I doubt it. A sound mind delights in difficulties, and demands them. It rather yearns for intricate problems as it develops. Will any young musician be tempted to despise the complexities of Beethoven and betake himself to the practice of Sunday School hymns? Not likely! He is on his mettle when he is up against a classical composer: and he will take it as an insult if you think he is fit only for musical simplicities. Will any reader throw up Browning and go back to the tale of "Mother Hubbard"? Again, not likely. If he has the makings of a scholar in him, he will aspire to tackle the best and toughest literature. Offer a mother relief from the worries of her children, and to transport her back to the streets as a laughing girl —will she thank you? Once again, not likely. To suggest easy things to wholesome minds is an affront. The truth is that we welcome complexities that expand our interests and powers.

And what about risks and responsibilities? Does any man with a streak of grit in him wish to evade these? Shake your head if you will at those who lose their lives in the adventure of flying, the game goes on—because the risk is the magnet. Were it possible to offer them the choice, do you think Luther, or Knox, or Washington, or Mozart, or Lincoln, or Cromwell, or the designer of the *Mauretania*, or Baden-Powell would vote for a feather bed? Would

any of them thank you for the exchange? Not one! And what these supermen tackle is only a high example of what every sane man elects to do in a humbler sphere.

And why? Because a life of evasion, however you colour it, is a life of cowardice. The contentment which is secured by suppressing capacity, evading duties, withdrawing from interests and engagements, is but a skilfully-devised life of selfishness. The suggestion, too, is a negative one. Simply to stand aside, and keep out of "trouble" is mean and sneaky. In his sermon one morning, Henry Ward Beecher said: "I have just been reading the obituary notice of a man who died last week. It was recorded of him that he did not leave an enemy behind. And this was supposed to be a criterion of goodness! God forbid! In a world of so much injustice, cant, and treachery, to pass out without making an enemy—I call that unfaithfulness to truth and righteousness!"

IV

Of course, there is the hustling extreme to avoid—gasping round the planet, and blaring one's way with a trumpet. But better that than the spineless life of paltry hopes, mean fears, selfish joys and sorrows, and vacant souls!

V

The real Simple Life is to cultivate simple habits in our everyday programme—with the object of gaining a clearer brain and steadier hand in responding to the duties and activities of the world's progress

This is to be a true Simple-Lifer.

And, granted sufficient health, the world has no worthier vocation to offer any man.

VI

"Do not isolate yourself—Be among men and among things, and among troubles, and difficulties, and obstacles."—HENRY DRUMMOND.

HEARKEN TO THE VIOLIN STRINGS!

I

"THIS is cruel!" cried the violin strings, as the bow rasped them. The violinist did not hear them complaining in that fashion. What he heard was a torrent of ecstatic music. The audience applauded it, and called for an encore. But the strings murmured among themselves. "Here are we, strained to snapping point; and tortured mercilessly. This is torment—torment, and nothing else." Thus the strings whined. "Yes," answered the bow, "it may be torture, but there would be no music otherwise; and you must think of the pleasure you give to others." "But what business have you to interfere with us?" "No business, except that the violinist compels me to do it." "But he rubs rosin on you, to make you increase our agony." "Yes; and that is needful, too. But for the rosin I would slip across you and produce no sound at all." "Well, we wish you would just do that." "I can't, I tell you. The firmer I grip you the fuller is the music. And I can only succeed by interfering with you and compelling you to sing." "There may be something in that, but it's irritating to us." "No doubt, but let me remind you again of the pleasure you give to others. That's how you should regard

it." "Oh, well, it's heartsome to know that we can be of use. So, scrape away; and make the most of us while you're at it!"

II

This is what is known as the law of interference. It is operative throughout Nature; and its function is to produce pleasurable effects. A flower only accepts those rays of the sun which compel it to expand—all others are interfered with and rejected. Throw a pebble into a pool and you will produce rings of wavelets; and if you throw a second pebble into the water you will create another set of wavelets. And when the rings meet they cross and pass through each other; and the crossing gives you a third set of ring effects. This illustrates the law of interference. If you strike two sounds simultaneously you have a similar interference. Wave-beat interfering with wave-beat produces variety of tones—and thus you have music. In the sciences of light and sound, interference plays an essential influence; for both are subjects of varying vibrations.

Your dictionary tells you that interference means not only to oppose but also to modify and counteract. When the wavelets in the pond pass through each other they modify one another's action; and so of sounds. Modification works for harmony by reducing discordancies. Marriage may be offered as an illustration in actual life. Husband and wife complement each other; and happiness ensues. If the husband be a tyrant, or the wife a scold, there is no transference, and no happiness. When the doctor

comes to cure you of a disease, however, he roots it completely out. In this sense, interference is to intervene, and ultimately erase.

III

Is there something answering to all this in our lives? Does the law of interference find useful scope there? Assuredly.

The entire schooling of life is education by interference. In some particulars, indeed, a man may interfere with himself. Demosthenes, the great orator, was born with a stutter; but he determined to interfere with it. He accomplished his purpose by filling his mouth with pebbles, then wandering on the beach and addressing the waves till he subdued his defect. Whenever you try to cure a fault, you interfere with yourself. The man who has a passion for drink, and who signs the pledge, interferes with the function of that appetite.

The mother who chastises her boy for misbehaviour interferes with him rather violently, but for his advantage. If there is a football match in a field adjoining the school, the scholars are apt to be restless; but they are kept tied to their tasks by the teacher. He interferes with their wishes, and for a high purpose. If you even give a person advice against his inclinations you interfere with him. And interference is the very spirit of sport. What a dowdy affair would be a football match were all the players urging the ball in the same direction! Interference is the very genius of our pastimes.

Every Act passed by Parliament may be said to be interference with something or somebody. Life—

healthy, strenuous life—is mothered by interference. If you are to train even a horse or a dog you must interfere with him sufficiently to break him, and cure him of wilfulness.

A young man who was being led to execution in the early days asked that he might be allowed to speak to his mother. Being granted the privilege, he bit off her ear, and said that if she had chastised him for his follies in his childhood he would not then have been on his way to the scaffold.

In almost every meeting for the transaction of business there is a motion, opposed by an amendment; and when the subject is discussed the opinion of one speaker crosses that of another. The optimistic individual prods the pessimist into action, while the sober views of the pessimist subdue the bounce of the optimist—and the result is a compromise that includes the best elements of both. This is wisdom. Indeed, nobody gets it all his own way in life. Even the King is a constitutional monarch, and can only act with the consent of his advisers. Imagine a town in which everybody was at liberty to act as he pleased! It would require more asylums than workshops; and and there would be a distressing demand for strait-jackets. Lawlessness is insanity. All law, all taxation, all superintendence is a condition of our liberty and security. This is a necessity, but a gracious one. Progress is the offspring of interference. It rules throughout life's curriculum. Everything and everybody interferes with us. Our parents interfere with us, our teachers interfere with us, our contemporaries interfere with us. Every law and condition of Nature interferes with us—to modify, guide, or punish.

Says Nietzsche, the iconoclast philosopher: "If life once becomes pleasant, it will be valueless. It requires obstructions." We owe more to our contradictions than to our latitudes. Our advancements are nurtured by hitches, thwartments, collapses, and limitations. By the play of irritations we attain. Friction produces electricity—which is both power and light. The way to success is through a series of disappointments. It is in this royal sense that Browning cries:

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough;
Each sting that bids us sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!"

IV

A veteran of the old world, named Paul, expressed the truth in this way: "No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness." This man was no languid experimenter: he knew what he was writing about. He probably spent as much time in confinement as in freedom; he was three times shipwrecked; he was stripped and flogged more than once; he was so mutilated on one occasion that he was flung over the city wall as dead. He was everywhere interfered with, and in brutal fashions; yet he maintained that "afterwards" it was for his gain.

And the strings of the violin corroborate the game campaigner. "Yes," they say, "no rasping is joyous, interference is torture, nevertheless afterwards —Music!"

SAY IT WITH HUMOUR

I

AFTER Alfonso thought it discreet to leave Spain, he declared, "I am still King of Spain." The comment of *Judge*, an American paper, was, "This is a minority report." There is the essence of humour! The *Daily Herald* is conspicuous by its humorous comments. "According to a social worker," it says, "modern girls are divided into the thoughtful and extravagant." "Pensive and expensive," is the happy comment. "The man who said that conversation is dying out was not a married man," jocularly announces *Punch*. Lord Dewar was uncanny in his humorisms. "Many a false step is made by standing still," was one of them. And another was, "When there is nothing else to be said, some fool always says it." Said with humour.

One day John Wesley was passing a building which was undergoing repairs. A scaffold had been erected in front of the building, with a plank for foot-passengers underneath. Wesley met a rigid Calvinist, who drew himself up and said to Wesley: "I never give way to a fool!" "Oh," answered the mild Methodist, "I always do"—and he stepped aside. Said with humour.

Among his letters one morning, Beecher found an envelope addressed to him, but containing only a slip

of paper on which was written the single word "Fool." The great preacher turned to his secretary and remarked: "I have often had people write letters to me who forgot to sign their name, but this is the first time anyone has signed his name and forgotten to write his letter!" Exquisitely turned! Said with humour.

Mark Twain was reported dead some years before he was due at the bone-yard. "Report greatly exaggerated," he telegraphed, and the whole world laughed.

II

In his *Traits and Stories of the Scottish People*, Charles Rogers relates a delightful incident in the career of Professor Aytoun, the Scots poet. As a young man he was enamoured of Miss Wilson, daughter of the celebrated "Christopher North," but he was bashful about approaching the famous man. He suggested to the maiden that she should herself sound her father on the subject. She agreed. Entering his study, she announced that "Mr. Aytoun wants to marry me, father. What do you say?" Without looking up from his desk, her father took a sheet of paper and wrote something on it; then, rising, pinned it on her shoulder and signed for her to retire. When she rejoined her lover he was overjoyed to read on the slip, "With the author's compliments." Could anything be more felicitous?

During the ministry of Dr. Joseph Parker, one of his members verted to the Catholic Church. She wrote to announce her change of faith. As is the custom of those joining a community in that Church,

she adopted the name of a saint; and instead of signing herself "Helen Crow" she blossomed into "Helen Maria Theresa Crow." Parker replied humorously, and signed himself "Joseph Matthew Mark Luke John Parker!"

I heard Spurgeon get himself out of a delicate situation rather neatly. At the annual dinner of the College he received the guests himself, most of whom he knew by name. "How do you do, Mr. Partridge?" he said to a gentleman, offering him his hand. "Very well, sir," answered the visitor; "but my name is Patridge, not Partridge." "Oh, well, forgive me, and I will make game of you no more!" Said with humour.

Sir Robert Peel once rescued the House of Commons from an awkward situation by a stroke of humour. The Irish Question was setting out on its stormy passage, and feeling was heated. In course of a speech, Fergus O'Connor said that he didn't care whether the Queen or the Devil sat on the throne of Britain. The unparliamentary expression roused a storm; but Peel rose and said: "When the honourable gentleman sees the sovereign of his choice on the throne of these realms, I hope he will enjoy, and I am sure he will deserve, the confidence of the Crown." Laughter saved the ugly situation. Said with humour.

III

Not the least recommendation of humour is its indirect power of correction. On the occasion of a special service at which the celebrated orator Robert Hall was present, the preacher—rather a pompous individual—was anxious to hear Hall's opinion of his

sermon. Hall evaded the query, but ultimately admitted with a smile that there was one fine passage about the service. "And pray, sir, which was that?" asked the anxious pulpiteer. "Why, sir, the passage—the passage—from the pulpit to the vestry."

A high-speed enthusiast tracked Bunyan to his prison at Bedford. Grasping the preacher's hand frantically, he cried: "After searching for thee in half the prisons of England with a message from the Lord, I have at last found thee." Bunyan laid him out with one stroke of banter. "Friend," he said, "if the Lord had sent you, you did not need to search for me, for He knows I have been in Bedford jail these several years."

Some years ago I read in the *Scottish American Journal* that Sir George Adam Smith, while on a visit to the United States, was vulgarly patronised by a High Churchman. "There is no difference in spirit between us," he said fawningly, "only a slight difference of ritual." During a tour in a public conveyance, they came to a particularly striking scene. An enthusiastic revivalist in the company shouted, "Praise the Lord!" A crude Yankee drawled, "Wa-al, I'm d——d!" "Ah!" remarked Smith, "the spirit is the same! Only, there's a slight difference in the ritual!" Said with humour.

A friend told me of a farmer who was not very saintly in his life though a kindly soul. On returning from the market on one occasion he gave a lift to a serious-minded elder of the kirk. They began talking of their farms, etc. Said Mr. Worldly Wiseman (falling into a mood to suit his company): "I often wonder what we'll think of all this when we

look down on it from another world." The elder spied his chance for a word in season. "Look down!" he repeated. "I think you're more likely to look *up!*" Said with humour.

IV

An incurable humorist died lately in one of our Scots villages. During his illness he was visited by several of his acquaintances, among whom was the grave-digger. The patient had been silent for a day or two, and his friends began to shake their heads. When the undertaker arrived, however, the old humour suddenly sparkled to life, and he whispered: "Ye're ower soon, Jimmie. Ca' again in a day or twa!"

Shall I tell you the tender tale of a student chum? At one of our colleges, a few years ago, several students were engaged in cutting down an old tree in the grounds. One of their number—a hall-marked joker—was accidentally hit by a comrade's axe. A furious gash in the head resulted. The students forsook their task and gathered round the unconscious victim; and the professor of Hebrew, noticing from his window that something unusual had happened, rushed out to ascertain. Slowly consciousness returned. The limp eyes of the sufferer wearily scanned the anxious group till they rested on the face of the Hebrew expert; then his lips flickered, and he whispered: "Professor Fergusson, couldn't you put in some Hebrew roots now? You'll never have such an opening again!" Bravo!

V

Say it, even your illness, with humour!

WHY NOT GET THE BETTER OF YOURSELF?

I

WE phrase the experience differently. "In the blues," says one. "Off colour," says another. "In the dumps," says a third. But whatever the phrase, the sensation is the same.

When you open your eyes some morning you feel derailed. You are aware of a humiliating sense of helplessness. The spinal cord of your courage seems to have withered. The linch-pin has dropped from the axle of your chariot and the wheel is off. You drag heavily. A chill lassitude cramps your soul. You have no energy, no inspiration, no aim. Before you have tackled the day's drag, you feel spent. Life is empty but for its fogs and glooms.

Or, perhaps the plague gets you at night. You come home tired, unhappy, irritable—why, you can't guess. You are dissatisfied with everything and everybody, including yourself. You are prone to sigh with Hamlet:

> "How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seem all the uses of this world!"

Your mood is not original. It unnerved Job, three thousand years ago. "My soul is weary of my life!" he cried. And Theognis, a poet of six

centuries before the Christian Era, set the croak—an old one even then—to verse.

> "Not to be born—never to see the sun—
> No worldly blessing is a greater one!
> And the next best is speedily to die,
> And lapped beneath a load of earth to lie."

The modern form of the wail is: "What's the use of it all? Life is a mixed pennyworth at best, and ends in a cupful of dust."

These drab moods are mysterious and irritating.

Of course, there is sometimes a real enough cause for them. It may be actual failure. What is so unbalancing to a person with an earnest purpose in life than to be startled by the discovery that laboriously-built erections have been unexpectedly lightning-struck; or undermined by hidden springs, and dragged to ruins? Even the wisest workers are sometimes baffled and the wariest explorers thwarted. Indeed, only those who aspire can fail—that's some comfort, anyway.

Temperament, too, plays its tricky incantation. No temperament has a perfect compensation-balance; each has its peculiar origin and bias. The sons of Ossian, for instance, are born brooders; their cradles are rocked amid mist-drenched hills and lonely glens. Every Celt is at once emotional and pensive. He knows the surge of battle and the croon of a psalm; the extremes are his gamut. Natives of sunnier shores are keyed to gaiety; and therefore are the readier sport of peevishness in misfortune. But, indeed, in all races and tribes there are temperaments that are ever soaring or sinking. They sing—or sigh. One day they are sailing through summer skies

in an aeroplane; the next, you will find them drudging in a coal-pit.

A sour cast of religion drives many well-meaning souls past life's happier chances. Don't pitch your tent in a graveyard!

The mood-factories are many, and diverse.

II

Whatever the cause, you must master your mood. You must come to grips with yourself promptly, and get the better of yourself. But how?

Don't wax garrulous over your depression, anyway. In plain English, don't blether about it. It is humiliating to think how eloquent we can be over our grievances! Says wise Emerson, "No man ever stated his sorrows as lightly as he might." Don't decorate your complaint, or feed it. What you talk much about assumes an authority over you. Lay a firm hand on the reins and govern your mood as you would a wayward horse. Such restraint is the sign of courage, and brings the soul quickly round.

But you must do more: you must retaliate on your mood, and establish a better one in its place. It can be done. Tackle your work as if nothing had happened. Ignore the impediment. Livy says that the Romans were so engrossed in the battle at Trasimene that they were unaware of an earthquake taking place. Swing into your work once more! There's a healing distraction in activity. Whip yourself to the effort. You'll succeed better than you imagine.

In Scott's portrayal of the Last Minstrel, he represents the lonely old singer as approaching Newark

Castle in a thoroughly dumped and heartless mood. The Duchess instigated him to tune his harp, notwithstanding. He shook his head. All his brother bards had died, and he was lonesome and depressed. She urged him to try his harp once more. After much coaxing she succeeded. And this is how Scott depicts the harper gaining possession of himself:

> "Amid the strings his fingers strayed
> And an uncertain warbling made,
> And oft he shook his hoary head;
> But when he caught the measure wild
> The old man raised his face and smiled,
> And lighted up his faded eye
> With all a poet's ecstasy.
> The present scene, his future lot,
> His toils, his cares, were all forgot:
> Cold diffidence and age's frost
> In the full tide of song were lost!"

String your harp and attempt to catch again that "measure wild" which you think you have lost! The effort creates the power. When Scott found himself a ruined man he practised successfully this art of self-cure. As soon as he was aware of his misfortune, he sat down and wrote in his diary these brave words: "I must take my old way and write myself into good humour with my task. It is only when I dally with what I am about, look back or aside instead of keeping my eyes straight forward, that I feel those cold sinkings of heart."

III

Recover your poise! It can be done. Argue yourself, sing yourself, or work yourself into a victorious mood.

Don't sulk; the world sweeps onward and leaves you stranded and lonely; and Time has no bitterer penalty for the sulker than the loneliness and regret that make his advancing years unhappy.

And write this sentence in your note-book: "Life would be unendurable but for its worries and misfortunes." It is from the pen of that eminent physician, Sir James Crichton Browne. Think over it, and see if you can discover its meaning. When you find the solution, pass on the secret.

TO AN INVALID

I

YOU ask me if I can tell you why you are so afflicted. I cannot. It may be on account of some hereditary prompting; or a thoughtless exposure on a wet day; or an earlier unattended ailment when you were young and strong. All our illnesses have causes, could we but detect them.

But very likely your enquiry is more moral than physical. You are bewildered at your adversity, and wonder what can be the meaning of it all. Again, I cannot tell you. I do not know: no one does.

But I do know that our bewilderment is the measure of our eminence in the natural order. Animals ask no questions, nor do people of animalish natures. Our inquisitiveness is the toll we have to pay for superiority. And the more sensitive we are the higher is the toll. It is a strange arrangement; yet it gives more than it takes, and bestows more than it denies. One of the oldest pieces of literature in the world is the book of Job. Job, too, was mystified. "I know not the way He (God) takes," he admitted; but that did not check his faith. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!" he declared. This is the attitude attested by believers in all ages, confronted with the mystery of life. There can, indeed, be no trust unless there is something incomprehensible.

I think that life gives none of us more than the degree of encouragement sufficient to enable us to hold out. Some seem to have more happy chances to steady them than others; but even those who get a fortunate supply have usually extra undertakings to face, unknown to the world. Good health tempts us to many a risky venture. Of course, we all assume that we have a right to health and happiness; but we are too willing to forget that life is a training ground. It is discipline at its best. We cannot reasonably claim that every day should be fine, and that we should have no days of frost or rain. All kinds of varying weather are in life's programme.

There are differing types of heroism, and to one or other of these most people are called sooner or later. Yours is the heroism that calls for quiet endurance. Its practice is not easy; but it is the noblest kind. If people only knew it, even contentment in ordinary circumstance is heroism: it requires the exercise of restraint and unselfishness. Have you not sometimes felt that your misfortune has given to you an experience, and an inexplainable sense of endurance, that are different from the experience and endurance of your breezy days? You are sensible of being called apart from the concourse of men, like Livingstone in the depths of Africa, or a nurse watching an overfevered patient; and that apartness gives you the realisation that you are enduring something special in the task of life which you can only fulfil by surrendering yourself? It is part of a campaign of which your Leader only knows the secret. No life is wasted in the economy of God, however trivial that life seems.

You have realised, too, the change in values which illness brings. The honours which your healthy days demanded are now only a modified gratification. The concerns you once thought essential do not flush your mind as formerly. You now touch reality and begin to discern the concerns which really matter. Forgive me if I say that this is a genuine gain, not only in the sense that it gives these pomposities their true place, but in that, by withdrawing your ambitions from them, you are the freer to endure your change of situation.

There are many sufferers whose true dignity and sweetness only reveal themselves in sorrow. In the island of Goa, near Bombay, there is a tree that flourishes in the darkness and whose petals wilt when the sun rises. This is contrary to the general law of tree life, but it is nevertheless a real though rare product of Nature. And I am not sure but many sorrows are of the like exceptional character and yet have their purpose in the secret intention of God.

Did you ever think that only those who suffer have reason to be hopeful? They become seasoned. The first reverse that hits a man who has been hitherto successful feels like a clean knock-out; but, later, he will encounter much ruder experiences without a tremor. Every knoll we surmount tells us not to fear climbing a mountain. Sir Francis Drake, being caught in a storm on entering the Thames, was heard to say: "Must I, who have escaped the rage of the ocean, be drowned in a ditch!" That was his jaunty way of saying that he despised the ditch, after having mastered great terrors. And those who know something of suffering are the least likely to lie down and

repine when a new affliction assails them. You also know, my friend, that even in your days of health there were times when you lost your control of things, and your most cherished convictions failed to grip; yet you held on blindly but doggedly till confidence returned. This quality of consecrated doggedness is a precious talent, and it will now pull you through your present straits.

II

If you are not wholly strengthless, try to do something for those less fortunate than yourself. It will, at least, entice your mind from your own ills in some degree. There must be many people around you (old people, for example) to whom even a recognition of their existence would be surprisingly welcome. I knew a lady who, prior to her death, lay fourteen years with curvature of the spine. She had a small shelf fixed beside her bed, and within reach, and here she kept a supply of cards with various quotations on them. She sent some of these to young people leaving school or lovers marrying; and whenever she heard of any person in trouble she posted to them one of her messages, suggesting sympathy and encouragement. It was not much to do; but it engaged her mind and gave her the feeling that she was not wholly useless. Try it! As you know yourself, it is pleasant to be remembered in sickness; and you tend to lose heart when you think you are forgotten.

Keep always at your bedside a book or two with quotations for every day in the year. Make your own selection. Have more than one, because if the quotation for the day in the first book you consult should

not fit your mood, that in one of the others likely will. And occasionally all the quotations may converge to give you a special lift. Don't let your thoughts rove loosely and unguided. The value of a helpful quotation is that it offers an anchorage.

When a mood of depression threatens to prevail with you, begin crooning some of the psalms and hymns you sang in the Sunday school or church when you were young. These are all simple and direct. The solace is unbelievable. And keep at it till your mood brightens. You can do this, however weak you are. And take a day at a time. This is easier said than done; but habit renders it congenial.

Think of God. When you need strength, think of Him as your strength; when you need patience, think of Him as your patience; when you are too faint to speak, think of Him as your refuge; when you are quite exhausted, think of Him as your renewer. Lie back on His Almightiness.

We are all better of some example to inspire us in our struggles. I know an elderly gentleman who sends his mind back to the sufferings of our lads in the trenches during the War. "When I remember what these boys went through, I shut up!" is his clippy way of expressing himself. Good; but we can do better. Some years ago I visited a near town. As I had to wait some time for my return train, I went into a church, which happened to be open, and sat down in a pew. Before me was a large crucifix. The thought arose in my mind that this Suffering Figure was a strange Hero for the human heart to select. Not a soldier, not an explorer, not a statesman, not a king; but a sufferer! And I found the reason: it

was because there were so many stricken and sorrowing hearts in the world. Let your thoughts travel to Him. He is the Great Example. He was sure of God; and if God ever spake to suffering humanity, it was through Him. Hold to that.

III

It is possible, my ailing friend, that you are hovering over the Borderland and nearing the finish of your journey; or you may be old, and your thoughts steal away occasionally towards the Exit. In any case, we must all sooner or later come to the lonely last mile; and I would suggest that you plant the two following verses (by Dr. Maclean Watt, of Glasgow Cathedral) in your mind, and linger on them:

"Carry me over the long last mile,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Weary I wait by Death's dark stile
In the wild and the waste, where the wind blows free;
And the shadows and sorrows come out of my past
And look through my heart
And will not depart,
Now that my poor world has come to its last!

"Lord, is it long that my spirit must wait?
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Deep is the stream, and the night is late,
And grief blinds my soul that I cannot see.
Speak to me out of the silences, Lord,
That my spirit may know,
As forward I go,
Thy pierc'd hands are lifting me over the ford!"

LIFE'S PROGRAMME: PART TWO

I

PART Two of Life's Programme hides perils peculiar to itself. After fifty, many become suspicious and creepy, and (even though comfortable) live in dread of the poor-house. The generous enthusiasm and trust of youthful instincts give way to distrust and unbelief. It is noticeable in the writings of many novelists who carry their characters beyond the love and marriage hurdles, that these deteriorate morally as they advance in years; they certainly do not exhibit the attractions which ought to accompany mellowing age.

Actual biography supplies startling instances. Nero—the most brutal of men—was an amiable youth. Had Henry VIII died in early life he would have died a saint. Alexander the Great was a monster in the latter part of his life. Women have been no exception. Catherine the Great and the incomparable Cleopatra (though she died ere entering the decrepit lap) drooped in morals as their years advanced.

I am afraid that the experience is fairly general. Anacreon, the poet of love and wine, took chilly fits at the thought of passing fifty. Berenger, the French Robbie Burns, wrote a despairing ode on his fiftieth birthday. Fervid natures, of course, get to the bottom of the barrel very quickly, and then disgust sets in.

Sir Frederick Treves, in his notable book, *The Other Side of the Lantern,* describes the British in India as full of discontent and weariness. Their programme had been too exciting, and they were tired. To-day, we are all more or less in a hurry to have a good time. Even our young folk suck their oranges hastily, and then wail about the fruitlessness of life. Indeed, it is astonishing how soon this pestilence of satiety affects the garden of the heart to-day. We grab a hurried view of everything. The pictures, magazines, cheap travel, and the persistent lure of amusement give us very early to feel that "the world is a pretty small place after all." Schoolboys find life "rotten," and after their first shave youths whine "Is life worth living?" They crack their nut before it is ripe, and then complain of its taste.

Is it any marvel that those who only reach mid-channel are tired of the voyage? They set out without consulting the chart; and they thought that the Happy Isles were just outside the harbour. These are the petulant grousers who miss the fun by being too frantic.

II

But mid-age has occasionally to be scourged to its task. It is apt to become languid and indifferent. Its enthusiasms flag and tend to smoulder. It has a disposition to become stationary and exacting. At forty, one's opinions are pretty well consolidated; and it is then that we pride ourselves on our knowingness and immovability. Our opinions and habits get a sense of the past behind them, and we cling sentimentally to them, just as we revere the old home, the

old school-house, and the old kirk. It won't do! Give it up, and keep in with the youngsters.

Too often, too, the second half of the programme brings some sense of disillusion. The aims we worried about have not turned out to be what we expected. But that, after all, is only a new and mellow wisdom. We see now what fools we were to spend so much energy on show and pretence; how weak we were to knuckle to popular fads; how mad we were to quarrel with our friends; how silly we were to take the huff at some trifle and leave a poignant regret in our hearts for ever; how guilty we were to gain an advantage which now makes us permanently unhappy!

But, in face of all this, we can retain our enthusiasms for worthy pursuits. Whoso has something vital to live for need never dawdle. Did Wesley tire? or General Booth? or Edison? Retain your interests! Struggle for a renewal of your youth! Pluck the old feathers out of your wings and make room for fresh ones to grow! Barrie says this of his mother: "I have heard no such laugh as hers except from merry children. The laughter of most of us ages, and wears with the body; but hers remained gleeful to the last, as if it were born afresh every morning." Isn't that fine?

Shake off the prowlers. Don't let the scorners frighten you. Pass them by, and hold to the top of the road. Will an architect or a physician be talked out of the knowledge of their profession by unskilful and impertinent loungers? Verily no! Therefore, says Marcus Aurelius, we must not be talked out of our profession of manhood by idlers and those of mean spirit.

"THE POWDERS: TO BE TAKEN AS REQUIRED"

I

"GIVE me some helpful thought wherewith to refresh myself," pleaded a wounded warrior, as he was borne from the field. His mind craved for a stimulant to steady his mind amid his agony.

Who has not felt the need of a supporting suggestion in crises of depression and emergency? A word of seasonable rally is the best tonic: it sets your mind to an attitude of confidence or resignation to accept the varying eventualities with which life challenges you.

We should have a stock of encouraging axioms at hand for life's emergencies (like the pantry of a wise housewife), because embarrassments are quickly born, and they are apt to overthrow us before we have time to adjust ourselves to them. Bandages and medicines should be ready and at hand, and not to be hunted for after the accident has happened.

II

Let me recommend to you three restoratives—or, in the phraseology of the chemist, "Powders: to be taken as required."

When Circumstance momentarily battered the breath out of Abraham Lincoln during his tardy and

fluctuating struggle for a united America, he was wont to say: "This, too, will pass." It is a quotation from the ring of an ancient Persian shah. In those days—and, indeed, until recent times—it was customary to engrave some generally-applicable motto inside your ring, to be a kind of advising talisman in the happenings of life. The motto of the Persian shah was: "This, too, will pass." Was he flattered by some occasion of pomp or ceremony of splendour? It would pass. Was his reign long and prosperous? Still, it would pass. Did disorder threaten his government? It would pass. Was he entangled by a situation of anxiety and worry? It would pass. If he couldn't shift it or solve it, at any rate by the mere process of the days it would become an affair of the past.

In narratives and stories the phrase frequently occurs: "It came to pass"—that is, it came in order that it might pass. For nothing abides. Are you young to-day? Well, don't forget that youth passes. Make the best of it! "Gather your rosebuds while you may—Old Time is aflying." Miss no opportunity of exploring the highest in life, for to-morrow it will be as something that has been and is no more.

When your life-weather changes and dark days settle down on you, sit tight. "This, too, will pass." Painful or unjust or cruel may be your grief; yet it will pass. Only hold out! To-day is relentless, but it passes; and to-morrow makes to-day yesterday. Already your trial is a day behind you! Recall the hazards and deliverances you have experienced. Extract faith from the review, and say to your soul, "This, too, will pass!" Keep cool, and hope!

III

A sure pick-me-up is this maxim : " You cannot always fail any more than you can always succeed." Everyone who has hitched himself to the engagements of active life knows how some of his most cunningly planned schemes slither and collapse. Nobody succeeds in every venture. A failure is disappointing, no doubt ; but it need not be final. If you have any pluck at all, and persist, you will score more goals than you will miss. Your game of golf would be a fool's outing if every stroke flew exactly as you intended. The need for persistence nerves you. If you lose a hole, you don't give up in a sulk and go home ; you become more keen to redeem your credit at the next hole. Wise man ! You keep at it till your gains overtop your losses. Failure spurs you to be as perfect as possible for you. If you fail in your exam. to-day, be at it again to-morrow. You cannot always fail any more than you can always succeed. Watch Sir Malcolm Campbell when he sets out to put up a new record of speed. One day an unfavourable wind prevents him from securing the full result at which he aims, another day he has some slight engine trouble, and he may also be thwarted by invisibility ; but these failures do not unseam his resolution. He repeats his efforts till he gets what he went out for. A splendid lesson to all classes of triers !

If you trip or stumble while out walking, you don't give up your ramble. You just continue, because it is the steady steps that take you to your destination. Even a crack marksman may miss the target in exceptional circumstances. He knows that this is a

fluke, however, and reckons it as such ; then charges his rifle again. Every flower you plant in your garden doesn't grow ; but the majority of them do—and your labour is repaid.

" You cannot always fail any more than you can always succeed." That's a tonic to keep you in fettle, notwithstanding your blank shots.

IV

Some years ago I read this verse in a newspaper article :

> " The happiest heart that ever beat
> Was in some quiet breast
> That found the common daylight sweet,
> And left to Heav'n the rest."

Let me recommend this cheap but efficacious powder as a soother for the heart. It is sometimes very irritating, I know, to have such a simple remedy offered ; but that is because we have forgotten how to use it. " Oh, yes," we say, " that's all very well ; but——" And then we erect all sorts of barricades against its entrance into our approval and practice. " Somewhat unreal ! " we titter, half cynically.

Well, what's wrong with the " common daylight " ? That's real enough, surely. Imagine that we were doomed to live in an atmosphere of perpetual mist and smirr, a compound of Labrador and Newfoundland. And suppose that in the newspapers to-morrow the meteorologists announced that on a certain day in June our weather could be transformed for that day ; that the sun would be seen in unclouded brilliancy ; that we would see and hear birds in full feather and

song ; that our gardens would be abloom with flowers in fascinating colours—what a sensation there would be throughout the land ! Everybody would be restless and alert the night before the expected magnificence ; nobody would go to bed. The excitement would unsettle old and young. Everybody would attempt to be first to see the sunrise ; and everybody would hope to be the last to witness the sunset. Not a minute of that day but would be notched with some happy experience, to become a reminder. And yet, and yet—here's the miracle—all this happens in our world every day for many months during our year. We take it as a commonplace. Yet every summer day is as rich as that special day would be. We could not keep up the exuberance, of course ; but we can remind ourselves of the sunlight and make a habit of deliberately delighting in it. There is so much entertainment that we worry-hunted mortals take for granted ; and so miss !

" And left to Heav'n the rest " does not convey any suggestion of careless responsibility. It is trust. Robert Louis Stevenson hits the idea in modern phrase. " It is our happiness to attend to the small things for we do not understand the big ones." The common daylight is one of the at-hand things. Blessed is he who finds it " sweet " !

BUT NAPOLEON DID NOT COME!

I

ON the eve of Waterloo, and during the progress of the battle, Brussels was in a state of stark excitement. Thackeray, in his *Vanity Fair*, gives vivid glints of the nervous demoralisation of the people.

The Emperor had issued a bombastic proclamation, which had been distributed liberally in the city. "Soldiers," it said, "this is the anniversary of Marengo and Friedland, by which the destinies of Europe were twice decided. Then, as after Austerlitz, as after Wagram, we were too generous." This time, however, there was to be no mistake. He reminded his soldiers of what their comrades had suffered in English hulks. "Madmen! a moment of prosperity has blinded the English; and if they enter into France it will be to find a grave there." It was agreed on all hands, says Thackeray, that Prussians and British would never return, except as prisoners of the conquering French. No quarter was to be given to the British.

On the sound of the first cannonading, crowds rushed hither and thither. Each man asked his neighbour for news. The merchants closed their shops and came out to swell the general outcry of clamour and alarm. Women rushed to the churches,

and crowded the chapels, and knelt and prayed on the flags and steps. Carriages with travellers began to leave the town. "Napoleon has cut the armies in two," it was reported. "He is marching on Brussels. He will overpower the British and be here to-night." The usual "only one man who escaped" appeared, to affirm that Marshal Ney had annihilated each British regiment as it came up. And Wellington was killed!

"The arrival of the French was hourly expected," continues Thackeray, "and preparations for flight went on everywhere." Clearly the case was hopeless! "Addresses were prepared, public functionaries assembled and debated secretly, apartments were got ready, and banners and triumphal emblems were manufactured, to welcome the arrival of His Majesty the Emperor and King."

There's the picture. The citizens lost both their heads and their hearts. Knees trembled, and were preparing to kneel to the conqueror. There must be an unqualified surrender, for had he not said in his proclamation that he had been too generous on former occasions? "Get ready addresses of welcome to him," cried the excited and shivering authorities. "Our only hope is to make him think that we are honoured by his presence."

So everything was in order for the conqueror to arrive.

II

But—he did not come!

The people of Brussels had consulted their fears and not their faith. They under-estimated Wellington. They allowed the Emperor and his partisans to

scare them. Cowardice pulled courage from the saddle and mounted to the seat. The dread of the citizens was sincere enough; but it was a bastard, and had not been mothered by reality. What they apprehended with so much trepidation never happened! At the very moment when their panic and fear were at their fiercest, Napoleon was hurrying for his coach, a fugitive from the field of his overthrow—never again to lead an army or wear a crown.

Some years ago I was visiting an old lady of ninety-two years of age. She was as sunny and bright as a girl. One day I asked her what was the most remarkable experience of her long life. She giggled, then said: "Well, I think I enjoyed most the things that never happened." "Come, now, no nonsense, old friend!" "Oh, it's a fact I'm telling you. The most remarkable thing about my life was my fear of troubles that never arrived. Burns says:

> 'But human buddies are sic fools
> For a' their colleges an' schools,
> That when nae real ills perplex them
> They mak' enouch themselves, to vex them.'

Ay, weel, I was one of the fools. I made many anxieties for myself that existed only in my fears. The fool that I was! Many a sad and weary time I've given myself for no purpose!"

The British were in Capri from 1805 to 1808. It was then invested by the French. Lowe, the British General, held out for a fortnight; then fearing that reinforcements promised would not arrive, he surrendered: and he had the mortification of seeing them arrive just after signing the treaty!

III

Seven years ago I was suffering from heart affection. I consulted a specialist. He would tell me nothing: which was significant. I decided to go North for a rest. While there, I received a note from an old friend asking me to spend the night with him. His house was five miles distant, and I excused myself on the ground that I was unable to walk so far. He came for me in his motor. I was feeling ill and rather depressed; but I kept my misery to myself. I congratulated him on looking so well. He laughed in the way men do who see a joke leaping to meet them. "D'you know," he said, "it's wonderful how life works out contrary to our expectations! When I came here I was suffering from heart trouble. My business made it essential for me to visit the southern markets every year. The first time I undertook the journey I said to my wife, 'This is my first run, and I'm afraid it will also be my last.' But since then I have been South thirty-two years in succession; and I can do as much work to-day as any of my men! I was always expecting to collapse, but I'm still on the perpendicular!" He grinned like a bravado who is jubilant over getting the better of his opponent.

IV

When the people of Brussels learned the truth of the battle, they went wild with joy. Reaction from depression is one of the choicest delights of existence. Recently, I met a builder who was enjoying a good time with himself. His face was a hot-bed of ripples.

"If it's a good joke, pass it on," I said banteringly. "The joke's good, I assure you," he answered. "I hurried out of my office last night to attend a concert. I posted my letters on the way. While the concert was proceeding I was somehow tempted to revise in my mind the figures of a big piece of work I had contracted for. To my consternation, I discovered I had overlooked a very important item. If my offer was accepted I was next door to being a ruined man! I left the hall in misery. The post-office was shut. I was doomed! I went home in ill humour, if ever a man did; and I slept not a wink. To-day I hurried to my office in case my wife might detect my depression. On my way I kicked cats and dogs out of my track in wrath. And, when I reached my office, there was the letter on a ledge beside my desk! I had laid it there apart from the others, and had forgotten to put it among them. This morning I could hug the dirtiest tinker in the street!" "I suggest that you make a thank-offering for your deliverance from the Slough of Despond," I said, joining in his glee. "I know a very decent old man, a bachelor, who has been ailing of late and is behind with his rent; and I propose that you give me a pound to assist him." "A pound!" he replied. "Man, it's worth more than that!"—and he handed over thirty shillings on the spot! "Deliverance" is only a longish way of spelling "delight."

Passing along the street one day lately I witnessed a very ordinary incident. Two ragamuffins were disporting themselves with a cart made from a soap-box and two neighbourless wheels. One was the proud passenger, his face varnished with smiles; the

other was the driver. The driver was too careless in his ecstasy, and the pullman car was pushed over the kerb and capsized. The plutocrat who was passenger forgot his dignity and launched a whole gamut of howls. He was killed, sure! His driver, apprehending disaster, joined in with a vigour which was meant as a defence of himself. I stooped and lifted up the derailed passenger, and made a pretence of examining his limbs. I pronounced him unhurt. "You're all right, sonny! You'll be a man before your mother yet!" When they realised that the noble traveller had escaped without injury, they broke into a bout of laughing through their tears; and the besmudged faces of the two tourists were the funniest sight of the day.

V

Napoleon didn't come.

You understand the parable, don't you?

HIGH-FLIERS

I

THE high-flier of the old style is his own advertisement. He is a dandy, sheer out of the bandbox. His clothes, shoes, ties, and collars are as fresh as newly-plucked daisies. Whether they are paid for or not gives him no sleepless nights or anxious days. All tradesmen were created for the special purpose of administering to his importance—gratis; and he sweats them to do the job perfectly. He is Somebody. A paragon of knowingness, he carries the sidereal system under his bowler hat. He is out to see life, whoever pays for the jaunt. Classed A1 in his own register, he expects all the world to accept him at his own valuation.

Should the high-flier be a woman, the characteristics are almost similar. Perhaps she holds her perky head a trifle nearer the clouds, especially if she is uneducated. Unlike her male peer, she does not readily poke her way into company to exhibit herself. What company is class enough for her? She walks out in proud isolation, and reserves herself for herself. Self-admiration is her daily servitude. Yet she thinks she is having a good time.

II

Samples of high-fliers are sufficient in these hectic new times. Every day distributes its thrills. Young

girls, scarcely escaped from their teens, box the compass of passionate satisfaction so triumphantly that life is not capable of continuing the supply, and they perish by their own act in a fever of vexation. The pitiful tragedy is confined to no rank or class. Having despised the simple and natural sources of happiness, they take the pet because their frenzy is not better rewarded ; and suicide is the only sensation unexplored.

Perhaps the most remarkable case of modern days was that of Richard Barton, the famous and popular cartoonist of New York. He had squandered so much of his time in search of excitements that he became increasingly unable to enjoy the pleasures of unpolluted life. The crazy desire for " self-expression " ruined him. In disgust, he died by his own hand. He left a startling document on his desk, explaining his reason for committing suicide " I have run from wife to wife, from house to house, and from country to country, in a ridiculous effort to escape from myself. I did it (commit suicide) because I was fed up with inventing devices for getting through twenty-four hours a day." He was brilliantly gifted and highly paid. A speed-flier, he exhausted himself, and crashed.

Such fliers only reach the clouds and fogs : then miss their direction and become frantic. A crash follows.

II

A new type is announced. A woman purposes to cross the Atlantic in an aeroplane, and the newspapers report her as saying : " I shall take enough

oxygen with me to reach a height of thirty thousand feet, so that I may escape the storms." There's the idea! She purposes to fly high enough to get into clear and calm air. Suggestive, isn't it! To get above the storms! That's the royal style of flying! Life is liable to fogs and clouds in the lower atmosphere—and on that level we meet disturbances, sudden changes, and distractions. Can we get above them?

Some schools of philosophy teach us that the best method is to ignore the clouds. "Discipline yourself," these Stoics preach. "Be unconcerned. Let storms break as they may, pay no heed to them. Man must defy the perturbations of life." The advice is accompanied by wisdom part of the way. But when the storms break over your aeroplane, your philosophy crumples with your machine. Defy the gale, if you will: it is still a gale.

The American lady flier suggests a more excellent way. "Fly higher than the clouds," is her counsel. Yes; but how? "Take plenty of oxygen with you," she answers. Oxygen spells buoyancy. Cultivate the buoyant temperament—that's the chief requisite. We are more the victims of disposition than of circumstance. Mrs. Gummidge would fret in a palace, even as she did in her hut. Sam Weller could have carried Mrs. Gummidge on his back, and have made jokes of his burden. Petulant natures never see the sun rise; grateful natures never see him set. We cannot remodel our dispositions; but, as with the functions of the body, we can train it to healthful habits. Nobody is healthy or happy by haphazard carelessness: the end of that folly is the dump heap.

The lady flier anticipates her flight with zest. She has something to accomplish. That, too, belongs to the secret of high flying. I know a wispy old lady who is so frail that I am always expecting her to become a cairn of relics at my feet. But her interest in life is unabated. She keeps several little ministries on the move. And whatever she undertakes she does with zest. She keeps well above the clouds. Zest!

But there is Something else. The true high-flier must give consideration to the upper atmosphere, if he is to reach it. I shall let Sir Harry Lauder tell you what that upper atmosphere is, and how to reach it. The little man has lifted many thousands above the clouds. It is because he has had to encounter clouds himself, and has learned to outsoar them. During his visit to Manchester on a late occasion he was sought out by a town councillor who had known him in youth. This is how his visitor reported the interview:

"As we sat beside the fireside, Lauder said: 'We are both getting older, and I suppose our views of life are sober and settled by now. My only bairn was killed in the War. I have had my moments of bitterness and desolation. I have been at the point when a man does one of three things—he becomes desperate, or takes to drink, or turns to God. John, I have had to turn to God, the God we learnt about when we were boys together. Let's kneel down and pray as we used to do in the auld kirk.' And we did."

EVERYBODY'S MYSTERY TOUR

I

THE mystery tour is a new idea in travelling, and it seems likely to become popular. It ought, for the very suggestion is intriguing.

A bus company advertises the prospectus of the tour, with hour of starting, and price for the run. You buy your ticket with your eyes shut—that's the beginning of the entertainment,—and you take your seat in trust. No information is offered you as to the route. If you ask, you are shunted: for it is the essence of the game that you should be kept in the dark. Therefore, to be possessed of even an inkling of the programme would defeat the game. You are a blindfolded traveller in charge of the conductor. He knows the route. You must trust him, or get off.

The marvel of the game is that everybody enjoys it. Expectation is excited. As the bus sets off, every traveller tries to guess the route. Conjecture breeds conjecture, and the interest deepens. Ah, there's a turn in the road you know! No, it isn't. But it must be! No—yes—no! How often you are deceived! Your knowledge is set at naught; your wisdom flouted.

And thus the tour winds and unwinds. And the charm of it all is that you don't know where you are going! Rare experience! You even laugh when you find yourself outwitted; and you and your fellow-travellers make joking remarks to each other on your discomfiture.

The tour ends to your joyful satisfaction ; and then you chat of the surprises, the queer guesses, the pleasure of it all.

The mystery is the attraction. That's the marvel.

II

Schopenhauer, writing on *The Emptiness of Existence*, has the nerve to affirm that it is impossible to be happy in a world like this, where everything is thrown into a whirlpool of change. That shows how foolish wise men are sometimes. The truth is, that change and surprise are the renovators of life : its twin-elixir. You don't meet the same people every day—happily for your sanity and health. If you did, and heard the same salutation from them every morning, you would soon be in a strait-jacket. How would you like to hear the same jokes every day, and open letters in the same terms, and have similar orders to despatch ? You may think the church rather a dull show, but if you heard the same sermon and the same hymns every time you attended, you would indulge in some forcible protest. And if you had the same film presented on the screen every time you visited the cinema, you would soon require the attention of a mental specialist. No ; the old German philosopher is dotty. Dismiss him, and trust your own experience.

Life is a queer puzzle, doubtless ; but the mystery of it is very engaging ; and its daily surprise is the secret of refreshment. To rid life of its shocks and its unawareness, and its hours of rapture and of darkness, and to reduce it to a formula, would deprive it of its essential energies. Life is not a tramway of

fixed rails; it is a bus, with winding and mysterious journeys. The riddle is the thing! Of course, there is ever the chance of a spill, a stoppage, a change of weather, and some travellers getting sick or tired. Life is just like that. There are lots of queer and sometimes unpleasant episodes by the way. "In between birth and death," says a modern writer, "the loveliness of life snuggles close to its tragedy."

III

Notwithstanding the occasional jolts and even upsettings which the tour may indirectly involve, it is marvellous how cheerfully we rub along. That fact proves, at least, our confidence in the general order of existence.

Don't let yourself get panicky over your frequent mystification and incorrect guesses. Keep your seat, and relish the run.

Be assured that the route is not haphazard but is according to plan.

And, then, the Conductor knows the road!

TOWARDS REINFORCEMENT

"When the showers are over, we expect the suns to return, and fairer weather."—VIRGIL.

"As we grow older we find that all life is given to us on conditions of uncertainty, and yet we walk courageously on."—MARK RUTHERFORD.

"Are we not daily, all through life's journey, trusting ourselves to bridges whose supporting piers are away down beneath the water, believing in their strength without doubt? Well, we walk the bridge of life. Can we not trust its safety on the great resting-places of God's wisdom that are hid from us in the depths of the two eternities?"—PHILLIP BROOKS.