The Quest of Happiness

Philip Gilbert Hamerton.

E. G. Baylis.
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BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE," "THOUGHTS ABOUT ART," "A PAINTER'S CAMP," "ETCHERS AND ETCHING," "HUMAN INTERCOURSE," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

IN the "Journal Intime," — that Thomas à Kempis of our century, — we are told that "the unfinished is nothing." Was not this the explanation of Amiel's ineffective life? Did he not glance too disdainfully over the lower world, forsooth because it was "unfinished"? Did he not sit, a too scornful guest, at the bountiful table of the actual, leaving its viands untouched and its wines untasted, dreaming always of a nectar and ambrosia which only the gods on Olympus may taste?

According to the dictum of the gentle Swiss pessimist we ought to reject Dürer's famous crayon sketches, Coleridge's weird "Christabel," and Buckle's magnificent fragment, "The History of Civilization." Nor would modern lovers of fiction be permitted to relax their minds over Stevenson's "Weir of Hermiston," or Pater's "Gaston de la Tour."

Indeed, Amiel carried this philosophy of "the unfinished" so far as to give up most of the ordinary sources of happiness in life; he felt their imperfections too intensely; and no one of them exactly corresponded to his own lofty ideal.

The unfinished work of the world's great men is, however, to many readers, fraught with a peculiar interest and charm. The sketches in some great artist's portfolio may be more suggestive than his masterpiece; and the imagination may be more stirred by a head, in outline, than by a carefully finished portrait.

Amiel's quest for happiness was a quest for an ideal, which he tried to impose upon the outer universe, but which really existed only within his own pure mind. It was this attitude of his mind which was largely responsible for much of the melancholy of his life. He could not or would not see, with the clearness of Philip Gilbert Hamerton, that "the Ideal, when it transforms itself into a hope for the present life, is a sure forerunner of disappointment."

To see the Ideal, and to realize the impossibility of attaining it, and then deliberately to set about the task of contenting one's self with

the Real, is the chief result of Mr. Hamerton's daring "quest." When and when only "Ideal pleasures are kept well separated from Reality" are they conducive to happiness, — is what this practical philosopher affirms.

It is perhaps partly because of its incompleteness that we think this last work of Mr. Hamerton's worthy of preservation; for no completed essay upon the incomplete science of happiness could ever wholly satisfy the insatiate heart of humanity.

In the "Quest of Happiness" we have the final word of an artist-poet, who was developed by the varied and disappointing experiences of life into a philosopher. This, his last message to mankind, is one of encouragement. Yet it was written when he was held in the clutches of a mortal disease, and knew that he was nearing the end of life. With a strong sense of the imperfection and uncertainty of all things earthly, Hamerton attempted to direct the feet of those who were to come after him toward a goal which he knew his own feet would not reach. He paused — almost at the gate of the other world — to reflect upon the abundant provision for our happiness in this world, and upon our

ingratitude in being dissatisfied with the arrangements of the feast and the shortness of the banquet.

After completing "The Intellectual Life," Mr. Hamerton purposed writing a book to be called "The Life of the Feelings." This plan he never wholly abandoned. But while engaged in the analysis of the general relations between human emotions and human conduct, he was led to consider their particular significance upon individual happiness. Thus the plan of the "Quest of Happiness" gradually grew in his mind.

As early as 1891 he wrote to his American publishers: "I am hesitating, as to the title of my new book, between 'The Quest of Happiness' and 'Happiness and its Opposite.' In fact, the book is as much a study of unhappiness as of happiness — there is as much shadow as light in it."

The title having been finally decided upon, the book was begun early in 1891, but was laid aside for many months, owing to the author's removal to Paris and the pressure of other duties. In 1893 Mr. Hamerton resumed work upon it, and had nearly completed it, when the theory of "Positive and

Negative Happiness" came to him. In developing this theory he believed he had found "The Real Law of Happiness," and at once began to re-write the book. He was still at work on it in November, 1894, when he died, leaving the closing chapters unwritten.

These last chapters were to be upon "The Influence of the Affections upon Happiness;" and the book was intended to close with an epilogue upon "Unhappiness and the Possibilities of Deliverance."

The author's theory, expressed in the "Quest of Happiness," was that all unhappiness is caused by the non-exercise of natural faculties. The same law he intended to apply to the affections. He purposed considering separately the natural ties of parental and filial love, the love of wife, and similar relationships. These relationships were to be studied in their effects upon individual happiness; and he wished to show that no individual, even though he were denied the exercise of these natural faculties, need be wholly wretched if he possessed one devoted friend. In a chapter of "The Intellectual Life" called "Women and Marriage," this thought is admirably expressed: "Now, although an intel-

lectual man may not care to make himself understood by all the people in the street, it is not a good thing for him to feel that he is understood by nobody. The intellectual life is sometimes a fearfully solitary one. Unless he lives in a great capital, the man devoted to that life is more than all other men liable to suffer from isolation, to feel utterly alone beneath the deafness of space and the silence of the stars. Give him one friend who can understand him, who will not leave him, who will be accessible by day and night,—one friend, one kindly listener, just one, and the universe is changed."

This passage will show any who are unfamiliar with "Human Intercourse" and "The Intellectual Life" how much stress Mr. Hamerton laid on sympathetic relationships with other human beings. The ties of blood he cared little about; the ties of the spirit were everything. "There must have been mutual affinities of some kind to make a friendship, while natural relations are all like tickets in a lottery."

In a chapter of "Human Intercourse," called "The Death of Friendship," Mr. Hamerton speaks of the "inconsiderate or ungentle word,

or unhappy fault of temper, that might have been easily avoided, but which has wounded the kind heart of our friend, and killed the gentle sentiment that was dwelling happily within." "The only way," he writes, "to be quite sure of avoiding this great and irretrievable calamity is to remember how very delicate friendly sentiments are, and how easy it is to destroy them by an inconsiderate or an ungentle word."

These quotations will show the direction in which Mr. Hamerton's thought would have moved had he been permitted to complete his plan of the "Quest of Happiness." Among the notes left by him for the uncompleted chapters he refers to the possibility of our improving or increasing our happiness by a careful understanding of our personal needs, together with an appreciation of what we already possess. Some of these notes point out and emphasize the belief that the acquirements of old age — self-reliance, facility for better work — are in most cases adequate compensations for its many drawbacks.

The classification of the chapters in the "Quest of Happiness" is the work of Mrs. Hamerton; and she has wisely permitted

the chapter called "Some Real Experiences" to remain, and to end the book. In the re-writing of the "Quest of Happiness" this chapter was marked "rejected," probably because it did not fit into the author's new plan for finishing the book. It is interesting, however, and worth preserving, although it has no organic relation to the author's revised plan.

In offering Mr. Hamerton's unfinished work to the world, his wife has yielded to the urgent wishes of her husband's many admirers. The "Quest of Happiness" is not an immature literary effort, but in style it is quite equal if not superior to "The Intellectual Life" and "Human Intercourse." It belongs with these books, and shows us Mr. Hamerton, not as an art-critic, but as a practical philosopher.

It is not easy for us correctly to estimate the wide-reaching influence of a book like "The Intellectual Life." The impression which it has made upon the lives of lonely young students, just graduating from the schools and academies of America, has been a profound and permanent one. It has interested a large class of cultivated men and

women, but it has also carried a veritable gospel of "sweetness and light" to a multitude of earnest book-loving young souls. The unhappy youth, deprived by circumstances of a longed-for college education, is shown by Hamerton "that any man or woman, of large natural capacity, can reach the tone of thinking which may justly be called intellectual;" and that "the school of the intellectual man is the place where he happens to be; and his teachers are the people, books, animals, plants, stones and earth round about him."

That much-quoted sentence of Hamerton's which tells us that "the essence of intellectual living does not reside in extent of science or in perfection of expression, but in a constant preference for higher thoughts over lower thoughts," has become a permanent and invaluable part of the intellectual furniture of scores of minds.

Little by little our educators are learning that "intellectual living is not so much an accomplishment as a state or condition of the mind in which it seeks earnestly for the highest and purest thought." This truth the author of the "Quest of Happiness" reiterates and emphasizes.

The "double law of the intellectual life — high thinking and fearless utterance," Hamerton learned from Emerson; and, in plainer speech than Emerson knew, he brought this message to a Gentile world. His lucid thought, and smooth didactic style, combined with his courageous habit of never shrinking from the truth, were qualities which especially fitted him to instruct youthful minds.

The growing boy or girl who can be persuaded to "read, mark, and inwardly digest" "The Intellectual Life," "Human Intercourse," and the "Quest of Happiness," will have acquired a working philosophy of life. He will have been taught, not only how to think, but how to live. His mind will be enriched, his standards of conduct will be elevated, and his chances for attaining the highest kind of success in life will be vastly increased.

Some critics of Mr. Hamerton's earlier books have pronounced him "a cheery optimist;" but it will be found, by those who study his books impartially, that he was far removed from this; he had nothing in common with Walt Whitman, who "could not see one imperfection in the universe."

When Sir John Lubbock wrote his agreeable little volumes called "The Pleasures of Life," he was reminded that his own life had been so exceptionally "bright and full" that he had no right to judge the life of others. This criticism has somewhat undermined Lubbock's optimistic position. A man who dares to write upon the subject of happiness must be able to assure his pessimistic readers that he knows something of the opposite condition of being.

It is therefore with the purpose of avoiding similar criticism that we take the following facts concerning the disappointments of Hamerton's life from Mrs. Hamerton's interesting memoirs of her husband.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton was born Sept. 10, 1834. His childhood was exceptionally lonely and miserable, for his mother died when he was an infant, and he was brutally treated by a dissolute and drunken father. After his father's death the boy was sent to a large public school, where his lack of physical strength, and his morbid sensitiveness, prevented him from taking part in the usual boyish games; thus his school life was a solitary one.

A brief and unpleasant career as a soldier — a profession for which Hamerton was entirely unfitted — followed. Always fond of literature and art, Hamerton soon left the army, and determined to be a poet and artist. A small volume, called "The Isles of Loch Awe and Other Poems," appeared in print on the day when he came of age. This volume was published at the author's own expense; and only eleven copies were sold, out of an edition of two thousand. The fate of this first literary venture was but one of many disappointments which came to Hamerton in his early life. He lacked the passion of the poet and the inspiration of the artist; he had a clear perception of beauty, but the capacity to create beauty was wanting.

In the last chapters of his autobiography he speaks of the conditions necessary for perfect happiness, and says: "The element lacking in my own case was success in work." After years spent in patiently measuring the height of mountains, and the length of running streams, — according to the false advice given art-students by Ruskin, — Hamerton learned, through the rejection of three pic-

tures, and the candid criticism of his wife, that he had not received the necessary training to make him a landscape-painter. These bitter disappointments came to him, close upon the loss of a part of his small income, when the needs of a growing family made some sort of remunerative work imperative. It was at this time that the "Painter's Camp" was written, and accepted by Mr. Macmillan. From the first this book was a success. The freshness of the narrative and the charm of the style were fully appreciated, and an American edition of the book followed almost immediately. Thus success came to him from a direction in which he had not looked; and the particular kind of success for which he had always longed was never his. Yet all his failures and disappointments proved to be valuable material, which, entering into his experience, fitted him to preach an intelligible gospel of hope to a discouraged world.

For many years Mr. Hamerton's literary work took the form of art criticism. His "Thoughts on Art," "The Graphic Arts," and "Etchings and Etchers," are well known in England and America. But this is not the place to discuss these books, because the

"Quest of Happiness" does not belong with them. It is Hamerton the philosopher — the critic of life — whom we are studying. It was out of the man's entire life rather than from the artist's mood that the "Quest of Happiness" was written.

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" is the keynote of much of our modern pessimistic literature. From the alluring idealism of Amiel to the dismal cynicism of Nordau, coming down a step further to the bitter "Anatomy of Negation," by Saltus, these several disciples of Schopenhauer do their utmost to deprive us of our faith in the freedom of the will. Such books are, for the youthful mind, as deadly as is carbonic acid gas for the body; they produce a slow stupor, a certain paralysis of the motor-nerve centres.

In strong contrast with this *fin de siècle* philosophy comes a wholesome book like the "Quest of Happiness," which bids us quit dreaming of an ideal universe and encourage in ourselves "a sense of reality."

Mr. Hamerton thinks that the "power of seeing things as they really are, without being biassed by the desire to have them as we think they ought to be, is, of all gifts, the

most desirable, with a view to a rational though not an intoxicating kind of happiness." And his recognition of the practical dangers of the idealist's conception of the universe is the most original feature of his "Quest." The beauty of an ideal and perfect life beckoned Hamerton; for his sensitive, delicately poised nature responded to beauty, always and everywhere. But his own melancholy experiences had taught him that "imperfection and uncertainty must characterize all our happiness on this earth."

He writes that "happiness, enough and much more than I ever expected, has been mine, but it has been various in character, and always very difficult to keep. The effect upon me has been as if an interesting volume were snatched out of my hands when I was in the middle of it, and another substituted, quite as interesting, but not what I wanted at the time."

By an effort of your will adjust your life to the actual universe as it exists to-day! Such is the message of this eminently sane philosopher. *Keep your dreams of an ideal world, and enjoy them, but never for a moment deceive yourself into expecting to find those dreams*

realized in this necessarily imperfect world, — this is the thesis of the "Quest of Happiness."

Searching vainly for he "knew not what," and "invoking the while something which had no name, unless it were happiness or death," the lonely Genevese thinker, Amiel, sadly ended his noble and yet pitiful life. A few weeks before his death he wrote these hopeless words: "Satiety, lassitude, renunciation, abdication," — a sad comment upon his own wretched life. "The unfinished is nothing," he said, and spent his life in grieving over the evident and awful incompleteness of this mysterious world.

Our clear, coherent English philosopher and the vision-haunted Swiss dreamer had much in common; both longed for the poet's lyre, but longed in vain. Both had known what it was to fail in their chosen work. Both men felt and faced the tragedy of this life without any constant and illuminating faith in the compensations of a Hereafter. But Mr. Hamerton took counsel with himself, and, instead of lamenting over this world's incompleteness, he perceived that the "unfinished" is necessarily present in human af-

fairs, because it is the essential characteristic of this unfolding, expanding world. The universe itself is unfinished, and furnishes the material out of which, whether we will or not, we must construct our lives.

The meditations of Amiel, exquisite as they are in literary form, and inspiring in thought, are not wholesome diet for many minds, and are fatal for youthful thinkers. In the "Quest of Happiness," on the contrary, there is a gospel of encouragement, of self-reliance, and disciplined serenity, which sends us forth with new vigor to face an actual though a rather sober-hued world.

It is with a tender feeling of regret that those who have been scholars in Mr. Hamerton's university will read this his final message, his unfinished valedictory. To them it will be sufficient that they are again permitted to feel the old-time, stimulating influence upon their thought, while their instructor himself has gone forth into a country where, — to quote his own last words — "Justice and Right would always surely prevail."

In this world Philip Gilbert Hamerton was brave enough to lay aside his youthful dreams and make the utmost possible out of a

somewhat prosaic experience. Let us hope that he has now entered a country where happiness is not found by dwarfing our diviner instincts, but where dreams are found to be realities, and what seemed to be realities are found to have been merely dreams.

> "And then, as mid the dark, a gleam
> Of yet another morning breaks;
> And, like the hand that ends a dream,
> Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
> Touches the flesh, and the soul awakes."

M. R. F. GILMAN.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.,
October, 1897.

PREFACE.

AS the conditions of happiness are studied in detail in the course of the present volume, I intend to confine myself in the preface to a confession of faith which, like my study of happiness itself, shall have its negative as well as its positive side.

To begin with the negative (as naturally the first in order since it clears the ground for the other): I have no belief in any perfect or ideal happiness in the world of reality, and as my philosophy of the subject is founded exclusively on observation, I am strictly limited to human experience as it is known to us directly or indirectly. At the same time I have no confidence in the duration of such happiness as we may actually possess. I see plainly that it may be destroyed at any time by causes over which we have no control, and therefore that it is not to be counted upon, even for a

day. The two negative words that best characterize our happiness from this point of view are therefore *imperfection* and *uncertainty.* Nor have I the faintest hope that human beings will ever succeed in removing the imperfection and uncertainty of their happiness so long as the race endures, as the forces of nature itself are opposed to such an enterprise, and the contest against cosmical conditions must always be ultimately vain. The law applies to all human beings without exception. There are very great differences in the degrees of happiness, but the best of it is imperfect, and the most durable belongs to us only for the moment of fruition.

To admit this, which I do, as the reader sees, with the utmost candor, is, however, very different from any acceptance of Leopardi's pessimist opinion that there is no such thing as happiness at all. To admit that London is an imperfect city, and that it will not last forever, is not the same thing as to believe, with the ignorant inhabitants of Morocco, that there is no such place as London. On the contrary, the positive side of my

creed about the matter is as decided, and as firmly rooted in reality, as the negative. I know by my own experience, and by the experience of many others, that the provision for our happiness, even in this world, is most abundant, and that we can generally enjoy it on two conditions, the first of which is that we learn to accept contentedly a sort of felicity that does not correspond with our ideal notions of what ought to be, and the second that we make the best of the present without requiring of it that it shall be the future also. The discontented class of minds that are found in all ranks of society are like guests invited to a sumptuous and superabundant banquet who are out of temper because the arrangements are not exactly what they would have made if the ordering of it had been intrusted to themselves, and also because their invitation, though the hour of departure is not precisely fixed, is yet not absolutely without limits. It seems to me that there is an obvious inconsistency in being dissatisfied with the arrangements and with the shortness of the hospitality at the same time, since if the

arrangements are so defective it may be as well that the banquet should not be indefinitely prolonged.

The reader is requested to bear in mind that a practical philosophy only considers how men may make the best of circumstances; it does not undertake either to justify the laws of Nature, or to suggest any means of escape from the ineluctable uniformity of their pressure. By a common defect of reasoning it is inferred that if we recognize truths that are not exactly in accordance with the popular taste we wish them to be as we have stated them, and make ourselves morally answerable for them, though they existed thousands of years before we knew anything about them. If asked whether I approve of the laws I should answer that they are so completely non-human, so entirely outside of what men would ever be likely to devise in their own schemes of legislation, that our standards of right and wrong, and even of expediency, are not in any way applicable to them. This is not an attempt to elude the responsibility of an opinion; I only mean that nobody is under any

obligation to form an opinion upon a subject that no one entirely understands. When, however, we come to the question of our own happiness, we can speak more decidedly, as that is within the range of our knowledge, and it is probable, indeed, that we are better judges of it than far higher intelligences could ever be if they had not gone through the trials of our human experience.

The doubt has often been expressed whether it is of any use to concern ourselves about happiness at all. The less we think about it, the less we consciously aim at it, the more probable it is, according to this view, that we shall attain enough of it for our needs. If this is really the case, happiness must be strangely different from all other objects of human desire. Suppose that the object in view is wealth, or learning, or reputation, — does it seem probable, in the nature of things, that a fortune will be made the most surely by the man who never calculates, that scholarship will be attained by an idler who never reads, or that fame will be the reward of the infertile and unproductive intellect? The truth is that

those who affirm the uselessness of the pursuit of happiness are generally engaged in following it themselves, but indirectly; and I may be permitted to observe that the directness or indirectness of the road that is taken does not alter the nature of the end.

As for our success in this pursuit, speaking generally, I should say that it is considerable, but incomplete; that the happiness we attain, though it is not the ideal, is still worth, and more than worth, the trouble and pains we take for its acquisition; that if we do not get all the happiness we had counted upon, we get very much that we have never deserved and that has never entered into our calculations; and finally, that owing to certain peculiarities in our nature there are good reasons for believing that complete felicity, supposing it to be possible, would be unsuitable for us, and is therefore undesirable. This is not easy to express, as it seems a contradiction to say that a completely happy man would be less happy than he whose happiness is incomplete; but it is one of those cases in which a part may be greater than the whole.

It is undeniable that the interest of human life, which never ends, is due chiefly to the imperfect and precarious character of our happiness, which even the uneducated know by their own traditions and experience as well as the most learned philosophers. We see, too, that even those who are most fortunate and enviable cannot keep one sort of happiness very long, but are forced to resign it, with or against their will, after which (supposing them to be still fortunate) they pass to a second kind very different from the first, and so to others, always losing those which have gone before. I am, perhaps, not the first to compare this transition to a wandering through a series of halls in a great palace, the doors being successively closed and locked behind us; or it might be compared to the building of several houses by the same person after their destruction by some pitiless natural force.

Besides this consideration there is another of equal importance in the weakness of our own powers of enjoyment, which makes us quite as unable to deal with a great number

of mental pleasures as a child is unable to eat all that it would like to eat. When the materials of happiness are given in quantities far beyond our powers of appreciation, we feel like a reader in the British Museum before its miles of shelves. His first sensation is that of being delighted but overwhelmed; then he makes his little selection, sits down, and neglects what he cannot grapple with. Most of us have made the discovery for ourselves that a huge exhibition of pictures does not give more to us than a smaller one, because our receptivity is so limited. In like manner we are driven to the conclusion that happiness itself is a sort of emotion of which the mind may become fatigued, and that in this case the proverb "Enough is as good as a feast" may be amended into "Enough is better for us than a feast." It is obvious, too, that the vigor of the mental powers which dares to recognize the hugeness of the evil there is in the universe, and the tenderness of heart that sympathizes with the endless suffering, are both of them utterly incompatible with the placid satisfactions of

optimism; yet it is better for a grown man to have a strong brain and a pitiful heart than to keep, in his maturity, the ignorant happiness of a child.

The whole subject, it may be said, is one of secondary interest, because our personal happiness ought not to be made the object of our existence. I have never said that a care for my own happiness was, or ought to be, my law of life, but the subject goes far beyond the limits of private selfishness. Its importance increases with the range of our influence over others. Its selfish character is already lost when the happiness of a family becomes the object, and it is still more completely effaced when a ruler has in view the general well-being of a nation. The desire for happiness may even impel us to labor for results which would be as advantageous to foreign countries as to our own, and this places it even above the accusation of a patriotic narrowness. Nor is the study of happiness confined, in its beneficent effects, to the human race itself. Some understanding of the happiness of animals, such as is

easily attainable by any observant person who has the care of them, may diminish the hardship of their position as creatures utterly helpless and defenceless before the superior intelligence of Man and too often the miserable victims of his carelessness or his cruelty.

THE QUEST OF HAPPINESS.

CHAPTER I.

A DEFINITION.

HAPPINESS, as the word will be understood in the present volume, means that degree of satisfaction with our existence which, in spite of minor vexations and disappointments, makes us willing to go on living as we are now living without any important change.

This does not prevent the happy person from looking forward to an important change as likely to become acceptable, and even desirable, in the future. What I mean is, that he is satisfied with the present, as the present, and does not feel that any important change is urgent. The anticipation of future change may overshadow or it may brighten his present happiness, but he looks upon it in either

case as remote, and is not anxious to bring it nearer.

The test of happiness must be therefore in the strength of the conservative sentiment with regard to what we are and to what we have.

On applying this test to the lives we see around us, we must admit that there is abundant happiness in the world, as the majority of people are at least sufficiently satisfied with their existence to desire its continuance, provided it does not get worse; and if it gets worse, then they desire the continuance of the deteriorated existence in the hope that it will not get worse still, so as to become positively unendurable.

It may be objected that my test fails because people are conservative more from their dread of the future than from their appreciation of the present. It is not that they are really happy, but that they are alive to the possibility of becoming still more unhappy than they are.

I fully admit the extreme difficulty of fixing a point like the freezing-point in the centigrade thermometer, at which the degrees of happiness are at zero and those of wretched-

ness begin. I may, however, suggest the following solution. So long as we prefer conscious to unconscious existence, I should say that there must be some degree of happiness in our lot. Even here, we meet with the new difficulty that some people have a morbid dread and horror of unconsciousness, so that they would rather be unhappy, provided only that they can know it, than lose the sense of existence altogether.

My test of the presence of happiness (as proved by our willingness to go on living as we do without any important change) is still, I believe, a sufficient practical test. I should say, for example, that if a man is willing to go on working in his profession, and does not look forward to retirement with any eagerness or longing, it may be taken as good evidence that he is happy in his profession, notwithstanding the many troubles, anxieties, and annoyances from which no profession is exempt.

The same argument may be applied to many occupations and pursuits that are not professional. If we feel loath to give them up, our unwillingness is good evidence that, on the whole, we have found them conducive to

our happiness, and yet there is not a single human pursuit that does not bring its own train of vexations. The truth is that we are so constituted as to be able to extract a sufficiency of happiness for ourselves from sources that do not offer it in a pure state. This is our great human gift, which accounts for the generally cheerful appearance of mankind, though every one is dissatisfied with some things in his existence that he would order otherwise if he had the power.

CHAPTER II.

THE AUTHOR NEITHER OPTIMIST NOR PESSIMIST.

ON the publication of "Human Intercourse" an influential critic accused me of "cheery optimism." This led me to make an *examen de conscience* as to whether I inclined towards optimism or pessimism, or had nothing to do with either.

The optimist is a person who for his private satisfaction shuts his eyes to the evil there is in the world, or habitually endeavors to minimize and understate it to himself and others when he finds it impossible to keep his eyes shut any longer.

The pessimist takes a dismal pleasure in demonstrating that only fools can enjoy anything like happiness, and that even in their case, though they are much favored by their folly, the happiness they suppose themselves to enjoy is a mere illusion that a higher degree of intelligence would soon dissipate.

The pessimist has at his service a formidable armory of arguments derived from such undeniable facts as the frequency of infirmities, the certainty of death, and the disquieting absence of justice and morality in the natural government of the world. The history of human governments is also very useful for his purpose, as it abounds in examples of tyranny and oppression which made existence so intolerable for their victims that we were certainly better off in our past condition of absolute unconsciousness than they were in living and suffering when they did.

Neither optimism nor pessimism is untrue in the sense of being founded on false data, since Nature herself supplies an ample basis for both. The error, in each case, is merely the common human error of a one-sided argument. Life is a most precious boon, because it offers all the joys that the poets sing; life is not worth living, because it exposes us to all the evils that philosophers deplore. It is heaven for the fortunate, at some time of their lives; it is a temporary hell for the unlucky. I deny neither the heaven nor the hell, but I do not perceive the universal victory of a benignant principle which is the

foundation of optimism, nor the sure supremacy of a malignant principle which is the gloomy religion of pessimism. Looking on the world as it really is, without any pre-conceived theory of benevolent or malevolent intentions, I see that there are both happy and miserable existences; and whilst it seems to me that life, so long as it is happy, is well worth living, and that the interest we take in it is amply justified by all that it has to offer, I confess frankly that there are human lives to which a rational man, if he had the choice, might excusably prefer annihilation.

There is an important difference, however, between the life of the individual and that of the race. The pessimist's argument is stronger so far as the individual only is concerned, but when the individual can be freely sacrificed and treated as of no account, the optimist has a fine field, as he can point to many evidences of an upward and improving tendency in the race that almost seems to justify his dream of a perfected humanity.

The strength of the pessimist's argument lies in the great probability, amounting very nearly, though not quite, to a positive certainty, that each of us has evil days in store

for him, and that all our prudence cannot effectually guard against them. As we advance in life the alternative before us is death or decrepitude, and we like neither one nor the other. That which we instinctively desire is the indefinite continuance of everything that we find to be agreeable, especially the active exercise of our faculties.

To this the optimist has two answers. If he is a religious optimist, he promises the resurrection of the body with all its organs in perfect and permanent health, or else, having abandoned this hope, which was formerly held essential to orthodoxy, he promises an equally perfect life in which bodily organs will no longer be required. If his optimism is philosophical rather than religious, he invites us to find consolation in the thought that although we ourselves shall be cast aside when useless as so much (probably suffering) lumber, a continual renewal is the necessary condition of the existence of humanity as a race, so that it is well from the general point of view that each of us should be sacrificed when his time comes. A further consolation is that as the race advances in intelligence our backwardness would impede its progress;

therefore it is well that our minds should be preserved only in books, which can so easily be neglected, and will neither vote at elections nor interrupt the conversation of our more advanced descendants at their dinner-tables.

Perhaps the best test of a disposition to optimism or pessimism would be the answer to the following questions.

1. Would you, if you had the power to do so, create a new planet exactly and in all respects like the earth, and would you put upon it a race of creatures exactly like prehistoric men, whose descendants should suffer all that men have suffered and enjoy all that they have enjoyed?

2. Would you, if you had the power, put an end to the suffering on our own planet by the instantaneous and painless extinction of all human and animal life?

My own answer to the first question would be a decided negative. It does not seem to me that the happiness there is or has been in the world can be taken as a compensation for the cruelty and injustice involved in such proceedings as the persecutions for witchcraft in England or the persecutions for heresy in Spain.

As to the second question, my answer would be that although unwilling to undertake personal responsibility for the extinction of life, I look upon its sure extinction in the course of nature without the slightest disapproval and with very little regret.

Astronomers have sometimes amused themselves by representing the earth as it would appear from the moon. In these drawings the continent of Africa is visible as in a map. From our own planet we see plainly with a telescope the geography of our satellite. Which is the sadder spectacle, Africa, the scene of untold and unending cruelties, or the desolate lunar landscape of windless mountains that no cloud overshadows, that no stream waters, the land where there are neither sheep nor shepherds, and where no bird sings? To me it seems that Africa is the sadder sight.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE DUAL NATURE OF HAPPINESS.

I.

THE happiness that we know by experience, that which alone is compatible with the realities of life, is of two kinds, — positive and negative.

Positive happiness is in action and enjoyment, especially in those kinds of action and enjoyment for which each of us is best adapted by his constitution. It is the felicity of all energetic natures, and is not given, except in the very smallest measure, to the indolent and unenterprising.

Negative happiness is in freedom from troublesome hindrances and interferances, whether caused by the action of others or by unfavorable circumstances.

The importance to us of the two kinds of happiness may perhaps be broadly regarded as very nearly equal, as a life without negative

happiness is restless, whilst without positive happiness it is dull. It varies, however, with individual cases, according to constitution, and with age. Natures that are strong, vigorous, and impetuous can never be contented with mere exemption from evil; they always eagerly long for positive good, even though it may be accompanied by great evils, and they are willing to endure the evils for the sake of it. Placid and peace-loving natures, on the other hand, desire above all things to escape from everything that they dislike, so that to them the negative kind of happiness is really of greater importance than the positive; and whether they think of it consciously or not, they look to its preservation first of all, they protect themselves as much as possible against the intrusion of troublesome people, and they carefully avoid the burden of wearisome obligations. They are the defenders of their own peace.

These two conditions of feeling may seem to have so little in common that they are not likely to be found in the same man, yet both are possible in one life, at different stages. One may think of nothing but positive pleasures and enjoyments in his youth, whilst he

may gradually come to appreciate mere exemption from evil as he passes through middle life, and value it more and more as he approaches the confines of old age.

II.

Unless there is already some assured basis of negative happiness, the pursuit of positive satisfactions, however energetic, is felt to be almost vain; but if negative happiness is in a great degree assured, then a very small positive satisfaction is keenly appreciated. We are then in the situation of the man who has no debts and no pecuniary claims upon him, which is the state of negative happiness in money matters. To a man in such a situation the arrival of any small sum that can be placed to his credit is a pure good, and gives unalloyed positive satisfaction.

The negative happiness of our moral conscience is the firm assurance that we have not done wrong. It is a kind of happiness that can be fully enjoyed by no one with regard to the whole of life, but it may be enjoyed with reference to parts of life, to our past actions under certain circumstances or with certain

people. If, in addition to these satisfactory reflections, we can say to ourselves that we have done some positive good under those circumstances or to those people, then our pleasure is pure; but if it did not begin with a clean record, we may heap up positive merit as much as we like in our own favor, the evil will never really be effaced. We shall be in the position of a man who has wronged a woman and afterward expresses his regret and offers pecuniary compensation. She may accept it, if she is poor, or she may refuse it; but in either case the wrong is not righted, it is not as if it had never been.

The value of merely negative happiness as a preparation for the positive may be aptly illustrated by a comparison with an engraver's plate. We say that the copper is in a perfect condition when it does not show the slightest scratch, so that an impression from it, in that state, would be absolutely blank. The engraver would refuse to work upon a scratched or indented copper because the positive qualities he might give to the plate would be neutralized by the lack of the negative quality of blankness before he began. In one point, however, my comparison fails, for

a scratch or indentation can be completely effaced from the copper, whilst the state of negative satisfaction, once lost, can never be restored in a human life. The evil thing is there still, however many good things may be added to it.

A better comparison, in this respect, may be the following. The negative quality of anything we eat or drink is the absence of all unsuitable ingredients. The mere absence of these, though only a negative virtue, is quite as important as the presence of desirable ingredients, which is the positive quality of culinary preparations. A cup of coffee may be improved by the addition of sugar, but would be spoiled by the same quantity of salt. The lack of negative happiness is like salted coffee, and it is idle to tell us that the coffee is delicious in itself so long as we cannot get the salt out of it which no one whose life is spoiled has ever yet succeeded in doing.

III.

In the provision of the natural world there is the most lavish generosity as to materials and opportunities for positive happiness, but

very little protection for the negative. It seems as if, to be in accordance with the laws of the universe in which we live, it would be wiser on our part to look to the positive side, — that is, to action and enjoyment, — rather than to the negative, which is merely security against evil. As it is hardly possible for any of us to protect our lives against the intrusion of disagreeable, and even hateful things, do what we will, had we not better seek for the agreeable things, which are so easily accessible at the cost of a little effort?

The answer is partly contained in the comparison with salted coffee. If the life is spoilt by the absence of negative happiness, the flavor of it is not to be restored by action and enjoyment. The true prudence on our part is to look to the negative side of happiness first, as no power will protect it for us if we do not protect it ourselves. When we have made that tolerably secure (we can never make it absolutely safe), then we may try for whatever positive happiness may seem to us desirable, in the full assurance that a very little of it will be delightful if we can only keep the negative.

IV.

The analogy between happiness and morals is so close that we are always tempted to pass from one to the other. At least half of the moral virtues are negative: we are not to do the forbidden things; we are not to steal, not to commit murder or adultery, not to indulge in covetousness. The right order in moral training is to make sure of the negative virtues first, and not to accept positive virtues as a compensation for them. Some of the greatest criminals in history have had positive virtues, such as courage, kindness, and generosity, yet we do not call them good men merely because they had some of the positive qualities of goodness. Neither is a man truly happy because he has the ordinary opportunities for action and enjoyment. He may be mentally and physically active, yet fully conscious that he lacks the negative happiness that is commonly called peace of mind.

And as in the moral life the negative virtues, though necessary, are insufficient, so in happiness the mere exemption from evil is not enough. Even old people, though they

appreciate negative happiness incomparably better than the young, are still dissatisfied if they have nothing above or beyond it. Their too frequent sadness is caused by the loss of positive pleasures, and they commonly show their appreciation of such pleasures by attaching immense importance to very small ones, as an old pauper finds delight in a pipe of tobacco or a pinch of snuff, and is miserable if deprived of them.

V.

Whilst everybody can more or less understand the value of positive happiness, the negative is appreciated only by the experienced, or by people thoughtful enough to be almost philosophers. We cannot expect a light-hearted, unreflecting boy to think of the innumerable evils which are spared to him, and by which others have been embarrassed on their path in life. He takes the mere absence of obstacles as a matter of course, as some mariner sailing through what might have been a dangerous channel thinks nothing of the rocks that others have blasted to make the passage clear. The whole eager-

ness of youth is for action and enjoyment, that is, for the positive side of happiness; it does not give a thought to its good luck in not being destitute, or crippled, or idiotic. In fact, the list of evils from which we have escaped is so very long that we cannot expect young people to remember them, or give them any separate attention. A healthy young man is fortunate in not having this or that disease, but if you tell him that it is lucky he is not consumptive he may wonder what leads you to select phthisis as an example when there are hundreds of other ailments of which he hardly even knows the names. So it is with accidents. An active young man always goes through a certain number of accidents and, as a general rule, he escapes from any permanent evil consequences, after which he thinks no more about them. If you preach to him about his good fortune, or about providential interposition in his favor, your sermon seems to him superfluous or unpractical, as it is impossible to be active without running risks, and a life of inactivity is not to be thought of. He always sees his happiness on the positive side, as in the excitement of the hunt, and not in his

personal safety, which could at any time be secured by preferring a sofa to a saddle.

The fatal defect of negative happiness, like that of negative virtue, is that, however precious it may be to its fortunate possessor, and however deplorable may be the loss of it, nobody finds it interesting. We are interested in action and success, we are not interested in mere tranquillity. It is this dulness of negative felicity that makes it so indifferent to the young. In later life we become less impatient of dulness, and we have an increasing dislike to disturbance. In old age men and women prefer peace, though it may be uninteresting, to every kind of adventure; and then the mere avoidance of evil is recognized as a good, though it be only a negative good.

At all times of life we recognize negative good when suffering from positive evil. The presence of pain makes the mere absence of it seem delightful to the imagination, and when the pain is gone we appreciate our negative felicity very keenly for a short time, after which we fall back into our ordinary condition of indifference to the merely negative, and desire some positive satisfaction.

Our feelings about negative good fortune manifest themselves clearly when we think of annihilation, a condition intensely repugnant to the instincts which attach us to life, so that in some ages and countries the certainty of eternal torture for the great majority of mankind has seemed infinitely preferable to it and more consistent with the justice and goodness of the Creator. Yet, however much people may dislike the idea of annihilation, it is evident that it contains the whole of negative good except the consciousness of it, whilst to put as much positive good into active existence would require a perpetuity of health, wealth, youth, and intelligence, all in the highest imaginable perfection.

VI.

Before leaving, for the present, this subject of negative happiness, I may say that it would certainly be better for us if we were more generally alive to the value of it. Our indifference to it is a loss to us in this sense, at least, that we miss many a legitimate opportunity for self-congratulation. The Pharisee in the parable ought not to have been proud of his

supposed superiority to the Publican, but he might fairly be glad that he was not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer. So, without being proud of health and wealth as giving him a superiority over the sick and the indigent, a man may reflect with permissible satisfaction on his freedom from disease and debt.

There is one negative happiness which has been enjoyed by the English people for many centuries: they have not suffered from a foreign invasion. Unfortunately the only English people at all able to realize their good fortune in this respect are either the few who are gifted with extraordinary powers of reflection and imagination, or else those who, like the present writer, have witnessed the effects of an invasion in a foreign country and experienced, in their own minds, all the intensity of the anxiety that attends it. The happiness of not being invaded is purely negative, and therefore, in itself, not easily appreciated.

In a life full of action and enjoyment, negative happiness consists in not being obliged to do too much work or go through too much excitement. Pleasures themselves become

disagreeable when they are imposed upon us, and then we suffer from the loss of the negative happiness we should have enjoyed in solitude. I may mention as an example the custom, prevalent in all barbarous states of society, of compelling people to eat and drink more than they want under the pretext of hospitality, but in reality because the vanity of the host is gratified when the guests seem to appreciate what is provided or because he indulges his instinct of domination by forcing people to do anything in accordance with his will and against their own. In a more advanced state of civilization the guest is provided with everything that he is likely to want in the way of eating and drinking, but no pressure is exercised upon him, and his abstinence does not seem to attract attention. The reason for this change is evident. In a low state of culture positive happiness is alone understood, and as eating and drinking are agreeable, it is assumed that a guest can never have too much of them; but as culture advances and people become more civilized, they begin to appreciate the value of negative happiness also, and then they rebel against excesses imposed by others.

VII.

The slowness of mankind in the appreciation of negative good is strikingly shown in the progress of religious liberty. The positive form of it is one of the first conquests that are made when nations feel an impulse towards freedom; but the negative is won long afterwards, if at all, and it excites so little enthusiasm as to seem almost a matter of indifference. The positive form is liberty to meet for religious services and read religious books according to our conscience; it is the Protestant claim, and, as we know, it has been successfully contended for in many European countries, though not in all. The negative form is the liberty *not* to take part in services and *not* to be compelled to read books that bear no relation to our views of the government of the universe. It is the free-thinking claim, and it has rarely been either advanced with much energy and pertinacity or allowed with readiness. It is, however, more generally admitted at the present day than at any previous epoch, and the reason is that the purely negative happiness of not being compulsorily a hypocrite is better understood than

formerly, and is beginning to be recognized as a right. Perhaps it would have received separate recognition somewhat earlier if it had not been tacitly included by the Protestant sects in their own claim, so far as they themselves had need of it, as the liberty to go to a reformed church implies the negative liberty of not hearing mass, and the right to use a Bible implies the right to leave unopened the books that the Church of Rome has substituted for it.

VIII.

Very little attention has been hitherto paid to the negative side of happiness in education. It chiefly consists in not being forced to waste energy uselessly in studies for which we have no natural aptitude. The subject is very tempting, but cannot be dealt with in a paragraph. I will only observe, at present, that happiness in our studies is quite as much negative as positive, and that the most industrious student might be made miserable by being kept to uncongenial work. What is wanted to insure greater happiness in intellectual pursuits is a wider liberty of choice.

Happy is the student who works at a task for which Nature made him, and that man is at least negatively happy who is not bound down by the force of circumstances to any study in particular.

This seems to bring us, finally, to the conclusion that there must be a sort of happiness in downright ignorance, as the thoroughly ignorant man escapes not only from the wearing toil attendant upon the acquisition of knowledge, but also from the sense of insufficiency and imperfection that pursues us in all studies that we have not thoroughly mastered. The decided self-satisfaction that characterizes very ignorant people must be due to their sense of their own negative perfection. With regard, for example, to a language or an art, it is evident that there are two opposite kinds of perfection, or, in other words, two opposite ways of avoiding error; one is to know all about it, and the other is to know absolutely nothing. All blunders lie between these two extremes. I never made a mistake in the Russian language, *et pour cause.* There is a certain satisfaction in that, though I have no reason to be proud of it. The complaint that might be reasonably made by all school-boys

against their masters is that they destroy the negative felicity of complete ignorance without substituting for it the positive felicity of attainment, so that they leave the boys on their entrance into manhood with an unpleasant and probably an enduring consciousness of imperfection in their minds, unknown to the true Philistine.

IX.

If one were asked to define positive and negative happiness each in a single word, he might say that the first was exercise and the second rest.

Unhappiness, according to this theory, would be always caused either by the denial of exercise to some faculty that demands it and produces uneasiness till it is gratified, or else by the imposition of a greater strain than the faculty is easily able to bear. It is intentionally inflicted in both ways for the punishment of criminals who have to undergo the restraint of confinement or the effort of hard labor.

My own belief is that all human happiness and unhappiness may be explained in this

way, — that happy people are wise enough, and have the opportunities to exercise their physical and mental faculties without undue strain, and to take their rest when they need it; whilst the unhappy, either through their own indolence and mismanagement, or by the effect of circumstances, are prevented from giving due exercise to their powers, or else compelled to overtask them. In this account of the matter the word "faculties" includes, of course, not only the physical and intellectual powers, but the sentiments and affections; and I think it will be found that all cases of happiness and unhappiness come under the two headings of sufficient exercise, with necessary rest, or privation of exercise and privation of repose.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, this may seem a very summary method of dealing with so complicated a subject, but it bears the test of application to real life, which is the only effective test. The reader is aware already that I fully admit the imperfection of all happiness whatever; but this being once granted I firmly believe that the sort of happiness which is compatible with realities is in all cases attainable when there is neither any-

thing to hinder one from exercising his powers nor anything to deprive him of the rest which is necessary to his own organism.

It may be noted that as happiness is of a dual character, so is its opposite, unhappiness. There is a positive and there is a negative unhappiness. When positive, it is caused by some infliction that puts a strain upon endurance; when negative, it is the effect of some hindrance that does not allow us to do that which some natural impulse, some faculty requiring its own exercise, is urging us to do. A man may be doubly unhappy by suffering from positive and negative unhappiness at the same time. For example, it may happen that circumstances do not allow him to follow a profession that would exercise his strongest powers, those which most urgently demand exercise, whilst these same unfavorable circumstances compel him to follow some other profession that puts a constant strain upon powers which, in his case, are unequal to the work required of them and, so far from clamoring for exercise, ask for nothing but repose.

X.

An equal solicitude for the positive and negative sides of happiness is constantly shown in the progress of beneficent legislation, the kind of legislation which has for its object the general welfare of some great community and not the preservation of a dynasty or the interests of a class.

The work of legislators, when undertaken purely for the public good, is favorable both to activity and rest; it delivers all innocent occupations from the forbidding interference of an intermeddling authority, and it sets itself as much as possible against slavery by limiting the hours of work. It also protects, as far as it can, the weak and immature against the strain of labor beyond their strength. Legislation of this kind is a clear recognition of the dual nature of happiness as a satisfaction of the two great needs of a living organism.

CHAPTER IV.

ON HAPPINESS AS A GIFT OF NATURE.

I.

HERE is a criticism that may be anticipated. It may be said that the quest of happiness is as vain as the endeavor to be a genius, because both happiness and genius are gifts of nature bestowed on some and to others hopelessly denied. The happy nature, it may be said, is happy in a quite unaccountable way, simply because it is so; the gloomy nature, amid the sunniest circumstances, will find a means of surrounding itself with its own private veil of darkness. Between these are innumerable intermediate natures, and particularly the alternating one that is brilliant and sombre by turns, not passing gradually from one extreme to the other, as the moon does in her phases, but suddenly, like the opening and closing of a policeman's lantern. To try, then, to attain happiness is of no avail,

as each of us enjoys exactly that degree of felicity which is in accordance with his natural disposition, and can never, with all his efforts, attain to anything superior.

II.

I am willing to accept the comparison of happiness, if not with genius, at least with natural talent; indeed it is a talent,—there is a talent for happiness as there is an artistic gift,—but it does not seem to me that the fact of variety in natural endowments makes the pursuit of happiness less interesting, as the object of a rational being is to attain that kind of happiness which is suited to his own mental and bodily organization, and not some other kind suited to another idiosyncrasy, and so forever unattainable by him. A child may have a strong natural talent for music, and still, for want of special training, miss the peculiar happiness of a violinist, though Nature had given him the endowments of an accurate ear and a hand so organized as to be perfectly adapted to the instrument. In such a case I should say that the child was born with the potentiality of a violinist's happiness, but no

more, and that the attainment of it would have required a long and careful training. My argument is that the pursuit of happiness is vain only when we have in view some kind of felicity for which we are not qualified by our constitution. To take a very broad and general case, it is evidently useless for Englishmen to desire French gayety. The English may be, and I believe they are, quite as happy in their own way as the French in theirs, but it is a different way; they can be steadily cheerful, but true gayety or light-heartedness is beyond them. This being so, an Englishman ought to aim at the perfection and preservation of his national cheerfulness, whilst a Frenchman may innocently enough encourage (I am speaking figuratively) the champagne to bubble up in his brain, the more so that what seems to us his temporary silliness does not make him less industrious, or less prudent, or less competent in the mechanical and the fine arts.

A distinction still broader than this, as it is not confined to nationalities, is the distinction between the happiness of the man of action and that of the intellectual and scholarly man whose lot in life is to be a perpetual student.

The art of living, in these opposite cases, must evidently be to do what is most likely to develop the inborn power, because the power has its own peculiar potentiality of happiness. Thus, we find M. Renan, whose nature was that of a scholar mingled with that of a literary artist, declaring in his old age that his lot had been a happy one, and looking back upon his life with feelings of almost unmingled satisfaction. Yet it was a life that no active Englishman could have endured, being almost entirely deprived of physical activity (Renan took no exercise), and also of that daily excitement of contact with the outer world which is enjoyed in practical affairs. Although Renan was not precisely a recluse in the sense of absolute solitude, as from his earliest youth he had lived in communication with other minds in the Catholic Church or out of it, he was shut up in his scholarly pursuits, not as in a prison, but as in a "high-walled garden, green and old," where he lived and worked contentedly. The gift of Nature, in this instance, was the power of finding happiness in philological science, and in the application of that science to historical research. This happiness was so great that it enabled Renan to endure

for many years a loud and continuous cataract of calumnies without taking the slightest notice of them and without losing, for an instant, his inborn charity and urbanity.

III.

A case in strong contrast with that of Renan has come under my own observation. I used to call occasionally upon an old lady who lived in a provincial town in France, where she occupied a flat in a large tenement house, inhabited by people in all ranks of society. It was almost impossible to pass the ground floor without hearing the voice of a woman singing, — a rich voice, always perfectly in tune, and remarkable both for the energy and the sweetness of its modulations.

"Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Pouring her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower."

In this case, however, the singer was not a high-born maiden, but a handsome woman of the lower middle class, the mother of eight fine

children, and the place where she sang was not a palace tower, but a gloomy little kitchen, with an outlook on a narrow courtyard, where she slaved from morning till night, as her husband earned but a small salary, and they could not afford to keep a servant. I like to hear a beautiful voice, and I like to meet with happy people who irradiate our mortal life with their own sunshine, so I made some inquiries about this songstress of her neighbor, the old lady, who had nothing but good to tell me. Afterwards I made the acquaintance of the songstress herself, and one day I ventured to ask if she could really be as happy as she seemed. The answer was that she had every reason to be satisfied with her lot, — she had a good husband, affectionate and healthy children, and though their poverty gave her plenty to do she was strong and could bear it easily.

This good mother must have been endowed with a great natural talent for happiness and the power of finding an ample provision of it in simple and primitive satisfactions. The conjugal and maternal instincts were satisfied to the full, the mind was occupied sufficiently (or at least the attention taken up) with con-

stant care for the children, and the body kept in a state of healthy activity by incessant work. I may be told that in such an existence there could be no place for the ideal. Certainly there was no place for mental culture, but ideal satisfactions were found in singing and in religion. There is a certain state of feeling which finds an intense gratification in the observances of the Roman Church, and in that state of feeling both the singer and her husband lived habitually.

This is evidently one of those cases in which the inborn power of being happy owes the liberty of exercising itself quite as much to negative as to positive conditions. The life I have just been describing is beautiful in its harmony and in its devotion; even the very simplicity of it has a sort of artistic completeness, but its well-deserved felicity, though quite compatible with a musical faculty and with religious sentiment, would be wholly incompatible with vigorous intellectual powers, as these would require their own freedom and chafe under the restraints and the slavery of a narrow existence, of which every moment is absorbed by trivial duties and obligations.

IV.

The gift of physical happiness is much more common than that power to enjoy intellectual good fortune which belonged to Renan and has distinguished other kindly tempered philosophers. There are also good reasons for believing that there is a completeness in the sense of physical well-being that can never belong to any rational consciousness of intellectual superiority. A man may feel himself to be in perfect health and strength without being mistaken in such an estimate of his physical powers, but if any human being believed himself to be impeccable in his learning or absolutely wise, his opinion of himself would be good evidence that he was neither. And with regard to training, although no doubt the activity of the body is increased by gymnastics, the spontaneous motions of boyhood, left to amuse itself as it likes, will sufficiently develop the muscles and promote the circulation of the blood, whereas a boy's mental pursuits, supposing him to be left entirely to himself, would do very little for his intellect. As life goes on, the gift of physical well-being may

be enjoyed by every one who has ordinary leisure; it is even enjoyed in physical labor, as well as in games and sports that are practised all over the country; but intellectual gifts compel their possessors to live in, or near, the centres of intelligence, under penalty, if they live elsewhere, of a mental isolation which is never favorable to happiness.

One of my friends who had been in the army, but was spending some of the best years of his life as an idler and sportsman, once told me that he sought physical happiness only, and did not concern himself about any other. Nature had been most generous to him in all physical endowments; he was tall, strong, handsome, and naturally very active. He had gone through the siege of Sebastopol without a wound, and had borne its privations without injuring his digestion. In his retirement he lived almost entirely in the open air, enjoying life in his own way, which was superior to the common way in this, that he was fully conscious of his felicity and intelligent enough to know that physical happiness, for anybody who can be content with it, is more perfect, so long as it lasts, than any that can be derived from intellectual

pursuits. As to his right to enjoy himself, his conscience was perfectly at ease; and indeed one does not clearly see that he would have been more virtuous if occupied in puzzling out Plato with a dictionary, for Plato would only have wearied him, without doing him the slightest good. His case was the opposite of that of Lady Jane Grey, who preferred Plato to the hunting field.

The objection to any entire reliance upon physical happiness is, that it is suspended by illness, even by the slightest illness, such as an ordinary cold, and that it is sure to be steadily diminished by advancing years. Under these circumstances the man whose physical happiness was once complete, finds himself exposed without defence to a degree of tedium entirely unknown to the lover of liberal studies, who has always something interesting in view, however imperfect may be his sense of mastery in the science that he has chosen.

My opinion about physical happiness is that we do well and wisely to be fully conscious of it, and to delight in it whilst we have it, but that it is unwise to trust entirely to a kind of felicity that is even more precarious than any other, as it may, at any time, be suspended or even annihilated by accident or disease.

V.

But how if there is a great gift of physical happiness, as when a youth has a magnificent constitution and mighty powers of enjoyment, whilst at the same time there is a total dearth of interest in all pursuits that belong to the region of mind, so that he does not care, and cannot be made to care, about any science or any liberal art? How is a young man so constituted to lay up treasures of knowledge for the solace of his declining years?

The answer is simply that he does well to accept and enjoy the kind of happiness that belongs to his own nature, and that it is useless to preach to him about the satisfaction that others, who are differently constituted, may find in occupations that he dislikes. As for his future, it must come in its own way, and though the dulness of it may be inevitable, it may be palliated by minor pleasures.

VI.

The excessive constitutional happiness which is known as high animal spirits, might be enviable if it were not a disturbing cause

in all deliberations that require cool accuracy of judgment. A too great happiness of a constitutional kind may have a dangerous influence on conduct by disposing its possessor to see everything under too favorable a light. To enjoy high animal spirits may be as pleasant as the condition of one who has absorbed rather too much champagne. He is not drunk, or even tipsy, but he sees things, for the moment, under aspects more favorable to good fellowship than to the transaction of business. I have observed, too, that the condition of high spirits is not good for the attainment of any great object of human pursuit. A boyish exuberance does not dispose one to settle down seriously to the patient toil required for any arduous undertaking, such as the acquisition of knowledge or of wealth: it inclines us to temporary enjoyments, to social pleasures; it makes us agreeable to others and to ourselves; it does not provide for any future or dispose us to any prudential considerations. Therefore, although such high powers of enjoyment may seem very conducive to happiness whilst they last, they are not conducive to the happiness of a lifetime, but are positively detrimental to it if

taken as a whole, and for my part I have never desired them, either for myself or for any one who is dear to me.

VII.

It seems as if good-tempered and good-natured people were peculiarly endowed for happiness. What is fortunate for them is their generally favorable opinion of others, — an opinion that makes life sweeter and more encouraging to those who are able to hold it.

Another advantage on the side of good-natured people is that they attract and keep affection, but we have to bear in mind that their magnetism operates only on those who have an affectionate disposition to begin with. I remember being criticised by one of the newspapers for having made a distinction between persuasive influences and actual power. I had said that the persuasive influences only operated upon the willing, whereas real power can operate upon the unwilling also. My critic suggested that to be able to command willing deference was the greatest power of all. Certainly such influence is very pleasant to possess, and the kinder a man's

nature the sweeter it must be to him; but it is not general enough in its operation to give the sense of power, except over isolated individuals. Poets only influence those who have the poetical temperament, the good-natured and tender-hearted only win the respect of those who are tender-hearted like themselves. The vulgar, pushing, and selfish natures, which are very numerous and very active, misunderstand and despise them. The good-natured man has an advantage in not dissipating nervous force in useless irritation and in conflict, but as he is habitually over-charitable in his estimates of mankind and too ready to put up with less than the consideration that is due to him, he is likely to be an inefficient defender of his own rights. In this way it may come to pass that although such a man is well constituted for serenity in his private thoughts, he is unfit for the battle of life, and therefore likely to suffer externally. An angelic disposition, unless it included the combative courage of a St. Michael or a St. George, would certainly not be the most favorable to happiness in a public school.

It may be, too, that the ill-natured, though they lack inward serenity, derive a peculiar

satisfaction from distilling the poison of malevolence, and that it is agreeable to them to lie in wait for their victims and watch for the opportunity to sting. The powers of wit and sarcasm are not associated with good-nature, but with ill-nature. To change the metaphor, I may say that compressed malevolence is the explosive force that sends wit's pointed projectiles into the victim's flesh. And as the majority of mankind have a keen admiration for intelligence and malevolence together, so long as they do not operate against themselves, whilst benevolence is agreeable to them rarely unless they themselves profit by it, the ill-natured person may look forward to a sort of aftermath of satisfaction in the admiration of others which is beyond the expectations of the good. The reader cannot, I am sure, recall to memory a single benevolent saying with the same chances of immortality as the bitter and depreciatory sayings of Carlyle.

VIII.

If one had to answer, very briefly, the question, "What is the happiest nature?" the answer that most readily suggests itself would

be, " The most sane, the healthiest in body and mind."

This answer can only be satisfying for a moment, as there are such wide differences of mental constitution between persons who are equally sane. We may put aside all the more or less insane people (including many who are famous for the brilliancy of their genius) as congenitally disqualified for happiness, but when we come to the healthy natures our difficulty begins.

There are, let us suppose, three sons in a family, whom for convenience we will call by their Christian names. They are all perfectly healthy in mind and body. John enjoys his own life and lives in the present, not diminishing his own satisfaction in living by any troublesome degree of sympathy with his less fortunate neighbors. He is rich, and getting richer; it seems to him only natural that others should be poor, and suffering from the consequences of their poverty, which he does not feel under any obligation to relieve. The same want of imagination that makes him unsympathetic deprives him of any clear view of his own future. He cannot fancy his own old age; still less does he realize the disagree-

able idea of death, and though frightened at what he is told at church about eternity, he thinks of it as seldom and dwells upon it as little as possible. I should say that he is constituted for a certain kind of happiness, but a narrow kind, and such happiness as he has is not likely to last him through the evening of life, which with his healthy constitution may be prolonged and increasingly dreary. Yet it is undisputable that he has a sound mind in a sound body.

His brother James is also quite healthy and in a good pecuniary position, but his mind is so sympathetic that it is impossible for him to enjoy to the full his own well-being so long as there are poverty and wretchedness in England or, indeed, anywhere in the world. His feelings of sympathy give him certain inward satisfactions when he is able either to relieve suffering directly himself or to take a part in public philanthropic undertakings; but, on the whole, the pain of being able to do so little exceeds the pleasure of doing the little that he can. Meanwhile his judgment remains perfectly sane and clear. The evils that he sees are real, they are not the product of a morbid imagination, and he does not exaggerate them

in the least. I should say that James is not so well constituted for happiness as his brother John; he is constituted for a state which is higher and better than happiness, but which is not the same thing and ought not to be called by the same name.

These two brothers are not alone in the family; they have a brother Henry, who is as soundly constituted as either of them, but whose intellect is much more powerful and far-reaching. For himself, personally, he troubles his mind very little, and, indeed, never gives a thought to the question whether he is happy or not, or by what means his happiness might be increased. His sympathy with near and special cases of suffering does not seem to be quite so lively and ready as that of his brother James, his real and constant preoccupation being with that great destiny which includes all human destinies. He is saddened by the prediction of Science that all the works of men are destined to ultimate destruction and oblivion, and that the race itself must advance to its own extinction, probably through a slow and most melancholy process of degeneration, in which a decadent posterity will gradually lose its hold on all inventions that require

a high degree of practical intelligence for their continued use. The same far-seeing disposition makes him anxious from a national point of view. He is disquieted when he thinks of the precarious future of England, with a population dependent on foreign trade and a wealth derived from a mineral now so rapidly extracted and so recklessly spent. He is anxious for the future of religion on account of the unprecedented position of the modern world, which is pulling down its ancient temple before it has decided upon the site or the arcnitecture of the new. These ideas have not the character of morbid hallucinations; they may visit, though unwelcome, the brain of a thoughtful man in perfect health, and he has no means of preventing their return. The three brothers whom I have summarily described have all of them equally sound minds, they have no taint of any cerebral ailment, but their chances of happiness are very different. The first, John, is well gifted for happiness of a very narrow kind, which no man of high intellect would care for, or willingly accept. The second brother, James, is not so happy as John, because he suffers with and for others; but

such happiness as he can enjoy by snatches from time to time is of a much more elevated nature, and might be acceptable by a mind of a noble and even of a saintly character. When we come to the third brother, Henry, we find that he is not likely to enjoy much selfish felicity like John, nor even the kind of sympathetic happiness that may sometimes be a compensation to James; his intellectual power is unfavorable to happiness because it is always bringing him face to face with truths that he cannot help rebelling against, even whilst he recognizes them. Yet he is as sane as either of his less gifted brothers, and he has indeed one advantage over both of them, — the exulting sense of intellectual force and moral intrepidity. Such happiness as he has is in a great measure dependent on his consciousness of mental power, though he is too intelligent not to be well aware that the power itself is but a temporary possession; so that even here also there falls a shadow of intellectual sadness, and the contentment of simpler and more primitive natures is made impossible for him.

The three cases I have just imagined might be multiplied to three hundred without supposing in any one of them any real disturb-

ance of healthy equilibrium. So far from finding uniformity of happiness in healthy natures, we should be likely to find the utmost possible diversity, both in the intensity of the feeling enjoyed and in its very essence, one man's happiness being no more like that of another than one kind of wine or music is like another. The most that can be said is that there is a certain potentiality of happiness in each of us which we rarely profit by to its full extent, and that this potentiality is probably (to me it seems undoubtedly) much greater in some individuals than in others. It is probable, too, that simple natures have a better chance of realizing the kind of happiness which is possible for them than natures of a higher order, as they are in a certain sense nearer to it, so that it comes more frequently within their grasp.

CHAPTER V.

HOW OUR HAPPINESS IS INCOMPLETE.

BY the extension of our interests in life we are constantly seeking for new kinds of happiness, and at the same time constantly exposing ourselves to new troubles, of which in a narrower existence we might have remained ignorant. If, then, complete happiness were possible in the world, it would most probably be realized by persons of a very simple nature, leading a very narrow life, and placed in such a situation that their few and limited faculties would find sufficient exercise without the strain of over-fatigue.

As we extend our interests in life we become more and more vulnerable, and vulnerable in new places. The probabilities against the preservation of happiness are therefore continually increasing, even if we suppose it to have been perfect at the beginning.

The only effectual self-defence would be the utmost possible restriction of our life; but

even if this were carried to an almost ideal degree, as in the existence of an anchorite, we should be exposed to unhappiness through the craving of our faculties for various kinds of activity which, in such a narrow life, would be denied to them.

We are, therefore, fatally condemned to some kind of imperfection in our happiness in one of two ways. If we extend the range of our sympathies and activities we expose our peace to many hazards, and if we defend our peace by narrowing our existence we are likely to suffer from unsatisfied desires. There may be much happiness of an imperfect kind in both kinds of life, but the perfection of it is not to be counted upon in either.

I fully believe, however, that if a very narrow life begins well and goes on afterwards in a groove that answers to the restricted tastes of the person who has to live it, such a life, however poor it may seem to outsiders, may have better chances of approaching completeness in its felicity than a more extended one. The reader will please to observe that the completeness of content may be very different from variety of interest.

For example, the life of poverty (not anx-

ious but submissive poverty), along with celibacy, extreme temperance, and silence, which is accepted by some of the monastic orders, might approach somewhat nearly to complete happiness if the monk were so well persuaded of the truth of his religion as to have no misgivings about the routine of his observances as the best possible employment of his time. It is difficult to imagine anything like such completeness of happiness in the life of an active politician incessantly exposed to vexations and disappointments against which no routine of duty, however conscientiously followed, can afford any effective protection.

I myself happen to know a Dominican monk. I knew him well when he was a boy and entirely uncertain about the choice of a profession. His tendencies were towards those occupations that leave room for the exercise of the idealizing imagination, and he might have become an author or an artist. He soon discovered, however, that there was something unsatisfactory to him in the studies which are necessary to any artistic success, and, though he enjoyed the masterpieces of literature and art, even this enjoy-

ment was constantly marred by a sense of their insufficiency to happiness. "It is not here," he said to himself, "that I shall find the refuge that I seek." At length his thoughts turned towards the monastic life, and being at Amiens, where there is a Dominican establishment, he was received into the order. The life he leads is one of the utmost regularity and the most severe discipline. He is now undergoing the eight years of studious preparation for preaching, and is practically excluded from intercourse with his own family, the place of his residence being fixed by his monastic superiors.[1] Yet in spite of these restrictions he affirms that he has attained a condition of mind much more nearly approaching to the completeness of happiness than anything he had ever known before. This example entirely confirms my belief that if happiness is to approach perfection it must be of a narrow kind. This Dominican would find his happiness imperilled by the slightest development of his intellect or his affections outside of his prescribed studies and his own white-robed brotherhood.

The contrast between the restricted and

[1] For four years it will be in the island of Corsica.

extended life may be more easily brought home to most readers by the familiar comparison of celibacy with marriage.

A fairly near approach to the completeness of happiness (without considering its intensity or variety) is more probable in the single than in the married state, provided only that the sexual and parental instincts are sufficiently tranquil to leave the unmarried person at full liberty to enjoy the advantages of his situation. His chief advantages are in lightness and readiness for action, and in the ease with which he can defend himself against many evils, — I do not say against all. The married state, on the contrary, is heavily encumbered for action (this is well illustrated in travelling, for example), and the married man with a family lives in a house that has many entrances for evil, whilst he is not able to bar one of them.

Another familiar example is the comparison between the professional and the non-professional existence. Here, again, the approach to completeness in happiness is on the side of the more limited activity. To live on an independent income is to escape from all professional anxieties and vexations. To enter a

profession is to expose one's self to the certainty of such vexations, though it may be impossible to foresee precisely in what they will consist. If the imperfection of happiness were a sufficient reason for rejecting it, no one ought to go into a profession unless forced into it by sheer poverty, or else in a spirit of self-sacrifice, like a doctor who has learned medicine to make himself useful to the afflicted. For the same reasons ambition of all kinds ought to be eschewed, as it is impossible for an ambitious person to gratify his aspirations to the full, and therefore he is sure to suffer from the dissatisfaction that accompanies a sense of imperfect attainment.

In some lives, at the time for the most important decisions, there is liberty of choice between a narrow existence and a more extended one. It may be possible to avoid marriage and to keep out of professional and public life. The chances in favor of a more perfect though much narrower happiness would be enhanced by these renunciations, and they would be still further increased by renouncing all pursuits that are likely to torment us by the consciousness of imperfect attainment. It is obviously prudent, when

the perfection of happiness is the object, to avoid those arts, such as music and painting, that require great manual skill, which is likely to be imperfectly acquired. So in languages, as it is almost impossible to learn a foreign language really well, most people are happy only in their own, and may wisely leave foreign languages to those who are compelled to make use of them.

The practical decision most commonly taken is in favor of extension rather than restriction in the search for happiness. We are pushed to this by too many surrounding influences for escape to be easy without a great and constant effort of resolution. There is also a powerful internal force in the lively curiosity of youth, — a curiosity that must needs satisfy itself at the cost of infinite trouble and inconvenience, and which impels us in many directions from which it is afterwards difficult to retreat.

I should say that the extension of our interest may augment the total sum of our happiness, but that it is most detrimental to its purity. The common confusion in this matter is between happiness and knowledge, or culture, as if they were the same, which

they are not. Happiness is much more nearly akin to self-satisfaction than to culture, and self-satisfaction is usually found in its highest perfection in narrow minds and in narrow lives.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPERFECTION OF THE HIGHER HAPPINESS.

LIFE carries us much more towards extension than towards perfection, so that the chances in favor of completeness in our happiness diminish steadily as we grow older, and we finally arrive at a condition in which happiness has to be picked up like precious stones scattered over a vast and otherwise barren area, if it is to be enjoyed at all.

This being so, it would seem at first sight natural that men should desire to go back to the primitive condition, — that of childhood or youth, — in which their happiness was more complete; but they very rarely experience any such desire. We may legitimately infer from this, that although increased knowledge and experience make happiness more and more imperfect, they give, in themselves, some kind of satisfaction that is taken as an equivalent for the loss.

Perhaps we feel instinctively that the simple

life, with the profundity of its ignorance and its delightful self-satisfaction, is on a lower stage of being than the complex, and that it is impossible to get back to genuine simplicity when once we have passed beyond it.

Even as a mere matter of prudence, without considering pride, we might set a higher value on the happiness of a mature and cultivated man, with all its imperfection and with the fullest consciousness that its imperfection is inevitable, than on the more perfect existence of a lower type. One reason in his favor is that he is seldom quite crushed by any evil short of utter ruin or incurable disease, and even these evils, terrible as they are, may be mitigated in his case by his broader views of the universe and of the human race, of which he and his misfortunes are insignificant and almost imperceptible incidents.

What is true for the individual is true also for communities. The ideally happy community would of necessity be quite primitive. It would have one religion answering exactly to its needs, and one benevolent despot familiar with the wishes and habits of the population. Such a community might enjoy much more perfect happiness than modern England and

France, with unsettled religious and political ideas that produce dissension and lead to experiments of which a large proportion are always likely to be disappointing. But there is a dark side to the lot of the primitive community, as to that of the primitive individual. If it is unhappy, it is so absolutely, and with very little chance of any immediate relief. If it is unfortunate in its ruler, and if its religious customs are sanguinary and cruel, its chances of even moderate happiness are very small, whereas there is always the hope for an advanced community that a bad ruler may be checked by other political influences, a bad religion at least prevented from persecuting and bad laws amended or repealed. The great power of recovery after misfortunes which has been several times exhibited by modern states, and conspicuously by France, is due to the variety of intellectual and social elements which they contain; and yet it is this very variety that makes it so difficult for such states, in ordinary times, to preserve internal harmony, the sort of harmony that is easily maintained by a despotic ruler in a primitive and ignorant community and which is in itself a sort of national happiness. No one who

sees things as they are can doubt that the present political happiness, either of France or England, is almost hopelessly incomplete; yet at the same time it is better for them to be as they are, with all their internal dissensions, than to enjoy a primitive kind of peace in the submissive unanimity of ignorance.

It is certain that imperfection is the inevitable characteristic of the higher happiness, whilst perfection, or at least a nearer approach to it, belongs to a lower grade of being. The reason appears to be that as we advance our wants become much more numerous and our consciousness of them clearer. To satisfy them we might require armies and fleets, or the most improbable internal revolution. There is a reactionary French lady of my acquaintance who is a superior person, with strong patriotic sentiments and decided political views. Her happiness is very imperfect. To make it perfect one would have to begin with a huge war for the recovery of Alsatia and Lorraine, and the war would have to be entirely victorious for France. We should also have to destroy the French Republic and re-establish the monarchy in its place. It would be necessary, again, to effect a revolution in the Italian

Kingdom by completely restoring the temporal power of the Papacy. The unhappiness of the lady, so far as it is caused by the present state of Europe, is due to her comparatively elevated mental position. Her servants are not troubled by such ideas, beyond a little natural hatred of the foreigner, — a sentiment that does not diminish their enjoyment in eating and drinking.

If from a comparison between one human being and another we pass to a comparison between ordinary man and the very highest of the lower animals, we still see that the more elevated nature is the less likely to preserve the perfection of its happiness. A human mother loses a child and painfully regrets the loss of it ever afterwards. She may still be happy in the love of her husband, and in her other children, but the perfection of happiness is impossible for her. It would require the miracle of restoring the dead to life. A canine mother, as tender for the moment as the human, has lost several litters of puppies and forgotten them. If some have been kept to maturity she meets them without recognition. In either case, the past does not affect the happiness of the present. Again, the merely un-

filial conduct of a son is enough to spoil the happiness of human parents, and they become utterly wretched if he does anything shameful or dishonorable. There is no conception of unfilial conduct amongst the lower animals.

To carry the comparison further down, it is evident that the high nature of the dog makes him feel sentimental privations painfully which to the horse are matters of the most complete indifference. I have often observed my horse after returning from an absence of several days or weeks, but have never been able to detect the slightest sign that he was aware I had been away longer than usual, whilst my dog would show an emotion so intense as to be painful. I remember especially how after one long separation he returned from a solitary little outing of his own and found me, quite unexpectedly for him, sitting in my easy-chair. He did not utter a sound, but rushed to me and laid his head in my lap, kept it there a very long time, and trembled violently at intervals. It was not until the next day that he recovered his joyous ways with me. He had been perfectly miserable during my absence, — a kind of misery due to the very superiority of his canine nature.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEAL.

THE very imperfection of our happiness — an imperfection that we see more clearly after every intellectual advance and that we acknowledge more frankly as we become more honest — impels us to that exercise of the imagination which creates the poem of an ideal felicity.

The process by which this ideal is imaginatively attained is the removal of all that is unpleasant to us in existence, so that we may give ourselves over to the uninterrupted enjoyment of what is agreeable. This may be achieved ideally, but never otherwise. Even for the merely ideal enjoyment of perfect felicity it is perilous to imagine details, as they are sure to be incompatible with each other, after which the scheme of perfect happiness becomes incoherent and the vision fades.

The impossibility of realizing the ideal will be seen at once when we perceive that it is always selfish and personal, it is always the dreamer's own private satisfaction that he has in view. To this he would bend and adapt the convenience of all other beings. In the world of reality this cannot be done; it is easy enough in the world of imagination, so long as the critical faculty remains inactive.

The ideal condition, for each of us, is the pleasantest age of his own life made permanent, without any of the defects that partially spoiled it in the reality. What was the pleasantest age? That would vary in different cases. A likely preference would be for ripe manhood, between thirty-five and forty, and the happiest situation for a man of that age would, according to the most common opinion, be in married life, with a wife still young and charming and merry children around him, his own parents yet living in cheerful old age, not too far from his bright and beautiful home. I omit for the present all possibly vexatious and irritating details. I allow the supposition that the children are not disappointing through any mental or physical infirmity, that the wife is affectionate and

faithful, the old parents neither exacting nor unjust. Still, in this picture of domestic happiness the only persons likely to be entirely satisfied are the husband and the wife. The children do not feel themselves to belong permanently to their home, — the boys are already looking forward to fields of military or civil activity, the little girls are fancying themselves at the head of well-kept and expensive establishments, and the old people, however healthy for their years, find their dignified tranquillity a miserable substitute for the superior energy of their past. Besides these elder and younger relations, we have to consider the feelings of the servants when estimating the happiness of an entire household. The order and cleanliness of the great country house are kept up by the incessant toil of domestics who lead a life of extreme restraint, many of them at a distance from their native place and separated from all their kindred. They are accustomed to their lot in life, and therefore probably not so unhappy as we should be if we suddenly found ourselves compelled to sacrifice every hour of our liberty for bread and to assume the most deferential manners towards the indolent pur-

chasers of our time. Still, it is impossible that a servile existence can be one of ideal happiness, for domestics must constantly feel the lack of that independence which is denied to them. Out of a large household we have therefore, hitherto, only been able to find two persons whose existence could be sufficiently near to the ideal for them to desire its indefinite continuance without change. I need scarcely add that the ideal happiness of the master of the house is no more than a supposition, and a very improbable one. In actual life he would be sure to have a constant succession of vexations, apprehensions, and disappointments, which however philosophically they may be endured are still quite enough to destroy the perfection and the purity of happiness.

The most usual practice, and the most favorable to the pleasures of the imagination, is to transfer the conception of ideal felicity to another state of existence. All the laws of Nature can then be easily repealed, and the dreamer can emancipate himself from reality. He is able to traverse the absolute cold of the interplanetary spaces, or to live for an indefinite length of time in a furnace, like

the blazing surface of the sun, without in the least affecting either his visual or his intellectual powers. One of my friends has seriously persuaded himself that after his death he will travel amongst the stupendous mountain scenery of the moon, see the rings of Saturn from the surface of the planet, and explore the mysterious "canals" of Mars. The origin of such dreams as these is obviously nothing but a traveller's instinct, which has been insufficiently gratified in the dreamer's terrestrial existence and which rebels against the natural restrictions that deny us all access to other worlds. He is fond of travelling, and has learned the inconvenience of having a body that requires hotel accommodation and luggage that needs a porter. The traveller's ideal would be to wander through the universe as a pure Intelligence, unembarrassed by any *impedimenta*.

Instead of the traveller's instinct, it may be the social or the artistic instinct that is the origin of the ideal. Suppose it to be the social. The dreamer finds that in actual life he has not so much society as he would like, or that the quality of the conversation does not answer to his ideal of what conversation

ought to be. He therefore imagines the Elysian Fields, where he will walk and talk with Socrates and Plato in an eternity of intellectual intercourse. If the artistic instinct is the motive power, the dreamer is probably dissatisfied with the dismal ugliness of some manufacturing town and imagines an ideal city of beauty and light situated in the midst of a lovely landscape and watered by crystal streams.

More commonly still, the conception of ideal happiness has its origin in an imperfectly satisfied state of the affections, and particularly in the profound dissatisfaction that all very affectionate natures experience when they first open their eyes to the hard fact that natural law is not tender, but inexorable. The idealist then imagines a government of the universe as he would like it to be; he imagines an affectionate and sympathetic government of the universe, of all conceptions the most agreeable to humanity, and the one for which, when it is authoritatively expounded and maintained, human beings are the most unfeignedly grateful. The same needs of our affectionate instincts lead us, when we indulge them, to resuscitate in imag-

ination all dead persons, friends or relations, who have at any time been dear to us. We do so in a most irrational and inconsistent manner, but the ideal is too delicate a structure to bear any critical investigation. The most obvious contradiction is that different people resuscitate in their imaginations the same dead person at different and incompatible ages of his life; yet how can he be at the same time what he was to his grandmother, who knew him as a baby, and to his grandson, who knew him only in his age? This, however, only tends to confirm my theory that the ideal is an entirely private indulgence of the imagination, in which each of us fancies to himself a world adapted to his own personal sentiments and tastes. The best evidence of this selfish tendency of the idealizing imagination is, that it so frequently creates for itself a state of things in which the happiness of many others is to be at least partially sacrificed to its own happiness, as when there is an ideal indulgence in the pleasures of successful rivalry or domination.

Ideal dreaming is a habit much more indulged in by some persons than by others, and, in the same person, is far more prevalent

at one period of life than at another period. It is common in youth, especially in adolescence, much rarer in active middle life, and frequent again in age, which thinks of existence as it might have been without the unfortunate circumstances that have invariably spoiled it.

The habit of ideal dreaming always presupposes at least some degree of mental culture, however humble, if it be only the religious knowledge of a Russian peasant. It is greatly aided by literary culture of a higher kind, especially by the study of poetry. It is also very much promoted by painting, and still more, perhaps, by music; in a word, by all the higher æsthetic pursuits and pleasures.

The consequence might be, that in an age like ours, when literary and artistic culture has become very common, and all artistic pleasures very accessible, the habit of ideal dreaming would be more prevalent than ever; but this is in a great measure counteracted by the positive tendency of an age which puts men in the closest contact with hard realities, such as industrial work of all kinds and our pressing social questions. Our contemporaries are

not impelled so much towards genuine idealism as towards the improvement of what is real, and the desired improvement is usually of a kind that can be effected by intelligence and money. I need hardly observe that there is an essential distinction between these aspirations and the dreams of any genuine idealist. The distinction is that his dreams must always remain dreams, as they are pure poetry, whilst the desires of the practical man are not poetry, but a prosaic conception of what is possible, usually in the form of improved machinery for pleasure or for production, — as a finer and swifter yacht or a larger factory, and, speaking generally, a more elaborate and expensive life, of which a great spending aristocracy sets practically the example. But such an aristocracy, by exhibiting the expensive life as a reality, only proves that it is not an ideal, for a true ideal transcends all possible realities. The only sense in which expensive living can be called an ideal is when it gains a poetry not its own in the imagination of those who long for it as hopelessly beyond their means, — as in the case of some poor poet who fancies all that wealth might be to him if he possessed it.

There is a French song about a would-be traveller who longed to visit Carcassonne, but never got there; to him, therefore, Carcassonne remained an ideal city, which it certainly is not to its inhabitants.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAPPINESS AND THE IDEAL.

THE true ideal, the state that we desire or think that we desire, the state that we vaguely and never precisely imagine, is a dream suggested equally by the charm and by the imperfection of reality. It is at the same time an implied eulogium of the world that we have known and the severest of all possible criticisms upon it. All the materials out of which the idealist constructs his dream are taken from the common world; his flowers are gathered in our gardens or our woods, his stars have twinkled in our skies. Even the strange and wonderful life that he imagines for us is still, at least in the thinking and feeling part of it if not in external conditions, exclusively human. Though he presents to us a sublimated and perfected existence, it is made out of the old familiar elements. He marks his appreciation of the

natural world by all that he borrows, and criticises it negatively by all that he omits. He invariably provides for the complete and absolute triumph of his own opinions; and here even a gloomy idealism enjoys a victory, by anticipation, over the recurrent cheerfulness of Nature herself, as sunshine can never be permanently banished from the actual world, whereas the idealist is free to make his imaginary one as dismal as he desires. The danger here is that he may endeavor in spite of Nature to make actual life more miserable than it need be, and achieve a partial or a temporary success. As in the Scotland of the seventeenth century, the desire for a peculiar perfection may take possession of men's minds, even though most unfavorable to their happiness. In its full completeness it may be incompatible with reality and impracticable, yet the mere endeavor to approach towards it may be enough to overshadow, in the country where it prevails, the happiness of an age. There is always, in these cases, a germ-conception out of which the baleful system grows. In Scotland the germ-conception was a peculiar belief concerning the mental disposition of the Almighty.

It was believed, without any evidence, that human happiness was distasteful to Him, and consequently that the pursuit of it was sinful. Still, the pursuit of happiness went forward, as it is impossible for a whole community to detach itself from the interests of life and live like a Carmelite nun. Even in the gloomiest hour of Scottish asceticism people got married and procreated children, though their children came into a society which had made itself so unpleasant that they might have done better to keep out of it. "To be poor, dirty, and hungry, to pass through life in misery, and to leave it with fear, to be plagued with boils, sores, and diseases of every kind, to be always sighing and groaning, to have the face streaming with tears and the chest heaving with sobs; in a word, to suffer constant affliction, and to be tormented in all possible ways,—to undergo these things was deemed a proof of goodness, just as the contrary was a proof of evil. It mattered not what a man liked,—the mere fact of his liking it made it sinful. Whatever was natural was wrong. The clergy deprived the people of their holidays, their amusements, their shows, their games, and their sports;

they repressed every appearance of joy, they forbade all merriment, they stopped all festivities, they choked up every avenue by which pleasure could enter, and they spread over the country an universal gloom."

In this quotation[1] the most important words are these five: "Whatever was natural was wrong." Yes, that is the inevitable consequence of over-indulgence in an ideal; it is sure to make the natural seem wrong. There was nothing in the land to sadden the minds of its inhabitants. If the climate is rude it is invigorating, and though rain is frequent, especially in the west, it is diversified by frequent gleams of sunshine. The cold is neither so intense nor so prolonged as it is in Canada, nor the brief heat of summer so dangerous as in New York. The country has those strong local characteristics which attract and keep patriotic affection; it is rich and fertile in some parts, and where it is barren it is romantic and picturesque. With intelligence and industry, which we now see to be by no means wanting in the race, the people of Scotland

[1] From Buckle's History of Civilization, Vol. III. Chap. iv. "An Examination of the Scotch Intellect during the Seventeenth Century."

may live happily in their own country, though the climate does not favor the fig-tree, the olive, or the vine. There was nothing in nature to prevent the Scotch from being as happy in the seventeenth century as they are now, but they had the misfortune to fall under the dominion of an anti-natural idea, so that instead of making the best of the nature that was accessible to them they made the worst of it.

This is only one of many examples which tend to show how dangerous it is to put our minds under the domination of an ideal, and how easily our happiness may be sacrificed to some preconceived notion of our own that has no foundation in reality. The ideal, when it transforms itself into a hope for the present life, is the sure forerunner of disappointment; if it is to be transformed into hope at all, it should look for its realization beyond the grave, "within the distant Aidenn." Nature has not refused to men the liberty to hope everything, or to fear everything, for another life. In this world, too familiarly known to us, the comparison of the reality with our ideal always drives us at last to the recognition of the unpalatable truth that reality has char-

acteristics of its own which never conform entirely to our human conception of what ought to be. The idealist dreams of a world governed in human ways; but the system of natural government, from which we cannot escape, is not human, it is something else, so that the idealist is disappointed. There are several refuges open to him, but terrestrial reality is not one of them. Religion is his best refuge if he finds a religion answering to his needs. The Church of Rome, in particular, has been careful to provide for him an ample choice of austere or sumptuous habitations. But even the religious refuge itself may be unfavorable to happiness when it is too gloomy, as we have just seen, or too cold; it may even be less hospitable and offer less of comfort to the human spirit than the hard reality that the idealist would escape from and avoid. The other refuges for the idealist, as I said in another chapter, are poetry, music, and the graphic or the plastic arts. When his own nature is fertile and productive, he finds his best resource in the absorbing labor of artistic production which makes him oblivious of the unsatisfying reality; but when his nature is receptive he reads poetry, listens to

music, and delights in galleries of pictures. In all such cases, equally, what he is really seeking for is an escape from the actual world.

When ideal pleasures are kept well separated from reality, they may be conducive to happiness, and in some cases even necessary to it; but it is a mistake fatal to happiness to confound them with reality itself and to expect to find them in reality.

The real is much richer in variety and in unexpected interest than the ideal, but it differs from the ideal in its lack of artistic unity, — an imperfection which the idealist never tolerates and invariably banishes from his dream.

The lover is an idealist. He is not in love with a living reality, though he thinks he is. His happiness, as an idealist, consists in believing a poem to be not only poetical but a fact. True love is a religion, that is, a believed poem, but it is inferior to the celestial religions in expecting its ideal fruition on the earth. The lover seeks this fruition in marriage. If his marriage is unhappy, it is a disappointment, and there is no more to be said; but even the happiest marriage is different from the lover's ideal. It is inferior as to per-

fection, because it is full of great or trivial annoyances which are incompatible with perfection and which the lover had not foreseen; but it is incomparably superior to any ideal in richness and in interest. The woman must have a poor nature who does not, after marriage, reveal qualities that her lover had not included in his conception of her gifts. It is like going to live in some beautiful place that, hitherto, we have only read about. We had imagined for it a certain pure and simple charm. Living there, we find unexpected inconveniences, but the neighborhood has become far more interesting to us since it has been our home, as we have made a hundred discoveries that our imagination was unable to foresee. Finally, we perceive that the interest of the place, which the tourist thinks he has exhausted in one visit, is in reality inexhaustible. Nevertheless, in spite of the superior variety of interest in the reality, on comparing it with an imaginative conception, we know that it has one inferiority. The ideal is still the ideal, and from time to time the first impression (which was not true) may recur to us in memory with a magic that no reality can equal.

I began this chapter by saying that the true ideal is a dream suggested equally by the charm and by the imperfection of reality. We must remember this dream-like character of the ideal if we do not wish to be misled by a vulgar misemployment of the word. People habitually apply the adjective "ideal" to realities that exist in every civilized country but do not happen to be in the possession of somebody who desires them. Things that exist are not ideals at all; they are only realities beyond one's reach. The commonest of these desired realities is simply the kind of life that is led by wealthy people, essentially in the same way in all civilized countries. When a man of small means desires to live like his rich neighbor, he may say, "My ideal would be to have a stud of horses, a yacht, and a picture-gallery;" but the possession of these material things is merely a fact that is common in rich countries, it is not an ideal in any true sense. If I indulge my imagination in dreaming of a country where justice and right would always surely prevail, where the weak would never be oppressed nor an honest man incur any penalty for his honesty; a country where no animal would ever be ill-

treated, or killed otherwise than in mercy, — that is truly ideal dreaming, because however far I travel I shall not find such a country in the world, and there is not any record of such a country in the authentic history of mankind.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SENSE OF REALITY.

I SHOULD define the sense of reality as the power of seeing things as they really are without being biassed by the desire to have them as we think they ought to be.

Such a power is conducive to happiness in two ways. It prevents disappointment by saving us from vain expectations, and it enables us to foresee the most probable consequences of actions. A man who has the sense of reality is deprived of the pleasures of illusion, and may so far be less happy than a dreamer; but the moderate amount of happiness that he possesses is of a more durable texture, and serves him better in the existing world, such as it is.

I have just said that the sense of reality deprives us of agreeable illusions; but we are not forbidden by it to indulge in the pleasures of the imagination, provided that we know them

to be imaginary. The realist expels superstition from his conception of the existing world, whilst he admits it and enjoys it in poetry and the fine arts. This imaginative tolerance preserves his mind from becoming too much imprisoned in the actual. Mr. Herbert Spencer has described the periodical meetings of a little society of very realistic modern philosophers where poetry was often read aloud. Their firm grasp of reality made poetry only more delightful to them.

Of all gifts, it is just this firm grasp of reality that seems most desirable with a view to a rational, though not to an intoxicating, kind of happiness. It is so closely connected with sanity that the insane are always deprived of it. Their misfortune is to be severed from reality and isolated in a world of private and personal illusion, which is not only a much narrower world than the external one, but different from it, especially in having no educating power; whereas the reality, when we are in contact with it, is incessantly educating us.

Still, there is something in reality that does not wholly win the approbation of mankind. It does not satisfy either the artistic or the moral sense, and few are so completely realist

as not to regret the brutality of natural law, when it manifests itself in the blind destruction of things or persons that can never be replaced.

The death of Shelley is a poignant example. The incident belongs to the world of reality; in a world adapted to human sentiments the squall would have moderated its force on approaching the poet's little vessel, and so have spared it. We are pained to see the exquisite thrilling consciousness of so rare a genius extinguished by an unconscious force, and it is difficult for us to keep strictly to the reality and not imagine some malignity in nature. The simple truth is, that the wind had no choice as to its own strength or direction, that it knew nothing about human existence or about its own, and that Shelley was not even punished for his imprudence, as a squall can have no idea of penal inflictions. His widow wrote some touching verses on his loss, in which she endeavored, by a poetic fiction, to compensate herself for the indifference of Nature. The fiction was that the "Spirits of the deep" were grieved by the poet's death, and "raised a wail of sorrow." Even in the prose of a critic the pathetic

fallacy intrudes. Mr. William Rossetti, writing of Shelley's cremation, says that "it was a glorious day and a splendid prospect, — the *cruel* and calm sea before, the Apennines behind." He is writing prose, but still feels some emotion as the scene arises before him, and so he loses, for a moment, the exact sense of reality. In reality, the sea is neither kind nor cruel; it is not even aware of the existence of its own fishes. This reminds me of an expression that has become very common of late in French funeral announcements. People tell you that they have suffered *une perte cruelle* in the loss of a relation. As it is not the custom to attribute cruelty to Divine Providence, the allusion probably is to the destructive forces of disease, which is imagined as a conscious torturer and executioner.

The sense of reality may be greatly strengthened in us by cultivation. The best discipline is to think of some purely natural power as it really is, without permitting ourselves to endow it with human attributes, as savages and childish people habitually do. The sun, for us, is the most magnificent of all comparatively proximate realities. Nobody within the influence of scientific ideas im-

agines that our great star holds a supreme position in the universe; he is but as an apple in all the orchards of the world. It would be equally erroneous to assign to him a theocratic rank as a minor Deity, for though he sustains and governs life, he does not rule us like a god, but only as a star. Neither does he reign as an intelligent vicegerent of a greater Deity; still, he is the best and most conspicuous example we have of the practical methods of natural as distinguished from all other government, and this is the reason why he is so valuable to a student of reality. Our human terms of praise and blame are equally inapplicable to him. If we say that he is bountiful the answer at once suggests itself, — that whilst he radiates into empty space an amount of heat that would suffice for a million worlds like ours, terrestrial creatures are frequently frozen to death. Others, it is true, die of heat, apoplexy, or of thirst, and if multitudes are impoverished by drought other multitudes are ruined by inundations, which are an effect of the sun's action upon the sea. These facts are to be accepted as part of reality; but if we keep to reality alone we do not attribute any malevolent intention to the sun:

we leave that to the poet, who describes a sun-god "burning with wrath," and shooting arrows directly at animals and men, as in the first book of the Iliad.

The student of reality does not need to enumerate all the good things that we receive from the sun, as we are dependent upon him not only for life itself, but for everything that makes life agreeable. Still, we address to him no thanksgivings, because we do not believe that he takes any conscious interest in our welfare. By his influence on the currents of air he favors our sailing-ships, and we do not praise him, or he wrecks them, and we do not curse him. Our practical business is to get as much benefit from him as we can, along with as little evil. We have set him to various great and minor tasks, and we now hope to make in the future a better use of a minute fraction of his wasted heat. All this is very sane, very rational, and much more conducive to our happiness than some terrifying mythology. Meanwhile, as usual, the reality turns out to be incomparably more interesting than the myth, and the interest of it increases with every addition to our knowledge.

It may seem a great descent to come down

from the sun to the merely human invention of money; but in the first place money is not so much a human invention as the result of a natural necessity, and therefore in its way a part of nature. Besides this, it might be argued that money, like coal, is an accumulation of solar heat and light. In coal, the trees and other vegetation have done the storing; in money it is human energy and toil. For both, equally, the sun has supplied the original force, which after accumulation is available again for our comfort.

The habit of looking upon money as a part of unconscious nature is good evidence that one has acquired the sense of reality. No reasonable person expects unconscious nature to be moral or intellectual, so why should we expect money to reward morality and intellect? It may do so in some cases, by accident, but never by rule. I remember seeing a lady who was pointed out to me in a French provincial town as having enriched herself in a peculiar way. She had been married, but had encouraged lovers, and, being prudent, had chosen rich ones, whose gifts she had quietly accumulated, whereby she enjoyed a dignified and comfortable old age. Her lot, so far as

material comforts are concerned, is much better than that of a starving, used-up governess who, having kept her old mother in the days of her very modest prosperity, has now nothing left for herself. So much for the side of morals; as to the conscientious use of the intellectual powers, we know how it is in literature. There is no relation between the sale of a book and the honest and often costly labor bestowed upon it in observation and research. Suppose that a vulgar Frenchman undertakes to write a book on England. He knows that his readers do not want observation and research, — what they want is to be amused at the expense of the English; so he writes in a mocking spirit, invents when necessary malevolently, has his jest at everybody from the Queen to a policeman, attacks the moral reputation of English girls, and sells a considerable edition. He does harm by increasing international prejudice and ill-will; he disseminates hatred and uncharitableness; he prepares in his own small way for a future war between two great nations, but his money is much more easily earned, and with less deduction, than if he had studied the English people seriously. See, too, how the money power encourages superficial work in the business of

reviewing books. To review books hastily and without reading them is a paying profession; to read them first and write a scrupulously just account of them afterwards is the unremunerative though honorable occupation of the scholarly amateur.

The blind money power treats painters with an irrational mixture of the narrowest parsimony and the wildest extravagance. Too often the parsimony is towards the living artist, whilst the extravagance is profitable to others. We all know how frequently pictures are sold for many times what the painters originally received for them, the difference going to dealers or collectors who had nothing to do with the production of the work of art, — truly an "unearned" though enormous "increment." Some instances of this have been especially painful when an artist has been hampered by intense pecuniary anxiety, with his wife and family almost starving at the very time when he was earning for distant strangers from fifty to a hundred pounds an hour. Then there are the inventors who create new forms of industry that enrich entire communities, their own share being miserably small, as in the case of Crompton, the inventor of the spinning mule,

and Fulton, who first propelled a ship by steam.

Cases of this kind are the more painful that people who never could have invented anything are so often made wealthy without any effort on their own part, the money pouring into their pockets as rivulets, swollen by heavy rains, discharge their waters into a lake. These, however, may be said to grow rich innocently, as their wealth comes to them and they only accept it; but what of the wealth that is accumulated in what is called "the sweating system," by the abuse of its own power over the poor,—and what of the aggressive wealth that is able to erect itself on the ruins of innumerabe little fortunes, as when a great railway speculator is able to ruin a multitude of shareholders and deliberately does it?

The student of life who has the sense of reality is not surprised by these phenomena, though he may regret them, and seek for some practical means of limiting their evil effects. For him the money power is a natural force, and therefore inevitably unjust. He does not expect more justice from it than from the solar power, which unconsciously destroys so many innocent victims, and gives comfort to so

many rascals. As to what now concerns us, — the effect of the knowledge of this reality on happiness, — it may not be so pleasant as an illusory belief in the justice of natural forces; but no one who perceives the truth would be willing to exchange his perception of it for an illusion, since the knowledge even of an unpleasant truth is always felt by us to be more salutary than ignorance of it, and in these cases the truth is far from being absolutely bad.

The evil done by the unconscious action of the sun, though often on a colossal scale that powerfully impresses the imagination, is still as nothing in comparison with the good that he does constantly and quietly. Without his beneficent (I do not say benevolent) power, we could neither see nor think, we could not even breathe. With it, we are what we are, imperfect but still wonderful creatures, lords of a wonderful world. So with the power of money. It is not cruel; it is only destitute of intelligence. This stupid power still compels us to help each other every time we try to help ourselves, and has converted mankind from the life of a beast of prey to the life of civilized and industrial communities. Against

this benefit we have to set such evils as the Panama briberies or the career of a Jay Gould; but whilst the evils occur like acute diseases, the good of mutual help remains with us from year to year. It is to money, also, that we owe the possibility of dividing our work into specialities with all the fruitful results of such division. We may even observe an increasing tendency in the middle classes to use money more and more; that is, to purchase things which, like bread and beer, were formerly made at home, and in great cities people pay small sums of money to be carried over very short distances which their fathers would have traversed on foot. Another characteristic of modern urban life is that every amusement, except mere walking in the streets, has to be paid for, and that there are many amusements, whereas in former days they were both few and inexpensive.

The consequence of these changes which prove to us more and more the utility of money, and especially the very frequent utility of ready money that we are almost incessantly called upon to disburse, is that in modern life the inability to appreciate its use and value is looked upon as the surest proof that one lacks

the sense of reality, that sense which is the equivalent of sanity.

When the sense of reality is in its highest perfection it constantly takes account of the action of natural forces and endeavors to make use of them, but without attributing to them virtues and vices from which, being unconscious, they must be absolutely free. There is, for example, that disconcerting natural law by which money flows superabundantly into the coffers of the rich and avoids those places where it would be most desirable, — the wretched habitations of the poor. When we have the sense of reality we simply perceive how it is that the natural law of interest operates, and there is an end of the matter. We do not argue with money as if it knew what it was doing.[1] Here, again, the sense of reality is favorable to happiness, at least of a tranquil kind, as it spares us all the pain and

[1] An objection may be raised to this passage on the ground that although money is unconscious the holders of it are not. The answer is that the owners of money are compelled to act in obedience to its laws under penalty of sacrificing their own interests to those of others, or to a principle. They do so occasionally, as when they decline to receive interest for money lent, but as a rule they obey the natural law almost as regularly as if they were unconscious agents.

excitement of useless indignation. It is silly to vex our souls about the senseless forces of the world; it is prudent to take them as they are, and make the best of them in our own interest.

The genuine sense of reality is usually associated with the scientific temper, but there is a false and unwarranted belief in one's own sense of reality which belongs to the simplicity of ignorance. The true Philistine always thinks that his sense of reality is much sounder and stronger than that of educated men. He thinks that educated people excel only in possessing useless knowledge or frivolous accomplishments, whilst he himself, the practical man, excels in sterling common sense, the sense that deals with the world as it really is.

I remember that at one of those times when sun-spots are largest and most visible I had a good opportunity for observing them towards sunset with my glass, and I happened to mention them afterwards to a Frenchman, a retired man of business, a fairly representative specimen of the rather narrow, practical man. Now, as the sun was not a literary subject, but something visible, it seemed to belong to

the domain of common sense, and my Frenchman thought he knew about it all that was to be known. He was quite sure that there were no spots on the sun, that there never had been any, and that the spots I had seen were on the glass of my telescope, or in my eye; in a word, he precisely repeated the contemptuous observations that were made by all people endowed with common sense when sun-spots were first discovered. I found, too, that he did not believe in the existence of mountains on the moon; yet if anything in nature is material and substantial, it is surely the lunar mountains, which, as we know, are much loftier than the terrestrial.

I fear it must be admitted that the illusory sense of reality gives even greater self-satisfaction to its possessor than a more cultivated sense. The Philistine is always sure that he knows all about material things, whereas the scientific student of matter is led into inevitable speculations, that remove every particle of it from the region of what is absolutely known.

As to the artistic study of matter, with a view to excellence in the art of painting, it makes us observe all visible realities very

closely, and in this way brings us nearer to nature, and so makes the visible world very interesting to us, whereby the happiness of living in it is unquestionably increased. But the studies of a painter do not stop at this elementary stage, at which he is most closely and happily in contact with realities and most pleasantly familiar with them. He is led on from substance to effect, and again from effects in nature to purely artistic arrangements which have art in view, and are removed from nature; and as imaginative illusion plays a great part in fine art when it is highly developed, I should say that the advanced practice of a painter is not nearly so favorable to a sense of reality as his earlier or elementary studies. This, however, must depend upon the kind of excellence which is aimed at in each particular case. In that of Meissonier the sense of reality was sedulously cultivated to the last; in Turner it was overborne by the idealizing tendency, so that many painters of inferior rank have been closer to reality in their latter years than he was. It will be found, I believe, that those artists in whom the sense of reality remains most vigorous to the last are usually sounder in mind,

and therefore presumably happier than the idealists.

The happiness attendant upon realism or idealism in the fine arts concerns, however, only a very small and very peculiar class. Artists are most exceptional in being able to win celebrity for themselves by turning beautiful illusions into works that other people often admire and even occasionally purchase. In ordinary life there is no compensation of this kind; there an illusion, however beautiful, is without any other value than the pleasure it may give to the one person who indulges in it. To him it may be a kind of mental hashish, to others nothing. But a strong sense of reality is valuable in all human relations, valuable in every kind of business; and even when we are not engaged in active commerce with mankind it gives a feeling of being at home in the world of material nature, and under the government of natural law, that sets a man upon his feet wherever he happens to find himself.

CHAPTER X.

HAPPINESS IN OUR OCCUPATIONS.

THERE are three sources of happiness in professional occupations.

The first is the sense of harmony between the occupation and the mental condition of the person who follows it.

The second is the feeling of efficiency. This is always agreeable in itself, even when the occupation is not precisely congenial.

The third is the knowledge that the work we are engaged upon, whether agreeable in itself or not, will be rewarded by some benefit to ourselves or others of a nature extraneous to itself.

Of these three sources of happiness in our employments the first (the sense of harmony) is the most attractive, especially in youth. It seems as if there could be no limit to our happiness when our occupation is precisely in harmony with our tastes. This answers to

the delightful anticipations that precede marriages for love.

As to the second (the consciousness of efficiency) it is obvious that it differs from the first in coming much later, as there cannot be any feeling of efficiency until it has been attained, and it cannot be attained in anything without great labor in actual practice, which involves a prolonged period of inefficiency.

The third source of happiness in occupations (the feeling that we are winning an extraneous benefit that has nothing to do with the occupation itself) is usually chosen by those who consider themselves, and are considered by others, eminent for their prudence and right reason. To follow an uncongenial occupation with a view to money requires a persistent exercise of will. An occupation so pursued is clearly differentiated from all pleasures. The exercise of will elevates it, and still more when the money earned by it is for others.

Now, with regard to the probability of disappointment, it is the desire for happiness in congeniality of occupation that most exposes us to disappointment, for reasons too numerous to be given in this place.

Satisfaction in efficiency appears at first so positive that it seems as if disappointment were not to be apprehended, as it is difficult to believe that even vanity itself could cherish illusions about efficiency when practice is sure to put it to frequent and incessantly recurring tests. A man must surely know whether he is practically a good swimmer and a good rider, or not; if not, his own misadventures will make him aware of it. The disappointment is usually that of hope long deferred and never ultimately realized. The inefficient person hopes that efficiency will come to him in time, with practice, and it does not come; he remains inefficient to the end. That is his form of disappointment. Efficiency itself, when attained, is not disappointing; it is a constant satisfaction. The accomplished person may feel vexed that his efficiency does not bring him extraneous honors and wealth, but that has nothing to do with the pleasure of feeling himself accomplished.

The third source of happiness in occupations, as given above, is the avowed pursuit of an extraneous advantage by means which are possibly not agreeable in themselves, but

of which the pleasantness, or the unpleasantness, is not taken into consideration. This way of pursuing happiness is greatly superior to the two others in the clear distinction that it establishes between the means that may have to be employed and the end that is steadily kept in view. It is admitted, from the beginning, that the means may be disagreeable, so there can be no disappointment about that; and as the best years of an ambitious man are mainly occupied in the pursuit of his objects, he may already enjoy a prospective happiness in the mere hope of their still distant attainment. His peculiar form of disappointment usually awaits him towards the close of his career, when the extraneous reward that he has received in the shape of honors or fortune is always likely to seem to him an inadequate payment for all that he has done, and an insufficient compensation for all that he has sacrificed. Or he may be disappointed in another way: the rewards may be even greater than he had anticipated, yet the pleasure of fruition as far inferior to his hopes. Nevertheless, whilst fully admitting these possibilities of disappointment, I believe that it is safer, as a rule, to seek for happiness in some

reward outside of our occupations than in the occupations themselves; but these questions are so important as to deserve fuller consideration than could be given to them conveniently in a single chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

CONGENIALITY OF OCCUPATION.

SOME experienced people hold the belief that although there may be very wide differences, as to pleasure, between studies or exercises that are undertaken for amusement only, all occupations followed as work are sure to be equally irksome, so that there is, in fact, no reason for choosing one professional occupation in preference to another as far as its inherent agreeableness may be concerned. According to this theory, congeniality of occupation is not worth considering by professional people, though it may be of importance to amateurs.

I have been in the habit of inquiring, in conversation with workmen, whether they felt any attachment to their occupations and took any pleasure in them, and I found that a kind of general law appeared to reveal itself in their answers. The more the occupation

educated the workman, the more nearly it approached to the nature of an art (not necessarily a fine art), the stronger was the disposition to become attached to it; whereas mere labor without any educating interest was only gone through with more or less courage and endurance. Thus joiners, as a rule, are attached to their profession, which is constructive and often calls for forethought and ingenuity, and the more difficult the work they have to do the better they seem to like it, provided only that they are not too strictly limited as to time. The materials, too, are interesting from the variety of their natures, and the necessity for treating each wood in a special manner, according to its own constitution. One joiner told me that the only objection he had to his work was that as he liked it, and was almost incessantly engaged upon it, the days and years flew past too quickly, so that his life was made shorter for him than it would have been in idleness.

Occupations are never, to those who follow them, what outside observers imagine them to be, and it would be impossible for us, even if we tried an occupation for a long time, to feel at home in it as a man does who has worked

at it steadily since his boyhood. I lived at one time in what was both an agricultural and a mining district, and I remember with what surprise I discovered that the miners were at least as much attached to their own occupation as the farmers were to theirs, though it seemed to me, with my love of landscape and the fresh air, that to be much in the fields was poetical and delightful, reminding one of Virgil and Burns, whilst nothing could be more gloomy and depressing than the black and dangerous interior of a mine. Further study of the matter made it clear to me that what the miners liked in their occupation was a certain rough kind of cosiness and comfort, as they were perfectly independent of wind and weather, and their lamps and fires gave a sort of home-like feeling, especially in the depth of winter. Besides, the art of mining has always its own practically scientific interest, which the miners themselves share with the engineers, whilst the personal danger is either made light of from familiarity, or stimulates, without daunting, the courage of brave men.

Notwithstanding the close confinement of life in factories, it is found in manufacturing districts that there is an attraction in the mills

which brings the people from the country round about and soon converts them into an urban population with entirely new habits and tastes. The mill hands, like the miners, escape from the hardships of an out-of-door life and have shelter and warmth, though the warmth is accompanied by incessant noise and vitiated air. The poor, however, are not usually very sensitive to noise, so that they easily get accustomed to it, and impure air does not seem to them a very grave inconvenience, as they seldom attach much importance to sanitary considerations in their own homes. It is extremely difficult for us to judge of the degree of happiness which is really compatible with the monotonous labor, the incessant strain of attention, and the long and close confinement attendant upon work in factories. Such a life is so different from the ideal of industry in the conditions most favorable to perfect well-being, that we may easily imagine a factory population to be more unhappy than it really is. It is now many years since I was familiar with the manufacturing districts in the north of England, but I well remember that the confinement of the operatives in the mills did not quench the exuberence of their nat-

ural gayety any more than the confinement of champagne in a bottle prevents it from bubbling when uncorked. Their spirit seemed to me very like the spirit of school-boys, which is still full of energy and frolic in spite of the irksomeness of their tasks. In some rare cases, where young people are naturally gifted with intellectual powers that claim their special exercise, the life of a factory worker must seem uninteresting, but the majority of mankind are disposed to get through work of any description as a mechanical routine, and are so little interested in higher pursuits that the greatest poets and philosophers only bore them. The mechanical regularity of factory work has its compensation for them in the facility that comes from habit and practice, so that if only it be reasonably limited as to hours and the workers are strong enough to bear it, they need not be a particularly unhappy class. It is well known that the girls, as a rule, prefer the factory to domestic service, because in service there is so little absolute freedom, whereas the factory girls are as free as ladies after "th' mills is lawsed."

The severe discipline of a too monotonous regularity is always very irksome to the natural

man, so we all prefer, until we are changed by habit, those occupations in which the nature of the work is varied and its pressure not invariably the same. This variety is one of the great charms of a rural life, even when there is very little positive amusement. The French peasantry work to excess in hay-time and harvest, but at other times they take life more easily, and in winter have a good deal of leisure, though they get up very early to thresh their corn. The times of over-work are not felt as a hardship, because they do not last very long, and leisure is always welcome when it comes, though it is enjoyed in semi-somnolence, and not enlivened by any more or less intellectual pursuits. The work to be done in the fields has also a charming variety, one occupation succeeding another as amusements do in the fashionable world, and the mere change in the seasons is in itself a constant source of interest. When I used to live in France, almost all the poorest rural population of the hill country poured down into the Burgundy wine district for the vintage, doing the long journey on foot, much of it in the nights, and enlivening the way with songs. Their work in the vineyards was hard, but it

was fairly paid, and the grape-gatherers were better fed than in their ordinary life on the hill farms. When the vintage was over, they would march back homewards, laden with baskets full of grapes, all the weaker travellers so wearied that it was a great charity to give them a lift in any passing carriage. Still, they were passionately fond of this excursion as the most complete change that they enjoyed in the whole year. The hurried visits of Lancashire factory people to the seaside, in cheap and crowded trains, answer to it in our industrial civilization, but they are neither so picturesque nor so natural as that annual pilgrimage from the wooded highlands to the vine-clad lowlands of Burgundy.

It is an almost invariable rule that the inhabitants of great cities are much more bound down to one occupation than people who live in the country, and that the further we live from great centres of population, where everything is specialized, the more likely we are to enjoy the relief of variety. I have described in another work the amphibious activity of a coachman in Argyleshire who would take his four horses over a mountain road, or his sailing boat across a broad salt-water loch, in the

roughest of weather, with the same skill, and equal security for his passengers. In Paris the omnibus drivers are fastened to their high and solitary seats all day. Rough travel and colonial life both require that the same person should have some skill in many different crafts, but are not exacting as to his attainment of perfection in any one of them. In great capitals, the monotony of specialized employment impels us to seek variety in amusements; in a primitive existence there are few or no amusements; it is the serious work of life which itself affords the necessary refreshment of change.

One of the most frequent causes of unhappiness in the modern world is the narrow limitation of our choice in professional work. Our choice in amusements is far wider. We amuse ourselves by returning, in play, to the savage state, and become hunters or nomads with tents and canoes, and we practise in a rough way — of course always as amateurs — the most various primitive arts. All this is delightful and truly recreative, precisely because no great degree of skill is necessary to the sufficient enjoyment of a pastime. When, however, we pass from play to work, we are limited both by technical difficulties and so-

cial considerations. The technical difficulties bind us, with rare exceptions, to a single pursuit, and the customs of our class leave us very little liberty of choice. I need not do more than refer to the old aristocratic alternative of the Army or the Church, but I may be permitted to express at somewhat greater length my regret that all physical labor should be associated, in the European middle classes, with the idea of social degradation. Consider how the gifts of Nature are bestowed upon human beings at their birth, — how many have good physical gifts, how few, in comparison, have any great mental powers, — and then think how often the good physical gifts are left without exercise of a professional kind from a dread of losing caste! A strong man who would have been happy all day long as a carpenter or a blacksmith, sits at a desk, and passes what to him is a tedious existence, because he has relatives who are supposed to be genteel. If his occupation is merely dull and mental, the evil is only negative — I mean in the privation of bodily exercise — but it may be much worse than that by calling for the exercise of faculties that are either wholly absent, or else too feeble for the service that is

required of them. I should say, for example, that if the situation in which such a man finds himself requires a false pretence to the appreciation of literature, his misfortune is then more than negative, it has become positive; or if he has gone into the Church because it is a respectable profession, but without having any religious ideal, then I should say that he has put himself into a false position, from which it is not probable that he will be delivered by acquiring, later in life, the peculiar kind of ideality that is wanting to him.

CHAPTER XII.

INSUFFICIENCY OF GIFTS.

THE gifts required for some peculiar kind of happiness in occupations may be insufficient in one of two different ways — either they may be all present, but too weak, or some of them may be present in quite sufficient strength, whilst others, equally necessary to the kind of happiness desired, are entirely absent.

Amongst the gifts that are very common in a certain limited degree, but extremely rare in any eminent degree, is the power of sustained effort in doing what is felt to be drudgery. The consequence is that few men or women go long and steadily through work that requires drudgery unless they are forced to it and bound to it in some way, usually by pecuniary necessity. Young people, in dreaming about occupations that they fancy they would like, always omit the drudgery, but Nature never omits it;

she inflicts it upon us even in those occupations that are supposed, by those who have never seriously followed them, to be purely and absolutely delightful. It may take very different disguises, but it is always in reality the same — that is, a business that has to be gone through with patience. Sometimes the victim has to feign enjoyment at the same time, as in many social functions, or he has to conceal his labor and assume an appearance of ease, as in many kinds of artistic performance and production — deceptions that really increase the drudgery which they disguise.

In the ideal anticipation, all drudgery is, of course, eliminated; in the reality, every occupation has its own peculiar drudgery. Mr. Holman Hunt says that the reason why so many amateurs fail in painting is that they shrink from the drudgery that it demands. The world in general believes that painting is always agreeable, always an amusement, an *art d'agrément*, as the French say. The intelligent young man who is bound down to a manual occupation thinks that scholarship must be delightful, and so indeed it is; but the delightfulness is associated with, or preceded by, a kind of drudgery harder than that

of planing boards, because it requires a more incessant attention.

But the great reason why there is so much disappointment about the suitableness of a particular occupation to one's natural talents is because we are so apt to believe that we have all the talents required for a particular kind of work, when, in reality, we have only some of them. Those that we do possess may exist in great strength and perfection; when that is the case, we are all the more liable to be deceived into the belief that we possess also those other talents that are, in reality, wanting to us. Let us consider the various gifts that are all absolutely indispensable to the equipment of a great poet. I enumerate them, for a particular reason, in the inverse order of their importance.

1. The poetical appreciation of all that we observe; that is, a sense of the charm of nature and of human life, which is always emotional, and therefore different from the prosaic perception of hard fact. This sense is possessed in common by poets and all truly artistic painters. It must also belong to the romantic (as opposed to the scientific and analytic) novelists, and in a considerable degree to musical composers.

2. An exquisite sense of the beauty of language and of the literary value of words, accompanied by the power of selecting those which produce the most musical effect upon the ear, and of arranging them in new and beautiful combinations. This power is also possessed by artistic writers of prose, but they do not cultivate it to the same extent, as they have not the constant musical discipline of metre and rhyme.

3. The faculty of creative imagination, or, as it is sometimes called, poetic invention. This power exists in various degrees of strength. Milton had less of it than Dante, Dante less than Shakespeare, but it is always present in poets of the first rank, and manifests itself even in their youth; for example, in the rich though immature poetry of Keats.

Of these three gifts, the first makes a mind responsive to poetry, and is therefore essentially the reader's gift. The sympathetic reader has all the feelings of a poet, and these feelings, which always answer so readily to the call of genius, may awaken in him an illusory creative impulse. He then tries to write poetry, fails, and is for a time discouraged and unhappy. Yet the bare reality of his situa-

tion, divested of all illusion, is very good. He is still a privileged person. He has possibilities of enjoyment that no critic, however contemptuous, can take away from him; he has the faculties that appreciate great poetry, — an appreciation which of all intellectual enjoyments is the most elevated, the most noble, whilst it is so little costly that it may be had in the highest perfection for a few pence.

When this gift is joined to the second (the mastery of language) but without creative imagination, the result is a minor poet; that is, a musical versifier who has poetical thoughts and feelings. Here, again, there is room for a mistaken estimate of one's own powers. The minor poet who constructs his verses skilfully, and has genuine feeling, may excusably attribute to himself the complete poetical equipment. The gift and the accomplishment that he possesses are of a high kind, though not of the highest. He, too, is an enviable personage, if he knew his own happiness, as in addition to the pleasure of reading poetry he enjoys the still more active pleasure of sound metrical composition. If poetry were like anything else, the minor bard might be thoroughly happy in his work, having the

assurance that it was good of its own kind; but the contempt which is attached to all metrical writing except the highest (a contempt in great part due to a disinclination to read any poetry whatever) places the minor poet in the position of a producer of something that is not wanted, and this is always trying to one's self-love.

Another art that easily awakens delusive hopes is that of painting. The desire to paint is excited in us by the love of nature, and especially by an admiration for those fleeting beauties that art may preserve, however imperfectly, still better than nature herself does. The first of these is that transient human beauty which in life is subject to so many changes. At a later period in the history of art, there comes a desire to preserve some record of the fleeting beauties of landscape.

This is the true origin of painting. The ambition to win money and fame by means of art is extraneous, and arises later. It has nothing to do with the first impulse. Even after painting has become a recognized avenue to wealth and fame, an aspirant might still find wealth more easily attainable by commerce, and fame by literature or politics, so

that the choice of painting would still, in most cases, be dictated by the love of nature; and we see that in reality it is so.

This brings us to the most common cause of disappointment in the pursuit of painting, which is the distinction between a love of nature and a feeling of satisfaction in the technical management of pigments.

Obviously, the love of nature may exist without any special pleasure in glazing or impasto, or any special aptitude for handling. It may even exist without any talent for composition or any gift of pictorial invention. We may go yet further, and say that the most keenly appreciative enjoyment of natural beauty at the moment of observing it may be utterly distinct from any power of remembering it, even for a day.

Confident in the sincerity of his love of nature (which is only an expression for the enjoyment of natural beauty or sublimity) a youth may go to painting because he wishes to express his feelings and thinks that painting would be the most effective means, not because he has the inborn abilities of a painter. In such a case an artistic disappointment will assuredly be the consequence of hoping for

too much from a love of nature in a practical and productive sense. But that love itself remains to the disappointed artistic aspirant, and may still be a source of great happiness to him if he is only able to dissociate it from his artistic failure. Why should he not dissociate the beauties of nature from the difficult management of pigments ground in oil? A poet makes no unnecessary connection between the two. Byron was an ardent lover of nature and hated painting, the best and the worst indiscriminately. The feelings of Wordsworth towards nature, if not so ardent as Byron's, were more tenderly affectionate; if he did not hate painting, he took no interest in the technical craft, nor did he know anything about it. He went at once to the thought, when there was any thought; in a word, to the literary interest of the picture.

I have hitherto only mentioned the love of nature as a frequent cause of false vocations in painting; but this is connected rather with a rural than an urban life. Inhabitants of great capitals, with their easy access to pictures, may be led to attempt painting because, for them, the art is interesting in itself. This appears, at first sight, much more promising,

as the example of human work already triumphantly executed seems to encourage artistic production much more directly and immediately than nature, which is remote from us and sets no example of artistic execution. Even here, however, there is room for an illusory or false vocation, which, if imprudently followed, must lead to an inevitable disappointment, as I will now proceed to show.

This is one of those very numerous cases where a distinction has to be established between the receptive and the productive powers. The intelligent lover of pictures answers to the intelligent reader. He is receptive. He may possibly be productive also, but it does not follow that he is. As a general rule (there have been a few rare exceptions) the great producers are not remarkably receptive. We are familiar with the common accusation against writers that they read less, instead of more, than other cultivated people. We have heard a similar accusation against painters that they do not appreciate the works of their great predecessors, and are usually ignorant of theory and also of the history of art. These accusations are both of them, in the majority of cases, well

founded; the only error is in giving them a malicious character. The greatly productive minds are rarely greatly receptive, because all their energy, or nearly all of it, goes to production, and they have scarcely any left for appreciation, which they do in a most summary manner and without taking the trouble to be just. The patient students of art long since executed, the loving critics and students of art history, have an affinity with fine art, that is evident, or they would not spend time and thought over it; but their artistic intellect is of a purely receptive nature.

Now, what is the effect of this temperament, receptive as to fine art, on happiness? In itself, so long as it does not delude its possessor by false hopes of a productive success, it is surely a very enviable possession. If I rank it below the love of nature and the love of literature, it is chiefly because natural beauty and literary productions are accessible almost everywhere, whilst good paintings and good statues are accessible, at least to the poor student, only in great cities. But if the student is within reach of works of art, to enjoy them is to possess them. It is the one case in which the French adage "*Voir, c'est*

avoir" becomes literally true, as the only good of a picture is in the sight of it. Is this nothing? It is a kind of riches that is wanting to many an owner of hereditary art treasures who, being without it, is disqualified for enjoying the contents of his private galleries.

When there is no illusion as to the gifts of nature, when we really possess in perfection all the gifts which are needed for the work we have to do, and when the circumstances of our position do not prevent us from devoting our time to the occupation of our choice, the result of such a fortunate combination ought to be a very pure and elevated kind of happiness. In actual life it is often spoiled by some perfectly extraneous disappointment. Shelley had the complete equipment of a poet, with full liberty to cultivate his mind and make poems, but his existence was embittered by the indifference of the public, the contemptuous hostility of the press, and a feeling of discouraging uncertainty as to his future fame. This is the misfortune of all the artistic occupations — the need of a large and appreciative public. Even Turner, who was far more successful in his life-time than artists usually are, is said to have been em-

bittered by the attacks of anonymous critics, by the jealousy of rivals, and by the difficulty he found in selling his oil pictures at the time when they were painted.[1] Wordsworth was another disappointed genius, and with better reason, as he could not live by his art, whilst Turner made a fortune; yet Wordsworth enjoyed all the leisure that is necessary for a poet, with health, and length of days, and the possibility of living amongst the lakes and mountains that he loved. Even Scott's enjoyment of his own immense success was, I will not say embittered, for he was too great to be affected seriously by any such considerations, but limited by his modest conviction that his fame could not endure. These instances are taken from the roll of celebrated names; amongst obscure artists and authors the instances of disappointment which remain

[1] I have found lately a fresh proof of Turner's early celebrity. A friend has given me a guide-book to London entitled "The Picture of London" for 1804. It contains a paragraph on Turner's works beginning with these words: "Mr. Turner is a painter of the first order." Subsequent criticism has only said the same thing more elaborately. This anonymous eulogium was printed when Turner was only twenty-nine years old, and the writer of it cannot have been a follower of Mr. Ruskin, because the author of "Modern Painters" was born fifteen years later, in 1819.

unknown to us must be innumerable. The evil in their lives is the extreme difficulty of enjoying the practice of an art for itself alone, and without reference to the opinion of others. There is also, in most cases, the incessant intrusion of pecuniary considerations which have absolutely nothing whatever to do with the arts we practise, yet which force themselves on our attention because we all of us have to buy our time with money that must be either inherited, or earned, or stolen.

The best refuge, so far as happiness only is concerned, would be to cherish in ourselves, as much as possible and as long as possible, the true student-spirit, which takes an interest in a pursuit on its own account without reference to any personal success. I have just said that it is extremely difficult to enjoy the practice of an art for itself alone. It is so because the fine arts appeal to others and attempt to awaken their emotions, so that to write what is never to be printed or to paint what is never to be exhibited seems like talking to rocks and trees. But the study of nature is a pursuit that does not of necessity involve an appeal to the sympathy or admiration of any human being, and it is a safe

refuge. It has been the one remaining happiness of many a disappointed artist; it is the delight of all obscure men of science; it makes us, so long as we are engaged in it, independent of the whole human world except our predecessors, who have prepared the way for us, and who, for the most part, were solitary students like ourselves.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE QUESTION WHETHER OUR HAPPINESS IN THE USE OF OUR FACULTIES IS IN PROPORTION TO THEIR STRENGTH.

THIS question is complicated by several others, so that it is difficult to answer it simply.

The other considerations that prevent a simple answer relate to the sense of improvement, to the satisfactions of successful or the torments of unsuccessful rivalry, to the condition of public opinion, and the degree of importance that the individual human being attaches to the opinion of his fellows.

The comparison of our own powers with those of others continually interferes with our enjoyment. A strong savage lives in a tribe where the majority of warriors are still stronger than he is himself. He is likely, in such a position, to be derided as a weakling, and to have a self-consciousness of weakness

(implanted in him by his fellow-tribesmen) rather than happiness in his positive strength, such as he ought to have and would have if it were not interfered with by the tribal public opinion.

Comparatively small powers may be accompanied by a sense of great satisfaction if only there is a consciousness of increase. Here we have the secret of the happiness of youth, which bears its own present deficiencies so easily because it has the assurance that they are not final. Even in youth, however, discouragement may attend progress, because the progress itself, though real, is not sufficiently rapid and assured to answer the expectations of one's friends, or even one's own legitimate expectations.

A comparatively weak faculty may sometimes give a purer satisfaction than a strong one, because it does not awaken ideas of competition. One who rides a bicycle simply for his amusement, or for health, well knowing that he would be nowhere in a race, may get both more amusement and more health out of his exercise than if he were powerful enough to think of breaking "records." It is the same in the exercises of the mind. One who

writes ordinary letters well may have a satisfaction in his private correspondence far more complete than any that he would ever experience in the open field of literature. In the fine arts, professional workmen, with few exceptions, deride the efforts of the amateur; yet the amateur's disinterested studies, which have no motive but his own enjoyment of natural beauty, have at least this in their favor, so far as happiness only is concerned, that they are free from those jealousies and heart-burnings which are so hostile to professional peace of mind.

There is, in short, no necessity for any remarkable or exceptional strength in a faculty as a condition of our ample enjoyment of its use. Provided only that there is strength enough to permit reasonable exertion without fatigue, the pleasure that accompanies the exertion may be so complete that it is impossible to imagine any increase of it as a consequence of augmented power. A man who walks ten miles easily may enjoy so much refreshment from his exercise that he could not feel happier in it if he were able to walk fifty; the only difference would be the prolongation, not the intensification, of his pleasure.

So with our intellectual labors. A man of ordinary power, well disciplined, can fix his attention steadily to one thing during a sitting of two hours, after which he usually requires rest or change; but a man of superior brain-power, like Napoleon at his best, can fix his attention for a whole day or a whole night. It does not follow from this power of prolongation that Napoleon had a greater pleasure than we have in the employment of mental energy, but his pleasure was more prolonged, and he probably took pride in his remarkable staying power as a means of humiliating others.

It is one of the consolations of healthy age that, although it cannot do anything to excess without having to pay a penalty afterwards, it can still do most things in moderation, and derive almost as much satisfaction from the limited and reasonable exercise of diminished powers as it once derived from excessive and often unnecessary exertions.

There is even a satisfaction in the use of what we know to be a moderate power that does not accompany a great one, as the moderate power is usually employed either for simple pleasure, or for some unpretending

kind of utility, whilst great powers lead men to undertake the most burdensome tasks. Even when the powers are equal to the task — as they were, for example, in the case of Michael Angelo, — they still condemn their possessor to a species of slavery. The slavery of the great artist is undoubtedly one of the noblest in the experience of mankind; but though Michael Angelo exercised his genius and enjoyed a severe kind of happiness in doing so, that painting of the Sistine Chapel was a terrible business, and many a minor artist has passed pleasanter years before his easel than those during which Buonarotti lay toiling on his back. The predominant strength of Napoleon's military genius led him first to the kind of happiness he was able to enjoy, and afterwards past it and away from it; his generals, who had great military talents also, but of a less imperious order, wished to rest on their laurels after their greatest successes, and would have been happy in the enjoyment of their titles and châteaux if he had only given his consent. Here is an excellent instance of the truth that minor talents may be more conducive to happiness than the most brilliant ones, for certainly Napoleon's lieu-

tenants would have acted wisely in retiring, as a prudent gamester does, whilst luck is still in his favor.

The possibility of happiness with limited talents does not make it the less necessary that such talents should be genuine of their kind. For a yachtsman to enjoy sailing it is not necessary that he should possess nautical abilities that would bring him distinction amongst the most accomplished yachtsmen; but the genuine nautical instinct is indispensable, since without it sailing would be to him no more than an imperfect mode of locomotion. The born landsman finds no pleasure in playing the beautiful game with the capricious wind, in which it is sometimes an enemy, sometimes a friend, and often too indolent to be either.

These considerations help us to a rather cheerful view of life; for although genius is rare, minor talents of the most various grades are common, and if each of these minor gifts brings a satisfaction in its exercise, there must be an incalculable amount of such humble satisfaction in the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT EVERY TIME OF LIFE HAS A HAPPINESS PECULIAR TO ITSELF.

THE common belief that happiness belongs to childhood and youth, and is lost in mature age, may be due to a misunderstanding of certain changes in its nature. No one would affirm that it is possible to retain in age, or even in full maturity, the peculiar buoyancy that belongs properly and exclusively to youth. That is plainly out of the question; and there will be no attempt in the present chapter either to underestimate the value of that buoyancy as an element of happiness whilst it lasts, or to represent it as lasting longer than it does in reality. We can only say of it that it belongs to youth, but that it does not constitute the whole of happiness, being only one of its phases. It is like the beauty of spring, which passes away with its own season, yet the end of it, which comes so soon, is not the end of all the beauty of the year.

The beauty of summer is not so fresh and flowery, but it is of another kind; it is fuller, richer, and more lasting. Then comes autumn, which, when it reaches its own perfection (it does not reach it every year), may be the most beautiful of all. Winter is a time of loss; the leaves that remain to it are "red and sear," its skies are gray and gloomy; still, even in winter itself, though it has neither the light nor the rich foliage of summer, there is a kind of beauty perfectly well known to all true lovers of nature, who do not by any means look upon themselves as disinherited because the more brilliant seasons have successively passed away. This beauty of the year, with the completeness of its changes, is closely analogous to the successive varieties of happiness in a well-ordered and fairly prosperous human life. The analogy goes even a little further, as it happens in some years that one or other of the seasons may be, so far as beauty is concerned, comparatively a failure. I have said already that autumn does not reach its own perfection every year, and the same may be said of other seasons also; but the beauty of autumn is always peculiarly in danger, because it is so short and evanescent. So, in life, the happiness of one

age or another may be, and often is, interfered with by adverse circumstances. All that I pretend to maintain is that the time of life, in itself, and considered without reference to accidents, may have a happiness, as each season may have a beauty of its own.

The most serious argument against this theory is that every evil that happens to us in life leaves something permanent behind it; so that as we get older and older there is a steadily increasing accumulation of evils that weigh upon our spirits and drag them down. For the present, however, I must be permitted to exclude accidents of all kinds, as it is impossible to take into consideration everything that might possibly happen to make life painful to bear or simply unsatisfactory. The worst evils of life have usually an accidental character. A man may marry a woman who has a bad temper, or who is unfaithful, and then marriage will be an evil in his case, or he may have a son who is vulgar and insolent, or dishonorable, and then his paternity will be a plague to him; but these are accidents, they are not the universal consequences of marriage. So it is with diseases, and with pecuniary misfortunes, and with wounds received in railway accidents or

in battle; such things happen continually, yet since they are not universal we have not to consider them as certain evils belonging to this or that period of life. Again, some of the worst accidents happen in what is reputed to be the most joyful and happy period of existence — that is, in childhood and youth — yet no one ever, on that account, looks upon childhood and youth as miserable and unfortunate. In short, we are not under any obligation to consider accidental evils in any general theory of happiness, as it is beyond our powers to estimate them in any general way. Here even statistics do not practically serve us. A certain number of husbands murder their wives annually, — a fact that makes no difference in the happiness of wives who are kindly treated by their husbands.

Let us first consider the physical basis of happiness. Leaving diseases out of the question (many of them attack the young quite as readily as the aged), there are certain constitutional changes which do not destroy physical well-being, but produce an alteration in its nature. Between the ages of fifteen and forty-five the constitution loses elasticity and gains firmness. The effect of this upon the mind is

to replace the delight in very active and restless, and often quite useless, movement, by a sense of satisfaction in powers that may be calculated upon and employed by their possessor steadily in the course of his occupations. The physical exercises of middle age are rarely accompanied by the exhilaration of youth, but they are accompanied by a sense of power which is agreeable, and by a consciousness of being able to do all that is necessary both for health and occupation. Between forty-five and sixty there is usually some decline of strength, but, in a healthy subject, quite enough of it remains to meet all reasonable claims upon it. If the kind of life and the habits of the individual are favorable to the preservation of physical health and strength, there is no reason in the human constitution why life should not afford even considerable physical enjoyment between forty-five and sixty. It is an age that does not forbid either field sports or travelling of the more independent and active kinds, on horseback, on the bicycle, or on foot. The only rules that a healthy man need trouble himself to observe, as he approaches threescore, are never to allow his physical powers to be lost to him through indolence, and never to strain them or

distress himself. The number of gray-headed men to be seen in the hunting-field, and now upon bicycles, is ample evidence that physical exercise may be really enjoyed after middle life and that it still invigorates. To keep these benefits nothing is required but a little prudence, and that is surely not a very high price to pay for the inestimable blessing of a well-maintained activity.

Down to this point I can speak with the authority of experience, and may mention a piece of advice that was given to me by two old men quite independently of each other. They both said that there was a time in life, that varied with different individuals but might be fixed between forty and fifty, when a tendency to physical indolence, a love of ease, began insidiously to creep over a man, which if allowed to progress unresisted would make him useless before his time. They both affirmed that the preservation of active powers in age is very much a matter of the will. And this brings me to a kind of happiness which, from its nature, can only be felt in advancing years; that is, the self-congratulation on having preserved, at the cost of some effort, all those precious forces that might have been

greatly diminished, or even totally lost, without it.

So far, that is to the age of sixty, a healthy man of prudent and active habits has nothing whatever to complain of in the way of physical well-being. His physical sensations may be less lively and exhilarating than they were at sixteen or twenty, but they are still by no means disagreeable; they still need not, of themselves, predispose him to anything like melancholy. The real difficulty of happy physical existence comes in the fourth score. Between the ages of sixty and eighty, there is always, even in the soundest constitutions, a marked decline of strength. Here I have not personal experience to guide me, but I have what is next best,—the observation of old age in others. The reader will please bear in mind that in this chapter I am considering age only as distinguished from the effects of disease, and therefore must confine myself strictly to sound examples. Diseases occur at all ages, and are too numerous and complex to be taken into account when we are dealing simply with the effects of years. Now, with regard to age, a friend and near relation of mine told me that as he approached fourscore

the effect of age upon him was increasing indolence and a greater enjoyment of rest; but he was still quite equal to undertake long railway journeys alone, and went to London from his residence in the north of England when any matter of business called him. He betrayed a certain slowness and stiffness, and a disposition to remain in an easy-chair when he got into one, but could still walk several miles without fatigue. Another old friend of mine tells me that the inconvenience of old age is not to be able to put on or take off one's overcoat without assistance. If that is all, why not buy a cloak? When the physical health is perfect in old age according to the laws of change which govern a sound constitution, the state is not irritable, as with the diseased, but simply restful, and inclined to somnolence, in which there is no unendurable hardship. In the best cases death comes like sleep, and is merely the cessation of the internal motions. The watch has stopped, and that is all. In less favorable cases, the constitution breaks up in a few months, ending with senile decrepitude and death.

Critics may make the objection that I have represented only the most favorable cases.

Such a criticism would be just, hitherto, only so far as this, that I have supposed my old men to be free from any positive disease. This, no doubt, is a kind of idealization, since, as a matter of fact, old people do usually suffer from a chronic ailment of some kind, and many diseases develop themselves in mature life which are unsuspected till middle age. My only argument is that if you divide human life into four spaces of twenty years each, a healthy man may enjoy complete physical happiness during three of the four quarters, whilst in the fourth he will become, in the course of nature, more indolent and restful; and that is not positively an unhappy state if the old man can have and enjoy the rest that he desires, for even resting is in itself a kind of happiness. But if we look to the really exceptional cases, in which sound health is combined with the special gift of longevity, then we find the fourth score of years as good, or nearly so, as the third. One of my friends, at the age of seventy-three, is still fond of travelling, and last year he visited Italy, France, Switzerland, and the United States of America. Another, at seventy-six, is a good pedestrian, and would climb, I will not say

any mountain in France or Switzerland, but certainly any mountain in Great Britain. Among celebrities either still living or who have died in our time, there is quite a long list of vigorous old men. It is unnecessary to give names that every reader knows. It is enough to say that in our time the exceptionally healthy and long-lived constitutions seem to have altered the period of decline from the eighth to the ninth decade; that, for them, the eighth is still a time of activity, whilst even the ninth itself is by no means a time of senile decrepitude, but only of quiet occupation in the place of strenuous labor. Whilst I am writing these pages, La Scala is ringing with the success of a merry and joyous opera written by a composer of eighty who gave ten hours a day to personal superintendence of its production, whilst the House of Commons is listening with the most eager attention to an orator of eighty-three who came from Biarritz to London without breaking the journey, and after a rough passage in stormy winter weather held a cabinet council immediately on his arrival. The physical perfection of living is to have good health and much activity till seventy, then gradually less activity and an

increasing economy of effort till about ninety, when the old man feels tired of living and quietly falls asleep. It may be said that this is an ideal; if so, it has the advantage over most ideals that it has been in some instances actually realized. It has been twice realized in the Germany of our own time. England and Italy are in a fair way to realize it in Mr. Gladstone and Verdi, whilst it must be remembered that these examples are taken from a most limited class, that of European celebrities, so that if the same proportion of healthy old men is to be found amongst the far more numerous classes of the obscure, there must be thousands of them in the population of the world. And next to those who combine health with extreme longevity, there are ten times as many who combine it with a moderate longevity; that is, who have enough of physical well-being for the enjoyment of life to the age of seventy or seventy-five. Of such an existence, it is certain that every decade has a physical happiness of its own, from the quicksilver restlessness of childhood, through the athletic activity of youth and the quiet confirmed strength and well-directed energy of manhood, to the peace and rest of

age. It is quite true, and I make no attempt to deny it, that the physical happiness of advancing life is much less intense than that of boisterous boyhood; the river of life no longer leaps in noisy cascades made brilliant with all the colors of the rainbow; it flows more calmly and evenly, and at last slowly and sluggishly, before it loses itself in the infinite sea. The great changes in the nature of our physical well-being are not to be disputed; I only say that every age has its own well-being, so long as health remains.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE PERFECTION OF THE SENSES.

IN the last chapter I assumed that health was preserved to an advanced age, as I wished to consider the effects of age by themselves without the complications of diseases that may, or may not, take possession of a man and influence his happiness unfavorably, at any period of his existence. I still reserve this question of disease, about which there may be much to say on both sides; but for the present there is another condition to be considered, and that is the different degrees of perfection of the senses in different individuals, all of whom are equally healthy. The eyes may be free from disease, yet short-sighted; the ears may be healthy whilst the hearing is not acute; the stomach and intestines may do their important work regularly and well, yet at the same time, from a dulness in the organs of taste, there may be a com-

plete or partial incapacity for enjoying the pleasures of the table. There is a sense to which I can only allude, yet which is necessary to the perfection of physical life in mature individuals as well as to the health and vigor of their descendants, though people can be well without it, or whilst having it in an inferior degree. And there is certainly another sense which is without any single and definite name, — the sense of physical delight in life, in breathing pure fresh air, in feeling cool waters flow over the naked skin, "the exultant sense" of physical sympathy with the rhythmic action of the strong horse that is galloping or leaping beneath one, or of the yacht that rises to the wave, all which may be wanting to a man who is not aware of any deficiency in his health and in whose body a post-mortem examination would not reveal the existence of any ailment.

Leaving, then, for the present, as we did in the previous chapter, all maladies out of the question, the difference to happiness between the possession of perfect or inferior senses may be far greater than is commonly imagined. Let us consider sight first as one of the most precious senses we have; certainly

one of the two which do most in the service of our intelligence, and of all our senses the one that best relieves and mitigates the tedium of solitude. Now, think of the difference between having the eyes of Turner and those, let us say, of Tennyson. In this comparison I make no reference to the artistic insight of those two great men; they both, no doubt, possessed this in a very rare degree, though not in the same kind; I allude simply to their ocular power. There is good evidence that Turner in his best years had remarkably strong eyes, and eyes which adapted themselves equally well to different distances. He would throw sketches on the floor and refer to them there, or he would draw minute details in little vignettes on his table. The scale of his own work was quite indifferent to him, and in his study of nature he took the same interest in distances several miles away that he did in the objects of the foreground. His vision, in comparison with ordinary vision, may be described as telescopic and microscopic at his own will, and the practice of his art, instead of fatiguing it, only increased its power, as muscles grow larger by use. Our great poet, on the con-

trary, was extremely short-sighted, and therefore subject to all the disabilities which that implies. He can never have clearly seen the most magnificent of all the spectacles of nature, the splendor of the constellations when the night air is most pure and transparent and their light comes to us so brightly across the inconceivable distances of space. He must have seen the distances of landscape dimly, and only small objects really well, such as the shell in Maud, or the "flower in the crannied wall." Sight of this limited kind, though still far preferable to blindness, is such an exclusion from wide regions of beauty and interest that if it came upon any one who had enjoyed good sight before, he would feel it as a great calamity, or at least as a severe restriction. For example, in the studies of literature and art a short-sighted person may read books, but cannot appreciate painting, as the parts of pictures only come together at their own distance where every touch must tell. The same touches, scrutinized at a distance of a few inches, do not only appear coarse and unskilful, but must be positively unintelligible, so that the most learned execution, if seen too near, might be taken for the

most ignorant. In nature there is no execution whatever, whereby the short-sighted student of nature does at least escape from this especial error, but he is driven to the world of detail, and that world, though infinite and inexhaustible, is not the synthesis but the analysis of nature.

We are so much accustomed to deafness as a result of disease that we think of it rarely as a congenital imperfection, except in those cases of total deafness which attract attention chiefly by the dumbness which accompanies them. There are, however, very various degrees of excellence in hearing quite independently of disease. It is, perhaps, impossible to fix any exact standard of normal hearing, though aurists are accustomed to test every new case that is presented to them by means of instruments, such as tuning-forks, or by the ticking of a watch. These tests are variable, and there is no sound of any fixed and regular strength amongst the ordinary noises of nature. As a rough test, without any pretension to accuracy, we might say that if any one well placed in a concert-room hears all the *pianissimi* quite easily his hearing may be considered not inferior to the average; but

even this is dependent on the varying voices of the singers and on the acoustic properties of the room. When the imperfection of hearing goes so far as to deprive us of the *pianissimo* in music it may be almost said to deprive us of music altogether, and the loss of music is not merely the privation of a pleasure, it is the loss of the most powerful and the most ideal stimulant and consolation. I do not pretend to be able to explain how music acts upon the human mind, and have never met with any person or any book that could explain it. All I know is, that it requires some memory of sounds, as we could not feel the effects of a passage, or even of a note, unless we remembered what had gone before. Yet our recollection of music does not need to be very perfect or precise, as we may enjoy a composition whilst it is being performed without remembering anything definite about it when it is over. When we come to the stimulating or consolatory effects of music, we enter upon a region of the profoundest mystery. All that we know is that no other influence can replace it. I may perhaps add to this, that in my own experience the perfection of the musical influence is felt only when something

beautiful is to be seen whilst the performance is going on. If it is indoors, a bare concert-room is not enough; the full influence is to be felt under the lofty vaults of some ancient and magnificent cathedral. If the music is out of doors, it is best in some rich landscape with mysterious mountainous distances, especially in late summer, and towards the close of a splendid day. This combination of the æsthetic pleasures of sight and hearing, which is impossible unless both senses are in perfection, may affect our whole estimate of life by elevating it, at least for a time, into the region of the ideal, and by affording us a deliverance from vulgar interests and sordid cares.

It is true that the perfection of hearing, like that of smell, makes us liable to certain intrusions and inconveniences, against which some degree of deafness would at least partially protect us. A dull ear shuts out many importunate sounds and diminishes the force of others. What student has not sometimes regretted that the ears could not be closed as effectually as the eyes? Imperfect sight is always and everywhere a disadvantage: it is as inconvenient for the solitary student as for a general in the field; but imperfect hearing

does not in the least interfere with private work in the study: it even aids it by making us more absolutely alone. At this moment I hear a carriage passing, a dog barking, a cock crowing, several sparrows twittering, and a bell ringing. Besides what I actually hear there is the apprehension of other possible noises, a railway whistle, a barrel-organ, or the strident scream of the siren in a steam-barge on the river. A deaf person would escape from these and other annoyances.

Smell and taste are considered inferior senses, yet their value to us is twofold, as it is both practical and poetic. On the practical side they are servants of science and aids to health (where would chemistry be without them?); on the poetical side they are not only necessary to the appreciation of many passages in the literatures both of oriental and western nations, but what is still more important, they are connected with our personal affections from childhood to old age. To lose the sense of smell is to lose a power which, more than any other, carries us back to our past life. Every one who has this sense in perfection knows that, notwithstanding the variety of odors in great cities, each

of them has a special dominant odor of its own. The smell of London is not that of Paris, and on returning to either place after an absence it is the smell, quite as much as the language, that recalls to us our own former residence there, and helps to revive old recollections and associations. So every house acquires its own odor, which is rarely, though it is occasionally, repeated in another. As to the influence of this on happiness, I may say from experience that there is a profound pleasure, though a very melancholy one, in meeting with a house-odor that belonged, in years gone by, to some house where we used to be received with kindness, and which is now closed to us by death.

A few persons are born with the senses of smell and taste more delicate than they are in ordinary human beings. The advantage of this excessive delicacy is not so obvious as the disadvantage of having senses below the average degree of acuteness. A man born with abnormally keen sight would perceive many very minute details that must interfere with that broader conception of beauty which distinguishes the master from the student in the fine arts. Such a man would see nature as we see

it through a field-glass for distant objects, or as we see near things through an engraver's lens. There would be no advantage in so much detail if the object were the artistic enjoyment of natural beauty; and although it might be valuable for the purposes of science, these are already provided for by our opticians. Ordinary vision, good of its own kind, is the most desirable for daily use, particularly as it can be multiplied both in magnifying and in penetrating power by the telescope and the microscope. So, in hearing it may well be doubted whether preternaturally acute hearing would add anything to the happiness of life. The possessor of such an abnormal faculty would be perpetually disturbed by small sounds, and would have difficulties of his own in the appreciation of music. It would seem to him violent and rude. I am writing these lines with a lead pencil, and a fly is walking across the page; if I heard as with a microphone, the noise of the pencil would be a loud scrape, and the footsteps of the fly would sound like those of a dray-horse on a pavement. A multitude of odors and flavors that seem to us so mild as to be matters of indifference would then be potent enough to compel a choice between the pleasurable and the offensive.

It is probable, therefore, that ordinary human happiness is best assured, so far as the senses are concerned, by the condition of healthy mediocrity.

The reader will please to observe that the acuteness of the senses themselves has not much to do with that æsthetic cultivation which aids us to discriminate by an operation of the mind. The best evidence of this is that one of the two kinds of seeing may improve, in the same person, whilst the other declines. A painter may gain artistic insight by the progress of his mental culture, whilst at the same time his physical sight is deteriorating through advancing age. An old publisher's sight may not be so good as that of a school-boy, but the publisher might still discriminate between tones and textures in papers that the school-boy would confound together. An old physician, looking through his spectacles, will discern signs of disease that escape every layman's observation. In these and a multitude of similar cases the sight is really that of the mind, and the eye is only a more or less efficient servant of the mind.

We have come, then, to the conclusion that so far as the state of the senses has any effect

upon happiness, a healthy mediocrity is best. There is no evidence that the happiness of the human race would be increased if what is now an extraordinary keenness of sight and hearing were to become general, or that the happiness of exceptional individuals gains anything by an abnormal development of these senses. Who wants to hear the footsteps of flies or to count the threads in lawn?

If, however, there is no great gain to happiness in possessing sharper senses than other people, any inferiority to the common average is inconvenient, not so much in itself as because the habits of social existence are founded upon a presumed equality. The average seems to vary with different nations. English manners take it for granted that acute hearing is universal; voices are low, a few syllables in every sentence are marked by a tonic accent, the rest are scarcely articulated. If the hearing is a little dull, the meaning can only be guessed from the accented syllables that remain. In France the louder speech, the equality of pronunciation in syllables, and the clearness of articulation, make a slight degree of deafness a very much smaller inconvenience. It may be desirable, too, in England, to have better

eyes than in France or Italy, on account of the low degree of intensity in light, particularly in the great English towns. The peculiar defect of sight known as daltonism, or color-blindness, has only a negative effect on happiness; it does not cause any mental suffering to the person born with it who has never known, and will never know any other state, but he is unfortunate in missing a pleasure that nature offers abundantly and free of cost. For any one who sees color well, and appreciates it, the not very rare occasions when the coloring of nature is either magnificent or very exquisitely delicate and refined are fully equal, as a pleasure, to a performance of the best music by the most skilful musicians in the world. I have known several persons who were color-blind and whose good spirits did not seem to be in the least degree diminished by their defect. The world, to them, was not a gallery of pictures, but a portfolio of photographs or engravings; yet they were not more saddened by their loss than those born without an ear for music are saddened by living away from operas and concerts. A disability like daltonism affects happiness only when it becomes practically inconvenient, so as to be a hindrance to professional success, as

when a railway servant cannot be employed in some capacities because red and green are alike to him, or a shopman is disqualified for mercery because he is unable to distinguish between the tints of ribbons.

If people were to make themselves unhappy because they miss the pleasures of a sense they do not possess, we might all of us have good reasons for unhappiness, as the whole human race is probably destitute of senses of which it has no conception whatever. We are as unable to imagine the extent of our loss as a dog to realize what he loses by not being able to read. "We have five senses," says Sir John Lubbock, "and sometimes fancy that no others are possible. But it is obvious that we cannot measure the infinite by our own narrow limitations."

"Moreover, looking at the question from the other side, we find in animals complex organs of sense, richly supplied with nerves, but the functions of which we are as yet powerless to explain. There may be fifty other senses as different from ours as sound is from sight; and even within the boundaries of our own senses there may be endless sounds which we cannot hear, and colors as

different as red from green, of which we have no conception. The familiar world which surrounds us may be a totally different place to other animals. To them it may be full of music which we cannot hear, of color which we cannot see, of sensations which we cannot conceive."

The other animals are welcome to all their superiorities. Our own senses are enough for us if we use them. In these, as in all our faculties, our happiness lies in exercise and rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

GROUNDS FOR RATIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

IF happiness follows naturally from the due exercise of our faculties, alternating with their sufficient rest, there must be in many cases, though not in all, a possibility of increasing it by a closer conformity to its law.

The unhappy conditions would be those in which the proper degree of exercise and rest was rigorously forbidden, — as, for example, in the case of prisoners condemned to insufficient exercise of their mental powers, by the withholding of books and writing materials, and the refusal of permission to see visitors, or to insufficient exercise of their bodily powers by a too close confinement, or else to overwork in hard labor; and in those lives which are nominally free because there is no legal imprisonment, yet in which the mere force of circumstances condemns the sufferer to injurious, though not primitive, forms of

mental or bodily inactivity, if not, as in some industries, to activity of an excessive and unhealthy nature. Only a blind and determined optimism could refuse to see that the unhappiness in such cases is real, and that it is inevitable under the conditions; nor do I intend to represent it as less grievous than it is. I only say that in lives of the ordinary kind, where a healthy and moderate use of the faculties is possible to any one with a vigorous will, there is at least this reason for encouragement, that people may increase their happiness if they know how to set about it in the right way.

To hold out the prospect of a simple increase of happiness is far more encouraging in the practical sense than to talk to people of a state of felicity that may be brilliant as the stars in heaven, but is equally beyond their reach. In imperfect health the patient is cheered by the slightest evidence of improvement, when he listens with scepticism to optimistic promises of absolute restoration.

The first encouraging reflection is, that there is hardly any situation in which some improvement would not be possible to a man of activity and resource. Then arises

the objection that such a man would hardly need the guidance of philosophers, that he would seek his happiness in his own way and probably find it, whilst those who do really stand in need of guidance are not likely either to have the intelligence necessary to appreciate its value or energy to follow it. We all know the listless people who are unhappy because they are too lazy to be anything else, and the stupid people who have not sense either to discipline themselves, or to accept any discipline imposed by an external authority. I am content to leave the hopeless cases to their fate. For the others, which are the majority, it may be fairly urged that activity and resource are possessed by them in different degrees, and that their unhappiness might, in most cases, be lessened if they did not underestimate their own powers. No one who understands the conditions of happiness would suggest that people should go beyond their powers. Each of us has his limits, which cannot long be overpassed without consequences incompatible with happiness; and, as to the resources of intelligence, if we are born with small resources, neither gods nor men can expect us to act as if they were larger.

The most encouraging reason for making the best of such moderate faculties as we possess is that the prudent use of them, besides actually increasing their strength, soon enables us to employ them to much greater advantage. There is no fact in our constitution more encouraging than this. The art of swimming is one of the best examples, because it is an art in which the beginner always expends ten times more energy than is necessary. After practice he finds that the slightest motion will keep him above water, and that he is free to use almost all his real effort for progression. The effect of practice in intellectual pursuits is to make everything easy except the one difficulty against which, for the moment, we happen to be contending, and that difficulty is usually either surmountable or avoidable.

A common reason for discouragement in youth is the habit of undervaluing one's natural gifts. This does not often occur in those cases where there is an æsthetic passion or ambition, as when a boy thinks he is born to be a poet or a painter, but it is common as an excuse to one's self for indolence in ordinary studies. A boy persuades himself,

for example, that he has no linguistic abilities, so as to shirk the study of languages. I know by several examples that it is quite possible for such a persuasion to exist along with a faculty that is naturally vigorous but has never yet judiciously been exercised. Or a boy may have half the faculty but not the other half; he may be fitted for reading foreign languages, but, from lack of mimetic power, may speak them badly or not at all. The linguistic gift may always be known by the power of thinking in foreign tongues, but it is difficult to recognize the presence of this power before the student has supplied himself with a full vocabulary. The same difficulty of ascertaining the presence of faculty in young people applies in different ways to most of their pursuits, except easily learned amusements, as the strength of the natural faculty can only exhibit itself when the technical difficulties have been overcome. It is therefore reasonable for young people always to assume that they have a sufficiency of natural endowment for the work they have to do. By taking this simply for granted and working on in a temper of cheerful determination, they are likely to be both happier and more

successful than if they allowed themselves to be perpetually asking if they are fit for this thing or that. And as this book will probably be more read by middle-aged and reflective people than by boys, let me add a word of protest against the habit of many parents who discourage their children by depreciating their abilities in their presence. That kind of parental depreciation may be, and often is, founded on a mistaken estimate of the boy's nature or on an insufficient appreciation of the difficulties he has to overcome. The right way to deal with him is to make him believe that however arduous may be the mountain he has to ascend, the next step, the step immediately before him, is one that he is qualified to take. He ought always to be told, in the admirable words of Rembrandt, to put well into practice what he already knows, because by so doing he will find that, in due course, those other things will become clear to him which at present seem difficult and obscure.

In all matters connected with intellectual acquirements and with skill in any of the arts, whether it be a fine art or one of simple utility, the encouraging truth is that either

knowledge or skill may be increased before the sun of the present day goes down, if we only determine that it shall be so. Without telling anybody, without making any fuss or pretension about the matter, I can, if I choose, know more Greek by dinner-time than I did at breakfast. The increase will not be much, and yet I might hit upon something that would be of frequent recurrence afterwards. If the increase in a single day is small — and to the indolent it always appears so small as not to be worth the trouble — the wise know the effects of accumulation. If the accumulation itself is unsatisfactory as being unequal to our hopes, there remain the exercise and the benefit one gets from it.

There is another reason for encouragement in that law of our nature by which a faculty that has no opportunity for exercise gradually becomes less importunate in its claims, and finally ceases to make any demands upon us whatever. What is here called the demand of a faculty for exercise is a kind of uneasiness that it sets up in the nervous system, which ceases when the exercise is given, and is succeeded by an agreeable satisfaction, accompanied by a slight fatigue. If the craving

for exercise is met by a firm refusal every time that it arises, it troubles us less and less, and it ends by being so feeble a survival of the past desire that we have no longer any difficulty in resisting it. This is the secret of that kind of negative happiness which belongs to asceticism. The ascetic is proud of his power of resistance to the natural craving of the faculties, — in reality, after the early struggles against nature (which are usually got through when the aspirant is sustained by youthful enthusiasm) the necessity for resistance is very small. I do not wish to set up ascetic practices as a model for voluntary imitation, my theory of happiness being opposed to asceticism, which I look upon as so much death; but it is occasionally very advantageous to see how others manage to do voluntarily what we ourselves may be compelled to do against our will. It is encouraging to think that the denial of exercise to some, at least, of our faculties may be possible without permanent unhappiness. For example, the social instincts are strong in most of us, but to indulge them we must be in such a position that society is accessible; and there are great numbers of able men who find them-

selves severed from it either by distance, by poverty, or by some kind of social prejudice, so that they have to get on as well as they can without it. What happens in such cases is usually a gradual decrease in the craving for society, accompanied by a strengthening of the power of enduring solitude, until finally there is hardly any sense of privation. For this, however, it is absolutely necessary that other faculties should be exercised, and that the lonely man should have other interests, were it only in looking after flocks and herds. He ought to have to do with living creatures of some kind, even quadrupeds, and to see fresh faces from time to time, though they pass by the solitude of his life as ships pass some islet in the ocean.

The craving for muscular exercise is strong in a healthy boy, who feels uneasy if you fix him to a seat, particularly if he has a Latin book before him. As he grows older the poor lad becomes a clerk, and gets, perhaps, a walk through the streets to the office, the arms being slightly exercised by swinging them, or by carrying an umbrella. A sedentary existence has, however, so far diminished the craving for muscular exertion that the once active boy

now frequently takes the omnibus, and in middle age, when a well-trained man thinks nothing of walking a few miles, he takes it every day. By this time he has no craving for exercise at all, and, though deprived of it, does not suffer from the privation, except indirectly, through the diminution of his physical powers generally, which he accepts as inevitable at his years. I do not set him up as an example of an eminent degree of happiness, — far from it; I only say that his existence is more supportable than it would be if he had the need for muscular activity that torments a newly caught and still untamed animal in its cage. His case is like that of ladies who may once have been romping girls, but who, in middle age, content themselves with the motions of a carriage so well hung on responsive springs, and so softly cushioned, that whatever exercise they extract from it resembles that of pictorial goddesses reclining on a cloud. Yet, even these rich ladies are not wholly miserable; their faces wear an aspect of placid resignation to their lot.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME REAL EXPERIENCES.

IT may be safely assumed that people know whether they are happy or not. We may accept their testimony on that point quite simply, without inquiring whether, in their circumstances, it is reasonable for them to be happy or the contrary. It seems to me that all testimony of this kind is interesting when we know it to be sincere. The sum of it usually is that the experienced person would be happy if — or might have been happy without this or that unfortunate impediment.

The following experiences are all real, and stated, I believe, in each case, with perfect candor. I am careful to prevent recognition by giving no clue to the persons, some of whom are still living.

"My experience," said an old gentleman to me, "has been that I never could succeed in getting the special kind of happiness I had

wanted or hoped for, but that other kinds of happiness which I did not want and had never hoped for were supplied to me, in the course of life, most lavishly and abundantly. I therefore ended by discovering, though it took me a long time to make the discovery, that the right way to enjoy the happiness within my reach was not to form an ideal of my own and be disappointed when it was not realized — for that it never was — but to accept the opportunities for enjoying life which were offered by life itself from year to year and from day to day. Since I took things in this temper, I have enjoyed really a great amount of happiness, though it has been of a kind entirely different from anything I ever anticipated or laid plans for when I was young." He looked back upon life as, on the whole, very well worth living, and enjoyed it still heartily in his old age, but felt no desire to live it over again and accepted the inevitable and natural ending of it with perfect resignation.

I lately lost a friend who had lived to a very advanced age and whom I had known for forty years. On my observing to him that what seemed to me most unsatisfactory in human life was the frequency with which, in the ordi-

nary course of nature, men are punished for having done right, he answered that there was a sort of compensation, as they got so many good things they had done nothing to deserve. This, he said, was his own case. Although he had incurred undeserved odium for his philosophical opinions and so had been punished socially for being honest, he still enjoyed the full benefits of contemporary civilization which he had done nothing, in the material sense, to advance. He therefore struck a sort of balance, and finding that, on the whole, the sum of benefits was in his favor, he accepted the injustice of his contemporaries without complaint, and found it possible to enjoy happiness in spite of it.

(Perhaps I may add my own reply to my friend's theory. I said that he was able to enjoy happiness because the injustice he suffered from was limited to mere odium, but that in the earlier ages it would have passed into active and unrelenting persecution for which the general benefits of civilization would not have compensated him. If I were burning at the stake it would be a small satisfaction to know that the ingenuity of the Americans had invented for themselves a deli-

cious variety of cooling drinks. And even when, in the ordinary ways of nature, a man suffers from excruciating disease, he can find little consolation in the thought that the pleasures of life would be inexhaustible if only he were at liberty to enjoy them.)

Another old gentleman places happiness entirely in occupation of which he has always found an abundance, both in professional work and in studies. "I have always found life most interesting," he said, "and I can see no reason why its interest should ever end." On my inquiry if he made a clear distinction between pleasant occupation and hard work, his answer was that by occupation he did not mean toil, and that he had never looked upon toil as conducive to happiness in any way. Now, it is unfortunately true that the occupations of most people who have to earn a living are either toilsome or else tedious. My friend's own case had been exceptionally fortunate; both his professional work and his private studies had afforded an ample field for the exercise of his extraordinary mental force. In old age and retirement, when his practical energy had diminished, his former pursuits had left a rich material for reflection and in-

vestigation in a leisure that he intensely appreciated.

A well-preserved old Frenchman told me that the mere boon of life itself appeared to him infinitely precious. His own happiness was in seeing and thinking, perhaps more especially in seeing. He enjoyed these pleasures intensely, even in age, notwithstanding the anxieties and humiliations which in his case had accompanied a transition from easy circumstances to poverty. On the whole, he had enjoyed his existence on earth and should leave this world with the greatest regret, though fully assured of another and still more interesting existence in a future state.

I have met with several other instances of people who in their old age, and when the time of illusions might be supposed to have passed away, still spoke of happiness as a reality, but I have observed remarkable differences in the mere "love of living" which seems to be a passion in itself quite independently of the degree of pleasantness that an outsider would attach to the particular existence in question. When the passion is strong, life will in any case seem prefer-

able to non-existence; but when it is feeble, the greatest luxuries and advantages are insufficient to attach people to our world, and the most seductive descriptions of it fail to persuade them.

An old lady who had often suffered from a nervous ailment that was accompanied, whilst it lasted, by a profound depression of spirits, told me that in spite of this she had cheerful views of life and was fully persuaded of the general preponderance of happiness. She herself derived constant and intense satisfaction from the beauties of nature and from the little she knew of the wonderful order of the Universe. In this way she escaped from herself, except in her hours of gloom, when she was imprisoned, for the time, in her own afflicted personality.

Occasional melancholy is not inconsistent with a preponderance of happiness; indeed, it is quite possible to be happy and melancholy at the same time, as a landscape may be both beautiful and sad, or as a piece of music may pass from a major to a minor key and be equally harmonious in both. Sir John Lubbock tells us, in the preface to his "Pleasures of Life," that he himself is "naturally rather

prone to suffer from low spirits," yet no one can more thoroughly appreciate the lavish abundance of the materials for happiness with which we are surrounded on all sides and which less observant intellects so commonly neglect.

Much more gloomy views have sometimes been communicated to me. One friend steadily maintains that it is impossible for anybody to be happy after the age of thirty-five. Why fix the time of life in such a trenchant and decided manner? On mentioning this to a lady I received the rather saddening answer that she agreed with my friend, but proposed as an amendment the insertion of the words "or before," so that the sentence might read as follows: "It is impossible for any one to be happy, after or before, the age of thirty-five."

One of my friends, who is a bachelor, affirms that it is not possible for any bachelor to be happy. But I have another friend with a much longer experience of celibacy who opines that the very first condition of happiness is complete exemption from conjugal and paternal responsibilities. I should say, as to all cases resembling one or the other of these two, that the

only error is to make the statement general instead of limiting it strictly to the speaker's own personal experience. Each of us is the best possible authority about his own happiness, but not worth listening to as to that of others, except when he speaks simply from unprejudiced observation, as I am trying to do in the present volume. We ought not to attribute our own experience to others, or suppose that they feel as we do.

There is no pessimism as to the present life more profound than that of some religious people who condemn it because it does not answer to a sufficiently pure and elevated ideal. They forget that our present life is not an ideal but a reality, and that to expect in reality the qualities of imaginative poetry is a mistake in criticism. Reality has its own qualities, which are chiefly those of inexhaustible interest and abundance; but it can never possess the ideal qualities of purity and perfection. As to this, I remember an old lady of moderate but perfectly independent fortune and the sincerest Christian opinions, who told me in a moment of absolute candor that in her view the only reason for enduring the present life lay in the hope of a better one to come after it. As for

the existence known to mankind, even when taken at its best, she did not consider it preferable to annihilation. The truth is that she had been led to underestimate our earthly happiness by allowing her mind to dwell too continuously on an ideal existence neither embittered by disappointment nor darkened by the apprehension of death.

The lack of desire for life which in this case applied to our earthly existence only, is in some cases, — I think I may truly say, in an increasing number of cases — applied to the future state itself. One philosophic friend has confessed to me that he cannot have any desire for a future life in general without possessing accurate information as to the details of his own personal future. He illustrated the subject by supposing an offer made to live over again as a human being. "I might possibly," he said, "accept such an offer if the exact nature of my second human life were clearly explained to me in every detail, and if it seemed positively desirable; but if the offer were only that I should take a new ticket in the lottery of human life in general, with all its chances of misery and misfortune, I should think it more prudent to decline." In this case

it is evident that the natural passion for living must have been feeble, for when it is vigorous people will accept any kind of human existence, however intolerable, provided only that they may live and not die.

Would you consent to live your own life over again, exactly as you have lived, and in every particular? This is very different from having the experience of a second and different human life with all its freshness of interest. Is any one willing to go through his own life again as a conscientious reader will study a classical author for a second time, without omitting a single word? The willingness to do this is extremely rare, but there are instances of it. One of my friends told his eldest son at the age of eighty, that if it were offered to him to live over again exactly as he had lived he would gladly accept the offer. The reader probably supposes that this man's existence had been peculiarly exempt from evils. On the contrary, he had known some of the worst evils that can possibly happen to humanity. He had been utterly ruined both in purse and health, though he afterwards prospered and recovered. After a happy marriage he had known the long, sad soli-

tude of the widower. He had been overburdened with family charges, both in his own house and out of it. The intensity of intolerable anxiety had brought on paralysis. His home life had been poisoned by the dread of famine, and his business life by the shadow of impending bankruptcy. Yet he would have gone through it all again for the pleasure of living once more the earlier and the later happy days!

When people are too happy in the good things that they have, they take to wishing for something entirely different. This tendency may be a provision of Nature against premature restfulness and stagnation. An acquaintance tells me that his happiness, otherwise almost complete both before and since his marriage, has been spoiled by his political ambition. Whenever great political events are taking place he longs to have an active share in them, even in foreign countries where an Englishman can do nothing. Many people in our age of culture are making themselves unhappy because, though living in perfect comfort on private means, they are anxious to become celebrated in literature, or they waste the precious daylight in hopeless efforts to paint pic-

tures, although there is not the slightest necessity for them either to write or paint. I rather think that towards the close of the nineteenth century it is the art of painting that has produced more unhappiness than any other occupation by the misemployment of time and by the poignant sense of dissatisfaction that follows after futile and unsuccessful endeavors.

Not one of the examples hitherto quoted is taken from my own experience, and to prevent misunderstanding I will now state as frankly as may be possible in a few words what that experience has been. Happiness enough, and much more than I had ever expected, but very various in character, and always very difficult to keep. I mean that the mere blind force of circumstances made it difficult to retain the particular kind of happiness that I enjoyed at a particular time and which (being very conservative by nature) I should have desired to retain much longer. It is true that the lost happiness has every time been replaced by another very different from it, and which I learned to value later, but the effect on me has been as if an interesting volume were snatched out of my hands when I was in the middle of it, and

another substituted, quite as interesting, but not what I wanted at the time. I well know that all happiness must be imperfect, and this is the nature of its imperfection in my own case.

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