Idleness

Any remark on idleness must sooner or later call out the saying of Claude Tillier, “Le temps le mieux employé est celui qu’on perd”; so that I may acknowledge my debt to its suggestiveness from the outset. Someone may, and no doubt will, argue that idleness cannot exist at all, for some part of our nervous system that is connected with neutral activity must always be at work during our waking hours; but conceiving that point as belonging more to the subtleties of psychological discussion than to the chit-chat of a semi-dilettante club, one can very well consider that form of idleness corresponding in some degree and sort to the French désœuvrement, that may be productive of fruit.

Now, the aphorism just quoted does undoubtedly like most paradoxes of its kind contain a germ of truth, which of course the author has expressed in its strongest and most indisputable form. In the attempt to bring out this germ from its enclosing husk of falsity, three pictures have presented themselves to my mind; the first two shewing what possibilities lie in moments of idleness. The others may serve as a contrast.

Imagine a warm corner on a tiny island in the Aegean sea, where between hot red rocks and under a canopy of wild vines there is a small stretch of yellow sparkling sand, the resting place for these few moments of idleness of an Ionian Greek with the forehead of a Titan. To him, as he lies there in the sunny spot, arise from every side figures of various shapes, grouping themselves into the fabled and the real characters in the oldest of epics. Out there far off in that matchless blue are the sails of Meneleas making for Troy. Close at hand in the little bay below a farm whose dozing to “the drowsy melody of bedded reeds” has been disturbed by the laughter of a group of sea nymphs, is in hot pursuit. In another moment the horses of Phoebus Apollon will drag the fiery chariot into sight; and as the watcher gazes with rapt eyes, his ears deaf to all that till just now had absorbed him, he can see before him what was, and is, the world’s delight. Aphrodite with naked limbs gleaming through the blue and on the cushioning foam. In the contemplation, let us have Homer, for it is then that a man likes to be alone. On a warm summer afternoon an English youth is still reclining at the foot of a huge oak in an English park, where, indeed, though a trespasser with perhaps some thoughts of poaching he has already wiled away the best part of his day of idleness. The place is peopled for him. Between the trunks of the Stratford woods peeps Rosalind, urging him to dance with her on that green turf and not lie there meditating more of his enigmatical sonnets; while in the background stalks gloomy Jacques wondering what those fools from Windsor can be doing in disguise and why that merry crowd from the forest of Arden cannot make less noise. Ophelia is lying down in yonder bend of the moon; just where the great willow tree over hangs it, and from her chaplet of flowers there floats one down the slow stream to the poet who keeps it for years afterwards, although it is whitened and most of its petals are gone. As night falls, the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patinas of bright gold, under this canopy Shakspeare makes his way after a day of idleness, to the cottage at Shotover where Anne Hathaway has given him a rendez-vous—not for the first time.

Contrast with these two pictures, which represent the glorious idleness of genius in meditation, free, wilful and strong, the cold grey cells whose terror even Kleinnian’s
somewhat sensational descriptions cannot exaggerate. The haggard wretch’s eyes that have that look one can never forget – the look that passes from the despair at the realisation of his fate and the empty stare of idiocy on the face of madness. Silence – nothing but silence. Idleness enforced; the brain working, working over the same endless, ever torturing thought.

The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months;
The months will add themselves and make the years;
The years might roll into the centuries
And still the same silence, still the same unchanged horror of idleness would make each moment a new eternity of pain. When I think what this last picture means, I wonder that the very stones that enclosed it are not roused by its hideousness arise and mutiny.

Paul Lafleur
The Sea Serpent

As I have little doubt that other members of the club will treat this subject from the two points of view which afford the most interest in connection with the Sea Serpent, namely the imaginative and the ludicrous, my intention of considering the matter in the serious, perhaps logically dry, relations of credibility and incredibility, may possibly not be taken amiss. The historical discussion of tradition and testimony concerning the existence of deep sea monsters so enormous as the Sea Serpent is commonly reported to be, and as we fancy him in our day dreams or really see him in our nightmares.

“Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lamen ademptum”

cannot by reason of its extensiveness be entered upon in so short a paper as this must necessarily be. Probably the best résumé of it is to be found in the article entitled “Sea Serpent” in Chambers Encyclopaedia which beginning with the statements of Olaus Magnus and Pontoppidan in 1555 and 1755 respectively, comes down to the depictions of Captain M’Quhae and his lieutenant of HMS Daedalus in 1848, this last being with one exception perhaps the most straightforward and careful testimony of eyewitnesses ever given on the subject. The one exception is the statement contained in an article published by The Atlantic Monthly a few years ago, in which the facts observed by several people simultaneously and with no more divergence than might reasonably readily be expected, seem a first glance to impose belief; but this article is unfortunately not really to be got at in Montreal. Suffice it to say, then, that, of the amount of testimony there can be no question, all depend upon its quality. Scores of people have testified and would no doubt not only swear that the Sea Serpent exists, but even give heavy odds in its favour. They have seen him, say they:

“With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood,
in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian or Earth-born that warred on Jove,
Briareus or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, on that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream”.

Now, that human testimony, unimpeachable on the score of good faith, will not suffice to establish certain facts is almost too great a tourism to call for emphasis. When the concurrent statement of any number of human beings contadicts what we may call for convenience’s sake a Law of Nature, that is a uniformity settled as invariable through inductions so often repeated that there is no possibility of mistake, the alleged facts are to be unhesitatingly rejected. The law and the statements cannot subsist together. Thus, no amount of testimony will induce a man of scientific training to believe, on logical grounds, that two straight lines can under any circumstances enclose a space, that an
unsupported body can remain suspended in mid-air, that energy of any kind can be absolutely annihilated, or that an animal from whose body the vital spark has departed, a once living being now in an advanced state of decomposition, can be brought back to physical life.

But propositions we are inclined to disbelieve are often different from those just mentioned; they run counter not to complete inductions, but to what Niell, Bain, and Spencer aptly call Approximate Generalizations, and that is propositions not absolutely universal, but so nearly so as to negate much of what may be advanced contradictory to them. The basis for that approximation is experience. Man’s experience has established a certain proposition as true, the tendency to reject anything that contradicts it becomes very strong, increasing with the growth and repetition of that experience.

This precisely fits the case of the Sea Serpent, the experience here being a mere negation, most people, even of those familiar with the sea at all times and in all places have never seen it. No one has, so far as I know, ever proved that the existence of the Sea Serpent is a physical impossibility. Under these circumstances the right position to take is undoubtedly the result of calculation of probabilities for and against; such affecting of chances against chances it is the object of this short paper briefly to attempt this evening.

The strongest reasons that are given by naturalists do not amount to complete disproof as was said; they form, however, a tolerably large number of added probabilities, various in cogency, which may summed up under the following heads; - (a) the entire absence of any skeleton, remains, or part of the beast; (b) the credulousness and superstition of sailors from whom the most abundant testimony comes; (c) the mendacity of travellers in general and of sailors in particular; (d) the want of full and exact description of the beast (such as might be secured with photography); (e) the discrepancies among the reports submitted; (f) the likelihood of mistaking a giant squid or cephalopod for the supposed Sea Serpent; (g) the descriptiveness of observations made at sea, especially when there are no near objects with which to compare for the purpose of accurately determining dimensions; (h) the quite peculiar psychological influence of the sea, which produces even upon minds accustomed to it a sense of terror when anything unusual occurs, thus tending to vitiate the chances of exact report as to what is seen. These points, say the opponents of the belief, constitute a mass of probability so great as to leave the question, if not decided, at least with the weight of chances against the monster’s existing.

But when we turn to the other side, we find that quite as strong an array may be mustered in its favour. Those who maintain it advance the following reasons; - (a) the testimony is enormous in a mount; (b) it comes from varied sources, from different sorts of men at different times; (c) it is consequently independent; (d) despite this independence it is in general wonderfully concurrent upon certain characteristic marks, which would be sufficient to clear the testimony from the charge of mal-observation; (e) the character and intentions of many of the witnesses are above suspicion, in that connection at all events’; (f) many of the witnesses have been persons with education and scientific knowledge, even predisposed, in some cases, not to believe before seeing and observing; (g) our ignorance of the deep sea and what it contains is very great; (h) the monsters reported
upon may be stray specimens, that have come up to the surface accidentally; (i) these may be the “Old Guard” of a palaeozoic age; (j) it is not likely that any remains of such creatures would ever be found by man, for their habits would tend to make them die in the deep sea and to avoid the surface in storms, thus precluding the chances of them ever being cast up on shore and discovered. It seems to all that when when(sic) we place these two groups over against each other in regard to both quantity and quality, the instances pro rather overbalanced the instances contra.

Paul T. Lafleur
A Holiday

On such a subject one’s thoughts are pretty evenly divided between truism and egotism; so that the little I can have to say this evening must savour of both. The one who chose the subject can therefore have but himself to blame if he finds that I is written with a monster capital, and that the path I follow, whether literally or figuratively, has been beaten hard and turned into dry dust by the feet of countless wanderers before me. Of the other members I crave indulgence.

After wandering through the tortuous and blinding white streets of Lisbon for about a week last May under the hard blue sky of the Peninsula, I in time found myself breaking my feet on the Roman pavement, chatting with golden-haired Florentines in the avenues of the Toscaine, or shooting around sharp corners alone in a gondola. From this sight of men and cities I then turned my steps to the Tyrolese hills and valleys; and as a day and a half of my pedestrianism there interested me at least as much as most of what had met my eyes elsewhere, and the country I travelled through finds less frequent mention in the alternately dull and rhapsodical narration of the tourist, it may be well to ask you to plod with me this evening in the land of the zither player and the Jäger.

Leaving Innsbruck, that most charmingly situated of towns, the railway takes one away eastward towards the Yulen Sea and the valley of the Salzach, connecting at Bichofshofen for Gratz, Vienna, and Hungary. Taking my own two feet at this point, I began rather late in the afternoon to follow the great high road that lead to Salzburg, formerly one of the direct post road from Vienna to Trieste, and still to-day one of the most perfectly kept high road in Europe.

I imagine a valley not more than a mile wide at most, through the middle of which dashes the pale grey water of Salzach, bordered on one side by a marvelously constructed railway, and on the other the high-road I have just mentioned. The fields are a lovely mass of colours at this season with green grass and yellowing hay, daisies, clover, and buttercups just as in the valleys of New Hampshire. Up they slope to green thickly wooded hills, of which the foliage gets darker the higher they rise, away up to short scorched grass, bare grey rocks streaked with rusty-red, and last of the snow dazzling white against the afternoon sky. Here and there groups of houses with a church of which the interior is decorated in gaudy Tyrolese taste and an inn, where beer cold as paleontocryotic ice and yellow as amber can begot for little more than love, are the homes of simple folk. They greet the simple pedestrian with “Grüss Gott”; rarely does one hear the more German salutation “Gutten Tag”.

As I passed through the streets of the little town of Bichofshofen I found all the people, with a large proportion of school boys and school girls, assembled for what we call in this country “sports”. A row of ancestral lindens shaded the street and to one side was a beer garden filled with the old men and women, chatting apparently over past times, and contrasting the decay of modern brew and sinew with the vigour of their own vanished youth. Over on the other side of the street stands the village of Kugel-Bahn, or bowling
alley with a floor about as smooth as the terminal moraine of an Alpine glacier; and the balls have evidently played a part in an avalanche.

Sack races and jumping matches were chief items of interest, which not even the presence of a stranger diverted, though I found myself shyly gazed at by more than one, who turned thereupon and uttered something to his nearest neighbour. He probably wondered what is the something—beginning with capital H I was doing in their midst. The pleasantest sight of all, however, was that of a charming girl a perfect Gretchen type—dressed in a wide straw hat and blue dress, evidently a cut above her surroundings (possibly the daughter of some neighbouring landowner) who stood at the head of the line and afterwards shyly distributed the prizes. Some of the latter to my surprise were scapularies and chaplets; whether these symbolise the relation between the earthly sack race and a skyward pilgrimage, I don’t know. Gretchen’s soft blue eyes and satin cheeks were far more interesting subject for meditation. I have since wondered whether they were as soft as they looked. For several miles this exquisite valley winds on bewilderingly sweet in its varied beauty of May and cool with the air rising from the glacier stream that now streaks the mountain sides with silver veils and now hides them at spots in wreaths of mist gilded in the afternoon sun. Off north in the distance the valley comes to a sudden stop, blocked by a high breast-shaped hill, covered with pines and crowned with a castle that commands the valley. What a spot for a medieval baron, or today for a painter! It takes the weakest kind of imagination to call up the gay cavalades that at one time threaded their way up the private bridle path to some merry making in the halls, paragons then now gloomy, of this immense Hofburg, Wifien; or the hands of eager pale-faced merchants from Vienna or Venice who crept around the road of the base of its headlong cliff fearful lest another heavy item should be added to the toll levied on them by the noble scoundrels who held it; or, sadder still, the little trains of martyrs and enthusiasts going to torture and death in damp cells up at the Schloss. For Hofburg Wifien was famous, or rather infamous in bygone days for its fidelity to the persecuting principles focusing in and about Salzburg whose princely archbishop were one after another imbued with the desirability of stamping out heresy. Perhaps the name of Wefen might be traced to the amiable practice of tossing the bodies of Protestants dead or alive from the top of the cliff into the surging Salzach below. The pine trees about the castle still echo their dying shrieks as they sway to the evening breeze. I visited the various courts and halls of this huge castle next morning, after spending a long evening watching the shadows sink and the delicate pink gather and die away on the mountain tops across the valley; truly, no place I ever saw can give one a better idea of the importance and strength of a medieval noble. From the highest of its extinguished towers the eye stretches in one direction for at least ten miles; in another for more than twice as many. The young woman who acted as guide was extremely pleasant and intelligent, but unfortunately not equally comely. She and her mother alone occupy the place, being family servants of Graf Thun who owns it and keeps it merely for the amusement of the thing, so the small fees cannot find their way into his pockets. What most struck me, after the lovely view from the tower was the sight of a circular wooden cover over a hole in the tower floor, which I took to be an old well, in case of siege prudently placed in the castle. The Fraulein lit a lantern which she lowered with a rope some thirty-five feet when it struck the bottom. “A well, I suppose”, said I “Nein, das a bin jajanguing”, was the
answer. “When the castle was cleaned in 1828, there was found in the horrible hole barely a yard in diameter, a great pile of bones to which Christian burial was given *en masse*. It was the custom to let the prisoner down with a simple loop under the arms, and if he clung to the rope to poor boiling water on him to relieve his excitement and make him feel that the cord was needed for the next prisoner or the first poacher caught in the neighbouring woods.

Tyrol is simply dotted with castles, of which this must have been in its day one of the most important. It contains a chapel with a little grated balcony, like the box in the old Queen’s hall, for the ladies who gathered there to hear the mass or the recantation of a timid enthusiast; a huge barrack-room; suite of apartment filled with carving in wood; and cells in the lowest depths, jam deep in the solid rock of the hill, up from which to the hall of justice lead a flight of solid stones steps, one hundred and ninety-two in number. In the middle of all this stern terror is an idyllic spot, a garden all overrun with wet bramble and weed, but still lovely. Far away in the sweetest corner peeping out over the vertical cliff stands a decayed arbour, which give one as romantic a view over the valley as can be seen off the operatic stage. Think of the scenes enacted there!

> “Dans cet antre, où la mousse a recouvert la dalle,  
> Venait les yeux baissés et le sein palpitant,  
> Ou la belle Caussade, ou la belle Candale,  
> Qui, d’un royal amant conquête féodale,  
> En entrant disait, Sire et Louis en sortant.”

During which time some medieval cherubim was entertaining her highness or her Grace, in the way of pages. “Il chiffonnait sa souveraine” in spite of her ruff and wimples.

I bade goodbye to my entertaining guide and offered her a golden - about forty cents for the trouble and information. Considering that she had talked steadily for about three quarters of an hour, had toiled up mounds of masonry and countless steps, it was modest enough as a return. To my surprise she exclaimed; “Ach! das itch doch zu vil”, and had to be prevailed on through the mildest of entreaties and the strongest of argument finally to accept it. Truly, the Tyrol is still unspoilt and simple. Never before have I been refused in the matter of tips; and never since indeed, this much vexed question. “How much or how little?” is one of the greatest drawbacks to European travel. Europeans are them selves inveterate tippers. They show, however, a most ungenerous reluctance to explain the principles of their method. It cannot be because they feel a sort of solidarity with the varletly of their own continent in liking to see the strangers exploited. More probably it comes from their having no principle at all in the matter, except that of trying to make the tips as small as possible without producing an explosion. Hence the generous foreign man is bled to the ultimate drop of his ruddy gold.

Cheered by the incident and the reflection it excited, I followed the valley till it narrowed to the famous Pass Lung. Its width here cannot be more than a few hundred yards; and then on either side rise the mountains, rather lower than before but so precipitous that you look up involuntarily now and then at the great trees over hanging and wonder whether
you will not be flattened to a soft mush under one of their giant trunks before you leave
the valley. The Salzach disappears at this point and goes thundering down into a great
cavern, coming out a few furlongs below in the wildest gorge whose jagged rocks card it
into foam. So much of mere loco-description work is done in guide books and others
writings eijusdem farinae that I don’t mean to attempt it here. But the man who, in spite of
Carlyle’s unmerited contempt, is candidly, as I was, a “view hunter” will find here all that
his secret soul can wish. And only think of it! High up on a side of this romantic gorge is
a perfectly accessible dismantled fortress, with guard-rooms and casemates that you can
crawl in and out of without any hindrance, slipping over mossy stones, and startling
lizards and bats galore. A dozen men with ammunition could defend that valley against
the thousand; and what fun it would be! A royal game of ten pines, whereof the pines are
men, who topple down into the surging river at the merest touch of a musket ball; and the
swirling water carries them in to a dark hole, yawning like Acheron, to issue in shreds
much lower down. By a curious combination of circumstances quite premeditated on my
part I met here an actor, a paper-merchant, and a goat. The men were together; the goat,
alone, and was so far as I could see, autonomous. He was more than comfortably
demonstrating in his proffered caresses; feeling sure of his own footing over the small
bridges that spanned the river, on the rocky paths that followed its windings, he trotted
along with me, keeping judiciously inside and mildly remonstrating with a butt when I
paid more attention to the wild beauty of the scene than to his exhilaration with the end of
my stick scratching his sleek back. He was a less malodorous goat than I have hitherto
been familiar with—at smelling distance—but I was much relieved at his suddenly
bounding across the narrow fissure in the rock over one arm of the divided stream, and
going off to seek a more sympathetic tourist. It is said that Andreas Hofer and his
companion rolled boulders on Napoleon’s army as they marched through the pass
towards Italy. A few judiciously trained goats might have done the business more
artistically. For one thing, however, I can thank my deodorised goat; he proved with rapid
experiment the proverbial vivacity of his kind by gladly drowning in a meditative but
appreciative mood the cold stump of a cigar that dropped from my hand.

The actor and the paper-merchant, both Austrian from Gratz, soon became my travelling
companions. The foreman was intensely amusing with snatches from the German version
of the The Nubian, La Grande Duchesse, and other operettas of the same colours. Like
most successful comedians, he was off the stage, serious—almost demurely so; and
preferred to discuss the state of politics in Europe or the future of the American
democratic experiment to trading the bonds or posting in the green Room. To judge from
him and his friend, who was an excellent fellow, the Austrians must be a charming
people, with more friendliness than the average German, they have quite as much chat
and appear less ready to crack up what they consider the strong point of their own
country. One thing, however, does stir the spite of a genuine Austrian and that is the very
general neglect of Vienna as a general tourist resort. I forget all the attractions these
enthusiastic men poured out before me; the only one I can remember is that the
Ringstrasse within the distance of half a mile contains buildings that have cost more than
any group of edifices within the same radius in Europe. “Unfortunately”, said the actor,
“we Austrians don’t understand advertising; besides, we are too proud. Paris and Berlin
understand the art, and are consequently crowded with strangers throughout the year”. All
the facts here stated may be doubted: but these sweeping assertive show how ready continental people are, almost without exception, to a mass this proved generalisation and to deduce from them any number of extremely shaking inferences. I don’t deny that the same tendency may be found elsewhere; but among Europeans it bears signs of systematic, if unphilosophical method.

Together we reached the little town of Golling, once a famous station for post horses over the pass, now only a collection of houses with the unfailing castle. The railway from here to Salzburg is quiet enough, as contrasted with the splendid hills it has come through; and soon Salzburg itself, with its fortress crowned rocks, comes into view. Humboldt calls it the fourth town of Europe for situation, placing it after Constantinople, Naples, and Lisbon. To give any idea of its perfectly exquisite beauty, as we gazed on it from the K (so called from this monastery that tops it, now turned into a pot house) would weary you. Put together has the most fantastic bits you can recollect from the most romantic hits operas you know, and touch them up with the glow of a sunny evening in June; this alone can give you an idea with the place of its medieval castle, its churches after the model of St-Peter’s, its rows of stately Italian-looking houses, and its parks on the top of rocky hills with vertical sides, and its pretty villas.

After a comfortable dinner in a curious restaurant called the Peterskeller which has no roof and one side of which is the bare rock below the castle-wall (and where by the huge, I got the additional refreshment of a Russian and his wife from Lunberg – the latter possessing all the attractiveness of her race in a pair of fiery eyes and a superb figure) I went quickly to rest in the Hotel Stein, rather tired but convinced that for the man who will take his knapsack on his back and speak the language of the country he travels in, some of the pages of the Wilhelm Meister can be rewritten and re-read in the light of a charming personal experience.

Paul T. Lafleur
Why write about Hell? For my own part I should prefer “Tommy” as a subject. I know as little of the one as of the other; and with the latter at all events there are no grue some me association, no recollection of the days when one sat, a trembling youngster, under the roaring of some Boaveges, who, bathed in perspiration, warmed up with the fire of his own ghastly pictures, held all imaginable and unimaginable horrors in terrorism, over the poor little devils who told a white lie, robbed an orchard, or forgot to say their prayers. Besides, when one has, like most sensible men of today, shaken off the red hot fetters of that hideous dogma, there can be neither gain nor interest in the discussion; and as for those who retain some shreds of logic in religious belief, and cling to the old faith without quibbling over figurative interpretation of the word “hell”, or logomachies over the true meaning of DICIOVI OST why, for them something more than speculative information may come some day, directly or vicariously. It is still a popular belief supported on quasi-theological grounds, that the blessed sheep one of the tidbits of heavenly de light will be to watch as in a sort of gloried infernal Alhambra the unfortunate goats disporting th emselves in pools of burning warly, or, as the Salvation Army rhyme hath it “Skating upon the sulphur lake”.

The most vivid and condensed description of the conventional hell of Christian theology till very recent times, in fact till this day of rather flabby universal philanthropy, is to be found in Buckle, vol. III, ch.4. – Allow me a short extract “The clergy… declared that all mankind, a very small portion only excepted, were doomed to eternal misery. And when they came to describe what that misery was, their dark imaginations revelled and gloated at the prospect. In the pictures which they drew, they reproduced and heighten the barbarous imagery of a barbarous age. They de lighted in telling their hearers, that they would be roasted in great fires and hung up by their tongues. They were to be lashed with scorpions, and see their companions writhing and howling around them. They were to be thrown into boiling oil and scalding lead. A river of fire and brimstone, broader than the earth was prepared for them; in that they were to be immersed, their bones, their lungs and their liver, were to be, but never consumed. At the same time worms were to prey upon them; and while these were gnawing at their bodies, they were to be surrounded by devils, mocking and making pastime of their pains. Such were the first stages of suffering, and they were only the first. For the torture, beside being unceasing, was to become gradually worse. So refined was the cruelty, that one hell was succeeded by another; and lest the sufferers should grow callow, he was after a time moved on, that the torment should not fall on the sense, but should be varied in its character, as well as eternal in its duration… Ample, however, as the arrangements were, they were insufficient; and hell, not being big enough to contain the countless victims incessantly poured into it, had in these latter days been enlarged. There was now sufficient room. But in that vast expanse there was no void, for the whole of it reverberates with the shrieks and yells of undying agony. They rent the air with horrid sound, and amid their pause other scenes occurred, if possible still more excruciating. Loud reproaches filled the ear, children reproaching their parents, and servants reproaching their masters. Then indeed terror was ripe and abounded on every side. For while the child cursed his father, the father consumed by
remorse felt his own guilt; and both children and fathers made hell echo with their piercing screams, writhing in convulsive agony at the torment which they suffered and knowing that other torments more grievous still were reserved for them. Jonathan Edwards sweetly emphasises the duration element in the picture “you when damned will know certainly that you must wear out long ages millions of millions of ages in wrestling and conflicting with this Almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains”.

These two quotations, which are types of many others, show clearly enough the essential elements of the orthodox belief in hell – what a logician might pedantically call its difference, namely the combined ideas of torture and perpetuity. Now with the origin and historical evolution of their gentle beliefs we need not concern ourselves. Some trace it to the dualistic system of philosophy among the Persians, others to this or that form of primitive belief. The peculiar forms of suffering are obviously moulded by the prevailing tendencies of thought in the age where the belief exists; as human punishments lose their coarseness, the mind learns to turn in disgust from the loathsome fancies of a ruder time; but, whether so modified or not, the principle remains at bottom the same and unchangeable - that for wrong done on earth nothing can atone except an eternity of the worse unimaginable pain.

Now it requires no tour de force of logic to show that given certain dates, without which Christianity ceases to be Christianity (that is, a coherent system of theological doctrine), the belief in hell is a logical necessity; and this too whether one adopts the ethical position of free will, or turns with Calvin to the belief in necessity. For, if on the one hand man, being born free to choose between right and wrong, deliberately prefers evil and defies his maker, nothing short of eternal vengeance can satisfy the eternal sense of justice that calls aloud against him. And on the other hand if necessity rules the fate of human beings, where can one find the man so bold as to reproach the maker for having made some vassals to honour and others to dishonour? In the latter case, men are simply worms, clay, or dust in his hands, according to the cheering metaphors of the pulpit. It was this position, which the acute logicians of the Church of Rome so clearly saw, that made them turn to the idea of purgatory as a relief from the revolting consequences of the dilemma - a dogma, however, which, as ecclesiastical history clearly shows, was not arrived at without much wrangling in volumes and councils. Here at all events is a touch of humanity which the Calvinistic school of theologians might well have imitated. The men of our own day, except a few clerical perruques, either refuse to entertain the idea at all or simply eviscerate their theology by deliberately removing the offending clause, although the ruse de guerre deceives no one who gives the situation a moment’s thoughtful attention. “Eviscerate theology” says one “it seems to me more like putting bowels of mercy into it?” Precise ly so, if you prefer the figure; but theology as a system does not admit of mercy at all to affect the rigour of its conclusion. It is but a wretched makeshift to shirk the consequences of one’s death by declining to see them when they stare one in the face. It is this that vitiated the so called “liberal theology” of today, a teaching which while deliberately blinking unwelcome propositions attempts to form the new and fermenting wind of modern thought in to the skins of desiccated creed. Do you
care to hear how it sounds, stopped of .....theological solemn trappings or the count of
the pulpit?

It is simply optimism sung by Béranger with a truly bourgeois ring;

Il est un Dieu; devant lui je m’incline,
Pauvre et content, sans lui demander rien.
De l’univers observant la machine,
J’y vois du mal et n’aime que le bien.
Mais le plaisir à ma philosophie
Révèle assez des cieux intelligents.
Le verre en main, gaiement je me confie
Au Dieu des bonnes gens.

Wherein does this Bacchic profession of faith differ, as regards the principle of its
inspiration, from the chirpy optimism of many of our modern apostles this or even from
knowing of poetical burst out of the lips of Pippa?

“The year’s at the spring
And day’s at the morn;
Morning’s at seven;
The hill-sides dew-pearled;
The lark’s on the wing;
The snail’s on the thorn;
God’s in his Heaven?
All’s right with the world!”

Fathering the old dogma is equally unsatisfactory to the thinking mind. If the ideas are
not contradictory I may say that the sight of a conclave of diviners in New York gravely,
settling for Jehovah whom he shall damn and who he shall not damn, is as melancholy a
farce as any ever played in the much bemocked church councils of the middle ages; in the
latter at all event, the deduction from the assumption of a deviously instituted authority
was sound enough. The nature of this discussion is sufficiently indicated in the following
clip cut from one of last week’s newspapers;

**Doctrine of Electon**

New York, Jan 21. The General Assembly committee on the Revision of
Faith made good progress yesterday in revising confession of faith in accordance
with the recommendation of various Presbyteries. The doctrine of infant
damnation was eliminated by the adoption of the following substitute for the
Chapter XIII section 3 which now reads; - Infants dying in infancy, and all other
persons who are not guilty of actual transgression, are included in the election of
grace and are saved and regenerated by Christ, through the Spirit who worketh at
when and where and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are
not outwardly called for the ministry of the Word
Considered as the natural development of one of our strongest moral emotions, namely the sense of justice, this belief of an eternity of pain seems now to have a certain reason for existence. We are all optimists in desire, if not in belief, but who can preserve belief in optimism as the rule of human affairs, when he dares to look facts in the face? Without going so far as Schopenhauer, who in a fit of rancour declared that “the world viewed from the aesthetic side appears to one a cabinet of caricatures; from the intellectual side, a madhouse, and from the moral side a harbouring place for rascals”, one is forced to admit the presence all around one of evil and suffering perfectly inexplicable except under the hypothesis that nature, or nature’s maker, has been guilty of extraordinary bungling; if these are but the necessary consequences of the moral and physical constitution of the universe, the indignant cry arises from all thinking humanity. “Why then are the gods so cruel?” Protest or wail, call it what you will, the echo of this comes ringing down through the century like the cry of a lost Spirit. From Job to Euripides, from Solomon to Jesus of Nazareth, from St Augustine to Tennyson, sigh and dwell the long lament Eloï, Eloï, Lama Sabachtani”. The outraged sense of human justice either asserts itself in violent doctrines, or sinks with the Buddhist into impotent despair, when confronted with the dismal prospect; and the Christian systems of theology, drawn not indeed from the alleged sacred records but out of the fullness of the purely human heart, and built on this emotional basis with a stately superstructure of reason, are only some of the many forms devised by man to soften the inflexible facts. The sight of moral evil especially in what stirs the indignation, is only one of the many characteristics of a century that will so aptly be described as “an age of weak belief”.

Mere pangs corrode and consume,
Dead when life dies in the brain;
In the infinite spirit is room
For the pulse of an infinite pain.

And a theology that finds no room among its teachings for a dogma meeting out to such moral monsters as these any punishment worse than the remorse of a conscience who does not exist to this world as a speedy annihilation is the next, has no right to arrogate to itself the dignity of a religion, for it is not even a system of sound ethics. Perhaps, however, this moral fantasy is only one among the many characteristics of a century that will so aptly described as “an age of weak belief”.

Paul T. Lafleur
Trial

But few people are not familiar with one of Thackeray’s charming “Roundabout Papers”, entitled Thorn in the cushion; the cushion in question being that placed in the editorial chain once occupied by the bulky novelist, and the paper having been written for the purpose of telling an envious public that far from being stuffed with rose leaves alone the pad often contained spines which made the editor shrink from sitting in his fauteuil or indeed anywhere else for a time. The particular pea in Thackery’s shoe was that any poor people made either frantic or piteous appeals to his editorial heart for the admission for trifling verses or diluted essays to the pages of the Cornhill Magazine – with a matter of course the expectation of a speedy answer and payment. To such requests most editors grow in time as callous as a Rotten Row flâneur to the importunities of rose and match hawkers in Piccadilly, especially as the compositions are worthless, while matches and roses (usually the last, like Horace’s flowers, scrae morantis) have a definite market value. Apparently it does not cost the average editor a very lasting pang to blight your poetry darling of the grove – or ruin; but Thackery not being made of that sterner stuff felt keenly the disappointment his duty made him inflict; and if there is one thing more pathetic than the letters he received, it is the letters that he sometimes wrote and above all this obsecratio ad populum in which he takes the reader down into the depths of his big throbbing heart and shews him its raw and aching spots. Still, it must be admitted that the assumption of editorial functions implies editorial duties – and emoluments; now is it to be wondered at that the making of a magazine-omelette should at times demand the rejection of a very addled literary egg. It is hard on the hen that laid it, but why did she cackle and draw attention to it?

All this, however, is only by way of introduction to a phase of this sort of thing which may never have come under the motive of some of the members of The Pen and Pencil Club. Others no doubt have occasionally been called on to pronounce quasi-editorial verdicts on verses, essays, tales, pictures, and other amateurish productions by their friends; and for my own part, delicate as though the task is, it is one that I always have undertaken, and always will undertake gladly for anyone of my friends. But; establish in any way the flimsiest, babble(bubble) reputation for knowledge of letters, science, or art; occupy the humblest of academic position; and it is odds but you will be pestered at fairly frequent intervals to pronounce in a semiofficial way upon the character of inchoate productions of absolute strangers. These free-lances of learning, who generally come from an imperfectly educated milieu, are psychologically curious. Interesting, no; there is far too much sameness in the type, and in the method of procedure. As a rule, a bulky parcel of manuscript, unpaged and hand written, is left at your door with a letter begging your candid opinion of the merit of the performance; or an obscure friend of the equally obscure author calls at some unearthly hour to crave your interest in the newly born poet, novelist, dramatist, system-maker, theologians. Probably the best account of one species of this bug or burglar of authorship is that contained in the late Professor De Morgan’s amusing book called “A Budget of Paradoxes”. The men who for any years besieged him with applications of this sort were of the tribe of circle-squares. Now, the squaring of the circle has a peculiar fascination for the mathematical soloist; and the impossibility of the problem cannot be demonstrated to anyone who has not a very fairly cultivated
mathematical talent. Each circle-squarer is a nervous maniac with individual symptoms, but they are unanimous in one point – they blackguard up and down, in private and in public, any mathematician who declines to answer them. There was one of this tribe in Montreal not many years ago – a Mr John Harris, who lately died in England. His pseudonym was Kuklos; and as he had plenty of means, he saw nothing better to do with them than to pay for costly editions of his works, with neatly engraved photos wherein he hewed in pieces all the troubles of mathematics worked out by such insignificant men as Archimedes, Deshid, and Newton, not to speak of Descartes and Laplace. He even went so far as to attack the professor of mathematics, in McGill College for refusing himself the relaxation of perusing these books; he wrote to the newspapers; and finally made a desperate appeal to the governors of that institution to compel the said professor to read the books, and in the event of his declining to eject him for contumacy. I trust you will now pardon the egotism of a personal experience. Some eighteen months ago, I was roused from sleep by an early morning caller who turned out to be the emissary of a totally unknown writer – a young woman – and who asked me to read with care a precious manuscript that was only waiting for the judgment of a competent literary critic to be submitted to the publisher. The compliment, be it said, was the sap with which my anticipated objection to doing this kind of thing for an entire stranger was to be overcome. As Dogberry says, we are all human. The presence of the inflemous youth (who was probably the girl’s suitor) disarmed me; had the manuscript come with a letter, it would promptly have gone back without one. Well, this thing turned out to be the most common-place literary embryo I ever cast eyes on. The scene was in the Hindoo Kozh mountains somewhere about five hundred BC, and the hero was some incarnation of the primitive Brahmanical longing for the unattainable. Red-coated English soldiers also played a part in this – I cannot call it a story for it had neither beginning, end, nor plot. The writer had a singular trick of bursting with fitful metre when under the stress of emotion, a metre marked by a single original trait; it was at times regular – accidentally. In answering, I remembered Holme’s advice about dealing with women; “Bien qu’elle soit solidement montée, il faut ne pas brutaliser la machine”, and the oaths were suggested rather than expressed. But the advice to the author to adopt either prose or verse as a vehicle for thought, to be less eager for publicity, and to read more before venturing into the field of historical fiction and mystical philosophy, was received with manifest disapprobation. The writer I have never seen; but I have heard from her. It will be readily understood that if such can be the experience of an unknown man in a provincial town, professional authors in crowded cities must be often exposed to similar attacks. The gentler and kinder an author is known to be, the more will he suffer from these importunities. Longfellow was hounded by them, and took his duty bravely; every morning his table was laden with missives of this sort. Hay’s house in the Avenue d’Iéna was the Mecca for many poetaster who anticipated his pilgrimage with a literary visiting card in the shape of a volume of verse, upon which l’Illustre Maître was expected to pronounce judgement.

You see where the “trial” comes in, do you not? The opinion, unpaid for, is requested; and if unfavourable to the tips, is sniffed at, openly scorned, or refuted with the most abusive insults that the suckling bard can find in the Roget’s Thesaurus of English words. When a man goes to a lawyer, a physician, or any other gender of a man special training in
quest of opinion on his case, he pays his shot like a man, or is at last expected to do so. The expert in salvation, it is true, operates without special heed for each soul; eternal life insurance pays no policy, and calls for no payment in this world. It is only in erratic sects that souls are saved at so much a dozen. But why must students of special artistic literary, or scientific knowledge be expected to give the laborious attained results of their study for nothing, and be treated with every contumely for so doing?

The only ground on which this attitude of beginners appears, in my eyes, to stand is, that person appealed to his only delivering himself of an obten dictum which another critic might at once set aside. There is no doctrine of critical caucus; the judge has no authoritative body of law to fall back upon; and consequently his opinion is a personal affair – to be met with personalities.

Between the editor and his uninvited contributor relations are now pretty generally understood to be on a strictly commercial basis. “Have my poem, tale, essay?” says the writer. “Don’t want it; my readers don’t want it.” Answers the editor on a decisive, if polite, printed form; and in most cases that is the end of the colloquy. But there is certainly a lack of knowledge concerning what my former professor of ethics called “The mission work of life” in requesting a complete stranger’s opinion on a work from which the author expects to reap buckets of money, never to hint at any form of return, and pour out vials of wrath, floods of vituperative epithets upon him, because he has dared to say politely what he deemed to be a very patent truth.

Paul T. Lafleur
Illusion

Three familiar words in English, all bearing on mental self-deception, are on the one hand commonly taken to be synonymous, and on the other much too sharply distinguished from one another. These are illusion, hallucination, and delusion. Of the confusion that arises from their being looked upon as equivalents for one another and their frequent misuse, I need say nothing; but it may be worth while to spend a moment or two in attempting to shew that, though delusion is clear enough in meaning when correctly employed, the boundary line between illusion and hallucination is neither so fixed nor so sharp as many with pretensions to psychological accuracy might suppose. Delusion is simply an error as regards matters of fact, of opinion, and occurrence. Much of the so-called historical knowledge we possess is delusive; and many a historian, by reading into documents what his imagination has suggested rather than what his judgement ought to have inferred, creates for himself, and his students delusion as complete, in some cases, as any found outside of Bedlam. The example of the Reverend J.S.C. Abbott on Napoleon is too familiar to be insisted on; but I may cite a recent case of a peculiarly destroyed one, the life of Columbus by Lamartine. Mr. Justin Winsor has lately shewn with much force that the character there given to Columbus is as thorough a delusion as that with which Lamartine glorified the Italian maiden Graziella. The most common form of delusion, which is closely allied to a wide-spread type of insanity, consists in misinterpreting the attitude of relatives, friends, acquaintances, or the world at large towards oneself. The tendency to put, as Kipling says, “too much Ego into one’s Cosmos”, leads the unsuccessful to believe that the world has conspired to ruin them; the sensitive, that everyone despises and wishes to send them; the powerful, that cabals are forming to depose or thwart them. The most complete delusion I have ever met with in this connection was that of Jean Jacques Rousseau. At a given point in his Confessions, the whole tone of the narrative changes. The account ceases to be interesting, except from a pathological point of view, for the reader feels that he has before him nothing more than the ravings of a maniac, who saw in the most trivial actions of all his acquaintances a deliberate intention of destroying the peace of mind and the intellectual effort of the genius, Jean Jacques. A casual visit to a lunatic asylum will prove to anyone, that such delusions, whether mild or acute, are among the commonest of mental diseases. They are also among the most tenacious, for being traceable to the influence of imagination, and apparently coming from some hidden region of the brain, quite in accessible to examination except post mortem, they cannot be treated except psychologically; and as the whole psychological machine is out of gear anything is apt to make it work worse than ever. There is, I have been told, no more persistent disease than l’idée fixe.

Now for illusion and hallucination. A too hasty judgment is apt to fall into the error of accepting the distinction drawn in many text-books, namely that illusion is a misinterpretation of some impression of sense, or false perception, while hallucination is the result of a disordered imagination which pictures objects, when no objects are there to act upon the senses. Putting it otherwise and a trifle more technically, illusion is partly objective and partly subjective, while hallucination is wholly subjective. Now there can be no doubt that the simplest illusion contrasted with the most complete hallucination
will support this view. For example, a very simple illusion is that which interprets a number of black lines on paper into the idea of a solid body, making of the following diagram at will a picture frame, a truncated pyramid, or a receding passage-way. Nothing at first glance appears to connect so primary and almost voluntary a deception from the visions of Socrates, Mahomet, Luther, or Swedenborg, in which, so far as biographical testimony can shew, nothing but direct suggesti on of the imagination can have operated toward the extraordinary result. All these were brains diseased, or at least abnormal in these action; and many would take them as pathological subjects, and allow psychology to deal with the first example alone. Before trying to shew their inner connection, a tie which proves clearly that there is no more break in the action of the human mind than in any other organism of nature, but that mental phenomena merge into one another by almost imperceptible degrees, we may touch up on the fact that every sense is capable of giving us impressions that the mind distorts. If you will but consult your recollections you will find that the skin, the ear, the nose, the tongue and palate, and so forth, have at various times sent messages which you afterward discovered had been read upside down, or from right to left, when they should have been read right side up or from left to right. A crackling in a dark bedroom may sound like a distant revolver shot; a faint smell presents itself to consciousness as a noisome stench; a hollow tooth, or the gap that it formerly filled, falls like a cavern of Dante’s hell. The reason why illusions of sight, especially as regards colour and distance are so common is probably that we use sight much more than any other sense, and do not stop to think how much its impressions are aided by touch, the muscular sense, and the experience accumulated in our mind from the day we first clutched at the moon. An excellent literary example of this, is found in Crawford’s “Mr Isaacs”, where it is said that no one on seeing the Himalayas for the first time fully appreciates the stupendous scale on which they are constructed. A little rill turns out on closer inspection to be a roaring mountain river; a patch of snow suddenly transmutes itself into a glacier many acres in area; and what looked like a clump of waving bushes is finally seen as a magnificent virgin forest. It is on similar principles that one in a general, and often even in a detailed way, can explain the constant illusion of the arts of design and picture; facts which ought to teach the mere dilettante to the greatest in actions expressing opinions as to perspective, correctness of drawing and colours unless he has submitted with laborious discipline implied in the successful practice of this as of any other art. Bear with me please for pointing my dictum with an hypothetical example. Sitting at a café in Fontainebleau with our friend and fellow member Hopes, on a fine July afternoon of last year. I happened to see at a neighbouring table a cyclist who was sitting in the shadow of a house, but beyond whom the trunk of a larger chestnut was brilliantly gilded by the sun’s rays. I just previously have uttered some of the lips opinion about colours that had stirred hope for he suddenly asked me “What colour is that fellow’s cap?” I at once answered “White” “Not a bit of it said he” for against that background of the yellow tree-trunk it is, and much(m ust) be, positively grey “he was right of course, and I absolutely wrong.

In all such illusions, however, the judgment is in the end triumphs over perception and prejudice but the moment memory and emotion play a pre-eminent part illusion verges on hallucination. The old man, who lives much in the past see the golden age in the days of his youth and “these degenerate times of shame” finds neither art, wordily, nor religion;
for him the age of chivalry is indeed food. The lovers who see Helen’s beauty in a brain of Egypt – is this illusion or hallucination? For remember Balzac’s marvellous tale of “Le Succube” in which the poor old monk, fired by the gypsy’s beauty sees that the long repressed passions of his heyday are mirrored in every phenomenon of nature. “Chevauche, mon chevalier, tout chevauché”. The rest of the evocation has perhaps been referred to by each one for himself. Between such illusion as this and the hallucination of a man with delirium tremens who will undertake to draw the line? When one compares this case with the description of “Janet’s repentance” or in “l’Assomoir” it is not easy to say precisely where the objective element ends and the subjective element begins.

Perhaps, after all, the whole phenomenal world is a colossal illusion. Who can say that even in the competent state of sanity, the common’s caution we receive from the world of real things are not mistranslated all through life by that very mind of which we are so proud that we confidently arrogate to man the exclusive possession of it, and on this ground drain all sorts of conjectured parallels between ourselves and our intangible origin?

In face of this hypothesis, one can but quote Voltaire “mais à quelle fin ce monde a-t-il donc été créé?” demande Candide “pour nous faire enrager” répondit Martin.
Is it a Case of Doubling?

The reviews have been very busy during the last few months over a “movement” – one of those fluctuations in expressed sentiment and literary fashion that lead the Sanguine to hope for a great moral renascence (as they are fond of calling it), and the cynic to shrug his shoulders as he wonders whether the advancing tide will come up far enough, or not, to float his little haunt. Fortunately in this case, the Sanguine onlookers have been many, the half-hearted or the cynical, for one has not to look very far in the work of English critics during the last few years to find that their general attitude toward France almost invariably shows itself as surrounded by a halo of lofty moral complacency.

“France worships lubricity – the great goddess Asselglia”, pompously proclaims Matthew Arnold with the pontifical assurance of a professor; “Paris”, raves the preacher “in his rhetorical climax is a modern Gomorrah” – he ought to know for he has just visited it in…..; “What a nasty book” pipes up Snowflake, putting back the volume of Jyp, “Autour du Mariage”, that she has taken from her brother’s shelves and read on the sly from title page to finish. Now, all these expositions are measured by sensible people for what they are worth. All Arnold’s aplomb in criticism of social matters failed to carry conviction, because his competency outside of pure literature was extremely questionable; Boanverges of any creed must preach sensational sermons from time to time, if only to wake his congregation; while the … -reading girl may not unjustly be suspected of reading some parts of her book more than others, as the fray thumbmarks clearly show. But one must at all events candidly admit that in one aspect the condition of somewhat recent French literature, if not of France itself, has given some reason for this general tone of expression of foreign critics, whether capable or incapable. Far be it from me to maintain in any move than the vaguest way the these that fiction is a picture of contemporary society; there is far too much of mere fashion in such popular literature to justify that position; and fashion in such matters never reaches down to the heart of the living and right-thinking majority who make a nation’s strength. Besides, there have been protests in abundance against the gross caricatures which, for more than fifty years, have misrepresenting the life of French society. Monsieur Jules Simon’s energetic counter blast must still be fresh in your memories.

But no one can deny that from Balzac to Zola, the great majority of French moralist have found their especial pleasure in the study of morbid psychology in the heated atmosphere of cities, where all sorts of monstrosities find their best feeding-ground. It is almost worse then commonplace today to say that the young men of Balzac, those whom we are to look upon as his heroes, are mere moral larvae, who, as they crawl over the steps of his fiction, leave behind them a slimy track. We need but run quickly over in our mind the long list of similar characters from those just mentioned down to Paul Astier in Daudet’s “L’immortel” to see that the prevailing type of Parisian youth is, in fiction at least, by no means a lofty or inspiring one. Looking upon the tone of French fiction as but one of many co-operating causes, we cannot wonder that the very men whose works have tended to foster such sentiments and therefore to cultivate such types, have finally become horrified at what is in part the result of their works as authors. I… of a revulsion in feeling and taste have for some years been struggling into day, but the general attitude of cynicism and persiflage was strong enough to keep them down.
With the appearance of Paul Desjardins “Le Devoir présent” a new spirit comes over the scene. This book, published almost simultaneously with a number of others breathing the same inspiration (Darm esteter, Schuré, Cherbuliez, De Vogüé) is the touch of a young professor of rhetoric in Paris who deems it his duty to organise a league of honest and right-thinking people in France, the weight of whose moral influence must in the end tell upon those thousand who have been following blindly on perverse guides. His main thesis is to set before each one the imperative need of doing that duty, whether humble or lofty, that lies immediately.

In his path, the duty toward which the fringe of his enlightened conscience points with no unmistakable directives. Perhaps the most singular feature of this well-intentioned movement is that it makes no appeal, however distant, to anything in the nature of a creed. Dissociated from church and religion alike, it aims, in a spirit of stoic optimism, at raising the moral level of the community at large through the personal and collective pressure of the minority – the ten righteous – which even the modern Sodom can certainly count written its walls. To fan into a glow that shall warm up the whole of a nation, all the dying embers of a moral feeling upon which the deadening vapours of misdirected or vicious writings have for years been gathering, is indeed a noble purpose, nor can we feel any real surprise that the sympathy of hundreds has already been shown in the most emphatic way by letters, meetings, and much enthusiasm in the newspapers. The movement was evidently ripe.

Without any the least intention of underrating the value of a tendency in which lie endless capabilities for the betterment of what according to many is a sorry state of things, we may fairly enough take into consideration this evening a point or two suggested to me by the reading of copious extracts from the book and of comments manifold.

To say, in the first place, that there is nothing new in Monsieur Desjardins’s ideas is easy enough; but like most easy judgments this contains hardly half a truth. And great moralists from Solomon and Marcus Aurelius to John Stuart Mill have insisted on the inherent dignity of conscience, saying again and again that if man will but take counsel with what he feels in the depth of his soul to be right his actions must lead him along that arduous path which the morally sober alone can firmly tread without fear of the ditch on the one side and the quagmire on the other. Moral precepts are old in deed; and in the abstract scarcely a word of late this can be counted as a gain to the carpers of moral doctrine which Aristotle, once for all, laid down in the Ethics. It is however the privilege of every succeeding moralist to employ these magnificent abstractions, from age to age, as frames for a moral picture of his time. To put it otherwise; the skeleton remains, relatively speaking, unchanged, for only though the slowest of evolution does the ground plan of a system, physical, intellectual, or moral, under those transformations in structure, by gradual cell-building, which in time give it an appearance of increased stability or of decrepitude; while, on the other hand, the softer tissues moulded through the thousand fold influences summed up in the convenient world Zeit Geist, assume in this country or in that, in this decade or the next, a roundness here and a sharpness there, betraying at once to the psychologist the leading characteristics of the day he studies. Now, it is precisely this that Monsieur Desjardins has done. Beginning with a masterly analysis of
the actual conditions of life in France, in most of its striking aspects, he sums up the
causes which have tended to produce the apparent moral enervation, of which so many
signs are obvious to him who looks. The French Revolution, unlike most other analogous
movements in that it was not a mere shuffling of political ends and a new deal, but a
solvent that permeated to every fibre of the nation's life, helped to disintegrate other
ideas than political ones, and among them the moral basis of society; the rapid increase of
scientific, industrial, and commercial activities, the easier means of education and
communication introduced under the new régime, have given to the individual a
heightened sense of his own social importance, a sentiment largely aided by the brilliant
tide of new from all ranks to the summit of the social ladders; while, upon this result, has
been grafted a bastard philosophy, a monstrous marriage of misread Darwinism and
pessimism, which could but result in the exaltation of personal strength, ambition, and
selfishness regardless of those who are trampled under the feet of success. In short, the
imperfectly assimilated products of nineteenth century civilisation appear to one a sort of
social and moral chaos. Now, be it remembered, does Monsieur Desjardins confine his
attention to that one subject, over which the average English Pharisee is so fond of
licking his lips, - the most ticklish of moral subjects, namely, the relations of the sexes.
No, he places clearly before the reader the generally awakened sense of duty, shewing
itself in the thousandfold relations of life, in politics, in trade, in literature, in professions,
in the church. For the regeneration of the people, the one thing mainly wanted is the
readiness of those who know and feel rightly to sacrifice their time, their means, their
pleasures, aye, even their delicate artistic ideal and to lay each one his shoulder to the
moral car, which appears to labour in the mire. New or not, the lesson is timely.

A very obvious remark, will he made - has been made - by more than one Spenserian,
that this is simply a scoring of the sentimental pendulum. All motion even social
evolution, is rhythmical; and, given a certain preponderating influence for a few
generations, the reaction is bound to come sooner or later. How much this may be worth
would be a discussion on which I have for the present neither the time nor the wish to
enter, for it implies the settlement of all the fundamental problems of philosophy. But, if
it be really so and this wave of moral feeling is in time to be followed by a depression,
there we may congratulate ourselves on being upon the rising wave, for such undulations
are not counted by simple lives.

By far the most radical opposition that can be made to any attempt of this sort is by that
very party so markedly overlooked as a rival factor in the scheme - namely, the organised
moraliser of the world and those who still feel the want of a less tangible, more ethereal,
impulse than the mere wish to be useful to mankind. “The mass of mankind”, says
Arnold “have neither force of intellect enough to appreciate moral precepts as ideas, nor
force of character enough to follow these strictly as laws” To the mass of mankind then,
it may be argued, all such preachments are but vain baffling; what they want is a good old
fashioned hell - a sea of burning…. an equally vivid purgatory, and a heaven of coarse
imagery, Je wish or Ge ntile. Well, all this they have been getting for nearly nineteen
hundred years; if they want more, why, there are plenty in the trade to supply them with
these commodities to the End of time. Still there is much to be said in favour of the view
that a purely moral enthusiasm fires only the small band of spirits, too much dispersed
and, also, too much occupied, as a rule, with their own surpassing virtue to do more than nourish themselves in secret on its delight.

Finally, if these really be wanting to the success of this admirable purpose a breath which comes only from an influence commonly described as spiritual, it must be confessed that one more moralist has said his say, and the world cannot stop long to heed him. As one creed after another topples down both in the soul-life of each man and in the collective life of the community, some gaze in silence and blank despair at the ruins of what appeared a plain fabric, others cry aloud that Pan is dead seeking for a new hope which will come only with the coming of the coquecigrues, others again turn to the wrecked … for what plunder they can find; while the very few, amid the crash of systems, remain like the Roman soldiers of old, impassive at the post of duty. To these, however, there is the saddest of all mockery even in the poetical millennium of Shelley;

O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious praise (prize) of blindly-working will!
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend forever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!
Afterwards

There is a very interesting, though enigmatical, picture by Gervex called *Retour du Bal* and representing a scene which is likely to be interpreted by everyone in the vein of his own human or his own experiences rather than through the medium of any general artistic or intellectual principles. Husband and wife – or, as some have it, *un ménage* (not marriage) *de convenance* – still, in full society panoply, are thinking over the events of the last few hours in a sitting room “furnished” as an auctioneer might say “in the best Parisian style of the day”; she, after making a wreck of her ball bouquet, sobs on the bergère, quite regardless of the silks and gauzy draperies probably put on with the certainty of anticipated triumph; he, *ennuyé*, meditatively unbuttoning his gloves, sits by indifferent, and possibly thinking with “Figaro, Ah! femmes! femmes! femmes!” What is the true meaning of this “Afterwards”? Flirtation on one side, impatient jealousy on the other? Have the attractions of the collective *éternel féminin* of a ball-room made him forget his bygone promise to the type, centred in his rib? A scene in the *coupé* on the way home about some trifle of expense or of decorum? Has her gown to take its place in the wardrobe, like the scribbler’s manuscript in the pigeonhole, among the rejected – “bright, but not suited to our column”?. Really, the more I think of the situation, the more it seems to resemble our evening’s subject, by coruscating into endless possibilities of suggestion. We can but too easily

“…Look before and after
and pine for what is not.”

To some of us, however, the afterthoughts of what should have been a gay evening come not laden with the mingled dread and excitement, of the familiar domestic tiff sung in a new key, or set to a new air; they bring often to the self-conscious bachelor the too lucid memory of chances thrown away for saying a neat thing or, worse still, for holding his tongue. George Eliot says somewhere that “Half the sorrows of women would be averted if they could repress the speech they know to be useless - nay, the speech they have resolved not to utter”. Yes, and many a wakeful night might have been spared the callow youth too. To be haunted by *l’esprit de l’escalier*, as it is called in French, is a form of torture at once keen, lasting, and capable both of infinite variation and of intensified repetition. Remember the first sinking as the vague but voluminous consciousness dawned on the mind of some ething correct that was left unsaid, or some ething ghastly actually blurted out - nervously, jerkily, but with a fatal distinctness of utterance. Then comes the strenuous effort to forget as one wanders from flower to flower in the brilliant rooms, amid the music and the talk – a pleasant pastime, if only it were not interrupted by the periodic surfing of memory on the crest of whose waves perches the mocking goblin, the ghost of a *bêtise* whether spoken or unspoken. That sprite will dog your feet or dance about you as you descend the steps, after flitting around the clothes in the dressing-room where your belongings have been scattered among the chaotic heap that strew its floors, it will come skipping down in the raindrops or perk at you out of the eyes of the man in the moon, as you seek your quiet room; and there again it grins out from every smoke wreath of your lonely pipe, and in the haze of tobacco and recollection begin to take on the larger proportions that make of it the *innless (numbness)* of those singularly lucid
moments preceding the troubled dreams to follow. Nay more; those dreams themselves will be haunted by a gigantic but nameless presence of something amiss – the social world of dreamland is all out of kilter –; and the events of a comparatively innocent past life seem perversely to focus themselves about an incident of a few moments back with an insistence that rends its strange blinding and the unfathomable more painful than any merely physical wrench. In the magnifying and distorting medium of the atmosphere of sleep the germ, the notes, of waking consciousness have bloated themselves out to a bigness frustrating all our commonplace ideas of space; proportions they have none, for standards are all astray, two straight lines do, without surprising us, enclose a space, and the part is infinitely greater than the whole. For this one moment, whose importance swells and contrasts, with the fitful phantasmagoria of sleep we seem to have lived; and to annihilate it, or to see the first signs of its evanescent we would willingly die. With a sudden start of full returning consciousness, the monster collapses into the trifling point it really is, and the morbid vanity or self-interest which puffed it out into the nightmare shrinks before the calm judgement of a grey morning and a throbbing head.

But imagine that you had truly died, as you longed to do in the anguish of that dream; do you feel sure that the obliteration of your earthly ego would have meant the vanishing of that miserable memory? For all that we can tell, it may be precisely this form of torture which the imps of the perverse hold in reserve as beautifully adapted to disembodied spirits of a certain order. If the laws of adaptation and selection, which as Darwinians tell us determine the destiny of individual and species here, hold good beyond, we cannot be sure but that a reversal of the order progress may mean, in that region of conjectural shadow, an infinitely protracted declension from the summits that this life has reached – a continuously increasing definiteness of perception with accompanying capacities for pain, and deterioration of the moral qualities through the loss of balance in moral judgement. Picture to yourself a lonely disembodied soul in the spaceless immensity of the future, surrounded by nothing but the definite, though bodiless, wraiths of its own gaucheries, and turning in vain from one to the others for a distraction which none can give, since each one, in the realm of “afterwards”, is but a re-issue, albeit larger, of its former earthly self. Some such a vision as this, it seems to me is meant by the solitary Satan of Dante, seated in the lowest Inferno – an inferno of ice-faced with his own everlasting and stupendous gaucherie of having striven to overcome the inexorable, the inevitable. Beside this, Fitz-gerald’s “shadow of a soul on fire” is a vague weakness.

Paul T. Lafleur
The materials for my paper are so readily accessible to anyone, that I have had some hesitation in deciding to put any of my information and results this evening before the club; but at the risk of thrashing old chaff for some, there may yet be a point or two brought out upon which all the members have not definitely thought, or concerning which there exists nothing like unanimous agreement. The article “Monachism” in the Encyclopaedia Britannica by the Reverend R. F. Littledale, and Milman’s “History of Latin Christianity” are the two sources where I have drawn my facts, most of my ideas, and some of my opinions.

The root-idea, or principle of action, which acts as the inspiration of any monastic movement is, under a variety of aspects, always the same retirement from actual life in search of an ideal life, supposed to be attainable through systematic abnegation of all that makes ordinary social life attractive to the man of the world. This applies not only to the two chief forms in which the spirit has manifested itself in the history of the Christian church, but to all sporadic attempts at social regeneration, whether individual or collective, of which examples will presently be cited in the proper place. The first type is the anchoritic or eremitic type chiefly connected with the history of the Eastern church, which flourished in Egypt and Syria during the first few centuries of the Christian era. In those lands, where a handful of peas or dates and a cup of water are sustenance enough for a day, nothing could be easier for the enthusiast then to retire to some rock-hewn cave of the desert whose entrance was shaded by a palm-tree, and there to live, much like an eastern faquir or lama in endless contemplation of the All-one, the sole pure and ineffable essence, the dojos, or whatever other mystical abstraction the philosophy of the time had instilled with the devotee’s mind as the true object of dread and worship. Everyone remembers the beautiful opening scenes of Kingsley’s “Hypatia,” describing the laura of the Nile with its stern, yet peaceful, inhabitants, from whom the youth wished to part for the purpose of regenerating a wicked world with his preaching. This, however, represents a comparatively advanced stage of development, for even here we have the beginnings of a sort of communistic life, if which the anchoritic existence is, in the beginning almost entirely free. Eremitic exclusion, as Milman says, results from a “sublime selfishness”, that seeks its own future bliss by scheming any of the ordinary temptations that may imperil it. If the selfishness is purely mundane, it may lead, as it did in the case of the half-enthusiast, half-charlatan Henry Thoreau, who lived in complete solitude under a shed built by his own hand or the unfrequent ed shore of Walden Pond—a man of whom it has been said, that he “was bred to no profession; never married; lived alone; never went to church; never voted; refused to pay a tax to the state; ate no flesh, drank no wine, never knew the use of tobacco; had no temptations to fight against, no appetites to passions; refused all invitations, preferred a good Indian to highly cultivated people, and said he would rather go to Oregon than to London”.

This type of monachism Dr. Littledale ascribed chiefly to three causes:
(a) The Oriental love of retirement or asceticism, as seen in the customs of the East, which existed long before Christianity and evidently suggested the outlines of the practice.
(b) The Hebrew’s teaching of the Alexandrian philosophers, whose Neo-Platonic doctrines tended to foster solitude and mystical contemplativeness.
(c) The spirit of authority and discipline inculcated by the system of Roman government.

To these must be added, I think, the natural dread of everyone who cared for his skin of the hideous confusion of the Eastern world and society, constantly subject as they were to decimating war and oppression, from which the only refuge was in simplicity of life remote from the troubled centres of activity. The second, on coenobitic type, which consists in forming communities, living according to a rule that may vary in strictness, find its completed expression in the monasteries of Western Europe, and is to be connected almost entirely with ecclesiastical development in that part of the world. In a purely secular aspect, the ecclesiastical prototype has been copied by scores of socialist communities, such as the Saint Simonens with their phalansteries, the American Shakin community, the experiment of Brook Farm. In this case, as in the former, the basic principle is the same, whether the members seek retirement solely from worldly reasons, or give themselves in addition the blessing of religious auction. Historically considered, the question presents, so far as the East is concerned, little besides confusion, not so much perhaps from the scantiness of material as from the fact that we have but one side of the story— that told by the clerics themselves. We do know, however, that before any movement had been definitely made by the Church, the curious sect of the Essences had begun to gather together apart and seek in quasi-monastic clusters a retreat from trouble and persecution. But as soon as we turn toward the West we find that under the instigation of Jerome who had been a monk of Bethlehem, the spirit spread rapidly, so that from his time (about the middle of the fifth century) the monastic movement advanced with steady stride, broken, as every human movement must be, by halting and even by retrogressions. It was in 528 that Benedict founded the mother-house not only of his order, but of all other orders at Monte Cassino between Rome and Naples. His rule which is still extant, was extremely strict in many respects, but from the admirable knowledge of human nature which it implies (for it contains a singularly politic blend of security and freedom) it must be considered as one of the great triumphs of administrative ability.

As we read the history of this wave of human feeling, making all the while allowance for the extreme partiality of the writers, we cannot but feel inspired at the true nobility that attended at least its rise. Nowhere more forcibly than in Henri Martin’s Histoire de France have the heroic efforts of the monks been described in breaking the ground of Teutonic forest, draining the soil of Flemish marshes, preserving such learning as the world then had, fostering the early signs of art, healing the sick and consoling the dying, and, least of all, opposing the only possible bulwark to the myriad of petty tyrants who were then beginning to oppress the world as the systems of feudalism was forming. They and they alone could cope with so colossal a task. But precisely as the result of their success came their decline, until in the tenth century came perhaps the
deepest point of their corruption. The Crusades fanned the fire by the establishment of the three great military orders of the Templars, the Hospitallers, and the Teutonic Knights, and in the thirteenth century came the men decent order of St Dominic and St-Francis, soon afterward followed by another rhythmical wave of degradation in the fourteenth century, which was justly stemmed by the Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum of Ulrich von Hutten, - a work which has been rightly compared to the Provincial of Pascal.

The last order is, as ever yone knows, that of the Jesuits, who made their first open appearance at the Council of Trent in 1535. From that day to this no order, not even that of the Sulpicians nor of the reformed Trappists, can be said to have either exerted commanding power in the Church, or really drawn the eyes of the world upon itself except by some crushing defeat. To relate even in outline the history of clerical discomfiture would be long and tedious from its very familiarity; but the mere fact that after 1861 no less than 2200 monasteries were dissolved in Italy alone shews clearly enough that in some parts of Europe it was felt that monasticism had, to employ a political phrase, exhausted its mandate. Many of us might think that nearer home such drastic reforms are the only hope for a country dotted with gloomy piles of brick and stone of which the only result seems to be increasing poverty and obscurantism from an unfortunate race.

“The nest was form, and have attendance paid:
They drank and ate, and grudgingly obeyed.
The more they fed, they ravened still for more;
They drained from Dawn, and left Beersheba poor.
He this they had by lain, and some refined.

When once possessed they never quit their claims,
For then the sanctified in Heaven’s light name”.

No one can, it seems, urge any sound reason against the principle of the monkish spirit. Surely the world is worry enough to allow for the expansion of any type, which is not in its nature hostile to the normal evolution of human society; and only fanatics can maintain that the formation of a sm all number of quiet retreats for those whose natures prompt them to shun social and family life and prefer plain living and light thinking will lead to anything but a purifying moral influence when the ascetic occasionally mixes with the material and artificial world of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Lecky, who cannot be accused of any weakness for the systems of medievalism admits in his History of European Morals that in the case of women at all events Protestantism has shown little wisdom in condemning such communities, which would undoubtedly satisfy the longings of many whose vocation does not lie in the very small number of directions left open to women by the restriction of our civilisation.

But even if all this be granted, it seems right to insist that men who thus withdraw from the duty of playing their own manly part in the great world-struggle should have
their path of “sublime selfishness” made as difficult as possible to travel; and that any system permitting such withdrawal of strong areas, if not of willing hearts, from the stripe of existence, should eternally typify in the very sternness of its asceticism the memorable protest of Carlyle against “eating and misdoing”. It must be added, however, that the solid arity that at once springing up among the members of such communities, whatever may have been the individual enthusiasm to begin with, invariably tend, like all natural forces, to degenerate into a blind and selfish energy, against which all clerks except that of an equally blind and selfish intolerance must, as history has too often shewn, prove utterly futile. But the most telling objection against the real unmanliness that underlies a large proportion of such cases of retirement from the share of labour that ought to fall to each one’s lot, and which no ecclesiastical quibbling can blink is in the words of the great worldly philosopher who assuredly cannot have thought that his opinions would be quoted in this connection;—“Many a teacher of those whom we reverence, and who steps out of his carriage up to his carved cathedral place, shakes his lower ruffles over the velvet cushion, and cries out that the whole struggle is an accursed one, and the works of the world are evil. Many a conscience stricken mystic flies from it altogether, and shuts himself out from it within convent walls (real or spiritual) whence he can only look up to the sky, and contemplate the heaven out of which there is no rest, and no good. But the earth where our feet are is the work of the same Power as the immensurable blue garden, in which the future lies into which we could peer. Who ordered toil as the condition of life, ordered weariness, ordered sickness, ordered poverty, failure, success— to this man a foremost place, to the other an ameless struggle with the crowd—what a shameful fall or paralysed limb, or sudden accident to each some work upon the ground he stands on, until he is laid beneath it …

Look and see the sunrise; he sees the labourer on his way a field; the work-girl plying her poor needle; the lawyer at his desk, perhaps; the beauty smiling asleep upon her pillow of down; or the jaded reveler reeling to bed; or the fevered patient tossing on it; or the doctor watching by it over the throes of the mother for the child that is to be born into the world; to be born and to take his part in the suffering and struggling, the tears and laughter, the crime, the remorse, love, folly, sorrow, rest.”
The Slave

More than one of the world’s writers have attempted to describe step by step, the slow enslavement of the drunkard or the hashish (hashes) eater or the opium-smoker. Some of them, notably DeQuincey and Coleridge (not to speak of Charles Lamb’s sad literary prank in the Confession of a Drunkard) have inconsistently been able to draw from the stores of their own inner experience, thus giving to their words a more than usually pathetic ring, which strikes all the more sharply on the ear from its being mingled with the tales that reverberate from a hard and sombre personal knowledge. “Alas! It is with a bitter smile, a laugh of gall and bitterness, that I recall this period of unsuspecting delusion, and how I first became aware of the maelstrom, the false whirlpool, to which I was drawing just when the current was already beyond my strength to shew”. “Oh, may the God to whom I look for mercy through Christ, show mercy on the author of the Confession of an Opium-eater, if, as I have too strong reasons to believe, his book has been the occasion of seducing others into the withering vice through wantonness. From this aggravation I have, I humbly trust, been free, as far as acts of my free will and intention are concerned; even to the Author of that work I pleaded with flowing tears and with an agony of forewarning”. Thus Coleridge. But a far more terrible picture is presented in The Mangeur de Rêves by Catulle Mendès. Ennui, reverses in business, a domestic row, an amourette abruptly broken off, or perhaps a moment of idle experimental curiosity, - and the poor wretch has tasted the drug for the first time. From the first exquisite sense of freedom in the land of wild dreams that its influence has spread out before him, to the constant increase in the dose and the gradually growing intensity of dream-life, down to the disintegration of the body, mind, and conscience – Mendès has rendered all this with a vividness such as Poe himself never surpassed. I shall never forget the horror of the final stage, as described in this sketch, a depiction which it would be literary sacrilege to treat otherwise than in quotations. It is all the more remarkable that this perfect bit of analytical description appeared to be done entirely, as entirely, as the critics say “from the outside”. There is no introspection in it, no projection of the writer’s soul in to that of his subject; it is as though some little lost soul had been laid bare before the artist and dissected with the precision and finish of a brilliant psychological operator. One might have expected such treatment from the eminently objective character of the literary art of Mendes. He is simply shewing us a diseased soul, analyzing its pathological character, detecting the aetiology of the disease, noting the patient’s predisposition, and following point by point the progress of the evil from onfar to onfar, till the whole appeal before us putrid, not with physical but with moral rottenness, and coloured, on rather mottled, with all the loathsome hues of putrescence. Just another human life gone, that is all.

A touch with an .. and a willow,
And a lie carved deep in the stone,
says Mhyte Melville; and perhaps he is right.

Still, what chiefly concerns those who think at all about what our hideous scientific terminology calls “psychopathological specimen” is the inference to be drawn from the “case”; and all the more value is said to lie in such inferences if they can be shewn to have some bearing on that vanity of vanities, dear to moralist and theologians alike, the
conductor of life. It is indeed a simple matter to grind out larger and \textit{widely} platitudes about “the will” enfeebled, the mind enslaved, by habits, which, like fungous growths, overspread the fair face of human nature and turn it into a blot that at some rank to Heaven”. (This choice mixture of metaphors, I need hardly say, was not blended in my own imagination: I quote, as nearly \textit{verbatim} as possible, from a sermon I heard many years ago.) But moralizing is just as easy as getting demoralized – and a great deal cheaper; to think tellingly is much harder than an either, and in the end consumes an appalling quantity of brain-cells. No this club, so far as I know makes no pretensions of discussing either abstract or applied ethics; why should we not give our fancy free play, and put another interpretation on the conduct of men who, deliberately or not, give themselves up to what is commonly called the slavery of a vice, simply because such conduct clashes with the conventional practice of eminently respectable, but dull, society? For, assuredly, to follow consistently the path of vice is imply a practical protest against the tyranny of virtue, pompously enshrined in the rigid structure of the moral law. All law is in its very essence despotic; it admits of no question; however often we may change what lawyers, I believe, call the venue of our side of the case, the inflexible authority faces us, routs us, and bids us be silent. And the professors of every sort of this detestable tyranny are all dogmatists, every one of them. The youth who has had this first delicious sip at the cup of what he imagines to be “free thought” shrieks at the dogmatism of the parson; has it ever struck him that the arithmetician is every bit as dogmatic, and on grounds that appear unquestionable only because they are less complex? The very term “free-thought” is a misnomer, the subtle fallacy of which only the few have succeeded in piercing; when they have done so, they hasten to plug up the hole, and the old deception is used once more \textit{pour rouler le monde} with excellent profit to the player. Why, thought itself is bound, cramped in, by the harshest of all laws, which we can no more deny or break than we can leap out of our own skins. A few ounces, more or less, of white and grey substance that physiologists call “nervous-matter”, because they do not know what it is – a thorough and rather dirty looking substance that thrills in some unaccountable way when it is supplied with a thick red liquid – and for a number of years we go on thinking the same old foolish thoughts doing the same old foolish things, running around the same old eternal vicious circle, just as our parents before us; and each generation thinks itself wiser in its own wisdom than all those that have trodden the path and strewn it with their ashes. Who is the old author who said that “a man who becomes a slave ceases to be a man”? It is simply exchanging one set of fetters for another. And anyone who has ever really felt the weight and coldness of the fetters imposed on every human mind by the condition of consciousness itself, may well ask whether the poor wretch we blame and pity is not silently revolting again the merciless shackles, the common thraldom. During the few brief moments that the beloved poison can give him, he is at least free from the misery of thinking as he must, and not as he will. In that he also not of shadow and light, but of light which is shadow, and shadow which is light, where shade has neither beginning nor end nor middle, where distinction of true present and past and future seem but “shadows of an antenatal dream”, where the very confusion of cause and effect flake out like lucidity therealised, there at last the long pent soul finds relief from the slavery under which it pined, fretting the pigmy body to decay.
And yet, who knows? Perhaps our little specks of individual essence may find themselves after all sorely puzzled in presence of a universe that has no intelligible meaning, and like Byron’s prisoner “refrain their freedom with a sigh”. The riddle that we have in vain tried to read during our little span of life has fallen into the grave with the handful of dust we left there; but a greater, infinitely greater, enigma remains to be read, and this is all the more hopeless that we know it to have no key. And, for all that we can tell, the years of slavery to consciousness spent in writhing impotently against our chains may have left us quite unfit for that existence of unimaginable liberty; like a long caged animal we may again seek our prisons, but they are no longer open to receive us. Frail as we may, having once entered their fatal door, all hope must be forever abandoned. Ah, weary weight of life! What new and more welcome gospel will bring the steadfast assurance of the final happiness of oblivion;

Et toi divine mort, où tout rentre et s’efface
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre et de l’espace
Et rends-nous le repos que la vie a troublé

Paul T. Lafleur
The Bar (Sinister)

There was in the active literary times of the Middle Ages a singular fiction, which seems, so far as I can make out, to present a firmly exact parallel with the modern practice of writing sonnets good, bad, or indifferent on every conceivable and inconceivable subject that can be squeezed into the metrical strait waistcoat of fourteen pentameter verses; I mean the custom of writing what were then called Éloges. There is an enormous library of encomiastic literature, sometimes in verse and sometimes in the loveliest prose. Most of it is in contemporaneous with the work of Rabelais, who has left one or two by no means contemptible specimen of his ingenuity - in this direction in Gargantua and Pantagruel. It is not part of my purpose to discuss this curious literary part in itself; although it presents characteristics at least as interesting as some corresponding ones of later times – the Characters, for instance, such as those of La Bruyère, who found in John Earle another Englishmen, no less than three hundred imitations in England alone; on the last century trick of writing pseudo-foreign letters (Lettres Persanes of Montesquieu, Goldsmith’s Citizen of the World, and a whole host of others). Probably the critics of that time and the professors of rhetoric analysed these laudatory compositions and gave the less odorous ones as models to their class. Needless to say that many of them were of light flavour. Everyone knows that a sure passport to literary popularity in those days was the capacity to produce un livre de haute presse; and considering what kind of books constitute a certain part of our furtive reading today, we may hold ourselves worthy of our distant sires. They, at all events, did not snicker on the sly, as we do, they laughed eagerly, just as they loved and fought.

The subjects of these Éloges are old enough; and the treatment is usually a wild paradox. The seven deadly sins (particularly lust in all its varieties), parts and functions of the human body, noble or ignoble, poverty, riches, dirt, cleanliness, woman, death, illness, and so forth; such are the themes over which the laudable scholastic littérature disported themselves. Many of them, no doubt, are to be traced to the unwhole atmosphere of conventual’s existence, where repressed human passions found this sad vent during the long and hours of solitary musings and study. But in the various lists of such productions, which, for want of the originals, have been my sole authority, I have never seen “L’Éloge du Bâtard et de la Bâtardise”. Even literary charity, which is often more generous in sentiment than strictly practical, has agreed with common opinion, crystallised in the law, to leave these poor devils, who have been born through no fault of theirs on the wrong side of the blanket, inexorably out in the cold. There it is that common speech gives them the tepid comfort of being called “love children”, and that the term “natural son” contrasts very strongly with the expression “enfant du devoir”, the invention of which is, I believe, describable to Balzac. But when babes are waiting for bread (and milk), it is at least as cruel to pelé them with euphemistic names, as to offer them stones. The very anecdotes that form the delight of late hours in the smoking-room show the same feeling. One of the Seven Sages of Greece (to cite one of the oldest of these tales) on seeing a bastard throwing stones in a crowd, bade him take heed lest he by accident hit his father. An Irishman, when asked by a French who had forgotten the word orphan, for the equivalent of “one who had neither father nor mother” promptly answered, “an illegitimate son of a she-dog”. Even Shakespeare himself, whose
rural(rush)-vaunted breadth of human sympathy might have been expected to shew itself in favour of the unjustly disinherited child, gives much problem in giving to the bastard Edmund in King Lear, as vile a character as almost any on his varied stage. And since men will say nothing in his favour, Edmund himself cries out.

“Now gods, stand up for bastard!”

It seems as though Bacon’s words on physical deformities, namely, that the hushees possession of them try by some means to convey themselves and be even with nature, had found an analogy in him who, cheated by social injustice, vindicates his birth right by openly declaring on against social convention and decries. “Whosoever hath anything fixed in his person that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in him self to rescue and deliver him self from scorn”. As to the stigma that attaches to illegitimacy it bears the stamp of injustice, comm on to general judgment passed by social organisation, for it is impressed on the innocent and irresponsible. Society makes the the(sic) natural child suffer for the guilt of its parents, and on the mother is fixed the major part of the blame, in which the father ought, in comm on justice, equally to share. I shall not here enter into the tangled question as to whether in the too frequent antisocial mishaps there has been more persuasion exerted on one side than on the other; the French dictum, which says “Il y en a toujours un qui aime et l’autre qui se laisse aimer”, may or may not be true. But what seems to me essential in any sound view of the question is to remember that the result, the corpus delicti, is visited with a judgment that is only a pitiable makeshift for fairness, which the interests of arrogant society arbitrarily, if not wantonly, impose. Family life, the instinct of absolute do mesticity, which forms the basis of our artificial condition, demands some kind of safeguard; and this is all that human ingenuity has hitherto been able to device. It is clumsy and brutal, if effective enough for ordinary social purpose, but we need not pride ourse selves on having discovered either a perfect remedy or one that chimes with the principles of the simplest justice. This is distinctly a case of jeu between morality and law.

One sometimes hears the singular plea advanced that this is a form of vicarious punishment, making the parents suffer through the disabilities imposed on their offspring. To my mind it is not more than that it is a carrying out of the biblical teaching that visits the sins of parents upon their children. It seems rather to come from the desire to punish some one, any one, f or an antisocial offence, rather than let the sentiment of domestic virtue defied go without its food. In fact it is perfectly echoed in the words of the needy in Bleak House; “Better hang wrong fler than no fler” (Better hang wrong fler than no fler). As to the sufferings felt by the father, at least, in such cases, the easy, half-cynical way in which Gloucester discourses the illegitimacy of Edmund before King Lear is a very fair representation of the average situation. “Let the galled jade wince, my withers are unwrung”. To discuss, generally or particularly, the advant age of being born under the conditions referred to might be an extremely interesting exercise in paradoxical casuistry. For, if society relieves the father of duties and responsibilities towards his natural children by loosening some of the ties of parentage, what becomes of filial duty in case the opportunity should, ever come, for displaying it? The question can only be answered by referring to the opinion of Moor in Schiller’s play of The Robbers and Franz...
Moor was not a natural son. The filius nullis is in a somewhat different position, but what Moor says applies a fortiori to his case. To shake off the yoke of gratitude, affection, and so forth for the unspeakable happiness of having been brought into a world to take one’s small share of joy and one’s larger share of suffering, might be to many a very sensible relief; and if cause for such gratitude and affection were to arise by the unexpected shew of kind treatm ent on the part of a parent, the pleasure of giving these freely would be altogether unmarred by any admixture of the bitter element of duty. It seems to me that Rousseau and the other visionary philosophers of the last century must have had some such idea as this when they exhorted society to return to the state of nature, to seek in purely natural relations the happiness of freedom which any conventionalised form of society renders impossible, unless one tacitly agrees to neglect the conventions and formulas by secretly breaking them. Now, the natural son, is, in the great majority of instances, in precisely this position; for him, indeed, is the world an oyster, which he may open, if he will, or can. Released from the oppressive burden of family affection of respect for family tradition, he owes nothing to society except the harshest return for harsh treatment; and, given any small share of ability he can return contempt for contempt, brutality for brutality; he can meet the selfish collectiveness of his fellows by an equally selfish individualism, of which the profits are entirely his own. And history very clearly shews that to him who will the way is open.

One of the most famous of all the Persian conquerors was Darius’ brother or Ochus, that is the Bastard. The Bonaparte’s have been famous for at least two eminently successful left-handed scions of their race – Comte Walewski and The Duc of Morny. I cannot pretend to make an enumeration of the celebrated men who, born under the unfavourable conditions mentioned, have simply fought down the social prejudice against their origin; but in literature, at all events, the list is surprisingly long and famous. In the last century, Richard Savayr (author of The Castaway) is a brilliant example. In our own day the same thing has been seen (is to be said) in the case of E. C. Grenville-Murray, Edward Fitzgerald, Alexander Thomson, and the late Sir Richard Wallace. In military deeds their prowess has been extraordinary. Not to speak of such men as the famous Duke of Berwick and the late Duke of Munster, almost every one knows that one of the crack regiment of Uhlans in the Prussian army was till quite recently exclusively reserved for the illegitimate sons of North German nobles.

Truly, this noble army of martyrs to a cause that is simply a self assertion of nature against society ought to find a poet strong and willing enough to sing their praises. When, under the enlightened slate of affairs promised us by the more sanguine of Fourierists or Saint-Simonians, we shall have verified the old dictum that it is a wise child that knows his own father or the more pungent epigram that “maternity is a matter of fact while paternity is a matter of opinion”. The silent harass who bore the burden of a accumulated social prejudice during centuries of misguided social arrangements may obtain the just desert in the epic poem of the thirteenth century “La Bâtardise historique – épopée en vingt Charets. (chapitres)”
Ennui

There is an Hebrew proverb, cited by Renan in one of his discourses, which says that « The fathers have eaten of unripe grapes, and the teeth of their children have been set on edge ». Of what pungent fruit must it be that the eager and romantic generation preceding us has eaten, since we find ourselves so constantly in the condition not of listless and apathetic, but irritable, ennui. I know perfectly well that the vanity of our own time prefers to give this disposition the nobler name of Melancholia. There are not wanting critics of to-day’s philosophy- Mr. E. C. Stedman’s last book is a proof of it – who turn our attention to Dürrer’s famous etching and bid us see in it the Renaissance parallel of our hyper-neurotic exhaustion. He calls that solemn figure, seated in solemn dejection among the discarded instruments of her study, “The Muse of Christendom”. He interprets that strange allegory in the conventional way, seeing in her despair a prophecy of what awaits every age whose interests and pursuits have erred by being too purely intellectual. But is he parallel true? Look again at the robust figure in that picture, at its firmly planted legs, at the swelling curve of muscle which even the ample drapery cannot entirely mask. Even the bouncing boy that represents learning might, in the bloom of this healthy little frame, have been brought up for mouths exclusively on Mellini’s Food. No, no; there is nothing anaemic about that pain; they are not suffering from what has been aptly called “Acute Americanitis”. The despair, as it is called, of Dürrer’s superb Melancholy is the despair of solving within the life-time of a single generation the mighty secrets which can be seen glimmering behind the veil at the end of any wishes opened up by all the new sciences and arts which have been revealed by the awakening light of the Revival of Learning. At the first flush of youth and hope, which the dawn of an unfettered era gives to the reviving world, the mind of a generation is like unto that of the boy who has sipped at many fountains during the brief years of his college life, and has felt the rare delight of the first stage of intoxication, exquisite in this case as it is with wine. It’s not till somewhat later that he realises how of all these fairy paths but one at most is open to him to tread; and that is shewn with pitfall; it has no blazing or guideposts; and once having entered, “nolle vestigia retrorsum”; though the way is mostly uphill, it closes behind us as we advance. Just at this point, it would seem to me has Dürrer caught his Muse of the Renaissance. She has not pushed any one of her many investigations to its uttermost limit. She longs to try them all; but the conviction has come upon her, that this is no task for any single mind, or for any single generation. That full rich bound of heart and imagination which spurred all the generous souls of her time has come to its rhythmic halt; but it is not the finiteness of human capacity – that at she has learnt, it is only its limitation by the inexorable condition of terrestrial time. “Give me time”, I fancy I can hear her moan, “and the ineffable riches of discovery are mine and the world’s” I will sail over that seemingly limitless sea, stretched in its inviting stillness below me, but let me try one after another the means that lie now strewn at my feet. Thus, with the aid of all these tools of mine, I shall reach those radiant, still unseen shores, and bring back the evangel of eternal knowledge and truth unto men”.

But, as I have already said, the common tendency in reading the Stupendous symbolism of this figure of Dürrer’s Melancolia is to give to the interpretation a prophetic turn,
But, when we examine closely this solemn figure, and try to wrest from her the secret of her sadness, she remains still obstinately silent. Out of her lips there comes no moan; though dejected, she is firm in her resolve to try all methods; to sound the unplumbed sea, and bring up from its oozy depths the treasure of unseen gold. From the gloom of disenchantment the youthful world of the Renaissance is free. These hangs about it none of the irremediable despair, often so sordidly selfish, of our own time and generation, which has been bequeathed to us by the race of philosophers that took from the world even the ghost of hope mercifully left by the gods at the bottom of Pandora’s urn. For under the all-dissolving criticism of German philosophy, analysing all things and thoughts in its unpoetic crucible, we have learnt to see, as a French poet has told us, “In the universal world of created things nothing but the long birth-throes of an infinite despair”. One after another our ideals have been submitted to microscope or acid; and in every case they have been disintegrated into a few uninteresting elements, which, however, no philosopher has yet succeeded in recombining. Beauty, in whatever art it may shew itself, is but an illusion of sense and imagination; virtue is according to the Darwinian theory, merely the survival of the fittest under exceptional conditions; loss, as explained by the physiologist, is nothing more than the thrill of a ganglion-cell. No wonder that, in the words of Schopenhauer, “In hypochondriacal moments, the world, viewed from the aesthetic side, appears to many a one a cabinet of caricatures; from the intellectual side, a read-house; and from the moral side, a harbouring place for vassals”.

This conviction, which has been the secret of the mighty few—of Plato in some moods, of Pascal often, of Christ during his whole life upon earth—has now become the vulgar property of all, the by-word of cheap newspaper cynicism. And what has been the result? Each one says, if not openly, at least in the solitude of his own soul, that, seeing there can be learnt nothing new under the sun, since faith and country and honour and art and love are but so many empty words, while sensations and emotions are at all events very perceptible states of consciousness; since pleasure and pain are the real things in life; why, let each one buy or snatch as much as he can of the one, and run or slink away from the other. One man finds his sensation in the many-voiced applause of the crowd over a diplomatic trick, or a deal in stocks; another, in the quietest patting on the back of a paid
critic; a third in anybody’s wife but his own; and so on to the end of the list. This spirit of individualism, as it has been called, which seems to me very different from the spirit of humanism, incarnate in Dürer’s Muse of the Renaissance, is to some sadness more than sufficient as solving for them the enigma of life. They eat; they drink; they multiply; and they rot. And this, too, explains the singular development in this century of what is perhaps one of the lowest forms of art—namely, lyric poetry, as expressing the feeling of the poet, without any reference to the world and what it contains besides his all-important ego. I would ask you to consider whether this is not the predominant note in that abundant field of literature which La Nouvelle Héloïse and that stranger book, Obermann, were the first to open up in the last century. We trace the spirit through the Werthers and the Fausts; find it again in the styly heroes of the Byronic type; and with ourselves it is heard in the thin, reedy piping of every poetaster who can spin an ode to his folly, his boredom, or his lust. There is something so enervating, not to say emasculating, in the mood I have attempted to indicate pointing out the order of its psychological progress in the worst literature, that one can hardly wonder at its producing among the highly-strung persons who give way to it, the feeling of ennui, of world weariness, so that even the braver men of our time have now and again felt its numbing grip on intellect and will. The simple fact is that modern thought on the one hand, and modern civilization on the other, the one with its enchanting thoroughness and the other with its innumerable exigencies, are renting entirely on our nerve-fibres and cells. Now, evolution tells us that the brain of man has developed in area and complexity of structure as the race has climbed up the various steps that brought it up—the anthropoid ape to finished man, but the process was comparatively slow. But the enormous acceleration and velocity of modern movements has been too much for us; and if we do not wish to become fathers of a generation even more fin de siècle than ourselves, we must adopt some other motto than that of the telegraph companies. Voltaire tells us “il faut cultiver notre jardin” … may well recommend the undoing of history by a process of what she calls decivilisation. Another is the ubiquitous Dr R. V. Pierce—who prescribes his Pleasant Purgative Pellets. As my own profession is that of official sceptic, all I can say is that the disease is of no consequence to anyone but ourselves.
ART

A subject so wide in its scope and capable of being envisaged from so many different points of view as this proposed of « Art », cannot, it is evident be really discussed in any one of our club papers and hence, in consequence of this impossibility the extreme one-sidedness, the limitations of view in this short essay should meet rather with correction than with refutation. For after all, it is but commonplace to say that the right attitude even of cultivated people toward critical opinions of any sort is marked by a tendency toward absolutism that is quite as intolerant as the absolutism of religion. The most difficult of lesson of all higher in intellectual and aesthetic culture is the learning of true catholic judgement, the realising that in spite of German erudition and patient cobweb spinning there is as yet no such thing as a coherent system of aesthetics. We cannot therefore violate canons of Art, because no universally accepted canons of Art have ever been formulated. And, since I have mentioned the German, allow me a short digression. I am inclined to think that one of the most potent causes of the too general worthlessness of German painting at the present day is to be sought in a fact which it might be difficult positively to prove, but which nevertheless less forces itself on any one who has walked through the galleries of such an exhibition as the annual one in Munich, - namely, that by far the larger majority of the painters appear to have worked from formulae, learned in the course of their training, in stead of giving their subjective inspiration free rein and letting it travel over every point of the canvas. Precisely the same thing is found in recent German literature. How much the excessive militarism and rigidly scientific culture of our generation will have to answer for when the productions of which I speak are weighed in the critical balance of times to be, it hardly behoves us to predict.

But in this respect our day is not peculiar. Everyone knows the almost universal enslavement of artistic opinion in England during the last century, under which the poetry of Gray very nearly died of starvation, much not everyone has read the famous passage of Addison which acquiesces in the enslavement, and before which we can only stand in dismay and pity. "Let anyone reflect on the disposition of mind he finds in himself, at his first entrance the Pantheon at Rome, and how the imagination is filled with something great and amazing; and, at the same time, consider, how little in proportion, he is affected with the inside of a gothic cathedral, though it be five times larger than the other, which can arise from nothing else but the greatness of the manner in the one and the meanness in the other. (Spectator No 41) Nor was the subsequent reaction less positive in its expression.

The Romantic School in France with its worship of the Middle Ages, all the more absurd that it rested on the slenderest possible foundation of historical knowledge, could see nothing in the moderation that inspires the classical spirit, and from which it obtains the most artistic attributes of dignity and reserve. The following passage, though satirical, is no unfair caricature of the average opinion in the rank and file of that stormy time.
“Qu’est-ce à dire, et retomberions-nous dans l’art grec? M’a-t-on tendu un piège? Monsieur Paturot, ajoute l’architecte chevelu en se levant, si vous avez cru trouver en moi un instrument docile de la ligne droite, un singe de Vignole, de Mansard et de Perrier, un esclave du dorique et du corinthien, un complice de la renaissance, une âme vendue à l’ionien et au toscan, vous vous êtes abusé. Je ne reconnais pas l’architecture grecque, monsieur, je regarde la Madeleine comme un grand catafalque, le Panthéon comme un biscuit de Savoie, la façade du Louvre comme une niche à marionnettes. Je méprise la feuille d’acanthe et la cannelure, les oves et les tympans. Tout cela est mort, très mort, et je ne prostituerais jamais mon encre de Chine à des vieilleries pareilles. C’est bon pour des maçons et des gâcheurs de plâtre. Adieu, Monsieur”. When faced with such conflicting opinions as these, which be it remembered, are expressed by men speaking as those who, for their own time, are supposed to know, we naturally incline to the equally absolute scepticism that proclaims individual taste to be the only criterion whereby the productions of any art are to be judged. Since the worship of system in aesthetic criticism leads to such untenable extremes, why then, let each man follow the bent of his own likes and dislikes, and provided his lungs and his mouth are large enough, he can easily impose his conclusions on the crowd, just as the bellying ranter is sure through persistence to collect a certain following.

“You are a nice set of people” says Dorante in La Critique de l’École des Femmes” with your rule for puzzling the ignorant, which you constantly din in our ears. To hear you talk, one might think that the rules of art are the greatest of mysteries in the world; and nevertheless they are but simple observations made by common sense on what is capable of reducing the pleasure we get from poems of this sort; and the very same kind of common sense that made these observations in former times easily makes them any day unassisted by Horace and Aristotle. I should like to know whether the rule of rules is not to give pleasure, and whether a play that has attained its object has not followed the right path. Do you wish a whole public to be misled in these matters, and to prevent anyone from judging by himself of the enjoyment he feels? …If plays constructed according to rules fail to please, while those that give pleasure neglect all rules, it necessarily follows that the rules are wrong …Do allow us to to(s ic) go genuinely after the things that take hold of us; and let us not search for arguments that interfere with our enjoyment”. This of course is more than a negation of criticism, it is the negation of its possibility. We thus find ourselves placed between the bristling Scylla of conflicting theory on the one hand and the fathomless Charybdis of fluctuating taste or opinion on the other. By far the large majority of those who have some pretensions to culture are perfectly content to remain permanently in this fundamentally absurd position, because it enables them to take refuge behind a body of vaguely apprehended principles, if their personal judgments are challenged; or, if their opponent appeals to authority, to assert their intellectual freedom by proclaiming themselves “independent aesthetes”- artistic mug-wumps in short.

Now, if it were only possible to confine this latter spirit to an oligarchy of intelligence, the outlook for all kinds of art in the immediate future would lose much of its hopelessness, but, not content with making our laws, the multitude insist, through their mouthpieces of the newspaper press, on deciding for us as well as for themselves, not only what we should, but what we shall like. In no direction has this vulgarizing of taste
become more glaring than in that of the stage – at all events in England and America. Here, it might have been supposed, common sense and common experience would assert their rights and vindicate the justness of human nature by supporting dramatic efforts with something to recommend them; and yet the increasing popularity of the “variety-show” and the gradual disappearance from the board of plays in which some measure of respect is still paid to intelligence, shows only too clearly what is to be anticipated if other artists become as contemptibly venal as the playwright and the manager of to-day. Fortunately, it is not from that side that the higher art of the present time is most seriously threatened. The moderation, dignity and reserve of the best artistic effort, to which all cling as to one of the most precious appanages of art when they have fully realised the influence that Greece still retains upon the modern world, have to withstand the invasion not indeed of turbulent democracy, but of an absolutism of theory much more plausible, and also more authoritative than any that has preceded. The plausibility comes from its entire accordance with the mood which the marvellous progress of exact science has aroused in us of the modern world; the authoritativeness finds its support in the exact data that furnish material for the apparently logical deductions which constitute the theory itself. That theory is the theory of Realism or Naturalism. Call it by what name you will; the terminology of a system has for us no pedantic interest whatever.

Now it forms no part of my purpose to dwell on the very obvious fact that so-called realistic or naturalistic productions have existed in all forms, long before the theory was ever proclaimed as an aesthetic doctrine. Types of artistic temperament remain fundamentally the same, simply because they are human types, with which nature plays century after century of the same old game, with an occasional interesting variation. Until it can be shewn that human nature has in the course of ages undergone fundamental, and not merely superficial, transformation, it must remain as an indisputable proposition that methods of thought, aye, forms of artistic inspiration never can change; we only work with other, or perhaps improved material.

But the point on which it seems valuable chiefly to insist is that the doctrine of naturalism fails as a tenable theory from its tacit neglect of one or two of the fundamental conditions of art, and so falls short of that universality in its own sphere without which no proposed theory can be worthy of the name. In the first place, no one is likely to dispute the assertion that the scope of science is universal. Every fact, when in its own place, among the myriads with which science is called upon to deal is of equal value, scientifically speaking, with any other; the serious difficulty is often that of placing what appears to be an outstanding fact. To the truly scientific mind the possibility of practically applying a fact or a principle is a consideration entirely subsidiary to that of establishing its truth. It is for this reason that Dr Welch of Baltimore late impressed on his students the following maxim: «Experience has shewn that the most important discoveries in science come not from those who make utility their guiding principle, but from the investigation of truth for its own sake, wherever and however they can attain it.” Hence the genuinely indifferent attitude of the completely scientific mind to the practical discoveries of the telephone and the air-brake, however useful they may become to material civilisation. But far different in the scope, though wide enough, of Art outside and beside the sphere of pure science, and far above that of the terre-à-terre application of scientific principles,
lies the region of pure Art, whose boundary is conterminous with the conditional limitations of human emotion. Art is in this light not universal but selective; and to talk of Shakespeare and Goethe as “great indifferent artists” has always seemed to me a blasphemy on their natures, which were capable of responding to every thrill that can master the human heart. It is this totality of sympathetic capacity that makes these great men what they are; that causes us pigmies to feel our real nothingness in the world, and if there be any reverence in us, to open their works with the sense that we are approaching a shrine. By what more exquisite gift than falls to the lot of ordinary men, these supreme souls select the thought that is to move the world, must in the words of Plato, remain for ever a mystery. “For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains; but when falling under the power of music and metre, they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who drew milk and honey from the rivers, when they are under the influence of Dyonysus, but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same as they themselves tell us; for they tell us that they gather their strains from honeyed fountains out of the garden and dells of the Muses; thither, like bees, they wing their way. In this way the God would seem to indicate to us and not allow us to doubt that these beautiful poems are not human or the work of man, but divine and the word of God; and that the poets are only interpreters of the God by whom they are severely possessed”. This only is the witchcraft they have used.

Now, the doctrine of Realism is the very antithesis of this. It maintains that the artist, so far from being a creator inspired to work he knows not how or why, is little more than a singularly gifted and acute observer, who regis ters with the precision of a scientific man all that his examination of life has revealed to him of its bewildering complexity. It was this that led Goncourt to maintain in the preface to La Faustin in 18-, that novel-writing had to undergo a complete emancipation and transformation. The novel was becoming, according to him, a form of literary study and social investigation – a moral history of the times; and hence the novelist, who had taken unto himself all the functions of the scientific investigator, might justly claim all his privileges and employ all his frankness of expression. This, as everyone knows, is simply a continuation and recast of Balzac’s, once famous introduction to La Comédie Humaine, that stands at the head of the first of his short tales, “The House of the Cat Playing at Ball”. In his own words, French society was to be its own historian, and Balzac himself nothing more than its secretary. To say this is to destroy at once and in a single phrase, the possibility of writing a novel that shall be in the true sense a work of art; and if the most distinguished writers of this school have given us any novels that possess artistic qualities, it is not because they were realists, but because they were great selective artists, with the keenest perception of what should and what should not be introduced into fiction in order that it might be effective. What happens when this divine discernment fails a writer, is shewn only too clearly in the irredeemable and deadly dullness of Madame Bovary, as well as the vast majority of the “Howell and James” type of novel.
After all, are we not in such discussion, attempting, as a distinguished critic has said, to make sharp distinctions of schools, where we ought to recognise nothing but differences of character and temperament in the artists, some inclining rather to give their imagination the freest possible play, while others tend toward observation of detail. A following is thus artificially established, when an artist with a particular temperament has achieved success in any direction. From him the union producers take their word of common and exaggerate his mode of procedure; and their smaller achievements only indicate that tastes and opinions can fluctuate. In this way we come to build up systems out of the qualities of a man’s work, nay, indeed out of its very defects.

Where then, it will be asked, is the criterion of Art? Where are the rules of taste? How can we feel sure that our praise and our strictures are rightly distributed? To none of these questions can, as I said before, any definite answer be given. All that we can do is gradually to increase our knowledge of these things which time, the great sifter has selected from the mass and learn to love them in a spirit of accomplished humanism. Then and only then can we realise the great truth of Sainte-Beuve’s aphorism “good taste is not the wandering Jew”.
A great deal of the exact scientific investigation we hear so much about in these days gives but very little wool for all the cry it gives out. I have been particularly struck with this on reading full notice of a voluminous work recently published entitled, “La Mendicité à Paris”. The details of beggar life are curious and occasionally interesting enough, but nothing of real value is added to the experience of people who have studied the subject, in possibly a less statistical and scientific way, in all the great cities of the civilized world. The same impression results from the articles on German tramps in the successive numbers of an illustrated magazine of last year. All that such writing seems to do is to reduce to exactness in numerical statement the common knowledge of practical men of the world. We find, for instance, the following perfectly familiar facts. Out of the total population of a city a certain proportion (different in different countries) practice begging as a profession; they live on the easy pity, the momentary credulity of the passing stranger. They resort to all sorts of ingenious methods in order to play successfully on these two states of mind. These methods vary very little in principle, although original applications of the principles may be devised by a beggar of more than ordinary cleverness. By far the great majority of people who thus assail our cheap pity and our purses in the streets are undeserving of anything save reproach, for the poor really suffer, suffer almost invariably in silence, and are accidentally discovered to be in horrible destitution by the police-service, by agents of charitable societies, by clergymen and physicians, or by casual explorers of the poor quarters of larger towns. Pride and self-respect are much more common even in humble life of toil than the cynic would have us believe. A remarkably larger number of professional beggars, who appear infirm are perfectly capable of taking up their bed and walking, and often have a balance at the bank that the Pen and Pencil Club, simply on collecting, might well envy. To give in charity without investigating the genuine claim of each particular case is therefore unsocial; it does nothing more than relieve our cheap feelings of pity by the consciousness that we have been virtuous. Of all sentimental writers Dickens has done the most to encourage this practice, and people ought to remember that the chances of their good individual management are far outweighed by the opportunities that be in the power of organised charities, controlled or not by ecclesiastic bodies. This is especially the case when the latter publish regularly audited returns at fixed interests.

An anecdote in Thackeray’s Roundabout Paper entitled “On a Medal of George the Fourth” is sufficiently illustrative of the general method of procedure adopted by the social freebooter. “During the Exhibition time I was stopped by an old countrywoman in black, with a huge umbrella, who, bursting into tears said to me, “Master, be this the way to Harlow in Essex?” “This the way to Harlow? This is the way to Exeter, my good lady, and you will arrive there if you walk about 110 miles in your present direction!” I answered courteously, replying to the old creature. Then she fell a sobbing as though her old heart would break. She had a daughter a-dying at Harlow. She had walked already fifty three miles that day! Tears stopped the rest of her discourse, so artless, genuine, and abundant that – I own the truth – I gave her, in I believe genuine silver, a piece of the exact size of that coin which for the subject of this essay. Well. About a month since, near to the very spot where I had met my old woman, I was accosted by a person in
black, a person in a large draggled cap, a person with a huge umbrella, who was
beginning, “I say, Master, can you tell me if this be the way to Har –’ but here she
stopped. Her eyes jogged wildly. She started from me as Macbeth turned from Macduff.
She would not engage with me. It was my old friend of Harlow in Essex. I dare say she
has informed many other people of her daughter’s illness, and her anxiety – to be put
upon the right way to Harlow”.

The essayist goes on to speak of the motive that drives numbers of such wretches to ply
their trade. There is a certain excitement in it, much like that of rescuing down a very shy
prey. Eager pursuit, vicissitudes of the chase after elusive half-crown, must give
uncommon zest to a game fraught with some risk to the chief player. For it is, I believe,
only in Naples and some towns of Spain that systematic begging, at all events in
civilisation, is more than vouched at by the authorities. For Papal Rome used to be
infested with swarms of mendicants, the Church not only countenancing the practice but
encouraging the rich, through Scriptural precepts, to give to the needy poor. Nowhere
perhaps so most as in Munich in the last century were the fruits of this system
abundant. Travellers were amazed at the boldness of begging in that city. Even
respectably dressed people would frequently stop the too easily recognised stranger in the
hope of getting an alms from him. As everyone knows, the practical energy of Count
Rumford (Sir Benjamin Thompson) who acted in concert with a large committee of
burghers, put an end to this anomaly and nuisance. In one day of we are told, he and his
supporters arrested beggars in the streets of Munich, declaring that from that time
forth begging would no longer be tolerated. I can answer for it that the plan has worked
successfully to this day, for during a three weeks’ visit I was accosted only once, and on a
side street.

On all such facts there is no need for further insistence, for they are familiar in the rough
to almost everyone. But I have thought, since the choice of this subject was made at our
last meeting, that though some of the causes that lead men (and women) to their life of
degradation have been often enough analysed and set forth, there are yet other conditions
of mendicancy that demand a less simple and obvious explanation. I admit that the
burglar, the sneak-thief, and the tramp may prefer a life of irregular activity and
excitement, with all the chances it implies, to sober work, steady hours, and moderate
equable comfort. There may be ecstatic joys that they feel, which we who conduct
ourselves as regular wheels of the social machine never have an opportunity of tasting;
unless, indeed, like Mrs. Davis character like Thoreau we have the courage to break with
society and take our chances of picking up a subsistence in the woods.

The whole psychology of this type of men, as well as that of the criminal class in general,
has been admirably studied and expounded by Lombroso. He points out that in all those
exercises of organised and respectable society, there is a peculiar structure and
functioning, accounting to disorder, of the nervous systems. It enables them to put forth a
surprising measure of energy for a short time but renders them quite incapable of slow,
sustained effort. Their life therefore consists of, if we may so put it, tremendous
oscillations of the physical and psychical pendulums from one extreme of the arc of life
to the other. In the intervals of their mad activity they are apathetic; a torpor, more like a
trance than ordinary sleep, seizes them irresistibly. And hence it often happens after their
expeditions that the burglar or the tramp, who has shewn almost superhuman ingenuity
and endurance, is found asleep over his spoil in some perfectly exposed place, and others
fall an easy capture to the defenders of order. In such men passions and appetites, hunger
and lust, are seen at their height. Food is devoured ravenously; the mistress—trull is
proceeded on and treated with the blind fury of a beast. In short, we find the old saying
that likens this type to the brute more and more true. Physiologically, they are incapable
of inhibition, or the power that enables a higher nervous centre to control, or even
completely to check, the impulses conveyed by a lower. From the moral side they serve
as an illustration or verification of the aphorism of Josh Billing's;—“I thus have been
ascertained by a learned profession in Yale College that the wicked work fifty-percent
harder to get to hell than the righteous do to reach heaven”.

Let us admit also that the existence of the tramp has its charms. Not to refer again to
Thoreau, much greater philosophers than that hence bug have preferred simplicity and
freedom and dirt, to conventional cleanliness and comfort. Solomo Maimon, the modern
Diogenes of Poland, whose philosophical powers excited the admiration even of Kant, is
a remarkable instance of this type of mind. All the distinguished men of Germany who
entertained him, attracted though they were by the subtility and breadth of his thought,
found it impossible to tolerate his dirt and animality in their well-ordered houses. Even a
dog has some respect for his kennel; but for Maimon a drawing-room seems to have been
no worse—and no better—than an alley-way. These habits he had contracted during
several years of wandering through Poland and Germany; society tramp, who happened
to be gifted with a better brain than the majority of regular toilers.

One can understand too, with the half of Diderot's masterly analysis the spring of action
that lead Rameau's nephew—that remarkable compound of baseness and intelligence—to
choose his way of life. He is a social parasite, only one remove above the ordinary
beggar. He has his philosophy, and expounds it in a most ingenious way when Diderot
meets him in the Palais Royal, when he is, as we say, “down on his luck”, starving almost
and vapo. The next day when the tide has turned, he may be seen blazing in scarlet and
satin, sauntering along the boulevard picking his teeth with the easy indifference of a
flâneur. No Morley says “Diderot knows that Rameau is base and abject, but he is so little
willing to rest in the fact an easy paradise of conventions, that he seems to be all the time
vaguely wondering in his own mind, how far is genius of grossness and paradox and
bestial sophism a pattern of the many, with the mask thrown off… Rameau is the
Squalid and tattered Satan of the eighteenth century… He has that rarest fortitude of the
vicious, not to shrink from calling his character and conduct by their names. He is one of
Swift’s Yahoos with the courage of its opinions. I. The effect is of mixed fear and
fascination, as of a magician whose miraculous crystal is to shew us what and how we
shall be twenty years from now; or as when the surgeon tells a tale of some ghastly
disorder, that may at that very moment be stealthily preparing for us a doom of anguish”.

Still, whatever of truth these explanations may contain, they seem to me to leave entirely
out of account the case of the ordinary beggar in modern cities. He is not in the position
of the decayed gentleman in Branden Matthew's tale, or of the “avili lucide” of Bourget.
He has not come to grief because instead of work he liked “every thing that was indigestible, or expensive, or immoral”. Not at all; he has not enough stamina to be immoral; he has merely had a chance for an indigestion; and as for expenses, the paltry returns of The Pen and Pencil Club for a single evening, would fill him for a week. Further he does work. He paces the streets, or stands at freezing corners for hours in hope of catching the stray penny. He will sit motionless all day with his eyes shut, feigning blindness. At the end of a day’s limping with a crutch, his bent leg must suffer the cruellest cramp on being straightened out. And so on with every device he employs to take advantage of the public. In each case there is an enormous amount of toil of the dullest sort for the uncouth possible return. Mark too that I make no mention of the frequent rebuff, the insults and mortification to which in time the poor devil no doubt gets perfectly hardened. Nor are such characters in any sense to be compared to dear old Rip Van Winkle. “The great error in Rip’s composition was an inseparable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be from want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar’s lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble… He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil… In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody’s business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible”. The ordinary beggar is on the contrary profoundly selfish. Except in cases of the utter destitution of a family or of the rare “pal”, beggars do not go out into the streets either for others or with the intention of afterward sharing their spoil. They work for themselves, and enjoy what they get by themselves. Hugo’s marvellous picture of The Court of Miracles in Notre Dame de Paris has no analogue in the cities of the nineteenth century. No such dramatic or picturesque interest attaches to modern beggards; and communistic feeling is quite absent from that world.

What I have failed to get at is the motive that made these beggars practice so hard a trade that must in the vast majority of cases bring him the scantiest returns. The aura is simply enough; regular work as society understands and demands it. For if it has been said that “he who will not work shall not eat, we add a rider in the nineteenth century that the work must be of some service to the community by whose collective toil each one of us is enabled to gain his subsistence.
The Prison

In classical time not everyone had a chance to go to Corinth; and in the nineteenth century few have had the opportunity of seeing, unimpelled, the inside of the prison I intend to speak of to-night. A succession of accidents brought me, an interested spectator within its walls. My title to admission, so far from being commonplace, was singular; indeed, to this day it had ained my firm conviction that I never ought to have been there at all, if heed had been paid to my deserts. But the mysteries of official favouritism must ever be dark. Considering my appearance there in the light of an intrusion, the turnkeys might well have kept me in reclusion until I had made good my title to get out again.

Two years ago, I found myself suddenly stranded, as it were, in Lisbon, when I had expected to be in Geneva. The Italian vessel in which my passage had been taken changed her course at the Eleventh hour, and made for Lusitanian Shores with a cargo of the cheapest wheat America can produce. I have not time to dwell on the blending of odours that resulted when, after some of the unloading had been done, the decayed grain at the bottom of the hold married itself with the "sarva Mephitis of bilge-water", as Coleridge calls it. Enough to say that the passengers soon went ashore, preferring the possibilities of fleas and originality in Portuguese cookery to the unmistakable solidity of the smells they left behind them. We got both, after all.

One of my travelling companions was a lobbyist. He was the "poor man's friend", a philanthropist and almost savage reformer. Having been labour-commissioner for his native state of Missouri he was entitled to the rank of Honourable (spelt without the u), and used his prefix as a pass to consular and other forms of official favour. Hearing that the state penitentiary of Portugal was situated just outside of Lisbon, he determined to visit it and asked me whether my curiosity would carry me thus far with him. On my consenting he first applied to the American Minister, who interested himself in our expedition and wrote a letter to the Portuguese Minister of Justice, kindly in sending my name in the request for the permit. To obtain permission took much more time than the actual visit. The art of circumlocution is admirably understood and practiced in the Portuguese government. I do not now remember the order in which we visited the following offices (with our interpreter) but all of them we certainly did see, outside much larger than inside - Minister of Justice; Minister of Public; Prefect of Police; Chief-Inspector of Penitentiaries (there is but one Penitentiary in Portugal); Warden of the Penitentiary (city-officer); Mayor of Lisbon; Prime Minister (for the countersigning of the order). I have since thought that the interpreter’s being paid by the day may have had something to do with all this wandering from pillar to post. However, we finally went as the “American Legation”; I believe I was described as an attaché. Notice of our intended visit having been given twenty-four hours beforehand, we walked one lovely morning in May up the hills through olive groves carpeted with scarlet poppies until a long stretch of rough darkened red stone wall about twenty feet high met our eyes. Even the agility and superhuman strength of Jean Valjean would have quailed before the attempt to scale it. All around this wall are the fertile fields of a farm on which produce is grown for the prisoners. It would be hard to find a more striking and painful contrast than the farm ing
enclosure and its surroundings, for just in front of the great iron gate that for ms the only entrance is one of the most beautiful view of the beautiful city. Down at one’s feet are the grey olive groves all besprinkle d with patche s of the m ost brilliant s carlet; off in the distance is the white city with its many church towners and dark-red roofs; beyond that the estuary of the Tagus crowded with shipping and closed in on the far side by distant, rugged mountains; and over it all the hard blue sky of Spain.

Passing through the gate just mentioned of which the massiveness might be likened to an old portcullis, one c rossed a cou rt and one or two other g ates, bristling with guards, and finally enter ed the priso n itself, where, af ter a f ew moment’s waiting in the warde n’s office, which was rather vulgarly, if  vilely furnished, one of the chie f turnkeys was told off to escort the Am erican Legatio n. I m ust say that wh en the barriers of official obstruction are once broken down, no one can be more civil than a Portuguese Employé. This one shewed us everything – except the wom en’s ward, – and, through our interpreter, gave us the amplest explanation of the system, though I remarked that he eyed my companion, all the while, who was taking elaborate notes.

In the first place, one must clearly understand that this p enitentiary is reserv ed for the worst of crim inals alone. Portugal som e years ago abolished capital punishm ent, and consequently most of the insider s here are in for long terms. For murder a man may get twenty, perhaps more, years, with a certain number afterward to be spent in the penal colonies – not as convict, but under surveillance. During these years of colonial life he is for all purposes save that of travel, perfectly free. Em ployment and wages are not only guaranteed him but actually found. If, on his ent ring the penitentiary he has no trade or other means of making a livelihood he is taught; so that by the tim e his term has run out, he has something to fall back on when he reach es the penal settlement. The penitentiary term may be shortened, and often is, for good conduct within the walls. One prisoner, of whom I shall speak presently, was in for hom icide – fifteen years with six more years in the colonies – and his term had already been cut down by three years, though he had been cut too under confinem ent. Terms are not lengthened; a refractory convict is brought to bay in a very proper manner which I shall mention presently. I was much interested a few days later at hearing from an officer in the P ortuguese Navy whom I m et between Gibraltar and Geneva the grounds on which this system of penitentiaries has been adopted by the country. “Monsieur”, said he with animation, “there is no escape from this syllogism; -

What society does not give, society has no right to take away
Society does not give life
Therefore, Society has no right to take away life.

“I am proud” he added, “that my country, whose glories are now in the past, and which is by your arrogant nation, Sir, trodden down as a rag in the mire has given the example to modern civilisation and led the way of abo lishing the worst of the barbarous customs inherited from feudal times. My logic, Sir, is impregnable”. He did not know that he was challenging me on my own ground; but I was not professing logic at that m oment. The sea and sky were too blue. I could only wonder at the inveterate lover of the Latin races for exact deductions and formalism in general. Few of them can realise their sociology is based not on axioms or general principles but on prac tice, often on makeshift ts; it will
probably be many generations before we know enough to justify our reasoning in the fashion of my acquaintance of the Portuguese navy.

But to return to the penitentiary itself. It is in all respects a model place. Built on the Panopticon plan, elaborately worked out by Bentham some generations ago, it may be roughly represented as a wheel-shaped edifice. In the centre is a circular, or perhaps rather octagonal tower, from which the different wards radiate; thus one or two guards, who are always in this tower with loaded rifles, can easily see into and control every one of the corridors on either side of which the cells are placed. There is no common dining room, for reasons which will presently appear. Between the radiating corridors with their two tiers of cells and a few larger rooms for workshops, the spaces are filled by the chapels and the schoolrooms, in the former of which mass is said by the chaplain, and in the latter instruction in the elements is given to convicts that require it. The whole plan may be represented thus; –

Dessin

In the other intervening small spaces are small triangular exercise grounds, where the prisoners in turn take their solitary three-quarters of an hour. There are little patches of earth, which they are allowed to plant with flowers, if they care to do so; seeds and tools being furnished by the establishment, I believe as a reward for good conduct.

Below in the basement are other workshops, a carpentering-room, and so forth; and even a printing establishment in which are printed the textbooks in use at the Elementary school of the city of Lisbon. Against this, as against the furniture-shop and the shoe-making industry of the prison, outside complaint have often complained in vain. The furniture and the books, though common enough, struck me as being very well made; but of all the vile print and paper ever put into a schoolchild’s hands this of the penitentiary was the worst. I asked to be allowed to carry away a specimen spelling book, but the privilege was against the rules. On the lowest floor – the basement – were a number of other special rooms, and the punishment cells. One of these is a simple cachot with bare white walls, stone floor, and small barred window – the traditional cell in short with a plain wooden bed of rather springy slabs, not at all uncomfortable in appearance. But the more interesting cell is the dark room, literally a “black hole” built into the walls, perfectly ventilated by some means which I did not well understand, and absolutely bare. Into this space of about six feet square the positively refractory prisoner is turned, the door is shut and he is left to repent in leisure in the most absolute darkness I have even seen, if one can see darkness at all. Milton’s “darkness visible is no poetical invention to my mind. The turnkey shut as all in for a few seconds, and though he was in with us himself, I admit that a little longer stay would have terrified me with something nameless dread. The rebel against discipline is put in that awful, solid darkness in shirt and trousers; except for the hardness of the floor and walls it is relatively comfortable, for the temperature, even in winter is never below seventy degrees; but a very few hours of the dead silence and darkness will knock the spirit out of the most hardened. It is his solitary prison lot with the addition of all sorts of unimaginable horrors that he makes for himself.
From there we passed to the kitchen, also in the basement. It was filled with a rich odour of most fragrant soup. Floor, dressers, huge copper boilers, baking ovens, everything scrupulously clean. Compared with the toiler of the Lisbon streets, who may have to live on a sardine, a penny loaf, and a glass of wine a day, the convict is a very bibulous. He has his coffee in the morning, followed by the usual déjeuner and dinner, that hold good everywhere in the south of Europe, at ten and five respecting. If he earns money while in the prison, he is allowed to spend a certain part of it in tobacco, which he smokes during exercise time. I believe too that he is given a certain small quantity of wine every day.

Upstairs, again, was the hospital where a very intelligent young physician who spoke French did the honours of the place. Even here the vigorous discipline shewed itself. A poor fellow, who looked shockingly ill, actually rose up and tried to sit on our entrance, but a quiet word from our guide made him lie down again with a grateful look. There too everything was spotless.

As we came out of this place to visit one or two of the cells, my attention was caught by a single shuffling noise, and turning around I saw a sight that filled me with horror at the real nature of the confinement in this particular penitentiary. I had previously noticed some two or three prisoners washing or sweeping the corridors, with hoods over their head, and had supposed that these were intended to keep them from breathing too much dust or from catching cold in the rather draughty halls. But no: a procession of prisoners passed me. Each one separated from his neighbours by a space of about two feet, looked like an inquisitor-sm all holes being made for the eyes and mouth – and shod with felt shoes. An attempt to break the line or to touch a fellow prisoner would have meant imprisonment in the cells for twenty-four hours on bread and water. Thus each man was quite unknown to anyone in the place, save the turnkeys and guards. The numbers they wear are under the coarse linen sack that serves as outer garment. Except in his own cell and during his solitary exercise, the prisoner must wear his hood. Consequently, all possibility of communication or of recognition is cut off. The convict works in common at carrying weights, or any other occupation that requires more than one, both are hooded and under the eyes of a guard, whose orders are to shoot if either of them makes the slightest attempt to communicate by word or sign with his companion. One man was shot dead about five years ago for this offence; and since then nothing of the kind has been known to occur. While we were standing watching this ghostly defiling one poor devil, probably thrown off his balance by the unusual sight of visitors in the place took a wrong turn. Immediately he was seized and disappeared downstairs, to be left in solitude and darkness till the evening. The discipline is admirable but terrifying. As one can readily understand, with such a system all places for concerted escape or rebellion are simply impossible. For aught a prisoner knows the man he might try to talk to is one of the turnkeys, muffled like a convict and playing the spy. This, I thought I understood from some words rather guardedly translated by our interpreter. As for single attempts at escape, only one has been known in ten years; and the wretch, after prodigies of ingenuity and strength succeeded only in getting to the blind alley of an external couloir in a biting December night, where he was found with both hands frozen by the morning patrol, for he had nothing on but a pair of linen trousers and a shirt.
Finally, came the visit to a prisoner’s dwelling cell, the room in which he works and eats alone – the shell of his solitary hermit crab. Nothing, I think, can be more dreadful than to form part of a system of this sort – a mere mechanical wheel, which must go right at all costs. What a difference between that and playing one’s vital part in the great organism of social life, where one may have excuses, it is true, but where too one can feel the touch of unity, if not of occasional brotherhood. The room we saw belonged to the homicidal prisoner I mentioned before. He had killed a man in a fit of jealousy, and had served rather more than two of his fifteen years’ term. In Southern countries the law deals rather gently with such cases, jealousy being a passion that even a judge can feel. As we went in the prisoner at once put on his hood, but the guide kindly bade him remove it. In his speech I heard the word capuche, which reminded me of our own familiar capuchon. The prisoner was a most intelligent and ingenious fellow. During his leisure hours he had manufactured all sorts of curious objects out of paper, pasteboard, and glue, which he worked up into a substance resembling papier mâché. He had a windmill, a pair of horses and a carriage, and actually a perfect model of the Eiffel Tower, copied from a stray illustration in one of the daily papers given him for use in his work. As he understood a few words of French, I asked leave to speak to him, which was granted. I shall never forget the intense look of pleasure and gratitude he gave me; it was beautiful and pitiful at the same time. “Monsieur”, said he, “during nearly three years that I have been here, I have been treated with kindness, much more kindness than most”. The cell itself had only a bed and a washstand built into the wall; further, a small recess with a deodorising bucket, emptied by a keeper immediately after use. The window is so high that the prisoner cannot reach it. In order to prevent any attempt at suicide, the wall has not even the semblance of a hook, and the food is prepared in such a fashion that it can always be eaten with a spoon, knives and forks being absolutely forbidden. To make the system complete, each cell door is provided with an eye hole, opened only from outside, so that the prisoner, on whom the door shuts automatically cannot never look out, but is always under the eye of a keeper. “Ah, Monsieur”, said the convict, “it is the month of May outside; here it is always dull grey autumn. I would give up the shortening of my term to be allowed to look for five minutes at the beautiful city through the great, cruel, iron gate”. “Of us, but yours is the only human voice I have heard in all that time. Yours is the only face I have seen, save that of my keepers”. So complete, indeed, is the isolation that at mass and in the schoolroom, the prisoners are put into boxes, somewhat like upright coffins; and not until every man has taken his place, is the sign given to remove the hoods. I begged to be allowed to buy one of his manufactures as a souvenir, but this was denied. The man told me aside as we left that this would give matter for remembrance during many a dreary week.

Our visit being over, all we had to do was to shake hands with the very civil and obliging turnkey who had accompanied us. Feeing was of course out of the question. He declined anything of that sort, offered by my companion(I am glad to say not by myself); but he told us through the interpreter, that this was an event in his life as well as in that of his prisoner, for his leave amounted to about four days in the whole year. At other times it was nothing but routine, as unvarying as that of any of his convicts.
As we passed once more through the great gate and saw the blazing sunlight, the distant gleaming city and harbour, the the(sic) olive-trees and the blue sky, the contrast was still more emphatic than at our entrance; but, as the reflection I now had leisure to make can find better mouthpieces in any of my fellow members, my over-long paper must close on the gloomiest, but not the least interesting, experience of a week in Lisbon.

Paul T. Lafleur
Asleep or Awake?

Many people are familiar with some of the phenomena that form the subject of my next paper. These are for the most part almost every day observation. A few of these phenomena, however, are reserved for the introspective experience of a few, whose numbers the ever-augmenting pressure of modern life tends unfortunately to increase.

From the physiological side, it seems easy enough to understand and explain the somewhat singular bodily disturbances that often accompany the falling asleep of even the healthiest subjects. While lying quietly waiting for the day’s veil to fall from the world of sleep, as Shelley puts it, we are surprised into full waking consciousness by the sudden shooting out of a leg or an arm, as though under the sudden application of an electric shock. Indeed, the feeling may be that we have actually jumped several inches into the air and fallen back again on the soft couch. In reality the nervous commotion is much weaker in its effect on our muscles than we take to have been. The merest disturbance of the nervous equilibrium—a slight twitch given to a muscle or a group of muscles—is misinterpreted; and in the somnolent condition we can no longer correctly estimate the degree of energy put forth. It rarely happens that any such state is violent enough to disturb a fellow-sleeper.

All this finds a ready enough and plausible explanation. The functions of the higher brain-centre are gradually being weakened under the altering conditions of blood supply preceding sleep. Thus, the duty of inhibiting and regulating the nervous discharge is neglected, and the energy no longer under control spend itself in a jerky fashion to the disturbance of our muscular repose. In extreme case, with which some of us are no doubt perfectly familiar, the activity of the nervous system, under the relaxing of the tension ordinarily exercised by two active waking brain, may take the form of a general systemic thrill which specialists tell us is closely allied to some of the milder forms of epilepsy. The whole body, under these conditions, tingles in every fibre; flashes of coloured light may appear to pass over the field of vision; and in rarer case, there is also the accompaniment of an “olfactory aura”—that is, the subject is conscious of an odour pleasant or unpleasant, aroused not by anything in his neighbourhood, but by the abnormally excited condition of his nerves of smell.

Such symptoms, however, concern the specialist in nervous diseases rather than us. I have mentioned them merely as an introduction to the much less known, but still more interesting, mental conditions that often accompany what Dr. Weir Mitchell has called the “predormition state”.

I refer to the fact that in the comparatively short interval between waking consciousness and the general disintegration of our ideas just before the first profound sleep, certain very disturbing and remarkable states of consciousness find time to occur. Everyone knows what is meant by the “disintegration of ideas” just mentioned. We have become drowsy; perhaps in the act of reading, or in working out a plan for the future; and to our surprise, the words suggest incongruous images, which do not “fit” at all in the mind. There is a sense of being puzzled, and yet the general bodily comfort is so great that the
intelectual perplexity is more than compensated for by the conviction that we shall soon be asleep. Well, in many persons just before this delightful state comes on, in which we are, when still awake, reconciled to the oddness, the incongruities, fully developed in the subsequent fantasies of dream land, there are a few moments of perfectly, indeed alarmingly, lucid consciousness, during which the mind becomes a trembling prey to all kind of disagreeable emotion. Just as the higher brain-centres, in the case spoken of a few moments ago, refuse their office to control nervous discharge; so here, the will which in the daytime checks the suggestions of the imagination and keeps them within bound, now seems to have lost its grip. This, it seems to me, may have been a part of what was in the Psalmists’ mind when he wrote the “Terrors of the night”.

So far as careful examination of various personal records has shown, the two emotions most frequently suffered in this condition are shame and fear in its form. The recollection of a blunder or a disgraceful action is turned over and over in the mind, emphasizing its details in turn, till the whole body tingles with a sense of the deepest mortification; and it seems as though the whole world suddenly passed before one’s eyes, pointing the relentless finger of score. But it is fear – shuddering terror – that oftentimes reigns supreme during those few moments, when under physical condition not thoroughly understood, our courage and self-respect, in these, all the moral powers that enable us during the day-time to face our fellows and the eternal problem of life – have suddenly collapsed, leaving us to all the suggestions of our fancy and the workings of a perfectly untrammelled thought. The business-man, whose all is ventured in some speculation, sees the rapidly succeeding scenes of the panorama of his failure. The husband, soon to be a father, imagines himself at a bedside in presence of two livid corpses. The beauty glances into the mirror of the future which casts back the hideous image of a woman fighting with time to preserve the wreck of a once lovely past. And the solitary man, once surrounded with friends and inspired with the elation of success, looks on the tottering image of an unlovely old age, stumbling in loneliness and poverty, to reach the term insus alone. Finally, if any have thought long and deeply on life and what it may mean, the idea that is most likely to surge up before them at such moments, is that of the final, utter extinction of death, which most of us, like the sturdy old Johnson, so secretly dread, did we but dare to acknowledge it to ourselves. In those lucid hours of the night, before we find the momentary lull of sleep, we can see, as it were, our poor, helpless, vital cell (or spark; call it what you will), lonely in the presence of the indifferent universe; nothing but those two – me and the awful power that is not me. And slowly, as one watches, a skeleton hand seems to creep up out of the shadows of night to grasp the feeble alone and extinguish it forever. Then it is that terror like that of the man in Kipling’s tale, seizes on one without remorse. The cold shudder and clammy sweat; the frightful feeling of emptiness within and of inexorableness without; before these, even the stoutest heart may be pardoned for quailing. The next moment we are broad awake, wondering what a beautiful happy world the world of dreams is; following the ignis fatum of fancy, as a child might chase a butterfly. But in those few moments that precede the dream, was I asleep or awake?

Paul T. Lafleur
A Crime

The two physicians eyed each other for a moment in silence, taking the measure of each other and trying to discover by a happy guess how far their unspoken thoughts might tally. Differing as they did in appearance, age, professional standing, and scientific opinions, they shewed but one external point of agreement—the expression of serious and set purpose which so early fixes itself in the lines of even the youngest doctor’s face when he takes his worth in earnest. It was the first time these two had met, and the meeting was in one sense accidental for the terribly sudden and rapid events that were culminating in the tragedy of the men room had driven the inpatients servants to call in any medical aid, quite regardless of conventional professional distinctions. How long this process of mutual examination might have gone on it would be hard to say; but through the door on the knob of which the elder man’s hand was still resting, there came a sound that reminded both of them that no time was to be lost in coming to some practical decision. It began with a piteously appealing wail, rose with a quick crescendo into the agonised shriek of a strong man in wrenching pain, and finally died away into vague moaning and gasps.

“I thought we had given him enough to keep him quiet for some ten or fifteen minutes”, said Burton, the younger of the two; “but strychnine always means business”.

“Yes, long business too, especially in the case of such powerfully built men as this one”, continued Dr. Hill. “You were here before me, you have of course done everything in the way of antidote”.

“Certainly; but judging from what was left and from the delay before I was called in, the poison was taken in larger dose, and had ample time to work its effect. It is a perfectly hopeless case. What made him choose death in that hideous form, it is idle to guess, he is a dead man, but before he dies he has some hours of about as violent agony as can be felt with perfect lucidity of consciousness too. You and I know that. As he appears to have subsided under the anaesthetics, may I, Sir, as the younger man ask you for your opinion in such cases? You must have seen several; this is the first one of the kind for me”.

“After you, if you please”, said Hill; and Dr. Burton, nettled by the trace of irony that seemed to underlie the common formula of politeness, broke out; “From your writings, Sir, I can infer that we have at all events one point of departure in common. We need not complicate the question with religious sentiments. In my case the poor devil will meet his Maker (if he has one) before many hours are over in spite of anything we could do. He wouldn’t, even if he could, listen to a parson or a priest. His man, whom I asked to go for one, told me that his master had always despised the cloth. As regard consequences to ourselves—I beg your pardon, to myself—I am confident that that element may also be left out of consideration. If I should make up my mind to help a euthanasia, I feel that that sort of thing must be too common in secret, to run any risk of its becoming known to the general public. The question with me is, not whether I shall violate conventional law in
“You admit then”, said the other, “that you are hesitating whether or no you will commit a crime, for a crime it is according to the laws of any civilised country. As you are young in your professional career, might you not do well to pause a little longer? Wait for your next case, of a similar or kindred sort. Your experience in this one will help to plan out a regular course of general principles for the future. For myself” - he was interrupted by the sound of another and more violent paroxysm from the adjoining room. The young doctor dashed past him, and returned a few moments later, pale, though calm in speech. “I have committed a fragment of the crime Dr. Hill; a moment or two more of the cap and it would have been all over with him. As it is, the anaesthetic, given in such measure is just short of toxic, and must finish him piecemeal. I must confess I can’t see any reason why it should not be done once for all and thoroughly; it will save the wretch some moments of perfectly useless torture at any rate”.

“My reason”, answered the other, “is the one I have always given in the course of my practice, though I own I have often been weak enough not to oppose others who denied its soundness. I have never myself done what you speak of doing, (though I have let others do it) because it seems to me to be a dangerous thing. Once admit the principle, and we need not enumerate the possibilities of its abuse. Deny the principle and it’s but consistent with reason and duty to obey what that denial implies. It is singular, by the way, how soon you come to first principles when you are faced with such a case as this. Everyone will grant that in this particular instance, there is no doubt whatever as to the best thing to be done concerning this case alone; mark, I say this case alone. But a young man like you with excellent opportunities and ability above the common, will find in the course of his practise that these circumstances, or others indistinguishably like them will recur again and again. Now, consider are you prepared to adopt the principle that when death is virtually certain, but its coming will be attended with hours of racking agony, the medical man is justified in hastening death and stopping the agony. Remember, too, that I am taking for granted a great deal in saying that death is certain, our science is anything but exact in its previsions. Whatever experience may have pointed to in the past, we must always be ready for the unforeseen; and in helping nature to relieve the individual you may for all you know be robbing that individual of a remote and unknown, but still imaginably possible, chance of life”. So much for the general and social side of the question. But how about yourself? To relieve the sufferings of this criminal, who is getting the natural reward of his own act, are you determined to become a criminal yourself; although, the motives of your crime and his are at the time opposite poles of moral conduct? You say that the legal definition of crime is conventional, but if you violate that convention by which we cling together as human beings, you will always remember through your life that you almost began your practice with a violation of the tacit agreement between you and your fellows to respect the laws under which you live. You remember your medical jurisprudence, I am sure.

Putting suffering against suffering, are you sure that it is an even balance between the few moments of pain for this man whom you have never known and the hours, nay years, of
moral torture that you will undergo before your conscience has grown callow to the recollection of this first step? For it is only a first step, so surely as you have accustomed yourself to the gradual reconciliation of your duty with your feelings, and not to the subduing of feeling because it clashes with duty so will occasions present themselves for repeating the act with fatal facility of return. There is no analogy here between what you propose to do and the hackneyed moralizing about a first drink. The two things are on different planes. The first drink is not wrong, but this would be a fine crime in the deepest sense of the word. And such a deed brings its cumulative effects inexorably.”

“That is precisely the point I contest”, said Burton, “I cannot make up my mind that it is a wrong to listen to feelings which I know to be sound. What is my duty? Must I obey the collective judgement of men as expressed in the law, or secretly follow my own judgment in a case of conscience like this? The only real harm that could come would be through its becoming known, generally practised, and abused. Who is to know? The coroner will believe what he is told by expert report; it will never be suspected that death came soon and not late. As for my own conscience I am ready to bear what burdens it may give me. That it will wrench me, I know, but I will try to meet the struggle and come out of it a better man for this experience. But had we not better look at our patient? The strong anaesthetic is working off again, and I am afraid another attack of tetanus is at hand. The spasms have been progressively violent, and the intervals between them are shorter. You see that he has no chance at all. I only hope our entrance will not hasten the action by surprising him”.

And indeed as the two medical men re-entered the suicide’s bedroom, the fatal poison was once more beginning to shew its terrible power. On the bed lay a strongly built man, apparently in the prime of life, but twisted out of ordinary resemblance to the human figure by the violent cramp that follows a lethal dose of strychnine. His feet and hands were contracted convulsively, but not from a voluntary effort to wrestle with pain, one could see that the tension of nerve and muscle was something more than human strength could accomplish. The head twitched back, and the neck formed an odd but hideous angle with the trunk. For the eyes which began to protrude from the sockets an expression of anguish and pleading could still be clearly perceived, and that consciousness still lingered was only too well shewn by the first words that greeted them for a tongue and lips covered with froth and livid with anguish, - “Help me, doctor, hold me, I am dying. But kill, for God’s sake, quick! I didn’t know it was so...”. Nothing more could be heard than inarticulate moans, which soon gave way to shrieks that made even the older man turn pale. For many minutes the two physicians stood side by side, holding down the man, whose struggles taxed their strength to the utmost, until finally the spasms died away and the sufferer, on whose face the traces of his agony had left their marks, as the passing breeze leaves its furrow on the water after it has gone, looked up into their faces with a perfectly lucid, but exhausted, expression. “You are very good”, he gasped, “Thank you. But I know it is all up with me. I took good care of that, no science in the world can help me now. It was my wish. It is so still; but I had no idea it would be anything like this. Can’t you help me to die easily?”, he added, gazing piteously into their faces as they leaned over him. “Nobody will ever know; and when your turn comes to be judged, I will say how good you were to me. I am not afraid for myself: God knows He
gave me more than I could bear in life. Even this pain is not the worst I have had to suffer. It is all in keeping, and this is the right end for such torture as I have felt for the last forty years”.

The two others went on with their professional work in silence, not daring to look into each other’s eyes. In a few moments their patient being restored to momentary quiet and appearing with shut eyes to be in comatose state, possibly exhausted by the violence of the last attack, the older man whispered to Burton, that he had some orders to give to his coachman concerning his regular visits, and left the room to use the telephone. For some little time the quiet of the apartment was broken only by the sharp ring of the little bell, and the quick impatient sounds of Dr. Hill’s voice punctuated with dashes of listening silence.

When he returned his face changed. Sternness, dread, and question chased one another in quick wanes of expression over it. Burton sat motionless at the head of the bed, looking down on an equally motionless figure, from which all semblance of life had now departed. “You have done it! I did not think you would take advantage of my absence”.

“I thought your absence was only intended to give me a chance to do it. You avoided my eyes as you left the room”.

For fully fifteen minutes nothing was said. Neither of them knew how to begin. At last Hill with a tone of respect in his voice which became more and more emphatic as his sentences followed one another in hurried succession, broke out: “You are right, for you have had the courage of your convictions. You are right too in thinking that I have not shewn the courage of mine; for if I had, I ought not to have left this room until all was over without any human interference. This has always been my judgment on myself in similar cases, many of which, however, have differed from this one in being not suicides, but purely accidental, or cases of long, painful, and necessarily fatal illness. And, you; do you still feel that you did wisely and well?” The other answered with great effort, as though struggling with some hideous nightmare. When he spoke, his voice sounded low and hesitating. “Thank you”, he said, “but the moral blame is mine. You need not try to ease me of it by assuming any share of it at all. But I had never realised the difference of feeling, before and after. I can’t tell you”, he added with a heartrending ring in his voice,” what I went through during that terrible silence when neither of us spoke. It seems to me as though all the years I have lived were nothing compared with the length of those few minutes. Doctor, tell me: shall I ever forget them? The older man walked quietly over and put his hand on the younger one’s shoulders. “My dear fellow, you need an anaesthetic yourself, now. Don’t trouble about this just now; or try to think of it for the present as little as possible. Leave all the arrangement to me. I will draw up our report and have it sent to you to sign. By the time the coroner’s jury are met, you will certainly have regained your nerves. After that, there is no one but yourself to meet, and I am confident that you will, to use your own words, come out a better man from this experience. But it is getting quite dark now, and my brougham must be at the door. I shall send my man to put off my visits, after he has driven us to my house where I shall be very pleased to have you dine and spend the evening with me. By the bye, can you meet me to-morrow
morning at ten? I should like to have you in consultation with me over a puzzling case. I can send word to my patient’s home that you will be with me”.

Burton looked up quickly: his lip was quivering and his eye looked suspiciously bright. His voice, however, was quite firm. “Thank you again, Doctor Hill. I don’t know why you are so kind to me. Yes, I shall be proud of the honour of assisting you. But will you take it amiss if I decline your invitation for this evening? When a man has committed his first crime, not from impulse, but because he thought it was the best thing to do, it is better for him to fight out the fight, as soon as possible, with his own conscience and alone.
The Corpse

The local Falstaff was dead. That monstrous body the actual sight of which had always touched my childish imagination more than any of the seven wonders of the world that my play books talked about, was at last nothing but “a mountain of mummy”. I remember, as I used to sit near this old farmer in the barn-like country Church near which my boyish holidays were spent, that we youngsters used to wonder what his insides could be like. We did not know that his colossal corpulence was caused by layers of adipose deposit; and when we saw a sheep or a hog-killing we used to enter into abstruse calculations as to the probable size of the old man’s viscera on the basis of the proportional data of the slaughtered animal. I am glad that I did not have to verify them in corpore vili. Of Falstaffian attributes, however, this was the only one the respectable old chap possessed and in his case the bodily affliction was increased by his being yoked to a wife whom marriage had permanently, and not only periodically, developed into proportions equally remarkable. Indeed, the current belief that this couple, so broad in the beam and in girth, had been obliged to get measured for a buggy big and strong enough to carry their united weights, was no myth.

Well, the old man was at last dead; but this, the most sensible thing he had done for many years, in spite of all his shrewdness he had undertaken to spoil by expressing a wish to be buried at a distance of some fifteen miles from his village, and that the service should be read by the clergyman from a neighbouring city who had, I think, been the heaven-sent guide of his conversion from the creed of his fathers. The difficulties of carrying out these requests may be imagined, when I say that the city was twelve miles away; the cemetery fifteen in the opposite direction; that there were no railways anywhere in the neighbourhood; it was at the season of la débâcle, so that the roads were axle-deep in mud and slush, and the ice-bridge over the St-Laurence, which the clergyman had to cross was hardly likely to stiffen again merely because the servant of the Lord had to perform the last offices for his old friend.

However, in the service of Heaven and friendship combined, man must not hesitate to ask; he may waver between an execration and a prayer for patience. But I had better remember the narrative as early as I can remember it is the words of the pastor who afterwards told it to a number of friends, struggling between sympathy and laughter, around the table of a house noted for its hospitality. I shall never forget his look of haggard exhaustion and despair, as he entered the warm dining-room. “Le voilà enfin enterré”, were his first words, and after the only comfortable meal he had had in thirty-six hours, he was sufficiently restored to tell his pathetic, but burlesque, story; “As you know I had to drive across the river, and though in my thirty years of the ministry I have had to do this often and in all weathers, I have never seen the passage so dangerous. My driver, the old man’s eldest living son, had taken his youngest and fresher horses, partly to do me honour, but also to save time. Twice we upset in ice-cold pools, and several times I thought the animals were going to dash from the almost obliterated track into the
enormous air-holes that had nearly reached it. Finally, we got to the shore and after a few miles of impossible road, we reached the house of woe. A single glance after the first few words of condolence told me that under the general gloom there was anxiety. Everyone appeared expectant and restless. By cautious questioning I discovered that the coffin, which was to have arrived in the afternoon, had not yet come though it was then seven o’clock in the evening, and the procession was to start at nine the next day. For three more long hours, we waited listening for every sound of vehicles, till at ten o’clock a black mass loomed up at the front gate; it was the coffin at last. With four stout men I then went up to the death-chamber where the three hundred pounds of my old friend were laid out in his best broadcloth. To my horror when this enormous mass was lifted up, it was found that several inches of thickness on either side could not be persuaded or forced to accommodate themselves to the final casing, which by some fault in measurement, or some imbecility – on the part of the workmen who could not believe in the reality of such dimensions, was much too narrow for its contents. I involuntarily thought of the lines.

“Little Johnny’s dead, jam him in his coffin,
We don’t get a chance for such funerals often.”

But “jamming” was in this case out of the question, according to the silly country custom, the funeral had been delayed, and the corpse was in one respect already Lazarus-like and would permit no liberties. I had thus discovered another of the causes of anxiety in the stricken household. To say that Bochain now represented the state of feelings would be weak. At all hazards, I scribbled a few lines to an undertaker in town, requesting him to send out with my messenger the three biggest coffins he could find anywhere in the city, assuring him that the superfluous ones would be sent back undamaged. This being despatched by a rider post-haste in the dead of night, I then proceeded after dispensing what comforting assurances I could to the sorrowing relatives, to sleep in which my troubled dreams kept distorting and exaggerating the ghastly events of the afternoon and evening. The next morning, after more anxious looking out of the windows through a drizzling sleet, I had the immense relief of seeing at last towards nine o’clock that my unusually larger order had been very literally filled. I had had no hesitation in giving it, for the family were extremely well-to-do, and would have sacrificed anything rather than become the laughing-stock of a parish of hostile religious. A woe begone and drenched figure drove into the yard what looked like a huge pyramid of wood, the three coffins being placed in an ascending scale and tied down with strong cord. I need hardly say that the two top ones proved too small; and it was only by divesting the corpse of its Sunday clothes and shrouding him in the thinnest of winding-sheets that we finally got him into his chrysalis. A brief but fervent prayer was all that was expected here, but when it came to getting the coffin out of the front door and into the hearse, which by the bye had also been delayed by the condition of the spring-roads, that was found to be impossible without an indecent amount of tilting. Regard for the family would not let me consent to its being thrust out on the bias, and amidst the moans and sobs of a crowd of the irrelevant, but ubiquitous women, we had finally to carry it out through the kitchen of which the door had been fortunately made wide enough to allow the old man and his wife to pass out abreast. It was their ordinary mode of exit from their dwelling. Need I say that the mud-splashed hearse also proved too small; one cannot think of everything. In many
anxiety about the coffin, I had forgotten the hearse, which with its bedraggled plum es now stood useless – a much more fitting object of compassion that that worn-out carriage is Desssein’s coachyard at Calais which drew a tear from the sentimental Sterne. Luckily this was not irremediable; and on a hint from the one member of the family who still kept his head, a huge express-van from the shop of a neighbour g country-grocer was hastily called into requisition and draped with such black cloth as could be found. At half-past twelve the cortège set out on its miry way to the fifteen-mile-distant church, where the whole countryside had been already waiting half an hour – probably longer for it is a religion with country-folk to be always well ahead of time for gossip. The drive was without incident I am glad to say; but naturally the ordinary decent, funeral pace had to be given up, and so far as the state of the road would permit we rattled along like a succession of fire-engines, the mischief helping the hindmost. The dead man’s relatives themselves had thought enough left for others to remember the waiters in the bare and cold country church, and did not spare the horses. Our only anxiety was lest the cord that tied the coffin to the Express-cart might not hold till the end of that gloomy journey through mud and sleet.

My experience of the last few hours had wonderfully improved my foresight, and I had before leaving the house taken a precaution for which I subsequently had good reason to congratulate myself and all others concerned. A man on horseback had been despatched to see that the coarse wooden box that was to hold the coffin was large enough to hold it; and also to see that the grave which had been dug in spite of the still frozen earth had been widened enough to hold the huge mass of body, coffin, and case. I said to the man as he mounted, “See that that case is big enough if you can’t get anything else, you can surely find a piano-box and make it big enough to preserve the casket till later. If the relatives in the spring care to dig the old man up again and put him into another, well and good; but he must be buried today. If you fail me in this, I will not conduct the burial-service”. Fortunately my warning took effect, and the orders were carried out so faithfully that when we reached the church door at half past three I was amazed at the size of the huge packing case that had somehow or other been put together by the goodwill of the local carpenter. I have never seen anything like it except in the hold of a great transatlantic liner. In fact, partly because of this, and partly because of the time that had so stupidly been allowed to elapse between death and burial, it was thought wiser not to bring the body into the church, and my old friend’s burial service was thus conducted really in his absence and over his imaginary shade. I could not but feel the irony in this case of the beautiful words, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace”, when I thought of the hours of fuss and anxiety we had all gone through; but any tendency towards amusement was checked by the sadness I felt on thinking how much the old man who during his life had been kindness incarnate would have grieved at giving such pain and trouble to those he had loved best during his life, simply through a natural wish expressed with his latest breath.

At half-past four we reached the neighbouring churchyard, where my instructions had certainly been carried out to the letter. The yawned the grave, as broad and deep as a castle-moat. Indeed, a quarrel subsequently arose over this, for its widening had encroached on the adjoining lot. It was with a sigh of relief that I finally saw the huge
object lowered, and myself threw the first spadeful of frozen clods that were to keep the old farmer warm in his last long home; but not until the mound was finally smoothed over, did I feel that we were at last safe from any more anxiety on account of this useless mass of clay, now at last buried, I trust for ever. It was now twenty minutes to six and just barely time to catch, two miles away, the evening express for the city. I stood on no ceremony, but shaking hands with the immediate relatives, made for the station. Here I am at last, and I had not eaten a morsel since breakfast this morning at seven o’clock.

The writer feels bound to add that the incidents related have received no embellishment no addition form his pen. The pastor in question was his own father, who has not, as will readily be believed the polyglot fluency in profanity too often unjustly attributed to some of his offspring; but surely, although his narrative was garnished with no sonorous but necessary language, it may be taken for granted that if anything of the kind was whispered by him in petto, the Recording Angel was merciful enough to blot, or at least to smudge it with a sympathetic tear.

Paul T. Lafleur.
The genuine and hearty curse – I do not speak of our casual, or cursory, exclamations of impatience – is based on the same fundamental postulate, assumption, conception or misconception, as the prayer or the hymn of praise. It implies that near us, and above us, there exists some personal Power, with attributes more or less resembling those of human beings, that can hear us when we call, that willingly listens, and thinks it worth while to fulfill our wishes, if they happen not to jar too seriously with the general scheme. In other words anyone who seriously utters the phrase, “God damn you”, or “Go to Hell, must believe, either in an open or in a sneaking fashion, that God is but man “writ large”. The same power that can still the waves to keep my precious personality from shipwreck, or kill the superabundant microbes in my system, so that I shall not rot alive with some filthy distemper, is conceptually, the same as the Being to whom I appeal for vengeance on some other human worm that has wriggled across my path. The first curse we read of in Scripture was uttered by the Supreme Power, it is true; but since that example given to our poor human clay, man has eagerly expressed his feelings of anger in calling on the Maker of all to blast his unwholesome brother. What was first delivered by God as a fiat, because in later times a passionate cry from the creature to the Creator that He might see fit to hearken to the curse of one, who being but little lower than the angels, had surely some right to be heard.

“All the stored vengeances of heaven fall
On her ungrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness….
You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes. Infest her beauty,
You fen-suck’d fogs, drawn by the powerfulness,
To fall and blast her pride.”

Lear undoubtedly believes that the injury to his personal feelings by the breach of contract on his daughter’s part is a violation of eternal justice; and he calls on the unseen powers to pour their wrath and satisfy both justice and himself.

It is precisely the same spirit that animates ecclesiastical curses at all times. When men come to believe that in the doctrine they hold is eternal truth, that they who preach and enforce that doctrine are simply heaven-appointed messengers, the mouthpieces of the Most High, they are not slow to pronounce the ban of the church in a tone of supreme authority. To them truth has been revealed, by them alone is it preserved, and consequently on them, as vicegerent, rests the vindication of the Almighty. The re is nothing inconsistent in this. He who believes in the efficacy of prayer, ought equally to believe in the efficacy of a curse, for, after all, a curse is only a prayer to the detriment of one’s neighbour. The fact that a curse is a rule more fervent and emphatic than a prayer is simply the result of a very natural and human failing. The majority of men enjoy the failures much more than the successes of others – La Rochefoucault says, even of their friends – and when the other happens to be a rival or an enemy, is it not all wonderful that we had rather seen him everlastingly damned than raised into eternal glory? I confess that
for my own part I do not understan d the dis position of m ind, that m eets this feelin g by quoting the m essage of peace and g ood will to all men. Suppose this p ut into practical, daily application. W e love them that hate us; bless them that spitefully use us; turn the other cheek when we are smitten; give our cloak to the thief that has stolen our purse; and what then? I am incline d to think that in the nineteenth century, just a s in the first, it would mean a speedy extinction of the good and weak for the permanent benefit of the powerful and wicked. N o, the utterance of a cu rse seems to me to recogn ise the eternal difference and conflict between right and wrong, beyond the reach of all sophistry. When in our helplessness we look with wild eyes on the hideous chaos of the m oral world, which Schopenhauer calls “a harb ouring-place for rascals” we often feel tempted to lift our trembling hands in appeal to that eternal justice in whose scales alone the true balance can be found. The cry, “L et mine enemy perish, and m y wrong be avenged”, represents, in my wrong, the outraged moral feelings of the human race.

Paul T. Lafleur
The Sphinx

Whatever conjectural date may by scholars be assigned to the guess of Oedipus, we judge very safely indeed from the simple and obvious nature of the riddle, that the original story on which the later drama is founded must be a very early one. At no later time does the enigma of life offer itself in so primitive, nay so naïve, a shape. The legend as we find it expressed in the play of Sophocles is undoubtedly intended to be allegorically representative of the supreme riddle which every race, every civilisation, every man and woman, must sooner or later make an attempt at reading, during those moments of meditation when the demands of work and play suffer a temporary lull. It is but natural, as I hinted before that the problem should present itself rather as a quaint conundrum than a serious scientific or religious crux to a race not yet fully alive to the tremendous issue at stake, according as the attempted answer fell on the hither or the far side of a clearly drawn line; and Sophocles in recasting the fable for dramatic purposes was in no wise concerned with the new glosses or readings which the pre-Socratic philosophers had seen for to introduce into the imperfectly read text of the book of life.

But with a fuller sense of the difficulty and weight of the question, the metaphysicians of Greece had early begun to offer solutions; and their attempts at last culminated in the pure intellectualism of Plato and Aristotle; the latter, indeed, seems at times to have had the dream that the universe might some day be explained by means of a series of closely concatenated syllogisms. Beyond this it was hardly possible to go in that direction; and the later school of Alexandrian thought could add nothing but an element of mysticism to the rational theories of their great predecessors. In the opinion of the Alexandrian philosophers reason was to be suffused with a mysterious influence from the all-spirit in which the whole order of things takes its rise. The pure thought by which the Greek in the palmy days of Athenian civilisation had sought to explain the universe had now exhausted its mandate; and, as is always the case with any intellectual movement that runs its topical course without serious interruption from outside material interference, this great wave of transcendental thought rose and finally fell with a crash at the foot of a new and totally different intellectual power. The appearance of the Roman as the prominent figure on that vast stage, whereon the human comedy was being played with a zest that lasted for centuries, gave a new impulse to the energy of the human mind by diverting it towards the practical work of the world. Before the mind of the ideal citizen of Rome the real, living world presented itself as a vast problem. Humanity was a mob to be ruled, drilled, organised. To this problem all the splendid physique, the intellect, and the stern will of such practical philosophers as Caesar, Augustus, and Trajan were resolutely bent. Their one ideal seems to have been that of a perfectly ordered human beehive on anthill, in which each insect played its small, but yet significant part in the life of the whole. Whether they ever seriously thought of anything beyond, it would be hard to say; and yet one wonders whether, if their wildest dreams of colonisation and civilisation had been realised, their thoughts might not have turned to the problem of life in itself and what it means after all. It is precisely this element of finiteness in the aspiration of the Roman that gives to the higher thought of his time an air of being borrowed and factitious. This is why the Ciceros and Senecas and all their other philosophers, with the one exception of Lucretius, strike us as mere dilettante transcribers of what before their time had been said.
so wisely and so well. The end of all this vain attempt to solve life by resolutely attending only to its practical issues is too hideous to dwell upon; the saddest pages of all history are, to my mind, those that tell of the moral deluge that marks the fall of Rome.

But side by side with this conception of the world and life, a new ideal had risen and slowly developed out of the teaching of a humble artisan in one of the many coins perdus of Roman civilisation. From the collective, as well as from the individual, point of view, the object of the primitive Christian in life differed from that of the triumphant Roman. For the ideal of an all-embracing, centralised state, he substituted that of the universal human family; for civic dignity and strength, moral and personal worth. These terrestrial ideals however, he subordinated to his faith in some ineffable “beyond”, which his imagination pictured and coloured in various ways according as he was by birth Jew or Gentile. Far be it from me to say, or even to hint, that this movement has, like the others begun to see its own decline, and yet it seems to me that under the chirpy optimism of its present official representatives there is no great difficulty in detecting timorous misgiving and half-heartedness. And when we search our own hearts, can we truthfully say that our daily lives are ordered according to the message and precept of peace? Is the world to the meek? Nay, rather, in this day of fierce struggle which, sociologist tell us, is only beginning, is not the modern world slowly realising that the solution of life, individual or collective, is not to be found for all times and races alike in the formula of a Golden Rule? There have been few centuries, since Romans (sic) Christian civilisation began to dawn, during which the vital question has been so eagerly asked, and yet so diversely answered, as in ours. And yet when we look at the result, it seems as though the chaos of Greek myth were order and symmetry as compared with the confusion of idea and opinion in the nineteenth century. There was indeed when the too individual tendencies of Christian thought were corrected by an ecclesiastical conception of life. The medieval church man, drawing his ideas both from imperial Rome and from his own religious faith, believed that in the universal church would be found the answer for which humanity had so long sought in vain. A work of Dante, the typical medievalist, which till lately was little read, places this ideal clearly before us, and enables the reader to understand the revolting intolerance and cruelty of the Inferno. The nineteenth century is still ringing with the crash of this great edifice, which was so long the prison of the human intellect.

And what do the loudest-spoken of our prophets cry? Their message is Science. Surely I need not before such a group as ourselves, dilate on the failure of them the shortest reign of them all. It is not yet fifty years since in the forties and little later, the vast majority of leading biologists and physiologists were shouting that they had discovered the secret of life; a few years more, they said, and we shall explain to infant classes how it is that matter in the ovum becomes conscious. Today the cackling is not quite so loud and so general. The search for truth is “the rotting bodies of dead men and the writhing bodies of live cats” is as busy as ever, but somehow or other it needs no great penetration to see that the zest has died out of it. “However”, as Mr. Mallock says “each generation is wise in its own wisdom; and ours would sooner look at a foetus in a bottle, than at a statue of the God Apollo, from the hand of Phidias, and in the air of Athens”. 
These, then, seems to me to be the leading types under which the various conceptions of life and its meaning can be classified, so far at least as our western civilization is concerned.

The Greek - Beauty and Truth
The Roman – Order and Strength
The Christian – Conduct and Faith
The Scientific Man – Knowledge.

But, as we have seen, not one of these is lasting and final. Each appears to run its course, one might almost fancy as a sort of intellectual or moral measles, from which the human race is, for the time being doomed to suffer. When we look back over the wreck of systems our eyes fall on a scene much like that which Shelley describes in Alastor:

The awful ruins of the days of old
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoever of strange.
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia on her desert hills
Conceals,

Discouraging, however, though this retrospect appears to be, we can do something more than look on it with stolid despair, or try to forget it in the epicurean fashion of Omar Khayyam. It is only the sanguine optimist who can hope that for some generation yet to come the secret of secrets will some day be no more. For us, the inexorable law remains of the limitation of human capacity, beyond which it’s vouchsafed to no one ever to pass. Humanity is destined for ever to run around the old vicious circle, seeking in vain to discover a point that indicates it’s rising in spiral.

But it is precisely this condition of our existence which gives its eagerness, its zest to our search. Could we look forward definitely to a time when for man neither this life nor the next would have any mystery, that moment our energies would flag; we should leave the task of elucidating the details of the problem to the generations yet unborn. And if over the “Great guesser” of whom Du Maurier speaks in Peter Ibbetson ever does appear, from his time on the scroll of human effort will be rolled up once and for all time. For this reason, we whose daily task it is to work in spite of our conviction that the least of it is but vanity and vexation of spirit, still keep our shoulders to the wheel in the firm belief that…. That which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Paul T. Lafleur
LE COUP DE GRACE
(version manuscript)

My knowledge of the facts in the short tale that I have to tell is remarkable in only one point – and that is my getting possession of it at all. To any one who has not travelled, or who has travelled and harboured suspicion of all casual rencontres with his fellow-worms, I shall appear to be merely inventing a mise-en-scène for my narrative. But the momentary expansiveness of a lonely man, who finds a listening ear that he will probably never meet again, is proverbial. For my own part, I have never shrunk from hearkening to even the dullest of talking travellers, in the hope of coming on some strange bit of experience, some unknown document, letting me see a little further into the complexity of life and character. The impulse to communicate to a stranger things which one hardly dares to reflect on in the darkness of the night – crime, weaknesses, treachery, the deceptions of life, or merely grotesque blunders that cause the very soul to burn and blush – has always been to me inexplicable. But the fact is there; the event often happens. Generally, too, one can see the evident relief the patient feels; and also his very obvious eagerness to get rid of the stranger who now knows too much.

A few years ago, at the end of my first day’s walking through the beautiful South Austrian Tyrol, I had arrived at Meran, a little footsore and not a little hungry after five hours afoot. It was a beautiful evening in early June, and though the inevitable veal cutlet with bread-crumbs, the black bread and cheese, the copious draughts of nippy Austrian beer, provided in any modest inn, had made me feel the leaden weight of my legs more and more, I began to think of a stroll. I must admit that the presence of a comely and chatty hand-maiden – the type of a village Marguerite – who had taken down a zither on hearing me hum a German air, and had already shown proof of her skill, was a strong inducement to remain with my cigar under the vine-bower where my table had been spread; but the arrival of some noisy admirers of the said nymph spoilt the tête-a-tête and the dream of an idyll at one blow. I went out accompanied by a huge bull-dog belonging to the house, who had at first terrified me by nuzzling suspiciously about my tired legs, but became my firm, inseparable friend after a few solid crumbs from my table. For some time I heard, besides the distant noises of the little town, nothing but the scrunch of gravel under my feet and the irregular pat of his bandy legs, with the accompaniment of the roaring stream whose waters join the Etsch, the Adige, and finally flow past Verona and so into the loveliest of all lands. The path I followed wound along its banks at some little height above the water, and was all emowered with shrubs, through the meshes of which the glorious gold of evening was turning into delicate rose. Against this the leaf and branch patterns detached themselves with the firm black of an etching; all trace of solidity was gone; it was a study of black lines and spots against golden pink. It was hard to believe that this little peaceful town, a favourite resort of consumptives, had been the headquarters of the brave Tyrolese rebellion against the great Emperor, the home of Andreas Hofer. As I was trying to get myself into the truly historical frame of mind, a sudden turn of the path brought me close to a bench and almost face to face with its occupant whose countenance I could not make out, and never really saw at all, for it was
now growing dark. But remembering that smoking was forbidden on the path on account of the invalids, I hastened to throw my cigarette into the water below, though the season was early for consumptives and no one in that condition was likely to be there in the evening dew. As I was passing by, an extremely pleasant voice said in good English, but with a Viennese accent: “I hope, Sir, you did not throw away your cigar on my account. Please take one of mine”. As I was about to strike a match he held out his own cigar, and so again I lost the chance of seeing his features. I have since thought that the sense of security he felt under these conditions accounted for his subsequent want of reticence. At his invitation I took my seat near him, and a very few moments showed me that I had had the good fortune to meet a man of the world with a singular charm in his conversation. Unlike the majority of such casual companions, he had the gift of avoiding all the beaten tracks of common-place, guide book rhapsody, swindling and nasty quarters in hotels, praise of his own country, and so forth; and a more discreet, less inquisitive man about other persons’ affairs I have never met. We had been eagerly discussing the Triple Alliance and the policy of Count Kalnoky - he switching off into voluble German when he found that I could follow - and occasionally into snatches in to what I took to be Hungarian for which he promptly apologized – when a chance remark of mine suddenly gave to our talk a turn for which I was totally unprepared. I forget now exactly what it was, but it soon led to an animated difference of opinion as to the hardness, the inevitableness of fate, in spite of our efforts to do what we think right, or at least expedient. I was beginning to think from a shade of hardness in his tone that he must have had some serious trouble in his life, when to my surprise he broke into a strain of personal talk, as though wishing to support his conviction, and ease his spirit of a burden at the same time. “I cannot convince you with theories, I see; let me tell you my own experience. It will perhaps not weary you, and it cannot hurt me to speak out that of which I think during every unemployed moment of my rather active life. I am an officer in Hungarian regiment of light horse; but though a Hungarian, was educated in a cavalry school near Vienna, my father thinking it necessary for me to become a perfect master of the German language. During my six years’ stay in the school, I became very intimate with a young Viennese of good family, between whom and myself the constant rivalry of the study, the exercise ground, and the fencing-school never marred our friendship, a most usual thing between Austrian and Hungarian. We seemed in our intimacy to show that the two ever hostile elements in the Empire could be harmonized, if only the different members would study one another instead of stupidly handing down the old race-hatred from generation to generation. I remember how the commandant in his closing address when we came out equal at the end, and had won our commissions in the same troop of hussars, made a direct reference to the fusion of races exemplified in the perfect friendship that had united two of his departing cadets. Need I say that the intimate dinner that evening, which joined our two families at the house of my friend’s father was first gay, and finally marked with sentiment and tears? We are expansive, we Hungarians, as you can judge for yourself to-night at my adopting this strain to you. What gave me the greatest joy, however, was the recognition of my affection for Leopold’s sister, for this feast was a celebration of another sort besides that of our entrance into military life. I had learnt to know and love Elsa during the first holiday I had spent in her father’s country-house in Styria, among the beautiful mountains that surround Grazt; but both families had refused to allow the engagement before my studies were ended. It was all well now, and
Elsa and I were happy. What Viennese women as you no doubt know; for my own part, I have always thought that they unite the charm of the Italian, the German, and the Frenchwoman, for they are passionate, sentimental, and vivacious. But that is not to the point.

I was still basking in the warmth of my acknowledged love, spending every spare moment from my military duties in the society of the only woman in the world for me, when a change took place in my affairs as the result of one of the absurd political tricks which, diplomats foolishly think, change the face of the world. All that they do, so far as I can see, is to alter the lives of a few individuals here and there, while the great human current flows on without apparent deviation. I only wish that the diplomats themselves were the first to suffer; it would certainly modify their ideas of their own importance to the world. However, as I said, political trouble disturbed my peace. The Austrian government, chiefly by its own meddling, found itself burdened with the task of putting down an invasion of the terrains vagues of Bulgaria. Bands of men, with hearts of tigers and the ingenuity of Chinese, were scouring the southern frontiers of our country, ravaging everything, disembowelling women and babes and torturing prisoners in the most inexpressible way. But this has become history by means of the newspapers. Judging from all accounts, it must have been fully equal to the hideousness of the Thirty Years’ War. In order to quell this, a very large number of Austrian and Hungarian troops of cavalry were sent out: and in order to meet the scattered bodies of Turks, we were divided into small groups of about twenty or thirty men each, with two officers to each small squadron. We were thus able to disperse over a very large territory; and I can assure you that whenever we caught a few of the fiends, they had very short shrift. One of them before dying, however, had time to grin and gloat over our ill-disseminated horror at what they told about the tortures inflicted on any of our men when they were caught. During several days, we did a great deal of execution, and I remember that at the end of one day my six-shooter had been emptied twelve times. Six of the shots had been executions; a prisoner was caught, hauled up to my saddle and in a moment with a gramme or two of lead in his cursed pate sank to the ground like a pack of old clothes. I actually got to like this sort of martial justice after a few days, and would rather have shot a Turk than a rat; for when we came to a ruined hamlet, the very stones of which were still smoking with blood and fire, some of the sights we found in kitchens and out-houses were enough to give a man nightmare for the rest of his life. In one place, I remember, we found six young girls, all together; minus eyes, tongue, nails, hair, and ears, and we had good reason to believe that these and death were not the only sufferings they had had to endure. I can tell you it required all that I could to keep my men from retaliating when any of the Tartar devils fell into our hands. This was a very stimulating life, in spite of all the danger, perhaps because of it; and yet night after night I slept in the open air with my saddle for a pillow, although being laid down I never could be sure that I should not die in torture before morning. But my dreams were always of Elsa, whose partings words of Liche bin in die Eweigkeit - Love for ever - reminded me night and morning that this though not the way to glory, was certainly sure to confirm our passion. It was my first taste of actual life, too; and the planning and execution, as cont rasted with my six year’s life at the cavalry school, seemed to make me feel that I was not only a Hungarian officer, but a man. I felt that life has been good to me in trying me before the ordinary
time; and I was glad that as commander of a handful of civilized men I could do my share in crushing the barbarians whom all Europe ought to combine in driving beyond the Bosphorus. I could not imagine any occurrence where my courage or my sense of duty would fail; if I fell, it was to die, for I would never be taken alive by the Turks. Like those of my fellow-officers my name was known to them as an unsparing captor, and in their hands my death would have been slow. None of these thoughts ever affected me, for the life was too full of activity to give time for them; and I was so weary at night, that I could only mosey to the memory of Elsa before sleeping like a baby. My poor orderly was always in an agony of terror lest he should be unable to wake me before a sudden surprise. But what gave me more courage than ever was a brief note from Elsa, brought me by the captain of a reinforcement. It contained all the usual assurances of loving women’s letters and words that made my cheeks tingle with pride. I have it with me now. I had scarcely sunk into my first sleep, it seemed, after reading my letter a dozen times, when I was waked by my orderly who told me that a trooper had brought orders from the colonel in command of the whole detachment bivouacked in one of the neighbourings valleys some miles away. They were to the effect that we must start at once, and proceed to a secluded place deep in the mountains, so as to surprise before daybreak, or not later than sunrise, a large body of Turks, who we were meditating a descent on us. This information the colonel professed to have received from some spy or deserter or prisoner. Our road was clearly indicated; it lay through forest and over hills by passable bridle-paths, known to one or two of my troopers, and finally led to a fairly steep descent, down which, punctually at five o’clock we were to charge on the flank of the Turks; while another squad was to take the other flank, and the colonel himself at the head of a strong body of heavier cavalry would dash up the main road. He thus reserved for himself, with the true courage of a Hungarian, the most desperately dangerous part of the enterprise, which at once struck me as singularly rash. The cavalry bugle, which could be heard for miles, was to be the signal. The valley in which the Turks lay was closed at the upper end, and thus we had them in a trap.

In a few minutes we were off, and winding our way through the magnificent forest of pines between which the stars picked them selves out in myriads over a sky clear and black as in the tropics. Our horses’ feet fell softly, almost without sound, on the carpet of pine-needles; and but for the deadly earnest of our midnight ride, and the absence of women, it might almost have seemed that we were bent on a party of pleasure. It was all I could do to keep my men from breaking out into a war song, or a stave to the lasses they had left behind at home. Just as the first cold grey of dawn was drawing its faint line over the distant horizon in the East beyond the hill tops, we reached a height some three or four hundred feet above the valley where the watch-fires of the Turks were beginning to die out. Our men were still concealed behind the thick growth of pine-forest, looking alternately at the encampment below and the distant mountain tops now ruddy with the first sunlight. I was wondering at the apparent im prudence of the enemy in placing no scouts or sentinels upon the hills; when suddenly, just as a golden bar struck down between two peaks on the huddled and motley gathering in the depths, the bugle-signal, caught up and repeated a dozen times by the echoes, rang in my ear. In a moment the quiet of the scene disappeared above and below. I had only time to notice that our other two detachments were equally ready and that the confusion of the Turks was very much
less than I had expected, before charging at the head of my small troop down the road which fortunately admitted of our riding three abreast, and so of forming a tolerably strong column thus deep. Our horses, of a surefooted mountain breed, kept their footing admirably so that the whole body arrived close to the encampment in perfect order; and as did the other two. I have never known a concerted movement to result in such perfect precision in mountain warfare. Everything appeared to be in our favour. But, to our amazement, we were received with a collective volley, which however did little damage as the Turks generally aim high at the first discharge. It was evident that our plan had been revealed; or, more probably (as I afterward thought), we had been led into an artful trap. I shall not lengthen my story by telling you of the fierce struggle that followed as we drove the yelling Turks back and back nearer the head of the valley, they retreating in splendid order, but leaving the ground covered with dead, who even in death grinned with white teeth in hatred of the conquering Frank. We gave no quarter nor asked for any. Our men, too, were falling here and there, as we advanced.

At last the Turks broke and fled, but not a we at first thought in utter rout; it was only to dash right and left up the steep hillsides, and form again behind a barrier of crags from which with cavalry alone it was impossible to dislodge them; and thence they picking off a man or a horse from time to time with a much better directed fire than at first. But to my dismay, on looking behind and above the beetling rocks, whence issued flashes of flame and puffs of smoke, I saw that the valley was by no means closed as we had been told. A clear discernible mountain-pass wound like a grey ribbon up and up the hills, at the summit of which, sharp against the blue, there now showed a spot of dark colour, telling of reinforcement that meant our utter destruction, if we did not retreat at once. The colonel having fallen almost at the first charge, the command devolved upon his second, a captain of lancers, lately promoted and exchanged from the staff near Pestli. He was nowhere to be seen. We learned afterwards that he had shown the white feather, and disappeared after dropping his sword, boots and everything possible to lighten his horse’s load. He was court-martialled; but escaped death; and the last time I was in Geneva he was acting as courier to the family of an English milord, with the daughters of whom he had no doubt better success than in the field, for he was unquestionably graceful and handsome. But to return. The loss of the commanding officer, and the defection of his second, utterly demoralized the men. In a moment, it was a general sauve-qui-peut, and I found myself clattering down the valley behind the galloping troopers, whom nothing could succeed in forming into anything like order. To complete our confusion, it now appeared that the lower open end of the valley was also to be closed to us, for some miles away we could see the dust of an advancing body, which could mean no help for us. Between flight the way we had come and selling our lives dearly we chose the former course; and the horses began to scramble up towards the pine woods we had left with hope a few hours before.

I was preparing to follow and save my skin, when from a group of fallen men at the foot of the mountain path I heard a voice piteously call my name; “Maurice!” The pulses throbbed in my throat. It was the voice of my old friend Leopold, whose presence in the engagement I had not known. After my departure in the night he had begged not to be separated from me, but to be allowed to join the principal attack. There he was lying
under his horse, which had broken its master’s leg in his fall. “Wait,” I said, “I will get you out; I think my horse can bear another behind me.” “Useless, my dear fellow. I am wounded in both hands, and have a musket bullet through my belly; I must die, but I can live for some hours yet. If I had been able to move my fingers, which one of the cursed rascals slashed over and over again as I was trying to get up, I could have finished myself with my revolver long ago, for I won’t be found alive. Have you your poison about you?” I must tell you that every officer in that service carried a tiny gold flask of prussic acid to avoid falling alive into the hand of the Turks if he was left on the battle-field. Eagerly I felt for my sabretache; but this had been cut away from my side in one of our furious charges. For one or two moments we looked at each other, when following the eyes of Leopold, which had slowly dropped from my glance, I saw that they had fallen on the revolver in my left hand containing my last cartridge. The mute dialogue lasted only a few seconds. “Goodbye, Maurice; thank you. Tell Elsa it was for my sake as well as hers. Love her as well as you do me. God bless you!”, he whispered hoarsely with parched lips, and then closed his eyes in pity for me.

A moment later, my now empty revolver was lying useless on the ground, and I was alone in the pine-woods above, turning only to look down at a dark patch in the valley, which was all that was left of my first and dearest friend.

The darkness of night had fallen before the Hungarian closed his tale with an almost breaking voice, and I hesitated to interrupt the silence, as I looked up at the indifferent, twinkling stars, when he suddenly resumed in the hardish voice I had noticed at first. “You understand à demi-mot, no doubt; but I shall feel relieved if I finish completely. My escape from that infernal Turkish trap was marvellous indeed; for I was in a mad, frenzied dream during the whole perilous ride back to camp. My prostration was complete and I was sent back to Vienna where the first words that met me were “Where is Leopold?” I am not surprised that my engagement was broken off by Elsa, though at the time it was very hard. It was not reasonable to suppose that a woman would marry the man who had killed her brother, even though it was to save him from something worse than death at his own wish. Perhaps she was right, and, as she said, the spirit of Leopold might have regretted it on seeing our happiness from another world. She soon went into a decline and was sent here to Meran, during which time she continued often to see me and to speak to me with the voice of love. But nothing shook her resolution, and two years ago she and I had our last long talk on the very bench where I have now told you the tragedy or the comedy of my life. Her grave you can see tomorrow behind the church, if, as you said, you are on the way to the Milsabyan early in the morning. I hope you will forgive a stranger for keeping you so long from your bed”.

I took the hint, and with the faithful bull-dog, who had several times shown signs of impatience slowly walked back to my room.

Paul T. Lafleur
LE COUP DE GRACE
by
PAUL T. LAFLEUR

My knowledge of the facts in the short tale that I have to tell is remarkable in only one point—and that is my getting possession of it at all. To any one who has not travelled, or who has travelled and harboured suspicion of all casual rencontre with his fellow worms, I shall appear to be merely inventing a mise-en-scene for my narrative. But the expansiveness of a lonely man, who finds a listening ear that he will never meet again, is proverbial. For my own part, I have never shrunk from hearkening to even the dullest of talking travellers, in the hope of coming on some strange bit of experience, unread human document, letting me see a little further into the complexity of life and character. The impulse to communicate to a stranger things which one hardly dares to reflect on in the darkness of the night—crime, weaknesses, treachery, the deceptions of life, or merely grotesque blunders that cause the very soul to burn and blush—has always been to me inexplicable. But the past is there; the event often happens. Generally, too, one can see the evident relief the patient feels; and also his very obvious eagerness to get rid of the stranger who now knows too much. A few years ago, at the end of my first days walking through the beautiful south Austrian Tyrol I had arrived at Meran, a little foot-sore and not a little hungry after five hours on foot. It was a beautiful evening in early June, and though the inevitable veal cutlet with bread-crumbs, the black bread and cheese, the copious of native Austrian beer, provided in my modest inn, had made me feel the leaden weight of my legs more and more, I began to think of a stroll. I must admit that the presence of a comely and chatty hand-maiden—the type of a village Marguerite—who had taken down a zither on hearing me hum a German air, and had already shown proof of her skill, was a strong inducement to remain with my cigar under the vine bower where my table had been spread; but the arrival of some admiring ravers of the nymph spoilt a tete-a-tete and the dream of an idyll at one blow. I went out accompanied by a huge bull-dog belonging to the house, who at first terrified me by nuzzling suspiciously about my tired legs, but became my firm, inseparable friend after a few solid crumbs from my table. For some time I heard, besides the distant noises of the little town, nothing but the scrunch of gravel under my feet and the irregular tap of his bandy legs, with the accompaniment of the roaring stream whose waters join the etch, the Adige, and finally flow past Verona and so into the loveliest of all lands. The path I followed wound along its banks at some little height above the water, and was all embowered with shrubs, through the meshes of which the glorious gold of evening was turning into delicate rose. Against this the leaf and branch patterns detached themselves with the firm black of an etching; all trace of solidity was gone; it was a study of black lines and spots against golden pink. It was hard to believe that this little peaceful town, a favourite resort of consumptives, had been the headquarters of the brave Tyrolese rebellion against the great emperor, the home of Andreas Hofer. As I was trying to get myself into the truly historical frame of mind, a sudden turn of the path brought me close to a bench and almost face to face with its occupant whose countenance I could not make out, and never
really saw at all, for it was now growing dark. But remembering that smoking was forbidden on the paths on account of the invalids, I hastened to throw my cigar into the water below, though the season was early for consumptives and no one in that condition was likely to be there in the evening dew. As I was passing by, an extremely pleasant voice said in good English but with a Viennese accent: “I hope, sir, you did not throw away your cigar on my account. Please take one of mine”. As I was about to strike a match he held out his own cigar, and so again I lost the chance of seeing his face. I have since thought that the sense of security he felt under these conditions accounted for his subsequent want of reticence. At his invitation I took my seat near him, and a very few minutes showed me that I had the good fortune to meet a man of the world with a singular charming conversation. Unlike the majority of such casual companions he had the gift of avoiding all the beaten tracks of common-place, guide book rhapsody, swindling, and nasty quarters in hotels, praise of his own country, and so forth; and a more discreet, less inquisitive man about other persons’ affairs I have never met. We had been eagerly discussing the Triple Alliance and the policy of Count Kalinoky he said switching off into voluble German when he found that I could follow – and occasionally into snatches into what I took to be Hungarian for which he promptly apologized – when a chance remark of mine suddenly gave to our talk a turn for which I was totally unprepared. I forget now exactly what it was, but it soon led to an animated difference of opinion as to the hardness, the inevitableness of fate, in spite of our efforts to do what we think right, or at least expedient. I was beginning to think, from a shade of hardness in his tone, that he must have had some serious trouble in his life, when to my surprise he broke into a strain of personal talk, as though wishing to support his convictions, and ease his spirit of a burden at the same time. “I cannot convince you with theories, I see; let me tell you my own experience. It will perhaps not weary you and it cannot hurt me to speak out that of which I think during every unoccupied moment of my rather active life. I am an officer in Hungarian regiment of Light Horse; but though a Hungarian was educated in a cavalry school near Vienna, my father thinking it necessary for me to become a perfect master of the German language. During my six years stay in the school, I became very intimate with a young Viennese of good family, between whom and myself the constant rivalry of the study, the exercise-grounds, and the fencing-school never marred our friendship, a most usual thing between Austrians and Hungarians. We seemed in our intimacy to show that the two ever hostile elements in the empire could be harmonized, if only the different members would study one another instead of stupidly handing down the old race hatred from generation to generation. I remember how the (commandant,) in his closing address when we came out equal at the end, and had won our commissions in the same troop of Hussars, made a direct reference to the fusion of races exemplified in the perfect friendship that had united two of his departing cadets. Need I say that the intimate dinner that evening, which joined our two families at the house of my friend’s father was first gay, and finally marked with sentiment and tears? We are expansive, we Hungarians, as you can judge for yourself tonight at my adopting this strain to you. What gave me the greatest joy, however, was the recognition of my affection for Leopold’s sister, for this feast was a celebration of another sort besides that of our entrance into military life. I had learnt to know and love Elsa during the first holiday I had spent in her father’s country house in Styria, among the beautiful mountains that surround Graz; but both families had refused to allow the engagement before my studies were ended. It was
all well now, and Elsa and I were happy. What Viennese women are you no doubt know; for my own part, I have always thought that they unite the charm of the Italian, the German, and the French woman, for they are passionate, sentimental, and vivacious. But that is not to the point.

I was still basking in the warmth of my acknowledged love, spending every spare moment from my military duties in the society of the only woman in the world for me, when a change took place in my affairs as a result of one of the absurd political tricks which diplomats foolishly think, change the face of the world. All that they do, so far as I can see, is to alter the lives of a few individuals here and there, while the great human current flows on without apparent deviation. I only wish that the diplomats themselves were the first to suffer; it would certainly modify their ideas of their own importance to the world. However, as I said, political trouble disturbed my peace. The Austrian government, chiefly by its own meddling found itself burdened with the task of putting down an invasion of the terrains vagues of Bulgaria. Bands of men, with hearts of tigers and the ingenuity of Chinese, were scouring the southern frontiers of our country, ravaging everything disembowelling and torturing prisoners in the most inexpressible way. But this has become history by means of the newspapers. Judging from all accounts, it must have been fully equal to the hideousness of the Thirty Years War. In order to quell this, a very large number of Austrian and Hungarian troops of cavalry were sent out: and in order to meet the scattered bodies of Turks we were divided into small groups of about twenty or thirty men each, with two officers to each detachment. We were thus able to disperse over a very large territory; and I can assure you th at whenever we caught a few of the fiends, they had very short shrift. One of them before dying, however, had time to grin and gloat over our ill-dissembled horror of what they told about the tortures inflicted upon any of our men when they were caught. During several days we did a great deal of execution, and I remember at the end of one day my six-shooter had been emptied twelve times. Six of the shots had been executions; a prisoner was caught, hauled up to my saddle and in a moment with a grammie or two of lead in his cursed pate, sank to the ground like a pack of old clothes. I actually got to like this sort of martial justice after a few days, and would rather have shot a Turk than a rat; for when we came to a ruined hamlet, the very stones of which were still smoking with blood and fire, some of the sights we found in kitchens and out-houses were enough to give a man a nightmare for the rest of his life. In one place, I remember, we found six young girls all together; minus eyes, tongue, nails, hair, and ears, and we had good reason to believe that these and death were not the only sufferings they had had to endure. I can tell you it required all that I could to keep my men from retaliating when any of the Tartar devils fell into our hands. This was a very stimulating life, in spite of all the danger, perhaps because of it; and yet night after night I slept in the open air with my saddle as a pillow, although on lying down I never could be sure that I should not die in torture before morning. But my dreams were always of Elsa, whose partings words of love for ever reminded me night and morning that this, though not the way to glory, was certainly sure to confirm our passion. It was my first taste of actual life, too; and the planning and execution, as contrasted with my six years life at the cavalry school, seemed to make me feel that I was not only a Hungarian officer, but a man. I felt that life has been good to me in trying me before the ordinary time; and I was glad that as commander of a handful of civilized men...
I could do my share in crushing the barbarians whom all Europe should combine in driving beyond the Bosphorus. I could not imagine any occurrence where my courage or my senses of duty would fail; if I fell, it was to die, for I would never be taken alive by the Turks. Like those of my fellow-officers my name was known to them as an unsparing captor, and in their hands my death would have been slow. None of these thoughts ever affected me, for the life was too full of activity to give time for them; and I was so weary at night, that I could only give a moment to the memory of Elsa before sleeping like a baby. My poor orderly was always in agony of terror lest he should be unable to awaken me before a sudden surprise. But what gave me more courage than ever was a brief note from Elsa, brought me by the captain of a re-enforcement. It contained all the usual assurances of loving women’s letters and words that made my cheeks tingle with pride. I have it with me now. I had scarcely sunk into my first sleep, it seemed, after reading my letter a dozen times, when I was waked by my orderly who told me that a trooper had brought orders from the colonel in command of the whole detachment bivouacked in one of the neighbouring valleys some miles away. They were to the effect that we must start at once, and proceed to a secluded place deep in the mountains, so as to surprise before daylight, a large body of Turks. This information the colonel confessed to have received from some spy, deserter or prisoner. Our road was clearly indicated; it lay through forest and over hills by passable bridle-paths, known to one or two of my troopers, and finally led to a perilous steep descent, down which, punctually at five o’clock we were to charge on the flank of the Turks: while another detachment was to take the other flank, and the colonel himself at the head of a strong body of heavy cavalry would dash up the main road. He thus reserved for himself, with the true courage of a Hungarian, the most dangerous part of the enterprise, which at once struck me as singularly rash. The cavalry bugle which could be heard for miles, was to be the signal. The valley in which the Turks lay was closed at the upper end and thus we had them in a trap. In a few minutes we were off, and winding our way through the magnificent forest of pines between which the stars picked themselves out in millions over a sky clear and black as in the tropics. Our horses feet fell softly, almost without sound, on the carpet of pine needles; and but for the deadly earnest of our midnight ride, and the absence of women, it might have almost seemed that we were bent on a party of pleasure. It was all I could do to keep my men from breaking out into a war song, or a stave to the lasses they had left behind at home. Just as the first cold grey of dawn was drawing its faint line over the distant horizon in the east beyond the hill tops, we reached a height some three or four hundred feet above the valley where the camp-fires of the Turks were beginning to die out. Our men were still concealed behind the thick growth of pine forest, looking alternately at the encampment below and the distant mountain tops, now ruddy with the first sunlight. I was wondering at apparent imprudence of the enemy in placing no scouts or sentinels upon the hills; when suddenly, just as a golden bar struck down between two peaks on the huddled and motley gathering in the depths, the bugle signalled, caught up and repeated a dozen times by the echoes, rang in my ear. In a moment the quiet of the scene disappeared above and below. I had only time to notice that our other two detachments were equally ready and that the confusion of the Turks was very much less than I had expected, before charging at the head of my small troop down the road which fortunately admitted of our riding three abreast and so forming a tolerably strong column. Our horses of a sure-footed mountain breed, kept their footing admirably so that the
whole body arrived close to the encampment in perfect order; and so did the other two. I have never known a concerted movement to result in such perfect precision in mountain warfare. Everything appeared to be in our favour. But, to our amazement, we were received with a collective volley, which however, did little damage as the Turks generally aim high at the first discharge. It was evident that our plan had been revealed; or, more probably (as I afterward thought) we had been led into an artful trap. I shall not lengthen my story by telling you of the fierce struggle that followed, as we drove the yelling Turks back and back nearer the head of the valley, they retreating in splendid order, but leaving the ground covered with dead who even in death grinned with white teeth in hatred of the conquering Frank. We gave no quarter nor asked for any. Our men, too, were falling here and there as we advanced. At last the Turks broke and fled, but not as we had first thought in utter rout; it was only to dash right and left up the steep hillsides and form again behind a barrier of crags from which with cavalry alone it was impossible to dislodge them; and thence they picking off a man or a horse from time to time with a much better directed fire than at first. But to my dismay, on looking behind and above the beetling rocks, whence issued flashes of flame and puffs of smoke, I saw that the valley was by no means closed as we had been told. A clear discernible mountain pass wound like a grey ribbon up and up the hills, at the summit of which, sharp against the blue, there now showed a spot of dark colour, telling of reinforcements that meant our utter destruction, if we did not retreat at once. The colonel having fallen almost at the first charge, the command devolved upon his second, a captain of lancers lately promoted and exchanged from the staff near Pestli. He was nowhere to be seen. We learned afterwards that he had shown the white feather and disappeared after dropping his sword, boots and everything possible to lessen his horse’s load. He was afterwards court-martialled; but escaped death; and the last time I was in Geneva he was acting as courier to the family of an English milord, with the daughters of whom he had no doubt better success than in the field, for he was unquestionably gracious and handsome. But to return, the loss of the commanding officer and the defection of his second in command, utterly demoralized the men. In a moment it was a general sauve-qui-peut, and I found myself clattering down the valley behind the galloping troopers, whom nothing could induce to form into anything like order. To complete our confusion, it now appeared that the lower open end of the valley was also closed to us for some miles away we could see the dust of an advancing body, which could mean no help for us. Between flight the way we had come and selling our lives dearly we chose the former course; and the horses began to scramble up towards the pine woods we had left with hope a few hours before. I was preparing to follow and save my skin, when from a group of fallen men at the foot of the mountain path I heard a voice piteously calling my name; “Maurice!” The pulses throbbed in my throat. It was the voice of my old friend Leopold, whose presence in the engagement I had not known. After my departure in the night he had begged not to be separated from me, but to be allowed to join the principal attack. There he was, lying under his horse which had broken its master’s leg in its fall. “Wait,” I said, “I will get you out; I think my horse can bear another behind me”.

“Useless, my dear fellow. I am wounded in both hands, and have a musket ball through my belly; I must die, but I can live for some hours yet. If I had been able to move my fingers, which one of the cursed rascals slashed over and over again as I was trying to
get up, I w ould have finished m yself with my revolver long ago, for I won’t be found alive. Have you your poison about you?”

I must tell, you that every officer in that service carried a tiny gold flask of prussic acid to avoid falling alive into the hand of the Turks if he was left on the battlefield. Eagerly I felt for m y sabretache; but this had been cut away from my side in one of our furious charges. For one or two moments we looked at each other, when following the eyes of Leopold, which had slowly dropped from my glance, I saw that they had fallen on the revolver in my left hand containing my last cartridge. The mute dialogue lasted only a few seconds. “Good-bye, Maurice; thank you. Tell Elsa it was for m y sake as well as hers. Love her as well as you do m e. God bless you!”, he whis pered hoarsely with parched lips, and then closed his eyes in pity for me. A moment later, m y now empty revolver was lying useless on the ground, and I was alone in the pine woods above, turning only once to look down at a dark patch in the valley which was all that was left of my first and dearest friend. The darkness of night had fallen before the Hungarian closed his tale with an almost breaking voice, and I hesitated to interrupt the silence, as I looked up at the indifferent twinkling stars, when he suddenly resumed in the hard voice I had noticed at first.

“You understand our demi-mot, no doubt; but I shall feel relieved if I finish completely. My escape from that infernal Turkish trap was marvellous indeed; for I was in a mad, frenzied dream during the whole perilous ride back to camp. My prostration was complete and I was sent back to Vienna where almost the first words that met me were “Where is Leopold?” I am not surprised that my engagement was broken off by Elsa, though at the time it was very hard. It was not reasonable to suppose that a woman would marry the man who had killed her brother, even though it was to save him from something worse than death at his own wish. Perhaps she was right, and, as she said, the spirit of Leopold might have regretted when seeing our happiness from another world. She soon went into a decline and was sent here to Meran, during which time she continued often to see me and to speak to me with the voice of love. But nothing shook her resolution, and two years ago she and I had our last long talk on the very bench where I have now told you that tragedy or the comedy of my life. Her grave you can see tomorrow behind the church, if, as you said, you are on the way to Milsabyan early in the morning, I hope you will forgive a stranger for keeping you so long from your bed”. I took the hint, and with the faithful bull-dog who had several times shown signs of impatience slowly walked back to my room.
The Farewell

The cry of « All ashore! » had been twice repeated before a handsome, well dressed young woman, who had been for several minutes talking quite naturally with her departing husband, turned towards the gang-plank after a rapid embrace. Her high-heeled shoes were the last to tap on the lumbering structure before it fell with a crash on the dock. The stay cables were cast off; and the huge white vessel backed slowly away from her moorings to the sound of a gun and a hideously hoarse whistle, while all the time as is the fashion with the Germans, an irrelevant brass band on the deck thumped and blew on the instrument out of all time and tune.

A simple wave of a lace handkerchief, and the young élégante, whose brougham was waiting on the dock, stepped into it and drove home. There, without taking off her bonnet she sat down at a desk and wrote rapidly for more than an hour, put the letter safely away, and again went out just as it was growing dark. The letter, which subsequently came into my possession, is now old; paper and ink are faded, discoloured; but the handwriting is firm, and there is neither erasure nor correction from beginning to end. Odder still, for a woman’s letter, it is accurately, even punctiliously, dated; there is no postscript; and not a word is underscored.

"Dear Harry,

You could not guess that our parting on the deck was a final one. When you read this I shall long since have ceased to be your wife. If the reading of my real feelings causes you pain, pray remember that I have not come to the writing of them without some suffering on my part, and that that suffering is owing to your own conduct towards me, as well as to my exacting nature.

The experiment of our marriage has now lasted two years; so far as I am concerned, it has been a failure so complete that to prolong it any further goes beyond my strength. I only wonder that you did not suspect it before now, but I took good care to prevent that, for nothing that you could do would have made it bearable. Your business-trip to Europe gives me an opportunity that in our ordinary life would have been hard to find, without chances of scandal and pain to others besides you; and your grief, I am afraid, will not be over long.

You will understand, though I do not think you will feel, what I say about the relation between you and myself. Our characters are so different, our view of everything were from the very first so wide apart, that I am still wondering how I could ever have imagined that I love you; still more hour I love you yet – but not enough. By degrees, I came nearer to you, but you have not moved; and this is what I cannot bear. You have taken from me, one by one, all the things which my girlhood had taught me to prize and love, and in return you have given me your unchanging self. I do not speak of your social position and our wealth, because you known yourself that by marrying you I neither gained nor lost in this way. If I dissect the subject in this hard fashion, believe me, I learnt the trick from you. It is true that I have not to complain of the common disillusions that make so many women grow old before their time. I have always heard you spoken of as an honest and honourable man before the world; you have been true to me. I believe; and for a man your temper is admirable. But you have taught me the philosophy of
disenchantment, and the girl you married can no longer worship at any shrine; you, her former idol, cannot even play the poor part of a fetish. Shall I, for your intellectual diversion, tell you the history of this – what you could call the psychological history of a situation?

It began with your discouraging all my attempts about six months after our short wedding journey at writing and painting. You expressed contempt of all amateur work; you insisted that the only secret of good literary or artistic work was in the necessity of having to do it in order to live; and you shewed me my weak spots with such distinctness as to convince me that any of my efforts must always be inferior. There is no use, you said, in being merely a respectable mediocrity in letters or art, for it only makes the competition harder for those to whom the way to publication is a mean of livelihood. I thank you, however, for teaching me to express myself clearly. For your destruction of my hopes. I do not feel grateful; perhaps a little sympathy with my vanity would have been a wiser course for you to take. It was a very short time after this that I, as you said, took up a new pad, by beginning to think less of myself and more of others. But when I proposed to spend some of the time I had to spare now I had given up literature, in doing some work with our wretched poor, you told me that you had no wish to see your wife going about slumming and possibly catching or bringing home all sorts of disgusting diseases; as for charitable meetings, why these were only pretenses for idle women to neglect their own homes for gossip and gadding. Since we were wealthy, we could give as much as we liked to be distributed in the right way by clergymen and others who really understood that kind of work better than those who had not been trained to it. The chequebook you gave me, generously enough, at the time is still untouched; for I had one of my own. But there were deeper feelings which you could not understand; or, perhaps because you understood them too well, you did your best to crush them – and you succeeded. It was this that vitiated all my ideas and feelings, and has since made marriage with you or any men – nay, life itself – intolerable. Only four months ago, when we were by chance alone one evening, I happened to take up “The Princess” and read the last part aloud to you, until I could no longer command my voice. I can’t tell you what a shock it gave me when I saw your smile and heard your sneer at “the mawkish sentiment that Tennyson had set a going, the weak optimism that rested on no convictions, and had done more to make men and women sigh after the impossible than the real thinkers could destroy”. You know the correctives you gave me from your own shelves, which I read as you said a wife should. I read them, hated them, - lost another illusion. Besides, you added, Tennyson, like other poets, had made his wife unhappy in the conventional, vulgar way; and all his rhapsodies about women growing in moral breadth, and men in “sweetness and moral height” were the cheapest kind of concessions to English sentiment that will not acknowledge how unhappy most marriages are, unless they start fair on a basis of common sense. You see, I have remembered my lesson well, though a woman’s bitterness in learning it is a little different from that of a man. These disappointments I might perhaps have borne, although I realised more and more every day how much your character and opinions must jar with my own. I think I could have learnt in time to think of your real worth and resign myself to the hopeless differences that would forever separate us. But you were not satisfied with this; and a few weeks ago you gave me a deeper wound than any, a wound from which my heart is bleeding still. When we dined with our friends the A’s, the sight of their two comely children asleep in the nursery made
me forget myself as we drove home, and you will remember my expressing sorrow that we had no nursery, and no hope of any, in our own house, you replied by quoting from some German pessimist that motherhood was not beautiful, for it robbed a woman of all her best charm, and brought her down to the common load of any then domestic animal. The moment a woman, become a mother, you said, that moment her whole personality is merged in a necessary, but disgusting, task. – I cannot go on. I could never make you feel what I suffered. It seemed to me that any woman must simply loathe your companionship, after hearing you speak in that way. Why did you? Must a man like you never discover the secrets of a woman’s heart without making it slowly bleed to death? Oh Harry I understand now the sadness in your mother’s voice when she kissed me and said; “I hope, dear, that you will find happiness with my boy”. This is why she died so soon; when the burden of your hard nature left her, she had nothing more to bear. I only wish that she had loved you less, or me a little more.

So, you see, I am wise now. Your justice, your hardness, and your selfishness have taught me much. They have shewn me that I have nothing in life to look forward to but slowly growing older by your side, living for you but within myself. And as I look on towards the coming years, I can see what you call my beauty waning, my spirits sinking under the load of your unyielding character, and yourself losing your affection for the wife of your youth, while I told down the weary way of life, alone. For there is one thing you could never do. I will do you the justice of saying that you never tried. Other women sometimes seek consolation, and find only deeper grief, in the help of other men than their husband. But though you have made me despise my own intelligence, killed my sense of duty and my feelings, you have not destroyed my self-respect.

And so I bid you good bye, Harry. It is very simple and not so hard as I thought. When I return from my quiet dinner at the As’, where I shall complain of neuralgia, I shall simply double my dose of morphia, and to-morrow you will be alone once more, but not more alone than I have been since I married you. It will be put down to a mistake, and so appearance (the only thing you ever seemed really to care for) are saved. When I am gone, I do not ask you to think again of

**Gertrude**

Harry enjoyed his “business-trip” immensely. Instead of going directly to Italy he got off at the Azores, where the ship put in for a few hours; and as the business was by no means pressing, he waited, in order to have some wild-fowl shooting, for the regular Porte-June steamer which took him to Oporto. It was only many weeks later that an old copy of Galignani’s Messenger fell into his hands at the Hotel Quirinale in Rome. Thus he learnt of the accidental death from an overdose of morphia of his young and charming wife, for the various telegram to Gibrale had from the characteristics Spanish carelessness never reaches their destination. He never saw the letter and does not to this day known of its existence. He philosophically resolved to bury his grief in Europe, and wrote to an intimate friend to sell his furniture and let the house. At the sale this friend brought a desk, in which by accident he found the spring of a secret drawer, where the letter had been hidden. From him this letter, as too dangerous to keep, yet too precious to lose, came to me; and I have transcribed it word for word.
Harry’s second wife is a jolly, conformable sort of woman, “with no nonsense” about her as her husband says. He has since modified his opinions about a nursery, for he confided to me some time ago that his eldest boy had filled his cup of happiness to the brim by breaking his collar-bone in the last Yale-Harvard football match.

Paul T. Lafleur
The Devil

Our last subject of The Contract suggested, collaterally, a discussion in which some of us took part, namely, the existence of the devil as a distinct personality, with a determinable influence on the feelings, the thoughts, and the actions of mankind. I held at the time, and still hold, that the vast majority of cultivated spirits, especially in the European world, have long since ceased to believe in the personality of the Devil, just as they refrain from assigning specific attributes to the underlying Force in all things, to which theology in all its divers forms gives the name of God. With the steadily increasing shadowiness of Theisus, there infallibly goes a corresponding thinning out of the conception of Satan. Etherealise one notion, and you inevitably must reduce the tangibility of its antithesis.

All our philosophy of the last two or three generations seems to have lent its energies to the obliterating of distinctions consecrated by centuries of thinking on the part of philosophers of every race in times past. The effect of this in observable even in the sphere of ethics, for here, as our criminal trials of late years only too clearly shew there is a distinct tendency in many minds to remove or rather to rub out the old line sharply delimiting right and wrong. Old distinctions are disappearing, and nothing takes their place. The result is a confusion in moral judgement that would have appalled the consciences of our Puritan or Calvinist ancestors. I am perfectly aware that in the opinion of some advanced sociologists this is but one sign of the moral evolution of the race, whose ideas are slowly transforming themselves under the influence of what they pompously call the données nouvelles of scientific ethics. Absolutism having been driven out of religion, is forbidden to fall back into the entrenchment of morals. It would not be difficult to argue from another point of view that we have here another symptom of degeneration. I trust that Max Nordau will some day write a sequel to his recent work taking up this side of the question.

But I must confess, for my part, when I hear the palliations that are offered for the shamelessness of men who every day violate public and private trusts, when in addresses to juries I come across pleas against which one’s whole moral sense rises in revolt, and (worst of all) when I witness the lazily cynical acquiescence of the great mass of the cultivated public in the lax maxims which now seem to pass for moral judgments, it seems to me that our ancestors with their old-fashioned Dualism of God and Satan, right and wrong, were better able to cope with the problem of life than ourselves.

Paul T. Lafleur
The New Woman

What is meant by such a phrase as The New Woman” is a puzzle to most men; nor can it be said that a complete satisfactory answer has been given. Our opinions, nay our judgements, are so strongly coloured by our own experience or our own want of experience. What each one of us is a David (Daniel) in to him self, and an emblem of ignorance to the mass of his jeering fellows’. Few men stand sufficiently aloof from the ordinary fate of A-law to take an outside r’s view of what is admitted to be an interesting theme for discussion – a still more fascinating subject of conjecture. Most of us close the book of life, or turn down this attractive paper, with the riddle unread after all. We learn as little of New Women, as we do of women in general. The one enigma we think we have solved in the choice of our lives mockingly eludes our grasp while “L’éternel féminin” smiles like the Lorelei on the Sphinx over the failure of all our hopes. And for this reason woman is forever new, though, unfortunately, in this respect and like other new things, she falls upon us at times. It is therefore not with the hope of solving the problem that I have ventured on a subject to me unknown; what I have to say is picked up and put together from stray impressions, the mildest utterance of which has before this evening been met with crushing scorn by women who were not all new.

The merest glance at the silly literature produced through the idea underlying the title of our evening’s subject would lead any man to infer, that the predominant characteristic of The New Woman is aggressiveness. Like Jeshuran, she has waxed fat - and kicked. What in the name of the Father of Evil she has to kick about, she has been more voluble than explicit in telling us. I should judge from the little I have had the courage to read, and the more to which, out of politeness, I have been forced to listen to in silence, that the Extreme Left of the New Woman movement has realised little else than its own restlessness and discontent with things in general – a very natural outcome of the individualism of the tail end of the nineteenth century. Given aspirations without capacity, impudence without strength, fluency without eloquence, conciseness of rights for self without recognition of those of others, - a boundless self-esteem and an equally boundless contempt of that poor and transparent creature, man – ignorance of life with readiness to decide by sentiment all its most intricate problems – regard for fact only in so far as it supports a forgone conclusion; - and here you have the type of the self-appointed demagogue of a down-trodden sex.

I am assured, however, that even a milder copy of this picture is not a portrait – not even a caricature – but a complete travesty. The New Woman, it is said, is all that her grandmother was, and something more. Her spokeswoman is not the brawler in literature, vain of applause, and more intolerant of opposition than a priest. Her protest is firm, but not noisy; it will be heard. The most definite expression of her desire and resolve is that of Nora Helmer in “A doll’s House”;

“You forget that you are a wife and mother”. “I remember that I am a human being”. This, then, seems to be the plea. “There are lots of things that we women would like to enjoy in life, which are forbidden us by the laws that men have made. We don’t wish to merge our individuality in another’s simply because we are forced to do it; when we are
willing, that is another affair. But you men insist on drawing a sort of cordon sanitaire about our duties, our occupations, our very pleasures; and such restrictions on your own, you would be the first to resent. It is not, as you pretend, in the interests of society that this is done, but merely to gratify your own vanity—and selfishness. It preserves society as it is, true enough; but our contention is that society needs reconstruction or re-organisation. Not until that is accomplished by letting us women have our own way in so far as regards our own lives can we hope to see any approach to the form of ideal society that our philosophers dream of. You are afraid of consequences? We are not; we have sufficient confidence in ourselves to promise you that by this increase of freedom (which we shall take, if you do not give it willingly) we shall only learn to know and love you better. You will then get from us more truth and less flattery. Truth you get from your equals; flattery, from your slaves. If you answer that you have rivals enough in the world, that competition is making life much too impossible for the average man, we have our reply all ready. Do not deceive yourselves, well-breeched brethren; women will not be your rivals, they will be your superiors, but kinder to you as mistresses—because wiser than you have been to us as masters. Our ideals are not yours; they are purer and nobler. At all events, we are bound to have our way. The sooner you give in with at least a show of good grace, the better for yourselves in the end; and this we think the strongest appeal we can make, for it touches your selfishness”. Like every other piece of special pleading that I have heard, this is ingenious and plausible enough. It winds up, too, with the usual irrelevancy of women in argument, by saying that discussion is useless the field is all but won.

But, as I hinted before, why all this dust, especially in civilised countries? If a woman wishes to show her individuality—why in the name of all that is sensible doesn’t she? I for my part cannot see why any woman who chooses to take up a career, follow a line of enquiry, practice a certain profession., should not do so. In America the only two callings legally denied to women are law and politics. Let her do as man does. When a youth with energy and talent is opposed in his choice by his parents on the social circle in which he moves, he strikes out for himself and makes for himself the facilities which have been denied him. The natural strength of his character makes him independent of public opinion, which it is his aim to conquer and command. We men are by no means so untrammelled as women seem to think; but the difficulties that birth, fortune, accident have thrown in our way, we take pride in overcoming, and most of us try to keep silence about them till we have grown old, garrulous, and irresponsible. The truth of the matter seems to me to lie in the fact that women from their maturing rather early get caught by social surroundings at an age when boys are still in training. Their own, or their mother’s social aspirations—whether high or low—force them into a way of life that makes them crave for approbation. How many of them at eighteen or twenty would be willing do you think, to practice all the self-restraint, the application, the labour of the youth in the country-house, the office, or the college class-room? I admit that when at that age they become mothers their self-devotion and sacrifice is a beautiful moral spectacle. But this is impulsive rather than rational. If I am to judge from my fifteen years’ experience in teaching the young of both sexes, I infer that the pursuit of anything for its own sake, without guidance or hope of succeeding, in the rare exception among young women, a very general rule indeed with boys; and until this
fundamental difference in character disappears, I cannot give my approval to any schemes which tend to reduce the relative dependence of woman as a factor in human society.

Paul T. Lafleur
Hunger

I remember with almost painful intensity the very tone and accent of the little urchin as he answered my question. I had been dreaming away a delightful sunset hour, leaning on a deserted corner of the stone parapet that commands the view over the matchless bay of Naples; and as with advancing darkness Vesuvius shot up a superb firework for my special enjoyment, and the promontory of Sorrento faded more and more into delicate purple haze, it seemed as though Nature herself had bid me be glad with the quiet joy that is so near akin to sadness. It was not without impatience that I answered the boy who had disturbed, my reverie with the eternal cry of “Soldo, Signore”; but there was something so piteous in his repetition of it that I could not but feel the depth of real human want and suffering in the corner cry lace, exasperating words of the Neapolitan beggar. I turned to look at him, and saw the jauntiest little figure possible, whose two staring black eyes in his poor little wan face, looked up at me in an appeal such as, I am glad, to say I have never beheld in the “sturdy rogues” of our own streets.

“Are you really hungry.”

“Si Signore; sempre”. Yes, Sir; always, he replied.

Fortunately, a passing bun-seller, who happened to be belated, came by just at that moment; and I can know what it is to see one ravenous little beast satisfy his hunger for once in his life. Of such stuff, I thought, as I walked back to my hotel, are anarchists and socialists made. Here, in this little famished boy, is the embryo of the mafia. My attention had never before been turned to this side of the social problem, at least in the same direct and concrete form. I have often thought of it since; and on looking, as a logician should, in the facts of the case, I find it asserted, on incontrovertible authority, that in such cities as London, and even in New York, there are every day from forty to fifty thousand persons who are literally on the verge of starvation ninety-nine days out of a hundred.

My Neapolitan ragazzino and I represent the two conflicting powers in the modern social organisation, - those who have and those who have not. There we can read the question itself, not (unfortunately) its solution, of the whole problem of modern sociology and economics- the problem of distribution. To this two answers are given, radically opposite, hopelessly irreconcilable. The older of these dates, as every one knows in economic literature from the time of Malthus. It insists that however willing legislators and philanthropists many be, they never can overc ome the stern law that population is bound to increase faster than the means of subsistence can be supplied. Given a circumscribed tract of territory, and even under the most favourable conditions, its population will tend to increase at a much greater rate of speed than the most improved methods of food-production can cope with. The larger the aggregation of human beings, the greater must the suffering be; and the only thing that legislators can do is to attempt to check the growth of the people beyond the possibilities of bare subsistence. Thus, thus only, can the evil be minimised, though never eradicated. It is needless to add that in the last thirty-odd years the Malthusian doctrine has received a powerful ally through the application of the belief in the “struggle for existence and survival of the fittest”, which some sociologists have striven to transfer from biology to sociology. But there is another answer to the question- the answer of the socialist. That answer is as old as Christianity. Hear how one
of its great poet speaks; - “If every just man that now pines with want, Had but a moderate and befitting share Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury now heaps upon some few with vast excess, Nature’s full blessings would be well-dispensed. In unsuperfluous ever proportion. And she no which encumbered with her store”. It seems to me that at the head of every book on political and social economy this passage should stand as the motto. But I only raise the question, for its solution is beyond me.

Paul T. Lafleur
The Lost Treasure

In the Life and Letters of Charles Darwin published by his son there occurs a passage that has often been quoted, but of which the true significance and interpretation have, so far as I know, escaped the commentators. During the last twenty years of his nobly industrious life Darwin more than once expressed to one or two of his most intimate friends his profound regret that a great enjoyment had passed away from him completely. The English poets who in his youth and manhood had been much to him, now gave him no pleasure at all. Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton were names, familiar indeed, but without suggestive warmth. The spell they once exercised over his imagination had vanished like the factitious gold of fairyland. With the admirable candour that characterises his every utterance, Darwin ascribes this aesthetic decay not to the poets, but to himself. He is aware that having cultivated his power of observing facts, and having bent his energies to the harmonizing of these facts in highly abstract, synthetic propositions, he is now compelled by the stern law of compensation to pay the penalty. He has unwittingly sacrificed the artistic, to the scientific, enjoyment of life; but to that sacrifice he can never be wholly reconciled. What another, with far less generosity of intellectual sympathy, would have given up cheerfully in return for the splendid result of his life of scientific work, he never ceases to regret with a manly, subdued emotion that might well be imitated by the poets who went over their vanished youth.

To the majority of the reader of the Life of Darwin, the point here raised probably seems to be settled by the man himself. It will be said by many an intelligent man or woman that every arduous intellectual career resuscitates the giving up of something that we may have learnt to love; and the antithesis between art and science remains so strong, in spite of recent aesthetic theories, that it is utterly impossible for any man to attain eminence in one sphere of activity while at the same time retaining a living interest in, and feeling for, the other. The demands of modern life on individual energy are too great to allow of any dispersion or oscillation in our efforts; and consequently we must expect to find some of our powers becoming in time atrophied from disuse, and perhaps even perishing altogether with decay.

But there is something more than this very obvious answer to be said in connection with the problem. Many questions, of which the solution appears to lie very near the surface, really contain much more than they shew; and this, I am inclined to think, is one of them. Let us freely admit, to begin with, the soundness of the general opinion that mental energy, when concentrated upon one set of things or thoughts, is precluded in a measure from occupying itself with others. No one can really be, like so many of the heroes of Lytton or of Disraeli, dandy, lover, poet, scholar, statesman, philosophers, and God knows when besides, all rolled up in to one. We get over that illusion pretty early in life, and buckle down to the work we have to do with more or less of listlessness. The rare exception of a Lionardo or a Goethe does not conflict with the general rule.

But it is a serious mistake to believe that there is any fundamental antagonism between the scientific, and the poetic, imagination, so that manifestations of both forms are incapable of emanating from the same mind. On the contrary some of the greatest of
reflective poets, Lucretius, Dante, Goethe, Woodsworth, Leconte de Lisle, have won a great part of their poetic fame by the way in which they have respectively taken up the most advanced scientific or philosophical ideas of their time, assimilated them, transfused them with the fire of their genius, and finally given them articulate expression in the perfect rhythms of emotional poetic speech. But the mind of a Darwin is by no means of the same order as that of any of these great poets. He, like Newton, Cuvier, Laplace, is entirely wanting in that peculiar power that marks the poet, the power which we all cherish because it eludes definition. Could we define, describe, and label it like a botanical specimen, the death of all poetry would be at hand; and it has always struck me as a complete misconception on the part of certain critics when they attempted to draw analogies between the great generalisation of science and the creations of the poet. What Darwin seems to me to have lost is by no means the poetical imagination which he never possessed, but a much more elementary capacity of which he had, to begin with, probably very little, and which consequently soon vanished from neglect. This power which subserves almost every kind of artistic imagination, but yet remains quite distinct, is known to psychology as “visual representation”. It is quite distinct, as I said, from imagination, and also from memory; for there are many good memories that have it not, while many who possess it are utterly devoid of imagination. The working of this faculty, as the older writers used to call it, may best be shewn by means of a concrete example. If I should ask the members present to think of the room in which they habitually work, it is more than likely that the majority would instantly have a mental picture, as it is called, of that room, its shapes, furniture, pictures; in some cases, the colours and respective situations of the objects would be almost as exact and vivid as those of the room itself when beheld with the eye. When the scene is in any way associated with feeling in our lives, its vividness increases in intensity. The schoolroom in which we got our first listing, the shady glen where we first heard the trembling confession from lips now estranged or silent for ever, can in a moment be summoned up to bear witness to the faded reality of days that are no more.

So general is this precious possession, that most persons cannot believe any other to be without it(sic). And yet, as recent researches have shewn, this is a far less general power than might be supposed. Francis Galton in his *Enquiring into Human Faculty* states that on questioning the Fellows and Members of the Royal Society he found that the vast majority of them were singularly weak in this respect; some of them even denied the existence of this power in others, seeing that they did not possess it themselves—a common failing among scientific men of lower order. But on pursuing his enquiries elsewhere, Galton found that children, women, painters, poets, writers of fiction, and so forth do possess this power, and are often capable of describing or picturing with wonderful fidelity all that they have once seen. In some, the power is less visual than auditory, voices and other sounds being echoed in the ear with almost life-like vividness; and when the subject is a good imitation, the very tone and quality of a voice that has been hushed for years, may be reproduced in a startling way. The greatest artists appear to have had such powers in far more than ordinary measure; Wagner, for example, could never have composed his operas without an amazing share of both. The possession of such gifts, in even a vision measure, by ordinary persons accounts for the pleasure we take in thinking over our travels, relating our dreams, and reading novels and certain
forms of poetry. In the last cases, with the help of a little creative imagination, it enables one to build up out of the verbal description of the writer, the scenes through which the characters of his fiction are made to pass. And, generally, when a man has this power in abundance he cares little for the best of illustrations to a novel, because he feels that his own pictures are infinitely superior (for him, at least) to those of the most skilful designer. And, conversely, he who lacks the power is not likely to take much interest in fiction or poetry consisting largely of description.

Now, if you consider for a moment the principal qualities of Spencer and Milton, the poets Darwin regretted he could no longer enjoy, do we not find their pictorial vividness to be among them? I need barely quote passages in support of this.

Darwin, as a boy, probably built the infernal palace of Paradise Lost for himself, as we all have done; he heard the tones of the voice in *Mouniou*, Beelzebub and all the others “grand infernal Peers”, or the members of that pre-mundane chamber of deputies. But he found to his cost, that science, like art, is a jealous mistress. With advancing years and the increasing preoccupation of the abstract scientific truths which have changed for us the whole face of nature, he allowed his treasure to escape him to the limbo from which there is no recall.

Paul T. Lafleur
The Wreck

Morton was finishing his after-dinner coffee and cigarette in one of the many pseudo-greek pavilions serving as summer houses for numbers of villas that dot with their white walls and terraces the shores of the Italian lakes. The evening, as of ten happened in that exquisite spot, was settling down cool after the deadening heat of a June day; and as Morton’s eyes passed from the creeping roses on the balustrade whose scent made the air thick and with fragrance, to the blue waters of the lake, to the palaces of Isola Bella reddened by the setting sun, and on to where, beyond Pallanza, the foothills of the Alps were backed by the yellowing tops of the snow mountains, the moodiness that appeared almost habitual to his thoughtful face gave way to a smile of genuine delight. “I am not so ennuyé as I thought” said he inwardly; “I can still enjoy that. I wish Lovett would turn up, so that I could crow over him. There’s a picture, just between those two orange trees that even his riots of colour can’t equal. Ah! Here he is now”, he added as a gaily painted boat with an awning and the American flag, for the bearing of which the boatman charges five francs extra - glided to the lowest of the steps leading to the terrace.

“Hello! Lovett! I was just wishing you could see something here beyond the reach of your reckless brush. The picture is there, but neither you nor anybody else can paint it – not even Turner himself.”

“I won’t attempt it now, at all events,” said the other, “and I dare say the sunshine will keep. I have been painting in the gardens of Count bon... all day. He gave me an order. Nice little hit. The old count asleep; the still older countess crocheting(sic) and nodding, as usual; two or three grandchildren rolling about on the gravel with a lean Italian cat; and the pretty signorina insists on turning her back. It’s a family picture, in the family garden, and about as intensity to paint as the Primrose family in my theological part; but the old fellow pays well – for an Italian. But I am not thinking about art or painting, just now.”

“No? Something better?”

“More interesting, for the moment at all events. I had a very pleasant meeting with an old and intimate friend. Our boat crossed just as I was pulling over here, and that is why I am late for my coffee”. Lovett helped himself and sat down on a lounging chair with the complacent smile of a winner.

“You mean a woman, of course” said Morton. “That fatuous grin is not a reflection from a man’s face. Don’t tell me though that you have settled it all out there; you in one boat, she in another, on the unsympathetic waters of Lake Maggiore. But as you are both Americans, there’s no saying what eccentricities you may have practised in the externals of love-making. But you’ll get to the positive and commonplace by and by. Life can’t be too short for you then”.

Lovett turned to look at his friend with a puzzled surprise, but soon became quite serious. “I beg your pardon, old chap, for springing it on you, though really nothing has happened
yet. She was with her mother, and I only guessed from her face something of what I have wished to know for four years, ever since I have been in Europe, ever since I knew you. I have not heard from or about her in all that time, and when I left America I couldn’t have spoken, for I had no career there. But if it pains you to hear that another man thinks he may be happy, I won’t talk about it again just now. It is true that though we have known each other for four years, I have never heard you on the subject, and couldn’t have guessed the line you would take. I have just gone into a career that I ought not to have explored; but don’t kick me out, please”.

“Lovett, you have a very graceful way of telling me that I am a brute”.

“Not a bit of it. I don’t expect you to sentimentalise. But I meant to ask your advice”.

“What is the use. You wouldn’t follow it”.

“That means. Don’t!”.

“If you say so, I admit it. But pray, do not insist on asking my reasons. You are happy just now; and if anything I say were to make you doubt of your feelings or your purpose, the next sight of the woman would destroy my words and probably your friendship for me. Take my congratulations and my blessing for granted, but don’t ask me to be your best man. Godfather I might be; groomsman, never. There are histrionic objections against both rôles; but while the former only recognised the accomplishment of the fact, the other is an encouragement to accomplish it”.

“Come, Morton; that sort of cynical epigram is out of date, you know. Don’t think of me at all just now. Your boutades don’t hurt me in the slightest. I think I know Alice well enough to be sure that if she will have me, we shall be much better suited to each other than most people are. She is intelligent, cultivated, and amiable; I am positive that my work and my life will be better for her companionship and her love. And I expect you to confirm me in this, for your knowledge of men, things, books, life, has been very precious to me. My pictures would have been much worse but for you”.

“Thank you; but this is the very point on which I cannot advise you, Lovett. It would be of no use. I know you, I don’t know her. Of women in general perhaps I think I know too much – probably, I know too little”.

“Well, well; put me off as much as you like, you can’t convince me that it is really your ignorance that keeps you silent. But, as I hinted before, if I had dreamed that I was indiscreet, you may be sure I would not have spoken. I’ll come over and paint your picture of the glimpse between the orange-tress the first fine day after tomorrow, for as you guess I shall be out of range all day”.

There was a suspicion of disappointment in Lovett’s voice that stirred his friend profoundly. The latter was by several years the elder, and during some years since they had first met in the studio of a Paris acquaintance, the younger man had indeed been
wisely counselled by him on many important occasions. Here, for the first time, both counsel and interested sympathy seemed to fail. For a few moments, both sat gazing on the snow-peaks that were slowly turning rosy, when suddenly, with effort but suppressed vehemence, Morton exclaimed in a tone that surprised his friend: -

“No, you were not indiscreet. It is my fault, for you ought to have known my affairs long ago. Your friendship entitled you to it. My own marriage” (the other gave a start) “has embittered me a good deal; and I never can see a fellow full of artistic promise like yourself running the risk without a feeling of treason for him. As for the woman, she is generally quite able to take care of herself in that, as in other relations of life. The women you and I likely are to meet at the dangerous age usually know a good deal more than we do, whether good or bad. The chances are by no means even. Remember, I speak for our class alone – the men who have some definite purpose of the higher sort in view, a career in art or science or letters. You have no idea of the ingenious way in which you can be switched off from the ambition, the honourable aim, of your life by a woman who thinks she shares your interests best by guiding your life in the way she determines it ought to go. The man of higher purposes who finds just the right sort of companion has the supreme lot, but how many have it? And if you do make the colossal mistake – as I did – one of two things will happen, of which it is hard to decide whether one or the other is the worse. Either you will not realise that all your aims have been vitiated, so cleverly will you have been coaxed to part from all your cherished ideals, or you will realise it, and then God help you, for any imaginary future is better than the real hell in which you are doomed to suffer in silence. Look here, Lovett, I can’t philosophise on this subject; I feel too keenly. But I can tell you what I have passed through. I don’t think it will act as a deterrent; but if you are right in your choice, you can gloat over the conviction that I can’t triumph over you with “I told you so”. If you do make a mistake, you will know where to find me, and one can share each other’s disillusionments.

My marriage was the most natural thing in the world according to all my friends, and unfortunately in my own opinion at the time, it was the luckiest for both of us. It happened when I was twenty-six, lasted six years, and since then five years have run out. During the last four we have been much together. Have you never wondered that a man of thirty-seven, with health, means, and education, who is not at all lazy, should have no definite work in life, but should simply saunter from studio to library, reading, talking art, and never doing anything?”

“I have”, rejoined the other, “but I thought perhaps you found your sphere of activity in advising and helping beginners like myself. But why don’t you do something?”

“Why? Because all motive, all interest, is gone. I gave up the best six years of my life to things that I didn’t either care for or respect; and now it seems as though some moral spring were broken past mending. I sometimes almost wish that I had to earn my living so as to be forced to some exertion of a genuine sort. And I feel it all the more bitterly, I resent it, because it was less my fault than that of another. However, you shall judge. I don’t feel in honour bound to spare my wife, for she never has spared me, and she is still alive to defend herself. She can do it, too, prettily cleverly, for many of my oldest friends
have sided with her. Do you know that you are the only human being I have ever spoken so fully about this? Since the day my wife and I parted in friendship, while she had already formed the determined plan of leaving me, I have found almost everyone so ready to put the burden on my shoulders, that I have never deigned to justify myself before any but my own conscience. You know that I was educated in Germany. During the six years of my training, and delightful years they were after the dull drudgery of an English public school, I slowly formed the plan of taking up, when I should be quite free, some comprehensive subject in connection with philosophy and history; and by the time my professors had finished with me, the scheme was ready. I intended making a wide survey of civilisation, art, science, letters and so on, and determining the share each great race had taken in contributing ideas and factors to the concept of human culture. To make such a study thorough and minute, I had calculated that twenty years of hard, but delightful, work would not be too much. And as I was young and eager, (I was only twenty-four), it seemed to me a small thing, when such great men as Gibbon, Kant, and Spencer, had not hesitated to give up most of their lives to a great task. And, do you know? That has always struck me as one of the finest results of German timing – it teaches the student to wait for his rewards.

On learning that the notes I had already accumulated would be vastly improved by a study of some race manuscripts in the Bodleian and Magdalen College libraries, I went over to Oxford with the intention of spending a winter; and there it was that the first step was taken leading to the ruin of my whole plan of life. Old Dr. A – of Christ-Church, to whom I had a letter, soon asked me to discuss where I took in his daughter – I must admit as goodlooking and charming a woman, at first glance, as I ever met. You guess what is coming, and you are right. The year of my engagement was spent between the libraries and Dr. A’s drawing-room; and a happier man Oxford never held, I really believe. What schemes I built and talked over with my fiancée, of quiet study and travel to interesting spots in search of material! The work was to be hers as well as mine, for were not her love and encouragement to double my energy and my patience?

After the usual trip, we settled, according to my wife’s desire, in London, with the intention of spending the following year in Rome; and as time went on, and our house needed no cradle, I could not but look forward with some eagerness to the Vatican library, the galleries, and everything that was to add to my store and advance my work. I could feel during all that first year, however, that my wife considered this prospective absence as a sort of exile; besides which, I had the additional discomfort of being dragged out night after night to all sort of entertainments, chiefly, to my surprise, in houses of strong political colour. Let me assure you, my dear Lovett, that I never attempted to give literary or archaic logical dinners at my own house. I am, as you know, extremely fond of congenial companionship, but I never expected my wife to interest herself in the fearfully one-sided specialists I often had to mix with. There are a dozen ways of meeting such men outside. But little by little, as our time for going drew near, hints were dropped that made me slowly open my eyes to the fact that my wife did not really care a button about art or learning or studious work. She, who had promised before our marriage, to help me not only by looking after practical details, but by actually becoming my fellow-worker, I now found had schemes of her own quite irreconcilable with mine. Thank
goodness, she had none of the ordinary vulgar social ambition. Both she and I had doors open wide enough to us everywhere, and people were ready enough to come to us, to keep her from making that an aim in life. But she was a born politician; I wish to God she had told me before I married her! I don’t know that she cared much about progress or reform or socialism; she knew the value of a good income, and wasn’t eager for legislation that might tend to reduce it. No, what she wished for was power — to feel that men who talked to her were ready to listen to her and act from her advice. It is the deuce’s not that she had not hooked some minister of state. And to my dismay, I soon found out that she positively disliked everything connected with intellectual work for its own sake. “I have lived too much with musty professors, Jien”, she said to me one evening after finding me in my study. What can be the use of theories, if the next generation sets them aside as so much number(lumber)? Facts, why, my dear old boy, in ten years some new school of history will have sprung up, and all your facts are proved to be myths. Even poets and artists don’t do anything of real value. Most people admire their work, because it is the right thing to do; and the others profess to admire it, because they haven’t the courage to say how defective they really think it. Come, now, you know that the very intellectual world you say you revel in, would be much better off if two thirds of the libraries and picture- galleries were burnt up. Of everything that is written at least one half is out of date in ten years, and most of the other half is nonsense. I have heard you say much the same thing a score of times; only you didn’t put it so bluntly. Don’t you remember one evening at Oxford how you told us the modern student’s life would have been much simplified, if only the works have had an atom of scientific culture and good faith? The only real men are the men who do — the soldiers, sailors, colonisers, statesmen. What is the use of working, if your work is understood by a handful of men in your own time, and contemptuously brushed aside by posterity? I wish I had the training of men at college. I would trash them to think meanly of the immorality that comes from being mentioned in an obscure text-book of literature or philosophy or science”.

“That was pretty blunt”, broke in Lovett, “something of a shock to you, no doubt”.

“Oh, I am only giving you the spirit of it”, said his friend. “It was all said in a charming, insinuating way, so that I didn’t realise at once how my ideals were tumbling about my ears. She was so wondrous well-informed and clever, that everything wore an air of plausibility; and what made it worse was that it was the clear utterance of those misgiving, which every quiet worker feels at times. What is it all worth? You say in the stillness of your room as the piles of manuscript grow higher; and you feel that in a life of outward activity these doubts would never have time to cross your mind. A brilliant woman who doesn’t sympathise with your aims is probably the most dangerous counsellor a man can find. She can vitiate all his ideals, and make him lose confidence in himself, Lovett”.

“Even if she loves him?”

Yes, all the more if she does. All women don’t look in the same way. A woman of this sort, you see, thinks her judgment worth ten of yours. She has looked at the real world,
she says: you are a mere dreamer of dreams, a specimen of flimsy webs. But I must hurry on to the end. Needless to say, we did not go to Rome that year; nor the next. I still loved my wife better than my ambition and my work. I locked up my manuscripts at my banker’s (where they are now), and for five weary years I tried political life under her guidance. That was my only hope, for how could a man brought up in a hot bed of German idealism understand the practical life of English party-politics? If I were a humorist, I could make you roll off that chair into the lake with stories of many blunders I nearly committed, and a few I still blush for. Fortunately, as my wife had had her way, she was patient. I will do her that justice. And during those five infernal years, I never heard a scornful word from her at what must have appeared my glaring want of common-sense. But I could see that she was as weary of the failure as I. At an unexpected dissolution of Parliament, I made up my mind to withdraw from the foolish game; and my wife cheerfully acquiesced with a look of pity that shewed me how low I had fallen in her esteem.<

The rest is soon told. Just six years ago today, we parted at Paddington. She was leaving for Oxford to see her father, while I had some business to attend to in Paris. A week later, on the very day when I was to return to London, I got a brief letter in her well-known handwriting, telling me that she had realised on horrible mistake, but as we were both young it was not irretrieving. She would go her way, and I might go mine; but any attempt to lead a life in common must end in misery for both of us. I can remember every detail of that lovely scene in the Tuileries gardens, as the morning sun shone down on the chestnut trees and the children playing and laughing with their white-capped bonnes; and I can tell you Lovett, it felt as though something had snapped within me. My wife assured me that she would accept nothing at my hands. She regretted that her real love for me, which had died out, had led her into marrying me; and she hoped, that I would, now that I was free, turn to what I thought was worth living for. She did not quote Ibsen. It was a sensible, rather sad, but very decided letter, which made me feel that all was indeed over between us, though I think estimating the fault, the blame is not so heavy on my side as on hers. Well, since then, I have been but once in London – to look at my useless manuscripts.

“Yes useless!” added Morton, “with almost a (sic) groan.” Those five years of hated drudgery and my wife’s companionship had robbed me of faith in myself and the worth of my own aims. I have tried over and over again to recover the flush of ardour that stimulated me in Germany and lasted during the first year of my married life, but it is all gone. I am not one of those who can pick up their shattered arm and wipe it clean, and rush again into action. I am ruined for my own work, and an fitted for no other. Here I am, an idler, sauntering about Europe, only too glad to find a casual good soul like yourself, whose youth is still fresh and courage still vigorous. I am thankful, if, as you say, I have been helpful to you, though I am quite hopeless of helping myself.”

In the stillness of the delicious Italian night, the accents of Morton’s voice wailed out with the tones that tell of broken hopes, wasted energies, and lost loves.
The silence that followed this confession was painful, and Lovett with the inexplicable, clumsy blunders that even a friend can be guilty of, exclaimed; “But, Morton, it seems to me that you gave up very easily. I don’t wish to blame you, old chap; but didn’t you answer your wife’s letter? Have you never seen her again? If you had gone straight to Oxford, and given her a good shaking, you would be with her, and probably contented, to-day.”

The other gave a short laugh. “That’s just what I did do; and she wasn’t there. She had taken jolly good care that I shouldn’t meet her at her father’s. No, she was with some friend in the countries, and a week later in Dresden, as I heard. Have I seen her? Yes, and so have you- without knowing her. Do you remember that remarkably handsome woman who was with Count Prochaska, the Hungarian diplomatist, last year at Monte Carlo?”

“Yes; you appeared like old friends. I remember you and she talked in the garden till all the lights were out.”

“Well; she is his mistress and my wife. That evening she was trying to persuade me to sue for a divorce, for I have know of the liaison for four years; you see, it would enable him to marry her, and gratify her political ambition. As it is, she has been received at one or two of the petty courts in Europe, but he is going to Portugal one of these days and she would like to be ambassador. And simply because I refuse to have my name dragged through the infamy of the courts and the gutter of the newspapers, all her friends think that this is an additional meanness to having made her suffer mortification for five years. She is the martyr, while I am mean spirited and selfish.

“Well, Morton; If I were you, I would be generous, you don’t intend to live in England, and it could do you no real harm.”

“Perhaps I may, but I can’t think of it to-night. Do you know, Lovett, I think I have been very silly this evening. I do wish you better luck than I have had; and I believe you will have it. You have known your Alice sometime. Forget, or try to forget, what I have said, and be as happy as possible. If you are to marry soon let me know. For you might have the villa for a month or so in September. I may be signing divorce papers, or some other confounded legal instruments in London by that time.”

As his friend’s boat pushed off under the strokes of the boatman, who was refreshed after his long siesta, Morton lit another cigarette and turned once more to look at the distant snow-peaks, now livid against the black, star-spangled sky. “That was a foolish outbreak”, he said to himself. “It has done me no good, and certainly won’t give him pause. Ten to one he tells it all to her, sooner or later; and all my past friendship for him and their honeymoon in this villa won’t count against her feeling of sympathy for one of her oppressed sex. I have made an ass of myself, and lost a friend.”

Paul T. Lafleur
The Coward

The sleigh coach, in which I had been fortunate as to secure a front seat beside the driver had discharged all the other passengers and most of its freight at Hampstead, so that I had at last a chance of rousing from his taciturnity the quiet, yet determined-looking man from whom no previous questioning of mine had succeeded in forcing more than a mere “yes or no”, although I had been careful to speak only of such things as were suggested by the trivial incidents of the journey or something new to me in our long drive over the dull undulating plain of central Texas. Luckily, between our present point and Austin, our destination, we had some thirty miles to go, and I began to see some chance of hearing more than nervous syllables from my companion, who had stirred in me the inexplicable curiosity that is apt to come over even so old a traveller as myself. He now accepted the cigar that I had vainly offered him earlier in the day, and when I drew out my last bottle of genuine “blue-grass” from Kentucky, his eyes fairly glistened; evidently, though not a Westerner in appearance he had lived long enough in Texas to acquire western tastes. Its first effect was shown in his driving, for he flicked his horses with the eight foot lash till the stage-coach fairly spun over the road and the beasts almost snorted with indignation; but never for a moment did his hand slacken its grip of the reins. It was a shapely hand too, though hard and brown, the hand of one brought up as a gentleman. I was not at all surprised when he began suddenly in the clear crisp voice that marks the man of education and breeding; - “Yes, I am from the North. You had more than half suspected it, hadn’t you?” It is just in this way that a man breaks out, after having to hold himself in for years, when he unexpectedly meets a companion he thinks he can trust. “Yes”, I answered, “I thought the accent you used before was a trifle put on. I am Northern too, - from Boston”. “Boston”, he murmured, “Harvard man?” I nodded. “Well, so am I. I didn’t take any degree there, because of the war. I ran away and volunteered, just like hundred of other boys when I was only nineteen, and entered the army just in time to march through Georgia with Sherman. The first letter I got from home was to tell me, that my mother, who had a weak heart, had been killed by the news; and the servant long after told me that my only sister had died of fever nursing our wounded men in Baltimore. I hadn’t the heart to go back and claim the old homestead, but sold it to a cousin and come out west as far as I could reach, and here I am now at twenty-nine.”

He was silent for many minutes. During which I felt that the truest sympathy must be mute. “Pretty hard times, wasn’t it?” he resumed. “A mere boy, like myself, fired with patriotic zeal, not thinking that it would kill his mother and break up his home. And yet, thank God, her last trembling handwriting was to bless me, to call me her dear, brave, reckless boy. She hadn’t strength to sign, and my sister finished with the news of her death. But the old “Stars and Stripes” can thank them both for giving the country a pretty good soldier. They told me afterward that I had fought like a demon; and I can just remember myself when once we charged a battery of rebels, how I god-dammed them as I drove my bayonet into every gray coat I could reach, and the gush of satisfaction I felt when the steel sank in and the beggars squirmed like a spitted rattlesnake. God! They made it hot for us, though! You don’t mind my running on this way, do you? You are the first white man I have met for five years. Here in this infernal desert, they are all South, and if anyone suspected for a moment some of the things I have been through, tar and
feathers would be mild to what I might expect. Why, only two years ago they horsewhipped the hide off a poor devil who was fool enough to wear a Northern war-medal on Washington’s birthday and get full drinking Lincoln’s memory – in his own room, too. Some damned beast in the same house heard his row, and looked through the keyhole. You can imagine what it is to meet you and let out a little. Man, I have had to sit by and listen while boys who were at school while I was fighting, blackguarded our Massachusetts and Connecticut men, calling them cowards, cads, shopboys; when I knew that out of the ten thousand that left Connecticut in a week, more than six thousand were sons of professional men, clergymen, professors, and merchants. I had to learn the ars tacendi; you see, a little cheap Latin sticks to one, after all. They call me “Dumb Jim” in Austin, but if you will come to see me there, I think I can shew you one or two war relics that might interest you and I can talk about them readily enough. I have my old blue coat still, pretty well faded and with some bullet holes in it too; and besides that a double-eagle that serves as my war medal. I had one side of it burnished and the date engraved on it. If you care to hear, I can tell you how I came by it. Why didn’t I get promotion? I didn’t care for it. All I wanted was to send as many of the cursed rebels to hell as I could, before one of them finished me. Mine was only one of the thousands of lives ruined by their reckless selfishness and disloyalty, but I meant to pay as much of the score as possible. But do you really care to hear?” I nodded and offered him another drink, which he took. “Well, it happened in this way. You may not know that there was a tremendous amount of desultory fighting in the South. Engagements with not more than two or three hundred on either side were frequent. Indeed, for a long time after our men had got into training, the rebels rarely attacked us in the open country en masse, though at the beginning of the war they succeeded admirably in this way. I once heard general Sheridan compare his work in Virginia to that of Hoche in the Vendée; and I am not sure that he wasn’t right. At all events in one of these small fights my company was once engaged. We had been sent out as éclaireurs and had had to march for an hour or two through pitch-pine woods between the bales of which I could see the swampy land stretching far away on either side, when suddenly we came on a great clearing - a plantation with a fine old mansion and out buildings. The whole country was fairly humming with rebels about here, and any God’s quantity of them had secreted themselves in the old house. They let us get well into the open within twenty yards of the house which appeared quite deserted and then let fly, killing some twenty or thirty of us and wounding several more. Fortunately we were able to retreat behind a sort of barn or cotton store, full of splendid big white bales. These we very soon hauled out and in an incredibly short time we had simply a perfect breastwork, into which the bullets sank with noise like pebbles thrown at clay or putty. It drove the rebels wild, for we simply kept firing at every window, for we had plenty ammunition and were in the best of spirits from the air scented with pine-needles and our bellies all full of excellent breakfast. Besides, they couldn’t get away, for the road stretched straight away across the clearing for at least a quarter of a mile, and two or three of their men who tried to cover the distance with a run were picked off usefully by some of ours who had been big game hunters in Wisconsin. Behind escape was impossible, for there was simply limitless swamp. In the meantime a corporal of ours was sent back five miles on the full run to get Colonel S. to send along a light fieldpiece and a couple of gunners, with which the old house could be smashed to atoms in an hour or two. They must have guessed this, for some officer in a
garret-window was watching our movements with a field-glass. It was presently knocked out of his hand by one of our marksmen; I certainly saw him shaking his hand and I am sure he was cursing volubly.

As we didn’t know how many of them there were, it would have been folly to try to storm the place; there was nothing for it but to wait behind the cotton-bales and get every head that showed itself on top of a gray coat, which we conscientiously did until they grew tired of being potted and for a long time all was quiet, while we waited for the field gun to come up. Captain B. had just told us that we might eat a biscuit if we liked, when in a moment the whole scene became alive again. Round the nearest corner of the house there suddenly appeared a gray-coat, mounted on a great black horse that had evidently been lashed and spurred into fury. The man made no attempt to use the animal as a shield; he rode erect and yelled curses at us as he came, swearing with more force and variety as the shots followed one another with increasing rapidity. We could see that he and the animal were struck several times before they had covered more than half of the distance between us and the veranda; and we were so excited with preventing his approach that scarcely anyone noticed that the windows and doors had suddenly become alive with men ready to make a sortie if their victim succeeded. For he was a victim, though a willing, probably like myself, a desperate one. That man rode to his death as certainly as if he stood in front of a twenty-ton gun. He held in his right hand a great blazing torch of cotton dipped in pitch pine gum and petroleum, the red flame of which made hideous spot of colour on the bright June sky. I distinctly saw a bullet strike his upper arm, but he never flinched and as he came tearing madly along, I could clearly see the look of mingled desperation and triumph in his eye. He was longing for death, but also equally eager for glory. Who knows? Perhaps he had had hard luck too; perhaps… but I will tell you later what I guessed. I have never seen or heard of a braver, more defiant, thing; and at the moment I was so amazed that I actually forgot to fire. In an instant, he had reached the nearest bale, and as he reached it, simply riddled with bullets, with one supreme effort he spurred his equally shattered horse right on the pile, and thrust the torch into the mass of white fluffy cotton. Both had been able to hold out just long enough; and as the pile burst into flame that would run like lightning, the rebels from the house broke into their hideous, but terrifying yell, and dashed down towards us. There must have been full two hundred of them."

"Well, but what was your part?"

"My part?" he said, pulling himself together "O, that wasn’t much. As soon as the fire broke out Captain B. yelled out, “Twenty dollars to the man who puts out the fire!” and as the blaze was just in front of me. I clambered over and managed to break it out with my blanket. It didn’t take long.”

"Long enough to secure you a few wounds, I should think.”

"O, yes – a few. I have some bullets marks down me that still show; but I cant pull up my trousers and hold the horses at the same time. No, don’t try, they know me, and don’t
stand a stranger’s touch on the reins. Queer beasts these Western ones; they live so much
with us men, that they get fond of us somehow, and we of them. But I’ll show you a
wound or two, if you’ll come and have a look at my uniform and the medal. The uniform
shows the wounds quite as well as my body. The medal is the double eagle on account of
which I got the name of The Squirt in the regiment, because I had some objection to
spending it on bad whiskey for the boys when the fight was over.”

“Well, but how did it end?”

“Simply, enough; as soon as the fire was out, we managed to keep the rebs back until the
gun came up, and then we simply peppered the house until they shewed a white
handkerchief. We sent of a hundred and fifty prisoners that night towards the North, and
the company was mentioned in general orders.”

“No promotion for you?”

“I have already told you I didn’t want it”, he rejoined somewhat impatiently. “But while
my wounds were being dressed, I persuaded Captain B. to let me have anything that had
been found on the brave Southerner’s body. To my amazement I found in the breast
pocket of the waistcoat a photograph of my own sister of which nothing but the face was
recognizable; all the rest was chopped up with bullets, so that I never could make out
what had been written on the back. And two weeks after came the letter from the head of
the Army Hospital near Baltimore telling me that she had died of fever; but I always
thought that grief had something to do with it.”

The man’s story was ended, and with it, apparently, all wish for further talk. It seemed as
though the dyke of his forced reserve once broken down, all the pent up waters of feeling
had dashed out in one brief, fierce rush, and that he could now go on again until the strain
became once more too strong and he chanced to find a sympathetic stranger. The last ten
miles were finished in silence and darkness, for the night had fallen; and when we
reached the wretched wooden tavern at Austin that went as usual in the West by the
pompous name of the Imperial Hotel, my acquaintance merely nodded as I bade him
goodnight, and did not repeat his invitation to visit him and see his war-relics; nor did he
give me his name and address; but perhaps as some Texans were standing about he
thought it still necessary to play out his part of “Dumb Jim”.

The meal I had that evening in the Imperial Hotel reached a lower level than any previous
western experience had led me to believe possible, so that when I drifted into the filthy
bar-room it was rather for the sake if trying to avert indigestion than for companionship.
This I did not expect and did not get. The place was full of gaunt-looking, greedy-faced
men, with the earthy complexion and red nose that come of living on fat port and bad
whiskey. One of the was evidently holding the crowd’s attention with some yarn, as I
walked in and took an empty chair beside my quondam driver who was sitting somewhat
in shadow. “We nearly had ’em at time,” the speaker said. “The Yanks were hidden
behind a lot of cotton-bales and were firin’ on us that was in the house. Our captain was a
good sort, from Baltimore high-toned as a Virginian, but square. Well, seein’ th is, what
does he do but get out his horse and ride straight for the cotton bales with a big pitch-pine torch; and by God, he got there and set the thin g afire before they clean killed him. They said they found more’an fifty bullets in his body, but I don’t believe it; he couldn’t have lived long enough, and the Yanks wasn’t no shot s anyhow. If it hadn’t a been for one the sons of bitches crawled over and put the fire, we’d a fixed them all.”

My neighbour nudged me gently and presently walked out without word or sign to anyone.

“That’s a damn’ poor spirited cuss, that Dum b Jim” said a low blackguard who had been industriously filling up a distant not-hole with tobacco-juice, “a damn mean-spirited skunk.” He don’t giv e any back chat. The other day, “bout some little thing or other, I told him to go to hell, and all he said was ‘After you’”.

Paul T. Lafleur
Poverty

Few subjects, to my knowledge, lend themselves with greater case to pathetic declamation or to paradox than that which concerns the condition you and I do our best throughout life to avoid with, I am afraid, only imperfect success. Tonight, however, I have preferred the less obvious effort of drawing, for my now old recollections, the picture of one whom I knew well years ago and who seemed to me to have constantly presented the images of poverty in almost all the ascertainable relation of his life. He was a colleague of my own, when as little more than a boy I first entered the teaching profession in a small town of Western Ontario. I remember very vividly indeed my first sight of him, as he walked into the cozy study where I was tremblingly waiting for my first interview with his, and my, chief - the headmaster of the school. A long shambling figure he was – a sort of Lowland Scots Edition of Ichabod Crane – with the same old, loose, ill-fitting clothes that appeared to give only too free play to the unusually numerous irregularities of his bony frame. His talk, during our few moments together, was strangely in keeping with his outward appearance; its dragged on from one thing to another, never showing any decision or incisiveness in its conclusions, save where the listener could at once detect that the opinion had been taken from a book of ancient and excessively respectable authority. The whole man gave me at the time the impression of one whose entire nature had been from its earliest years familiar with starvation; and as time went on the impression grew into a conviction. Little by little, as we continued to meet, he told me the story of his life. He was the seventh (or the eighth) unwished for son of what I believe to be an extremely rare type in the Scotch Lowlands, a shoemaker, not only drunken, but idle, thriftless, and cruel. As the boy’s worn out mother had died in giving him birth, the youngster grew up as best he could, getting so little of his porridge that he had not ever the heart to play; but even this was grudged him after a time, and the shoemaker succeeded in packing him off to Canada as one in a ship load of boys destined wherever farming colonists. In this country, at least for a few years, he was well-fed. When I knew him he used at times to speak of his four or five years with an Ontario farmer much as the Egyptian in their days of drought might have spoken of their years of plenty. His soul seemed to glow over the recollections of piles of food and drink of which he had always had his share. But in one thing he was not poor. He had a Scotch conscience which told him that he could never, with his weakly frame, prove of any real service on the farm. Succeeding in an answer to advertisement of “Boy wanted” for a country store at a lonely crossroad, he remained there for some years during which time he contrived to pick up, in unaccountable ways, enough elementary knowledge to pass the then very easy entrance examination of one of the inferior college of Upper Canada; and painfully, from year to year, he scrated through on the lowest pass-list, among the “Extra-mural” students, until the indiscriminating institution actually granted, out of sheer weariness, the degree allowing him to teach in High School. Competition being there less keen than it is now in a province which today breeds Bachelors of Arts almost as freely as prize-cattle, the position of undermaster was obtained without much difficulty, and his courage for a moment ran so high that he dared to listen on the drudgery of his school duties as a married man. (The) Undermaster in those days held a
position somewhat analogue to that of the “general servant” in a household. When I knew
poor H. he had taught, or was teaching, arithmetic, English grammar, reading, writing,
and dictation. One of our number (member) will be horrified to learn that the charge of
classes in French and German had also been handed over to him, for these studies were
not considered as “elegant accomplishments”, but were taught as a sort of grudging
concession to a unfanged theories of education, which the local Philistines of the school-
board were only beginning to understand. It was pitiable and humorous to see the boys’
exercises, especially after they had been corrected with the help of Fasquelle and
Ollendorff. The despotic scenery of the vocabulary was so complete, that any French
word or phrase from a set of synonymous in the dictionary did duty for the English
original. “English as she is spoken” reappeared in French dress. As for its pronunciation,
it was more foreign to my ears than Kayté, Martinique, or Jersey French, and, so far as I
could make out, had been acquired by strictly arbitrary process; while over all this was
a thick strain of tenacious Scotch. Complicate the situation a little, and you can easily
imagine the state of German as taught in that school. I think it must have been a comfort
to H. when I relieved him of both; but I must confess that I have never passed a more
trying moment before a class than when I took charge of the upper forms who had had
many months of my predecessor’s linguistic régime.

H. for some months after my arrival contended himself with joining me in an occasional
stroll, or in dropping in on me at my rooms where my small collection of books seemed
to offer him endless pleasure. He had fairly good literary taste, as so many of his nation
have, and could quote Burns and Kogg with much rapture and quiet chuckling over bits
occasionally cut out of drawing-room editions. He was delighted at the unexpurgated
“Jolly Beggars” which he found in my copy. At parting, he always appeared to hesitate as
if wishing to say something, but for a long time remained silent about it. One winter
night, after a little help from a bottle, he asked me in a timid, yet manly way, whether I
would not come to his house some evening and sit with his wife and himself. He made no
parade of his poverty, and showed no trace of false shame. He said he had hesitated a
long time not on his own account, but on mine. It was difficult not to think him shyly
ironical, considering my own modest stipend at the time; though I verily believe that
irony was an intellectual vice whose nature he could not have understood. A few days
later, I called there and found as I had expected from the exterior of the little frame-
house, covered with roughcast, which I had so often seen, a domestic situation similar to
what I have occasionally come across right in the rural towns of Italy and Spain— with
the difference however, that the whole place was scrupulously clean. H. told me laughingly that his wife had taught him to sweep clean, even with an old broom. There
were children in plenty as there always are in those cases, but I did not see them there.
Now and again, a little cry was heard from an adjoining room, each time (I thought) from
a different voice; hush. They all struck me as being from one age and kind. Carpets of
course there were none. The furniture was of the ordinary kitchen sort, unpainted. The
walls were adorned here and there with prints from illustrated papers, and yet showing
some little sign of wise taste and feeling. One little shelf of plain deal held the
schoolmaster’s library; but, as he remarked with a pathetic smile, “I don’t use my French
books much now.” The French books were Ollendorff and Fasquelle. It would take more
courage than I have to speak of H’s wife—not indeed because she emphasised the
dealings of destiny with him; neither the contrary. But it struck me that the poor mother of which he had spoken more than once, much, like this faded Canadian woman, have worn the too visible signs of struggle renewed without hope from day to day. In the Scotswoman’s case, the look must have come on the face still earlier in life. As time went on, I continued to see something of that house, in which I always found a word of welcome. Though the talk was neither high nor lively, it was natural, absolutely free from pretension of any sort. And when I left my little master town for a position nearer my own house, I believe that H. and his wife regretted the separation as much as I did myself. Three years ago, one of the educational authorities of the place passed through Montreal. In the course of a call, I took occasion to ask him about H. “Oh” said he, “a short time after you left, he was promoted on the staff, and got a certain amount of administrative responsibility; but it was too much for him, and he died. The doctors said it was tuberculosis that must have been in his system for a long time. My own opinion is that he was out of his place, and better in another world.” “What about his wife and children?” The lord only knows, and he hasn’t told me.”

It was not my intention, when I began, to end with a cynical remark on the fortunes of one who was my friend. I prefer to add to my sketchy recollections, a thought which, strangely enough, had never crossed my mind till now; perhaps by one of those strange and subtle influence which scientific psychology disdainfully passes by because it cannot explain them, it may helps to a count for the feeling of respect that has always lurked in him for poor simple-minded incompetent H. and his wife. During all the time that I knew them, they never uttered a word of contempt, of envy, or of complaint. I was not present at my poor friend’s deathbed, but I am sure that in his last spoken thoughts, there was not a trace of repressing at his lifelong poverty.

Paul T. Lafleur
The Alarm

The broad red disk of the sun had travelled far towards its setting while the two sat in the wide window seat after their afternoon’s ride talking, in the fashion of their kind, over the trivial events of the day, each of which seemed to them an epoch in the course of their undisturbed lovemaking. With tea and lights and crackling blaze in the fire-place, the voices sank to lower intimate pitch; and anyone who might have peeped through the gap in the heavy portière would have carried away with him the recollection of the sight of happiness. Had he indiscretely listened, however, he would soon have detected under the correctness of the tones, and in spite of the restraint imposed by affection and breeding combined, the little discordant note that threatened to mar, the harmony of the pretty scene. It was a mere trifle of difference between these two, who till that moment had never suspected the possibility of its ever arising; and who were unfortunately so young, or still so callow, as to believe that discussion can smooth out the ruffled feelings of lovers. Nor at that moment could they realise that it was the first of those trials of strength which, if engaged in at all by a man and a woman must be fought out till one or the other is finally beaten, cowed, submissive, silent and carries to the grave a load of bitterness or of forgiving resignation. To the eyes there might have been some amusement in observing the characteristic divergent currents followed by the thoughts of this pain; the girl, persistently ignoring the trivial issue, trying dexterous little evasions to put her lover momentarily in the wrong, and yet all the time eager to catch his first sign of yielding as the test of her triumphant power and of his love for her; the man, unable to disguise his selfishness under the arguments which he fatuously took to represent a principle, and pushing brutally on, blind to the change that was coming over the eyes which now only furtively sought his own. But he had gone too far. Dropping the screen with which she had kept her face carefully in shadow, the girl shot a proud glance which might have brought him to his senses had he not been affecting to gaze indifferently into the fire, and said in a tone had matched his own:

“There is little to gain by prolonging this any further. You still think your dignity compels you to refuse me? Can’t you find a more suitable name for your feeling? My impression of you was that you prided yourself on your precision.”

“So I do, indeed. Hardly anything is more trying to a man than to hear other people playing with terms because of the confusion of their own thoughts. We men are not much given to random guesses at what others feel.”

“Perhaps if you did, you might learn more accurate discriminations of yourselves.”

“At all events, I know that I can’t play the part of hero in a modern psychological world. To return to the point, Netti, I cannot accompany you tomorrow, and I think it unreasonable of you to ask me. But sooner than risk a repetition of this scene, I would go to fight with the Spaniards in Cuba. There is no acting about that.”

The girl laughed. “Go by all means: but you won’t find that the rebel leaders give you as much opportunity for arguing as you have had this afternoon.”

The little comedy was over, and neither actor had forgotten his part for an instant. No voices had been raised, and as the man withdrew he bowed low at the door as he might have done at the end of any afternoon call. No, he did not far neglect his manners as to
bang the hall-door. He could hardly have done so indeed in the presence of the servant, whose mistress had summoned him with the drawing-room bell. The girl heard her lover mount and ride away, and hummed a little song, - a trifle uncertain in the lower notes that kept time to the galloping hoofs. “Poor Herbert,” she said to herself, “to-morrow morning he will write a neat little note begging me to let him come; and I shall make him carry the flowers he brings, all the way.”

She was very merry at dinner that evening, and entertained her guardian invalid aunt, her sole companion; nor was it until she reached her own room that she found herself unable to fight down the tiny misgiving that had kept up its whispering in spite of her talk and rattle. Still, it was with no feeling of self-reproach that she ran over the theatrical little dialogue in which, she felt certain, hers was the brilliant rôle; she had read her lover’s motives clearly enough, while he had not shown enough interest in hers to give them a thought. And yet was it worth while to win a cheap triumph over Herbert, at the risk of rousing his suspicions that she too might be more selfish than she appeared? Men, of whom she knew little, although she had read a good deal about them, were generally thought to like in women the qualities most opposed to their own defects; and in this little falling-out Herbert had shown himself so heedless of her pleasure, so bent on having his own way, that it might have been wiser to yield, with a chance of turning the obstacle by another manoeuvre the next day. Contrary to her expectations, she did not dream either of him or of the reconciliation which her imagination had already pictured; but with the next morning she was able to laugh away all the gloom which the day before she had vainly sought to scatter; and most of that forenoon was spent in practising over again the favourite songs with which she meant to reward the man for his confidently anticipated unconditional surrender. Had she already been his wife, there is no doubt that she would have had sagacity enough to attend also, very carefully, to the ordering of the dinner to which she meant to ask him. But as the hours flew by, rapid as her thoughts, without bringing the tenderly slavish note and the flowers on which she had counted, the feelings of the previous evening began to link in again, with, it seemed to her, a strange and unreasonable persistence. Now, too, there was something more. It was shameful of Herbert to keep her waiting in this way. She now had a perfect right to be more than displeased, - to be angry with the man who felt so little for the woman he professed to love, as to neglect so many hourly opportunities of telling her how much he regretted his stubborn words. “If he comes now,” she said to herself, “it is my turn to be dignified. He has had plenty of time to realise that it was his duty to make this first tiny sacrifice of convenience that I asked of him.” The striking of five o’clock broke in on her meditation - only five o’clock! “Why it seems an age since I sat down to wait for him at half-past four! Well, I will give up going out, since he won’t - but no, it will be a good thing for him to find me gone when he comes too late to make amends.”

On her return, she was still too incensed, and much too proud to ask directly whether Herbert had called. Even though the servants were all aware of the footing on which the two stood; but the maid who brought the evening paper only dispelled one anxiety to start another as she volunteered the information that no one had come to the house except the invalid’s physician. As the young girl sat down, casting a glance carelessly at the half-folded sheet, her eyes fell on the too familiar heading “Spanish cruelty in Cuba”, followed by a few lines written with all the laconic brutality of modern telegraphic style.
“A dispatch from New Orleans says that a foreign sharpshooter in the rebel service fell into the hands of the Spaniards two days ago. The Spanish commander-in-chief, whose hatred of outsiders is intense, handed him over promptly to a company of Andalusian infantry, whose losses by sharpshooters have been great. The soldiers gagged and bound the prisoner, and having laid him on the hard wood floor of a cabin, literally flogged him to death with their heavy buckled leather belts. They turned him over at regular intervals in order to distribute the pain, and prolong the agony, which is said to have lasted six hours.”

“I don’t care for any dinner.” She said to the servant, “unless Mrs. March is well enough to come down. She is not? Very well; bring me some tea in my room, please. I am not at home to-night, remember. If people should call –and, and- say they are expected, answer that I have a headache and cannot see anybody.”

“How silly I am,” she said to herself. “He can’t but call to-night, and feel properly anxious about my headache. I didn’t think myself so weak as to be disturbed by a newspaper paragraph which in all likelihood isn’t true and couldn’t apply to Herbert. I know that he is probably at his club at this very moment, and thinking of coming up to see me…. But if he had gone, - My God”, she almost screamed, “this might be his fate in a few weeks! Startled by her own voice, she looked around, to see whether the door was shut. Before her eyes there pain ted itself a vivid picture of the splendid form she had so often secretly admired on horseback or in the tennis court, now trying vainly to writhe in its cruel bonds, while from the gagged mouth there issued nothing but faint moans - the great blue eyes staring appallingly up in the agonies of a hideous death. She almost heard the sound of the cruel blows – she knew it well, for only a few days before, he had thrashed in her presence a vicious dog that had attacked her during a country walk; and each imagined stroke seemed to call up the sickening crack of the heavy molasse stick on the wretched beast’s skin. So completely unhinged was she, that all that-night, between sleeping, and waking, her mind kept running on scenes of successively increasing terror, contributed to by all that she had read in the newspapers of Spanish on Cuban ferocity, to which, until this hour she could never have believed had she given a moment’s attention, never had she realised before the capricious cruelty of memory.

On the following day, which found her wearied, fretful, nervous – for the fever of what she knew to be causeless anxiety had well-nigh worn itself out – she determined to act. Alone, save for her aunt whose health rendered her duties of guardian and chaperon almost nominal, she had no one who could have soothed the absurd fears and quieted her with the commonplace assurance that all would come right. The man whom she sent to Herbert’s chambers with the pretext of a book to be returned, came back saying that the housekeeper had told him that Mr. Escott had left town the night before last without saying how far he was going, or how long he would be away. “The housekeeper said, Madam, that Mr. Escott looked very much agitated. He packed a portmanteau in a hurry, locked his doors, and said that he would send word from New York how soon he might return. He had only time to catch the evening train. He left his keys with the housekeeper.” “Did Mr. Escott’s servant go with him?” “No, Madam, Mr. Escott discharged him before leaving the house.” “Very well, Thompson; thank you, that will do.”

Discharged his man! Why he must be gone altogether! Bates, that faithful old fellow, had been fifteen years with his father before entering Herbert’s service; and the girl had heard
her lover speak of his exact and thorough ways a hundred times. She was almost tempted to ring for Thompson and enquire whether he had heard why Bates had been discharged; but she saved herself in time. “The whole varletry is talking about it by this time. I know,” she thought, “It would be folly to give it colour by shewing curiosity. -Thank Heaven, no one suspects it– as yet. It will be bad enough, later on. Herbert, Herbert,” she moaned, “what makes you men so headstrong, so harsh, to us women. Don’t you see that all we ask of you is devotion? Why don’t you give us our way in little things? It doesn’t interfere with yours. It is only a moment of yielding; and, after that, you get all that you want–much more than you had dreamed of hoping for.”

It was a long torture to her to sit through most of the afternoon with her aunt, called away from her own absorbing feelings by the peevish complaints of the invalid, who, like most nervous patients, was perfectly insensible to the state of those around her, and considered the whole universe to be gravitating around her own person, resenting anything in the nature of an eccentric motion. When the fretful voice had vanished through the doorway, leaving behind, as it were, a faint echo that seemed to trail all the way upstairs in the swish of the wrapper on the carpets, the girl sank exhausted into one of the low chairs of the boudoir, to collect herself for the ordeal of dinner; for whenever her aunt had been especially acidulous in the daytime, it was her wont to expect unusual alertness and vivacity from the niece, who, in return for the sham protection demanded by society, housed and tended her relative, and paid the exorbitant doctor’s accounts.

As she sat there in the gathering darkness, alone, dreading the return of her daily trial, but still more the long hours of the night to come, so rich in their suggestive powers, the ideas and meagre events of the last two days passed again and again before her mind with the confused vividness of a dream. A dream? Yes, it was all a bad dream, she said to herself with a sudden rush of quieter judgment. For forty-eight hours she had allowed her fancy to run riot, and now its neurosis was upon her. Could she no longer control it? And, with much effort, she struggled to call up other scenes of which she and Herbert had so often talked together in fond recollection or anticipation - their first meeting, the timid avowals, the hopes and plans for the future. No; she assured herself that it was not all over; it would be madness to take the situation so tragically without waiting a little longer. This very evening her lover would come back to her, feeling his own hardness, and then in the shaded light of the quiet drawing-room they would agree that both had acted like a pair of children in disputing as to who was right or wrong. What could it matter? Was not every moment of a love too precious to be wasted in trying to distribute their respective shares of blame? Triumph! What a mockery! All she wanted now was to see Herbert again, to hear the sound of his voice and laughter. What a comfort he had been to her in her loneliness, how helpful in cheering her days darkened by the constant complaints of her exacting aunt. For his sake, and under his influence, she had learned to rise under this burden, to be cheerful and forget herself. Surely, a moment of foolish pride could not destroy all the past. It was in a much happier mood that she rose to join her aunt at the dinner table; and that evening, as she touched her lover’s picture with her lips before turning out her light, she had the courage to look at the expression of her own face in the glass, and found to her delight that her smile seemed as natural and peaceful as that of the eyes that gazed so steadfastly out of the frame. The solitary breakfast hour of the third day brought the usual number of letters, among which she hurriedly glanced for a sight of the well-known handwriting. Instead of this, however, she found nothing but
bills, circulars, cards of invitation, and so forth—all the inhuman varieties of nuisance inflicted on us three times a day by cheap postages. Stay, though; there was one letter with the New York post-mark but the address was in a woman’s hand. On being cut open it proved to be from an old schoolfriend, never married, from whom the girl had not heard for months; nor indeed, was the other a regular correspondent of hers. Running her eyes carelessly over the contents in order to catch at once the motive of the letter, she at last fell on the important paragraph, squeezed in accidentally between an account of the last horse-show and a description of the bonnets at the varnishing day of the state Exhibition. It had not been inserted as a postscript, for no woman in writing to another nowadays is so ignorant as to employ this traditional ruse, which is oftener mentioned in fiction than(sic) practised in real life:

“Driving back from Charity luncheon at Brooklyn day before yesterday (nothing but Charity could have taken me to Brooklyn), my carriage was stopped for a moment near the western end of the bridge; and I had time to catch a momentary glimpse of your friend Mr Escott in a coupé laden with boxes and portmanteau, as though for an ocean voyage. With him was a dark, good-looking determined man, who might have been a South American. Mr Escott appeared quite solemn, for him, and was smoking fiercely. He did not see me; and their carriage I saw turned down to the right, towards the South American and West Indian docks. Is he going away for a long time? I thought I had heard that every thing was au mieu between you.” Then followed the fashionable rattle, referred to, the blurred lines of which seem ed to impress themselves hard on the reader’s eyes, but without conveying any definite meanings to her brain. How the rest of the morning with its niggling duties passed away she could not have told; but late in the afternoon, her aunt being fortunately too ill to call for more of her time, the wretched girl found herself in her accustomed seat by the fire-place, with a heap of notes and letters in her lap. These she read again and again, going over point by point every incident or episode which each one of them now called up in her mind with its train of irremediable regret. What had she done to be punished in this way, merely for asserting her claims as a woman? Was this the justice of men and of fate? Good God, how hard it was that a single instant could vitiate all the happy past, and turn her from little more than child into a woman! She almost got up to see whether a white thread or two had not stolen into her hair since the morning. So absorbed had she been in her occupation, as to forget the precaution of telling the servant that she was at home to no one that day; and vexation was mingled with alarm at hearing the front door open and shut, followed by the sound of a stick slipped into the Japanese umbrella stand in the vestibule. She could not be found in this state. Her face and voice must betray her agitation even to the most indifferent stranger. Springing up she listened eagerly for the sound of voices, and her heart almost stopped beating as she recognised the tones which for nearly three days she had been longing to hear. Fighting down her impulse to rush out and meet her lover on the stairs, regardless of the servant’s presence, one instant more she lingered. What? Such a cool unconcerned soul, while she had been struggling not to scream out her agony and repentance to the world! All this storm of feeling on her part, and, on his, the matter-of-fact assurance that he had nothing to do but walk in after his pettish fit had blown over! What did he mean by not writing to explain his unaccountable absence? And now, even after she heard the servant telling him that his mistress had appeared unwell, he had not even the decency and politeness to send up his card before coming upstairs. No, this
confident mastery of possession was more than she could bear. A wave of indignant anger surged over her spirit as she heard his careless. “I think Miss Wharton will see me”, and the young man began to come up, humming, after his wont, a snatch from Carmen. Had she waited till now to find out that he was a puppy? Driven by a sudden, inexplicable impulse, she walked back to the fire-place, and flung into the grate with both hands the whole heap of letters which she had hastily caught up in her fist perturbation, and without another moment’s delay fled by a side door to her own apartments, to collect herself for the approaching meeting.

Some minutes later, on re-entering the room with unnaturally flushed cheeks (for the casual sight of her own face in the dressing-glass had given her a great shock), she found Herbert standing by the chimney with his back to the door, looking down by the fire on which the last scraps of the paper were dying out in a blaze, and shedding their last vivid flashes on his face. He held in one hand a small morocco case; while on the table was lying a bouquet of flowers, about the diameter of a carriage wheel. He advanced eagerly towards her; and checked by the slow haughtiness of her approach, quietly held out his right hand in silence. Nothing could have been more cold and formal than that meeting of two hands, which had so often lingered lovingly in each other’s grasp.

Mechanically seating themselves, each waited for the other to begin. All the girl’s soul revolted at the matter of fact way in which her lover assumed that all was right, because it was his way of understanding the situation; she could not forgive the man’s want of penetration in failing to read all that she had suffered during his absence. And yet had he shewn that he guessed, her resentment might have been greater still; nor, had he at that moment placed himself at her feet, would she ever have admitted her anxiety, her many hours of agonised despair.

Unable to bear the silence any longer, Escott broke out eagerly, covering up his embarrassment, as well as he could, with rapid sentences: “I got back from New York only an hour ago. As I got to my door the other evening, after leaving your house, I ran into a messenger-boy who handed me a telegram calling me away to attend to business in New York; and I had just time to pack a Gladstone bag and rush off to the train. Bates, who has grown very independent of late, turned rusty at being rung up to help me off; and I settled his score there and then. Must have a scapegoat, you know; and I wasn’t feeling very charitable just at that moment. The business in New York, which I expected would take at least ten days was settled by compromise in one morning; and I thought I might at least stay over and hear the De Reszke in Tannhäuser and Calvé in Carmen. By the bye, I had a curious rencontre at luncheon in the Players’ Club day before yesterday. I was introduced to the president of Paraguay, who turned out to be so attractive that I accompanied him to his schooner which was leaving for the River Plate that afternoon. Altogether, I had a good time, Nettie; it would have been much pleasanter, if I had not carried with me the recollection of the way in which we parted. But I didn’t forget you. I thought of you through all the rush of business; and it was your voice, not Calvé’s that I heard in Carmen”. As he spoke, the young man attempted jauntiness had faded, and the girl met with no responsiveness in the girls’ face, handed to her the small casket she had already noticed. Miss Wharton took it, and without a word laid it on the low table beside her.

“It never stuck you, I suppose, that you might have dropped a line to say why you had gone. Were you afraid of altering your decision, if you did not put a hundred miles...
between us on the day when I had asked you to accompany me?” She was throbbing with suppressed indignation that during his dreamy account of his doings, he had expressed neither regret for his past attitude, nor apparent interest in knowing what she might have thought of his absence. “Yes, it did strike me,” he burst out, stung by the coldness of her tones, and exasperated at finding that a sentimental reconciliation was not so simple as he had expected. “But I begin to think I did right in not acting on the thought. If, after three days of absence, you can’t forget that I refused you a favour, and gave good reasons for my refusal, how can I ever think that you will listen to reasons at all. But you don’t listen to me; you are so bent on having your own way in trifles, that it angers you to think that the least of your desires can meet with a check. You women turn and twist every situation into a test of a man’s affection. You don’t seem to guess that every moment of my stay in New York was a torture to me. My evenings at the theatre and my drive to the boat were only desperate measures to drive the remembrance of three days ago out of my mind, but all the time, I kept thinking “Only let me back to her side, and we shall forget it all.” And now, when I do come back, eager to see you, to hear your voice, and to know that you too have had time to determine on covering up our sad quarrel, I find you busy burning my letters, and greeting me as though I were a chance caller interrupting you in an interesting occupation.” As he spoke, the young man stooped down and picked up from the fender a single brief note in his own handwriting that had escaped from the burning, held it up before her, crumpled it and sent it to join the ashes of its fellows. Under the rouge hastily put on the girls’ cheeks were quite white; but the accuser was too occupied with what he took to be righteous wrath to pay any heed to her. “I had not suspected, Mr Escott,” said she, “That you followed my accidental household occupations so closely. You could hardly have noticed them with greater accuracy had I been, what I once promised to be, - your wife. Nor did I think that you at tached such importance to your letters as to guess whether I kept them, or not. If you take your responsibilities so much to heart before marriage, I dread to think what character they might assume later on.” “If that is the case,” answered he, “I might as well have gone to Cuba, instead of New York.” “So I told you, three days ago,” she replied quietly, removing her engagement-ring from her finger, and placing it gently beside the still unopened morocco-case.

I need hardly add that Herbert did not go to Cuba. A few weeks ago, he told me his side of the story, with as much as he had been able to gather of the circumstance, and with no further comment then that he thought himself well out of the situation. I offered no remark, but allowed myself to conjecture what the girl’s feeling might have been at the time; and the result is now present to my fellow-members. What they may have been since, I have not permitted myself to guess; nor do I know that she is still alive.

Paul T. Lafleur
I cannot easily explain, even to myself, the real reason when I begin putting down the weary monotonous solitude and gloom that now make up my life. I am not a writer; I seek no public: even if I did, my years and the narrowness of my convent education would make it impossible for me to find a reader. My words shall never be shown to a living soul during my own lifetime – what good could a confidant do me, to whom the very priest refuses absolution? - and after my death this manuscript, falling into strange hands, can only serve to show what will then be beyond anyone’s help or control. And the reflection that some kind heart may feel pity for another gone wrong, but now past redemption, gives me today no comfort whatever. But then it is something to be able to fill the black hours, when the housework and the sewing are over, in the silence of the lamp-lit room, the very cat having long since left off its purring. I must begin, however, with the facts; if my present motives are unknown to myself there is no use in dwelling on what they may be. How well I remember that first meeting of ours! The park was green and sunny at the end of May and I sat there thinking of my welcome freedom after the death of my querulous husband, it seemed to me that life at thirty-three still held out something to hope for, although I had no relatives, no children, no friends, no money. We had come from far and had lived alone. At least one thing I could do: with our small means I had learned to manage: and good housekeepers can generally earn a living. Is it surprising that a woman in my position should take as a providence the quiet middle-aged stranger who happened to choose the same bench on that sunny day? If I had been shrewder and more worldly, I should have suspected, not him, but the feeling which led me by degrees to answer his questions. No one could have been kinder; and as my answers soon showed him that my education was better than my dress, he seemed eager to make amends for having spoken to me as to an inferior. So I was, but not quite so much as he at first thought. And there, as it happened, he was looking for a person to do just the kind of work that I had made up my mind to try for. Without being rich, he was still able to keep up a country house, left him by a relative; and there he spent four or five months in every year, coming up to town in the winter for some sort of public work. What he wanted was a strong competent person to keep the place in order during his absence, and to control the servants while he stayed there; for, being unmarried, he had found himself neglected and cheated by the peasant men and women whom he had almost to bribe to remain in service. He seemed so pleased at getting what he wanted, that I had myself to remind him about references; but he smiled at that and answered that my remark was in itself reference enough. Would I go down in three days and set things to right? Indeed, I would; and so in less than half an hour, my life was decided for the next eighteen years. I accepted the position, tried to live it honestly, and I blame no one - not even myself. Who could have thought at the time that the housekeeper would become the real mistress of the house? Not at once though; it was three years before my master told me his wishes and many months after that before I gave way to my own weakness. And, after all, did I not serve with more willingness than before? The servants respected my
orders as though I had been his wife. The many guests who used his hospitality may have suspected my presence; me they never saw. And I have sat again and again behind m y curtained window watching the country-carriages drive up with their gay loads of men and women - the summer guests of the neighbouring watering-places - and they have sat down night after night to what I had prepared for them, but could not ever see them enjoy. Is there one of them today, who knowing now what I then was, would do more than offer me a contemptuous charity, a meal on the doorstep, if I asked for help? I know I should have been strong; I should have left the place and tried the world again. Heaven knows I did try; but when my master spoke of his age and growing weakness, and pleaded with me not to go, after he had told me of his affection - well, I loved him, and he loved me too, after his own fashion. It seems to me that I served him better than many a wife does her husband. I gave him all, and never asked him for anything. More than one woman I knew during my early married life would, in my doubtful position, have secured herself against the future. She could have spoken of marriage, of settlements, of wills, insurance - do I know what precautions women can take against the man they care for? Marriage? Why to him it would have meant giving up all that hospitality which was the talk of the place, the breath of his life; and I never could have had the courage, if I had had the thought, to propose such a sacrifice. During the weeks and weeks of winter, when I was alone in the house with one maid, it never once crossed my mind to think that the man who loved me in my ripery ears, was quietly and thoughtlessly taking the life I had to give, just as my long dead husband had accepted the surrender of my girlhood. And even had I known it, I can say, in my loneliness, that I should be ready to do it all over again. But it does seem strange that one who had lived beside with me - one, too, who had plenty to give - should have gone on year after year with never a thought for her after years, since it must be that he should go first? It makes me realize all the more how little I must have known him. I do not know whether he can see me now; I truly hope not. During those last dreadful days, when the disease that had hung about him steadily closed his grasp, no one could have been more gentle and grateful for the little relief my care gave him. Time and again he sent me away to rest, under the pretext that he himself wished to sleep; and when I came back I found him lying with his eyes wide open, and his face wrung with pain, which a call to me might have softened. And at last - just two years ago, - I found him still with that look of agony, the eyes still staring - but the pain had gone for ever. It seems hard to go on writing tonight; though I thought I had much to say, it has not taken much time and paper. And I could not say much about what followed - the funeral I could not attend, the will I did not hear read, which the heirs would not have allowed me to listen to; and that fell upon me dulled with other sorrow, and unable to think of the future. One of the heirs came into my room - he did not even knock at the door - and after ordering me to leave the place where every part showed the signs of my care, held out a dirty crumpled roll of bills, probably enough for a railway ticket. I did not wait to see his face as the blaze of the wood fire carried them up the chimney.

And now, as I sit alone in my one-roomed cottage, hardly more than a stone's throw from the old garden gate. I wonder how long I have to wait for a release. What little work I can do with my sewing and my chickens, keeps me alive; I am too old to begin again with anything like the old life. To the villagers around me, I am one a little better than themselves, who rose - and fell again. The women bring me their orders, but remain on
the doorstep; and I have never crossed one of their thresholds. The boy from the village shop takes the eggs twice a week, and carried away my simple orders. Even the priest, as I said before, refuses me absolution except as a bargain for repentance, and of repentance I have none. Why should I? I have done no wrong to anyone. The life I had made happy many years of another’s life, and brought me to what I am now, a woman without name, without a house, without one human being in this world who cares whether I live and suffer, or die and am out-of-the-way. Probably, I shall never again take a pen in my hand to put down what I think and feel and I doubt whether anyone by accident coming on these wandering words will ever guess from my dull tale what an amount of inexplicable

The manuscript ends here, abruptly. My informant tells me that it was lying under the dead woman’s forehead and outstretched arms. When the neighbours forty-eight hours after broke in and found her, with the cat still sleeping peacefully in her lap. [figure du crucifié]
A Rejoinder

The discussion of alleged psychic manifestations, which formed so interesting a part of our last meeting’s entertainment, has, in the interval, struck me as deserving of still further elaborated treatment, chiefly with a view to the clearing away of a misconception or two, but also for the purpose of emphasizing what grounds of divergence in belief may exist, and of indicating the real point where such divergence begins.

With the initial propositions laid down in the admirably coherent paper which was read, no one, who has carefully thought out the subject, will, I think, be disposed to take serious issue. The hypothetical nature of all our fundamental conceptions is, with a certain school of philosophers, almost a commonplace of belief. There is not a single one of our most abstract notions – not even our mathematical concepts, which the triumphant analysis of idealist metaphysics has not succeeded in reducing to non-existence, outside of the human mind. It was the realization of this which led Hume to his genial philosophical scepticism. This too led Mill to the surprising conclusion that, for all we know, in the vast unexplored space of the universe there may exist regions in which the Law of the Universal Causation has no place: or, as Huxley more emphatically put it, - there may be worlds in which two and two do not make four.

Reduced to its bare philosophical expression, this is simply pure idealism. If it be granted that human thinking and experience are limited or conditioned, nothing is easier than to declare that outside of these conditions, for all we know, the whole world of our conceptions would be turned topsy-turvy. Thus, according to idealist mathematics, we may postulate a space of four dimensions instead of three; and under these conditions, two straight lines do enclose a space, and the three interior angles of a triangle are not equal to two right angles.

Under the spell of these ideas all life is an illusion. The clearest expression, for popular uses, of this view of the universe is probably the following equation from Fichte:

To those who remember Plato’s Republic, this form of speculation is abundantly familiar.

Now, if I mistake not, the limitation of human powers of conception is one of the fundamental supports of modern scientific thought. All science, it seems to me, proceeds on the assumption that verified experience is the only basis on which any solid superstructure can rest. What transcends that experience is unknowable, and consequently non-existent for the human mind. I have not, in the course of several years of reading, met with such expressions as impossible, or contrary to the law of nature in any contemporary scientific literature of the first rank. It is true that the dogmatic nationalism of the eighteenth century, particularly in France, frequently sought to dispose of awkward facts by pronouncing them to be contre nature, and as such undeserving of consideration. In the German materialism of the middle of the century as (for instance) in Büchner’s Kraft und Stoff, the same sweepingly dogmatic spirit is frequently illustrated, but I am not aware that any scientific man of acknowledged eminence in the scientific world of today thrusts aside without examination or with contempt any statement or assertion made by witnesses is any sense competent to examine and weigh testimony.
Now, the facts or phenomena which are alleged to have taken place and to have been registered, are very readily divisible into two distinct categories. It may, in the first place, be held that such phenomena are of a superior order and suprasensible. Those who observe and note them are beings not of common clay, but of a nature lying in the mid-region between man and the Gods.

Eritis scient deus, scientes verum et falsum

This, it seems to me, is the condition of some of the Eastern sages in so far at least as I can understand them when interpreted into western speech. These men pretend to powers of which we have no conception because not so gifted; and consequently the suprasensible experiences of which they directly become aware must remain hopelessly untranslatable into terms comprehensible by our positive minds. Swedenborg’s dream world with its revelations likewise refuses to submit to ordinary verification, and in so far as it does so enters into the same classification.

But the phenomena of which we are asked to take cognisance belong to a very different order. Those who maintain their existence, do not, so far as I know, advance pretensions to the possession of one or more mystic, indescribable senses, which it does not fall to the lot of ordinary men to share. What they contend for is the possession of greater candour in investigation of facts, and incomparably greater power of close and accurate observation. Naturally, if any man says to me, “I possess two senses to your one”, it is impossible for us ever to reach an understanding. It is a statement which, as far as I am myself concerned, admits neither of proof nor of disproof. With such a postulate, a man may insist that he is possessed of an inner conviction that he is the angel Gabriel; and who will say him nay?

But the advocates in favour of the occurrence of the alleged phenomena virtually say this: “We have noted such and such facts; from these facts we draw certain inferences”. The facts are not by any means of daily occurrence, but they are attested by credible witnesses, and have been verified by undeniably competent investigators. Here, at last, we reach a firm battleground; and here we take issue. The challenge is flung down to witnesses and investigators alike, as unqualified and incompetent. The inferences drawn are a fortiori quite beyond the cognisance of scientific enquiry. The witnesses are unqualified because in not a single case advanced for belief has it ever been established that the observers concerned had been in any way trained to take accurate note of phenomena lying beyond the range of ordinary experience. The investigators are incompetent; because being almost without exception men of academic and laboratory training, they are entirely out of their province when called upon to deal with the accuracy and credibility of ordinary human testimony to extraordinary facts. The whole of this contention has been put in so masterly a way by an undisputed scientific authority, that I may be pardoned the introduction of another, and longer quotation.

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It is precisely because no such evidence, rigorously checked, has ever been found for the so-called phenomena of psychic, or unexplained transmission that so many men of the world decline to consider the allegations at all. When those who maintain their existence will submit them to the scrutiny of committees made up of shrewd general practitioners of medicine, experienced alienists, cross-examining barristers and conjurers; and when
the statements come out of that fiery ordeal unaltered; then, and then only can we attach to them the importance now given to them by their believers.

Paul. Lafleur
discretion is, I suppose, admittedly a desirable quality in a physician. I remember now, when I was a student, our professor of medicine urged upon us to cultivate this quality, and to be constantly on our guard against using our professional knowledge influence, on opportunities beyond their legitimate sphere. And now here I am, after thirty years, exercise of my profession about to confess a deed in direct contradiction with all our principles and practice, an avowal which itself violates the discreet secrecy so characteristic of our class. And I have no doubt that more than one psychologist would account for this revelation by ascribing it to a still uneasy conscience. As the event took place, some fifteen years ago, anyone who judges me cannot charitably let me off on the plea of inexperience and youth. No my share in the tragic-comedy was deliberate; but I am not sure that I should care to resume the rôle with the same, or a different set of fellow-players.

It was in the eighties, then, that I ran down from my bachelor chambers in town to spend a few days at the end of the hunting season with my old acquaintance Foster and his wife, who had taken a country place after most of an active life in the migratory condition of many an Indian Cavalry officer. I had met them years before on one of the British Indian vessels, of which I was then chief surgeon; and attracted at first by the contrast between the choleric little red-faced Colonel, and his placid but determined, Amazon of a wife (who, by the way, required a cavalry charger, to carry her in the field). I had passed into the condition of genuine liking and friendship for them both.

The tidiness of a three-hours run in the gathering gloom of an autumn afternoon was fortunately relieved by my finding myself in the same carriage with a stranger, who soon turned out to be bound for the same place and house as myself. Like my host, an ex-military man, he had retired much earlier, and was now spending a comfortable income and a surplus of energy in the usual amusements of the man about towns. Nothing could have been freer from the ordinary, wearisome cynicism of the note than the talk of his man; but, through some subtle suggestion, there oozed from him a sort of unscrupulous animality which would unquestionably make him a redoubtable guest in a houseful of women. However, we shortened the journey with interchange of general talk, and congratulated each other on the chance that had thrown us together. He informed me that, for this evening, we should be almost the only guests, the remainder being due chiefly the following morning. Dinner at "Holiercroft" proved the usual dull affairs, for neither, the host nor the hostess possessed the art of guiding or turning conversation into channels which everyone cares to follow.

Most of the next day, so far as I was concerned, was spent in work. Guests arrived and amused themselves after their own fashion, while I occupied the deserted library, busy over the final revision of a technical article for a medical review, the proof of which I had brought down with me. It was not till dinner that I found time, thought extremely tired, to take the measure in quantity and quality of the houseful of people who had arrived during the hours when I was at work. Seated on the left of my hostess (who rejoices in the bizarre, but opposite combination of "Juno Martha" for her Christian names) I had on my own left, a newly arrived at newly married niece, lively as a squirrel, and full of eagerness at the thought of her approaching trip to India, where her husband had recently preceded her in view of setting their future home for some years to come. Our corner of
the table rattled with talk for Mrs Foster, with the characteristic effusion of childless
would had lavished all the unsatisfied maternity of her nature on her sister’s child, and
was only too glad to give her counsel and sympathy in regard to her new life, which the
aunt knew so well. My companion of the railway carriage was at the far end of the table,
on the other side, quite absorp ed, apparently in some incidents of the days’ races, a
subject which the brisk Colonel could always enlarged on being a much privileged guest.
I was allowed, after a brief interval with the ladies in the drawing-room, to follow my
own desires which led me to a secluded corner of the conservatory, concealed behind a
great clump plants, and generally unknown to visitors. It was the Colonel’s own chosen
spot, but allowed to me also as a special favour. There in the silence and semi darkness I
went over again the facts and arguments which it seemed to me, must strengthen the
scientific position. I was striving to take, until by gradual process fallacies and logic
became confused and puzzling in that well known condition which we have now learned
to know as the pre-dormition. Into this penetrated, from some as yet indefinable
source, the murmurs of steady voice, which (in spite of its vibrant intensity appeared
strangely familiar, and yet clear.

There was nothing in it of what we commonly call passion; it had the same uncomprising,
cruelly unyielding undertones that more than one poet had professed to find in the
impulses of Nature, when she bids us fling the garment of repentance into the fire of
spring. The answers came in whispers distinct enough, however, to suggest the
fascination of a frightened and silly bird. Escape from my corner was quite impossible; I
had heard too much and must now wait the end of the colloquy. “You know”, finally said
the man’s voice, “that I am not to be push off in that way. Say that you will. Have I not
waited, and followed you about? –without ever compromising you, but without reward.
In four days, you leave for India, and I am here alone. Let we bid you goodbye, to-night,
when all is quiet. The recollection of such a night will dwell with each of us for the rest
of our mortal lives.”

To the sound of vanishing voices and foot-steps conveyed acquiescence. I could not but
think of the truth contained in the lines.
“Longue ambrassade, et long voyage aboutissent à cocusage.”

It was however, no affairs of mine; if my hostess’ niece chose to take up her life abroad
with an uneasy conscience of having vitiated it from the outset, she was old enough and
had sufficient experience of life to know the full uncaring of what she had consented to
do – and yet, if one could only contrive to thwart the scheme without involving her, while
at the same time inflicting a lesson on her prisoner (for such he certainly was), at most any
nearer would be admissible.

The anecdotal atmosphere of the smoking room satisfied me after an hour or two during
which time I had had more than ample opportunity to come to conclusions as to the
character of men who can disguise in the presence of women what their garrison stories,
after a sufficient number of drinks, will lay open to any number of men, most of whom are strangers. On the plea of fatigue, easily accounted for by my labours during the day, I
went to my room, passing on the way the row of closed doors which indicated that all the
women in the house had already sought their quarters; but as an after thought, returned
for night cap to the smoking room, played a game of billiard with the colonel, and soon turned in with the rest. Impending events however, prevented me from sleeping and I waited, wakeful in the gathering silence, which was at last interrupted by a confused noise of distant altercation and expostulation rapidly hearing a general hubbub. Hurrying on a dressing-gown, I joined the now assembled party of guests, all like myself in less than half-dress, and gazing with amazement at “Juno Martha”, who stood in the middle of the hall holding my travelling acquaintance by the collar of his sleeping jacket, much as a schoolmaster grips an offender. Around the pair, the Colonel, in a pink pajamas and scarlet felt slippers, was dancing, simply beside himself with rage, while with both arms and voice, the undismayed Amazon kept him away from the apparent disturber of his household peace, the ravisher of his long-kept family honour. “No, Jack” you keep off, and leave this to me. He has done me no harm, and I really don’t guess yet why he should have tried to. But I think it were best he should leave tomorrow morning by the earliest train. And I must also add that as neither I nor my guests are quite suitably attired for continuing the discussion. They and I had better retire again. Jack, go back to your own room, and go to sleep. Captain, goodnight and goodbye. You had better lock your door. I think, your train goes at half past seven. Breakfast at seven, and it is only ten minutes drive to the station with the dog-cart.”

The captain’s name shortly disappeared from several well-known club-lists, and I am certain that he must have wondered with horror at the anticlimax of his scheme. But what I have never know, and never enquired about, was what Juno Martha gave as a parting advice to her niece, or returning to their owner the dainty white satin slippers which the aunt must have found in her own room before her maid entered the next morning.