

were penned; but they know as well the serene outlook upon whatever the future reserved, and the unflinching joy and interest in his craft that sustained him. This is the true Christmas spirit, to look back on the year that is spent and forward to the year that is coming with equal consciousness of and determination for sustained effort; to have done and to do a little to the best of one's ability; and to do this joyously so that we may honestly inscribe upon our hearts:

"This is the study where a smiling God
Beholds each day my stage of labour trod,
And smiles and praises, and I hear Him say:
'The day is brief; be diligent in play.'"

WHY is it that there are only thirty-six dramatic situations and only thirty-nine merry jests? Why is there nothing new under the sun? Why is it that we are doomed to disappointment when

New Antiques
and Old
Novelties

we enter the shop of the enterprising tradesman whose sign declares that he deals in "New Novelties and New Antiques"? It is the new novelty that we fail to find in his wares; his novelties are certain to be old; and it is only his antiques that are new. There is, indeed, this difference that the antiques pretend to be old and are young, whereas the novelties vaunt their youth and yet reveal themselves as hoary with age.

There seems to be no limit to the willingness of mankind to say ditto to itself, in spite of its eternal longing to hear and to tell some new thing. Whately was right when he said that most Irish bulls had been calves in Greece. And as we smile we wonder whether this is not the echo of some Grecian witticism. The worthy Père Bonhours asked gravely whether a German could have wit—*si un Allemand peut avoir de l'esprit*; and, of course, he could not foresee Heine, a German who was the very quintessence of wit and *esprit* and *Geist*. Yet even Heine trod in the trail blazed by those who went before him; and when he said that Victor Hugo's muse had two left hands, he may—or he may not—have been aware of Rivarol's earlier declaration that an Englishwoman might be beautiful, except she had two left arms.

One of the most characteristic of Mr. Kipling's tales of his "Soldiers Three," is that narrating the stain upon "His Private Honor," which can be removed only by the willingness of his superior to meet him, man to man, with the weapons bestowed by nature. A score of

years or more before this British short story was written the same situation had been utilized by Labiche in a most amusing three-act farce, entitled the "*Vivacités du Capitaine Jic*." The situation is precisely the same in the French play and in the English tale, although the French soldier is a cavalryman and the English soldier belongs to the infantry; and yet it is inconceivable that Mr. Kipling should have taken it over from Labiche. And, if it comes to that, who trod the trail before the French dramatist? And in what specimen of oriental folk-lore may we some day find a remoter original? Perhaps the late Max Müller would have explained it away as an obvious sun-myth, the obscured honor of the private being only the passage of the shadow of the moon across the earth during an eclipse.

The pathetic situation of the guilty wife forgiven by her nobler husband at the hour of death is in "*Froufrou*," the most Parisian of latter-day dramas, but it is also in Heywood's "*Woman Killed with Kindness*," a most characteristic Elizabethan play. Probably it has its analogues in Greek drama or in Greek epic. The most striking effect in the "*Danichefs*," the Franco-Russian play to which the younger Dumas lent his easy wit and his dramaturgic skill and which had its vogue on the stage in Paris and in New York a quarter of a century ago, is to be found in the "*Electra*" of Euripides. And the central episode of the late Mr. Hearne's "*Margaret Fleming*" (the moment when the devoted wife gives suck to the illegitimate babe of her husband) has its parallel in the attitude of Andromache to the offspring of Hector. New antiques are plentiful enough if we take the trouble to collect them; the real rarities, which the collector must seek in vain, are the new novelties.

BEYOND my apple tree, high against the blue, he sits upon my neighbor's roof and hammers in the sun. The birds sing round him in the friendly green branches; the fragrance of those young leaves and of the fresh-cut shingles must be sweet. He works in leisurely fashion, tears off a few old shingles; sits and thinks; nails on a few new ones, and thinks again. I find myself envying him his sense of endless time; his way of throwing down his hammer upon the stroke of five, with a nail half driven in, and hurrying down the ladder, the first bit of haste he has shown; envying, too, his—

A Modern
Idyl

It must have been my Scotch maid who put it into my head that he was lazy, for such an idea would never have occurred to me in regard to Labor, whose struggles I have followed with deep sympathy. I suppose I might describe myself as a parlor socialist who makes not infrequent visits to the kitchen. It was on one of these occasions that I heard the following astounding statements:

"I never see such good-for-nothin' men in my life as the men in this country," said Janet. The painters had been busy in her pantry, and she was vainly searching for traces of their toil. "They've been here all day, and what have they done? Scared the cats, and that's all." As ill-luck would have it, the men employed by the state commission to ferret out gypsy moths were working out in our yard that day. Janet eyed them scornfully. "It's took 'em all the mornin' to cut off three knot-holes and tack 'em up," she observed. "End they've spent the afternoon lookin' for their hammer. What does the state pay 'em, then, for standin' with their hands in their pockets? Na, na, the women in my country work a deal harder than the men in this."

It set me to thinking, for I have reason to respect Janet's power of observation, and the grim logic of her conclusions, though one has to make allowance for a touch of exaggeration, due, doubtless, to Calvinistic theology, in her statement of truth. Day after day, while my neighbor's roof grows all too slowly, I have watched the village Laboring Man in whatever aspects he has happened to come under my eye; gardener, raking leaves or clipping grass; carpenter, sawing boards; mason, plastering the house that is going up near at hand, and I find it hard to square him with the Laboring Man of the pamphlets, the "hardly entreated brother," of Carlyle and Ruskin. Miners and factory hands are, of course, beyond my observation as I sit at my window and toil, and I speak only of the workers I have watched. So sitting and so watching, I have found it in my heart to envy the wage-earner his happy irresponsibility and freedom from anxiety. His is no risk; the employer takes that; no haste—is not delay money in his pocket? no gnawing anxiety lest the result be less good than the best. For sweet security, tranquillity, freedom from strain, there has been nothing like his lot since the days of Theocritus, of sheep browsing secure in grassy pastures by the sea, of peaceful noontide piping in the shade. I, sitting at my desk and gnawing my pen, doomed to eternal

vigilance in labor of the mind, cry out upon you Laboring Man, that it is not fair! It is as if the primal curse lay upon you but for stated hours, and, at the stroke of five, you were privileged to leave the rough fields of toil and go back to Eden for more hours than you spend outside. The curse, as spoken, recognized no eight-hour law. Should I not appreciate it, do you suppose, if instead of being haunted by shadows of ideas even in my dreams, I could but begin thinking at eight-thirty, and quit upon the stroke of twelve? Could I but train my mind to take a noontide rest upon a sunny wall, or to slumber away an hour under the maple as you do in your high leisure, should I not be content? There you are now, piping in the shade, though it is but a clay pipe and indifferent tobacco that you use. Would I might learn your way of working, slow stroke by stroke, with intervals of gracious waiting, and get rid of this eternal, and infernal, impulse goading me on to make things better! Would I might toil for stated hours, with time for sunshine and bird songs! *Et ego in Arcadia*, if it might be! Why should you be paid simply because the hours pass, and draw Father Time's wage for sending the sand through the hour-glass? Shall a man receive hire because Saturn, Venus, and the rest are swinging with measured pace around the sun?

Would, too, that with this golden relaxation of the present, I could share the happy assurance of result of the market-man, careless of destination, and whistling cheerily, who is even now delivering our chops at our neighbor's house, eight numbers down the street. All paths are perhaps alike desirable in Arcady, but is this quite true here? Such faith that all will come out well exists not elsewhere outside the Islands of the Blessed. It will doubtless aid you in the digestion of your luncheon, but oh, who will be digesting mine?

Yet, Laboring Man, you are missing something. Is it sour grapes that, at this moment, I am sure that all is not well with you in your *dolce-jar-niente* state? There is not enough uncertainty in it to pique you to effort; one may not, with impunity, be cocksure of life. Is it not written in our ancient book of wisdom, nature, that the organism which has nothing to contend with shall die out? This worry, this uncertainty, this taking risks, this element ruled out of your existence as you sit basking in the huge gourd shadow of your labor union, contains the challenge that makes it all worth while; herein is the secret of poignant joy in

living. Are you never to know the high content of dissatisfaction with yourself? Are there no heights in Arcady to climb? We have moved on from our sheltered pastoral fields, O inhabitants of Smithville, Berryville, and Jonesville Corners, and there is no returning. It will be well for you, if you are to survive—and arrive, to be up and doing.

There, at this minute, opposite sits the mason who is busy with my neighbor's house—sits upon the wall, waiting for eight o'clock for fear lest he give ten minutes' extra time. I, who am awakened by the early bird—it is an oriole—and am at my work betimes, realize that I have misspelled my title. I should have written, *A Modern Idle*.

A SOMEWHAT supersubtle friend of mine, who is forever seeking to discover the hidden causes of all sorts of events, likes to explain the decline of negro-ministry in the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century as caused in great measure by the coincident rise of after-dinner oratory. He maintains that the hunger of the normal human being for "chestnuts" being now stayed gratuitously by the post-prandial speakers, the Interlocutor and the End-Man could not withstand the competition and therefore went out of business. Probably a strict logician would dismiss this as a fallacy, denying that what is *post hoc* is necessarily *propter hoc*. And yet the suggestion is alluring, and it would account for the deliberate joke-hunting and for the persistent anecdote-mongering which debases so much of our latter-day dinner-table speaking.

Is it also fallacious to point out a similar connection between the strange vogue of Christian Science and the marvellous development of the Correspondence School in recent years? Is not the underlying theory of the Correspondence School a belief that Absent Treatment is available also in education? Hitherto the art of healing has always found its profit in the personal influence of the physician on the patient, direct and almost hypnotic; and yet this element is necessarily lacking in any system of Absent Treatment. Hitherto in the art of education, great stress has been laid on the personal contact of the teacher and the pupil, on the immediate but unconscious influence exerted by the gifted instructor in arousing and in stimulating the ambition of the

aspiring beginner; and yet this element is necessarily lacking in any scheme of instruction by letters only. In both cases the impression of the wiser man upon the more ignorant is surrendered voluntarily.

That the Correspondence Schools are now flourishing is evidence that they have supplied an obvious deficiency in our previous educational arrangements, even if they have had to get along as best they could without the potent aid of the actual teacher's presence. Their popularity is proof also that the Complete Letter-Writer of our youthful days, with its forms for all sorts of occasions, was not really complete, since it did not engage to supply a perfect education also. There seems to be no field of instruction which the epistolary tutor is not now prepared to preëempt. It is true that I have not happened yet to read any advertisement of a Correspondence Sunday-School, and yet such an institution may exist, even though I have no knowledge of it. Indeed, it seems impossible that the method of Absent Treatment should not have been applied to Religion as well as to Sign-Painting and Dentistry and English Literature.

I say this with the more confidence since I chanced recently to find in a column of educational advertisements two appeals to ambitious youth, which opened unexpected vistas as to the possibilities of instruction by letters. These two advertisements followed one another without the interposition of any other advertisement of any other Correspondence School. Thus displayed they afforded an example of what may perhaps be termed Humor by Juxtaposition. Here they are—with only a polite transformation of the address, made advisable solely because these remarks of mine are not intended for the advertising pages of this magazine:—

PLAYWRITING AS A PROFESSION brings fame and fortune. You need not be a genius to succeed. Full course by correspondence. Address Dramatic Institute, Bean City, Mass.

LEARN PLUMBING. Many of our students have graduated in four months and are earning regular plumber's wages. Illustrated catalogue Free. Mississippi Trade School, Mississippiville, Mo.

The sole suggestion the reader may feel called upon to make is to the effect that it is a pity that the writer of the first advertisement did not declare that "many of our students are earning regular playwright's wages," and that the writer of the second advertisement did not assert that in plumbing "you need not be a genius to succeed."

Concerning
Correspondence
Schools