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Contributors

Paget, Stephen, 1855-1926.

Publication/Creation

London : Smith, Elder, 1914.

Persistent URL

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THE NEW
PARENT'S ASSISTANT
STEPHEN PAGET

To REI

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THE
NEW PARENT'S ASSISTANT

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THE
NEW PARENT'S ASSISTANT

BY
STEPHEN PAGET

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LONDON
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1914

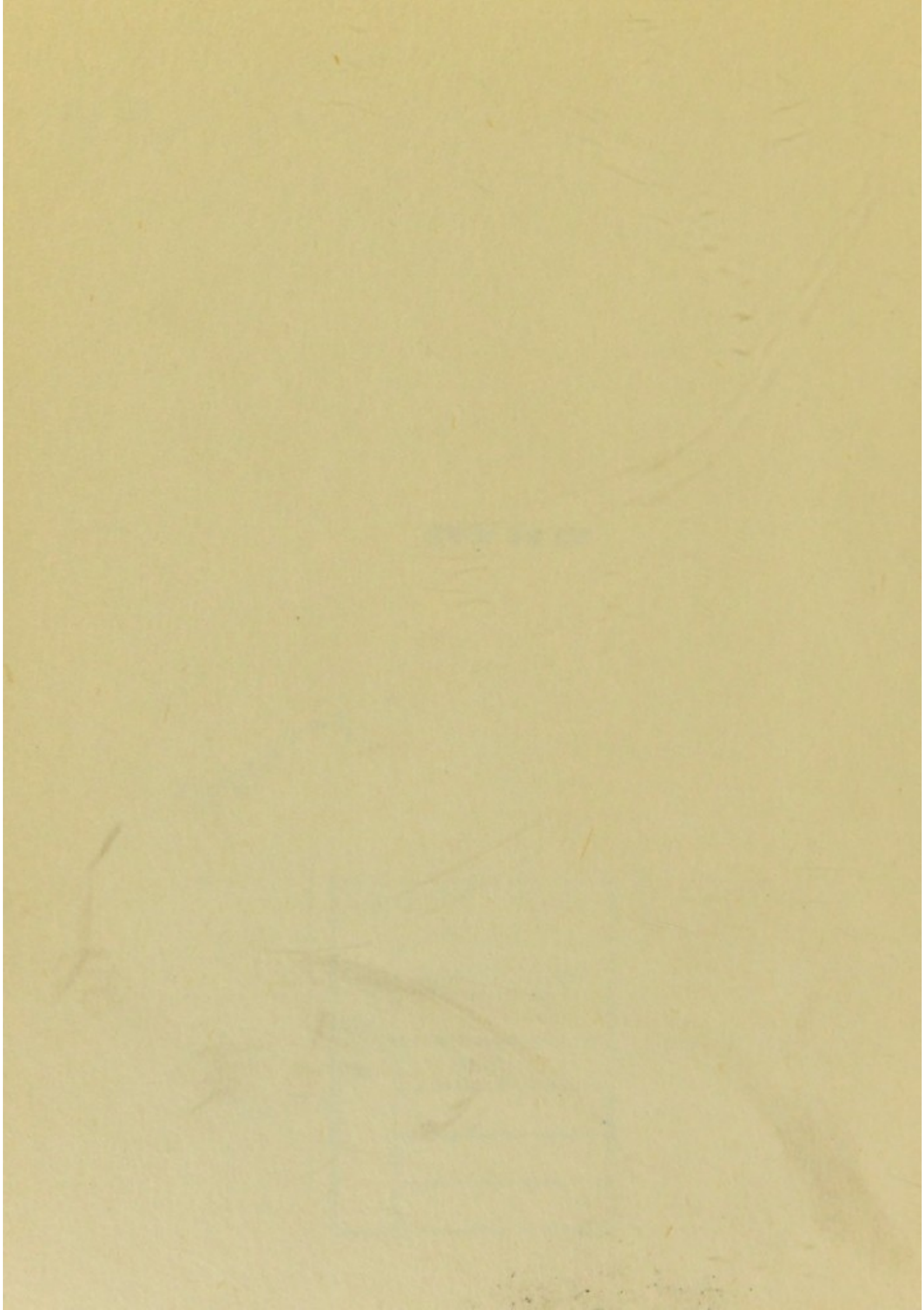
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TO MY WIFE



PREFACE

MISS EMILY LAWLESS, in that delightful book, the 'Life of Maria Edgeworth,' told us how 'The Parent's Assistant' came to be written. It was the work of a girl not long out of the school-room, with a crowd of little brothers and sisters always round her; it was written to amuse herself and them:

'These tales were begun without any idea of publication, simply for the benefit of her particular charge "little Henry," and of such of the small brothers and sisters as came nearest to him in age. They were written out upon a school-room slate; were altered; were added to; were approved of, or summarily condemned, entirely according to the verdict of her short-petticoated judges. . . . That the stories themselves owe their really extraordinary vitality largely to this method of production we cannot doubt. They are stories for children, written, not from above, but from a level; from the point of view of those to whom they were addressed.'

From then to now, it is a hundred and thirty years:

consider, what forces in that time—the French Revolution, to begin with—have been impelling home-life toward liberty, equality, and fraternity. Where are the old conventions, the old sense of distances and of differences? If any of us parents were to try to restore the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of Miss Edgeworth's home-life, it would be like dressing up for a charade: the children might be amused at us for an hour or two, and would then say that they wanted to play at something else. And if any of our children were to affect toward us that extravagance of filial piety which Miss Edgeworth rendered to her father and his four successive wives, we should be more than embarrassed—we should be resentful and suspicious.

Take one instance. The child of a friend of mine was told, in the course of a sermon, that *we have lost the key to Amelia Sedley*. She knows her 'Vanity Fair,' and she came home furious. *A good job too*, she said. Doubtless, she was right—they always are; but the fearful among us are saying that we have lost not one key but the whole bunch, with the ring which kept them together. But the question is whether we have lost the key, or the children have lost the lock. See, by this instance, the depth and the intricacy of the problems of home-life; surely, we need a new sort of Parent's Assistant, not written on a slate for children. It must begin with us parents, now and here, taking us as we are, and examining us: not concerning itself

unduly with the past, nor pretending to foretell the future; it must have regard, like a cookery-book, to what is in season. It will be in the good company of better books: 'Home Life in England' is one of them. Some time, the great authoritative book will be written, the History of Home; which is waiting for its Carlyle. He will explore the very elements of past and present home-life. On this high mission, he will not want to be troubled with a crowd of anthropologists, education-alists, eugenists, and psychologists; he is going where they cannot go; he will put out to sea, he will leave them behind, digging on the beach, under the kindly care of Science, till he comes back from his long voyage. And I wish that I could be with him, to share his adventures and his discoveries.

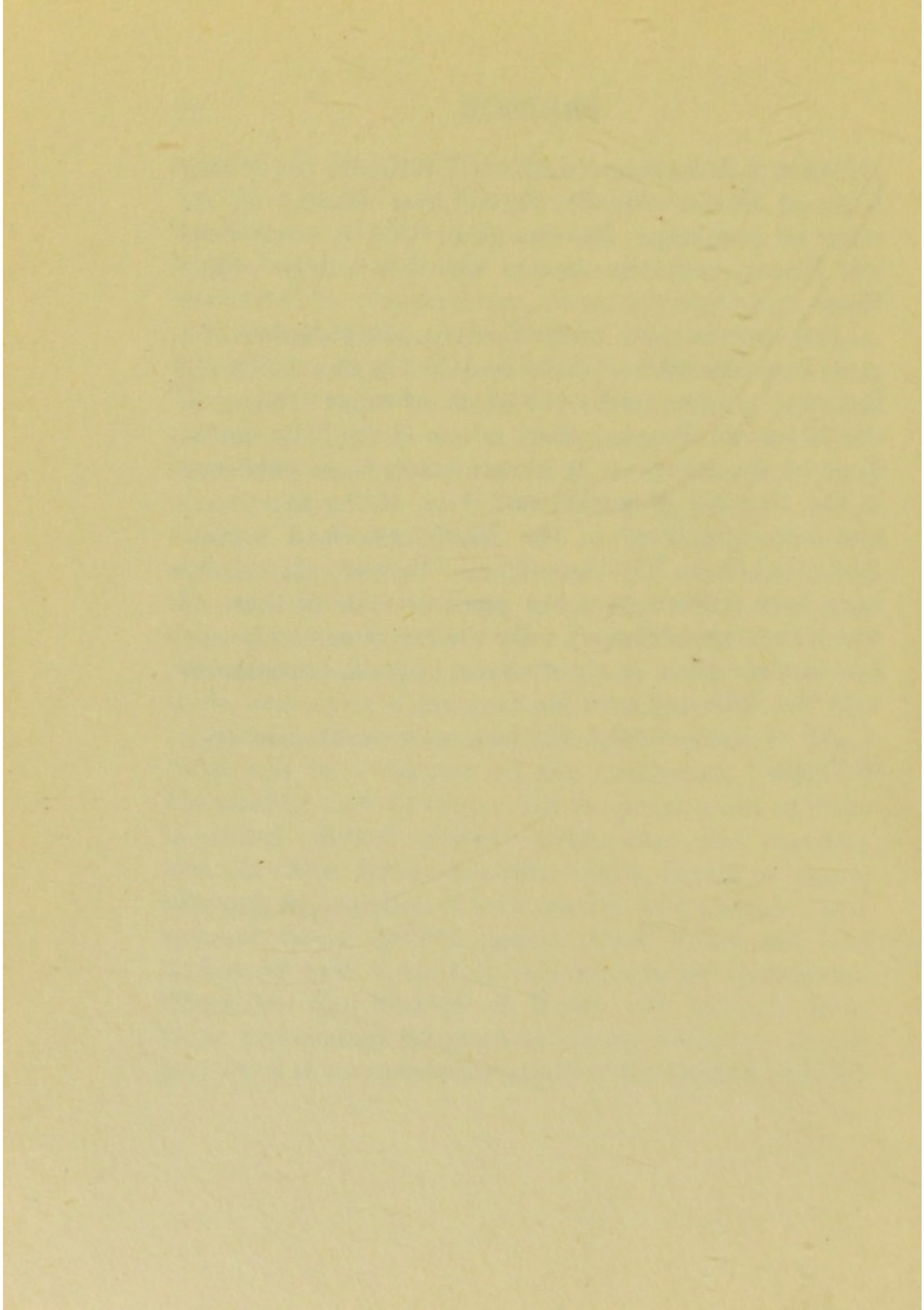
We talk of home-life, some of us, as if the forces at work on it were mechanical; we say that we are moving with the times, going the pace; we speak in metaphors of speed and strain and pressure; we wrest the vocabulary of motoring from its proper use. The History of Home will have none of this jargon; it will state life in terms of life; it will trace the interacting and counteracting influences of ideas and beliefs. For example: there will be a chapter on the doctrine of Evolution, considered as a disturbing factor in family-circles. Home, surely, has never been the same place since 1859, when 'The Origin of Species' was published. There will be a chapter on Religion: it will take into

account the fact that Religion often has a solvent action on home-life: it will study the working-in and the working-out of those refusals and acceptances of faith which bring to a family not peace but a sword: the interminable disputations, misunderstandings, compromises, sacrifices, wounds given and received, lapses into silence, on the way to individual freedom of belief. Then, less tragical, yet serious enough and more than enough, a chapter on the upsetting ways of Art: her interruptions, her interferences, her vexatious habit of expecting the whole family to agree with her—*I hope I don't intrude*, she says, like Paul Pry: and in she comes, and down she sits, and there she stays. Even in the great days which are gone, the midsummer golden days, when we discovered Brahms and Ruskin, even then she loved to stir up strife, and set us all by the ears; and, so far as I can judge, she is worse now than she was then. And there will be a chapter on the Conflicting Claims of Hospitality and Charity: for the pegging-out of them is seldom effected without controversy and repartee. But all these family-quarrels, which thrust us apart, also pull us together, if only we live long enough; and a home never divided against itself would fall into monotony, and would lose hold on us in the later years. Therefore, the History of Home will proceed from these preliminary chapters to higher themes. It will give itself to an exhaustive study of the Decline and Fall

of Parental Autocracy : and it will estimate the Whole Duty of Home. Finally, it will *rise dilating on the wings of prophecy*. Heaven grant that it may foresee Home, centuries hence, not too wildly unlike Home now.

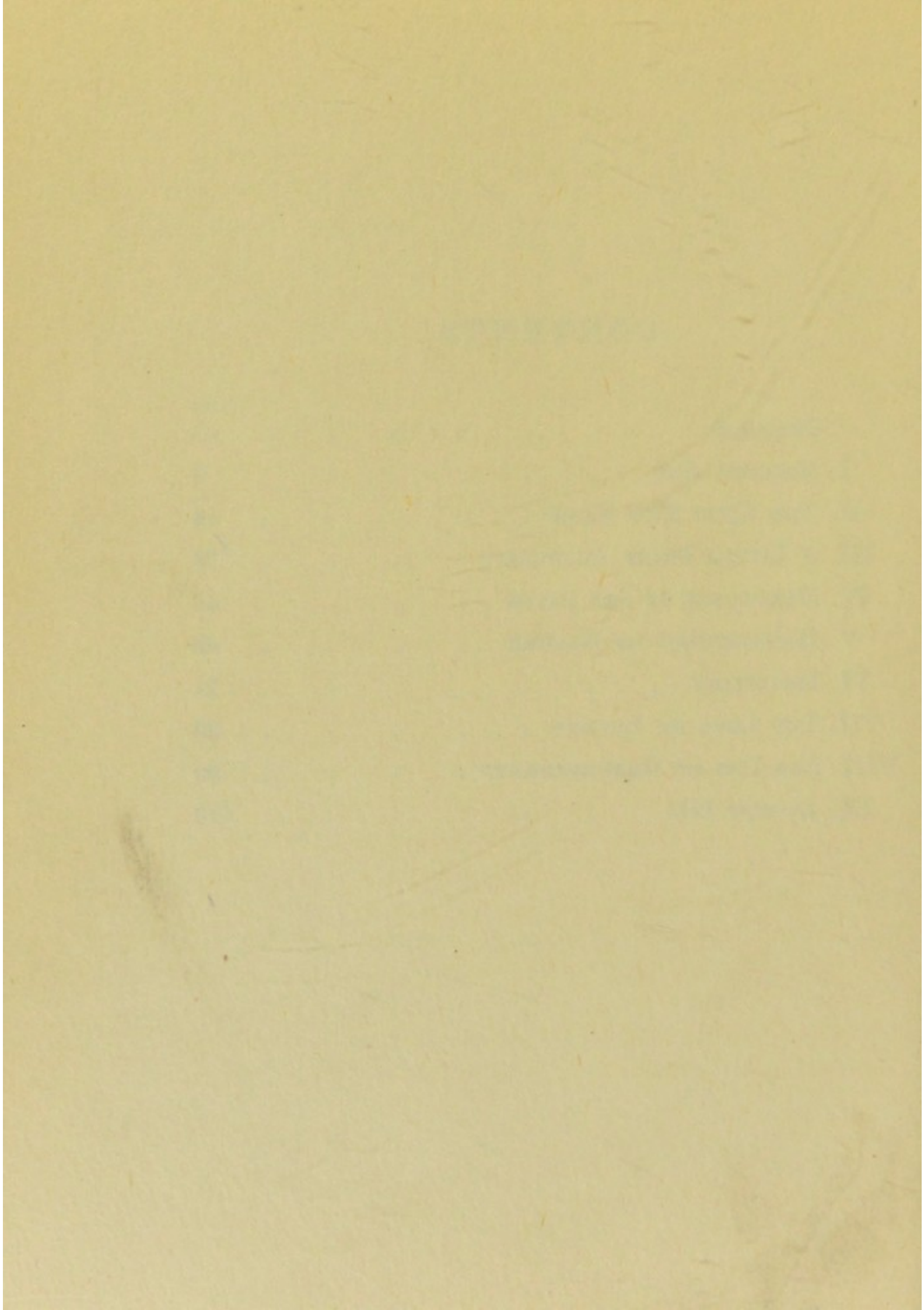
But there is room, under the impending shadow of a great book, for little books to find shelter, like the eleven thousand virgins under the cloak of Saint Ursula, in the picture at Bruges. Here is one of the little books. Four of the essays in it have already been published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and two of the four have also been published in the *North American Review*. And all of them, like the original 'Parent's Assistant,' have been written from the point of view of those to whom they are addressed. By the use of concordances, I have given them an air of almost impudent familiarity with the Bible and with Shakespeare.

All of them, except the last, were written in time of Peace.



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THE NEW PARENT'S ASSISTANT

I

BEGGARS ALL

OF the countless miracles which we take for granted, this surely is the most bewildering, that we have children. Neither science nor religion can measure this wonder of wonders. It may well shake the universe, and influence the music of the spheres, that I am a parent. But, as things are nowadays, to be a miracle is to incur grave responsibilities. I must not content myself with staggering Heaven : I must also attend to Home. Miracles must not think too much of themselves : there are the children to be considered. And, when I face quietly what I mean by my responsibility for the children, I am up against a problem which seems to me insoluble.

It presents itself to me thus. We two, man and wife, who are the efficient cause of our children's being,

are thereby the sole agents of every false step that they take, every sin that they commit, every cruelty that they inflict, every pain that they suffer. All maladies that have come or are to come on them, all disappointment, all disgrace, are of our making; and their death will be our handiwork.

I call it a problem; but it has the clear-cut look of a fact. If it were not for parents, there would be none of these disasters. For the children would not be here; they would be nowhere: and, so long as they were nowhere, they could neither sin nor suffer. It is idle to answer that parents are likewise the agents of all virtue, happiness, and health in their children's lives. It is true, but it has nothing to do with the matter. For the children, if they had not been born, would have lost nothing; you cannot begin to lose things till you are here to lose them. Doubtless, if they could have had their choice, to be or not to be, they would have chosen to be. But they could not have their choice: for they were not here; they were nowhere. You cannot begin to choose things till you are here to choose them.

It is said, now and again, in defence of shooting, 'If the pheasants had been given their choice, not to live, or to live well-fed and well-protected to the moment of their death, they would have chosen to live.' The same argument applies to hunting. Or take the case of the pig, that mass of evidence against vegetarianism.

The alchemy of the pig, its transmutation of the contents of the trough, affords it unfailing satisfaction ; and, if it had been given its choice, I feel sure that it would have chosen to come here and be our alchemist. But neither pheasant, fox, nor pig was given its choice. Besides, what business have we to be considering these lower creatures, we who are parents ? For we have called not animals but spirits from the vasty deep, and they came when we did call for them. By which act, we are the cause of all their distresses.

Out of the reach of words, and high above the tangle of my thinking, some transcendental explanation waits, in the vain hope that I may be able to pull it down. Meanwhile, the fact is at my elbow, clamouring for immediate attention, and something to be done. If we parents—and who can doubt it?—are indeed the cause of all discord and pain among our children, it is time that something should be done. We must put things right with them, we must make it up to them. But we cannot incessantly do penance before them ; nor would it be of any use. Once they are here, it is too late for us to be sorry that we brought them here. If one of them tells a lie, or strikes the baby, or has a toothache—that I may take no graver instances—we cannot rend our garments each time, declaring ourselves guilty. But that is what we are : for there would have been neither lie, nor blow, nor toothache, if it had not been for us. How shall we expiate our offence against

them ? There is nothing to be done, for there is nothing that can be undone. But we must do something, for we brought them here ; and we knew that they would again and again go wrong, and be in pain—and all the same we brought them here.

This attitude of contrition is in strict accord with the facts of the case ; none the less, it is rather like a circus-horse going down on its knees, in the sawdust, at the crack of a whip ten yards away. My conscience, stand up on your feet like a man, square your shoulders, and remember the words of Cordelia to her father :

‘ Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me ; I
Return those duties back as are right fit :
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.’

That is the children's way. They thank us for being their parents ; and some of them, at school or at college, think of us when they hear the text, *Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers who begat us*. They do not doubt that we did well to bring them here ; they honour us as the authors of their being : and on Commemoration Day they extend to us the oath of allegiance, and exalt us into the company of the famous men.

Thus content with us, and more than content, they do not, as they might, call us to account when things

go hard with them. I am acquainted—who is not?—with a small child, half a century old, who, on a black day of detected naughtiness, said, *I wish I had never been born*. But he was not thinking of his parents when he said it; nor did he say it to them, but to himself. Besides, if he had said it to them, he would have been rebuked, not for filial impiety, but for blasphemy. It is wicked to wish that you had never been born: it is an offence against God, the Author of your being. So we tell the children, or so we used to tell them, or so we ought to tell them; and they admit the rebuke, and say to their Maker, that evening, that they are sorry they spoke. Only, half a century hence, at the present rate of development of free thought in the nursery, there may come a change. I see one of my great-grandchildren, on her way downstairs, in her nightgown, just before bed; she has been crying, but there is a touch of laughter about her lips: and she marches into the drawing-room, and holds up her little head, and she says to her parents, says she, *I'm sorry I wished I had never been born; it was not very polite to—you*. And I see them, to my horror, accepting her apology, as if it belonged to them: though they are neither the authors, nor the editors, of her being, or of any other being: they are only one of four causes—formal, material, efficient, and final. None the less, they accept her apology; they forgive her what they have done: and she goes back to bed. My thin ghost,

that evening, in the drawing-room, will surely find some way of suggesting to them that they are indeed the efficient cause of her offence. For, if it had not been for them, she would never have been born to wish that she had never been born. He can hardly fail to get them to agree to that. They will make up their minds that something must be done; but nothing in a hurry. My ghost must not be too sanguine.

Holding fast this theory, bearing all your weight on the assurance that our children's miseries are of our making, father or mother, whichever you are, say what is to be done. Where is the path of atonement, the way of amends? It goes from us to them; we must examine ourselves, not them, to find it. We require, therefore, not more child-study, but more parent-study. *The child*—that is what the believers in child-study dare to call my children. As if anybody could study that. *The oyster* we can study, because all oysters are so alike. But we cannot study *the child*, or *the parent*; only children and parents. Let each of us, to begin with, study and examine that one parent whom each of us best understands.

But the intricacies of self are closer twisted than the maze at Hampton Court. One must have a guide. At Hampton Court, there is the man on the little platform, just outside the maze and just above it. When we are tired of missing our way, he shouts at us, directing

us till we find our way. None of us would think of contradicting him; for he is outside and above the maze.

My dear self, I have found the very thing for you. It will guide you to the end of your perplexity; it will tell you where you are; it will give you, with absolute authority, a clear indication of your surroundings, which you will not think of contradicting. I found it, just outside the maze and just above it, in the Burial Service, of all unlikely places. It is in the words, *We brought nothing into this world*. That is what the Burial Service says of us fathers and mothers; even of us, who have brought children into this world. But who would contradict the saying? For he and she were only one of four causes, and that not the best of the four. To be the final cause of children—I mean, of course, children so good as mine—would be a distinction worth having; nobody could then say that I had brought nothing into this world. But, so far as I can judge, they are the final cause of me, not I of them. I was only one half of their efficient cause. But what is the use, here, of words? The children are given, consigned, entrusted to us—all words are but sounds; and I admire the reserve of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so, in this morning's paper, *Of a son*. I will be bound that they said much more than that to each other, especially if it was their first-born. But so soon as the doctor was gone, and she was asleep, and her

husband began to think of telling the good news to the public,

‘Something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist,’

and he only said, *Of a son*. The wonder and the blessing of a life come to lives, and then his wife and himself, were past all telling to the public. He was perfectly right; words are of no use whatever: let us only say *Of a son*, or, better still, *Of a daughter*.

That we brought nothing into this world is a disclosure of ourselves which we forget to make to the children. We leave them to learn it, not from us, but of us. It comes to them when they are most wanting us to come to them. It is read aloud to them, this hard saying, by him who is *taking the funeral*. He walks very slowly, as if he were trying to keep back from them what is behind him; but they know that it is there, and it comes level with them, compelling them to look. Let them hold out this half-hour, and it will be taken away, got rid of, buried, burned—Oh, you poor children, why did I leave it to the day of my funeral for you to be told that I brought nothing into this world? I ought to have told you myself, showed you my empty hands, long ago; I could have made you laugh with me over my poverty; we would have called it, in Mrs. Eddy's delightful phrase, my native nothing-

ness ; you should have chaffed me, and I you, for it was no fault of mine ; there was nothing to conceal or be ashamed of ; and I might have explained it all so lightly to you then, so happily—not left it to be read out to you now, over my coffin, to add to your misery, and you crying the whole time. Beggars all : that is what we are.

Into this world we are born, what there is of us, empty-handed, empty-headed, empty-hearted ; we bring nothing. If we were to wait till we had something to bring, we should never get here. So soon as we are here, we begin to acquire something. First, a breath of air ; then soap and water, clothing, mother's milk, a cradle, and sleep. These seven gifts—counting the soap and the water as two—are bestowed on us within the first few hours. Other gifts, in due time, are added to them : such as teeth, a perambulator, the power to stand, the power to speak, more teeth, picture-books, and some sense of a difference between right and wrong. We have nothing to do with the coming of these gifts : they just come, and we receive them. So it is, and will be to the end, with all our gifts. They arrive, and we take them in, like so many Christmas presents, at the front door of the house of life. Every beat of my heart is somehow a gift ; and the same is true of all such advantages as I have obtained from inheritance, education, patronage, example, experience, and friendship. None of us is more than a

point, which has neither parts nor magnitude, in a perpetual movement of giving.

But the children do not regard us in this light. When a mother plays to her children, or makes them new frocks, they do not say that she has the gift of music, the gift of dressmaking. They are of opinion that she is clever at music and at frocks ; clever because she is clever, and good because she is good, and beautiful because she is beautiful : and there they stop, not looking beyond her for any explanation of her. All that we do for them is put to our credit ; they call it, all of it, us. When they are grown up, they will call it human nature, or the parental instinct, or the force of habit—which will be even more stupid than calling it us. Overhaul the Pope's soliloquy in 'The Ring and the Book,' line 1073, and when found make a note of.

See how difficult is the pursuit of parent-study ; we are already back at child-study, we who ought to be looking in ourselves to find the path of atonement. Examination of ourselves tells us that all our gifts were given to us, and all the good in us has come into us from outside ; that we are beggars all ; that we are points, having no parts and no magnitude, only position—and we did not make even our positions for ourselves. In brief, what has been made of us is what we are. By ourselves, we are nothing.

We ought to rub this fact well into the children :

we must beware of neglecting this opportunity to put things right with them. We shall draw them closer to us, and we shall purify and strengthen their religion, if we explain to them the predicament in which we stand. No need to be solemn over it; our plight is comic, not tragic: we are the Emperor who had nothing on.

But the best of all opportunities belongs to those parents who will confess their faults to their children. We may well dislike this duty, and reserve it for great purposes; and all of us will hide more than we shall uncover. But there is no way so straight and sure to their hearts. One act of confession will avail more between them and us than many acts of correction. Assailed by our united forces of advice, warning, and punishment, they can still hold out; but the sound of the note of confession brings down the drawbridge, and they welcome us into the fortress, and sign peace with us, and more than peace. We disarm them as it were by magic, we quicken loyalty in them; and their minds, years later, go back to that day. I have long forgotten innumerable occasions when my father was right and I was wrong; but I remember clearly an occasion when he said that he had been wrong, and I right: though it is open to doubt now, whether he was. More than thirty-five years ago, on a Sunday evening, in Munich, I was aching all over to escape from the hotel dinner to the opera. He utterly disapproved of Sunday theatre-going; but he said, *I leave it to you to decide*. Early

next morning, he came to my bedroom, and said that he had been thinking it over carefully, and that he thought, on the whole, as I was so fond of music, that I had done right in going. I am not likely to forget him thus humbling himself to me. There is a similar story of Darwin :

‘He had,’ says Sir Francis Darwin, ‘a horror of drinking, and constantly warned his boys that anyone might be led into drinking too much. I remember, in my innocence as a small boy, asking him if he had ever been tipsy, and he answered very gravely that he was ashamed to say he had once drunk too much at Cambridge. I was much impressed, so that I know now the place where the question was asked.’

These are the impressions which endure, when other impressions, most deep for a time, have long faded off the surface of memory. Tell your children of their faults, and they will forget what you were saying ; tell them of your own, and they will remember the very place where you said it half a century ago. Besides, it is not as if we could hide our faults ; they stick out, most of them, like the broken ribs of an old umbrella. ‘The reference here is to the first chapter of *The Little White Bird*’—‘That strange short hour of the day, when every mother stands revealed before her little son.’

Against all these pages of good advice to parents, one objection makes itself heard, knocking persistently,

like the tassel of a blind in a draught. Do stand up, it says; don't grovel, don't let the children see you like that, looking so silly. Teach them self-confidence, self-help, strength of will, and a firm hold on the realities of life. Do get up out of the gutter. You are not setting them a good example.

But facts are facts, wherever we find them; and pearls of great value, a whole string of them, were found not long ago in the gutter. Of course, we must set a good example to the children; but the best way to ensure that, is to set them the example of somebody better than ourselves. Any good example will do, provided it is not our own, but a better article. My dear, I will gladly set your example before our children, if you will kindly set before them mine.

II

THE FIRST FEW YEARS

It is a frequent saying, that a man cannot understand babies ; that he does not know how to quiet them, nor how to hold them ; that he is no judge of the beauty of their hands and feet, the firmness of their limbs, the needlework of their robes ; that women, and they only, can understand a baby. Certainly, men cannot understand a baby ; for this reason, that nobody can ; not even women. Harvey, in the 'De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis,' writing of the difficulty of understanding the circulation of the blood, says :

' I found the matter hard indeed, and full of difficulty : so that I began to think, with Frascatorius, that the movement of the heart was known to God alone.'

It is harder to understand a baby than to understand the circulation of the blood : for you cannot discover the baby : it is not in science. Besides, there is nothing to discover, nothing to understand : the performance has not yet begun. In a room with a

new-born child, we are spectators in a theatre, waiting for the curtain to go up ; and I come from the presence of a baby, always knowing this only, that I have seen a baby. I saw all that was to be seen of it, heard all that was to be said of it ; but the baby itself—there is no other phrase for what I mean by a baby—was past my understanding. And this is not because I am a man : it is because the baby was a baby.

What does it feel like, to be a baby ? None of us knows, nor ever will. We tell each other that a new-born child must have the feelings of a new-born animal. But what does it feel like, to be a new-born animal ? Animals are even less intelligible to us than we are to each other ; especially new-born animals. We are so accustomed to the society of grown-up people and grown-up animals, that we forget that once they were new-born. Words fail me to say how impossible it is to understand a baby. Women love, not waiting to understand ; men wait for some touch of mutual understanding between the child and themselves.

During the first few months of the child's life, its parents and it are incessantly signalling through the darkness. Some of the signals are only guessed at ; many are lost. The code is very simple ; and the apparatus is that which was used in the Garden of Eden. Babies, when they want anything, still cry for it, as did Cain and Abel, *with no language but a cry* ; mothers, except that many of them do not nurse their babies

themselves, as did Eve, still communicate with them by the use of signs and sounds as old as the hills ; fathers still, as did Adam, try to induce the baby to take notice. Before the end of the first year, the darkness begins to be penetrable ; soon, comes the dawn, and the parent and the child are able to see each other ; but in the first few years, in that half-light, they do not see each other clearly, and often are mistaken over distances, and tumble over obstacles. Besides, they are meeting for the first time ; and they hardly know what to expect of each other.

Long ago, I worked for seven years in the outpatient department of a great Hospital for Children, hoping, of course, for an appointment on the staff—I was Jacob working for Rachel, I was the apprentice working for Sally in our alley ; but when my seven long years were out, another man got the appointment : I got the heart-ache, and was not able to keep that most infectious disorder to myself ; but we all recovered. If anybody is thinking—and who is not ?—of the density of the population of London, I confess that I helped to keep alive thousands of sick children, many of them no credit to their parents : they were brought to us, twice a week, all those years, as if we were the Brazen Serpent ; and there were times when I felt like it. So I venture to put here a note on the management of small children.

And, to begin with, I say that parents, in their dealings with a small child, ought to give the chief

place in their thoughts to its brain. This wonder of wonders, the human brain, we mostly contemplate in the adult male skull ; but the brain of a child is even more wonderful than the adult brain, for it is not only living but growing. The number of nerve-cells in the brain is about two thousand millions. That is a very large family for one brain to bring up. Each of them is a separate creature, with its own ways, its own destiny. Consider that the brain, at birth, sets to work to rear two thousand million cells ; and imagine that Science could isolate one of them and magnify it, on a lantern-screen, to the size of the front of Buckingham Palace. We might then have some idea of the complexity of its nature : deep calling to deep, force clashing with force, life rushing to the help of life, over the whole front of the Palace. Thus magnified, the nerve-cell would seem to be a most unaccountable member of the brain-family : it would display weak spots, crises of instability, lapses, and false moves. And to think that it is only one of two thousand millions, all growing fast in one small skull which has not yet dared to close up tight round them.

It is well for our peace of mind that Science has no time to build a machine for this exhibition : we should lie awake all night, thinking of the child's brain. Still, we ought to bear it in mind that he is at the mercy of these growing nerve-cells ; and we cannot say what is happening at any moment to any one of them. The

wonder is that the brain is so stable. Not the instability, but the stability of my life amazes me : the constancy of my temperature, the rhythm of my heart, the subservience of my muscles : yes, and the orderly conduct of my brain, steadily maintained through incessant failures, confusions, and betrayals, this is the greatest of all the wonders of my stability. But the brain of a small child may be, in some way of its own, more unstable than a brain which, to say the least, has done growing. The swiftness of the child's heart-beat, the fickleness of its stomach, and the antic behaviour of a thermometer under its arm, make us feel that we are in the presence of uncertainties : the child is *so easily upset*. Bichat, a century ago, coined a phrase—The Tripod of Life : meaning thereby the heart, the lungs, and the brain ; and, with small children, it is the last-named leg of the tripod, mostly, which gets upset. We grown-ups are able—a homely instance—to sit with our backs to the engine without distress ; we are free of night-terrors ; we could cut a third set of teeth without convulsions, if only we might have the chance ; our temperatures take no rocket-flights ; and we digest much more food than we need to eat. When we are upset, it is on grown-up lines ; small children are upset on juvenile lines. So far as I can guess at the course of their upsetting, I am inclined to think that a small child is likely to need quieting, not urging ; and I would mostly approve a sedative draught, for

sudden self-tormenting naughtiness, rather than a dose of castor-oil : for the brain may be the key to the whole position.

Consider, as bearing on this matter, the fears of small children. We grown-ups know what it is that we fear at night : it is fire, or burglars, or illness, or death in the night. These fears are sane ; but those of small children often are not. Even a five-months-old baby will wake, screaming and sweating, not with pain, but with some experience which we cannot measure : we say that the baby was frightened by a dream ; that the habit of dreaming is innate. What does it feel like, at five months old, to be frightened by innate dreams ? Even at five years old, the child's fear, though it may require some outside fact—a creaking door, a flapping blind—to set it going, is not shaped or limited by that fact ; rather, it is shapeless, illimitable, incommunicable : and the least spark of a fact will fire the whole mine. To some of these fears we give the name of night-terrors ; and I marvel at the unkindness of the parents who will not let their children have a light in the room. *Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum*, that is what the night-terror is : a dreadful, shapeless, illimitable power of evil, which comes when the light has been taken away. But the night-terror may be worse than a sense of obsession ; it may be convulsive, tearing the child, wrecking self-control and self-recognition : I have seen a small boy rush,

mad for a minute, down a well-lit corridor crowded with people : a horrible sight. These terrors, so far as I know, leave no mark on the later years : meanwhile, let us be thankful for sedatives and night-lights. Till we know why children are afraid of the dark, let us keep it from them.

Another fear worth noting is the fear of blood. Mostly, when a small child is wild with rage over a bruise or a cut, it is not from pain, but from the fear of blood. *Does it bleed?* That is his amazing first question. He rages, not knowing that he has any blood to spare ; he finds himself, to the best of his knowledge, ebbing away. But his hatred of the sight of his blood goes even deeper ; it goes back, we know not how far, to we know not where. A surgeon, one of the best anæsthetists in London, has told me that if a patient, during an operation in the mouth, swallows, unconsciously, some blood, his stomach will be sure to reject it after the operation. If grown-up folk be thus ascidian, let us not laugh at small children who are frightened at the sight of their blood.

These fears of the dark, and of blood, come from within. The fears which come from without are legion. To meet a person deformed, or mutilated by loss of a limb, or very ugly, is for some children a terrible business : none can say why. Fear of dogs, also, is common among them ; and a child will shy at a dog, yet ride gladly on the back of an elephant : so it cannot

be a question of size. Some children, doubtless, are by nature less brave than others; but if we perfectly understood them—that is to say, if we were they—we might be ready enough to make our confession. *To know all is to forgive all.*

It is not only their fears which are past our understanding: it is also their tricks, their inexplicable tricks. One of these has often puzzled me. Small children have a way of putting 'foreign bodies' into their ears, or up their noses. A bright bead, a tiny shell or seed or pebble, a fragment of slate pencil: these are the favourite objects. I have wondered, always, why they do this; I have asked them, but they cannot tell me; I have asked their mothers, nor can they. Why should the ear, or the nose, *non hos inventus in usus*, be thus maltreated? It cannot be that a small child, having no pockets, requires a safe to hold its little treasures. Is it a sort of blind reversion to the ante-natal possession of branchial clefts? Does the child still feel darkly that one orifice in its head is much the same as another? Do any of the higher apes practise this trick? For they had branchial clefts before they were born, and they have had no pockets since. I commend this vulgar subject to the experimental psychologists.

If we cannot understand the fears and the tricks of small children, shall we say that we understand their graver faults? Take their most grievous offences:

cruelty, impurity, and lying. Put yourself in the child's place; exchange selves with him. But you cannot: you are you, he is he. Well then, what have you got to go on? What assurance in religion, what evidence in science, what doctrine of ethics, will tell you why he said what he said and did what he did? Even he could not tell; and, if he cannot, how can we? Oh, but we are grown up. Much help that is to us, to have grown up in a tangle of theories. We hesitate, and are irresolute, when a small child commits an act of animalism. *Do you think that he really understood what he was doing?* The question is thousands of years old; and the answer ranges through every degree of hesitancy between Yes and No. But I am fairly sure that these, and all other offences, may be, and very often are, committed by small children in absolute ignorance that they are doing wrong; or, at the worst, in ignorance so nearly absolute that the answer may be very nearly No. Take another instance: how they will say something wildly unkind; it hurts us: they wish we were dead, they don't love us any more: a hit, a palpable hit; but with what a little penny wooden sword, emphasised by the wearing of what a dear little paper cocked-hat. Or they will spin a yarn, and we call it a lie; we who told them, only ten minutes ago, a fairy-tale. They do not really understand what they are doing: they would not, if they did understand, be children.

Sometimes, in the emergency of this or that offence, we get some help from our memory of what we were at the child's age; we find that he is reproducing us, who produced him. But memory, all that way back, is faint; we may be mixing up what we remember with what we imagine. Still, we are bound to look at our own records before we judge our children's misdoings, lest our sentences should be too heavy, or too light. Parents who never say to themselves, *What was I like at his age?* had better send their children away to be brought up by somebody else.

Now, if it be a fair estimate of small children that they are unstable, and in many ways inexplicable, we ought, I think, in our nursery-policy, to be conservative. If we do not understand them, we must not lightly experiment on them. A family of small children is not a discovery; there is nothing original or new in its existence; it is not like radium, that it should be pursued by Science. Our own particular children are new to us, and we to them; but the influences which will draw them to us, or drive them from us, are ages old, and are not to be played with. *Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.* Fathers and mothers have been feeling our wants, and making our errors, ever since Adam and Eve had two children so unlike as Cain and Abel. Our first parents were bewildered, as we are. What had happened, what mistake had been committed, that the two boys should be so unlike? They

had been brought up together, share and share the same ; and here was the end of it all : and what was the meaning of it ? So these first parents cried out, utterly at a loss what to think of the children : so we cry out, under lesser tragedies, we likewise at a loss what to think. There is nothing new in our bewilderment : it is primal, aboriginal, as old as the hills ; we must not try to make it subject to theory. Truly, neither science nor ethics can do much for us. Not that I should ever go to an Ethical Society for guidance in any of my difficulties : I would not trust it so much as to tell me, without a paper and a two hours' discussion, how to get from the Bank to the Marble Arch ; but ethics, doubtless, are a grand study, if only the Ethical Societies would leave them alone.

As it is not wise *to hurry because it happens to be dark*, so it is not wise to try to be original over these difficulties of home-life. Desiring, heart and soul, to do the very best thing for the children, we yet may well think twice before we change the old ways of looking after them. The proper place for small children is home, and the nursery. Have we so outgrown the ideals of home and nursery that we need to be consulting the oracles of the psychological laboratories ? Is it urgent, that Science should bind our babies in chains, and our children with links of iron ? Consider how every moment of a small child's day-time, every inch of his play-room, every sound in the street, call him to

observation, comparison, decision, action, experience, and memory. That is Nature's method. The whole world is her kindergarten. The first educational toys which she gives the baby, to teach itself arithmetic, are its own fingers and toes. She sets the small child where he has no choice but to be always learning; she has no theory of his individual aptitudes, no special machinery for accelerating the wheels of his brain, no graduated series of test objects. The young men in the psychological laboratories say that she is *careless of the single life*; but that is only their fun. For she is making the small child make himself: and they are merely making the small child. I am thinking, of course, of 'The Water-Babies'—that masterpiece among books for the bringing together of parents and children; worth many Alices, and a wilderness of Blue Birds—I am thinking of what Mother Carey says:

'Know, silly child, that anyone can make things, if they will take time and trouble enough: but it is not everyone who, like me, can make things make themselves.'

That is what she said to the fairy who was 'so clever that she found out how to make butterflies. I don't mean sham ones; no: but real live ones, which would fly, and eat, and lay eggs, and do everything that they ought; and she was so proud of her skill that she went flying straight off to the North Pole, to boast

to Mother Carey that she could make butterflies. But Mother Carey laughed.' Our psychologists, education-
alists, theorists and analysts of childhood, are indeed
able—all honour to them—to make real live butterflies.
But there is something to be said for Mother Carey's
way of making butterflies make themselves :

'Tom expected, of course—like some grown-up
people who ought to know better—to find her snipping,
piecing, fitting, stitching, cobbling, basting, filing, planing,
hammering, turning, polishing, moulding, measuring,
chiselling, clipping, and so forth, as men do when they
go to work to make anything.

'But, instead of that, she sat quite still with her chin
upon her hand, looking down into the sea with two great
grand blue eyes, as blue as the sea itself. Her hair
was as white as the snow—for she was very very old—in
fact, as old as anything which you are likely to come
across, except the difference between right and wrong.'

It would be pleasant to transcribe whole pages
of the dear book, even its most perishable nonsense.
It will not all die ; for it was born in the company of
Immortals, in the great storm of thought which went
to the making of the mid-Victorian Age. It was out
in that storm : a fine experience for any book. Happy
and thankful am I, that I am even older than Tom,
and am able to remember the intellectual glories of
that Age, and the many virtues of its home-life. They
are foolish young people who speak lightly of the

influences of those years. Crinolines, heavy furniture, ugly wall-papers, sentimental novels, dull Sundays—that is mostly what they see in an age which they never saw. But I will back my parents against theirs, any day of the year; and my old nurse against theirs, if they have one. I will back against theirs my home-education, home-discipline, home-love, home-pride. The dullness of the Sundays taught us the elements of submission to the inevitable; besides, it threw into relief the natural brightness of the Saturdays and Mondays; besides, I never did think that week-day colours really suit Sunday's complexion, and some of the Sundays which I see now are dressed much too young, and their faces powdered as thick as a clown's. The stolid furniture, which our parents called 'handsome,' and then thought no more about it, left them free to give the more attention to our spiritual furnishing. And the old nurse—her thrilling touch of downright heathen superstition, her mediæval science and practice of medicine, her fascinating store of likes and dislikes, and her treasury of quotations from Pope and Addison—think of that, all you unlucky children who are being brought up on the New Lines: and her courage and her self-forgetfulness, and her flaming and everlasting love toward us—why, she ought to have a biography all to herself.

I do not say that all the children of that fast-vanishing generation were so happy in their home-life as

we were in ours. But, if it were possible to give a prize for the safest and wisest home-management of small children, I am inclined to think that the average home of the present day might have to be content with a *proxime accessit*.

III

A LITTLE BRIEF AUTHORITY

ALL of us know what it is to have to keep up appearances : how it ages man and wife, and cuts into the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other. It is a most obstinate skeleton, hiding in every cupboard, present at every feast. Our motives to friendship, our choice of a neighbourhood, our enjoyment of holidays—all of them are perverted from their proper lines. There are growing-pains, and there are labour-pains ; but the pains which we take to keep up appearances bring nothing much either to growth or to birth. None the less, these pains are so strong, that if they could be turned to mechanical force they would suffice to move the Admiralty Arch out of London. It is true that the keeping-up of appearances accustoms us to endurance and alertness ; it gives us ingenuity ; but we are longing, all the time, for some reduction of armaments between those two great friendly powers, the neighbours and ourselves. We desire not more Dreadnoughts, but an Ark : a quiet

family Ark, with six bedrooms, dressing-room, and good bathroom, moderate rent, and a lease terminable with the emergence of Ararat. And, I think, there is some evidence that appearances are becoming less urgent, less compulsory. The raven came back ; the dove came back twice, and is gone again ; not a sign of the glint of her wings ; and the sky promises fair. We are beginning to be less afraid of what people will say ; we venture to drop this or that conventional habit, and nobody is offended ; we plan our leisure on unexplored ways, and have no fear that we are trespassing. Any old Londoner can recall the time when lives as fine as ours, and finer, were subject to a more strict rule of appearances than that which is laid on us.

But my theme is the keeping-up of appearances, not in society, but at home. Society can look after itself ; but home—

‘ There, where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life ’—

we must not leave home to look after itself. If we would play the fool, let us do it in society, which will not mind if we do, but will just open its mouth and swallow us up like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Let us not play the fool in our own house, for the children will mind if we do ; and they notice everything. The disregard of social appearances may be justified : the

disregard of domestic appearances is a more serious offence.

For the keeping-up of appearances before the children, we must take into account, first, their opinion of our conduct in their presence. Next, their insight into our dealings with the servants—on whose side, mostly, they are ; and that, in many cases, with justice. Next, their verdict on the books we read, the plays we admire, the level of our talk, and the range of our Sundays. Last, their sharp sense when either of us is cross with the other. It was over a dead child's grave, in the poem, that *we kissed again with tears* : it is dreadful to *fall out, my wife and I*, if the living children hear us. Nothing could be worse for them. And I consign to perdition, along with tiffs—a properly ugly word—all snaps and snarls, such as *Don't tell me what your mother said*, and *Well, you know what your father is*. In these pungent homes, the children upstairs make the golliwog and the teddy-bear fall out, they know not why, and kiss again with tears, at the expense of the Fifth Commandment.

It follows, that the children like to see us clean and neat, and of blameless manners at the table, noiseless over our food, and careful not to spill. That we must show sympathy and courtesy to the servants, lest the children should apologise to them for us, saying that we did not really mean it, and they hope it will not happen again. That we set their teeth on edge if we

eat sour grapes, calling them our taste. That they feel our jarring voices as we feel the east wind, or the smell from Crosse and Blackwell's on a raspberry-vinegar day. All these abandonments of appearances they are quick to note and to censure; or, what is worse, to imitate.

Like a moth round a lamp—and I wish that some man or woman of science would tell me why moths fly at lights—I have been circling round the subject which attracted me. Of all domestic appearances, we most jealously guard the appearance of our Authority. We claim authority over our children; we fear to lose it; we call on them to recognise it. Yet, in that Parent's Catechism, which will some day be written, there is the question, *My good parent, what meanest thou by this word?* And the answer is difficult.

But the difficulty, mostly, is of our own making: we have not given thought to the meaning of the word. We have contented ourselves with a vague notion that our parental authority is a natural product; that we get it, ready-made, by merely having children; that we possess it, as we possess bodily organs and worldly goods; that our power over the children is founded and built on the bare fact that here the children are, just as a man's digestive power is founded and built on the bare fact that here his insides are. But this notion of our authority as a natural product, developed in all of us alike, is not only vague, but downright false. It appeals

to Nature : therefore, unto Nature it shall go, and hear what she has to say to it.

The further I trace back, in Nature, the power of parents over their children, the less I like what she shows to me. For I find the whole business tainted with savagery—*Oh Jephthah, Judge of Israel, what a daughter hadst thou*—I trace it back to the power of brutes over their young, and to worse than that. At the end of the track of my thoughts, if they can be called thoughts, I see Moloch, Juggernaut, Chronos devouring Zeus, and cats devouring their kittens. So much for the origins, or development, of parental authority in Nature. But why should we be scared by the origins of ourselves ? For we are not origins, but results. The origins all left off before we began ; they had to, or we never could have begun. As Mr. Balfour says of the origins of music, in that magnificent second chapter of 'The Foundations of Belief'—'How does the fact that our ancestors liked the tom-tom account for our liking the Ninth Symphony ?' If my ancestors—I take Mr. Balfour's word for it—did like the tom-tom, I am not surprised that they had to come to an end before I could begin to begin. So it is with all origins : the more we enquire of them, the less we revere them ; it is not origins that explain results, it is results that explain origins. Let us limit our enquiry to here and now.

What do we believe, touching our authority over the

children—really believe, in our hearts, you and I, my dear? What do we really believe, when we sit together of an evening, and think it over, when the children are asleep? Take what happened only to-day. Boanerges—he is named after his godfather, not me—was extremely difficult, all to-day; we had to be very determined with him; we had to assert our authority. We pulled that cracker, and the noise of it silenced him; and we are left, man and wife, each with one end of a spent cracker. Was it, or was it not, the best way to manage him?

Surely it was, with a child so young as that. But they soon outgrow and resent all such explosive displays, and are stimulated to resistance by our efforts to be irresistible: for they detect in us, or imagine that they detect, ill-judged and intemperate and theatrical behaviour. The older they are, the more careful we must be to avoid a masterful high-handed course of action, with scenes, and what are called *strong curtains*. We do them wrong, being so majestic, to offer them the show of violence. Such methods, long ago, kept the Fairchild family straighter than straight; but the families of this generation are made of other stuff. Indeed, as things are now, Mr. Fairchild might find himself watched by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. His methods remind me of the story of the Siege of Jericho: how the insistent procession, ultimate and fearsome, bringing the Irresistible along

with it, went round and round, till the walls themselves could not stand any more. No wise parent now would thus besiege his children, nor would they thus be captured: they would hardly trouble to look over the edge of their walls; they would merely say, *Oh, of course; Father, as usual.* Or they would come forth out of the city with hosts of arguments, and give battle, and their parents be defeated in the very presence of the Irresistible.

Against the risk of such disaster, each of us ought to know what right we have to our rights, what authority for our authority. We get no help here from Nature. The primal origins of our authority are hopelessly disreputable; and the nearer past has nothing to tell us, save that everything is always changing. From generation to generation the standard is shifted, the rule is modified. Again and again the sum has been done, and the answer each time has come different. *Quis custodiet custodes?* Take a dozen homes, to-day: parental authority is enforced in one, disdained in another. The modern stage, mostly, displays the authoritative parent as a hard-willed fool: Sir Anthony Absolute enslaved to chapel-going, old Capulet run to seed, and Lear, no longer tragic, refusing to his daughter not a kingdom, but a latchkey. Only, Heaven be praised, there was 'Milestones': it had insight, it had distinction. It will need a new act, of course, every thirty years; and I know some good critics who, at the fall of the

curtain, planned one, then and there, in a restaurant over the way. Still, to my thinking, the play ends well where it ends now, with the death of old Authority, after a wearisome period of slowly failing strength. Nothing is here for tears: death came so quietly at the last, hand in hand with honour and with peace. *Le Roi est mort.* But the children, none the less, are in need of us. For they are fond of loyalty, they fear and hate anarchy. They desire a king, some sort of a king; they are waiting outside the darkened palace to cry *Vive le Roi*, and we must not keep them waiting. Somebody must be at the head of their affairs; if it be only to earn the money and have charge of the household. And, after all, there is nobody, my dear, but you and I. Not even the most emancipated child can suggest an alternative scheme. We have no power to lay down the cares of State: parental authority may be a thing of the past, but parents are not. It is impossible to doubt that you and I are still expected, if not to govern, yet to reign. Come, your hand: strike up, trumpets and drums: let us at once assume our thrones:

‘Here you see the monarch sit,
With his consort opposite.’

For we ought always to try to do what the children want, so long as it is nothing which can do them any real harm.

But we must adapt ourselves, carefully, to the new

order. We are King and Queen, under this proviso : that we make no unconstitutional use of our royal supremacy, consult our advisers, and commit no tyrannical act. Amen, so be it. Now let us examine, with purged vision, the purpose and the workings of parental authority, new style. But please let us mind our own business, and leave the neighbours out of the question ; for there is plenty to learn in *this toy kingdom of ours* without going outside. Also, let us forget those occasions when your authority and mine have been at variance :

‘ And while Papa said, *Pooh, she may,*
Mama said, *No, she shan’t.*’

For it is facts that we want, not casuistry. And I say that parental authority is not a free or unconditional grant or subsidy from Heaven. We get it not all at once, but by instalments ; we are paid, not for having children, but for looking after them : there is no covenant between Heaven and us, only a general understanding that we may hope to receive what we have earned, but must earn something before we receive anything.

Mark how we set to work : observe the initial ways of a mother with a baby. There are two words—*Naughty Baby*—which mothers of large families may well be tired of saying. These are the first words of parental authority ; and all our later exercises of authority are nothing more than variations on this

theme. The earliest use of these words is to teach the baby to keep itself clean : that is, when it is about three months old, but not before. His mother's authority over Boanerges, therefore, was born about three months after him. My authority drew its first breath a few weeks later, on the day when he was trying to swallow my watch. Nothing of authority could pass from us to him till he was able, more or less, to attend to the sound of us. For the first few months, we were impersonal to him, for he was impermeable to us : we were just like the two sides of his cot, let up to keep him in. Till he was old enough to be naughty, we had no authority over him. She nursed him : I looked at him. So long as he was too young for me to say *Naughty Baby* to him, I was powerless.

Slowly, year by year, with pleasure and pain, success and failure, pride and shame, comes that good understanding between parents and children which we call our authority. It is innumerable acts of parental care and filial acceptance ; and so quick is the sequence of them that we get the impression or sense of continuity, as with a film at a picture-palace. We see our authority not as a series, but as a fixture ; we talk of it as if it were always there, like a policeman at Oxford Circus. It is just a name for the children trying to be obedient to us, and us trying to be wise with them. We cannot lock it up, as if it were the cheque-book ; nor send it to the Bank, during our holiday, as if it were the

silver tea-set ; nor flourish it all of a sudden, as if it were the poker, and the children were a noise in the basement. It is nothing that we have, it is only what we are. It is ourselves feeling our way to the children, and they to us.

Truly, here is a kingdom to be proud of. What can be better for us, than to try to be good ? What more suitable gift could Heaven devise for us parents ? But we must be always deserving it, or it will stop coming. It is not handed to us, once and for all, across Heaven's counter, along with a baby, like a sugar-basin with a pound of tea. *Mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu.* As with all other gifts, so with this gift of authority, the only hold that we have on it is the use that we make of it. That is the rule under which we get our gifts : and quite right too.

It follows, that we are at any rate as safe on our thrones as we are anywhere else. We must play no fantastic tricks before high Heaven. None the less, we are King and Queen *Dei gratiâ* : that is, on this divine condition, that we keep on trying to do the best thing for the children. So long as we are thus employed, we are in authority over them.

I wrote *Dei gratiâ* : and it occurred to me to turn out the coins which were in my pocket, that I might assure myself of the accompanying words, *Defensor Fidei*. Penny, sixpence, shilling, florin—they all implied to me that they who reign by the Grace of God are

thereby bound to be Defenders of the Faith. I put the four coins on the mantelpiece, in a row, and looked hard at them ; but I could not stare them out of countenance, nor make them change their opinion. They were unanimously agreed that parents, to be deserving of authority, ought to defend the faith of their children. This resolution was sent up to me from the mantelpiece : and it shall receive my serious consideration.

IV

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

WHEN I said that we ought to defend the faith of our children, I meant that we ought to help them to defend it for themselves. And I was not thinking of books and arguments and evidences : I was thinking of children too young for such learning.

Children are taught to pray before they are taught to argue : and we all of us know the sort of prayers which they say, and the off-hand way in which they speak of their Maker. The prayers do not concern us here ; for they are formal, not off-hand. All children, at first, pray much the same : that they be made good, and a blessing be on a long list of their nearest and dearest. Some pet animal may be included ; and the child may pray to be taken to Heaven when he dies ; but I do not care for him to say that. His prayers are ritual, rather than original ; he loves to be precise over them—he will go through the list again, if he has left out one of us. Our opportunity, therefore, is not in his prayers, but in the off-hand remarks which he makes

to us. And some of us, I think, are too shy of taking this opportunity. To a man or a woman who does not profoundly care for children, these off-hand remarks appear to be of no more value than the formal prayers ; the child says funny little prayers, and he makes funny little remarks, and there is an end of the matter. But those of us who do profoundly care for children will find, again and again, that the remarks disclose what the prayers conceal. And, in this disclosure, we have an opportunity of helping the children to defend their faith.

We are apt to stop at the mere grotesquery of these off-hand remarks. We quote them in letters, we send them to newspapers, we bring them out at parties—*I must tell you what my little boy said*. But, so soon as I have heard what the little boy said, I long to know what his mother said. Did she take the opportunity, or did she make a fool of herself, or did she only laugh at him as she is laughing now ?

The laughter, round the dinner-table, is wholesome enough, and as free from affectation as dinner-party laughter can ever hope to be. But it has a special note, a very distinctive note. Each of us, when we hear what the little boy said, is compelled, for one moment, to look inside self. It does not move me to self-examination, if I am told what the man said when he sat down on his hat ; but these child-stories do move me to examine what there is of my own defences of my faith.

It does not take me long, but I have to do it ; and so has all the company at table. That is the way of these stories ; they turn us to the inspection of our own lines of defence : and in we go, and out we come again, each apart and all together, still giving our polite laughter to what the little boy said.

I wish that I could find out how parents and guardians, in the ancient world, handled *the religious difficulty*. A hideous phrase. Put aside Babylon, and Egypt, and Persia ; they are too remote : yet, in Persia, the boys who were taught *to shoot with the bow, and to speak the truth*, rouse my curiosity. But, when we come to Greece and to Rome, I do wish that I knew what the children were taught about the gods. Those little Athenian, Spartan, and Corinthian boys and girls, how were they taught, at school and at home, to defend their faith ? That idyll of Theocritus—the two gossiping women, who take the child to the festival, and push their way through the crowd, to hear the Hymn to Aphrodite—what did the child make of it all ? I have lost my Theocritus : perhaps they left the child at home ; but let it be granted that they took him. *Mother, what are they singing about ? Mother, who is Aphrodite ? Where does she live ? Can she live where she likes ?* Another time, doubtless, they took him to the theatre. *Mother, was that really Apollo, or somebody dressed up like him ? Have you ever seen him ? What should you do, if you did see him ? Who made him ? What*

has he to do with the sun? Is he the same as Zeus? I should like to see him and Zeus together, Mother. Oh, these children, these children. At school, I suppose, he learned Homer. What explanation was given to him by his teachers, under a Government grant, of the doings of the gods in Homer?

Ancient world or modern world or world a thousand years hence, the import of the children's off-hand remarks is unchanging. It is only the setting of them which changes, not the substance. One and all, from Babylon to now, and from now onward, they are all alike; they are sprung on us, as on Praxinöe at the festival; they come of that which is in every child; they may seem different, but the more they change the more they are the same thing. She, I suppose, told her little boy to regard the Homeric stories as true in a way: it was the way that people talked of the gods long ago, and very beautiful it was—no, not exactly what you would call really true: it is very beautiful poetry, and you must learn a lot of it by heart—no, it is not only poetry, it is really true, in a way: things did really happen, of course they did; but Homer—*Never mind all that, Mother, I don't want about Homer; I want about the gods—tell me about them.* As it was with her, so it is with us, and ever will be, to the last syllable of appointed time. The children *want about God.* We fuss over the duty of breaking it gently to them, that this or that Bible-story is not historical.

The children do not care one way or the other ; they leave us fussing, they race ahead, for they have heard of God ; their wild imaginings of Him rise like dust under the feet of runners, and hide them from us. The endless pursuit of the wonder of Him is upon them ; the sound of His name is so loud in their ears that they do not heed us calling them to come back and let us read to them—it is not books that they are thinking of, but God. The Bible-stories were no more than a dropped flag, which started them on their course : they are gone, breathless and untidy, toward Him ; and we are left here to explain the Bible-stories to each other. And we say to each other that the children, after all, are only children ; they are too young to understand ; we must not make them little prigs, little hypocrites ; we must wait, be patient ; it will be all right, in time.

But, I think, at the backs of our minds, while we are thus consoling each other for the absence of the children, we are wishing that we had done more for them, had missed no opportunity of helping them to defend their faith. Such opportunity they do give to us, now and again, in their off-hand remarks. Take one of many instances. A child was told the story of the golden calf ; how God was angry at the worship of it. She asked, ‘ Was He angry at that ? ’ She was told that He was. ‘ What, angry at that ? ’ ‘ Yes, very angry ; there it was, in the Bible.’ Then she said, *Well, I should think anybody else would simply have*

laughed. Now, it is certain that the answer to this off-hand remark, the true, perfect, final answer, is somewhere in existence ; the Dialogues of Plato, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and many books which we foolishly call mystical, must have that answer somewhere among them or between them. None of us could give it extempore ; it requires a long period of special reading and hard study : still, there it is, somewhere in old books of philosophy and theology, waiting, asleep, like the princess in the fairy-tale, to be found and waked by a question, as it were by a kiss.

To write the word *defence* is to think of children besieged, and of us helping them to hold on. Picture them and us enclosed in a fort, and the enemy all round it. If we are to be of help, we must immediately examine, and strengthen, the weak points of the defence. The weakest points, of course, are the poverty of the children's minds, and the poverty of ours. But there is a third weak point : it is the poverty of our words. For the defence, we need weapons of precision, accurately sighted, and of sufficient range. We must not talk down to the children ; we must avoid, so far as we can, the use of baby-language. It may be impossible, sometimes, to lay hand on the right word ; but we ought to try, lest the habit of talking down to their level, or what we take to be their level, should land some of us in the vocabulary of Caliban guessing at Setebos. It is pitiful that we should thus present their Maker

to them, we who ought to raise the whole subject above grossness, and cleanse it from idolatry. But I am not sure that we can do much : and what I suggest here is more visionary than practical.

To begin with, we might be more careful to use the present tense, to the exclusion of the past and the future tenses, when we are talking to the children about God. Over *He is*, we are not likely to go wrong ; over *He was* and *He will be*, we are. Likewise, the indicative mood is to be preferred before the subjunctive mood—thus, *He would be* and *He would have been* are even worse than *He will be* and *He was*. This notion of variableness in time with our doings will not help the children to defend their faith. Here may be our first exercise in the art of helping them. Let us keep to the use of the present tense and the indicative mood ; let us drill ourselves to be handy with paraphrases of *was* and *will be* ; let us forgo the use of *would be* and *would have been*. For example, over the story of the golden calf, we can put the past tense in its proper place, which is Horeb, not Heaven. There *was* a golden calf, and it *was* wrong to worship it. Then comes the question, Why ? Then, the delightful escape into the present tense. Golden calves *are* wrong, invariably, wherever they are. In the open air of the present tense, we can breathe deep and walk far, taking the children all the way with us.

From this exercise in the restricted use of one tense

and one mood, we advance to the much harder exercise in the use of adjectives. Is there anything that we can say, if we do not want to say *angry* or *sorry* or *glad*? These and the like adjectives are of immemorial age and universal custom; they are as natural and essential to earth as the hills; they are in the very fabric of the books of religion; and they stand for that which we cannot translate into words for ourselves, let alone for the children. Words we must have, and the best in this kind are but shadows; we might easier try to make the children understand the velocity of light, or the distance of the stars; we have no business, fools like us, to play tricks with these most venerable adjectives. Truly, the answer is, that we have no business. Still, the children come first. And we may have an opportunity, now and again, of reconciling the reverence that we owe to these words with the reverence that we owe to the children, which is *maxima*. But we must prepare ourselves for the opportunity, we must plan our sentences, rehearse our effects; the grown-up mind must be *schooled and exercised*, that it may be of service to the child's mind. If we will do that, we ought to be able to talk religion to the children, without hampering it with a lot of inadjustable adjectives. I am reminded, how 'Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not

proved them. And David put them off him.' We lend the children our usual adjectives, and think that we are helping them to fight Goliath; and they, less wise than David, will not put them off, but go stumbling and embarrassed to meet the enemy, under the heavy weight of arms too large for them. Is that the best that we can do to help them to defend their faith? The armour belongs to us, and we have proved it; but the children have not. We are able to handle these adjectives; but the children are not.

Last comes the hardest exercise of all, the impossible exercise in the use of pronouns. I am thinking of children long out of the nursery, and well-nigh out of the schoolroom. We have to help them to apprehend the meaning of *He, His, Him*. We must be very diligent over this exercise, determine our programme and abide by it, foresee all exigencies, and leave nothing to chance. For we may be needed, some day, in haste. There will be an alarm of tempestuous debate in the schoolroom, or a long and grave letter on the breakfast table, from the son at college, saying that he has ceased to believe, and thinks that we ought to be told; and happy are those parents whose son thinks that they ought to be told. We must be ready for these occasions; we must have at hand the reason for the use of these pronouns. They are a good safeguard of that which we want the children to believe. We want them to see that they, of themselves, are more than works of Nature :

for each of them is able to say *I am*, and not all the forces of Nature put together could enable them to say that. Further, we want them to see that the good in them is just as real as their food and their clothes, and is made for them, and put into them, just as food is made for their stomachs, and put there, and clothes on their backs; and, as the food in them comes from that which has nourishment in it, and the clothes on them from that which has warmth in it, so the good in them comes from that which, somehow, has goodness in it. And, as the good in them is real, so it is just as real, if not more real, in that which gives it to them. It does not wait till it gets to them to be real: it is real right away, in the beginning. So we call it, very properly, *Him*: because no other word would be of the faintest use. To think of the lives, and the deaths, of good men and women, is to feel quite sure that the word for that which makes them good must be not *It*, but *He*. No *It* could make all those *hims* and *hers*, and them so good, and each of them able to say *I am*. The abandonment of *He*, *His*, *Him* would insult not only faith but logic.

These exercises, visionary though they are, in the use of tenses, adjectives, and pronouns, may be of some slight assistance to parents. For there is no denying that we often are neglectful of the power of each word, when we talk religion to the children. Words are like the germs of malaria, which have two stations

of life, one in us, the other in mosquitoes ; therefore, what matters to the children is not the meaning of our words to us, but the meaning of our words to them. We tend to forget that ; we give them some thin, worn-out phrase to lean on ; it breaks, all of a sudden, in the child's hand ; down she comes, and pulls us down with her. *Was He really angry? Anybody else would have laughed.* These breakages are bound to happen, when clever children throw their whole weight suddenly on such phrases ; and it is our fault. It would not happen with phrases of stronger texture. But these we leave to the last, because we think them too hard, too heavy, too philosophical.

But why should we be afraid of talking grown-up to the children ? It makes them feel, to their delight, that we are trusting them, honouring them, letting them into our thoughts, and widening the horizon of theirs. Always, it is like wormwood in a child's mouth, the sense that we are playing down to him, putting him off with baby-talk. Let us give him not that bitter stuff, but something more nourishing.

I have often wished that I could write a little book of philosophy for children. It must be light as air, and clear as crystal ; no long words, no parade of learning, no list of references, no psychology, nothing but what may slowly guide them toward a better understanding of *The world, myself, and Thee*. It would be a grand thing if we could get them to see that Plato and

Aristotle are of higher authority than Nurse ; and I feel sure that they would enjoy the change. I would not perplex them with such words as *Being* and *Absolute* ; and I would make frequent use of the name of *The Spirit*. Titles for this book—‘First Steps in Philosophy,’ ‘Metaphysics Made Easy,’ ‘Logic for the Little Ones,’ ‘The Nursery Theologian,’ ‘The Boy’s Own Berkeley’—these have run off the end of my pen. Some young man or young woman, tired of reading for a degree, might well write on these lines.

Besides, this juvenile version of *The Foundations of Belief* would be, like its great namesake, ‘notes introductory.’ It would be intended to prepare the children to think as they ought of Christianity. It would be an attempt to give them some sort of hold, according to their strength, on the assurance ‘that among the needs ministered to by Christianity are some which increase rather than diminish with the growth of knowledge and the progress of science ; and that this religion is, therefore, no mere reform, appropriate only to a vanished epoch in the history of culture and civilisation, but a development of theism now more necessary to us than ever.’

For the children have so far to go, from their earliest love of pictures of Baby Jesus, to any sort or kind of grown-up Christian faith, that they had better be off as soon as possible. Go they will, let us hope, whether we send them or not ; so we might as well

begin to get them ready now. For none of us knows how long we shall have them with us.

But, if we were to remain silent, they have other ways of getting to know about our Lord; they do not need us to introduce them to Him. Shop-windows, Christmas cards, and illustrated papers, commend Him to their attention; and over the doors of churches, and in picture-books, and on posters, there He is, and is made known to them. It is not all of it our doing, that they are familiar with the look of Him—those of them, especially, who live in a great city. Merely, they so often see Him that they know Him by sight; and, if we held our peace, the streets would none the less cry out.

I cannot guess what authority, if any, is now allowed to Mr. Heaphy's theory that the traditional likeness of Him is a real likeness. The evidences in Mr. Heaphy's book may be out of favour now; they may be in favour a century hence. The outline of the face, the shape of the nose and of the mouth, and the eyes, and the long hair parted in the middle, and the beard—these, we are told, are really like Him. Some record, from Judæa, found its way to Rome: a rough drawing, from memory, or from description of memory; still, it was like Him. I do not think that the refusal of this theory would be more reasonable than the acceptance of it: and if a small child were to ask me, *Is that really like Him?* I should say, *Yes, I believe it is.* The

forgeries of art, the aureole and the robe, if they were noticed, would have to be explained away ; but I should stick to it that we were looking at a real likeness—*sic oculos, sic Ille manus, sic ora tenebat*.

It is true that His pictures and effigies have to contend, indoors and out of doors, with legions of other claimants of a child's notice, many of which are of overwhelming size and bewildering ugliness ; and I can only marvel at the shops which sell, and the parents who buy, dolls and toys and caricatures thus debased. Still, His portrait holds its own ; the child, whether we tell him or not, will include it in the little gallery of the mind. *That's Him*, says the child.

Consider, now, that our Lord is steadily presented to small children, in this secular way, under one of two aspects : either as a baby in arms, or as a man crucified. Note the intensive action here. His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen, are presented under those conditions which obtain at Madame Tussaud's ; they are crowned King and Queen. One life, and one alone, is set before the children in the two extremes of helplessness : in the first year after birth, and in the agony of death. That is the street's method of teaching. It cares little for other aspects of the life : it is content, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, to display a Madonna and Child, or a crucifix. The street—whatever else it may or may not believe—starts with two words of creed which none of us can find any difficulty in saying :

Natus, Crucifixus. And that is where the child starts, if you leave him to himself, and to the educational forces of the streets of a great city.

I venture a step further. It goes without saying, that all children ought to have their 'heroes and heroines in real life.' No wholesome-minded child wants pictures and effigies of abstract thought: figures of Peace, Justice, Charity, and so forth. Even if he did want them, he ought not to have them. We spoil our public buildings with them; let us keep them for that, and exclude them from the nursery. Into this Palace of Truth, let us admit portraits of real men and women, and of none else. Whom shall we have? Shakespeare, of course, and Joan of Arc, and Nelson, and Darwin, and Pasteur—if it was my nursery—and hands up for Beethoven, St. Vincent de Paul, and Queen Victoria: and the usual family-portraits. Whom have we left out? Who is to have the place of honour over the mantelpiece? He, surely, who has the right to say *If I stay, who goes? And if I go, who stays?* That is what all the other portraits would desire, if they had a voice in the matter.

For this enthronement above the nursery mantelpiece would do more than recognise Him; it would isolate Him; and so it ought. I cannot imagine a nursery so vague, so neglectful of proportionate values, that it would put all its historical portraits level in importance. Not even the most Positivist household

would thus offend. Imagine the vulgarity, in a small child's picture-gallery, of a collection of Immortals taking it in turns to possess the place over the mantel-piece. One must reign there, and must reign alone; and we know Who it is.

As time goes on, the child will be wanting to talk about Him. If the picture be of the infancy, he will be asking whether the baby grew up to be a man. If it be of the crucifixion, he will be asking why they did that. Slowly he will piece together, on lines of his own, some concept of the life of our Lord: and it will be, so far as it goes, indisputable. There was a Good Man long ago; He was a baby, to begin with, like me; then He was a little boy, like me; then He grew up, and He did a lot of good, and wicked men hated Him for being so good, and they nailed Him to a cross, so that He died.

Observe that, if we do not tell the children, the street will. And this influence of shop-windows and church-doors is not wasted on them. We are mighty careful to keep them away from what we call 'horrors'—Never mind that, dear, don't look at that—we drag them past, we divert their attention. And all the time, one horror, naked, is set before them as the example of perfection; and do what we may, the street, wiser than some of us, dares them to look at a man being crucified. On this foundation of fact, it is our bounden duty to help the children to build some sort of stronghold, for the defence of their faith. We cannot do it

for them ; we can help them ; but they must do it for themselves.

Their building-materials, perforce, are taken from two great stores of supplies : from the past, and from the present. And, if the building-up of a faith were like the building-up of a factory chimney, we might well be anxious, and say that the whole fabric will come down in the first high wind. For the children take, to begin with, materials from the past, many of which are not able to bear the strain. But I would compare faith-building not to chimney-building, but to the development of the embryo. My body, when it was in my mother's womb, was incessantly building, unbuilding, and rebuilding itself. At first, it was always harking back to the remotest past ; occupying itself—extravagantly, as it appears now—over rudiments and vestiges, forms long ago abandoned ; incessantly selecting, designing, remodelling, and reconciling its constituent parts ; ever bettering itself, never annihilating one atom of itself ; retaining, to-day, its hold on the past, for all that it is worth. And he would be a bold man who would say that a healthy body contains anything absolutely worthless.

The children likewise, when they begin to build-up their faith, make use of the past ; and some of it is history, and some of it is legend. We should only hinder them by interfering with them over their choice of materials—indeed, they have no choice ; they are

building as it were by instinct. The wise parent gives to the children, so soon as they can read, the old Bible-stories, legends and all. For these stories come into a thousand affairs of daily life, and are knit into our art and our literature as close as Greek and Latin are knit into our language ; we belong to them, not they to us. What does it matter to Adam and Eve that they never really happened ? They lived and live and will continue to live in the commonplace talk and thought of the world. What does it matter to the Star of the Nativity that it never really came and stood over Bethlehem ? We all are familiar with it, though more than nineteen hundred years have elapsed since it did not happen ; indeed, to most of us it is the only star which we know by name. We have no business to withhold from a child this heritage of stories : and I keep my pity not for the child who believes them, but for the child who is robbed of them by some self-willed, wrong-headed parent. Let us help the children all we can to learn and to use, for the building-up of their faith, materials from the past, till they are big enough to grasp and handle and put in place those materials which the present has in store for them. The present, the Presence—oh, the wireless telegraphy of words. But here I stop, leaving the small child to the work of a lifetime ; for it may well take him that, if he is to go all the way from his earliest notions of our Lord to a final hold on philosophical belief in Him.

V

INTERPRETERS OF NATURE

How shall we help small children, when they begin to notice the existence of sex, and to be inquisitive into its workings? What, for instance, are we to tell them, touching a birth in the family? I have been looking up 'The Winter's Tale,' to remind myself how the little Mamillius was talked to, and I find that the ladies of the Court spoke plainly to him of his mother's condition. *The queen, your mother, rounds apace: we shall present our services to a fine new prince, one of these days.* The words may look amiss here: for I have prized them out of their setting. The scene that I recall, some five-and-twenty years back, is a grand room in a palace in Sicily: it is evening, the child's half-hour; it is winter, and the firelight makes everything more beautiful. Hermione is tired, and no wonder—*Take the boy to you: he so troubles me, 'tis past enduring*—but she says it with a laugh; she did, leastways, five-and-twenty years back. So her ladies and the little Mamillius have one of the best interludes

in Shakespeare, all to themselves, while she rests, looking into the fire, and thinking. The mock flirtation, between the ladies and the child, is like fairies playing with thistle-down; and every word is clean as clean can be. But the right thing for those pretty ladies to say was judged the wrong thing for us to hear; and the reference to Hermione was cut out, that memorable time at the old Lyceum. It is certain that she, if Mamillius had asked her, would have told him the truth.

With children very young and unnoticing, questions are in abeyance, or are staved off, till the baby is born. They sleep through the night of pain and suspense, footsteps and voices and cries, and the blessed smell of chloroform, and all the terror and all the thankfulness. And when they wake, lo and behold, the baby is there: and they will ask for an explanation. I hope that nobody will tell them that the angels, or the doctor, brought the baby to the house. Shall we say that the baby came from Heaven? But they will imagine a swift passage through the air, like the falling to earth of a meteoric stone. Shall we say that God sent the baby? But the notion of transit will still be in their minds, persuading them of an arrival, somehow, from a long way off. *I think*, said one of them, *it must have come in a puff-puff*. The little Mamillius would have known better than that: and why should he not? It is hard to see how a small child can be hurt

by knowing that babies are born of their mothers. My thoughts are off at a tangent, for it is Christmas-time, to the Nativity. In thousands of our London nurseries, at this moment, the *crèche* is set-out: there are Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger; and shepherds and kings, and ox and ass; and certain effects of sunset and moonlight, done with coloured gelatine, which are dear to children of all ages. If any child, looking into this beautiful toy, were to ask me, all of a sudden, where Baby Jesus came from, I must not insult with falsehood both *crèche* and creed. And, I think, we ought to be no less truthful over a birth in our own home. It cannot profit us, in the long run, nor the children either, that they should imagine babies made above the clouds and despatched to earth. But we must go carefully: the answer must be ready, point-device, and the entire household must be agreed over it, lest the child be not enlightened but endarkened. By forethought we shall be able to tell him or her, without offence, that the baby was formed in its mother's body and was born from its mother's body. Besides, curiosity is apt to be sharpened more by evasion and fabledom than by the plain truth.

But neither truth nor fable nor silence will keep them long from wanting to know more. That is why we ought to begin by telling them the truth, when they ask us how the baby came: to think on sane lines, they must be guided by sane facts. They will be

wondering, from time to time, at sex. Newspapers, plays, books, shop-windows, advertisements will invite them to think; reminders, every inch of the way, will attend them; not a picture-gallery, nor museum, nor farm, nor woodland, will be able to let them alone. With all this dinning in their ears, we must be careful to start them on the right lines. If we deceive them over the baby's birth, we may be sending them into a wilderness of nonsense. If we tell them the truth, we may be putting them on a fairly safe road to further knowledge. They will bring their guesses to us: that is our fear, and our hope; we shall fear it less, and hope it more, if we have a wise answer ready for them. To have it ready in time, we ought to set to work on it now. Each of us, by deliberate choice of the best words, must determine the form of it; and we shall answer wisely or foolishly in proportion to the trouble which we have taken to prepare ourselves for the question. With care, it should be possible to tell children, without harm to their innocence, how a baby's life begins in the union of its parents. None of us must decide, save for himself or herself, the time for telling them; only, when the time comes, the duty of telling them belongs to us, who begot and bare them. And, I think, we are likely to lose more than we shall gain, and they too, if we shirk this obligation. The little Mamillius, though he knew so much, was just as pure and as loving as our children: indeed, he died

of a broken heart, at the false charge against Hermione :

‘Conceiving the dishonour of his mother,
He straight declined, drooped, took it deeply,
Fastened and fixed the shame on’t in himself,
Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languished.’

It is no answer to say that children who know less will suffer less ; that it is the head, which breaks the heart ; and that we ought therefore to let them be happy, and keep all such knowledge, so long as we can, out of their heads. For, do what we will to keep it out, Nature puts it in : and they may call on us to interpret Nature to them. In the palace of their life come forth fingers of Nature’s hand, and write upon the plaister of the wall ; and they see the part of the hand that writes, and their thoughts trouble them : and we may have to be Daniel—‘ An excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in Daniel.’

Will they find these gifts in us ? Will they so much as send for us, when their thoughts trouble them ? If they do send for us, and if Nature has written something utterly brutal and shameless, defiling the white wall as if she were mad, we shall need all our wisdom to explain to them what she did it for, and how she

never thought of the cruelty of it, to deface the wall so that nothing will make it quite the same again. To many children, to most children, she is less unkind. But there are some whom she enjoys to plague, scribbling on their walls, tapping at their doors, underlining their lesson-books, talking while they are saying their prayers ; and a few whom she so persecutes that they dare not let us know of it.

But no two children are exactly alike ; and we can hardly make rules for any but our own. There are children obsessed, and there are children incurious ; some children seem to be passionless, and to hear nothing ; some are inclined to listen, and lay their ears where they may hear more ; some seem to have been born perverse ; some drift into vice with innocence, or with no more than the very faintest notion that they are doing wrong : some are downright evil ; some grow up to marriageable age in strange ignorance, and with most fantastical notions of the whole subject. Seeing this wide range of temperaments, through a thousand intermediate degrees, what help can we give to any children but our own ? Indeed, what help, even to our own, can we be sure of giving ? For we dare not say much, lest we should say too much. Besides, we have not made up our minds what to say. Like Macbeth, hesitating over the witches' *supernatural soliciting*, so we hesitate over this natural soliciting ; for it *commences in a truth* : but not in a truth easy to tell to children. Besides, we do not

know what may be already in their minds, what they have been told by others, what they have made of their Bible and their classics. No wonder that we are afraid, lest we should do more harm than good.

Yet, I think, on the whole, we are afraid, many of us, where no fear is. The danger to the children is not from us, but from secret thinking, reading, and talking among themselves. Looking back to my own childhood and boyhood, I wish that I had been 'told more' by my father. He would have done it better than the boy who did tell me: and, if he had thought fit to do it, I believe that he would not have regretted that kindness. But neither parents nor children like to begin: each waits for the other.

This waiting-time—if we cannot bring ourselves to begin—may well be used, by us parents, for self-preparation, and for the quiet choice of such phrases as may assist us when we shall feel bound to be interpreters. We shall know what to say, if we know what we shall say. Of Daniel, it is on record that he had light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. These advantages are not to be had at short notice; they must be worked for: so that the children, when they want us, may find us attired with sudden brightness, like a man inspired. *I must tell you what my little boy said.* It was a dreadful remark; A ought not to repeat it—but he and B are old friends,

and B says, *What did you say when he said that?* But the wise man is C, who overhears them, and thinks to himself, *What should I say, if my little boy were to say that?*

Many parents, in this difficult business, look for assistance from the teaching of natural history. They tell their children of the fertilising of flowers and the mating of birds; they play these instances as a prelude, leading up, from male and female, to man and wife; they take the children to Nature in her pleasantest mood, and ask her to be very nice to them. This method is of value; but we must not expect too much from it, nor think that we shall get the children to follow a straight line of exposition. For they will be guessing at human life, while we are still at plant-life; or they will be averse from a description of sex in flowers, as from something which they would rather not study: or they will display unaffected interest in our instances, but fail to apply them. Not all children will go up the ladder of analogy: some will hardly see that it is there. They are not old enough to think of evolution, or to arrange forms of life in order of precedence. We invite them to begin at the beginning: they have begun at the end. That is to say, they begin at one end, and we at the other; and their end is the beginning, just as much as ours, and more. They begin at their own bodies, at pictures and stories and talk of human conduct, at a marriage or a birth in

the family. The bent of their thoughts is toward themselves and us: the writing on the wall is from the hand of their own Nature. That, nothing less than that, will be troubling them, when they send for us to be interpreters. For which task, we must prepare ourselves; or we shall be no better than the astrologers, and the soothsayers, who could not read the writing, nor make known the interpretation thereof.

Still, there is good help from the study of natural history. Only, the children must not pick out one set of facts. They must observe plants and butterflies and birds, but they must not take up the processes of reproduction as a special subject. They must read the whole book of the creature's life, not one chapter. When they go to the ant, to consider her ways and be wise, they must consider not one but all her ways—which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. They must consider the ant: not her reproductive organs only, but all of her. If we are to teach physiology to children, let us teach it on very wide lines, so that they shall not be inclined either to avoid or to run after the facts of sex: let us put those facts in their proper place, among a host of other facts of importance, and keep them there. We shall bring down their pretensions, if we reduce them to the rank and file of all the other facts.

Thus far, I have been thinking mostly of small children. But they are not the real difficulty. The nakedness of their minds is embarrassing, but not ominous: it does not know that it is naked, it has no thought of concealment: we are disconcerted, not distressed: we need only be ready for it. From this point of view, I commend, to all true lovers of small children, a hard exercise. Collect with patience, and transcribe with accuracy, twenty of their off-hand remarks on the facts of sex. Let your collection be absolutely unscrupulous: expurgate nothing, be shocked at nothing, so long as it was indeed said. Then put against each remark, in writing, your answer. By the time that you have done this exercise, you will be able, more than most of us, to help small children, when they give you the opportunity.

It is the older children who are the real difficulty: and I dare not pretend, here, to be of assistance to parents. I only know that we must stick to it, that the facts of sex are but one element of the fact of life. *Sex-hygiene*—whoever invented the ugly phrase ought to be punished—is not nine but one point of the law of spiritual hygiene. If it is our business—and I am inclined to think that, for most of us, it is—to present their own physiology to our boys and girls, it is no less our business to present their own faith to them. As we acknowledge Earth, so we must acknowledge Heaven. Some of us, here, will add, to the confession

of *Natus* and of *Crucifixus*, the confession of *Homo factus est*. And all of us, one way or another, will see to it, that Nature shall not have the last word: or we shall fail to do justice to Earth, let alone doing justice to Heaven.

I am thinking of those boys and girls whom Nature so besets and worries that they ask us, *What have I done, and what do I fear?* She downright frightens them: and we have to wake them as it were from sleep, and bid them open their eyes and see where they are. I love that moment of waking from a dream into this intelligible world of law and order and proportion and sequence, where I know what time it is, and recognise my room, and am conscious of purpose in all that I have and all that I am. It is the very moment for faith in the design of human affairs. To regain, out of chaos, my hold on facts—to find myself back among realities, effects following causes, and two and two making four—is to feel sure that I am here, not by chance but on purpose, in a world intended for me. So must we help boys and girls, when their Nature is a nightmare to them; we must wake them to see that they are in their own little room of this world, designed and furnished for them; we must compel them to believe that their Nature is only a part of the plan of their lives; that the full measure and explanation of the fact that they are here—so far as it is measurable and explicable—lie outside the ring-fence of the natural

sciences. It is all very well to render to Nature the things that are Nature's. But when boys and girls are distressed by Nature's importunity, and come to us for assurance, it is faith that they want, more than physiology.

VI

DISCIPLINE

THE name of Discipline does not often come into our talk of the children. It is a dying word : more shame to us, that we are so careless of the lives of words ; so overkind to an ignoble breed of feeble little dogs, so unkind to noble words, disregarding their infirmities, and, at the last, consigning them to the lethal chamber of the dictionary. This old word Discipline was born in the purple : it has a fine record ; it was familiar with philosophers and with saints, and now it is dying, more of neglect than of old age. We have done worse than neglect it ; we have made friends with other words less honourable. The harm began, I think, with Development and Evolution : two words whose friendship reminds me of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They were plausible, they were explanatory ; they gave us conviction that the bringing up of the children was indeed an occasion for Science. There was in them none of that sound of the scourge which is in Discipline ; we trusted them to exorcise

the ghost of Superstition, and the ill-defined spectre which is called the Middle Ages: and they so set us against the word Discipline, that we thrust it out from the doors of our talk. The word Education stayed on in our service, but it was overworked; we were like a housewife trying to manage with a general, instead of a cook and a house-parlourmaid. The result was that Education, poor drudge of a word, had to do the work of two, with only one pair of hands; and to answer the bell, always, whenever we wanted a word for the bringing up of the children.

Education, I find, is derived not directly from *educere*, but from *educare*; but I cannot understand the difference between these two verbs. Varro, I am told in a reference-note, puts it thus: *Educit obstetrix, educat nutrix*. That is to say, if the nurse came as a monthly nurse, and remained as a family nurse, she would first educe, then educate. But I am referred to Plautus, Terence, Cicero, and Tacitus, all of them using *educere* where Varro would have them use *educare*. Truly, I am tempted to think that the writers of Latin poetry used whichever word would scan, and the writers of Latin prose used whichever word they liked. And, from all that I remember of the hardship of writing Latin prose, I am not surprised at them. Anyhow, nothing has occurred, all the way from Varro to Tacitus, to shake my belief that to educate is to draw out, bring out, lead out. There is an *e* which means *out*, and there

is a *duc* which means *lead*. Thus far I feel as confident as Malvolio : *Why, this is evident to any formal capacity : there is no obstruction in this.*

But some of us hesitate between two ways of thinking of education. Now, if you love words, observe what images they call up before you. From *Education*, I got three distinct images. All three of them came of themselves, right away, so soon as I said to myself *Education* : they just raised their heads for a moment above the waves of my subliminal consciousness, like mermaids, and went down again. The first image was an old picture, or mosaic, somewhere in Italy, of the Descent into Hell. The second was *μαιευτική*, the Greek word for midwifery. The third was a modern picture of the Good Shepherd.

The first and the third of these images are in agreement. They give to the word its true meaning. Some of us, I feel sure, give it a false meaning : as if education were the bringing out of what is nice in a child, leaving the rest of the child behind : as if it were the drawing out of the child's gifts, as one draws a tune out of a piano, or money out of a bank. No, said my two images, education is not that ; it is the leading forth of the child himself, body and soul, out of his surroundings, leaving them behind, but taking him with you. Away you go, the pair of you, the child and you together : nothing remains behind, but the place where he was.

In the image of the Descent into Hell, this meaning

of the word was writ large all over the picture. The gates of Hell are thrown down, and the devil is pinned under them, impotent. Christ, over the fallen gates, strides across the gap in Hell-walls. He has in His left hand the standard of His victory: and, as it were with an effort, He reaches and holds with His right hand Adam's hand, and brings him out of Hell. In the image of the Good Shepherd, the idea was the same; the leading out of sheep from pasture to fold, or from fold to pasture. That is what education is: not the bringing out from the child of that which is in him, but the bringing out of the child from that which is round him. Thus, I find that Plautus uses *educare* of the hatching of eggs, the bringing out of chickens from the shells which are round them. But Trench, in his lectures on the Study of Words, favours the other meaning of the word:

‘To draw out what is in the child, the immortal spirit which is there, this is the end of education; and so much the word declares.’

Well, if you draw out all that, you are hardly leaving the child behind. But some people talk of education as if it were like the making of tea: whereas in tea-making you draw out the volatile oils, and the theine, and the tannin too, if you let the tea stand till it is stewed—which is the way of over-educationalists—but you leave the tea-leaves behind.

But my second image, that of the Greek word for midwifery, seems to assert that education is the bringing out from a child of that which is in him, leaving the child behind. I was remembering, of course, how Socrates compares himself to a midwife :

‘But I attend men and not women, and I practise on their souls and not on their bodies. . . . Many of them in their ignorance, either in their conceit of themselves despising me, or falling under the influence of others, have gone away sooner than they ought ; and then they have miscarried through evil communications ; moreover, they have lost the children of which I had previously delivered them, by bad management, being fonder of lies and shadows than of the truth. . . . Dire are the pains which my art is able to arouse, and to allay, in those who have dealings with me ; just like the pains of women in childbirth ; night and day they are full of perplexity and travail which is even worse than that of women.’

But Socrates was dealing with men, not with children. And his way of helping them was his own, and has little in common with our present theories and systems. His genius inspired him to lead men to convict themselves, confess, and condemn themselves. The word for this power over men’s hearts, this masterful spiritual guidance, is not Education but Discipline.

Back we come to Andrews’ Copious and Critical Latin-English Lexicon, the edition of 1870 ; timed, doubtless, to coincide with my arrival at a school which

taught Latin and Greek more copiously and more critically than any school in the Empire ; taught them with such devotion that it had nothing else to teach to a boy of the name of Darwin. *Disciplina* (very frequent, says Andrews, and good prose) is instruction, teaching, 'in the widest sense of the word,' learning, knowledge, science, discipline. Livy uses it of military discipline. But I miss that sound of the scourge which I seem to hear now in the word. Like some of us, it has become graver in its old age ; it speaks to this generation of chastisement and hard rule. That must be the reason why we hear so little of it. Chastisement, in our dealings with our children, has gone out of use : and the old penance-words are dying.

Here I have a sudden vision of a Waxworks Exhibition, years hence, of Great Words. It would be arranged on the lines of Madame Tussaud's. It would display the effigies of famous words as they appeared when they were on earth, ennobling and encouraging mankind : and I think Discipline would be one of them. But there would have to be a Chamber of Horrors, a very large one, for infamous words, of whom the world is well rid. I should love to see Nut and Swank in a Chamber of Horrors, and many more, their accomplices in crime : whose names I must not write here, for they are not yet dead.

But the death of words does not touch the life of that for which they stood : and, whatever we may

think of Discipline as a word, it is omnipresent as a fact. It is the rule under which we go, all of us, all the way from our cradles to our coffins: and, of course, it is laid on all of us alike. It is not laid by us on the children: it is laid on them and us together.

In our casual talk, we seem to forget that discipline is thus collective; we speak of it to each other as if it were the individual price which each one of us pays for his or her private wisdom. We say of one, that he has learned his lesson, but he had to pay for it; of another, that his wisdom has cost him dear: of a third, that he was lucky to get off so cheap. We take it for granted that we go marketing for wisdom not together but apart. 'From David's lips that word did roll, 'Tis true and living yet: No man can save his brother's soul, Nor pay his brother's debt.' That is why we speak of self alone, and say, personally, *My experience is*, and again, *Experience has taught me*. But we ought to be more on our guard against these individualist phrases. We ought to be thinking more of the market, and less of our several market-baskets. For the contents of one basket are just like those of another: we all buy the same sort of stuff, and we all pay the same price for it. Though we gossip over our small purchases—one grumbling at the cost of bitter herbs, another calling them reasonable, a third sure that you can get them for next to nothing, if only you know how—yet, in the long run, our expenses

work out at the same figure for each of us. For, in this divine market, where wisdom is found, and the place of understanding, there are no bargains, no selling-off. You say that you have paid more for your basketful of wisdom than your neighbour paid, last week, for his; but you must remember that you wanted yours so badly. What you got was the very thing that you wanted. Have it you must, and have it you did; and there was only the one place where it was to be had. I do beg of you not to say that the Lord of the Market ought not to have charged you so much for it. Not He, but you, determined the exact point of the price. If you had not wanted it at once, if you could have managed without it, you might, later, have got it rather cheaper, when you wanted it less: or you might not. Meanwhile, you have got it.

To escape from this metaphor, let us exchange the stupendous name of Wisdom for the more homely word Experience: and let us be agreed that experience, in the home-life, is collective. It is not isolated in each member of the family; it is the experience of the family. The older the children are, the more clearly we see how nothing happens to one of them, and everything happens to all of them. I am not thinking of home-love and the domestic affections: that is only one strand of the bond of family-experience. There are families whose experience is more bitterness than happiness, more pain than pleasure, more bondage

than bond. Home-hatred and home-disunion, no less than home-love, are experience: Cain was no less experience than Abel. Or take King Lear. Are not Goneril and Regan experience, no less than Cordelia? The whole tragedy, from the first scene of the first act, where they are with him in life, to the last scene of the last act, where they are with him in death, is the experience of those four souls together, from the day of the partition of the kingdom to the day of its downfall.

That is the nature of family-experience: it is a common bond woven thick of good and evil, of loss and gain. But the children, while they are little, hardly feel the pull of the bond. They are upstairs, in their bath or in their beds, while father and mother, downstairs, are white to the lips with the shock of a telegram. Keep it from the children; rub the colour back to your cheeks, and get your voice quite steady, before you go up to them. To-morrow, at the mid-day dinner, they will be pleased that you did not eat last night's pudding: there is the more for them; and that is all that they will know. But with the advance of years they will come step by step into your confidence, and you into theirs: for they too, like you, have their secrets, their misgivings and imaginings, encounters with Apollyon, acceptances of his company, which they hide from you. Every year, there is more that parents and children can share with each other, and less that

they need hide from each other. The bond of experience is made so strong and close with all the many threads, of all colours, worked up into it, that at the last it is seen to be what it is, not experiences but experience: and people describe the family, *en bloc*, as a family which has had a great deal of experience. Some of it was delightful, some of it was horrible: there was the day when Tristram got his fellowship at Cambridge, and the day when Isolde ran away to Brussels, and the day when Grandpapa fell off the top of the omnibus. But, whatever the experience happened to be, we all of us always had all of it. We have rejoiced together, mourned together, been openly shamed together; we have drunk together every drop of the family wine, down to the family dregs, out of the family cup. That has been our experience: that has been our discipline.

It follows, that the phrase *Parental Discipline* must be abandoned. The children, while they are little, believe in the separate existence of parental discipline, apart from and independent of family discipline: and they could give instances to support their belief. But, in reality, in the home-life, all discipline is family discipline. When Baby, playing with the matches, consumed one of the best tablecloths, the discipline fell on all of us; the fright, the confusion, and the final moralising were a family affair. All the other children told Baby what they thought of him: one of them went so far,

that evening, as to pray for him. Not one of us escaped the discipline. It extended its influences even to the cat, whose tail, in the rush, was trodden underfoot: and to the Fire Insurance Company, who gave us a new cloth. We have never been the same family since; we are the richer by one more experience, one more outpouring of discipline; we are the family whose Baby burned the tablecloth. Thus collective is the discipline: it leaves out nobody, it leaves off nowhere; it *Lives through all life, extends through all extent, Spreads undivided, operates unspent.* Take the simplest example: how it hurts a mother to hold a child tight for the attentions of a surgeon. *Oh my dear, my dear,* she says—useless for her to say, impossible for him to believe—*It hurts me more than you;* they cling together, they go under the discipline together. Or take our ordinary words of protest against so much noise in the nursery: we call it intolerable, a regular nuisance, a constant interruption: confessing at every word the pressure of the discipline. Troublesome children are sent into this world on a two-fold mission: for their own good, and for ours. That is why they scratch the paint and upset the mint-sauce and fall into the water-butt: it is not only that they may be taught by us to behave properly; it is also that we may be taught by them to behave properly, and to refrain from saying what I should otherwise have said.

Some fool invented a proverb, that Life is made up

of trifles. It may be true of guinea-pigs ; it is false of us. The sums of our lives include the heavy expense of tragedies : and it is tragedy, not farce, which draws Heaven to this little theatre of Earth. But I am afraid to write of the tragedies which are in many homes. I only know that homes are not intended to live by farce alone ; no, nor by comedy alone : it is not they, but tragedy, which perfects the home-life. That much we can be sure of. We may be able, even over trifles, to feel a touch of discipline ; but, if the family is ever to attain the highest position, the final experience, it must have tragedy. *Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus*—there must be tragedy on the way up to that saying. Indeed we know, as a matter of fact, that there was.

VII

THE LOVE OF LONDON

SOME time ago I gave two little lectures, to some young ladies and their teachers, at a school in Kensington; and here is what I said: for it is not all children who love their London as they ought. And that, mostly, is the fault of their parents; whom I humbly desire to assist.

I

PAST LONDON

It happens to all of us, now and again, to begin thinking of the place where we are. A few weeks ago, in Nottingham, I had good opportunity for this exercise of thought. Sunday morning, and the shuttered streets of a big town, were before me: and I was possessed of a mood of quiet vagabondism, and had nobody's company but my own. For a time, I tried hard to play at being abroad; but the general sense of the place

was against me, and the day was too cold for that pleasant game. Indeed, nobody seemed capable of playing at anything: and I was just making up my mind that Nottingham was dull, when I came to the chief glory of the town, its great parish church. You will remember that Mrs. O'Dowd, in *Vanity Fair*, used to say that her repeater-watch, when it struck the hour, had a tone equal to a cathedral. That is true of St. Mary's, Nottingham: it has a tone equal to a cathedral. I knew that the Civil War had raged round Nottingham; that King Charles had set up his standard there; and I hoped that St. Mary's would give me some information on the matter. And there, was hanging a faded banner which had been in that War; and the King himself, and the men and women of his time, had said their prayers there; and a great part of all Nottingham, from then till now, had come there to be christened, married, and buried: the whole history of Nottingham had flowed for three centuries between these walls, in at one door and out at the other. But I could not stay at King Charles: for the church was already old in the days when he was King. I had to dismiss all the cavalier ghosts, the fine gentlemen in Vandyck clothes, and the ladies in satin skirts, with square-cut necks, and their hair done low on the forehead in little curls, to look like the Queen. These ghosts of the Stuart period were too modern: I re-peopled the church with strictly Tudor ghosts. They

looked like a gallery of Holbein portraits, and pious donors out of old Flemish altar-pictures; and they talked of the Reformation, and the Marian persecution, and the policy of Elizabeth, and the latest news of the Armada. After them came a third congregation, ghosts of the Plantagenet period, who talked about the Wars of the Roses, of which I know nothing. Last, came the people who endowed and founded the church, and carved the great porch, and set flowing through it the stream of the life of the town. By this time, the service was over; the present townsfolk were going home to dinner, and I with them.

But, of course, I had not got one-fiftieth part of the way back to the very beginning of St. Mary's, Nottingham. For, to get back to the very beginning of an old building, we must include, in the range of our thoughts, the ground on which it stands. As house-property includes all the minerals in the earth under the house, so the history of an old building includes the history of the ground under it. There is continuity between the building and the earth. Take, for a good example of this continuity between houses and their sites, the Roman Forum. It has been excavated so deep that the foundations of the modern buildings round it are exposed, here and there, in a sort of cliff, like the sides of a railway cutting. You get a vertical section through the strata or deposits of Roman history. It is like a geological diagram of the successive orders of rocks; or it is

like a slice of Fuller's cake, intersected with seams of golden marmalade, and covered with a recent formation of walnuts and pink sugar. You see, under a building three centuries old, the naked remains of a building fourteen centuries old. Lower still, you are at the level of the Forum as it was in the days of St. Paul; you walk on that Via Sacra which was trodden by Virgil and Horace. Lower still, the explorers have discovered and uncovered some traces of the first Rome of all: a sacred well, and a few monumental stones which have been there since the battle of Lake Regillus. Nor do you stop even here. For, at the final depth of the work, they have laid bare half a dozen skeletons of unknown age. There they lie, huddled in little pits, with primitive urns and relics of some prehistoric time older than Rome: without a clue, without a date, these aboriginal natives of Italy. Make allowance for the irregularities of the ground, and for the general confusion of ruins where fighting and revolution and plague and fire have had their way, off and on, for more than two thousand years: none the less, you can trace, layer on layer, the human deposit of Rome. On the top are hotels and shops and electric tramcars. Beneath these modern trifles is a church that was old in the time of our King Alfred. Then, that Forum where Antony spoke over the body of Cæsar. Then, that Forum where Virginius, in fact or in legend, broke the power of the Decemvirate. Last, the bones

of the local Adam and Eve: the primal people, the little men and women who were dead and buried before Æneas came to the Valley of the Seven Hills. And though the work of excavation were carried even deeper, it would still be going through the evidence of life, turning-up extinct pre-human creatures.

Surely, buildings and earth are one fabric. You dig down, wherever you are, without a break, from Art to Nature. Once you have said *What a lot of things must have happened in this place*, your imagination is off, and nothing will stop it, till you get right down to fossils with names like those of the tribes of the Philistines: trilobites and ammonites, and all the forms which Nature first made when she came to life. Everything is here, at this point of the world, wherever you are, between the house over your head and the ground under your feet. Say that you are in Westminster Hall. On its pavement are the four little plates of engraved brass: where Strafford stood for sentence, where King Charles sat for sentence, where Gladstone's body lay in state, and where King Edward's body lay in state. That is three centuries of English history, and the Hall is more than eight centuries old; but think of the centuries which are under its pavement. Or you are in St. Paul's: think how absurdly young it is. But Wren had to deal with the wreckage of Old St. Paul's; and the builders of Old St. Paul's had to deal with the remnants of some sort of a Saxon

church ; and the builders of the Saxon church had to deal with a temple of Diana, likely enough, or some such landmark of Roman authority ; and think of the age of the bones and the bits of primitive earthenware, a few yards under the dome of St. Paul's.

The history of London, if you go on reading through the London gravel and the London clay, never leaves off. All London is Old London. I feel sure that a layer of Rome is spread thin, far and wide, under the asphalt and the motors : I would hazard a guess that you might find a Roman or two even under the Albert Hall. We call them Ancient Romans, but in the history of London they are Modern Romans : for the age of London goes back to the Iron Age and the Stone Age. She is older than she looks ; and she had already a most eventful past, long before she began to arrange herself into streets.

Therefore, if we are to learn Past London, or if we are to teach Past London, let us begin with the very elements of London—the London gravel, the London clay, and the London river. Let us avoid the pious error of the old lady, who thought it such a wonderful dispensation of Providence, always to put a river near a large town. Let us begin where London began : with gravel and clay and river. But what comes next, when we have done with her geology and her geography ? If Past London were ever to be made a special subject, if prizes were to be offered for the learning, and

Professors appointed for the teaching, of London history, how ought we to handle the subject in class ?

First, I think we ought to get the class to take some interest in architecture. Nothing is more necessary for young students of cities than to be able to make a good shot at the age of a building, and to appreciate the differences between one style and another. It requires no exact knowledge ; indeed, it requires very little knowledge of any kind, or I should not be talking about it. Children can learn in two or three weeks enough architecture to begin with. Till they have done that, it is impossible that they should be properly keen about London. They will ask you politely, for the mere sake of being polite to you, *Is this place very old?* If you only say, *Yes, dear, it is very old indeed,* they will not have much reason to be grateful to you. In a few weeks you can put them on the way to recognise the style of a building, and thereby to imagine the times in which it was built, and what manner of men raised it. Henceforth, London will always have a better chance of getting at them : and they will have learned, to the end of their lives, to read buildings, wherever they are. A little architecture, surely, ought to be part of the liberal education of the young Londoner.

Next, we are bound, I think, to teach and to learn Past London not only in terms of brick and stone, but in terms of human life. We do not properly admire

historical buildings, if we regard them as old shells of masonry. We must fill them with historical crowds, see them inhabited, used, enjoyed by appropriate ghosts, from generation to generation. How shall we do that, in the right way, just as it ought to be done? The right way is to forget the Kings and Queens of England, and set our thoughts on the people of England. That is why an old parish church is such a good place for a vision of Past London. You are quite certain that the life of the common people has flowed through it; you fill it with any number of invisible congregations, a whole series of them; and all of them just the common people, the average lives, the unrecorded folk, nobody grander than the City merchant and the City parson. We shall only half understand London, if we give the most of our attention to her Kings and Queens: the chief importance of London, for us, is in her unimportant people.

Furthermore, we must be on our guard against sentiment, romance, and fondness for what are called picturesque effects. To hear some of us talk of Old London, you would think it had been all charm and no horror, all light and no darkness, all pleasure and no pain. They talk as if London, once upon a time, was a clean, happy, artistic little place, something like one of the new Garden cities. That is the Old London of the Earl's Court Exhibition. Its quaint houses all have steep red roofs and lattice-windows

and ingle-nooks and old oak furniture ; and there are carven belfries, and gargoyles, and heraldic shop-signs, and pink and white fruit-blossom ; and all the delightful people out of King Henry the Fourth are up and about the crooked streets, Falstaff and Prince Hal and all the rest of them ; and everybody goes a-maying, and there is a grand procession up Cheapside every fortnight ; and all the girls are pretty, and all the prentices are jovial. There never was that London. There never was, nor ever will be in your life-time, a London not sore all over with pain and vice and misery. This picture-book Old London had its filthy slums, its cold and nakedness, its villainies ; it was taxed and bullied and flogged and racked ; it smelt horribly of the abiding presence of drink and the abiding absence of drains ; it was ravaged by typhus and plague and smallpox. Or, for a later version of Old London, take that London which Hogarth saw and painted. Was there ever, in the history of England, such ugliness of buildings, fashions, religion, and civic life ? Think, for one moment, of Gin Lane, Tyburn, Bedlam, Bridewell, and Newgate, as Hogarth saw them.

Last, I advise you that we cannot thoroughly teach or learn Past London, unless we believe that all cities have their destiny, their fate assigned to them, not by chance, but by the hidden design of the world. It seems to be part of the design of the world that every great city, sooner or later, shall fail. What

about Future London? That is a question which some grown-ups are apt to ask. I have found myself, in London, saying to myself, not *How many things have happened in this place*, but *What in the end will happen to this place?* Is it gaining or losing strength? Is it safer against falling, or is it in more danger of falling, than it was fifty years ago? Is your London better off, or worse, than the London of the mid-Victorian Age, of which, thank Heaven, I was a privileged spectator? It is not enough, I think, to be interested in Past London, unless we guess at Future London. In the development of the design of the world, and in the shifting of the balance of power among nations, how long will this place last, and what will be the number, five hundred years hence, of its inhabitants?

II

PRESENT LONDON

Let us be agreed, that Present London is big past all measuring, rich past all guessing, beautiful past all telling. These last few days, London has come into the full glory and miracle of her utmost beauty. Lilac and may and laburnum, and the green of the trees, and the blue and white of the sky—was there ever such a Spring-time? Seriously, can you imagine

London more beautiful, more wonderful, more lovable than she is now? There is only one word for it, and that is, the magic of London: her enchantment, her secret, her witchcraft. Look at me, she says: was there ever, since the world was made, a place that could surpass me? You have only to walk to the top of Queen's Gate and across the road into the Park, and you can fairly quote Wordsworth, *Earth hath not anything to show more fair*. But I, who am ignorant of Wordsworth, none the less feel the amazing and almost extravagant beauty of London in May: and I am sure, that the people who say that they hate London have something bad the matter with them.

But if I am to have the honour of telling you to love London, I am also bound to tell you that the true lovers of London are mostly elderly, independent, unfashionable, rather vague people: whereas you, forgive me for saying it, possess none of these disadvantages. I doubt whether you ever poke about Clerkenwell and Southwark, or get stuck in a crowd, unable to see more than the top of the State-coach, or wander off-hand and alone into the old side-shows of the City: you are too young, too correct for such moods. It is not what you are here for: and your love of London must grow, and get its wings, gradually, not all at once.

Still, within your limits, the sooner you begin to love London, the better. Take, first, her bewildering beauty. Remember that she can be also, and

frequently is, horribly ugly. That does not affect her beauty. I have been told, on good authority, that I, for a year or two, was a beautiful child. Very well : that is an accomplished fact. It cannot be annulled by subsequent events : it remains among the eternal verities. So, with London, parts of her are always ugly ; all of her is sometimes ugly ; none the less, her beauty is eternally real. It would take a most stupendous fool to say *She was ugly yesterday, therefore she is not beautiful to-day* : or, again, *Kensington Gardens are not beautiful ; for Kensal Green is hideous*. Where you find beauty, there believe in it : go on looking for it, till the difficulty is, not to find it, but to help finding it.

Next to those gifts which London receives from what we call Nature, come those which she receives from what we call Man, or Human Nature. Take, first, the works of that department of human nature which we call Art. Consider your London, fairly and squarely, as one of the finest art-collections in the world. Life is not long enough to see all the collection. Where are we to begin ?

Let us begin with some sort of a creed, or faith, that some works of art are really right, and others are really wrong. People will tell you that there is nothing absolute or unchanging in works of art ; that the prices of pictures go up and down with the fashions ; that Art is always finding new modes, expressions, develop-

ments, always on the go. I advise you to be narrow ; avoid the blunder of admiring everything ; have a close little creed and keep inside it, like a Bernard crab in its shell. Believe that some works of art are as good as good can be. Drop into the British Museum, and have a good look at the seated figure of Demeter, in one of the Greek sculpture rooms. She is Mother Earth : and, like many mothers, she went through a time of great anxiety over her daughter. Have a good look at her ; learn by heart her beauty, simplicity, austerity, as the measure of every other bit of sculpture in the world. She is more than two thousand years old, battered, mutilated, the wreck of her former self ; but she sits there, for all that, defying all the many Charities and Fortitudes and Peaces which have been sculptured these two thousand years, and all the living women, in hobble skirts and beehive hats, who wander from room to room of the British Museum. She has never been surpassed, nor ever will be. There is just a hint of her dignity, her grave sympathy, in the figure of Motherhood, which is on the Victoria Memorial, toward the Palace : but I prefer the Greek original : and this narrow creed is quite wide enough for me, that the Demeter is eternally as good as good can be. Or drop into the National Gallery, some very bright day—Italian pictures were not painted to suit our weather—and put your chair in front of the big Raphael, the *Ansidei Madonna*. He was only twenty-three when

he painted it : you are looking at a young man's work, still imitative, still academical. Never you mind all that : do not bother your head over the stiffness of the figures, and the exact arrangement of them. Not your head, but your heart, is the place for this picture, with its blue sky and sleepy landscape, its purity, its delicate open-air quietness. The young man, though he had his faults, had something in him as good as good can be. Or go and see *Romeo and Juliet*, well acted, which is easier said than done ; keep your mind off the tricks of the stage, and the shortcomings of the actors ; just follow the passion and the tragedy of that love-story, and be sure that no love-story will ever be more perfectly told and set in our hearts.

You see what I am driving at. If we are properly to enjoy Present London as a treasury of all the arts, we must have some sort of a faith concerning them ; and I commend to you this creed, that the goodness of good works of art is above all changes of taste or opinion.

We have come thus far, that Present London is very beautiful, and is full of beautiful works ; and I pray you, one and all, to enjoy your London quite furiously. Nothing is more dismal than people who go trailing languidly up and down the brilliant streets, saying that they have seen everything already and do not care to see it again ; they ought to be deported hence. But you, to whom London is calling, listen to her, and enjoy every day of your London life.

Only, you will find that she has designs on you, wants to get something out of you, and means to get it. All her beauty and her treasures are for that purpose; she gives that she may gain; she intends to make the most of you, just as you are intended to make the most of her. She desires you to be, in the best sense of the phrase, good citizens: that much she does expect of you, in return for all that she is doing for you.

The word *citizen*, surely, was driven out of use, in this country, by the French Revolution. Decent folk, standing on the old ways of life, heard with rage and horror of *citoyens* and *citoyennes*; of the men who did the bloody work, and of the women who came swarming out of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and crowded round the guillotine, and sat knitting there, counting the heads as they fell into the basket. The word is finding its way back into high repute: it is a fine title. But where do we touch the affairs of a city which contains five millions of people, and covers a hundred and twenty-one square miles? Queen Elizabeth ordered London to leave off growing; but Kensington, to-day, could of itself hold all Elizabethan London. Try, if you wish to estimate London, the journey by trains and trams from North to South, or from East to West. It is not one but a dozen cities: and how can we be citizens of that? But if St. Paul could be proud of Tarsus, calling himself a citizen of no mean city, we can be proud of London: that is to say, proud not only that

London belongs to us, but that we belong to her. What can we do for her? You are too young, most of you, for any sort of administrative, official, or public work. But, so soon as you are older, keep your eyes open for it. Meanwhile, believe that your duty to London is one with your duty to God and your duty to your neighbour; that you can be good citizenesses, though you hold no office, belong to no committee, follow no cause; that good citizenship is able to 'dwell and find expression in a hundred courtesies of life, in self-suppression, loving thought, and unseen actions, just as fully as in a crowded meeting.' And I will give a prize to any girl who will tell me where that quotation comes from.

You will live to see London half a century hence; but I saw London half a century ago: and I would not change with you. She had poets, men of science, artists, and actors, as good as those whom she has now, or better. She was quieter. You might have thought it slow: I thought it magnificent, and I think so still. Nothing should induce me to exchange my Past London for your Future London: and let us hope, for your sake, that I am wrong. But here put from your minds that London which you did not see, and that London which none of us has seen: and give your love to Present London, and promise your services to her.

VIII

THE USE OF GRANDPARENTS

THE baby's first thought is for us ; he is no sooner created than he creates us father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandpapa, and grandmama. Each of us obtains a title, from this fount of honour not yet one minute old : our names are in his Royal Gazette long before the doctor is out of the house. It is a pretty act of condescension ; the young Sovereign's first exercise of his supremacy ; he ennobles us all round, then and there, before he has had time to breathe. Perhaps the subsequent cry is from a sudden sense of dismay and vain regret : he realises, too late, what he has done. Why did he create uncle Robert, who hates babies ; and aunt Sophia, with her virulent notions of diet, her bacteriological evidences against the use of a dummy ? It is too late now : he has made the appointments, and they are irrevocable.

None of us can afford to despise or refuse these birthday honours. Observe the school-boy uncle, the school-girl aunt ; their affected levity, their secret

pride : hear the boy, next term, back at school—*I say, you fellows, I'm an uncle.* It is the ugliest word in our language ; even phonetic spelling could not make it worse. Still, to be an uncle is to be in office ; it is a position of unquestionable dignity. I have held it for more than thirty years, under many nephews and nieces who have shown me tokens of their confidence : I have nothing to say against the avuncular service. But the duties of the post are ill-defined ; and though we continue to the end as honorary uncles, we retire early, at the height of consulting practice, from active work ; we tend, after fifty, to be not *My uncle*, but merely *One of my father's brothers*. Besides, uncles, like godparents, are well-nigh useless in a model family ; and in a family which is not model their interference is apt to be resented. Ye uncles and aunts, be content, and more than content, that you are seldom wanted.

But uncles and aunts are the least important members of this peerage. Father and Mother come first, immediately after Royalty, like the Archbishop of Canterbury. Then, Grandpapa and Grandmama ; then, *longo intervallo*, uncles and aunts, and a drift of cousins. None below the rank of Grandparent has the right to bear capital letters, or to come into the nursery without knocking.

The title of Grandparent is magniloquent, enforcing attention like deep harmony. It is more than a word uttered, it is a motive given out. Contrast its fine

seriousness with the trivial uncle-and-aunt theme : you are in two different worlds. Or contrast the reverence of Art toward grandparents with her contempt for the whole clan of uncles and aunts. What artist has ever found inspiration in them ? But the grandmother holds her own in some of the best pictures in this country : for example, the big Francia in the National Gallery. Never mind the quartette of attendant saints, and the foolish little St. John in the foreground ; see only the group on the throne—Grandmother, Mother, and Child. It was an altar-picture, and the Mother, I think, is looking not at the Child, but out of the picture ; but the Grandmother is intent on the Child, and holds out a fruit to him, and he nearly overbalances himself, reaching after it—oh, these grandmothers, how they spoil the children, always giving them things to eat—but her face, radiant with self-unconsciousness, is faultless in beauty.

To find the use of grandparents, we must carefully examine them. It is a hard subject, and has not received much attention. The experimental psychologists, Heaven be praised, have neglected it : parentage so engrosses the mind of Science, that none will study grandparentage. As, in the hall of a country-house, the hostess puts a jig-saw puzzle, that her guests may try to piece it together, so Nature puts before us her problems of parents and children ; and we always have to leave, long before the puzzle is done ; but

she takes no interest in problems of grandparents. They are no longer engaged in the perpetuation of the species: and that is generally supposed to be all that she cares for. Thus, they might fairly be called supernatural: for they come neither into eugenics nor into Freud's unholy method of psycho-analysis.

They begin so late in life, that we must examine them at the moment of inception. In the final years they are less instructive: it is the brand-new grandparent who best repays observation. Take therefore this man and this woman who to-night, for the first time in their life, are grandpapa and grandmama; and have a good look at them. Do not think it amiss that they are unable to assort themselves at once to the sudden change. For they are at the mercy of opposed influences: they are like Garrick in the picture, wavering between Tragedy and Comedy. They feel younger; they feel older. But he, on that eventful night, in comparison with her, is a commonplace figure. He is thinking of himself, and of his new title; he is making good resolutions, and visualising all that should accompany old age: let him go home, calling the stars and the scudding clouds to witness that he is a grandfather. The nursery, that hot little room, flushed with pride that it has got a tenant, does not want him. For he is only a man: he never had, in her sense of the word, children of his own; he only had, in his sense of the word, hers. But she—well, you know what she

is; what a way she always has with all babies. But to-night it is more than that: I cannot find the right phrases for what it is, but there it is. The new baby, somehow, though it is not hers, yet is hers: she might be its mother, from the way she behaves; it seems to revive in her that passion which was in her at the coming of her own babies; she would like to nurse it herself, if she could; she is one, through her child, with her child's child; she loves it as if it had been conceived and born of her. He is admiring the fact that he is a grandfather: she is possessed, body and soul, by the sense that she has a grandchild.

What we call Time—our habitual reticence makes us poetical—will take the edge off this contrast. Ten years hence, if they live so long, they will be less unlike than they are to-night. But to the end she will show signs of her primal nature. Age will seem to have made her placid, matter of fact, dead to mere instinct; then one more grandchild will come along, and immediately the embers of her sex will glow again in her, to the astonishment of her juniors. It is a common belief among the young that youth is complex, impulsive, and incalculable, and old age is easy to analyse, estimate, and explain; and they are surprised and offended when they discover the falseness of this belief. Who would have thought the old lady to have had so much love to pour out for her grandchildren? You were of opinion that you had accounted for her, that you

could foretell her moves and impulses ; and look at her now, over her tenth grandchild, just look at her.

So hard are the difficulties of studying other people, that I have well-nigh ceased to attempt it : life is too short for it : the saying *He knew what was in man* was not written of the likes of me. And the older we are, the harder, not the easier, we are to understand. For we are the result of all that has ever been in us : and the older we are, the more has been in us. Even the portrait of old age, in a picture-gallery, may be undecipherable :

‘ As one stands before one of Rembrandt’s portraits of old age ; as one looks and looks at the face, harassed, furrowed, worn with all the cares, the failures, the ambitions, the disappointments, the decisions, the renunciations, the humiliation and endurance and discipline of an inscrutable past ; as one guesses at what has been unlearnt and learnt, lost and won, in the battle of life ’—

And we the living, are we more easily deciphered ? If I knew what was in man, I would not waste my time writing about him : I would just sit here and create him.

Now, from this fact, that grandparents are mostly bewildering and inexplicable, I have to fashion a working-theory of their use. That they are useless I cannot believe ; they must be of some use, or they would not be here ; they are of the body of the family : it is impossible that they should be wholly useless. Shall

I therefore liken them to vestigial structures, feebly useful, retained in the body, mere survivals, belonging to the past ?

I shall not get my working-theory of them on those lines. I must deduce their use, not from what they were, but from what they are ; not from any evidence in them of past activity, but from their present incalculable temperament. I must be persuaded that it is their impulsive behaviour now, which completes and ensures the health and strength of the home-life.

I would liken them, with all respect, to those bodily organs which are called the ductless glands : for example, the thyroid and pituitary glands. The use of these, when I was a medical student, was not known. They had no ducts ; they did not seem to contribute to the general welfare of the body. Glands with ducts, such as the liver and the pancreas, were intelligible ; we knew what they were doing ; they were the regular rate-payers of the body ; but the ductless glands, to all appearance, put nothing into the currency of the blood, manufactured nothing, spent nothing. They just lay low, defying the Professor of Physiology to say what they were for. Then came that magnificent series of researches—it is of the happiness of my life that I know some of the men who made them—which proved that these glands secrete, and put straight into the blood what is needful for the balancing of life. Note that Luschka, about 1880, said that the use of our

thyroid glands is to improve the outline of our necks : grandparents, likewise, are thought by some people to be more decorative than functional. Whereas, our thyroid glands are incessantly making and distributing through the body, from the crown of its head to the tips of its toes, a substance of most subtle composition and of most amazing potency. The active principle of this 'internal secretion' is a ferment : and we know that a very little ferment goes a very long way. Indeed, in some cases, where the thyroid is over-active, there is grave unrest of the nervous system—what is called 'hyper-thyroidism.' Yet, without these ferments, the health of the body cannot be kept up. They are wonderful in the swiftness of their action, the spread of their leavening. Among ferments which come from without, think of snake-venom ; or of the juice of cursed hebenon, which *courses through the natural gates and alleys of the body*, producing all over it *a most instant tetter*. But I am thinking of ferments which come from within, home-made ferments. The least excess, or the least deficiency, in the supply of these internal secretions, may be injurious to health ; but a proper supply of them is essential to health.

So it is with grandparents. They complete the fullness of the home-life ; they maintain the balance of its constituent forces, the fruitful diversity of its interests, the perfect exercise of its purposes. As,

in a monkey, removal of the thyroid gland causes myxœdema, a kind of cretinism, so in a family the removal of the grandparents — I assume, of course, that they were acting properly—causes, more or less, myxœdema: it tends to make home slow, irresponsive, chilly, non-venturesome. The home-life has been deprived of a ferment. You may be able to cure the monkey, giving it extract of thyroid gland from a sheep; but there is no substitute for grandparents.

Observe, that they contribute to the family-body nothing ponderable or bulky, no food-stuffs; but a mere trace of an invisible agent more dynamical than words can say. In excess, it would set up hyperthyroidism, jangling the nerves and hurrying the pulse of the home-life. In default, it would let the heavy clouds of myxœdema dull the mind of the home-life, chill its initiative spirits, and retard its movements. In due proportion, it adjusts the balance of home: I will call no family of young children complete which has neither grandpapa nor grandmama.

Make allowance for them, by the light of this parable; make the best of them, while they are not yet old enough to be inert. Their little interferences and subterfuges, and their way of comparing notes and laying plans, and running in and out, and their suggestions and their prophecies—regard it all as part of the healthy metabolism of the home-life. Think what it must feel like to be a ferment, a catalytic agent: that is to say, a

volcanic sort of substance which cannot do anything without upsetting something. No wonder they are troublesome.

Only, of this be sure, that they are, indeed and in truth, not destructive but constructive. That which they upset, they upbuild. In the gradual and hazardous alchemy of the home-life, they are always breaking one group of atoms to make another; and that which they make has its uses, no less than that which they break. Without them, in the long run, the home-life would be not richer but poorer. By their restlessness it is steadied; by their instability it is established; by their emotional and expansive waste of themselves its fabric is knit close, its complexity balanced, its adaptability held at a wholesome width. That is what it is, to be a ferment.

Poor little parable, sit down: for you must be tired out. Aid me, O Muse of Unpretentious Prose, Thou tenth and least accessible of all. I say that every allowance must be made for grandparents. I admit that they are, like the rest of mankind, imperfect instruments; they have to be tuned from time to time. The reference here is to Amelia Osborne, and the trouble that she had with her parents. Old Mr. Sedley 'was disposed to spoil little Georgy, sadly gorging the boy with apples and parliament, to the detriment of his health—until Amelia declared that George should never go out with his grandpapa, unless the latter

promised solemnly, and on his honour, not to give the child any cakes, lollipops or stall-produce whatever.' It was even worse, when she caught her mother, in the days of little George's infancy, dosing him with Daffy's Elixir :

'Amelia, the gentlest and sweetest of every-day mortals, when she found this meddling with her maternal authority, thrilled and trembled all over with anger. Her cheeks, ordinarily pale, now flushed up, until they were as red as they used to be when she was a child of twelve years old. She seized the baby out of her mother's arms, and then grasped at the bottle, leaving the old lady gaping at her, furious, and holding the guilty teaspoon.

'Amelia flung the bottle crashing into the fireplace. "I will *not* have baby poisoned, mamma," cried Emmy, rocking the infant about violently with both her arms, and turning with flashing eyes at her mother.

'"Poisoned, Amelia!" said the old lady; "this language to me?"' . . .

Then came the pitiful quarrel ; and on the next page, 'Till the termination of her natural life, this breach between Mrs. Sedley and her daughter was never thoroughly mended.' But we must not confound the spoiling of a child's stomach with the spoiling of a child's soul. Not one of ten thousand grandparents is guilty of the offence of soul-spoiling. Besides, the word cuts both ways. Did not Mr. Fairchild spoil Henry and Emily, worse than Mr. Sedley spoiled

George ? To make children grim, conventional, non-imaginative—is not that to spoil them ?

And for the minor offences of young and promising grandparents there are excuses, which may be lame, yet are able to stand. Consider it thus. Man and wife, in the later middle years, are apt, now and again, to find the house of life rather too calm. They feel a bit lonely ; they miss those out in the world whom they still call the children. Moreover, they are beginning, or have begun, to feel old. They are fond of deciding, in rooms larger than they want now, and full of accumulated furniture, which of the children shall have what ; they teach to each other the stiff sentences of old age, such as *When I'm gone*. The slowness of their days vexes them, for they do not know how long they have to live. He so talks of the sword of Damocles that she says, at last, that she is sick to death of the sword of Damocles ; forthwith, she taps wood : not to avert the omen of the uttered word, of course not ; she was just vexed with him for the moment. That sword is then most formidable, when it is far off. Into this not unhappy but uneventful life, a grandchild comes, *scattering the past about*, and crying *I am fire and air*. What pleasure it is for them to hold the baby in their arms. It is the very making of them. Animals, even the most anthropoid apes, draw the line at their immediate offspring ; dogs and cattle have no instinctive love toward their grandpuppies and grandcalves. But

these fantastical baby-worshippers have their feet on the one straight line of three generations ; and are thinking of living to see the fourth. They cannot keep their hands off the baby, nor their hearts either ; they bring Magian gifts, and find it hard to return to their own country.

Besides, they are persons of experience ; they are full of advice, and it is valuable, almost all of it. Is Grandmama to remain silent, when the baby weighs no more to-day than it weighed last Saturday ? Is Grandpapa to take no part in the choice, over the cradle, of the baby's school, college, and professional career ? They went through it all, with Bob and Alice and Barbara ; all that Bob and Elizabeth, Alice and Dick, Barbara and William have got to go through. Therefore, play up to them ; let them make themselves, or think themselves, immensely useful, while they can. For, if they live long enough—I am not sure that I wish it for them—the time of uselessness will come on them ; till, at the last, they are hardly more than instances of persistent vitality. I would not wait till then to honour them ; I would honour them now ; not for their advancing age, but for their enduring youth. There is no lack of people to praise the four-score years : I praise the young grandparents who take themselves so seriously that they have to laugh at themselves for being so serious. Make allowance for them, remembering that they still are father-in-law and mother-in-law ; do not expect them to resign

lightly these formidable offices ; leave them to the gentleness of Time, who will one day put them, if they live long enough, on the shelf. But here I have to explain, for the assistance of parents who are on their way to it, what the shelf is.

There is a thread, no thicker than a hair, slung over the space between birth and death : one thread for each of us ; but, of course, they are convergent. And before you come to the end of your thread, the cliff, advancing to meet you, juts out so close that a ledge of rock is immediately under your thread ; and here you can rest, but not for long, before you go on. This ledge of rock is called The Shelf : and when you have got thus far, those behind you, each of them on his or her own thread, watching you ahead of them, say that you are on the shelf, or that it is time that you were there. From where they are, it is impossible for them to see the final stretch of your thread : the cliff juts out too sharply for that. Nor is it possible for you, from where you are : there is a corner which you cannot see round. All that you know is, that you are not yet at the end : there is one bit more to cross ; meanwhile, you have the shelf under your feet. It is none too comfortable ; it is hard and narrow, and it strikes cold, with a foretaste of the mainland where all our threads end together. Still, it is firm under you ; and you are delivered, for a time, from that sense of insecurity which you had on the swaying thread.

That is what The Shelf is : if only people would stop to think. Mostly, they are content to imagine the top-shelf of a bookcase, where dull books, unread but not worth selling, are out of the way and are forgotten ; or the top-shelf of a cupboard, convenient for rubbish of broken crockery, cast-off garments, emptied boxes. Or with more imagination they see a crematorium, with lines of funeral urns, shelf above shelf ; ashes, least personal of all relics, yards of pigeon-holed ashes ; or, mere relics of relics, a line of labelled mummies behind glass doors. None of these is The Shelf : it is no abandonment of ourselves to lethargy ; it is the poignant experience of slipping off our threads to a foothold of hazardous rock, for a little, that we may recover our strength before we go thence to the mainland. On The Shelf, we are alert in every nerve, and feel the life, what is left of it, in every limb. Some of us are proud of being there, some of us are sorry ; all of us are keenly interested in ourselves, in each other, and in those who are coming toward us : our hearts beat quick, for it was hard work to attain thus far : and the last stretch is waiting for us, and the wind is against us. Here, just long enough to get our breath, on this precipitous edge, this *shoal and bank of time*, we hesitate, knowing this only, that we cannot stop where we are.

Another chair, please : another parable has fainted. Perhaps the meeting had better be adjourned. But I hope that I may be allowed one minute more. It

is true that grandparents are hungry for the utmost measure of sympathy ; they cannot bear to feel that they are not consulted, not wanted ; they long to be in everything that is happening ; and they require, and they deserve, if it were only out of pity, a very generous measure of regard, a very careful display of attention, from their married children. But they must remember—it is not always pleasant, but they must—that a man and his wife belong to each other, and to nobody else. I cannot put it more gently than that ; nor, I think, more brutally than the marriage-service : which makes short work of his and her parents, will have nothing to say to them, will even let an outsider give this woman to be married to this man. *She was yours, she is his* : that is all that the marriage-service has to say to her parents. It shuts them down, it cuts them off, it hardly knows whether they are there ; it recognises no home, save that which it is creating ; no parents, save them whom it is joining together ; no children, save them which are yet unborn. And the moral is, that grandparents must learn the hardest and wisest of all the arts of love, the consummate art of self-effacement. That is what I was just going to say when we were interrupted. I beg to move that the meeting be adjourned. Those in favour ? Contrary ? Carried unanimously.

IX

AUGUST 1914

I WROTE these essays in time of peace : and here they are, for anybody who cares now to read them. It is like throwing a straw into a whirlpool, to see it vanish. Who wants little essays now ? I am writing these last pages on the night of Monday, August 3, 1914. It would be as silly not to send them to the printers, as to send them ; it matters very little, one way or the other. Besides, a light book, even in this August and September, may be welcome here or there. For we must keep our heads ; we must take, those of us who can get them, regular meals, and enough sleep and exercise ; those of us who are of no direct use to their country must not give trouble to other people by being ill ; and we must read something beside the newspapers, and think of something beside the one burden of our thoughts. This book will do for something to read. It may serve, in this or that home, to start a talk, or raise a laugh, or shift the outlook for half an hour. Oh you lucky little book, if you can do that much :

you will be like a district-nurse, one of the *angels on bicycles*; you will go your round, and there is trouble in every house you come to; and you will do all that you can to help. Indeed, you are wonderfully fortunate. Not many people will read you, very few will buy you—this is not the time for buying little books—but it will be a grand thing if you can amuse a few people, now. Besides, you may be welcome for this reason, that you touch things eternal: I intended you to do that, and I hope that you will do it in a proper way. You touch that Love which is between parents and children; you were planned to ascend into Heaven; and you must take your chance of finding a heart, somewhere, to be your chariot of fire. So be off with you to the printers, you straw in a whirlpool, you district-nurse, you small prophet going up into Heaven in a chariot of fire not your own.

Now, a word to all children who may read this little book. I wrote with my thoughts more on children than on parents: and there is nothing here not fit for children to read. Of course, it is not possible for them—it is not possible for any of us—to have more than a very faint sense of what is now happening to this world; and we may well be thankful for our insensitiveness, *kindly given, that each may fill the circle marked by Heaven.* Here is a fine text for a sermon to children; I wish that they were all made to learn by heart some of the Essay on Man: it is just what they need for

the logic of their faith. Nothing could be better for them than its confession of want of knowledge, its hold on religion as a personal affair, its assurance that Heaven marks out a little circle for each of us, and keeps it marked out, even through these terrible days.

Some of the children are too young to be told of what is happening; some are half-told, in such words as we can find for them; none of them is old enough to take in the whole import of what they read or are told; Heaven does not mean them to take it in: they could not fill their little circles, if they did. Let us rest and be thankful in their enjoyment of this autumn. And, what is better still, let us be sure that nothing on earth rubs out circles marked by Heaven. The events of this time are destined, somehow, to be of good to our children. They will be talking of 1914 long after we are dead; they will be reading of it in history-books, and on maps of Europe; they will be saying, our grandchildren to their grandchildren, that they can remember 1914. That will be on their lips; but my mind goes off to the prayer 'that we show forth Thy praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to Thy service.' Heaven has inspired our country to do right, cost what it may. This will to do right, this recognition of the Divine Presence in the midst of us and in each of us—*Upon such sacrifices, the Gods themselves throw incense*—this, world without end, is the praise of 1914 for us and our children,

to be shown forth not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to its service. It will not be for nothing in their lives that they are the children of the War. In them, a few years hence, the darkness of this year will be transfigured. I see them, in a vision, more grave, more patient than we were at their age; quicker to put things eternal before things temporal; more simple in their ways, more moderate in their pleasures, more careful over their words, more willing to look in the face of death, more conscious of God in their daily affairs. For they have been baptised with the baptism of 1914. That was Heaven's plan for them; it destroyed with fire some of our bad handiwork, to make a way for them; it brought them out into a world prepared for them, won for them by this present agony and bloodshed. Heaven has many ways of being good to us: and I say of these children of my vision, that 1914, when they were little, took them in its arms, laid its hands upon them, and blessed them. And we who begot and bare them, we may hope to see, and to enjoy with them, that more quiet and more dutiful home-life for which many of us were longing in the days that are gone.

We shall have suffered, by that time, so heavily—the memory of our dead, the general poverty, will so pull us down—that there will be no fever of reaction, or next to none; we shall recover slowly, like a man after a long and exhausting illness. The least thing

tires him, and he can hardly laugh without crying. All that he cares for is to be quiet somewhere, out of the noise and the rush; to sit in a garden and look at the trees and the sky: he had forgotten, he says, how beautiful they are. We shall be too weak to want to knock about, or to care to be amused; we shall desire this, and only this, to rest each of us in the quiet spiritual garden of the home-life, thankful to have got there, and saying that it looks more beautiful and more wonderful than ever:

‘The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign:
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.’

That is how the darkness of this year will be transfigured in us, and the praise of this year shown forth in our lives. But there are many homes, now, in our country, and there will be many more, gardens indeed, but of Gethsemane: and I kneel and worship outside them. It is in these dark and forlorn gardens, beaten down by the storm, that any fool, if he will kneel on the path outside them, and peer through the broken fence and the driven trees, can see the Divine Presence.



