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The
COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

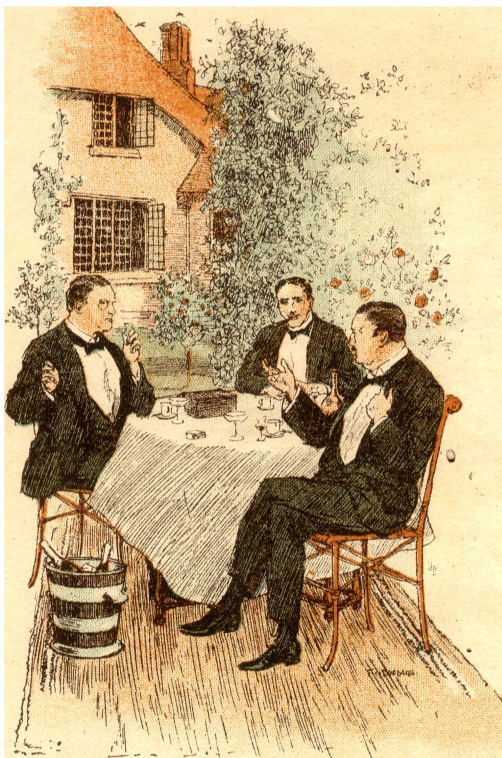


J. A. Spender



J. M. DENT & SONS, Ltd.
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.....the working man..... he declared to be idle and greedy.
Chapter VII

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The
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J. A. Spender



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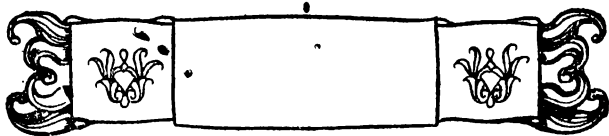
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WHILE the chapters collected into this volume were passing through the "Westminster Gazette," many inquiries reached me about the identity of Bagshot. The answer to these questions would add nothing to what is contained in the chapters themselves. The merit of Bagshot, if any, as a commentator lies in his point of view. His calling, for instance, enables him to know something of affairs, while it compels him to refrain from partisanship; and his attitude towards life in general is roughly on the same lines. His greatest advantage of all is perhaps that, since he has passed from the scene, it is useless to dispute with him.

There comes back to me a saying of his own that "one man's paradox is another man's platitude," and since he never aspires to paradox, I know not to what deep borings below platitude some of his observations may seem to descend, if they encounter the wrong reader or even the right reader in the wrong mood. In such a case, let the reader blame the editor.

J. A. S.



THE COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

CHAPTER I

SOMEWHAT to my surprise, when my friend Bagshot died about six months ago, I found myself named executor in his will. He left me a legacy of £100 for my pains, and, what I valued more, his small and select library of about a thousand books, and certain diaries and manuscript note-books which were stacked together in the central cupboard of his chief bookcase. The note-books contained a variety of observations about men and things, which he had apparently been in the habit of jotting down at odd moments; and when I came to look at the books I found that there was scarcely one of them which was not annotated on the fly-leaf at the end with some query or comment which had occurred to him in reading it. Some of these comments had at first sight scarcely the remotest connection with the book in which it was written; but, having known him well, I was generally able, on reflection, to discover a connecting-link. Nothing, I am sure, was farther from his thoughts than that any of these observa-

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tions would ever see the light. The note-books are quite disconnected, and there is no arrangement or plan about his jottings. He set them down anyhow and on any subject exactly as they came to him. He has often told me that, though literature was, in a sense, his main interest, he had no faculty of consecutive writing, and I know from experience that it was pain and labour to him to answer any but a formal letter. His papers, nevertheless, have interested me so much that I am tempted to make a few selections from them and to offer them to the public.

A few words in explanation about the man himself. Bagshot is not his real name, but the idea of publicity would have been so distasteful to him, that I have decided to veil his identity. He died at the comparatively early age of fifty-five, after more than thirty years in the public service. He did well, but not quite brilliantly, as a public servant, and was in the last years head of a department and earned a substantial salary. No one heard of him outside his department, and, having done his duty conscientiously, he considered that his private life was his own to spend in the way most congenial to his own tastes. He was a bachelor with about a dozen real friends, and until he was forty-five or thereabouts he lived in rooms not far from Burlington House. After that he moved out of London, and established himself near St. Mary Cray, which, he used to say, was the nearest piece of real country within reach of a Government office. Here he had his

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more intimate friends to stay with him, and I remember nothing pleasanter than a bachelor week-end at his house. He was a good scholar, and had only just missed a fellowship at Oxford, and though he disclaimed every kind of expert knowledge, he had excellent taste, and I have known many a professional critic ask his judgment on a work of art. He was wholly unambitious, and extremely kind and charitable. He used to say that the chief merit of the public service was that it enabled you to live without the constant sense of competition with rivals who would deprive you of your daily bread if you did not deprive them of theirs. I suspect that the chief reason he remained a bachelor was that he had to support a mother and two sisters out of his official salary, for he would have made an admirable husband and father, and was capable of warm attachments. In appearance he was more interesting than handsome. I remember him as a tall man, clean-shaven, with somewhat irregular features, and piercing brown eyes. You could not be long with him without noticing his queer habit of raising his left eyebrow when anything interested him. His attitude towards life was—or so it seemed to his friends—a half-humorous interrogative, but he was essentially benevolent, and would insist with much vehemence that men in the lump were a great deal better than they were commonly supposed to be.

I thought I knew him well, but there was much in his papers that surprised me. He

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seems to have meditated on a great many subjects on which he never talked, at least to me, though he was possibly less reticent to others. Like most unmarried men, he had careful theories about friendship, some of them, I conjecture, founded on an estrangement from an old friend which troubled him greatly during the last years of his life. In one of his note-books I find these entries under date 14th November, 1896:

“There are very few friends with whom you can be equally intimate on all subjects. Discover the range of your intimacy with each friend, and never go beyond it.

“Nothing is so perilous to friendship as to presume intimacy with a friend on a subject on which he is a stranger to you.

“Reserve is essential to an enduring friendship.”

The last sentence is repeated again and again at later dates, as though he was perpetually warning himself against a tendency to transgress his own rule. I imagine he meant that a man might be a friend to you in politics, but a stranger to you in religion, a friend to you in literature, but a stranger to you in philosophy, and yet he by no means intends to bar discussion between friends on questions on which they may differ, for a little later (10th December of the same year) he quotes with high approval Carlyle's description of himself and Sterling as “except in opinion not

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disagreeing." But he is persistent about "the subjects on which your friend is a stranger to you," and I find the expression slightly varied at a later date:

"There are subjects on which an intimacy is possible between strangers which would be fatal to friendship.

"The wise penitent chooses a confessor who is unknown to him."

I wish I knew the incident which gave rise to these ejaculations. Apparently he had given some advice or ventured some confidence which had been taken ill by his friend.

There is much more on the subject of friends and friendship, to which I shall return another time. He had a pleasing habit of summing up his friends in little *aperçus* which I find scattered about his note-books. Here are a few entries taken at random:

- "C. 'has the courage which bears an intolerable toothache with fortitude for fear of going to the dentist.'

"Of L. he writes that 'he has a tideless nature beating against rocks.'

"Of Y.—that he is 'like a frozen waterfall. He comes clattering down to the precipice and preserves all the forms of animated and glittering motion, and then hangs frosted over the edge.'

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"G. (aged eighty-three) is 'like an ancient olive, with a mere shell for its trunk, yet indomitably throwing up new shoots on top—green against the grey.'

"Of M. he says: 'Cut him open and you will find a clergyman inside.' (This is put in inverted commas as if he had read it somewhere or someone else had said it, but I cannot trace it to its source.)

"Of another, M. (a well-known and distinguished man), he says: 'He is generally supposed to be the least ambitious of men, but he is consumed with an ambition to surpass himself.'

"The conversation of D. is 'like the noise of a train in a tunnel'—one idea deafening you with its echo.

"S. is 'not a visionary, as his friends say; he is merely hyperopic—*i.e.*, constitutionally incapable of focussing his vision on any near subject. His distant vision is no better than other people's, usually a little worse.'

"A. 'is like a bridge over a mountain torrent. He joins two precipices, and the stream of controversy passes beneath him.'

"C. 'is without the sense of co-operation. He is nearly always right, but generally fails, because he likes to keep his wisdom to himself. It pleases him more to show you how wrong you were than to have had your help in doing the thing right. A sagacious, unpopular, and infructuous character.'

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“ Talking with D. is ‘ like glissading down a snow slope—delightful while it lasts, but you are soon at the bottom. If you aren’t careful, he’ll take you over the precipice.’ ”

Bagshot loved theology, and plunged with zest into ecclesiastical controversies, but I never could discover what his religious opinions were. As to the part which religion should play in the world he was quite positive. I find him saying (19th April, 1897):

“ An Opposition is as necessary in daily life as in a Parliamentary assembly. The part which religion should play is that of a permanent Opposition—an Opposition which never hopes to become a Government.

“ This *rôle* is fatally compromised when a Church is established.

“ Established churches must be conservative, but a conservative religion is a contradiction in terms.

“ The conversion of Constantine was the greatest disaster to Christianity. It was the beginning of its secular bondage.

“ Only stupid people sneer at the man who says, ‘ Credo quia impossibile.’ To have faith in the impossible is precisely the function of religion.

“ The State and religion may be in acute conflict, and both may be right, but though the State may yield to religion, religion should never yield to the State.

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“ Religion cannot accept the protection of the State without binding itself to uphold the State and its law and policy. The effect is automatic with an established clergy, though they are mostly unaware of it.

“ Religion dispenses with law nearly as often as it enforces law. One of the finest texts in the Gospels is the admonition addressed to the disciple plucking corn on the Sabbath day: ‘ Blessed art thou, if thou knowest what thou doest; but if not, thou art accursed and a breaker of the law.’ This occurs in only one manuscript of the Gospels, and is declared to be an interpolation. I am convinced that it is genuine.

“ ‘ But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground.’ What did he write? (A great subject for a religious poem.) ”

I should give a wrong impression of Bagshot if I said that he was intolerant about anything, and some of his warmest friends were among the Established clergy, but on this subject of religion and the State he was unyielding. Not that he took the Nonconformist view or had any prejudices against the Anglican Church except as an establishment.

On almost the last page of his latest diary I find a passage which expresses a mood that I was often aware of in him:

“ Have you ever stood outside a public

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“meeting and heard the applause and the interruptions, but not the speaker? How absurd and meaningless it sounds! There are moments when one stands outside life in just such a way. One hears the noises, but has no clue to the meaning.”

A month after this was written he was in his grave, but I do not believe that he wrote it with any premonition of his end, which he had no reason to expect. Rather it represents a mood which was frequent with him throughout his life. Over and over again I have heard him say “I have lost the clue to things,” or of a particular controversy that it conveyed no meaning to him. His interest in politics was keen when aroused, but there were whole classes of subjects to which he could not be persuaded to pay the faintest attention, and others on which he would blaze intermittently and quite briefly. Though not at all a pedant, he was for ever trying to discover some logic or sequence in things, and he habitually talked of the unexpected as if it were an offence against good manners. “The gross impropriety of this event must be obvious to you,” he wrote about some untoward happening—an earthquake or a foreign complication, I have quite forgotten what—which cut across his scheme of things. But these traits I shall best illustrate when I come to give further extracts from his own comments.

CHAPTER II

BAGSHOT is gone, and I have already explained that he left me no authority to publish any of his writings. But to acquit him of all blame in the matter let me begin this chapter by quoting the first entry—dated 1st January, 1906—in the very last of the note-books that have come into my possession:

“ We all denounce bores, but, while we do so, let us always remember that there is nobody who isn't a bore to somebody. The most certain mark of a bore is a complete assurance that he is an exception to this rule.

“ While I am denouncing A as a bore to B, ten to one he is denouncing me as a bore to C.

“ * Therefore let me be careful to confine my moralizings to my note-books.”

The last sentence is starred and endorsed in the margin as “ Good resolution for 1906.” In letting his moralizings escape from his note-books, I feel it is due to his memory to quote this passage.

Having thus discharged my conscience, let me go on to quote a few more of Bagshot's observations upon bores and boredom:

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"The worst attribute of the bore is that he loves you. That adds remorse to pain.

"Bores are dreadfully intolerant of each other. Never ask two to meet, or you will have both on your hands.

"The true bore is seldom stupid, and often very clever; but a diet of pearls is extremely boring to the swine.

"Clever men forget that stupid ones can be bored. None is so merciless as the clever bore.

"My friend B. is an epicure in bores. I saw him the other night absorbed in the conversation of W. (a notorious bore). He took an exquisite pleasure in studying the natural history of the bore as exemplified in this extreme specimen. He begged me afterwards to bring them together again that he might have a further opportunity of research.

"Bores are generally called well-meaning, for the essence of their infirmity is that they are unconscious of it. Some few, however, are malignant. These are determined to 'talk to you for your good.' That is malice prepense.

"It is a presumption against a man to have the word too much in his mouth. The easily bored are nearly always bores. It is possible to be a bore about bores."

That last sentence warns me to shut down these quotations, but I have let them run to this length because they illustrate a certain phase of Bagshot's character. I remember well how

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vehemently he used to inveigh against the "tyranny of clever men." He was not without a suspicion of cleverness himself, yet he had a rooted aversion to the people commonly called "clever." Most of them, he used to say, were fundamentally stupid; and one man, reputed to be very clever, he described as having "a complacent, *borné* intelligence with a fraudulent top-dressing." In another entry he tells us that one of the chief wants of the day is a "league of ordinary mortals to put the clever people in their proper place."

There is a touch of the Civil Service disposition in some of his observations, but he had a clear eye for the characteristics of "the Permanents":

"The ideal condition for the permanent Civil servant is that in which he rules the country and the politician takes the blame.

"The ideal condition for the politician is that in which he takes the praise and the permanent does the work.

"The fairest compromise is to give the permanent the work and the politician the blame. This conduces to the moral welfare of both parties.

"Rule for Civil servants: 'Oh, take the cash, and let the credit go.'"

This was written in 1884, but there is a note added to it at a later date, January, 1906, a very

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few months before his death. "After further experience," he writes in this note, "I am greatly struck with the loyalty of both parties to this compact. Some few politicians, such as — and — (two eminent names which I omit), have grabbed the praise and shirked the work, but hardly any have shirked the blame. I scarcely know a case in which a politician has thrown the blame on permanent servants even for gross mistakes of which he was wholly innocent. People talk slightingly of politicians, but there is no trade in which there is a higher standard of loyalty." This was a frequent theme of his, and I have often heard him regret that there was no first-rate biography of a public man written by a permanent servant who had been closely in contact with him on the administrative side.

The note-books contain also sundry observations about promotions and appointments. Some of them apply to special cases long forgotten, but others have a wider application:

"Promotion by merit is not at all the same thing as promotion by ability. Clever men mostly forget this. Nothing is so embarrassing as unsuitable ability.

"The eleventh-hour man is absolutely essential to the service.

"It is the highest self-discipline to receive the eleventh-hour man without resentment."

The "eleventh-hour man" is, I take it, an

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allusion to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. Bagshot himself, as I know, suffered severely on one occasion from an eleventh-hour man, and with all his philosophy it was, I imagine, a severe act of self-discipline to receive without resentment the brilliant newcomer, hoisted over the heads of the labourers who had borne the burden and heat of the day. Till I stumbled on these passages in his note-book I had never known him make an allusion to this incident except to protest that the appointment was admirable, and most salutary to his Department. His objection to promotion by seniority was, indeed, I think, carried to rather extreme lengths, and he sometimes forgot the discouragement of competent hard work which might have followed from too perpetual incursions of the eleventh-hour man. His idea, however, is insisted upon again and again:

“ Exceptional ability must not be required to graduate.

“ Hostility to youth is the worst vice of the middle-aged.

“ It is silly to quarrel with the chamois because he has not come by the mule path.

“ I hate to hear people saying, ‘ He is young, he must wait; he will get plenty of chances.’ How do they know? Could Keats have waited, or Shelley, or Byron, or Burns?

“ They said it of W., and pushed him back. Three years later he died. .

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"It is a cheap generosity which promises the future in compensation for the present. Give youth its present, and leave its future to God."

The last three of these notes come together, and they are tinged with a rather unusual emotion. I imagine that he had been a warm friend to W.

Being a public servant, Bagshot was not in the ordinary sense a politician, nor had he the party-political mind. But his instincts were Liberal, even in some respects revolutionary, and he had no patience with croakers. Here is a characteristic entry from his 1890 note-book:

"The weaknesses commonly attributed to democracy by the pessimists are mostly weaknesses inherent in collective action of any kind—oligarchic, aristocratic, or democratic. They could be avoided only by absolutism which is impossible in modern States."

A few pages on I find this:

"The most dangerous demagogues are the clever Conservatives who despise the people."

"In public affairs the cynic is more pernicious than the demagogue."

He returns to the attack on cleverness a little later in the same note-book, and I suspect that

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he was suffering much at this time from a notoriously clever man who held high office in those years:

“Do not seek far-fetched explanations of the stupidities of clever people. In public affairs things are nearly always as silly as they seem.

“A motto for Cabinets: Twenty wise men may easily add up into one fool.

“Cleverness and stupidity are generally in the same boat against wisdom.”

I spoke in my last chapter of his constant search for some logic or sequence in current events. Here are one or two extracts which illustrate this tendency:

“History, we are told, is past politics, but it is harder and more important to conceive present politics as current history.

“To see things *sub specie æternitatis* is for angels and philosophers, but a politician may try to see them *sub specie historiæ*.

“Conceive of your life as an unfinished biography, and try to discover the next chapter and the end.”

That I gather from other entries in his diaries was his habitual mood about his own life.

CHAPTER III

BAGSHOT's comments by no means all of them take the epigrammatic form of some I have quoted. I find a longer passage, for instance, written at the end of a forgotten book on animal instinct:

“ The problem of immortality is for practical people the problem of memory. All the metaphysical problems are combined in the question, ‘ Is there that which remembers? ’ If we could conceive a man to have irretrievably lost his memory, that man would have lost his immortality. The waters of Lethe are fatal to the eternal life. The question ‘ Does man survive? ’ may, therefore, be re-stated as ‘ Will man remember? ’

“ The instinct of the animal is its racial immortality—the hoarded memory which is the common property of the race, and which gives each member of it his share of its continuous existence. The bird which builds its nest untaught, exactly according to the pattern of its race, is not *a* bird but *the* bird, *the* immortal bird of immemorial age and unbroken memory. The animal is so generalized that it repeats its *self* and perpetuates its identity while the

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"race lasts. This *self* never dies, and it is the animal soul.

"So far as man becomes individualized, he forfeits this racial immortality. The hoarded memory dies down, as the individual emerges, and in the 'progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity' he loses his racial soul. Does he, in compensation, gain an individual soul? So far from merging man in the race, the theory of evolution extricates him, individualizes him, leaves him solitary and unique—a being with his own memory, experience, and characteristics for whose extinction the survival of the race can offer no compensation to nature. If the whole purpose of nature is the making of individuals, can we believe that nature extinguishes them when made?

"I seem to see in the scheme of things an ascent from the racial immortality to the individual immortality—the individual gradually emerging from the dim mass of general life, losing, as he advances, more and more of his connections with this general life, but gaining by the same process his individual immortal soul; becoming more helpless as an animal, but more masterful as a man. Large numbers of the human race seem as yet to be in the position in which they have lost their privileges in the animal world, and not gained their standing in the human world. But the whole process moves, I am persuaded, to the making of the individual immortal—a being

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“possessing in itself the same undying memory and consciousness that are the collective possession of the animal world.”

Judging from his note-books, Bagshot dwelt on this theme and wrestled with it during many hours of his leisure. There is another entry about the same date which is worth quoting:

“In all literature there are no words which have affected me so profoundly throughout my life as Aristotle’s ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν.¹ They are untranslatable; no modern language has any words which convey the depth of their meaning. Implied in them is the Christian conception of ‘the eternal life,’ but their value is that they are pre-Christian, and independent of all mystic beliefs about another world. The eternity of things is here asserted as the basis of the temporal. It is the last word on the subject. Whatever he believes about another world, a man must live in this world *as if he were immortal*. This alone lightens the burden of his years and enables him to look steadily at the future.”

In the same vein is a note which Bagshot has written in pencil on the fly-leaf at the end of Morley’s “Life of Gladstone”:

“If you are feeling old and are oppressed

¹ So far as possible to live as an immortal.

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“with the sense that your days are few and the future is little to you, go to this book and see where Gladstone was at your age, and what he had in front of him. Yesterday I was forty-nine, and all day long I struggled with the thought that the fiftieth year was the beginning of the end. It comforted me amazingly to find that at this age Mr. Gladstone had not yet got into his second volume.”

A few months later he seems to have taken the book down again and to have added another note:

“It matters little, as a matter of fact, whether death be near or far provided you can keep this sense of the future. An interest in public affairs is a preservative of youth because it takes a man out of the individual life into the general life and projects his mind into a future not limited by his own existence. He is bound as far as possible to live the life of the immortal.”

The same strain, slightly varied, is to be found in another reflection of about the same date:

“A great *new* building—not one of your shoddy modern hotels, but something noble and permanent—affects me with precisely the same sense of poetry as a great *old* building. This morning I stood watching them at work

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“on the new War Office, and the thought came over me, What will it witness which I shall not see? Answers to riddles innumerable, agonies of wars undreamt of, hopes, fears, passions of multitudes yet to be born. I see it immensely historical with the history of the future.”

Let me finish this graver kind of quotation by one more passage dealing with the subject of death:

“ Why is it that in death the sense of bereavement is felt by the living, but not by the dying? Why should those who are departing from life be supposed to feel the separation less keenly than those who are left behind? Most of those who have been to the verge of death will tell you that they felt no pang of the emotion which they would have suffered if watching at the deathbed of others whom they loved. None of the poetry or literature of the subject imputes a sense of bereavement to the departed.

“ Is this merely a result of the religious teaching that it is far better to depart, or is it some deep instinct which reassures the dying? ”

A few passages in a lighter vein may be added to wind up this chapter. Bagshot's transitions are very abrupt, and I will not endeavour to soften them. This should please the Food Reformers:

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“It is a pity that over-eating is not followed by the same visibly scandalous consequences as over-drinking. There would be more thin people in the world and less gluttony, but hardly anyone would be sober at the end of a London dinner-party.

“It is ultimately the most disagreeable fact in the world that living things live on each other. In this respect man is divided from the brutes by the cook. There may be pleasures unrealized by man in the sense of smell, but I am devoutly thankful that the sight of a flock of sheep in a field does not appeal to my appetite as it apparently does to my dog’s. Imagine a pastoral landscape with cattle in it pervaded by an odour of roast beef.

“The expression ‘dumb animal’ is meaningless. There are hardly any ‘dumb animals,’ but the horse, to his great misfortune, is one of them. Who would dare whip a horse if he cried out like a dog? Imagine the uproar in London or Paris or Naples!”

The common saying that you should know everything of something and something of everything Bagshot paraphrases as follows:

“It is necessary to fathom one’s ignorance on one subject in order to discover how little one knows on other subjects.”

CHAPTER IV

BAGSHOT was generally counted a shy man and his manners were somewhat embarrassed. Yet, oddly enough, there was hardly any imputation that he more disliked than that of shyness. I ventured once to suggest to him that he should try to overcome this fault, and he was genuinely surprised and not a little offended by the criticism. For shyness, he said with some vehemence, was either odious or silly—odious if, as in nine cases out of ten, it arose from self-consciousness or vanity; and silly if, as in the tenth case, it arose from timidity. Nervous a man might be on fit occasion—if, for instance, he was going to an interview on which his fate depended—but only fools were shy. Then, turning on me with some acerbity, he begged me to mention an occasion on which he had misconducted himself in either way.

I entirely disclaimed the meaning he had read into my friendly remonstrance, but I pointed out that only the previous week in my house, when a party of young people had drawn us old ones into some improvised charades, he had slunk aside looking the picture of embarrassed wretchedness and hidden himself downstairs in my study till the cast was made up. To this he made the astonishing answer that, if I had only given him

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the false white beard and wig which I had so thoughtfully provided for myself on this occasion, he would have played my part himself, and played it—he hinted—a good deal better than I had played it. He said this as if his meaning was completely self-evident, and would have dismissed the subject but for my puzzled “What *do* you mean?” This set him off on to an excursion on “false beards,” which, so far as I remember it, was to this effect:

“Men are divided into two classes, those who can and those who cannot throw off their own personality. The former are dramatic by nature, and have no sense of the absurdity of impersonating someone else. The latter are always haunted by this sense of absurdity. I belong to the latter class, and I pity the actor who has to appear with his own face and in his ordinary coat and trousers, pretending to be someone else in a modern play. To me the situation only becomes tolerable when I can disguise my face, and with a false beard and wig I feel somehow that the worst of it is mitigated. This is not shyness, as you call it, but merely a natural incapacity to take on another personality. The same thing runs through literature and the arts. I have the greatest admiration for the work of H. and S. (naming two distinguished imaginative writers), but if I had written their books (of which I am quite incapable) I could not, for all the

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“applause and fame, have persuaded myself to put my name to them. Such a public impersonation of fictitious characters would be fatal to my sense of myself. But I can conceive myself writing anonymously for newspapers without any sense of discomfort. The ‘we’ of journalism is the false beard and wig which saves you from the constant intrusion of yourself before the public, and enables you to live your own life within the mask. That is a positive necessity to the non-dramatic kind of man.”

I remember objecting that he was here confusing two things—the impersonations of the actor and the emotional outpourings of such a writer as S., who was deliberately attempting to express *himself* to the public. Bagshot, however, would not admit that the distinction held good. The relation of such a man as S. to his public was essentially a dramatic relation, and his constant appearances in his own name led him to dramatize his own character. He had a fancy picture of himself as a man from whom certain postures were expected, and he could not take up his pen without putting this imaginary figure between the public and himself. He wrote quite differently in his private letters, and again he would write quite differently if he wrote anonymously. Which of his assumed characters was the real man it was impossible to say, for the writing of imaginative literature had this curious effect

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of disintegrating personality, and strongly individual men were incapable of it. This was really what was meant by the artistic temperament—an unstable personality moving in many worlds, and not firmly anchored in any.

An entry which I find in one of his note-books about this date is in keeping with this discourse:

“The worst of the ‘artistic temperament’ is that so many people have the temperament and so few the art. We should never excuse the temperament, unless we are sure of the art.”

There are many other entries on this subject to which I may return another time. A little incident, however, comes back to me which may be recorded in this place. I said to him once that a certain notorious poetaster excused his excesses on the ground that Byron had lived a shocking life. He replied curtly that Admiral B. (a blameless and Churchgoing acquaintance of us both) might as well elope with the rector’s wife, and justify the proceeding by the plea that Nelson had carried on with Lady Hamilton.

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Bagshot seldom, if he could avoid it, spent a night in London; but I find this note dated from an address in Gower Street, 10 p.m., 9th January, 1903:

“To most people the vision of a great city

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“is that of streets, parks, river, bridges, and endless bustling crowds in the open under the sky. But the idea which most weighs on me as I sit here alone is that of a vast unexplored interior, with a million forms of hidden life. If a path could be driven through the heart of it, so that we might walk under the roofs from the prosperous West to the last of the mean streets, we should begin to lift the curtain on humanity. Would Dives venture to return to his palace and fare sumptuously every day if he were compelled to make that pilgrimage once a week?

“The brain reels when it tries to realize this life. Within a mile of me at this moment—the dinner-party, the death-bed, the woman in travail, children tucked away in comfortable night-nurseries, children swarming together in one verminous bed, elegant loungers in drawing-rooms, roysterers in public-houses, beautiful empty rooms, squalid crowded tenements, endless human cells, with each its own separate life shut off from all other life, a thousand thousand romances, tragedies, histories, all running at once, and with complete disregard of each other. And then the emotions, anxieties, pains, pleasures, griefs, hopes, and fears falling on each man or woman as if he or she were the one being in the world! I get at once the sense of the swarming of humanity and of its intense separateness within its little compartments. The real city is the

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“city under the roof; all the rest is coming and going. We say we know London. We know at most the outside of a few score of streets, and the inside of about six houses—if so many. Beyond is impenetrable mystery.”

Side by side with this I may put another passage which comes a little later in the same note-book:

“Year by year, as I grow older, I get more impatient with the misanthropes. Say what one will about the vices and follies of man, how immense are his virtues! Think steadily, if you can, of the incredible things that he suffers—his hard toil, his struggle for bread and home, the smallness of his reward, his undeserved calamities, the slaughter of his affections, and through it all his indomitable spirit and courage as he gathers himself from the dust or the mire, and plants his feet again on his rough and uncertain road. The shallow rich talk much of the turbulence of the poor and their tendency to agitate. It is the patience of the poor which most strikes those who know them.”

The note-books abound in observations about wealth and poverty, and Bagshot had a theory that everyone should be taught the elementary facts about the distribution of wealth, so that he might “place” himself correctly in the material scale. Here is a characteristic passage:

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“ If I were a soul trembling on the threshold of birth into this world, and my place had to be assigned to me by an impartial drawing of lots, the odds would be heavily in favour of my being a Chinaman, or a Hindu, or a negro. If I escaped that, and were happy enough to draw an English lot, the chances would still be nearly four to one that I should be born into the working-class. That I should come again into such a home as I am now living in, a home furnished with the modest comforts and luxuries that an income of £1200 a year can provide, or get the start in life that parents with such an income might afford me, would be an incredible piece of good fortune which I should have no right whatever to expect.

“ An income of a thousand pounds a year and upwards is, materially speaking, a rare and privileged state of being which *dehumanizes* those who attain to it or inherit it. They are so far removed from the common human lot that, except imaginatively, they have no experience or knowledge of it.

“ These fortunate few, nevertheless, habitually talk as if they were the world, and nearly all modern literature proceeds on that assumption. That accounts for the divorce in the Western world between life and letters. All modern letters are ‘ polite.’ ‘ Humane letters ’ have yet to be.”

Bagshot used to say that one of the advantages

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of not being a practical politician was that you were free to theorize without being called a fool for your pains. So, for the moment, I may close with this quite unpractical piece of theorizing which he has scribbled on the fly-leaf of a recent book on Socialism:

“The Socialists are quite right when they wish to raise the minimum wage, but they are wholly mistaken when they speak of the equalizing of wealth as an important object for society to pursue, except so far as it is necessary for that purpose. . . . I look forward to a state of society in which every man shall be able to earn sufficient to provide air-space, decent food, and clothing, as well as education and rational enjoyment for himself and his family, and in which no man shall be able to plead economic conditions to avert the penalties—compulsory labour, loss of rights, etc.—with which he will then inexorably be visited for failing to do these things. But I do not at all look forward to any state of society in which, above this level, there shall not be all degrees of wealth and a sufficient number of people living in the style of the ‘magnificent man’ in Aristotle. The moderately well-to-do would gain no more by levelling these more fortunate beings than I should gain if Lord Rothschild became bankrupt to-morrow and his property were scattered to the four winds.

“The real difficulty in a modern society is

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“to get the wealth into the hands of the ‘magnificent men’—the men who have a genius for spending at all corresponding to the genius which the modern rich man has for acquiring. Not only is there no connection between these two things, but there is an actual conflict between them. The presumption is that a man with the genius for acquiring will be a man without the gift of spending. Half the world seems to be born with the one and the remaining half with the other gift. Rarely under favouring stars is the man born who combines the two. This is one of the most glaring imperfections of nature, and this it is which makes wealth gross and repulsive in imperial Rome or modern America. In my Utopia the State would every year select a man who had a genius for spending but no money, and endow him with the sum necessary for the ‘magnificent life.’ It would thus have examples of spending as a fine art, and the money would be found by taxing those who abused their wealth.”

Underneath these reflections Bagshot has written the names of half a dozen of his friends whom he thinks would be eligible for this Utopian endowment. These, however, I suppress.

CHAPTER V

BAGSHOT was not often obscure, but he had a habit of packing a good deal into a few sentences. Thus I find him trying to condense the whole controversy about the "rights of man" into a note which he has written at the end of the late Professor Ritchie's book on "Natural Rights":

"When the speculative man talks about his 'ideals,' the practical man talks about his 'rights.' Rights are ideals in terms of action. Man first becomes formidable in action when he conceives his ideals as his rights."

I am familiar with that last sentence. He used to repeat it with some pride, and declare that it was *the* fundamental postulate of human progress. Indeed, I can hear him now enlarging on the theme of man setting out on his long journey with an idea of human society as good and just, pursuing the vision till to the eye of faith it seemed a concrete reality, and then passionately claiming it as his right, his birthright. In the same book and on the same page is another note which treats the theme in a minor key:

"When men say that they have rights, they generally mean that they are suffering wrongs."

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Bagshot was of equable temper in controversy, but I have known him grow hot and angry when some cynical young man fresh from the schools was heard to declare that human rights were a delusion. He would tell these youths with some acerbity that a knowledge of human nature was desirable in those who set up to be philosophers.

On the other hand, he was never weary of insisting on the distinction between the idealist and the fanatic. Extremist politicians, he held, were guilty of a gross confusion of thought when they denounced men of moderate opinions as necessarily opportunists or time-servers. A great many moderate men, he used to say, were "visionaries with an acute sense of the difficulty of legislating for practical people." A great many others were genuine zealots for a moderate policy. Here is an entry of March, 1900:

"It is a mistake to suppose that people are only fanatical for extreme courses. A passion for moderation is one of the commonest of English characteristics. A bigoted attachment to the *via media* of the Anglican Church was the redeeming virtue of Charles I. If a martyr, he was a martyr for a compromise."

He was clearly thinking much at this time about the South African war, which greatly depressed his spirits. It is not necessary to go back on his reflections at this period, but one or two notes

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about war and public opinion are worth reviving.
This is dated 10th February, 1900:

“ There is only one possible change of Government when a war is proceeding—a change from a less warlike to a more warlike Government, from Lord Aberdeen to Lord Palmerston. The reverse process is impossible, unless the country desires or is compelled to make peace. The worse the present Government conduct the Boer war and the longer it lasts, the more likely are they to remain in office. And yet I imagine that they would greatly like to be relieved.

“ I don't know whether the country is more angry with the Boers, the pro-Boers, or the Government. Of the three I think I pity the Government most.”

Soon after the taking of Pretoria, when the Peace Party were crying out to stop the war, comes this:

“ If you want to influence a country for peace in time of war, you should be known as a man of war in time of peace. Only Bismarck could have ‘ stopped the war ’ after Königgrätz.”

Besides these I may place two observations written a few weeks before his death, in March, 1906, at the time of the Akabah incident, when everyone was in favour of coercing the Sultan if he refused to give way:

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“There is no peace-at-any-price party. There are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars.

“All the peace parties I have known have ardently desired to make war on the Sultan of Turkey. Perhaps they are right, but some of them seem to regard it as a humanitarian picnic on a large scale—which is almost certainly a mistake.”

Bagshot was a very kind-hearted man, and he thought much on the subject of pain. He comforted himself by believing that the evil of pain was, on the whole, a good deal exaggerated. I find this entry in January, 1899:

“Nothing cheers me more in the world than to observe how much more abiding is the memory of pleasure than of pain. I have been talking to-day in a hospital with men who, in the last few weeks, have suffered every hideous form of mutilation and torture—the survivors of an accident which filled the public with horror. One and all assure me that they suffered nothing at the time, and nearly all seem to have forgotten what they suffered afterwards, or, at most, to recall it with a cheerful pride which has no element of pain in it. One or two of them are maimed for life, and therefore greatly to be pitied, but the pain for which we chiefly pitied them is apparently the least part of their misfortune.

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“The thought of pain as something capable of illimitable increase in proportion to the tortures inflicted is, happily, an illusion. Pain has its own limit — unconsciousness. Whoever has fainted from pain has reached his limit. He would suffer no more if he were burnt at the stake. It is an illusion, also, to suppose that the pains which are horrible to describe are necessarily worse than the commonplace pains we suffer without sympathy. We should never think lightly of pain, but we need not torture ourselves by supposing that the wounded on a battlefield or the victims of an accident suffer an indefinite multiplication of the pains we are familiar with.¹

“A wise man will suffer almost any degree of physical pain in preference to mental anguish. It is one of the qualities of physical pain that it kills thought. The ascetic who flagellates himself does really cure his spiritual agony.

“Dr. N. (he writes a little later) came yesterday and made a large incision in my neck, and afterwards inserted an india-rubber tube in the hole. I declined chloroform because, when a similar operation was performed on me ten years ago, I suffered nothing. This time I analyzed my sensations with some care. The sensation of being cut by a skilful surgeon would not, I think, be pain if one could keep one’s imagination out of it. If it is quickly

¹ B. adds as a note to this passage: “I have shown this to a woman, and she disagrees with every word of it.”

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“done, you feel nothing till it is over, and then what affects you is not a hurt but the idea of the sharp steel on your skin. That causes a shiver, with a sense of the teeth being set on edge, and, if you don’t steady yourself, you go back and back on the sensation till you grow sick and faint. If I had not known what was happening, and let this prey on my imagination, I do not think I should have suffered anything from the wound.”

A year later he was seriously ill of pneumonia, with various painful complications, and I find another note about his sensations a few weeks after his recovery:

“I am told (he says) that my sufferings were horrible to witness, and the nurse dwells particularly on my struggles for breath. Of those I was completely unconscious, and I am not aware of having even suffered discomfort in breathing. Other things were temporarily painful, but the memory of them has so far faded from my mind that it is scarcely to be weighed against the recollection of one sunny hour. The idea of pain is constantly before us because a few people out of a vast number are always suffering accidents and diseases which are described in newspapers or talked about by their friends. This produces the illusion that pain is a constant factor in everybody’s life. It is, on the contrary, but a rare incident in the lives of the vast majority.”

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A little later there comes this characteristic sentence:

“ Just as the journalist conceives of men and women as readers of newspapers, and the banker conceives of them as possessors of cheque-books, so the doctor conceives of them as ‘ suffering humanity.’ Some doctors are not even content with this. They suppose most people to be suffering from the particular disease in which they happen to be specialists. My friend Sir T. D., the eminent specialist in rheumatism, told me the other day that ‘ rheumatoid arthritis ’ was ‘ the scourge of the human race.’ It is probable that not one in a thousand suffers from that rare disease, and if there were no specialists in appendicitis it is probable that that affliction would be as rare as it was before its discovery. It is a solemn fact that the discovery of a new disease immediately creates a demand for it.

“ The expression ‘ suffering humanity ’ (he goes on) is a gross piece of sentimentalism if it is taken to imply that humanity in the mass is generally suffering. At any given moment the vast majority are not suffering.”

Nevertheless, Bagshot had a great respect for doctors, and he was always advising young men to enter “ the most disinterested of the professions.” But he has occasional flings at modern surgery:

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“ One of the most audacious scientific *non-sequiturs* is the assertion of the surgeons that the appendix has no function in the human body, because *they* are unable to discover it. Its function will probably now be discovered by the ‘ method of difference.’ ”

The logical reader will have no difficulty in divining the meaning of the last sentence. I hope, for the sake of those who have undergone the operation, that the forecast is untrue.

I am glad to be able to add that Bagshot was not always quite so stoical himself as some of these passages might suggest. On a certain day in 1900 I find this entry:

“ I have never before been conscious of my own shape, but this morning I woke up with the sense of being *outlined* with a running thread of rheumatism. It is a horribly long way round.”

With the exception of the passages quoted in this chapter, I can find no allusion to his health in any of Bagshot's diaries.

CHAPTER VI

LET me for a moment suspend my selection from Bagshot's note-books to recall a talk which has stamped itself on my memory as revealing more of my friend than he generally let us see. We were three in number—B., myself, and a friend of his and mine, whom I will call Slackford, an eminent official well known in the public service for his extreme competence and affected cynicism. It was a June evening, and we had gone down to dine with Bagshot at his house in the country, and were sitting in the garden after dinner, smoking his excellent cigars. For a time everything was placid, then something or other set Slackford going about the iniquities of the working man, whom he declared to be idle and greedy. B. became Socratic, and induced him, in particular, to denounce a certain set of workmen to whom, he said, a Government Department had just made a base surrender. B. then observed that the case had come before him, and he had discovered that the men in question had earned, on the average, rather less than 4s. for a day of nine hours. Slackford blustered and declared it was quite as much as they were worth, whereupon Bagshot made a rough calculation of Slackford's wage, which worked out at about £6

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for a day of seven hours. Granting a whole world of difference between Slackford's value to the public and the value of the aforesaid labourers, was a man "greedy and idle" who wanted a very little more than a thirtieth part of what Slackford received (and what he was known to complain of bitterly as a most inadequate salary)?

Slackford said with some justice that this *argumentum ad hominem* put him in a false position, and immediately changed his tack to a sweeping assertion that we were all equally greedy together in these days, and that there really was nothing worth having in life except money and the things that money bought. Small blame to them, then, if they tried to get more, and small blame to us if we tried to prevent them from getting more. Slackford then launched out against the "cant" which was talked by preachers and writers about money being an evil, when everybody knew that nobody believed it, and all the world spent the whole of its time in seeking to get money and keep it. "Everyone," said Slackford comprehensively, "was either greedy or needy; those who weren't greedy were needy, and those who weren't needy were greedy. Most of us were both greedy and needy."

Bagshot was not to be drawn, and at first he returned a chaffing answer. But Slackford persisted, and was presently denouncing Radicals and Socialists, first for their dishonesty and then for their foolish ignorance of human nature.

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Then Bagshot's patience broke, and he marched to the attack. His exact words I cannot, of course, remember at this distance of time, but the general tenor of the conversation is vividly in my mind. "If," he said, "I had to make the choice—which, mercifully, I have not—I would far rather live in a country in which Socialism was a failure than in a country in which materialism was a success. To say that money is the only thing that counts in this world is not only not true, but a particularly foolish kind of paradox." "A dull platitude, on the contrary," growled Slackford. "Let's test it, then," said B. "By all means," replied the other. "Well, then, is there any man who, standing by the death-bed of a wife he loved, would hesitate for one moment to take all he had and throw it into the sea, if by so doing he could bring her back?" "You put it too high," said Slackford. "But you said the 'greatest thing in the world,'" was the retort. "Take another case, if you will. Did the rich young men who went to South Africa show the white feather in order to be sure of going home and enjoying their wealth? Notoriously not. Or would you, the cynic, commit one paltry crime in order to save the whole of your miserable salary?" One after another came a torrent of typical cases, till Slackford was protesting that he had been misunderstood, while Bagshot, breathless but triumphing, was declaiming upon the blessed inaccessibility to the money motive of all that really mattered in life. He got himself

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finally to the point of saying that the very importance, *on their own plane*, of the things that money could buy makes the refusal of average decent people to get money at the cost of self-respect a more shining virtue. Slackford found courage to say that a vast number of people had no such scruple, but Bagshot insisted that his "average decent people" were an immense majority.

Since Slackford still muttered, Bagshot took another illustration. "In my Utopia," he said, "I would so order Nature that people, in bequeathing their property, should be able to bequeath also their characters, dispositions, and personal appearance, let us say—to make it easy—at the best time of their lives. I would make it a condition that the legatee should not be allowed to accept the one without at the same time accepting the other, and that, in default of this acceptance, the property should revert to the State." "Now," he said, addressing himself to Slackford, "supposing X."—naming a notorious millionaire—"left you the whole of his millions on condition that you took his cruel chin and snub nose and rascally disposition and predisposition to gout, would you accept them?" "I'm d——d if I would," was the emphatic reply; "which means," pursued Bagshot quietly, "that you would not for all his money change places with him. But let us take a less acute case not involving present company. Would my charming niece Molly, who is sadly impecunious,

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and greatly desires to marry a most deserving but wholly unendowed young officer, take her Aunt Sarah's thousand a year if she had also to assume Sarah's honoured countenance and evangelical disposition? We will take dear Sarah at her best—say, aged thirty. I have a photograph of her over there, and you can judge for yourselves." Swiftly we judged, and declared that Molly would go penniless all her days, scrub floors, sweep crossings, and die at the last in a workhouse rather than take up that forbidding heritage. Bagshot pursued the theme with a wealth of illustration. Was there any painter, poet, musician, or man of letters worth his salt who would exchange his talents for the endowed Philistinism of Mr. T.? The initial concealed an extremely undesirable personality, and Slackford and I exclaimed together that the offer would scarcely tempt even a starving journalist. "Right, of course," said Bagshot; "and now perhaps Slackford begins to see what I am driving at. In my Utopia the State grows enormously rich from repudiated estates, and all social problems are solved without taxing anybody, simply because, when it comes to the point, almost everybody is quite convinced that no money can possibly compensate them for the loss of beauty, health, happiness, good temper, and other things that really count." I have never seen Bagshot happier than when he had wrung the admission of this edifying platitude out of the cynic Slackford. Slackford, in fact, gave it

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up. "It must," he remarked, "be extremely mortifying for the ghosts of those Utopian aunts and uncles to watch the effect of their dispositions, if that is permitted in the place to which they go." "It is, of course, permitted," said Bagshot; "and it makes an excellent beginning of purgatory."

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I find certain observations in the last notebook which, I think, belong to the same time as this conversation:

"Cynicism as often as not is a kind of collective modesty. There are people who think it as immodest to claim virtue for humanity as to claim it for themselves. This is what religious people call the sense of sin.

"To call themselves 'miserable sinners' is with many people a kind of religious good manners, just as a man inscribes himself, 'your humble servant.'

"In the idealist the sense of sin passes into a passion for perfection. Instead of 'I am unworthy,' he says, 'this is unworthy of me.'

"Not a few clever men resemble those plants which so impoverish the soil that no other plants can live near them. Arthur H—— has great talent himself, but he kills talent in others.

"There are a great many people who would do excellently in the world if they could from

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“the beginning be marked *hors concours*. They have a sense of perfection which is blunted and marred by competition.

“The fear of being beaten is the most insidious form of moral cowardice. A great many men will challenge their superiors, but never face their equals. That is to save their pride in case of defeat. For the same reason the first-rate man actually prefers to be handicapped when competing with his inferiors.

“The non-Royal are said to be all one to the King. For the same reason the gifted and the ungifted seem alike to the man of genius. Hence the common complaint of the merely talented that the great choose inferior men for their friends.

“In literature the very good and the very bad may alike be popular, but talent appeals only to the cultivated.

“Many excellent men fail because they confuse the parts of conductor and first fiddle.

“Many minds are like low-grade ores. There is gold in them, but it takes a vast deal of labour to get it out.”

CHAPTER VII

To judge from the note-book before me, Bagshot was in a contemplative mood on the night of 3rd September, 1903. I wonder (he writes) whether other people are oppressed, as I am, by a sense of the things which "happen when we are not there." There are moments when our consciousness is strained to the utmost in the effort to comprehend what we cannot see. To-night there is a full south-west gale, and the wind howls about my windows and chimneys. I think of vast heaving masses of water in mid-Atlantic under the moon—stupendous activities with no eye-witness. Metaphysicians tell me that the thought is meaningless—that there is no form or colour without an eye to see, no noise of wind or wave without an ear to hear. What, then, is there when I am not there? Potentiality, says the metaphysician, a kind of ghost of what might be there, if I were there. No matter; I cannot help thinking of it as related to me, and I try to realize all that is going on everywhere—crashing of ice at the Poles; tropical forests under blazing sun in mid-Africa; beasts of prey and their violent life in the jungle; swarming cities of Orientals in China and India; solitary men on ranch and prairie; crowds in the markets and

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Stock Exchanges; armies of labouring men building, digging, ploughing, mining; Parliaments, churches, theatres, law - courts; endless forms of life and death, at all hours of day and night simultaneously. The brain whirls with it, and for all my struggles I cannot rid myself of the conviction that it is midnight everywhere, and that the whole world sits listening, as I do, to the sound of the wind without.

We talk glibly of "realizing things," but, as a matter of fact, we realize hardly anything. It is an infinitesimal fragment of the whole that is contained in our consciousness. The rest is a confused mist round a point of light, and the effort to enlarge the field of vision throws the whole of it out of focus. It is not the shortness of life that oppresses me so much as this intense limitation of the life of thought. I yearn not to live longer, but to live more—to realize more fully.

In thinking of the Deity, omnipotence is nothing, omniscience everything. The modern conception of the universe substitutes law for power, and forbids us to think of power apart from law. But the omni-consciousness of God is an overwhelming thought to those who realize the intense poverty of the human consciousness.

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"The fool hath his eyes on the ends of the earth." But so has the modern man with the modern newspaper. What subtle effect, I

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wonder, has this daily diffusion of consciousness through cable and telegraph upon the mind of the race? This incessant hitching-on and hitching-off leads to a kind of intellectual short-windedness. The thinking capacity of man remains constant, so far as one can discover, while the demands upon it multiply indefinitely. His mind is daily divided between a hundred imperfect images, none of which can be even approximately realized. Mental culture reverses the process of agriculture, and passes from the intensive to the extensive, going to seed over a wider and wider area, regardless of the fertility or infertility of the soil. Hence the sharp, shallow, inconsecutive modern intelligence, which prefers the article to the book, the paragraph to the article, and, eventually, the headline to the paragraph.

The passion for fact is killing thought in the rising generation. There is a conflict not only between science and religion, but between science and thought. Nothing is so fatal to thought as a little science—the popular science which teaches the “how” and the “what” of things, and never the “why.”

I may, perhaps, add to this a note which Bagshot wrote at a later date, at the end of a scientific book on the origin of life:

“Nearly all the scientific books about the origin of life fail even to state the problem coherently. We do not need to make philo-

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“sophers kings, and still less kings philosophers. The great need for the advancement of knowledge is that the men of science should study philosophy, and the men of philosophy study science. The chasm between the two must be bridged if either are to make progress. The idea fostered by the universities, that philosophy is an accomplishment for the students of ‘humane letters,’ leaves science without a foundation.

“To Bacon, writing for his time, it seemed a fundamental necessity to bring the world back from the fantastic speculations of school men and alchemists to the solid region of fact. For us, on the contrary, the chief necessity is to make the thought equal to the fact. Though Bacon condemned it, I can never read without a thrill his description of the ‘*inveniendi modum simplicem et inartificiosum qui hominibus maxime est familiaris*’—the simple and unartificial method of inquiry which is most familiar to mankind. ‘*Hic autem non alius est, quam ut is, qui se ad inveniendum aliquid comparat et accingit, primo quae ab aliis circa illa dicta sint inquirat et evolvat; deinde propriam meditationem addat, atque per mentis multam agitationem spiritum suum proprium sollicitet et quasi invocet ut sibi oracula pandat.*’¹ This image of man ‘invok-

¹ Bacon, “*Novum Organum*,” lib. i. 82. This is the method whereby, when a man applies himself and braces his faculties to an investigation of anything, he first asks and

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“ing his own spirit to open its oracles to him ’ is surely one of the most beautiful in all literature, and I know of no words which express so much of the toil and turmoil of the thinking mind. The excessively external life which we lead in these times leaves us without leisure to invoke the inner oracle.”

Let me pass from this to some more of the observations about persons which are so plentifully scattered throughout the note-books:

“Some persons have the good fortune to combine dissimilar virtues, but still more have the misfortune to possess defects which, one would suppose, could not exist together.

“S., for instance, is both dull and violent, and the conversation of Y. is at once boring and improper.

“William (a cousin of his) has a genius for the indirect. The front door may be wide open, but he will fetch a ladder and force an entrance by the first-floor window even though he has to cut out the glass in doing it.”

Another entry, a year later, about the same man may be compared with this:

“William is in chronic rebellion against other people’s experience. He is like one of ascertains what has been said about the subject by others; then adds his own meditation, and with much mental turmoil appeals to his own spirit and invokes it to open its oracles to him.”

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“those climbers who will go up a mountain the wrong way, simply because other people have gone up the right way before him.”

“B.’s distrust of logic leads him not to refrain from syllogizing, which would be rational, but to put a negative into the conclusion—which is absurd.

“Denys has a nature warmed from within on which the snow will not lie.

“Lewis’s life is an incessant tobogganing, which means that he spends two-thirds of his time in getting his bob-sled up-hill.

“S. has the misfortune to be out of scale with his surroundings. He has too much talent for the circle in which he moves and not enough to be at home in the circle of the really talented. M., again, is always shocking the pious people with whom she lives, but is ineffably shocked when she finds herself in the company of the real worldlings.

“H. asked Dr. F. what would reduce his corpulence. ‘Three months’ hard worry,’ was the reply. H. is conscientiously seeking a subject to worry about, but has completely failed thus far. A course of H., however, is extremely thinning to his friends.”

After a series of these observations Bagshot seems to have been struck with remorse, for he adds a “platitude usually forgotten”:

“The most difficult thing in the world to

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“realize is that other people talk about us with exactly the same freedom that we talk about them. We are so encased in self-flattery that there is scarcely one of us who is not genuinely surprised and indignant if accidentally on one occasion we discover this to be true. Let us assure ourselves that this is *habitually* our fate at the hands of our best friends, and, before we take offence, let us ask ourselves whether they have not exactly the same ground of offence against us.

“The idea that you must say nothing behind a man’s back which you would not say to his face is absurd. A great many things which are quite inoffensive when said behind one’s back would be grossly impertinent if said to one’s face. I am quite entitled to say to my friends that I don’t admire Mrs. Hawksbee’s type of beauty, but I should be grossly impertinent if I said it to her face. If I am a journalist I may without offence write things about Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman which I could not without gross rudeness say in their presence. Our friends are to us, and we are to our friends, what the newspapers are to the public man. Society would be indescribably artificial and insipid without the liberty of fair comment on matters of personal importance. Let us cheerfully yield ourselves as a topic of conversation to our friends, if they are kind enough to think us interesting; but let us have no mercy on the mischief-makers

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“ who turn the innocent into the malicious by the act of repeating it.”

Bagshot's sister insisted on taking him to a ball one night in 1894, when his niece Molly came out. According to an entry in his diary, he was not in bed till four the next morning. I am sure he made himself very agreeable, but he celebrates the occasion with this comment:

“ ‘ The gods,’ says Hesiod, ‘ have bestowed fortitude on some men, and on others a disposition for dancing.’ I was sorely in need of both qualities last night.”

CHAPTER VIII

I HAVE been reading (writes Bagshot in his diary of 10th March, 1906) several books and articles this week on man's place in the universe. One—a book on astronomy—suggests that the meanest pebble on the seashore may be a whole universe in itself, with a multitude of planetary systems in its interior, all whirling about their solar centres and reproducing the pageant of night and morning and summer and winter on millions of atom-planets, divided from each other and their suns and other stars by spaces relatively as great as those which divide the heavenly bodies in our universe. All this the writer deduces from the supposition that matter is “discrete” and subject to radio-activity. And then he goes on to suggest that there may be an Intelligence to which our universe is but a pebble on the shore of the infinite and our globe but one among a million million atoms whirling round their radio-active centres within the pebble. This is a humbling thought, and it reduces us from our comparatively respectable place as inhabitants of one of the meaner planets to that of inconceivably microscopic parasites on the surface of an atom.

From this I turned to an article by Dr. A. R. Wallace in the “Fortnightly Review,” and I

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learnt that the universe is one and limited, that our solar system is the centre of it, that our earth holds the primacy of the solar system, that alone of all stars and planets it is inhabited, and that man holding the lordship of its inhabitants is, therefore, the crown and climax of creation.

These, apparently, are the two voices of science about man at this moment. Which of them am I to choose?

In my perplexity I turn to a metaphysician, and he tells me that whether I am the parasite on the atom, or the crown and centre of the universe, is, from his point of view, not of the slightest importance, and that both the astronomer and Dr. Wallace are fussing themselves about nothing. Mind, says the metaphysician, is the only reality, and mind is not to be weighed in any of these material scales. So far as I partake of mind, I create the universe and possess it, which is much better than being a microscopic atom, as on any other supposition I must be, whether at the centre, the circumference, or drifting about in between. This puffs me up, and I feel like Heine when he fed on the fixed stars and drank up the milky way.

After this course of reading I went last Sunday to church and sat under an eminent preacher, who took all these hypotheses and hurled them at me one after another, without, apparently, the slightest sense of their incongruity. I was a speck in infinity, a worm and no man, a miserable sinner, yet the centre of creation, the constant object of Divine solitudē, the being for whose

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salvation everything was ordained before the foundations of the world were laid. The preacher was apparently as convinced that the earth was the Lord's chosen planet as the Jews were that Palestine was His chosen country, and to that extent he agreed with Dr. Wallace; but he would grant me no pride in my position on the elect world, but insisted repeatedly on my unworthiness to occupy this place, and the pain and sorrow which I caused to a Creator who, he seemed to say, had been grievously disappointed by the result of His own act in placing me there. So though I held my central position I had no right to it, and for some inscrutable reason had been promoted to a place in nature for which I was equally unsuited and unworthy.

The curious thing is that I seriously believe all these things in turn. I feel myself of no importance and of all importance, an outcast and an angel, the master of circumstances and the sport of circumstances, the most perishable of things and the most enduring of things—each of these things in turn, on different days of the week, and different hours of the same day. There are days when, so far from lacking faith, all the terrestrial faiths put together seem to make too little demand on my capacity for believing, and there are days when I seem to be equally without past or future or anchorage to the present.

I have questioned all sorts of religious people and I gather that their emotions are essentially

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the same as mine, though they use phrases about them which do not come easily to my lips. And this is good for them and for me. Any religion would be a calamity which quenched this sense of the great human adventure in the unknown. There is no certainty which could be other than dull, hard, and materialistic, compared with the infinite hopes and possibilities of this spiritual quest. "Ὁ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ, and I will not for any theory, theological or scientific, resign my rights in the inquiry.

Let me pass from this philosophizing to some of Bagshot's lighter comments on life in general. Here is a note about snobbery:

"Snobbery is imperfectly defined as 'meanly admiring mean things.' It is just as often a quite respectable form of egoism—a desire to show in what esteem you are held by people of esteem. The disappointed and those who are insecure of their position are quite as prone to it as the vulgar.

"It is no sin to cultivate the society of your betters. The important thing is whom you consider to be your betters.

"Boastfulness, like snobbery, is a vice of the unsuccessful. The boaster speaks for himself because he cannot trust other people to speak for him."

Let me give next an observation about diplo-

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macy which I have often heard from his own lips:

“A diplomatist should never seek to be thought diplomatic. Here, if anywhere, *ars est celare artem*. A really discreet man avoids the appearance of discretion.

“To speak freely what you may speak and to be silent about what you may not speak is the way to be trusted. A fool blabs the forbidden, and makes a mystery of the permissible.”

Here is another note on a kindred subject, which may properly be given here:

“In proportion as society has gained freedom of speech in law and theory, it has curtailed its freedom in life and practice. We greatly need some modern substitute for the fool at the Court or the slave in the chariot—privileged truth-tellers, who will say to the great what, with all our liberty of speech, none of us dare say, for fear of shocking propriety or encountering the law of libel. A public scavenger, enjoying immunity from prosecution, would serve a purpose in the modern world.”

In the year 1884 one of his relatives asked Bagshot to be godfather to her child. There followed quite a long and acrimonious corre-

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spondence about the child's name, which he so much disliked that he actually would not appear at the church, and the ceremony had to go forward with a proxy in his place. This entry—about the same date—must, I think, refer to that incident:

“Silly name makes silly child. Parents should consider the effect which a foolish name will have upon the child's character and other people's opinion about the child. Every child should have the right of changing its name when it comes to years of discretion. Many children, I fancy, would exercise this right.”

Dreams are generally rather a bore, but an entry of Bagshot's, on 20th March, 1903, is, I think, sufficiently out of the common to justify me in reproducing it here:

“There must, I think (he writes), be some mocking spirit imprisoned in all of us which escapes in our dreams and rejoices to place us in ridiculous and humiliating positions. How else explain the extraordinary puckishness of many of our dreams? There is one dream which has visited me twice or three times, and which is to me what the no-clothes dream is to other people. I find myself standing on the platform of a large lecture-hall, something like the Royal Institution, with a distinguished company to support me on the platform, and a

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“crowded audience of the most intellectual in front of me. Then I become conscious that all these people are awaiting a lecture from me on a Spanish poet of the eighteenth century. I have no manuscript and no notes; I have made no preparation; and I know nothing about the poet—not even his name. There is breathless silence, and I am expected to begin. I strain my eyes to the far end of the hall, where hangs a bill announcing the subject of my lecture, and with a tremendous effort I just manage to read the name of the poet. The situation is horrible; for though I have read the name I don’t know how to pronounce it, and I have never before heard of the man. My tongue sticks to my throat, and I break out into a clammy perspiration, but the audience beams and looks expectant.

“And then a sad and deeply disgraceful thing happens. How do I act? I should like my friends to answer the question by saying, ‘Of course he made a clean breast of it, and begged pardon of the audience and swallowed the mortification like a man.’ The unhappy truth—or at least the dream-truth—is that I suddenly recovered my composure, and, casting shame and scruple to the winds, proceeded to invent the poet from his cradle onwards. I gave him a birthplace, supplied him with anecdotes and incidents for his childhood and youth, enlarged upon his style and themes—all the time refreshing my memory

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“about his name by furtive glances at the poster at the back of the hall—and finally brought the thing to a climax by reciting my own translations of his imaginary poems, and brought the house down with such applause that I woke up with a start. Then, for ten minutes, I lay panting with the effort, but secretly consoling myself that the mocking spirit had turned the joke against the audience. On calm reflection, however, I am wondering whether the incident does not reveal something dark and unscrupulous in my sub-conscious self, which will one day come to the surface and involve me in a scandal. Is it a common experience, I wonder, with others as with me, to lose all moral sense in their dreams? If so, what does it mean?”

CHAPTER IX

BAGSHOT, like all bachelors, loved to moralize about women, and, on the principle that the outsider sees most of the game, he claimed that the unmarried have the best right to be heard on this subject. His observations, however, though numerous, are, as usual, scattered and inconsecutive; and if I attempt to gather them up into one chapter, I must put in the reminder that they were not so written, and that Bagshot himself would have been the last to claim that they were a new or methodical treatment of this ancient theme. .

“ In no respect (he writes in March, 1890) has man taken greater advantage of his position than in labelling as feminine a large number of the less attractive weaknesses which are common to humanity and both sexes. In apportioning these weaknesses man selects for himself what he imagines to be the defects of his qualities and gives the rest to women.

“ I like this stanza of Lafontaine:

“ ‘ Rien ne pèse tant qu’un secret:
Le porter loin est difficile aux dames;
Et je sais même sur ce fait
Bon nombre d’hommes qui sont femmes.’

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“The sexes are much more alike in fundamentals than is generally acknowledged, and when we say that this or that quality is feminine we have always to add that there are *bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes*.

“The great advantage which women have in the world is that most women understand men a vast deal better than any man understands women. Since knowledge is power, woman has a control over man which man never has over her. To man she is always, in the last resort, untamable and unintelligible, whereas to her man is a simple, if massive, creature; and his subtleties, when occasionally he is subtle, are much more intelligible to her than to other men. There is no complexity of the male character which the woman does not understand, and there is scarcely any complication of the feminine character which the man can really unravel. This accounts for the good humour with which the vast majority of women accept the crude mechanical power which man exercises by his laws and political devices.

“But, unfortunately for both parties, there are women with men's minds and men with women's minds, and you never can tell from the appearance of either when this inner discord is at work. I have known delicate fair feminine women with a masculine mind within, and I have known robust brawny masculine men with the mind of a woman

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"within. The woman with the man's mind must be perpetually in revolt, whereas the man with the woman's mind enjoys the privileges of both sexes. The first finds the woman's place an odious subserviency from which there is no escape; the second has the advantage of the male ascendancy, and, if he does not choose to use it, he may flatter himself that he is exercising a merciful forbearance.

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"There is an Italian proverb which says that woman is to money as the sun is to ice. According to my observation, a woman is more naturally disposed to thrift than a man, whenever she is answerable to others for her expenditure. Women who are reckless in spending their own money are scrupulously frugal in spending their husband's money. Give a woman the sense of responsibility, and she is more conscientious than any man.

"A woman will spend half the morning in saving fourpence on her household bills and then make up time by taking a half-crown cab to keep an appointment. Whereat the man laughs consumedly.

"This, however, is exactly what man does himself.

"The man who worries an office to save a pound in business will spend ten pounds without a thought on a dinner at the Savoy. Business is business; says the man; the weekly

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"bills are the weekly bills, says the woman. It is the same habit in both. I know a woman who telegraphed to her husband to buy three-pennyworth of cream on his way home from business to save her books from exceeding £6 a week. *He* paid for the cream and the telegram. It was an admirable instinct on her part. Similarly, I have known a Government Department spend £5 of another Department's money to save twopence of its own.

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"Woman's morality (writes Bagshot a few months later) is not inferior or superior to man's morality so much as different from it. Women are much more truthful than men when they are convinced of the importance of truth, just as they are much more uncompromising than men when they are convinced of the importance of an ideal. When they are not convinced they have little or none of the everyday morality which carries men through the ordinary affairs of life, though they may conform to it from fear of the consequences.

"Nearly all white lies are the inventions of women, and nearly all great falsities the inventions of men. Men say that women have no sense of honour, which is true in the sense that they do not conceive themselves as bound by obligations to those who are not in intimate relations with them. With them loyalty to persons always takes precedence of loyalty to

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“institutions or to the public interest. A woman is hardly ever convinced if you tell her that the public interest prevents you from perpetrating a job for the benefit of her husband or son. She is sure that you nourish a secret spite against them.

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“A woman’s conclusions are often the same as a man’s conclusions, but her reasons are nearly always different from a man’s reasons; hence the extreme difficulty of arguments between women and men. A woman is not content that you should agree with her conclusions; she requires your assent to her reasons as well.

“The demand of women for political influence is difficult to concede, not because women are unfit for political influence, nor because they are inferior to men; but because the mind of man and the mind of woman run on parallel lines which cannot be made to meet. All good politics presume a unity in difference among those who are entrusted with power.

“In my Utopia there is a man’s legislature and a woman’s legislature, and there are many important branches of legislation in which the man’s legislature is obliged to defer to the woman’s. This is found to work excellently.

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“All the world is agreed about a pretty

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“face, but there is always a minority against a beautiful face.

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“ Women are indefatigable in their analysis of conduct. A man accepts a white ray of light for what it is; a woman passes it through a prism and resolves it into its component rays. If I pass Mrs. A. in the street without saluting her, she conjectures a dozen painful motives to account for my absent-mindedness. If she passes me, I conclude that she is short-sighted or absent-minded.

“ Women see through a brick wall to what isn't on the other side. Nothing causes them so much misery as their habit of supplying complicated explanations and invidious motives to simple and innocent proceedings. I never meet my sister Alice but what she tells me that some friend of hers was inexplicably cold to her when they last met, and before I can tell her that she was probably mistaken about this, her ‘unerring instinct,’ as she calls it, has woven together a dozen meaningless trifles into a consecutive and plausible but highly improbable story of her friend's motives and intentions.

“ A good and loyal woman will resent a slight upon her husband long after he had forgotten and forgiven it. I am very good friends with S., whom I once thought it necessary to criticise in an official report; but his

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“wife will never again ask me to her house, and she thinks that her husband has shown a mean and compromising spirit in forgiving me so easily.

“The maxim of Pericles that you should treat your enemies as though they might again become your friends seems mean and craven to most women. *Never enlist a woman's sympathy with you in a quarrel with another person unless you are quite sure that you will never make it up*, for, if you do, you will fall heavily in her esteem.

“When their feelings are really engaged, women are much less worldly-minded than men. Opportunism and compromise on the things that they really care about are unpardonable offences in their eyes. Most of the great sacrifices for principle are inspired by women.

“If I say to my niece Molly that two and two make four she consents, but is unconvinced. But if I show her this little formula:

$$1\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} + 1\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = 4,$$

she is at once all alive with interest, and sits down to work it out, and proclaims in triumph that it is so. From a hard and dull statement of fact it has become a problem and an intrigue, and here she is in her element.

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“That is the way of womenkind in all relations of life.

“The obvious bores them and at the bottom of their hearts they do not believe in it, though a long habit of conforming to male conventions requires them to consent for the avoidance of friction. Nearly all women are convinced in their hearts that things are other than they seem.

“It is this sense of a secret lurking in the commonplace which renders them more liable than men to superstition.

“Reason covers probably two-thirds of life. Most men imagine that it covers the whole of life; most women are convinced that it covers less than half of life. Women’s mistrust of male logic is quite as well founded as men’s mistrust of women’s intuitions.

“Genius arises when the imagination of the woman is added to the intellect of the man. The *man* of genius is supreme over woman in the feminine qualities.

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“Talking to Lady C. the other night I quoted Kant’s injunction to ‘act so that your action may be universal.’ She replied at once that the philosopher was a fool. Was there any woman, she wanted to know, who would not be insulted if a man behaved to her in ‘a universal manner’?

“Women hate rules and love exceptions.

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“There is no woman who does not believe herself an exception to a rule. Most men know that they are not, and wish that they were.”

There is much more in the same vein scattered up and down Bagshot's many note-books, but I have given enough to show his general state of mind—a state of mind which, as the reader will see, varied according to his moods, and may easily be convicted of inconsistency. Let me add just one note, written when he was thirty years of age, which shows a sad lucidity of soul:

“One marries a girl and lives with a woman. I think I know something about girls, but I am sure I know nothing about women.”

• Bagshot never married.

CHAPTER X

THIS is a chapter of random observations, gathered from three note-books, dated 1895, 1900, and 1903 respectively. The subjects are conduct, religion, and things in general. Here, to begin with, is a characteristic reflection on the life of the bee:

“It is curious that in moralizing about the bee, Maeterlinck should have omitted one feature which lends itself above all others to a parable. The bee builds her cell and gathers honey to fill it, but, all unconsciously, she is the agent of another service, bearing the pollen from flower to flower. So we, while we go about our own business, are unconsciously the ministers of others, fertilizing them if we are fortunate, blighting them if we are not. And this service of ours is effectual and happy, precisely in proportion as we are unconscious of it. Virtue goes out of it when we become philanthropists, and carry the pollen with the air of benefactors.”

A page or two later comes this thought, suggested by a flower:

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“ Whence does the flower draw its scent? I have had a narcissus bulb growing in a pot in my room. I have watched it send up its shoot and come into bud, and yet not till the moment when the bud opens and it breaks into flower have I ever discovered the faintest trace of the coming scent. Then in a second it comes from nowhere, and fills my room with its fragrance. A human being will suddenly perform this miracle for us like a flower.”

As a note to this Bagshot has added a quotation from Thoreau: “ I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. I want the flower and fruit of a man that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me and some ripeness flavour our intercourse.”

- I have often heard Bagshot say that the combination of thrift and laziness produced the most useless kind of man. Here is the same thought expressed the other way round:

“ Just as it is necessary to create wants in the savage man before he can be induced to work regularly, so it is a necessity for many civilized men to live habitually beyond their incomes as a condition of using their powers. I constantly hear his relations lamenting R.'s extravagance; but for my part I rejoice at it, since R., with all his gifts, is precisely the kind of man who would be lazy if not extravagant.

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“ ‘ Lazy and extravagant ’ are two epithets commonly combined, but when a poor man is extravagant he is generally also industrious.

“ The principle of the counter-irritant is universal in life (he writes in November, 1900); and it is the function of the minor anxieties to cure the greater. Hence it is that our lots are more equal than they seem. He who has most fears most, and the chief human malady is fear.”

A few pages later he writes:

“ He who need not worry about his wealth will most certainly worry about his health. Cast out the fear of poverty and you let in the fear of death.”

Now and again his customary optimism seems to have deserted him. Thus I read on 1st December, 1900:

“ The Greeks named the hemlock *εὐφορβία*, the good food. So we speak of ‘ death the healer,’ ‘ death the comforter,’ ‘ death the good angel,’ in a pathetic effort to propitiate the power we dread. Our attitude towards pain and death is a constant euphemism—a kind of whistling in the dark.”

That leads him on to sundry observations about the attitude of religious people towards

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pain, death, and evil. They are rather disjointed, but I put them together as they are written:

“ Religion would gain greatly if the clergy would make a more sparing use of the blessing-in-disguise argument. No one really believes that pain, privation, and bereavement are other than evil things. Not to believe this is to take the mainspring out of human action. It is rational to say that character may win good out of evil, but only a colossal egoist will be persuaded that the death or suffering of another is a dispensation of Providence for the welfare of his soul.

“ The problem of evil is not in the least helped by saying that good and evil are correlative terms, that evil is ‘ less good,’ or that the idea of good is impossible without the idea of evil. That merely restates the question in a more perplexing form. Why should existence be so conditioned that good is impossible or unthinkable without evil?

“ The moral currency is debased by the Puritanism which calls good things evil, as well as by the cynicism which calls evil things good. The child who is brought up to believe that the theatre is sinful will end by believing that debauchery is venial.

“ If the modern world abandons the religious idea of sin it will have to recover the Greek idea of virtue as a fine art. It is a pity that the two cannot be combined. The next nation

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“which leads mankind to a higher level of conduct will be one which adds conscience to instinctive good taste.

“The misfortune, meanwhile, is that the nations which excel in manners pay for it by disparaging morals.

“In China lack of patriotism and corruption in government go hand in hand with the highest standard of honesty in private transactions. In Japan the highest standard of patriotism and public honour is maintained by individuals who are untrustworthy in private business. If the Chinese could learn the public virtues of the Japanese, and the Japanese the private virtues of the Chinese, the Yellow races would be irresistible.”

Here is a hard saying, which Bagshot has underlined as if trying to impress it on himself:

“The just man bears most easily what he knows to be his own fault.”

These, again, are characteristic:

“At what period of the world’s history should one wish to live? Young ladies reply the age of Elizabeth or the age of Pericles. I rather think we have lived a thousand years too soon.

“Moderation, coolness, caution, are quite

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"compatible with a highly nervous temperament. Some well-balanced minds are like 'sleeping tops,' which keep their equilibrium by being perpetually in motion.

"It is as important for a country to have great unrepresentative men as to have great representative men. Socrates, St. Francis, Dante, Wiclif, Giordano Bruno, Newman, were all unrepresentative men. The Founder of Christianity was, humanly speaking, the supreme unrepresentative man.

"It is only the landlubber who makes a boast of the fact that he is never sick at sea. The *homo sanus ought* to be sick at sea if he is accustomed to live on dry land.

"Despotic governments need not be afraid of education. In so far as they educate their subjects, they undermine their power of physical resistance; and, though agitation is increased, the chance of rebellion is diminished. What a despot has to fear is a few intellectuals let loose among a fighting people.

" 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound.' It is true courage to come out of hospital and to go back into battle."

CHAPTER XI

BAGSHOT appears to have visited Monte Carlo in the winter of the year 1902, and I find sundry observations in his note-books which may be traced to this visit. "Gambling and superstition," he writes, "go hand in hand, and both result from the inexpugnable human instinct to escape from the rational. In this place everything that is absurd is greedily believed. You acquire luck by touching a dwarf, by picking up a pin, by wearing charms, by not seeing the moon through glass, by seeing two magpies or three parrots. You are in a world where two and two have ceased to make four and may make a hundred or nothing. That is obviously the charm of it to men and women in revolt against the horrid routine of cause and effect. There is F. — temperate, frugal, business-like, and sternly rational for fifty weeks in the year, yet for the remaining fortnight recklessly staking forty-pound notes on the spin of the roulette ball or the fall of the cards! It is his reaction against the deadly sanity of Lombard Street. All men are said to crave a nerve poison—alcohol, tobacco, or drugs—and nearly all men seem at one time or another to need a brain-

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poison—some narcotic of the reasoning faculty—which it is the function of this place to supply.

“But then the reasoning faculty has a habit of reasserting itself while the narcotic is at work. If the gambler would only accept this irrational world on its own terms, little harm would come to him. But he must proceed to supply it with a logic which belongs to the sane world, and herein lies his disaster. -F., who is in all other respects a rational man, seriously believes while he is in this place that one spin of the roulette ball influences another spin of the roulette ball, and one deal of the cards another deal of the cards. Both beliefs are manifestly absurd, and if he applied them to his banking business he would be ruined in a fortnight. Yet on these absurdities he builds what he calls a ‘system,’ and ‘invests’ a thousand pounds. It is the nature of the place to be system-proof. You cannot have a system of the unsystematic. Yet its supreme cunning lies in its constant invitation to you to apply reason to its absurdities, and in proportion as it succeeds it increases your losses and its own gains.

“The gambler is vain and inordinately sanguine. If he wins, it is his own cleverness; if he loses, it is his ‘accursed luck.’ What he wins he spends, regardless of what he lost yesterday or what he may lose to-morrow. Above all things, never give moral advice to a gambler, for it is part of the perversity of this place that it will instantly rise up and defeat your best maxims. You tell him to come away; he defies you and stays, and

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at the next *coup* wins heavily. Or he comes away and misses a *coup* that would have brought him fortune, and bears you an eternal grudge. There is no point in the game at which you can say that prudence will be rewarded or recklessness punished. Moralize, if you will, about gambling in general; but never stake your moral maxims on a particular *coup* (a good rule for life in general)."

The last entry in this note-book will be understood by philosophers who have been to Monte Carlo:

"The lights of the Casino shut out the stars."

Let me pass to a few more of Bagshot's sayings on politics and public affairs. The root difficulty of politics was, in his view, to keep thought on a high plane, while submitting to the limitations in action which are a necessary condition of public life. What a politician dared do for forty millions of people must often be the second-best, but his thought, which was his own, should always be best. However, let Bagshot speak for himself:

"The suspicion of insincerity which clings to politics arises largely from the fact that politicians will not make confession of the conditions under which they work, and which, if openly confessed, are no shame to them. A politician need never apologize for opportunism in action, but he should always be ashamed of compromise in thought."

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“ Politics progress most where men are moderate in their action and uncompromising in their ideals.

“ Thought which is individual should never be dragged down to the level of action, which is collective.

“ Where there are no extreme parties the average of opinion will be low.

“ The merit of the English two-party system is that it simplifies politics by squeezing a great variety of opinions into the same moulds; its weakness, that it tends to impose on thought the discipline which is necessary for action.

“ Freedom of thought means division of opinion. A party which is not divided in Opposition will seldom have ideas on which it is worth while to unite when in power.

“ It is often necessary to tolerate evil in public affairs, but it is always disastrous to pretend that it is good.

“ The extremist who refuses an instalment for fear it may prejudice his demand for the whole betrays a rooted mistrust of his own cause.

“ The worst spectacle in politics is that of everybody doing what everybody disapproves, in the hope of pleasing somebody else who doesn't exist. This fictitious being is commonly called ‘the man in the street.’

“ All the world is constantly engaged in doing homage to imaginary fools.

“ Civilization is in its infancy. Its entire history is comprised within 10,000 years.

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“Astronomers tell us that the world will probably be habitable for at least fifteen million years. If so, man has not yet run the 1500th part of his career.”

Next come a few notes on International affairs:

“If you hear a man described as anti-German, you may be certain, in nine cases out of ten, that three years ago he was anti-French. The fundamental thing is the anti-temperament. It is a pure accident what nation may at any given moment become the subject of a patriotic antipathy.

“The truth is that every active nation needs a pace-maker, and when there is no rival at hand to fill the part, it instantly invents one. France, Russia, Germany, and the United States have each successively fulfilled this purpose to Great Britain in the last twelve years, and Great Britain herself regularly discharges the same duty to other nations. The function of the ‘anti’s’ is to discover the pace-maker. It is, therefore, idle to expect a state of international relations in which every nation will be on equally good terms with every other.

“If there were no international rivalries it would be necessary to invent them, and the collective intelligence which constitutes national feeling will not for many generations to come

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“reach the point at which the rival is distinguished from the enemy. That is still an exceptional effort of the individual mind.

“The great difficulty of international relations is that they are still on the plane of natural selection and subject to the play of forces which are quite unmoral; whereas internal politics are (dimly) informed by morality. Marr, however, is so invincibly moral in his reasoning processes that he is constantly under the necessity of explaining his instinctive combativeness by motives, reasons, causes, pretexts, which are quite irrelevant to it. Hence the inevitable deceitfulness of diplomacy, which is for ever engaged in concealing the barbarian under a frock coat.

“Hypocrisy is imperfectly defined as the homage which vice pays to virtue. It is also the prediction of a morality to come. Man rises to the height of his own hypocrisies. International morality will some day be what diplomacy pretends it to be.

“In so far as the Liberal is justly suspected of indifference or hostility to Empire, it is because he is always trying to apply the moral law to the physical world. That is his special function, but it is often premature.

“A government is always in a sad plight with a war to which it has reluctantly consented. By a confusion of thought it carries its reluctance on into the conduct of military operations, and compounds with its conscience by sparing

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“the enemy. This is absurd. There is no middle course between keeping the peace and making war with all your might. History abounds in instances of the disasters which follow from neglecting this elementary rule.”

Here are a few observations taken at random from a diary for 1901:

“A disagreeable disposition is, in certain circumstances, a high testimonial of ability. My friend C., for instance, is of so disagreeable a disposition that no one can possibly have desired to retain his services, unless they were indispensable. I know nothing about him in his official capacity, but the unanimous aversion to him in all other capacities is proof positive that he is a most competent man.

“There is an almost pathetically charitable inclination to assume that physical deficiencies must be compensated for by moral excellences. A plain woman starts with a presumption in favour of her goodness, which a beautiful woman will scarcely acquire by years of good conduct. The worst of it is that the presumption is mostly groundless.

“The same idea applies more or less to intellectual qualities. ‘Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever.’ Herein Kingsley expresses the fundamental British idea that there is a hidden opposition between goodness and cleverness. Next to that of being a

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“humorist, there is no reputation which a British public man had better avoid more carefully than that of being clever. There is room for genius and for solid worth, but the path of talent is a razor’s edge.

“ I heard a certain man described the other day as ‘one who had never used a bad argument in a good cause.’ I don’t know this man, but I hate him. *Tanto buon che val niente.*”

CHAPTER XII

LET me put together in this chapter a few of Bagshot's reflections on social classes and social inequalities. Under date 10th January, 1886, I find a closely written note in his smallest handwriting on the fly-leaf of an American book entitled, "What Social Classes Owe to Each Other."

"It is, of course, quite true (he writes) that men are not born equal, but they are not born unequal in the manner which those who remind us of the fact appear generally to assume. Natural inequalities form no basis for class distinctions as they are at present, though in an ideal society they might very well form the basis of a kind of life-peerage hierarchy. As things are, the established families are constantly engaged in protecting their unfit members from the competition of the fitter in other classes, with the inevitable result that the sum-total of their capacity declines. If natural endowments are the test, the advantage tends more and more to be with the middle and artisan class. That fact would quickly be revealed if we really had the educational

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“ladder from the elementary schools to the Universities. It is not in-marrying so much as the artificial protection of inferior types which threatens an aristocracy in modern times.

“ It is probably a dim instinct of what is for its own good that makes an aristocracy warlike, even in modern times. The aristocracy of feudal times was exposed to a rigorous process of natural selection on the battlefield, which kept it physically vigorous and mentally self-respecting. The aristocracy in these days has found no *rôle* in peace to take the place of the part which it formerly took in war. When it ceased to be a fighting class it was doomed as a governing class, and when it ceases to be a governing class it becomes plutocracy with a past. If the world is ever driven to Socialism, it will not be from any predatory instinct, but from sheer inability to discover the *rôle* of the rich in the modern economy.”

A few years later I find a series of short comments on the same theme:

“ I hear people constantly deploring the fertility of the poor, and the comparative infertility of the well-to-do. They assume that Society is being replenished from the ‘worst stock.’ Is there any foundation for this belief? The so-called ‘ worst stock ’ provides admirable settlers for new countries. House them well,

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“ feed them well, educate them well, and they yield the same proportion of intelligent and influential characters. The ideal marriage is that of intellect and character, of culture and simplicity, and in my Utopia the Athenian would wed the Bœotian. The world would gain greatly by this intermarriage of the intellectual and the working classes. *A mésalliance is biologically good.*

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“ Clear your mind of the superficial symptoms—dropping of aspirates, wearing of corduroy or broadcloth—and you will see an astonishing resemblance in the types of men. My gardener is an Academic man who never went to College; my secretary an agricultural labourer with a University education. My nephews (two notable athletes) are natural backwoodsmen with a thwarted instinct for physical toil which finds its vent in rowing and Rugby football. The great majority in all classes are by nature manual labourers, and the upper-class labourer is in chronic revolt against the circumstances which compel him to affect an interest in things intellectual.

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“ I went yesterday through the men’s wards of a great London hospital. Illness searches out and discriminates the types. Pass down this ward where thirty men lie in bed, shoulders

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“and heads above the counterpane, showing features sharpened and refined by the wasting of sickness. They strike on you as abstractions of character, purged of dross and accident, ‘all that they might have been, all that they could not be,’ the thwarted heart and core of them. There to the right of me, with splendid brow and profile and dreamy blue eyes, lies the spéculative man, poet, philosopher, higher mathematician, mystic—take your choice—all these potentially, and fine gentleman above all, with such mild dignity of patience and courage in his clear glance that he is surely saint as well. I ask the nurse for his name and calling, and the answer comes short and sharp, ‘Smith, stevedore, of Bermondsey, recovering from operation for cancer.’ Two beds down lies Raphael’s Pope Julius, beetle-browed, sunk-eyed, full-bearded, holding his head at precisely the characteristic angle, and with just the authoritative Pontifical air (Collins, grain-porter, East India Dock); and opposite him again a manifest Cardinal of the same period, full-jowled, square-chinned, worldly, ecclesiastical (Webb, potman, Rotherhithe). Next bed but two a distinguished man of the world, slightly cynical, and *rusé*, but with the perfect self-possession that comes of long mingling with good society (Sothorn, bookstall-clerk, District Railway); then an unmistakable prize-fighter, square-jawed, heavy-chested, with enormously developed

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“muscles (Wilson, solicitor’s copyist); and next to him an oppressively intellectual man, whose heavy forehead squeezes down on nose, mouth, and chin, and threatens to extinguish them (Rawson, casual labourer). There at length is a carpenter true to himself, but next to him again an unmistakable King’s Counsel, who turns out to be a shop-walker; and in the last bed of all an inglorious Milton—shrivelled and reduced, but Milton still—who proves to be a picker-up of waste-paper. Here among a score of the poor and very poor were all the physical types which till now I had supposed to be the special marks of the refined and well-to-do and intellectually distinguished.”

Following on this line of thought are sundry observations about education.

“We sadly need a word (says Bagshot) which shall express the opposite of the word ‘education,’ a word to denote that turning-in of the mind upon itself, closing of doors upon speculation, hardening of mental tissues, which is the special vice of the so-called educated. The cases in which learning kills culture and science extinguishes philosophy are around us everywhere. There is also a kind of education which expels nature and leaves a vacuum.”

Three notes in the same vein may be inserted here:

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“Second-rate minds are apt to be confirmed in their inferiority by education. This is why a liberal education so often results in illiberal opinions.

“The best mind feeds all day, like the flower, from sun and air. The inferior mind needs constant meals to keep it going.

“A large number of scholars are men of science gone astray, and many editions of classical authors are but chemical analyses of their component parts, from which the element of literature is excluded. It is for this reason, among others, that a classical education so often fails to impart a literary sense.”

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At the close of a German book on Education, which is heavily interlined with notes of dissent, I find a very singular outburst on Bagshot's part:

“My heart (he writes) goes out to the unhappy German youths who have fallen under the yoke of this horrible pedant. It enrages me to think of him and a hundred like him let loose on a country to turn its schools and universities into gigantic tool-factories for the making of human implements. To-morrow I will start for Germany and tell this man to his face that education has no purpose but to make men philosophers. He will not understand my meaning, and he will laugh in my face, but

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“happily there are some people in Germany who do understand, and by-and-by they will rise up and slay these pedants and save their country.”

Side by side with this I may place these stray notes from a diary of the same year:

“There is no literature without speculation. When a subject can be exhausted it has ceased to be literature and become material for a Blue-Book.

“If science enlarges the bounds of knowledge, it also enormously expands our conception of the unknown. The modern positive and scientific world has a sense of mystery which was altogether lacking in the ancient and mediæval world, and which is akin to the mysticism of the East. *The scientific age is that which has the measure of its own ignorance.*

“What curious instinct is it which has led the Christian world to describe the ‘ages of faith’ as the ‘dark ages’? Last Sunday I heard a preacher exhort his congregation to return to the Christianity of the ‘first six centuries,’ and within five minutes he was speaking of a large part of this period as the ‘dark ages.’

“The ‘dark ages’ were apparently more convinced than any of the completeness of their illumination.”

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Let me wind up this section with a more personal record. Bagshot appears to have been seriously annoyed on 26th October, 1900. The cause of the trouble is unknown to me, but his diary contains this entry:

“I am told that the junior clerks in my department regard me as a demigod, raised high above law and discipline. Yet this morning I received a letter from my political chief which makes me feel like a fifth-form boy under the lash of a school-master. My chief, I gather, has received a letter from the Prime Minister which makes him feel like an usher who has been reprimanded by a Head master; and the Prime Minister probably has received a letter from the Sovereign which makes him feel like a footman who has been scolded by his mistress. Now I shall go home and scold my cook, who will quite certainly scold the kitchen-maid. Such is the link which binds the highest and humblest; but the kitchen-maid, I hope, will feel less mortified than I do.

“To be where no one has the right to blame is the vain hope of middle-aged vanity. My colleague, Pulsford, left the public service to gain this freedom, and then married a widow with two daughters, whose censure is regular and oral.

“I read in the Life of Archbishop Benson that he never could face the governors of the school of which he was Head master without

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“an inward conviction that he was going to be summarily dismissed. That is a touch of nature which has given me much comfort. The prospect of an interview with my official superiors always fills me with the same unfounded sense of calamity to come.”

The entry winds up with an injunction which I have often heard from his own lips, and which I have known him describe as “one of the three golden rules of worldly wisdom”:

“Never display a wound—except to a physician.”

CHAPTER XIII

IN my last chapter I said that Bagshot described a certain maxim as one of "the three golden rules of worldly wisdom." This has naturally set me searching among his papers to find the other two. Clearly Bagshot had three in his own mind, but, oddly enough, whenever he records them on paper, he makes them four or even five. Here, for instance, is a fragment on the subject, dated 10th June, 1894, which I will copy down exactly as it is written:

"Be rich among the poor rather than poor among the rich.

"Take all but the most important things at their surface value.

"Seek the prizes of your own calling and be resolutely *hors concours* to all others.

"Never display a wound—except to a physician.

"Thus (he adds) you will avoid vain striving for the trivial or the impossible, and, if you suffer hurt, be spared the mortification of thinking that others are witnesses of your discomfiture. Let your physician be a trusty friend who will not break your confidence.

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“Let him see you without your clothes on, but never disrobe to an acquaintance.”

Then follows a note upon “surface values”:

“B. asked you to dinner the other night and you enjoyed yourself. You think he called you a bore after you had gone? Very likely he did, but you enjoyed yourself. What more do you want? It was amiable of B. to have been so agreeable to you, if he thinks you a bore.

“The Mauleverers asked you to the best house-party and you had three very good days. ‘Why did they do it?’ you keep asking yourself. You are sure that Mrs. Mauleverer dislikes you and wants to get something out of you. Perhaps she does, but you had three very good days, and it is extremely doubtful if Mrs. Mauleverer will get anything in return.”

“You went to ‘The Gaiety Girl’ last night, and you grumbled all the time because it wasn’t Shakespeare set to Beethoven. To-morrow you are going to a dance—you in your ridiculous forties—and you will yawn and feel aggrieved because it isn’t a political dinner-party. You want to go and you want to complain because it isn’t something else. There is no help for you.

“You can’t enjoy a holiday because you have to go back to work next week, nor a rose because it will fade to-morrow, nor your robust middle-age because you are going to be

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“old and decrepit some day. The ground is covered with flowers and you sigh and say the grave is underneath. There is no help for you.

“There are about six people in the world whose motives matter to you. Study these, if you will and can, but in regard to all others consider only if what they *do* is agreeable, helpful, or convenient to you, or if what you can *do* is agreeable, helpful, or convenient to them. What they *think* is of no consequence to you and you will never discover it.”

The other maxims explain themselves, but I find Bagshot returning again to the idea of pursuing your own prizes and being “resolutely *hors concours* to all others.” It is the advice which he gives oftenest in his letters to friends and colleagues.

“Choose your own world and live in it. Don’t, if you are a public servant, expect the applause and notoriety of a public man; don’t, if you are a professional man, expect the prizes of what is called ‘Society’; don’t, if you are an artist, expect to shine as an author. There can be no greater folly than to play another man’s game on his terms—amateur against professional. In life the champions do not ‘concede points’ to their inferiors. We all start from scratch in each race.”

Let me add here a few other notes and maxims gathered from different times:

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"The world admires the worldling only when it is sure that there are some things in which he is not worldly.

"The world forgives the cynic because it believes him to be a *poseur*. It has no mercy on the real thing.

"It is a great part of worldly wisdom to recognize other kinds of cleverness than your own. One of the greatest mistakes you can make is to think a man stupid because he isn't clever in your way.

"'Charity believeth all things'—but so unfortunately do envy and malice.

"If you want to prosper in the worldly sense you had better do the wrong thing in the right way than the right thing in the wrong way.

"It was long a belief of rich men that poor men had no right to the gout. In the same way the smart greatly resent the assumption of their follies by the dowdy.

"Not only does the world answer the fool according to his folly, but it suspects the suspicious, is hard to the harsh, and thinks ill of those who think meanly of it. The world is as penetrating as a child in discovering and punishing those who dislike it.

"'Better is an ass that carrieth me than a horse that layeth me on the ground.' It is the greatest folly to seek a position to which your abilities are unequal.

"That society is most to be pitied which lives perpetually in a condition of mutual

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“disrespect. Never seek a friendship with those whom you do not respect.

“Conform to your kind in everything that is immaterial. It is almost as silly to make it a point of conscience not to wear a coat with gold lace on it, when custom requires it, as it is miserable to desire a gold coat for its own sake.”

This last idea is carried on in two entries of the year 1889:

“Mr. Gladstone dropped an admirable phrase last night. ‘The right hon. gentleman, with that incontrollable conscience of his.’ . . . Surely the *mot juste* and of widest application. How one hates it, that conscience out of control, ranging at large over the trivial, breaking butterflies on wheels, pouncing on mole-hills and discovering them to be mountains of right and wrong! An incontrollable conscience fails almost invariably to discover a real case of right and wrong.

“The prig is he who renders unto God the things that are Caesar’s.”

It was part of Bagshot’s philosophy that in the long run the simple people got the better of the clever people:

“Bismarck boasted that he deceived the whole world by telling the truth. It is thus

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“that the simple defeat the clever, but without intending it.

“Simplicity is one of the few virtues which cannot be counterfeited. It is often the last touch which great ability needs to make it genius.

“Surely one of the most charming tributes to a friend is Martial's to Fabullinus:

“ ‘Tam sæpe nostrum decipi Fabullinum
miraris, Aule? semper homo bonus tiro est.’ ”

“ [‘ You wonder, Aulus, that our friend Fabullinus is so often deceived? *A good man is always a novice.*’] ”

Next let me put in a few more observations about friendship:

“Aristotle was right when he said that the test of friendship was to share a friend.

“He is no true friend who thinks that he puts a friend under an obligation by doing him a service.

“Persistently doing what you don't want to do under the idea that you are sacrificing yourself for others may so embitter your character as to make you intolerable to others.

“There are some services which you cannot do to a friend without sacrificing his friendship. I once had the opportunity of extricating a distinguished man from a position which was extremely mortifying to his pride. He was

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“inordinately grateful, but he never forgave me for having known of his catastrophe, and I saw him no more.

“If you have to explain to a friend why he has given you offence, you may be sure, in nine cases out of ten, that you are wrong in taking offence.

“The sympathy of your friends will be in inverse ratio to the number of your grievances.

“You may have one grievance, but two are dangerous, and three make you absurd. If three people do you an injury, it is advisable to forgive two of them.”

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CHAPTER XIV

BAGSHOT's comments touch lightly upon literature in many directions, and he was apparently a wide but rather capricious reader. His anger with the commentators on classics, ancient or modern, I have already noted, and again and again he denounces the rubbish-heaps of irrelevancies which they have accumulated about the text.

“ I am making discovery for the first time (he writes in 1900) of a great deal of literature which I supposed myself to know intimately as a boy. Greek plays which I had by heart when I was at school, and still to a considerable extent retain in my memory, large parts of Virgil, Lucretius, Juvenal, Lucian, and in modern literature Dante, Shakespeare, and Bacon, have suddenly possessed me as human documents. For years I have known the words, and have repeated them mechanically, but now the meaning comes flooding in upon me, and I am struck with my own stupidity in having missed so much of it for so many years. This rediscovery of the familiar and enrichment of it with one's own experience is one of the joys of middle-age, and I give myself great airs

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"about it to the scholarly youths, shaking my head mysteriously and telling them that they will only begin to understand when they have lived my tale of years."

Somewhere he has read a saying of Victor Hugo's that "genius is the achievement of the impossible," and he marks it with high approval:

"This (he says) and nothing else is what we ordinary people mean when we use the word. Our measure of genius is what we can by no effort of imagination conceive ourselves as doing. If I lived for two hundred years and devoted myself to the writing of poetry, I can conceive myself writing a considerable part of what appears in most anthologies. A mistake, no doubt, on my part, but still I can conceive it. But I cannot by any flight of imagination conceive myself writing the Ode to a Nightingale, or the Solitary Reaper, or Lycidas, or the invocation in 'The Ring and the Book.'¹ The first appeal to me as exquisite but attainable accomplishments, the second as miracles, and the miraculous alone is genius."

On the margin of an extremely utilitarian book which questioned the value of literary studies, Bagshot has written Leonardo's observation about his own aphorisms: "I know that many will say this work is useless. . . . Often when I

¹ Book I. 1391-1416.

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see one of these take this work in his hand, I wonder whether, like a monkey, he will not smell it and ask me if it is something to eat." At the end of an ultra-refined and exceedingly "precious" little volume he has written:—

"Taste, like humour, is an intermittent quality. Most of us have moods in which we are very vulgar. It is a common trick to disguise a vulgar thought in an absurd frippery of language."

Another literary theme on which he dwells is the diabolical perversity of the pen. He quotes Mr. Sludge, the medium:

"Tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves, and pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?"

"I am persuaded (he goes on) that half the literature in the world was written by men who intended to write something entirely different when they took pen in hand. I am perpetually haunted by the things that refuse to be said. To-day I have spent an hour trying to say a comparatively simple thing in a letter to H., and I have said a dozen other things, and entirely failed to say that particular thing. The moment I think I am going to overtake it, it flies off at a tangent and utterly eludes me, or something else crosses the scent, and I am away after that, before I have time to think where I am going. Or else I have a

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“perfectly clear image in my mind for which I can find no words that even approximately express its form and shape. I start out to describe it, and I describe something which may be quite definite and intelligible, but something which is entirely different from my thought. Much writing is in this way a changeling which the pen has foisted between the author and his thought. This is, I suppose, the reason why writers can seldom bear to read over what they have just written. They put it away for a week, and, having forgotten their thought, complacently accept the changeling in its stead.

“Thoughts are chords, and words are single notes—for which reason music so often expresses thought more profoundly than speech. Perhaps in another world there will be a kind of orchestrated literature combining the two—a speech of many parts all blending into one immensely enriched meaning. Dante’s magical description of Beatrice’s speech—*per le sorrisse parolette brevi*¹—has to my ear the effect of a chord by its blending of the voice and the smile in one infinitely caressing phrase.”

A page later comes this:

“Perhaps, too, in this other world there will be some way of blending men so as to make good the deficiencies of individuals. I could

¹ “*Paradiso*,” I. 95.

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“name twenty men, who, if judiciously combined, would make ten men of genius. There is H., who is profound in thought, but incoherent in words; mingle him with A., who is all words, but has no ideas, and you would have one first-class man of letters. There is Y., who is immense in energy, but confused in purpose; mingle him with N., who has the vision of a seer, but is incapable of action, and you would have one statesman of the first class. Or take W., with his beautiful draughtsmanship, and mix him with B., who revels in formless colour, and you will have an artist of the first rank. The rarity in nature is the last gift which makes the others serviceable and coherent. The great man does not so much tower above his fellows as add this final touch to the gifts which they possess.”

I pass over much, and come to the last journal of all. I can hardly do better than transcribe the last three pages exactly as they stand. There is no obvious connection between the entries, yet they seem to work to a sort of undesigned conclusion:

“There are two shelves in my library wholly reserved for old books that are quite dead. Nothing goes there that anyone has heard of, and I test them occasionally by bringing an eminent bibliophile to inspect them. If there is any one of them that he knows or has heard

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“of, it is straightway banished. For this is the home of the disregarded, and it is pleasant to think that the ghosts of their authors may sometimes visit them, and take comfort when they see me finger them, and browse on their faded pages, as I often do. For there is a certain charm in their artless inferiority, and, better than the masters, they help me to realize the common thoughts of average folk who have otherwise left no records. One of the falsities of history and literature is that the average life is transmitted to us through the distorting medium of genius, and this might be corrected, if we could unearth the average people and let them speak for themselves. A society for the study of forgotten books would have more to say for itself than many other learned bodies.

“How seldom one meets a clever man who has enough conscience not to beat a stupid one by a bad argument.

Of a certain politician: “X. so enjoys the luxury of differing from other people that, though a Conservative in politics, he prefers to call himself a Liberal and differ from the Liberal Party than to call himself a Conservative and agree with the Conservative Party.

“The whole of metaphysics lurks in the

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“tenses of an ordinary verb. If you know the meaning of ‘am,’ ‘will,’ ‘shall,’ and ‘was,’ you have fathomed the secrets of existence.

“Luther began by extolling reason as ‘something divine,’ and ended by calling it ‘that ugly devil’s bride’; Cromwell began by extolling liberty, and ended by ‘taking away that bauble.’

“I talked yesterday to a man who has won his way up from the working-class to a distinguished position among public men, and I asked him—putting wealth and ambition aside—which was, day by day, the more pleasurable existence. He answered, to my surprise, that the workman’s life was, beyond all comparison, the more pleasurable—that he had never had the same pleasure as in the evening’s rest after a day at the foundry, or as on a Sunday after a week’s hard toil. No work was so exhilarating, no leisure so rich and peaceful. Compare with this the depression of the brain-worker, the absence of any sharp boundary between his work and his leisure, the constant slopping over of the one into the other, the restlessness of intellectual fatigue, and the pitiful shifts to which the intellectual man was reduced in his effort to supply the physical element which was lacking in his artificial life. Life for life, no natural healthy man would hesitate for a

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“moment to choose the hand-working in preference to the brain-working life. ‘I hope it is true,’ adds Bagshot, ‘but only those who have tried both have the right to say it. The *intellectual* who says it exposes himself to the suspicion of doing so, in order, as Bacon put it, “to abate the edge of envy.”’

“Life’s great irony is that achievement defeats itself in the moment of its victory. *Tanta molis erat Romanam condere gentem.* The poet has scarcely finished before the historian takes up the tale of the Decline and Fall. Our Paradise may be lost and regained, but never held and enjoyed. We develop our brains and pay by the decay of our bodies; we refine our tastes and pay by the decay of our morals; we become humane and find that we have lost our endurance, we enjoy the blessings of peace and find that our bones are full of water. There is stupendous energy of building up, stupendous energy of tearing down, but no moment of repose for the atom or the planet or the human spirit. The city of the soul whirls and vibrates like a machine-shop fitted with dynamos. Yet, somewhere in the heart of it all, the individual can make his own peace on his own terms and defy the whole universe to disturb it. It still matters nothing to me that the earth and the solar system are whirling through space at the rate of sixty miles a second from no one knows where to no one

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“knows whither, if I may sit in my garden and listen to the bees on a summer afternoon.”

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The last entry of all is another aphorism from Leonardo:

“ ‘Thou, O God, sellest all good things at the price of labour.’ ”

SECOND SERIES
OF THE
COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

CHAPTER XV

SOME DOMESTIC PHILOSOPHY

ABOUT a year after the publication of the "Comments of Bagshot," I received from Bagshot's niece, Molly Harman, another box of her uncle's papers which had since come to light, and which were my property under her uncle's will. This lady's name is mentioned casually in the published papers; but my acquaintance with her was only slight, and I did not think it necessary to consult her in preparing the previous volume. I gather from a letter which accompanied the new documents that she was slightly aggrieved at this omission, and accordingly I invited her to make it good against the time when a selection of the new papers might be published. In answer, I have received from her two considerable letters which I may briefly summarize before proceeding to the new material. She is pleased

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to say that I have got some things right about her uncle, but she thinks my portrait of him to be lacking in humanity and colour. No one, she insists, was less in the habit of laying down the law or "ladling out maxims" for the edification of other people. He was both kind and understanding, and, when anything went wrong, ready to make excuses which had not occurred to the culprit. But it is admitted that he had an extraordinary curiosity about little things. There was nothing so trivial in her daily life, says Mrs. Harman, that he did not want to know all about it, and it delighted him beyond measure if, after a night's serious reflection, he could find a way out of some little impasse. She sends me a letter which she received from him on one occasion when she had got herself into a scrape with an old friend whom she supposed to have behaved very badly:

"MY DEAREST MOLLY,

"Walking through a country churchyard last week I saw the most delightful epitaph I ever remember. It was simply this: 'George Philip Dyson, died Oct. 7, 1871. He was a helpful man.' This was the only epitaph in the world I ever envied, and, if I thought that, after I am gone, you could put it on my grave, I should die a happy man.

"Now I want to help you, but it is very difficult, for you probably won't believe a word of what I am going to say: - You will ask, what

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“can *he*, a very old bachelor—more than forty years old—know about girls and their affairs? And upon my soul I don't think I know anything. All the same, let us try this case together. Clearly there isn't a shadow of a doubt that Nina Cornford has behaved disgracefully. Make a little wax figure of her, if you can, and stick pins into it until your fingers are sore. But then melt it all down and keep the wax and the pins till somebody else behaves disgracefully. But don't let anybody ever see you doing it, and when you have done, offer up a prayer for your own recovery and for blessings on the head of your disgraceful friend.

“Very well, then, Nina behaved disgracefully, and that helps. Next year somebody else will behave disgracefully, and the year after *you* will behave disgracefully, and every year of course I shall behave disgracefully. I often have, and sad trouble it has made for me. All the same, you won't send her that letter. Because Nina behaved badly that is no reason why you should behave stupidly. You talk about her being an 'enemy,' and people who are devoted to each other do very often use that word when they fall out. It does seem so exceptionally horrid that people you are fond of should get angry and say odious things about you behind your back. But 'enemies' aren't angry people of seventeen; they are old and cold and ugly people of at least forty, deep,

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“cunning, malignant people who plot and scheme and keep quite calm. So never use the word ‘enemy’ about people who are angry with you. If you are worth anything people *will* be angry with you, and you will do things to make them angry. I never knew anybody worth anything who didn’t make people angry with them, and especially the people they like best. Friendships which can’t stand anger are no friendships at all. I consider it a great impertinence for a stranger to quarrel with me, but it is often quite a compliment for a friend to be angry with me. It shows that he really cares what I think and say.

“I cannot believe, my dearest Molly, that you will ever have an enemy, but, if you have, let me tell you this. The only harm which an enemy can ever do you is to make you betray *yourself*. I have been watching this game of life now for twenty-five years, and I say this is true of every case I have known. I have known very good men and women have enemies—real jealous, vindictive, malignant enemies—but the only harm these enemies have been able to do them is by making them injure themselves, by making them retort foolishly, meanly, vulgarly, as good people will when they lose their heads. If you refrain from this, your enemies will help you when they mean to hurt you. But it is always a great harm to lose a friend, and there is no stupider way of losing a friend than by calling him an enemy

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“when he is merely angry. Enmity and anger are two entirely different things.

“Now, as I said at the beginning, you won’t believe a word of it, and I am not sure you won’t even say that I am as bad as Nina Cornford. All the same, keep the word ‘enemy’ till you want it, and burn that letter.—Always your loving uncle,
W. B.”

Such, apparently, was the more homely form in which “the golden rules” summarized in the previous papers were conveyed in the domestic circle. Mrs. Harman sends me a collection of short and pithy sayings from his letters, some of which I shall give hereafter in their proper place, but one or two may be inserted here to show the human qualities on which she insists:

• “To bear heart-ache bravely is just as important as to bear tooth-ache bravely, and much more thankless, since he who achieves it is usually thought to be hard of heart.

“You are very hard on poor Mrs. Harrison. Remember the answer of that admirable Frenchwoman who said when asked to criticise a friend: ‘God alone knows what he has given her; God alone knows what he may ask of her.’

“Take men and women *for what they are worth*. Do this literally and you will find it to be the law of love. They are worth more than you know.”

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“ Be very careful, when you marry, not to let your husband be called unselfish. It is always a reflection on a wife when a husband is called unselfish.

“ Early in life I had great ambitions. Since I reached fifty I have begun to hope that I shall get through without scandal.

“ It is absurd of you to think that you can bluff with all the cards on the table. You know everything, and I know everything, and you know that I know and I know that you know. Why, then, should we talk to each other with a silly pretence which we both know to be untrue? Keep your flag flying gallantly, my dear girl, among those who have no right to know, but not to me who have every right to know and help.

“ I know of no gift in life more graceful and serviceable than that of the happy ending. Get it, if you can, my dear Molly, and you will be a jewel among women. The world abounds in miserable people who don't know when to stop, who can't finish a speech and sit down, who can't end a conversation when they have done with it, who don't know how to get out of a room when they have got into it, who can't finish a letter when they have said what they want to say. Keep your eyes open at any evening party and see the unhappy

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“couples who are harnessed together in vapid talk which neither knows how to end, though each is dying to be rid of the other. Compare the perfect ease with which a well-bred woman will move away, when she has had enough, with the infinite embarrassment of most others when they endeavour to escape. An inordinate part of everyone's life is consumed in formal civilities to uncongenial persons which cannot be ended without quarrels or pursued without boredom. To save yourself from these without inflicting pain or attracting attention is one of the greatest of the social arts.

“ But even this is only a small part of the philosophy of the happy ending. The rest you will learn as you grow older, and thank God you needn't learn it yet. Finish your chapters well and bravely, and don't let any of them slop over into the next. Each will be good if you are not always lamenting that it isn't the one before. Men learn that more easily than women, and no man can teach it to any woman. At your age it is a great thing to be a girl and not a school-girl, but you won't think it quite so good a thing to be a woman and not a girl. Yet believe me, it will be quite as good if you have the art of happy ending. ' Believe me ' did I say, but of course you won't believe me, and I should hate you if you did.

“ There are exceptional men and women

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“who are capable of great happiness and great misery arising out of personal relations and emotions which are quite independent of their daily circumstances. But for the great mass of ordinary people the ingredients of happiness are mainly two, first to love and be loved, next to have a calling which enables them to do daily what they do best. A decent man will find happiness in any drudgery for wife and children, but the drudgery of the unloved is the most mournful thing in life.

“The artist who earns his bread by work which is his daily delight is the supreme type of happiness in work. If he might add to it happiness in love, his would be the ideal existence. The Providence which equalizes our lot seems to have invented the artistic temperament in order to blight this felicity.

“The world grows more and more like an evening party at which everybody shouts at everybody else in order to be heard above his neighbours. The pitch is always being screwed up until the brain becomes paralysed in the mere effort of speaking, and at the end of it all no one is heard. One spends one's evening in uproarious talk about the weather. If you want to be original, my dear Molly, if you want to be distinguished, there remains only one thing and that is to speak low and walk modestly. That is almost universally remarked in these days.”

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Mrs. Harman dismisses with something like contempt all my careful and conjectural explanations of the reasons which prevented Bagshot from marrying. The reason, she says, was simple and radiantly clear to any woman. It was Miss Helen Bramston. I have noticed that women almost invariably explain bachelordom in men by the theory of blighted affection. They seem, to a woman, to resent the defeat of their sex which is implied in the idea of a man's deliberately remaining single. So the story is that Miss Bramston refused to marry Bagshot, and he refused to marry anyone else. They remained close intimates to the end of their lives, and—such was the essential simplicity of Bagshot's character—he found no embarrassment in their relationship. Mrs. Harman is convinced that his observations about women were drawn not from her but from Miss Bramston. She remembers that lady twenty years ago, when she was still young, and describes her as extremely handsome and fastidious. Miss Bramston, it seems, wished Bagshot to leave the Civil Service and embark on some vague but brilliant career. She was always urging him to write and to come out into the world. She criticised everything, from his boots to his garden, and Mrs. Harman suspects that his note-books were written for her and shown to her. They quarrelled, says the niece, in a peculiarly intimate way, and took little account of her presence, until, in later years, she began to remind them of it. Miss Bramston

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died a year after Bagshot, and I have no means of discovering whether Mrs. Harman's conjecture is true; but I am not quite so sure that she is right in supposing that her uncle was not drawing on her for some of his observations about women. "One of the strangest things in life," says Bagshot, "is that no one seems to recognize his own portrait. The other night I lent Molly a novel which seemed to me to contain a most improving portrait of herself with sundry reflections upon her little foibles and weaknesses. She has just returned it to me with the remark that a terrible old man in it bears an astonishing resemblance to myself. Has she seen my point, and is this her deep retort, or does she really think it? I daren't ask."

CHAPTER XVI

WEALTH AND LIFE

IN addition to the new papers entrusted to me by his niece, various friends of Bagshot's have sent me specimens of his letters which they think should be included among his "Comments." They are of varying merit, and most of them would be interesting only to his friends; but I propose to include a few which reveal his thoughts on subjects that are commonly in debate. Here, for instance, is a letter written to his nephew Charles a few days after a dinner-party given by the latter, at which, apparently, a rich young man had discoursed at large about individualism and Socialism:

"10 January 1905.

"MY DEAR CHARLES,

"Since you ask me, I confess I did smile inwardly at the discourses of your friend Mr. Whitton the other night. It is really rather absurd for a young man who has so obviously been born with hundred - guinea pearl studs in his shirt-front to preach at large about 'the fair field and no favour' and the iniquity of 'pampering' the poor. Let your

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“prosperous, self-made commercials talk like that if they will—they have a right to do it, if they choose—but not your aristocratic born rich, who has had the field to himself and a thousand favours.

“But now about this individualism and Socialism debate. Believe me, two-thirds of it is a false issue. If you must have these antitheses, make it ‘the family versus the State,’ not ‘man versus the State,’ for all civilized communities take the family and not the individual as their unit. A logical individualism requires a fair start and an equal opportunity for each individual *within the period of his own life*; whereas the actual unit, the family, is all the time doing its utmost to abolish the boundaries between life and death and to give its own members, with the aid of the dead hand as well as the living, a long lead and a safe retreat. To get real individualism, the first thing you would have to do would be to abolish inherited property, and even then you would find all parents, relatives, and friends in a conspiracy to defeat you. It is odd how these things work in circles. Your real individualist would want a death-duty of twenty shillings in the pound and then he would be in an awful fix to prevent the State from becoming Socialist in spending it. It is fortunate for Mr. Whitton that you can’t defeat the jolly instinct of the human to mother and father, and coddle and comfort its own brats and pets.

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“For the real individualism you must look to the animals, and it all hangs on being able to turn the young ’uns adrift at or about the age of six months and not knowing them again when you meet them. Every human State is in league with the fond parents in the coddling and comforting business, and always will be.

“Lucky for Mr. Whitton, and when you meet him again you may tell him that if we ever get this individualism of which he talks it will be twice as disastrous to him and his kind as anything that has entered the head of Keir Hardie or Sidney Webb. Meantime, you may rely on the family to fight as hard against the ‘equality of opportunity’ of which he talks as against the absorption of its hoards by the Socialist State. I don’t blame it; it was there before the State, and it made the State for its own ends. But it mustn’t pretend to be practising the bleak virtues of individualism when obviously it is doing its utmost all the time, with the aid and connivance of the State, to shield its own members from the equal competition on equal terms.

“Like it, or not like it, you have to swallow the fact that ‘equality of opportunity’ is as impossible in any world that we know as equality in brains or person. Men don’t start from scratch; they don’t get what they deserve, and only what they deserve, in any material sense; and they never will unless you can

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“imagine them coming into the world without parents, relations or friends, and no generation overlapping another, and each generation being completely wound up when it departs, so that a clean start may be made with a new one. Then we might do complete justice to each man within the term of his natural life; but, honestly, I would rather be a slave in the present world than a king in that world, even though a great many lucky dogs get twice as many bones as they deserve or as I do. Mankind may not be good enough for Socialism, but it is certainly too good for individualism. Its nature being mixed, it demands what the ancients called a mixed polity.

“ But I repeat, the lucky dogs must comport themselves more modestly than your Mr. Whitton. They mustn't flatter themselves that they are where they are by their own genius and shining merit. They mustn't talk gaily about other people being pauperized when that is so obviously what has happened to them. I don't bear them any grudge, but the best thing they can do is to see that the other dogs have at least enough bones not to be under the temptation of envying them their too many. But seriously, my dear Charles, don't base your defence of the existing order on the ground that it does equal justice in material things to the living race of men, for, if you do, you will be flooded. You may say, if you like, that the real prizes of life are

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“not gold and silver, but you can never promise any man that he is going to be rewarded according to his merits in gold and silver, and frankly, I cannot imagine any state of society in which he could be. Put your society on such a footing that the devil doesn’t take the hindmost and you can leave the others to get through the eye of the needle, if they can.—Affectionately yours, W. B.”

Side by side with this I will place a fragment which I find labelled “an imaginary preface to an unwritten treatise,” presumably of Political Economy.¹ The object of this treatise is to restate economic problems in terms of human activity:

“A large part of what is called political economy is mere plutology—analysis of conditions by which individuals or communities may obtain wealth regardless of the uses to which they may put wealth. Only in so far as it begins to embrace the second of these objects does this study rise to the dignity of political economy, which, being literally and worthily interpreted, is the orderly management of the household of the State. For that, the art of spending is at least as important as the art of

¹ Bagshot, it need hardly be said, never had the slightest idea of writing a treatise on Political Economy, but his niece tells me that he was peculiarly fond of writing prefaces to imaginary books. From what sources he could possibly have obtained the statistics for this imaginary book need not be inquired.

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“getting. If the economists deny this, they should change the title of their science, and suppress a good half of their writings as being outside their province.

“If we are ever to understand the social effect of riches and wealth, of luxury and thrift, we must banish from our minds the whole order of ideas associated with money and credit, and consider the problem simply as one of human activity and its direction. Is the activity of a community rightly directed when it is applied inordinately to providing palaces and sumptuous living for a small minority of its members, and not applied sufficiently to providing decent shelter and tolerable subsistence for vast numbers of its members? Manifestly the answer must be that it is wrongly applied; and to plead that extravagance or luxury stimulates trade is merely to say that its malapplication is so fixed a habit that the activity directed to the providing of superfluities could not be easily or quickly diverted to the provision of necessities and decencies. This is almost always true, and it is folly for a Professor to tell a West-End tradesman that he doesn't suffer when a rich customer begins to retrench. Of course he suffers, and extravagance *is* good for that kind of trade.

“Economists have floundered and stumbled in their efforts to prove that luxury is un-economic, but this simple thought gives the clue. There is no solution to the *economic*

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“problem apart from an appeal to the good of the community. It is perfectly true that employment has grown up around the luxury trades and that the cessation of spending by the rich throws deserving people out of employment. It is by no means certain, as the economists seem to assume, that if the rich saved their money, instead of spending it, it would be employed as capital for purposes of greater social advantage than their self-indulgence. A large number of public companies are issued every year for purposes no whit more useful from a social point of view than the purchase of roses to adorn a ball-room. What is certain and immutably fixed in the nature of things is that communities which misapply their activities are on the road to ruin. They may defend themselves by appealing to the laws of liberty and property; protest that a man has a right to do what he will with his own, and that to limit his acquired or inherited power of directing other people’s activities to his own purposes is theft, spoliation, gross interference with private rights. But if ‘his own purposes’ are not in the long run good for the community or at least compatible with its good, then the community must inevitably decay, and do so exactly in the degree that it prides itself on the security of its credit and property, or, in other words, on its power of protecting its rich men in their misapplication of its own activities.

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“ All the controversies about Socialism and Individualism, or liberty and property, ultimately resolve themselves into this. A rich class has constantly to contend with the subconscious feeling of the community that its activities are being misapplied. The mass of the people are quite unable to find words for this feeling; they talk the conventional language about riches and poverty and transferring *money* from class to class. The Socialists speak of labour as the source of wealth, and some of them seem to imagine that all evils could be cured by redistributing its existing produce; whereas the problem is not to redistribute the produce, but to change the produce by directing the labour into more fruitful channels. It may conceivably be done under a Socialist régime or under an Individualist régime, but the problem in either case is one of intelligence and conscience in the class—whether of private persons or politicians and officials—which controls the activities of the nation.

“ I see a demand rising up for old-age pensions, housing schemes, land for allotments and small holdings, and many other purposes which by-and-by will raise serious questions of taxation. All this means the working of the subconscious instinct of the community that its activity is insufficiently applied to the well-being of the greatest number. And ultimately it may be found that there is no way of

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“diverting this activity except by taxing the rich, which will *pro tanto* reduce their power of controlling it for their own purposes, and increase the power of the State to control it for communal purposes. The condition on which this can safely be done is that the new activities shall be thought out and rigorously determined before the old are cut off. To tax wealth for the sake of taxing it before the new expenditure had been determined would be folly and waste, and would paralyze instead of stimulating activity. Hence the extreme wisdom of the old financial maxim that a Chancellor of the Exchequer must take no money out of the pockets of the public which is not allotted to a definite purpose. A statesman never stops one form of activity until he is ready to replace it with another.

“The conclusion of the whole matter is that political economy, so far from being the dull science, is inevitably and always a theory built on a vision. It can give no help to the State about the management of its household, unless it has behind it an ideal of the State and of the application of its energies. The science of wealth, in so far as it affects men in community, is the science of the power over men. It may hold that the good of the community is best achieved by letting its economic, self-regarding men buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market; or it may hold that the self-regarding man's

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“control of the activities of other people must itself be controlled by Governments acting in the interests of the community; but in either case it must have a doctrine of the communal good. And that doctrine can be nothing but an ideal—some vision, near or remote, of an ordered community directing its activities to the well-being of the whole and its own most perfect self-realization. Thus *political* economy can never be content with the production of a successful plutocracy. The worst State in the world might lead the world in wealth; but if its wealth were concentrated in the hands of a few, that would mean only that these few had a unique power of diverting the activities of the State to the ends which they decreed and which might be and probably would be quite incompatible with the general well-being of its people. The self-regarding man of the old economists is least of all to be trusted as superman.

“I propose, therefore, to take the expenditure of different classes of the nation during the last five years and to see what light it sheds upon the direction of the nation’s activities during this period. By such an inquiry we may be able to criticize the expenditure of the community as we would that of a single household and see whether its energies are wisely directed to the welfare of all its members.”

In the last years of his life Bagshot watched

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with a growing impatience the jealous comparison of the statistics of trade, which had become the practice with all politicians in the Free Trade controversy. He was not indifferent to that controversy or ever shaken in his Free Trade beliefs, but that both parties should "accept a test by which the worst of nations might be proved the best" was, he used to say, a real debasement of public opinion. At the end of a little handbook of Free Trade and Tariff statistics he has written two mottoes from the Funeral oration of Pericles:

“Πλούτη ἔργον μᾶλλον καίρῳ ἢ λόγῳ κόμπῳ χρώμεθα.

[“Wealth we employ not for boastful words but as a means of action.]

“Ἐπεισέρχεται δὲ διὰ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως ἐκ πάσης γῆς
τὰ πάντα.

[“Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us.”]

Note, he says, the order of these words and the splendid emphasis which is thrown on “the greatness of the city.” Clearly he means that to the Greek mind it was not the great trade which made the great State, but the great State which drew the great trade to itself.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME WORLDLY ADVICE

BAGSHOT'S niece, Molly, lived with her uncle almost continuously from her fourteenth birthday until, six years later, she married a young barrister, Charles Harman,¹ who was fortunate enough to possess, in addition to his professional prospects, some private means of his own. Bagshot warmly approved of this marriage, and took enormous interest in all that concerned Charles and Molly and the two children who were born before his death. It would be tedious to follow their relations at length, for they extended to all manner of commonplace things, but from the letters Mrs. Harman has sent me I have selected a few passages which seem to me to possess some interest. Here, to begin with, are two extracts from letters written in 1900, a few months before the marriage, when Molly was staying with her future parents-in-law:

¹ It has been pointed out to me that in the previous series (Chapter VI.) I report Bagshot as saying that his niece "desired to marry a most deserving but wholly unendowed young officer." Mrs. Harman assures me that, while she understands this allusion, and has no doubt that her uncle honestly entertained this belief, he was nevertheless mistaken, and that she never had any thought of marrying anyone but her present husband.

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“ You are going to marry and leave me, and, like the dear child that you are, you write that ‘ it will be just the same,’ and that nothing will ever change your feelings for me. I should be very disappointed if you didn’t say it, my dear Molly, and we should both be very foolish if we believed it. You would be vastly indignant if I suggested that you would have to share Charles with his mother, and he won’t like it any the better if someone suggests that he has to share you with me. Well, that in itself makes a change, and we shall both be all the happier three years hence if from the beginning we set out to discover the neutral territory we can cultivate together, and don’t pretend there are no private preserves.

“ No secrets from Charles! Of course not; but some innocent things which Charles won’t want to know about you, and many innocent things which you won’t want to know about Charles—at least, if either of you are half as wise as I take you both to be. Married people are very fond of saying that they have no secrets from each other, but they never say it without causing a little shiver of impatience in the unmarried. Frankly, my dear Molly, the unmarried don’t believe it, and the picture which it conjures up is not that of kindred souls revealing themselves to each other, but that of a pair of gossips in a state of agitation lest either should have a tit-bit which the other doesn’t share. Granted, by all means, that

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“there should be nothing which a husband *couldn't* tell to his wife, or a wife to her husband, there ought still to be a great many things which neither should tell, and real confidence consists in not wanting to know.”

Bagshot was always somewhat concerned about Charles Harman's private fortune, for he feared lest a certain indolence would lead him to live on it instead of using his considerable abilities to make more. This, from a letter written in 1905, is characteristic:

“Wealth, says Stevenson, ‘is only useful for two things—a yacht and a string quartette. For these two I would sell my soul. Except for these I hold that £700 a year is as much as anybody can possibly want.’ It has taken me half an hour to hunt up this passage, but I couldn't rest till I found it after reading in your letter this morning that ‘£700 a year is ample for two people.’ So it is, my dearest Molly, provided that they remain two, and ‘except for the yacht and the string quartette.’ I have known scores of people say the same thing, but there is always an ‘except,’ and as the years go on the number of the ‘excepts’ will quite certainly increase.

“Now, if I were the model uncle, I should straightway improve this occasion by a suitable lecture on housewifely thrift, and self-denial in milliners' bills. Instead of which—knowing

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“your prudence and Charles’s charming, unambitious nature—I solemnly express the hope that you will suffer and make Charles suffer from a passionate craving for yachts and string quartettes. He is a very clever fellow, is your Charles; but having this quite secure nest-egg, he won’t bestir himself and make the place for himself that he ought to make, unless you both want things and want them badly. They say the Kaffir can only be kept at the mines when he wants to add a second wife to his establishment. Heaven forbid that your Charles should develop in that direction, and, speaking with all due caution, I don’t apprehend it. But don’t make it too easy for him, or let him make it too easy for himself. So once more I say, hitch your wagon to the yacht and the string quartette.

• “Whatever you do, don’t show this letter to your friend Nina. She and her Algernon want quite other advice. *They* will try the yacht and the string quartette on the £700 a year—and that way lies tragedy.”

A year later Charles apparently was getting on, and he and his wife were beginning to be popular in fashionable circles. So, at least, I judge from the following letter:

“You and Charles must arrange these things for yourselves, but, if you really want my advice, you will find some excuse for not staying with Lady C. She is an admirable woman, but

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"she is entirely unable to realize that anyone can have less than £5,000 a year, and everyone you meet at Courtlands will take it for granted that this is your minimum wage. If you could dip in and come out again and take it all as you would an evening at the Opera and have done with it at that, I should say, go by all means and have the fun. But this is exactly what you can't do. Lady C. will introduce you to Mrs. F., who will pass you on to the Duchess of D., who will launch 'the charming young couple' in their frail cockle-shell on to the roaring tide of fashionable London. After three months of it, my dearest Molly, you would feel a donkey and be a pauper.

"The golden rule in dealing with the grandees is to be very affable to them when they come into your life, but on no account to let them drag you into their life. Charles is a barrister and hopes some day to go into Parliament. If the Lord Chancellor or the Foreign Secretary were to take a fancy to him, and if the Lady Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary's lady were to be civil to you, so much the better for both of you. That is in your life, and in this society you will be at home. But Lady C. and her friends have really nothing to do with you or you with them, and you will never be more than freaks to each other."

Next year Mrs. Harman writes that Charles is

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prospering and making more money, but she seems to have dropped a hint that the results on the household budget had disappointed her hopes. Bagshot replies:

“It is certainly one of the most disappointing things in life that getting more money doesn't seem to make you richer. All my life I have struggled in vain with the mysterious influence which causes the demand for commodities to overtake the supply of gold. Whenever I have had a rise in my official salary, the news of it, though a profound secret till the appearance of next year's 'Whitaker,' has instantly percolated by some secret channel to my cook. Within a week it is known to my butcher, my grocer, my tailor, and to every charitable institution in Greater London. In another week it has been silently intimated to me that all those deserving persons and causes expect a share in the increment to my fortune. Within a month it has become notorious at my club, and I am now confidently invited to play bridge for stakes which a month ago were entirely beyond 'poor Bagshot's' means. By this time the very crossing-sweepers have learnt it, and touch me for twopence where formerly I was a doubtful penny. The warm feeling of benevolent wealth now begins to steal through my veins, and I pity myself for the privations I suffered in the days of my poverty. This makes it impossible for me to pass a book-

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“shop, to refrain from taking a cab, to resist my cook, or to avoid going to the Opera. I am caught up in a far-reaching genial conspiracy to share the fruits of my honourable toil, and gently lifted up to a plane of being in which twenty-five shillings is scarcely worth a sovereign. So it will be with you and Charles, my dear Molly, and thanks be to the Lord that it is so, for otherwise what an intolerable, ugly, scrimping, stingy existence it would be! He is a mean man who won't raise the wages of his cook, when he grows rich, because he 'can get another as good at the same price.' ”¹

I add yet another passage about the giving and taking of favours:

“ You show your usual good sense in refusing to accept favours from the D.'s. They are very rich, and, I doubt not, very good-natured, but they are not *friends* of yours and they will expect in return just what you ought not to

¹ In one of the note-books I find an incident recorded which has its bearing on this philosophy of wealth: “ J. F., just back from China, where he is in the Government service, tells me that the week after his salary was raised last year, his Chinese housekeeper unblushingly presented him with a bill of 120 dols. for exactly the same items that had previously cost him 40 dols. On his remonstrating and asking the reason, John Chinaman replied that his Excellency was understood to have grown enormously wealthier. J. F. explained that he was not three times as rich but only a third richer, whereupon John Chinaman apologized profusely for having misunderstood the situation, withdrew the bill, and presented a new one for 53½ dols.” “ The whole of the conflict between economics and humanity,” adds Bagshot, “ seems to me to be condensed into this incident.”

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“give them. If I were a very rich man I should feel it to be a real hardship that I could scarcely ever help my poorer friends in the manner that would be by far the most serviceable to them—*i.e.*, by gifts of money when they really needed it. Nothing at first sight is so puzzling as this rigid rule against the giving or taking of cash. You might suppose it to be invented by rich people to save their pockets, yet I am quite sure it is invented by poor people to save their pride. The rich will give, if you let them; but it is the poor who will despise you, if you take. Only so can they protect themselves against the power of money, for where the rich give and the poor take the former will buy and the latter be bought. Convention restricts this to money, but it really applies to all gifts, if the giver is not your friend.

— “A rich man must earn the right to help a poor one, and this he can only do by a friendship in good times and bad so intimate and constant that it wins him the privilege of giving without conferring obligation. I say in good times and bad, for a bad-weather friend may be even worse than a fair-weather friend. To come suddenly to the rescue after years of neglect is taking advantage of a man when he is down. It is only the constant friend who should be welcome as the friend in need. *Never suppose that you can make up to a neglected friend by going to visit him in hospital.* Repent on your own deathbed, if you like, but not on another’s.”

CHAPTER XVIII

ABOUT POLITICAL CAREERS

MRS. HARMAN reproaches me for making it appear as if her uncle were always tendering advice unasked, whereas the truth is, she assures me, that he was in this respect the least aggressive of men. I can only plead in answer that, while this entirely accords with my own impression of his character, there yet remain among his papers—which extend over thirty years—the records of two or three occasions on which he did offer advice, and it seems to me foolish to suppress these lest someone who did not know him should hastily conclude that he was habitually officious. So once again I risk this misunderstanding for the sake of printing two letters, which have been sent me since the publication of the first volume, one to a young man, who was a great favourite of his, and the other to an old and intimate friend, giving his views about politics as a career. These need no explanation, and I will leave them to speak for themselves:

“PONTRESINA, 24th August 1904.

“MY DEAR HERBERT,

“You ask me to advise you about politics as a career. If I were a wise man I should refer

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“you to someone who has tried it; but, as you say, I have ‘watched the game’ for nearly thirty years, and you are welcome to my impressions for what they are worth.

“You have a thousand a year and the prospect of more. If you hadn’t, I should advise *you* to drop it and take to an honest bread-winning employment. I have known penniless young men go into Parliament and contrive to keep their flag flying and their pot boiling, but that is not for you or for anyone without a full quart of Celtic blood in his veins. England expects, or at least prefers, that every English M.P. shall have an income to his name, and it is an enormous advantage that there should be no mystery about it.

“When you speak about a ‘political career,’ I know what you mean, and please ~~don’t~~ trouble to disclaim it. You mean publicity, distinction, fame, steady progress from M.P. to Under-Secretary, and from Under-Secretary to Cabinet Minister. You are very public-spirited, of course, and you write modestly of doing some ‘decent bit of work as a humble M.P.’; but I know you well enough to be sure that you will break your heart if after five years of the ‘decent work’ you see young Mablethorpe, your contemporary, who is standing for Widdington, become Secretary to the Local Government Board while you remain ‘humble M.P.’ So, my dear Herbert, there is misery ahead of you. For I can’t

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“promise you anything. Politics is like cricket. You never can be sure that the best bat in the world is going to score, and there are some magnificent bats (at the nets) who have never yet scored in a match at Westminster, and never will. I see around me large numbers of clever men who can make nothing of a House of Commons career, and are silently breaking their hearts over the business. But don't think for a moment that it is all fluke and blind chance.

“ Taking the average of men possessing good brains and a certain aptitude you will find a definite quality which makes for success. For want of a better name I will call it the ‘co-operative sense.’ If you have that, you can at least pass your medical examination; if you are without it, you are like a colour-blind man starting out to paint pictures or navigate ships. You will find that the great majority of clever men who fail in politics are by nature solitary workers. They cannot put their minds into the common stock; they have the artist's objection to letting other people touch their work; they can neither advise nor be advised. The give-and-take of politics and its inevitable compromises seem to them both vulgar and dishonest, and, having got into Parliament, they bore us with incessant complaints about its necessary conditions and the lamentable lapses from philosophy and virtue which they discover in its procedure. So at

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“the outset, my dear Herbert, make up your mind whether you belong to the collective or the solitary workers. That prize essay you sent me from Oxford last year was charming, and I admired extremely the literary gifts which it displayed. But it raised a momentary doubt in my mind whether nature did not intend you for a solitary worker. However, you have just had a University education, and, as my old uncle in Mincing Lane said to me when I came down from Oxford, it takes a long time to get over that.

“Let us assume, then, that you have passed your medical examination, and look to Parliament as a place where average men are striking an average of opinion, not as a pulpit for Athanasius against the world. It will still want the best of your ability and more self-discipline than most young men with a literary turn commonly possess. Till you are used to it, you will find it an extraordinarily difficult place to work in. You will run in and out of the House, you will gossip in the Lobby, you will find your time cut up into snippets and fragments between the Library and the Division Lobby, the constituent wanting a ticket for the Gallery, and the score of letters about nothing which you must write every day. I have known men of your temperament lose all faculty of continuous effort after three sessions in the House of Commons. So the second qualification is that you know how to manage

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“the desultory life, and do not succumb to its temptations. The third is that you have an instinct for the seasonable. For the whole of the first Session you will be on the gridiron about your first speech, and you will prepare heaven knows what beautiful sentences and scathing epigrams, to find, when your turn comes, that they are wholly irrelevant. The good House of Commons speaker is always prepared, and always has the courage to throw his preparations to the winds. You may be as eloquent and as clever as you please hereafter, but you will have to earn the right to it by plain speech, which shows that you know what you are talking about and are not a mere pundit reciting a learnt lesson. Your classic definition of the eloquent man as one ‘who can persuade others that he is likely to know’ (τὸν εἰκότα εἰδέναι) exactly suits the British House of Commons, but most of you scholarly young men forget it.

“Let us again leap forward, and imagine you fitted with a constituency and master of the technique of the business. [I will not discourse about that, for I am no performer myself, and I am told already that you are uncommonly clever at it.] You will now begin to think of yourself as Ministeriable. Again don’t disclaim it; it’s quite natural and honourable and inevitable. But when that time comes, you will feel yourself extraordinarily at the mercy of circumstances and accidents. Men in

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“business and the professions, you will say to yourself, can count on steady advancement and increasing incomes as the reward of their unaided efforts. *You* hang on the chance of keeping your seat, of catching the favour of remote and mysterious beings above you, to whom you are as a fourth-form boy to a head-master, on the result of a General Election, on the possibility of somebody dying or making a vacancy, for which there will be scores of candidates and no positive test of merit. When Governments are being formed you will suffer the tortures of the damned, and you will suffer them all the way up to the highest promotion. Nothing will save you but a grim capacity to wait and smile. For from the beginning it is part of the contract that you have no remedy, and the attempt to enforce one will quite surely make you ridiculous. I have known a dozen able men make shipwreck of promising careers from failing to grasp this simple fact; and if promotion is your goal, to grasp it early in the day is the beginning of wisdom and the surest way to get there.

“A few men arise in every generation who have a genius for publicity. They are like popular newspapers with enormous circulations, and just in the same mysterious way they ‘catch on’ with the public. These defeat all rule; parties must have them, and will pay anything for them, though there is generally a silent movement going on below the surface

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“to prevent them from getting quite to the top. You, my dear Herbert, are not of this kind, and your career will not be on these lines. It will depend on your being yourself and cultivating your own qualities—on your contributing something tangible and positive to the sum of affairs. I have told you of the flukes and chances of public life, but you are young enough to wait and outlive them all. On the whole and in the long run justice is done, and, for all the croakers may say, it is a great career, and a fine discipline for a man who is honest but not pedantic, and will put away from himself all cynicism and cowardice. But treat it seriously, and don't imagine that you are going to take the place by storm. Only when you get there will you discover whether your undeniable cleverness will enable you to get on.—Your affectionate uncle, B.S.”

The second letter is addressed to a much older man, who was entering Parliament at the age of fifty, after a distinguished career in the public service:

“MY DEAR GEORGE,

“Anything that concerns you must interest me, and I am enormously interested to hear that you have been chosen as candidate for the Sallerton Division—a choice, I take it, which, in the circumstances of that constituency, is equivalent to a seat for life.

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“ You ask me to tell you ‘ candidly ’ what I think of the prospects of a man of fifty entering Parliament for the first time after a busy—and let me add in your case distinguished—career in another walk of life. I applaud it wholly and unreservedly, provided he remembers that he is fifty and not twenty-five. We understand each other well enough for me to be able to say that to you without offence. I can imagine no happier or more useful career for a man of your age and standing, *if* he has resolution and sense enough to hold himself aloof from all boyish ambitions and strivings; I can imagine few that would be fuller of vexation and mortification, if he has not this degree of self-control.

“ As I see it, there are two quite separate kinds of career in Parliament. There is the young man’s career rising through under-secretaryships to the Paradise of the Right Honourables; and there is the middle-aged man’s career, which eschews this competition and makes influence with independence its goal. On this latter condition a man of your temperament will find politics a fascinating occupation, and, though he may be in the thick of the fight, it will not disturb his peace of mind. When it is known that you want nothing, other people will want you. There never was a time when the disinterested private member entering politics at your age, and bringing a reputation from another sphere,

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“might have greater influence and power, and seldom a time when elderly politicians scheming for small advancements cut a foolisher figure.

“But to you least of all men need I enlarge on this theme. You are a philosopher, and you have no ounce of jealousy in your composition. You will help and encourage the rising youngsters, and give their seniors the last scrap of your experience and counsel without asking so much as a lawyer’s fee. And so, getting all the benefits of the public life and avoiding its petty vexations and evil passions, you will prolong your youth, get taken out of yourself just when the years begin to shut you in, and do another full day’s work before you go hence.—Ever yours,

W. B.”

CHAPTER XIX

SATAN THE STATISTICIAN

I PASS now to another of the short essays which I find among the new papers. It needs no explanation.

“ And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel. . . . And God was displeased with this thing ; therefore he smote Israel.

“ I see in the history of the last hundred years an illuminating commentary on this most cryptic of Scriptural incidents. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the various communities of the world lived in a flattering state of ignorance about themselves and their conditions. No great nation knew the numbers of its population, the amount of its trade, its birth-rate, or its death-rate, the proportion of its rich men and its poor men. Any nation could indulge in any dreams that flattered its vanity, and claim to be bigger, wealthier, and more enterprising than its neighbours, without running the risk of exposure or disillusion; and a grand kind of chivalrous boastfulness about imponderable manly virtues was the mark of patriotism.

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"Into this romantic fool's paradise comes Satan, the statistician, bringing envy and malice, shattering dreams and poetry, prime author of the deadly prose and ungodly materialism of modern life. He will measure us and hold us up to scorn if we fall short of our neighbours by one inch in stature; he will keep us racked with anxiety lest we cease to grow or our neighbours grow faster; he will insist on the fullest exposure not only to ourselves but to all the world of our delicacies and weaknesses and our sins and shortcomings. When we are strong he will fill us with dread lest we become weak; when we are weak he will fill us with envy of those who are strong. And all the time he will insist that nothing shall count but what can be weighed in his scales or measured by his rule: and woe betide the country which would cheat him by putting its soul into the scale. For Satan, the statistician, has no mercy on you if you be merely beautiful or gifted; he requires peremptorily that you be plump and sleek and your pockets bulging."

Bagshot cannot run a parable for more than thirty lines, and here he stops, but I find the subject more lucidly developed in several of his notebooks. Thus:

"Statistics are the clinical thermometers of the modern world. There is an incessant

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"taking of temperatures, followed by jealous comparison of the resulting records, and every patient examines not only his own but every other patient's fever chart. This is a chronic source of jealousy and unrest in the modern world. It tends at times to an almost insane hypochondria, in which the patient declares himself ill beyond recovery, though his appetite is enormous and his growth unceasing.

"The habit encouraged by statisticians of weighing quantities, instead of measuring qualities, is most debasing to ideals in a modern State. It is habitually taken for granted that a nation must be inferior to its rivals if it falls short of them in population, territory, or volume of trade, regardless of the fact that on two out of three of these tests China would still be the leading nation of the world. Of what use is it to cry out on the vulgarity of worshipping wealth when all the great nations and their statesmen and spokesmen deliberately preach to us that the richest among them is the greatest? The chief need of Europe to-day is to recover the thought that a country may hold the primacy of the world by leading it in ideas and the art of living. But we shall not do that till we have shut half the Government departments and killed all the statisticians."

There follow certain notes in a slightly different strain about the population question:

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“ Nothing is so strange as the varying moods of the English people about the population question. At the end of the eighteenth century, and until the end of the Napoleonic wars, the prevailing panic was lest oaks should fail for the building of ships and men for their manning. To plant trees, and bring forth children were the first duties of the patriotic Briton. The old Poor-law was seriously defended on the ground that the subsidy which it gave to the labourer helped him to marry early and breed quickly. At the end of the war opinion swung rapidly to the opposite pole, and the country fell into a panic lest population should outgrow subsistence. The census of 1801, which showed the population of England and Wales to be 9,000,000, was received with incredulity; that of 1821, which showed an increase of 5,000,000, with consternation. Rich men appealed to the figures as a powerful argument for a policy which would check population; poor men were driven to challenge their accuracy lest too powerful a weapon should be given to the rich. Cobbett imagined that he had reduced them to absurdity by arguing that, if they were accurate, the population of England and Wales would reach the portentous total of 29,000,000 by the end of the nineteenth century—about three millions short of the actual figures realized. But neither Cobbett nor any of the disputants on either side found courage to argue that the increase was good and ought

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“to be welcomed. For the next fifty years the country remained under the influence of Malthus and his theory, and all the economists and wise men cast about for policies which would check the multiplication of the proletariat and its proles. So late as 1874 I find an old Liberal publicist arguing in a book called ‘Rocks Ahead’ that the one way of saving the country was somehow to reduce its population to 20,000,000.

“But the moment the slightest sign has appeared that this object was being achieved opinion has swung again to the opposite pole, and from 1890 onwards most of the newspapers and all the preachers have been in a state of despair about the slightest check in the percentage of growth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century we wanted population regardless of comfort; during the middle of the nineteenth century we wanted comfort regardless of population; at the close of the nineteenth century we demand both comfort and population. The irrepressible subconscious will-to-live of the community comes here into conflict with its prudence, and proclaims as death and decadence what the wise men called thrift and forethought.”

The above was written in 1903, but there is an addendum dated 3rd January, 1905:

“These conflicting thoughts lie deep at the

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“roots of the present controversy between Free Trade and Protection. The ideal Protectionist policy implies a self-sufficing state in which there is a perfect equilibrium between population and home produce and a happy adjustment of taste to what can be produced at home. In such circumstances a country produces sufficient for its own needs, and prices are not raised beyond the world level by a tariff which restricts the home market to the home producers. Such a condition is not necessarily the result of a tariff, but a tariff crystallizes it, makes it permanent and, so to speak, registers the decision of the country to be self-sufficing and independent of foreign supplies. Among modern nations, France approaches nearest to this ideal, producing sufficient for herself of most of the staples of life in years of normal yield, though working on a margin narrow enough to bring her Protectionist system into play, when harvests are bad.

“It is absurd for Free Traders to deny that this ideal has its merits and its attractions, and may be worth the sacrifices it involves, if it is steadily and clear-sightedly pursued. But inevitably it implies a static conception of national well-being, and is incompatible with any growth of population which would disturb the equilibrium between the numbers to be fed and the feeding capacity of the country. In France alone is this logically worked out, and we see Protection going hand in hand with

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“a law of property which discourages large families, with the result that her population remains stationary, or grows only in the degree in which the equilibrium can be preserved.

“Where this equilibrium has been lost and cannot be restored, the growth of population must sooner or later bring a demand for free imports. England was driven to it in 1846, not by argument but by clear perception that her population had outrun her capacity to supply herself, and she definitely made her choice between the ideal of growth and the ideal of self-sufficiency. Germany, with her smaller population per square mile, and the United States with her vast unexhausted territories, have still a long way to travel before they definitely reach this imperative decision; but reach it they must, if their populations continue to grow, and then they will have to make up their minds whether, like France, they put ‘Full’ outside their doors or take down the barriers which prevent the produce of other countries coming in to feed their multitudes.

“There are infinite degrees of Protectionism and Free Trade between the two ideals, and at various stages the conflict resolves itself into a struggle of interests striving to maintain the barriers against a population which has outgrown them, or of divergent interests which want some barriers removed and others maintained. But the bitterness of the struggle lies

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“precisely in this fact that *the interest in maintaining Protection becomes greatest at the moment when the need to remove it is most imperative.* It is just then that the Protected interests are reaping their largest profit.

“The mischief of Infant Industries Protection is precisely this, that it tends to impose a stationary ideal upon a country just at the moment when it most needs expansion. It may enable a complete microcosm to be established in a new country, but the very perfection of the protected small State is fatal to its growth. It is thus that a few people make a small thing of a great country.”

Let me here promise and undertake that from now till I have done with him, Bagshot shall say no word more on the fiscal question. I add, however, a passage about France and Germany from another notebook which raises the same question:

“Too imaginative to blot out the memory of the lost provinces, too much wedded to her own refinements in the art of living to compete successfully with her neighbour in numbers and brute force, France at this moment presents the supreme instance of conflicting ideals. Unable to forget her wrongs, and unable to avenge them, she is obliged to seek peace, while dreaming of war. The census forbids the *revanche*; pride and sentiment will

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“not let the wound be forgotten. Common-sense cries out for acceptance of the inevitable, but there is no Frenchman who can persuade his countrymen to accept the gross fact of modern Germany. For years to come, so far as one can foresee, this impossible loyalty to a lost cause will remain the governing fact in the politics of Western Europe, and the point of danger for the friends of France, as well as for France herself. Fantastic and unpractical as it may seem, I confess to taking a certain pleasure in watching the dominance of an idea and the confusion which it brings to all policies founded on the belief that man is governed by self-interest. For all material purposes the French dream is disastrous to France, but all Europe is under the spell of it, and there will be no escape from it in my life-time, or till I have long passed from the scene, and the Latin races have been finally vanquished by the Teutonic in the struggle for numbers.”

CHAPTER XX

A BATCH OF LETTERS

I HAVE a bundle of letters before me, written during two Swiss holidays (1898 and 1900), which range over many subjects in a desultory way. So let me just run through them and cull a few passages at random. Here is a letter to Charles Harman about a newspaper controversy, in which that rash youth appears to have involved himself with a literary man:

“ Good for you, Charles! If you are getting the worst of it in an argument with a literary man, always attack his style. That’ll touch him, if nothing else will. I have tried it once and again myself, and found it infallible.”

Another letter a fortnight later returns to the subject, and by this time, I gather, Keats had been dragged in, for Bagshot writes:

“ If Keats were really killed by a ‘ Quarterly Reviewer,’ he is surely much more than recompensed by the immense consolation which his martyrdom has afforded to inferior writers

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“under the lash of criticism. Unfortunately, it does not follow that, because some great men have been belittled, the little men who get their due are great. But don't, I pray you, destroy that illusion.”

A letter to Mrs. Harman contains this message to “Tom”—a cousin of hers who had been enjoying himself at Oxford, and, apparently, got into a scrape:

“Tell Tom from me that ‘ragging’ is either a great insult or an affectionate familiarity. There is nothing between the two. But you must know a man very well indeed before you put him into a horse-pond.”

The same letter contains an avuncular rebuke to Molly herself:

“You say you ‘can't afford not to hit back.’ But are you really so poor as all that—so poor that you actually have to ‘repay him with his own coin,’ having none of your own? Do, I beg you, my dearest Moll, consider what bankruptcy these phrases imply.”

A week later he is philosophizing *more suo*:

“I got into talk to-day with a Swiss peasant, and he told me a very interesting thing. If you manure an Alpine meadow you destroy the Alpine flowers. A very few, like the crocus,

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“are strong enough to survive both freezing and coddling, but the average hardy plant is killed by it. Aren’t they just like humans?”

“Fear God, yes, but don’t be afraid of Him. *Il y a des gens dont il ne faut pas dire qu’ils craignent Dieu mais bien qu’ils en ont peur.* I have that down in an old diary of mine, but with no name to it. Do, please, tell me who said it.

“Have you ever thought of this—that, if we pass out of time when we die, there need be no separation at all for those who go hence. The moment of our departure may be literally the moment of our reunion on the other side with those who stand watching around our death-beds; for their earthly life also may have passed in the eternal instant of our death and awakening. The reflection has its drawbacks if we are minded to escape from some earthly connexions; yet even in the timelessness of eternity one may hope for some synchronization of kindred spirits which may enable one to escape a reunion with J. or B. by the equivalent of a thousand years. I revel in the thought of an existence in which one may be a million years late for dinner and one’s spiritual hostess politely remark that it is nothing.”

Yet another week and he is arguing again with Charles Harman about literature:

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" Let it be boldly said that a large part of the literature which is called classical is entirely second-rate, and has only been kept in nominal existence because the authors of it have achieved a merited immortality by a small quantity of first-rate work. For this reason the student of literature should always be encouraged to express his own honest opinions and preferences apart from the glamour of names and reputations. Herein, as a rule, he can rely on no sure guidance from the established teachers and critics, who resemble and even exceed the theologians in the reverence that they pay to orthodox traditions.

" A kind of demi-theology grows up around a demi-god. Shakespeare, for instance. There are orthodox schools and modernist schools among the Shakespeare theologians; and even a school which denies his existence. That is the highest compliment of all, and has been paid to no other *man* except Homer.

" If you would test your admiration for an author's style, take a passage at random and copy it out. How much that is merely glittering falls to pieces under this test; how the pen splutters and stumbles over this solecism, that awkwardness, this loose construction, that vulgarity! The spurious will often deceive the eye when it will not bear to be written.

" It is good discipline to write lawyer fashion without stops. Try it when you feel yourself getting involved or losing grip of the logic of

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“writing. A sentence which needs stops to show its meaning or to clear it of ambiguity is structurally a bad sentence, and should always be rewritten.

“ One of the delightful things about literature is that an author may borrow without being in debt. Shakespeare borrowed hugely, but is scarcely ever in debt. The literary purloiner, unlike the common burglar, is excused precisely in so far as he is able to make what he steals his own. It is evidence for the defence that he has melted down his haul. To be branded as a plagiarist is merely to have failed in this essential appropriation.”

The next batch of letters deals with certain incidents about which Mrs. Harman appears to have consulted him:

“ Tragedy, my dear Molly, the philosopher will tell you, is not a conflict between right and wrong, but a conflict between right and right. And that applies exactly to the case of you and M. You were quite right to do what you did, and she is quite right in resenting it. On that basis you may come together again hereafter, if you both desire it, but on no other. Don't for a moment think I am blaming you. There are occasions in life when it is quite impossible to avoid giving pain. This, I am sure, is one of them. But don't make it a grievance that M. is offended. She would not

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“only be less than human but positively inhuman if she weren’t.

“One of the things that puzzle me most in life is the extreme anxiety of the emancipated to be accepted by the conventional. There is Mrs. F., who ran away from her first husband, and having been divorced, has now settled down with F. six miles from Bradlow. She is outraged because conventional people, who have not been divorced, will not ‘receive’ her. The whole neighbourhood rings with her complaints. She wants the entire code of the marriage laws altered to suit her case, though what good it would do her, since under the present law she has got her divorce and got her re-marriage, I can’t conceive. For aught I know, she may have had very good reasons for running away with young F. That is between him and her and both and their Maker. I don’t presume to judge the case. But that, having done it, she should want to re-enter the circles of the unemancipated, to whom the whole affair is necessarily a challenge and an outrage, seems to me the *ne plus ultra* of feminine perversity. If exclusion from that circle was too high a price to pay for her adventure with F., why, in the name of common-sense, did she venture it at all?”

From the next batch, addressed again to Charles Harman, I select two inverted moralities:

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“Punctuality is one of my worst vices. If I make an appointment, I simply must be there at the exact moment; in this respect I work automatically, like those queer people who can wake themselves at an exact moment of any hour in the night. But nobody else, I find, is ever there; so it comes about that I have wasted more time from this single cause than from any other in my life. Thus is virtue rewarded.

“Another copy-book maxim has played havoc with my life—‘never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.’ Under the influence of this pestilent morality, I am for ever letting to-morrow’s work slop backwards into to-day’s, and doing painfully and nervously to-day what I could do quickly and easily to-morrow. If you are an artist, take your time and all the time there is; if you are just a common grubber like me, don’t begin till you must finish—in short, never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.”

Next let me insert the portrait of a certain E. S., to whose identity I have no clue:

“E. S. is staying here, and his presence has considerably damped my spirits. He is a blameless man, but wears a haunted look, as if he were expiating some crime in a past existence. His conversation is to match, and he makes the lightest remark with an air of

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“profound affliction. Among other things he is persuaded that nearly all the married women of his acquaintance are living terrible lives of hidden tragedy—from which I judge that he is considered by women to be a very sympathetic man. He has Röntgen-ray eyes, which detect skeletons in double-locked cupboards. Till I talked with him I never for a moment suspected the appalling number of eminent and distinguished people whose lives are blighted by horrible secrets. He is no scandal-monger, he is only very very sorry for the mass of misery which these eminent ones have to bear unconsolated. Before he had been here a week he had found out all the horrid things which had happened within a radius of ten miles during the last fifty years, and now I cannot go for a walk with him • but what he points out this smiling hamlet as the scene of a gruesome crime or that peaceful chalet as the stage of an unsuspected domestic tragedy. I am trying to invent a story to tell him about myself, for I am sadly conscious that I am incomplete in his eyes until furnished with a melodrama of some kind, and if I cannot think of a suitable one myself he will quite certainly think of something extremely unsuitable *for* me. Last night he followed me up the Col to see the sunset, and the afterglow suggested the disagreeable thought to him that a miasma of human misery was steaming upwards from the groaning world. Happily he departs

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“on Wednesday, or I should have to move elsewhere.”

Let me wind up this chapter with a few shorter passages:

“ You speak better than you know about S. I like to hear it said of a man that all his swans are geese. Throughout my life I have noticed that the men of whom this is said have a high proportion of swans to their geese.

“ If we could all manage each other’s money affairs, instead of having to manage our own, what a world of trouble would be saved! Everybody is afraid for himself, and everybody thinks his neighbour’s fears ridiculous, as they generally are.

“ I like the idea of a public trustee, but there is yet another official whom I even more desire to see established, and whom I will call the official taker of responsibility. What blessed holidays we should have if before starting we could just go to his office, and for a small fee dump down on him all our worries and anxieties, all our fears about our money or our work, all that we have pledged and promised to perform, all that we sha’n’t do or haven’t done; and jump for a space into a new world without past or future. The joke of it

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"would be that, when we came back, we should find that as a rule the official had lost or mislaid a considerable part of our most treasured anxieties. That, indeed, would be a special part of his miraculous duties."

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CHAPTER XXI

ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL

As I have already explained, Bagshot's vocation as a Civil servant prevented him from taking part in politics, while it gave him special opportunities for forming a judgment on public affairs and public men from within. He had been private secretary to more than one Minister, and had spent numberless hours in the Lobby and under the clock in the House of Commons following debates which affected his Department; and being wholly without the bureaucrat's impatience of popular assemblies, he was a shrewd and unprejudiced critic of debates. It is, I know, supposed in these days to be a sure sign that a man is not an "advanced thinker" if he is a believer in party government; but I cannot disguise the fact that Bagshot was a believer, and a staunch believer, in the party system. I have in my possession a letter from him written a few months before his death, an extract from which will bear quoting:

"Do let us realize that an unorganized democracy is powerless against every kind of

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“tyranny, and that the only organization possible in public affairs is that of parties. What your despot hates is not a mob of voters, but organized parties of voters. Nothing is easier, as history proves, than to get a plebiscite for a tyranny from an unorganized mob. Those, therefore, who wish to destroy parties wish, whether they know it or not, to disarm democracy, for the party is its only effective instrument of action. I have noticed throughout my life that the people who inveigh against party government are almost invariably hostile to popular government. What they have in their minds is a government of superior beings, bureaucrats, aristocrats, or intellectual persons calling themselves Socialists—a thing which I profoundly abhor.

“As a purely intellectual exercise you or I might sit down and invent something superior to the British House of Commons and the British party system: but honestly I don’t know where this better thing exists. If the party system is bad, is the group system better, and, if not the group system, shall we find salvation in abolishing groups and parties and leaving every man to go his own way without guidance or hindrance? Your House of Commons would then be a mob of 670 non-party men. The idea fills me with terror, but, whatever other results might follow from it, this I regard as certain: the 670 would be at the mercy of any little group which acted

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“together, and about this group the despised party system would inevitably come into existence again. For this is the law of all assemblies which have the power to act as well as talk. ‘Parliament,’ by the way, is a misleading word. The House of Commons is not a talking-shop, but an Assembly which *acts* through debate.

“The root of the matter is that your politician is everywhere and always a man who *acts* in association with others. His party may be large or it may be small, but in either case it will fetter his liberty of action. He may think as much ahead of his party as he likes and as much behind it as his conscience will allow, but he must act with it or break with it and join another. Whether parties are few and big or many and small depends entirely on the varieties of opinion in a country, and since the British people commonly take simple and massive views, their parties are few and big—which personally I think to be an advantage. But in either case the condition of being a politician at all is that you submit to the discipline of your party or group. Many excellent men are incapable of this. They have a conscience or a temperament which compels them to differ from all the parties. Abundant opportunities are open to them for influencing their neighbours; and if we ever do have a real critical, revising Second Chamber, we may open the door to some of them by

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“proportional representation. But it is folly for them to complain that they are shut out of a particular kind of career the essence of which is action in combination. When a man says that his conscience prevents him from combining with his neighbours, we may praise him and admire him and encourage him in all possible ways to communicate his solitary thoughts by speech or pen, but we cannot be expected to distress ourselves because he is excluded from a career in which combined action is essential.”

I may add that Bagshot had an enormous respect for the judgment of the British people, and I have heard him say that, looking back over the General Elections of his lifetime, he considered the popular verdicts to have been without exception right and just, and even the size of the majorities to have been delicately adjusted to the equities of the case. I find at the end of his copy of Gustave Le Bon's “*La Foule*” a rather drastic comment on that Gallic analysis of collective hysteria. The British crowd, he says, “has an admirable instinct *for so much of an idea as will work*. They will praise the rest, cheer the rest, and make a popular hero of the visionary who will give them a dream, but only for what will work will they go to the poll. This is what the electioneers mean when they say that their meetings are no clue to the election. Long may the distinction between cheering and voting survive in this country.”

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The new notebooks abound in observations about public affairs. In 1896 I come upon a passage too long to quote, in which he is shaking his head over certain school-books which had come into his hands, and which taught that the British Empire was irresistible and all-powerful. "On the contrary," he writes, "the duty of the British Empire, as of all nations, is *to discover the limits of its power and to work within them*. It can be irresistible on its own ground and in its own element, but provided always that its policy is not so spread as to bring it into collision with others who are irresistible on their ground and in their element. It is absurd that the present generation should be taught out of books which assume the state of Europe to be the same as it was after the battle of Waterloo." There follow some observations about armaments:

"Armaments are like bullion in the bank on which diplomacy draws cheques. It is pure hypocrisy to pretend that they are only an insurance against war. They are for almost every country the foundation of its policy in time of peace.

"A relative of mine devoted several years of his life and many thousands of pounds to inventing a process for rendering gunpowder non-explosive. His enterprise was completely successful, but he discovered too late that nobody wanted non-explosive gunpowder. Some people did not want gunpowder at all,

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“but those who wanted gunpowder wanted it to go off. In vain did my uncle explain that the gunpowder which he had rendered non-explosive could be restored by another process to its explosive condition.

“My relative’s ingenuity seems to me an exact parable of the proceedings of the Governments of Europe. They accumulate vast stores of gunpowder, and then hold Hague Conferences to see if they can render it non-explosive. They spend millions on ordnance, and millions more on paying statesmen and diplomats to prevent the ordnance going off. Everybody assures you that his own gunpowder is non-explosive and that everybody else’s gunpowder is highly dangerous. I know nothing to meet the case but the universal application of my relative’s invention.”

Another note about British policy may come in here:

“The Englishman not only lives in an island, but wherever he goes he seeks to reproduce the island condition. From my youth upwards the whole purpose of British policy in the East has been to make an island of India. It is not enough that she is isolated by mountains; there must be buffer-States to prevent her boundaries from touching those of any Power which might desire to possess her; there must be an absolute veto on all continuous railways which might

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“link her up with Europe and the West. In Africa we use Belgium and Portugal to isolate us from Germany; in America we watch jealously lest there should be the slightest breach in the Tariff wall which isolates Canada from the United States, and deplore the omission of which Providence has been guilty in not providing an ocean to divide the two countries. The true Englishman shudders at the thought of living in physical contact with a great and powerful neighbour, and will not permit even a hole to be burrowed from Calais to Dover. Hence the elaborate apparatus of neutral zones, buffer - States, guarantees of independence for small nations to keep big ones at arms' length, and other isolating devices which are the peculiar contribution of Great Britain to the diplomacy of the world;”

I come next to a series of observations on the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general:

“When there is a run on a bank, it is prudence for one depositor to get his money out, if he can, but it is madness for all the depositors to make a simultaneous rush for all the money.

“It is wise for one brewer to buy one public-house to protect himself from the competition of other brewers; but it is madness for all the

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“brewers to buy all the public-houses with the idea of protecting themselves from each other. If all the brewers do it, they are paying a great price for what was already theirs before they bought it. One brewer may increase his trade by acquiring a tied house; but all the brewers cannot increase their trade by buying all the houses.

“It is wise for one trader to protect himself against competitors, if he can; but it is folly for all the traders to try to protect themselves against all their competitors. For one man's competitor is another man's customer, and when they have all collectively excluded their competitors, they have also shut out their customers.

“Similarly the armaments of Europe are for all the nations madness and for each nation imperative. It may, therefore, be very useful to organize an international movement against them, but it is useless to agitate against your own Government for doing what other Governments are doing.”

I pass from this to three notes about compromise which are worth recording:

“Very few people are able to make the essential distinction between a compromise and an equivocation. A compromise is a real mean between two extremes which both parties

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“will accept as a basis of action; an equivocation is a verbal formula which can be so interpreted as to enable both parties to retain their original position.

“The articles of the Church of England are less a compromise than an equivocation. They are so drafted as to enable one party to maintain that they are Catholic and another party to maintain that they are Protestant. They represent, therefore, not a compromise on which the two parties can unite, but a formula which enables them to go their separate ways under an appearance of unity.

“A large number of the constitutional compromises which figure in English law and history are of the same character. They have served the practical purpose of masking or concealing conflict, but they are interpreted by each party with a mental reserve which may declare itself surprisingly in a moment of strain.”

Here are certain observations about the trend of social politics:

“I smile to myself when I hear the Western man speak of ‘the problem of the educated native’ as if it were a special affliction of the Government of India. The arrival of the educated proletariat is precisely *the* problem of all the Governments of Europe, and in the

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“next thirty years it will be every bit as perplexing in London and Berlin as it now is in Calcutta.

“Chamberlain’s doctrine of ransom is perfectly sound, and all the Governments know it. I know it in my own department. When Society guarantees the weak rich in the possession of their property, it is obliged to find compensation for the strong poor. And that in all States alike is the beginning of Socialism.

“*Vox populi, vox Dei?* No, indeed, my friend, or you and I would have to turn our coats every time it brought our political opponents into power. And yet I can imagine a man holding at one and the same time that his own views were right, and that the country was right in rejecting them. For the idea which is right for him only becomes right for the community if and when the community *wills* it. The impatient idealist is for forcing his doctrine on the unconverted, which is a worse mistake in politics than in religion.

“One of the most engaging points about modern political leaders is the elephantine clumsiness of their efforts to deceive. I have seen a dozen grand tactical manœuvres in my times, but not one of them could have deceived an intelligent child.

“When a political party sells its soul, it

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“never gets paid. The operation of dishing the Whigs has always been fatal to the Tory Party.”

I find that I have far from exhausted my material, but I must reserve the remainder for a later chapter.

CHAPTER XXII

MORE ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL

AMONG Bagshot's notebooks I find one labelled "the optimist's vade - mecum." It consists entirely of passages culled from books and speeches thirty years old and upwards predicting imminent disaster for the Empire, decay of British trade and energy, dwindling of population, eclipse of faith and morals, and so forth. His niece tells me that whenever a modern pessimist came out with a peculiarly dismal foreboding he would fly to the "vade-mecum" and cap it with a parallel passage of exactly the same import fetched from the lumber of a previous generation. Among the letters which have been sent to me is one to a correspondent in the Indian Civil Service who had expressed his disapproval of certain language heard at the Indian National Congress about a remote future when India would be a "free and independent Sovereign State." To which Bagshot replies:

"You might as well be angry with Macaulay's New Zealander. The British Empire will go, in India or elsewhere, when there is something

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“better to replace it, and by that time you and I will be able to take a celestial and impartial view of human affairs. So, pray, don't let yourself be disturbed by Mr. Bengali Ghose, or whatever his name may be. You ask me what *I* think will be the ‘ultimate future of India.’ I tell you frankly I haven't the slightest idea; but I do know that a vast deal of unnecessary worry is caused in politics by asking questions which cannot be answered. That morbid habit is at the root of most international jealousies, and not a little of your troubles in India. What a paradise this world would be if the nations would only keep pace with the day's work, which is far too much for most of them as it is, instead of worrying about what may happen to them thirty years hence. I like to think of you sitting in your District Court administering British justice;’ and ‘if you want advice I will give it you in eight words: Give them the law and cut the prophets.”

To a friend in the diplomatic service who writes to him about Anglo - German difficulties he replies:

“The first thing a Foreign Minister should do when he fears a rival nation is to instruct all the Embassies and Consulates to be studiously polite to it in small things. I trust no man to stand for the important things unless he knows

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“how to yield the unimportant with a good grace. You diplomatists seem generally to reverse this process. The word goes round that Germany or France is dangerous, and straightway there sets up a trivial and chronic irritation, in which the Governments assail each other with pin-pricks and all their emissaries set to work to find something sharp to scratch with. It would be great folly if you were really as desperately afraid of each other as you make out, but that I take leave to doubt.”

The same letter winds up with an observation which is not less true now than when it was written:

“The chief mischief in European affairs at this moment is that strategy has become the master instead of the servant of policy. The German General Staff has imposed its military conceptions on all Europe, and the policy of each country is a manœuvring for positions in imaginary wars invented by Staff Colleges. We shall have no rest until the strategists are again brought under the control of the statesman.”

I pass now to sundry observations about affairs which I must take at random:

“Beware always, says a Russian writer, lest

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“your ideals become your idols. Patriotism is a great ideal, but jingoism an ugly idol.

“The greatest fallacy in politics is the assumption that the will of the people is something constant and definite. When the Conservative Party claims that the House of Lords stands for the will of the people, it generally means the will in re-action. All progress depends on catching and fixing the public in its *best* mood. The Second Chamber that we need is one that will check a rash impulse but never thwart a good one.

“Two things are commonly said about democracy—first, that it is fickle; second, that elections are lost or won by a small minority of select people who transfer their votes from party to party. These are much praised for their sobriety, steadiness and moderation.

“If this is true, the fickleness rests not with the mob but with the select few.

“In politics the meaning of many epithets is exactly inverted. A politician is called courageous when he tells his party in sonorous language what it wants to hear; and he is called timid when he resists what they desire. It requires no courage in politics to attack an opponent, but often a great deal to tell the truth to your friends. For this reason the martial epithets which politicians apply to each other are mostly nonsense.

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“ What threatens this country is not extreme opinions but stupid opinions. The British ‘ intellectual ’ who prides himself on his moderation seems to possess a whole arsenal of hundred-ton arguments in favour of stupidity.

“ In the human conflict there are two classes of combatants, one fighting under cover, the other fighting in the open. The first never see their opponents; the second are constantly engaged in a visible duel. The first work in offices, studies, counting-houses, consulting-rooms; the second in the Law Courts, the Stock Exchange, the House of Commons. In deciding a profession the first and most important question to answer is whether you are by nature a worker under cover or a fighter in the open.

“ Of all the open-fighting careers politics is the most ruthless and the most exacting. It is a fight in which your friend more than your enemy is a competitor for the prize you seek. Hence for the ambitious man the society of an opponent is more restful than the society of a friend.

“ The competition of the politicians is as if all the actors (and actresses) in London were performing together in the same theatre.

“ Dr. Johnson said of a man marrying a second time that it was the triumph of hope over experience. When a new Government comes into office the public achieve a similar victory.

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“ There are two classes of politicians—those who use extreme language about moderate proposals, and those who use moderate language about extreme proposals. In dealing with the British people it is well that your language should be most moderate when your proposals are most extreme.

“ The debate on Socialism belongs to evolution and not to politics. It may be—and, personally, I think it highly probable—that most societies will in course of time evolve a Socialistic structure; but the idea that people calling themselves Socialists can do it by legislation is absurd, and simply argues an ignorance of the limits of legislation.

“ Nothing ever suited the English people better than the union of Church and State in the person of Mr. Gladstone. Uniquely he combined in his own person the clerical and political offices—never so much of a politician as to cease to be a preacher, never so much of a preacher as to forget that he was a politician. John Bull likes a pious politician just as much as he dislikes a political cleric.

“ There is no subtler way of flattering a retired official than to criticize his successor in office.

“ If the absent are always wrong, a rejected alternative is nearly always right. We know the evils of what is, but not the drawbacks of the might-have-been.

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“When I hear a traveller dogmatizing about the character of the native—how he loves being beaten; despises those that are kind to him, admires those that oppress him—I say to myself that, though I have no idea what kind of man the native may be, I am sure he is not this kind of man. *Never accept from anyone an account of a man which inverts human nature.*”

A passage from a letter to a friend in 1905 about the cost of Empire may be quoted in this place:

“Do remember that for the great mass of people who toil morning and evening to fill their pots and keep a roof over their heads, the running of an Empire must always be part of the decorative and not of the necessary side of life. The individual working-man will get his bread in a little State as in a big State, and whether he lives in an Empire or in the Republic of Andorra. It is a great thing that he should have enough pride and sentiment and imagination to wish to spread his flag and expand his race, and I wish with all my heart that we may never have to expose the latent disinterestedness of the British people in these respects to the crude test of a cash account. But if you want to avoid that you must not make it too hard for them. You tell me quite gaily that you ‘foresee a time when it may be

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“‘necessary to add fifty millions a year to the naval and military expenditure of the country,’ and you seem to think that it doesn’t matter. I will only say in answer that if you do it in such a way that the working-class are heavily burdened by it, you will run a serious risk of their telling you that the Empire is a luxury that they cannot afford. If the finding of this money is a necessity to the Empire, the rich must see to it that the poor are not hit beyond a certain point, for in no other way can we guard the Empire at its heart.”

Bagshot was a warm admirer and partisan of France at a time when she had fewer friends in this country than at present. I subjoin a characteristic comment on the final stage of the Dreyfus case in 1904:

“ I have just been reading Matthew Arnold’s Essay on ‘ Numbers,’ with its indictment of the French for the loss of their Germanic and Hebraic qualities, for their failure in moral ideals, their devotion to the goddess of Lubricity. And now comes the Dreyfus case with its thrilling spectacle of a whole nation doing penance for a single act of injustice, doing it drastically and logically, in sublime loyalty to a moral idea. I can imagine other nations letting Dreyfus go free or granting him ‘ the King’s pardon ’; I can imagine other nations compensating him handsomely; I can imagine

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“other nations compounding with the man to bury the scandal; but I can imagine no other nation seriously, solemnly, and fanatically reversing the whole process of conviction and punishment down to the restoration of the last button on the torn tunic and doing it proudly and openly in the presence of the whole world on the very spot where the victim was degraded. It is magnificent, and I wish I could think that my own country was capable of this thing.”

Side by side with this I ought to place a further entry a year later concerning other French characteristics:

“I was in Paris last week and saw my old friend M. de B. This little dialogue took place between us:

• “I: ‘How is General P.?’

• “M. de B.: ‘Ah, poor man, he is *un homme fini*.’

“I: ‘But how so? It is not six months since I read in the *Temps* that he had had a great success and was generally acknowledged to be one of the most distinguished soldiers in France.’

“M. de B.: ‘What? haven’t you heard of his great misfortune?’

“I: ‘No, tell me.’

“M. de B.: ‘It was at the great review, and he was passing the President’s box at the head of his troops. Just at the saluting-point

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“his horse—bucked, do you call it?—and he came down head over heels, in plumes and uniform. All Paris roared with laughter, and from that moment he is nothing any more.’

“I: ‘But, my good man, you don’t mean to tell me——’

“M. de B.: ‘But, my dear friend, I shall never make you understand the French people. *Le ridicule tue tout en France.* The General P. is *un homme fini.*’ ”

“If, which Heaven forbid, France ever came to ruin,” adds Bagshot, “the epitaph which would have to be written over her tomb would be simply that—*Le ridicule tue tout en France.*”

CHAPTER XXIII

HEREDITY AND HEALTH

THROUGHOUT his life Bagshot took special interest in speculations about heredity and health, and there are among his papers various fragments on this subject which look suspiciously like drafts for letters to the newspapers. I suppress these, since they have possibly appeared before, and pass to a longish entry in his diary for 1902:

“ A worthy and zealous man, calling himself a Eugenist, paid me a visit the other day with the special object, so far as I could discover, of deterring me from matrimony—which I was by no means contemplating. I listened to him, I hope, with patience and politeness; and, when he had done, there followed this brief dialogue:

“ I: ‘ You are of opinion that insanity in a family should be a bar to marriage? ’

“ Eug.: ‘ Most certainly.’

“ I: ‘ And Alcoholism? ’

“ Eug.: ‘ Assuredly.’

“ I: ‘ You are of opinion that a tuberculous or phthisical tendency makes marriage undesirable? ’

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"Eug.: 'Highly undesirable.'

"I.: 'You are of opinion that cancer in a family should be considered a bad?'

"Eug.: 'In almost all cases.'

"I.: 'You are of opinion that hereditary nephritis makes a very undesirable condition?'

"Eug.: 'Undoubtedly.'

"I.: 'You think that a perityphlitic appendicitic family had better be avoided?'

"Eug.: 'Certainly, if possible.'

"I.: 'And still more a paralytic or apoplectic family?'

"Eug.: 'Of course.'

"I.: 'Well, then, my dear Sir, can you tell me the name of any friend of yours or any member of your own family whom you consider qualified for matrimony?'

"Eug. (after long reflection): 'Humph! Well, to tell the truth, I never thought of that way.'

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"My Eugenist was a very honest and a very simple man, or he would have found means of parrying my attack. But clearly Eugenics cannot be worked this way, or in our zeal for the best stock we should extinguish the race.

"Where my Eugenic friend goes wrong is in failing to realize that a great many of the maladies which he calls degeneracy are the just too much of the highly developed nervous system which is the special endowment of the

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“gifted families. Overcharge the battery ever so little and genius becomes insanity; give one member of the family a volt too much and the delicate balance of physical and mental qualities on which sanity depends is broken down. Extinguish the family and you will rid the world of some degenerates, but you will also and at the same time rob it of its most gifted men. My Eugenist would never have let Cowper, Lamb, Coleridge, Stevenson, Keats, Ruskin, Henley, or De Quincey see the light.

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“The doctrine of heredity should never be forgotten by parents or remembered by children. To the first it is the assertion of their responsibility; to the second a reminder of their helplessness. Fortunately our Darwinians and Weismannians have between them left the doctrine in such a state that it is prudent for parents to believe the worst and possible for children to hope the best. There is no man of science who will dare say that the child of the drunkard *must* take to drink, and none that will venture to tell the drunken parent that the child *won't* suffer.

“The longer I live the more I am convinced that the most enviable hereditary endowment is a strong will. Let a child have the will to live and the will to be well, and he will kill a thousand hereditary devils. All the Eugenics in the world will not give us this, and too much

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“Eugenics may give us the athlete of Plato—*ἀνδρείωτερος αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ*, but also *μισόλογος καὶ ἄμουσος* (twice the man he was, but a hater of philosophy and uncivilized).”

A year later I found another entry on the same subject:

“Thirty years ago it was customary to hear solemn people talking gloomily about hospitals and medicine and philanthropy as so many ways of interfering with the natural process of eliminating the unfit. Yet constantly in my time the standard of life and health has improved with the spread of these agencies; and it is now certain that almost all that the scientific men used to say on this subject is riddled with fallacies. The diseases which medicine has combated—cholera, typhus, smallpox, typhoid, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria—swept away fit and unfit, and were, if anything, rather more destructive to the fit than the unfit. It is almost a proverb that the weak survive and the strong succumb to typhoid and enteric. The breeding power of men on a low standard of life and health is unlimited—witness India and China—and none of the natural scourges make any serious impression on it. Biologically, the elimination of the unfit is almost useless, unless you can do it before they reach the age of parentage, and that involves exposure of infants and wholesale

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“slaughter of the young and defenceless. It is useless to construct a theory on the assumption that men can or ought to behave as tigers and wolves. We have to consider what man, being man, can do on human conditions to improve the race of men. This banishes once and for all the *elimination* of the living unfit by human effort. Nature may do it, God may do it; man cannot do it. Man's effort is to give men health and to leave the rest to God or nature.

“Can the Eugenist, then, do nothing? Certain things, I think, provided always he remembers that the loveless scientific marriage is as likely to defeat his purpose as any mismatching of the unfit. But it is a doctrine for match-makers and not for lovers. The lovers will laugh at you whatever you say. But persuade the matchmakers — parents, guardians, aunts, friends — that it is crime and folly deliberately to arrange a marriage between two young people, each of whom has the same hereditary weakness, and you will in time make some impression. Make it an offence which may void marriage for either of the parties to have concealed the existence of a disabling infirmity or hereditary taint and, again, you may do something. And if at the same time you can persuade the young people that to live a godly and sober life is the condition of becoming good parents, you will do still more. I have yet to be convinced that what a

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“man can do for himself is not twice as important as what his grandfathers and grandmothers have done for him.”

Let me add to this a letter which Bagshot wrote in 1898 to a friend who asked him to subscribe to a health society and sent him various pamphlets and leaflets dealing with “degeneration”:

“MY DEAR BERNARD,

“If it were, indeed, true, as your friends seem to believe, that, in spite of all our efforts in sanitation and hygiene, the race was steadily ‘degenerating,’ we might as well give up the whole business and leave a doomed people to fight it out with the slum landlords. Personally, I don’t believe a word of it. Every precise inquiry that we have had on this subject proves that degeneracy is the result not of town life or country life, but of certain conditions of living which may be present in either, and may be removed from both. It existed in the old villages under the poor-law, and it exists in many villages to-day. It will not be caused by taking people into the towns or cured by removing them into the country. It will be cured in town or country by giving them decent food, enough air-space, unpolluted water, suitable clothing, and, above all, by saving little children from work and worry until the time of growing is over. When I was

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“a young man, I spent a great deal of my time among the poorest class of town labourers and in visiting the miserable dwellings which they call their homes. I have seen typhus in their midst; I know what their death-rate was, and the proportion of their degenerates and consumptives; and nothing will convince me that the standard of health has not greatly improved during the last twenty-five years, or that the declining death-rate means nothing. You and your friends have classified a great many diseases which passed unnoticed in former times, and you have brought a grand scientific terminology—and, let us hope, a corresponding ameliorative process—to bear on them. And because your process is modern you rush to the conclusion that the things themselves are new. By all means go on with your process, for we are only at the beginning of the health movement; and by all means stir people up to the mass of avoidable physical suffering which is inflicted on the world, but don't tell them that degeneracy is a modern complaint, or you will inevitably undermine their belief in the measures that you propose.

“I should like to see you take out of your literature all your complaints about ‘town-life.’ They are futile and they run to cant. Country-life is no more natural to men than town-life, and to large numbers of men no more healthy than town-life. You will not get a high degree of intelligence out of a purely

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“rural population; you are not sure of even a high standard of physical health. If you doubt this, go to Russia or Eastern Prussia or the West of Ireland. Man needs ~~to~~ live with his neighbours, but with sufficient elbow-room to enable him to be alone. Your ideal is the *rus in urbe*—not to take the town people into the country, which you will never do, but to establish the country conditions in or about the towns, which you can and must do. Concentrate, then, upon your suburbs and open spaces and garden cities, and a hundred years hence we may have a population which will be getting all that the mind needs of the town-life and all that the body needs of the country-life.

“In the meantime, much as I honour your doctors and health-workers, I do see a danger in fixing the attention of the country upon its health. Whatever else you do, I hope most fervently that you won’t infect the working-class with the kind of valetudinarianism which afflicts nearly all the well-to-do in these days. But there, I needn’t trouble my head about that. The working-class, simply because they are a working-class, can’t afford the kind of medicine which, as Plato says, ‘educates disease.’ By the way, if you have forgotten it, look up that admirable passage in the third book of the Republic, about the system of Herodicus and the method of the carpenter.¹

¹ Herodicus, being a trainer and himself of a sickly constitution, by a happy combination of training and doctoring,

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"It is great good sense and as modern as can be.—Sincerely yours, W. B."

To the same correspondent he writes a few months later:

"Why do you talk as if it were of enormous importance to the world that clever and intellectual people should multiply indefinitely?

found out a way of torturing, first and chiefly himself, and, secondly, the rest of the world.

How was that? said Glaucon.

By the invention of lingering death; for he had a mortal disease which he perpetually tended, and as recovery was out of the question, he passed his entire life as a valetudinarian; he could do nothing but attend upon himself, and he was in constant torment whenever he departed from his usual regimen, and so dying hard, by the help of science, he struggled on to old age.

A rare reward of his skill!

Yes, I said, a reward which a man might fairly expect who could not be made to see that, if Asclepius did not instruct his descendants in valetudinarian arts, the omission arose not from ignorance or inexperience of such a department of medicine, but because he knew that in all well-ordered States every individual has an occupation to which he must attend, and therefore has no leisure to spend in continually being ill. This we remark in the case of the artisan, but, ludicrously enough, do not apply the same rule to people of the richer sort.

How do you mean? he said.

I replied: When a carpenter is ill he asks the physician for a rough-and-ready cure; an emetic or a purge or a cautery or the knife—these are his remedies. And if anyone tells him he must go through a course of dietetics, and swathe and swaddle his head, and all that sort of thing, he replies at once that he has no time to be ill, and that he sees no good in a life which is spent in nursing his disease to the neglect of his ordinary calling; and therefore, bidding good-bye to this sort of physician, he resumes his customary diet, and either gets well and lives and does his business, or, if his constitution fails, he dies and has no more trouble.—PLATO, "Republic," III. 406, Jowett's translation.

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"Nature knows better. Their comparative infertility is her device for keeping them within bounds. They are the salt of the earth, you say. Exactly, and the earth, like soup, is spoilt by too much salt.

"I grant you, however, that a different question arises about property. The comparative infertility of the propertied classes tends to a concentration of property in the hands of a limited caste—which an indefinitely multiplying proletariat will not tolerate as a permanent condition. The men of property must multiply if they are to abate the edge of envy.
W. B."

CHAPTER XXIV

RELIGION

IN this chapter I propose to put together a few passages on religion which I find in various letters and notebooks. The first is from a fragmentary diary of the year 1902, and is dated Sunday, March 30 (Easter Sunday of that year):

“ By a rare chance I happened to hear both the Athanasian Creed and the Litany in the same church to-day, and in an extraordinary way they seemed to me to express the intellect and the heart of the Christian religion. The creed is a stupendous struggle between reason and a dream: a thing full of menace and terrible history, though the rustic choir takes it at a cheerful hand - gallop. Every line of it is drenched in the blood of martyrs and heretics. Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Teuton have fought desperate battles for the last word. Thousands have died for it, thousands more have suffered incredible tortures and agonies, lest a shadow of doubt or schism should fall upon the least of its mystical definitions. I see in my mind's eye the mournful procession of heretics—Docetist, Monophysite, Nestorian, Arian—

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“passing across the stage of history to be crushed and damned by the triumphant Church and the militant defenders of her faith.” I see armies mobilized, countries laid waste, men, women, and children put to the sword, dynasties cowering, Popes thundering, and all the world subdued to the fierce passions of the intellect and its terrible zeal for the unattainable, incomprehensible truth—vision alike of man’s unconquerable mind and of the desolation wrought by his idealism and fanaticism.

“And then in the Litany we pass suddenly to the religion of the heart, the religion pure and undefiled, which visits the widows and orphans in their affliction. The pride of the intellect sinks, and all humanity becomes one in a lowly appeal to the mercy of the Eternal. Incomparably tender and touching in its enumeration of the sorrows and burdens of life, it is not only a cry for deliverance and mercy, but the dim protest of human kind against its frailty and littleness, its troubles and afflictions, its helplessness before the divine ruler and the human oppressor. I have no patience with the clergy who omit this incomparable prayer in order to add ten minutes to their sermons.”

A little later in the same diary I come upon two other passages which I will print next:

“When I hear people speculating on the

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“future of religion, my mind goes back to the discourse with the woman of Samaria. ‘Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem.’ We have had the religion of the Father and the religion of the Son, but not yet for mankind at large the religion of the Spirit. Jerusalem cries out that her temple is empty, and the mountain that it is deserted. Two-thirds of our population, we are told, never enter a place of worship, and the remaining third is torn with dissensions about the government of Churches and the serving of tables. Yet the heart of man yearns still for the religion of the spirit and it shall not be disappointed.

“A large part of modern pessimism is a rooted objection to two and two making four. I have just been reading a story in which Providence is arraigned because a mother neglects her child and it falls into the fire, and another in which the nature of things is said to be incorrigible because a deserving man loses his money. These writers demand that fire should warm and cook, but never burn and scorch; that water should quench thirst and float ships, but not swamp or drown; that money should be precious, but its loss painless; that men should be rewarded for skill and prudence, but not suffer for stupidity and carelessness; that the nature of things should be variable according to our whims and necessities. The unvarying nature of things does

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"indeed produce very perplexing results to a variable creature like man, but on the whole it seems to me more orderly, and perhaps in the long run more comfortable, that two and two should make four than that they should make five or seven, according to the whim of an arbitrary Providence.

"I will listen patiently to the tale of any curable wrong and thank the man who can touch my heart, or kindle my anger against it; but, as life goes on, I have less and less time for mere railing against the fixed framework of the universe. It is hard stuff, no doubt; but it's what we have to work upon, and there's no changing it."

In the year before his death Bagshot apparently devoted a good deal of his time to the study of Nietzsche, and a certain notebook abounds in scattered comments and queries on the "Will to Power" and the "Genealogy of Morals." It may seem strange that a man of his temperament should have conceived a warm admiration for the philosopher of anarchy; yet so it was, and I find him describing these books as "a splendid tonic for the orthodox" and their author as "performing supremely the indispensable part of devil's advocate to this generation and its conventions." "Why all this pother about Nietzsche?" he writes on another occasion. "This mad mystic trying to make a philosophy out of the principles of the German General Staff

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is only our own Carlyle carried to the ultimate logic of his Teutonic ideas, and if you will go to him yourself and read his books, instead of taking them secondhand in the bowdlerised versions of his imitators, it will do you no more harm than a visit to the Zoological Gardens, where the Nietzschean principle is in full working order." Bagshot, however, failed in the full courage of his convictions, for his niece tells me that his volumes of Nietzsche were carefully locked away, and that he refused even to lend her "Zarathustra." Indeed a little later I find these comments:

"The worst of Nietzsche is that none of the people who ought to read him will and that for those who do read him he is mostly virulent poison. Rightly construed this surging anarchism of his is a revolt against the doctrine which the supermen have imposed upon the world, and a call to the lowly and meek to assert their manhood against their oppressors; and it is a singular perversion which makes it the gospel and the justification of the oppressor. But that is the nemesis of all teaching which seeks to cast out fire with fire. To the oppressed Nietzsche says, 'Go and be oppressors too'—which they never will be and never could be even if they wanted to be. It is utterly useless to invite the pigeon to become a hawk or to tell St. Francis to turn himself into Napoleon."

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And again:

“The best short answer to ‘Nietzsche and his school is that all mankind has agreed to call the qualities that he decries ‘humanity’ and the qualities that he extols ‘inhumanity.’ Mankind is infallible about human nature, and no German Professor has anything to teach it on that subject. There is someone wiser than M. Voltaire, said Talleyrand: *c’est tout le monde*. The philosophy which denies the humanity of man is from the beginning a contradiction in terms. Nietzsche’s description of Christianity as ‘slave morality’ is a just comment on ecclesiastics, tyrants, and governments—and they are legion—who have used the Christian religion for their own ends. All Erastianism implies the conception of the ‘slave morality’; and every magistrate who regards religion as a means of keeping order deserves the Nietzschean rebuke. But it is the religion of the sword and not the religion of the meek and lowly which has enslaved mankind.”

We pass from Nietzsche to sundry other reflections made apparently about the same time:

“The idea came to me in my dreams last night that I was in a vast church listening to a preacher who was discoursing about ‘the world after next.’ In the next world, he said, every

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"faithful and humble member of every Church would be rewarded by finding that his religion was true, and every bigot and persecutor suffer the mortification of discovering that his own religion was false and the other religions true. But one and all would die to that world as to the present world, and in the world after next enter upon a final stage of blessedness, in which that which is true in all religions would at length be revealed. The preacher's peroration was still sounding in my ears as I awoke: 'Such, my brethren, is the ascent of man—*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*. To each his own symbol and shadow, till through life and death he may enter at the last into reality.'

"Slackford visited me yesterday and declared himself a profound believer in the doctrine of reincarnation, which, he protested, alone furnished a clue to the problems of unmerited suffering and unremedied wrong. There are moments when I incline to that belief myself, but we debated hotly about its probable consequences, if it were true. He held out for the simple view that a prosperous existence in the present life argued a meritorious existence in previous lives, whereas I denounced that conclusion as involving a gross confusion of moral and material values.

"For I work it out thus. If, in physical warfare, it is the highest honour to be told

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“off to fight the hottest corner, may it not, also, in the moral warfare, be the highest honour to be chosen to carry the flag through the fire of temptation, want and misery? In the scheme of reincarnation, where would the strong soul be sent by the King of the Universe? To the comfortable ease of respectable, wealthy existence or to the fire and storm of the underworld? And shall he not be scorched and wounded and perchance his white soul be stained and draggled, if he quit him like a man? Help for him by all means from willing hands, but be sure we do not pity the hero in the post of danger.

“If we are to have a new theology, few things seem to me so desirable as to banish, not merely from our creeds but from our thought and practice, the theological doctrine of the ‘last hour.’ I see that the compilers of ‘Hymns Ancient and Modern’ actually thought it necessary to add a verse echoing the words of the Burial Service to the original four stanzas of the hymn ‘Days and moments quickly flying’:

“‘O by Thy power grant, Lord, that we
At our last hour fall not from Thee,’

as if to burn into us the idea that frail humanity might in the agony of departure commit some unforgivable sin against the King of the Universe. Even the orthodox have grown sceptical about

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“the death-bed conversion, but all the world is still under the tyranny of the death-bed relapse. I am told that I waste my effort on the drunkard or the criminal because he will relapse at the end. It is to count for nothing that I helped him to five years of sober and respectable life, if after it he returned to his cups or his crime. It is to count for nothing that those two old people loved each other and lived happily together for thirty years, because in their weak and lamentable old age they fell out and parted. Harshly cruel and unfair are these retrospective judgments from a man's worst to his best. *To the Eternal every good has its abiding value, and there is no bad that can blot it out.*”

In the same strain is a passage I find in a letter which Bagshot wrote—apparently about this time—to a friend in the Prison Service:

“I view with the greatest suspicion this doctrine of ‘recidivism,’ which the criminologists, as they call themselves, are endeavouring to foist on us. Everyone who relapses is, on this theory, to be regarded as hopeless. As well might the surgeon refuse to operate on a cancer because, though he may prolong life for five years, the patient will inevitably die of it in the end. Of course, the liability to relapse is a very important fact, and you do right to observe it and to regulate your treatment accordingly.

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“But don't rush to the conclusion that, because a man may relapse, or even will relapse, it is useless to do anything for him.” In one of the records you send me I read: ‘For three years he lived an *apparently* respectable life, but then he fell back into crime, and was re-convicted.’ Why ‘apparently’? Simply, so far as I can judge, because the chronicler assumes the fact of his re-conviction to have proved his respectability to be spurious and worthless. I, on the contrary, think it a great feat which rewards all your efforts, that such a man should have run straight for three years. Do, I pray you, purge your department of the pernicious theological doctrine of the last hour. Man is not to be judged by the end that he makes, but by the whole of him, and any bit of him that is good counts in the reckoning. There is no mystical arithmetic which can make the last item cancel all the rest.”

CHAPTER XXV

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT HISTORY

IN this chapter I put together certain fragments about history gathered from many notebooks. Bagshot was a fervent but very desultory student of history, and he frequently avowed his ignorance of familiar facts and events:

“ There are some portions of history which I am totally unable to bear in my mind or to take the slightest interest in; though now and again I laboriously read them up from a kind of false pride which will not let me confess ignorance of what every schoolboy ought to know. I have been looking at an elementary history paper which my friend Jackson, who is a schoolmaster, tells me that almost every boy in his form could answer creditably. On five questions out of twelve my mind is almost a blank. I could give no coherent account of the Wars of the Roses; I had forgotten, if I ever knew, that there was a Roman Emperor called Olybrius and another called Tacitus; I find it extremely difficult to say what anybody was fighting about at the battle of Fontenoy,

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“and I can remember hardly anything about the battle of Linden except that before it ‘the sun was low.’ The worst of it is that, if I am quite frank with myself, I don’t want to know. But I do always want to know how the mass of people lived and what they thought at any given period, and I would give whole centuries of history as it is written for a dozen photographs of Athens, Rome, Elizabethan London, Florence in the fifteenth century, Cordova in the ninth century, and of the types of people that inhabited them. It is impossible to exaggerate the difference in the conception of history that the possession of these records will make to future generations.

“One of the main difficulties of history is its vanishing perspective. All the remoter incidents crowd together towards the horizon till we are at a loss to realize the spaces of time that divide them. Who can thoroughly grasp the fact that it was as long from the birth of Christ to the official recognition of Christianity by Constantine as from the reign of Charles I. to the present day, or that four centuries divided Paul from Augustine? All that the historians give us are little oases in the desert of time, and we linger fondly in these, forgetting the vast tracks between one and another that were trodden by the weary generations of men.

“Some races, like the Greek, have a genius for projecting themselves into history. They

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"are the star performers of the world, and have compelled us to accept their little wars and internecine struggles as big with the fate of mankind. It is the triumph of a splendid kind of advertisement. They have a press which all the world must read — historians, poets, and philosophers combining to secure a unique publicity for their favourites among generations unborn.

"Others, *sacro quia vate carent*, pass from the scene unsung. The Moors in Spain, who conferred priceless benefits on the modern world, and kept the torch of civilization alive in Europe in the blackest depths of the dark ages, have received no thanks from Western men. What schoolboy has ever heard of the Kalif Chakam, patron of letters, zealot for education, founder of schools, universities, libraries, and, Moslem though he was, anticipator by eight centuries of the ideas of toleration and intellectual freedom which Europe won eventually by blood and tears? It is the irony of fate that not one of the countless numbers of students and learned men who flocked to his Court and fed at his table repaid their debt by saving his name from oblivion.

"When anyone tells me that history affords no proof of the moral progress of mankind, I know that, though he may have read history books, he has not read literature to any purpose. It is nothing to the point to say that there

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"were moral heroes in ancient days; there were happily scores of them. It is the general opinion of mankind, *judged by the things it took for granted*, which is the test of contemporary morals, and for this we must read literature with a vigilant eye to the *plis de la pensée*. There is not a Roman or a Greek, a schoolman or a pietist of mediæval times, a Catholic or a Protestant of the age of the Reformation, a jurist, historian, or poet of the Renaissance, who does not complacently accept moral assumptions which are repulsive to the modern mind. Jewish, Greek, and Roman thought denies all rights to the mass of mankind; Socrates and Plato take unmentionable vice for granted; Cicero hurls insulting epithets at the *fæx Romuli*, his friend Atticus applauds: 'the Gods,' cries Lucan,¹ 'have never demeaned themselves to the life of the few—*humanum paucis vivit genus*,' 'mankind lives for the benefit of the few'; ecclesiastics burn witches, kill and torture heretics, each ascendant party in turn holding its right to be unimpeachable, and the world in general consenting. Outbreaks of savagery and even of persecution are possible in modern times, *but the world does not consent*. Here is the vast difference by which we may measure the progress of mankind. We have still a long way to travel before we can raise the practice of the world to the level of its professions, but the first step is to make its

¹ "Pharsalia," V. 342-5.

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“professions” condemn its practice, and here the modern world is immeasurably in advance of the ancient or mediæval.

“So when ecclesiastics tell us that the sense of sin is dying out in the world, we may boldly affirm that the opposite is the case. There is no time recorded in history when the conscience of mankind was so sensitive to its shortcomings as in these days. The common and perfectly true saying that we must judge a past age according to its own moral assumptions is its own witness to this fact. Without this allowance much history would be a mere welter of savagery.”

In October 1894 Bagshot was at Naples, and spent many hours at Pompeii. One observation from his diary of travel may be quoted here:

“When I have spent a few hours at Pompeii or in the Naples Museum, I get the curious feeling that the whole of the Middle Ages are blotted out, and that I am in touch with a civilization which is nearer to our own than any in the intervening period till the middle of the eighteenth century. Here is all the familiar furniture of my own home, without any of those alien Gothic extravagances which take me into another world; here is such a house as I might live in and depart not an inch from the customs and conventions of my nineteenth-century existence. It requires an enormous effort of

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“imagination to realize that between me and this lies the immense gulf of dark ages and middle ages, and the infinite toil and struggle of the centuries that made the modern world.”

Another passage which I take from a letter to his nephew strikes a slightly different note about the Middle Ages:

“No; you are wrong about the Middle Ages. They are not ‘a reaction from ancient civilization,’ but the period in which the rearguard of Western humanity was being brought up. Northern man starts on the race hundreds of years behind the point which Mediterranean man has reached, and hundreds of years must elapse before he can come level. After centuries, his culture and his processes of thought are, as you say, ‘such as would have seemed childish to a Greek of the fifth century or a Roman of the age of Cicero.’ Yet all the time he has been advancing, and all the time assimilating and even refining what he has received from antiquity. Provided, *ab extra*, with a religion which the Greek would have turned into a philosophy and the Roman into a system of law, he keeps it simple and strong and imaginative, and brings it constantly into a closer relation with working humanity. You get the concrete image of it all in the transition from the Roman Basilica to the Gothic Cathedral, from solid formalism

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“to genius with the heart of a child; genius vividly in touch with the common life, yet soaring to the highest point reached by the human imagination. A vast deal of nonsense has been talked about ‘Art’ and the Middle-Ages, but it is not ‘Art’ at all in the sense that a fatigued modern uses the word; it is nature and the soul of man bursting into leaf and flower, as the woods in spring. When you are tempted to decry the Middle-Ages, think of the cathedral-builders.”

I pass to a sanguine if debatable proposition:

“The most superficial reading of history convinces one that all the long-range forces are moral and all the short-range forces physical. No victory of material force ever is final unless it corresponds to an idea. Unity is an idea, race a community of ideas; the unity may be dissolved from within but it will not be broken by attacks from without. The Roman Empire was not destroyed by barbarians; it was dissipated and dissolved because it had ceased to be Roman.

“Statesmanship would be easy and peace secure, if mankind were only governed by self-interest. It is the incalculable idealism of man—his passion and pride and lust for self-assertion and expansion—that destroys his peace and lends the glamour and the glory to his existence. History teaches us to mis-

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"trust all policies which assume that nations will act as on a cold calculation of their material advantages they ought to act. There is always something not ourselves which defeats the utilitarian within us."

An observation about Germany may come in here:

"I see in the movement for German Unity a gradual condensation of all the mystic vapours of the German temperament into something hard and solid. Beware the mystic when he materializes! That transmutation of thinking energy to practical ends is the most formidable thing in the world."

A mathematician might object to the simile in the following passage, but it need not be taken too literally:

"If history never repeats itself, there are nevertheless certain recurring decimals which come again and again, though mankind fails to recognize them. It seems incredible that the mistakes at the beginning of the Boer war could have been committed by men who had the experience of the Crimean war before them, or who had even read the earlier chapters of Kinglake's history. One would like to see certain experiences tabulated and set on record for the warning of subsequent generations.

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“And yet the effort would, I suppose, be vain; and after all it is one of the splendid things about life that each generation starts anew with the incurable freshness of youth, unillusioned if inexperienced, and ardent as ever for the impossible adventures which make men heroes and fools. Nature has seen to it that men should never be too wise.”

CHAPTER XXVI

MORE ABOUT HISTORY

IN the spring of 1898 Bagshot was laid up for a month, and appears to have spent a good deal of his enforced leisure upon his diary and correspondence. I come upon a "comment on nineteenth-century" history, from which I judge that he has been reading Lord Palmerston's *Life and Letters*:

"One of the oddest sensations afforded by the history of our own times comes to me when I find Lord Palmerston calmly confessing in a letter to Lord John Russell that, if we had gone *to war with Prussia over the Schleswig-Holstein* affair, the total force we could have put into the field would have been 20,000 men, 20,000 armed with muzzle-loading rifles against 200,000 or 300,000 Prussians and Austrians armed with breech-loaders. And this avowal is made calmly, candidly, and without shame within a month of the time when these two old men were fighting valiantly for that desperate enterprise against—happily—the united opposition of their junior colleagues. Was it sublime

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“audacity, criminal folly, or sheer ignorance on the part of these ancients, who clearly had not the faintest conception of what modern warfare, as organized by Bismarck, was going to be?

“But it is, nevertheless, *the* most striking fact in nineteenth-century history that Great Britain dominated the politics of Europe, struck blow upon blow for nationality and liberty, proclaimed its *civis Romanus* doctrine, and reaped the honours and rewards of Palmerstonian diplomacy with a military force which could never have seriously challenged any considerable Power. One sees in it partly a splendid game of bluff backed by the prestige gained in the Napoleonic wars, partly an instinctive apprehension of sea-power and its meaning among our neighbours and rivals, and partly an ingenious manipulation of forces by a clever diplomacy which gave a minority vote the decisive power. It would be agreeable to add that there was an interlude between *the fall of Napoleon and the rise of Bismarck* when moral arguments prevailed, unsupported by physical force. Englishmen had persuaded themselves that this was the case, until the peace was shattered by the Crimean war, and their persuasion unquestionably lent force and fervour to their remonstrances. But the power of Britain during these years owed, I think, more to the fact that she alone among the nations succeeded in solving her internal problems while her great neighbours were

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“constantly plunged into revolution or plagued with the fear of revolution. I believe the time is coming when the nation which best succeeds in solving its internal problems will again have a power in the world which is altogether out of proportion to its naval and military strength.”

In a letter to Charles Harman (afterwards the husband of his niece, Molly) I find a passage on tolerance which Mr. Harman tells me was provoked by a chance observation in a letter of his own:

“It is true that we don’t torture heretics or burn witches, but I am more than doubtful when I hear people talking of tolerance as a modern virtue. I see little evidence that the modern man is in his heart more tolerant than his ancestors. Which of our friends is there who does not really in his heart think the worse of us if we differ from him on some subject in which he is genuinely interested? When I look round on the propagandist sects and the propagandist Press, and see the money and the energy which are devoted to the spread of every sort of opinion, the stream of books, pamphlets, and newspapers dedicated to different causes and crotchets, the heat and zeal, the sound and fury which are expended on these efforts, it seems to me that never at any time have so many people been so furiously engaged in trying to make other people think

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“what they think, or expressed their resentment with such passion when they failed in this enterprise.” It is still apparently as firmly rooted in human nature as ever that a man shall not only think his own thoughts but strive to make other people think them too, and strive the more vehemently and passionately in proportion as he is conscious of a doubt lurking at the heart of a subject.”

Akin to this is an observation about martyrdom:

“One of the most tragic things in history is the unending martyrdom to lost causes. There is no idea so ridiculous and outlandish but that someone has gone to the stake for it. Thousands have died for the Crescent as for the Cross, for the Synagogue as for the Church, for heresy as for orthodoxy, for indistinguishable shades of opinion about beliefs which were wholly false, for tyranny as for liberty, for anarchy as for order—faithful unto death for the truth that was no truth, doing loyal service to detestable masters, wasting heroism in the service of poltroons. Yet by such have the great human virtues of constancy and loyalty been established; and, if not martyrs for the truth, they are witnesses to the best in man—his fantastic chivalry and contempt for death, when once an idea has laid hold of his imagination.” .

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The following is taken from another letter to Charles Harman written during the same month:

“When one of the children of light proves wiser in his generation than the children of this world, the powers of darkness may begin to tremble. Many of the great makers and emancipators have been supreme over the worldlings in worldly wiles—Cromwell for instance, Cavour, and even Lincoln. As a rule the impatient idealists only win their victory when they get a man of this type to lead them, and a large part of his work consists in preventing them from ruining their cause by forcing his hands.

“Don’t, please, think this a cynical saying or imagine for one moment that I am blaming the idealists. Lincoln would have been impossible without Lloyd Garrison, Cavour without Mazzini and Garibaldi, Peel without Cobden. It is the business of Lloyd Garrison and Mazzini to be impatient, it is the business of Lincoln and Cavour to bide their time. Nor need one pity the statesman because he suffers a certain amount of misunderstanding and vexation in the performance of his prescribed part. That, again, is his *métier*. Two-thirds of all statesmanship consists in managing your friends; whoever can do that will generally have his opponents at his mercy.”

To another friend who writes to him about politics at this time he replies:

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“ You say that if we enter into this agreement about Madagascar it will be ‘ the ruin of the Empire.’ I should be disposed to agree with you, if you were content to say that it would be unprofitable to a small portion of our trade. I have made notes of seven articles in recent reviews and magazines, in each of which the writer assures me that the Empire will be irretrievably ruined unless something is done which he wants done or something not done that he disapproves of. Bankruptcy stares us in the face if we do not do something—I can’t make out what — about the gold standard; Armageddon threatens if we do something else about the Suez Canal; our power will depart for ever unless we immediately adopt the reduplicating automatic inflexible tubular boiler; our sun will set and the Empire fall to pieces if the Liberal Party or the Tory Party wins the coming by-election. You really must try another bait, if you want to catch an old trout like me. The Empire has been ruined a hundred times every year since I came on the scene, and when I was a young man I used to be quite miserable about it, but since I became forty I have resigned myself to live philosophically among the ruins.”

Two more passages from the diary of this month may be left to speak for themselves:

“ I have spent much of my leisure during

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“the last few weeks in hunting down the political predictions made by the wise men of the nineteenth century, and the result is a sad commentary on human blindness and nescience. I cannot discover any single war which was definitely foreseen except by those who deliberately planned it, any revolutionary movement which did not take by surprise the guardians of law and order, any development of wealth and distribution of population which followed the lines laid down for it, any results of political change which did not belie either hopes or fears. I find De Tocqueville predicting that America would be a land of moderate fortunes evenly distributed, Mr. Gladstone confident that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, Lord Salisbury declaring a united Germany to be a remote improbability, Lord Granville confident that peace was never so assured as on the day before the Franco-German war broke out, and all well-informed Englishmen persuaded that the one dangerous and formidable man in Europe was the Emperor Napoleon III., when, in fact, he was a hopeless invalid, clinging wearily to his throne and lying helplessly at the mercy of his German enemy. I find Governments and peoples constantly obsessed by groundless nightmares and wholly unconscious of the real perils that lay ahead of them. There are times when a nation seems to have a positive genius for the wrong bogey. And yet the longer I live, the deeper grows my con-

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“viction that though knowledge is unattainable, and desperate error is the inevitable lot of human Governments, faith is the supreme and saving virtue for nations and individuals. The one irreparable disaster is that a nation should lose faith in itself.”

Another note about political prophecy may be added here: . . .

“ Prophecy was a desperate enough business in the pre-scientific period, when there appeared to be some guarantee that the material environment of man would be approximately a constant factor, but it is sheer folly in these times, when no one knows what new invention or unexpected discovery may come to light to change all the conditions of life and material prosperity. Who, for instance, can say at this moment that all the material advantages mayn't pass from the coal-producing countries to the water-power countries, from Great Britain and Germany to Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, and the North of Italy? Who can venture to predict what changes in the habits of men and their relations with each other may not be produced by dirigible balloons or flying-machines so practicable that everyone can use them, or even by advances in ocean travel, which may obliterate time and distance and add further to the shrinkage of the world? At the beginning of the last century

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“man still seemed to be the one variable factor in a fixed framework of comparatively constant things, whereas now nature is as variable as man, and all the unknown factors are indefinitely multiplied. The likelihood and the rapidity of change increase with every year that we live. Hence it is that there is no simple rule of three sum by which we can measure the possibilities of progress. It does not follow that because England took five centuries to gain political liberty and evolve her constitutional system, Russia need take one-tenth of the time to reach the same point. The backward nations can take over a large part of what the forward nations have won by the toil of years, and leap whole centuries at a bound, as Japan has done. *Natura nil facit per saltum*, I hear you say, and it is true enough, if you leave the old dame to her own devices. But with a little prodding from man, nature has enormously quickened her pace in the last hundred years, and in my mind's eye I see her sprinting outrageously in the years to come.”

I may wind up this chapter with a note about primitive Christianity:

“I never feel so near to the divine element in Christianity as when I read the simple facts of the primitive Christian mission in the pages of some purely secular historian. The conquest of the Roman world by the apostles and

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“missionaries of the obscure Jewish sect is the most stupendous event in the world, and it is a thousand pities that the average man’s knowledge of it should end with the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The ecclesiastical historians have never risen to the height of it. They fail to see that in proportion as they multiply miracles, Christianity itself ceases to be miraculous. It would be no miracle to have converted mankind by signs and wonders, but the conquest of faith remains the supreme miracle.”

CHAPTER XXVII

MORE LETTERS

I HAVE reserved to the end of the new material presented in these chapters a last packet of Bagshot's letters to his niece Molly and her husband, Charles Harman. These are about everything and nothing, and as before, I can take only a few passages at haphazard from the less personal among them. During the years covered by this correspondence, Charles Harman was increasing his income by writing for various newspapers, and he was in the habit of consulting his uncle-in-law, who sent him suggestions from time to time. Thus Harman has posed the subject of "irony" for what is called a "middle-article," and this sets Bagshot flowing:

"Irony is a noble and cleansing weapon if applied by a serene spirit to the discords of life; it is a savage and unholy vengeance if it is merely the mockery of a spirit at war with itself.

"In the literature of discontent there is a world of difference between the malice and

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“uncharitableness of the envious soul and the fierce indignation of the just man at the wrongs of his fellows. The two are often confounded, and to detect their difference is a very nice effort in moral discrimination.

“ When I read Swift, I can never quite escape the thought that his anger at oppression is partly a furious disappointment that he was not born among the oppressors. When I read Milton I know that he is righteously indignant. But *really* righteous indignation—*i.e.*, disinterested indignation—is, I am afraid, rarer than you think.”

The next subject tossed up is “ flattery and the artistic conscience.”

“ You say that artists and writers are notoriously conceited people. But not the great ones. For the life of me, I cannot think of Shakespeare or Milton or Bunyan or the prophet Isaiah as conceited men, though I can just think it of Micah or Habakkuk, who, as Voltaire said, was ‘*capable de tout*.’ The real artistic conscience refuses to be deceived. You cannot flatter the great artist by telling him he has painted a good picture when he knows he has painted a bad one; or the great writer by telling him he has written a good book when he knows he has written a bad one. If you try, his conscience will tell him that you are either an ignoramus or a flatterer.

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"One odd thing I have noticed about the writers I have known. They are usually in despair about what they have just written, but often quite complacent about what they wrote a year ago. I suppose in the former case they remember and in the latter case they have forgotten what they *meant* to write.

"The normal attitude of a man is to admire and envy and greatly to exaggerate the value of the gifts which he does not possess himself. A work of genius implies a perfect assimilation of the man to the thing he does; an assimilation which makes the effort seem natural and normal to him; and that banishes conceit, which is the consciousness of doing something exceptional and highly accomplished. Hence the common observation that writers are conceited about their speech-making, but not about their writing; painters about their writing, but not about their painting; poets about their fiddling, or piano-strumming, but not about their poetry. When a man *is* conceited about the thing he does habitually, it is a sure proof that he has not passed the stage at which he conceives it to be an exceptional accomplishment, and this means again that he is not at the beginning of genius.

"What the master feels about the masterpiece is but a dim conjecture for the rest of us, but conceit must be the last word for it. It is pride, joy, elation, exultation, and, if you like,

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“a serene superiority to carpers and critics who cannot rise to it. That may express itself in ways which stupid people will take for conceit, and if he proves not to be a master, and the masterpiece is not finally acclaimed, then, in due time, you may write him down an ass. But before you pass judgment, you must wait till the game is played out. Forty years ago half Germany and all the rest of Europe said that Wagner was a conceited donkey.”

I take these at random from many letters:

“The worst thing about life is that the worst part comes last. In another life the reward of the just man must, surely, be to work backwards from old age to youth.

“It is a tradition among Judges never to settle any case on its merits, if they have an excuse for riding off on a side issue. That is the habit of all mankind in regard to truth.

“Our friend F. recalls to me Dean Swift's story of the Archbishop of Dublin who was willing to become a 'patriot' (*i.e.*, to join Swift against the Government) because, as he said, 'there was no precedent for promoting an Archbishop of Dublin to the See of Armagh.' Don't scoff, however, for there is a certain kind of character which must have succeeded and put success behind it, before it can begin to

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“develop on the moral side. If success often spoils, there are some few whom it really makes in this sense.

“ Be very careful of ever saying or thinking that Hamlet will be without the Prince of Denmark if *you* go out. How many times in my life have I seen the melancholy Dane retire in dudgeon just before the curtain was going to rise, and Hamlet proceed without a hitch, or even a word from the prompter. There is no man necessary to anything, not even the Prince of Denmark to Hamlet.

“ Why is it that we have such peculiar difficulty in perceiving vulgarity in foreigners? M. (an American friend) is greatly annoyed with me because I asked him to dinner to meet the H.'s (other Americans), who he tells me are notorious vulgarians in their own country. ‘ Don't I hear,’ he asks indignantly, ‘ how they speak the English language?’ Upon my soul I don't; they seem to me to speak it exactly as he speaks it, and to be extremely agreeable, high-spirited people. It doesn't matter a red cent to me whether they are in his set or not and I intend to pursue their acquaintance. But, then, I don't know an Italian cook from an Italian Count, or, when they are both in mufti, a German baron from a German waiter. Query, is this my density, or is it that our ideas of culture and refinement are strictly provincial,

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“and that, in dealing with foreigners, we strip them off and deal as man to man? As a democrat, I favour the latter explanation, which also has the merit of flattering my vanity.

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“The greatest geniuses have added little to the stock of thought, but they have added enormously to the stock of energy. Most of them are content to take the common stock of thought and give it a new emotional value. Almost any second-rate philosopher will give you more original thought than Shakespeare or Milton, but the value of original thinking to human-kind at large is vastly exaggerated.

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“A solemn and painful thought has just come over me, and please bear it in mind in educating your child: Suppose by some miracle I found myself transported back into antiquity, a solitary modern man in the ancient world. What could I teach them of the present age and its civilization? Could I show them how to make a steam-engine of the simplest kind, or a modern loom, or how to instal the rudest electrical plant, much less to construct a locomotive, a motor - car, a telephone, or a sewing - machine? I could *assert* that the earth was round, and that it revolved round the sun, but could I *prove* either proposition? I could generalize about evolution, and talk in a vague and romantic

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“way about certain physical and biological speculations, but could I give them any coherent account of a modern chemical or physical laboratory? Honesty compels me to say ‘No’ to all these questions. Positively the only thing I think I could teach them would be how to print from type, and heaven knows why they did not discover that for themselves. At my time of life it is quite hopeless for me to try to get any accurate knowledge about these mechanical things, but none the less my sloppy ignorance about them is a constant discomfort to me, and I do think a child ought to have the elements ground into him.

“I am surprised on examining myself to find how many of my sensations are sensations *à deux* or *à plusieurs*. I can go to a concert alone, but I cannot go to a theatre alone; I can read poetry alone, but I cannot read humour alone. I can walk alone in the town, but not in the country. Half the pleasure of a beautiful scene is gone for me if I cannot express it and get it back from another mind. If I were an artist I could paint alone, for all the time I should be expressing myself to an imaginary other person; but in nearly all other pleasures of an æsthetic kind I am merely a subject requiring an object (or victim) to discharge myself upon.”

Here, to wind up this chapter, are three passages

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from letters to his niece written during the last year of his life:

“ Your Kantian Rhapsodies over the starry heavens seen from the Terrace at Caux delight me. Superb, indeed, is that great sweep of sky with the lake, on a still night, giving it back, and the jagged edges of the Savoy mountains coming sharp against the spangled blue. Yet there are moods when the mystery of it all is more than one can bear. I have stood there and turned aside in a kind of rage at those exasperating little points of light which pique an insatiable curiosity. Surely there is a subtle mockery in that five-hundred-year-old twinkling in the heart of space, so confidential and so horribly remote!

“ You are quite wrong when you take telegraph posts for a symbol of modern ugliness. I know few things more beautiful to the eye than a long line of them striding over a moor to the horizon, and delicately marking the distance in their race to overtake each other. I see them as symbols of companionship linking centre and outpost, and in the singing of their wires I hear all the voices of human-kind, bearing good tidings and bad, the lover's secrets, the sportsman's tips, the merchant's prices, the death-roll from the veld, the latest scores from the Oval. Highly romantic and rubbishy, you will say, and by all means, if

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“you think so. I’m only telling you how they affect *me*. I see that Charles has been joining in the outcry against the new railway down the Tessebourne Valley. Why, a passing train with a nice trail of blue-white smoke from the engine is just what that landscape wants to make it perfect! Tell him to shut up.

“ You say that you’ll act, if Mrs. S. and Mrs. B. will begin. If so, none of you will do anything. Have you never heard the story of the bewitched forest—how an evil spirit told all the trees that the first of them to blossom in the spring would be withered and destroyed, and how each of them waited for someone else to begin, and so the whole forest remained dark and dead for a thousand years? ”

CHAPTER XXVIII

MISCELLANEA

ANOTHER batch of correspondence with friends who do not otherwise come into this record yields a few more extracts which are worth setting down before I finish. In September 1898 Bagshot is writing to an old friend about a young man in whom they were both interested, and this friend appears to have said that the young man was passing through what ought to be—but apparently was not in his case—"the best time of life." Bagshot takes him up:

"The best time of life? With any luck, from forty to fifty, and God grant me, if I am alive after 1904, to begin saying then from fifty to sixty. Oh, yes; there is a great deal to be said for youth, strong limbs, high spirits, *joie de vivre*, and that illimitable look-forward embracing all impossibilities which closes in so suddenly when you find your berth. Still, I would not choose to live over again the years from twenty to thirty. What loads of anxiety one suffered from examinations, with all the elders conspiring together to persuade one that

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“the whole of one’s future hung upon success or failure! What an impenetrable thicket the business of life looked from the outside, and into what depths of despair one fell as one wandered round it looking in vain for a gap! Vividly I remember walking about a certain suburb in that hour when the gas is lit before the blinds are drawn, and looking greedily into the rooms as a child might into a toyshop, and envying the settled security of fixed incomes which they seemed to imply, so different from my lodging off the Strand and precarious—very precarious—three pounds a week. Looking back on it from my haven at Whitehall, I can colour it with a sort of romance, but in my heart I know it was not romantic, and honestly I don’t want it again. Every lad who is worth his salt should go through it and will get through it, but you don’t help them by pretending it isn’t hard.”

I pass from this to a letter of the same year written to a friend who has sent him a book on mysticism. It is long, and I have space only for one extract:

“All through literature, all through philosophy, all through religion, we may trace the struggle of the human mind to establish the mystic principle against the material, faith against knowledge, love against justice, freedom against necessity, will against intellect.

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"The gentle mystics say love and faith, the violent mystics say will and power, but both are at one in their rebellion against the pretension of the intellect to reduce life to reason. The difficulty of the struggle for the mystics is that they have to argue with the rationalist on *his* terms. For all argument implies that reason does prevail, and the assertion of a principle transcending reason is from the beginning a denial that the issue can be settled by argument. The mystic can do nothing but impeach the logical instrument of his opponent, and this he often does with great skill, but in so far as he succeeds, the conclusion is not that he is right, but that neither he nor the other fellow can establish anything by any valid process of reasoning."

A year later he is arguing with an artistic friend about the artistic sense:

"There is no such thing as *the* artistic sense. The sense of beauty is not one but diverse. There are painters who are wholly without taste in architecture or music, musicians who are blind to painting, poets who are complete Philistines in all arts but their own, prose-writers of rare accomplishment who are gross bunglers as either makers or critics of poetry. The age of Pericles and the Italian Renaissance each produced a group of men who were equally gifted in all the arts, but as a rule it is positive

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“salvation for the poet *not* to be a painter, for the painter *not* to be a musician, for the musician *not* to be an æsthete in other branches of art. An all-round hyperæsthesia is almost always a morbid condition which sends its victim to drink or drugs and destroys the character which a thorough mastery of any one art requires.”

To a friend who has sent him a book on Christian evidences he writes about the same time:

“All your proofs are to my mind as nothing to the witness which religion bears to itself. That he should need religion, and that he should have found religion, is the supreme fact which really does distinguish man from the brutes that perish, and which for me establishes the real existence of that something outside himself which is the stuff of all religions, that something with which he must compare himself and to which he aspires in life and in death. There are whole chapters in your book which any secularist lecturer that knew his business could tear to pieces in a few minutes, but, if it were all established beyond challenge, it would not give me one-thousandth part of the confidence that I draw from this vision of humanity needing the gods and stretching its hands to the farther shore. . . . Humanity is like the glow-worm in that its light comes from within.”

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I pass to some shorter passages taken at random from many letters. Here are some cricket similes:

“ Tell F., with my compliments, I can easily play his bowling. If he really wants to deceive me, he should make the ball break three inches, not three feet. I never knew a man whose stratagems were so obvious.

“ George is that dangerous kind of man who never misses an easy catch. Nothing is so serviceable in the long run, and to that I attribute most of his success in life.

“ G. R.-K. is one of the splendid deep-fields of the Empire, infinitely more patient than any of us, and as alert as if he were standing at point in Whitehall. What a long line he guards, how keenly he watches for the ball to come his way, and how splendidly he ‘ saves the boundary ’! We stay-at-homes can only clap from the pavilion, and nine times out of ten there is no ‘ gate ’ for *his* game.

“ He sent you a loose ball and you hit it for six. Good; but don’t presume on it. I know him of old. He will send you down two half-volleys and two long-hops, and then wind up with a ripping ball, which will take your bails, if you aren’t very careful. He may be a stupid man, but he has uncommonly clever streaks in him.”

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“ ‘but (long pause) she did wish someone would marry Margaret. She had tried hard with Ruby’s young men, and Ruby wasn’t a bit jealous; but none of them would take Margaret; they was all after Ruby.’

“ So there was nothing to be done about Margaret, but the case of Ruby had suddenly become urgent. ‘Ruby ’ad up, and said she wasn’t going to live at ’ome no more, unless ’er grandmother was sent away, and ’er father ’e ’ad up and said that so long as ’e lived ’er grandmother wouldn’t live nowhere else. But Ruby, she was that wilful she’d think no more of walkin’ out of the ’ouse and never comin’ back than she would of spending a day at ’Ampstead.’ Ruby had been argued with. ‘I says to ’er, you’re a wicked, ungrateful girl that you are, Ruby. If you ’adn’t got no grandmother, whoever’d get up in the morning to give you a ’ot breakfast and a rasher of bacon to it? Whoever’d do your shoes at nights, and what would you do all lonesome in some hattick with no grandmother to do nothing for you? But Ruby, she says she don’t care nothing about that, and that if she’s going on paying me ten shillings a week for ’er keep, she’s goin’ to ’ave a room to ’erself, and there ain’t no room if the old lady stays. I’m not sayin’ there isn’t reason in ’er ’avin’ a room, and ten shillings is ten shillings, and it do make a lot of difference, comin’ reg’lar, with four children to feed, let alone Ruby and George

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“and the old lady, all big eaters. If only one o’ Ruby’s young men would marry Margaret and let Ruby ’ave ’er room. Not that I’m sayin’ that Ruby’s a good girl. Fair’s fair. She do carry on, and there’s no denyin’ it. Two nights last week she wasn’t in till half-past ten, and the hoffice shuts at six, so we knows she wasn’t there, and it ’xasperates ’er father, and it’s ’ard on the old lady ’aving to sit up to ’alf-past ten and do ’er boots after that and be up at six in the morning to light the fire and give ’er ’er ’ot breakfast afore she goes out. And (once more) there’s no denyin’ that Margaret’s a good girl, but whatever will I do without Ruby, and George that cross if the old lady don’t get everything she wants the moment she asks for it.’

“Then the aunt chimes in: ‘I never was one to say nothing ’gainst Margaret, and I never known ’er do nothing wrong since she was that ’igh, but there ain’t nobody like Ruby. Don’t ’ee part with Ruby I say, don’t ’ee part with Ruby.’¹

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“*March* 10, 1900. Old Tom Burnley, for twenty years the caretaker of my office, died this morning. I went to see him last week,

¹ Bagshot added a note to this story a year later: “I have spent hours puzzling over this problem, and Ruby has become quite familiar to me. What happened, and how was it settled? Anyhow, my sympathies are wholly with Ruby; but the ‘old lady’ does seem to have earned her keep in this establishment.”

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“and found him comparatively well and much interested in an experiment he was making. He had asked two doctors to attend him, each of whom was coming on alternate days without the knowledge of the other. The Monday, Wednesday, and Friday doctor charged two shillings a visit; the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday doctor eighteenpence. He gave them both a rest on Sundays, and his comment on the affair was that the two-shilling doctor was on the whole the cheaper, for ‘he gave more medicine, and it hadn’t to be taken so often.’ I thought it prudent to send my own man to have a look at him—which made a third—but the old fellow was past mending, and seems enormously to have enjoyed the process of dying.

“ *March* 18, 1900. A water-finder came to-day and went all over my little estate with a divining-rod in search of a place to sink a well. I am now in a great pother what to do, for, though he claims to be absolutely infallible, he tells me he is unable to say whether the effect on his rod is caused by a little water near the surface or a great deal of water a long way down, since the two causes produce identical results. There may therefore be either an immense river 100 miles below the spot he has indicated or a serviceable spring within fifty feet. Now, if I sink a shaft fifty feet, or a hundred feet, or two hundred feet, and find no

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“water, he will still be right, but I shall be a hundred pounds out of pocket. Anyhow, that man is a genius.

“ *June 20, 1900.* Having to wait an hour at Bletchley Junction to-day, I had the good luck to fall in with a steeplejack, who began to talk to me about his profession; and, getting into the same carriage with me, went on talking all the way up to London. On the whole, I am inclined to think he was the wisest man I ever met, and I never knew anyone practise a dangerous calling who was so entirely without brag or swagger about it. Out of his own head he had mastered the grand principle that all dangers are on an equality when they pass a certain point. When I asked him whether it wasn't horrible to have to run that risk every day, 'Lor, sir,' he replied, 'it ain't no riskier than sitting on a roof and nailing on slates, nor half so risky as walking along a parapet in a gale of wind—what every mason has to do, and think nothing of it. I reckon if you falls forty feet you're killed, and it don't make no odds how much higher ye go, excep' maybe ye comes down quicker and gets it over easier.' I call that heroic common-sense. My man admitted, however, that it was 'an uncomfortable job' getting over the cornice of a factory chimney when she was swinging in the wind; but, 'there, every trade has its drawbacks!'

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“ *June* 20, 1900. I was in the Natural History Museum to-day and sat reflecting before the model of the vast prehistoric monster known as *Diplodocus*, when there came in two little boys, aged about eleven and thirteen, with an intensely business-like air. One of them produced a yard-measure and proceeded to measure off a portion of the beast on the floor beside it. This puzzled me greatly, until they came to the end, and I discovered that they had laid down twenty-two yards, marking the terminals neatly with a piece of white chalk. Then, of course, I had it, and my conjecture was beautifully verified. Leaving the younger one standing at my end, the older went back and bowled an imaginary ball down the measured pitch. Then they chuckled with delight, and made off as hard as they could. I followed them to the hall, and was in time to see them clattering down it and out into the street. For once the whole thing is as clear as daylight to me. Some solemn parent or teacher had been rash enough to charge them with romancing when they said that *Diplodocus* would span a cricket pitch and leave his head and tail projecting at either end; and now they were going back with proof positive for the discomfiture of that unhappy man. Moral: Never correct children.”

CHAPTER XXIX

LAST WORDS

How Bagshot would have shuddered if he could have foreseen the exposure of his private moralizings to curious folk who never knew him—he who kept his notebooks locked away even from his most intimate friends! Truth to tell my conscience pricks me a little as I look at a pile of letters which lies before me—letters which have reached me during the serial publication of these chapters—upbraiding him for innumerable offences against good manners and sound beliefs. But he was, according to his light, a just man; and something tells me that, since I have published his “Comments,” he would like me also to publish a selection of other people’s comments on him. Let me, therefore, plunge into it and get it over as quickly as possible.

I take first a letter signed “Impatient Idealist”:

“I loathe your Bagshot, with his pose of reason and sanity, his moderation, and his insufferable patronage of the prophets and apostles. Give me, if you will, a good,

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“ fanatical, romantic reactionary who can lose his head for a lost cause, but not this academic pettifogger with his foolish optimism, his pretence of seeing good in everything, his fatuous Liberalism, his affected charity. That cold-blooded passage in which he calmly sets out what he is pleased to call the ‘ métiers ’ of the so-called statesmen and the ‘ impatient idealists ’ is really the last straw. As if life was a kind of puzzle-picture into which pieces of different kinds and shapes were to be fitted by one Bagshot devoting to it such leisure as could be spared from the impeccable performance of prescribed tasks in a Government office. The last straw, did I call it? The passage which corrects an emancipated woman for wishing to make the best of both worlds is in some ways even worse. Of course she wishes the best of both worlds—as if any woman with spirit enough to release herself from an intolerable yoke wouldn’t use teeth and claws upon the colourless Philistines and Pharisees who tried to cold-shoulder her! But that’s so like your Bagshot. We are all to have our little spaces in his puzzle-picture—there he fixes us and there we are to stay, living a model life according to the rules and regulations of the Civil Service, to be corrected like children if being a round peg we venture into a square hole. Thank you, not for me!

“ Bagshot’s politics are, of course, absurdly old-fashioned, but allowance may be made

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“for that, since he died in 1906 and was brought up on mid-Victorian superstitions. But no allowance can be made for the pre-Ibsenite conventionality of his view of life. The real emancipation movement of these times, the emancipation from the stifling atmosphere and foolish sentiment of the British home, the emancipation from the slave morality imposed by parents and priests, passes him by and leaves him unconcerned. Through all the arid waste of his ‘Comments’ one looks in vain for any thought which recognizes the real, deep, revolutionary movement of these times. He skims with airy optimism over the surface, invariably missing the vital, seething, inner things of life. No ‘impatient idealism’ for him!”

Personally, I have a suspicion that Bagshot kept as steady an eye on the movement of these times as the writer of this letter, but I shall get into trouble if I try to defend him. It is quite true that he suspected sophistry in all clever criticisms of life which arraign the grand conclusions of common sense, and I have often heard him protest when a superior kind of reality was claimed for what is conventionally called realism. The reader, however, must judge for himself whether Bagshot’s undeniable optimism had roots in the inner things of life or was merely, as the “Impatient Idealist” suggests, an airy skimming over the surface of things. Another

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correspondent, who signs himself, "Honesty," makes a different criticism:

"It is long since I have come across anything so insidiously subversive as the 'Comments of Bagshot.' The false air of moderation and persuasiveness which hangs over it all merely disguises and makes more dangerous the real tendency which underlies it. The man who wrote the 'imaginary preface' to the unwritten treatise on Political Economy is a Socialist, and you know it. Nothing could be more threatening to property than to dissolve a man's solid possessions into a mystical idea of power over his fellow-men, and if this gets into the head of Socialists and agitators I should be alarmed for the consequences. And so on throughout these 'Comments.' With a false urbanity to people of his own class, Bagshot invariably contrives to suggest that they are in the wrong, and that they may think themselves exceedingly lucky that the mob don't rise and set them right. I have watched him carefully, feeling sure that before we had done with him he would give himself away, and sure enough he did in the instalment which you published about a month ago. 'There are two classes of politicians,' you quote him as saying, 'those who use extreme language about moderate proposals and those who use moderate language about extreme proposals. It is always well in dealing with the British public

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“that your language should be most moderate when your proposals are most extreme.’ There, Sir, at last the cat was out of the bag. It is an exact description of Bagshot’s own method. He is for ever wrapping up extreme proposals in a false moderation of language and then asking you to see what an extremely reasonable man he is. I cannot profess to regret that he is dead or that his occupations prevented him from being either a politician or a serious writer in his lifetime. Such a man in public life would have been even more dangerous than Lloyd George.”

I need scarcely go on to say that my poor friend has got involved in the current controversy about academic people. Among my letters is one pointing the finger of scorn at him as “just the sort of academic man that the Oxford and Cambridge conspiracy loves to hoist over the heads of practical people.” “Of course,” says another, “he was at the Board of Education.” Well, he wasn’t at the Board of Education, for in his younger days he wasn’t thought good enough for it, and, though there were times when, to my knowledge, he would have liked, above all things, to be there, he never had the chance in later life. But he was not of the class whom academic people consider to be distinguished sons of a university. His academic successes were quite moderate; he was far below the standard of a college fellowship, and he never spent a con-

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secutive week at Oxford after he went down at the end of his four years. Certainly, he did all his life carry on the reading which he began there, and was always deeply grateful to the teachers who had put him on the road, but he never regarded his university education as more than a means to practical ends, or his performances at Oxford as other than the crude beginnings of a young man. If it will give any satisfaction to my correspondents, I can assure them that he was extremely suspicious of academic claims in his own department, and that, in the last years of his life, he foresaw a storm rising against the older universities, unless they either largely abated the claims which they made for their members or greatly enlarged the scope of their efforts.

It would be ridiculous for me to spend time in proving that my friend was not, in his own way, a cultivated man—as if that were really to his discredit—but I should have thought I had quoted enough from his “Comments” to show that he attached no inordinate value to mere culture as an element in life. Let me add a passage from a letter to his nephew, written in 1904, which bears on this subject:

“The prevailing idea of culture leads to a small number of people specializing in what should be an element in all lives. At the top of English society is a coterie of highly cultivated people, who in refinement of taste and intellectual activity are the equal of any similar

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“class in the world, but instead of spreading the light, they regard it as a sacred flame to be kept alive in the inner sanctuary of their own temple. I should like these hierophants to be turned loose into the popular press and compelled to make a living by writing for it on the popular level. The failure to touch the common mind, upon which our cultivated people appear to pride themselves, is not, as they imagine, a sign of their superiority, but rather a clear proof of the inadequacy of their ideal. Culture invariably dies, unless refreshed by the common intelligence, and before it dies it very frequently becomes corrupt.”

I have several letters before me from theologians and scientific people who complain of the incursions of Bagshot's "untrained mind" upon their preserves. His cautious questionings of certain scientific beliefs are specially resented, and I am referred to many high authorities who will confute what, I am told, are "heresies arising out of ignorance." Bagshot, I must confess, was rather bold in this respect. He took great pains to inform himself about the general conclusions of scientific research, but he would never accept them unless he could make sense of them in his own way. In excuse for him it may be said that he lived through a period in which scientific dogmatists were for ever turning each other inside-out, and he saw no reason why a layman should not occasionally take a hand. It was one

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of his maxims that the conclusions of specialists about their special branches of study were always to be regarded with suspicion. "No man can be trusted," he wrote to me on one occasion, "to write a book on a subject on which he is the sole authority. H., you say, must be right, because no one else understands the subject. On the contrary, the chances are ten to one that H. is wrong, and that he is either deceiving himself or deceiving the public." I suppose I shall get Bagshot into a worse scrape if I go on to quote another passage from the same letter:

"Specialism is quite often only another name for monomania. I have known few specialists whose special study was not an *idée fixe*. I met a man at the Maloja last month who called himself a craniologist, and he was for ever manœuvring to get furtive glances at our skulls from different points of view. His interest in human beings was solely to discover whether they were brachycephalous, dolichocephalous, microcephalous, or macrocephalous; and he unblushingly ascribed the amiable eccentricities of our friend F. to an amorphous dolichocephalism of his cranium. At first I took it to be his humour, but it gradually became evident that he had positively no other way of expressing himself, and no thoughts which corresponded to any other kind of expression.

"*Cave hominem unius libri*. I am not sure

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"I know what this means. I have heard it translated, beware of the man who knows one book, for he is a formidable fellow. For myself, I render it: shun the man who prates of one book, for he is a bore. If the Bible satisfies a man, it is precisely because it is not one book, but many books.

"Still let us be patient and tender with these lunatics. They are the necessary martyrs to science and learning, whose service is always very perilous to the reason. Only, when they try to domineer over us, let us never forget that they *are* insane—*i.e.*, in the strict sense of the word not *whole* men."

After this, I am afraid it is useless to reply to the correspondent who upbraids Bagshot for encouraging the "vice of discursiveness."

The theologians I must leave aside, and, if I get to work on the other correspondents who question Bagshot's politics, his style, and his views of life, I should never make an end. On all these subjects he must be left to speak for himself, if he has anything worth saying. He would turn in his grave if I posed him as a prophet who would resent contradiction, or as a literary man who prided himself on his style. His sense of the difficulty of saying what he wanted to say, and nothing else and nothing more, was almost a superstition with him, and his notebooks at first were merely a private effort to overcome what he recognized as a special defect in himself. As for

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contradiction and criticism, he could seldom be got to talk unless flatly contradicted. He was, I think, a man of stubborn conviction and no little obstinacy in getting his own way. But these qualities were overlaid with a rather misleading evenness of temper which at times caused considerable exasperation to his friends. I have stumbled upon a letter from the lady mentioned in a previous chapter, one passage in which will bear quoting. "Nothing," she says, "would induce me to marry a man who keeps his temper when I lose mine." With that I leave him, and the reader must decide whether it was a virtue or a vice.



