

from which you can see a seemingly exhaustless and endless array of ever-new schemes, hopes, and fancies, and purposes, and ambitions and dreams, line still chasing line, towards that magic disenchanting shore. Those behind cry "Forward!" Vain for those before to cry "Back!" Yea, themselves soon pick up their broken forces, and swell the energy and join in the advance of the crested lines that chase one another to the shore.

This, then, is to me the first lesson of the waves coming in. Human aspirations and dreams, advancing gay in youth, awhile seeming to make some progress; but learning at high tide that they have but been conquering barren tracts of unprofitable sand. Then yielding ground inch by inch, losing their grasp of the world and relinquishing the very lust thereof; and spoiled, and stained, and marred, and with a very heart moan, sinking to low ebb as life turns. Was not this Solomon's story? Wave after wave dancing to the shore, curve after curve bursting eagerly upon it, scheme after scheme, toil after toil, pleasure after pleasure, hope after hope, ambition after ambition, dream after dream; the eye is bewildered and dizzied with the ceaseless motion, the steady endless advance of the gay and crested waters—"Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour." It was gladdening, exhilarating, exciting to see the flashing battalions of earthward plans, and earthward dreams, pressing each close upon each, to the inexorable, impassive line of rocks or sand—what matter that here one shattered with a crash against a cruel blunt crag, and fled with a scream, and that another left its light and beauty trembling and sinking into the sand, while itself slunk back with a hollow sigh; what matter these scattered and insignificant experiences of the vanity of things mundane, while there was yet a whole rising tide of wildly eager waters, coming in fast, fast, exhaustless, infinite, flashing and gleaming and dancing in the sun? On, gaily on, and what if some die? Are there not myriads to follow? Why heed the waste, amid youth's profusion?

But a pause comes over all the glad onset: a stagnant time, a period of neither advance nor retreat; the tide is at the full. You mark no change for a while either way: then at last an edge of wet sand begins to border the line of dying spray.

Broadening and broadening; but it was quite enough that it had once begun. The tide has turned. Here is "the check, the change, the fall." An eager strife, a wild race, an impetuous advance, a profuse and uncalculating spending all youth's energies, and purposes, and powers, and aspirations, an excited, resistless march. And with what result? An unprofitable and transitory conquest of a narrow track of barren sand.

Oh draw off, draw off your broken forces, defeated in that they were victorious! disappointed by the very fact of attainment; steal back with that heart-sigh of "Vanity, vanity, vanity: all is vanity,"—back into the deep sea again! Leaving, it is true, the colour, and the light, and the gladness, and the purity: the crested spray, the diamond drops, the rainbow gleam; all lying wrecked and sucked in by the hungry shore. Leaving the spoils of youth, yet glad anyhow to get away; for what can equal the bitterness of that moment when the tide, long sluggish, begins at last to turn?

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

"Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us."

And so hark to the moan of the waves as they draw off, when the tide has turned, and the disenchantment has come, sigh after sigh, moan upon moan, in the weary and desolate retreat. "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." Yes; and further on, a more bitter wail, as it passes back over some spot where some of the gayest morning hopes were spilt: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Lower and lower yet, with yet duller and heavier moan: "What hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." And now an almost fierce and angry cry: "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

And what then? Is this the end of all?