

—he is not likely to spoil his digestion by rushing about the streets with a pike or a musket. It is your man of "lean and hungry look"—as Shakespeare told us 300 years ago through the lips of Julius Cæsar—who wreck cities and overthrow thrones. A Conservative is merely a Radical who has had his dinner, just as a Radical is a Conservative who has not. Any man will be Conservative enough so long as he has anything to conserve; but when once he finds his own pockets empty he very soon discovers that the framework of society needs reconstruction, and that "property must be transferred," (i. e., from its present possessors to himself.)

Barely two miles away from our door, in an old-fashioned farmhouse on the wooded slope of Leith Hill, lives a man whom I last saw in his office under the shadow of the Kremlin during one of my flying visits to Moscow. The clergyman of our village, who is now quietly established in a snug little English vicarage half buried in over-shadowing trees, has heard the tiger's roar at midnight in the jungles of Bengal, and has seen the broad, smooth stream of the Ganges mirroring the towers and temples of ancient Benares. More than one of the straying fellows in dark blue who tenant the county police station two doors below our cottage have an upright bearing and bold military stride suggestive of their having faced in their time worse dangers than a drunken plowman, a runaway horse, or some frisky young "Jack Horner" of a bull. My present landlord, too, whom I can see as I write working away manfully with his spade in a field on the other side of the road, is a Veteran of the Seventeenth Lancers, on the wall of whose tiny parlor hangs a medal inscribed with names which are household words to every Englishman: "Alma, Balaklava, Inkerman, Sebastopol." Thirty-two years ago, when his iron-gray hair was black and his weather-beaten visage round and ruddy, he trenched earthworks under a hail of Russian shells and round shot upon the fatal plateau that faced the destroying batteries of the Redan, and rode in the ranks of the immortal "six hundred" who went to their doom down the "valley of death" at Balaklava on that terrible Autumn afternoon in October, 1854.

On a clear, bright morning in the later Autumn, while the memory of the great conflict was still fresh, I tramped along the Balaklava Valley in company with Hepworth Dixon, wishing to follow as closely as possible by actual observation the details of the famous charge. At first sight, indeed, the spot showed little trace of what had been. Man's ravage is transient as himself, and on the field of slaughter where so many hundreds of brave men had died in vain the grass grew fresh and green, and the sheep fed peacefully on the rich herbage that covered twelve hundred corpses, and the sun shone brightly overhead, and the birds caroled merrily around us, and the butterflies hovered idly on the warm, dreamy air, as if neither sight nor sound of war had ever defiled that beautiful valley since the day when it first glanced downward through one of the Summer clouds, and a human foot had trod its sods.

SOCIETY—WHAT IS IT?

BY CHAS. T. CONGDON.

Reflections upon what is called "society" in the same sense in which we speak of a "society man" or "society woman" are usually silly or cynical. We either attach too much importance to fashionable pursuits or too little. A great number of people find pleasure in going out, in seeking and being seen, in dressing late in the evening and undressing early the next morning, in eating at supper various indigestible things, and paying the penalty in agonies of indigestion. There is a mania in this. Very few like it, but very few also have the courage to give it up, though they renounce happiness and risk health by persistence. I know one woman—perhaps more than one—who is certainly committing suicide in this ignoble way, and not very slowly either. What one wants in company is cleverness, bright conversation, wit, and humor. What one gets is a weary repetition of feeble comment upon matters not worth commenting upon at all. The advantage which one receives from this is a cleverness of the ignorant and fatuity of mankind. What is this information is worth what it costs is another matter.

It is melancholy to think what poor practice passes in this world for respectable conversation. When the lights shine over fair women and brave men there is a buzz of voices. The noise is great enough, but it conveys no idea whatever to the listener. The faces of the talkers look intelligent enough, and talkers and listeners are apparently interested in what is saying. There could not be a greater mistake than to think so. Not one cares a farthing for what the other is saying. The number of those who are hearing what they have not heard many times before is exceedingly limited. The monosyllabic "Ye-e-s" is cruelly overworked. The great point is to get through the evening somehow. It is a hard task, yet nobody dares to go away before the regular hour, just as nobody has dared stay away altogether. The hostess has provided against ennui to the best of her ability. She has men and women to sing songs, which everybody has heard a dozen times better or worse sung, and she has other men and women who give recitations, funny or forcible or both together. The themes are the weather and the dress, with a feeble dribbling of what is called literature. Half the talk is interrogative, which is always a sign of weakness or ignorance or mental desperation. And so many meet who cared not to see each other again! All is too shallow for interest, and too absurd for criticism.

But I have often thought that those who had the worst of it all were the lions. There may be these belonging to that class who enjoy their limitation and are happiest when made most of, shaking hands with pleasure, no matter how accurately the right wrist may ache, and finding an intense satisfaction in being stared at. They usually turn out, however, whether authors, actors, singers, or travellers, to be really small people, to be avoided rather than sought. If one's time and patience be worth anything, Really clever people may be captured now and then, but they are never caught twice, if they can help themselves in the same house. The real lion likes his jungle best, and he resembles the beast for whom he is named in hating to be stared at. Miss Martineau says in her autobiography, that during the great popularity of her first London seasons, she "went nowhere but where her acquaintance was sought as a lady, by

ladies." If she accidentally found herself in a less than predicament, she would hide behind a door, or do anything to avoid attention.

There is something puzzling about what we call fashion. God, we profess to believe, gave to man the power of thought, of intellectual cultivation, of acquiring knowledge, and of imparting it. We are accustomed to talk of the dignity of human nature. We admit the moral duty of living wisely. Such are our theories, but it is painful to think what a vast proportion of the human race care for little except a momentary uniformity, and how few there are who wish for anything except to be like the majority, of which they are but an infinitesimal part. Inability to dress in the mode makes many a woman wretched, and men and women both find their lives a burden when they fall, in spite of toadyism and woe-wool and fawning to get into a certain set. Perhaps there are a hundred English novels written almost expressly to rebuke this weakness, but none of them has ever done any good. It would acquire no little philosophical investigation to determine whether this notion which we call fashion proceeds mostly from love of imitation, from hope of personal advancement, from vanity, or from sheer inability. Whoever disregards it is set down as eccentric, as queer, or, to use the final and all conclusive word, as unfashionable. It is from no hope of doing any good that it is spoken of here. It is simply mentioned as curious.

Thompson, in the "Castle of Indolence," tells us of the inmates of that somniferous edifice that their only "labor was to kill the time."

"And labor dire it was and weary woe."

For many persons the world is still one great castle of indolence. They have no sense of the delights of solitude. They are the opposite of those happy spirits who find the best company in being alone. They have no resources in themselves, and no genuine claim upon the resources of others. They have no life except in contact. If they read it is because others have read the book before them, and they would fain be able to talk of that which others are talking of. They like and dislike a mode. When they fall into the company of well-informed people they run great risks of lamentably exposing their ignorance, but some of them exhibit great chivalry, and hardly ever get caught. They can say "Yes" and "No" and "Certainly" and "To be sure," if they can say no more, and when they really have nothing to say they can smile, which answers every purpose.

Most of our novels are mediocre, and those which are better have a foreign odor. But what could be expected for the stage or for a story book from a society so rich and vulgar?—can, based on vanity by display and profuse expenditure, a fashionable position; or the pretence to literary taste, prattling without sense or information; or the devotee of dancing, or the walking advertisement of a celebrated dressmaker or an expensive tailor; or a purse-proud millionaire who is bent by ostentatious extravagance upon informing the world of his successes?

The question may well arise, What is all this display worth? Certainly it absorbs much money which might be better spent, and it drives many a man ultimately into involuntary. For it is a peculiarity of those who constitute fashionable society that they are imitative. Only fortunes too enormous to be entirely dissipated are sufficient for such luxury. But there is always a train of those of minor means, who, in the desperate effort to be somebody, suffer themselves

to fall into endless pecuniary vexations, and put themselves to a great deal of trouble without any real pleasure resulting from it. They have enough for all that is worth having, and they make themselves wretched for the sake of what is not worth having at all.

It is no wonder that there has been a good deal of speculation upon the question: "Is life worth the living?" That depends. Some lives are; some are not. But unless we are ready for rope or ratsbane we are obliged to live until fate calls us away from pleasure or pain. Bitter questions are: "How shall we live wisely? How shall we make the most of life? How shall we best get over its difficulties and secure its possible happiness?" And such is the variety of human character that these are not easy to answer. There is a good, a better, and a best way for every person, and there is a bad, a worse, and a worst way. Some are so constituted that nothing but solitude, the profounder the better, satisfies them; but it can hardly be said that these make the most of life, because they miss the pleasure of doing good and of contributing their quota to the happiness of their fellow creatures. It may indeed happen that they will most largely add to the happiness of their fellow-creatures by keeping themselves entirely to themselves, and such may be excused the most complete privacy. But there are those in the world who are really worth knowing and who are capable of social converse at once pleasant and profitable. They can tell us something worth knowing, or, maybe, we can tell them something which it is well for them to know. True friendship, which stands all tests and is based upon absolute and immutable confidence, is very rare, but it is usually to be found by those who are worthy of it. Only acquaintance is not friendship. A man is not necessarily your friend because he asks you to dinner, or a woman because she sends you her card for afternoon tea. You live with acquaintances because you cannot help yourself; with friends because they are a part of your life. You can have the first for asking, you must be worthy of the other. Above all things let us take life quietly. There is so much in it which all can command, and we have such large resources in ourselves, that it would be childish to complain because we miss this or that toy, or to think too much of what the world thinks of us. Nothing has been here said of domestic happiness and the dear delights of home. To a great many these are undoubtedly incomprehensible, but it is a consolation to think how much they are valued by a great many more. They have a society worth living for. The bonny blink of their own fireside outshines all the glare of the saloons. There is a dressing gown and slipper joy which the dress coat and Parisian robe know not of. We may go to "receptions" as a duty; happy are we if we can come back to our homes and hearthstones, or even radiators, as to a refuge for weariness, and a compensation for having been frightfully bored! No matter if he never sees his name in the fashionable intelligence! No matter if the inter-visitor never thinks him worthy of a call and a cross-examination! No matter if he never gets a solitary card! Happy in himself and in the company of those who love him, a man can well afford to remain unnoticed, and to die without the smallest prospect of an obituary article in the news paper.

TORONTO, Ont.

Indeed it is a hard task to make a fool wise who holds folly for wisdom.