

THE GOOD OLD WAY

and marking the lessons which they teach us. Experience has been compared to the stern-light of a ship which shines only on the road that has been traversed. But the stern-light of a ship that sails before you is a head-light to you.

You do not need to try everything for yourself in order to understand what it means. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that he gave his heart to know madness and folly; and that it was all vanity and vexation of spirit. It will be a wise economy for us to accept his lesson without paying his tuition-fee over again.

It is perfectly safe for a man to take it as a fact that fire burns, without putting his hand into the flame. He does not need to try perilous experiments with his own soul in order to make sure that lust defiles, that avarice hardens, that frivolity empties, that selfishness cankers the heart. He may understand the end of the way of sensuality by looking at any old pleasure-seeker,

Gray, and gap-toothed, and lean as death,
mumbling the dainties that he can no longer