

known fact that the fruit of plants and trees which are forced never possesses that richness of flavour, that delicacy of taste, which is the common property of fruit ripened by the ordinary processes of nature; and that the more a plant or tree is forced the more insipid and meagre its fruit becomes. And what is thus true of the vegetable world is no less true of the animal—and of man. Such is the speed with which we are swept along in this everyday race against time that, if our efforts and exertions are to produce any fruit at all, it must perforce be fruit of an unnatural and forced growth, with all the imperfections and inferiority common to such—with unprofitableness and premature decay engraved upon it from the very beginning. And this is just the state of things we see all around us. Of change and hurry and dash, of boasting and bragging, there is much; but of maturity and excellence, of improvement and real worth, there is little to be found anywhere or in anything. Though we do not acknowledge it, all we conceive of, all we take in hand, all we execute centres round one narrow point, viz.: the Present! and to it all our achievements are made to tend, all our offerings are brought. It is our high altar, our God.

To bring our fruit to the public mart *first*—never mind its forced growth, its insipidity, its immaturity, or how much our stocks are injured thereby—that is the all-absorbing passion of our age, the one thing we use life for. And to such a pass has this come, and so firmly has it taken hold of us, that should one whose mind revolts against such a course, and who has an eye for the welfare of posterity, set his face against these selfish, narrow, mistaken views of life, we forthwith regard him as little better than an idiot, and treat him to our pity or contempt. This is no exaggerated

statement; it is all too true, as we must confess if we will only give ourselves time to think about it. And it is this which is to lead us on to the grand goal of national prosperity and progression! This is our much-boasted advancement, our utility! I have sadly misapprehended the meaning and sense of these terms, if this is what they mean. I had always deemed them in my simplicity to be synonymous with wide, universal improvement and amelioration of our race, in which succeeding generations should share as well as our own—with a something that would make our lives and the lives of our children, and those to follow after, better and brighter and happier. I must have been mistaken if the popular view be the right one. But to go to the root of the matter at once without further circumlocution, I think we have, as a people, mistaken the *object* of life, and blinded our eyes to the true facts of the case by putting imaginary aims and ends before our minds. And if such be really the case, is it not time for us to pause and consider the matter for a moment? We surely, for instance, can not take such a serious step as the placing of our children—who, let us bear in mind, must influence the destinies of the future, either for good or ill, no less than ourselves—under any, much less the modern, system of training and development, without, at any rate, bestowing some little reflection upon the subject; and it needs but scanty reflection to show us how evident are the evils of the system prevailing amongst us. Our children are *forced* up into men and women almost before they can walk or talk; and, like everything else that is forced and prematurely ripened, they must and do lack, not only all those qualities so pleasing and delightful in the young, but also the qualities that adorn and beautify the youth of all countries and ages, and which to so