

"Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to hell
The huckless pots he marred in making; pish—
He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well."

Given a God of all-Love and all-Power, and given man the plastic clay, and the logical result is universalism. He wishes all men to come to the perfect image of the Christ, and he is all-mighty to effect his purpose, for helpless man cannot frustrate his will; therefore all men will reach the same goal by and by. Shall we call this the figure at its best? If so, it yields a cheerful optimism, but it is a superficial and spurious optimism which robs life of all moral meaning, and cuts the strings of all strenuous endeavor.

But some will take the figure neither at its best nor at its worst. They will look at the real facts of life, the vessels of honor and of dishonor, the pots of beautiful design and those of ungainly make, the cups which have poured their true use in the Master's banquetting table, and the cups which have been marred or broken in the process of being shaped; and as they reason from the potter's work to the potter's final purpose, they cannot give way to utter despair nor can they cherish a universal hope. In the presence of such confusing evidence, skepticism sometimes recommends itself as the safest verdict. This was perhaps the conclusion of the old Persian poet who is being so eagerly seized upon in literary circles to-day as the true interpreter of the spirit of our age. He leads us to the tavern where the human vessels are discussing the divine purpose and man's destiny, and this is what we hear:

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common earth was ta'en
And to this figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless earth again."

Then said a second—"Ne'er a peevish boy
Would break the bowl from which he drank in joy;
And he that with his hand the vessel made
Will surely not in after wrath destroy."

After a momentary silence spake
Some vessel of a more ungainly make
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry
What! did the hand then of the potter shake?"

Whereat some one of the loquacious lot—
I think a sufi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of pot and potter—tell me then,
Who makes, who sells, who buys, who is the pot?"