

needful to imbibe and illustrate our own experience by using fraudulent appearances, statements or implied conditions as to our monetary conditions, that we may gain the *use* of wealth, by means of the *appearance* of it. This is, in fact, the crime which is Respectability's besetting sin. To this, as to all sin, is attached its appropriate punishment. It is chiefly respectability itself which is by such means gullible, and thereby gulled.

The deeper depth of "respectability" in crime is reached when the fraudulent appearance of wealth enters even into the outer courts of the temple, and endeavours to maintain itself by ostentatious subscriptions to churches and what are called "good objects," in order that these gifts may act as a blind to searching enquiry into the donor's conduct of affairs. An entire absence of any care for the morals, welfare or wealth of 500 operatives, clerks, and managers of departments is rendered respectable by a slight subscription towards those institutions which professedly care for the welfare of the community. Sometimes this is conscious villainy. Sometimes it is the man's own idea of business transferred to the Deity he regards as too powerful an opponent to be altogether set at defiance. He thus attempts to keep an ill-balanced Dr. and Cr. account with Him. Thus 500 operatives, receiving \$1 per week less than the actual value of their labour, nets \$26,000 per annum. Of this, 90 per cent. is carried to a contingent fund, to meet possible changes in the condition of trade, or the relations between capital and labour, which are felt to be too one-sided to last, while 10 per cent. is used to satisfy (?) the rightful claims of the God who is all goodness, who gives wisdom and power liberally to all who ask, and adds no upbraiding.

Men who thus act have within them still some remains of conscience. Evolution is to them still a science which they feel to be too hard, too unfeeling a taskmaster. Their very fears for self restrain their entire submission to it. They hunger for something more personal—more loving, less relentless. It is only the fool whose heart, whose will tells him there is no God—no love and wisdom other than the love of self, and the wisdom to care for "number one." For that man in whom burns yet, however dimly, some faint expiring glow of love towards his fellows, knows that only that part of his labour, thought, anxiety, or care, which ultimates in real usefulness to the whole race, has any of that element of solid value in it which *compels* respect and *continues* ability.

Nor is communism any less selfish than Respectability. It, too, is struggling to raise self by depriving others—to produce a dead-level of equalization of means, it would prefer to deprive *all* of wealth rather than permit any but self to retain it.

There is, then, but one royal road to wealth and lasting respectability, and that is *usefulness*. For none can be useful, in superabundant measure to all, without benefitting all; and he who would fain be as useful to others as he can perceive it possible he could wish that others would be useful to him, has found the key which unlocks and reveals the entrance to that way, that Truth, which is Life here and now, and Eternal Life hereafter.

Shall we not live it now, God helping us? Usefulness to others as the very core of life would stay at once those pretences to wealth itself "ill-gotten" even though attained,—would transform Politics from party spirit into an enthusiasm for humanity,—would make society a true and real communism of voluntary and affectionate service, which anything *else*, and anything *less*, is powerless to accomplish,—would level naturally and with gentle hand wealth, from exceptional super-abundance, into universal abundance; and there would be no more poor, save those who are "poor in spirit," blessed indeed that they realize that poverty of theirs, and are willing to take of the Divine Life, not for self, but only to live it out again in a life for others' good. So it might be *now*, so it *will* be in futurity.

### CONVENTIONALITY.

You cannot open a book or take up a paper in these days without coming upon the statement that something is or is not "conventional." Somebody's art, or somebody's poetry, or somebody's style of living, speaking, dressing or dining is sure to be described as "conventional." One comes, therefore, to regard this as one of the most important words in the language—if, indeed, the thing expressed is not one of the most important influences in modern life; and so it seems desirable to consider for a moment what it means, and to what extent we are, as a people, in subjection to it.

There are many words which it is comparatively little use to look up in the dictionary. "Conventional" is one of these. We certainly get thereby to know that it is "something agreed to, sanctioned by usage, or become customary"; but this is not going very far—not so far as the many meanings we attach to the word in our daily use of it. For instance, when we speak of "conventionalism in Art," we imply all sorts of things. We may mean that an artist paints in a certain formal or accepted style, or that in his work he goes on the principle of using accepted types of things, instead of drawing the things themselves—as in Indian religious art it is imperative to repeat the exact forms of things which have been so used from time immemorial. These forms may not be at all like what they are intended to be; but it is forbidden that they should be departed from. A striking example of this is afforded by

heraldic devices. The heraldic painter copies not what he sees in Nature, but the monstrosities handed down from old times—the "conventional" forms of planets, animals, and other objects he is to depict. As examples of conventionality carried to excess, I may point to the mechanical rendering of the *fleur-de-lis* as a spear-head—and to the pine as treated in Indian shawls, where it takes a form so arbitrary that it is hardly possible to recognize its likeness to the original. Artists in connection with architecture are also greatly fettered in this way, especially in the ecclesiastical branch of their work, in which the want of capacity of artists in the Dark Ages, who involuntarily caricatured what they could not represent, has led to certain formalities which have become the accepted type of things, binding for all time!

It is not so easy to define the "conventional" in writing as in art. No doubt but we all feel the difference between a bright, fresh writer and one who adopts a style "sanctioned by use," or which has "become customary." The most curiously striking conventionalities in literature are those which effect the form or framework of things. It is this which makes it imperative that a fashionable English novel should appear in three volumes. This determines the length and arrangement of the "leading articles" in the *Times* and other daily papers; they must be one column long, that column to be broken up into three long paragraphs. If the *Times* came out with a "leader" in short sentences, nobody would attach the slightest value to it—no, not if each sentence were as pregnant with wisdom as a proverb of Solomon.

But the conventional goes much further in the dominion it has over us. It regulates our morals, our manners, and even our religious observances. And in connection with these matters, we give it a new name. We call it "Mrs. Grundy." She is a standard of conventional propriety. We have not to trouble ourselves with questions of abstract right or wrong. Some moralists, indeed, insist that nothing is right or wrong in the abstract, but only in relation to something else. That is to say, that the standard of morals is artificial, and conscience nothing more than educated instinct. Without going so far, there can be little question but that Mrs. Grundy is the great ruler and arbitress of our lives.

To take a familiar example, there would appear to be nothing much more easy to settle than the point as to what is, and what is not, decency in dress. But in reality there is no law—save the dictum of Mrs. Grundy. At times it has been the fashion for ladies to wear dresses so short that they hardly hid the knees. But there was no outcry of immodesty; at others, long dresses have been insisted on, and a lady was guilty of an offence against society if she showed her ankle. So with high-bodied and low-bodied dresses. Sometimes Mrs. Grundy insists that the dresses should button up to the neck; at others she is content that they should leave off buttoning at the waist. At present what is termed a "low" dress is permissible at a ball or at the opera which would be denounced as absolutely indecent in church. Why? I could never understand why it was considered a mark of respect to go to hear music at an opera or concert, in a dress which it would be considered improper to attend Evening Service in. The only reason is that the distinction is "conventional."

The reign of Mrs. Grundy has been too long and too oppressive. And just as the tendency to the conventional in Arts and Letters is toward the dead, formal and commonplace, so its influence on life is tiresome and depressing. We want more brightness and light, more gaiety and variety; a fuller enjoyment of good things and use of available talents. We want to get rid of that sense of weariness of life, and terror of the consequence of being natural. We want more scope of individuality. We want "character," which is only another name for that personal independence which kicks against old rules, fixed manners, and monotony in dress and surroundings, and all that interferes with the free action of a free people.

*Quevedo Redivivus.*

### THE BRITISH UNIFORM COLOUR.

In the above heading the word "uniform" appears as an adjective, and properly so, though it is customary in referring to this subject to use the word as a noun. This is not only ungrammatical, but, as is always the case when improper terms are used, confusing. When the dress of the line regiments varies in details, and sometimes even in total appearance; when the various adjunctory services all have their distinctive colours or facings, it is impossible to say the army has a uniform colour, and therefore it has no uniformity, and the word uniform or *single* should not be used to designate the colour of the dress. It is, however, so used, and custom prescribes that in writing on these matters it is necessary to use the word "uniform" in the sense of "dress." It is as such I shall use it.

The earliest British uniform known consisted of a collar on the neck and various daubs of colour on the body and limbs. Whether the earlier British ladies admired this costume as much as the garrison belles of the present day do the monkey jackets of some of our corps, is open to question. Doubtless the soldiers of Boadicea and Cassivelaunus had their sweethearts' admiration when attired as above. Why not?

Passing on to the time of the Normans, the archers were clothed in Lincoln green, (the colour of the facings of the 29th, 63rd and 69th regiments)