

a wheel, in selling ribands, in writing figures into a book. Truly the most dreadful outburst of savage temper is but a wild and wicked mis-statement of the truth that men were not made, with all their glorious powers, for this. And yet no Chartist or socialist theory can rail the seal off the bond which dooms multitudes to these ignoble fates, or contradict the saying of the ancient sage that the foot must be trodden into the mire if the head is to be carried aloft. So much for the masses.

Now look higher, and ask whether the vices of the better classes commonly results from fiery passions and overwhelming temptations, or from the demand of their torpid energies for some ripple on the surface of life, and the persuasion that it must needs be an angel who stirs those waters out of their stagnation. It is commonly said that men are in most danger in early manhood, when the restraints of home give way. But there is a fall quite as frequent as the fall of inexperienced youth, and far more hopeless. It is the crash of disenchanted, disillusioned experience. How often have we been shocked by a scandal in mature age, and imagined perhaps that a mask had fallen from one who was a deceiver and a hypocrite all his reputable days. But that is scarcely credible; for the honour of human nature we cannot believe it to be common.

No, the truth was more probably, that a man of large desires and shining hope ran well as long as he saw the prize glittering before him, before the bloom was brushed off the fruit of the tree of life. But he fell when the cruel truth came home to him that the world had little more, or at least little different, to give, that he had found his level, that either the prizes were not for him, or else they were scarce worth grasping. Then he *stole* some prize that still seemed near or valuable; then he tried strong spices because plain food had little relish; then, like the fabled Faust, he sold to the devil the soul which could find no pleasure left on earth.

Yes, the desire for "more life and fuller," the hatred of these rigid iron grooves along which the ponderous machinery of social life thunders, and drags us along its straight, graceless, flat, monotonous lines—this has much to do with the conflict of classes, the collapse of reputations, the weariness of life.

Yes, and every theory of life is self-condemned which looks upon this profound yearning as vague and meaningless. The gospels of the nineteenth century fail miserably to grapple with this demand of nature, and they will drag down humanity in their collapse, if ever they really persuade men that Nature evolved them through millions of years and changes,