

rience, that has much to do with this craving in mankind to seek companionship. True, it is, that comparatively few people exist who are not really fond of society of some description; and, in fact, perpetual solitude seems to be one of the greatest punishments that can be imposed upon man. Yet in order to please in society, no special talent or intelligence is required; in point of fact, the average person is infinitely more agreeable if he does not appear strikingly brilliant. Balzac evidently recognized this, for in one of his stories we find a lady warning the hero not to be too entertaining nor too luminous, but still to *let his superiority be felt*. An attentive listener, moreover, if not palpably dull, is often considered a more valuable acquisition than the very best talker. But at present it is the intellectual man that is the hero of the hour. He who can make his hearers intellectual, at least in their own imagination, is sought after and worshipped beyond all others.

Whether or not society is to prove beneficial to us will depend in a great measure on the dispositions in which we enter it. For if we consider the amount of selfishness in the world, and the evident reluctance of many persons to furnish their experiences for the good of their fellows, we cannot but question the motives which impel mankind to proffer this fellowship. Hence we are too suspicious of each other. If we go into active life, however, meaning to better and enjoy ourselves whilst helping others to do the same—to be instructed, cheered or comforted, as the occasion may allow—then society becomes truly advantageous to us.

Still, the constant high pressure under which we live has also a powerful effect on our social atmosphere. We begin and end each day in the same flurried and excited manner. Every one desires to advance his own purely personal interests; and in our over-anxiety about ourselves, we forget to treat others with that regard and consideration which our code of manners so rigidly imposes. For among the primary laws of etiquette—which even the most selfish among us do not dare to violate openly—that of love for one's neighbour occupies the first place. How true then is the remark that the source of good manners to-day is found in respect for human nature, one's own and that of others, heightened by a sense of the value of life and a desire to make the most of the opportunities it affords.

But let us also bear in mind that, with the exception of our elders, no class of men should receive so large a share of our kindness and sympathy as our inferiors. Is it not our duty to disregard the barrier which fortune has erected between us? How thoroughly the ancient Romans understood poor, weak human nature when they