

THROUGH A MONOCLE

THE CRIME OF PESSIMISM.

IF I were Czar of Canada, I would put every pessimist in jail for life. Especially would I do so if it were proven that the peevish fellow had been dripping his inky opinions where they would catch the eye of young people. The man or woman who carries about smoked glasses to be loaned to young people when they are peering anxiously out into the future, trying to see if the sun is smiling on the other end of the valley of shadows through which they may just then be trudging, is a pest and a poisoner of wells and a defiler of streams and a potential assassin of babes. Perhaps you noticed the other day that a young girl of eighteen committed suicide somewhere in the United States; and it was surmised that she had done so as the first of a Suicide Club to draw the fatal number. A member of a Suicide Club at eighteen! One might as well expect to find a child of five entangled in an anti-candy league. At eighteen, it ought to be impossible for a boy or girl to despair. "The day is at the morn—the year is at the spring," and if God does seem to have left His Heaven, there is lots of time for Him to get back again.

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THIS sordid modern world of ours needs a religion of optimism more than it does a religion of salvation. Our people need to be saved now—not in the next world. Even the theologians will confess that a suicide is a self-damned soul, and that, as long as a person is kept from suicide, there is always hope that they may "repent and be saved." Hence the man who drives the clouds of despair from the mind of man, woman or child, opens the gates of possible salvation to them as surely as the man who preaches his gospel more directly. We will all of us go in for salvation hereafter if we can only manage to fight our way through this present veil of tears. And the big-hearted, cheery, ever-hopeful, never-cast-down human being with the bright face and the infectious laughter, makes it impossible to think of failure and convinces us that the direst disaster is but a temporary eclipse.

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AKIN to the pessimist is the man who has no faith in his fellows—the whisperer who drops into your ear the suggestion that So-and-So who seems so generous "has an axe to grind," that every scheme for the betterment of humanity means "a rake-off for somebody," that your best friend abuses you behind your back, that he who trusts either man or woman is bound to have his eyes opened one of these days. I shun such distillers of poisoned gossip as I would a snake. I had far rather believe and be deceived than curse myself with constant unbelief. In the course of a fairly long life, I have yet

to be seriously deceived by a single man, woman, or baby. More often people have been better than I have had the courage to give them credit for. It is wonderful how much honest dealing, frankness, good faith and genuine friendliness there exists in the world; and I believe that most of us are practically never cheated unless we invite the process by showing our fellows that we suspect them. To go about with a watchful air is to put men on their mettle—to dare them to try it—to challenge them to see if they are smart enough to "take us in."

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AS a rule, people mean well. The reason we think that they do not on occasion, is that we judge them by standards which they do not recognise. The very bandit in the mountains has his code of honour; and he will often live up to it at greater sacrifice than some of us who preach more loudly would make to keep faith ourselves. I have been reading lately of an English traveller who became the guest of a band of outlaws in the Albanian hills; and, though his hosts would not hesitate to shoot and rob a Turkish traveller if they caught him and sometimes raided Turkish villages with terrible results, they were the soul of honour in their treatment of their guest, and he is only waiting for an opportunity to take a friend and go back again for another visit and some hunting. Men do what they themselves regard as right. If their notions of "meum" and "tuum" are a trifle hazy at times, that is your misfortune; but you will make a great mistake if you imagine that they have consciously done what is wrong.

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BUT is there no standard of right and wrong, you ask? And, at the risk of shocking you, I will give you my opinion that there is not. The standard is constantly changing—constantly improving. The underlying principle is always the same; but its application varies. Many a man has called the main principle—justice. Jesus of Nazareth called it—love. Others term it—brotherhood. But, in any case, its application changes as conditions change. For instance, take human slavery. At one time, it was the acme of humane conduct—the most difficult virtue of war. The general custom was to glut your vengeance by ruthlessly slaughtering all captives. That was the conqueror's right. It was no more wrong then to kill a captive than it is now to burn a non-combatant's house in the course of military operations. But a new and virtuous humane idea came gradually into operation. The lives of captives were spared. It is true that they were held as slaves ever afterward; but they were not killed. This was a great step in advance; and the slave-holder was the good man. Since that day, humanity has marched ahead; and now the slave-holder is regarded as an inhuman beast. The laws of human conduct are eternal; their application is as mutable as the run of the seasons.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

HOW WESTERN MILITIA MEN TRAIN THEIR HORSES



Militia Training in Canada is becoming more practical. This photograph taken during the recent Camp of the Sixteenth Light Horse, at Fort Qu'Appelle, shows how the Western Cavalry are developing.