

son is, to be sure, at times. A ground glass shade over a gas lamp does not bring more solace to our dazzled eye than such a one to our minds. There are men of *esprit* who are excessively exhausting to some people. They are the talkers who have what may be called the jerky minds. They say bright things on all possible subjects, but their zigzags rack you to death. After a jolting half-hour with these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief. It is like taking a cat in your lap after holding a squirrel."

After these evidences of a magnanimous nature, it is easy to believe that the delightful humor which runs through all of Holmes' writings, is never indulged at the expense of the reader's more sensitive feelings. In this respect, he closely resembles the French Moralists whose hearty enjoyment of the ridiculous, is as unlike as may be to the sneer of the English satirist. He has a light pleasant way of showing up the foibles of humanity, which is so far from being offensive that we laugh with him at our very selves, and take his well meant lessons to heart notwithstanding.

A cursory reader may not immediately detect the didactic efficacy of the Autocrat's discursive talk; if he did, he would probably read but little of it. Yet, no one I think, can fail to profit by contact with the wise and kindly spirit from which it flows. The good is wrought silently in us as all good should be wrought. We begin by feeling uncomfortably conscious of certain unmistakable blemishes of character in ourselves, and certain equally unmistakable virtues in our neighbor until by dint of trying to rid ourselves of the first and emulate the second, a wholesome impetus has been given to our better impulses and a corresponding check put upon our worst ones. There is something salutary in such a result.

With all this, Dr. Holmes is not by any means, as far as I can see, a religious man. I will go farther and say that to my thinking, the spiritual element is wholly wanting in him, or at least, in his works. It is true that he has a certain reverence for holy things, that he has acknowledged his belief in Christ and, like every good Protestant, aimed a shot or two at the Catholic church. But notwithstanding all this if we probe to the bottom of his philosophy in search of a religion I fear we shall not be a little startled to find in its stead—paganism pure and simple.

In other words, the springs of human action seem to have for him, no higher source than a sort of poetic aspiration after an ideal of beauty. His love of truth and virtue resolves itself into an æsthetic refinement of thought and feeling. His decalogue is neither more nor less than the code of honor of a gentleman. He has fallen into the error against which Newman has warned us, that subtle but fatal error which makes good breeding supersede religion as a motive, and beauty or materialism, for they are the same thing, take the place of Christ, as an ideal. The error is all the more dangerous as man is more prone to serve the world than God. He is more jealous of his honor as a gentleman, than of his valor as a Christian.

It would in nowise please me to draw this paper to a close at a point which might leave an unfavorable impression of an author, who, in spite of the charge I have laid at his door holds a very high place in my affections. Let me sum up as briefly as possible the better qualities and more pleasing characteristics of the subject of our study.

Dr. Holmes is undoubtedly entitled to a place in the front rank of modern authors. For fluency and correctness of style, for exquisite refinement of thought, feeling and language, for rich quaint humor, for shrewd wisdom, for utter freedom from aught that is gross or impure, for almost feminine tenderness for the weak and unhappy, he is unsurpassed if not unrivalled. We cannot read his books without loving him, and feeling that he in a measure loves us in return.

For the country, Holmes has done an unparalleled amount of good. He has elevated her standard by refining her ideals. He has taught the world that his people is something more than a money-making race, and that his climate favors the growth of art and poetry as much as that of corn and sugar cane. In fact he has left his mark upon his age and I have no hesitation in prophesying that his name shall be a household word in every English and American household for more years to come than I would dare compute—and right gladly may we join in the throng, who wished him a few days ago on his 80th birthday, "Many happy returns," though it is sad to realize how few returns either happy or otherwise, are likely to come to one who is eighty years of age.

PRINCE EMILIUS.