

ture tells us that acceptable men are tried in the furnace of humiliation (Ec. ch. 2); then, in the name of respectable authority, profane or sacred, who or where are our great men? Who are even acceptable? We have genius and talent, and many graded distinctions, in our day, but they cannot stand Ruskin's test, and if they were dropped into the furnace of humiliation, they should from that moment cease to exist. There is nothing so universal now-a-days as an all-absorbing, all-subverting *amour-propre*, if the wholesome counsel which bids men love their neighbors as they love themselves (funny counsel that!) prevailed at present to any practical extent, we should all set about admiring and cherishing one, and that to a truly alarming extent, and should do little else from morning until night but indulge the most affectionate solicitude for our neighbor, and thereby run the risk of being reproved, for having done a Christian duty overwell.

There is one lesson which the wise men of our generation have yet to learn; it may not be a pleasant one, but the importance of such things is not measured by their pleasantness, usually. It is, that people in general are utterly, even brutally indifferent to the accidents and vicissitudes of 'other people's' lives, the recital of which is at all times unspeakably and provokingly wearisome. Never volunteer any purely personal details, no matter how vital an interest they may possess in your own eyes, and you shall get along comfortably with your fellow creatures. It is the grumblers and the boasters, the self-constituted autocrats and reformers, and kindred classes of men who are held to be excrescences upon the fair surface of society, and who are not very tenderly treated in the long run by that exacting body. And, indeed, when we come to think of the many and varied topics which might be pleasantly and profitably discussed in ordinary conversation, and contrast them with this puerile egoism which has a faculty for thrusting itself into our social intercourses, whether it be appropriate or endurable, or not, it is no wonder that men protest against it, and threaten it with a visitation of their wrath.

Good breeding is supposed to regulate the use of the pronoun *I*, by educating men to extend some consideration to their fellow-creatures, but it is certain that persons who have every title to the name of

being well-bred, are guilty of the horrid crime of talking of themselves. No one doubts the truth or wisdom of the proverb, "All our knowledge is ourselves to know," but no one can deny, either, that the best possible application of such knowledge is to keep it religiously to ourselves. Beyond the conventional solicitude which enquires about the health of one's acquaintances, people have very little interest in the fates and fortunes of others. At least, we should wait until a particular desire is shown to enter into our private affairs, before we attack anyone with a volley of confidence, in which our own feelings and experiences play the most important part. It is doubtful if many have given the smallest attention to this imperative social duty, which should constitute one of the points of our daily meditation. Those who bore their fellow-mortals with the dismal recitation of their personal worries, the painful vagaries of their moods and tempers, who are over-confidential about such matters as have no lawful claim upon the charity or sympathy of others, are guilty of a double crime, and pending the atonement which, as a moral transgression it is sure to involve, they should be apprehended by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and made to pay a penalty proportionate to their offence. Since daily intercourse with one another is inevitable, where men live together in civilized communities, we should see that we are properly armed for self-defence against such wearing innovations as *Myselfism*. Let us, then, tax the use of the pronoun *I*—let us brand the offenders—let them lose caste—let us do something effective,—for it is too much to expect from anyone endowed with only ordinary powers of moral endurance that he should tolerate such a torrent of egotism as has been let loose in our day. In some other age, when people have less to do and think about, when men shall have grown more generous and more sympathetic than they have time to be in this busy century, self-lovers may thrive. Just, now, however, they are in the way. If they wish to become useful and ornamental members of the human family, let them ignore such parts of their grammar as have reference to the deservedly-despised first person singular, and thus avoid that dreadful social blunder and error and sin and sacrilege—whose mildest term is, *Myselfism*!