

With the Poets.

Villon's Prison Song.

(Paris, 1462.)

The week is nearly gone
(Today is surely Friday).
And night is drawing on—
And so's the end of my day.
Anon I'll creep apace
To find a good day's rest,
And leave my mother's face
For her calm, spacious breast.

When lying near her heart
I'll trouble God no more.
Villon has played the part
Of villian times five score.
I fear they'll pack me tight
Within her breast when I
Have ceased to dance so light
Between her face and sky.

And other times and men
Will come when I'm asleep.
Not one in ten times ten
Will think of me or weep.
That matters not to me—
For water I don't care;
But the women fair to see,
That will laugh when I'm down
there!

Will laugh and love and sigh,
In my inferiors' arms;
Pretend to pout and try
To hide their mantled charms.
To think they'll walk above
The earth that I'm below,
And drink till drunk the love
That once I used to know.

But what I leave and prize
They'll have but for a day.
Old Time with lashless eyes
Will see them pass away.
Ah! that gives me no peace,
Through days as black as bats,
In here, mid ooze and grease,
And toads and snakes and rats.

Why are men born to die?
Why is man's life so brief?
I'm thirty-one, and I
Was born—will die—a thief.
I and myself have fought
(The prizes Right and Wrong)
Since first my stained soul sought
The path to stainless song!

God's breath! but I'm undone—
I've forgotten how to pray.
From Jesus Christ I've run,
To turn night into day.
In a short time, at the most,
I will be what I must:
My soul, a thirsty ghost;
My body, viewless dust.

The roaring of this sphere
As it flies round and round
Will horrify my ear
When I am underground—
So that I cannot hear
The tinkle of the chink
To pay for—what I fear
I never more shall drink.

Yea, I've been pretty bad—
But others have been worse.
Not every lady's lad
Can sing her charms in verse.
A very flock of rhymes
Is underneath my hair—
Goats' blood! they'll die betimes,
Of rapid change of air.

And I no more shall sing
The joys and ills of France.
Tomorrow I shall swing,
And while I swing, I'll dance.
Gay thieves—sweet dames—poor
hags—
Lords of France—good-bye!
We're in Time's bag of rags
The very day we die.
—John Ernest McCann in Dramatic
Review.

The Eternal Sea.

(British Weekly.)

Lord, we are rivers running to Thy sea,
Our waves and ripples all derived
from Thee;
A nothing we should have, a nothing
be,
Except for Thee.

Sweet are the waters of thy shoreless
sea,
Make sweet our waters that make haste
to Thee;
Pour in Thy sweetness, that ourselves
may be
Sweetness to Thee.

"Why So Many Old Maids?"

[Chicago Herald.]

A correspondent of the Herald has asked, "Why are there so many old maids?" Probably no one social philosopher could answer a question which involves so many enigmas of choice and chance—of such varied commonplace and dramatic human experiences. The causes of celibacy are as numerous as the individuals to whom that lot in life has fallen.

The phrase itself, "old maids," has fallen into disuse. It has lost, also, in common speech, even on the tongue of gossip, and among the thoughtless and young, its former minor significance implying a sinister fault or misfortune in the class to whom it relates. The words are now employed for no other purpose than to indicate unmarried women who have passed beyond the first years of their youth. It is the language of mere description, not of kindly reproach nor of charitable scorn.

This is easily explained. The occupations which unmarried women may adopt are numerous. A woman can live for something else besides to catch a husband. She is not useless and an incubation if she fails to marry and bear children. There are

thousands of things to which she can apply active brains and industrious and skillful hands. She is no longer the drudge, the idler or the scold of the family. She may be a free and independent fellow-citizen, earning her own livelihood, not the ward or dependant of any relative or friend, or the public. She is spoken of no longer in lightness or contempt.

It is true that in a life of unmarried and solitary independence some of the harmony and the completeness of womanhood are lost. The romance of her life disappears. She never knows the joys of witchhood and maternity. In some senses, Earthlier happy is the rose distilled, Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,

Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness. But those who do not marry may enjoy the cynical satisfaction that, if they never enjoy domestic bliss, they do not suffer domestic misery; that in the absence of home ties grief is not caused by their rupture; that if there are no nuptial blisses there are no divorce scandals. The average life of all is made up of compensations. The good and the evil are not always balanced, but the sense of enjoyment and the power of endurance are adopted to all vicissitudes.

Waste of Child Life.

Frightful Slaughter of Neglected Little Ones in the Cities.

Dr. H. W. Chapin has an article in the Forum which forcibly brings to our comprehension the waste of child life in great centers of population. He shows that the bodies of 3,042 children under 5 years of age were taken to the morgue in this city last year, and that 2,851 of them were buried in Pottery Field. These children were victims of poverty and ignorance, and they represent but a small proportion of last year's or any other year's victims of these causes.

Dr. Chapin has made a study of 600 child cases in the New York Post Graduate Hospital. The condition at birth in 508 instances was good, bad in 20, fair in 12, and unknown in 60. This showing demonstrates that even among those who are forced to resort to public hospitals when sickness appears in their families, most of the sickness of infants is not due to inherited causes, but that it is acquired—presumably from faulty conditions of life, neglect and bad surroundings.

That environment is stronger than heredity has been proven in the cases of twenty children received at St. Christopher's Home some years ago. They were taken from tenement houses, and like most neglected children had a low degree of physical development. Many were scrofulous with a continuous tendency to skin eruptions. For two or three years they required constant medical oversight. Every year, however, has shown an improvement in their condition, and now, eight years after they were taken from the tenements and given proper care, they are apparently well. Good food and intelligent care have made them healthy.

It having been established that poverty and ignorance kill more children than inherited disease the duty of the community becomes obvious. First the work of education is necessary. Parents should be lifted out of ignorance and taught to properly care for their children. The kindred curse of poverty is largely the result of another form of ignorance that we call improvidence. The fearful waste of child life must be checked by lifting up the parents, by teaching them to care for their offspring properly, and by bringing them to a plane of industry and provident forethought.—[New York Mail and Express.

Sugar Plums.

The women of Louisiana, are mad—at least some of them are. A committee of them went to Baton Rouge to "petition the Legislature," quite a new departure for young women. They told the Government what they wanted, very pluckily and very explicitly, only to be told by the governor in response, that "women were too good to be dragged into politics." And that is what made them mad. Small blame to them; for whether one is in touch with their demands or not, one can recognize that when a woman asks for bread—politically leavened—she does not care to be supplied with sugar plums and metaphorically told she is a pretty child. The governor of Louisiana was gallant, but not up to date.—[New Orleans Times-Democrat.

—Communion with God was never more needful than now. Feverish activity rules in all spheres of life. Christian effort is multiplied and systematized beyond all precedent. And all these things make calm fellowship with God hard to compass. We are so busy thinking, discussing, defending, inquiring, or preaching, and teaching, and working, that we have no time and no leisure of heart for quiet contemplation, without which the exercise of the intellect upon Christ's truth will not feed, and busy activity in Christ's cause may starve the soul. There are few things which the Church of this day, in all its parts, needs more than to obey the invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart into a lonely place and rest awhile."—[Alexander Mac-

Just for Fun.

When Sidney Smith was rector of a parish in Yorkshire, he found his vestry were discussing the propriety or otherwise of paving a certain approach to the church with wooden blocks. Having decided to undertake it, the question arose as to how. "Gentlemen," said the witty rector, "I think if you will all put your heads together, as the saying is, the thing can be accomplished without much difficulty."

The car was crowded, and two young ladies on getting in immediately put their hands into the straps and prepared to stand, but Pat jumped up and offered his seat.

"But I don't want to take your seat, thank you," said one smiling, but hesitating.

"Never mind that," said the gallant Hibernian. "I'd ride on a cowcatcher to New York for a smile from such gentlemanly ladies."

And the girl considers this as pleasant a compliment as she ever received.

Alexandre Dumas, the great French author, was a quadron, and showed his African parentage in his woolly hair, his dark skin, his thick lips and his prodigious bodily strength. But it is needless to say that many people looked askance at him on account of it.

"Was your father not a mulatto?" a man asked him once.

"Certainly," said Dumas. "My father was a mulatto, my grandfather was a full-blooded negro, and my great-grandfather was a monkey!"

"What!"

"Yes; my genealogy begins where yours leaves off!"

A suburbanite was greeted, one morning, as he entered his dining-room, with this choice specimen:

"Mr. J., the cat has friz the pipes. They've burst, and the cellar's all afloat."

The same domestic, while at work in the hall adjoining the library where her employer was writing, thinking he might prefer not to witness the operation of polishing the floor, entered the room and said:

"Mr. J., do you want the door cluz, or the curtains drew?"

Mrs. Peters, who is older than she used to be, but perhaps not so old as she looks, had gone to Boston with one of her neighbors and her neighbor's little daughter. The trio had done their shopping and seen the sights in the windows, and now were back in the station waiting for the outward train.

Just here it was that a well-meaning old gentleman made Mrs. Peters angry. He spoke pleasantly to the little girl, and then, turning to Mrs. Peters, said:

"Is this your little grandchild?"

"Grandchild!" exclaimed Mrs. Peters. "Grandchild! Does that girl look like a grandchild?"

A Good Letter.

Thomas Carlyle is not often quoted as a letter-writer to young people. Recently a letter of his to a young lady was read in London and published. It was written in reply to a letter asking for advice:

"Dear young lady: Your appeal to me is very touching, and I am heartily sorry for you, if I could but help at all. Herein, as in many other cases, the 'patient must minister to himself.' Were your duties never so small, I advise you, set yourself with double and treble energy and punctuality to do them hour after hour, day after day, in spite of the devil's teeth. That is our one answer to all inward evils, as they used to be called. 'This I can do, O devil, and I do it, thou seest, in the name of God.' Were it but the more perfect regulation of your appointments, the sorting away of your clothes and trinkets, the arranging of your papers, 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might' and all thy worth and constancy. Much more, if your duties are of evidently higher, wider scope; if you have brothers, sisters, a father, a mother, weigh earnestly what claim does lie upon you on behalf of each, and consider it as the one thing needful, to pay them more and more honestly and nobly what you owe. What matter how miserable one is if one can do that?"

The Nick in the Coat Lapel.

Did you ever wonder why that V-shaped nick was placed at the juncture of your coat collar with the lapel? I suppose you have. Occasionally we all have our little ruminating spells, and fall to wondering the whys of the many odd things we see about us.

Hold your coat up before you, and you will see at a glance that it would "set" just as well without the nick as with it. Therefore the matter of fit cannot be given as a proper solution of the fact that it is there. Without apparent purpose this nick is clipped from the lapel of every frock coat in the world. But there was motive in the madness of the first man who adopted the little insignia of distinction. I will tell you about it. When the first Napoleon gave way to his ambition he tried to imitate Gen. Moreau in Pichegru's conspiracy. Moreau had been Napoleon's superior, and was very popular, but, under the circumstances, as Napoleon was on top, it was not safe to express publicly any sympathy with Moreau, so his admirers secretly

agreed to nick their coat lapels to show who they were. Carefully note the outlines of the first coat front you see that is well fitted and buttoned, and see if you cannot plainly detect the initial letter M in its windings. The M will appear upside down, the little nicks forming its sides. M was the initial letter of Moreau, and his champions were known by the nicks in the lapels of their coats.

Church Music.

Unisonal Congregational Singing.

(From New York Evangelist.)

It is seldom that an organist can judge of congregational singing from the standpoint of the congregation. He hears the people sing from his position at the organ console in close proximity to his choir. He can hardly tell, at times, whether the people are singing at all, and it may be safely said he can never hear any part but the melody. Let him, however, while on his summer vacation, or at some other convenient time, take a seat in the midst of the congregation and note the effect of the usual mode of singing congregational hymns.

The compass of the melody is too great, or the pitch of the time is too high for any voices except the soprano and tenor. Musical individuals possessing bass or alto voices, will unconsciously take up their respective parts, without detriment to the general effect of the singing, it is true, but certainly without giving any strength to the harmonic structure of the time. But the musically uncultivated, with more zeal than determination, "make up" a bass or alto part, the latter usually a third below the melody, regardless of all laws of harmony and the sensitiveness of the nerves of more musical neighbors. These persons would, in most cases, sing the melody correctly if it were within reach of their voices, and thereby strengthen the body of tone and express equally well their feelings of praise.

Many can doubtless recall the magnificent effect of some chorale sung in unison in some of the churches of Germany. The effect is not unknown here, but is rarely heard outside of the Lutheran Churches. At present our tunes are too ill suited to unisonal singing, and if that method is ever to be employed it will necessitate a complete revision of the hymn books now in general use. All radical changes are opposed by conservative interests, and doubtless an attempt to introduce unisonal singing into our churches would be resented by many. But if the subject be considered in an unprejudiced way, there can hardly be more than one decision, and that in favor of unisonal singing.

Let the experiment be tried in both large and small congregations; take a familiar tune, whose compass is, for instance, from f to f, one octave; transpose it so that the melody does not extend over d, and sing it in unison, all voices on the melody, and let the organ alone fill in the harmony. We predict that the result will be a surprise and a revelation to those who have never tried it. If churches will adopt the unisonal mode of congregational singing, it will tend to raise the standard of hymn tunes above the present average. A trivial style of melody is unsuited to a large body of tone, and from the necessity for stronger tune melodies, the people's part of church music would gain in dignity and impressiveness.

Dr. Burney speaks of the unison singing in the Lutheran Church in Dresden as being one of the grandest choruses he ever heard. Carl Engel, in his "Study of National Music," says the impressive effect of unison singing is not appreciated as it ought to be, and he deprecates the employment of part singing in congregational music. "Here," he says, "the essential conditions for insuring a correct and pure harmony are wanting, and are, moreover, unattainable."

To quote from the preface to the Book of Worship used in the Swedenborgian Church, where unisonal congregational singing is in general use: "Singing the harmony parts indiscriminately by voices scattered here and there, without order or arrangement, enfeebles and obscures the principal melody, introduces conflict and confusion in the harmony, and so distracts the attention of persons possessing but limited musical ability as to deprive them of the power of singing at all. It will be found quite generally, that where this manner of singing prevails in a congregation, a large portion failed to unite audibly in the singing."

Our observation of congregations, when seated among them, goes to the support of the foregoing; there seems to be in every congregation a large proportion who simply hold the hymn-book open and make no attempt to sing. These are largely men whose voices are not high enough to sing the melody, and whose musical ability and confidence are too limited to permit any attempt at singing a subordinate part. Could these persons all unite on a melody of the proper range, they would not be so prominent.

The opposition to unisonal singing is entirely unwarranted, and would largely disappear if this method were given a fair trial. Small congregations, particularly, would find it greatly to their advantage, and we believe that all churches would recognize a great improvement in the spirit of their hymn singing if they would give a few months' trial to singing in unison.

The Peace of Defeat.

(The British Weekly.)

There are compensations often for the vanquished; between the triumph of victory and the peace of defeat there may be little to choose. When a lawsuit that has been dragged over years comes to its close, there is an end, even for the defeat, of the protracted misery, the weary and racking suspense of delay. Though the worst has come to the worst—though the days of existence must be henceforth colorless when they are not harsh and sad—it is something that the strain upon fortitude has been relaxed for the moment. When some long-dreaded evil smites us into the dust, we may be amazed by our own calmness. Certainty, of whatever kind, relieves those worn with the effort of being deaf to the footsteps of fate. The truth—terrible as it is—falls on the dim, dull, puzzled brain with some strange sense of rest.

But there is a Christian peace in defeat, higher than the mere relief of overtaken nature. They ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. There is a moment when effort should cease, because the issue is clear. That moment should carry us straight into the silence and rest of God.

There comes an hour—perhaps it comes to the most successful—when they accept the truth about themselves. They have hoped and striven for long to achieve something in life. Their hearts have been set on some shining mark. It may be that the whole endeavor and drift of many years have been to attain a certain definite position. In any case they have never thought to rest where they are. What has been is a preparation for what is to be—tolerable as such, but not otherwise. Gradually, with a slow distinctness, a dull pain, it has become evident that the issue is more doubtful than it seemed. Then come fervent efforts, silent conflicts of the spirit. And at last the end is plain. Even those who have hitherto protested with a fond vehemence of defense are silent. Ours, we find, are not the talents of the few, but of the many. Youth has gone, and taken away with it much that we deeply prize. It is the common lot. In every profession there are comparatively few whose early dreams come to fulfillment. The vast majority have to content themselves with humble aims, slow advancement, an uninteresting career, and a nameless memory. We can bear but little success, and little is given to us, and the day comes but too early when we know that the ascent of life has ceased, and that henceforth we must decrease.

Such defeat, if trustfully accepted, brings its own peace. There is an end of the long, lonely misgivings, of the ambition which has drawn such hard breath under the weight of self-distrust. If we will but cease! Few things are more tragical and forlorn than attempts made to recall the irrevocable—to pretend to a youth that is past—to make vain appeals against an irreverent judgment. It is well to struggle on while hope remains. But let us be wise as we grow older, and accept the award. In some smaller field that once would have been despised, it may yet be possible for us to do something that will endure. If we can see besides the loving will of God in the appointment, the heart will be kept in the patience of hope. There is a certain stage of life in which men naturally generous and warm-hearted are tempted to a little patient envy. It is when they hear the footsteps of the young hard behind them, and realize that those who come after are preferred before them. Accept the will of God, and all the bitterness goes.

The same thing is true even when ambition is more unselfish. The energies have been flung without restraint into the battle for a great cause. To overthrow some wrong, to win some victory for goodness, is the whole purpose of life. And we are to see no victory; may even have to acknowledge—after all efforts at reconciliation of palliation of the facts—that righteousness is for the moment repulsed. Peace will come to us if we recognize that it is our business to fight, and for others to triumph. To acknowledge this is to carry on a soul's work, to recognize God's presence in life.

"Though we fail indeed, You . . . I . . . a score of such weak workers, He Fails never. If He cannot work by us, He will work over us."

In the winning and losing of love which is so much of life's business—which is in a great sense life and death the will must be disciplined to peace. Men and women have laid bare many secrets of the heart, but though the world is old, none have said much about the defeated desire for love. More has been told about the agony of love withdrawn. Sometimes there is no warning, and the pain has all to be borne without any schooling to content. But oftener we know what is coming. We may try to stifle the hideous fear that looms out from the dark places of the heart, but it grows impossible. When that effort ceases trust may for the moment drop down dead and powerless. Even the peace of defeat will be withheld. But if we face the truth and accept it with steady, tender, patient submission, some better thing will come.

Surely when Christian faith is more

powerful in the world we shall alter our attitude towards the inevitable. Going forth to meet it we shall be conquerors not conquered. Why keep out of life the rich and deep memories it might hold if we did not fear to speak what was in the heart? There is a day when human skill owns itself foiled; when the journey before the loved one is of few and measured steps. Then faith may grow into resignation, which a Roman Catholic writer has justly called the last term of Christian activity. It is in a true resignation that the Christian displays all his resources, brings all his powers into play. And Christian resignation there cannot be till we understand and believe that resignation there cannot be till we understand and believe that resignation is applicable only to things that pass away. We resign nothing that endures. We may have to part with it for more or fewer years, but it waits us in the world of solemn and complete restitution.

When after a hard and prolonged struggle for health it became plain that the end was nigh, many have felt the "solemn quietness" with which Caroline Fox tells us she received what she took for a signal of death. She finished a letter, and "then lay down alone, and felt altogether rather idle and much disposed to be thankful, or at any rate, entirely submissive, whatever might be the result." In the memoir of his wife written by Prof. Austin Phelps, an experience is recorded which is far more common than might be imagined. Mrs. Phelps' last years were the brightest of her life—marked by a quick blossoming of powers which had long been hidden in the bud. In the noontide of her strength and happiness she was struck by fatal illness. She met it by what her husband calls a "calm, deliberate, conscientious, determined struggle for life." Feeling that she had everything to live for—that life had rich gifts of love and opportunity, she resolved to do her utmost to abide. She concentrated the whole strength of her being on that battle—watching in silence the signs of failing strength, and expressing continually her strong hope of recovery. Sometimes for days together the conflict was so stern that those she loved best could hardly catch from her a word or smile or look that betokened her interest in them. At length her hope began to waver, and she became convinced that God was calling her to himself. Then in perfect peace she gave up all, and life drew to its close with a beautiful naturalness, full of thought for those she was leaving, full of love for the Savior who waited her coming. She had found even in the world of distress the large, unfluctuating peace which comes to those who "Grow willing, having tried all other ways,

To try just God's."

"O Will of him we love, which is always known, though not always understood; Will whose justice we may confide in, whose mysteries we adore; Will which to gain heaven we would not intercept; adorable Will, law of all beings, beatitude of the elect; Will which constitutes the glory of the place it assigns and the power of the sacrifice it commands—Will of my God, involve mine own. Will of my God, be mine, and continue till my latest breath to initiate me into the secret of thy growing delights."

Remember on every occasion which leads thee to vexation to apply this principle: that this is not a misfortune, but that to bear it nobly is good fortune.—[Marcus Aurelius.

A Store of Future Wealth.

There is reason to hope that the world may be greatly enriched through the results of an important series of observations and experiments now being carried on to determine just how certain plants manage to assimilate nitrogen from the atmosphere. It has been discovered that such plants as peas, beans and clovers have their roots invaded by myriads of minute organisms, which may be either bacteria or parasitic fungi.

These organisms in some unknown way incite the plants to increased activity so that they are able to assimilate free nitrogen from the atmosphere, and thereby to supply through their own subsequent decay, an abundance of nitrates, nitrites, ammonia and other nitrogenous substances to the soil.

Efforts are being made to determine whether some other stimulus, besides that furnished by the organisms referred to, may not be applied to plants which will enable them still more effectively to assimilate nitrogen from the air for the ultimate enrichment of the soil.

The importance of these investigations may be judged from the following statement made by Prof. H. Marshall Ward, a leading authority on the physiology of plants:

"This question, be it emphatically stated, promises to be of more importance to agriculture in the future than any legislation as to prices, etc., that we can conceive; for if it turns out that the acquisition of free nitrogen by the land, or what amounts to the same thing, the plants growing on it can be economically promoted, the farmer and forester may have control of sources of real wealth not yet dreamt of."

Thus is science sometimes able greatly to increase the bounty that nature bestows upon man.