

Bubbles.



IT is that trenchant insight and nervous terseness of expression so supereminently his own, our immortal Will of Avon remarks that "men are but children of a larger growth." He is right. It is not "the nature of the beast" which changes — it is merely the nature of his toys: the full-grown man is but the overgrown infant. What one of us has not, in the days of his guileless youth, extracted whole hours of rapt delight from no more complicate or ethereal raw materials of the same than are comprised in a clay pipe and a mug of soapy water? Barren of a lost delight is truly that incomplete childhood which never thrilled to watch the beamy bubble bud and blow from forth the inverted bowl, swell to majestic rounded beauty of perfect form, clothe itself in iridescent dyes of changeful splendour, and, released by the deft manipulation of its infant creator, float majestically away on the lucent heavens of air, a microcosm of glory in itself—"a thing of beauty" newly born, though not, alack! "a joy forever." Ten seconds — twenty seconds — ye gods! full thirty seconds of fulfilled delight, of trembling absorption in that glowing flight, that infant sphere; and then — puff! the heavens are vacant of a rapture, and the places of a glory know it no more! What matter? The magic pipe, the glory-breeding suds, the informing breath of the infant world-builder, still remain; new planets of delight break forth, soar, and disappear; until, sated with his evanescent universe of joy, the youthful godling rests from his pleasant labour, and feels that it was good—while it lasted!

In the days of our proud maturity (God save the mark!) we do not revert to the unsophisticated bubble of our childish admiration; but all the same, in one way or another, do we remain bubble-blowers from childhood to the verge of the grave. The mischief of it is, that the bubbles wherewith we amuse our adult intelligence are, as a rule, not near so pretty as the primal and genuine article, and our amusement is therefore in so much the less intelligent. For the bubble of the overgrown child is a thing multifarious in aspect, ranging "through all the forms diverse of waking dream" from an eye-glass to a "hobble-skirt," and its name is legion, though reducible to a generic singleness under the one pithy and expressive cognomen — a "fad."

There are fads of all sorts, shapes, and sizes. There are fads of fashion — such, for instance, as the eye-glass just adverted to.