

Breakfast was just over. The table was crummy. He took the crumbs. He made one heap stand for the angry father and his company, another for the mountains, a thin circle for the lake, a little bit of crust for the boat, two little bits of sugar for the lovers, and all was clear. His little girl took in the whole thing, she thought in shape. These few crumbs changed her world for her, perhaps for ever, gave her mind solid ground and living power, instead of leaving her suffocated under a heap of words. Those few crumbs in an able man's hands lived, and imparted life. Never lose sight of the crumbs and their marvellous power. What could we, unhappy that we are, have done with our unhappy classes under like circumstances? O the deadly paralysis of words, words, words! often not understood singly, and, if understood singly, utterly bewildering when whirled round in the boiler of an elaborate, self-satisfied explanation. O the curse of words and memory!

Then again, let us apply another bit of familiar knowledge. At the battle of Worth, at the beginning of the Franco-German war, 17,000 men were killed. Why don't you burst into tears at this vast presence of desolation, agony, death, pain, ruin? Simply because it is not present. The figures are present. They are an arithmetical fact, all pat for an examination paper. But we don't weep for an examination paper; unless, indeed, we have to answer it. These many thousand deaths move you not. But I, for my part, agree with the old General, who is said to have locked himself in his room every Sunday to read Mrs. Ewing's story of "Jackanapes" unseen. I could not trust myself to read it in public, or, her "Story of a Short Life," and her "Six to Sixteen," with the death of the old French noble. Yet these are fictions, and only three, set against those many thousands of real sufferers. But the fiction is real, because it is thought in shape; the reality is unreal, because it is fact in cipher, no nearer the heart than any other bit of arithmetic. I have purposely taken these three simple narratives, because they are the most transparent that I know, the most free from artificial excitement, the most direct appeal of heart to heart, exquisite in their simplicity, pure spirit, mind touching mind by the passage of light, clear and untainted by extraneous mixture; in fact, the most perfect specimens of thought in shape. Thus the unreal becomes real, when it is thought in shape, and the real unreal, when ciphers are put in its place.

But figures and arithmetic are not the only ciphers. Every word not vividly understood is a cipher. We will leave common words at present, and take abstract words. The fondness of the youthful and the uneducated for general terms cannot have escaped the notice

of an experienced teacher. The general terms are so convenient; like charity, they cover a multitude of sins. Well, take the axiom, "Law kills love." I dare say you think the illustration so perfect that it conveys no meaning at all. Let us translate it into shape. A good home may stand for love. The children in a good home are young natures undergoing training through love. And accordingly theft, gluttony, and violence, ill-temper, and all the evil passions, either do not appear, overborne by the higher life and its pure atmosphere, or, if they appear, are dealt with in a loving spirit. But let us suppose that the first moment a child appropriates an apple, or breaks a window, the police are called in, and the small offender taken before the magistrate. There would be an end to love. And you get at once the axiom, "that law kills love," as soon as thinking in shape is practised, stamped upon the mind in clear characters; an axiom, which after all is only a condensed statement of most of St. Paul's epistles, even as the gospel is the other side of the same truth, namely, that love establishes a kingdom higher than law, and above it, though it is not difficult to fall down out of the kingdom of love, and the family life, into the realm of law, and make police courts the choice instead of a father's love.

In this way, by thinking in shape, ciphers and memory drop into their proper place, and reality begins. Most people, however, live in a world of ciphers. The hard facts are ciphers; the words are ciphers; nothing lives. The men and women are wooden figures, animated automata, ciphers too; and the successful master of innumerable cipher-facts becomes a ruler, and sways senates, and deals with delicate life as with wood. And the people, well—the less said about them, when they worship the great cipherers, the better. They have never been taught to think in shape at all events. But the commonest words are still worse off. What everybody knows, nobody thinks about. So different is knowledge from thought. In nine cases out of ten knowledge means the shut mind. The knower has got his *x* and *y* pat. They transact his daily work and his talk. He has collected a box full, he shuts down the lid, locks it, and is satisfied. But what does he really know? We will concede him at once a certain amount of bread-and-butter power. *X* and *y* do this pretty well. He can set up house; we have furnished him, perhaps, with respectable pots and a little fuel; and he is a reasonably good pot boiler. As Wordsworth's old cook told us, when asked by one of our ladies to admire a splendid sunset, one of those glorious glimpses of heaven's great picture gallery, which we sometimes get, "Lor', ma'am, I am a decent cook, and tidyish