

SENSE BEING LOST

LONDONERS UNABLE TO GROPE THEIR WAY IN DARKNESS.

Philosophical Review of Warfare's Needs, and of Past Days, Has Not Brought Citizens to a Proper Realization of Conditions.

A few months ago I chanced to be in what official language would describe as "a certain northern town" at the time when lighting restrictions were being newly enforced as a precaution against air attacks. Loud was the outcry of persons who had bumped into the lamppost and tripped over the curb upon their homeward way, and who had even found themselves unable to identify their own homes without the aid of an electric torch.

And yet the curious thing was that even such restricted street lighting as remained would have been considered a really handsome illumination by our forefathers and would indeed be considered so today by dwellers in rural districts where the street lamp is unknown. C. Fox-Smith writes in the London Chronicle.

What is happening to us—or, rather, what was happening to us in the days when the daylight, in towns, was deposited before its death by the glare of gas and electric light? Were we not rapidly losing the very last remnant of that faculty of seeing in what we call "the dark," which is really quite a natural part of our equipment, being a sort of combination of the senses of sight, smell, touch and hearing?

As a matter of fact speaking broadly, what most people call "the dark" is not darkness at all. How often, for example, do you hear a person who has just emerged from or who lifts a blind to look through the window of a lighted room exclaim: "What a pitch dark night!"

But once leave the bewildering lights behind and it will be seen that the apparent darkness was really more than half caused by the light itself. Pitch darkness seldom exists except comparatively, never without some extraordinary condition, such as fog or very dense clouds. One does, of course, remember one or two such occasions of a blackness impenetrable as a wall and almost as tangible to all seeming. But they are rare enough to be noticeable—even to cause surprise, as if they were somehow abnormal, which would not be so if pitch darkness were common.

It is rather strange to reflect that, until the coming of the lighting restrictions, most of the present generation had never really seen the town at dusk.

And yet what a peculiar charm there is now about the coming on of dark in a city. There is, let us frankly admit it, a touch of the sinister about the dark mouths of narrow streets which by daylight are but the most commonplace and sordid of routes to the back of shops and warehouses.

But they are for the time romantic, as well as sinister; there is a something Stevensonian about them, Stevenson of "Doctor Jekyll" and "The New Arabian Nights."

Darkness is the fairy godmother of commonplace buildings. It brings them gifts of breadth, of massiveness, of dignity. This pinchbeck incrustation, that shoddy bit of construction, it transfigures with a wave of its wand. Seen simply as a broad effect of light and shade, or rather of shadow and deeper shadow, the newest building is at one with the old, the tawdriest with the most austere.

Called for Repetition.

Grandma had a very bad cold one day when her little granddaughter made her a visit. Suddenly she sneezed very hard. Much pleased with the unexpected excitement the child looked up and said: "Honk again, grandma."—The Christian Herald.

AS TO THICKNESS OF BREAD

Dinner Table Etiquette in the Old Days of Abundance Differs From That of Today.

We have it on no less authority than that of "Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society," written by Charles William Day, and published in Boston in 1844, that the household bread should never be cut less than an inch and a half thick. Appended to this important bit of advice is the graceful hint that "nothing is more plebeian than thin bread at dinner." Somebody was talking the other day about the good old times—somebody is forever talking about them—and here is historical proof of the abundance as represented in slices an inch and half thick, and wisdom as shown in the simple expedient of declaring anything less than the prescribed thickness "plebeian." Of course, remarks a writer in the Indianapolis News, the word plebeian settled the thing. If it were plebeian to cut bread less than an inch and a half thick, you may be sure that it was not done to any great extent. There may have been an emergency now and then when company came unexpectedly or when there were too many in the family and too little flour in the barrel, but certainly the plain statement that it was "plebeian," so plebeian, in fact, that "nothing was more plebeian," made it a difficult thing to serve thin slices in those days.

Even so you may consider that it was a less difficult thing to serve thin bread in those days than it would be to serve thick bread these days. One doubts if even that unpleasant epithet "plebeian" could induce us to cut it an inch and a half thick. We could not if we would. One loaf seven and a half inches long would make five slices. That would mean two loaves to a meal for a family of any size, and it is plain to be seen that that could never be accomplished. But cutting them thin, say three slices to the inch, we can shave out twenty-two or twenty-three slices to the seven and a half inch-loaf. Statistics are wonderfully convincing, are they not? You may suggest that they had real loaves of bread in those old days, and it is, to be sure, easy to picture them as huge, benevolent affairs. It is easy to imagine one of those inch and a half slices nicely spread with sugar or sirup or jelly or any of the good things that belonged to those days.

It would, no doubt, take a more forceful word than "plebeian" to induce the powers that be to make such loaves of bread these days. And that, of course, is the difference between the good old times and these. All that people had to do then was to look in a useful bit of a book and cut their bread accordingly, without counting food values, or appetites or prices. We may pretend that we think it plebeian to cut bread an inch and a half thick, but it is nothing more than pretense. We know that we have to cut bread according to the size of the loaf and the size of the family and the size of our purse, and we are lucky and thankful to have any bread to cut in any manner, plebeian or proper.

Missed Their "Home."

"Wot's up with yer, Pete?" inquired Weary Willie. "Yer look as if yer were goin' ter cry."

"I dunno," was Plodding Pete's reply. "I don't feel the joy o' livin' like I used ter. I've been thinkin' o' my wasted life, an' I've got a sorter uneasy, homesick feelin'."

"Homesick!" broke in Willie. "Why, bless me, I believe that's wot both of us are sufferin' from. We ain't neither of us bin inside a jail for close on three months now, 'ave we?"

Reckless Influence.

"Are you a law-abiding citizen?" "Yes," replied Mr. Chuggins. "But I'm the victim of reckless company. Every now and then that motor car of mine breaks loose and drags me into a mix-up with the traffic regulations."

TIME TO SAVE ONE'S MONEY

Mistake Is Too Much a General One in Neglecting the Present for the Future.

Presumably every young man knows, as a physical fact, that he can do nothing next year which he cannot in some degree, do today. He will not grow wings or overcome the law of gravitation or subsist without food. But he is always prefiguring a future in which his mind will operate differently. The time will certainly come when he realizes that there is no future, but only an indefinite extension of today. The important question is whether that time will come early enough in life to do him any particular good.

A lazy man cannot possibly make himself industrious in the future; or a tippling man, sober; or an extravagant man, economical. If it is done at all he must do it at an immediate present moment—at some "right now!" No man ever saved a penny in the future, or ever will. He has got to save the penny in his hand at the moment or he will be broke to the day of his death, the Saturday Evening Post insists. That is clear enough to anybody who will think about it. To save the penny in hand he must resist the temptation to spend it. Imagining himself next year as resisting the temptation to spend a handful of pennies will do him the same good that the drunkard gets out of imagining himself reformed next year. Every year that he does not resist weakens his ability to resist.

This spending business is as much a matter of habit as tippling. It is within the knowledge of everybody who has the ordinary circle of personal acquaintances that, after a certain time, the man who lives up to the limit of his income—which, about nine times out of ten, means a little beyond—accepts that as a normal condition and just automatically spends whatever he gets.

At twenty a man lives largely in an imaginary future. At thirty he seems still to have fairly incalculable powers and opportunities to draw upon. At forty he begins to realize what he fully knows, probably, at forty-five—namely, that he has already spent his future, in the sense that he has largely shaped and fixed it; so that it will contain nothing essentially different from what he himself has already put into it.

If he can realize by thirty that he is spending his future every day it will be a good thing for him.

An Optimist.

It was 5 a. m. He was starting the furnace fire at this unseemly hour.

Without warning a large lump of coal leaped from its berth on top of the coal pile and landed squarely on the captain of his toe brigade on the left foot. In other words, the coal landed squarely on his big toe. He warmed up much more quickly than the fire as he hopped about on one foot in imitation of a Russian toe dancer.

He swore, cursed his luck, increased the white space on his face, and then—then—he began to smile. And his toe thumped like a stranded auto engine!

"Why, I really am lucky," he thought. "I'm lucky to have a coal pile big enough for a lump of coal to get a start on. Come on, do it again," he dared and smilingly cast his grouch in the furnace, gave his aching toe a rub or two and cheerily went to work.

Had Reason for Belief.

"I was reading the other day," said skimp little Mr. Meeck, "that firmness of purpose is one of the most necessary sinews of character and one of the best instruments of success. I believe it, too, for I am sure that without firmness my wife would never have been able to make me the model husband that everybody says I am."

ONE'S OWN PLACE

PROBLEM THAT CONFRONTS BOY STARTING LIFE WORK.

Examinations Made by Experts Are of Supreme Importance in Guiding Footsteps of Youth Into Their Proper Sphere.

In view of the practical quality of the results of psychological examinations, it is not unreasonable to suppose that much practical knowledge can thereby be gained concerning an individual, which may give a clearer conception as to his place in the world, and may even indicate the conditions which lead to his fullest development. Pearce Bailey, M. D., writes in Scribner's.

The boy who seems to have no special qualifications or special interests when he reaches the period when he should begin to prepare for his life work is convicted by his own indifference of not being first class. In the event of his parents having no employment or occupation ready at hand, he falls into something haphazard. Such a boy under present arrangements may have aptitudes which might permit him to excel at some particular calling, or he may have defects which definitely prohibit certain callings.

There is another class of boys between whom and their parents there is disagreement as to what they should do. Each is, perhaps, controlled by an idealistic preference for some occupation, but the ideals do not coincide.

Psychological examinations might determine whether the boy really had some leaning to or qualifications for what he wanted to do, or whether his ideals on the subject were purely imitative without solid foundation, and whether he would do better at the calling his father wished him to follow. In deciding this question, the antipathy which not infrequently exists, although hotly denied, between parent and child would have to be considered. It has often been found, when a parent is determined on some one thing and the son just as obstinately on another, that the divergence is not on the real issue, but on a personal antagonism which neither of the two admits.

There is another large class of boys and young men who are almost certainly predestined to get in wrong unless they are wisely directed in youth. There is some twist in their mental make-up, either congenital or acquired, which unfits them for certain lines of work, and if they follow these lines the result is not only economic failure, but physical and mental collapse. Such young persons are recognizable by a variety of signs. . . . There is no absolute standard by which such individuals may be judged as a class. On the contrary, each one is different, depending upon heredity, environment, early education, passionate prejudices acquired through individual experience, a lack of balance in learning and a discrepancy in moral development, capacity and ideals. Each requires a different social remedy. They are boys that present the most serious problems that parents have to face, such as drinking, failure in studies, tendency to evil associations, criminal and immoral tendencies. The vast majority of these are the product of conditions and are not incurable delinquents. Could the fundamental disharmony be recognized early enough, and could conditions be changed, many of these boys might be saved from ultimate collapse and might become useful citizens.

Function of Art.

Truer words were never spoken by Schiller than when he said: "Where and whenever art deteriorates, it is always the fault of the artists." The function of art is to educate, and elevate, and when it fails to do this, it fails in its mission.