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SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE

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MAN acts in Society; he thinks and dreams in Solitude. It is not well for a man to be alone too much; the gregarious instinct is a very healthy one, yet the health of the individual demands that he shall retire from time to time into the solitudes, where he may hold communion with his own self,

"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

There can be an excessive activity of the social instinct, healthy as in the main that is, and in most men there is an excessive activity. To be alone with their thoughts and feelings is painful to them, and so they hasten to find their place in the crowd again. Indeed the citizen does not love the solitary man overmuch. He notes the "lean and hungry look" of the solitaries, and finds them infected with revolutionary thoughts and anti-social notions. To go away from the city to the country, or to the seashore or mountains, is well enough in the sultry days of summer, but to retire into one's self, and to live there, does not impress the average citizen favorably. The solitary, it may frankly be admitted, is a rather dangerous person, who is likely at any time to come out of his retreat for no other purpose than to unsettle human values.

It is natural that the conservative should frown upon him, for Society in the mass is always organized stupidity. At bottom it is a mobocracy. Ideas find the gregarious soil shallow and barren for their seeds. But the conservative is always at home in the crowd; he is no alien to Society, but to the "manor born." And there is much to justify the conservative. Society is the

home of the graces and refinements, of love and friendship. Whatsoever is most human in us—our interests and intimacies and enjoyments—everything, indeed, that apparently makes life worth living seems to pass from us when we leave the habitation and the street. Moreover, Society is the goal of ambition, of achievement, of all things which human beings are able to accomplish. We should not be surprised then if Society should prove to be a jealous mistress, for she is quite right in holding that all the issues of life and death are fought for her, and that without the assembling of men together, there is nothing ultimately true or good or beautiful; that the individual by himself is meaningless.

Nevertheless, Solitude has claims that may not be put aside. Whatsoever is good in Society, whatsoever is true and beautiful, has come out of Solitude. All great thoughts, all noble ideals, have been born in Solitude. The tall spirits of the race have not been the most gregarious; they have not been what the man in the street calls "good mixers." They have not in reality been unfriendly; on the contrary, they have usually been more friendly than the persons whose faces always glowed with smiles, when they passed their neighbors on the thoroughfares, or met them in the drawing-room. But their friendliness has taken another form, a form which later has been seen for what it was, and their thoughts are now spoken by every tongue, and their stride marks the time of every footstep.

Society is the high-water mark of realized fact; Solitude is the ideal which would realize a larger vision. Masses of men are always satisfied with themselves; the children of lonely thought are never satisfied, for they are only too well aware that there are heights of life which they have not ascended, depths which they have not explored. They perceive the possibility of an experience beyond experience, a beauty sweeter, a truth higher, a goodness nobler than any of current report. They discover that no matter how artistic Society's tailor may be, the coat that he makes is soon threadbare. The genius is always somewhat cavalier in his dealings with the popular idols, and it may be that he not infrequently loses sight of the metal in present fact, because of the tarnish there, yet he is never quite oblivious of

the metal. But his optimism towards the future carries him away from the cities and farms of the present to the mountains of the prophetic spirit, from whose summits he may survey the gleamings of a Golden Age and the City of God.

The genius of Solitude is the true eye of Society. Ordinarily, men are blinded by the dust and heat of partisan and sectarian strife, and even more by commercial interests. The pressing care of the moment—the hewing of wood and the drawing of water—seems to be the only thing worth while to the majority. Society has decreed the law, and the masses have no other will than to obey. No higher will is known. Society has its conventional law, its conventional morality, its conventional religion, and its conventional way of doing business. These things are taken for granted. They are not reasoned upon by the average person. Most people are sticklers for precedent, and believe that to obey is the highest virtue. History is regarded by them as a truer teacher than the Prophet.

Society is always outwardly respectable and decorous. Within the mansions, life is gay. Men are well tailored; women are richly gowned. The spoken words are softly uttered. The parson prays for the welfare of his flock, and drones out platitudes in his sermon. The merchant and the manufacturer are content as long as profits are secure. The wealthy man is honored, and usually worshipped. Surely it would appear that all things in Society are well ordered; are at one, indeed, with the divine will.

But our lonely poets and prophets and philosophers are not satisfied. They profess to see evils in Society that are commonly overlooked; to see, in fact, what it is not fashionable to see, nor respectable. They see the gay mansions, but they see the hovels too; the rich garments, but the rags of the poor no less; the soft words they hear, but they also hear the curse. These men are not satisfied with the success of the manufacturer and the merchant, while a world of misery lies all around them, the world of the poor who go scantily clad, and often hungry and without a sheltering roof. They are certain that Success must be a very unlovable god, he is so partial, and the prayer and sermon that do not proclaim a real brotherhood of man, and a universal fatherhood of the divine, jar upon their ears. The

poet finds himself stifled in this atmosphere of commercialism which has never absorbed the fragrance of the flowery meads, and knows nothing of majestic rivers and sky-piercing mountains. The great deeps of Solitude have nourished lovelier ideals than the conventional ones of prosperous financial and industrial magnates, and between these ideals of Society and Solitude there is a very wide gulf. The artists and the philosophers despise the men of business, and the men of business in turn despise the philosophers and the artists.

It is very unfortunate, this feud between the realists of Society and the idealists of Solitude, but there can be no question which party will be obliged to yield in the end. All the charm that our Society of to-day possesses it owes to the idealists of the past. There is no citizen of the present who would reverence the society of his remote ancestors. Let him despise the poet and the prophet as much as he will, he has yet entered with joy into the inheritance that was won for him by a poet's song, and a prophet's iron tone. The mansion, the genial conversation, the graces and amenities of life, the church are all debts which he owes to a spirit whose latter-day incarnations he affects to scorn and treat with utmost disdain. There is scarcely a comfort which he enjoys that would have been attained but for the masterful purpose of art.

Emerson has said that "Solitude is impracticable and Society fatal." Without the ideals which the lonely spirits of Solitude bring to our doors, Society would indeed be fatal. The hope of Society lies in the men of reflection and vision, into whom the Life of Ages is "richly poured," the Life which we find

"Breathing in the thinker's creed,
Pulsing in the hero's blood,
Nerving simplest thought and deed,
Freshening time with truth and good.

Consecrating art and song,
Holy book and pilgrim track,
Hurling floods of tyrant wrong
From the sacred limits back."

It is this Life of Ages to which all righteous appeal is made. If we can square with that, the foundation of our purpose is a

rock; if we cannot, it is nothing but flimsy and treacherous sand. Society is indeed a precious thing, and its reality must be preserved, even if its forms must be destroyed again and again. There is a society not yet recognized by that which calls itself Society, an association of the poor and lowly of the earth, who are regarded as fortunate if they secure the crumbs which fall from rich men's tables; an association of individuals organized only by the bond of the spirit, who, for the most part, know nothing of the graces and amenities of life; the unkempt and unlettered children of the field and workshop, whose joys are few and cares many. These, too, must emigrate from the hovel to the mansion; they must cease their dreary stammering, and learn to speak with articulate voice; they must find room in the church to worship; they must receive their equitable share in the profits of Society, which now fall mainly to the manufacturer, the merchant and the financier.

Society is a will-o'-the-wisp until it is founded on human brotherhood; until every man knows that he is a brother to every other man. The joy of life must become a universal joy, not one to which only a few are invited, while the many remain alien and outcast. No man should be an alien and outcast. Not until Humanity becomes the cornerstone of Society shall an individual stand firmly planted on his feet, and with eyes that may gaze unflinchingly into the future. We may bind the limbs of men to-day with iron, we may gag their organs of speech, we may crush the very life whose blood flows within vein and artery; but these bound limbs shall yet smite, these tongues shall yet speak, these lives shall yet be free. If Society denies justice, the red banner of revolution shall be unfurled in the air. He is a very ignorant man who fancies that coercion settles anything. The life that is the peasant in time learns to smile at the life that is the king. It learns to smile and crush its oppressor. Things are never settled until they are settled right. Let the conservative pile up his obstacles on the pathway that leads to progress; let him pile them up until they have become mountain-high; let him scream in anger until he grows purple with apoplexy; the rising tide of human aspiration is of a river that shall roll aside every obstacle.

For there is an Infinite in every man which speaks from the deeps of his Solitude, and is sooner or later heard by all. This Infinite is man's larger self. We may convince another by argument that our wrong is right, but one cannot convince oneself, and in this truth the weakness of Society's conservatism is found. In the din and bustle of Society, the familiar tones are heard to the exclusion of the sky-born melodies that are heard in Solitude, and which are later interpreted as the accents of divine love; but, although in the noisome clamor only the jarring notes of greed and private warfare are heard, there are hours when even Society may be said to go into Solitude, hours when the divinely human energies within us work miracles. The Infinite has spoken, and Society has listened and heard. Society then leaps out of its evil into its good. In those golden moments there

"gleams upon our sight,
Thro' present wrong the Eternal Right."

Solitude is not, like Society, a good in itself. We retire into ourselves only that we may emerge again, and appear in Society with a quickening thought. Apart from Society, there is in Solitude no meaning. Although we see clearest and think our greatest thoughts in Solitude, our thoughts would be meaningless, and our vision vain, if we did not direct the energies of our nature, inspired by thought and vision, to the upbuilding of a noble Society. Nay, were it not for Society, there could be no human seeing and thinking. A person takes his city with him when he retires into his own privacy. The use of Solitude is not that men may get away from men, but that men may learn how to get to men. Solitude is valuable because it enables the individual to work out the problems of Society; because it teaches him how he may become a worthy citizen. He is a false teacher who proclaims that Solitude is a good in itself. A man is not by nature a monk; a woman is not by nature a nun. One does not need to spend his days and nights in a lonely cell, nor in the sandy desert, nor among the lonely hills. Cloistered virtue is not the sweetest. For very few men or women is the life of a recluse good, and rarely is it beautiful. He who retires from Society because he hates Man is worse than the meanest indi-

vidual who, content with his lot, abides in Society. Life is sweet; life is good; life is beautiful. Only in and through Humanity may one live truly. To divorce oneself from Society is to make oneself incomplete. There is no good without brotherhood. The vision of a virtuous Solitude is the apotheosis of an ideal Society. It is an outlook upon Society without blur or stain; upon a fraternity living and working together for the common good. And to receive the full benefit of Solitude, to secure the vision, it is not necessary to leave the crowded street. One has only to live in noble, masterful thought. Only in such Solitude may a self hear the low, sweet prelude to the Society of the future.

It is often said that all great souls have been born lonely, and loneliness, it must be admitted, has been a characteristic of all the tall spirits of the race. It is a sad truth. Many have been well-nigh friendless; some completely so. Some whose lonely burden seemed to them at times greater than they could bear have cried in anguish of heart for the companionship that was denied to them. And the pity of it all is that the persons who have been denied companionship, because of their finer sensibilities and nobler ways of thinking, were just the persons who would have been the truest friends. Think of Jesus in Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood in his agony, lonely, alone with his dream of the Kingdom of Heaven, and in his consciousness perceiving the spike-piercing cross just ahead of him! Think of Gautama, a prince by birth, leaving his palace, to become a beggar, that he might discover the law which should cure the sorrow of the world! Think of Spinoza, with the curse of his own people upon him, because he dared to be loyal to the truth as he saw it! Think of the men of genius in all ages, whose dreams of truth, of goodness, of beauty, caused doors to darken at their approach, and, in some instances, led them beyond all sheltering roofs, to find peace only in the grave!

Nevertheless, these individuals have not been quite friendless, even in their darkest hours; they have not been quite alone. In their dreams they saw fair men and fair women; fairer, indeed, than any that the earth knew; fairer, I fear, than any that the earth will see for a long time. But the poet sees in every man and woman something fairer than what is seen by the common

eye. Even the best are better when a poet sees them. There is a London, a Paris, a New York, that has no existence outside of the idealist's dream, which yet is more real than the actuality, because it will be the acknowledged reality of the future, long after the present has faded, to use Professor Tyndall's famous simile, "like a streak of morning cloud into the infinite azure of the past." "In the world," said de Senancour, "a man lives in his own age, in Solitude in all the ages." Some compensation the men cut off from their fellows have had, although it is far from being a full, or adequate, compensation. These men have been destitute of that which sweetens the cup of life, and makes the bitterest drops less bitter. And it is quite possible that a prophet, if rejected too long, will grow sour and waste his energies in a fruitless Solitude. Emerson, who is often so wise, has said truly that "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in Solitude to live after our own, but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of Solitude." Yes, after all is said, one must find his Society in these creatures of flesh and blood. Even if the men and women of the dream-world be fairer, yet it is a dream world still, and, until it is realized, it can never be the soul-satisfying thing that a genuine friendship is.

Great is the man who, knowing the value of friendship, dares to be himself in every crisis, at whatever hazard. The masses will not think beyond the pressure of the hour's problem, but the genius is he who perceives the problems of the generations to come. There is no permanence in the realm of thought. The thoughts that appear to-day to be the most secure, the thoughts of religion, of morality, of government and education, shall eventually pass away like mist before the sun, or submit to modifications that will be almost equally destructive. There is nothing permanent, nothing stable, save the human soul, out of which comes all thought. Society is not composed of unchanging atoms. The individuals who compose Society are as changeable and fleeting as the winds. All things pass away. God after god, dynasty after dynasty, have risen and fallen, to give place to other gods and dynasties, whose reign shall be but for a day. But chance is not the secret of change. The world is a growth.

Society is a growth. First comes the lower, then the higher, and next the higher still. More and more does Society become the incarnation of a noble purpose. I am not one of those who believe that progress is inevitable, in the sense of being produced by a blind evolutionary force; I am certain that a very large amount of devolution has now and again taken place, but the history of man to date has, upon the whole, been upward, and so it will, I believe, continue to be. As the world has grown, so will it continue to grow.

The Society of the past has been based very largely upon force. Not altogether, for no society could have endured for a month without a modicum of freedom, but for the most part it has been based on the insecure foundation of coercion. The religion, the morality, the governments of men have been maintained by the military and the police. Through generation after generation the cry has gone forth to men from the dictators of Society: "You must think what we tell you to think; you must feel as we tell you to feel; you must do what we tell you to do; and you must abstain from all that we forbid." More than once the deepest wisdom in the world has been crushed under the burden of these commands, enforced by ignorant and brutal hirelings. Nevertheless, out of the heart of Solitude have come great thoughts and mighty aspirations which Society was unable to kill, because within that Solitude the divinity of man was brooding, and keeping watch that no true value should everlastingly perish.

Slowly, but surely, a new spirit is coming into our world, a spirit that teaches us that physical force is no real force, after all; that the Niagara-torrent of the heart, the Nile-stream of the mind, cannot by any human agency be prevented from reaching their native ocean. More and more Society learns, as the meaning of love dawns upon the race, that government by physical force is fallacious; that love is the only cohesive force that will bind nations and individuals together. The thought of love, too, is modifying all our old notions of religion and morality. In the past both religion and morality dealt largely with the terrors of the law; a species of terrorism inimical to all sound morals and religion was inculcated. Gradually, however, the

conservative mind is learning to perceive, what lonely prophets have known for generations, that religion and morality are the natural gestures of man's mind; that they are not commandments or prohibitions; and that no supernatural god, or earthly governor, is responsible for them, or required to enforce their mandates; that they are, indeed, the natural flowering of our highest faculties.

In the light of reason, the uselessness of attempting to bolster up that which is natural to man becomes clear. It was only the false elements in religion and morality that needed the coercive power of government to maintain them, and not until these false elements pass away shall the values of religion and morality be clearly seen. As knowledge grows, however, and love overcomes hate, the excrescences of religion and morality begin to disappear. To know the greatness of man, and to love man because he is divine—this is the only true religion; this is the only true morality. In the past Society has been mainly concerned with property rights. But love knows no property rights. Love says: "Let us sit down together, and share our good." Love knows no distinction between mine and thine. The only property which maketh men rich is a common holding in truth, beauty and goodness. There are universal spiritual properties more real than air or sunlight, and all of them are convertible into love. We do not see very clearly to-day the relations between these universal properties and real estate, or stocks and bonds, but it shall yet dawn upon Society, as it has dawned upon many a poet and prophet of the wilderness, when the secret of life, only to be learned through a valiant comradeship, is found, that no material possessions are as valuable as the possession of warm human hearts, and that, in order to possess these, we had better throw away our gold and silver, if they stand in our way. Society is destined to be an association of lovers, whose ardent wooing of all that is truly large in individuals shall put to shame all the amatory wooing of the present and the past. I fancy that there will be something amatory in the higher affection, although it will come from an amateness that has been transfigured; for when persons truly love each other they do not strike the attitude

of one about to plunge into a cold bath with the temperature at zero. Love must express itself in some fashion. And Whitman's poems, in the division of *Leaves of Grass* called *Calamus*, contain words which express literally, and not figuratively, the coming passion of man for man. Indeed to the "good gray poet," as we may truly believe, the terms of endearment employed were not hollow, but the echoes of sweet and blessed moods.

Love is a revealer, but it is not the only revealer, of life. There could even be too much love, if individuals were not gifted with intelligence. It is sometimes unwise to view things at close range. The azure-hued mountains of the distance are only jagged rocks when reached. And when one stands too near to Society, the azure-hued ideal of the spirit fades into the grayness of the mass. No matter to what heights evolution may take us, the habit of Solitude will always be required for the highest human welfare. The readjustments of Society can come only through the visions and meditations of the lonely thinkers. Society is always the word that man has spoken; Solitude is the word that man is speaking, or will speak. No matter how strong a man's love for his fellows may be, his love, to be clear-sighted, requires that he shall go away occasionally from its object, that he may commune alone with the Alone, and thus renew his strength. One does not love his friends with the right fervor, if they are always within the sweep of his daily vision. Most of the friction of married life comes from the partners seeing too much of each other. Silence is needed for our welfare as well as speech; Solitude as well as Society.

An article of the ancient creeds holds that dualism is a fact of the individual, cutting him in two. One of these divisions is called the natural man; the other is called the spiritual man. There is also supposed to be an inherent antipathy between the two. Not a few powerful minds have believed in this antagonism, and Paul made a religion out of it. That such a division exists I admit, but there is no reason why it should. The natural man and the spiritual man should embrace and kiss each other, and become one in the flesh and the spirit. The spiritual man, at bottom, is only the natural man in full-blown dignity of purpose, the natural man clothed with the cosmic vision. The doctrine

that every individual who is born into the world must be born again is a psychological truth, but this psychological truth no more means that the natural man is to be put aside than entering a university means that the new university man is to put aside the knowledge acquired in the preparatory school, or the home. The two go naturally together. No man is spiritual who is not natural. The flesh is not despised by the person who has penetrated the mystery of the new birth; it has merely taken on a spiritual meaning; it has been transfigured. True, it must not be allowed to run riot, as perhaps it did in the older and more barbarous periods; it must now take on higher purposes. But every legitimate desire of the flesh is no less legitimate under the moral government of the spirit than it was in the day of anarchy. One must not fail to appreciate all that was genuine in the old-time appeal. The natural man sings:

"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

The sentiment sounds selfish, and it may be selfish, but there is, even for the spiritual man, a certain logic to be found therein. If the flowers of the springtime did not bloom for us; if the trees did not murmur in the summer breeze, if the breath of the mountains and the sea did not bring its delicious coolness for us, then we might well say, What does it matter whether these things be or no, since they have no connection with our organs of sense? If it were possible for one to be born without the five senses, what would it matter to him if the spirits of the rest of us were thrilling with delight through contact with the glories of the earth? The fairness that is not for us, and which can never be for us, is a fairness which, so far as we are concerned, might as well never have existed. If one has never seen the light, the light simply does not exist for him. The so-called selfishness of the natural man is often nothing more than the commendable desire that the fairness of the world may be his, in order that he may appraise its fairness at its proper value, and not be a thing to fill him with melancholy thoughts that turn all existence into dust and ashes. The natural man makes a legitimate demand. The beautiful world does belong to him; it belongs to

all of us. But the natural man makes the mistake, until his spiritual sight is opened, of attempting to enter violently and illegally into his possessions. He has never seen himself in his relation to his brethren. He has believed that the world belonged to him and to his family. In his selfishness, he has even called upon the Almighty, in the words of a rhyming caricature of the Calvinist's creed, to

"Save me and my wife,
My son Joe, and his wife,
We four, and no more."

He has been spiritually blind, and his blindness has brought him nothing but pain. He may not enter into his inheritance until he perceives that he is but one member of a family to which every son and daughter of Adam belongs. When he perceives that all men and women and children are growing dear to him; when his outlook is no longer bounded by the family hearthstone; then, and not till then, is he able to make all things his own. By giving himself freely and unreservedly to all, all is given in turn to him. Then the fairness of the world becomes his spiritual possession, the glory of the world enters into his heart; he feels the genial influences of all things dwelling with him: the men, women and the children; the flower-spotted meadows; the swift-flowing streams; the placid lakes; the green fields; the venerable woods; the silence of the stars; the strength of the hills; the whisper of the wind; the strong voice of the sea. He is now at home in the great sky-spaces; the gods are his familiar companions; he communes with the mighty soul of nature.

Not in Society, but in Solitude, does the master learn his lessons. Nay, one may not be a master, until he has wrestled with himself in the lonely field of Solitude, as Jacob wrestled with the angel that dark night in the lonely valley. Let us be fair to Society, however. If in Solitude we learn to solve the lessons of life, it is Society that gives the problems to be solved, and is the inspiration that compels us to solve them. Society is the raw material of all problems. Even as God could not be, if man were not, neither could man be without Society. One may retire from the dust and sweat and roar of the city to cool his

fevered brow in the cool air of the mountains and the lakes, but nature has an arctic temperature for the man who becomes a misanthrope. To him who has fought a good fight, and failed in the seeming, a kind heaven often peoples his solitude with angels and archangels, but the misanthrope shall find in Solitude only a whip of scorpions. No one can flee from himself, and when one would flee from human relationships the gate of peace is barred for evermore, unless he turns back to go where the voice of duty is calling. One may ascend the mountain and be transfigured, but the halo is quickly lost, if one does not return to the plain where his brethren are fighting the battle in which all should participate. There is grim satire in the lines on the parish priest of Austerlitz, written by the Rev. Reginald Heber Howe, that every anchorite should take to heart.

“ The parish priest
Of Austerlitz
Climbed up in a high church steeple,
To be nearer God
So that he might hand
His word down to his people.

And in sermon script
He daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven,
And he dropped this down
On his people's heads,
Two times one day in seven.

In his age God said
‘ Come down and die,’
And he cried out from the steeple,
‘ Where art thou, Lord?’
And the Lord replied,
‘ Down here among my people.’”

The lovers of Solitude are those who hope to discover in their thinking and dreaming an ideal world. Dear, indeed, is the City of God to the soul whose heart loves justice and beauty, and longs with a mighty passion for the society in which all men and women are fair. The day is always poor and mean to the man of the larger vision. The deeper self grows sick

with every day's report of sordidness and crime. The life around seems empty, a mere collection of struggling atoms, owning no law but the law of force, and in their labor seeking naught but selfish ends. From the turmoil of Society, the idealist would wend his way to the vale of Solitude, in which no sound of sorrow should come to mar his everlasting calm. But there is no such Solitude to be discovered. The city's roar is soon heard even on the mountains and by the shore of the sea. The ideal world must be found in Society or nowhere; in the bosom of Society the idealist must find his true Solitude, or none shall be found. Destroy the world which seems so ugly to the eyes of the idealist, and the ideal is also gone, for the ideal world is built of the atoms of the real world, and one may not survive if the other perishes.

Our age is preëminent to a degree over all other ages in its worship of outward nature. It is a worship that was not characteristic of the classical world, or of the mediæval. One may justly query whether the modern reverence is not overdone. Far be it from my purpose to utter a word against the beauty of the natural world. True, all is not tranquil and serene within it. Earthquake and tornado and volcanic eruption come to jar and jolt. The rattlesnake under the rock and the nightshade in the glen mar the pleasures of those who would find in nature only a sweet rapture of delightful fancy. But there is, nevertheless, a charm in the loneliness of the hills, or the sand rim of the sea; a charm that dwells everlastingly on the banks of a babbling brook. Yet let us beware lest we deceive ourselves. Nature has no meaning apart from man. She wears no singing robes, save to the listening ear. Were the individuals of the world more humane in their manifestations than they are, they, rather than nature, would be the cynosure of all eyes. Even as it is, one finds nature most charming when wedded to human interests. The Hudson is as beautiful as the Rhine, but on the Hudson there are no castles and watch-towers, such as have made the Rhine famous in song and story. No spot on earth is sacred soil, save those places where men have bravely toiled and nobly dreamed.

Solitude we may define as only a vision of the Society that is to be. Even now the Society of the future is slowly taking its

shape, first in the minds of the dreamers, and later in the structure built of daily acts. Between the Society of to-day and the Children of Solitude there is an irreconcilable antagonism at many points; between ideal Society and rational Solitude there is none. Every thinker, every prophet, every poet, is an architect of the future. Aspiration is the cornerstone of the ideal city of our dreams. In the best sense of a much-abused word, religion is the cord which connects the pearls of our thought, for religion in essence is love to God—truth, beauty, goodness—and love to man, who is the incarnation of God from generation to generation.

As the centuries roll on the conviction grows in human minds that all things work together for good to those who love the ideal. It is by no means certain that there is an omnipotence either within or without the visible universe; an omnipotence, that is, which can do any conceivable thing, in any conceivable way. But the Holy Spirit, whose other name is Humanity, is, for every rational purpose, omnipotent whenever the vision is clear. Without God, or the Divine Ideal, we are but dust; in the ideal we are all-powerful to build the city of our dreams. As individuals, we may be conscious factors in the work of fulfilling the ideal; but whether we are conscious, or are not conscious; whether we aim to build, or aim to destroy; whether we strive to help, or strive to hinder, there is an ideal in the world which alone is incapable of permanent defeat, an ideal which will be found gleaming wheresoever the human light dwelleth. The ideal in man is the thinker, the dreamer, the prophet, the poet, the artist, the creator of the eternal values of life. Its avatars are the individuals who receive these glorious names. Out of the heart of Solitude they have proclaimed the dawn; they have read the stars of destiny; they have bathed in the all-embracing spirit of the ineffable. As the Children of the Light, they have done whatsoever their hands found to do, and through their labors Society grows slowly into the living reality of their consecrated vision; and so long as the light continues to shine, and their strength fails not, they will labor to create a Society in which truth, beauty and goodness shall reign supreme over all and in all.

THANKSGIVING FOR OUR TASK

SHAEMAS OSHEEL

THE sickle is dulled of the reaping and the threshing-floor
is bare;
The dust of night's in the air.
The peace of the weary is ours:
All day we have taken the fruit and the grain and the seeds of the
flowers.

The ev'ning is chill,
It is good now to gather in peace by the flames of the fire.
We have done now the deed that we did for our need and desire:
We have wrought our will.

And now for the boon of abundance and golden increase,
And immured peace,
Shall we thank our God?
Bethink us, amid His indulgence, His terrible rod?

Shall we be as the maple and oak,
Strew the earth with our gold, giving only bare boughs to the
sky?
Nay, the pine stayeth green while the Winter grows sullenly by,
And doth not revoke

For soft days or stern days the pledge of its constancy.
Shall we not be
Also the same through all days,
Giving thanks when the battle breaks on us, in toil giving praise?

O Father who saw at the dawn,
That the folly of Pride would be the lush weed of our sin,
There is better than that in our hearts, O enter therein,
A light burneth, though wan