

THE WORLD OF CHANCE.*

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

XXV.

"YOU see," Ray said, "it's merely a fragment." He wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Of course," the girl answered, with a sigh. "Isn't disappointment always fragmentary?" she asked, sadly.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, happiness is like something complete; and disappointment like something broken off, to me. A story that ends well seems rounded; and one that ends badly leaves you waiting, as you do just after some one dies."

"Is that why you didn't like my story?" Ray asked, imprudently. He added quickly, at an embarrassment which came into her face, "Oh, I didn't mean to add to my offence! I came here partly to excuse it. I was unjustifiably persistent the other night."

"Oh no!"

"Yes, I was! I had no right to insist on an opinion from you. I knew it at the time, but I couldn't help it. You were right to refuse. But you can tell me how my poem strikes you. It isn't offered for publication!"

He hoped that she would praise some passages that he thought fine; but she began to speak of the motive, and he saw that she had not missed anything, that she had perfectly seized his intention. She talked to him of it as if it were the work of some one else, and more and more he respected the lucid and serene quality of her mind.

He said, impulsively, "If I had you to criticise my actions beforehand, I should not be so apt to make a fool of myself."

Mrs. Denton came back. "I ran off toward the last. I didn't want to be here when Peace began to criticise. She's so severe."

"She hasn't been at all severe this time," said Ray.

"I don't see how she could be," Mrs. Denton returned, reckless of consistency. "All that I heard was splendid."

"It's merely a fragment," said Ray, with grave satisfaction in her flattery.

"You must finish it, and read us the rest of it."

Ray looked at Peace, and something in

her face made him say, "I shall never finish it; it isn't worth it."

"Did Peace say that?"

"No."

Mrs. Denton laughed. "That's just like Peace. She makes other people say the disagreeable things she thinks about them."

"What a mysterious power!" said Ray. "Is it hypnotic suggestion?"

He spoke lightly toward Peace, but her sister answered: "Oh, we're full of mysteries in this house. Did you know that my husband had a Voice?"

"A voice! Is a voice mysterious?"

"This one is. It's an internal Voice. It tells him what to do."

"Oh, like the demon of Socrates!"

"I *hope* it isn't a demon!" said Mrs. Denton.

"That depends upon what it tells him to do," said Ray. "But in Socrates' day a familiar spirit could be a demon without being at all bad. How proud you must be to have a thing like that in the family!"

"I don't know. It has its inconveniences, sometimes. When it tells him to do what we don't want him to," said Mrs. Denton.

"Oh, but think of the compensations!" Ray urged. "Why, it's equal to a ghost."

"I suppose it is a kind of ghost," said Mrs. Denton, and Ray fancied she had the pride we all feel in any alliance, direct or indirect, with the supernatural. "Do you believe in dreams?" she asked abruptly.

"Bad ones, I do," said Ray. "We always expect bad dreams and dark presentiments to come true, don't we?"

"I don't know. My husband does. He has a Dream as well as a Voice."

"Oh, indeed!" said Ray; and he added: "I see. The Voice is the one he talks with in his sleep."

The flippant suggestion amused Mrs. Denton; but a shadow of pain came over Peace's face, that made Ray wish to get away from the mystery he had touched; she might be a believer in it, or ashamed of it.

"I wonder," he added, "why we never expect our day-dreams to come true?"

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"Perhaps because they're never bad ones—because we know we're just making them," said Mrs. Denton.

"It must be that! But, do we always make them? Sometimes my day-dreams seem to make themselves, and they keep on doing it so long that they tire me to death. They're perfect daymares."

"How awful! The only way would be to go to sleep, if you wanted to get rid of them."

"Yes; and that isn't so easy as waking up. Anybody can wake up; a man can wake up to go to execution; but it takes a very happy man to go to sleep."

The recognition of this fact reminded Ray that he was himself a very unhappy man; he had forgotten it for some time.

"He might go into society and get rid of them that way," Mrs. Denton suggested, with an obliquity which he was too simply masculine to perceive. "I suppose you go into society a good deal, Mr. Ray?"

Peace made a little movement as of remonstrance, but she did not speak, and Ray answered willingly: "*I go into society? I have been inside of just one house—or flat—besides this, since I came to New York.*"

"Why!" said Mrs. Denton.

She seemed to be going to say something more, but she stopped at a look from her sister, and left Ray free to go on or not, as he chose. He told them it was Mr. Brandreth's flat he had been in; at some little hints of curiosity from Mrs. Denton, he described it to her.

"I have some letters from people in Midland, but I haven't presented them yet," he added at the end. "The Brandreths are all I know of society."

"They're much more than we know. Well, it seems like fairyland," said Mrs. Denton, in amiable self-derision. "I used to think that was the way *we* should live when we left the Family. I suppose there are people in New York that would think it was like fairyland to live like us, and not all in one room. Ansel is always preaching that when I grumble."

The cat sprang up into her lap, and she began to smooth its long flank, and turn her head from side to side, admiring its enjoyment.

"Well," Ray said, "whatever we do, we are pretty sure to be sorry we didn't do something else."

He was going to lead up to his own dis-

appointments by this commonplace, but Mrs. Denton interposed.

"Oh, I'm not sorry we left the Family, if that's what you mean. There's some chance, here, and there everything went by rule; you had your share of the work, and you knew just what you had to expect every day. I used to say I wished something *wrong* would happen, just so as to have *something* happen. I believe it was more than half that that got father out, too," she said, with a look at her sister.

"I thought," said Ray, "but perhaps I didn't understand him, that your father wanted to make the world over on the image of your community."

"I guess he wanted to have the fun of chancing it, too," said Mrs. Denton. "Of course he wants to make the world over, but he has a pretty good time as it is; and I'm glad of all I did and said to get him into it. He had no chance to bring his ideas to bear on it in the Family."

"Then it was you who got him out of the community," said Ray.

"I did my best," said Mrs. Denton. "But I can't say I did it, altogether."

"Did you help?" he asked Peace.

"I wished father to do what he thought was right. He had been doubtful about the life there for a good while—whether it was really doing anything for humanity."

She used the word with no sense of cant in it; Ray could perceive that.

"And do you ever wish you were back in the Family?"

Mrs. Denton called out joyously: "Why there is no Family to be back in, I'm thankful to say! Didn't you know that?"

"I forgot." Ray smiled, as he pursued, "Well, if there was one to be back in, would you like to be there, Miss Hughes?"

"I can't tell," she answered, with a trouble in her voice. "When I'm not feeling very strong or well, I would. And when I see so many people struggling so hard, here, and failing after all they do, I wish they could be where there was no failure, and no danger of it. In the Family we were safe, and we hadn't any care."

"We hadn't any choice, either," said her sister.

"What choice has a man who doesn't know where the next day's work is coming from?"

Ray looked round to find that Denton

had entered behind them from the room where he had been, and was sitting beside the window apparently listening to their talk. There was something uncanny in the fact of his unknown presence, though neither of the sisters seemed to feel it.

"Oh, you're there," said Mrs. Denton, without turning from her cat. "Well, I suppose that's a question that must come home to you more and more. Did you ever hear of such a dreadful predicament as my husband's in, Mr. Ray? He's just hit on an invention that's going to make us rich, and throw all the few remaining engravers out of work, when he gets it finished." Her husband's face clouded, but she went on: "His only hope is that the invention will turn out a failure. You don't have any such complications in your work, do you, Mr. Ray?"

"No," said Ray, thinking what a good situation the predicament would be, in a story. "If they had taken my novel, and published an edition of fifty thousand, I don't see how it could have reduced a single author to penury. But I don't believe I could resist the advances of a publisher, even if I knew it might throw authors out of work right and left. I could support their families till they got something to do."

"Yes, you could do that, Ansel," his wife suggested, with a slanting look at him; and the notion apparently amused her more and more. "I only hope we may have the opportunity. But probably it will be as hard to get a process accepted as a book."

"That hasn't anything to do with the question," Denton broke out. "The question is whether a man ought not to kill his creative thought as he would a snake, if he sees that there is any danger of its taking away work another man lives by. That is what I look at."

"And father," said Mrs. Denton, whimsically, "is so high-principled that he won't let us urge on the millennium by having pandemonium first. If we were allowed to do that, Ansel might quiet his conscience by reflecting that the more men he threw out of work, the sooner the good time would come. I don't see why that isn't a good plan, and it would work in so nicely with what we want to do. Just make everything so bad people can't bear it, and then they will rise up in their might and make it better for themselves. Don't you think so, Mr. Ray?"

"Oh, I don't know," he said.

All this kind of thinking and feeling, which was a part and parcel of these people's daily life, was alien to his habit of mind. He grasped it feebly and reluctantly, without the power or the wish to follow it to conclusions, whether it was presented ironically by Mrs. Denton, or with a fanatical sincerity by her husband.

"No, no! That won't do," Denton said. "I have tried to see that as a possible thoroughfare: but it isn't possible. If we were dealing with statistics it would do; but it's men we're dealing with: men like ourselves that have women and children dependent on them."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Ansel," Peace said, gently.

"Yes," he returned, bitterly, "which-ever way I turn, the way is barred. My hands are tied, whatever I try to do. Some one must be responsible. Some one must atone. Who shall it be?"

"Well," said Mrs. Denton, with a look of comic resignation, "it seems to be a pretty personal thing, after all, in spite of father's philosophy. I always supposed that when we came into the world we should have an election, and vote down all these difficulties by an overwhelming majority."

Ray quoted, musingly:

"The world is out of joint:—O cursed spite!
That ever I was born to set it right!"

"Yes? Who says that?"

"Hamlet."

"Oh yes. Well, I feel just exactly as Ham does about it."

Denton laughed wildly out at her impudent drolling, and she said, as if his mirth somehow vexed her,

"I should think if you're so much troubled by that hard question of yours, you would get your Voice to say something."

Her husband rose, and stood looking down, while a knot gathered between his gloomy eyes. Then he turned and left the room without answering her.

She sent a laugh after him. "Sometimes," she said to the others, "the Voice doesn't know any better than the rest of us."

Peace remained looking gravely at her a moment. She said, "I will go and see if the children are all right," and followed Denton out of the room.

Mrs. Denton began to ask Ray about Mrs. Brandreth and Mrs. Chapley, pressing him with questions as to what kind of people they really were, and whether they were proud; she wondered why they had never come to call upon her. It would all have been a little vulgar if it had not been so childlike and simple. Ray was even touched by it when he thought that the chief concern of these ladies was to find out from him just what sort of crank her father was, and to measure his influence for evil on Mr. Chapley.

At the same time he heard Peace talking to Denton, in a tone of entreaty and pacification. She staid so long that Ray had risen to go when she came back. He had hoped for a moment alone with her at parting, so that he might renew in better form the excuses that he pretended he had come to make. But the presence of her sister took all the seriousness and delicacy from them; he had to make a kind of joke of them; and he could not tell her at all of the mysterious message from Mr. Brandreth about the friend to whom he wished to submit his book, and of the final pang of disappointment which its immediate return had given him. He had meant that she should say something to comfort him for this, but he had to forego his intended consolation.

XXVI.

Ray had no doubt that Kane was the court of final resort which the case against his novel had been appealed to, and he thought it hard that he should have refused to give it a last chance, or even to look at it again. Surely it was not so contemptible as that, so hopelessly bad that a man who seemed his friend could remember nothing in it that would make it valuable in a second reading. If the fault were not in the book, then it must be in the friend, and Ray renounced old Kane by every means he could command. He could not make it an open question; he could only treat him more and more coldly, and trust to Kane's latent sense of guilt for the justification of his behavior. But Kane was either so hardened, or else regarded his own action as so venial, or perhaps believed it so right, that he did not find Ray's coldness intelligible.

"My dear young friend," he frankly asked, "is there anything between us but our disparity of years? That existed from the first moment of our acquaintance. I

have consoled myself at times with the notion of our continuing together in an exemplary friendship, you growing older and wiser, and I younger and less wise, if possible, like two Swedenborgian spirits in the final state. But evidently something has happened to tinge our amity with a grudge in your mind. Do you object to saying just what property in me has imparted this unpleasant discoloration to it?"

Ray was ashamed to say, or rather unable. He answered that nothing was the matter, and that he did not know what Kane meant. He was obliged to prove this by a show of cordiality, which he began perhaps to feel when he reasoned away his first resentment. Kane had acted quite within his rights, and if there was to be any such thing as honest criticism, the free censure of a friend must be suffered and even desired. He said this to himself quite heroically; he tried hard to be ruled by a truth so obvious.

In other things his adversity demoralized him, for a time. He ceased to live in the future, as youth does and should do; he lived carelessly and wastefully in the present. With nothing in prospect it was no longer important how his time or money went; he did not try to save either. He never finished his poem, and he did not attempt anything else.

In the midst of his listlessness and disoccupation, there came a letter from Hanks Brothers asking if he could not give a little more social gossip in his correspondence for the *Echo*; they reminded him that there was nothing people liked so much as personalities. Ray scornfully asked himself, How should he, who knew only the outsides of houses, supply social gossip, even if he had been willing? He made a sarcastic reply to Hanks Brothers, intimating his readiness to relinquish the correspondence if it were not to their taste, and they took him at his word, and wrote that they would hereafter make use of a syndicate letter.

It had needed this blow to rouse him from his reckless despair. If he were defeated now, it would be in the face of all the friends who had believed in him and expected success of him. The thought of what Mr. Richings had said in his praise goaded him into activity. His motive was not high; it was purely egoistic at the best; but he did not know this; he had a sense of virtue in sending his book off to

a Boston publisher without undoing the inner wrappings in which the last New York publisher had returned it.

Then he went round to ask Mr. Brandreth if he knew of any literary or clerical or manual work he could get to do. The industrial fury which has subdued a continent, and brought it under the hard American hand, wrought in him, according to his quality, and he was not only willing but eager to sacrifice the scruples of delicacy he had in appealing to a man whom he had sought first on such different terms. His only question was how to get his business quickly, clearly, and fully before him.

Mr. Brandreth received him with a gaiety that put this quite out of his mind; and he thought the publisher was going to tell him that he had decided, after all, to accept his novel.

"Ah, Mr. Ray," Mr. Brandreth called out at sight of him, "I was just sending a note to you! Sit down a moment, won't you? The editor of *Every Evening* was in here just now, and he happened to say he wished he knew some one who could make him a synopsis of a rather important book he's had an advanced copy of from the other side. It's likely to be of particular interest in connection with Coquelin's visit; it's a study of French comic acting from Molière down; and I happened to think of you. You know French?"

"Why, yes, thank you—to read. You're very kind, Mr. Brandreth, to think of me."

"Oh, not at all! I didn't know whether you ever did the kind of thing the *Every Evening* wants, or whether you were not too busy, but I thought I'd drop an anchor to windward for you, on the chance that you might like to do it."

"I should like very much to do it; and—"

"I'll tell you why I did it," Mr. Brandreth interrupted, radiantly. "I happened to know they're making a change in the literary department of the *Every Evening*, and I thought that if this bit of work would let you show your hand— See?"

"Yes; and I'm everlastingly—"

"Not at all, not at all!" Mr. Brandreth opened the letter he had in his hand, and gave Ray a note that it enclosed. "That's an introduction to the editor of the *Every Evening*, and you'll strike him at the office about now, if you'd like to see him."

Ray caught with rapture the hand Mr. Brandreth offered him. "I don't know what to say to you, but I'm extremely obliged. I'll go at once." He started to the door, and turned. "I hope Mrs. Brandreth is well, and—and—the baby?"

"Splendidly. I shall want to have you up there again as soon as we can manage it. Why haven't you been at Mrs. Chapley's? Didn't you get her card?"

"Yes; but I haven't been very good company of late. I didn't want to have it generally known."

"I understand. Well, now you must cheer up. Good-by, and good luck to you!"

All the means of conveyance were too slow for Ray's eagerness, and he walked. On his way down to that roaring and seething maelstrom of business, whose fierce currents swept all round the *Every Evening* office, he painted his future as critic of the journal with minute detail; he had died chief owner and had his statue erected to his memory in Park Square before he crossed that space, and plunged into one of the streets beyond.

He was used to newspaper offices, and he was not surprised to find the editorial force of the *Every Evening* housed in a series of dens, opening one beyond the other till the last, with the chief in it, looked down on the street from which he climbed. He thought it all fit enough, for the present, but while he still dwelt in the future, and before the office-boy had taken his letter from him to the chief, he swiftly flung up a building for the *Every Evening* as lofty and as ugly as any of the many-storied towers that rose about the frantic neighborhood. He blundered upon two other writers before he reached the chief; one of them looked up from his desk, and roared at him in unintelligible affliction; the other simply wagged his head, without lifting it, in the direction of the final room, where Ray found himself sitting beside the editor-in-chief, without well knowing how he got there. The editor did not seem to know either, or to care that he was there, for some time; he kept on looking at this thing and that thing on the table before him; at everything but the letter Ray had sent in. When he did take that up, he did not look at Ray, and while he talked with him, he scarcely glanced at him; there were moments when he seemed to forget there was anybody there, and Ray's blood

began to burn with a sense of personal indignity. He wished to go away, and leave the editor to find him gone at his leisure; but he felt bound to Mr. Brandreth, and he staid. At last the editor took up a book from the litter of newspapers and manuscripts before him, and said:

"What we want is a rapid and attractive *résumé* of this book, with particular reference to Coquelin and his place on the stage and in art. No one else has the book yet, and we expect to use the article from it in our Saturday edition. See what you can do with it, and bring it here by ten to-morrow. You can run from one to two thousand words—not over two."

He handed Ray the book and turned so definitively to his papers and letters again that Ray had no choice but to go. He left with the editor a self-respectful parting salutation, which the editor evidently had no use for, and no one showed a consciousness of him, not even the office-boy, as he went out.

He ground his teeth in resentment, but he resolved to take his revenge by making literature of that *résumé*, and compelling the attention of the editor to him through his work. He lost no time in setting about it; he began to read the book at once, and he had planned his article from it before he reached his hotel. He finished it before he slept, and he went to bed as the first milkman sent his wail through the street below. His heart had worked itself free of its bitterness, and seemed to have imparted its lightness to the little paper, which he was not ashamed of even when he read it after he woke from the short rest he suffered himself. He was sure that the editor of *Every Evening* must feel the touch which he knew he had imparted to it, and he made his way to him with none of the perturbation, if none of the romantic interest of the day before.

The editor took the long slips which Ray had written his copy on, and struck them open with his right hand while he held them with his left.

"Why the devil," he demanded, "don't you write a better hand?" Before Ray could formulate an answer, he shouted again, "Why the devil don't you begin with a *fact*?"

He paid no heed to the defence which the hurt author-pride of the young fellow spurred him to make, but went on reading

the article through. When he had finished he threw it down and drew toward him a narrow book like a check-book, and wrote in it, and then tore out the page, and gave it to Ray. It was an order on the counting-room for fifteen dollars.

Ray had a weak moment of rage in which he wished to tear it up and fling it in the editor's face. But he overcame himself and put the order in his pocket. He vowed never to use it, even to save himself from starving, but he kept it because he was ashamed to do otherwise. Even when the editor at the sound of his withdrawal called out, without looking round, "What is your address?" he told him; but this time he wasted no parting salutations upon him.

The hardest part was now to make his acknowledgments to Mr. Brandreth, without letting him know how little his personal interest in the matter had availed. He succeeded in keeping everything from him but the fact that his work had been accepted, and Mr. Brandreth was delighted.

"Well, that's first-rate, as far as it goes, and I believe it's going to lead to something permanent. You'll be the literary man of *Every Evening* yet; and I understand the paper's making its way. It's a good thing to be connected with; thoroughly clean and decent, and yet lively."

Though Ray hid his wrath from Mr. Brandreth, because it seemed due to his kindness, he let it break out before Kane, whom he found dining alone at his hotel that evening when he came down from his room.

"I don't know whether I ought to sit down with you," he began, when Kane begged him to share his table. "I've just been through the greatest humiliation I've had yet. It's so thick on me that I'm afraid some of it will come off. And it wasn't my fault, either; it was my misfortune."

"We can bear to suffer for our misfortunes," said Kane, dreamily. "To suffer for our faults would be intolerable, because then we couldn't preserve our self-respect. Don't you see? But the consciousness that our anguish is undeserved is consoling; it's even flattering."

"I'm sorry to deprive you of a *Hard Saying*, if that's one, but my facts are against you."

"Ah, but facts must always yield to reasons," Kane began.

Ray would not be stopped. But he suddenly caught the humorous aspect of his adventure with the editor of *Every Evening*, and gave it with artistic zest. He did not spare his ridiculous hopes or his ridiculous pangs.

From time to time Kane said, at some neat touch: "Oh, good!" "Very good!" "Capital!" "Charming, charming!" When Ray stopped, he drew a long breath, and sighed out: "Yes, I know the man. He's not a bad fellow. He's a very good fellow."

"A good fellow?" Ray demanded. "Why did he behave like a brute, then? He's the only man who's been rude to me in New York. Why couldn't he have shown me the same courtesy that all the publishers have? Every one of them has behaved decently, though none of them, confound them! wanted my book."

"Ah," said Kane, "his conditions were different. They had all some little grace of leisure, and according to your report he had none. I don't know a more pathetic picture than you've drawn of him, trying to grasp all those details of his work, and yet seize a new one. It's frightful. Don't you feel the pathos of it?"

"No man ought to place himself in conditions where he has to deny himself the amenities of life," Ray persisted, and he felt that he had made a point, and languaged it well. "He's to blame if he does."

"Oh, no man willingly places himself in hateful or injurious conditions," said Kane. "He is pushed into them, or they grow up about him through the social action. He's what they shape him to, and when he's taken his shape from circumstances, he knows instinctively that he won't fit into others. So he stays put. You would say that the editor of *Every Evening* ought to forsake his conditions at any cost, and go somewhere else and be a civilized man; but he couldn't do that without breaking himself in pieces and putting himself together again. Why did I never go back to my own past? I look over my life in New York, and it is chiefly tiresome and futile in the retrospect; I couldn't really say why I've staid here. I don't expect anything of it, and yet I can't leave it. The *Every Evening* man does expect a great deal of his conditions; he expects success, and I understand he's getting it.

But he didn't place himself in his conditions in any dramatic way, and he couldn't dramatically break with them. They may be gradually detached from him and then he may slowly change. Of course there *are* signal cases of renunciation. People have abdicated thrones and turned monks; but they've not been common, and I dare say, if the whole truth could be known, they have never been half the men they were before, or become just the saints they intended to be. If you'll take the most extraordinary instance of modern times, or of all times—if you'll take Tolstoi himself, you'll see how impossible it is for a man to rid himself of his environment. Tolstoi believes unquestionably in a life of poverty and toil and trust; but he has not been able to give up his money; he is defended against want by the usual gentlemanly sources of income; and he lives a ghastly travesty of his unfulfilled design. He's a monumental warning of the futility of any individual attempt to escape from conditions. That's what I tell my dear old friend Chapley, who's quite Tolstoi mad, and wants to go into the country and simplify himself."

"Does he, really?" Ray asked, with a smile.

"Why not? Tolstoi convinces your reason and touches your heart. There's no flaw in his logic and no falsity in his sentiment. I think that if Tolstoi had not become a leader, he would have had a multitude of followers."

The perfection of his paradox afforded Kane the highest pleasure. He laughed out his joy in it, and clapped Ray on the shoulder, and provoked him to praise it, and was so frankly glad of having made it, that all Ray's love of him came back.

XXVII.

Ray took a hint from one phase of his experience with his story, and made bold to ask Mr. Brandreth if he could not give him some manuscripts to read; he had rather a fancy for playing the part of some other man's destiny since he could have so little to do with deciding his own. Chapley & Co. had not much work of that kind to give, but they turned over a number of novels to him, and he read them with a jealous interest; he wished first of all to find whether other people were writing better novels than his, and he hoped to find that they were not. Mostly,

they really were not, and they cumulatively strengthened him against an impulse which he had more than once had to burn his manuscript. From certain of the novels he read he got instruction both of a positive and negative kind; for it was part of his business to look at their construction, and he never did this without mentally revising the weak points of his story, and considering how he could repair them.

There was not a great deal of money in this work, but Ray got ten or fifteen dollars for reading a manuscript and rendering an opinion of it, and kept himself from the depravation of waiting for the turn of the cards. He waited for nothing; he worked continually, and he filled up the intervals of the work that was given to him with work that he made for himself. He wrote all sorts of things, essays, stories, sketches, poems, and sent them about to the magazines, and the weekly newspapers, and the syndicates. When the editors were long in reporting upon them he went and asked for a decision; and in audacious moments he carried his manuscript to them, and tried to surprise an instant judgment from them. This, if it were in the case of a poem, or a very short sketch, he could sometimes get, and it was usually adverse, as it usually was in the case of the things he sent them by mail. They were nowhere unkindly; they were often sympathetic, and suggested that what was not exactly adapted to their publications might be adapted to the publication of a fellow-editor; they were willing to sacrifice one another in his behalf. They did not always refuse his contributions. Kane, who witnessed his struggles at this period with an interest which he declared truly paternal, was much struck by the fact that his failures and successes exactly corresponded to those of business men; that is, he failed ninety-five times out of a hundred to get his material printed. His effort was not of the vast range suggested by these numbers; he had a few manuscripts that were refused many times over, and made up the large sum of his rejections by the peculiar disfavor that followed them.

Besides these regular attacks on the literary periodicals, Ray carried on guerrilla operations of several sorts. He sold jokes at two dollars apiece to the comic papers; it sometimes seemed low for

jokes, but the papers paid as much for a poor joke as a good one, and the market was steady. He got rather more for jokes that were ordered of him, as when an editor found himself in possession of an extremely amusing illustration without obvious meaning. Ray developed a facility wholly unexpected to himself in supplying the meaning for a picture of this kind; if it were a cartoon, he had the courage to ask as much as five dollars for his point.

A mere accident opened up another field of industry to him, when one day a gentleman halted him at the foot of the stairway to an elevated station, and after begging his pardon for first mistaking him for a Grand Army man, professed himself a journalist in momentary difficulty.

"I usually sell my things to the *Sunday Planet*; but my last poem was too serious for their F. S., and I'm down on my luck. Of course I see *now*," said the journalist in difficulty, "that you *couldn't* have been in the war; at first glance I took you for an old comrade of mine; but if you'll leave your address with me— Thank you, sir! Thank you!"

Ray had put a quarter in his hand, and he thought he had bought the right to ask him a question.

"I know that I look twice my age under some circumstances, when people happen to see double—"

"Capital!" said the veteran. "First-rate!" and he clapped Ray on the shoulder, and then clung to him long enough to recover his balance.

"But *would* you be good enough to tell me what the F. S. of the *Sunday Planet* is!"

"Why, the Funny Side—the page where they put the jokes and the comic poetry. F. S. for short. Brevity is the soul of wit, you know."

Ray got away from the journalist in difficulty. He hurried home and put together some of the verses that had come back to him from the comic papers, and mailed them to the *Sunday Planet*. He had learned not to respect his work the less for being rejected, and the *Planet* did not wane in his esteem because the editor of the F. S. accepted all his outcast verses. But the pay was deplorably little; and for the first time he was tempted to consider an offer of partnership

with a gentleman who wrote advertisements for a living, and who, in the falterings of his genius from overwork, had professed himself willing to share his honors and profits with a younger man; the profits, at any rate, were enormous.

But this temptation endured only for a moment of disheartenment. In all his straits, Ray not only did his best, but he kept true to a certain ideal of himself as an artist. There were some things he could not do even to make a living. He might sell anything he wrote, and he might write anything within the bounds of honesty that would sell, but he could not sell his pen, or let it for hire to be used as the lessee wished. It was not the loftiest grade of aesthetics or ethics, and perhaps the distinctions he made were largely imaginary. But he refused the partnership offered him, though it came with a most flattering recognition of his literary abilities, and of his peculiar fitness for the work proposed.

He came to know a good many young fellows who were struggling forward on the same lines with himself, and chancing it high and low with the great monthlies, where they offered their poems and short stories, and with the one-cent dailies, where they turned in their space-work. They had a courage in their risks which he came to share in its gayety, if not its irreverence, and he enjoyed the cheerful cynicism with which they philosophized the facts of the newspaper side of their trade: they had studied its average of successes and failures, and each of them had his secret for surprising the favor of the managing editor, as infallible as the gambler's plan for breaking the bank at Monaco.

"You don't want to be serious," one blithe spirit volunteered for Ray's instruction in a moment of defeat; "you want to give a light and cheerful cast to things. For instance, if a fireman loses his life in a burning building, you mustn't go straight for the reader's pity; you must appeal to his sense of the picturesque. You must call it, 'Knocked out in a Fight with Fire,' or something like that, and treat the incident with mingled pathos and humor. If you've got a case of suicide by drowning, all you've got to do is to call it 'Launch of one more Unfortunate,' and the editor is yours. Go round and make studies of our metropolitan civilization; write up the 'Leisure

Moments of Surface-car Conductors,' or 'Talks with the Ticket-choppers.' Do the amateur scavenger, and describe the 'Mysteries of the average Ash-barrel.'"

As the time wore on, the circle of Ray's acquaintance widened so much that he no longer felt those pangs of homesickness which used to seize him whenever he got letters from Midland. He rather neglected his correspondence with Sanderson; the news of parties and sleigh-rides and engagements and marriages which his friend wrote affected him like echoes from some former life. He was beginning to experience the charm, the fascination of the mere city, where once he had a glimpse of the situation fleeting and impalpable as those dream-thoughts that haunt the consciousness on the brink of sleep. Then it was as if all were driving on together, no one knew why or whither; but some had embarked on the weird voyage to waste, and some to amass; their encounter formed the opportunity of both, and a sort of bewildered kindness existed between them. Their common ignorance of what it was all for was like a bond, and they clung involuntarily together in their unwieldy multitude because of the want of meaning, and prospered on, suffered on through vast cyclones of excitement that whirled them round and round, and made a kind of pleasant drunkenness in their brains, and consoled them for never resting and never arriving.

The fantastic vision passed, and Ray again saw himself and those around him full of distinctly intended effort, each in his sort, and of relentless energy, which were self-sufficing and self-satisfying. Most of the people he knew were, like himself, bent upon getting a story, or a poem, or an essay, or an article, printed in some magazine or newspaper, or some book into the hands of a publisher. They were all, like himself, making their ninety-five failures out of a hundred endeavors; but they were all courageous, if they were not all gay, and if they thought the proportion of their failures disastrous, they said nothing to show it. They did not try to blink them, but they preferred to celebrate their successes; perhaps the rarity of these merited it more.

XXVIII.

As soon as Ray had pulled himself out of his slough of despond, and began to strug-

gle forward on such footing as he found firm, he felt the rise of the social instinct in him. He went about and delivered his letters; he appeared at one of Mrs. Chapley's Thursdays, and began to be passed from one afternoon tea to another. He met the Mayquaits at Mrs. Chapley's, those Gitchugumee people she had asked him about, and at their house he met a lady so securely his senior that she could let him see at once she had taken a great fancy to him. The Mayquaits have since bought a right of way into the heart of society, but they were then in the peripheral circles, and this lady seemed anxious to be accounted for in that strange company of rich outcasts. Something in Ray's intelligent young good looks must have appealed to her as a possible solvent. As soon as he was presented to her she began to ply him with subtle questions concerning their hostess and their fellow-guests, with whom she professed to find herself by a species of accident springing from their common interest in a certain charity: that particular tea was to promote it. Perhaps it was the steadfast good faith of the pretty boy in refusing to share in her light satire, while he could not help showing that he enjoyed it, which commended Ray more and more to her. He told her how he came to be there, not because she asked, for she did not ask, but because he perceived that she wished to know, and because it is always pleasant to speak about one's self upon any pretext, and he evinced a delicate sympathy with her misgiving, which interested him as that of a type and a class. It flattered him that she should single him out for her appeal as if he were of her sort, and he eagerly accepted an invitation she made him. Through her favor and patronage he began to go to lunches and dinners; he went to balls, and danced sometimes when his pockets were so empty that he walked one way to save his car fares. But his poverty was without care; it did not eat into his heart, for no one else shared it; and those spectres of want and shame which haunt the city's night, and will not always away at dawn, but remain present to eyes that have watched and wept, vanished in the joyous light that his youth shed about him as he hurried home with the waltz music beating in his blood. A remote sense, very remote and dim, of something all wrong attended him at moments in

his pleasure; at moments it seemed even he who was wrong. But this fled before his analysis; he could not see what harm he was doing. To pass his leisure in the company of well-bred, well-dressed, prosperous, and handsome people was so obviously right and fit that it seemed absurd to suffer any question of it. He met mainly very refined persons, whose interests were all elevated, and whose tastes were often altruistic. He found himself in a set of young people who loved art and literature and music, and he talked to his heart's content with agreeable girls about pictures and books and theatres.

It surprised him that with all this opportunity and contiguity he did not fall in love; after the freest give and take of æsthetic sympathies he came away with a kindled fancy and a cold heart. There was one girl he thought would have let him be in love with her if he wished, but when he questioned his soul he found that he did not wish, or could not. He said to himself that it was her money, for she was rich as well as beautiful and wise; and he feigned that if it had not been for her money he might have been in love with her. Her people, an aunt and uncle whom she lived with, made much of him, and the way seemed clear. They began to tell each other about themselves, and once he interested her very much by the story of his adventures in first coming to New York.

"And did you never meet the two young women afterwards?" she asked.

"Yes. That was the curious part of it," he said, and piqued that she called them "two young women," he went on to tell her of the Hugheses, whom he set forth in all the picturesqueness he could command. She listened intensely, and even provoked him with some questions to go on; but at the end she said nothing; and after that she was the same and not the same to him. At first he thought it might be her objection to his knowing such queer people; she was very proud; but he was still made much of by her family, and there was nothing but this difference in her that marked with its delicate distinctness the loss of a chance.

He was not touched except in his vanity. Without the subtle willingness which she had subtly withdrawn, his life was still surpassingly rich on the side where it had been hopelessly poor; and in spite

of his personal poverty he was in the enjoyment of a social affluence beyond the magic of mere money. Sometimes he regarded it all as his due, and at all times he took it with simple ingratitude; but he had moments of passionate humility when he realized that he owed his good fortune to the caprice of a worldly old woman whom he did not respect very much.

When he began to go into society, he did not forget his earlier friends; he rather prided himself on his constancy; he thought it was uncommon, and he found it a consolation when other things failed him. It was even an amusement full of literary suggestion for him to turn from his own dream of what the world was to Hughes's dream of what the world should be; and it flattered him that the old man should have taken the sort of fancy to him that he had. Hughes consulted him as a person with a different outlook on life, and valued him as a practical mind, akin to his own in quality if not in direction. First and last he read him his whole book; he stormily disputed with him about the passages which Ray criticised as to their basal facts; but he adopted some changes Ray suggested.

The young fellow was a whole gay world to Mrs. Denton in his reproduction of his society career for her. She pursued him to the smallest details of dress and table and manner; he lived his society events over again for her with greater consciousness than he had known in their actual experience; and he suffered patiently the little splenetic resentment in which her satiety was apt finally to express itself. He decided that he must not take Mrs. Denton in any wise seriously; and he could see that Peace was grateful to him for his complaisance and forbearance. She used to listen too when he described the dinners and dances for her sister, and their interest gave the material a fascination for Ray himself: it emphasized the curious duality of his life, and lent the glamour of unreality to the regions where they could no more have hoped to follow him than to tread the realms of air. Sometimes their father hung about him—getting points for his morals, as Ray once accused him of doing.

"No, no!" Hughes protested. "I am interested to find how much better than their conditions men and women always are. The competitive conditions of our economic life characterize society as well

as business. Yet business men and society women are all better and kinder than you would believe they could be. The system implies that the weak must always go to the wall, but in actual operation it isn't so."

"From Mr. Ray's account there seem to be a good many wall-flowers," Mrs. Denton suggested.

Hughes ignored her frivolity. "It shows what glorious beings men and women would be if they were rightly conditioned. There is a whole heaven of mercy and loving-kindness in human nature waiting to open itself: we know a little of what it may be when a man or woman rises superior to circumstance and risks a generous word or deed in a selfish world. Then for a moment we have a glimpse of the true life of the race."

"Well, I wish I had a glimpse of the untrue life of the race, myself," said Mrs. Denton, as her father turned away. "I would give a whole year of the millennium for a week in society."

"You don't know what you're talking about," said her husband. He had been listening in gloomy silence to Ray's talk, and he now turned on his wife. "I would rather see you dead than in such 'good society' as that."

"Oh, well," she answered, "you're much likelier to see me dead. If I understand Mr. Ray, it's a great deal easier to get into heaven than to get into good society." She dropped the cat out of her lap long enough to go up to her husband and push his hair back from his eyes. "If you wore it that way, people could see what a nice forehead you've got. You look twice as 'brainy' now, Ansel."

He caught her hand and flung it furiously away. She went back to her chair, and the cat jumped into her lap again. "Ansel," she said, "is beginning to feel the wear and tear of the job of setting the world right as much as I do. He never had as much faith in the millennium as father has; he thinks there's got to be some sort of sacrifice first; he hasn't made up his mind quite what it's to be, yet."

Denton left them abruptly, and after a while Ray heard him talking in the next room; he thought he must be talking to some one there, till his wife said, "Ansel doesn't say much in company, but he's pretty sociable when he gets by himself."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

WEBSTER.*

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

IN my first lecture I spoke briefly of the deficiency in respect of Form which characterizes nearly all the dramatic literature of which we are taking a summary survey, till the example of Shakespeare and the precepts of Ben Jonson wrought their natural effect. Teleology, or the argument from means to end, the argument of adaptation, is not so much in fashion in some spheres of thought and speculation as it once was, but here it applies admirably. We have a piece of work, and we know the maker of it. The next question that we ask ourselves is the very natural one—how far it shows marks of intelligent design. In a play we not only expect a succession of scenes, but that each scene should lead, by a logic more or less stringent, if not to the next, at any rate to something that is to follow, and that all should contribute their fraction of impulse towards the inevitable catastrophe. That is to say, the structure should be organic, with a necessary and harmonious connection and relation of parts, and not merely mechanical, with an arbitrary or haphazard joining of one part to another. It is in the former sense alone that any production can be called a work of art.

And when we apply the word Form in this sense to some creation of the mind, we imply that there is a life, or, what is still better, a soul in it. That there is an intimate relation, or, at any rate, a close analogy, between Form in this its highest attribute and Imagination, is evident if we remember that the Imagination is the shaping faculty. This is, indeed, its pre-eminent function, to which all others are subsidiary. Shakespeare, with his usual depth of insight and the precision that comes of it, tells us that "imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown." In his maturer creations there is generally some central thought about which the action revolves like a moon, carried along with it in its appointed orbit, and permitted the gambol of a Ptolemaic epicycle now and then. But the word Form has also more limited applications, as, for example, when we use it to imply that nice sense of proportion and adaptation which results in

Style. We may apply it even to the structure of a verse, or of a short poem in which every advantage has been taken of the material employed, as in Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn," which seems as perfect in its outline as the thing it so lovingly celebrates. In all these cases there often seems also to be something intuitive or instinctive in the working of certain faculties of the poet, and to this we unconsciously testify when we call it genius. But in the technic of this art, perfection can be reached only by long training, as was evident in the case of Coleridge. Of course without the genius all the training in the world will produce only a mechanical and lifeless result; but even if the genius is there, there is nothing too seemingly trifling to deserve its study. The "Elegy in a Country Church-yard" owes much of the charm that makes it precious, even with those who perhaps undervalue its sentiment, to Gray's exquisite sense of the value of vowel sounds.

Let us, however, come down to what is within the reach and under the control of talent and of a natural or acquired dexterity. And such a thing is the plot or arrangement of a play. In this part of their business our older playwrights are especially unskilled or negligent. They seem perfectly content if they have a story which they can divide at proper intervals by acts and scenes, and bring at last to a satisfactory end by marriage or murder, as the case may be. A certain variety of characters is necessary, but the motives that compel and control them are almost never sufficiently apparent. And this is especially true of the dramatic motives, as distinguished from the moral. The personages are brought in to do certain things and perform certain purposes of the author, but too often there seems to be no special reason why one of them should do this or that more than another. They are servants of all work, ready to be villains or fools at a moment's notice if required. The obliging simplicity with which they walk into traps which everybody can see but themselves, is sometimes almost delightful in its absurdity. Ben Jonson was

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