

Editor's Study.

I

THE little boy whose speculative interest in the ascent of Vesuvius was the opportunity it offered "to see the creator smoke" had a primitive imagination. The grotesque fancy suggested by the word *crater*, so readily transformed into a word having a personal meaning, had for him no incongruity—indeed, it was perfectly in keeping with all his childish fancies of unknown things and persons. The editor remembers his own earliest actual conception of the Supreme Being—that of a stern man whose very respectable vesture culminated in a broad-brimmed beaver hat—probably due to the fact that, in the mountain solitudes of Vermont, the vision of such a personage had overwhelmingly impressed his childish imagination. The same child regarding elderly women gossiping over their teacups was frequently admitted to that mysterious after-part when the teacups were emptied and from the residual grounds fortunes were intimated. The wonderful things seen in the teacup, well enough defined to the gossips, were to the child unfamiliar; and while to them the cup expanded to include all that was therein represented, to him just the reverse happened—the visible cup was the standard of capacity, and everything seen in it that he had never actually beheld assumed the size that would bring it within those narrow limits. Thus he remembers that sometimes a coffin was seen in the cup, and his early idea of the dimensions of a coffin was fixed by that circumstance.

The child's imagination regarding all things which he has not seen, whether in this world or another, literally follows such patterns as are shown him, and is contractive rather than expansive, though what he actually sees appears very much larger than it will to his mature vision. Pictures and maps exaggerate this natural tendency. The map of our own country is likely to be the only one drawn on a large scale, and by its side Europe and Asia have no fair show. The Red Sea does not look as long as the Hudson River. The child has no true perspective, and can only gain one after long ex-

perience and extensive observation. So is it also with his spiritual vision, which can only keep pace with the images and suggestions tendered to his imagination by the material world, and which must therefore be confined within narrow ways until, through large co-ordinations of these images and suggestions, it leaps to the spiritual truth.

In the highest interpretation of the philosopher the child is the very type of genius, as in that of the Gospel the child is the type of the kingdom of heaven. In Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" the child is represented as one whose large native heritage dwindles with maturity. Nothing too much can be said of the power that resides in the plastic nature of the child; but the first contact of this power with the world, the first disclosure of potentiality, would seem to belie the large manifesto of the poet and of the philosopher. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," but no earthly matter is too petty to engage the child's attention; and, though his first attitude may be one of aversion to things, as if he suffered a kind of sickness of the world abruptly thrust upon him, yet the immediate reaction is shown in the avid acceptance of that world and a violent seizure upon material things. The old mystery whence he emerged is veiled, and he can revert to its meanings only by mastery of the visible and tangible. His toys are cherished idols, and regulate his perspective. He takes his knowledge in fragments, and his teachers must be explicit, formal, and even mechanical; the homeward road is a long way round, and veers sharply away from the near-lying heaven. Wordsworth's boyhood was left far behind when he divined that "the child is father to the man"; he was very "far inland" before he could distinctly interpret those voices of the eternal sea immediately communicable to the soul of infancy. The child turns away from the large heavenly implications, and eagerly accepts the small, explicit things, the "toy commandments," arbitrary precepts, grotesque images—even the meaningless masks and idols that are only the playthings of his fancy: all earthly

shapes—mere tokens of broken truths—engage his interest and absorb his thought, filling his dreams in chaotic incongruity.

“Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's
height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou
provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly
freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.”

II

But a like course in race development is more interesting and suggestive to the student of human history. Ethnic progress follows the lines of individual growth. In the earliest thought of any people the human fancy enacted a grotesque masquerade in which the earth was the stable centre of the universe. Religion, poetry, and philosophic speculation were all compassed within earth-symbols. There was no counterpart to our modern idea of heaven or of hell; no aspiration ever leaped quite free of the solid ground; nor did any fear create a realm wholly loose from Earth, which was then no “planet,” but the one thing eternally fixed and immovable.

Blanco White's wonderful sonnet, wherein he describes the approach of night as first seen by Adam and Eve, and the dread of these two, followed by their rapture when the whole starry universe, which daylight had hidden, was disclosed to their view, loses entirely the deep meaning which it has to us when it is applied to any really primitive “first parents,” to whom this upper firmament disclosed no majesty comparable to that of the mighty earth—to whom, indeed, the obviously magnificent moon would have seemed their only considerable consolation for the absence of the golden sun. The sun itself, immediately personified as it must have been by the primitive fancy, was incidental and subservient to Earth, her mere husband, with the inferiority attaching to all husbands in the primitive matriarchate. The idea of divine motherhood took precedence of that of divine fatherhood, and was imme-

diately associated with Earth. In that time man looked not upward, but downward, for his God. Desire, in its primitive meaning, was away from the stars—*desiderium*.

Benjamin Kidd, in his *Western Civilization*, distinguishes between the Christian era and that which preceded it, asserting that in the latter the principle dominating civilization was the subordination of the individual to existing society, and that in the former—i. e., in Christendom—the dominant principle is the subordination of existing society to the society of the future. The divergence of the primitive period (preceding all which is known to us as ancient civilization) from the Christian is still wider, as in that remote time man's social regard was mainly backward—to the past, as it still remains to-day in the ancestor-worship of the Chinese. The revolution in human thought is indeed tremendous from that downward and backward primitive look to the upward look of the Christian soul since the martyr Stephen's dying vision of an opening heaven.

Mr. Kidd is doubtless right in making the *conscious* altruism of existing society in the interests of the society of the future a distinctive characteristic of Christendom. But unconsciously life, individual and social, was always, in its natural and inevitable course, altruistic, and dominated by what was to come, though it is only in our modern scientific view *seen* to be such, just as the earth was only through the Copernican astronomy seen to take its proper place as participant with sun, moon, and stars in the celestial patrimony.

The revolution from the primitive to the modern view of life and nature was gradual. A great step was taken—probably at the same time with the substitution of patriarchy for matriarchy—when mankind came to give the powers of Light precedence over those of Darkness, when the pagan prayers to Apollo seemed more efficient than friendly treaties with the Titans.

III

Our chief interest here in any consideration of this progressive human view is not in its relation to religion or to the development of conscious altruism, but

in its relation to human culture in art and literature.

The emancipation from earth-ideas was a detachment necessary to human progress. Such a Golden Age as may be associated with the infancy of the race, even if we concede perfect innocence to its consistent but irrational naturalism, were well soon over for the sake of the humanities, the evolution of which is in lines quite distinct from those of Nature—often reversing them. When the temple got away from the tomb; when the painting and the statue were detached from temple decoration, and the song and the dance from the temple ritual; when the Greek drama was relieved of its dependence upon the Demeter story—these were steps in the emancipation of ancient art, just as the violent divulsion of astronomy from mythology by Anaxagoras, for which he was stoned by the Athenians, was the initial emancipation of ancient science. We look back to the Greece of this period, just before Plato and Pericles, as the first arena in the world's history where human reason triumphed, where the humanities were born. Here, Mr. Kidd may be reminded, was the first distinct assertion of the claims of individualism, and, at the same time, the first orderly and rational restraint of this assertion for the common good, and, we may assume, for the good of posterity, since this new order of life—based upon Reason, "which looks before and after"—could not be wholly oblivious of its legacy to future generations.

Centuries earlier Homer had uttered the first note, the prelude to this human aspiration, as his imagination of Athene and Hermes was prelude of their impersonations in the statues of Phidias and Praxiteles.

The primitive period probably endured for ages, what we conceive to have been the Golden Age having been merely its dawn, before it passed into its maturity, with its own characteristic civilization, which, casting aside the quaint grotesquery of infantile fancy, became as sterile and overlaid with custom as the Chinese, developing also as elaborate an ethical system, and finally, after static social consolidation without vital harmony, sank under its own weight—the prey of self-seeking tyrants. What the

old Renaissance was or from what ancient font—Accadian or other—we know not. We only know that some such new birth there must have been before the Vedic hymns and the Homeric poems. Possibly oppression precipitated nomadic flights from the old centres, and thus the cup of custom was broken, and the revolting humanities had their chance in new fields for a surprising culture which knew no totems.

Such graphic art as there had been before this Renaissance was the meagre record of the naked truth—of the *fact* in its simplest terms. The early man's seizure upon the earth was crude and violent—he was content with the mere word, the mere deed, which had in themselves plenipotence. Rude were the creatures of native fancy, minified rather than developed into greater might and beauty in their later crystallizations.

The humanities are not from the child—the native man—but from the man reborn, emancipated from earth-symbols, from fixed custom and sterile code, and who is then prepared to enter the heavenly heritage, which belongs to childhood only by implication.

We see, then, that poetry as an art could not have been a primitive possession. Always it followed a renaissance. It is never of the Pelasgic, but always of the Hellenic type of man. We think civilization antagonistic to poetry—that mature civilization which has become crystallized and static—yet the great poet never arises until such new currents of a nascent and plastic civilization are set in motion as create intellectual and æsthetic culture; and from this same matrix must all great literature and the representative arts have their genesis.

IV

Through renaissance after renaissance have the humanities been developed, and the most important problem of our civilization concerns its relation to their deeper culture. The nurture of ideals in all our life, as well as in literature and art, is indeed our most intimate and most lasting concern. The projection of our interests and energies into the society of the future, which seems to Mr. Benjamin Kidd our main business, is a mere incident. Altruism will take care of it-

self. In its conscious procedure it is often misguided, while in its unconscious development it is, as we have said, a law of life. The evolution of humanity is on lines variant from those followed in the development of the physical world; and it is only when the human soul has passed through the period of blind naturalism that it comes to itself and takes its transcendent path.

We are in danger from a new naturalism based on the theory of physical evolution. The peril is not in the acceptance of that theory, but in its perverse application, ignoring that human trope wherein man turns from and contradicts nature. It is the contradiction in which one half of a circle stands to the other half; but when we consider humanity in relation to nature we must take note of the contradiction. If we fail to do this in our scientific view, we shall make the same mistake in our literature and art. Zola, in his naturalistic fiction, ignores the contradiction, as do also his apologists. Man is not merely a highly developed animal, as in the naturalistic view he seems to be. In the physical structure of any other animal is indicated the full scope of its functions, its precise limitations. In the physical structure of man there is no indication whatever of any distinctively human achievement—such as a great cathedral, a great poem, or symphony. All his ideals transcend his animality.

Dr. Huxley, the greatest European exponent of the theory of evolution, in his *Romanes* lecture (1893), distinctly asserted the contradiction of the ethical to the cosmic process:

“Men in society are undoubtedly subject to the cosmic process. As among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support. The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence. The strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to tread down the weaker. But the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilization. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called

the ethical process, the end of which is, not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best. . . . Its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive.”

For its fullest meaning, the “ethical process” must be understood to include all the humanities, and to not merely combat, but to transcend the cosmic process. It must also be insisted upon that there is in this departure from the cosmic process something radical, such a contradiction as involves not merely a restraint upon the self-assertion of brute force, but a new kind of assertion, which is expressed in ideals distinctly human, that is, germane to man’s proper destiny.

More and more the special study of the natural sciences and of psychology on its physical side, as disclosed in the laboratory, encroaches upon the too limited field accorded to liberal culture, so that one of our best New England colleges wins a special distinction by a complete departure from the lines followed in the great universities and holding to the old ground—the culture of the humanities. The great universities are necessary with all their specialties, through which the sciences are not only taught, but advanced by new discoveries. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the importance of this advance, or upon the value of strenuous industrial organization, and of our material progress generally; only these developments should not suppress the humanities. It was the revival of learning by the Renaissance which gave new meaning to the compass and the printing-press, and a new impulse to scientific discovery. Material progress should be subordinate to human culture, receiving therefrom its impulse and dominant motive. The academic training must be not only maintained, but lifted and re-enforced, as the groundwork of the more complex university scheme. The college, as distinguished from the university, has yet its indispensable work to do all over the land.

The theme we are considering is peculiarly appropriate to the Editor’s Study, since the chief aim of the Magazine is to stimulate and respond to this deeper

culture, regarding as of first importance the interests of literature and art, and faithful always to those ideals which give value and distinction to life, and which are to make our civilization memorable.

The reaction is always toward a barren art, toward a literature devoid of charm and inspiration, toward a life absorbed in materialism and animalism. The degeneration is far lower than the primitive lapse, since it avails of all the *spolia opima* of a refined civilization for its devious perversions.

The lien to nature is not broken by culture. It is only through culture that we become children in the Kingdom of Nature, full heirs of her household, rather than mere servants. Nature does her best for us when we best maintain our transcendent human contradiction to her. She holds her own in our primary passions, in our kinship and our enmities, but she deigns most willingly to serve these when there is in them something not her own, when through human culture they rise to the higher human plane. It is her own fire that burns in their white flame, the same as in their native red. If our aspiration becomes a revolt from nature toward something too fair and good for her nurture, if in our culture we deny and betray her, repudiating or perverting our natural affections and emotions, she quickly asserts her proper dominion through stress or penalty. Her severest penalty is atrophy.

The child is indeed father to the man, and Coleridge was right in his conception of genius as the continuance of the plastic potency of childhood into the period of maturity—a potency identical with the creative power of the imagination. We should say that genius is the renascence rather than the continuance of childhood. Juvenility is usually the denial and betrayal of the natal heritage rather than its true unfolding or embodiment. The genius common to all is shown in that period only in a certain grace, spontaneity, and *naïveté*—qualities which are apt to be soon suppressed. Whether in the individual or in the race, it is revived only by a kind of second nativity. For the world known to us, the typical revival was in Hellas, and the revival of Hellenic culture it was that distinguished the later Renaissance.

We designate our liberal culture by the phrase "the humanities," since it is only through this culture that we enter upon the higher transcendent plane, which is distinctively human, over-arching our animality—the sky above our earth, the heavens, whose bright constellations will alone remain to illumine the darkness when our civilization shall have passed away. As it is a secular no less than a sacred truth that man must be born again, to be truly man, it is also essential that our secular treasures be laid up in these heavens, for incorruptibility.

Forever, probably, men will look back to those remoter stars of the Hellenic heavens—to Homer and Plato and Aeschylus and Pindar; it would be a dark day indeed for our humanities when these should be eclipsed or ignored. The immediate sequel must be a like oblivion for the stars in nearer skies, and finally the obliteration of our heavens altogether.

The full perspective of culture is necessary to its continuity; every stream that has contributed to its volume invites us to wander along its banks, to visit its academic groves, to ascend to its source. The languages of Greece and Rome enrich our own. English poetry has drunk deep from every old font. Fold upon fold in the investiture of our art—indeed, of all our institutions—is of an ancient drapery. How far are we away from that archaic bareness which characterized every picture, every image, every record of pre-Hellenic civilization! Creative genius has transformed the representative arts, the poem, the story, by forever adding new veils which are new revealings. Aeschylus in his *Prometheus Bound* sent a new ray of light through the old Titanic veil. Homer furnished illusion after illusion for the vesture of Greek tragedy, and, indeed, of all poetry after him. Milton was a more impressive poet, because his culture made available the unlimited investment of the past. These veils, the old and the new, should command our respect, lest we reverse this old habit of Art by a sadly corrosive analysis, as if we were in the autumn of our world, anticipating its wintry divestiture. Thus only may poetry continue to flourish upon the earth, and have perennially its springtime vesture.

EDITOR'S DRAWER



MR. KIRBY'S OWN PARTICULAR CONTRIBUTION

The Kirby Wedding

BY HAYDEN CARRUTH

"WELL, I don't know," said Mrs. Kirby, doubtfully; "I've been thinking about a pickle-caster."

Mr. Kirby snorted. "Now, that's just like you—a pickle-caster!" he said. "Did you ever hear of a couple getting married that they didn't get about a thousand pickle-casters?"

"Well," sighed Mrs. Kirby, "I never knew for sure of over six or seven; but there's generally enough, I reckon. But what's a body to do? Everything's old."

"Oh, get out," answered Mr. Kirby. "Tain't so. There's a-plenty of new things if you just put your mind on it. The trouble with you is you don't *think*."

"No, I never was no hand to think," said Mrs. Kirby, resignedly. "I s'pose there are

a-plenty of things. Now, a nice set of nut-picks might—"

"There you go again, Amanda. Great snakes! I never seen a table of wedding-presents that wasn't just alive with nut-picks. Yes, and spoons, and carving-knives, and napkin-rings, and salt-cellar, and all them things. What you want to do is to just forget 'em all."

"Mebby you're right, Walter," returned Mrs. Kirby, still more resignedly. "But Jennie's been a good girl, and we must give her something. When Hester Purdy got married her folks give her an etching," she added, cautiously.

"What's an etching?" demanded her husband.

"A kind of picture that comes in a frame. They have 'em at John L.'s furniture-store