

## Editor's Study

AS we were saying, the men and women of the coming generation, not yet adult, will be better modernists in their maturity if, as children, their natural predisposition toward antiquity is indulged without interference or restraint. The Gentiles made better Christians because they had been pagans, whose imagination had not been sterilized and whose faith, ministered to by this free and fertile imagination, had had full natural indulgence in its embodiments of divinity. The impression of divine immanence was the natural preparation for the idea of a transcendent divinity, and remained as its complement.

We are too timorously concerned about the free play of the child's imagination, and mischievously interpose our sterilizing processes of indoctrination. Let the little Goethe build his altar to the sun. Milton would have been a better poet in his maturity if Puritanism had not been so prematurely imposed upon him; he would have had a more native sense of things, such as Shakespeare had, and would never have conceived of anything so preposterous as an angel discoursing with Adam and Eve on Calvinistic themes. Iconoclasm and Puritanism belong to maturity, and are prevented altogether by the tolerance nourished in a naturally disposed childhood. Even Protestantism is not one of the child's natural belongings as a conscious attitude. Any revolt—any form of reaction based on rational grounds against authority—should not be imposed upon children. They should be allowed to grow into it, as a part of their adulthood, when, at the proper season, their rational faculties are awakened and developed.

It is not true that the traditions freely accepted by the child unduly affect his future when, with equal freedom, he shall exercise rational choice and selection. It is well that they have strongly impressed him and that they are not ruth-

lessly repudiated, as they are likely to be if they have been imposed upon him. The child's impressions depend upon contacts, and it is in the selection of these contacts, where they are not inevitable but the result of choice, that the wisdom of his tutelage is tested. If he is country born and bred, he is surrounded by objects of nature, and the impressions thus derived cannot be too deep and lasting; they belong to him all his life, never needing to be repented of. The city child is helplessly defrauded if shut in from this natural environment, which can only be his through parental provision. But, whether in the city or in the country, the Past is his native heritage; something, indeed, nearer than heritage, his natural intimacy. The human past is the postulate of his very being, as a human child. Here especially he is dependent upon his elders for fitly chosen contacts. If he is to have any familiarity with the Bible, with Homer, with the heroic and legendary lore of Greece and Rome and of the Northern races, with that order of old literature which is creative and yet not deeply reflective, with the historic personages portrayed by Plutarch, with medieval heroism as chronicled by Froissart, as feigned by Scott, or as sympathetically ironized by Cervantes—all of which belong to the child before he has reached the age of twelve—these things must somehow lie in his way, so presented as to disclose their native allurements.

If the child is to learn Greek and Latin or modern languages other than his own, it is certain that this early period is best suited to their rapid and easy acquisition; and if his situation makes this learning possible, it is for him a great gain as well as a natural possession, taken, that is, as naturally as he assimilates food. It is not a mental discipline or an indoctrination, beyond his years; yet there is nothing which so gently insinuates intellectual discrimina-

tion. In finding that two words may be used for one meaning the child gets his first sense of words as distinct from things, as not fixed, but having flotation—as phantoms that vanish, giving place to others, hiding the essential things—an ever-variant masquerade. It is a kind of play and at the same time an intellectual diversion and surprise. The child in passing from Greek to Latin has this sense more acutely than in passing from English to Latin, because so much of English is derivative from Latin.

In passing from English to either Greek or Latin the child has another diversion and surprise in the endings of nouns and verbs as indicated in declensions and conjugations, where the words seem to have a life of their own, significantly varying these terminations. The English child, far more than the French, is diverted and surprised by this organic flexibility of Greek and Latin words.

Ancient mythology, to all modern children, even when known through translations only, becomes another and subtler masquerade, disclosing the varied and ever-changing forms and symbols of creative faith. These transformations become more evident and impressive when, at a little later period, the young pupil adds to his knowledge of Homer that of the Greek dramatists. Scandinavian mythology furnishes another wonderful variation, and all this mythical and legendary lore presents a striking contrast to Hebraic monotheism, while the medieval presentment, including the Virgin Mother and the saints, with the heroic knightly complement, is a further variation in the evolution of faith.

These manifestations of human worship and belief, near or remote as related to the child's sympathies, form a kaleidoscopic retrospect, supplemented, it may be, by imaginative embodiments of ancient and medieval art—which gives fluency to outward symbolism, just as learning other languages gives flotation to words, and so suggests the permanent and essential background of human faith and romance. It is only a suggestion, leading not to any mental formulation, but to an impressionistic conviction of something substantially real, however indefinable, beneath the ever-changing symbolism and pageantry—something in-

eradicably abiding in human nature and emotionally prompting the imagination to diverse outward expression.

The child is of course supposed to have from his birth a contemporary religious and ethical environment and to be strongly impressed by it in his earliest development. Even the most liberal of his elders, if not hardened sceptics, are wisely tolerant of his spontaneous devotions and loyalties, instinctively withholding from interference. The present to him is a part of the past, coming to him from a former generation, and this near past seems warmer and closer to heart than the remotely antique, however picturesque and imposing the spectacle it offers, not thus cherished by his immediate progenitors. Because the Bible is a family possession, its personages become familiar—Jesus and Mary in far-off Judea, the tented patriarchs on the Chaldean plains, and Moses on the banks of the Nile—having a home-like nearness never to be attained by Osiris, Demeter, Jason, or Helen, or by the gods and heroes of our own Teutonic ancestors. Thus a perspective is established for the child, in which the remoteness of the whole pagan spectacle is intensified, a scene forever detached from his intimacies, and regarded by him as by a spectator who has no part in it.

It was not always so. There was a long period, covering more than half of all the Christian centuries, when the Bible was not a family possession, when indeed it was to the people a sealed book. During a considerable portion of this period the Christian church was in actual contact with the paganism, first, of the Roman Empire, and, later, that of the Northern peoples, acting upon it and reacted upon by it, through a compelled wisdom stooping to conquer. The Christian children of that era saw more of the pomp and ritual characterizing paganism than of the simplicity which marked the worship of the Hebrew synagogue. Therefore the conflict with paganism was never as fierce and relentless as that with monotheistic Islam, or even as that in the seventeenth century with iconoclastic Puritanism. The accommodations to paganism—such as the adoption of its feast days and the investment of the Virgin Mary with the attributes of all

the ancient ladies of sorrow—were graciously healing and sympathetic.

No such investment of the spirit of Christianity with pagan aspects as was compelled by the circumstances of that time is to-day possible, or could be prompted by a motive so sympathetic. The pagan spectacle is remote from us by an impassable chasm. The Bible nurture has made the break complete.

Yet such contacts as are possible to modern children, through art and literature, with a past thus exiled from our intimacies, are of inestimable value for our future culture and for the amplest expression of the Christian spirit; and they are most fitly cultivated in that period of life when the backward look is most natural. We can clearly see that the pressure brought to bear upon the rising generation, forcing upon it what is called a practical education—one wholly concerned with its equipment for the efficient performance of special functions incident to our complexly mechanical and commercial civilization—tends to the destruction of genius and of all those higher values of life which make civilization and progress desirable. Incidentally, the exclusion of the humanities involves the exclusion also of any intimate acquaintance with the Bible, as may be ascertained by the examination of pupils who have been subjected to this forcing system.

If the scope of both primary and secondary education is to be narrowed down within the limits of such utilitarian specialization, then the less attention paid to education the better, giving Nature, who never runs a race against Time, a chance for recovery.

In any case the care of children is not properly subject to theory, but to a consideration of conditions. Childhood is the season of impressions, of plastic submission to these, of backward-looking and waiting, as youth is the season of forward-looking impulses. Nature has made this distinction, and if in childhood she makes preparation for the blossoming of youth, her processes are hidden. We are advancing no theory, but only recognizing this distinction of terms, when we plead for the child's free and full indulgence of the backward regard. It is ours to help him to his

natural birthright, to lead him into the field of the past, with some sense of what calls him thither—a sense which determines the contacts we give him—and there we leave him free to derive his own impressions from the scene, the persons—all that makes the play. We burden him with no technicalities, which he no more needs than when he is brought into contact with natural objects; and we refrain from distracting him by ulterior meanings or analytical interpretations, which he may himself seek later.

If the play, thus given its full chance with him, proves unalluring, then we may deliver him over to the industrial trainer or taskmaster, to anything decent and useful—he has no imagination. We need not fear for any too great or overmastering allurements, but rather rejoice that his interests and sympathies are profoundly engaged, that the scene lives again in his vivid impressions of it. It is at best a scene alien and remote, even as rendered in the vibrant pulse of the heroic epic; while, as conveyed through the medium of the plastic and dramatic arts, it comes to the beholder as to one revisiting the glimpses of the moon. The statues and temples are cold, and the moving figures in the play are statuesque and imposingly impressive. The nearer medieval scene, though it is Christian, has in its quaintness, grotesquery, and unhuman sanctities scarcely more of warmth, save for the glow thrown upon it by the old masters of painting. If therefore from this shadowy retrospect some exceptionally penetrating vision of such a child as De Quincey was, or as Keats or Morris or Pater was, gathers the secrets, veiled from other eyes, of the creative power, of the majesty and beauty of that human past, it recovers priceless treasures for the enrichment of our modern world. But, failing of such wonderful necromancy, the lesser vision is not to be despised; the continuity of human culture depends upon it.

The past is not cherished simply because it is past. In the lines of culture the dust of antiquity has been most diligently sifted for its hidden wealth; and this wealth is not that of the market-place, but of the clearing-house of the Imagination.

## Editor's Drawer

### A Fickle Jade

BY GEORGE WESTON

ON his fiftieth birthday Mr. Jolley had retired from the cheese business and had surrendered himself to his lifelong ambition of being a poet. For many years he had felt the divine gift surging so strongly within him that there had been times when he had scarcely been able to tolerate the intrusion of Roqueforts, Bries, and American creams; but, like a prudent man, he had realized the importance of lining his treasury before beginning to treasure his lines. On his golden anniversary, however, Mr. Jolley had walked out of his cheese warehouse and out of the cheese trade in a spirit of blissful exaltation; and even as a youth cries in his heart on the day of his majority, "Now I am a man!" so did Mr. Jolley shake hands with his business successor, and walk out into the sunlit street, swelling and singing with the thought, "And now I am a poet!"

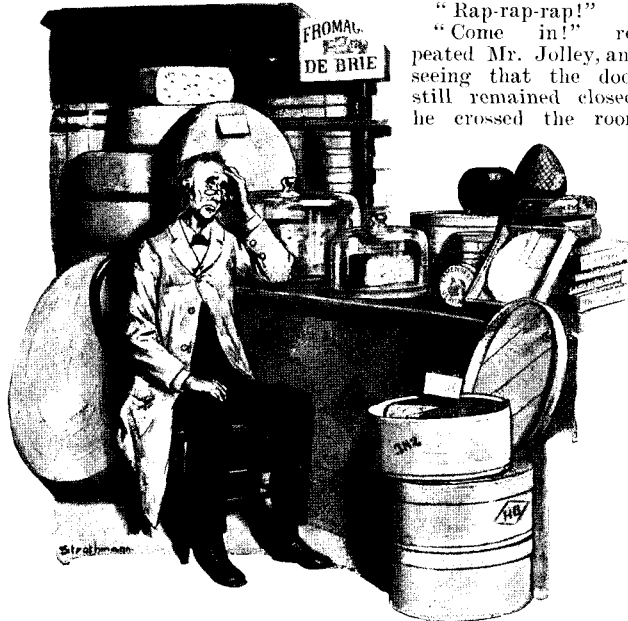
Like a prudent man again he had already arranged his plans. In his room at Mrs. Spencer's boarding-house he had installed a library desk, a ream of linen paper, and a waste-basket. There he had seated himself, and there, with a noble scorn of sonnets, couplets, triolets, ballades, madrigals, and all the lesser forms of poesy, he had plunged straightway into "America: An Epic Poem"; for what Homer had been to Greece, and Dante to Italy, and Milton to England, Mr. Jolley determined to be to America. And there for months and months he had filled his waste-basket, and there at last he was beginning to make the discovery that whereas in the cheese business his mind had run continually to poetry, now that he had set up as a poet it was difficult for him to keep his thoughts away from the cheeses.

Though never did a man more ardently woo his Muse. Once he said to himself, "She is angry at me because I ignored her so long," and looking at his manuscript he added in a gently protesting voice, "But, you know, I simply had to make my money first." Then, rumpling his hair and scowling with intensity, he sometimes strode up and down his room and sometimes he walked around the Park muttering, "Come, now, Inspiration! Come, now! Strike me! Hang it all, what's the matter with you, anyway?" For Mr. Jolley was growing peevish, as even the most gentle of men might, after walking out for hours in the moonlight, wooing a Muse, and afterward discovering that he has succeeded only in catching a cold.

One evening while Mr. Jolley was sneezing away in iambic and dactylic measures (as the result of a midnight rumination in the rain the night before) he heard a gently hesitating feminine knock upon his door.

"Come in!" he cried.

"Rap-rap-rap!"  
"Come in!" repeated Mr. Jolley, and seeing that the door still remained closed, he crossed the room



HE HAD SCARCELY BEEN ABLE TO TOLERATE THE INTRUSION OF ROQUEFORTS, BRIES, AND AMERICAN CREAMS