

Editor's Easy Chair

THE poet came in with a very alarmist air and said, "Have you seen that paper by Havelock Ellis on 'Love and the Woman's Movement'?"

"No," we said, inattentively. "What is it about? How is love related to the 'Woman's Movement'?"

"Anything," the poet answered, "that is connected with love is related to everything connected with women, and the woman's movement is naturally related to love. Mr. Ellis thinks if that movement gets far enough it is going to end in the abolition of romantic love, through the intellectual revolt of women, and the return of the race to the classical motive, the Greek motive, the Roman motive in marriage, with the good of the family and the State for the matrimonial ideal, instead of the happiness of the youthful couple."

"Well, what is the objection to all that?"

It was either the editor who spoke or the philosopher who sat behind him, like his shadow cast there; who was, in fact, often interchangeably substance and shadow with him.

"You must allow," whichever it was that spoke, pursued, "that love as the basis of marriage is a good deal of a failure."

"I allow nothing of the kind," the poet vehemently dissented. "I deny the very premises of Mr. Ellis's argument. I deny that even among the Greeks and Romans love was not regarded as a plausible reason—yes, an imperative incentive to matrimony; and the poets will bear me out in my contention."

"Oh, the poets!" the philosopher scoffed; or was it the editor?

"Well, then, the historians. The poets were the first historians, anyhow; Homer, you'll certainly allow, was before Herodotus. There is evidence all through the epics and tragedies and comedies that people married for love among the ancients; I mean the young ancients. The

Anthology is full of it, and there are lots of mortuary inscriptions bearing the tenderest testimony to the affection of husbands for their wives, and even of wives for their husbands."

"There is a good deal of truth in what you say," the editor and philosopher jointly conceded, "though not, perhaps, so much as you think or would like to believe; that affection may have grown up after marriage. Of course, as a poet you are vitally concerned in the preservation of romantic love as the ideal in marriage. If it were once disestablished, you would be laid off half the time and as a novelist you would be out of a job altogether. You are a novelist as well as a poet?"

"In the pressure for large-selling fiction, and the small demand for poetry, I am often obliged to turn from verse to prose for business reasons; but I am always a poet even when I write fiction. I am a romantic novelist."

"Precisely. Romantic love is a vested interest as well as a cult with you, and we do not blame you for rushing to the defense of it as the ideal in marriage. But let us know the exact grounds of your disagreement with Mr. Ellis, who, we must warn you, will be apt to carry a great many advanced women with him, advanced in thought as well as in age. If he denies that the cuneiform inscriptions of the Assyrians, or the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians, or the sacred writings of the Hebrews afford any proof that romantic love, or what we know as the common or garden passion of love, was considered an unanswerable argument for marriage among the young people of those nations, and that the literature and art of the free peoples of antiquity are equally wanting in it, then when and how does he say the worship of it came in and began to possess the earth?"

"With the rise of chivalry. He holds that till some men began to respect the weakness of women and to protect them

from the brutality of other men, they had little notion or none of the necessity or propriety of marrying for love. That was one of the motives, but not the main motive, he seems to think; and I deny his facts as well as his postulates. Take the Stone Age itself, to begin with! Did the man of that epoch go out and club a particular girl into insensibility and drag her to his cave, with the notion of making a happy home for both because he loved her, or did he do it with the intention of founding a family and serving society against the hordes of race suicides? The question is absurd! He loved that particular girl passionately; he adored her; he felt that he could not live without her; he wanted her and no other woman for his wife; and in his primitive, inarticulate way he offered her his hand and heart."

"Very likely," the philosopher suggested, "Mr. Ellis might admit all you say, while he would make you observe that when people began to pick up from the Stone Age and get along in civilization as far as the Bronze Age or the Iron Age or the Nickel Age, they began to act upon less selfish motives for matrimony, to marry for monetary and social and patriotic considerations. The ego ceased to be the ideal of cultivated people; a gentleman looked upon himself primarily as part of a family, a *gens*, a city, a nation, and only secondarily as suitor for the hand of a certain pretty girl."

Lightning began to flash from the eyes of the poet and novelist; they blazed like incandescent lamps. "And he would say, I suppose, that Christianity was a sort of reversion to barbarism, to egoism, since it brought back the individual to the supreme place in his own regard, with a conscience which could not be given into the keeping of others, and a heart which could not be satisfied by the fulfilment of duty to the family or the city in the superlative affair of life."

"It would be rather daring of him, of course; and yet, wasn't it? I mean if Christianity was the precursor of chivalry, and chivalry was the source of romantic love." The philosopher put up his hand to delay the retort of the poet. "Isn't it one of the most cogent non-reasons of the anti-suffragists that if

women get the vote, men will stop giving up their seats to them on cars and taking off their hats in elevators? Hasn't chivalry always offered its beneficiaries courtesy instead of justice and honor instead of equality?"

"Do you call superiority inequality?" the poet hotly demanded.

"What do *you* call it?" the philosopher asked in turn, and while the poet gasped for words he went on: "Women have had too much of the superiority that love gives them and too little of the equality that law refuses them."

"Come, come!" the editor interposed. "Isn't all this rather beside the question? Though, by-the-way, what is the question?"

"In the Socratic method the question was anything Socrates chose to ask," the philosopher said, "but we will not be so absolute, as Hamlet says of the gravedigger. The question is whether the passion of love, as it prevails among the youth of both sexes, is the true or best ground for marriage. Of course, I mean the idolizing or idealizing love of the poets and novelists. The question is whether it is not often, and perhaps oftenest, a misleading rather than a true index of the union which produces the home, the city, the nation." The philosopher, after the fashion of his kind, went on to restate and overstate the case, while the poet helplessly fumed in tacit protest and denial as he waited for his innings. In the mean time we softly murmured in the well-known words of "Locksley Hall":

"With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

They were false guides, the affections;
she herself was not exempt;

Truly, she herself had suffered—perish in
thy self-contempt!"

"Yes, what do you say to that?" the poet burst in.

"It doesn't sound exactly like argument," the philosopher returned. "But I should say whatever Tennyson himself said in 'Locksley Hall Fifty Years Afterward.' Or was it sixty?"

"Yes, and drew from Gladstone one of the most scathing rebukes that was ever visited upon a recreant!"

"Well, I don't know," the philosopher dreamily replied. "They were both old

men and perhaps equally unconvincing. I'll allow that Gladstone was right if you'll allow that Tennyson was. At their age they could not really have felt very keenly about it."

"You are not getting on," we interposed. "At this rate you will never arrive at any practicable conclusion. The simple fact is that the passion of love is in the world, and the question is whether it shall be used for getting married or for—worse?"

"Oh, is *that* the question?" the philosopher commented, as it appeared to us rather cynically, so that we had to take a tone of rebuke with him.

"Yes, and a burning one. What shall be done with the passion of romantic love now that we have got it in the world?"

"Yes," the poet put in, rather irrelevantly, "who sent it into the world? Who created it?"

"I suppose whoever created the other passions: fear, hate, greed, avarice; there are a lot of them."

"And you compare the passion of love with those passions and assign them the same divine origin?"

"Yes; don't you? If you suppose a Creator, you must suppose that He created everything."

"This," the poet gasped, "is er—er—pessimism."

We should have used a stronger word ourselves, but we were reluctant to interfere in so fruitful a controversy, and we only said, "We imagine that the main difference between you is that the poet would contend that the passion of love as popularly accepted came directly from the creative hand, and the philosopher would hold that it was largely an invention of romance, of chivalry, or whatever." Neither of the disputants denied this, and in their provisional assent we found the ground for proceeding: "Having realized that we live in a world where this formidable element prevails, we have to determine where we stand with regard to it. That is the Ibsenian lesson of life, the moral of the whole drama of existence—to know where you stand. If we allow that love as a guide to marriage is largely a failure—"

"But I *don't* allow it; I deny it!" the poet interrupted.

We went back for quantity. "If with

the experience of these States alone, where almost every marriage is a love-match, there is an average of one divorce to every seven and a half marriages, we must confess that love is not quite an infallible guide to marriage, not a home-maker of the highest order. At the same time we probably all feel that marriage without love is rather a repulsive notion—"

"I feel nothing of the kind!" the philosopher retorted almost as vehemently in his turn as the poet himself. "I maintain that mutual esteem, social and pecuniary equality, similarity of tastes, identity of race and religion, are predisposing causes to a life-long union altogether more reliable and respectable than that precipitated by your vaunted passion of love."

"Our vaunted passion of love?" we returned, and in our resentment we began to feel ourselves more and more differentiated from the philosopher. "You mean the poet's vaunted passion of love."

"Well, I don't know," the philosopher said, and he laughed as if to have asked any serious consideration of the passion were to have abdicated some part of our claim to be taken seriously. "I thought you were going to turn sentimentalist."

"I accept the taunt, the stigma, gladly, proudly," the poet said. "Not only is the future happiness of mankind bound up in the worship of that passion as the heart of the home and the central impulse of the race, but it is the record of its life, the embodiment of the human story in nine-tenths of the literature of all languages. If the passion of love were once disestablished, so to speak, this immense mass of literature would fall into desuetude, it would be forgotten and would ultimately perish."

"And a good riddance to bad rubbish," the philosopher declared. "Nine-tenths of that nine-tenths of literature is truck, mere truck. Your idolized passion of love has played the tyrant in all the arts. It has assumed to be not only the supreme interest, but the only interest worth looking after in works of the imagination. All other human interests and motives are subordinated to it. Usually it is brought in unblushingly at the very beginning, but sometimes, when it seems as if human nature were going to be

given a show, the pestilential pair steal up at opposite points on the horizon and begin to emit the heat of their passion; and a malarial blight steals over the prospect. The spring of reasonable action dries up; the persons of the drama become mere puppets worked by wires round the poisonous pair and having no other aim in life than to contribute to their infatuation for each other."

"Aren't you putting it rather strongly?" we deprecated, though we really always enjoy a good, strong denunciation of average fiction.

"Not at all," the philosopher declared. "It's quite as bad as that, and in poetry it's worse for the most part—'sensual caterwauling,' Huxley called it."

"Yes," the poet hissed, "and what has become of Huxley and the rest of the agnostics? Who reads them or speaks of them, while untold millions in all parts of the habitable globe nurture their faith in human nature, in life here and hereafter, on the love-stories that embody the race-story."

"You must allow," we said to the philosopher, with an effort of impartiality, "that if romantic love were disestablished, beauty would largely perish."

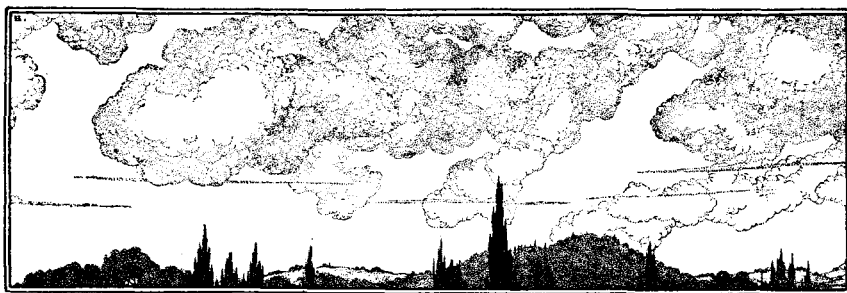
"It depends upon what you understand by beauty."

"Well, 'beauty is truth, truth beauty,'" we quoted.

"Then I should say it was not beauty which would perish, but stuff and nonsense. The truth is not in that false ideal, and therefore not beauty. If mar-

riage itself is not to perish, that ideal as a motive to it must go."

"Monstrous, monstrous!" we heard the poet murmuring prelude to some violent outbreak; and we hastened to interpose with a suggestion which we venture to leave to the reader. "Why not take a middle course? Marriages of arrangement by parents and guardians are not much more successful than love-matches, and they will never be accepted by the Germanic races, though the Latins seem resigned to them. But why not take a leaf from the Swiss statute-book in the matter of divorce? There it is legislated that if the happy couple have got tired of their bliss and wish to be separated, they must come three times, at several months' intervals, before the magistrate, who will grant them a divorce only in the event of their final perseverance. The same principle can easily be applied to cases of the romantic passion. When the lovers think that is the trouble with them and wish to get married, it could easily be arranged that they should appear in the county or city clerk's office and take out their first papers as for naturalization. After two years they can come again, and then at the end of five years the marriage license can be delivered to them. In this way all the errors of haste and judgment can be safeguarded, and the lasting happiness of the pair can be secured. Perhaps the intervals need not be so long. In some cases a succession of weeks or even days would suffice to bring reflection and forbearance."



Editor's Study

THE twentieth-century American defies classification. The same remark might be made of a twentieth-century Englishman or Frenchman, but in England and France it would be easier to find some kind of a label, if only a badge of office or party or social rank, to apply to a man eminent enough for recognition at all.

Eminence is not so segregate as it was in the last century. What a man stands for collectively gives him distinction. We have not characteristic personalities, and are not likely to have, that stand out individually as, in their several fields, Lincoln, Mark Hopkins, Emerson, Whitman, and Mark Twain did in the last century.

The late William James seems of the twentieth century, as the still living Bergson of France seems; and James, though allied to his French contemporary in some essential phases of his philosophy—notably in the unsophisticatedness of it—expresses that philosophy in characteristically American terms.

James's frank adoption of the term "Pragmatism" as designating his philosophy brings his thought of life and of the world into distinct harmony with the American tendency to measure everything according to its uses, or, as James does not mind saying, its "cash values"—to emphasize the pragmatic consideration, though of course his reference is to the coinage of life-experience. Worship is worthship, and value is rooted in valence, connoting also valiance. James is consistently American, then, when he brings all things that go to the making of faith and romance into the field of living experience and asks what they are worth there—what are their uses and values. His view of truth as living, as organically expressed, is especially pertinent to twentieth-century development through vast organization which everywhere translates individual into collective uses, and makes wealth commonwealth.

To hoard, to secrete, to exclusively possess anything, is along the way to death and burial, and is contrary to the frankness, openness, and abundance of Nature. All forms of repression, civil, social, and religious, close or interrupt living currents and produce static conditions and an artificial civilization. Among Western peoples the American has suffered least from such conditions, and has, more than any other, and more naturally and spontaneously, realized freedom of action and expression. At the beginning of the new century this people, more clearly than any other, has a sense of the worth of liberty as promotive of all other worth. The value of freedom is initial to all opportunity and availability in living lines illuminated by Reason. The tyrant's opportunity is for self-aggrandizement, blind seizure, brutal exploitation. It includes by exclusion and alienation. It is the truth of life that gives freedom to life, and the vision of that truth discloses creative values, nutritive and reproductive through correspondences and affinities. Thus the living truth has not only individual integration, but collective embodiment.

It is this freedom, thus realized and embodied, which is generating a new kind of sociability in the American people—new only because, for the first time in human history, sociability is released from inveterate artificial restraints, and is beginning to find its own laws and to evolve spontaneously its own issues. Both the laws and the issues are as inexplicable and as inevitable as those of Nature. Take, for example, this law—that if a man seeks something just for himself, even his own salvation, he is cut off from everything and becomes a mute and a surd, whereas if he is openly concerned in the world outside of himself, as the child is, then that world is joined to him with all its powers and accordant with him in all its harmonies; he is nourished