

Editor's Easy Chair

THEY were sitting on the veranda of the hotel in the summer afternoon, which was as cool and bright as they could have asked. The titular mountain of the Ponkwasset House lay blue in the middle distance, propped on some lower hills and pillowed against the range of peaks that paled into the horizon behind it. In the foreground stretched the different blue of the water which had been, for a Victorian generation, Lake Ponkwasset, but had now resumed its earlier name of Ponkwasset Pond. Over the face of the water scuttled many motor-boats, bearing groups of laughing and screaming young girls, and battering the air with their unmuffled exhausts, which echoed across the pond into the nearest uplands and clattered against the sides of the veranda. In a new-mown field a team of half-grown boys were shouting and cheering at a game of baseball; from a tennis-court beside the hotel rose the self-mocking cries of elder youth of both sexes. In front of the hotel ran the ancient post-road, and over this whirled in swift succession automobiles of all types, from the stately five-thousand-dollar touring-car of the rich to the rattle-bang second-hand delivery-runabouts of the natives bringing the hotel its supplies from the neighboring village. The house stood on a knoll between two valleys, and as each motor mounted from the hollows, the driver cut out his muffler for speed, and passed with gutturing, shuddering, and gasping noises that shattered the air hanging full of the malodorous yellow dust which the landlord's enterprise in oiling the track failed to hold down.

His guests had come out from their endeavors to get naps after the midday dinner, and as they gathered one after another on the wide veranda, and were struck down by the smells and noises into their rocking-chairs, one of the gentler of the ladies timidly ventured to another,

"Doesn't it seem to you that it's rather noisy here? I mean for the mountains?"

"Yes, it does," the other assented. "My husband came up here because he's had a nervous breakdown, and thought he couldn't bear the sound of the surf and the bell-buoy and the fog-horn and the siren at the seaside, but—"

The lady in the rocking-chair beyond the first lady said: "Did you think the junction was *quite* so near? We got rooms at the back because I thought my daughter would be quieter there, although I knew we should have the kitchen and pantry under us. But they seemed to be shifting the trains all night; it was just as if we had the locomotives in the room. Her poor baby never got a wink." They all lapsed into a hapless silence; but presently that gentlest one of them noted:

"The worst of it is that the people are noisier than they used to be. Their voices are louder and harsher; they shriek and shout more. Just hear those baseball-players! If it were only the voices," she went on, sadly, "but the people in those autos, it seems as if their very looks were making a noise."

Two men who sat side by side beyond the doorway were apparently arrested in their own talk by their interest in hers. But at their stopping she shrank from saying more, and one of the men went on:

"Yes, it seems to have produced a type, in wonderful abundance, as if by a sort of intensive culture. We used to have jokes about the bicycle face; perhaps the automobile face is so awful we can't joke about it."

The two were leaning forward and studying the autos that whirled or scuttled by at five-minutely intervals. "It's extraordinary," the other said, "how almost instantly the motor habit vulgarizes. Some of those people must be ladies and gentlemen, but they have ceased to look it much sooner than the bicyclers and bicyclesses did, though *their* decline and fall was rapid enough. The bicycle itself

declined and fell as swiftly as the refinement of its riders. The monkey-back and the reversed cap had scarcely come in before the wheel began to go out. You still find it in country-places, where it's seriously used for errands, and it's with us in hideous survival as the motorcycle, but the bicycle, the dreadful 'bike' of other days, whether for tandem-riders or 'built for two' abreast, is quite archaic now."

"And you don't think the auto will pass, too?"

"No, the auto is more practicable, with infinitely less exertion—with none at all, in fact. We Americans don't like physical exertion. Just watch the people in those autos: male and female loafers in bare heads and poke hats and caps; they have only to roll into and roll out of the luxurious seats, except when the car does the rolling and gets them under it and mashes them."

"They can't all deserve such a fate," the milder of the talkers suggested.

"I don't say they do. But many of them are outlaws, or law-breakers. Last summer I was driving along the Maine coast, where there are a good many crooks and turns, you know, and every now and then one of those machines would dart over a rise of ground or out of a piece of woods and bear down on us without a note of warning. We are bitter on the chauffeurs, in the newspapers, when something happens, but those cars were driven by their owners, or the people who had hired them; and they couldn't have all been ex-convicts, though they ought to have been. *Look at that!*" A dusty car came whizzing by, with its muffler open, and young girls and young men lolling at different slants in it; pennants were fluttering from staffs in front, lettered with the names of the places it had passed through.

"Pretty bad," the milder man owned. "But was the old-fashioned Concord wagon with a cargo of college-yelling collegians any better?"

"It wasn't so universal. It didn't infect the whole country. Few could afford it; but anybody can afford an auto like that, though it costs so much more, and the people who run it are no richer than they used to be."

"Yes, where does all the money come from that goes into automobiles?"

"Mostly out of people's mortgaged houses, I believe."

"Oh, but come! There *are* people of refinement who can afford to own cars and drive them. I have seen them, and so have you. We know them."

"I admit that there are exceptional instances. There are motorists who sometimes ask me to drive with them. Whenever I accept, I approve of motor-ing. But when I am outside of a car I see motoring in its true perspective."

The two men laughed together, and the milder urged, "Well, they are doing a good work in abolishing the horse, with his danger to health and morals."

"Oh, the horse is a beast, and he must go, and his friend the house-fly with him, I hope. The horse has been the cause of more lying and cheating in the human race than any other agency; but he has never, in the whole course of his evolution from the eohippus, been the cause of such wide-spread demoralization as the automobile in the few years of its invention. As to the financial embarrassments and the destruction of values, the race-horse himself can't be compared to the motor-car. The savings of a lifetime are wasted in its purchase, and its operation entails wretchedness upon the hapless people who live on the high-roads it ravages and on the owners of the summer cottages which will not let within reach of its noise and dust."

The ladies who had been talking ceased, and were leaning in the direction of the speaker, spellbound by the interest of his alarming opinions.

The milder man seemed to have some diffidence in suggesting: "I'm afraid the motor, or auto, or whatever we call it, has come to stay, just like the high cost of living. What you want to do is to regulate it, just like the trusts—"

"Do you think," the other interrupted, "that we have been shiningly successful in regulating the trusts?"

The mild man laughed. "No. What I think is this. We complain of the noise and dust. Well, then, we've got to have noise and dust reservations, and we've got to prevent the autos from coming into those reservations or going through them by law."

"By law! We've laws forbidding a high rate of speed and requiring the use of signals. Are these laws obeyed?"

"This is an age of the world when people want to go fast. The way is to fix an area where they can go fast, and an area where they can't go at all. Live in that area and build in it, and your lives will be quiet and your summer cottages will be let. But the auto has come to stay. We must accept the *status quo*."

"I see that you are a philosopher," the other said. The ladies contrived the appearance of listening to him rather than his friend, and he had an effect of easy self-confidence in continuing: "Well, I agreed with you that the horse must cease to be, with his filth and the house-flies mainly bred of it, and the city dust which it is pulverized into. But the motor, as we have it, ought to go, too. We must have some sort of machine for the work and pleasure which we used to get out of the horse. We did begin in the right way, with electric motors, which were safe, clean, and so simple in use that anybody could manage them. But we went off into steam-motors, and then into these pestilently practicable petrol-motors which now infest the whole world. We must retrace our steps, our missteps; we must fall up the precipice which we have fallen down. We must invoke the help of the Good Genius of the age, and prevail with the beneficent Edison to invent an electric-motor, so cheap, so safe, so portable, so light and beautiful that when once launched upon the world it will devour all the petrol-motors, as the phagocytes in our blood devour the germs of disease that lurk in it."

"You'll never," the philosopher defied him, "have an electric-motor that will begin to make the speed of the automobiles now in reach of anybody who—"

"Couldn't afford to keep a horse and buggy in the old days? Well, I think we don't want the speed. It's never safe, either for the people in or out of the motor. And it's far more depraving than the horse at his worst. The auto doesn't result in so much lying and cheating, but it's far more homicidal. It tempts men if not women to take chances of maiming and killing people, for the sake of getting quickly over the ground, which no humane person will consciously take."

"Do you say that of the automobilists

who invite you into their cars?" the philosopher asked.

"Of all. Without knowing it, when the speed habit is once fixed in them, they take chances that once they would not have dreamed of taking. In the delirium of going-some, as the vulgarer of them phrase it, they become potentially homicidal and suicidal, though I don't hold those who invite me into their cars so responsible as I do the joy-riders who take out their masters' cars for a clandestine spin and kill themselves or others. One distinguishes, of course."

"The speed habit has come to stay," the philosopher remarked. "It's the spirit of the age."

"No," the other said, "not every evil that comes, comes to stay, and I deny that the speed habit is the spirit of the age. There may be some excuse of business or duty in the speed of an express train; but these people who tear through the land at from twenty to fifty miles an hour pretend to be doing it for pleasure in the scenery they ignore and insult. It's the same as pretending to read a poem in fluttering the leaves of the book, or to enjoy a gallery while you run by the pictures as fast as you can. No, the motor habit is a madness, a disease, a scourge, like the gipsy-moth or the brown-tail moth. We must get a parasite which will devour the mania for speed with all its attendant inhumanity."

"Perhaps," the philosopher suggested, with a smile, "some inoculation of the tsetse-fly virus might do, just enough to induce repose, without going so far as the sleeping-sickness."

"Yes, the tsetse-fly might do," the moralist allowed. "But it would be better to use some form of serum evolved from the electric-motor. I don't object to mechanical locomotion. The horse must go, for the reasons we've all agreed on, but that's no reason why the speed habit must remain. The law is helpless against it. The process of its extinction must be educational. Some sort of university extension must teach that it is vicious, cruel, and stupid, and finally destructive of civilization. It's—"

A gentleman had come out of the doorway behind the moralist, and, as if knowing him by his voice, laid his hand playfully on his shoulder. He looked up

and called to the face smiling down into his, "Why, Doctor! What in the world brings you here?"

The doctor's smiling face clouded. "I'm here with Alverly—to get him away from himself. But I'm afraid I've come to the wrong place," he said, glancing at the roadway where the autos were streaming to and fro. "I've left him lying down in a room at the back of the house, where he can't see them, but as soon as he does we shall have to move on. But where to?"

The doctor spoke in a low tone, dividing his address between the two friends sitting together.

"Do you mean he hasn't got the better of it yet?" the milder man asked.

"Has got the worse of it," the doctor answered, and at the same time he turned as if from some psychic intimation and confronted a haggard face that showed itself at the door. "Oh, come now, Alverly! This isn't playing the game."

"Do you call it playing the game to bring me here for *those*?" He pointed rigidly at the whirring and whizzing and guttering motors.

"I hoped we shouldn't find so many of them at this elevation," the doctor coaxed. "But now we must try the sea-level; we must make a voyage; we will go to Bermuda or Mount Desert, where these things are not allowed. Go in now, and I'll get away with you by the next train."

Alverly did not reply; he saw the two friends, and came out to give a hand to each. "Oh yes; I know I'm crazy. But whenever I see one of these infernal machines I see myself in it, and I see the face of that little child before it; and I see his face change from the joy in his play to that deadly terror before I ran him down and crushed his life out." He put up his quivering hands to his eyes; the sensation of his anguish imparted itself to the whole group.

The moralist rose from his chair and laid a compassionate hand on Alverly's arm. "But, my dear Alverly, you did everything that a man could do. You took the child up in your own arms and

rushed him to the hospital at the highest speed of your car. You've pensioned his mother, and provided for the schooling and employment of all his brothers and sisters. You're morbid! Why, the child died in your arms! Besides, he had no right to be playing in the crowded street." Alverly took down his hands and looked his consoler sternly in the face.

"I murdered him. He *had* the right to play in the crowded street that every little one has to play *somewhere*, and he had no other place. But I had no more right to drive my car at ten miles an hour through that street than I had to drive the locomotive of an express train. *Oh!*" He gave a wild cry and ran into the hotel.


A magnificent touring-car of the latest type, and large as an old-time railroad coach, swept over the rise of ground south of the hotel, and, plunging into the hollow, swept up again and halted under the hotel porch and came to a noiseless stop. Seven or eight people, powdered to their eyebrows with yellow dust, dismounted and came up the steps, where the landlord bustled forward in welcome, as if he expected them. The party, in spite of their different disguises, revealed themselves ladies and gentlemen in voice and manner. The evident owner of the car took out his watch and showed it to the mild, spectacled old gentleman at his shoulder. "Well, what do you think of that, Dominie? We made the last fifty miles in one hour and twelve minutes! Will you ever preach against motoring after this?"

"No," the dominie said, with a laugh which all the party shared, "I'm completely converted."

"And I," a gentle old lady said, who seemed authorized to speak as the dominie's wife, "and I never want to go slower after this."

The owner of the car threw back his head in the laugh that all shared again. "Well, landlord, what about that lunch?"

"All ready as soon as you are, sir," and he named the name of a rich man whose charities cover perhaps a greater multitude of sins than the charities of any other rich man in the world.



Editor's Study

IN a living procedure there can be, or come to be, nothing absolutely static. A machine may stop; that is, considered as a machine, it may come to a standstill. But it cannot rest. The metals composing a watch may become tired or even diseased, since there is in minerals enough simulation of life for them to have a kind of pathology; so they may rest or be cured. But, as a machine, the watch cannot have weariness or rest, any more than it can have sleep.

When we are walking and stop, it is not as a machine stops. The act of volition is involved as much in staying our footsteps as in going on; our outward motion ceases, so to speak, "of our own motion," and we may become weary from standing as from walking. Our bodily motions may be obstructed against our wills, but it is the obstruction that is mechanical, not our volition nor any action we may call our own.

Should death result from the obstruction of some vital functioning, as when a bullet is shot into the heart, it is the shot that is foreign and accidental; death itself, however occasioned, is intimate and natural, part of a living procedure. A machine cannot die; it may be broken in pieces, and these fragments, wood or metal, will then be left to their own natural fashion of decay and dissolution.

In the last month's Study we were considering this universal fashion of dissolution as the concomitant, or rather the obverse aspect, of new becoming. We saw that it is the urgency of creative life that makes the passing, the vanishing; that what is drawing on compels the withdrawal; that new integration determines the character of disintegration, so that, in the qualitatively real change forever going on, what is ending derives positively from what is beginning, though in some apparently lethal interval like that of sleep. It was no merely negative obliviscence which, in the ancient myth, attended the renewal of the child dipped

in the waters of Lethe, and so made immortal. In the early pagan regard, darkness was not merely the absence of light; some creative power was lodged in it, and Night was the mother of the gods.

In our ordinary experience we are acquainted with physiological and mental phenomena which lead us to associate freshness in the exercise of power with interruption and release. Persistent tenacity ends perforce in impotence and atrophy. There is a positive virtue in the weariness which compels rest or change and finally brings us to sleep. We find it necessary to seek relief in seasons of rest, which we significantly call vacations. The concentrated gaze upon a bright object induces hypnosis; if the object has color, the concentration involves a process of decomposition in the eye itself, rendering that color invisible, and its complement is seen instead. Here we have a signal illustration of the positive character of all weariness—of something tropic in it, connoting a qualitatively real change.

Thus the ordinary phenomena of our experience have a suggestive significance, pointing to facts of life which lie deeper, beyond our definitely conscious notice. We note the signs of weariness; we see the eyelids close in sleep, and we leap beyond these indices to the deeper indication of something in the aversion and withdrawal which we do not see and of which we have an imaginative, though imageless, intuition; or, rather, such leading images as we entertain seem themselves to vanish, giving place to the intuition.

Our conscious intelligence, both as to things outside of us and as to our states of mind or feeling, becomes a definite awareness through changes in these things and states. If light had no cessation or interruption we should take no note of it and have no name for it. If we never forgot anything, how should we define to ourselves memory? Thus con-