



EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

IT is now May of the year that is past and everybody is beginning to go to Europe, and in the apt disguise of a steamer-chair, got from the deck steward for a dollar, the Easy Chair is beginning to go too. There may be a topic over there, but it is doubtful if the Easy Chair has any motive so distinct.

The last time before the last time it said to itself, when it felt that disgusting tremor of the ship's screws under its feet, "Now this shall be the last time! America is good enough for me. Let others go to Europe if they will or must. After this I shall make nothing but homeward voyages." Yet here it was again, with the sea widening round it, and the steamer spurning the water into foam, behind the scarcely heaving cabins and promenades of the second-class passengers. Above the restless coming and going of some of these, and the restless motionlessness of others, a line of first-class passengers hung upon the rail which they could pass, but the second-class passengers could not, and stared down upon them with the sense of moral inferiority which a sense of social superiority brings. In order to recognize the difference which the price of a second-class and first-class ticket creates between men who are born equal the Easy Chair invisibly insinuated itself between two fellow-passengers of its own order and joined them in looking into the sort of very wide comfortable bay where the prisoners of poverty roamed or reposed. It perceived then that it had on one hand an Old Man and on the other an Elderly Man. The two seemed to be saying something interesting, and the Easy Chair began listening with all its might. The Elderly Man said: "I suppose you've been over a good many times," and he lifted his voice a little in a way that the Old Man perhaps resented. He answered as with umbrage, "Oh no; not many; ten or a dozen." "Then you don't come every year?" "Not at all.

I hear of people who do. Perhaps you do?" "No, this is my first time." "Yes? How have you escaped so long?" "I don't know; by wanting to come so long, I suppose. At this time of year we shall have a good passage, sha'n't we?" "I've crossed at every time of year, and out of twenty crossings I've not had four bad ones. I think the sea has been maligned; it's like life—most lives are agreeable enough, but we judge all life by the exceptionally rocky ones. Are you seasick?" "I don't know yet. Are you?" "I was," the Old Man said, "when I was young, but I had it out with the sea fifty years ago. At that time I was life-sick, too; but I had it out with life then, and I have never been seasick or lifesick since." "Then you don't believe in taking anything for it?" the Elderly Man asked. "Which?" the Old Man returned. The Elderly Man laughed: "I see you are an optimist. I wish I could promise myself to be as cheerful at your age." "Yes; what is your own age now?" "I'm fifty-eight." "Well, I merely reverse your figures; I'm eighty-five." "You don't tell me!" the Elderly Man exclaimed; "I should have said not more than sixty-eight. But there is everything in feeling young." The Old Man turned his dim eyes on the smiling face at his shoulder, the affectionate face, "I'm afraid I shall disappoint you now—I don't feel young. I've heard of old people who do; but I suspect they don't remember what feeling young is like. I do. It's one of the few things I do remember. I sometimes go about in an evening haze shot with sunset, but I never mistake it for the glow of morning."

"Oh, here you are, grandfather!" a gay young voice behind them called, severely. "You mustn't run off like this, you know. I've had my heart in my mouth over the whole ship, looking for you," and the girl put her hand through his arm and propelled him away, without

letting him express the hope that he and the Elderly Man would meet again; he did not seem to think of it, to tell the truth; but the Elderly Man looked wistfully after him, so that we felt authorized in assuming a conversable visibility.

"He's rather interesting," we suggested.

"Yes, isn't he?" the Elderly Man agreed.

"He seemed so much younger than his granddaughter," we suggested further. "But perhaps she has aged with the care of him!"

"There may be something in that," the Elderly Man assented, with a laugh.

We liked his laugh so much that we resolved not to part with him during the brief stay we had promised ourselves in England, and we thought we could not do better than to consort with the Old Man at the same time, and his granddaughter, if she would let us; she might be temperamentally gay, but she might be spiritually severe, as we had already noted, though it would be for the common good. We now quickly found that we were convertible, by lightning changes of emotion, with the Old Man and the Elderly Man, and she herded us together through the Liverpool examinations which feebly emulate the New York customs. Then by favor of the strict young guard at the door of the dining-car, she got us a compartment in the next carriage, after we had been told there were no places in that section of the boat-train, and that we must wait for the next. We slipped the guard a shilling, and he thanked us so generously that we instinctively knew we ought to have made it half-a-crown; and while we toyed with our regret, and vowed from that on to overpay everybody on the spot and not wait for future chances, there was a sudden flick in our experiences, as at the moving-picture shows, when a new film has been substituted. We were running through the amiable English country, out past the suburbs with the dense black-green trees leaning from the hedgerows over the meadows where the new-cut grass lay in windrows that covered the ground almost as densely as the standing stems. The dim air kept its secret, so that we did not know whether the day was shady or

sunny; and in fact it made no difference. Neat villages, cosy farms, stately country-seats, cattle grazing, sheep nibbling: they were all there again; and then there was another flick, and we were seated in the dining-car at that *table d'hôte* lunch which is served you personally *hot* in England, by appointment, instead of the lukewarm gorge collectively supplied you on our own trains after you have earned it by watching for the places of the people who somehow always know how to be first. Then, such is the stealthy speed of the English trains, there was another flick, and the passengers were picking out their baggage on the platform of Euston station, each one only too glad not to claim another's. Flick again, and now you see us smoothly racing in our taxis with our trunks above us and about us through streets, each a Fifth Avenue for density of traffic, all against a background of phantom four-wheelers and hansoms, now perished from the London pave, but jolting spectrally over it with the extinct pony-carts and horse-omnibuses, equally diaphanous. Then for the last time, flick, and we are sitting at afternoon tea in the drawing-room of our lodging, as if we had been there our whole lives, with that sodden bread and sweet butter, and that round loaf of sobered cake.

In the unjaded consciousness of the Elderly Man we were for our first time in London, which long, long ago resolved itself into a sort of stained-glass effect of dull red winter sunset prevailing through the short, cold, but not too cold day. In that time Dickens was still in the air, and there was besides the day-long sunset a sense of holly and misletoe and poultry and game; but nothing definite. This quickly passed and only the red glow in our consciousness remained, the cold, stained-glass glow of that far first time in London. With the capricious volatility characteristic of us, we turned our back on it, and invited the company to walk with us through Curzon Street to the Park, where in the more recent and complex experience of the Old Man we were well aware that we should no longer see the fashionable hordes of high-born ladies sitting in the penny chairs, and the tall, frock-coated, top-hatted gentlemen drooping before or

over them, or hanging upon the doors of their carriages, closely ranked beside the walks, with the army of promenaders pacing up and down, to look and to be looked at. The Old Man knew that the motor-car had ended all that, and that this splendid blossom of the season had dropped its petals never to resume them. But his granddaughter hoped against his knowledge that there might yet be caught some glimpse of the little-or-nothing of the fearless fashions of our time, which would be new to her eager American eyes. She ran these eyes over the thousands and thousands of penny chairs and the sward fenced in by low iron barriers, and sighed deeply, "None! None!" while the penny-chair man came up and collected a sole penny from us, thriftily including in our own the personalities of the others. We explained from that of the Old Man to that of the Elderly Man that the chairs were formerly put there for a world now locally as extinct as the hansoms, but in the practice of that fine English constancy would be put there till the Earth was as cold as some English summers.

Then we took our composite way back across Park Lane, carefully reversing our law of the road from right to left so as not to be run over by the taxis in our American endeavor to avoid them. Then we found ourselves in face of that fine old Chesterfield house where we made our companions observe that the blacks of ages had only added to the ineffaceable beauty of its marble forms. We draped it with the gardens which we ourselves had never seen there, but made haste to lead our other selves round to the rear, or to the other front, where the memory of those gardens lingers about the foot of the stairway branching from the long windows. There with the Old Man's eyes we saw angels ascending and descending, as on Jacob's ladder, their tilting hoops of the eighteen-sixties striking on its rungs, their hair shining smooth, and the balloon-like circumference of their tulle expanding pink or white over the terrace. The Old Man smiled compassionately at the illusion; but the Elderly Man who remembered hoops in their compression, could only smile and vainly try to grasp the fancy by means of tie-backs. It seemed to

him that the tie-back had made no more secret of the female frame than the slit skirts and diaphanous tissues of the present day; he recalled newspaper jokes of that far time about the single trouser-leg which ladies were said to wear, and he thought the jokes very like the jokes about the little-or-nothing which now supplied an effect of twin trouser-legs in the costumes of the two tall girls coming up a Mayfair street. The granddaughter fetched a great sigh of satisfaction as if here, now, was what she had come for, and made envious note of the flaming cherry of the silk in one case, and of the faint soft pink in the other, reflecting that in her native air she could not wear either.

After all, the Easy Chair made its reflection, the world is always young and innocent when it is not old and virtuous, and it takes more than one fashion to corrupt it. When flicked in the next day's films into Piccadilly it did not find so many splendid young giants as there once were in frock-coats or cutaways, with their back-sloping top-hats resting on their ears, and striding toward Rotten Row and the ranks of chairs beside it. There were some top-hats and some cutaways, but no frock-coats, though their return is predicted and the brief moment of braiding was past for any form of coat. Jackets would never have been braided, and they prevailed now, sometimes almost sardonically with a top-hat. With such changes wrought by the motor and the week-end the Easy Chair felt that England might be well on the way to a Chinese republic; but it did not insist; that would have been as indecent as saying nasty things of the royal family, which is notoriously unable to retort a jibe. There was to be a suffragist meeting in the Park that afternoon, but the Easy Chair was not in the film of that, though it was flicked with its companionship into the audience which saw, with English constancy, the Russian dancers dancing as like mad as two years before; and again, with another flick, it was harrowing itself with the just sufferings of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." It made the Old Man observe that both the play and the playing appeared to have aged since he saw them first, whether in London or New York; though

they were both very good, they were not of a supreme actuality; one heard and saw how Mr. Pinero's excellent work was put together in places, and how the truest effects were artficed.

It was not a very play-going companionship, and the drama of the streets sufficed it, though this was not very vivid, either for tragedy or comedy. A block in Piccadilly seemed not what it was in the days of hansoms, four-wheelers, horse-omnibuses, bicycles, family chariots, dog-carts and pony-carts; the nervous and mercurial taxi-cab prevailed enormously over every other vehicle, and found its way promptly out of a block, however dense. The policemen showed no signs of exhaustion from their heroic struggles with the suffragettes; it seemed as if they were a little more prepotent than they used to look, and this put us all in mind of the tall Irish tyrants who rule our New York thoroughfares. Otherwise the united search of our company found few evidences of the American invasion which Americans once so fondly believed in. We were ourselves almost the only Americans we recognized; to be sure, it was getting very near the end of the season, and our compatriots had probably all been asked down to the houses of the nobility who still love them so much, but perhaps do not marry them so often as once.

All this time the films have been jerkily changing, and our little movie-show has had a variety of subjects which our record would endeavor vainly to follow. You cannot come every other year to London and hope to find it as fresh as the first time. To be sure, it was the first time with the Elderly Man; but feeling round in our complex consciousness for his impressions, we perceived that he had somehow eliminated himself. No doubt he had taken his shadowy Baedeker under his arm and gone in pursuit of those objects of interest which our experience spurned. We followed him without envy in our conjecture, through the perspective of long-past years, and enjoyed his pleasure in seeing the Tower and Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's and the Parliament Buildings, and Whitehall and

Buckingham Palace, and all the dear old ugly public monuments; we even rode with him on an omnibus top under Temple Bar. We wondered if he knew how precious this first time was, or if he knew how beyond price it was to have a footman come out of that big stony palace, so unlike London, in a Mayfair street, and approach on his quivering silken calves and under his powdered hair to say anything to the chauffeur of a waiting automobile. No, no! He could not value aright that beautiful allegory of the Past and Present kissing each other in this spectacle; but the granddaughter somehow could, and she gladdened in it as an effect possible to the magic of an American girl who had married a duke and had flung down in the heart of Mayfair that ponderous and marble palace as if it had been her little glove for a gage of battle to all the architecture of tradition. If it had been the only incongruity we elders might all have borne it better, but there was another in that Mayfair street, a brand-new temple to the latest American religion.

There were other things that partly consoled. The motor-cars, indeed, coursed and honked through the street where once the hansoms gaily glanced and the four-wheelers gloomed; but there was the same sad-hearted woman's voice pealing to the sky from the roadway where she swayed with her baby on her hips; there was the lavender boy singing his herb; there was the blind violinist at the curb, as they had been ever since the Conqueror's time. Within, the lodgings are electric-lit and less moldy than they used to smell; there is (we must own it) a bath-room, though but one tub for the whole house; and the cooking is almost apologetically improved; it is better than we could get in France for the money. The toast is almost warm, and, yes, there is a difference in the cut of the bacon; it is almost American in cut, woe is us! The waiter brings it crisped, as if to flatter our national indigestion. Crisped bacon! He will be offering us Oolong tea the next thing. It is surely time to take passage home. After all, one must suffer to be of the greatest nation.



EDITOR'S STUDY

A NOTABLE feature of current literature is the absence of controversy, of which there is indeed very little in ordinary conversation. The very great difference in this respect between the oral and written expression of to-day and that of two generations ago, among thoughtful people, indicates a significant change in the general mental disposition.

What we here call "the general mental disposition" is not "mental" as we apply that term to abstract conceptions or logical propositions, but in the generic sense, as in Wordsworth's phrase, "the mind of man," meaning Reason rather than reasoning, or Will with Reason in it—else we could not make it an attribute of disposition. The fact that this disposition of the mind of man changes from age to age—we might now say, from decade to decade—and especially as to the most essential things it is given the mind of man to consider, is significant of its character as psychical, as a motion of the soul interpenetrating and lifting man's elemental nature into a firmament of light and reasonableness, ever more and more a realization of dominant sympathy and a release from fixed forms and arbitrary authority as affecting psychical activity.

The laws of the physical world and of mechanics do not change, nor the forms of logic; but human activities, physical and mental, affected by these laws and forms, are not purely psychical. The material and mental progress due to the application of new discoveries and inventions—whatever psychical activities these may themselves engage—and to the improved social adjustments dictated by formal justice, is not itself an evolutionary procedure, though promotive of it and in turn receiving from it new life and inspiration.

On the other hand, when Religion, Art, and Creative Reason fall from their purely psychical firmament into formal

systems—as to some extent they must if they are to have any earth-dwelling, any organic vitality—there is danger to these systems of losing their creative principle, surrendering it for traditional and static permanence, and sinking into a changeless induration. The creative principle is itself safe, finding its way in the world through systems which accept death for renewal and ceaseless transformation.

Creative transformations disclose ever more and more clearly, beyond the limitations of a visible environment, material and social, the realm of purely psychical dynamics, intuitional glimpses of the kingdom of the soul. Neither the realization nor the vision of the essential Reality can ever be perfect; nor can we reasonably delight in the hope of such perfection, of so utterly blank disillusionment in the white light of Reason.

But, however imperfect the psychical realization and vision may be, they tend to extinguish contention and controversy. They assure us that even while we are earth-dwellers the soul which rises with us lifts us into a harmony that has elsewhere its central and dominant note. The earth is not excluded, nor are our elemental nature and our earthly social order—rather all these in the procession of the ages come more fully under its domination.

It is not difficult, following the historical perspective in any field of humanism, to see through what changes so large and so leading a portion of civilized mankind has reached its present attitude toward the essential truths of life. This is especially apparent in matters of faith. Religion swayed the hearts of men and such minds as they had before there was any development of science and the arts; and it was then that it was most closely bound to an earth-center and most intimately associated with the elemental human nature. Before there was enough institutional development to incite eco-