



EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

MORE than once in this place the amaze which seizes the returner to New York after, say, six months' absence has been expressed: expressed measurably, for wonder so great cannot be fully uttered. You leave New York in May, suppose, and you spend your glad exile by the sea or in the hills, or perhaps you take an outgoing steamer and celebrate your escape in regions generalized as Europe. It does not matter where you go or stay, what quiet Parises or dreamy Londons you sojourn in; when you come back to New York it is with the same awakening to a mighty change, as if you had been lolling on the beach or huckleberrying in the hills through the intervening months. It is still New York, but not the New York you left. That has been pulled down or swallowed up so largely that only the inalienable topographical lines remain. The terrible mysterious forces have not yet effaced the familiar streets; there are still Broadway and Fifth Avenue; there is Long Acre Square, and the numbered thoroughfares that cross the avenues from east to west; there is South Ferry and there is Harlem, but on all these, while you were away, the sleepless genii of enterprise and capital have been at work and made the city over, recreated it. Where a meek little ten-story edifice cowered when you went away an architectural geyser or volcano now shoots into the air; the winter sky-line has been sawed into peaks and chasms, and the horizon has been lifted a hundred feet above the level where it used to keep the beautiful autumn sunset lingering low adown.

Every year when you come back you find the air denser, thicker, and fouler with the breath of the multiform motors, which now pack Fifth Avenue so closely, coming and going, that you could walk to and fro on their tops more safely than you can cross the street among them. As for Long Acre

Square, it is a terror to the eye which shrinks from the snorting and snuffling and threatening herd of cars of all types, and rests with comparative relief on the faces and figures of the passing chorus girls, who have the strange property of imparting their effect to all the other women. In the Avenue it is as if the women wished to appear like the women of the Square, but here and elsewhere the fog which more and more of late years New York has studied in emulation of the London fog intervenes and softens the spectacle. Neither the new fashions nor the new edifices are so startling as they would be without it. If the morning opens clear (as it is still apt to do in New York) the afternoon closes dim, and the tops of the cliffy piles and the feet that fly from the slit skirts along their bases are alike subdued to the wondering eye. The very nature of the passing crowd seems different, or its quality. A little while ago and there were passers upon whom your eye had time to rest with the pleasure that gentle faces and figures give the beholder; but what has become of them? Who is it that walks in Fifth Avenue now? No doubt people as fine and good as those one sees no more under the wild disguises that the pale mist tries to hide. There is no long-distance walking now; only hurrying swiftly from shop to shop, and mounting into motors and whirling away.

It is not only the unique avenue and the exceptional square that are changed between spring and fall. Every eastering and westering street from Washington Square to Central Park has put on a new effect. Terrific sierras of apartment-houses and office-buildings and vast shops and factories have started from the graves of the simple old high-stoop or English-basement dwellings which you left dreaming of permanence in May, and glower upon you from a thousand windows, colossal skeletons of

steel clothed on with brick or granite or marble. The strangest thing of all is the convincingness the change has. It is the pitiless logic of prosperity, of unrelenting industry, of all-conquering commerce. Farther and farther up-town the successful enterprises stride in their twenty and thirty storied boots, and plant themselves here, there, and everywhere, never to be moved from their places except by other enterprises of longer legs and firmer foothold. If you would see a sad, mocking image of the old-time leisurely movement of the Fifth Avenue crowd, go visit the region of these prodigious shops when at the noon hour they pour upon the street the weary thousands of their workers to breathe the outside air a little and to eat their meager mid-day meal. They do not walk much; they block the pavement with their slow-moving or moveless mass; they do not exchange the small talk of the gay world; they laugh hysterically, some of the weary girls; none of the men laugh at all, and they do not seem to gossip very cheerily in their Yiddish or their Polish or their Russian, or the obscurer accents of their strange central European worlds. People with business or pleasure in that part of Fifth Avenue must push through them or walk round them in the gutter; and there begin to be faint murmurs of their molestiveness. When they are made to keep away (to Heaven knows where) there will remain not even the wretched ghost of the old Fifth Avenue promenade.

More and more densely the department stores and the factories and the apartment-houses and hotels and office-buildings must cover the earth and blot the sky. Meanwhile we cannot deny the immense picturesqueness, the lawless magnificence of the effect. The effect is that of the Roman Forum on a scale for which there is no word adjectively huge enough. But the clutter which made the Roman Forum in its glory the ugliest place in the world was the tasteless crowding of forms mostly beautiful; the clutter of New York is the crowding of forms mostly ugly to an effect of sublimity. This is what we ourselves cannot deny and what all wonder-stricken strangers make haste to confess. They begin to gasp when they

come up the North River to their steamer's dock, whether by day or night, at the sky-scrapers glowing or glowering in the foreground or background; and if they are literary, as they seem so largely to be, they begin to sort their adjectives while the returning native is lost in an anguish of doubt whether he has done well to declare everything in his baggage, or whether his queasy conscience has not added a needless burden to that of the poor customs-inspector, who will now have to hunt for the dutiable articles and get an inspector to value them.

One of the latest of the glad, astonished strangers who have no such doubts to torment them, in their immunity from our duties on personal effects, has written, upon the whole, one of the most surprising of the many books written about us. But she has apparently done her devoir to the alien's arrival at some former time; she skips those marginal sky-scrapers, as it were, and launches herself in the very heart of our hustle with the fearless denial that it is hustle at all, or hustle in the matter of swift movement in the streets. We do not, she finds, walk nearly as fast as the people of the European capitals, and if we seem to escape with every appearance of flight from the rush of motors in our avenues, it is an optical delusion which better focusing will correct. But there is no mistake about the sky-scrapers or the ladies' lunches, and the butter the ladies eat, and the cream they consume in every manner of sauce, as well as in its native richness. In fine, it is a very amusing book which Mrs. Alec-Tweedie has written about us, and such as to prove her a very eager and pretty accurate observer, if not a quite convincing reflector. Yet even the reflection is not so bad, and since she gives a full list of the people in our different cities who entertained her as her hosts and hostesses, the proof of her opportunities for observation is unquestionable.

What seems to us the most valuable thing in her book is the sense of social luxury which with us is female luxury. One really gets something like an adequate notion of the feeding, delicate in quality, gross beyond belief in quantity, which goes on among our women in all the great and little social centers of our

continent. For every sort of good causes and for the improvement of their minds and morals, around lunch-tables filling the illimitable vistas on every hand, millions of mothers and daughters are feeding like one on food which is not only delicate in itself, but is so beautifully served in glass and silver and china, and is so daintily appareled in laces and ribbons of every apposite color, that it is almost a greater pleasure to the eye than to the palate.

Of course Mrs. Tweedie sings the qualities of our splendid and expensive hotels as well as the defects of their qualities, and of course she notes that our home life is fast disappearing into them, where she perceives that so many of those fairy lunches are sipped and nibbled. The disappearance of our home life has been noted before—that is, the home life of such of us as can afford to be driven from our domestic hearths by the lazy, untrained, extortionate servants whose worthlessness Mrs. Tweedie must have heard bewailed at thousands of these ladies' lunches. Perhaps out of say twenty-five million American housekeepers a million may have taken refuge from their hardships in hotels, but the most of the remaining twenty-five millions are not cursed with bad servants, because they are doing their own housework. Or if they can afford to "keep a girl," they are "around" with her, helping her and showing her how to help them. So plain a fact, so unhandsome a fact, does not show itself to polite observation, though many housewives like these can read and write, and will be interested—perhaps a little enviously, but also humorously—to see who "entertained" Mrs. Tweedie; while they wonder how she got her notion that we are all living or going to live in hotels.

It is a very old notion of us, though perhaps not so old as the time of Frances Anne Kemble's first visit to America in 1832, before she was Mrs. Kemble Butler. At that time we had not all gone to live in hotels because there were almost no hotels, and such as there were were so bad, according to her tell, that no housewife who could afford to "keep a girl" would be willing to live in them. Miss Kemble went with her father to the best of them when she came with him to

play in New York, and she tells, with the frankness which distinguished her throughout a life of plain speaking, how deplorably uncomfortable and self-satisfied it was. We will not give its long-forgotten name; we may better remember that Mr. Astor was just then going to build the great hotel which was called after him and has only now been pulled down: he was the one millionaire in New York, and he could afford to build the Astor House, and risk its paying. That was of course a chance, for our city was only a goodish-sized town, not long out of its villagehood. Miss Kemble found it pretty, with rather gay shops and rather tasteful dwellings, and on the whole looking somehow more French than English. She found the unscrapered sky beautiful, sunny by day and starry by night; but, oh, she moans more than once, for a wreath of London fog! She walks under the bright sky, before and after dark, to the Battery, which was once "a fashionable resort, but, owing to its being frequented by the lowest and dirtiest of the rabble, who in this land of liberty roll themselves on the grass and otherwise annoy the more respectable portion of the promenaders, it has been deserted lately." When she "came home up Broadway," she noted that it was "a long street of tolerable width, full of shops; in short, the American Oxford Road, where all people go to exhibit themselves and examine others. The women that I have seen hitherto," she says, "have all been very gaily dressed, with a pretension to French style." She does not meet them at white, pink, or mauve lunches in the hotels, but sometimes she dines at their houses, which "are all painted glaring white or red; the other favorite colors appear to be pale straw-color and gray. They have all green Venetian shutters, which give an idea of coolness, and almost every house has a tree or trees in its vicinity, which look pretty and garden-like. . . . The women here, like those of most warm climates, ripen very early and decay proportionately soon. . . . They marry very young, and this is another reason why age comes prematurely upon them. . . . As for their figures, like those of Frenchwomen, they are too well dressed for one to judge exactly what they are

really like; they are, for the most part, short and slight, with remarkably pretty feet and ankles"—not at all, one would say, like the towering, stalwart "sports" of our day, but of some such similitude as their houses, with green Venetian shutters and trees about them, would bear to the vast hotels in which Mrs. Tweedie says our women now mostly live. Miss Kemble does not give a list of the people who entertained her, as Mrs. Tweedie does, and so we lamentably lack the knowledge of who was who, which we might have had from her.

It is the difference which passes between things literary and things journalistic. Mrs. Tweedie's book reads like a lively society page from a Sunday edition; Miss Kemble's, with its passion for beauty, its girlish gladness in novel and agreeable experiences, and its delight in nature, has the flavor of an old-fashioned romance written in the form of a diary. She was afterward to cast her happy lot unhappily with us, but she was then a bright, eager girl, hating her life of actress as she always did, but adoring, somewhat critically adoring, her father's beautiful art. No faithfuller witness of our life has ever described it, and we can send the reader to the quaint volumes—they are quaint now—with the assurance that if he can find them he will find a very uncommon pleasure in them. She studies unsparingly but justly enough Philadelphia and Boston as well as New York; but she abandons herself to unstinted raptures in the beauty of nature as she finds it in our new world. Especially she raves over the magnificence of the Hudson, a stream that has fallen into a sad desuetude with the arts, and is no more popular with cultivated visitors than with the summer residents who once whitened its shores with their villas or darkened them with their castles.

For our own present purpose we could have preferred more Broadway and less Hudson in Miss Kemble's intelligent page. Yet it is something to know from her that in Canal Street, "much broader and finer than any" she had seen in New York, she "thought the crowd a more

civil and orderly one than an English one. The men did not jostle or push one another, or tread upon one's feet, or kick down one's shoe-heels, or crush one's bonnet into one's face, or turn it round upon one's head, all of which I have seen done in London," perhaps because there was really no hustle in our streets then, as Mrs. Tweedie says there is not now. "The young men invariably made room for the women to pass; as they drew near us they took the segar from their mouth," yet Miss Kemble was warned not to go out alone with her maid at night lest she should be spoken to.

Poor old Broadway, now lapsing into a country lane with a few trolley-cars purling up and down, was beginning to be macadamized. It was the great street of shops, but would "not bear a comparison with the brilliant display of Parisian streets, or the rich magnificence of our own," or perhaps with Fifth Avenue now. We should like for the uses of contrast, for the sake of the sensation in turning from a picture of that New York of 1832 to the actuality of this New York of 1913 (it is still last year as we write) to have had rather more of these vanished streets and avenues, even if we must have had less of the Hudson River and its shores. Yet we are not sure that the shock of such a contrast would in some things be more penetrating, more interesting, than that afforded by the lapse of time any year now between May and November. To note this adequately we should need the company of the personal-journalistic muse of Mrs. Tweedie and the emotional-literary muse of Miss Kemble; but with one of these on one arm and one on the other, the Imagination might fare forth in this New York of lightning changes and seize an adequate impression of the astounding facts.

But better even than this it would be if in successive autumnal returns one should find New York changed indeed, but changed back, and by some potent magic ever changing back till we should see it as Miss Kemble saw it, with a macadamized Broadway, and gay little houses painted pink and white and cooled by green "Venetian shutters."



EDITOR'S STUDY

IT seems now that Science is to find its new field of wonder in the physical universe, in what we call non-living matter. Dr. Henry Smith Williams's recently published book, *Miracles of Science*, is a vividly interesting as well as a concise and comprehensive summary of what has been accomplished by scientific research in physics, chemistry, and biology, since the close of the nineteenth century, the record of whose achievements in science he had already so competently presented. The brief period covered by this later survey—substantially only a decade—is not more remarkable for its momentum of progress, its accumulation of results, which in number and importance surpass the array presented by the notable century preceding it, than for the precedence taken in this advance by purely physical science.

The glory of nineteenth-century science was the establishment of the evolutionary hypothesis, the fabric of which remains to-day as Darwin left it, though some of its propositions have in their very illumination by Hugo de Vries, Mendel, and Morgan been modified. It is Herbert Spencer's philosophic exposition of evolution—extending its application to the universe, including the mind of man and the development of human society—that has been most radically transformed, not by scientific research so much as by the conception of all evolution as creative.

In its original field the idea of evolution was incidental to an inquiry as to the origin of species and was thus associated only with the organic kingdom; and to this day very little light has been thrown upon the evolution of the physical universe, at least by those actually engaged in scientific investigation. No hypothesis corresponding to that of organic specialization has been forthcoming; the inorganic kingdom has had no Darwin.

The zest with which indications of physical evolution have been sought is shown by the stress laid by the immediate followers of Herbert Spencer upon the nebular hypothesis as conceived by Laplace. Some of our readers will recall John Fiske's enthusiastic lectures in New York fifty years ago, illustrating this most fascinating theory of the genesis of worlds, and ingeniously defending it against assaults based upon recent discoveries of contradictory phenomena. At its best and at its plausiblest, it was a barren theory when placed alongside of Darwin's genealogy of species. The theories which have displaced the nebular hypothesis from Sir Norman Lockyer's, according to which the worlds of space have grown by meteoric accretion, to the latest modification of this view during the present century in the planetesimal scheme, in which nuclear spots in the nebulae are built up into worlds by meteoric bombardment, are still more mechanical and repellent to the poetic imagination. Even the Milky Way has been shorn of its mystery, and, instead of being, as was supposed, the very realm of nebulosity and the matrix of yet unborn stellar systems, is seen to be a vast array of such systems already perfected or grown old in their well-established order ages before the star-streams nearer and more familiar to us, and to one of which our comparatively insignificant sun belongs, were emergent. Indeed, it may seem a corollary of Professor Svante Arrhenius's theory of light pressure that these nebulous streams which we behold in various stages of world-formation owe their existence to the electrified particles driven off by the push of radiant energy from that older order of stars, being thus by-products of a more ancient but still existent universe.

The reference to "radiant energy" and to "electrified particles of matter"