

· THE POINT OF VIEW ·

IN these days of the placarding of *Safety First* and the juxtaposition of *safe* and *sane*, is a voice necessarily that of a madman if it be heard in the land singing the praises of danger and risk? With all our laws and movements and committees for the

A Plea for
Danger.

elimination from our daily life of all chances unfavorable to life, limb, health, and property are we in no danger of saving the body at the expense of the spirit? Too great security breeds weaklings, and too nervous a regard for physical safety is not only craven but ultimately unwise. Our nation, if it is to be great and free, must set high value on the courage, resourcefulness, and high spirit of the individual citizen. Now, courage is nourished on dangers coped with, and the prudent soul that always "plays safe" cannot be called high or noble. Our evolution up to this point has always been conditioned by the need of self-preservation in the face of innumerable enveloping dangers; the creature that hesitated to take chances or always avoided threatened injury soon ceased to exist, either as species or individual. Hence, our bodies, our minds, our very spirits have been evolved, in part, at least, to fulfil this function of coping with some kind of danger. For what purpose our eyes, our ears, our nerves, our muscles, our sense of right and wrong? A removal, then, from our environment of this element of danger tends to be followed by degeneracy and atrophy in all parts of our natures. Indeed, in modern life we are prone to become stalled in body and spirit. This we tacitly confess in our passion for sport, which is essentially mimic hunting or war, for gambling of all sorts, and for the vicarious adventure of romantic fiction.

But let us define terms a bit. By salutary danger I do not mean that it is better for one's body to be standing in the tenth-story window of a burning building than in a park, a kitchen, or a billiard-room. I would not have us cease to take all reasonable precautions against unnecessary accidents. What I do say, however, is that the presence of danger of any sort stabs us wide awake and makes us function more completely, and that in an ideal commonwealth, institutions

and the surroundings of daily life are not fool-proof, but rather the citizens are no fools. We should not go out of our way to create or encourage sources of danger, but we should do well to appreciate and profit by that which is now with us.

Safety and comfort are, naturally, among the aims of civilization, but it is the decadent society that is characterized by the excess of ease and security. When these become the chief concern of the people, it is evidence that individuals throughout the commonwealth are selfish and materialistic, that is, that decay is preparing if not already begun. Therefore would I welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough; life that is living must be hazardous, cannot be easy and safe.

Am I not right about the fulness, the liveness of the dangerous life? Compare, for example, your physical, mental, and spiritual states in the two situations, one as you saunter at ease along the sidewalk, the other as you cross the street at a busy corner, watching your chance to dodge an automobile, anticipate a trolley-car, and elude a motorcycle. Which is more lifelike? In which state is your being functioning more completely? Which approximates more nearly the conditions under which human life was evolved? There lies my point. Danger to or risk of life and limb, and indeed of less tangible things, such as reputation and even character, is a necessary element in the ideal environment for the production of efficient, active, progressive men and women. Character is formed by the succession and sum of one's choices as much in the matter of courage as any other virtue; we need training in bravery as we need it in honesty, purity, temperance. We need to have behind us a past full of smaller dangers manfully faced and humbly learned from, in order courageously to cope with the great crisis that may at any time confront us. We need to have a modicum of the gambling spirit, the willingness to stake much or all on something not at all a "sure thing," in order to come off with credit from any enterprise, be it politics or business, love or exploration. We need experience in injuries and losses in order that when the Angel of

the Darker Drink offers us the cup of death, or disgrace, or lost love, we may be schooled not to shrink from the draught with frantic outcry, or unmanly wailing, or imbecile revolt against fact.

I hold that the athlete who has taken a broken arm philosophically, the broker who can with fortitude contemplate the market going against him, the mother who can bravely send her son out into the world to take his chances among all its temptations and dangers—such are, in a sense, prepared to conduct themselves decorously and worthily in the final great issues of life.

But, besides the practical side, the pedagogical function of danger, there is its stimulative and purifying action. Is not a peril faced and passed a great uplift to mind and spirit, a straining away of the trivial and superficial, a clear setting forth of the real and permanent values in life? Consider the thoughts and feelings of the most flippant in a heavy thunder-storm; “the fear of the Lord” becomes a pregnant phrase even to us moderns, and we echo the words of Horace: *Cælo tonantem credidimus Jove Regnare*. Does not the vainest flirt become sincere after an escape from drowning? Is not a sudden cry of “Fire!” from Praxiteles to Sherlock Holmes, the world-old test of the dearest object of a man’s or a woman’s affections? Is there not, moreover, a kind of *catharsis*, as Aristotle would say, in a danger with difficulty overcome? If you have ever narrowly missed death, sudden, or otherwise, you know how your soul is at once abased with a sense of your powerlessness (and possibly folly) and lifted up by the feeling of life still present, which is near to a sense of the goodness of God. You remember that it was only to make him think that there was no danger that Mistress Quickly told Sir John not to think of God yet.

We see then that while our “progress” aims ever at safety and tries to make every circumstance of life assured and free from chance of unpleasantness, the past history of our race indicates that it is necessary to the well-being of the individual and of the state as well, the moral and spiritual well-being as much as the physical and material, that our environment be spiced with danger of all sorts. It is the ideal of civilization, I hope and believe, that the human race shall be composed of perfect men, ready to perform

and endure whatever is written in the scroll, *in utrumque parati*, rather than that our environment shall be so completely policed and mechanized that nothing of unpleasantness shall intrude. There might be some hope, it is true, of applying man’s intelligence to the production of a peaceful, diseaseless, chanceless society, with no accidents and no risks, if only man could be made to feel that such a commonwealth was worth living in, and if only there were not certain forces and phenomena beyond man’s control or foreseeing, which, fatal, or fortuitous, or providential, make of life a chancy affair at best. The action of the elements is ever uncertain and by no means always propitious to humanity. Death comes to all; birth likewise is a process fraught with danger. Wealth and health are seldom perfectly stable. Honor and reputation and friendship depend on that most unpredictable element, human nature. Love, which comprises so large a share of human happiness, is very largely a matter of chance in its inception and development, and its tenure can be safeguarded by no certain precaution.

Then, since, when all that man can do has been done, three-fourths of life’s affairs are necessarily exposed to all sorts of danger, it is better not to seek so feverishly for external safety. That smacks of the craven. Were it not more fitting free agents in a great republic to fortify themselves from within? Were it not better that they follow the examples of their evolutionary predecessors and use the dangers that beset them as the means to bodies agile and fully conscious, to minds alert and resourceful, and, above all, for it is soul that makes man human, to spirits steady, courageous, and sincere, God-fearing in worthy humility?

It seems to be the general impression that comment upon dress should be confined to the pages of the fashion sheets and so-called “women’s” magazines. I do not think it should. In these days of factory-made clothing, when large incomes and industries are dependent on the interest women take in dress, the subject is one of very wide importance. Fashion Notes.

It is to be expected that we hear much criticism and ridicule. The absurdity of women’s apparel has been a by-word for generations; it has always been the fashion

to sigh for the good old days of feminine modesty—I suppose it always will be. But let those who bewail the “evils of modern dress” (after peeping into some of the fashion magazines where plentiful examples of the Futurist-Contortionist school of art purport to represent the modes of the day) remember that instead of fashion it is more often the ignorant abuse of fashion which is to blame. There is much beside dress where the line between the beautiful and the ridiculous, the good and the bad, is of a hair’s breadth.

All over the world national and class costumes are giving way to Paris styles. I don’t believe this is so much due to the light-mindedness of our modern civilization having penetrated to small communities, as it is to the sudden eagerness of these small communities to compete with the great social and industrial centres, and the increased opportunities among the lower classes, especially in our own country, for rising to a higher social level.

Whatever the economists may say about the high cost of living, the extravagance of women, and the inability of young men to marry, the badge of fashion is, in the eyes of the world, the emblem of prosperity and progress. All working men and women know that the more prosperous they appear the better positions they are able to ask for. Far from being ridiculous, I think the figure of the little shop-girl or apprentice who, with aching back and smarting eyes, sits sewing beneath a gas-jet far into the night in order that her scanty wardrobe may look “up to date,” is very pitiable indeed.

We are all doing that in a great or less degree—straining to echo the *dernier cri* so we shall not be left behind. We hardly accustom ourselves to a style before it is out of style. We have come to regard the edicts of Paris as law.

But now, when the speed of the shifting fashions has taken on kaleidoscopic proportions; now, when the chase has never seemed so hot, I am sure I hear murmurs of revolt. An ever-growing majority of our women are beginning to vindicate their reputation for independence and assert a will of their own. Already there is much talk about “American styles for American women.” It is going further.

Had I the gift of organizing I would venture on a crusade to-morrow. I would bend

the efforts now expended on “making over” toward the creation of artistic, though not necessarily expensive, clothes, designed to show to advantage the wearer’s best points. Each woman would be at liberty to follow her own inclination as to comfort, style, color, and fabric, and each would, as a result, be appropriately and individually gowned. The incentive toward self-expression would be greater than the anxiety to ape one’s neighbor, and the style motive would automatically disappear. I cannot see that this would cripple any of the industries either; their products would simply take a different form.

Strange though it might seem, for my captains and lieutenants in this campaign I would enlist the heads of the great Parisian and Viennese houses. They are artists, and if a chance is given them to design for the woman instead of for the exponent of fashion, they do so with only half an eye to style and an eye and a half to suitability and type. Any one who has seen their portrait costumes will attest their art in this.

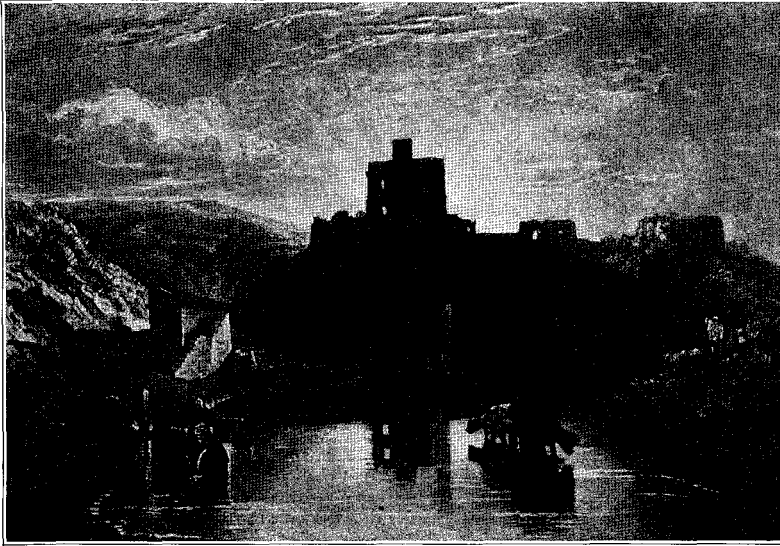
Of course, we could not all patronize them any more than we do now; but imagine the relief to the rest of us to feel we need no longer struggle to be in the fashion when we have neither the inclination nor the money, and would much rather dress as we please. I think we should please to look as well as possible, since that seems to be our nature, and if some of us were unfortunate in our selections and looked like freaks (which there would be little reason for, with such a wealth of choice) it would be no more than what we are accused of as a body under present conditions.

Not many of us really want to spend all our time and thought on dress—criticism to the contrary. We American women are busy folk nowadays, and when we go to the trouble and expense of securing a pretty and becoming gown we want to keep on wearing it, in all the consciousness of being well dressed, until it is worn out.

The day when we shall be able to do this is not far off. Few of those criers-out against us slaves of fashion will agree with me, but there are many others who will, because they know it, too.

After all, the most hopeful feature of these remarks of mine is that they are not original; they are only a sign of the times.

· THE FIELD OF ART ·



Norham Castle on the Tweed. By J. M. W. Turner.

A plate from the "Liber Studiorum."

Illustrations reproduced by the courtesy of the New York Public Library.

MEZZOTINTING FOR THE PAINTER

MEZZOTINT is an art that has its own well-defined characteristics and its own particular charm and appeal. It is distinctly different from even those reproductive processes which come nearest to it in effect (stipple, aquatint, and lithography), and fundamentally different from work expressed in line only.

Comparison of the two processes, mezzotint and etching, serves to emphasize the wide inclusiveness of the specialty which we designate by the collective term prints. The etching is an art of the line, in many cases—particularly in modern work—of the line used with elimination of detail, with only suggestion, at most, of tone and texture. The pure mezzotint is without lines, a process of soft outlines, with delicate gradations, dealing only with light and shade, with masses of color values and tones and textures.

These characteristics of mezzotint are based upon the manner of its production. A copper-plate is prepared for mezzotinting by working over it with the toothed edge of an

instrument known as a "rocker" or "cradle" until its entire surface is covered by minute incised dots accompanied by a bur. If a plate so roughened were inked and printed from, the resultant print would show only a uniform tint of rich black. Upon a plate so prepared the design is wrought by scraping—much for the high lights and less and less as the darkest blacks are approached. Obviously the strong points of the process lie in the possibilities it offers for obtaining rich, deep blacks, and at the same time the most delicate gradations between these lowest notes and the highest tones of light.

The very name mezzotint brings to mind a definite period in British history and art. A period of distinction and stateliness and grace in social life. These characteristics of the time were reflected and emphasized in the work of a group of brilliant portraitists—Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Lawrence, Hoppner, and their paintings, in turn, were reproduced with engaging and discriminating grace, with distinction of style, flexibility of technique, and individuality of manner by the noted mezzotinters of