

surplus of Will must find issue in the elevation of the individual towards the godhead; and the method of such elevation is by religion, love, and art. Now these three things are indissolubly bound up with wine, for they are themselves species of intoxication.

Yet against all these things we find the prohibitionist, logically enough. It is true that he usually pretends to admit religion as a proper pursuit for humanity; but what a religion! He has removed from it every element of ecstasy or even of devotion; in his hands it has become cold, fanatical, cruel, and stupid, a thing merciless and formal, without sympathy or humanity. Love and art he rejects altogether; for him the only meaning of love is a mechanical — hardly even physiological! — process necessary for the perpetuation of the human race. (But why perpetuate it?) Art is for him the parasite and pimp of love; he cannot distinguish between the Apollo Belvedere and the crude bestialities of certain Pompeian frescoes, or between Rabelais and Elinor Glyn.

What then is his ideal of human life? One cannot say. So crass a creature can have no true ideal. There have been ascetic philosophers; but the prohibitionist would be as offended by their doctrine as by ours. These, indeed, are not so dissimilar as appears. Wage-slavery and boredom seem to complete his outlook on the world.

There are species which survive because of the feeling of disgust inspired by them; one is reluctant to set the heel firmly upon them, however thick may be one's boots. But when they are recognized as utterly noxious to humanity — the more so that they ape its form — then courage must be found, or, rather, nausea must be swallowed.

May God send us a Saint George!

#### IV.

It is notorious that all genius is accompanied by vice. Almost always this takes the form of sexual extravagance. It is to be observed that deficiency, as in the cases of Carlyle and Ruskin, is to be reckoned as extravagance. At least, the word abnormality will fit all cases. Farther, we see that in a very large number of great men there has also been indulgence in drink or drugs. There are whole periods when practically every great man has been thus marked; these periods are those during which the heroic spirit has died out of their nation, and the bourgeois is apparently triumphant.

In this case the cause is evidently the horror of life induced in the artist by the contemplation of his surroundings. He must find another world, no matter at what cost.

Consider the end of the eighteenth century. In France, at that time, the men of genius were made, so to speak, possible, by the Revolution. In England, under Castlereagh, we find Blake lost to humanity in mysticism, Shelley and Byron exiles, Coleridge taking refuge in opium, Keats sinking under the weight of circumstance, Wordsworth forced to sell his soul, while the enemy, in the persons of Southey and Moore, triumphantly holds sway.

The poetically similar period in France is 1850 to 1870. Hugo is in exile, and all his brethren are given to absinthe or to hashish or to opium.

There is however another consideration more important. There are some men who possess the understanding of the City of God, and know not the keys; or, if they possess them, have not

force to turn them in the wards. Such men often seek to win heaven by forged credentials. Just so a youth who desires love is too often deceived by simulacra, embraces Lydia thinking her to be Lalage.

But the greatest men of all suffer neither the limitations of the former class nor the illusions of the latter. Yet we find them equally given to what is apparently indulgence. Lombroso has foolishly sought to find the source of this in madness — as if insanity could scale the peaks of Progress while Reason recoiled from the bergschrund. The explanation is far otherwise. Imagine to yourself the mental state of him who inherits or attains the full consciousness of the artist, that is to say, the divine consciousness.

He finds himself unutterably lonely, and he must steel himself to endure it. All his peers are dead long since! Even if he find an equal upon earth, there can scarcely be companionship, hardly more than the far courtesy of king to king. There are few twin souls in genius — rare even as twin stars.

Good — he can reconcile himself to the scorn of the world. But yet he feels with anguish his duty towards it. It is therefore essential to him to be human.

Now the divine consciousness is not full-flowered in youth. The newness of the objective world preoccupies the soul for many years. It is only as each illusion vanishes before the magic of the master that he gains more and more the power to dwell in the world of Reality. And with this comes the terrible temptation — the desire to enter and enjoy rather than remain among men and suffer their illusions. Yet, since the sole purpose of the incarnation of such Master was to help humanity, he must make the supreme renunciation. It is the problem of that dreadful bridge of Islam, Al Sirak; the razor-edge will cut the unwary foot, yet it must be trodden firmly, or the traveler will fall to the abyss. I dare not sit in the Old Absinthe House for ever, wrapped in the ineffable delight of the Beatific Vision. I must write this essay, that men may thereby come at last to understand true things. But the operation of the creative godhead is not enough. Art is itself too near the Reality which must be renounced for a season.

Therefore his work is also part of his temptation; the genius feels himself slipping constantly heavenward. The gravitation of eternity draws him. He is like a ship torn by the tempest from the harbour where the master must needs take on new passengers to the Happy Isles. So he must throw out anchors; and the only holding is the mire! Thus, in order to maintain the equilibrium of sanity, the artist is obliged to seek fellowship with the grossest of mankind. Like Lord Dunsany or Augustus John, today, or like Teniers of old, he may love to sit in taverns where sailors frequent; he may wander the country with gypsies, or he may form liaisons with the vilest men and women. Edward Fitzgerald would seek an illiterate fisherman, and spend weeks in his company; Verlaine made associates of Rimbaud and Bibi la Purée; Shakespeare consorted with the Earls of Pembroke and Southampton; Marlowe was actually killed during a brawl in a low tavern. And when we consider the sex-relation, it is hard to mention a genius who had a wife or mistress of even tolerable good character. If he had one, he would be sure to neglect her for a Vampire or a Shrew. A good woman is too near that heaven of Reality which he is sworn to renounce!

And this, I suppose, is why I am interested in the woman who has come to sit at the nearest table. Let us find out her story; let