

polite society. Is it not because religion has failed to fortify the soul against this apprehension that religion is no longer the vogue? Instead we indulge in dances and music and wine and everything that may help to banish the thought. We permit no skeleton at modern feasts. Philosophy dwells much upon death: perish philosophy! Mankind today dreads every discussion of realities, because to modern men death is the supreme reality, and they wish to forget it. It is the fear of death that has fooled men into belief in such absurdities and abominations as Spiritualism and Christian Science. I would be honored, sir," he stopped in front of the youth, "if you would allow me to grasp the hand of the bravest man that I have ever met, in the very moment of his culmination!"

The youth arose, automatically almost, and gave his hand to the adept.

"I thank you, sir," continued the latter, "you have given me an example, as you have taught me a lesson, of sublime courage. You are a thousand times right. When the evils of life become intolerable, they should be ended. I have half a mind to join you," he added, musing. "I have many disciples."

He sighed deeply, and threw away the butt of his cigar, first lighting another from the glow. "It seems to me that far too much fuss is being made about death now-a-days, as it is about death's deadlier twin-sister, Love. The ancients were our masters in these matters, and so are the Japanese and Chinese of today. The fear of these two things—who are but the man and wife at the lodge gates of Life Park—was probably imported from the effeminate, cowardly, and degenerate races of the Indian peninsula. Early Christians, with their agapae and their martyrdoms, feared neither. The Crusaders feared neither. But those nations that have become effetes, that preach peace and morality, and women's rights, these have the cur's spirit, the eunuch's soul, and in these nations death is dreadful and love dangerous. The virile temper of the Romans grasped love and death like nettles that excite even as they sting. That temper has decayed—the war should revive it—and men flee from death and love. Love stands apart and weeps; but Death cries Tally-Ho, and hunts them down to hell. 'But dried is the blood of thy lover, Ipsithilla, contracted the vein,' 'Novem continuas futationes!'" ended the adept, raising his voice even more than possibly the best taste would have sanctioned, though after all a river's marge at night is not an alcove. However, he recollected himself, and continued more gently. "Pardon me, young sir, I beg," he said, "my feelings overcame me for the moment. Balk at love, you balk at death; balk at death, you balk at life. It's hard to score," he added laughingly, "with both balls in baulk." (The allusion is to the English game of billiards.) The young man laughed, not wholly from courtesy, but because he was really amused, despite his tragic situation.

"If we all took things more easily," the Master added, "they would go more easily. Confidence is two battalions in every regiment that we have. Fear, and you fumble. Go ahead, a song on your lips and a sword in your hand; and meet what comes with gaiety. Damn consequences! If you

see a girl you like, prove it to her by Barbara and Celarent all the way to Fresison or whatever the logician's Omega is—I forget."

The boy was unable to remind him. He had taken Paley for the Little-Go.

"If you see a danger, embrace it," went on the elder man. Nothing seemed to exhaust the energy of his harangue. "If you escape, you have lived more beautifully and more intensely. If you die, you die, and one more bother is done with. Best of all, then, when one is tired of life, to face the Great Adventure gay and gallant—as you do to-night!"

"Then do you see no objection, of any kind," answered the youth, a trifle more earnestly than his habitual manner (Harrow and Trinity Hall) would have permitted in more usual circumstances, "to the fatal act which, as soon as you deprive me of the great charm of your company, I shall have yet one more excellent reason for putting into execution?"

"None," smiled the Master, bowing rather pontifically at a politeness to which years of the servility of disciples had inured him., "Unless, perhaps, we look at the matter in this way. Assume one moment that you are what we empirically call an immortal soul incarnating from time to time in various bodies as occasion offers. Very good; then you willed to live in this body. You knew the conditions—assume that! Good; then you formulate the accursed dyad, you deny your own will, by cutting short this life. Or, say this; assume that your body is an instrument by which you perceive material things, for a whim, or from some inexplicable desire, I know not what. Then, why destroy your instrument? True, it is hopelessly damaged, let us suppose, so that it perceives badly. If it were possible to mend it, you would cheerfully endure the necessary pangs; but all being decayed, scrap it, and get a new instrument. The only argument is that you may have willed to observe the great cruelty of Nature, not only by seeing, but by feeling it, so that you may thereby become fortified in your resolve to 'redeem it from all pain.' But this is all a mass of assumptions, little better than the twaddle of the Buddhists and the Christians and the Theosophists and all the other guessers. Ignore it. 'Thou hast no right but to do Thy Will. Do that and no other shall say thee nay.' Then since it is your Will to kill yourself, do not be turned from your purpose. That indeed would be a crime. The best argument I ever heard against suicide, if you will pardon my introducing a new witness, was an English journalist whose face resembled a cancer of the stomach in a rather advanced stage of the disease. 'Excuse a personal remark,' said I, 'but consider our feelings. Why not blow it all away with a pistol?' He replied with ready wit: 'I use it to pour drink into.' Clever Cecil!"

The adept rose once more. "But I detain you," he murmured apologetically. "Religion, philosophy, ethics, and common sense concur in approval of your purpose. I am infinitely obliged to you for the pleasure you have given me by your elegant and informed conversation; I dare not even voice a regret that I shall have no opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance. Farewell! Love is the law, love under will."

The Master bowed and moved slowly towards the towering beeches. But the boy—he was barely