

The Simple Life

By CHARLES WAGNER

Translated From the French by Mary Louise Hendee

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This pitiful truth nowhere appears with more force than in the relations between masters and servants as we have made them. Our social errors, our want of simplicity and kindness, all fall back upon the heads of our children. There are certainly few people of the middle classes who understand that it is better to part with many thousands of dollars than to lead their children to lose respect for servants, who represent in our households the humble, yet nothing is truer. Maintain as strictly as you will conventions and distances, that demarcation of social frontiers which permits each one to remain in his place and to observe the law of differences—that is a good thing. I am persuaded—but on condition of never forgetting that those who serve us are men and women like ourselves. You require of your domestics certain formulas of speech and certain attitudes, outward evidence of the respect they owe you. Do you also teach your children and use yourselves manners toward your servants which show them that you respect their dignity as individuals as you desire them to respect you? Here we have continually in our homes an excellent ground for experiment in the practice of that mutual respect which is one of the essential conditions of social sanity. I fear we profit by it too little. We do not fail to exact respect, but we fail to give it. So it is most frequently the case that we get only hypocrisy and this supplementary result, all unexpected—the cultivation of pride in our children. These two factors combined heap up great difficulties for that future which we ought to be safeguarding. I am right, then, in saying that the day when by your own practices you have brought about the lessening of respect in your children you have suffered a sensible loss.

Why should I not say it? It seems to me that the greater part of us labor for this loss. On all sides, in almost every social rank, I notice that a pretty bad spirit is fostered in children, a spirit of reciprocal contempt. Here those who have calloused hands and working clothes are disdainful; there it is all who do not wear blue jeans. Children educated in this spirit make sad fellow citizens. There is in all this the want of that simplicity which makes it possible for men of good intentions, of however diverse social standing, to collaborate without any friction arising from the conventional distance that separates them.

If the spirit of caste causes the loss of respect, partisanship, of whatever sort, is quite as productive of it. In certain quarters children are brought up in such a fashion that they respect but one country—their own; one system of government—that of their parents and masters; one religion—that which they have been taught. Does any one suppose that in this way men can be shaped who shall respect country, religion and law? Is this a proper respect—this respect which does not extend beyond what touches and belongs to ourselves? Strange blindness of cliques and coteries, which arrogate to themselves with so much ingenuous complacency the title of schools of respect, and which, outside themselves, respect nothing. In reality they teach, "Country, religion, law—we are all these!" Such teaching fosters fanaticism, and if fanaticism is not the sole antisocial ferment it is surely one of the worst and most energetic.

If simplicity of heart is an essential condition of respect, simplicity of life is its best school. Whatever be the state of your fortune, avoid everything which could make your children think themselves more or better than others. Though your wealth would permit you to dress them richly, remember the evil you might do in exciting their vanity. Preserve them from the evil of believing that to be elegantly dressed suffices for distinction, and, above all, do not carelessly increase by their clothes and their habits of life the distance which already separates them from other children. Dress them simply. And if, on the contrary, it should be necessary for you to economize to give your children the pleasure of fine clothes, I would that I might dispose you to reserve your spirit of sacrifice for a better cause. You risk seeing it filly recompensed. You dissipate your money when it would much better avail to save it for serious needs, and you prepare for yourself, later on, a harvest of ingratitude. How dangerous it is to accustom your sons and daughters to a style of living beyond your means and theirs! In the first place, it is very bad for your purse. In the second place, it develops a contemptuous spirit in the very bosom of the family. If you dress your children like little lords and give them to understand that they are superior to you, is it astonishing if they end by disdain you? You will have nourished at your table the declassé—a product which costs dear and is worthless.

Any fashion of instructing children whose most evident result is to lead them to despise their parents and the customs and activities among which they have grown up is a calamity. It is effective for nothing but to produce a legion of malcontents, with hearts totally estranged from their origin, their race, their natural interests—everything, in short, that makes the fun-

account it for merit that they have not covered their sin.

To frankness let us add ingenuousness in our solicitude as educators. Let us have for this comradeship of childhood—a trifle uncivilized, it is true, but so gracious and friendly—all possible regard. We must not frighten it away. When it has once fled it so rarely comes back! Ingenuousness is not simply the sister of truth, the guardian of the individual qualities of each of us; it is besides a great informing and educating force. I see among us too many practical people, so called, who go about armed with terrifying spectacles and huge shears to ferret out naive things and clip their wings. They uproot ingenuousness from life, from thought, from education, and pursue it even to the region of dreams. Under pretext of making men of their children they prevent their children from growing up; as if before the ripe fruit of autumn, flowers did not have to be, and perfumes, and songs of birds, and all the fairly springtime.

I ask indulgence for everything naive and simple—not alone for the innocent conceits that flutter round the curly heads of children, but also for the legends, the folk songs, the tales of the world of marvel and mystery. The sense of the marvelous is in the child the first form of that sense of the infinite without which a man is like a bird deprived of wings. Let us not wean the child from it, but let us guard in him the faculty of rising above what is earthy, so that he may appreciate later on those pure and moving symbols of vanished ages wherein human truth has found forms of expression that our arid logic will never replace.

CHAPTER XIV. CONCLUSION.

I THINK I have said enough of the spirit and manifestations of it, that there is here a whole forgotten world of strength and beauty. He can make conquest of it who has sufficient energy to detach himself from the fatal rubbish that trammels our days. It will not take him long to perceive that in renouncing some surface satisfactions and childish ambitions he increases his faculty of happiness and his possibilities of right judgment.

These results concern as much the private as the public life. It is incontestable that in striving against the feverish will to shine, in ceasing to make the satisfaction of our desires the end of our activity, in returning to modest tastes, to the true life, we shall labor for the unity of the family. Another spirit will breathe in our homes, creating new customs and an atmosphere more favorable to the education of children. Little by little our boys and girls will feel the enticement of ideals at once higher and more realizable, and transformation of the home will in time exercise its influence on public spirit.

As the solidity of a wall depends upon the grain of the stones and the consistency of the cement which binds them together, so also the energy of public life depends upon the individual value of men and their power of cohesion. The great desideratum of our time is the culture of the component parts of society, of the individual man. Everything in the present social organization leads us back to this element. In neglecting it we expose ourselves to the loss of the benefits of progress, even to making our most persistent efforts turn to our own hurt. If in the midst of means continually more and more perfected the workman diminishes in value, of what use are these fine tools at his disposal? By their very excellence to make more evident the faults of him who uses them without discernment or without conscience. The wheelwork of the great modern machine is infinitely delicate. Carelessness, incompetence or corruption may produce here disturbances of far greater gravity than would have threatened the more or less rudimentary organism of the society of the past. There is need, then, of looking to the quality of the individual called upon to contribute in any measure to the workings of this mechanism. This individual should be at once solid and pliable, inspired with the central law of life to be oneself and fraternal. Everything within us and without us becomes simplified and unified under the influence of this law, which is the same for everybody and by which each one should guide his actions, for our essential interests are not opposing; they are identical. In cultivating the spirit of simplicity we should arrive, then, at giving to public life a stronger cohesion.

The phenomena of decomposition and destruction that we see there may all be attributed to the same cause—lack of solidity and cohesion. It will never be possible to say how contrary to social good are the trifling interests of caste, of coterie, of church, the bitter strife for personal welfare, and, by a fatal consequence, how destructive these things are of individual happiness. A society in which each member is preoccupied with his own well-being is organized disorder. This is all that we learn from the irreconcilable conflicts of our uncompromising egoism.

We too much resemble those people who claim the rights of family only to gain advantage from them, not to do honor to the connection. On all rounds of the social ladder we are forever putting forth claims. We all take the ground that we are creditors; no one recognizes the fact that he is a debtor, and our dealings with our fellows consist in inviting them, in tones sometimes amiable, sometimes arrogant, to discharge their indebtedness to us. No good thing is attained in this spirit. For, in fact, it is the spirit of privilege, that eternal enemy of universal law, that obstacle to brotherly understanding, which is ever presenting itself anew.

In a lecture delivered in 1882 M. Renan said that a nation is "a spiritual family" and he added, "The essential

of a nation is that all the individuals should have many things in common, and also that all should have forgotten much." It is important to know what to forget and what to remember, not only in the past, but also in our daily life. Our memories are lumbered with the things that divide us; the things which unite us slip away. Each of us keeps at the most luminous point of his souvenirs a lively sense of his secondary quality, his part of agriculturist, day laborer, man of letters, public officer, proletarian, bourgeois, or political or religious sectarian, but his essential quality, which is to be a son of his country and a man, is relegated to the shade. Scarcely does he keep even a theoretic notion of it. So that what occupies us and determines our actions is precisely the thing that separates us from others, and there is hardly place for that spirit of unity which is as the soul of a people.

So, too, do we foster bad feeling in our brothers. Men animated by a spirit of particularism, exclusiveness and pride are continually clashing. They cannot meet without rousing afresh the sentiment of division and rivalry. And so there slowly heaps up in their remembrance a stock of reciprocal ill will, of mistrust, of rancor. All this is bad feeling with its consequences.

It must be rooted out of our midst. Remember, forget! This we should say to ourselves every morning, in all our relations and affairs. Remember the essential, forget the accessory! How much better should we discharge our duties as citizens if high and low were nourished from this spirit! How easy to cultivate pleasant remembrances in the mind of one's neighbor by sowing it with kind deeds and refraining from procedures of which in spite of himself he is forced to say, with hatred in his heart, "Never in the world will I forget!"

The spirit of simplicity is a great magician. It softens asperities, bridges chasms, draws together hands and hearts. The forms which it takes in the world are infinite in number, but never does it seem to us more admirable than when it shows itself across the fatal barrier of position, interest or prejudice, overcoming the greatest obstacles, permitting those whom everything seems to separate to understand one another, esteem one another, love one another. This is the true social cement that goes into the building of a people.

THE END.

Japanese Gathering Forces.

ST. PETERSBURG, April 1.—A m. There has been no fighting of importance lately. Reconnaissance establish the fact that the Japanese are gathering in heavy force twenty miles south of Sipinghai, evidently intending to attack the Russian position at Sipinghai. The Russians are strongly fortified there, and apparently expect to make a stand. The country between is comparatively clear of Japanese.

The Japanese are approaching Kirin, threatening communications in the Ussury district.

The number of Chinese bandits is constantly augmenting.

Chinese continue to report that Field Marshal Oyama has issued proclamations fixing the date for the occupation of Harbin as April 10th, but this prediction, if actual, is apparently improbable of fulfillment.

Business Notice.

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The constant aching of a bad back, The weariness, the tired feeling, The pains and aches of kidney illness, Are serious—if neglected, Dangerous urinary troubles follow.

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Frank P. Davis, molder, of 246 E. Logan St., says: "I used to suffer very much with a weakness of the back and severe pains through my loins. It kept me in constant misery and I seemed to be unable to find any relief, until I got Doan's Kidney Pills at F. Potts Green's drug store and used them. They reached the spot and in a short time my strength returned. I have never had any trouble of the kind since and am glad to recommend Doan's Kidney Pills not only because they helped me but because I know of others who have also found relief in the same way, and I have yet to hear of a case in which this remedy has failed to give satisfaction."

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Travelers Guide.

CENTRAL RAILROAD OF PENNA.

Condensed Time Table effective Nov. 23, 1904.

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