

nor to conviction—the host of the half-educated, characteristic and peril of our time. They, indeed, purchase and purchase largely. Heaven forbid that I should not recognize the few among them whose bent of brain and of conscience justifies their fervour; to such—the ten in ten thousand—be all aid and brotherly solace! But the glib many, the perky mispronouncers of titles and of authors' names, the twanging murderers of rhythm, the maulers of the uncut edge at sixpence extra, the ready-reckoners of bibliopolic discount—am I to see in these a witness of my hope for the century to come?

I am told that their semi-education will be integrated. We are in a transition stage, between the bad old time when only a few had academic privileges, and that happy future which will see all men liberally instructed. Unfortunately for this argument, education is a thing of which only the few are capable; teach as you will only a small percentage will profit by your most zealous energy. On an ungenerous soil it is vain to look for rich crops. Your average mortal will be your average mortal still: and if he grow conscious of power, if he becomes vocal and self-assertive, if he get into his hands all the material resources of the country, why, you have a state of things such as at present looms menacingly before every Englishman blessed—or cursed—with an unpopular spirit.

XXIII

Every morning when I awake, I thank heaven for silence. This is my orison. I remember the London days when sleep was broken by clash and clang, by roar and shriek, and when my first sense on returning to consciousness was hatred of the life about me. Noises of wood and metal, clattering of wheels, banging of implements, jangling of bells—all such things are bad enough, but worse still is the clamorous human voice. Nothing on earth is more irritating to me than a bellow or scream of idiot mirth, nothing more hateful than a shout or yell of brutal anger. Were it possible, I would never again hear the utterance of a human tongue, save from those few who are dear to me.

Here, wake at what hour I may, early or late, I lie amid gracious stillness. Perchance a horse's hoof rings rhythmically upon the road; perhaps a dog barks from a neighbour farm; it may be that there comes the far, soft murmur of a train from the other side of Exe; but these are almost the only sounds that could force themselves upon my ear. A voice, at any time of the day, is the rarest thing.

But there is the rustle of branches in the morning breeze; there is the music of a sunny shower against the window; there is the matin song of birds. Several times lately I have lain wakeful when there