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Epigrams

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EPIGRAMS.

"Brevity and succinctness of speech is that which in philosophy or speculation we call maxim, and first principle; in the counsels and resolves of practical wisdom, and the deep mysteries of religion, oracle; and lastly, in matters of wit and finesses of imagination, epigram. All of them severally, and in their kinds, the greatest and the noblest things that the mind of man can show the force and dexterity of its faculties in."

South: Sermons.

I.

Random fancies that I find
Scatter'd up and down my mind,
Let me gather! Order brings
Space and time for greater things!

II.

Many a teacher whom they praise
Is no wiser than I am:
Many a tedious volume weighs
Lighter than an epigram!

III.

Morning-Call on Wisdom.

'Seek out Wisdom! when I come,
See, I find her not at home!
'Come back later; she's away
In the woods to walk and play!

IV.

Paper Chase for Wisdom.

'Scholar lay by your book and speak!
The best stored brain is still to seek!
I need no telling that the book
But marks the path which wisdom took!

V.

Never yet was gospel found
But 'twas somewhere proved unsound:
Never scoff of wicked wit
But the wise have answered it!

VI.

You tell me when I ask your creed,
'It varies with the book I read!
Infer not more your weakness, then,
Than power of faith in other men!

VII.

Through this web of doubt and fear
Draw thy thread of purpose clear:
Truth whenever it doth shine
Shall light up that thread of thine!

VIII.

Tom, Dick, and Harry.

To whom our fealty is owing?
To whoso lives his soul's faith showing!
The rest of men, whome'er they marry,
Count them all up—Tom, Dick, and Harry!

IX.

In despair of outward things
Mournful Psyche moults her wings:
Dark and silent then are spun
Wings that soar beyond the sun!

X.

To war with evil in my breast
Long have I settled is the best;
But hate it also! urge good men:
Alas, my strife were over then!

XI.

Live, if you would elude life's pain,
Not with the heart but with the brain;
And yet in trouble take this grace:
The heart is wisdom's dwelling-place!

XII.

With all its boughs, my oracle,
The woodland whispers, 'All is well!
Fain would I publish what's in store:
The woodland will not tell me more.

JOHN EGLINTON.

THE GREAT ENCHANTMENT.

One of the matters that has interested me most in your all-interesting Review is the occasional reference to that attribute of Irish character which you poetically call "The Great Enchantment;" that many-sided attribute making itself evident, as the occasion calls or as the observer appreciates it in various forms.

Lazy, good humour, fatalism, forgivingness, improvidence, inertia, dependence, uninitiativeness, do-well a-enough-ness, seem its protean shapes. You have grouped them all under a general cause, "Enchantment."

This is the poet's view; can we have the philosopher's? Whence is the Enchantment? As mere rooters-out of scientific causes can we go farther?

Most people are content with a general referring of all such National peculiarities to the Celtic blood and its influence, supposed to be dominant in our island. But if we glance at the history of this "distressful country" we find that a continuous prevalence of internecine and other wars, general massacres, famines, diseases, not to mention other odd killings and dyings out, must have reduced the Celtic strain almost, perhaps, to extirpation, while repeated and large incursions and immigrations must have replaced it to a large extent by what are supposed to be hardier, hopefuller, and more self-assertive types.

"Oh," say others, "it is the result of Saxon oppression in one form or another or the effect of priestly domination."

But Saxon oppression is over long ago, and was only partial at any time; and the submission to clerical sway is really a consequence and not an origin of national character.

Why then is and was this Enchantment, and why are we still subject to it?

Shall I answer, shall I tell you that my unpoetic soul sees it as a mere matter of high aqueous vapour tension, or, in common language, just damp—damp in the ground, damp in the air—the fog, the rain, the sweeping mist, the soft moist climate. What else is so pervading, so influencing, so environing? "Splendid," my wife says, "for the complexion, but death to all great mental effort; producing the finest human frames in the world, but paralysing their abilities." Take them out into bracing climates abroad and they become great generals, admirals, merchants, workers, thinkers, their hands gain deftness, their brains become acute and virile, they control the destiny of nations, they reach for place and power; they hope, they work, they succeed. Even those whose business or interest lies here must make periodic excursions to drier lands if they would keep out of the depths. Hence where the frequent steamship touches our shores the power of the Great Enchanter wanes, though not to extinction.

Our sanitary inspector in these parts has been heard to say when discoursing on unwholesome environments, "It is not damp that kills, it is dirty damp, the nursery of the moulds and the microbes." Are we under some conditions of this kind? Is the Great Enchantment just a zymotic disease in which our hearts are eaten out by a moisty microbe whose nidus is in the baptism of water that christens our island "Emerald?" Are its enemies sunlight, sun-heat, dryness, and ozone?

Truly, if so, the knight errant who will restore us to strength and sanity will need to be little short of omnipotent.—Yours truly,

J. BROWN.

13, Ramsden Road, Balham, S.W.,
June 1, 1900.

MY DEAR SIR—

The whirl of a wandering life and the accumulation of arrears of work forcibly prevented my writing now before to thank you most sincerely for your suggestive and admirable Review.

I have read every number received, and believe that in time you will succeed in making Irishmen feel that despite the dispersing forces of religious and political feuds we have a common motherland, and dreams with visions which are not experienced by other men.

Pursue your good work, see the vision and follow it, until the success of sympathetic co-operation of all that is best and truest in Irish life crowns your work.

Believe me, very truly yours,

T. W. J. PULVERTAFT.