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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE
CHURCHMAN

JULY, 1899.

ART. I.—BRIEF SAYINGS.

1.

NO man plays the devil's game for him better than the saintly inventors of artificial sins. Artificial manners are half a lie, but artificial ethics are traps for souls.

2.

To be a man is a fine attainment. In public speaking, for example, the dullest person becomes interesting when we catch glimpses of himself, the real man. What I see may be so foolish that I scorn it; but even to scorn is not to be insensible; the mind ceases to wander, the attention is caught. An argument may be transparently fallacious, yet, if the man has persuaded himself of it, I am interested in this phenomenon. The dulness of Dogberry is not dull. The most potent eloquence always had an air of taking the hearers into the speaker's confidence, not saying chiefly what logic pronounces weightiest, but what has won his own heart. In this respect eloquence resembles sculpture, that all the best specimens show the human figure frankly and grandly undraped. Rhetoric, on the contrary, is the millinery of the mind.

3.

And hence it comes that blatant speakers shout. This they suppose to be the same thing as throwing heart into the subject, or at all events to have the same effect. They are much mistaken; the average man is well aware that the heart is not in the windpipe.

Now, this is written not for speakers alone. Transparent manners, frankness, a character which moves freely, and does

not hide among the trees of the garden, will always charm. But this is a grace which the consciously vile cannot attain to; it is not to be reached by artifice; one will always hide what he feels ought to be hidden. It is not inconsistent, we may grant, with the existence of much that *ought* to abash, but does not.

4.

Half the persuasiveness of women is also due to this, that the personal element preponderates in them. For perhaps it is the most radical difference between the sexes, that a man even feels with his head, while a woman even thinks with her heart. And marriage has actually survived the attacks of our fashionable novelists (among other reasons) because it mediates between the two extremes of impulsive thought and emotion which requires to calculate.

5.

It lies in the same direction, though perhaps it is only due to some lack of the practical element in her education, that while every good woman can be generous, not one in a hundred can be just. (We continue, nevertheless, to call them the fair sex.)

6.

Very many people would sin with a good appetite if only they were sure of having the good fortune to repent before they die. And yet sins are the only things which people achieve with this distinct hope that they shall hereafter repent of what they are doing. Apparently they do not expect the needed repentance to be very bitter.

7.

"He preached like an angel." But since he was not an angel, it would have been finer (and quite as rare) to preach like a man—not a sentimental, nor a logic-chopper, nor a sophist, nor an official, nor an ass, simply a man.

8.

People continue to discuss whether Tennyson or Browning was the greater poet, evidently because they have not clearly realized their meaning, whether it is the greatest artist in verse, or the greatest thinker and teacher expressing himself metrically.

Every such discussion proves that both form and message are important, perhaps equally important, in verse as well as prose.

And this is the key alike to the strength and the weakness of the cry "Art for Art's sake." Certainly, what we want for Art's sake is Art. But why may we not be allowed to require, at the same time, for Decency's sake, Decency?

9.

A clever child, at breakfast on his fourth birthday, was much disappointed at continuing to be smaller than his sister, and even "as much smaller as yesterday." We are such children. We, too, are disconcerted by the discovery that no epoch in life—not marriage, nor the inheriting of wealth, nor becoming a judge or a field-marshall—makes us, the very *Ego* of us, anything which we were not before. Success indeed will obtain a better hearing for what we have to say; but it will not make the utterance more worth hearing, nor ourselves wiser, nor better, nor even, after two or three days, better content with the imperfection which mars the man.

10.

"If riches increase, they are increased that eat them." But surely it was in the dramatic character of an embittered soul (as Shakespeare utters villainies) that an inspired writer put down this selfish piece of shrewdness. For it means to say that no pleasure is to be had from breaking any bread except for our own eating.

11.

In a certain tale of the "Arabian Nights" there is this much unintended truth, that only by casting from us all empty husks and shells do we ever destroy an evil spirit. Hear it, O ye orthodox! and O ye heterodox chatterers against orthodoxy!

12.

It very commonly happens both in the professions and in business that highly-gifted men have not the most successful careers. And it has been the same in literature, long before Goldsmith and Sheridan, and since the unique and memorable gifts of E. A. Poe. This is, partly at least, because such men exaggerate to themselves the value of their own gift, and therefore underrate the common conditions of life, the restraints and qualifications under which alone their fine endowments can work to successful issues. They see more than other folk, but they do not see that the most important things of all are visible to the plain people whom they look down upon.

But all the very greatest men succeed. They prevail not

only by the added bulk of their intellect, but by its sobriety, and because it is equal to the task of recognising, like sound eyes, the commonplace as well as the glittering. Balance of faculty, all-roundness of insight, was the gift equally of Shakespeare and of Goethe. It was what made a really great man of Burke, and perhaps of Wellington. And what somewhat detracted from the greatness of Burke was that his temper was less "considerate" than his intellect.

13.

The most wonderful achievement of Christ is not this, that He has convinced men that He, avowedly man, is God. The greater marvel is to have convinced them that, He being God, they may themselves be like Him. It makes one dizzy, as a sublime height does, to reflect that the average man does actually feel much more hope of resembling God than of resembling Sir Isaac Newton.

14.

The gigantic system of advertising which disgraces our civilization, the placards which vaunt a condiment or a soap, the puffs which celebrate quack medicines, quack preachers, quack philanthropists, the circulars which offer us Golcondas in unnumbered companies, perhaps, after all, these do not prove that all men are liars. Rather, one hopes on second thoughts, that *not* all men are liars; that we have met in our day such a preponderance of veracious people that we still persist in believing, in the teeth of reason and experience, even the people who advertise.

15.

Many, even in our island home, die, like Schiller, "never having seen the ocean." Therefore it is good to reflect that the grandest and vastest of all sights are universally visible. These are the noonday sky, the sunrise, the sunset, and the stars.

16.

Yet one suspects that multitudes never look at these great sights and most splendid of pageants except when they go abroad. Men rave about the sunrise among the Alps without reflecting that he rises over English fields, often as splendid, and commonly more tender, as being through an atmosphere more humid.

17.

In Froude's memorable apology for Henry VIII. perhaps the strongest plea was that the King had lived an exception-

ally blameless life, for a king of that period, until his fortieth year. We were bidden to infer, because he had passed almost unscathed through the most dangerous period of human passion, that his later actions cannot have been due to low impulses, but to a statesman's sense of the danger of a disputed succession while the ashes of the Wars of the Roses were still glowing. We need not argue about Henry; but it is highly important to remember that the life of man has two dangerous periods, and not one only. All men insist upon the peril of that hour when youth begins to feel the independence of manhood and its fires. But the youth has, for secular and earthly guardians, aspiration, the glory of all his day-dreams, ideals which he shrinks from compromising.

There is equal peril, perhaps the peril is even greater, when he has found his level; when his ideals have become dusty, or proved impracticable; when life shows no prospect of any further nobility attainable; when the only new fulness which can enrich its monotony must be drawn from unlawful sources; when the soul is disillusionized, lonely, with prospects no longer shining, without one great hope interposed between the soul and crime. This is the reason why the tragedies of the soul occur quite as frequently at Henry's age of forty as at that of twenty years, and why we are shocked and terrified, now and again, at the collapse of some trusted and matured reputation. And this is one more reason why we cannot afford to dispense with religion, the one hope which illuminates all the circle of our existence, from above it.

18.

The subtle and brain-torturing disquisitions which have sprung from the Gospel resemble the clouds, agitated and murky, which hurry overland from the sea. They are dark, but their source is transparent as it is profound.

19.

People cry out against "hair-splitting," and think that their outcries are evidence of their common-sense; but in reality the greater part of the best intellectual work is a splitting of hairs, a drawing of new and fine distinctions; and what they mean to complain of is only an abortive attempt to discriminate subtly, the splitting of hairs with a blunt hatchet of an intellect, set to do the work of a razor.

20.

Much that would fain pass for Conservatism is mere inertness; and much that claims to be Liberalism is volatility.

The past innovated, and we do not really venerate our ancestors by disapproving of innovation. But they innovated wisely, and with reason, and their success promises nothing to the lover of mere change for the sake of novelty.

21.

In fact, you never do homage to any original mind by surrendering your own originality, but by preserving it. There is a great evidence for the faith in this, that Christ fulfilled all the predictions and ideals of His race, and made all its greatest souls to be types of Him, while He was so original that His generation, lost in the study of those others, failed to recognise their Antitype.

22.

And thus, too, all Christendom desires to be like Christ, and its earnest souls are conscious, amid a thousand failures, of His likeness formed in them. And yet no one professes to act as He acted, or even to pray as He prayed. No one has ever been more imitated, or less emulated.

23.

"I am tired to death!" You are not tired, you are only weary. Of only three things men really grow tired—of idleness, incompetence, and vice.

24.

The primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Assume, however, that it was this, fully and really a primrose to the apprehension of Peter Bell, and what more should it have been? It should have been this, with the added beauty of its setting, "a primrose by the river's brim." Now you do not really see men or their actions any more than wild-flowers, unless you are capable of receiving into your field of vision their environment. But what mortal can do this? Some reclaimed drunkard in the first week of his reformation, and still untrusted by anyone, is perhaps even now enduring for righteousness' sake more than the pangs of an average martyrdom. Therefore, judge nothing before the time.

GEORGE A. DERRY.