

**PLEASURE TAKING.**  
 From the London Saturday Review.

Perhaps the falsest of all the false aphorisms that have obtained a considerable currency in the world is that which asserts that no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures. Like other popular sayings, it is derived from a very superficial observation of certain obvious phenomena. A man takes to drinking in spite of the clearest warnings of his probable fate; he goes on drinking till he is utterly unable to break the bondage which he has himself created; at length he drinks himself into his grave, though he has clearly foreseen his probable fate, and is willing to admit that his conduct is utterly absurd, as well as exceedingly wicked. We say that he cannot be a hypocrite, because his only apparent motive is the satisfaction of an overpowering appetite, and he cannot be supposed to have encountered such evils knowingly to please any one but himself. When a man yields to such an irresistible impulse, we must certainly admit that there is something genuine at the bottom of it. Nobody, it may be granted, will make such sacrifices without some very strong motive, which, in the case suggested, is probably a real craving for some kind of stimulant. Even in such a case, however, there is a certain mixture of reality and sham: a man drinks, or begins to drink, partly because it is the fashion of his friends, and he wishes to attain distinction in the only path which is open to him. It is difficult, and for many people impossible, to rise above their neighbors by intellectual or moral qualities, but almost anybody who chooses to do it may gain a certain kind of glory by unusual readiness to destroy the coats of his stomach. It frequently happens that a drunkard is simply a man of exalted ambition, who takes the ready path to eminence, and swells strong spirits because he cannot win glory by more legitimate methods. The feigned passion ultimately becomes a real one, but at its commencement it may become as hypocritical as any other abnormal eccentricity. The habitual drunkard may be the distortion of a village Hampden or a mute, inglorious Milton, who has taken to the consumption of beer instead of patriotism or poetry. Some such reflection must have occurred to many people who have stood upon Epsom Downs during the past week. What proportions of the crowd went there because they really liked it, and what proportion because they only fancied that they must like what so many other people went to see? It is of course an inscrutable problem, and it is inscrutable precisely because, of all the habitual falsehoods that people tell, the most common are those which concern their pleasures. There would be some sense in saying that no man is a hypocrite in his business; because people are ready enough to admit that they go to the city or attend in chambers for many hours daily, not because they like it, but because they are bound by excellent reasons to win their daily bread. But every man is too proud to admit that he seeks his amusement, although it does not amuse him, because somebody has told him that it ought to be amusing. The most familiar examples are sufficient to establish the fact. Take, for example, a crowd at an evening party. Nine men out of ten will frankly avow that they would have been much happier in their slippers, or at their club, smoking a cigar or reading a new book. They go in obedience to a tyranny which has become proverbial, though they cannot precisely analyze its elements. Or look at the crowds which throng the Royal Academy. It would be a liberal computation to say that one man in ten has a real taste for art, or could express any unassisted opinion as to the merits of the rival pictures. But we all profess rather to like it, than otherwise; and come home prepared to be discriminating critics, and to talk as if we had not yawned in spirit throughout our perambulation and resolved to escape at the first convenient opportunity. Such theoretical truths, and it would be needless to quote more, are sufficient to establish the fact that, if we are hypocritical anywhere, we are hypocritical when we pretend to be enjoying ourselves; and that the aphorism we have quoted may be set down with the equally preposterous aphorism that there is no disputing about tastes. There is nothing about which people dispute so often and so keenly, and there are no disputes which produce such a conscious sense of superiority in the persons concerned. A man who differs from us in politics or theology must be wicked; those who differ from us in matters of taste must be not only wicked, but fools; and, as a general rule, we hate fools more than we hate the wicked. At any rate we despise them more heartily, and contempt adds a bitter flavor to antipathies which would otherwise be comparatively harmless.

The philosophy of this curious phenomenon would deserve some examination. Why is it that we are so helpless when we are most left to our own devices, and so given to follow example in matters which only concern ourselves? If we would analyze the crowd which gathered last Wednesday at the Derby, we should first have to strike out the small number who came because they knew something about horse-racing, and the much larger number who came to pick up a living in one way or other. The first class may be supposed to form the nucleus of the crowd, and the last are the hang-on, predatory and otherwise, who will naturally be found wherever any vast number of human beings are congregated together. But taking the great mass who know and care little about the proceeding which serves as a pretext for their gathering, we have to inquire what is the real attraction, and why they cannot find anything better. The only positive reason that is apparent is the pleasure of being in a vast crowd for a certain number of hours. One might have supposed that Londoners, of all people, would have had enough of that particular kind of amusement. Persons who can walk down the Strand every day of their lives need surely take no particular trouble to see a hundred thousand cockneys in a lump. The answer is, we imagine, that it is pleasant to be in a crowd, simply because a crowd forms spontaneously a kind of electric battery. The excitement which is naturally generated by the contact of human beings increases in a much greater ratio than the increase of numbers. An audience of two thousand people is, we may say roughly, four times as enthusiastic as an audience of one thousand. Without consciously plunging into any philosophical speculations, or asking how many of the beings within sight will be alive twenty or fifty years hence, a sensitive observer may be almost affected to tears by the spectacle of a huge mass of humanity. Thus, if we could credit many men with the poetical sense, it might be a sufficient explanation to say that the crowd goes to see itself. Persuade the inhabitants of London that on a given day a hundred thousand people will be collected on a given spot, and a hundred thousand more would doubtless come to see them without any assignable pretext. It is the simplest and most direct mode of obtaining excitement; and excitement, pure and

simple, is a great object with those who, like most of us, are condemned to a monotonous and mill-horse round of existence. It is the same passion which is gratified by pure gambling. It may seem strange that a man should voluntarily put himself in a position of which the only peculiarity is that it is uncertain whether he will be utterly ruined or made twice as rich as before; and yet experience proves that for many men there is a strange charm in simple uncertainty. It is an escape, though by the simplest possible device, from stagnation, and stagnation is the one thing which is utterly unbearable. We enjoy any agitation for the sake of the agitation, and are glad to stir up a pool with a stick if we cannot get an angel to scribble the waters. But the other side of the problem is more puzzling. Admitting that we are need of some kind of excitement, why cannot we discover some more positively agreeable means of producing it? To go on and see a score of horses gallop for between two and three minutes seems to be rather a poor form of pleasure, even if a few people, whose names we scarcely know, and in whose fortunes we take the smallest possible interest, have a good deal of money depending upon which gallops fastest. What is it to us if A. B. has or has not transferred fifty thousand pounds to C. D.? There is a well-known problem as to whether we would walk across the Strand if we knew that by so doing we should save the life of a mandarin at Peking; certainly we should not do it to bring about a change in the Chinese Ministry; and to a great majority of the crowd at Epsom the question as to which ornament of the Turf is to receive and which is to lose the money has little more interest than the question whether one collection of monogylls or another is to be the name of the favorite of the Chinese Emperor. The only way of discovering an answer is to think of the small number of pleasures which are open to mankind in general. The mass of mankind is pretty much in the position of the proverbial snopemaker who tried to set up as a country gentleman but was compelled to come back to town on boiling days. We really do not know how to amuse ourselves, and are forced to snatch at the first pretext that offers itself, and to make believe very hard that we are really enjoying ourselves. It is a duty not as yet generally recognized to study the art of pleasure-hunting. Moralists have assumed that it is one of the tasks which may be left to the unpracticed instincts of mankind, and that preachers should confine themselves chiefly to denouncing an excessive devotion to the pursuit. Yet it is obvious that this ascetic theory takes no notice of a most important deficiency in the characters of most men. We are no more capable of amusing ourselves than of fencing or playing the fiddle without careful training and long practice. If the object of moral teachers is to increase the sum of human happiness, they could certainly incite the cultivation of the faculties which are immediately pleasant to the individual as well as of those which are more indirectly profitable to his race. It is a very good thing to be scrupulously honest and industrious; but the most industrious and honest of men may lead a wretchedly bare and unprofitable life. Why should he not study the theory of deriving the greatest possible amount of innocent enjoyment from the world which he inhabits, as well as that of doing good to other people? Two practical rules would probably result from such an inquiry. The first would be that the extreme importance of every man of providing himself with a good serviceable hobby. Whether he takes to art or literature or natural science, or even to athletic pursuits, he will be qualified to amuse himself; and the numbers of people who collect in crowds to see something in which they take the slightest possible interest is simply a proof of how many hobbyless wretches are still crawling about the world. Even a cultivated taste for cookery or wines is better than nothing, so long as it is kept within certain bounds, and not only provides a man with an interesting pursuit, but certainly promotes the content of his friends. We may admit indeed that this is at about the lowest limit of permissible pleasure-seeking; but it is a fair question for casuistry, whether a man would spend a day better in yawning about a race-course without any taste for horse-racing, or in pursuing with moderation a course of experimental inquiry into the art of dining. There is another rule, however, which is of equal importance, and may be more unreservedly stated. What an enormous advance would be at once made in the art of happiness if people could only be persuaded to a tolerable degree of sincerity! The principle would cut both ways. There are some things which everybody really likes, but for which, from some arbitrary fashion, it is customary to avow contempt; as there are many things which everybody hates, and yet which every one is afraid to denounce. One of the greatest impediments to sound art is that both artists and their admirers are so much inclined to adopt a style recommended by some preconceived theory as to overlook the important question whether they really give and receive pleasure. It is true that, when we know that we are to give a pleasure, there is a further question whether it ought to please; but when the habitual hypocrisy of mankind leaves us in a complete uncertainty as to the first point, our subsequent theorizing is apt to be very unsatisfactory. There would be in one sense no disputing about tastes if we only knew which tastes were genuine, though we might still ask whether they were elevated; but as it is, the first, and often the utterly insoluble question is, whether we really like a so-called pleasure or only persuade ourselves that we like it. If we could thoroughly cross-examine all persons who have been present at the Derby, and publish an accurate account of their answers, we should guess, judging from the settled gloom which was the prevalent expression of most countenances on the homeward road, that the attendance next year would be diminished. The simple satisfaction of being in a crowd would prove to have been purchased at too dear a rate, and the numbers on subsequent occasions would be thinned down to those who had some better cause for merriment. Meanwhile, such performances are likely to remain for many years to come as a standard illustration of the barrenness of the human imagination and the weakness of the pleasure-seeking faculties.

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Most of the cities of our Union have not names of endearment which are almost as well known as their proper titles. Thus we have the Garden City, the Hub, the Crescent and the Twin. One among our larger capitals has a name which is merely a translation of its own into a more familiar and better understood language. We mean Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. It is a city of which an American may well be proud, for here the Declaration of Independence was signed, and the heart of every patriot swells with a nobler emotion as he looks upon the bell which pealed forth with joy at a nation's deliverance. The philanthropist feels his heart throbb with pleasure as he views the noble institutions which a magnificent charity has erected in that favored spot to relieve the distress of humanity. The friend of science rejoices to see the city of the great American printer and philosopher abounding in institutes for science and nurseries of art. Medical students resort to Philadelphia for their professional training. The young man intending to adopt the bar as his occupation seeks her classic groves. The architect finds in her streets and squares, her solemn temples and gorgeous palaces, fit examples for his study and imitation. The merchant from other cities looks with wonder upon the commercial facilities of Philadelphia, her double port, her mineral treasures poured into her lap from the exhaustless resources of the Commonwealth, and the manufacturing energies which put the wheels of industry in motion and send the products of her artisans and the result of the energies of her capitalists to the farthest regions of the West in all points of the compass. From Philadelphia as from a modern Bethesda a healing pool for the diseases of humanity flow out the grand remedies which have stood the test of time, and are known and valued wherever mankind is liable to the ills of flesh or the accidents of climate. Why it is well known of our country, those members of the healing art who furnish the whole world with remedies for every complaint seem to have made their headquarters in the City of Brotherly Love.

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