

# The Simple Life

By CHARLES WAGNER

Translated From the French by Mary Louise Hendee

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CHAPTER VII. (Continued.)

And when you know that you are in a trial, do not draw a sanitary conclusion from them, as though they had the plague, that you cross only with precautions which recall to them their sad lot. On the contrary, after showing all your sympathy, all your respect for their grief, comfort them, help them to take up life again, carry them a breath from the out of doors—something, in short, to remind them that their misfortune does not shut them off from the world.

And so extend your sympathy to those whose work quite absorbs them; who are, so to put it, tied down. The world is full of men and women sacrificed to others, who never have a rest or pleasure and to whom the least relaxation, the slightest respite, is a precious good. And this minimum of comfort could be so easily found for them if only we thought of it. But the brown, you know, is made for sweating, and it seems as though it could not be fatigued. Let us rid ourselves of this criminal blindness which prevents us from seeing the exhaustion of those who are always in the breach. Relieve the sentinels perishing at their posts; give Sisyphtus an hour to breathe; take for a moment the place of the mother, a slave to the cares of her house and her children; sacrifice an hour of our sleep for some one worn by long vigils with the sick; Young Karl, tired sometimes perhaps of your walk with your governess, take the cook's apron and give her the key to the fields. You will at once make others happy and be happy yourself. We go unconsciously along beside our brothers who are under burdens we might take upon ourselves for a minute. And this short respite would suffice to soothe aches, revive the flame of joy in many a heart and open up a wide place for brotherhood. How much better would one understand another if he knew how to put himself heartily in that other's place, and how much more pleasure there would be in life!

I have spoken too fully elsewhere of systematizing amusements for the young to return to it here in detail, but I wish to say in substance what cannot be too often repeated: If you wish youth to be moral do not neglect its pleasures or leave to chance the task of providing them. You will perhaps say that young people do not like to have their amusements submitted to regulations and that, besides, in our day they are already overplayed and divert themselves only too much. I shall reply, first, that one can suggest ideas, indicate directions, offer opportunities for amusement, without making any regulations whatever. In the second place, I shall make you see that you deceive yourselves in thinking youth has too much diversion. Aside from amusements that are artificial, enervating and immoral, that blight life instead of making it bloom in splendor, there are very few left today. Abuse, that enemy of legitimate use, has befouled the world that it is becoming difficult to touch anything but what is unclean; whence watchfulness, warnings and endless prohibitions. One can hardly stir without encountering something that resembles unhealthy pleasure. Among young people of today, particularly the best, the respect, the death of amusements causes real suffering. One is not weaned from this generous vice without discomfort. It is possible to prolong this state of affairs without deepening the shadow round the heads of the younger generations. We must come to their aid. Our children are heirs of a joyless world. We bequeath them cares, hard questions, a life heavy with shackles and complexities. Let us at least make an effort to brighten the morning of their days; let us interest ourselves in their sports, find them pleasure grounds, open to them our hearts and our homes; let us bring the family into our amusements; let gayety cease to be a commodity of export; let us call in our sons, whom our gloomy interiors send out into the street, and our daughters, sniping in dismal solitude; let us multiply anniversaries, family parties and excursions; let us raise good humor in our homes to the height of an institution; let the schools, too, do their part; let masters and students—schoolboys and college boys—meet together often for amusement. It will be so much the better for serious work. There is no such aid to understanding one's profession as to have laughed in his company, and, conversely, to be well understood a pupil must be met elsewhere than in class or examination.

And who will furnish the money? What a question! Pleasure is a great error. Pleasure and money—people take them for the two wings of the same bird! A gross illusion! Pleasure, like all other truly precious things in this world, cannot be bought or sold. If you wish to be amused you must do your part toward it. That is the essential. There is no prohibition against opening your purse, if you can do it and find it desirable, but I assure you it is not indispensable. Pleasure and simplicity are two old acquaintances. Entertain simply, meet your friends simply. If you come from work well done, as are amiable and genuine as possible toward your companions and speak no evil of the absent, your success is sure.

CHAPTER VIII. THE MERCENARY SPIRIT AND SIMPLICITY.

WE have in passing touched upon a certain wisdom and preference which attributes to money a magic power. Having come so near enchanted ground, we will not retire in awe, but plant a firm foot here, persuaded of many truths that should be spoken. They are not new, but how they are forgotten!

I see no possible way of doing without money. The only thing that theorists or legislators who accuse it of all our ills have hitherto achieved has been to change its name or form. But they have never been able to dispense with a symbol representative of the commercial value of things. One might as well wish to do away with written language as to do away with money. Nevertheless this question of a circulating medium is very troublesome. It forms one of the chief elements of complication in our life. The economic difficulties amid which we still flounder, social conventionalities and the entire organization of modern life have carried gold to a rank so

not be drawn up in figures on the ledger of a ledger? Did our mother look for pay in having us and caring for us? What would become of child plying if we asked it for food and clothing for our aged parents?

What does it cost you to speak the truth? Misunderstandings, sometimes sufferings and persecutions. To defend your country? Weariness, wounds and often death. To do good? Annoyance, ingratitude, even resentment. Self sacrifice enters into all the essential actions of humanity. I defy the closest calculators to maintain their position in the world without ever appealing to aught but their calculations. True, those who know how to make their "gold" are not without ability. But look a little closer. How much of it do they owe to the usefulness of the simple hearted? Would they have succeeded had they met only shrewd men of their own sort, having for money the only end in view? Let us be outspoken. It is due to certain people who do not count too rigorously that the world gets on. The most beautiful acts of service and the hardest tasks have generally little remuneration or none. Fortunately there are always men ready for unselfish deeds, and even for those paid only in suffering, though they cost gold, peace and even life. The part these men play is often painful and discouraging. Who is to thank them for their courage and perseverance when the narrator regrets some past kindness he had done, some trouble he had taken, to have nothing but vexation in return? These confidences generally end thus: "It was folly to do that thing." So in times it is right to judge for it is always a mistake to cast pearls before swine. But how many lives there are whose sole acts of real beauty are these very ones of which the doers repent because of men's ingratitude! Our love for humanity is that the number of these foolish deeds may go on increasing.

And now I arrive at the credo of the mercenary spirit. It is characterized by brevity. For the mercenary man the law and the common sense contained in this one axiom: "With money you can get anything." From a surface view of our social life nothing seems more evident. "The sinews of war," the shining mark, "the key that opens all doors," "king money"—if one gathered up all the legends about the glory and power of gold he could make a litany longer than that which is chanted in honor of the Virgin. You must be without a penny, if only for a day or two, and try to live in this world of ours, to have your own needs of him whose purse is empty. I invite those who love contrasts and unforeseen situations to attempt to live without money three days and far from their friends and acquaintances—in short, far from the society in which they are somewhat. They will gain more experience in forty-eight hours than in a year otherwise. Alas for some people! They have this experience thrust upon them, and when vertebrae descend around their heads it is useless to cry: "I have gold!" I invite those who love contrasts and unforeseen situations to attempt to live without money three days and far from their friends and acquaintances—in short, far from the society in which they are somewhat. They will gain more experience in forty-eight hours than in a year otherwise. Alas for some people! They have this experience thrust upon them, and when vertebrae descend around their heads it is useless to cry: "I have gold!"

And, with it all, this credo is false, quite false. I shall not advance to the attack with hackneyed words, but the rich man astray in a desert who cannot get even a drop of water for his gold, or the decrepit millionaire who would give half he has to buy from a stalwart fellow without a cent his twenty years and his lusty health, no more shall I attempt to prove that one may have what he will; without it, impossible to have anything. They become pariahs, lepers, whom every one shuns. Flies swarm round cadavers, men round gold. Take away the gold, nobody is there. Oh, it has a thousand tears to flow, this credo of gain-bitter tears, tears of blood, even from those very eyes which once adored the golden calf!

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"I have used your medicine as you directed," writes Mrs. Caroline Hammac, of Hapnmac, Escambia Co., Ala. "I have only used one bottle of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and in connection I used one bottle of 'Golden Medical Discovery.' Six doses a day, three of each, and sometimes I used the medicine as directed. I feel well. I am hard at work and have been for some time. I had been unable to do any work for years for this same disease and you see how quick your medicine cured me."

"About a year ago I had a mishap which left me in very poor health for some time afterward," writes Mrs. C. S. Johnson, of Gordon, Sheridan Co., Neb. "I employed a local doctor but got only temporary relief, until I commenced using Dr. Pierce's medicine, which I did after consulting you. I am now as well as ever. I took five bottles of the 'Favorite Prescription' and one of the 'Golden Medical Discovery.' I would recommend these medicines to all who suffer as I did."

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