

## II

# AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

“BOSWELL: We grow weary when idle.

“JOHNSON: That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were idle, there would be no growing weary; we should all entertain one another.”

JUST now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *lèse-respectability*, to enter on some lucrative profession, and labour therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, “goes for” them.

And while such an one is ploughing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment, when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for these tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favour of diligence; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels in Montenegro, is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school

honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thoughts.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truantry that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphyteusis is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street

while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this: if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue:—

“How, now, young fellow, what dost thou here?”

“Truly, sir, I take mine ease.”

“Is not this the hour of the class? and should 'st thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge?”

“Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave.”

“Learning, quotha! After what fashion, I pray thee? Is it mathematics?”

“No, to be sure.”

“Is it metaphysics?”

“Nor that.”

“Is it some language?”

“Nay, it is no language.”

“Is it a trade?”

“Nor a trade neither.”

“Why, then, what is 't?”

“Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road; as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment.”

Hereupon, Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much com-moved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatenful countenance, broke forth upon this wise: “Learning, quotha!” said he; “I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman!”

And so he would go his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spread its feathers.

Now this, of Mr. Wiseman, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by; or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older, came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx., which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix., which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic

vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently," and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain underbred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and *Art of Living*? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will

have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way took him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Commonsense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness; but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many firelit parlours; good people laughing, drinking, and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties

for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralysed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuffbox empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his



friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts; and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr. Barnes. And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends; for

he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half an hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his; do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest. There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good humour; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling

rather than tearful children; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorum of the liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused; and within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare! And yet you see merchants who go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into bankruptcy court; scribblers who keep scribbling at little

articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid; and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centrepoint of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought.

## NOTES

THIS essay was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine*, for July 1877, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 80-86. It was next published in the volume, *Virginibus Puerisque*, in 1881. Although this book contains some of the most admirable specimens of Stevenson's style, it did not have a large sale, and it was not until 1887 that another edition appeared. The editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* from 1871 to 1882 was Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), whose kindness and encouragement to the new writer were of the utmost importance at this critical time. That so grave and serious a critic as Leslie Stephen should have taken such delight in a *jeu d'esprit* like *Idlers*, is proof, if any were needed, for the breadth of his literary outlook. Stevenson had been at work on this article a year before its appearance, which shows that his *Apology for Idlers* demanded from him anything but idling. As Graham Balfour says, in his *Life of Stevenson*, I, 122, "Except before his own conscience, there was hardly any time when the author of the *Apology for Idlers* ever really neglected the tasks of his true vocation." In July 1876 he wrote to Mrs. Sitwell, "A paper called 'A Defence of Idlers' (which is really a defence of R. L. S.) is in a good way." A year later, after the publication of the article, he wrote (in August 1877) to Sidney Colvin, "Stephen has written to me apropos of 'Idlers,' that something more in that vein would be agreeable to his views. From Stephen I count that a devil of a lot." It is noteworthy that this charming essay had been refused by *Macmillan's Magazine* before Stephen accepted it for the *Cornhill*. (*Life*, I, 180).

Page 21. The conversation between Boswell and Johnson, quoted at the beginning of the essay, occurred on the 26 October 1769, at the famous Mitre Tavern. In Stevenson's quotation, the word "all" should be inserted after the word "were" to correspond with the original text, and to make sense. Johnson, though constitutionally lazy, was no defender of Idlers, and there is a sly humour in Stevenson's appealing to him as authority. Boswell says in his *Life*, under date of 1780, "He would allow no settled indulgence of idleness upon principle, and always repelled every attempt to urge excuses for it. A friend one day suggested, that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner. JOHNSON: 'Ah, sir, don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner.'"

Page 21. *Lèse-respectability*. From the French verb *leser*, to hurt, to injure. The most common employment of this verb is in the phrase "*lèse-majesté*," high treason. Stevenson's mood here is like that of Lowell, when he said regretfully, speaking of the eighteenth century, "Responsibility for the universe had not then been invented." (*Essay on Gray*.)

Page 21. *Gasconade*. Boasting. The inhabitants of Gascony (*Gascogne*) a province in the south-west of France, are proverbial not only for their impetuosity and courage, but for their willingness to brag of the possession of these qualities. Excellent examples of the typical Gascon in literature are D'Artagnan in Dumas's *Trois Mousquetaires* (1844) and Cyrano in Rostand's splendid drama, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897).

Page 21. *In the emphatic Americanism*, "goes for" them. When Stevenson wrote this (1876-77), he had not yet been in America. Two years later, in 1879, when he made the journey across the plains, he had many opportunities to record Americanisms far more emphatic than the harmless phrase quoted here, which can hardly be

called an Americanism. Murray's *New English Dictionary* gives excellent English examples of this particular sense of "go for" in the years 1641, 1790, 1864, and 1882!

Page 22. *Alexander is touched in a very delicate place.* Alluding to the famous interview between the young Alexander and the old Diogenes, which took place at Corinth about 330 B. C. Alexander asked Diogenes in what way he could be of service to him, and the philosopher replied gruffly, "By standing out of my sunshine." As a young man Diogenes had been given to all excesses of dissipation; but he later went to the opposite extreme of asceticism, being one of the earliest and most striking illustrations of "plain living and high thinking." The debauchery of his youth and the privation and exposure of his old age did not deeply affect his hardy constitution, for he is said to have lived to the age of ninety. In the charming play by the Elizabethan, John Lyly, *A moste excellente Comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* (1584), the conversations between the man who has conquered the world and the man who has overcome the world are highly entertaining.

Page 22. *Where was the glory of having taken Rome.* This refers to the invasion by the Gauls about the year 389 B. C. A good account is given in T. Arnold's *History of Rome* I, pp. 534 et seq.

Page 22. *Sent to Coventry.* The origin of this proverb, which means of course, "to ostracise," probably dates back to 1647, when, according to Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion*, VI, par. 83, Royalist prisoners were sent to the parliamentary stronghold of Coventry, in Warwickshire.

Page 22. *Montenegro . . . Richmond.* Montenegro is one of the smallest principalities in the world, about 3,550 square miles. It is in the Balkan peninsula, to the east of the lower Adriatic, between Austro-Hungary and Turkey. When Stevenson was writing this essay, 1876-77, Montenegro was the subject of much discussion, owing to



the part she took in the Russo-Turkish war. The year after this article was published (1878) Montenegro reached the coast of the Adriatic for the first time, and now has two tiny seaports. Tennyson celebrated the hardy virtues of the inhabitants in his sonnet *Montenegro*, written in 1877.

“O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne  
Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm  
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years.”

*Richmond* is on the river Thames, close to the city of London.

Page 22. *Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours.* Stevenson here alludes to the oft-heard statement that the men who succeed in after life have generally been near the foot of their classes at school and college. It is impossible to prove either the falsity or truth of so general a remark, but it is easier to point out men who have been successful both at school and in life, than to find sufficient evidence that school and college prizes prevent further triumphs. Macaulay, who is noted by Stevenson as an exception, was precocious enough to arouse the fears rather than the hopes of his friends. When he was four years old, he hurt his finger, and a lady inquiring politely as to whether the injured member was better, the infant replied gravely, “Thank you, Madam, the agony is abated.”

Page 23. *The Lady of Shalott.* See Tennyson’s beautiful poem (1833).

“And moving thro’ a mirror clear  
That hangs before her all the year,  
Shadows of the world appear.”

Page 23. *Some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking.* Cf. *King Lear*, Act I, Sc. 2, vs. 15. “Got ’tween asleep and wake.”

Page 23. *Kinetic Stability. . . . Emphyteusis. . . . Stillicide.* For *Kinetic Stability*, see any modern text-book on *Physics*. *Emphyteusis* is the legal renting of ground; *Stillicide*, a continual dropping of water, as from the eaves of a house. These words, *Emphyteusis* and *Stillicide*, are terms in Roman Law. Stevenson is of course making fun of the required studies of *Physics* and Roman Law, and of their lack of practical value to him in his chosen career.

Page 24. *The favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac.* The great English novelist Dickens (1812-1870) and his greater French contemporary Balzac (1799-1850), show in their works that their chief school was Life.

Page 24. *Mr. Worldly Wiseman.* The character in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), who meets Christian soon after his setting out from the City of Destruction. *Pilgrim's Progress* was a favorite book of Stevenson's; he alludes to it frequently in his essays. See also his own article *Bagster's Pilgrim's Progress*, first published in the *Magazine of Art* in February 1882. This essay is well worth reading, and the copies of the pictures which he includes are extremely diverting.

Page 25. *Sainte-Beuve.* The French writer Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869) is usually regarded today as the greatest literary critic who ever lived. His constant change of convictions enabled him to see life from all sides.

Page 27. *Belvedere of Commonsense.* *Belvedere* is an Italian word, which referred originally to a place of observation on the top of a house, from which one might enjoy an extensive prospect. A portion of the Vatican in Rome is called the *Belvedere*, thus lending this name to the famous statue of Apollo, which stands there. On the continent, anything like a summer-house is often called a *Belvedere*. One of the most interesting localities which bears this name is the *Belvedere* just outside of Weimar, in Germany, where Goethe used to act in his own dramas in the open air theatre.

Page 27. *The plangent wars.* Plangent is from the Latin *plango*, to strike, to beat. Stevenson's use of the word is rather unusual in English.

Page 27. *The old shepherd telling his tale.* See Milton, *L'Allegro*:—

“And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.”

“Tells his tale” means of course “counts his sheep,” not “tells a story.” The old use of the word “tell” for “count” survives to-day in the word “teller” in a parliamentary assemblage, or in a bank.

Page 29. *Colonel Newcome. . . Fred Bayham . . . Mr. Barnes . . . Falstaff . . . Barabbases . . . Hazlitt . . . Northcote.* Colonel Newcome, the great character in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1854). *Fred Bayham* and *Barnes Newcome* are persons in the same story. One of the best essays on Falstaff is the one printed in the first series of Mr. Augustine Birrell's *Obiter Dicta* (1884). This essay would have pleased Thackeray. One of the finest epitaphs in literature is that pronounced over the supposedly dead body of Falstaff by Prince Hal—“I could have better spared a better man.” (*King Henry IV*, Part I, Act V, Sc. 4.) *Barabbas* was the robber who was released at the time of the trial of Christ. . . *William Hazlitt* (1778-1830), the well-known essayist, published in 1830 the *Conversations of James Northcote* (1746-1831). Northcote was an artist and writer, who had been an assistant in the studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Stevenson projected a *Life of Hazlitt*. but later abandoned the undertaking. (*Life*, I, 230.)

Page 30. *The quality of mercy.* See Portia's wonderful speech in the *Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene I.

Page 32. *Joan of Arc.* The famous inspired French peasant girl, who led the armies of her king to victory, and who was burned at Rouen in 1431. She was variously regarded as a harlot and a saint. In Shakspeare's historical plays, she is represented in the basest manner, from

conventional motives of English patriotism. Voltaire's scandalous work, *La Pucelle*, and Schiller's noble *Jungfrau von Orleans* make an instructive contrast. She has been the subject of many dramas and works of poetry and fiction. Her latest prominent admirer is Mark Twain, whose historical romance *Joan of Arc* is one of the most carefully written, though not one of the most characteristic of his books.

Page 32. "*So careless of the single life.*" See Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, LV, where the poet discusses the pessimism caused by regarding the apparent indifference of nature to the happiness of the individual.

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life."

Page 23. *Shakespeare . . . Sir Thomas Lucy*. The familiar tradition that Shakspeare as a boy was a poacher on the preserves of his aristocratic neighbor, Sir Thomas Lucy. See Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*. In 1879, at the first performance of *As You Like It* at the Stratford Memorial Theatre, the deer brought on the stage in Act IV, Scene 2, had been shot that very morning by H. S. Lucy, Esq., of Charlecote Park, a descendant of the owner of the herd traditionally attacked by the future dramatist.

Page 32. *Atlas*. In mythology, the leader of the Titans, who fought the Gods, and was condemned by Zeus to carry the weight of the vault of heaven on his head and hands. In the sixteenth century the name Atlas was given to a collection of maps by Mercator, probably because a picture of Atlas had been commonly placed on the title-pages of geographical works.

Page 33. *Pharoah . . . Pyramid*. For *Pharoah's* experiences with the Israelites, see the book of *Exodus*.

Pharaoh was merely the name given by the children of Israel to the rulers of Egypt: cf. Caesar, Kaiser, etc. . . . The Egyptian pyramids were regarded as one of the seven wonders of ancient times, the great pyramid weighing over six million tons. The pyramids were used for the tombs of monarchs.

Page 33. *Young men who work themselves into a decline.* Compare the tone of the close of this essay with that of the conclusion of *Æs Triplex*. Stevenson himself died in the midst of the most arduous work possible—the making of a literary masterpiece.