course there is not one reflection but an almost in-

in. As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of

prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived

is seen by other people—what an airless, shallow, bald,

antest thoughts, and very frequent even in the minds

of modest mouse-colored people, who believe genu-

inely that they dislike to hear their own praises. They

are not thoughts directly praising oneself; that is the

beauty of them; they are thoughts like this:

hit upon a pleasant track of thought, a track indirectly reflecting credit upon myself, for those are the pleas-

cal fiction! It doesn't interest me at all. I wish I could

on a dust heap on the site of an old house in Kingsway. The seed, I said, must have been sown in the reign of

cussing botany. I said how I'd seen a flower growing

"And then I came into the room. They were dis-

and I, not being a very vigilant housekeeper-look which, so they say, buried Troy three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one may even be caused by some round black substance, such as a small rose leaf, left over from the summer, at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust

and blues—which will, as time goes on, become more groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees, and which are men rose-shaped blots of an indistinct color-dim pinks stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. tersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, indefinite, become—I don't know what....

And yet that mark on the wall is not a hole at all. It

the pane.... I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, The tree outside the window taps very gently on never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green

sessions we have—what an accidental affair this living few of the things lost in one lifetime, beginning, for what cat would gnaw, what rat would nibble—three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools? Then there scraping paring affair it is to be sure! The wonder is to compare life to anything, one must liken it to belanding at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! like brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! With one's hair flying back like the tail of a race-horse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of is after all our civilization—let me just count over a were the bird cages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the hand organ—all gone, and jewels, too. Opals and emeralds, they lie about the roots of turnips. What a that I've any clothes on my back, that I sit surrounded by solid furniture at this moment. Why, if one wants Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so the Queen Anne coal-scuttle, the bagatelle board, ing blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour that seems always the most mysterious of losses-

on the Wall The Mark

Charles the First. What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First?" I asked—(but, I don't remember the answer). Tall flowers with purple tassels to them perhaps. And so it goes on. All the time I'm dressing stealthily, not openly adoring it, for if I did that, I should catch myself out, and stretch my hand at once for a book in self-protection. Indeed, it is curious how instinctively one protects the image of oneself from idolatry or any other handling that could make it ridiculous, or too unlike the original to be believed in any longer. Or is it not so very curious after all? It is a matter of great importance. Suppose the looking glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which

chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without

any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard

separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of

the first idea that passes.... Shakespeare.... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door,—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—But how dull this is, this histori-

up the figure of myself in my own mind, lovingly,



of red knights riding up the side of the black rock er came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade

Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupt

fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle towfor a moment upon the burning coals, and that old the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up

I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the

through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged

film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember present that I first looked up and saw the mark on the

PERHAPS it was the middle of January in the

ed the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy,

mark, black upon the white wall, about six or sever made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round

made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must so feverishly, and then leave it.... If that mark was ject, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw inches above the mantelpiece. How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new ob

> old lady about to pour out tea and the young man saying that in his opinion art should have ideas behind queer places, because one will never see them again, suburban villa as one rushes past in the train. it when we were torn asunder, as one is torn from the style of furniture, so he said, and he was in process of leave this house because they wanted to change their never know what happened next. They wanted to room. That is the sort of people they were—very inchosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the teresting people, and I think of them so often, in such the people who had this house before us would have have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady

humanity! To show how very little control of our posof life; The inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for But as for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't

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by Virginia Woolf

men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is

dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the against the stream like flags blown out; and of water-beetles slowly raiding domes of mud upon the bed close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes.... One by one the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the est branches drive deep into the ground again. Even comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced of the river. I like to think of the tree itself:-first the of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highso, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where

"Though it's no good buying newspapers.... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this

war!... All the same, I don't see why we should have a

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail

snail on our wall."

the wine-glass that Nelson drank out of-proving I really don't know what.

full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way.... Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't

take action as a way of ending any thought that threat-

ens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action—men, we assume,

who don't think. Still, there's no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at

a mark on the wall.

remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing.... There is a vast upheaval of matter.

Someone is standing over me and saying— "Tm going out to buy a newspaper."
"Yes?"

ers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water and health of mind increases.... Yes, one could imag our superstitions dwindle and our respect for beauty language of the stars? And the less we honor them as well as standing up. And what is knowledge? What are ter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as fire-lit room, what should I gain?— Knowledge? Matfirst view of modern life in the sight of a white-walled tient attrition of many generations of housemaids, resay?—the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hang world without professors or specialists or house-keep with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields. A ine a very pleasant world. A quiet, spacious world hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing our learned men save the descendants of witches and vealed its head above the coat of paint, and is taking its hundred years ago, which has now, owing to the pathat the mark on the wall is really—what shall we herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the No, no, nothing is proved, nothing is known. And

> every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, while the of aged laborers to the top here, examining clods of Colonel himself feels agreeably philosophic in accujourneys to the county towns, an agreeable necessity fast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the the neighboring clergy, which, being opened at breakearth and stone, and getting into correspondence with make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have both to them and to their elderly wives, who wish to comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country Colonels for the most part, I daresay, leading parties What sort of a man is an antiquary, I wonder? Retired have dug up those bones and given them a name.... must be some book about it. Some antiquary must

you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which esan intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom—if free-Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth, leaving us all with go, the mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints, become, I suppose, since the war half a phantom to dom. What now takes the place of those things I wonwill be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms many men and women, which soon—one may hope, der, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should tablishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency, which has believer in them was only a sense of illegitimate freephantoms, and the damnation which visited the dis-

walks, Sunday luncheons, and also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits—like the habit of

back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon

the risk of nameless damnation. Generalizations bring real thing, from which one could not depart save at

one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet minis-

ters—a whole class of things indeed which as a child are very worthless. The military sound of the word

and Shakespeare perhaps—but these generalizations taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did finite number; those are the depths they will explore,

scription of reality more and more out of their stories, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the de-

od was that they should be made of tapestry with little

thing. The rule for tablecloths at that particular perisitting all together in one room until a certain hour

although nobody liked it. There was a rule for every

wonderful it was to discover that these real things

and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed hali Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses of the royal palaces. Tablecloths of a different kind yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you

were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors

of the wall it would, at a certain point, mount and to be tombs, desiring melancholy like most English cannot be sure, but it seems to cast a perceptible shadbarrows on the South Downs which are, they say, eidescend a small tumulus, a smooth tumulus like those ow, suggesting that if I ran my finger down that strip ly to project from the wall. Nor is it entirely circular. I think of the bones stretched beneath the turf.... There people, and finding it natural at the end of a walk to ther tombs or camps. Of the two I should prefer them In certain lights that mark on the wall seems actual-

about to read at the quarterly meeting of the local so-

true that he does finally incline to believe in the camp;

that I have grasped a plank in the sea, I feel a satisfying ops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; For years and years they grow, without paying any Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel shades. Here is something definite, something real. ping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishhastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipwhich is a proof of some existence other than ours. side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. That is what one wants to be sure of....

ng suspended over nests of white sea eggs.... How I must jump up and see for myself what that mark Here is nature once more at her old game of finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The beaceful it is drown here, rooted in the center of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with heir sudden gleams of light, and their reflections—if it were not for Whitaker's Almanack—if it were not on the wall really is—a nail, a rose-leaf, a crack in the is threatening mere waste of energy, even some collision with reality, for who will ever be able to lift a Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York. Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows, and let that, so Nature counsels, comfort you, instead of enraging you; and if you can't be comorted, if you must shatter this hour of peace, think of self-preservation. This train of thought, she perceives, for the Table of Precedency! the mark on the wall.

I understand Nature's game—her prompting to

many Tudor clay pipes, a piece of Roman pottery, and murderess, a handful of Elizabethan nails, a great local museum, together with the foot of a Chinese that arrowhead there, which is now in the case at the thoughts are not of wife or child, but of the camp and ciety when a stroke lays him low, and his last conscious and, being opposed, indites a pamphlet which he is mulating evidence on both sides of the question. It is