"Old Country Life."*

"Old Country Life" takes us into the atmosphere of the "good old times" before the fever of socialism, materialism, atheism, naturalism, and all the other isms of this modern age, had invaded and taken possession of the world. This age of subtle analyses, of infinite desires and boundless irresponsibility, of wants increased by intelligence, and of passions instead of instincts, is for the nonce forgotten. We smell lavender, we have visions of old *châteaux*, stately dames in brocades and snuff-taking gentlemen in powdered wigs, quaint old terraced gardens, paradises of roses and dreams, with sunny walks protected by vine-grown walls, stiff parterres, hollyhocks, phlox, mignonette, and boxwood hedges. We read first about the old country families, how they rose and flourished, and how they have in many instances vanished from the face of the earth. They were simple folk. To quote Mr. Gould:

> "The country gentry in those days were not very wealthy. They lived very much on the produce of the home farm, and their younger sons went into trade, and their daughters, without any sense of degradation, married yeomen."

It seems that even to marry a blacksmith was not considered very terrible for a young woman of quality, as a daughter of the house of Glan-

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*Old Country Life. By S. Baring-Gould, M.A. With Illustrations by W. Parkenson, F. D. Bedford, and F. Masy. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

ville was allowed to marry a Tavistock blacksmith, and he was entered as "faber" in the pedigree they enrolled with the heralds. "It was quite another matter when one of the sons or daughters was guilty of misconduct; then he or she was struck out of the pedigree." The English aristocracy of to-day might copy their ancestors in this respect with profit.

Mr. Gould proceeds to draw attention to the fact that —

"The occasion of that irruption of false pride relative to 'soiling the hands' with trade was the great change that ensued after Queen Anne's reign. . . . Vast numbers of estates changed hands, passed away from the old aristocracy into the possession of men who had amassed fortunes in trade, and it was among the children of these rich retired tradesmen that there sprang up such a contempt for whatever savoured of the shop and the counting-house."

It is very curious to notice the evolution in houses since the fourteenth century. That they were more picturesque than cheerful or comfortable, we should imagine from the description of the original manor-house of the Arundels:

"This house consisted of three courts; one is a mere garden court, through which access was had to the main entrance; through this passed the way into the principal quadrangle. The third court was for stables and cattle-sheds. Now this house has but a single window in it looking outwards, and that is the great hall window; all the rest look inwards into the tiny quadrangle, which is almost like a well, never illumined by the sun, so small is it."

Mr. Gould also speaks of an old English house, Upcott by name, which shows how extremely primitive customs were in England, even at a comparatively late date:

"This house has or had but a *single* bedroom, . . . in which slept the unmarried ladies of the family and the maid servants, and where was the nursery for the babies. All the men of the family, gentle and serving, slept in the hall about the fire, on the straw and fern and broom that littered the pavement."

With the Tudor monarchs came in the era of broad wide windows, stately staircases, and the fine carved oak furniture of the German Renaissance. Marquetry became the fashion under William and Mary; and under Louis XIV. Monsieur André Buhl fashioned the exquisite cabinets, adorned with a marquetry of tortoise-shell and brass, which are known as Buhl cabinets to this day. With Louis XV. came the reign of rococo. White and gold walls, decorated panels and brilliant colors, took the place of the oak panels and demi-tints of Elizabethan times. Then came Chippendale, Heppelwhite, and Sheraton, then "the deluge." As Mr. Gould pertly says,—

"The only furniture that cannot be loved is that of the first thirty years of this century, when it violated all true principles of construction, and manifested neither invention nor taste in design."

Mr. Gould next gives us a charming chapter on "The Old Garden," in which he mourns the fast disappearing ones of Rome. Whoever has loitered in the Ludovisi gardens on a sunny afternoon, or picked violets in the green alleys of the Borghese or Rospigliosi palaces, must join in these lamentations. There is a melancholy charm about these old gardens which a new one, however beautiful, cannot possess. The romance of centuries, the spell of the mysterious, is there. Men and women have come and gone, leaving no visible trace, but the tragedies and comedies of human life pulsate in the very air we breathe. The gold-dust of sunbeams, the concentrated perfume of a thousand flowers, float about us.

Mr. Gould makes a plea for the graceful and dignified minuets and measures of our forefathers. He says that "the dance as a fine art is extinct among us. It has been expelled by the intrusive waltz." He would wish to substitute "Sweet Kate," "Bobbing Joan," or "The Triumph."

Our author gives us some very curious and interesting facts in regard to heredity, in his chapter on "Family Portraits." By calculation, he imparts to us the astounding and confusing information that "in the reign of Henry III. there were over a million independent individuals, walking, talking, eating, marrying, whose united blood was to be, in 1889, blended in your veins." No wonder that Schopenhauer defined a human being as the "possibility of many contradictions."

In the reign of Elizabeth, music was brought to great perfection. At that time, every gentleman was expected to be able to play or sing at sight, and wherever men and women met part-songs were sung. The Elizabethan poets were so permeated with this spirit of music that in their poems we feel the music between the lines. With the idealism, the burning note of passion and of love, the glowing imageries imprisoned in rhyme, the intensity, the freshness, the spontaneity, of the poetry of the Elizabethan age, is always combined the lyrical element. Some of these poems almost sing themselves. Even the serving-maids, we read in Pepys' "Diary," entertained their masters and mistresses with music of various kinds. In those days, however, very few persons kept servants, and they were often taken from among their own relatives. Pepys took his own sister

to be servant in his house, and afterward two young ladies, acquaintances of his wife's brother, as his sister's temper proved unsatisfactory. "Our forefathers do not seem at one time to have thought that domestic service was derogatory to gentility." Menial, Mr. Gould points out, simply means within walls, from the Latin *intra-moenia*, which, by the way, he erroneously writes *intra-menia*. Menial service thus simply meant in-door work, and involved no social degradation. When we read how Pepys and his wife amused themselves by spending their evenings with their servants, listening to pretty Mary Mercer sing, or Mary Ashewell play on the harpsicon, we ask if that was not in those times more true social equality than is found in the boasted democracy of to-day.

Mr. Gould is perhaps too much inclined to retrospective optimism, but this tendency is fully compensated by the thoroughly sympathetic way in which it enables him to treat his subject. His book is quaintly illustrated, and the publishers' work is exceptionally well done.

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