

ZWEIBAK: BEING NOTES OF A PROFESSIONAL EXILE.

I HAVE come on here from Switzerland, where it has been hot. I stayed with H— at his villa on the lake of Geneva. H—'s house is suited to hot weather. The lawn comes down to the edge of the lake, with the colors of which the large basins of carnations make a pleasant contrast. The dining-room is upon a level with the lawn and opens directly on it. Its floor is an inlaid one and the porphyry pillars match well with the blue water. It is the kind of house a Roman gentleman should have had on the banks of Como. H— let me breakfast in a small room on the upper floor, which has no porphyry pillars, it is true, but which had some books, and which looked out on the lake, with whose pervading azure the room seemed to be filled. I sat in the midst of this azure and read and had an unusually good breakfast of cutlets and red wine. There were no women about, nothing to affect the shade, the silence, and the liberty of the house, except the voice of Gustave when he said: "Monsieur est servi."

On the day I left I said to H—, "My dear fellow, I have been very well treated here. You have given me a horse to ride over these hills in the morning, and a boat to sail on the lake in the afternoon. How I have enjoyed this breakfast-room! This permeating azure has taken possession of my being. I have been allowed as much of my own society as I liked. With the exception of giving me your soothing company at dinner, you have kept yourself out of the way. And all this for the twenty francs which I shall give to Gustave. It is the cheapest and best thing I have seen in Europe."

H—'s dinners were excellent. There were two or three snow-peaks in sight. I don't admire Swiss scenery profoundly, but I agree that these peaks are good things to have over your shoulder if you are dining rather well. They have the effect of a pretty label on a bottle of German wine. But I have no respect for them,— not the slightest.

The fact that Switzerland is such a place for holiday-makers has given its scenery a kind of frivolity. It was a lovely day when I came in the steamer through the lake of Thun. The boat was crowded with sight-seers, and Switzerland was determined they should not be disappointed, for there on our right were the white peaks decorating the blue heavens and glistening for the entertainment of the lakes.

I often come to Zweibak, and I have always

liked it. I have a feeling of hope and exhilaration as the train moves into the little station. At the same time I am always on each successive visit afraid I shall not enjoy it as I have done before. But it has never failed to amuse me, and I have always left it with regret.

Of course I don't know how it will be this time, but it promises well. The tradespeople on the main street recognize me. That is one of the good points of the place. I find myself among old friends. I like knowing the people who give me my letters at the post-office and the young woman at the barber's shop. When I alighted at the station the porter of my hotel recognized me with a shout of welcome which seemed to be sincere, and actually shook me by the hand. The hotel to which I go is not one of those with English names, but an honest German place, which is cheaper and better than the smart ones. At the door I received from the landlady that welcome which is proverbially warm. I don't at all think less of kindness from landlords and landladies because I know I am to pay for my entertainment.

The town is full of English and Americans, although there are of course a great many Germans. I am here to see the Americans. Being an exile by profession, a few weeks with my compatriots who are here is almost like a visit home. Some of them are old friends whom I meet after a separation of years; others, again, I shall meet for the first time; and there are still others whom I may not have a chance of meeting at all, but whom I may at any rate look at from a distance. There are but few men among them. They are almost all of the other sex, and I am delighted to see how much they look like women.

... There are two faults I have to find with American women. One is this, that they are apt to be deficient in a positive female character. This is certainly true of many New England women. I do not mean that they are in the least masculine. On the contrary they are often people of a delicate and refined sort; but they appear to be neuters. Their womanly character is rather negative than positive. Now I think that the feminine nature should be as distinct and positive as the male. The female mind should be as strong after its kind as the male should be after its kind. The fault I refer to appears, by the way, to be a quality of well-born and well-educated women. Another fault I have to find with our women is

perhaps the quality of women of inferior education. Many of our women, and particularly our young girls, seem to be wanting in courtesy. Our girls are often rude. A crabbed bachelor of my acquaintance who lives in Paris ascribes this rudeness to the fact that American women find it easier to get husbands than the women of other countries, and therefore do not think it worth their while to be civil to men. Whatever the cause may be, there can be no doubt of the fact. I say that these girls are of inferior education in whom this rudeness appears. Well-bred women are often rude, but their rudeness is of the thought rather than of the speech or behavior. It is perhaps nearly as unpleasant to the recipient as the more outspoken sort, but of course it is more consistent with ladylike pretensions. The rudeness of some girls that one sees seems almost to be an expression of a consciousness of vulgarity.

But it is not enough that women should be civil in speech and bearing while their minds are proud and contemptuous. There is an ideal courtesy in women which is a quality of the soul; it is one of the most beautiful of female attributes. It was this quality in his Beatrice which first struck the delicate and reverential mind of the youthful Dante. I have myself so high an estimate of this quality that I hesitate to say that our girls are wanting in it.

Certainly this generalization led me wrong the other night. It was at the dance on Thursday at the Kursaal. I noticed an interesting figure of a girl standing in one of the groups of a square dance. She was slight, rather small, neatly dressed, and had a pretty face. But what was particularly captivating about her was the modesty of her look. There was a demure sinking of the eye, a patient holding of the shoulders, and her entire figure had an air of exquisite deference.

"I wonder who that is," said an English lady; "I find her quite charming. I think she is one of your compatriots."

I said I feared not. She seemed to me too courteous. Besides, there was a fullness of the features which I thought might have been Austrian.

The lady said, "Either German or American; certainly not English."

We asked the Kurmaster who that fraulein was. He inquired and came and told us that it was "Miss Digs, of Utica."

. . . I find that the great superiority of our women is in the fact that they are themselves. I do not say that they are superior in individuality to English women, although I am inclined to think that they are, for the reason that the repression of individuality which English

women are compelled to practice must in some degree affect the strength of the quality itself. But the truth is, I fancy, that the people of one country are about as individual as those of another, and that most people are more individual than we suppose. If you go to live in any family or to work in any office, you will find that people whom at first you take to be commonplace become, after you have known them a little while, more and more individual. I have never yet lived in any community which I did not find to contain a good many of what are called "characters." I would not say, therefore, that our women are so much superior in individuality. Their superiority is that they express their individuality. It is for this reason that they please to such a degree. Other women, no doubt, exhibit their individuality in their own families, to their husbands and brothers. Our women exhibit their individuality in society, where we all get the benefit of it. The charm of girlhood and womanhood is freely expressed among us. The difference between European girlhood and our own is that between game in regions hunted by man and the animal life of some virgin island of the sea. In the first instance the game is very wild, but the island bird will settle on your shoulder. The downcast eye, flushed cheek, and low voice are charming; but I am not sure whether I prefer them to the bright confidence of a Yankee maiden. I am not proof against that refined timidity of a nursery-bred young lady of the Old World; but is the charm she communicates quite so lively as that of her American sister?

The repression of the individuality of English women is, of course, due to the necessity they are under of conforming to a standard of manners which they appear always to have before their eyes. The more I see of English women here, the more sure I am that this is true. I observe it not only on comparing them with the women of our own country, but on comparing them with those of other countries. Perhaps to this cause is due the fact—I am sure it is a fact—that English women cannot smile with the force of French women. Yet there is often something admirable about this very repression. Take, for instance, some neat matron or some still comely maiden lady young enough to wish to be handsome,—a class in which that country abounds,—who has her tea-table opinions upon politics and what not, and whose accents, gestures, and sentiments even are modish,—one is often pleased, beneath the bonds which confine her mind, to notice an elastic, vigorous, and charming nature. Indeed I think that a fault of our women is that they are too much expressed; they are too tense. This may be due

in some slight degree to the education which some of them receive in high schools and colleges. I went once to the commencement of an American female college. I did not like what I saw,—the young ladies looked to me so wound up. The life they led seemed unnatural and unreasonable. Why should they be made to read essays to a thousand people in a great hall? This practice is of course borrowed from that of the male colleges. The custom began, I suppose, with the notion that the ability to make a speech was the peculiar ability of a public man, that he was the highest kind of a man, and that colleges were intended for the education of public men. The graduate got up on commencement day and showed what his college education had done for him. This notion has been very much modified, but perhaps it is even yet a good custom to be pursued by male colleges. There will come times in the life of almost any man when it will be necessary for him to make a speech; and he will present a very poor appearance if he cannot do it. But on what occasion is it necessary for a woman to make a speech? Is it when she is engaged or when she is married; is it when she becomes a mother or a grandmother?

At this commencement the young ladies all read essays, and I must admit that they were not so much frightened as they should have been. Then, apart from any objection to their appearing at all, I objected to the character of the appearance they made. I was shocked at the conventional pertness which they seemed to have cultivated. They had adopted in their essays a silly fashion of joking. Now I am always interested in the humorous perceptions of my compatriots. It is often a source of surprise to me when at home to find how many people there are who have a humorous way of looking at things. But the jokes of these young ladies were not good. They consisted of commonplaces, put into long Latin words. The recipe appeared to be this, that that which in Saxon English is a mere plain statement becomes very witty when turned into Latinized English. They kept this up incessantly, the only relief being when some serious allusion to their approaching separation would recall them to their proper employment of shedding tears.

There was one of these essayists, a young lady who really seemed to have some natural humor, who awakened my keen commiseration. Her tense mind seemed altogether too much for her slight body. I wanted to tell her to go and sit at her grandmother's window, near the shadow of the lilac bushes, to immure her mind and thin hands in deep dishes of pumpkin batter, to stay a whole summer in

some still village with only a little poetry to read, and away from all stimulating society.

I have said that American vulgarity exhibits itself in rudeness. English vulgarity, on the other hand, generally appears under the form of undue conformity. I cannot describe to you how strong my sense is of the prevalence of this quality among many of the English people that I see here. There is a rather underdone young Englishman here, a very good-natured fellow, in whom this conformity has settled downwards to the very soles of his boots; you see it in the things he says, in the tones of his voice, his gestures, and attitudes. Want of breeding, by the way, is much more easily discernible in men than in women. Among young women rosy cheeks and a pair of bright eyes and the feminine adaptability cover up this quality very much. But you will see the imitation in them also, if you look closely.

I went this afternoon to take tea with some English people who are at the hotel opposite. There was an amiable, fresh-looking girl who poured out the tea. She was an exceedingly nice girl. If manners must be imitative, I don't think any could be better than hers. But it was true that you could see by her way of sitting, by her way of holding her shoulders, and by the manner of her references to the accidents of English fashionable life, as if they were, and as if they were not, quite her own, that her mind was sat upon by some standard of behavior to which she felt herself obliged to conform. Perhaps this imitation might become tiresome if one lived in England, but with people who have such good nature and such good looks as this family one does not mind a little of it.

. . . I see I have written above rather slightly about the manners of certain English women. I admire them greatly, however. The qualities of the British nature are such as are particularly suitable to women. Those qualities,—benevolence, sense, dignity, decency, rectitude,—when combined with feminine softness, make up a character which is like balsam to the mind. The mental dullness proper to the nation is also to some degree refined away in them. When these qualities are united with beauty, with high breeding, and, as is sometimes the case, with majesty of form and countenance, you have indeed a fine object. The English women here are almost altogether of the middle and upper classes; but what strikes you when you visit England is the high average of female beauty. You see there exceedingly fine persons among the lower classes. One of the most beautiful women I ever saw there was a lodging-house keeper. The last time I was in England I went to

look for lodgings in Queen street. The door was opened by a large woman of thirty-five, fair and rather full in figure, whose mild beauty of countenance and aspect astonished me. For the moment I thought I had before me one of the grand illusions of Rubens. She seemed to me a figure such as the joyful humor of some great painter might have perpetuated from one of those times and places of happy repose which the centuries conceal. Her beauty was one which preferred to flourish in the shade. This good man's house, which no doubt did as well as any, she had selected for her sojourn. She was content here to be cutting bread and butter, glad to be shielded from the eyes of the world. A peculiarity of this woman was that she had an air of habitual perturbation. She was one of that class of women who find their beauty a burden and lament the necessity they are under of having to carry it about with them. The lodgings were extremely nice, and I thought how pleasant it would be to take them and give tea parties at which she should bring in the things; but I found this was out of the question. She asked five guineas for the rooms, with three and sixpence for the kitchen fire and linen, bath, lights, and boots extra.

. . . I have said that English women cannot smile. If they cannot smile they can frown, which I like nearly as well. There is a lady whom I often meet with her children in the streets and at church. I cannot conceive of her smiling. Her face—a dark oval one—and her carriage express the utmost decision, and at service she prays with such resolution! And there is a young girl here of something the same character. Her concentrated gravity and earnestness of expression mask or reveal an honest mind. She has this expression always. When she dances even it is with a serious and energetic face, her shoulders back,—revolving like a soldier on drill.

. . . I am always surprised at the amount of good poetry in the American magazines and newspapers. I came across the other day in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Paper," a poem written by some girl of about twenty-three (I suppose) who thought herself very old. The poem was addressed to a young man with whom she appeared to have had a flirtation, we will say at the age of twenty. She tells him that the love they threw away so lightly was not a thing to be met with every day and was worth keeping. The title, I think, was "Rags." At any rate the thought was that this love had now become rags. It had gone into the old rag-bag, the Past; "Time" she said, was the "old Rag-man." Isn't it good? You can fancy the poetess to be some rather

high-pressure Yankee girl, clever, perhaps satirical, a little romantic, and what you would call intense, with a brow of premature thought, a sallow cheek (such is my notion), and a face and figure in which is ill concealed the energy of her disposition. What particularly strikes you is that the young lady is evidently her own mistress. There is no chaperon or a suspicion of one anywhere about. I may here say that I think this independence necessary to a thoroughly interesting female character. Do not all the heroines of poetry and romance have it? The Homeric Nausicaa, the Chloes and Phillises of pastoral poetry, and in later times Shakspeare's Rosalind and the Angelina of Goldsmith's ballad, are much like American girls. Any really fine young woman of modern society should have the same independence. She should be like the princess of a small kingdom. She should have ministers and a standing army and should have at her command the sinews of war. She should be able to form treaties of amity and friendship with the surrounding princes. She should have power to make war or, if love is to be made, it should be from the same high vantage-ground. The interesting women one knows at home have been much in this position. I cannot imagine them with chaperons. This liberty is an essential element of their superiority.

Take the fine women I know. There is the gentle and profound Mildred, and there is M. L. The last was the daughter of a Quaker family whose farm-house overlooks Long Island Sound. They see at noon the cheerful blue of its glittering wave and the white rim of the distant shore. She was extremely pretty. She talked incessantly. But it did not seem like talking; conversation, or rather monologue, was her normal state of existence. It was only another sort of silence. I say that she was a Quaker. As a matter of fact I believe that her family had separated from the Quaker faith, but she was sufficiently near the Quaker character and mode of life. Her eloquence must have been derived from generations of preachers of that denomination. Her language, although truthful, was full and fluent. She read you with introvertive eye from the tablets of her mind numbers of thoughts, which seemed to my bewitched ears beautiful and original, upon poetry, art, books, people, etc. She repeated these in a voice the most charming I have ever listened to; poetical quotations sounded so very fine when she uttered them, as she did now and then, in her simple way. She even imparted a certain natural magic to the flinty meters of that pedant W—. She admired widely, and you yourself came in for a share of the lively in-

terest with which she regarded creation. The air of wonder with which she listened to what you said excited your self-love to the highest pitch. I visited their farm-house twice. I remember an orchard near at hand which stretched along the crest of a broken hill. I saw this once when the spring had sent a quick wave of bright verdure over the sod cropped short by the cows. The orchard was cut into three or four small patches, but there was a break in each of the separating fences, so that from room to room you could walk the orchard floors. I went again later, one hot midsummer morning, when our path led to a wood through a blazing wheat-field, in which I stopped to pull a branch of wild roses. We came soon to a deep break on an abrupt hillside, where, shut in by masses of dense and brilliantly painted greenery, moving incessantly with the forest zephyrs, and not far from a white dog-wood tree, we rested from the heat. I began to cut away the thorns from the branch of wild roses, an action which I was half conscious was mistaken. I had better have let her prick her fingers, for she said: "You can't care for wild roses if you cut away the thorns."

Another recollection I have,—of walking along a country road-side in that twilight which is almost dark. The daughter of the Quakers wore a blue silk cape with long fringes. She was talking her "thees" and "thous" to a half-grown lad, her cousin, as if she were no better than other women. The tall white daisies, thickly sown by the road-side, wheeled and swam in ghostly silence. It seemed that the slight figure that stepped briskly before me had a cosmic might and force residing among and descended from those stars and planets which had begun to strew the black heavens.

The family to which this girl belonged seemed to me to be people who practiced a very high order of civilization. She was the most obedient and dutiful of daughters; but for all that she seemed to dominate the whole connection, and the landscape too, I should say. Her liberty was so a part of herself that I could not imagine her without it.

. . . I usually go to a Catholic church here because some friends of mine are Catholics and always go there. What an advantage it must be to belong to a church which you always find wherever you go, however differ-

ent from your own may be the language and manners of the new country. The English churches abroad are not interesting; the clergymen are apt to be second rate. But I rather like the young man they have here; he is so completely and necessarily a clergyman. He is just as much a parson on the street as in church—in his face, I mean; his clothes have nothing to do with it. I find it agreeable to meet with a type so distinct, to see a fellow-creature in a place so evidently meant for him; but one cannot help wondering by what methods of breeding and education such results were produced. What kind of a boy was he, and especially what kind of a baby? I venture to say that he had not been five minutes in existence before he began with—"Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places."

. . . The poor Germans get very little good of their royalties, of whom there are several staying here. The English capture them. They stalk them daily on the promenade and at the springs. I was present this morning at a kind of a still hunt. I was at the Kurhaus, and found a number of English waiting at the door. They told me that the Grand Duke was having his luncheon. A throng of twenty or thirty people, most of whom could boast some kind of acquaintance with His Royal Highness, were there in the hope that he would speak to them. Two nice women, who were old friends of mine, said in their frank way: "We shall feel very badly if he does not speak to us." Old Jones produced a letter which he had just received from another eminent personage, saying: "I wonder how she knew my address." But the people did not talk much; they were silent and serious. Some of them would now and then try to push to the front, when there were black looks from behind. There was one lady, the wife of a general, I believe, who did not seem welcome among the more fashionable of the bystanders. She held her ground, however. Her pale and anxious face seemed to say, "Did we not entertain His Royal Highness at Aldershot; and did he not send to inquire after our daughter, who had the diphtheria? I think there is reason to hope he will speak to me." Presently the Grand Duke came out, walking fast and brushing his beard. He walked through the company, but did not speak to any of them.