

THE ARTS OF LIFE AND LOVE

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THE art of living is at once the aim and reward-in-itself for all who relish pure experience in a conscious existence. It is all too exact for fools and all too easy for the wise and virtuous. Without some ground work aiming to pursue and perfect an art of living there can be no art of love, no art of communication between lovers, saints and sages, and no delight in beauty for the sake of spiritual instruction and moral culture. In other words, there must be some measure of nobility and spiritual power present, there must be a clear freedom of soul and an utter repudiation of all that is mercenary, worldly and vain, before any effective or valid art of living can be realized and put into practice.

Such a mood and such an energy striking faithfully toward the beautifully good and true in life are indeed very rare, but when they do effect entrance and expression man's life is straightway made a glorious thing full of ideal power to think and act and work and fight for the common good of all his fellows. They are the specialty of wise men and the insoluble vexation of fools; no one who is still a tadpole or a wolf relishes the complex art of honest living because it offers no lazy ooze to wriggle in nor any barren strand on which to harass the innocent. One instance of how much sheer folly and corrupt practice there is prevalent today is the wide popularity of agapemonite theory, pornography, graft, blackmail, extravagance and profligate political power. The American press is all too ready to blatantly set forth the latest scandal or crime in box-car letters on pink fronts. And just now England (thinking possibly to outdo our own great industry of the domestic courts) is suffering a plague of divorce scandals largely among the aristocracy, because over there divorce is a luxury only for the elect; but some of the casuist reformers are fearful nevertheless that the mor-

als of the commoners will be jeopardized if the aristocracy's vulgar example gets too popular. I think it is not altogether primarily a case of cruelty, incompatibility, infidelity, desertion or what-not, as is usually charged. The true reason is often a new departure for perdition, a worldly interest which is anxious to be independent in its folly and its mischief. Thus all too readily do the scheming lawyers come forth casting furtive glances toward large promissory fees, the victim looks about for counter claims to sue on, the always-pretty divorcee-to-be always names some nice fat figure as a likely bill of settlement, and the public looks curiously on taking note of their shrewd example. But I have little confidence in financial heart-balms; there never was any real love except that for the world and its rewards when a certain amount of money will replace the lost affection. Ninety-nine per cent of the alienation suits ought to be decided by what the plaintiff wants, not by what he claims or what he is clever enough to "prove."

Life as one of the fine arts does not depend on sexual relations, financial standing or social prestige. It may truly enough depend somewhat on perceptual instruction and a devout faith in the traditional codes of morality, but its successful realization in a well-rounded career of thought, work, love and aspiration requires that there shall be some inherent energy of character, some innate spirit of consecration to high ideals, which will give that instruction and those traditions power over us, or at least an appreciative hearing and a subsequent chance for worthwhile expression. How much more then, are these latter elements of moral character necessary in the nobler art of love, its attendant art of life and the pursuit of peace, prosperity and happiness? But our great trouble is that we are so madly in hot pursuit of prosperity that we have neither energy nor proper disposition left for peace and happiness.

One cannot wholly be a vulgarian and a slouch on all the great historical ambitions of humanity, and still expect to enjoy a fullness of life and love in the narrow sphere of his feeble existence. An understanding of these is necessary to an understanding of life and love; otherwise we have only a vicious circle of finite interest and folly, feeble faculty and fickle fascinations. With such a fool there is no effectual art of living and certainly no exquisite art of love, and all that he does is vain and futile, being as uncertain of reliable results as the amazingly ambitious efforts of rainmakers and weather-controllers.

Accordingly it takes a certain amount of genius and creative taste to understand the proper conduct of life. There must be sufficient force of faculty to carry one through the struggle, the temptations and the mercenary mediocrities of ephemeral livelihood, through all the mud-slinging and wrangling and umbrage of a vulgar contact with the world, on up to the evenings and holidays of free converse with one's favorite books, friends, poems, pictures, Nature herself and all other arts and loves. The true lover, the true living soul, does not despise the classics, the humanities, the kindly criticism of friends, nor the stern rebuffs of Nature, for he is eager to see and feel and treasure those very things. I know only too well that the good old humanities are now just about wholly squeezed out of our college curricula by the more aggressive and practical (i. e., mercenary and vulgar) mechanical arts. But the courageous and ecstatic soul still treasures them, and he will do all in his power to re-energize, restore and re-express the chivalry, the honor, justice, devotion and noble sacrifice held inviolable and in sacred sanction by all those venerable traditions of a Past wiser and more virtuous than any modern age can ever presume to be.

On this point witness just such a heroic and unworldly soul, the Chinese philosopher Tang Tzu Tung, whose *Chin Hsieh* or "Love-Science" has recently been reviewed in the *Open Court* (for August, 1922, Chicago). He very ably shows the full dependence of all worthwhile achievements, all effectual progress, upon the unity of human life; the larger dependence of all virtuous human effort and accomplishment upon the unity and justice, the integrity and inexorable laws of the Universe, the cosmic life. Is this not a clear coincidence of philosophical conception with that of his Viennese contemporary, Hermann Lotze, a coincidence which goes to prove their hypothesis?

This dependence is one of love and correlated action, of gentle sympathy and high communion. Without an all-inclusive love existent and operative in the Universe, nothing would flourish, all would be a desolate waste-land, a scene of carnage and misery and selfish exploit. Tang thus held to a naturalistic idealism, feeling devoutly that Nature is indeed both our mother and our destiny, that man's highest ideals of life and love bear her eternal stamp and have sanction in all that is worth striving for here below. In this he shared the lofty mysticism of his friend and coadjutor in the neoclassical revolt, Liang Chi Chao, who, to escape Manchu persecution and the vengeance of the Empress Dowager, fled to Japan

where he published Tang's writings and his own highly symbolic *Yin Pin Ssu* or "House of the Crystal Draught of Water." Here, indeed was a wealth of anagoge and devout love for Nature which had no need for the mechanical lantern designs of an occidentalized Confucianism, even the Chinese version of Christianity not having preferment over the Buddhist Amitabha of Tang.

Co-operation, equality, justice, benevolence, sincerity, spontaneous sacrifice, heroic services, faith and courage in face of sorrow and disaster—these are to be our flaming watchwords, these are to be the only permissible elements of future art, the art of life and love. From all this it is shown that the man of base nature, vulgar ideas and mercenary motives, is not only a handicap to the progress of the world, but he is also a direct menace to the welfare and happiness of his neighbors. The evil men do, not only lives after them but the whole world has to suffer the consequences both while they live and after they are shot or hung. On the other hand the good they do lives after them in the form of respect, good laws, instruction and worthy example; things which usually require a post mortem examination and survival to give them power over those who live afterward. A fulness of life and love then, requires that there shall be free communion between congenial natures, mutual response and cordiality, that is, an appreciation and observance of others' rights, wishes, aims, deserts, hopes, and handicaps.

Ethics is a cold moral system of little else than mere intellectual attention to the social value of what is good and proper in human conduct. It lacks warmth, it lacks a pulse: a soul in full functional flourishing would go far to prevent our modern ethics from being such a barren field of activity, such an inert corporate body of mere data, contents and utilities. Love is what it needs; love is spiritual, it animates whatever human good one wishes to pursue, and it is always through some sort of love that any morality at all is ever obtained and realized in conduct. Thus, the love of truth, of learning, of reputation, of honor, art, books, one's friends or one's country, may sustain a proper conduct quite as often as the brotherhood of workers, the confederation of *travailleurs intellectuels* in France recently, the spiritual love of mystics, saints and martyrs, or the love which depends so often on the sex-relations of a properly mated marriage. Love and life are incomplete when estranged from art, from religious exaltation, or from each other; there must be mutual *consummation* as well as mutual communication, else it be a no-life, a loveless sterility, a living death. Only those who know what it

means to value love over life understand why it is better than valuing life over love, and they alone understand those subtle arts by which our spiritual life and love is sustained. It is only in reference to others than these chosen few ; it is only the fools and knaves of the world whom I have in mind when I ask, Who really understands the arts of life and love? Certainly not those who are selfish, vain, corrupt or spiritually dead.