THE RUNNING WATER OF CONVERSATION

The field of our daily experience may be likened to a country where we are never out of sound of the running water of conversation. Carrying the simile further we may divide our day into its various parts: the great open fields of our daily labors; secluded retreats of study and literary browsings and pleasant, sunny hillsides of play and relaxation. Through all of these pursuits we hear continually the sound of that running water. Quiet we must have at times, and so we journey to solitudes of complete silence, but we invariably return to the accustomed sound with heightened joy.

A meal eaten in silence is a dull affair; our food must be served on the banks of a stream of friendly intercourse and light chatter if it is to be pleasant and palatable. The running water of conversation sounds throughout our daily routine, lightening our tasks, heightening our joy, and multiplying every benefit which accrues to us. How little we would get from our reading and study were we shut off from a friendly interchange of views. Even the more or less idle chatter of our playtimes is a necessary part of our relaxation.

From Discussion to Chatter.

Because of the variety of topography of this conversational country, the streams must necessarily range from the deep, broad rivers of deep discussion to the chatter of tiny streams of inconsequential talk. Here are foaming cataracts of words, oratorical waterfalls to please the sight-seeing multitudes, having a certain grandeur, but the continuous thunder of it eventually palls, and the roar of it remains in one's ears for long after. There are seething rapids of debate, broken up by craggy rocks and snags into acrimonious riffles, or billows upon which only the hardiest dare embark. Artificial channels we have in abundance, where the current is sluggist and smooth, and which vie with the waterfalls in popularity with the multitude. Here the boating is easy and anyone may embark with safety, the pace is a lazy one, and no great expenditure of energy is required to keep afloat.

In our reading this demand for the sound of running water is more imperative than is generally acknowledged. A novel without conversation would be a dull affair. The author may give us an imaginative country of a beauty that is thrilling. He may give us visions that entrance, far horizons that glow with a truthful light, craggy peaks that may be climbed only by the dint of earnest effort, and once attained exhilarate with their atmosphere of charity and purity. Yet without the running water of conversation his imaginative country will remain imaginative, for it lacks that sound which gives it actuality. The realism of the conversation is the rule by which the novel is measured. If the conversation does not ring true, if it lacks wit, point or purpose, then the work is doomed. Faults of construction, form or description are insignificant when compared to faulty conversation.

A Vigorous Flow.

In too many cases the running water of conversation is not in consonance with the varied contour of the novel as a whole. Through rugged peaks of narrative and action, through valleys of descriptive beauties, the running stream too often flows along at the same level, as though it were a canal cut straight through in one flat uninteresting line. The water flows, it is true, but there is nothing inspiring in the sight of it. Since the novel is but the complete map of the imaginative country which the author wishes his reader to behold, the streams must follow the general contour down to its end. If there are sharp declivities of narrative, let the water come down with a zestful sparkle; if there is a sheer cliff of sharp action, the stream must come with a rush and then the effect of the cliff is enhanced by waterfall. Down through the sheltered valleys and meadows of description and contemplative rumination the stream should still retain a fresh smooth vigor.

This rule of conversation applies equally to the novel and to our daily living. In the quiet fields and valleys where there are no spectacular drops and rapids, the stream must be kept clear of obstruction lest it lose its deep, smooth sweep, and become torpid and sluggish. Unnecessary colloquialisms and banal or even vulgar slang, mere verbal makeshifts, accumulate rapidly like aquatic weeds, and in the course of time form such stubborn impediments to the natural current that heroic efforts are necessary to clear the stream.

Like every stream it needs must pick up additional breadth and depth as it flows, and here again increasing watchfulness is essential. If the stream is to retain its clarity and purity, every tributary that would bring with it adulteration or impurity in any form must be diverted, and every rivulet from a clear source and spring must be turned diligently into our flowing river that its growth may be equal in quality to its magnitude.

Changing Signposts.

The story is told of a man who, on his deathbed, said, "The thing that troubles me now, more than even the great sins of life, is a trick I played when I was a boy. Near to where I lived was a moor, in the middle of which two roads met, and at those cross-roads was a rickety signpost. The arms of this signpost were loose, and one day for fun I took them down and changed them so that they pointed out the wrong road. I now wonder how many poor travellers I sent across that moor in the wrong direction."

Do we ever change the signposts? Just look round, and the tendency for this in the world may be easily discerned. To-day some of us call darkness light, and the bitter things are represented as sweet. "Smart" people call it "seeing life"; those who wish for excuses talk of "sowing wild oats." It all amounts to the same thing—the changing of the signpost.

There is no necessity for us to be prudish or goody-goody. The world has no room for either the Pharisee or the prig. We need to cultivate a breadth of tolerance and sympathy that can find room to appreciate those who think differently from us. But it is vitally necessary that we shall mark out the way with clearness in order that others may not be misled.

It is up to all of us not to trifle with the things that are dangerous. If a man cares to risk his life, that is his responsibility. There is plenty with which to enjoy ourselves without our jeopardizing the best in us.

Around us there is plenty of wrong and hardship and peril without our directing others on the wrong path. For a man to do it purposely, with the set intention of adding to life's load, is diabolical. Yet some do it.

Some call upon us to broaden out. Yes, but we may be so broad that we are shallow. We may be as broad as the moor itself—and as barren. Our so-called breadth may be another name for the impulse to change signposts. It is wise, therefore, never to approve what we know to be wrong. It will react upon us if we do. We are made of better stuff than that, and for doing much better things.

No word would be bad enough or strong enough if, when we had asked our way, someone had callously pointed out the wrong direction. No one in his senses would do that sort of thing willingly. Yet in moral matters some of us are constantly doing it.

Those who, by their indulgence and selfishness, point to a false road, are soon revealed. Their speech and eye and general deportment indicate to the world that they are not safe guides.

We can only be true to our best selves by marking our road accurately, and by helping others to tread the right road. Get your principles sound, and things will work out well.

Candles burn brighter and longer after having been stored for some months.

Sense and Sensibility.

Years ago, I admit, when I first had a car,
I counted the total expense;
I was able to say at the end of each day
What it cost me in dollars and cents.
I plotted the curve of expenditures, too,
The gas and the oil that it took;
And whenever I blew any tube or a shoe
I entered it all in a book.

But I found that I hated to go for a drive
Before I had even begun;
A puncture, or such, would affect me so much
That it spoiled every bit of my fun.
So now I've abolished my system of cost,
My spirits are way above par;
I'm as free as the air, without worry or care
And I'm really enjoying my car!

—Harold S. Osborne.

Tasting With Your Eyes.

It is often said that blind people do not care to smoke, and it is true that blindness robs smoking of much of its pleasure. It is equally true that blindness largely spoils the pleasure that the average person takes in food. Unless we try the experiment of eating with our eyes shut we do not realize the immense difference that color makes to food.

Take the familiar instances of cheese and butter. If your butter was pure white you would not like it, even though it might be perfectly pure and good. Yet if you went to India you would find the ordinary country butter pure white and would soon come to like it.

Cheese in its natural state is almost white, and the best milk is white, yet cheese is always colored, for people would say that pure cheese had no taste. And believing this, the cheese would really lack taste, for it is true that taste depends largely on sight.

Waterfront.

I hear the great ships coming in
From the dark sea, from the deep sea;
I hear the muffled wharf sounds win
A slow rest as the gaunt winds thin
Along the quay.

And a slim, ghostly moon looks through
My window's crowded ivy lace . . .
In twos and threes I hear the crew
Work with their wet ropes in the blue
Lamplit city's face.

I lie awake; for none may sleep
When the great ships come in from sea,
When their sad deep-voiced whistles leap
Into the fog and gaunt winds creep
Down along the quay. . . .

—S. Bert Cooksley.

The Bridle Path.

Sweet scented is the lane along which the horses pass at intervals. Green maple leaves hang like pale lanterns over it and under a moss of new foliage there are tiny somber pools of rain that are slowly vanishing into the earth that softly sips from surfeit. The path is half sunlight, half shade, cool and wholesome in spots, then dry and summery.

The path bears fresh scars, mementos of caresses from hoofs of noble animals. Little scallops, curving crescents, and receding blunt depressions have been lately placed on the hard surface where the road rests in the laughing sunshine in moister places there is the full imprint of a recent promenade left in the plastic earth.

How unfrequented is the bridle path that leads through the blossoming city park with its trees and flowers! How charming its desertion, its quiet desuetude! Along the boulevard that may be seen from the hilltop there are hundreds of motorcars gliding over a smooth brown road. But only a few people revel in the joys of the bridle path, walk their luxurious animals over the scented earth, talking to them the while, or inhaling the perfume of new bloom, their thoughts intact, unspoken, but tacitly shared with their mount. Softly their horses' hoofs have fallen like rain, as they enjoyed the burgeoning blossoms, the trailing vines, and the sight of robin redbreast.

Overhanging branches from the bordering trees form a natural Tudor arch that partially shades the road and harbors the solace of the woodland.

There comes a steady, rocking rhythm in the air, the resounding music of a single horseman, made by the cymbals of metal and firm earth, with a rising interlude as an occasional surface rock is struck. The rush of the bridle path is broken by this new sound, this steady staccato beat of horse and horseman. The twain come into view. It is a new Centurion. A twentieth century girl, riding like a part of the beautiful horse—a crimson rider on a chestnut mare. They swing past. Nothing separates them, Mercurian wings lightening the hoofs of the horse as they scale Parnassian heights.

Ancient Clocks.

In the little village of East Hendred in Berkshire, England, there is a church clock that has been telling the time without interruption for four hundred years. At last they had to stop it in order that necessary repairs might be made; but the old clock is again on the job, ready to run for four centuries more no doubt. Even this clock is not the oldest in England, for the church of Rye parish has one that was erected in 1515 and is still running with its original mechanism.

A Shock.

"Tommy, dear, did you hear your mother call you?"

"Course I did!"

"Then why don't you go to her at once?"

"Well, you see, she's nervous, and it'd shock her awful if I should go too suddent!"

Curls.

Jack—"Well, when you called I suppose you found a girlish vision framed in soft curls of golden hair?"

John—"Not at all—found it framed in soft curls of blue smoke!"

Lord Beaverbrook

Canadian-born editor, newspaper owner and politician of England, who is now writing a "Life of Christ," following the recent publication of his "Recollections and Reminiscences."

Light From Plants!

By exposure to the glow of a luminous plant found in Bengal, a photographic plate has been successfully developed.

Mr. S. R. Bone, of the Carmichael Medical College, Calcutta, who obtained a collection of luminous vegetation, says that luminosity was usually confined to certain spots, but in some cases the flat surfaces glowed all over. Stalks showed a white streak of light along their length.

It is said that the light is due to a fungus which gives out a substance that glows in contact with oxygen or water. So long as the fungus lives it continues to emit light. The plants, kept in a moist condition, glowed for ten weeks.

Million Japanese Women Now Engaged in Business

A Government census reveals that almost 1,000,000 women in Japan are engaged in business, excluding the thousands of girls and women employed in factories.

Of these 100,000 are in medical service, as physicians, nurses, midwives and drug clerks. Another 80,000 are teachers, while 50,000 are telephone operators and in office work. There are 600,000 women in what is described as "commercial business," including waitresses and motion picture actresses, the latter numbering 620. There are 34,000 women hairdressers, 1,000 women employed in newspaper offices, and 200 musicians. The average wage for women is about twenty yen ($9.50) a month.

Value of Paper Bags.

Several uses may be made of the paper bags in which are delivered supplies from the stores.

After one has cleaned and washed lettuce, place it in a bag and put it next to the ice. It will be crisp and cold when taken out for use, and will not discolor as it does in a cloth. Celery, radishes and parsley will be found most satisfactory treated in the same way. Fowl may be prepared for cooking and kept in perfect condition if placed in a bag next to the ice.

The bags do not take up the space that pans or other containers do; therefore, one can keep more things in the ice chamber.

If one desires to heat rolls, they may be left in the bag and placed in the oven, care being taken not to have the oven too hot, as paper scorches easily.

Waste material can be thrown away neatly in bags, if these are placed in the refuse pails.

Waffles Without Scorching.

A new kind of electric waffle iron turns out scorchless waffles, as the current automatically is turned off before the iron gets too hot.

MEN AND WOMEN OF TO-DAY

No More "Howling."

Sir Oliver Lodge's discovery of a remedy for "howling," hitherto the bugbear of wireless reception, adds another achievement to the many that stand to his credit in connection with wireless.

Almost exactly forty years ago Sir Oliver showed how a spark in one Leyden jar could be made to cause a spark in another Layden jar some distance away. Soon after this he made the first electric bell ring without wires, at a distance of forty yards. And he had a wireless apparatus working in Liverpool two years before Senator Marconi came from Italy to take out his first wireless patent.

Behind the Budget.

Mrs. Winston Churchill, whose husband's Budget proposals are being freely discussed, plays a far greater part in political life than most people realize. She not only helps Mr. Churchill to prepare his speeches, but attends the House of Commons regularly to hear him deliver them and, presumably, to criticize them afterwards!

Lately she has given much of her time and energy to helping Mr. Churchill frame his Budget. Mrs. Churchill is a born Parliamentarian, and knows the ropes as well as any man.

"Drop In!"

A friend of mine, just back from Spain, tells me this new story of King Alfonso, who, by the way, is coming to London shortly, says an English writer.

Driving recently just outside Madrid, the King's car came to a standstill, and a minor adjustment had to be made by the chauffeur. At that moment a tired-looking workman, who was walking in the same direction, came up, and, not recognizing the King, askd him for a lift as far as Madrid.

The King, with a smile, told him to jump in, and the car conveyed him swiftly to his humble dwelling in the slums of Madrid. Then the King shook hands with the amazed workman, who had begun to thank him.

"Good-bye, old man," he said. "Have a good rest, and if you want anything at any time, come and see me at the Palace."

His Ready Retort.

Mr. Tom Griffiths, M.P., formerly Treasurer of the Royal Household, whose outspoken comments on inherited wealth have been attracting attention, has the reputation of never missing the chance of an apt retort..

Just before the last election he was speaking at a meeting in the course of which a member of his opponent's party shouted: "You're not fit to stand for us!"

In a flash Mr. Griffiths replied, "That's all the more reason why I should stand for you!"

Fishes Change Color.

On the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and more specially in the gulf stream around Florida and Cuba, the fishes, nearly all of them, are so gaudy in coloring that they are always a great wonder to visitors.

There are several reasons given for the great diversity of color, but the standard theory is that the fishes have, in the course of millions of years, colored themselves to suit the color of the ocean landscape, corals, flowers, sponges and all things which form the scenery under the surface of the waters.

The groupers and rockfish of the southern waters are the ones which are famous for changing color.

As a rule, the changes come when the fish becomes frightened or excited, and frequently it will change its coloring in a few seconds.

The color suddenly turns lighter or darker according to the tint of the surroundings, and keeps changing until it has reached a hue suitable to the vegetable or other growth in the vicinity.

Scientists who have studied the fishes in their ocean homes find that even as the fishes swim along over varicolored seedbeds they change color as they pass, but it is a very interesting study to watch them in an aquarium.

Princess Mary's Boy Sets Child Fashions

Although quite unaware of it, Master George Lascelles, elder son of Princess Mary, has begun to set fashions at the tender age of three.

At a recent needlework exhibition, Princess Mary admired a dressing gown of pale blue flannel decorated with white kittens, whiskers and all. Appliqued kittens were on the sleeves and front, and a kitten peeped out from each pocket. The Princess made a purchase of one of these gowns, with slippers to match, and now all small boys of the smart set—or at least all mothers of small boys in the smart set—want to have dressing gowns "like Princess Mary's little Georgie."

Cats As Hunters' Aids.

Judging from old Egyptian pictures, cats were occasionally used to retrieve water birds for Egyptian hunters.

Children's Wit and Wisdom.

"Granny," said small John as he was leaving the church after his uncle's wedding, "Uncle is married now, isn't he?"

"Yes, darling."

"Then what's his name now?"

A little boy had been out to a party. On the way home he looked up suddenly at the stars and exclaimed:

"Oh, daddy, look at those pretty stars. What makes them keep up? Are they stuck or gummed?"

Little Mollie was reading the family record book, containing the full names and birth dates of each member of the family. Finally she came to her own. She gave a cry of amazement and exclaimed:

"Why, daddy, I was born on my birthday!"

Two little sisters, Queenie and Doris, were having tea, when Queenie saw that there was only one apple in the dish. She started to cry bitterly, and after a lot of coaxing said, in a plaintive voice:

"Please, mamma, there's no apple for Doris."

Joan, aged three, wished to go into the garden one foggy morning. She opened the door, and then returned to the room.

"What's the matter, read?" asked her mother.

"I can't see outside," she replied. "It's ever so dusty."

Little Doris had been for a walk with Auntie. On her return she said to me: "We saw some birds, and auntie says they were wood pigeons, but I'm sure they were made of feathers."

One night, whilst carrying my little girl, I met a friend of rather large build.

"How are you Ben?" I asked.

The little girl surveyed him critically and said: "Are you Big Ben on the wireless?"

A little girl of six entered a bus with her mother and aunt. Her aunt asked for two tickets and a half.

"Who is the half for, mummy?" asked the child.

"You, darling," was the reply.

"But, Mummy," said the child quickly, "I'm not a half, I'm one."

The children were playing marbles in the sitting-room. One of the marbles ran under the piano, and the eldest child immediately procured a walking stick with which to retrieve it. Dirt had accumulated under the piano, and this was brought to light by the youngster's earnest endeavors. His mother, seeing the dirt, said: "Now, sonny, don't bother with the marble just now. Look at the dirt you are raking out."

"It's all right, mummy," replied the little chap. "I'll put it all back."

The Golden Orchids.

In the snow-born waterfalls we found the golden orchids
Nodding in the moss beneath the thunder.
Though many a snowstorm there had come and gone,
Though many a wind had deeply snowed them under,
Thy nodded there, and slept in spite of thunder,
In delicate, serene and golden wonder.

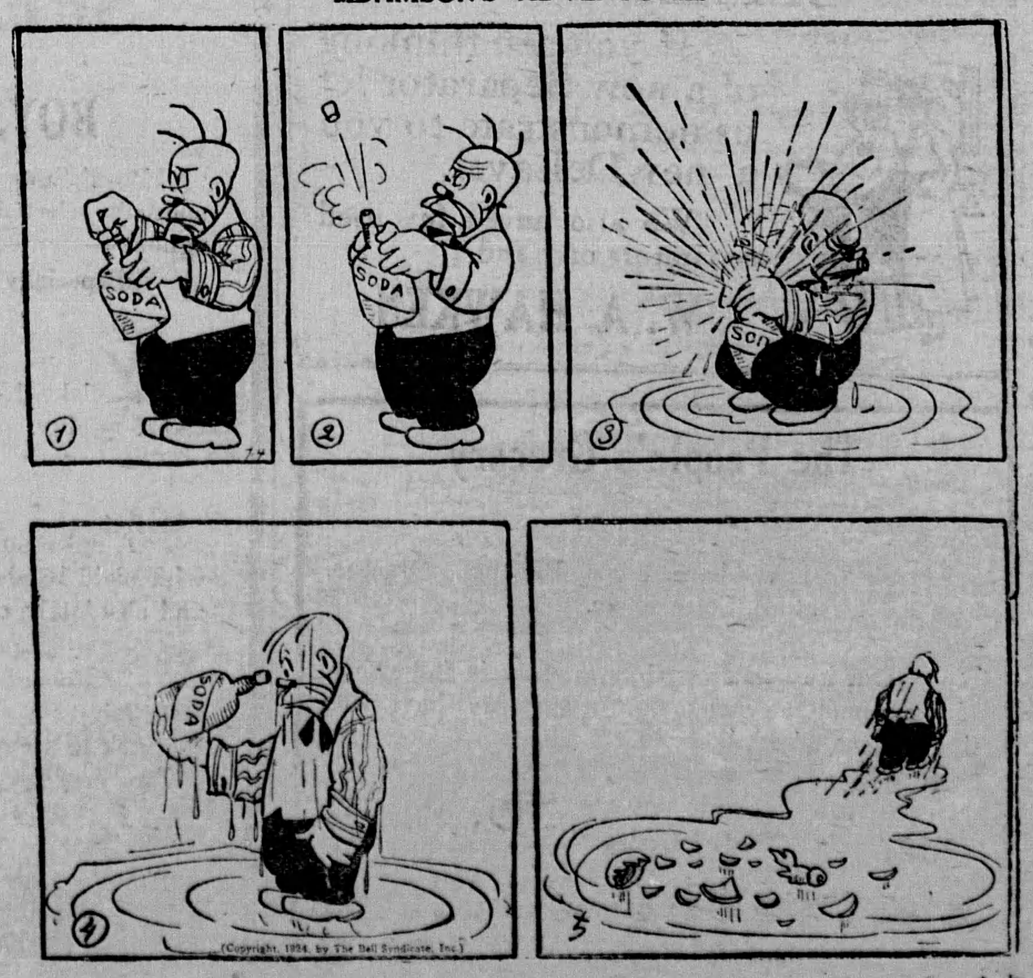
Quite Right.

Teacher—"Now, Mary, my dear, suppose I were to shoot at a tree with five birds on it, and kill three, how many would be left??"

Mary—"Three, ma'am."

Teacher—"No; two would be left."

Mary—"No, there wouldn't, though. The three shot would be left and the other two would be fled away."

Wild geese cast their feathers in summer, losing almost all the feathers from their wings simultaneously.

ADAMSON'S ADVENTURES