

.... The Great World's a "Whispering Gallery"

In the capitol at Washington, in St. Paul's cathedral, London, and at Gloucester cathedral in England, there are domes in which the faintest sound conveyed around the interior may be readily heard—and these are called "whispering galleries." The original "whispering gallery" was built centuries ago by Dionysius, the tyrant. It was a cavern 170 feet long, 60 feet high and 20 to 35 feet wide. It was built so that Dionysius could hear the solitary murmurings of his prisoners, was connected by a secret passage to the tyrant's palace and was known as the "Ear of Dionysius," because the faintest whisper of a prisoner reached his master's ear. Men will be more careful as to their thoughts and deeds when they learn to remember in every moment of their lives that this great world is a whispering gallery where the smallest thought or deed has wide-spread influence.

Richter gave us the idea when he wrote: "Words that a father speaks to his children in the privacy of home, are not heard by the world, but, as in whispering galleries, they are clearly heard at the end, and by posterity."

As with a father's words, so with the words and deeds, and even the thoughts of others. The mother's prayer, the father's counsel, the sister's tear, the friend's smile and the brother's word of cheer, exert an influence extending far beyond the interests of the immediate beneficiary even "as the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake; the center mov'd, a circle straight succeeds, another still, and still another spreads."

Every man and woman under whose eyes these lines fall, perhaps, remembers some other man or woman, or perhaps a little child, who has exerted marked influence for good upon the life and character of another.

"Such souls,
Whose splendid visitations daze the world,
Vanish like lightning, but they leave behind
The voice that in the distance far away
Wakens the smoldering ages."

Schouler in his history of the United States, refers to the marked influence which Washington had upon Monroe, saying: "The illustrious example of the first incumbent had become with Monroe an overpowering influence," and adding: "Even in personal looks the last Virginian, with his placid and sedate expression of face, regular features, and a grayish-blue eye, which invited confidence, had come to appear not unlike the first; so that in these years the names of Washington and Monroe became naturally coupled together."

The Duke of Wellington had said that he considered Napoleon's presence in the field equal to forty thousand men in the balance. He later admitted that this was a very loose way of talking, explaining: "That idea is a very different one from that of Napoleon's presence at a battle being equal to a reinforcement of forty thousand men."

In his address on "The Alchemy of Influence," Henry Drummond says: "Through all the range of literature, of history, and biography this law presides. Men are all mosaics of other men. There was a savour of David about Jonathan and a savour of Jonathan about David. Jean Valjean, in the masterpiece of Victor Hugo is Bishop Bienvenu risen from the dead. Metempsychosis is a fact. George Eliot's message to the world was that men and women make men and women."

Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" was a well-bred woman who fell because of the bad environment she had adopted. As we learn from the life of "Tess" that "evil associations corrupt good manners" so from Browning's drama "Pippa Passes," we learn of the "blessed influence of one true, loving, human soul on another."

That was a great and profitable day spent by "Pippa," the heroine of Browning's tale. Pippa was a girl employed at the silk mills in northern Italy. During the whole year she had but one holiday. It was New Year's day and she determined to make the most of it. She thought of the four persons whose lot was most to be envied in the little town, and she concluded that she would imagine herself each of these in turn.

Pippa enters the street singing.

Ottima and her paramour Sebald have murdered Luca, Ottima's husband, and are talking calmly of their sin. Seated near their window they hear Pippa singing as she passes: "God's

in His heaven—all's right with the world." Her simple song stirs the soul of Sebald, while Ottima begins her redemption in self sacrifice, praying "Not to me—to him (her paramour) be merciful."

Some students from Venice have played a great joke upon Jules, a man of culture, by means of sham letters they sent Jules as coming from the girl he loves. They persuade him to believe that she is a cultivated woman and the two are united in marriage. After the ceremony the truth is told to Jules. He gives his bride gold and bids her leave him. When Pippa passes the room where Jules and his bride are preparing to part she sings, "Give her but a least excuse to love me." Jules reasons that here is a woman with utter need of him. Pippa's song works the reconciliation.

Lugi, known as a patriot and suspected of belonging to a secret society, is discussing with his mother a plot to kill the emperor of Austria. His mother warns him that half of Italy's ills are feigned and urges him to delay his journey to Vienna. He is on the point of yielding when Pippa passes singing in tribute to "a king who lived long ago, in the morning of the world when earth was nigher heaven than now," and saying "no need a king should ever die." Lugi hears and remarking: "Not that sort of a king" declares: "It is God's voice calls." He goes away and thereby escapes the police who had arranged for his arrest had he remained at his mother's home over night.

Pippa moves on and passes the very house where a bishop is listening to one who is at the time plotting the ruin of the mill girl. As Pippa passes she is singing one of her little songs, ending "Suddenly God took me." The conscience of the bishop is awakened and he calls upon his servants to arrest the tempter.

Weary from her journey Pippa re-enters her chamber, wondering how nearly she has approached these people of her fancy to do them good or evil in some slight way, and falls to sleep murmuring: "All service ranks the same with God—with God, whose puppets, best and worst, are we; there is no last nor first."

In the language of one reviewer: "The drama shows us, too, our mutual interdependence. Pippa, the silk-girl, had a mission to convert Ottima, Sebald, Jules and the bishop. We look for great things to work for us; it is ever the unseen, unfelt influences which are the most potent. We are taught, also, that there is nothing we do or say but may be big with good or evil consequences to many of our fellows of whom we know nothing. People whom we have never seen, of whose very existence we are ignorant, are affected for good or evil eternally by our lightest words and our most thoughtless actions."

Ned C. Abbot, principal of the Tekamah, Neb., public schools, and well known throughout the state as an educator, delivered an interesting lecture on this subject. In that lecture Mr. Abbot said: "In one of the larger cities of Nebraska there lives a banker of a very modest, retiring nature, who occasionally can be led out of his native reserve, and whose conversation at such times is a delight to all his listeners. His sentences are invariably turned with grace and could be printed as he speaks them without the use of the blue pencil. It was a mystery to me how he obtained his fluency—this marvellous mastery of our language—until once his niece said to me: 'Did I ever tell you how Uncle Johnnie saved his reason while confined in a military prison? No? Well, you see, he and another young fellow felt they were losing their minds, so in order to have something to do they began committing the Episcopal prayer book. After they had learned it by heart, they started in on Shakespeare—somebody had left a paper volume containing eight of the great plays. Do you know, Uncle Johnnie can say every one of those plays yet?' What had been a mystery to me up to that time became clear as the mid-day sun; for who could help speaking fluent English, if he knew eight of Shakespeare's plays by heart?"

In the crowded car a man looks at his watch and immediately his neighbor does likewise.

We yawn and our neighbor yawns; we smile and he smiles; we weep and he is moved to tears.

The sour and surly man makes sour and surly all with whom he comes in contact and the hearty, whole-souled, cheerful fellow makes others happy.

Did you ever wait for a belated train on a rainy day in a dingy waiting room of a dingy

station? Perhaps the train is several hours late. Passengers ask surly questions of one another and the station agent and receive surly replies. Suddenly a young girl enters with a smiling face and a cheery good-morning for all. The gloom immediately disappears; the time passes rapidly; the station is not quite so dingy as it seemed; a rainy day is not, after all, so very unpleasant—and all because of a sweet-faced, smiling girl. "The very room, coz she was in, seemed warm from floor to ceiling."

A man who was struggling to conquer his appetite for liquor was a guest at a banquet where wine flowed freely. He was on the point of yielding to the temptation to take "a sip or two," when a man for whom he had a very poor opinion, rose to speak. This speaker had no appetite to struggle with, but he had many faults more serious than those of the man first mentioned. The speaker referred to the temptations of everyday life and, becoming somewhat personal, said: "If I could forget God at the banquet table or elsewhere, I could go to pieces very quickly." The man, with his hand upon the glass, restrained himself and avoided the fatal "sip or two." While he had all along regarded that particular speaker as a hypocrite, he gave to him the credit of saving him from a serious error.

Neither is this influence for good or evil confined to a small circle. The one who carries a smile or wears a frown is as choke full of contagion as a man with the measles. As the frown or smile is "caught" by another, he in turn passes it to the first person he meets, and so it goes on and on and on. Whether it be a vile story or a pure tale; a malicious word or a kind speech; a cruel act or a generous deed; an idle thought or a noble sentiment—it makes itself heard in the whispering gallery of this great world of ours.

Who can estimate the value of thoughts and deeds? Mr. Bryan expressed it well when, in one of his lectures, he said: "I fear the plutocracy of wealth and respect the aristocracy of learning; but I thank God for the democracy of the heart that makes it possible for every human being to do something to make life worth living while he lives and the world better for his existence in it. Mathematicians are able to calculate how far it is from the farthest star to the earth, but no mathematician has yet been able to calculate the influence for good of one kind word, or of one kind act. The life comes into contact with the lives about it, and through this generation it reaches on through the countless generations to come."

"So when a great man dies, for years beyond our ken, the light he leaves behind him, lies upon the paths of men." But "great men" do not necessarily mean famous men. It means good men; and it means particularly those men who, without fame or fortune, and unaccredited by their neighbors with genius, pursue the even tenor of their way, live the life of the ordinary man, and have yet the genius for doing right—the genius for making the world better because they have lived.

Some one has said that the tiniest sparrow lighting upon the highest twig of the most massive oak, sends a gentle shiver to the deepest root. There is a hint for the humblest of men! And as we learn the lesson of influence from the story of the sparrow, so from the literature of the children—literature very dear to some of our simple souls—we may learn of the value of the little things. The service given by the humble daisy was described by Wordsworth when, writing in a little girl's album, he said: "Small service is true service while it lasts: Of humblest friends, bright Creature! scorn not one;

The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun."

RICHARD L. METCALFE.

Senator Penrose of Pennsylvania was among the public men invited by President Roosevelt to confer with him at Oyster Bay. Can it be possible that Mr. Roosevelt is giving support to the Penrose machine in Pennsylvania?

If it is true that General Trepoff planned the latest Jewish massacre in Russia it is up to the czar to make it General Trip-off.

The trouble with the fool who rocks the boat is that he always insists in taking some helpless companion along.