

SCHEVENINGEN

July.—The smooth yellow sands, the smooth sun-dyed sea, the curving waves shelled with white foam, the iced air, the continuous, smooth, tenuous murmur of the sea, the sea I love, that soothes me, like a hand on my forehead smoothing down the swollen veins. I lean back in the hooded chairs, and let my soul slip out of me out to the meshed light, where the sea merges into the horizon, that melts over the vast cool depths; the scented silence after the rasp of life, the immensity after the cramping pettiness of pain.

I came back to the music, but the Kur-saal is bare, gaunt, and I am weak for the luxury that rests the eyes, if I listen to the

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cry that tears the soul. Music needs fountains, palms, down to rest on; to put yourself on an empyrean cloud and yearn to the passion of the gods while your spine is being rasped by a wooden chair and your temper deranged by a person near you gulping beer, is too antithetical to be nice. I am past going ostrich-like to Art and swallowing all sorts of visual scrap-iron for the sake of a grain of sound.

I detest hard seats, I loathe people who drink beer, I almost cry with the inability to get the rest I want with the death-song of the Brahms symphony booming in my ears; and so I go out on the windy Terrace, where an untidy, grease-marked attendant brings me iced coffee in a thick ugly glass.

It is absurd; there is no use living unless you can barricade yourself with every conceivable beauty. Life itself trembles on the precipice of physical pain, human-

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ity undisguised is disgusting, and the facts of existence undraped by wealth are intolerable beastliness.

Greasy attendants, thick dishes, incompetent housemaids, a zinc bath-tub; why in the name of immortal heaven should one endure these things? And Art only maddens you by the hints of an ecstasy that needs all the velvet and orchids and jewels of riches to frame. Could you imagine Tristan and Isolde singing the love duet on a horsehair sofa? Tristan and Isolde got more sheer pleasure out of dying for love than all the indigent husbands and wives of the world ever achieved out of living to have children. Oh, I grant they may love, or think what they call love, have their share in the flashes of illusion; but as illusion is the only thing worth while in life, the only life liveable is the one that makes it possible to be always illusioned.

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Monday.—Those weeks in Cairo proved that however much we may want a thing, however we may protest that we are willing to pay the price, something in us, not of ourselves, controls us otherwise. I held the price for it all in my hand, and let it drift through my fingers. I had no power to make myself yield.

And I can't, I won't, let Oscar think he can control my life, come when he wishes, be everything to me. I can't go back to him. Must it always be coming away? Am I to have no peace, no rest, no content? But to be willing to give myself, I must be free to give or refuse. Oh, if I could only rob a bank with the blissful certainty that I would not be found out! It takes training and nerve and brain even to be a criminal, and I haven't the training for anything. I am only so much flesh and blood that inexorably in a few years

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will be so much carrion as far as the use of it, the beauty of it, is concerned.

Carrion—and then—oh, yes, I shall die before then; I have no intention of being kicked out of living before I kick away life. Life! I wonder how many people would give millions if they could buy the youth, the life, the years, I have naturally before me, that I am so tired of. I loathe life, and they want it.

August.—I have done with life; it is around my throat and choking me, it is too heavy to carry, I have lost the rebound. It was myself against the world, and what had I to fight with to get the things I wanted, and all the time clogged by the hideous handicap of restraining inherited tendencies? Even now I am ruining my life by some obscure pride that will not let me yield to Oscar, wheedle him, cajole him into letting me have what I want and

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freedom too. A cleverer woman than I could do it, but I can't; it would not be the myself who had done the other things I have done if I could. We are the slaves of the past generations that made us, and our actions are as circumscribed as though bounded by an iron wall. We are as unable to do some things as to live under water or to fly. It is all the inexorable sum total which, from the addition of each circumstance, brings the inevitable result. Some half-forgotten words mark it—a "stiff-necked generation." That is it: that describes me.

And yet the sum total I hate so much, that is choking me now, has brought me some gorgeous hours and great love. But I was unmoved; for me, they did not exist as men, they did not make me feel real. But what is it that makes people real to each other, that lifts them from seeming automata of flesh and blood to a vi-

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tality that makes the very air you breathe their essence; and, if you can't be with them, that makes it seem as if the very oxygen had been shut out of the universe?

September.—I am still young and to be deceived. I shall shut life out while it still offers things to me and take a gift to Death of myself. That foolish Elaine and her barge and the voyage to Camelot! My lovers are not dead, but it is yet to death alone that I want to voyage.

It draws me, makes me yearn for it more than anything in life ever did.

I am curious, too, to know the secret of death. Any idea that humanity has of a future life is merely ridiculous, and extinction is so appalling! As for that, no possible explanation of the making of the world gives an adequate reason for the unthinkable millions of years of suffering. Surely extinction, non-creation,

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would have been better than that. No compensation seems possible for all this useless pain, from the very horses shivering in the snow in a winter street, the birds snared by a snake, a child suffocating and dying in agonies—what limitless repetitions of agony! How much better if empty space, which we cannot conceive, had been left! Empty space, uncreated space. What first dust of nebulae drifted together to form all this? What wretched minds we have when we cannot think away matter or mind and imagine a state of uncreation—nothing—when there never was anything—not even a void!

But if this is creation, if what we know and see is the culmination of unutterable power, it is immeasurably inadequate. When there was the power to form worlds, they, after all, were very poor ones. It seems such a colossal possibility with such mean results.

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Even gravitation and the swing of the stars, and the fire of unnumbered suns, is really very trifling when we consider that that is all: a few incandescent balls hung up in unmeasured space. Why clutter up the space at all? There is nothing gained.

If one could only find some way of exploding the world, of so deranging every magnetic influence of our solar system that the fragments would hurtle through space, chasing system after system into a series of celestial explosions, till entire creation should bang off like a line of fireworks and the whole box of tricks be destroyed!

LONDON

October.—It is an unwise thing to wait for Fate. It is a reckless thing to stake life against the opening of the heavens and the interposition of chance.

Why I came back to London I do not know. Why I drifted through those months in Holland, there in the straightness of its canals, weary of the little red houses, buffeted by the dark other world.

And now I have come back, come back like a dog to die. London is hideously empty; one day raucous sunlight, the next gibbering damp and cold. I walk every day in St. James's Park, walk as far as Carlton House Terrace, and let myself be overpowered by the outside grandeur of houses I know.