

*The Lay Figure***T**HE LAY FIGURE: NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"THE 1ST of January is everybody's birthday," said the Reviewer, thoughtfully. "Not only do we date our time from it, but on that one day all the nations of the civilised world have generous thoughts in common. All alike think with tenderness of the bereavements which fell to their lot in the last year; and all alike make good resolutions for the future. It is a day of truce—a day even of universal romance, for does not everyone feel that the 1st of January may be the beginning of something better in his own character or conduct? We speak of the Adam and Eve in human nature. Well, on the first day of the New Year they celebrate the anniversary of their wedding-day, and renew their youth with large hopes chastened with sadness and regret. It was a thought akin to this that caused Charles Lamb to speak of New Year's Day as the nativity of our common Adam."

"Yes," muttered the Journalist, "there's truth in what you suggest, the 1st of January has a transcendentalism of its own in the curious exaltation of mind that comes to all of us when the joy-bells ring it in at midnight. Without the least feeling of immodesty I could write a fine epitaph for myself of New Year's Day—a self in many respects unlike the familiar *ego* that lives in my thoughts and actions during the rest of the year. It is a visitor that comes unbidden and never outstays its welcome. Perhaps one may call it the Genius of Progress, for it would not come to me if I were utterly broken or degraded by the war of life. There is a universal charity in the minds of men on the 1st of January."

"And it is of inestimable value," said the Critic, "even when looked at from the least ideal standpoint. New Year's Day is a blessing when considered merely as a holiday; it rests the mind, warms the heart, and helps us to look at past events in a detached frame of mind—a necessary thing very hard to do at the present time, when even the so-called hours of leisure are frequently hours of labour in the quest of money. Pressed in this way by never-ending work, we get down at heel in spirit, and are apt to regard every set-back as a defeat. The arts decline with our hopes—and then revive with them on New Year's Day!"

"You don't overstate the case," the Reviewer replied, laughing. "In the autumn I was inclined to believe that the revival of the crafts had spent

its force, and that art was becoming once more a thing of auctions, of museums, and of speculative adventures among the Old Masters. But I changed my mind on the 1st of January, after thinking calmly of the last twelve months. The present-day movement in the arts had made way, and the general public had helped its progress by running counter to its excesses."

"Yet there are dangers," said the Critic. "In Europe at the present time, for example, a great many young painters and sculptors, young designers and craftsmen, are being trained at the public expense; but how trained, and for what purpose? If the purpose be a serious one, then their education in the schools should make them fit for the struggle which they must needs face in the world of affairs. They should be trained to business habits as well as to art, just as students were in the ancient Italian guilds. Yet, somehow, there is not (I believe) a single school in which this need of a business training is recognised in a practical manner. This, to my mind, is the greatest danger that menaces the modern arts, for we cannot get the best possible work from any young man who is hampered and harassed by his ignorance of the world outside his studio."

"Good!" exclaimed the Designer. "My own experiences bear out the truth of what you say. When I left the schools I knew nothing whatever about the customs of the manufacturers who might need my designs, and I passed several years of grinding poverty before I had confidence enough to do my business in a businesslike manner. If I were asked for the price of this or that, I stammered, blushed, and looked confused; if anyone tried to get the better of me, I either lost my temper and became abusive, or else I gave way through sheer distaste for haggling over money matters. I was a fool, a simpleton, reared carelessly by the State in a school of art; and you may find scores of clever youngsters who suffer to-day from the same defective training."

"It is pitiful!" the Reviewer cried, excitedly. "To be a raw recruit in the battle of life is never pleasant, not even in the most favourable circumstances; but when young fellows are started on their first campaign without the least knowledge of the warfare awaiting them, their lot is a miserable one indeed. And I certainly believe that this matter ought to be well considered in all countries. A thorough training in the business customs that rule in his branch of art work would be of inestimable value to every art student."

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