BY

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I HAVE been asked to do a thing I have long wished to do: to set down a few recollections and impressions of the friend to whom these memorial pages are devoted; yet now that I am face to face with my opportunity I am arrested by the difficulties it presents. It is probable that the facility of characterising a friend is in inverse ratio to the degree of one's friendship or rather, perhaps to the rareness of its quality. Where the relation has been one determined, or at least stimulated, by outward accident, by pleasant propinquities, by affinities of place or pursuit rather than of inner feeling, these at once provide a frame for the picture, a scaffolding to support the rising monument.

There are as many kinds of friendship as of minds, and many are built up in a definite hard bright pattern, where dates and days, and things seen and done, fit into the memory like the coloured cubes of a mosaic. But where the tie has been irresistible one of shared perceptions and curiosities, a spiritual, mental atmosphere making times and places indifferent to those who breathed it, the task of definition becomes more difficult and infinitely more dissatisfying.

I cannot recover any connected impression of the stages of time and the degrees of intimacy between my first knowing Bayard Cutting—in his boyhood, his pre-Harvard days, it must have been—and the period, shortly after his marriage, when, accidentally thrown together for a few weeks (and here again, I fail to remember where), we found ourselves at once and securely and completely friends. I can only say that from the first the understanding between us was so deep and sure as to preclude—certainly on my part, and I think on his—the least consciousness of the difference in our ages. We seemed to be of the same age just as we were of the same mind. This was perhaps partly due to the fact that, when we thus discovered each other, Bayard Cutting was already touched by illness. To say that it had not yet clouded his spirit or lessened his buoyancy is to imply that it ultimately did so; whereas, to the close of his short eager intensely living life, the last impression he ever produced was that of being under any kind of physical disability. Yet it may be that, even when I first began to know him, the fact of his having been thrown back on his intellectual interests, to the exclusion of the bodily activities he had so naturally rejoiced in,

had given him a riper mind, a wider vision, and above all a greater faculty of imaginative sympathy, than one commonly finds in the type of healthy happy youth to which he intrinsically belonged.

It might almost be said that the only way in which he betrayed his lack of strength was in his constant untiring struggle to live as if he were unaware of it: to be forever up and doing with the careless unconsciousness of health. The effort to crowd so much endeavor, so many impressions, so much work and so much enjoyment into his measured days confessed, perhaps, to a haunting sense of their brevity; yet there was nothing feverish or rebellious in his haste. Seldom, indeed, has any one borne with a better grace, with fewer apologies and less impatience, the ever-increasing restrictions of ill-health. He never seemed to wish to disguise the fact that he was an invalid; but he remembered it in such a way as to make everyone else forget it.

Here, again, there was nothing studied, nothing calculated in his attitude: he no more struck the pose of Stoicism than that of Christian resignation. The impression one had to the end was that, though he knew he was gravely ill, and had

early had to make his terms with that knowledge, yet he knew so many other things more interesting, more impressive and more immediate, that his individual plight was quite naturally dismissed to the remoter planes of consciousness.

The unusual range of his interests must indeed have saved him from ever feeling that plight too intolerably. He had so many windows of escape from his own case! Perhaps the distinctive thing about him, in this respect, was that his tastes were so inwoven with his personality. I have never known an intelligence in which the play of ideas was so free, yet their reaction so tinged by the elusive thing called "character." Coolness of thought and ardour of moral emotion dwelt together in him to their mutual enrichment. His activities flowed naturally into channels which often narrow the current of the mind. He cared passionately for politics, economics, all manner of social and sociological questions, and cared for them practically, reformingly, militantly. Yet he contrived—young as he was:—to keep a part of himself aloof from the battle and above the smoke, and to look down on the very conflict he was engaged in.

Two gifts of his rich nature helped him to this

impartiality: his love of letters and his feeling for beauty. Nothing so clarifies the moral sense as a drop of aesthetic sensibility. To delight in all the noble superfluities, the "by-products" of the great human ebullition, is perhaps the finest way of proving that the labour and strife are not in vain.

As an instance of the intensity of his delight in such manifestations I may cite his discovery of the Comédie Humaine. I do not know by what happy hazard he who had sailed so far and wide on the seas of literature had reached the age of twenty six or seven without more than sighting this vast continent; but happy the hazard assuredly was, since the adventure was thus reserved for the long imprisoned days when his mind had to make up, by wider flights, for the ever closer bondage of the body. I shall never forget the cry of joy that announced his dicovery; or the way in which, in the long letter retailing it, his critical appreciation kept itself clear of his not infrequent moral antagonism. In this case, as in so many others the intellectual estimate was singularly pondered and mature, and the moral judgment—the judgment on Balzac as a critic of life—coexisted with the freest admiration of his power of creating it.

This ceaseless intellectual curiousity was fed by familiarity with many tongues. It seemed to Bayard Cutting a perfectly natural and simple thing to learn a new language for the sake of reading a new book; and he did it, as the French say, "in playing." His gift of tongues undoubtedly contributed to his open-mindedness and increased the flexibility of his sympathies. It was the key to different points of view, and that key he was never weary of turning.

It played so smoothly in its many wards, and there was so little creaking or straining of locks and hinges, that his erudition and his accomplishments never overshadowed his personality. He was so much more remarkable than anything he knew or did!

This affirmation brings me to the most delicate point in my attempted picture of him: the point where the imponderable undefinable thing called "the likeness" must be caught. Here was a young man without health or its glow of animal spirits, without any specially developed and exercised "talent," without even the showier social gifts: what was it that made him so remarkable?

Not his learning or his accomplishments, assuredly; or even the mind which so delightfully

employed them. Interesting as his mind was, even that did not, or did not wholly, explain the rare quality that all who knew him recognized. One is driven, in defining him, to say that it was his "nature," the essence of him, that was rare.

It was, at any rate, something subtler and deeper than mere brain or mere heart: a happy mingling, perhaps, of qualities and faculties which, even when they coexist, are seldom fused. The result was a receptiveness of mind and a tolerance of heart that produced the impression not of a too early maturity but of youth in its mellowest prime. This mellowness was marked in him. Even when his bodily weakness increased, and he became more and more the slave of the invalid's routine, one never felt that he was missing anything, he gave one no sense of mental or physical privation. His ill-health seemed, toward the end, just the quiet corner from which, quite soberly and deliberately, he had chosen to look on at the great exuberant spectacle of things.

And perhaps, in some not remote way, it was just this—the pitiful accident of his doomed youth—that gave him his rareness and his brightness, that was the undefinable essence of his soul. It was this, perhaps, which at once made life so

glorious to him, and beauty so divine, and pity so natural, and his friends so dear; and which also, in its mysterious efficacy, gave him the time to give to all these things—as though, conscious of having so few days to spend in the mixed business of living, he chose to spend them all on what was finest and best.

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