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PSYCHOLOGY AND HIGH GROUND.

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THIS subject having been raised recently in these pages, I have been asked to make a contribution from the Irish standpoint. In doing so, I find it necessary to lead off with some attempt at making my position clear, in the hope of removing any possible misunderstanding. Therefore, I must insist that these views are entirely personal, as all such views must be. They are also incomplete, for, as we all know, the deepest wells of feeling are unfathomable and not for the written, or even the spoken, word.

The editorial comment on Lord Morley's troubled reference to Irish landscapes contains the following question:—"But is there really this difference between Irish landscape, abstractly regarded, and other landscape?" I agree at once that there is not; and the key to this agreement is found in the words "abstractly regarded."

With the exception of such national nondescripts as are to be found, no doubt, in every country, I cannot visualise anyone in Ireland capable of regarding abstractly his own hills any more than I would expect him

to so regard his own mother. But why a stranger, in whom such abstraction is not only natural but almost inevitable, should discover some subtle difference between the landscape of Ireland and that of some other country outside his own, is difficult to understand. Of course we can realise why, in Lord Morley's case, he should miss "the associations of composure and peace."

It would be folly, however, for any Irishman to claim that his native hills mean more to him than those of Scotland may mean to a Scotsman; and therefore the matter resolves itself into an effort, inadequate though it may be, to indicate a personal conception of the bonds which, with the individual distinctions imposed by differences in nationality, unite the universal brotherhood of mountain lovers and decent men.

I pass by all purely physical considerations such as the exuberance born of deep breathing and a sound circulation, and that fine zest which comes with the summit accomplished. These are not the monopolies of that high company for which I write, but are shared also by "the unlettered and the lewd." Attention is directed rather to something infinitely more precious—something "intangible and remote, but with a bounteous overflowing of the spirit."

It must be confessed that this inspiration is not simple but composite, and it is difficult indeed to analyse. However, among those portions which it is possible to isolate must be mentioned that for which a parallel will be found in every land.

I never climb the Wicklow hills and cross their silent valleys without the proud feeling that here Holt gave desperate battle and brave men died in a lost cause, or there Miles Byrne kept his enemies at bay and when hope was dead escaped to France, serving for fifty years in the army of Napoleon le Grand. Then northward to Slieve Gullion and the memory of a beloved leader

who, as a boy, so often sought and found his strength there, leaving his native Newry to meet many a stormy dawn upon its summit, "filling his mind with vehement and beautiful thoughts." So the same tale is told in every barony within the four seas and to this in these latter days is added another—intimate and personal—such as we all know.

It was Uhland, as a modern writer has reminded us, who once paid the Rhine boatman a double fare because he had carried, unknowingly, the ghost of a dead comrade; and many of us will revisit those wide silent places with a sense of pilgrimage and pay our tribute in our own way to the presences which will people those hills and glens for us as long as life lasts. One will say:—"There I spent an April night shelterless and in sleet and storm, but cheered and sustained by *his* unconquerable spirit; does he know, I wonder, that this barren place has grown fertile with his fragrant memory?" Or, again:—"I was here with him who was later my staunch comrade in another field—and is dead; 'did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way?'"

Then can I drown an eye unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night.

There are few healthy men who do not treasure vivid memories of instincts, almost predatory, which were kindled in them during boyhood among those hills where they grew to be men, and it is peculiarly satisfying to suckle the imagination with the thought that in such moods we are striking back to mountainy forebears. With those of us who are now, by the tyranny of circumstance, town dwellers, there is little risk of

Blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure,

but I am free to confess that when, by the favour of time and chance, I find myself once more in the high places of the earth, I have an unflinching sense of *homegoing*.

In conclusion, while I feel that no hill man worth the name can remain quite unmoved by the sight of high ground in any country, it is only upon the hills of his own land, as I believe, that he truly glimpses, be it only for a moment, that fugitive vision, less mortal perhaps than divine ; it is only in his own country that there come to him those rare moments of spiritual ecstasy wherein he hears "all the blended voices of history, of prophecy and poesy from the beginning."

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AT THE MOUNTAIN'S BASE.

As if, at the world's edge, one sees no more
 Time's landscapes heave ; so here, in rest and awe—
 An awe most vast—the terraced peaks withdraw
 Eyes from all level vision. Waters roar
 And cream, adown a crevice ; while the hoar,
 Gray rocks stand sentinel. The rook's deep caw
 Through rough, serrated passes, like a saw
 Most sage, breaks 'mid the silence. Mortal man, adore.
 And bare the head ! For downward dip, and drift,
 All lesser souls ; but thou the clear, cold beam
 Scannest upon the golden, towering gleam
 Of the swirled summit ! 'Tis a kingly gift—
 A foretaste of the heaven that waits the bold ;
 Rest on the height, amid the sun's spilt gold !

WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER.

—*Chambers's Journal*, Sept. 1917.