HE teacher was not disturbed by the coming of strangers to his class for the day; in fact, his method of using Nature as head-master was more and more bringing watchers to his educational experiments. Five girls from twelve to seventeen, were his class this summer morning. The class room was the shore of Erie where the beach is narrow and the bluffs high; the talk was incidental, until a half-brick, partly submerged in the sand, and momentarily in the wash of the low waves, caught the teacher’s eye and furnished the theme of the day.

Stepping forward with a receding wave, he drew it from the sand where it lay gleaming, wet and vividly red, against the gray tones of the sand. The edges of the brick were rounded by the grind of the gravel and water. It was like an ancient tile in a Chinese rose garden. . . . Just a common clay brick, not very old, not very hard, but a thing of beauty in the grays of the beach. “It reminds me of a girl’s dress I saw once on a winter’s day” remarked the teacher, “a rough cloth of mixed gray wools with a narrow edging of red velvet around the sleeves and collar. . . . Yet, alone, and now that it is dry, this is just a brick-red. It needs the gray grain of sand and gravel. . . . Now if that were a thing of true beauty, as it seemed to us lying below, a deep human reason is back of it. Perhaps we can find the heart.

“There’s something in the hollowing and rounded edges, such as no machine or hand-grinding could duplicate, but that has to do with the impression of age it gives; and there’s beauty in age, a fine mystery in itself. Often the objects which our immediate forebears found decorative strike our finer eyes as hideous, and with truth; but the more ancient things which simpler races found useful and lovely, appeal to us as consummate in charm and grace, though we may never have seen them before in this life. The essence of their beauty is a certain thrilling familiarity which our souls find in them—the same mystery that is awakened in us by an occasional passing face which we are positive has not met these eyes before.

“We are all more or less sensitive to mystic relationships with
"JUST A COMMON CLAY BRICK"

old vases and coppers, with gourds and bamboo, urns and sandalwood, with the scents and flavors of far countries, and with sudden stretches of coast, so that we repeat in wonder—'And this is the first time . . . ' Our souls know better perhaps. It is enough however to grant the meaning deep beneath our satisfaction in certain objects, and that our sense of their beauty is not accidental. For instance, there is something behind our pleasure in the gleam of red from the pervading grays of the shore. . . .

"And look at that Headland—the white cloud above it, the white of breakers at its point—and the little bay asleep against it—"

It suddenly occurred to me that we were in the midst of a lesson. We had climbed the bluff to the Master's cottage, and the view of the Headland was a fulfilment. "The point of the eastern gales is broken for all this stretch of shore," he said, "but the beauty of that rugged point is not alone in itsIf, but in the peace of the cove which it effects. The same is here in this bit of stonework and the vine. For beauty is a globe of meaning. It is a union of two objects which complete each other and suggest a third—the union of two to make one. Our minds are satisfied with the sustaining, the masculine, if you like, in the stonework and the gaunt headland, because they are completed by the trailing vine and the sleeping cove. The suggestion in each is peace, the very quest of life."

"There is always this trinity, to form a globe of beauty. From the union of matter and spirit, all life is quickened; and this initial formula of completing a circle, a trinity, pervades all life. We are thrilled by the symbols of the great original affinity of matter and spirit, and the very life which we thrill with, is its completing third. That elm tree, with its haggard weather-blackened limbs, and the springing from it of delicate green foliage, is like the background of a great painting. So often you will see in paintings the stone and the vine in the background, or the branch and the leaf, pictured many times with a suggestion of running water at the base for action and progress and the ever onward human spirit. You won't find the full-leafed tree there, (for that would hide the lineaments of beauty, as the character of a face is concealed in fatness)—but branch and leaf, the need each of the other, and the promise of the fruit. It is the globe again—the union of the strong and the fragile for a finer dimension of power—bow and cord, ship and sail, man and woman, stalk and leaf, stone and vine—yes, and that which surprised us at the beginning—that gleam of red in the wash of water upon the grays. It was the suggestion of warmth and life brought to the cold inanimate hues of sand and gravel, that gave us the sense of beauty
in a wet worn brick. Firelight in a room is just the same thing—a gray stone fireplace with red embers is the very heart of a winter house. . . . If there had not been a vital significance back of our discovery of the day, our sense of a brick’s beauty would have been untimely and disordered. . . . Go now and express what seems to you best, from our walk and talk.”

The five girls left us. The teacher turned, saying:

“NATURE is always so safe and replete. There are scores of analogies in Nature for every great event of the human spirit, even for the resurrection of the soul. . . . Oh, yes, you are interested in the departure of the little class for expression of what they have just heard. The day would be poorly spent, no matter what I might say, but for that. It is the union again of receiving and expressing that makes growth and character. Expression is the right hand. I try to establish them upon a basic idea—today it was of Beauty. They will not try to remember what I said. I never encourage that. Memory is not the faculty I care to cultivate.

“First, I strive to ignite their work from the spirit outward—not from the flesh inward. I don’t care to fill their brains, but to inspire their souls, to occupy their brains with products of their own. All my work is a training for the expression of the real self. We are infinitely greater than our brains. If I arrive at the truth of any subject, I need have no worry about sleepy heads in the classes. A disclosure of truth, and the process of it made clear, is the perfect awakener, for truth is the aliment of the soul. It is not what I say, but what the truth suggests to them, that determines the value of their expression of it.

“Expression is the triumph. Every time the brain gives expression to the real self, there is a memorable vitality, not only in the expression, but strength and authority added to the brain itself. Yes, this is training for writers, but that is not my aim, except in the cases of two or three with something like a natural bent. Words are the natural implements for us all. . . . So the ardent aim of the leadership of the classes here is to stimulate the expression of the real self. If I do this truly in a morning walk, or a class-room talk, I awaken the deeper vitalities of those who listen. When you awaken a soul interest, you may rely upon it, the brain is open to its full zest and capacity. Patterning of uncohered facts upon the temporal surface of the brain in the effort to lodge them in the tentacles of memory—does not construct the character of a man or woman. Think of the centuries wasted in that method.

“The superb flower of the work here is the occasional disclosure
of the real bent of a student. That is always like the discovery of
El Dorado to me. The most important fact to be considered in any
educational ideal is that the soul of every one has its own especial
treasures and bestowals; and when one succeeds in touching with
fresh fire an ancient facility or proclivity in the breast of a boy or
girl—the rest is but following the gleam. . . . For each one of us
is different. The world finds us significant, even heroic, only as we
give expression to a power intrinsic and inimitable."

In the afternoon, I joined a group of boys at work in the Teacher’s
rose garden. They were building a narrow cement walk of a
quality not to be seen elsewhere.

"We found more of the water-worn brick," said the Teacher. "I
told the boys some of the matters we discussed this morning, and one
volunteered the word that plenty more brick pieces could be had down
the shore near the Headland. An old brick house long ago rubbed
itself into the falling bank, and now its parts are spread along the
shore and buried in the sand. . . . One has to jetty along here if
the beach is to be saved. They say that an old apple orchard once
stood out beyond where we now bathe. . . . So the boys have
brought a half-bushel of the red treasures. And we are to carry out
and make perpetual the affinity of red gleams to a gray pebble walk."

I watched through the long afternoon. The boys worked rapty,
even through the hard dull labor of leveling, setting the frames and
laying the concrete foundation. The finishing was the absorbing part.
The Teacher’s idea called not for a fine-grained sand walk, but a
mixture of all sizes from a penny large down to the finest sand.

"The cement makes the most lasting bond in a mixture of that
kind, then the pebbly finish is effective and darker for the insets."

The walk was less than two feet wide and roughly squared by
pieces of shingle laid in the concrete, tip to tip. The final dressing,
two inches of pebble mortar, looked unpromising to me on account
of its coating of white. I thought it would harden a dingy cement
color, instead of the deep sparkling gray desired. When three blocks
were partly set, however, the Master turned a fine spray from the
hose upon the surface and the top cement flooded away. The surface
was then lightly sponged and the pebble tops appeared without the
clinging white. The water also erased the least mark of the trowel.

The red insets were now tamped in with the trowel-handle, the
unique round edges appearing without a touch of stain. The rapidly
hardening mortar was not packed about the brick pieces, but the
natural edge of the gray preserved, as if they had been hurled into
the mortar. They were placed without immediate regularity, but
with an admirable relation to the walk in its length. . . . I saw

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THE SUMMER RAIN

He will come down like rain upon the meadows,
Showers of cool summer rain upon the earth.
The purple lilies shall lift their heads
And dance among the tall meadow grasses.
Streams of water shall rush from the hills
To quench the thirst of the weary land.
The summer rain falleth softly. It bringeth refreshment,
As the cool drops fall welcome, incessantly.
He comes with abundant peace unto His own.
O Beloved, walk out in the meadows when it is raining.
The rain falleth upon the grass and on the purple lilies.
While the silver moon endureth, He giveth peace.
Dance with the lilies, Beloved! Oh, sorrow no more.
This is the song I sing of the purple lilies.
The sun rose in the east, and a silver light spread over the western sky.
I took my harp and went out into the meadows.
The lambs frolicked as to the spring and sheep sedate with curious glance went by.
I tuned my harp and sang of the joy of summer,
Its rush of flowers in green and shadowy glen.
I sang till the little moon, like a cloud appearing,
Sank in the east, pale gold and thin; and then,
I waited until the rain in a shower came falling
Over the meadows, fresh and cool, again.
Ah, me! It came silently. Silence is very sweet.
It fell on the meadow grasses and the lilies at my feet.
Silence is sweeter than song. The silver light lingered fair as at morning’s birth, and peace o’er the meadows stole abroad while the scent of meadow earth rose like a balm. The perfume of woodland lilies, purple and gold, pure as the dew, arose.
This is the song of lilies, the song of rain,
Of silence that healeth the world’s unrest and pain.
While the earth endureth—till the moon shall be no more,
Peace shall come in the falling rain, deep peace, till her cup run o’er.

BLANCHE ABLESON.