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# BUBBLES.




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BY JOHN CHRISTIE.

**T**HE man of mature years, be he clergyman, soldier, merchant or lover, smiles when he considers the case of the small boy who applies himself to the business of bubble-blowing with as much energy as the mature man, himself, might put into the work of saving a soul, circumventing an enemy, making a fortune, or winning a wife. And yet the case of the boy is not only one in which the child is father to the man, but in which the child's work is curiously identical with that of his senior. There is, indeed, nothing singular in the behaviour of the boy who, with an old pipe, a rusty basin, and some soap and water, finds happiness in filling the air with bubbles which may be very beautiful in shape and hue, but are still more certain to be very brief in duration. We all do it. The world is full of bubbles, and we are all bubble-blowers. Even the works of Homer, of the Hebrew seers and psalmists, of Shakespeare, and of other men with imperial minds and imaginations, great and glorious though these works be, are certain, some time, to melt like bubbles in the atmosphere of eternity.

Yet how good and beautiful a thing it is for mankind to take pleasure in the fame and the works of such men. As it happens, though, every man is so intent upon blowing his own bubbles that he has little time to spend in studying or admiring those of the rest of the race, even of the Homers, the Shakespeares, Newtons and Darwins. This intentness and preoccupation on the part of ordinary persons appear to ensure the comparatively early oblivion of great things; for men must devote themselves to their own affairs. Apparently, too, they have to do

this with a closeness which leaves them little or no leisure for the sympathetic contemplation and comprehensive use of the works of godlike intellects—of the bubbles which, being made of divinest thought, live beautifully and burst not within the visible atmosphere of time. Better social conditions might effect much change in this connection, for then, though people would still blow away at their own particular bubbles, they might do so with less personal conceit and absorption, and with more regard to the great things of the past and the present. Surely this is a desirable consummation. The persons concerned, and the communities of which they were members, would be gainers if young men and women in love, farmers, merchants, architects, doctors, Prime Ministers, ordinary politicians, artists, poets, priests, reformers, founders of new social systems, critics and journalists, were to realise that they were all blowers of bubbles, some of which would float in the air of time, comparatively for only a moment, an hour, or a day, while the most lasting must at last melt for ever into the impalpable ether of the ages. As a consequence of this sane self-consciousness, conceit might diminish and wisdom increase. Better bubbles, too, might be blown by all, and all find deeper delight in contemplating the more lasting of these exhalations of the mind of man, and in considering the faithfulness with which every bubble denotes the spiritual elements of which it is composed, and the depth and harmoniousness of the soul of which it is an emanation.

Hence, let bubble-blowing prosper. Yet be it ever remembered that the pretentious bubble does not necessarily deserve the most