

## CHAPTER IV

### AMUSEMENTS, DISSIPATIONS AND MARITAL RELATIONS

TURN to the amusements of the privileged rich and ask if they run with the customs and habits of the mass of our people.

A despatch from Saratoga last summer told how Mr. John W. Gates, with smiles, lost \$10,000 in a six hours' game of faro. Mr. Reginald C. Vanderbilt enjoys the distinction of having lost many times that amount during a single night in a high-priced gambling establishment in New York. To the very rich, either winning or losing is nothing in itself. It can add little to or take little from their wealth. The end sought is stimulation. Those who have a surfeit of all that mere wealth can bring seek change in excitement. And so there is much recourse to gambling of one kind or another, from bridge whist to plain "buck the tiger."<sup>1</sup> "Good-by, my dear," said a lady of quality to a guest, taking her departure from a house party. "So glad you came; enjoyed your company so much — and do remember, dear, you lost a trifle to me at bridge — \$300."

What stimulates, or, at any rate, what accompanies this growing passion for card gaming is a passion for the race-track. Our princes not only bet heavily, they are

<sup>1</sup> The very rich may indulge this weakness without fear of ordinary exposure. But those less rich, belonging to what corresponds in England to the middle and the upper middle classes, are not so fortunate. Several select, sumptuously furnished gambling houses for women have been raided by the New York police within the year.

the owners of the biggest and most expensive racing stables, with some horses worth \$100,000 apiece. More than that, in New York some of them control the State Racing Commission, which controls the racing. In this way they conduct racing matters, ostensibly to improve the breed of horses, but really as large-scale gambling enterprises, and this in the very teeth of the law.<sup>1</sup> Multitudes of the general public—that is, of the middle class and plain people—attend the races under the auspices of these and other race-track princes, and on the whole they lose, and lose heavily. The race-track princes come in for a handsome share of the winnings.<sup>2</sup>

But other of the princes go there merely for the excitement. They are careless whether they win or lose. They are imbued with something of the reckless spirit of the early California miner, who suggested to another miner, as a test of their relative riches, that each alternately cast twenty-dollar gold pieces into San Francisco Bay until one of them be "cleaned out."

The automobile brought a novelty into racing excitement. In the fall of 1904 the first big race was held—

<sup>1</sup> Act I, Sect. 9, of the Constitution of the State of New York runs: "Nor shall any lottery or the sale of any lottery tickets, pool-selling, book-making or any other kind of gambling hereafter be authorized or allowed within this State, and the Legislature shall pass appropriate laws to prevent offenses against any of the provisions of this section." Overtly, at least, this mandate is observed everywhere except on the race-track. Certain corporations have exclusive right by statute to conduct races. These race-track corporations have obtained legislative exemptions or modifications of penalty, so that, while a man caught "making a book" outside of a racing corporation's fence would be sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for doing the same thing inside that fence there is practically no penalty at all. The State Constitution is so much of a dead letter on the racing corporations' grounds that these associations actually sell the right to gamblers to make books on the track. The statute law makes a monopoly of race-track gambling, and gives that monopoly to the race-track associations, controlled by the State Racing Commission.

<sup>2</sup> The New York State Comptroller's report shows that the profits for 1904 of the eight great more or less allied tracks coming under the jurisdiction of the State Racing Commission were \$3,805,125.51. This was aside from the huge betting receipts.

the 284-mile international contest on Long Island, for a silver cup offered by Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr. For the amusement of those conducting and witnessing the race, thirty miles of public roadway were practically closed against general use—proof of the degree to which common rights bend to Privilege! No danger to the public? No, not if the public keep out of the way; but death and destruction to any who get in the way. As it was, one participant was killed outright, another very badly hurt, and for a time paralyzed. Many other fatalities have since attended high speeding. But what of that? There will be such racing and high speeding so long as a craving for excitement exists and finds no other outlet. The very danger involved adds fire to the agitation. Are not jockeys killed every year in the horse races? Does that increase or lessen interest?

Would this imply that our Princes of Privilege have brutal tastes? What I assert is that, lifted above interest in normal things, our princes as a class crave unusual stimulants. So far has this appetite advanced, that women of the privileged order are now seen at prize-fights. Fifty of them were found among the spectators at a private "mill" raided by the police in Brooklyn not long since. Of the three thousand persons who witnessed the six-round "bout" between two prize-ring celebrities in Philadelphia within the year, four hundred were women—women of station in that city. One of them, in a newspaper statement, to which her name was attached, said of her presence there, and the sensations she experienced:—

I didn't want to go, because I think all such things very brutal; but I was asked, and I didn't want to refuse. So I went, and I am very glad I did. Thinking it over, I feel surprised at myself. But to be candid, from the minute the men started I liked it. There was a funny little shock, a revulsion, at first. But after that the blood began to tingle in one's veins, and one felt alive all over. I'd never go to another prize-fight. But I certainly understand why men like to go.

This is the utterance of a highly respected woman. She spoke so in the face of the fact that, although the fight was only "six rounds" in length, and was declared a "draw" at the end, there was a frightful lot of hard hitting. One man's eye was split open, and both men, bleeding profusely, were smeared with their own and each other's blood. Brutality was there, but it was forgotten in the mad excitement. This was also true of many who attended the gladiatorial fights in Roman days. In his "History of European Morals," Lecky repeats the story related by St. Augustine, how one of the latter's friends, being drawn to the gladiatorial spectacle, endeavored by closing his eyes to guard against a fascination he knew to be sinful. A sudden cry caused him to break his resolution, and he never could withdraw his gaze again.

Mr. Bryce notices (*The Outlook*, March 25, 1905) a change common to all classes, "all the more noticeable in America, because it is there quite recent." This change is "the passion for looking on and reading about athletic sports" — of being, not actors, but mere spectators.

The love of playing and watching games which require strength and skill is as old as mankind, and needs no explanation. So the desire not to play, but to look on at chariot races and gladiatorial combats, was a passion among the people of Rome for many centuries. The circus factions at Constantinople have their place in history, and a bad place it is. But this taste is in America a thing almost of yesterday. It has now grown to vast proportions. It occupies the minds, not only of the youth at the universities, but also of their parents and of the general public. Baseball matches and football matches excite an interest greater than any other public events except the presidential election, and that comes only once in four years.

The interest of the universities is attested by the huge revenues of their athletics. The receipts from athletics at Yale for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1904, aggregated more than \$106,000, while the total expenses

were \$75,174. And some of the games are essentially brutal, especially football. It appears to be a settled feature of the coaching in the latter game to pick out the most dangerous man on the opposing team, and "put him out" in the first few minutes' play, "putting him out" meaning to injure him in some foul way, so as to incapacitate him from further play.

Nor is the preëminently national game, baseball, free of brutality. If it does not take the form of crippling players, it prejudices pure sport. Association owners engage players to win games by any method, with the intention of getting the biggest possible gate receipts. Polite, generous usages succumb to coarse, brutal hustling. There is unseemly wrangling among players, almost fist fights with umpires, and tolerance of the loosest shoutings from the roughest and most turbulent part of the spectators, who thrive on disorder. Among the colleges there is complaint that many of the best players are practicing deception to evade the amateur restrictions against taking pay, and that they descend to the pay and the hurly-burly of professionalism.

Or with small thought for all this, and finding occupation in other channels, see how some of our princes study and practice what they are pleased to call "The Science of Philanthropy." It really is not a science. It is not effectual, nor can it be. It does not go to fundamentals; it merely touches here and there on the surface. It does not stop the robbery of the masses, the robbery that reduces them to poverty. It simply gives a few sops to them out of the spoil taken from them. If the beneficiaries do not see this, yet it is so. With the best intentions in the world, they can do nothing far-reaching or permanent unless they do justice, and justice means stopping the robbery of some for the enriching of others. With justice in respect to privileges, the practice of "philanthropy" would not be required. With justice not practiced, the "science of philanthropy" can only be a

study of how, in Tolstoy's words, to do "anything for the poor but get off their backs."

What then if the Charity Organization Society of New York, for instance, be built up into a sort of "clearing house to the other charitable societies," enabling those philanthropically disposed to quickly ascertain "what to give and how to give it"? What if the "Tenement Shade Tree Committee of the Tree Planting Association of New York City" line the streets of poor districts with trees? What if Mr. Carnegie appoint a "Hero Commission," and transfer to it from the vast fortune he accumulated through privileges, \$5,000,000 in first collateral five per cent. gold bonds of the United States Steel Corporation, the interest of which is to be used by the Commission for the awarding of medals to heroes and pecuniary aid to the injured heroes and the wives and children of those heroes who die? What if Mr. Henry Phipps, for so long a partner in the Carnegie Company, establish tenement houses on a basis of five per cent. income on the investment? What if societies be established to enable "the worthy poor" to pawn their small personal effects at lower than the legal rates? What if hospital beds be endowed, and a thousand other things in themselves more or less good, which "the science of philanthropy" can suggest be done? What of it all? It falls far short of justice, which is all that is needed. But justice is something that Privilege does not and will not see. Many of the privileged pursue "the science of philanthropy" as an intermittent occupation or amusement; some of them, perhaps, as a conscience easer.

And what are the offsets to this seeking for excitement or searching for occupation and peace of mind? Often it is misdirected interest in things. For instance, one lady daily sends her dog out in her victoria for a "constitutional," liveried driver and footman on the box. Another treats her toy spaniel to the opera, on one occasion taking him to hear Caruso. Another has her darling

quadruped massaged, in order that "his spirits may be kept high, and his life may be prolonged." Yet another has the teeth of her pedigreed pet gold-filled, just as the Empress Poppæa had her horse gold-shod, — the horse that the Emperor Nero made consul. Then there are those who choose snakes, lions, pigs and bears for pets.

At other times there is the very madness of inanity: valentine dinners, golden-dish dinners, appendicitis dinners, horseback dinners, monkey dinners, bull and bear dinners, clown dinners and Egyptian desert dinners — the latter given by a New Yorker who lives abroad, the table being set as a miniature desert, where each guest dug up jewels with tiny gold pick and shovel.

A twist is given to the inanity by introduction of the English revival of falconry. Many cotes containing merlins, bastards, bobbies and goshawks are reported to have been set up on large private estates in western New York and the Berkshire Hills within the past two or three years. Then there are colonial fox-hunts and English "squire balls"; also revels and pastoral vapidities, such as were so favored in the dry-rot days of the French court, before ingulfment by the revolution. There are midnight beach parties, wild animal cotillions and vegetable parties, the latter in various ways suggestive of those mindless growths of the earth in imitation of which the participants dress. Perhaps there is a flocking to some such place as Sherry's in New York, to listen to the "melancholy apostle of beauty" descant on "The Mystery of Blue Hydrangeas"; or to some place like Delmonico's to applaud a more matter-of-fact person read from a manuscript book on "Marital Unrest," or another discourse on "How to Get Rid of a Lover."

These are the conditions in which our Princes of Privilege raise their offspring. As in all other courts of princes, flattery, cajolery and temptation fawn, snare and pander. Is it any wonder that pride, slothfulness and self-indulgence seek to possess the princelings?

There are honorable exceptions. Some of the heirs to empires of power choose deliberately to work and to work seriously. There are princelings, however, of a very different kind. Having slipped through college, by some sort of oiled process, they make no pretense of troubling with any more serious business than how to dress in the pink of fashion. If outwardly some are more seriously inclined, their thoughts are not so. I have a princeling in mind who entered a banking house to become fitted to follow his banker-father's footsteps. Though of voting age, his lack of interest in the business qualified him for no better place in the establishment than that of high-class messenger boy. Odd intervals he devoted to study. But what kind of study? To the difficult art of picking horses, to the delicate one of mixing drinks.

For the most part the young scions are not troubling themselves about any kind of industry save that of amusement. They pay \$40 or \$50 for choice seats at championship fights. They nonchalantly stake large sums on the speed of a horse, the turn of a wheel, the chance of a card.

Time was when the universal habit in the Eastern and Middle States followed St. Paul's precept, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." There was no such occupation as "gentleman." But in the circle of Privilege this is passing. Where the public marriage license asks for statement of the occupation of the groom, and of the fathers of the contracting parties, more and more frequently the word "gentleman" is written in.

Is it strange, then, that with nothing serious to engage them, and with great riches at their command, these princelings should fall into the arms of deadly dissipations?

And if it is so with the sons of our Princes of Privilege, what of the daughters?

Fifty years ago the keen French observer and commen-



tator, De Tocqueville, paid our women the highest tribute. After citing the fact that adultery was a crime punishable with death in colonial Connecticut and Massachusetts, he said: "If I were asked . . . to what the singular prosperity and growing strength" of the people of the United States "ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply: To the superiority of their women. . . . No free communities ever existed without morals, and morals are the work of women. . . . There is certainly no country in the world where the tie of marriage is more respected than in America, or where conjugal happiness is more highly or worthily appreciated."<sup>1</sup>

This was written before the advent in America of great fortunes from special privileges. Our people then were far, far more homogeneous than they are now. The multimillionaire was very rare, and on the other hand De Tocqueville said he never met with a lackey in the United States; that all regarded themselves as equal citizens of the Commonwealth — as men.<sup>2</sup> Of course an aristocratic feeling did to some degree exist. But it was not marked as to fortune or to outward bearing. De Tocqueville knew of the effects of the fruit of the evil tree of aristocracy on women as well as on men, and he plainly specified them: —

Among aristocratic nations, birth and fortune make two such different beings of men and women, that they can never be united to each other. Their passions draw them together, but the conditions of society, and the notions suggested by it, prevent them from contracting a permanent and ostensible tie. The necessary consequence is a great number of transient and clandestine connections. Nature secretly avenges herself for the constraint imposed upon her by the laws of man.<sup>3</sup>

Does not this aptly describe much that we see in the "smart set" of our aristocracy of privilege? The old

<sup>1</sup>"Democracy in America" (1898), Vol. I, pp. 46, 389, and Vol. II, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>"Democracy in America," Vol. II, pp. 215-217.

<sup>3</sup>"Democracy in America," Vol. II, p. 250.

true love, the deep love, the love rooted in respect, seems to be going out of date among our princes. Power, money; money, power: that is the thing most thought of and talked of. Money seeks money in marriage. Or, surrounded by all that money can supply, the daughters of our Princes of Power yearn for the regalia of Princes of Title. Their eyes turn abroad, and many of them marry English, French, German, Austrian, Russian, Italian and Spanish coronets.

There are doubtless among these foreign nobles men of estimable character and parts. But waiving the question of departure from democratic-republican principles, the too frequent tale of infelicity and separation makes such matches as a rule unwholesome. For that matter, nuptial alliances made at home or abroad seem, as a rule, to have much the same result among our Princes of Privilege, — unhappiness, divorce.

A cynic, touching upon superficial aspects, remarks that the prevalence of divorce among the privileged class comes from dancing the fashionable cotillion; that in that dance the young women become fascinated with the idea of changing partners, and they apply it to marriage. One case of rapid change of marital partners filled the press of the country and excited much caustic comment. The sister of Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt was in the course of fifty minutes divorced from Mr. Arthur T. Kemp and married to Mr. Hollis T. Hunnewell. This occurred at Newport, and Justice Dubois of the Appellate division of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island broke the old and sealed the new bond. Dr. Felix Adler has cited a woman who has been divorced and remarried five times, being twice married and twice divorced from one man.

Now the weakness or sins of divorce in this country are not to be laid solely at the door of Princes of Privilege. We know full well that our churches are profoundly disturbed over the alarming increase of the evil among all

but the very lowest classes of this country. The truth seems to be that divorces are not only more numerous in the United States in proportion to marriages than in any other country showing records, but that they are rapidly increasing.<sup>1</sup> And this increase is occurring in face of the growing stringency of the laws. There were sixty thousand divorces in the United States in 1903.

"Thirty years ago divorce was hardly ever talked about," said Rev. Dr. Leighton Parks recently, from his pulpit in St. Bartholomew's Episcopal church, New York City. "We scarcely knew of a case that had occurred among respectable people. But to-day it has usurped the center of the stage. It is the problem of the novel; it is the subject of conversation at the dinner party; it is talked over between mother and child; it clamors in the police courts; it demands that legislators change the laws; and it confuses the councils of the Church. It would seem at times as if marriage had disappeared, and that the chief human interest was divorce."

So far is this from being an exaggeration that many gravely discuss the feasibility of the proposal made by the veteran English novelist, Mr. George Meredith — that marriage be made a brief-term contract, instead of for life. Others think the marriage and divorce laws should be strengthened, and we find the President of the United States calling the attention of Congress to the "dangerously lax and indifferently administered" divorce laws in some of the States, and expressing the hope that "coöperation among the several States can be secured to the end that there may be enacted upon the subject . . . uniform laws."<sup>2</sup>

Now if divorce is so general and increasing, what is its

<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. W. F. Wilcox in "The Divorce Problem," in 1870 the relation of divorces to marriages was 3.5 per cent; in 1880, 4.8 per cent; in 1890, 6.2 per cent. According to the 1900 United States Census report the proportion of divorces to marriages in 1890 was 5 per cent; in 1900, 7 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> Presidential message, January 30, 1905.

cause? It must be general. It cannot lie in the lack of uniformity or indifferent administration of divorce laws. For, as Mr. Louis F. Post truly observes in a most suggestive little book on the divorce problem,<sup>1</sup> the ceremonial of marriage is not marriage proper, but the "symbol," or "outward proof" of it. The real marriage is the establishing of a relationship of love. Each must be in love with the higher intellectual qualities and the deeper moral impulses of the other.

But it is a part of ancient wisdom that "love flies out of the window when poverty enters the door." So that the continuance of love depends in no small degree upon keeping poverty at a distance. If poverty be not kept away, love may vanish; and with love gone, many of those bound by wedlock will want separation, and many will endeavor to get it either by help of a divorce law, or in spite of it.

That is to say, the prevalence and increase of divorces does not lie primarily in loose divorce laws or lax administration, for if marriage unions were happy, permission freely to separate would have no effect upon the bonds of love. The cause is social. It is the offspring of Privilege, which intoxicates some and kills happiness in others by holding them threateningly upon the brink of ruin. The harassing dread of many even in good circumstances is that in the upheavals and overthrows constantly occurring under present social conditions, they will be reduced to the straits of poverty.

But the Princes of Privilege, while always on the defensive for their special advantages, are little subject to the unhappiness that springs from fear of poverty. The main cause of divorces among them is the antithesis of want or its fear. Their ills are not the lean ills of scarcity, but the fat ills of superabundance. Possessing privileges that lift them in wealth and power above the mass of their fellows,

<sup>1</sup> "Ethical Principles of Marriage and Divorce."

these favored ones are prone to feel more or less exempted from many of the common social rules. Among these exemptions they set various obligations governing matrimony. Increasing numbers enter wedlock lightly; they hold it lightly. They come by degrees to regard themselves as Napoleon said of himself: "I am not an ordinary, but an extraordinary man. Ordinary rules of conduct, therefore, do not apply to me."

And the worst of it is that if open divorces are rapidly increasing, there is graver suspicion that secret connubial inconstancy is still more general. Yet it must be borne in mind that the startling change of manners in the country with respect to happiness, sanctity and permanence of marriage does not arise from any antecedent characteristic, but from Privilege, which harries many into unhappiness and pampers others into false notions.

And just as the marriage tie is coming to be held lightly, so the fruit of marriage is coming to be lightly regarded. There is a diminution in the number of births in the households of our princes.

Yet let us not make false assumptions. Births in the natural order of things, and taken as a whole, cannot occur haphazard. Nature must surely govern generation by law, just as she governs every other province of her vast domains. She appears to bring twenty-one boy babies into the world for every twenty girl babies. Likewise she appears to provide that there shall be increased births when the life of the race is threatened either by sparsity of population or by poverty, disease or other adverse condition in a dense population.

Reversely, Nature seems to provide that when the perpetuity of the race is assured, there shall be diminished births.

This is apart from conscious human direction. It indicates a natural law — a law that accords with and is subordinate to intellectual development. Where intellectual development is low, as in sparse or in slum populations,

Nature begets many children. Where intellectual development is high, as among the classes of material ease and comfort, Nature brings forth fewer children. This is not to say that intellectual development suggests artificial checks on generation. It may; but aside from that, Nature herself, automatically — acting without conscious direction of human will — appears to lessen births, probably by bringing into play subtle differentiations and refinements, and also probably by opening up new realms that invite and absorb the mind's attention.

This appears to be the result where Nature is allowed to take her course. Hence we should expect to find, not invariably, but on the average, more births to a marriage on the lower East Side of New York City than in the better sections. But what we find is more than this. The birth rate on the lower East Side, while high, is normal for that social condition. But there is more than a normal diminution among all the classes above the very poor elsewhere. And this diminution is progressing.

This marked falling off in the rate of births cannot be due to natural causes. Its cause must be artificial. However reluctantly, we are forced to the conclusion of New York State's recent Public Health Commissioner, Dr. Cyrus Edson, and must admit that the cause is "voluntary avoidance and prevention."

To what is this due? With the middle class it is due, I believe, to the cause which is increasing divorces. That cause in most instances is the intensifying financial strain in keeping up with a former, or in rising to a newly conceived, standard of living. Where this is not so, the cause is to be found in the constant heart-racking and mind-racking dread of financial losses, and the deprivations that that would involve. Hence refusal to give "hostages to fortune" in the persons of children.

This practice of "race" or class suicide among what we call our "comfortable classes" in itself denotes anything but a healthy social condition in the Republic. But what

shall we say respecting the diminishing birth-rate among our Princes of Privilege? Their great wealth lifts them above the fear of poverty. With them children would not be "hostages to fortune." There superabundance is assured for the largest families possible. If "voluntary avoidance and prevention" is practiced among the middle classes because of social straits or fear of being reduced to poverty, it would seem to be practiced among the princes for far different reasons. Is the chief one desire for freedom to cast themselves into the arms of frivolity and voluptuous indulgence?