

" SACK - CLOTH AND HASHISH "

Herman H. Lackner

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As one man's metes are another man's bounds, so do people, places, institutions, experiences, and, of course, emotions mean different things to different diarists. All other writing is directed to other people -- to entertain, to influence, to dun, to inflame or to sell a product of the writing itself. Diaries, on the other hand, are inner-directed and as intimate and honest as a person can be with himself. Being confidential, the best are written without reticence or inhibition to aid memory (without necessarily increasing its accuracy), to vent spleen, to perfect literary style, to record convictions or inventions (the John Deere Co. has successfully taken the diaries of Theophilus Brown into court to protect its patents), and for unnumbered private reasons. For the professional writer, journals are like money in the bank. They are easily and quickly converted into memoirs, as Frank Harris, Henry Miller, Mark Twain and others have done so profitably, or into "anti-memoirs" which Andre Malraux describes as answering "a question which memoirs do not pose, and not answering those which they do".

The following samplings of a random assortment of journals can only suggest the many facets of orthodoxy, the mutuality of zenith and nadir as interpreted by such disparate journalists as Tchaikovsky, who considered marriage a penance worse than sack-cloth; and Queen Victoria, who considered it a dream far exceeding the capabilities of hashish.

Queen Victoria was, in fact, so compulsive a diarist that she apologized to herself for missing the day after her wedding. However, on her wedding day she was turned on. Listen to her tell it like it was, in part:

"London, February 10th, 1840. Got up at $\frac{1}{4}$ to nine, having slept well. Mama brought me a nosegay of orange flowers. Wrote my journal and to Lord M. Had my hair dressed. . . . (Some pages later:)

"The procession looked beautiful going down stairs. The flourish of trumpets ceased as I entered the chapel and the organ began to play which had a beautiful effect. The ceremony was very imposing and fine and simple and, I think, ought to make an everlasting impression on everyone who promises at the altar to keep what he or she promises. Dearest Albert repeated everything distinctly. I felt so happy when the ring was put on by Albert. I then returned to Buckingham Palace alone with Albert: they cheered us most warmly and heartily, the crowd was immense."

Sweet! But to every verse -- even a paean -- there is a reverse.

The Countess Francoise Krasinska, a Warsaw debutante of 1760, confided to her journal the most suitable sentiments of filial devotion, piety, girlish glee and, above all, enthusiasm for the social whirl. The style progresses from idyllic to rhapsodic to lachrymose, as the following entry explains:

Warsaw, November 4th 1760 "Married! One hour ago, before the altar, before God, we swore to each other faith and love until death. What a terrible wedding! At five o'clock in the morning the Prince, my uncle, knocked at the door. I was quite dressed and we went out stealthily; at the gate the Duke, my husband-to-be, and Prince Martin were waiting for us. It was quite dark, the wind blew fiercely, we walked to the church as a carriage would have made a noise. The church was dark and silent as a grave; at a side altar two candles were lighted; no living soul but the priest and a sacristan. Our steps resounded as in a cavern.

"The ceremony did not last ten minutes and then we hastened away as if pursued. The duke brought us to the gate, and Prince Martin had to compel him to go away. Now I am again in my room alone. Nobody is blessing or congratulating

me, and if it were not for the wedding ring, which I shall soon have to take off and hide, I could not believe that I have returned from my wedding, that I am a married woman, that I am his forever."

That she was his forever did, indeed, sometimes escape the memory of the Duke. The marriage was kept secret for many years lest news of it interfere with the groom's prospects of employment. The only trade for which he had been trained was being a king, and agencies have only the scantiest listings in this category. The ultimate reward of having their great-great grandchildren ensconced on thrones of their own would, had they lived to see it, have assuaged what Turgenev calls the "sumptuous long-suffering of the virtuous".

Turgenev is often quoted in the Goncourt Journals. Who isn't? The names dropped by Suzy, the syndicated columnist, do not sound more like hail on a tin roof than the joint journal kept by these brothers. On January 28, 1878, Edmond de Goncourt wrote: "When we asked Turgenev what was the keenest amorous sensation he had ever known, he thought for a while and then said: 'I was very young at the time and a virgin with all the longings a boy has at fifteen. At my mother's house there was a pretty chambermaid with a stupid face. . . . I was walking around the garden when suddenly that girl came straight up to me and took hold of me -- and remember that I was her master and she was just a serf -- took hold of me by the hair at the back of my neck and said: Come! What followed was a sensation similar to the sensations we have all of us experienced so many times. But that gentle gripping of my hair with the single word sometimes comes back to me, and just thinking about it makes me happy'."

Not until years later did Turgenev discover that this encounter had been arranged by his mother as part of his education. Another thoughtful parent was

the father of Sergei Diaghillef who, according to Nijinsky's journal, took his adolescent son to a brothel with results which were as unfortunate to the boy's health as to his psyche. More relentlessly, albeit more subtly, pursued was Henri-Frederic Amiel, Professor of Aesthetics and Moral Philosophy at Geneva Academy. In his journal of 17,000 pages, he presents a dissenting opinion which was not included in the translation and digest by Mrs. Humphrey Ward which Victorian England found so elevating:

"September 25th, 1860. I have had neither wife nor mistress, nor passion, nor affair; I have especially avoided sensual pleasure and let the golden age pass; have I not been a fool? Such is the thought that besieges the celibate of thirty-nine in his solitary room, on his sleepless pillow.

"October 6th (his fortieth birthday). What am I to call the experience of this evening? Was it disappointing? Was it intoxicating? Neither the one nor the other. For the first time I have received a woman's favors, and frankly, compared to what the imagination assumes or expects, they are a small matter. It was like a bucket of cold water. At bottom I am stupefied at the relative insignificance of this pleasure over which they make such a stir.

"October 7th. Met X this morning, all smiles and graciousness. What exhausts the man nourishes the woman."

Gandhi, married at 13, vowed celibacy at 37 'though continuing to share a bed with his wife and controlling his passions by limiting his diet to fruit and nuts. From this he deduced that "there is no limit to the possibilities of renunciation."

Of a more worldly and debonnair turn of mind, James Boswell considered his conquests too routine for more than passing mention. His journal paints his

proress in broader strokes. Introspection must have been as agreeable to him as it was infrequent for nothing that he found disappointed him as we see by his entries of 1763:

"How easily and cleverly do I write just now! I am really pleased with myself; words come skipping to me like lambs upon Moffat Hill; and I turn my periods smoothly and imperceptibly like a skillful wheelright turning tops in a turning loom. There's fancy! There's simile! In short, I am at present a genius."

"Called on Mr. Garrick at Drury Lane. He was vastly good to me. 'Sir', he said, 'you will be a very great man'. . . . What he meant by my being a great man I can understand. For really, to speak seriously, I think there is a blossom about me of something more distinguished than the generality of mankind."

Could one interpolate the query of whether the critical faculty formed a petal of this blossom?

On May 16 and 24 of the same year, he bridged the generation gap: "I drank tea at Davies's in Russell Street and about seven came in the great Mr. Samuel Johnson whom I have so long wished to see. Mr. Davies introduced me to him. Mr. Johnson is a man of dreadful appearance. He is a very big man, is troubled with sore eyes, the palsy, and the king's evil. He is very slovenly in his dress and speaks with a most uncouth voice. Yet his great knowledge and strength of expression command vast respect and render him very excellent company.

"I went and waited upon Mr. Samuel Johnson who received me very courteously. He has chambers in the Inner Temple where he lives in literary state, very solemn and very slovenly. He had some people with him and when they left I rose too.

"I begged that he would favor me with his company at my lodgings some evening. He promised that he would. I then left him and he shook me cordially by the hand. Upon my word, I am very fortunate. I shall cultivate this acquaintance."

John Quincy Adams also wrote in his diary, on January 11, 1831, of one who recognized his own greatness: "Read about fifty pages of Jefferson's Memoirs. There are no confessions. He tells nothing but what redounds to his own credit -- always in the right. This is not uncommon to writers of their own lives."

Salvador Dali's self appraisal is even more succinct than Boswell's. He modestly published his journal under the title, "Diary of a Genius". The prologue contains the pith which is expanded without restraint in the body of the work:

"There has developed a tendency to consider a genius as a human being more or less the same in every sense as other ordinary mortals. This is wrong. And if this is wrong for me, the genius of the greatest spiritual order of our day, a true modern genius, it is even more wrong when applied to those who incarnated the almost divine genius of the Renaissance such as Raphael.

"This book will prove that the daily life of a genius, his sleep, his digestion, his ecstasies, his nails, his colds, his blood, his life, his death, are essentially different from those of the rest of mankind. So this unique book is the first journal written by a genius."

Dali's entry of August 30, 1953, "The one thing the world will never have enough of is exaggeration", suggests a spiritual kinship with another to whom showmanship was an absorbing avocation. Davy Crockett said: "I'm that same David Crockett, fresh from the backwoods, half horse, half alligator, a little touched with the snapping turtle, can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, ride

upon a streak of lightning, and slip without a scratch down a honey-locust; can whip my weight in wild cats -- and if any gentleman pleases, for a ten dollar bill, he may throw in a panther".

There are other ways of hiding one's light under a bushel, but Davy Crockett had no time for them. He kept up his journal until a few hours before his death on the last day of the siege of the Alamo. That he also kept up his spirits is proven by this entry of February 27, 1836:

"The cannonading began early this morning and ten bombs were thrown into the fort, but fortunately landed without doing any mischief. So far it has been a sort of tempest in a teapot, not unlike a pitched battle in the Hall of Congress where the parties array their forces, make fearful demonstrations on both sides, then fire away with loud sounding speeches which contain about as much meaning as the report of a howitzer charged with a blank cartridge."

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. was another who kept his cool in the heat of battle. Or could it be that he was unable to write up his journal until circumstances were more felicitous? In October, 1861, he describes his baptism of fire at Ball's Bluff: "I was hit at 4:30 PM, the heavy firing having begun about an hour before -- I felt as if a horse had kicked me and went over -- Srgt. Smith grabbed me and lugged me to the rear a little way and opened my shirt and ecce! the two holes in my breast and the bullet which he squeezed from the right one -- Well -- I remember the sickening feeling of water thrown in my face -- I was quite faint.

"When I got to the bottom of the bluff the scow had just started with a load but there was a small boat there. Then I thought 'Now wouldn't Sir Philip Sidney have that other feller put in the boat first?' But the question, as the form in which it occurred shows, came from a mind still bent on a becoming and

consistent carrying out of ideals of conduct -- not from the unhesitating instinct of a still predominant and heroic will -- and I am not sure whether I propounded the question, but I let myself be put aboard.

"When I thought that I was dying, the reflection that the majority vote of the civilized world declared that, with my opinions, I was en route to Hell, came up with painful distinctness. Perhaps the first impulse was tremulous but then I said, 'By Jove! I'll die like a soldier anyhow. I was shot in the breast doing my duty up to the hub -- Afraid? No! I'm proud.' Then I thought I couldn't be guilty of a deathbed recantation. Father and I had talked of that and agreed that it generally meant nothing but a cowardly giving way to fear."

Jungle warfare in the twentieth century comes through in an earthier idiom. The following antithetic views come from the diaries of antithetic men. On September first, 1942, War Correspondent Richard Tregaskis wrote: "It is startling to think how one's standards of value change under the continued impetus of living conditions such as ours on Guadalcanal. Things like bread and privies, considered the barest necessities at home, become luxuries. One thinks of warm water, the smooth water-closet seat of civilization, and a bed with sheets as things that exist only in a world of dreams."

Contrast this with a glimpse of the Bolivian jungle in the August 30, 1967 entry of the late Che Guevara: "The situation is becoming anguished; the macheteros are suffering from fainting spells. Miguel and Ario were drinking their own urine with the ominous results of diarrhea and cramps. Urbano, Benigno, and Julie went down a canyon and found water but, as the mules could not come down, I decided to stay with them and with Nato and Inti. The three of us ate mare meat. The situation must weigh squarely on everybody and whoever does not feel capable of sustaining it should say so. It is one of those

moments when great decisions must be taken; this type of struggle gives us the opportunity not only to turn ourselves into revolutionaries, the highest level of the human species, but it also allows us to graduate as men; those who cannot reach either one of these two stages should say so and leave the struggle."

Since opposing opinions are required to make a war, it is natural that the same events will be seen in different lights by different protagonists. Sherman's March from Atlanta to the Sea sent diarists scurrying for their pens lest posterity miss the blow by blow account.

General Sherman's Special Field Order No. 120 of 9 November 1864 said, in part: "The army will forage liberally on the country during the march. To this end each commander will organize a foraging party under the command of a discreet officer to gather corn or forage of any kind, meat, vegetables, corn-meal, or whatever is needed by the command. . . . Soldiers must not enter the dwellings of the inhabitants nor commit any trespasses; but, during a halt or a camp, they may be permitted to gather turnips, potatoes, and other vegetables, and to drive in stock in sight of their camp. As for horses, mules, wagons, etc., belonging to the inhabitants, the cavalry and artillery may appropriate freely and without limit."

On November 17, he wrote: "We passed through the handsome town of Covington, the soldiers closing up their ranks, the color bearers unfurling their flags, and the bands striking up patriotic airs. The white people came out of their houses to behold this sight, in spite of their deep hatred of the invaders, and the negroes were simply frantic with joy."

One of the marchers in this army was my grandfather, Colonel Francis Lackner, who wrote: "We were in Atlanta until the middle of November when our

whole army abandoned it and marched southeast through the rebel country to Savannah. This was Sherman's great march to the sea and, as we had little fighting, plenty to eat, and glorious weather, we enjoyed it hugely."

A few miles from Covington at Burge Plantation, a different picture of the same events was painted by Dolly Sumner Lunt, the great grandmother of my brother-in-law and guest this evening:

"July 22nd 1864. We have heard the loud booming of cannon all day. Suddenly I saw the servants running to the palings and I walked to the door, when I saw such a stampede as I never witnessed before. The road was full of carriages, wagons, men on horseback, all riding at full speed. Judge Floyd stopped, saying: 'Mrs. Burge, the Yankees are coming. Hide your mules and carriages and whatever valuables you have.'

"I went to the smoke-house, divided out the meat to the servants and bid them hide it. Our clothes were given to the servants to hide in their cabins; china and silver were buried underground."

"July 24th, Sunday. No church. Our preacher's horse stolen by the Yankees."

"August 2nd. Just as I got out of bed this morning Aunt Julia (a slave) called me to look down the road and see the soldiers. I peeped through the blinds and there they were, sure enough, the Yankees. Six of them broke in and demanded breakfast. Tonight Capt. Smith of an Alabama regiment and a squad of twenty men are camped opposite in the field. They have all supped with me and I shall breakfast with them. We have spent a pleasant evening with music and talk."

"November 19th. Slept in my clothes last night as I heard that the Yankees went to neighbor Montgomery's on Thursday night at one o'clock, searched his house, drank his wine, and took his money. This morning I walked to the gate and saw the blue-coats filing up.

"I hastened back to my frightened servants and told them that they had better hide, and then went back to the gate to claim protection and a guard. But like demons they rush in! My yards are full. To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. My flour, meat, lard, butter, eggs, pickles -- both in vinegar and brine -- wine, are all gone in a twinkling. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and young pigs are hunted in my yard and shot down as if they were rebels too. There go my mules, my sheep, and, worse than all, my boys.

"Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house today. If I live to the age of Methuselah, may God spare me from ever seeing such a day again."

When Santayana said that "the feminine soul abounds in intuition without method and passion without justice", he could have been thinking of activists of any era but probably not of activist diarists such as the one who became known as the Joan of Arc of Finland. Her journal entries for January 27 and 28, 1918 show a forthright response to a situation which many would consider delicate:

"The red Bolshevik flag has been raised over Helsingfors! Tonight I received the secret signal to take my place in the ranks.

"I started at dawn with my rucksack full of bandages and drugs -- destination Borge. Fortunately I had one of the Russian passports that were issued

to nurses during the war so was allowed, after waiting a few hours, to board a train heading eastward. Forty kilometers from Helsingfors the train came to a standstill as there were rumours that the White army was opposing the advancing Reds. I was taken to the Red headquarters where I was exhaustively interrogated and cross-questioned as to who I was and where I was going but I did not answer.

"At the long table at which my adversaries sat, armed to the teeth, they discussed my fate. They tried to force me to disclose the color of my political convictions and my reasons for wanting to get over to the White side. A square built fellow with a coarse, swollen face, seemed to hit upon a solution. He approached me with a smile and asked whether I would like a good meal. Still I made no reply.

"At that the fat, vulgar creature came close to me and, chucking me under the chin, with his dirty hand, said in his sweetest voice: 'Well, well, little girl, you might be more friendly. We will have a jolly evening and a still better night'.

"My reply was a resounding box on the ear. I realized that it was an impolite action but I couldn't help it. Nor did I regret it.

"The situation changed immediately. His face became distorted with rage and, drawing himself up to his full height, he roared the order: 'Shoot her!' A handful of Reds dragged me out into the yard. I thought it was ludicrous -- so many of them against one woman. It was dusk and they placed me with my back to a woodstack and tied my hands. How cowardly! Were they afraid of opposition -- from a woman? One of them came up to me with a dirty rag and wanted to bind my eyes. I gave him a hard shove with my shoulder and pushed him aside. I did not need to have my eyes bound. Long since I had got used to looking

death straight in the face. I could not help feeling surprised, though, that I should be so calm at the moment when my life would be ended.

"My executioners took up their positions at a little distance, ten paces from me. I could see that they were not used to their rifles, some hardly having a decent weapon. Dirty jokes and allusions rained about me. I did not heed them. Now they raised their rifles -- to aim -- one! two! . . .

"Suddenly an explosion was heard. From the station nearby there was an uproar, cries and volleys, and the deafening rattle of machine guns. The attention of my executioners was diverted for a moment. That was enough for me. In a flash I slipped behind the wood pile, rolled in the snow to escape the bullets whistling around me, picked myself up again and RAN."

When Fyodor Dostoyevski found himself in the same situation -- reprieved by a messenger of the Tsar after he had mounted the scaffold -- he wrote: "Man is a pliable animal, a being who gets accustomed to everything."

The first entry in the journal from which the foregoing excerpt was taken is dated May, 1914: "I have been given a diary for my confirmation. All the girls in my form have diaries. They keep writing them up, apparently with very secret matters, for they chatter about them a great deal. Now that my Godmother has given me a lovely fat book bound in leather, I suppose I must try to write something in it". The author is Dagmar, Baroness Ramsay, born in Finland to a family of Swedish ancestry. (This is less complicated than her husband, John Ronald Ramsay, whose Scotch ancestors lived in Finland for three hundred years but whose father was Viceroy of Poland.) Since her mother was a lady-in-waiting to the Dowager Empress of Russia, the godmother who gave the diary, and her father was minister of transportation in the Tsar's cabinet, Dagmar Ramsay's childhood was largely spent in St. Petersburg or, when Dad had an occasional

falling out with the boss, in Siberia. To Siberia they always went in a private car, taking a tutor along for the children. At the outbreak of World War I, although only sixteen, she volunteered as a Red Cross nurse and served at the front until it dissolved in the Revolution. Her father and brother having been killed in the Revolution, her mother and sisters escaped to their home in Finland, where she later joined them.

After frustrating the Bolshevik urge to fold, mutilate and spindle as noted above, Sister Dagmar, as she was known in her nursing career, reported for duty with a Finnish battalion which was being organized on Finland's southern coast between Helsingfors and Petrograd, right in the path of the Bolshevik army. This is a rugged coast of coves, channels, inlets, and hundreds of little, pine-covered, rocky islands among which the battalion was scattered in the face of larger and better supplied Red forces. Finally, with food and ammunition exhausted, they were literally driven into the sea.

Did Pauline ever face perils like these?

Although the Baltic is a fresh water sea it had never, within the memory of the inhabitants of its littoral, frozen over. In more organized periods before and since, ice-breakers have made it their business to ensure that this approach to Leningrad remains wide open. However, on this February night of 1918, the miracle happened and the little band of patriots set out, dragging sledges carrying the wounded. Eliza carrying her baby was not more eager to attain the further shore!

The harrowing trip in the bitter cold, near capture by a Russian ice-breaker, hunger and thirst -- all are described in harshest detail, concluding with these words: "The fog lifted and just in front of us, at our very feet, we caught sight of land! Dropping on our knees we kissed the frozen foreign soil."

With a similar if less exuberantly expressed satisfaction, Pere Marquette records reaching his goal in June, 1673: "After proceeding forty leagues on this route, we arrived at the mouth of our river and, at $42\frac{1}{2}$ degrees of latitude, we safely entered the Mississippi on the 17th of June with a joy that I can not express."

A month later, the tireless Father searched his soul for the real purpose of his explorations: "After a month's navigation descending the Mississippi, and after preaching the gospel as well as I could to the Nations that I met, we start on the 17th of July from the Arkansas to retrace our steps. We therefore reascend the Mississippi which gives us much trouble in breasting its currents. It is true that, had this voyage resulted in the salvation of even one soul I would consider all my troubles well rewarded."

Two hundred years later, another Frenchman, at the end of a difficult trip, asked himself the same questions. As a career naval officer, Pierre Loti may not have been trained to ask questions but, being sent on a diplomatic mission to Fez to present an electric boat (which had to be carried across the Sahara on the shoulders of forty foot-sore Arabs) to the Sultan, might suggest questions to even the most disciplined mind. Here is his account of the credibility gap:

"Fez, Morocco, April 17th, 1889. We are to be presented to the Sultan this morning. . . . Issue now some fifty little negro slaves in red robes and muslin surplices, for all the world like choir boys. They advance clumsily, huddled together like a flock of sheep. Then six magnificent white horses, all saddled and harnessed in silk, are led out rearing and prancing. Then a gilt coach in the style of Louise Quinze, unlooked for in such a setting, quaintly

incongruous, ridiculous even amid all this rude grandeur (the solitary carriage, be it said, existing in Fez, a present to the Sultan from Queen Victoria). Some minutes more of waiting and silence. Suddenly a tremor of religious awe passes along the line of soldiers. The band, with its drums and huge brass instruments strikes up a deafening and mournful air. The fifty little black slaves start running, running, seized by a sudden madness, spreading out fan-wise like a flock of birds, like a swarm of bees. And, mounted on a superb white horse led by four slaves, appears a tall, white, brown-faced mummy completely veiled in muslin. Above his head is borne a red parasol of ancient shape such as might have belonged to the Queen of Sheba, and two huge negroes, one in a pink robe, the other in a blue, wave fly-flaps before the august countenance. And here now, come to a stop quite near us, is the last authentic descendant of Mohammed. What good purpose can be served by a mission to such a sovereign, immobilized like his people in old human dreams that have almost disappeared from the earth? We are absolutely incapable of understanding one another; the distance between us is almost as great as that which would separate us from the Caliph of Baghdad, come suddenly to life again after a thousand years of sleep."

Had I kept a journal, it, too, would record at least a vicarious encounter with the primitive mind. I have reconstructed the incident, for if I do not drop my name among such illustrious diarists, who will?

The temperature was slowly falling to one hundred, the stars were brilliant, and a breeze was just between hope and reality as I sat with an American missionary in a dark and quiet courtyard, while he told me of his triumphs and failures in this remote corner of sub-Saharan Africa.

Although he already knew French, the language of the establishment in Mali, his first care on arriving at his post was to learn the native language, reduce

it to a phonetic script, and translate the New Testament into it. No sooner had he accomplished this than he discovered that his assigned territory embraced other tribes with other languages. So again he set his shoulder to the wheel, learning languages and translating the New Testament into them. Then one day, as he was diligently translating, it came to him that, although he had learned four languages, the people who spoke them had nothing to say to him nor he to them. Alas! He made no converts but found his niche in this Moslem world through his fortuitous talent for extracting teeth without anaesthetic and through his skill in teaching typewriting to young people seeking government jobs.

Exotic or unknown places test the descriptive powers of travelers anxious to preserve their first impressions. So far we have noted the diversity of reactions to similar situations. The remarkable feature of the following two excerpts is their similarity, although they were written more than three centuries apart. In 1519, Bernal Diaz, one of Cortez' lieutenants, found Mexico City all but unbelievable, and his wonder lost none of its vividness when he wrote his chronicles after his retirement: "Gazing on such wonderful sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on one side, on the land, there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake itself was crowded with canoes, and in the Causeway were many bridges at intervals, and in front of us stood the great City of Mexico, and we -- we did not even number four hundred soldiers! We were amazed and said it was like enchantments on account of the great towers and temples and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry. Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not all a dream."

On Christmas Day in 1839, Fanny Calderon de la Barca, the wife of Spain's first Minister to Mexico, wrote: "At length we arrived at the heights from which

we look down upon the superb valley of Mexico, celebrated in all parts of the world, with its framework of magnificent mountains, snow-covered volcano, great lakes, and fertile plains -- all surrounding the favored city of Montezuma. What a scene to burst upon the first eyes that beheld it. The great city standing in the midst of the five great lakes, upon verdant and flower-covered islands, with thousands of boats gliding swiftly along its streets and its long lines of low houses diversified by the multitude of its pyramidal temples." (It must be admitted that when Mme. Calderon came down to earth and back to her weekday prose, she admitted that: "Before arriving in the city, everything became arid and flat. On each side where the waters of the lagunas once surrounded the city, forming canals through its streets, we now see half-drained, melancholy, marshy lands, little enlivened by great flights of wild duck and waterfowl.")

"Sweet are the uses of adversity", when they can be turned to account in a diary -- especially if they form the background to later success. The depression of 1826 pulled the rug out from under Sir Walter Scott because of the failure of publishers in whom he had invested. His diary shows how chivalry can be bolstered by canny Scottish acumen:

"Abbottsford, December 18th, 1825. My extremity has come. Letters from London announce the failure of Hurst and Robinson so that Constable & Co. must follow and I must go down with poor James Ballantyne. I suppose it will involve my all. Men will think that pride has had a fall. Let them indulge their pride in thinking that my fall makes them higher. I have the satisfaction to recollect that my prosperity has been of advantage to many, and that some, at least, will forgive my transient wealth on account of the innocence of my intentions and my real wish to do good to the poor.

"What a life mine has been! -- half educated, almost wholly neglected or left to myself, stuffing my head with most nonsensical trash, undervalued in society for a time by most of my companions, getting forward and held a bold and clever fellow, contrary to the opinion of all who thought me a mere dreamer, broken-hearted for two years, my heart handsomely pieced again, but the crack will remain to my dying day. Rich and poor four or five times, once on the verge of ruin, yet opened new sources of wealth almost overflowing. . . .

"January 26th, 1826. Gibson comes with a joyful face announcing the creditors had unanimously agreed to a private trust. This is handsome and confidential, and must warm my best efforts to get them out of the scrape. I will not doubt -- to doubt is to lose.

"February 3rd, 1826. From the 19th of January to the 2nd of February inclusive is exactly fifteen days, during which time, with the intervention of some days idleness to let imagination brood on the task a little, I have written a volume. I think, for a bet, I could have done it in ten days. This is working at the rate of 24,000 pounds a year; but then we must not bake buns faster than people have appetite to eat them. They are not essential to the market like potatoes."

F. Scott Fitzgerald, having come closer to the bottom, approached the same problem from a different angle:

"Hendersonville, N. C. Autumn 1936. I am living very cheaply. Today I am in comparative affluence, but Monday and Tuesday I had two tins of potted meat, two oranges, a box of Unedas and two cans of beer. For the food that totalled 18¢ a day -- and when I think of the thousand meals I've sent back untasted in the last two years! It was fun to be poor -- especially if you haven't enough liver-power for an appetite. It was funny coming into the hotel

and the very defferential clerk not knowing that I was not only thousands in debt but had less than 40 cents cash in the world and probably a deficit in the bank.

"Enough of all this bankrupt's comedy -- I suppose it has been enacted all over the U. S. in the last four years, plenty of times.

"The final irony was when a drunk man in the shop where I bought my can of ale said in a voice obviously intended for me: 'These city dudes from the east come down here with their millions. Why don't they support us?'"

Even so cursory an examination of the varied responses to similar stimuli can have no pretension to representative coverage, much less to scholarship, without allusion to that favorite topic of diarists -- health. For the same reason although Anne Frank, Lewis Carroll, Byron, Thomas Merton, Thoreau, John Barrymore or Louisa May Alcott may be reluctantly passed by, we must, at least, take note of Samuel Pepys doing his thing. On May 31, 1661, he noted: "My health pretty well, but only wind do now and then torment me." Again, on November 2 of the same year: "To church where, there being a lazy preacher, I slept out the sermon, and so home and to bed with some pain, having taken cold this morning in sitting too long bare-legged to pare my corns."

Many writers confide less matter-of-fact commentaries to their security blankets (otherwise known as diaries) -- some peevish, some resigned, some inspired. Before Franz Kafka died of tuberculosis, he was embittered by it. His journal records its torments with macabre relish -- the sleepless nights, the hacking cough, the impossibility of marriage. Before Katherine Mansfield died of tuberculosis, she conquered it. The last entry in her journal, which follows, was torn out and then, apparently on second thought, put into an envelope addressed to her husband, Middleton Murray:

"Paris, October 10th, 1922. I have been thinking this morning until it seems I may get things straightened out if I try to write.

"Ever since I came to Paris I have been ill as ever. In fact yesterday I thought I was dying. It is not imagination. My heart is so exhausted and so tied up that I can only walk to a taxi and back. I cannot work. But why? Because, although M's treatment improved my blood and made me look well and did have a good effect on my lungs, it made my heart not a snap better, and I only won that improvement by living the life of a corpse in the Victoria Palace Hotel.

"But perhaps to people who are not ill, all this is nonsense. They have never travelled this road. How can they see where I am? All the more reason to go boldly forward alone.

"Now, Katherine, what do you mean by health? And what do you want it for?

"Answer: By health I mean the power to live a full, adult, living, breathing, life in close contact with what I love -- the earth and the wonders thereof -- the sea -- the sun. All that we mean when we speak of the external world. I want to enter it, to be part of it, to live in it, to learn from it, to lose all that is superficial and acquired in me and to become a conscious, direct, human being. I want, by understanding myself, to understand others. I want to be all that I am capable of becoming so that I may be (and here I have stopped and waited and waited and it's no good -- there's only one phrase that will do) a child of the sun. About helping others, about carrying a light, and so on, it seems false to say a single word. Let it be at that. A child of the sun.

"Then I want to work. At what? I want so to live that I work with my hands and my feelings and my brain. I want a garden, a small house, grass,

animals, books, pictures, music. And out of this, the expression of this, I want to be writing. (Though I may be writing about cabmen. That's no matter.)

"But warm, eager, living life -- to be rooted in life -- to learn, to desire, to know, to feel, to think, to act. That is what I want. That is what I must try for."