

**FROM A COLLEGE
WINDOW,
SIXTH IMPRESSION,
FOURTH EDITION**

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From a College Window, Sixth Impression, Fourth Edition by Arthur Christopher Benson

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ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

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FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW

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WINDOW

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Mens cujusque is est quæque

SIXTH IMPRESSION, FOURTH EDITION

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NOTE

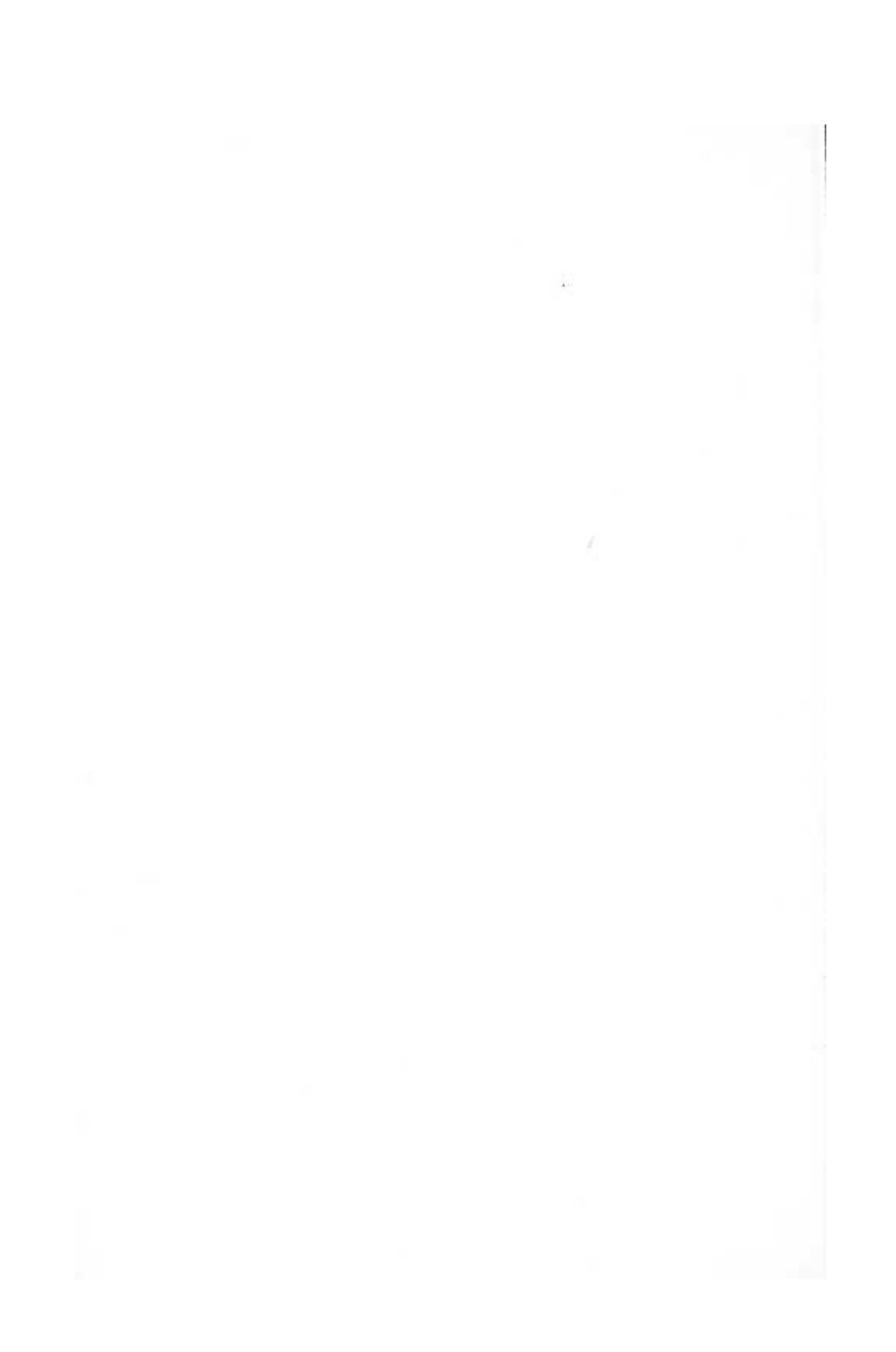
TWELVE of the essays included in this volume appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, monthly, from May 1905 till April 1906. I have added six more, dealing with kindred subjects. Those which have already appeared are distinguished by an asterisk in the Table of Contents. My best thanks are due to the proprietor and editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* for kind permission and encouragement to reprint them.

A. C. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE POINT OF VIEW *	1
II. ON GROWING OLDER *	20
III. BOOKS *	39
IV. SOCIABILITIES *	58
V. CONVERSATION *	75
VI. BEAUTY *	91
VII. ART *	119
VIII. ECOTISM *	135
IX. EDUCATION *	154
X. AUTHORSHIP *	178
XI. THE CRITICISM OF OTHERS *	198
XII. PRIESTS	216
XIII. AMBITION	233
XIV. THE SIMPLE LIFE	252
XV. GAMES	266
XVI. SPIRITUALISM	281
XVII. HABITS	295
XVIII. RELIGION *	307

* These papers have already appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*.



FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW

I

THE POINT OF VIEW

I HAVE lately come to perceive that the one thing which gives value to any piece of art, whether it be book, or picture, or music, is that subtle and evasive thing which is called personality. No amount of labour, of zest, even of accomplishment, can make up for the absence of this quality. It must be an almost wholly instinctive thing, I believe. Of course, the mere presence of personality in a work of art is not sufficient, because the personality revealed may be lacking in charm; and charm, again, is an instinctive thing. No artist can set out to capture charm; he will toil all the night and take nothing; but what every artist can and must aim at, is to have a perfectly sincere point of view. He must take his chance as to whether his point of view is an attractive

one ; but sincerity is the one indispensable thing. It is useless to take opinions on trust, to retail them, to adopt them ; they must be formed, created, truly felt. The work of a sincere artist is almost certain to have some value ; the work of an insincere artist is of its very nature worthless.

I mean to try, in the pages that follow, to be as sincere as I can. It is not an easy task, though it may seem so ; for it means a certain disentangling of the things that one has perceived and felt for oneself from the prejudices and preferences that have been inherited, or stuck like burs upon the soul by education and circumstance.

It may be asked why I should thus obtrude my point of view in print ; why I should not keep my precious experience to myself ; what the value of it is to other people ? Well, the answer to that is that it helps our sense of balance and proportion to know how other people are looking at life, what they expect from it, what they find in it, and what they do not find. I have myself an intense curiosity about other people's point of view, what they do when they are alone, and what they think about. Edward FitzGerald said that he wished we had more biographies of obscure persons. How often have I myself wished to ask simple,