

### The Caveman's Dream

James MacInnis '41

Of all the luxuries that are now in common use, the mirror is one of the most interesting. It is one of the most interesting because of the story that lies behind it—a story steeped in tragedy, romance, and superstition. Practically everyone has, at one time or another, used a mirror, so it will be unnecessary to give a description of it. Those who have never used one, or never intend to do so, will not be affected to any great extent by this article.

The history of the mirror dates back to several days before the creation of Adam. This is true because the first pool of water was the first mirror. It did not, however, receive any use or abuse until the creation of man. Adam and Eve, no doubt, often gazed at their reflections on these placid pools of the Garden of Eden. Perhaps they gazed at their reflections too much of the time. At any rate it is not definitely known whether their pride and subsequent fall resulted from this.

It is said that Adam's more immediate descendant, the caveman, was accustomed to walk every morning to a nearby pool to look at his reflection in the water and to gloat over his luxurious growth of whiskers, dreaming at the same time of a portable and more substantial mirror.

A few centuries later, the caveman's dream became a reality. Real mirrors were invented. Only a privileged few, however, could afford to possess these luxuries. Kings and queens were wont to gaze for hours at their mirrors, pleased, no doubt, with what they saw therein.

But, alas, there is tragedy connected with the mirror. In one case tragedy and love were combined. There was once a youth who derived much pleasure from sitting at the edge of a pool and gazing at his reflection. One day, so enamoured did he become, that he cast himself into the water and into his loved one's arms. Then there is a story told about "Good Queen Bess," who was an ardent admirer of her reflection in the mirror. It seems that for some reason or other she did not look at a mirror for quite a period of time. When one was finally brought to her, she became so enraged at her aged appearance that she flung it to the floor and it smashed to fragments.

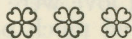
There may be some connection between this incident



and the misfortune that is supposed to follow a person who breaks a mirror. Be this as it may, no one knows if this superstition holds if the mirror is cracked by the shock it receives when certain individuals look into it. Several cases have arisen in which mirrors have been broken in this manner. For this reason it would be more beneficial for a person towards whom the conventional type of mirror has a distinct repugnance to revert to the ancient system of pool gazing.

It is true that some people do not make a practice of using mirrors. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but it oftens leads to embarrassment. This fact can be illustrated by a story, the setting of which was in the mountains of Kentucky. It happened that an old mountaineer chanced to pick up a mirror, and being curious, looked at it. Not having seen one before, he thought that it was a picture and he exclaimed "Waal, ef 'taint mah ole Paw, ah nevah knowed he had his pitchah took." Being greatly surprised and elated, he took it to his home and immediately set about to put it in a safe place. His alert and jealous wife saw him doing this and she forthwith followed him and snatched it from his grasp. She too, being ignorant of what it was, angrily exclaimed, "So thet's th' ole dame yo bin a-runnin' 'roun with."

It is needless to say, my dear readers, that you have often had recourse to the mirror. You will, therefore, never undergo the embarrassment of the good mountain woman. But there is danger in the use of the mirror. Never, like the youth in the story, fall in love with what you see in it. It is things such as these that tend to degrade both yourself and the mirror—a noble article that has been used almost daily through the centuries since man first became aware of it.



The gentle mind by gentle deeds is known;  
For a man by nothing is so well betrayed  
As by his own manners.

—Spenser.

Our worth is determined by the good deeds we do rather  
than by the fine emotions we feel.

—Elias L. Magoon.