

alone makes a common appeal to the sectaries of all our religious and scientific creeds, to the lovers of all our different schools of poetry and art, ancient and modern, and to many more beside these. It is the highest common denominator in the spiritual life of to-day.

"Yet now that it is most consciously valued, it is being most rapidly destroyed upon this planet. . . . In old days it needed no conservation. Man was camped in the midst of it and could not get outside it, still less destroy it. Indeed, until the end of the eighteenth century the works of man only added to the beauty of nature. But science and machinery have now armed him with weapons that will be his own making or undoing, as he chooses to use them; at present he is destroying natural beauty apace in the ordinary course of business and economy. Therefore, unless he now will be at pains to make rules for the preservation of natural beauty, unless he consciously protects it at the partial expense of some of his other greedy activities, he will cut off his own spiritual supplies, and leave his descendants a helpless prey forever to the base materialism of mean and vulgar sights.

"This matter has become a public question of the first magnitude. The value of natural beauty is admitted in words by our public men, but when it comes to deeds the doctrine is too new to bear much fruit. It has for centuries been held sacrilege to destroy a church, so churches are guarded from destruction and even exempted from taxation. But a place of natural beauty may be destroyed, and is now actually to be taxed by the State in order that it may the sooner be sold to the jerry-builder. Meanwhile, the State itself pours forth the money of ratepayer and taxpayer for the perpetration of outrages on the beauty of the country. Those who mourn over the destruction of abbeys long



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[Photo. per favour "Christchurch Sun."]