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WORKS OF  
WILLIAM MATHEWS, LL.D.

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# THE GREAT CONVERSERS,

AND OTHER ESSAYS.

BY

WILLIAM MATHEWS, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "WORDS; THEIR USE AND ABUSE," "GETTING ON IN THE WORLD,"  
AND "HOURS WITH MEN AND BOOKS."

Je sais bien que le lecteur n'a pas grand besoin de savoir tout cela ; mais moi, j'ai grand besoin de le lui dire.—ROUSSEAU.

TWELFTH EDITION.

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TO  
HORACE WHITE,  
EDITOR OF  
*THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED,  
WITH THE SINCERE REGARDS OF  
THE AUTHOR.

There are a hundred faults in this thing, and a hundred things might be said to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity.—  
GOLDSMITH.

When this bundle of egotisms is bound up together, as they may be one day, if no accident prevents this tongue from wagging, or this ink from running, they will bore you, very likely; so it would to read through "Howell's Letters" from beginning to end, or to eat up the whole of a ham: but a slice on occasion may have a relish: a dip into the volume at random, and so on for a page or two: and now and then a smile; and presently a gape; and the book drops out of your hand; and so *bon soir*, and pleasant dreams to you.—THACKERAY.

## PREFACE.

---

THE kind reception which the author's former work, "Getting On in the World," has experienced from the press and the public, has tempted him to appear once more in print. Many of the essays in the present volume have been published before, but all of them have been more or less enlarged and retouched, so far as the author's limited time would allow; and, with not a few misgivings as to their merit and probable reception, they are now given to the public in a permanent form. The scholar will find nothing new in them, but they may serve to freshen some of his pleasant recollections; and if the general reader, for whom they are chiefly intended, should find in them enough of interest to cheat a few hours of their *ennui* or weariness, the writer will not deem his labor wasted.

It remains only to add, that in writing the essay on the Battle of Waterloo, the author has taken pains to consult many of the best authorities,—among the ablest and most impartial of whom is Lt. Col. Charles C. Chesney, R. E., author of "Waterloo Lectures; a Study of the Campaign of 1815;" and that the map at the end of the present volume is a reduced copy of one attached to that work.



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## THE GREAT CONVERSERS.

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**A**MONG the books that remain to be written, one of the most interesting and instructive is a volume upon the great conversers of all ages, portraying their styles and peculiarities, and giving well-selected specimens, a kind of quintessence, of their sayings. To cull out their wisest and wittiest, as well as their most eloquent observations, the very *apices rerum*, from all the "Ana" and books of table-talk that have been published from the days of Xenophon and his "Memorabilia" to those of Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe," would be no easy task, yet it would be labor well spent, and we can hardly think of a book more piquant or charming. The materials for it are exhaustless, and the difficulty would be to grapple with such an "embarrassment of riches,"—to know, after opening the floodgates of anecdote and reminiscence, when to close them. One becomes, by familiarity, more and more enamored of such a theme; and he is loth, just as he has begun to irrigate the arid wastes of modern social life with the sparkling waters of a younger age, to be silenced by some Palaemon of a publisher with his inexorable "*Claudite jam rivos, pueri; sat prata biberunt.*"

Before speaking of some of the most famous talkers of ancient and modern times, it may be well to say a word upon a question which has been mooted by cer-

tain essayists, namely, whether authors or men of the world are the better conversers. William Hazlitt, who was a keen observer, and mingled much in the society of literary men, declares that authors and actors are not fitted to shine in the social circle. Authors, he thought, "ought to be read, and not heard;" and, as to actors, they, he thinks, who have intoxicated and maddened multitudes by their public display of talent, can rarely be supposed to feel much stimulus in entertaining one or two friends, or in being the life of a dinner party. She who perished over night by the dagger or the bowl, as Cassandra or Cleopatra, may be allowed to sip her tea in silence, and not to be herself again till she revives in Aspasia. Actors, again, utter cut-and-dry repartees which are put into their mouths, and must be a little embarrassed when their cue is taken from them. Rousseau, on the other hand, who wrote so laboriously, pronounces the conversation of authors superior to their books; an opinion which, except in the case of a few, to whom the stimulus of society was necessary to bring out their stores, the biographies of celebrated authors hardly confirm. Johnson, indeed, spoke like a wit, and wrote like a pedant; but his was a ponderous, elephantine mind, which needed the excitement of conversation to sting it into activity. Many of the most celebrated writers, who have filled their books with an originality and eloquence that defy oblivion, have been dumb before their fellow-men. Not seldom it happens that gems of the purest ray serene emit a very dreary lustre at the dinner-table of patronizing big-wiggery, or in the *salons* of blue-stockings. How often has it happened that your man of genius, when invited to a packed assembly for the express purpose of being pumped, has proved as dry and wheezy as a well

in August, giving out not even a drop of the anticipated living water! Many a fine spirit that can present novel ideas in kaleidoscopic variety upon paper, not only awing you by their profundity, but dazzling you by their tropical splendor, is notorious for his inability to put two ideas together by word of mouth,—failing even to find a door of utterance in that eternal refuge for the destitute of small talk, the weather. Golden ingots he has, precious bars of thought, which, in the privacy of home, he can burnish into splendor, or convert into the coin of the realm; but, like many a wealthy capitalist, he cannot, on the spur of the moment, produce the farthings current in the market-place.

Abundant reason is there why this should be so. Those who expect an author that has exhausted himself in his books to be equally brilliant in company, forget that it is the very fact that he has lavished his riches in his writings that must disqualify him from displaying them elsewhere. It is simply because he has been roused to an intense pitch of excitement while engaged in the task of composition, that he is proportionally nerveless and relaxed in his social hours. The electrical eel cannot be always giving off shocks; the bow that has long been strung loses its elasticity; the bird that soars to the stars must sometimes rest its wing on the earth. While other men in society abandon their whole souls to the topics of the moment, and, concentrating their energies, appear keen and animated, the man of genius, who has stirred the vast sea of human hearts by his writings, feels a languor and prostration arising from the secret toil of thought; and it is only when he has recruited his energies by relaxation and repose, and is once more in his study, surrounded by those master-spirits with whom he has so often held “celestial col-

loquy sublime," that his soul rekindles with enthusiasm, and pours itself on paper in thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

It is said that neither Pope nor Dryden was brilliant in conversation; the one being too "saturnine and reserved," and the other too much afraid of the author of the "Essay on Man." Neither Addison nor Cowper shone in society, and the same is true of the celebrated French authors, Descartes, Molière, La Fontaine and Buffon. Addison, indeed, could talk charmingly to one or two friends, but he was shy and absent before strangers. To use his own happy metaphor, he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket. Hume's writings were so superior to his conversation that Horace Walpole used to say that he understood nothing till he had written upon it. Goldsmith was a blundering converser, and showed hardly a spark of the genius that blazes through his writings. Occasionally he blurted out a good thing, as when he applied to Johnson a saying, in one of Cibber's plays, "There is no arguing with Johnson, for, when his pistol misses fire, he knocks down his adversary with the butt end of it." But generally he "talked like poor Poll," and, when he made an accidental hit, soon neutralized its effects by something exquisitely foolish. Neither Corneille, the great French dramatist, nor Marmontel, the novelist, was master of the intellectual foils. Nicolle said of a sparkling wit: "He vanquishes me in the drawing-room, but surrenders to me at discretion on the stairs." The eloquent Rousseau, whose writings have bewitched thousands, confessed that when forced to open his mouth he infallibly talked nonsense: "I hastily gabble over a number of words without ideas, happy only when they chance to mean nothing; thus endeavoring to conquer or hide my

incapacity, I rarely fail to show it." The witty Charles II., who was so charmed with the humor of *Hudibras* that he caused himself to be introduced privately to the author, found Butler an intolerably dull companion. He was confident that so stupid a fellow never wrote the book. The Earl of Dorset, who sought an interview with the great satirist, was similarly disappointed. Taking three bottles of wine with him, he found the poet dull and heavy after the first had been drained, somewhat sparkling after the second bottle, and, after the third, more stupid and muzzy than ever. "Your friend," said the Earl, after he had left with his introducer, "is like a ninepin,—little at both ends, and great in the middle." Godwin, the author of *The Political Justice*, was as dull as Butler. According to Hazlitt, he had not a word to throw to a dog; his talk was as flat as a pancake. All his genius was hoarded for his books; he had no idea of anything till he was wound up like a clock,—not to speak, but to write,—and then he seemed like a person risen from sleep, or from the dead. It was much the same with Adam Smith, who hardly dared open his lips in society, lest some pearl should drop out. He was so chary of his thoughts, that once Garrick, after listening to him awhile, whispered slyly to a friend, "What say you to this, eh? Flabby, I think."

Again, the shyness of authors, the natural result of their recluse habits, is doubtless one of the secrets of their frequent failures in conversation. That Oliver Goldsmith, awed by a Johnson, bullied by a Boswell, and snubbed by a Mosier, should have talked "like poor Poll," as Garrick declared, is not strange; but there are few who will not agree with a kindhearted writer in *Blackwood*, that had any person got poor "Goldy" all to himself, over a bottle of Madeira, in Goldsmith's

own lodging, and talked to him lovingly of his works, he would have gone away with the conviction that there was something in the well-spring of so much genius, more marvelous than its diamond-like spray,—that the man was immeasurably greater than the fragments of him found in his books. Campbell's conversation in general society was commonly disappointing; yet the writer just quoted, says that, accepting an invitation to sup with him *tête-à-tête*, he found him a most brilliant talker:—"I went at ten; I stayed till dawn; and all my recollections of the most sparkling talk I have ever heard in drawing-rooms afford nothing to equal the riotous affluence of wit, of humor, of fancy, of genius, which the great lyrist poured forth in his wondrous monologue." To a talker so fascinating one might apply the words of Joanna Baillie:

He is so full of pleasant anecdote;  
So rich, so gay, so poignant is his wit,  
Time vanishes before him as he speaks,  
And ruddy morning through the lattice peeps  
Ere night seems well begun.

There is another reason why men who spend their lives in thought often do not shine in the social circle. Deep feelings do not rise rapidly to the lips, and are rather checked than encouraged by the forms and ceremonies of social life. Profound thinkers are apt to be dull in company, because they have to dive to the bottom of their minds for the treasures which they would communicate to others, and cannot keep pace, therefore, with those shallow speakers whose thoughts lie on the surface. Butler has said, as truly as wittily, that the tongue is like a racehorse, which runs the faster the less weight it carries. It matters little how vast an amount of intellectual wealth a man has in solid bars,

if he cannot mint it into coin for currency in the commerce of thought. Again, the conversation of authors fails often because of its tenaciousness. It fastens upon a subject, and will not let it go,—thus resembling a battle rather than a skirmish, and making a toil of pleasure. The man who has gone to the bottom of a subject, though slow to talk, yet, having begun to discuss it, is not content to touch it lightly, to dally with it, to sport and trifle, to blow brilliant bubbles, but must begin at the beginning, and go through to the end. Besides all this, authors, having a reputation to lose, are often too ambitious to shine, to talk well. It is almost inevitable, when great wits are pitted against each other, that talking should turn into an arena for display.

It would be an inexcusable omission, in an account of the great talkers, to say nothing of the ancients. In conversation, as in oratory, they probably outshone the moderns. The printing press has damaged the “Mahogany” even more than it has damaged the hustings. Socrates, as we see him in the “Memorabilia,” barefoot, and plainly clad, inexorably logical, and the incarnation of common sense, must have been one of the most brilliant and instructive talkers of classic times. Chatting in the agora, the gymnasia, the shop of the corselet maker, in the studio of the statuery, and at the table, he must have been a kind of walking encyclopedia, a college on legs; and the whole State must have felt the influence of his philosophy in all the veins of its moral being. The few sayings we have of Themistocles and Alcibiades are “steeped in the very brine of conceit, and sparkle like salt in fire.” Most of the reported *mots* of Diogenes are so pungent and racy, that we regret that there was no Bozzy to give us more of them.

The man who coined the word "cosmopolite" must have been, in spite of his cynicism, a rare and catholic thinker.

Cicero was a most brilliant talker, and must have been what Sydney Smith calls "a diner-out of the highest lustre." He was a wit as well as an orator, and even deigned to pun when he could hit hard by doing so. Niebuhr even thinks that wit, what the French call *esprit*, was the predominant and most brilliant faculty of his mind; and it is probable that at a repartee he would have been a match for Talleyrand. He was so famous for his *bon-mots*, that Cæsar employed a man like Baron Grimm to send him a collection of them from time to time, to any place where he might be encamped. Though but few of his jests are preserved,—the *Liber Jocularis*, or collection of them by his freedman, Tiro, having been lost—yet they are of such a quality as to show that he had a prompt as well as a razor-like wit, that could draw blood when he chose; and it is a wonder that some of them did not cost him his head. According to Macrobius, his enemies called him "*consularem scurram*,"—the consular buffoon. A Roman lady having told him that she was but thirty years old, "It must be true," replied Tully, "for I have heard it these twenty years." When Pompey, who had married Cæsar's daughter, asked Cicero,—referring to Dolabella, who had joined Cæsar's party,—“Where is your son-in-law?” Cicero retorted, “With your father-in-law.” Dolabella was of short stature, and once, when Cicero saw him with a long sword at his side, he asked, “Who has tied that little fellow to his sword?” Quintilian celebrates Cicero's *urbanitas*, by which the ancients expressed that peculiar delicacy and eloquence of humor that smacks of the cultivation of a capital; but



the great orator sometimes stooped to coarse facetiousness, as when, in allusion to the Oriental custom of boring the ears of slaves, he replied to a man of Eastern and servile descent, who complained that he could not hear him, "Yet you have holes in your ears."

Joe Miller is the great storehouse to which it is supposed that most of the modern jackdaws of wit go for their fine feathers. But in the "Ana" of antiquity, as a late writer remarks, we shall find more than one *jeu d'esprit* which now adorns the brazen front of the plagiarist. What can be finer than Foote's reply to the English Lord who was boasting the great age of the wine which, in his parsimony, he had caused to be served in extremely small glasses,—"It is very little of its age?" Yet this identical witticism, says Mr. Hannay, is in Athenæus, where it is assigned to a woman whose jokes were better than her character. "Wit, like gold," continues the same pleasant writer, "is circulated sometimes with one head on it and sometimes another, according to the potentates who rule its realm. Few situations are more trying than to sit at dinner and hear a *raconteur* telling 'the capital thing said by Louis XIV.' to so-and-so, with a distinct recollection that the same thing was said by Augustus to a provincial. You cannot quote Macrobius without the imputation of pedantry, even if you were capable of the cruelty; and you grin pleasant approbation with the consciousness that you are a hypocrite."

Coming down to modern times, we find Martin Luther to have been one of the most charming talkers of the ages. Fond of society, fond of music, fond of children, intensely earnest, outspoken, and bubbling over with humor, he had just the qualities which make a good converser; and we find his "Table-Talk"

abounding in those *illuminated* thoughts that cast "a light as from a painted window" upon every theme, even the darkest and most dreary. Coarse and violent he sometimes was; he used "plain words, stript of their shirts;" called, Spartan-like, a spade a spade; and loved, as what Teuton does not?—his glass of beer. But revolutions are not made with rosewater, nor can broad axes have the delicacy of edge of razors. The more intimately we know Luther, the better we like him, for, as another has said, "he has the charm of nature. Of the most delicate wine a man is sometimes tired; but water is eternally fresh and new, as welcome the thousandth time as the first." "God made the priest," said he, one day; "the devil set about an imitation, but he made the tonsure too large, and produced a monk." In illustration the great reformer is especially happy. "That little fellow," he said of a bird going to roost, "has chosen his shelter, and is quietly rocking himself to sleep without a care for to-morrow's lodging, calmly holding by his little twig, and leaving God to think for him." "When I am assailed," he says, "with heavy tribulations, I rush out among my pigs, rather than remain alone by myself. The human heart is like a millstone in a mill; when you put wheat under it, it turns and grinds and bruises the wheat to flour. If you put no wheat, it still grinds on; but then 'tis itself it grinds and wears away." Sometimes he tells a good story, as this: "An idle priest, instead of reciting his breviary, used to run over the alphabet, and then say: 'O my God, take this alphabet, and put it together how you will!'" Had Dr. Martin lived in our day, he would perhaps have thrown his inkstand at some other persons besides the devil. It is plain that he had no sympathy with bluestockings, or "woman's-

rightsers," for he says, "There is no gown or garment that worse becomes a woman than when she will be wise." Though often deeply depressed, he always counselled gayety of heart in others. "The birds," he said, "must fly over our heads, but why allow them to roost in our hair?" Of female beauty he says, "The hair is the finest ornament women have. Of old, virgins used to wear it loose, except when they were in mourning. I like women to let their hair fall down their back; 'tis a most agreeable sight."

Treading close upon the heels of Luther comes another royal talker, Scaliger;—not Julius Cæsar, but Joseph—whose "Ana" Hallam pronounces the best ever published. His enormous memory, which held everything as with hooks of steel, and his prodigious learning, were the wonder of the world. His pride was as imperial as his genius, and his egotism was absolutely sublime. No king or emperor, he declares, was so handsome as his father, and then adds: "Look at *me*; I am exactly like him, and especially the aquiline nose!" He regarded himself as the monarch of the literary realm, and spoke of contemporary scholars with contempt and scorn. They were all, or nearly all, atheists, pedants, apes, or asses, unworthy to loose even the latchet of his shoes. Of Justus Lipsius he says: "I care as little for Lipsius's Latin as he does for Cicero's;" and of the Germans: "The Germans are indifferent what wine they drink, so that it is wine, or what Latin they speak, so that it is Latin."

In the next century the most brilliant talk to be heard in Europe was that of the wits of the "Mermaid" in London, whose conversational fame, had they but a *Ménage*, or other "chiel amang them taking notes," would have rivalled, if not eclipsed, that of the *diseurs*

of Lewis the Fourteenth's age in France. To this famous haunt came the "myriad-minded" Shakspeare; the brawny egotist, Ben Jonson; the metaphysician, divine, seer, pedant and poet, Donne; that encyclopedia on legs, Selden; Beaumont, Fletcher, Chapman, Raleigh, and other gods of intellect, who, seated in a room well-filled with tobacco smoke, and at a table covered with cups of canary, passed many an hour "ayant the twal," in exchanging their bolts and flashes. It was here that came off those merry meetings and wit-combats which Fuller has celebrated and Beaumont so finely painted.

What things have we seen  
 Done at the Mermaid! hard words that have been  
 So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
 As if that every one from whom they came  
 Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
 And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
 Of his dull life. \* \* \*

We left an air behind us, which alone  
 Was able to make the two next companies  
 Right witty, though but downright fools.

Of all these flashes of wit and sentiment,—these spoken fireworks,—we have, alas! not a scintillation. The chasm is one of the most deplorable in literature. Think of Shakspeare's talk reported with the fullness and accuracy of a Boswell! Luckily we have a few jottings of "Old Ben's" talk while he was visiting Drummond, of Hawthornden; though even these are so meagre and fragmentary, and come from so hostile a pen, that the rule *ex pede Herculem* hardly applies. There are enough of them, however, to show that he was what we should infer from his plays,—an Englishman to the backbone. His bluff, hearty manner, his swaggering, boastful way of speaking of his own works, his vanity, egotism, love

of deep potations, his dogged self-will, stern integrity, hatred of baseness and meanness, and vein of sterling sense, all peep out even in these imperfect notes, and give us a tolerable photograph of the man. "He would not flatter," he said, "though he saw Death." Of Queen Elizabeth, he said that "she never saw herself, after she became old, in a true glass; they painted her, *and sometimes would vermilion her nose.*" Of all styles he said he most loved to be named honest, and "hath of that one hundred letters so naming him." That he had felt the grip of poverty we have painful proof in the statement that "sundry tymes he hath devoured his books,"—that is, sold them to supply himself with food. His judgments on other poets were insolently magisterial, and remind one of Scaliger. The remark in which he most vividly photographs himself, is this: "He hath consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination."

Of that "gulf of learning," John Selden, we have, most fortunately, some of the treasures in his "Table-Talk," published by his amanuensis, Richard Milward, in 1689. In reading its pages it seems difficult to believe that we are listening, not only to the "Monarch of Letters," as Ben Jonson styles him, but to the great Bencher of the Inner Temple, who was the "law-book of the Judges;" to the orator who thundered against "tonnage and poundage" in the House of Commons; still less to the author of the dry "Titles of Honor," and the ponderous, crabbed "*Marmora Arundeliana, Sive Saxa Græca Incisa.*" But Selden had an intellect of wondrous flexibility; like the elephant's trunk, it could uproot an oak or pick up a pin. Dry and bristling with lore in his writings, he can be in his conversation

as simple and playful as a child. He is "still the great scholar and the tough parliamentarian, but merry, familiar and witty. The ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα is on the sea of his vast intellect. He writes like the opponent of Grotius; he talks like the friend of Ben Jonson." Clarendon, a severe judge, tells us that "he was the most clear discourser, and had the best faculty of making hard things easy, and presenting them to the understanding, that hath been known." Our limits prevent us from giving many bits of his talk, but we present a few. Of friends, he says: "Old friends are best. King James used to call for his old shoes; they were easiest for his feet." Under Language, we read: "Words must be fitted to a man's mouth; 'twas well said of the fellow who was to make a speech for my Lord Mayor, he desired to take the measure of his Lordship's mouth."

It is in this "Table-Talk" that is found the saying so admired by Coleridge, that transubstantiation is "only rhetoric turned into logic;" and the happy comparison of faith and works to light and heat: "put out the candle and they are both gone; one remains not without the other; so 'tis betwixt faith and works."

Selden loves to give a zest to his discourse by familiar allusions, aptly introduced, or smart figures of speech; his remarks, even on the gravest subjects, are as full of illustrations as a pudding of plums. Thus, observing that they that govern most make least noise, he adds: "You see that when they row in a barge, they that do drudgery, work, and slash, and puff, and sweat, while he that governs sits quietly at the stern, and is scarcely seen to stir." On the vexed question of convocation, he insists on the presence of laymen in the synod, to overlook the clergy, lest they spoil the civil work; just as when the good woman puts a cat into the milk-house to

kill a mouse, she sends her maid after the cat, lest the cat should eat up the cream. We fear the great scholar was not overstocked with gallantry; again and again he drops a remark which shows that, if not a woman-hater, he was a decided woman-mocker. "'Tis reason," he says, "a man that will have a wife should be at the charge of her trinkets, and pay all the scores she sets on him. He that will keep a monkey, 'tis fit he should pay for the glasses he breaks." Of the Sabbath he asks: "Why should I think all the Fourth Commandment belongs to me, when all the Fifth does not? What land will the Lord give me for honoring my father? It was spoken to the Jews, with reference to the Land of Canaan; but the meaning is, if I honor my parents, God will also bless me." To preachers he gives the following admirable advice: "First in your sermons use your logic, and then your rhetoric. Rhetoric without logic is like a tree with leaves and blossoms, but no root. That rhetoric is best which is most seasonable and most catching. An instance we have in that old blunt commander at Cadiz, who showed himself a good orator, being about to say something to his soldiers (which he was not used to do), he made them a speech to this purpose: '*What a shame will it be, you Englishmen, that feed upon good beef and brewess, to let those rascally Spaniards beat you, that eat nothing but oranges and lemons.*' And so put more courage into his men than he could have done with a more learned oration."

It is said to be impossible to read Bacon's Essays for the fiftieth time without being struck by some new and original remark, or seeing some thought placed in a new and original light. Their suggestiveness, the inexhaustible aliment they supply to our own thoughts, is the grand characteristic of all Bacon's writings; and

therefore we cannot but deplore, as a *hiatum valde deplendum*, the lack of any report of his conversation. How well he understood the proprieties and delicacies, as well as the value of "discourse," is shown by his essay on that subject. The few sayings of his that have been preserved are as wise, weighty, and dense with thought as his printed aphorisms. Ben Jonson, a severe judge, who was chary of his praise, tells us that "no man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. The fear of every man who heard him was lest he should make an end."

Disraeli remarks that many a great wit has thought the wit it was too late to speak, and many a great reasoner has only reasoned when his opponent has disappeared. Conversation with such men is a losing game. Profound thinkers are often helpless in society, while shallow men have nimble and ready minds. Montbelliard utterly eclipsed his friend Buffon in conversation; but when they took their pens, a vast interval separated them; he whose pen dropped the honey and the music of the bee, handled a pen of iron; while Buffon's was the soft pencil of the philosophical painter of nature. Of Cowley and Killigrew, Denham wrote:

Had Cowley ne'er spoke, Killigrew ne'er writ,  
Combined in one, they had made a matchless wit.

Prolific as was the age of Elizabeth in splendid talkers, it was not, perhaps, till the next century, in the reign of Louis Quatorze, that conversation, as an art, culminated. It was in Paris,—that marvellous city where, as Victor Hugo says, the grandiose and the burlesque harmonize, and where the same mouth can blow



to-day into the trumpet of the last judgment, and to-morrow into the penny-whistle,—that the *diseur* was in his glory. The *Grand Monarque*, himself a brilliant, epigrammatic talker, gave the cue to his court, and a wit of the time

Hardly his mouth could ope,  
But out there flew a trope,

or smart saying, which darted like an electric spark through all the circles of the capital. It has been aptly said that the words which were the counters at the Court, were as choice as the counters they used at cards; it was as if diamonds had been declared a legal tender. Honors were conferred by the King in *bon-mots*, and appointments communicated in *jeux d'esprit*. "If I had known a more deserving person," he would say, "I would have selected him." When Condé returned from the battle of Beuef, Louis advanced to the head of the staircase to meet his great general. The latter, ascending slowly, from the effects of the gout, apologized to His Majesty for making him wait. "My cousin," was the reply, "do not hurry; no one could move more quickly who was loaded with laurels as you are." There is no pleasanter intellectual distraction,—no better way of cheating one's dreary hours of their *ennui*,—than by dipping into the Ana of this period, and listening to the chit-chat, the pleasantries and pungent sayings of the wits, courtiers, and men of letters. They unite the elegance and polish of Chesterfield with the keenness and terseness of Talleyrand and Voltaire. Even foreigners, from the frozen North, are infected with the wit of the capital on coming into it; and they scarcely begin to breathe its atmosphere before their icy natures thaw and their mouths drop fine say-

ings. When Christina, of Sweden, came to Paris, and the great ladies rushed to kiss her,—“Why,” she exclaimed, “they seem to take me for a gentleman!” In fact, as an English essayist remarks, “While we read the *Ana* of this period, the air seems prickly with epigrams. They are as thick as fire-flies.”

Lord Stanhope tells a story of a Scotchman who, in the days of gambling and hard drinking, was heard to say: “I tell you what, sir, I just think that conversation is the bane of society.” Such must have been the opinion of many persons in England when Niebuhr, the German historian, visited that country, for he complains bitterly of the superficiality and insipidity of nearly all the conversations he listened to, as being absolutely depressing. Yet it was in that same “silver-coasted isle” that had lived and flourished, only a generation before, Samuel Johnson, the Alexander of the conversational realm, to whose iron rule the accomplished Reynolds, the luminous and learned Gibbon, the many-tongued Jones, the inimitable Garrick, the classic Langton, and even the eloquent Burke, were willing to bow; and what talker did ever Germany produce to rival Johnson? To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a word, was to him, as Macaulay has remarked, no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs, and have his talk out; and he loved especially to talk with those who were able to send him back every ball that he threw. Sluggish by nature, and averse to the drudgery of composition, he found conversation to be a necessity of his vigorous and teeming intellect. It was not merely a means of amusement or recreation, however; it was generally a struggle of wits,—a gladi-

atorial contest,—a literal fight, in which he must either conquer or die. Reading everything, and forgetting nothing; having all his knowledge at his tongue's end; possessing a powerful and piercing understanding, a fertile fancy, and an imperial command of language; he seemed to be, in one person, the Goliath and the David of conversation,—strong to wield a spear that was as a weaver's beam, and nimble to whirl a pebble from a sling. Blunt in his contradiction; merciless in his sarcasm; ruling like a despot in his circle; he yet displayed such a wealth of resources, that, whatever lack there might be of courtesy, there was none of interest. His powerful logic; his prompt and keen retorts; his pithy and sage remark; his apt quotation; his caustic wit; his princely command of language; his intense positivism, dogmatism, and *bow-wow* manner; his mingled cynicism, melancholy, pathos, and tenderness,—made him one of the mightiest talkers that ever lived. It has been truly said that his vivid, pithy talk spoiled men for everything that was not at once both weighty and smart. "It was at once gay and potent; its playfulness resembling the ricocheting of sixty-eight pounders, which bound like India-rubber balls, yet batter down fortresses." Contemporary with Johnson, though not of the club, was Horne Tooke, who, nimble-witted and full of learning, overflowed with an interminable babble. Yet he was no mere babbler, but had "cut-and-come-again" in him,—“tongue with a garnish of brains.”

Contemporary also with Johnson, though younger, was "Auld Scotia's" greatest bard, who added colloquial genius to his other gifts. That the man who dashed off Tam O'Shanter in a single day, and of whose terse, caustic, and humorous lines and sentences

so many hundreds have passed like iron into the blood of our daily speech, was a charming talker, we should infer, as a matter of course. The Duchess of Gordon said, somewhat coarsely, in allusion to the fiery sleet of the poet's discourse, that he could talk her off her legs. In the next age we have Sir Walter Scott, whose conversation was not brilliant, but frank, hearty, picturesque, and dramatic. He was a capital listener as well as a good talker, and had the rare faculty of appreciating a good thing from the humblest source. He pronounced George Ellis the first converser he ever knew, and expressed the opinion that the higher order of genius is not favorable to conversational excellence. That Byron was a splendid talker none can doubt. "His more serious conversation," said Shelley, "is a sort of intoxication;" it was now Childe Harold, now Manfred, now Don Juan, and anon the quintessence of all together.

It is said that, in the days of Jekyll, Mackintosh, and Sydney Smith, society had no member more popular than William Wilberforce. Madame de Stael pronounced him the most brilliant converser she had met with in England. Wit, it has been said, may either pervade a man's conversation, or be condensed in particular passages of it,—as the electric current may either be diffused through the atmosphere, or flash across it. Wilberforce's wit was of the former kind; he had no terse and pregnant jests, yet whatever he said was amusing or interesting. Sometimes Sir Francis Bacon would supply the text, and sometimes Sir John Sinclair; but whether he fused the pure gold of the sage, or brayed, as in a mortar, the crotchets of the simpleton, the comment was irresistibly charming, though no memory could retain the glowing, pic-

turesque, or comic language in which it was delivered. Mackintosh, his contemporary, must have been, we think, a wearisome talker, in spite of,—or, rather, on account of,—his prodigious learning; though Sydney Smith pronounces him the most brilliant and instructive talker he ever knew; and Robert Hall is reported to have said: “I have been with Mackintosh this morning; but, oh! sir, it was like the Euphrates pouring itself into a teacup.” Sir James had little verbal wit; brilliant repartees, pungent sayings, concentrated and epigrammatic remarks, were not his forte. He was “luminous, lettered, and long-remembered.” The shrewd, masculine Joanna Baillie calls him a clever talker; “but he tried me very much, though my sister once repeated to me seventeen things he said worth remembering, one morning at breakfast. Another lady, in describing his soft Scotch voice, said: “Mackintosh played on your understanding with a flageolet, Macaulay with a trumpet.” Perhaps the highest merit of Mackintosh’s talk was that it enriched other men mentally, without their being aware of the debt. He conveyed his ideas so skillfully and unobtrusively as to make his hearers believe them their own. He has been described as the converse of a pickpocket, with all the skill of enrichment which that ingenious individual uses for impoverishing.

To Sydney Smith’s colloquial powers we can but barely advert; who could do justice to them in a touch-and-go notice? We can think of no great converser whom we would have walked more miles to hear. He talked, not for display, but, as a bird sings, because he could not help it; because he was mad with spirits; because his mind was a spring bubbling over with ideas, and, as he said, he must speak or burst. He had no elaborate

impromptus, no cut-and-dry repartees; he never lay *perdu*, seeking to draw the conversation into an ambush, that he might give play to his sharpshooters, when he had tricked men within his reach. His practice was, as he said, to fire right across the table, and to talk upon any subject that was started, rarely starting anything of his own. Though the prince of wits, he was no mere joker, or provoker of barren laughter. There was always plenty of bread to his sack. Having as much wit as a man without a grain of his sense, he had as much sense as a man without a spark of his wit. His jests always contained a thought worth treasuring for its own sake, independently of the brilliant vehicle,—the value of a hundred pounds sterling of sense, condensed into a cut and polished diamond. Byron calls him

The loudest wit I ever was deafened with;

and it is said that, when he and Macaulay were in company, they set the table in confusion, appalled quiet people, made them eat the wrong dishes, and drink the wrong wines. His favorite maxim was: take as many half minutes as you can get, but never take more than half a minute without pausing, and giving others an opportunity to strike in; and he vowed that a clever acquaintance of his, who talked on the opposite principle, was the identical Frenchman who murmured, as he was anxiously watching a rival, "*S'il crache ou tousse, il est perdu!*"

Was Macaulay a fine converser? It is hard to say. The name which Sydney Smith gave him,—“a book in breeches,”—would imply that he was a monologueist, not a converser. In his talk there was the same impetuous volubility which we find in his essays; as

some one said of his speeches, all you thought of in listening to Macaulay, was an express train, which did not stop even at the chief stations. His conversation teemed with thought, criticism, quotation, and illustration; but there was too much epigram, too much glitter, too much, in short, of the rhetorician, to make it thoroughly enjoyable. Our countryman, Prescott, who often met him in society in 1850, describes his conversation as being "like the unintermitting jerks of a pump." "I do not believe," Sydney Smith used to say, "that Macaulay ever did hear my voice." But, though he took the lion's share of the conversation, it was not from arrogance, or a desire to monopolize the attention of the company, but simply because the stream welled forth from a full mind and a prodigious memory. When he launched upon a subject, there was no hope of arresting his voyage, nor any wish to do so. Commencing with the remotest beginning of his theme, hardly "skipping the deluge,"—just as he begins his History of James II. with the Phœnicians,—he would roll on a mighty flood, gathering volume and power at every moment, till there seemed no reason why the talk should ever cease; no more than for the Amazon to run dry, or time to pause in its flight. The talk had some of Milton's organ roll, and was only to be closed by Milton's organ stop.

The poet Rogers, according to Byron, was silent and severe. When he did talk, he talked well; and on all subjects of taste, his delicacy of expression was as pure as his poetry. Unfortunately, he was noted for the indulgence of a "critical" spirit, which became at last so formidable that his guests might have been seen manœuvring which should leave the room last, so as not to be the target of his shafts; and it was said that he

made his way in the world, as Hannibal made *his* across the Alps, with vinegar. He was aware of his propensity, and accounted for it thus: "When I was young, I found that no one would listen to my civil speeches, because I had a very small voice; so I began to say ill-natured things, and then people began to attend me." Among his witty sayings, one of the happiest was a hit at the restlessness of Moore: "Moore dines in one place, wishing he was dining in another place, with an opera-ticket in his pocket which makes him wish he was dining nowhere." "Is that the contents you are looking at?" asked an anxious author, who saw Rogers's eye fixed on a list at the commencement of a presentation copy of a new work. "No," said the poet, pointing to the list of subscribers, "the *discontents*."

That Charles Lamb must have been a charming converser, no one, except those who lack the slight idiosyncrasy necessary for the full appreciation of his writings, can doubt. He always made, we are told, the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation was his best. No other person, according to Hazlitt, ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half-a-dozen half-sentences as he did. "His jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hair-brained vein of homefelt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors!" To Lamb's conversation we might apply the words spoken of another in Julian and Maddalo;—



## His wit

And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,  
 And make me know myself;—and the fire-light  
 Would flash upon our faces, till the day  
 Might dawn, and make me wonder at my stay.

Among the minor talkers of England, James Smith, one of the authors of that famous hit, "The Rejected Addresses,"—of which a Leicester clergyman said, "I do not see why they should have been rejected; I think some of them were very good,"—must have been one of the most charming. He was not very witty or brilliant, it is said, but had an inexhaustible fund of amusement and information, with lightness, liveliness, and good sense. His memory was prodigious, but it was principally stored with the choicest morsels from the standard English poets, comic writers, and dramatists; and like Mackintosh, as described by Sydney Smith, he so managed it as to make it a source of pleasure and instruction, rather than "that dreadful engine of colloquial oppression into which it is sometimes erected." Among his reported good things are the following: To a gentleman of the same name, who occupied lodgings in the same house with him, and who was constantly receiving his letters, he said: "This is intolerable, sir, and you must quit." "Why am I to quit more than you?" "Because you are James the Second, and must *abdicate*." Mr. Bentley proposed to establish a periodical to be called "The Wit's Miscellany," to which Smith objected that the title promised too much. When the publisher called to tell him that he had profited by the hint, and resolved on calling it "Bentley's Miscellany," Smith asked: "Isn't that going a little too far the other way?"

Painters are usually quiet, thoughtful, silent men,

but, for that very reason perhaps, when they do speak, usually speak to the point. Not caring to shine, they shine the more. Northcote, judging by Hazlitt's specimens, must have been a capital talker. He had the faculty, which in Charles II. shone so preëminently, of telling a story or anecdote again and again, with all the freshness and point of the first telling. "His face," says Hazlitt, "is as a book. There needs no marks of interjection or interrogation to what he says. His thoughts bubble up and sparkle, like beads on old wine."

The brilliancy of Madame De Staël's conversation has passed into a proverb; it triumphed so far over the plainness of her features, that Curran said that she had the power of talking herself into a beauty. Though she talked often for display, she talked still more for self-improvement, and drew both her inspiration and her literary material largely from conversation. Her genius was fed so exclusively through her faculty of hearing—she used her eyes so little in acquiring materials for her books—that it has been said that she might almost as well have been blind. Except out of respect to custom, she avows she would not open her window to see the Bay of Naples for the first time, whereas she would travel five hundred leagues to talk with a clever man whom she had never met. Her chief fault as a talker was her racehorse rapidity of tongue. Byron called her society "an avalanche;" and Schiller complained that, in order to follow her, one had absolutely to convert himself wholly into an organ of hearing.

Of all the great talkers of ancient or modern times, the Coryphaeus, or *Jupiter Tonans*, who "Sternhold himself out-Sternholded," was unquestionably Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Though eulogized so often as a converser,

he was, in fact, rather a lecturer, preacher, declaimer, or thinker aloud, and poured forth his brilliant, unbroken monologues of two or three hours' duration to listeners so bewitched and fascinated,—so dazzled by the light which he threw upon every subject, even the dull-est, as the sun turns the dreariest vapors into clouds of gold,—so charmed by the words, so rich, so rotund, so many-hued, that passed before their gaze like a flight of purple birds,—that, like Adam, whose ears were filled with the eloquence of an archangel, the hearers “forgot all place,—all seasons and their change.” The enthusiastic Hazlitt, the conscientious John Foster, and the severely-critical De Quincey, alike exhaust their superlatives in testifying to his power. “He spun daily,” says the latter, “from the loom of his own magical brain, theories more gorgeous far, and supported by a luxury of images such as no German that ever breathed could have emulated in his dreams.” In his best moments, he was one of the most suggestive and instructive of talkers,—a teacher of teachers. The value of his discourses lay not so much in the positive knowledge that they communicated, as in the intellectual stimulus they supplied, the spirit of inquiry they provoked, the self-ignorance and superficiality of which they made men conscious, and the great basal principles which they revealed. Much of the effect of Coleridge's eloquence was owing, no doubt, to the charms of his manner; for his voice, it is said, was naturally soft and good; and though it had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and sing-song, so that his phrases of German terminology, “object” and “subject,” were nasally organized into “om-m-ject” and “sum-m-ject,” with “a kind of solemn shake or quaver as he rolled along,” yet there was a dreamy soothing in his accents, it is said, of irre-

sistible power, especially when poetry and imagination were the theme of his high argument. But the most brilliant eloquence tires at last, and even that of the Highgate sage failed sometimes of its witching effect upon the hearer's ears. "To sit eternally, as a mere bucket, and be pumped into,"—to be acted on forever, and never to react,—is what no human being, except a dunce, can long endure; and even those who bowed to this "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," felt, after they had listened to a soliloquy of five hours' duration, that they were pumped full, and cried, "Hold, enough!" Few will fail to remember the story told by Theodore Hook, of a three-hours' discourse from the "Rapt one with the god-like forehead," which was suggested by two soldiers seated by the roadside,—and Hook's characteristic observation at the close: "Thank Heaven! you did not see a regiment, Coleridge, for in that case you would never have stopped." Sir Walter Scott describes a dinner party, at which he was equally bored by a most learned and everlasting harangue of Coleridge on the Samothracian mysteries, Homer, and the Wolfian hypothesis, etc., etc., and concludes the account with the impatient exclamation, "Zounds! I was never so be-thumped with words." Yet doubtless there were others of the party who never dreamed that they were either cudgeled or beflogged, and who went away exclaiming to themselves,—

How charming is divine philosophy!  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute.

The few brilliant sayings of Robert Hall that are reported by his biographer, make us deeply regret that among those whose darkness he illuminated by his

flashes of wit, sarcasm, and humor, there was no one to make "Bozziness" his business. Many of his sayings have all the vividness and weight, without the ponderousness, of Johnson's. Foster said of the great Baptist preacher and Coleridge, that the former commanded his words like an emperor, the latter like a necromancer; but that in conversation they seemed to change their character; there, Coleridge became imperial,—Hall, necromantic. His words flitted and flew to and fro like the phantoms of enchantment, while those of the poet held on a stately and continuous march. In spite of his acute sufferings, he keenly enjoyed social intercourse, often saying, "Don't let us go yet; the present place is the best place," when the company was about to break up. In the intensity of his likes and dislikes, and in the freedom of his personal sarcasms, he strongly resembled Johnson. He could not brook a difference of opinion upon a point which he had thoroughly considered, and peremptorily closed the debate with an expression of his views.

Hall's friend, John Foster, must have been a brilliant talker, if we may judge by the few sayings of his that have been reported. In mixed company he was not ready to pour out his thoughts; but when with congenial companions, he could summon, as with a magician's wand, from all points of the compass, the profoundest thoughts, couched in the happiest language, and illuminated with the richest imagery. At repartee he was especially happy. Of certain useless worsted-work, he said that it was "red with the blood of murdered time." To a person who was praising the piety of the Emperor Alexander, of Russia, he replied gravely, with a significant glance: "Yes, sir, a *very* good man,—very devout: no doubt he said grace before he swallowed Poland!"

Hardly less marvellous than those of Coleridge were the conversational powers of Thomas De Quincey. All who have listened to his "silver talk," testify to its indescribable charm, as it welled out from those capacious, overflowing cells of thought and memory which a single word, or hint, or token could agitate. Gilfillan, in particular, has finely described his small, thin, piercing voice, winding out so distinctly his subtleties of thought and feeling,—his long and strange sentences evolving like a piece of complicated music; and the Ettrick Shepherd, in the *Noctes*, addresses him as one having "the voice of a nicht-wanderin' man, laigh and lone, pitched on the key o' a wimblin' burn speakin' to itsel' in the silence, aneath the moon and stars." A gentleman who visited this Aquinas-Richter in 1854, thus records his impressions of him after a half-hour's conversation: "We have listened to Sir William Hamilton at his own fireside, to Carlyle walking in the parks of London, to Lamartine in the midst of a favored few at his own house, to Cousin at the Sorbonne, and to many others; but never have we heard such sweet music of eloquent speech as then flowed from De Quincey's tongue. Strange light beamed from that grief-worn face, and for a little while that weak body, so long fed upon by pain, seemed to be clothed with supernatural youth."

Eloquent as De Quincey was, his conversational powers were at their full height only when he was under the influence of his favorite drug. The best time to hear the lion roar was at four or five o'clock in the morning; then, when recovering from the stupor in which the opium had plunged him, his tongue seemed touched with an eloquence almost divine. It is a curious fact, that though he was the soul of cour-

tesy, he never for a moment thought of adapting his language to the understanding of his listener. The most illiterate porter, housemaid, or even prowling beggar, he would address on the most trivial themes, with as much pomp of rhetoric, in language as precise and measured, and abounding in as many "long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*," as that in which he would have addressed an Oxford professor on a vexed point in metaphysics, or Porson on a classical emendation. Mrs. Gordon, in her life of Professor Wilson, has given a specimen of the style in which the "Opium-Eater" was wont to address her father's housekeeper, when directing her how to prepare his food; and, did it come from a less trustworthy source, we should take the order as a burlesque or caricature. Wishing his meat cut with the grain, he would say: "Owing to dyspepsia affecting my system, and the possibility of any additional derangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise—so much so, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance—if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal, rather than a longitudinal form." No wonder that the cook,—a simple Scotch-woman,—stood aghast, exclaiming, "Weel, I never heard the like o' that in a' my days: the body has an awful sicht o' words. \* \* Mr. De Quinshey would make a gran' preacher, though I'm thinking a hantle o' the folk wouldna ken what he was driving at."

Of the great living conversers, Carlyle stands in the front rank, if one can be called such who rarely converses, but almost always harangues. His talk, as commonly reported, is like Dr. Johnson's laugh, which was "a kind of good humored growl." According to Mar-

garet Fuller, he allows no one else a chance, but bears down all opposition, not only by his wit and onset of words, resistless in their sharpness as so many bayonets, but by actual physical superiority,—raising his voice and rushing on his opponent with a torrent of sound. “He sings rather than talks. He pours upon you a kind of satirical, heroic, critical poem, with regular cadences, and generally catching up, near the beginning, some singular epithet, which serves as a *refrain* when his song is full, or with which, as with a knitting-needle, he catches up the stitches, if he has chanced, now and then, to let fall a row. \* \* His talk, like his books, is full of pictures; his critical strokes, masterly.”

To make a good talker, genius and learning, even wit and eloquence, are insufficient; to these, in all or in part, must be added in some degree the talents of active life. The character has as much to do with colloquial power as has the intellect; the temperament, feelings, and animal spirits, even more, perhaps, than the mental gifts. “Napoleon said things which tell in history like his battles. Luther’s Table-Talk glows with the fire that burnt the Pope’s bull.” Cæsar, Cicero, Themistocles, Lord Bacon, Selden, Talleyrand, and, in our own country, Aaron Burr, Jefferson, Webster, and Choate, were all, more or less, men of action. Sir Walter Scott tells us that, at a great dinner party, he thought the lawyers beat the Bishops as talkers, and the Bishops the wits. Nearly all great orators have been fine talkers. Lord Chatham, who could electrify the House of Lords by pronouncing the word “Sugar,” but who in private was but commonplace, was an exception; but the conversation of Pitt and Fox was brilliant and fascinating,—that of Burke, ram-



bling, but splendid, rich and instructive, beyond description. The latter was the only man in the famous "Literary Club" who could cope with Johnson. The Doctor confessed that in Burke he had a foeman worthy of his steel. On one occasion, when debilitated by sickness, he said: "That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." At another time he said: "Burke, sir, is such a man that, if you met him for the first time in the street, where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner, that when you parted you'd say—'This is an extraordinary man.'" "Can he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" asked Goldsmith of a certain talker. Fox said that he had derived more political information from Burke's conversation alone than from books, science, and all his worldly experience put together. Moore finely says of the same conversation, that it must have been like the procession of a Roman triumph, exhibiting power and riches at every step; occasionally mingling the low Fescennine jest with the lofty music of the march, but glittering all over with the spoils of a ransacked world.

Did our limits permit, we might speak at length of "Conversation Sharp," who talked "like a book;" of Sheridan, whose talk, when his tongue was loosened by wine, was superb; of Buckle, who could keep pace with any number of interlocutors, on any given number of subjects, from the abstrusest point of the abstrusest science to the lightest *jeu d'esprit*, and talk them all down, and be quite ready to start afresh; of Sterling, who, in brilliant utterance and tongue-fence, if Carlyle say truth, bore the bell from all competitors; and of

Crabbe Robinson, of whom Rogers once said at a breakfast-party, "Oh, if there is any one here who wishes to say anything, he had better say it at once, for Crabbe Robinson is coming." But we must forbear.

The literary men of France and England have been famed at times for the brilliancy of their social eloquence; but the ancients appear to have made far more of conversation than the moderns, for, lacking the immense advantage of the printing-press, by which thought is circulated with so electrical rapidity, it was chiefly by oral means that they were compelled to communicate with their fellow-men. In our own day the art of conversation is fast dying out. The dinner-table, the supper-party, and the rout, are no longer the battle-fields in which are tested and tried the shining arms of the accomplished scholar. There is no longer the play of wit and raillery, the brilliancy, the concentration, the rapid glancing at a hundred subjects in succession, which there used to be. The attic nights of Johnson, Burke, and Garrick,—of Sheridan, Moore, Rogers, and other social luminaries; the symposia of the demi-gods, at which, with their cut-and-dry impromptus, their polished and prepared repartees, and their deliberate outbreaks of genius and of fun, they won undying glory and immediate applause,—have passed away forever, and "the age of calculators and economists" has succeeded.

As the old coach-roads have given way to railways, so conversation has given way to the press. Men wreak their thoughts upon expression, not in talk, but in "copy." Instead of listening to literary lions, they prefer to crackle *The Tribune* or the *Times*. Newspapers, magazines, reviews, suck up the intellectual elements of our life, like so many electrical machines gathering electricity from the atmosphere into themselves. Themes

are preëmpted by the press, and their freshness and interest exhausted before friends have encircled "the mahogany" in the evening. Professional *littérateurs*, especially, are becoming less and less inclined to post-prandial eloquence, and "lay out" far less than they once did for conversation. They have too keen an eye for the value of their stock-in-trade, not to be niggard of their ideas in social intercourse, and to hoard them up for reproduction, at some auspicious time, in a profit-yielding form. Not merely long and elaborate performances, but even puns and conundrums, are now marketable commodities. The pettiest jokelet has a cash value; and there is no anecdote so trifling, no scrap of knowledge so insignificant, no felicitous expression of an old truth, or dim suggestion of a new one, which may not be converted into a dime or a dollar by the literary miser who makes the acquaintance of the periodicals. In short, the entire tendency of things in these latter days of the nineteenth century is to contract conversation within such narrow limits, that a fear has been expressed lest some further development of the electric telegraph should reduce us to a society of mutes, or to a sort of insects, communicating by ingenious antennæ of our own invention.

## LITERARY CLUBS.

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WHY have we so few literary clubs in our western cities? Is it because there are not men enough in them who have sufficient culture to enjoy a weekly or monthly interchange of thought on literary and social themes, or because we are so engrossed with worldly cares—so interested in grain and beeves, pine boards, and corner-lots,—that we grudge every hour that is spent in a way that does not swell our pile of green-backs? Perhaps there are some scholars and thinkers among us who doubt the expediency of clubs altogether; and if, by the term, is meant a society such as are the majority of those in our eastern cities and in England, we do not wonder that the most thoughtful and intelligent of our citizens look upon them with distrust. Clubs of this kind are composed of persons of similar standing, who own or hire a building for their common resort, where they go to lounge, chat, hear or read the news, play cards or chess, drink, get a good meal at a reduced price, or to have a “grand supper,” in which all join. They pay the regular charges, have the run of the house at all times by night and by day, and the place is, to many, a home.

For unmarried men such a place has many charms; it affords unrivalled opportunities for reading, conversation and refreshment, and many an hour is spent there pleasantly, if not profitably, which might otherwise drag

heavily, or be wasted in debasing occupations. But upon a married man the influence of such a club may justly be regarded with a suspicious eye. Not only does it consume a vast amount of time, of which his wife and children can ill afford to be cheated, but it offers amusements and pleasures that gradually destroy his relish for the quiet enjoyments of home and the family circle, and fosters a habit of going abroad for that happiness which should be sought by his own fireside, among those to whom he is bound by the dearest ties that can bind a human being. The grand suppers of such clubs are too often mere scenes of debauchery, where intellectual conversation is unknown, and where a man's merit is estimated by the length of time during which he can, Gargantua-like, stuff himself with "links and chitterlings," and by the number of bottles of champagne or sherry which he can carry under his belt without rolling under the table. There is a roaring hour of short-lived festivity, the very violence of which precludes the possibility of true enjoyment; the revellers reel to their lodging-places to be tortured with dyspepsia and nightmare, and in the morning they awake to the disagreeable experiences of headaches and soda water.

Even in England, the birthplace of the club, it is beginning to be felt that such societies have another side besides the one commonly presented to the casual observer. The admirers of the club are compelled to admit that while it has elegance, ease, comfort, luxury, absence of care, it has also emptiness and *ennui*. A time comes at last to every *habitué* when the appetite palls, when the senses become sated, when the keen edge of the sensibilities is blunted, when the happiness ceases to satisfy and the pleasures lose the power of pleasing. The man loses more than the animal gains.

A writer in a London journal complains that there is that in-club life, at best, which deoxygenizes the air of its fair humanities and ethereal spiritualities, and, the more one breathes of it, the less he lives. The truth is, says the writer, man is by nature a home being, and needs that contact with feminine natures, that harmonizing of his will and his ways with those of another creature of a finer make and mould,—that discipline of mind and heart which a home, and nothing but a home, affords,—to keep him in his best estate, and develop what is finest and sweetest and noblest in his many-sided nature. The petty cares, the minute anxieties, the infinite littles which go to make up the sum of human experience, like the invisible granules of powder, give the last and highest polish to a character. The sexes were made for each other; it is from the other that each gets the most and the best of the material for its culture; and no scheme that ignores this truth can ever succeed, because the sentiments, the instincts, the irrepressible yearnings of human nature, are all against it.

Such are not the societies which we wish to establish. The clubs we would have formed are purely literary, like the Literary Club of London, formed by the wits of Johnson's time, and of which he was the monarch—or, rather, the despot. That club had no house of its own, and, consequently, no heavy expenses, but met either at taverns, or at the houses of its members. There are no pleasanter, no more profitable, reunions than the clubs of our own day that are thus organized. Made up of cultivated and thoughtful men, who keenly feel and appreciate the benefits of social intercourse, and who meet, not to babble, but for the interchange of their ripest thought, and because they know that the brightest sparks of wit and wisdom are oftener elicited by the

friction of mind with mind than by months of solitary cogitation or isolated study, they call into exercise the highest social qualities, and eminently favor all generous culture. There you may meet painters, poets, philosophers, statesmen, clergymen, lawyers, doctors, engineers,—representative men of the professions,—who love to steal an evening hour or two from the busy pursuits of life, and engage in literary colloquy, wrestling with some amicable antagonist, or pouring out the “hived honey of the mind” for the delight and edification of congenial companions. Such a meeting is not a robbery of home. It sets up no antagonism with domestic enjoyments and duties; it involves no costly expenditure, no waste of time; it is no wild hotel scramble for excitement; it is a calm and healthful recreation, which refreshes the overtaxed brain, soothes the jaded nerves, pours the oil of joy and gladness into the heart, and prepares one to fight with redoubled vigor and courage the battle of life.

Such a club, properly managed, has other merits besides those that are intellectual. It is a school of the heart,—a university for the training of kindly feelings. There is a wide difference between general acquaintance and companionship. You may salute a man, and exchange compliments with him daily, yet know nothing of his character, his inmost tastes and feelings,—see but a single phase of his intellect; while the converse of a few hours, in the unrestricted freedom of a club, may disclose the treasures of his heart and brain, and enable you to detect the nobleness of his aims and the redness of his blood. It has been justly said that the greatest discovery of our lives is that the world is not so bad as, in the first disappointment of youth’s extravagant expectations, we are disposed to regard it. The pas-

sage from boyhood to manhood is "over the bridge of sighs;" and our first experiences of life as it is, resemble the flavor of the forbidden apple—we are enlightened and miserable. Gladly would we command the secret of feeling as we once did; but, alas! every day takes from us some happy error,—some charming illusion,—never to return. We are reasoned or ridiculed out of all our jocund mistakes, till we are just wise enough to be miserable, and we exclaim with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "To my extreme mortification, *I find myself growing wiser and wiser every day.*" But a time comes, at length, when our views are more just. We leave our imaginary Eden with "solemn step and slow," and begin to appreciate the good qualities of those whose friendship we thought hollow, and the necessity of that labor which we deemed a curse. We exchange ecstacy for content, and, "forgetting the four rivers of our ideal heaven, open our eyes to the manifold beauties of earth,—its skies islanded by stars, and its oceans starred by islands; its sunshines and calms, and the goodness of its great heart, which sends forth trees, and flowers, and fruits, for our benefit and exultation." To that education of mind and heart which insures satisfaction with our lot,—which leads us to enjoy the sweet of life as it comes up, while we laugh at the bitter,—which stiffens our muscles and sinews for the tiger-like struggles of life,—we believe that well-conducted clubs conduce.

Intercourse is, after all, man's best teacher. "Know thyself" is an excellent maxim; but even self-knowledge cannot be perfected in closets and cloisters,—nor amid lake scenery, and on the sunny side of the mountains. Men who seldom mix with their fellows are almost sure to become one-sided,—the victims of



fixed ideas, that sometimes lead to insanity. Prejudices which, if exposed to the sun and air of social life, would melt into air, fix themselves down as with riveted screw-bolts. Confident conclusions, which could not walk the street a day without being knocked down like bullies, are cherished and nursed till they have become the very tyrants of the mind which has engendered them. It was but natural that Zimmerman, who was the Laureate of Solitude, should have become a lunatic. Who, that knows the facts of Rousseau's life, can marvel at the eccentricities which made him at once the wonder and the laughing-stock of Europe? It is not strange that, when the Man of the Mountain, as he termed himself, after having been cooped up for years, almost alone, in the mountains of Switzerland, descended into the plain, and became the idol of the brilliant circles of Paris, his vanity and egotism should be so inordinate as to amount to insanity. The morbid ingenuity with which he distorted all the kind acts of his friend, David Hume, into proofs of deceit and jealousy,—the vanity which led him to believe that he, lately a Genoese watchmaker, was a victim of universal persecution and interdict, and that not only the philosophers, but all the monarchs of Europe, had leagued to crush him,—were simply the result of a life of loneliness and solitude.

Private reading and study are, no doubt, necessary to culture; the scholar and the man of science must shun delights, and live laborious days, if they would sound the depths of any subject whatever. Like all our other instincts, that of solitude has its ends. It is absolutely necessary to rare and delicate natures,—at least, at times,—to protect them from the commonplace world around them. Mr. Hamerton, in his

"Intellectual Life," justly remarks, that if Shelley had not disliked general society as he did, the originality of his own thinking would have been less complete; the influences of mediocre people, who, of course, are always in the majority, would have silently, but surely, operated to the destruction of that unequalled and personal delicacy of imagination to which we owe what is inimitable in his poetry. The same writer further adds, that it was not when Milton saw most of the world, but in the forced retirement of a man who had lost health and eyesight, and whose party was hopelessly defeated, that he composed the *Paradise Lost*. It was during years of tedious imprisonment, that Bunyan wrote his immortal allegory. There is no lettered man who does not appreciate the saying of De Sénancour: "In the world a man lives in his own age; in solitude, in all the ages." But conversation is as necessary as meditation to the highest culture. And what is more delightful than this communion of thinkers? Pleasant it is to sit in a library or study, with a goodly array of wise or charming books about you, in which are preserved, as in a vial, "the precious life-blood" of the world's master spirits; or, with the choicest of those "abstracts and brief chronicles of the times," the newspapers, to tell how flows the warm life-blood of the world, and how the car of progress goes thundering along the highroads. Pleasant is it, with paper knife in hand, to skim the contents of the last monthly magazines, brimming with the freshest wit and wisdom of the day; but pleasanter far than any of these, is communion with living men, whose conversation is full of "that seasoned life of men which is stored up in books," who have roamed through all the fields of literature, and, gathering the choicest flowers, have

arranged them for your delight. Reading is a great pleasure; but it is solitary. Byron says:

They who true joy would win  
Must share it; happiness is born twin.

True as this generally is, it is doubly true of literary enjoyment. The fullest instruction and the fullest enjoyment are never derived from books, till we have ventilated the ideas thus obtained in free and easy chat with others.

The mental faculties demand exercise as truly as the bodily, and enjoy it as keenly. The mind that is healthy delights in the glow of movement and contest. It loves to meet with a congenial spirit,—one that has sucked the sweetness of the same authors, and enjoyed them with the same gust,—which has brought away their quintessence, and treats it to the juice of the grape without thrusting upon it the stalks and husks. Talking is a digestive process which is absolutely essential to the mental constitution of the man who devours many books. A full mind must have talk, or it will grow dyspeptic. Look at Professor Wilson! Athlete though he was, intellectually as well as physically, he could not live without talk. Not having enough in society, he sat down and talked to himself in post-prandial hours; and, in the wondrous “Noctes,” those imaginary conversations in which De Quincey, the Ettrick Shepherd, and others were made to join, poured forth the whole affluence of his vigorous and teeming mind, which, like the steel struck by the flint, needed the collision of other minds to bring out its sparks of wit and fancy. The wit, pleasantry, pathos, poetry, and learning with which these famous “Nights” bubble and run over, show that Christopher North was never

at any other time so happy,—never so original, fresh, and piquant,—as when engaged in literary colloquy, wrestling with some amicable antagonist, or pouring out his “charmed thoughts” for the delight and edification of congenial companions.

Sir William Hamilton used to say that a man never knows anything until he has taught it in some way; it may be orally, or it may be by writing a book. It is equally true that many authors have talked better than they have written. Philosophers tell us that knowledge is precious for its own sake; that it is its own exceeding great reward. But experience tells us that knowledge is not knowledge until we use it,—that it is not ours till we have brought it under the dominion of the great social faculty, speech. Solitary reading will enable a man to stuff himself with information; but, without conversation, his mind will become like a pond without an outlet,—a mass of unhealthy stagnature. It is not enough to harvest knowledge by study; the wind of talk must winnow it, and blow away the chaff; then will the clear, bright grains of wisdom be garnered, for our own use or that of others. Then let us talk; and that our talk may be a true re-creation, let us talk with congenial spirits. Such spirits may be met with singly in the ordinary intercourse of life, but the full play of the mind demands that they should be encountered “not in single spies, but in battalions;” and hence the necessity of clubs to bring together, like steel filings out of sand at the approach of a magnet, men of the most opposite pursuits and tastes, the attrition of whose minds may brush away their rust and cobwebs, and give them edge and polish.

## 'EPIGRAMS.

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WHY is it that good epigrams, at making which the wits of all ages have tried their hands, are so rare? Of the thousands that have been composed, it has been estimated that not over five hundred are good, and that of these not more than fifty meet all the conditions of excellence, and may be pronounced gems without a flaw. Martial, the Roman poet, who wrote fourteen books of epigrams, frankly confesses that of that vast number only a few are good, some passable, and the great majority utter failures. The reason is not far to seek. Though less genius is required to produce this species of literary composition than is demanded by a sustained effort,—such as an ode, an elegy, or a lyric,—yet in certain respects it is as difficult and as exacting as an epic. In its very brevity lies its difficulty. Nobody expects an “Iliad,” or a “Paradise Lost,” to be one perpetual blaze of splendor; prosaic and even dull passages are not only excusable, but needed as foils; for nothing tires so soon as perpetual brilliancy and gorgeousness unrelieved. The more exquisite the enjoyment we derive from any source, the more imperiously is an occasional suspension required. We sicken at perpetual lusciousness; we loathe the unvarying atmosphere of a scented room, though “all Arabia breathes” from its recesses. But while good Homer may be allowed to nod occasionally,

as Horace has told us, and even the rich illustrations which fancy scatters over the page of the orator or the poet may be crowded upon each other too fast, it is not so with the epigrammatist. He must condense his wit into a few brief lines; it must be intensely pungent,—like some extract which is the essence of a thousand roses, and is fraught with their accumulated odors, or the weight of a hundred pounds of bark in a few grains of quinine.

What are the precise characteristics of an epigram it is not easy to define. It differs from a joke in the fact that the wit of the latter lies in the words, and cannot therefore be conveyed in another language; while an epigram is a wit of ideas, and hence is translatable. Like aphorisms, songs, and sonnets, it is occupied with some single point, small and manageable; but whilst a song conveys a sentiment, a sonnet a poetical, and an aphorism a moral reflection, an epigram expresses a contrast. Its chief requisites are elegance, polish, and terseness of expression, consummate ease of versification, distinctness of idea, and, above all, an adroit satiric ending, or sting in the tail. Dullness and artistic defect are here inexcusable, and no broad mantle of "poetic license" can cover the sin. Especially is it essential that an epigram be brief. It has been justly said that of two epigrams, *ceteris paribus*, the longer is the less. Four lines are better than six, and two than four. The Spartan brevity, no less than the Attic salt, is indispensable, though there seems no need for so rigid a limit as Boileau's,—*un bon mot de deux rimes ornés*. Originally, an epigram was merely an inscription on an altar, temple, or monument; and, far from being bitter or sarcastic, it was commemorative or laudatory. Next it came to mean a short poem

containing some single thought pointedly expressed, the subjects being various—amatory, convivial, eulogistic, or humorous. Even then, however, the sting was no necessary part of it; and all that the Greeks aimed at was perfect literary finish and simplicity. It was the Roman satirists who changed both the form and substance of the epigram, and it is to them that we are indebted for the idea that it should have a spice of malice. Their notion of it is contained in the following distich:

Omne epigramma sit instar apis: sit aculeus illi:  
Sint sua mella, sit et corporis exigui,—

which has been loosely translated thus:

The qualities three that in a bee we meet,  
In an epigram never should fail;  
The body should always be little and sweet,  
And a sting should be left in its tail.

A good collection of epigrams should have some system, illustrating the styles of wit, as well as tones of thought, which have prevailed in different ages—a merit which the collection by Rev. J. Booth, published a few years ago in London, and which has suggested this article, has not. The book, on the contrary, is a mere catacomb of miscellaneous pieces, good, bad and indifferent, without any chronological arrangement or selection; and the classification, if classification it can be called, is as illogical as it is defective. Still, the author, casting his net into the great sea of literature, has fished up many fine epigrams; and of these we shall cull out some of the best, adding to them a larger number which we have gathered, in our reading, from ancient and modern sources.

To begin with the ancients: Martial wrote a great many platitudes, yet, from his thick volume, one may pick some epigrams that have the true ring. Here is one on a married couple:

So like yourselves, so like your lives,  
As bad as bad can be;  
The worst of husbands, worst of wives,—  
'Tis strange you can't agree.

Cervantes compares translations to the reverse side of tapestry; but the following rather gains in point than loses by the transfusion from Latin into English:

*Difficilis, facilis, jucundus, acerbus es idem,  
Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.*

This Addison translates thus:

TO A CAPRICIOUS FRIEND.

In all thy humors, whether grave or mellow,  
Thou'rt such a touchy, testy, pleasant fellow,—  
Hast so much wit and mirth and spleen about thee,  
There is no living with thee, nor without thee.

Nothing can be more thoughtful or more apposite to our own times, when men are so swamped by business cares, than the lines to Postumus, which Cowley has so beautifully translated:

To-morrow you will live, you always cry;  
In what far country does this morrow lie,  
That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive?  
Beyond the Indies does this morrow live?  
'Tis so far-fetched, this morrow, that I fear  
'Twill be both very old and very dear.  
To-morrow I will live, the fool doth say;  
To-day itself's too late—the wise lived yesterday.



One of the most pungent of Martial's epigrams is the following:

Petit Gemellus nuptias Maronillæ,  
Et cupit, et instat, et precatur, et donat;  
Adeone pulchra est? Immo foedius nil est;  
Quid ergo in illa petitur et placet? Tussit.—

Which a writer in the *Westminster Review* reproduces thus:

Strephon most fierce besieges Chloe,  
A nymph not over young or showy;  
What, then, can Strephon's love provoke?  
A charming paralytic stroke.

The effect of this epigram lies in the sudden *tussit*, "she coughs," which stops the hurried questions, bringing them down with a pistol-shot. "A charming paralytic stroke" is diffuse and pointless. The following, by G. H. Lewes, preserves more of the terseness and *élan* of the original:

Gemellus wants to marry Maronilla;  
Sighs, ogles, prays, and will not be put off.  
Is she so lovely? Hideous as Scylla!  
What makes him ogle, sigh and pray? Her cough!

Martial's lines "To an Ill-Favored Lady" are very subtle and sarcastic:

While in the dark on thy soft hand I hung,  
And heard the tempting siren in thy tongue,  
What flames, what darts, what anguish I endured!  
But when the candle entered, I was cured!

Less delicate, but equally pointed, is the sarcasm against the doctor turned undertaker, who, as Martial says, does *not* change his profession by the change:

Nuper erat medicus, nunc est vespillo Diabus;  
Quod vespillo facit, fecerat et medicus—

which Boileau, no doubt, had in his eye when he wrote that delicious couplet:

Il vivait jadis à Florence un médecin,  
Savant hableur, dit-on, et célèbre assassin.

If brevity is the soul of wit, the following epigram may be regarded as perfect:

Pauper videri vult Cinna — et est pauper.

“Cinna pretends to be poor, and is what he pretends,” a monostich rarely excelled.

A large majority of the epigrams of all ages have turned on the follies of certain set and customary characters, regarding them from conventional points of view. Women who paint and women who scold, sermons that have the effect of poppy and mandragora, the rascality of lawyers, and Death’s imprudence in carrying off doctors, are old and hackneyed themes, on which the changes have been rung for ages. Of legal jests, one of the best, though rather long, is the following hit at Lord Eldon (with others), who, according to Sydney Smith, could not assent to the truth that two and two make four, without shedding tears, or expressing some doubt or scruple:

Mr. Leach made a speech,  
Angry, neat, but wrong;  
Mr. Hart, on the other part,  
Was prosy, dull, and long.

Mr. Bell spoke very well,  
Though nobody knew what about;

Mr. Tower talked for an hour —  
Sat down fatigued and hot.

Mr. Parker made the case darker,  
Which was dark enough without;

Mr. Cooke quoted his book,  
And the Chancellor said, “*I doubt.*”

The author of this was Sir George Rose, to whom Lord Eldon, not long after, in deciding a case against him, said: "In *this* case, Mr. Rose, the Chancellor does *not* doubt." A terser epigram than the foregoing is one which was sent on a scrap of paper, by a barrister, to Baron Garrow, who had been laboring during a cross-examination to prove by a prevaricating old woman that a tender of money had been made:

Garrow, forbear! that tough old jade  
Will never prove a *tender made*.

It has been doubted whether the epigram exactly suits the genius of the English language. There are proofs enough to the contrary, we think, to remove all skepticism on this point; but it must be admitted that the Greek, the Latin, and the French preserve the neatness and the point of this kind of witticism better than our own tongue. One of the most pungent French epigrams is Boileau's verse on the fierce dispute that raged in the Catholic church concerning the *Homousion* and the *Homoiousion*. Men tore each other to pieces, because they could not agree whether the Son was similar to the substance of the Father, or of the same substance,—a dispute which hinged on the acceptance or rejection of the diphthong *oi*:

D'une *syllabe* impie un saint mot augmenté  
Remplit tous les esprits d'aigreurs si meurtrières—  
Tu fis, dans une guerre et si triste et si longue,  
Périr tant de Chrétiens, *martyrs d'une diphthongue!*

Though the epigram did not flower fully in England till half a century later, yet it reached a high degree of excellence in the time of Charles II. What can be more sarcastic than the following by Cleveland?

Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom:  
Not forced him wander, but confined him home.

“*Si sic omnia dixisset!*” exclaims Dryden, in his “Essay on Dramatic Poesy.” “This is wit in all languages: it is like mercury, never to be lost or killed.”

Of many epigrams the chief element is surprise—an artifice by which an unexpected turn is suddenly given to some apparently careless assertion. A good specimen is this hit at a fat doctor:

When Edwards treads the streets, the paviors cry  
God bless you, sir! and lay their rammers by.

The best machinery for surprise is the amoebæic poem, or question and answer, as in the dialogue of the traveller and the clergyman:

*C.*—I’ve lost my portmanteau.  
*T.*—I pity your grief!  
*C.*—All my sermons are in it.  
*T.*—I pity the thief!

Pope, who is one of the most epigrammatic of poets, wrote few epigrams which are disconnected from his other verses; but his poems, from the “Essay on Criticism” to the “Dunciad,” are strewn with antithetical couplets that are as condensed and pointed as the most successful hits in Martial. What can be keener or more sparkling than such lines as these?—

Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast  
When husbands—or when lapdogs—breathe their last;

or the portraiture of an intriguing woman who, after aiming at loftier game, saw a surer and easier prey, and

                  stooped at once,  
And made a hearty meal upon a dunce.

The satires of Young abound in terse and caustic

epigrams, of which the following rivals the happiest conceits of Pope:

'Tis health chiefly keeps an atheist in the dark,—  
 A fever argues better than a Clarke;  
 But let the logic of the pulse decay,  
 The Grecian he'll renounce, and learn to pray.

Of one of Young's deadliest thrusts, Voltaire, the Corypheus of French epigrammatists, was the victim. The French wit having in Young's presence decried Milton's genius, and ridiculed particularly the personification in *Paradise Lost*, of Death, Sin, and Satan, the Englishman, indignant at the Frenchman's irreverence and levity, lifted his finger, and pointing at him, said:

Thou art so witty, wicked, and so thin,  
 Thou art at once the Devil, Death, and Sin.

The erection of a monument some years after his death to the author of "*Hudibras*," who died in the most squalid quarter of London, and was indebted to the charity of a friend for a grave, provoked one of the acutest epigrams in the language:

While Butler, needy wretch, was yet alive,  
 No generous patron would a dinner give;  
 See him, when starved to death, and turned to dust,  
 Presented with a monumental bust!  
 The poet's fate is here in emblem shone:  
 He asked for bread, and he received a stone.

The times of William, Queen Anne, and George I., were the great age of historical epigrams in England. One of the personages most frequently satirized during this period was the Duke of Marlborough, whose petty avarice and haggings with the Bath chairmen, and uxorious fondness for his termagant, Sarah, were remembered long after the conqueror of Blenheim was

forgotten,—just as Lord Peterborough, walking from market in his blue ribbon, with a fowl under one arm and a cabbage under the other, threw into the shade the hero of Almanza. Marlborough's new palace of Blenheim was the target of ceaseless shafts,—as, for example, this epigram on the high arch built over the little brook in the park:

The lofty arch his high ambition shows:  
The stream an emblem of his bounty flows.

A more murderously severe lampoon on the hero of Blenheim and Malplaquet was that by Swift, which closes thus:

Behold, his funeral appears—  
Nor widow's sighs, nor orphan's tears,  
Wont at such times the heart to pierce,  
Attend the progress of his hearse.  
But what of that? his friends may say,  
He had those honors in his day;  
True to his profit and his pride,  
He made them weep before he died.

It is pleasant to contrast this fierce satire of Swift with the delicate pleasantry of Addison. "Swift uses the knout like a Russian; Addison tickles a man into agonies with a feather. Swift is *dicax*, and Addison *facetus*."

Of Oxford epigrams we have a few choice specimens, of which we can give only a few of the briefest in this article. An alteration in the statutory exercises for divinity degrees, by which two theological *essays* were required in future from the candidates, drew forth the following:

The title D. D. 't is proposed to convey  
To an A double S for a double S A.

The honorary degree of D. C. L. having been declined by a distinguished officer on account of the heavy fees at that time demanded, his refusal was thus set forth:

Oxford, no doubt you wish me well,  
 But prithee let me be;  
 I can't, alas! be D. C. L.,  
 Because of L. S. D.

Sydney Smith's description of Lord Jeffrey, mounted on a donkey, is decidedly classic:

Witty as Horatius Flaccus,  
 As great a Jacobin as Gracchus,  
 Short, though not so fat as Bacchus,  
 Riding on a little jackass.

One of the "modern improvements" in epigrams is the artifice of parody, which may be regarded as a poor trick, but which, as it doubles the surprise, and therefore the efficiency, cannot be very sharply condemned. A good illustration is the following hit at Tom Moore:

When Limerick once, in idle whim,  
 Moore, as her member, gaily courted,  
 The boys, for fun's sake, asked of him  
 To state what party he supported;  
 When thus to them the answer ran:  
 "I'm of no party, as a man,  
 But, as a poet, *am-a-tory*."

The poet thus wittily characterized was one of the most sparkling of epigrammatists. Though erotic verse may have been his forte, yet he showed that the bow of Cupid can wound as well as the bow of Apollo. As another has said, he was in controversy as quick and as vexatious as a mosquito; and he had an eminent advantage in his musical command of verse, for his

hum charms the ear while his sting tortures the flesh.  
He was like his own

bees of Trebizond,  
Which from the sunniest flowers that glad  
With their pure smile the gardens round,  
Draw venom forth that drives men mad.

Of the scores of *jeux d'esprit* that fell from his pen, we have room only for the following on a vain politician, which suggests a kind of speculation that might be made very profitable in these days:

The best speculation the market holds forth  
To any enlightened lover of pelf,  
Is to buy — up at the price he is worth,  
And sell him at that he puts on himself.

Of epigrams on names, the name is legion. Dr. Lettsom's "Principles of Medicine" stands in the front rank for its pith and unpretending stoicism, which is content to do its duty and abide the consequences:

If anybody comes to I,  
I physics, bleeds, and sweats 'em;  
If, after that, they like to die,  
Why, what care I? I. LETTSOM.

In the next we have the very *apices rerum*:

With Pius, Wiseman tries  
To lay us under ban;  
O Pius, man unwise;  
O im-pious Wiseman!

When Disraeli, in a speech on the death of Wellington, borrowed without acknowledgment a passage from a French eulogy on Marshal St. Cyr, by Thiers, he became the victim of endless puns, gibes and epigrams, among which was this ironical defense:



In sounding great Wellington's praise,  
 Dizzy's grief and the truth both appear;  
 For a great flood of tears (Thiers) he lets fall,  
 Which were certainly meant for sincere (St. Cyr).

A happy epigram was made by an old gentleman of the name of Gould, who, having married a very young wife, wrote a poetical epistle to a friend to inform him of it, and concluded thus:

So you see, my dear sir, though I'm eighty years old,  
 A girl of eighteen is in love with old Gould.

To which his friend replied:

A girl of eighteen may love Gould, it is true;  
 But believe me, dear sir, it is gold, without U.

The celebrated scholar, Dr. Parr, attended for a short time upon Queen Caroline, to read prayers, etc. His place was afterwards supplied by a gentleman of the name of Fellowes; upon which the following epigram was written:

There's a difference between  
 Dr. Parr and the Queen;  
 For the reason you need not go far;  
 The doctor is jealous  
 Of certain little Fellowes,  
 Whom the Queen thinks much above Parr.

How far such word twisting as the following is excusable, we leave the reader to judge:

That Homer should a bankrupt be,  
 Is not so very Odd D'ye See,  
 If it be true, as I'm instructed,  
 So Ill-he-had his books conducted.

One of the neatest and most caustic epigrams of this century was the one which Byron so much

admired, on Ward,—a tonguery Parliamentary orator and writer for the magazines, who had criticized Rogers's "Italy" with great severity. Referring to Ward's practice of passing off cut-and-dry speeches for *extempore* ones, the banker-poet gave him the following rapier-like thrust:

Ward has no heart, they say; but I deny it:  
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it.

It is said that Rogers was helped a little in writing this epigram by Richard Sharp. The poet was speedily rewarded by a jest upon his cadaverous complexion, on which, a waggish acquaintance declared, more good things had been said and written than on that of the greatest beauty. It was Ward who, according to the author of "Biographical and Critical Essays," asked Rogers why, now that he could afford it, he did not set up his hearse; and it was the same sympathizing companion who, when Rogers repeated the couplet:

The robin, with its furtive glance,  
Comes and looks at me askance,

struck in with, "If it had been a carrion crow, he would have looked you full in the face."

The following playful colloquy is said to have taken place at a dinner-table between Sir George Rose and James Smith, in allusion to Craven Street, Strand, London, where the latter resided:

*J. S.*—At the top of my street the attorneys abound,  
And down at the bottom the barges are found;  
Fly, Honesty, fly to some safer retreat,  
For there's craft in the river, and craft in the street.

*Sir G. R.*—Why should honesty fly to some safer retreat,  
From attorneys and barges, 'od rot 'em?  
For the lawyers are *just* at the top of the street,  
And the barges are *just* at the bottom.

The following is *simplex munditiis*. Who is the author?

Madame Dill  
Is very ill,  
And nothing will improve her,  
Until she sees  
The Tuilleries,  
And waddles through the Louvre.

Few epigrams are more ingenious than the following parody on the noted grammatical line, *Bifrons atque Custos, Bos, Fur, Sus, atque Sacerdos*. The author, curiously enough, was a Canterbury clergyman:

*Bifrons* ever when he preaches;  
*Custos* of what in his reach is;  
*Bos* among his neighbors' wives;  
*Fur* in gathering of his tithes;  
*Sus* at every parish feast;  
On Sundays, *Sacerdos*, a priest.

Lessing has given us one of the best specimens of the German epigram:

Es hat der Schuster Franz zum Dichter sich entzückt,  
Was er als Schuster that, das thut er noch: er flickt;—

which, roughly rendered, runs thus:

Tompkins forsakes his last and awl  
For literary squabbles;  
Styles himself poet; but his trade  
Remains the same—he cobbles.

American epigrams of a high character are not very numerous; yet we have seen a few almost as keen, pithy, and artistically finished, as any that have come to us from the other side of the Atlantic. The following, which appeared when Dr. Parsons won the prize

for the best prologue to be recited at the opening of the Boston Theatre, is decidedly toothsome:

INVITA DENTE.

“What! Parsons a dentist? You don’t mean to say  
That *that* sort of chap bore the chaplet away?”

“Nay,—none of your sneers at his laureate wreath,—  
He’s a very good poet, in spite of his teeth!”

The following lines to a lady who had published a volume of mediocre poems, appeared many years ago in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*:

Unfortunate lady, how sad is your lot!  
Your ringlets are red—your poems are not.

Why is it that epigram-writing has gone out of fashion? Is it because we live in a prosaic and realistic age,—because the era of wits and *preux-chevaliers* has gone, and that of “economists and calculators” has succeeded? For a single stroke of wit,—one deadly stab, which shall give an enemy his quietus,—no better form can be conceived; and we do not wonder, therefore, that it was once an acknowledged and formidable force in literature. Time was when the wits were the lords or lions of society, and a satirical poem of a few lines might ruin a politician, extinguish an author, or cripple, if not overthrow, a ministry. Epigrams were then the favorite weapons of political and personal controversy, and battles were fought with this rapier as decisive as are now won with the clumsy club of the pamphleteer or the broadsides of the newspaper. It is doubtful whether the small shot which Fox and Sheridan, Pitt and Canning, fired off in the *Rolliad* and *Anti-Jacobin* did not prove as murderous to their political enemies as the bombs and shells which they let loose in the House of Commons. Many of the pon-

derous pamphlets and speeches of those times have been forgotten, while the apparently ephemeral pieces, intended for a transient end, are still read and admired and laughed over. Not a tithe of those who have roared over "The Needy Knife-Grinder" have read Burke's "Letter on the French Revolution;" while such works as Darwin's "Loves of the Plants" and Payne Knight's "Progress of Civil Society" survive only in their parodies. The old monarchy of France was defined as a despotism tempered by epigrams; and even during the Revolution, when men were not in the mood for merriment, the contending factions made use of this weapon. Notwithstanding the efficacy of that fearful political engine, the guillotine, Chamfort, who had abundant opportunity for observation, has declared that *Il n'y a rien qui tue comme un ridicule*.

Why, then, we repeat, have we now comparatively few epigrams? Doubtless an explanation of their dearth is to be found in the fact, first, that authors are less jealous of each other than in the days of Pope and Dryden; they are no longer divided into hostile cliques, but rejoice in each other's success, and feel that they are members of a common guild. Political contests are less personal than of yore, and indignant lampoons have disappeared with duelling and revengeful party feelings. The epigram was perfected in an age when manners were starched and formal,—an age of minuets, and hoops, and pomatum, and powdered cues, and purple velvet doublets, and flesh-colored stockings;—when, too, the classics were studied and imitated more than now, and the antithetical poetry of Pope, Swift, and Dryden, imitated by all, made epigrammatic writing easy and fashionable. The result is that, by a process of natural selection or adaptation, our venom bags have

been absorbed, and men are born without them. Occasionally hybrid specimens of the epigram appear in *Punch*, or flower in the backward season and classical air of the English universities; and now and then you are startled by an epigram, at once pithy, pointed, and exquisitely finished, in some American journal; but generally they have lost their flavor, and degenerated into vehicles for jokes and puns.

On the whole, the change is not to be regretted; for, however agreeable it may be to read epigrams and impromptus, no one could ever have liked to be their victim,—to be a target for gibes and sarcasms. To become a martyr “for the truth’s sake” has been the ambition and “last infirmity” of many noble minds; but no one likes to be a butt of ridicule in order to testify the sincerity of his convictions. It has often been remarked that men would rather be deemed villains than fools; and it is certainly more pleasing to our vanity to be hated than to be despised. Human nature was the same in Queen Anne’s time as to-day; and to no man, however thick-skinned, could it ever have been pleasant to have his little personal peculiarities, his “peccadilloes or scapes of infirmity,” some *faux pas*, or unlucky blunder, or petty social sin, or “virtuous vice,” done into verse, and handed round the breakfast or tea-tables of his particular circle, to amuse his friends and give their cheeks a holiday. Nowadays, if a man’s conduct is satirized by a review or newspaper, he reflects, with Bentley, that no man was ever written down except by himself; or reasons, with Abraham Lincoln, that “if the end brings him out right, what is said against him won’t amount to anything,—if the end brings him out wrong, ten angels swearing he is right would make no difference;” and

so he laughs at the jest if it is a good one, and if otherwise, lets it hum and buzz itself asleep. Not so with the terse and biting epigram of two to eight lines, which was first confidentially whispered from friend to friend, and then handed about in manuscript long before it was caught up by the press. This insect libel seemed never to die; it stuck to its victim like a gnat, teased him his life long, and oftentimes clung to his memory long after he had been fretted and worried into his grave. It must not be supposed that the exquisite polish and the razor-like sharpness of the jest made it more endurable. Men do not stand still to be stabbed or shot, in mute admiration of the splendid weapons with which they may be assailed. Few persons have the equanimity which Chesterfield manifested when he read Johnson's stinging letter, and can coolly point out and commend the happy conceits, the exquisite turns of expression, in a satirical production every sentence of which is a stab at themselves. It is true an epigrammatist has said that,—

As in smooth oil the razor best is whet,  
 So wit is by politeness sharpest set;  
 Their want of edge from their offence is seen,—  
 Both pain us least when exquisitely keen.

But we believe the very reverse is true,—that both cut more deeply, and leave scars that are longer in healing. Johnson was right when he declared that “the vehicle of wit and delicacy” only makes the satire more stinging. Compared with ordinary abuse, the difference, he said, is between being bruised with a club and being wounded with a poisoned arrow.

## POPULAR FALLACIES.

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SOME writer remarks that there is a wonderful vigor of constitution in a popular fallacy. When once the world has got hold of a lie, it is astonishing how hard it is to get it out of the world. You beat it about the head, and it seems to have given up the ghost; and lo! the next day,—like Zachary Taylor, who did not know when he was whipped by Santa Anna,—it is alive, and as lusty as ever.

Proofs of the truth of this observation will suggest themselves to every one. Of the scores of fine sayings that have the advantage of being fallacies, one of the most popular is the assertion that “a boaster is always a coward.” It would be very agreeable to find this so; but so far is it from being true, that among the bravest people on earth are the Gascons, who are such boasters that we have derived a contemptuous epithet from their name. They are unquestionably the most courageous and fiery-spirited of the Frankish race,—“saucy, full of gibes, and quarrelsome as a weasel,”—and their valor and coolness in danger, their immense vanity, and “mountainous ME,” as Emerson would term it, are so notorious that they are almost invariably selected for heroes by some of the best French novelists.

Was Achilles, or any one of Homer’s heroes, a coward? Yet the great father of poetry, who dissected the human heart as keenly as any modern anatomist,



makes his champions "crow like Chanticleer" over their achievements on all possible occasions. Who is ignorant, too, that Milton's Satan, whose sublimest characteristic is his "unconquerable will, the resolution not to submit or yield," brags incessantly, in the most sarcastic and biting language, of the "fell rout" with which he has visited the hosts of heaven? With a few exceptions, the Southern rebels were all insufferable boasters, from Jeff. Davis downward; yet did they often show the white feather on the field? Did ever a braver man draw sword than General Wolfe? Yet we are told that dining with Pitt, the British Minister, on the day before his embarkation for America, he broke, as the evening advanced, into a disgusting strain of gasconade and bravado. Drawing his sword, he rapped the table with it, flourished it around the room, and talked of the mighty things which that sword was to achieve, till the two Ministers, Pitt and Temple, stood aghast; and when Wolfe had taken his leave, and his carriage was heard to roll from the door, the former, shaken for the moment in the high opinion which his deliberate judgment had formed of the soldier, lifted up his eyes and arms, and exclaimed to the latter: "Good God! that I should have entrusted the fate of the country and the Administration to such hands!" It is said that "a barking dog doesn't bite;" but those persons who, relying upon this saw, have provoked a bull-dog to plant his teeth in their calves, know better. Read the life of that bravest and most braggart of artists, Benvenuto Cellini, compared with whom Falstaff was an incarnation of humility, and you will abandon the popular but foolish notion that real talent is never vain, and real courage never boastful.

Akin to the foregoing hackneyed fallacy, is another

on everybody's lips, viz., that "brave men are never cruel." Bravery has nothing to do with either cruelty or clemency; it is alike independent of either. There are cases, doubtless, where brave men, not fearing their enemies, have spared their lives; while a coward, from very fear, would have shown no mercy. But the brave men who have been habitually merciful, have been very few. Did any man, however he might have execrated the cruelty of Haynau, "the Austrian butcher," doubt his courage? True, he was a woman-whipper, and proved himself to have had a brutal disposition; but did he ever show himself pigeon-livered on the battlefield, or, if insulted by another, would he have hesitated to measure swords with him? Was Graham of Claverhouse a coward?—yet did he not shoot innocent peasants without hesitation or compunction? Was Bonaparte a coward?—yet did he not, with cold-blooded cruelty, order Palm, the bookseller, and the Duke d'Enghien to be shot, and did he not butcher thousands of Turkish prisoners at Jaffa? Did he not leave a legacy to Cantillon, the would-be assassin of Wellington? Was Napoleon III. a coward?—yet did he not, on the 2d of December, 1852, mow down thousands of the citizens of Paris with his cannon to place himself on the throne of France? Did Marius or Sulla ever show the white feather, or the courage of Richard the Third ooze out, like that of Bob Acres, at his fingers' ends? The Duke of Alba, who shot down the Netherlanders like dogs, was never twitted of timidity. Nobody ever doubted Lord Nelson's bravery, yet a British writer admits that he practised the most atrocious cruelty on the Neapolitan patriots, to say nothing of the infamous breach of faith by which those cruelties were preceded.

Another popular fallacy is, that "murder will out." That such *were* the fact is a consummation devoutly to be wished; but almost every year proves its fallacy. The crime is, indeed, of so startling a character, and the remorse often so poignant, that the perpetrator cannot so easily remain concealed as the knave who robs a bank or picks a pocket. There is an astonishing number of cases where the crime, even after long concealment, has been discovered; and the exceptions are comparatively so few that they may well deter those who meditate the act. Yet there have been murders the authors of which have never been, and probably never will be, revealed,—not, at least, till the lifting of the curtain at the last day shall disclose them. Who has forgotten the famous Cannon street murder of 1866, committed at eight o'clock in the evening, in one of the most crowded thoroughfares of London,—a crime to the author of which not the slightest clue has yet been found? Or who has forgotten the Rogers homicide in New York, the perpetrator of which is still shrouded from the public eye,—a homicide that took place at seven o'clock in the morning in the open street, within a few steps of Broadway, when much of the industrial life of the city was already astir? To these instances we might add the mysterious murder of Parker, some twenty years ago, in Manchester, N. H.; that of Estes, the fireman, in Boston; that of Appleby, the grocer, on Randolph street, Chicago, about nine o'clock in the evening, in 1856; and, more recently, the yet baffling mystery of the Nathan murder in New York. A strange paradox in the history of some of these crimes is that the difficulty of tracing them to their authors has been aggravated, apparently, by the very lack of caution and secrecy in their commission.

Another popular fallacy, which is on the tongues of the friends of political liberty, is that "it is impossible to stifle the expression of public opinion." A very pleasant doctrine this for those to believe who live under a despotism; but it is useless for those who fail to resist the first encroachments of arbitrary power, ere it has become irresistible, to lay this flattering unction to their souls. There are, indeed, a thousand cunning devices and shrewd expedients which ingenuity may hit upon, to defeat the force of restrictive measures, and enable a down-trodden party partially to circulate its doctrines; and hence the Abbé Galiani has defined the *sublime oratoire* as the art of saying *everything* without being sent to the Bastile, in an age when one is prohibited from saying *anything*. But one has only to look at France and Austria as they were till within a few years,—indeed, at the whole continent of Europe,—to see how completely, for all practical purposes, the expression of opinion may be silenced by bayonets and cannon.

One of the most deeply-rooted popular fallacies is the opinion that persecution never succeeds, but only adds strength and force to the thing persecuted. A stereotyped illustration of this subject is the damming up of a river, which breaks forth, by-and-by, with redoubled violence and fury. But history discourses no such monotonous music. The martyr's blood has not always fallen on fruitful soil. Many a heresy has died in the bud, which, had it been left to ripen unmolested, would have blown into a victorious creed and a dominant church. The popular opinion on this subject would not easily have gained credence a few centuries ago. Mr. Mill has shown, in his essay on Liberty, that it is one of those pleasant falsehoods which men

repeat one after another, till they pass into common-places, but which all history refutes. Twenty times before Luther the Reformation broke out, and was put down; Savonarola was put down; the Albigenses were put down; the Lollards were put down; the Hussites were put down; and so were the followers of Luther everywhere, except where the heretics were too strong to be effectually persecuted. In Spain, Italy, Flanders, and the Austrian Empire, Protestantism was rooted out; and, had Mary lived, or Elizabeth died, the same probably would have been its fate in England. It is a piece of idle sentimentality, says Mr. Mill, to affirm that truth has any inherent power, denied to error, of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake. The sum of the matter is, that it is only at a time when it appears

Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,

when it only teases and irritates, without destroying, that persecution is followed by an effect contrary to that intended. "Persecution not effectual!" exclaims a writer,—“it might be as proper to say that steel and poison do not kill. The real truth is, that there is a tendency in things, under a certain amount of persecution, to rise into greater vigor, as fire burns more brightly under a slight sprinkling of water; but, under a sufficient amount of persecution, their repression is as unavoidable as the extinction of the same fire by a sufficient quantity of water.”

Of all the plausible fallacies which pass current in spite of repeated exposures of their shallowness, there is no one which has got a firmer hold upon the public mind than that of the encouragement given to industry by lavish expenditure,—the fallacy contained in the

saying, "It is always circulating money." Chide a "fast" man of your acquaintance for his reckless expenditures, and he meets you with the triumphant reply that he is doing infinitely more good by spending than by hoarding; he is a blessing to his race,—a public benefactor; he is "doing all he can to circulate money." Half-a-dozen young epicures meet at a hotel or a restaurant, and order a dinner at five or ten dollars a head; they guzzle or waste food and wine, the price of which would maintain an ordinary family a month; this unenjoyed, unenjoyable excess is not only not censurable, it is absolutely praiseworthy,—“for, d’ye see? it is always circulating money.” The economists, on the other hand, who husband their means, are denounced without stint or measure. “They lock up money and keep it from circulating. Nobody is the better for it,—not even themselves.” The truth, on the contrary, is that the savers of money are the chief benefactors of a country, for it is by them, more than by any other citizens, that not only its material, but its moral interests, are advanced. Railways, telegraphs, schools, colleges, public libraries, museums,—public works in which hosts of laborers are employed,—are only possible because of these savings. The accumulations of the sordidest miser are as serviceable as the coin in a trader’s till; for they are employed in bank business, in manufactures, in building, in printing, in a thousand forms of hired capital, besides paying a constant and ever-increasing tax to the State. They not only give immediate employment to as much industry as the spendthrift employs during his entire career, but, coming back with increase by the sale of the goods which have been manufactured, or the houses built, form a fund for the employment of the same or a greater amount

of labor perpetually. But money spent uselessly,—as upon the turf, for costly wines, or high-priced luxuries,—or money spent for vanity, and not for enjoyment, is absolutely wasted. It maintains persons whose labor, that might have been useful to the community, is of no actual benefit, either to the spenders or to mankind. When a dollar's worth of food is needlessly consumed, the community is made just a dollar poorer. When a dollar is saved, and loaned, or employed, its power to bless the community has no limit in time, for all the great operations of concentrated labor, by which a country is made a desirable one to live in, are the results of capital thus husbanded. The careless observer, however, does not see what becomes of the economist's money; he does see what becomes of the spendthrift's; and observing that it feeds a certain amount of industry, though immeasurably less than it would have fed if saved and loaned, hastily concludes that prodigality encourages industry, and parsimony discourages it.

Another fallacy, hardly less popular than the foregoing is the hackneyed saying, "Contentment is better than riches," which graces so many copy-books, and on which so many changes have been rung by a certain class of moralists. Tell a languid, unenterprising man that you are brooding on some scheme, Californian, Australian, or otherwise, by which to better your worldly condition, and with a deprecating look and an ominous shake of the head he will croak to you the old saw, or some other hydropathic adage, to damp your zeal and fright you from your purpose, with as confident an air as if nobody had ever challenged its truthfulness. It would be interesting to know how such a sentiment gained currency in these times; for, certainly, it is

one of those sentimentalities that seem better fitted for the golden age than for the bustle and shock of this fiery, "go-ahead" period in the world's history.

To be contented,—what, indeed, is it? Is it not to be satisfied,—to hope for nothing, to aspire to nothing, to strive for nothing,—in short, to rest in inglorious ease, doing nothing for your country, for your own or others' material, intellectual, or moral improvement, satisfied with the condition in which you or they are placed? Such a state of feeling may do very well where nature has fixed an inseparable and ascertained barrier,—a "thus far shalt thou go and no farther,"—to our wishes, or where we are troubled by ills past remedy. In such cases it is the highest philosophy not to fret or grumble, when, by all our worrying and self-teasing, we cannot help ourselves a jot or tittle, but only aggravate and intensify an affliction that is incurable. To soothe the mind down into *patience* is then the only resource left us, and happy is he who has schooled himself thus to meet all reverses and disappointments. But in the ordinary circumstances of life, this boasted virtue of contentment, so far from being laudable, would be an evil of the first magnitude. It would be, in fact, nothing less than a triggling of the wheels of all enterprise,—a cry of "Stand still!" to the progress of the whole social world.

What is it that contrives machinery, builds and freights ships, beautifies cities, encourages the arts, writes books, and promotes the wealth, intelligence and comfort of a free and happy nation? Not contentment, certainly. Not contempt for that "competence" which millions are striving for, and which has been happily defined as three hundred a year more than you possess. Man is naturally an active, progressive being, destined



to be perpetually improving himself and his condition, and he can have no sympathy with so sleepy, passive a virtue, without violating the first law of his nature. Providence has ordered that he shall work out his own happiness, and the very means it has employed to make sure that he shall go on in the fulfillment of its designs, is that inability to content himself with what he possesses, or has done, which sentimentalists declaim against as one of the worst features in his character. It is this which feeds and clothes him, furnishes him with all the luxuries, all the elegancies and amenities of life, stimulates him to accumulate capital to produce great social ends, and incites him to strain alike for intellectual and moral improvement. It is, indeed, the glory of the world that nothing in it is stationary, or rests contented with itself, but that to whatever peak of excellence it climbs, it sees "hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise:"—

Spring's real glory lies not in the meaning,  
Gracious though it be, of her blue hours,  
But is hidden in her tender leaning  
To the summer's richer wealth of flowers.

It has been truly said, that from the polyp to the saint, there is a perpetual striving,—a divine dissatisfaction. Even the inorganic world would organize itself; the groping atoms struggle into cells; and in every geologic period there are prophetic intimations of a more lofty that is yet to be.

With the civilized man contentment is a myth. From the cradle to the grave he is forever longing and striving after something better, an indefinable something, some new object yet unattained. No doubt this feeling often takes a wrong direction, and manifests itself in

ambition, envy, grumbling, fretfulness, and other excesses; but so may every principle of our nature be perverted; and even in this unregulated state, it is far better than that contented feeling which leads a man to sit down with his hands in his breeches pockets, leaving everything to chance, and making no effort to improve his condition. But the truth is, that the man whose thoughts and energies are all needed for, and constantly employed in, efforts to reach a higher position, is the person of all men least likely to let his mind brood sulkily and discontentedly upon things either not worth attaining, or which are not so to him.

Had Milton been a contented man, would he have given to the world his grand epic? Had Shakspeare been a contented man, instead of one who "troubled deaf heaven with his bootless cries," and "cursed his fate," which led him "to make himself a motley to the view,"—to "gore his own thoughts," and "sell cheap what is most dear,"—would he have delighted the world with those matchless creations, Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth?

Would Byron, if contented, have written Childe Harold? Would a contented man have painted the Cartoons; or, had Columbus been such, would he have discovered America? No, surely; such a benumbing, paralyzing principle as contentment and the lofty aspirations of genius cannot co-exist in the same soul. As well might you talk of a sedentary will-o-the-wisp, a brick balloon, or a lazy lightning. Depend upon it, the nonsense of contentment and a cottage is pretty in the page of the poet or novelist only, never in actual life. The virtue is one which the rich are always anxious to find in the poor,—one which every man likes to see his neighbor practise,—but which no one

cares to practise himself. In fact, as Mr. J. S. Mill, in his book on "Representative Government," suggests, the great mass even of seeming contentment "is *real discontent*, combined with indolence or self-indulgence, which, while taking no legitimate means of raising itself, *delights in bringing others down to its own level.*"

Look at the effects of this feeling upon nations. Was the free and fiery Spartan, or the noble Roman, famed for it? Does it characterize the English, with their "hungry heart," of which one of their poets speaks? Or do we not, in fact, find it in the highest perfection among the ignorant and degraded serfs of Russia, who, when in the most abject slavery, hardly evinced a wish for freedom? Do we not see it in the habits of the American Indians, who sneer at all the courses of industry, so long as they can gather fish from the rivers or game from the forests? Is it not a notorious trait of the peasantry of Ireland, who, if they have "murphies" enough, are content to live in idleness, though exposed to a host of what other people would call frightful evils? Does it not characterize such persons as constitute the dregs of every civilized community, who, deeply as we may deprecate the conduct of selfish and grasping men, that strive and toil for wealth and worldly aggrandizement, without any higher views, are not *above* such a life, but *below* it?

What keeps such persons down in the world, besides lack of capacity, is not a philosophical contempt of riches or honors, but thoughtlessness and improvidence, a love of sluggish torpor, and of present gratification. It is not from preferring virtue to wealth,—the goods of the mind to those of fortune,—that they take so little thought for the morrow; but from want of forethought and stern self-command. The restless,

ambitious man too often directs these qualities to an unworthy object; the contented man is generally deficient in the qualities themselves. The one is a stream, that flows too often in a wrong channel, and needs to have its course altered; the other is a stagnant pool.

## F A C E S .

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**R**EADER, do you believe in physiognomy, — that there are in our faces, as Sir Thomas Browne says, “certain mystical signs which carry on them the motto of our souls,” revealing our inner selves as clearly as if we carried a pane of glass in our breasts? Do you pique yourself upon being “a reader of character;” or, do you believe, with a shrewd observer, that

There’s no art

To find the mind’s construction in the face?

There are few persons who boggle at the generalities of the science; but when it comes to minute detail, — as when Lavater talks of a kind of nose which is worth a kingdom, — it is hard to have faith, even as large as a grain of mustard seed. The countenance may be rightly defined as the title-page which heralds the contents of the human volume, but, like other title-pages, it sometimes puzzles, often misleads, and often says nothing to the purpose. Many a man bears a motto on his shield, which, however true for his father from whom he inherited it, is false for the son. Not always does a fair soul, as Plato supposed, choose a fair body to dwell in; nor are scoundrels uniformly, in eyes, nose, and mouth, “marked and quoted to be villains.” Nature cuts queer capers with men’s phizes at times, and confounds all the deductions of philoso-

phy. Character does not put all of its goods, sometimes not any of them, in its shop window. Socrates had an ugly frontispiece; and some of the most virtuous and amiable men have had faces which a stranger would not like to have encountered in a lonely place after nightfall. We have seen "foreheads villanous low" on very noble men, and grand domes of heads on mere blocks and ignoramuses. It is often true, as Moore sings, that

In vain we fondly strive to trace  
The soul's reflection in the face;  
In vain we dwell on lines and crosses,  
Crooked mouths, or short probosces;  
Boobies have looked as wise and bright  
As Plato and the Stagyrite;  
And many a sage and learned skull  
Has peeped through windows dark and dull.

De Quincey, in expatiating on the meanness of Dr. Parr's personal appearance, and his coarse and ignoble features, adds, — "I that write this paper have myself a mean personal appearance," — and attributes the peculiarity to the original unkindness of nature. It is said of the great Russian military hero, Suwarrow, that, when engaged in business, he looked a man, but, while entertaining company, would walk about the room with bent knees, and head and hands hanging down, like an idiot. Some of the boldest and most determined men have had weak mouths, and some of the most timid and fickle a firm-set lip and a defiant eye. It has been remarked that one of the bravest of our young generals in the late war, — a rough-rider, and reckless in battle to the verge of madness, — is a gentleman so unobtrusive in address, and so gentle of face, that a stranger, meeting him casually, would at once

place him in the category of temporizing souls who are supposed incapable of saying boo to a goose. Bret Harte, speaking of the fugitives from justice at "Roaring Camp," says that, "physically, they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blonde hair; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy character and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice, and an embarrassed, timid manner."

It is a curious fact that many of the men who have been most distinguished for their power to raise comic ideas have had lugubrious visages, suggestive of tears rather than of merriment. Grimaldi, the prince of clowns, was a dull, heavy-looking man off the stage; and so was Liston, who, maddened London nightly with his fun. Robert Chambers tells in one of his essays of a person residing near London, who could make one's sides ache at any time with his comic songs, yet had so rueful, woe-begone a face that his friends addressed him by the name of *Mr. Dismal*. What wit or humorist ever lived who could so effectually "create a soul under the ribs of death" by his jests, as poor Tom Hood? His writings, as all the world knows, are steeped in the very quintessence of fun; the drollest, oddest fancies and conceits sparkle on his page as incessantly as fireflies in an Indian grove. Yet who that ever had a glimpse of his pictured phiz, so grave and melancholy-looking,—as if he had done nothing all his life but stare at death's-heads and statues of "Niobe, all tears,"—would have dreamed that he was not a modern Heracitus, a sexton, an undertaker, anything rather than a professor of the Pantagruelian philosophy, and author

of the queer conceits that fill his "Own?" His face "insinuates such a false Hood," that one would fancy that nothing less than galvanism could shock its features into any demonstration of fun; and, instead of being suited to adorn a comic almanac, it seems better fitted for a frontispiece to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." In fact, the owner tells us that he was actually taken many times for a Methodist minister, and, on his march to Berlin with the Prussian infantry, could never pass himself off for anybody but the chaplain of the regiment. Cervantes, Swift, Molière, afford additional instances of comic geniuses whose physiognomies have belied their characters.

As the merriest men have sometimes the soberest faces, so the most serious-minded have mirthful ones. It has been said of Wilberforce, that his countenance was so merry, rosy, and good-fellowish, that he seemed more like a jovial son of Momus or Bacchus, than a devout Christian, as he was *intus et in cute*, and a champion of abolition. The poet Young, whose writings are so gloomy that it has been doubted whether their author was ever *young*, had anything but the ghostly face one would give to him after reading the "Night Thoughts." It is well known, however, that he was till fifty a desperate place-hunter, after which he turned State's-evidence against the world, and satirized the pursuits in which he had failed. One can easily imagine what a clog and hindrance to success in any profession must be a physiognomy unsuited to it. Who does not hesitate to employ a broker who has "no speculation in his eye,"—a lawyer who, instead of a keen, vulture-eyed look, has a jovial, benevolent expression,—or a schoolmaster with so comic a phiz that his



pupils would be forever grinning, instead of being "boding tremblers," who

Had learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face?

Charles Lamb has well described the distrust we feel of such men in his ludicrous account of the Quaker "of the old Foxian orgasm," whom he heard expressing his remorse at a meeting, that "he had been a *wit* in his youth," while his brow would have scared away the Levities, the Jocos Risusque, faster than the Loves fled the face of Dis at Enna! Some years ago, in the East, there was a little bandy-legged comedian, who, finding that the stage did not pay, abandoned it for the medical profession, but could make no headway on account of his "villanous merry visage." He tried every way to look grave and wise, but hadn't "the power of face." In spite of every effort, he carried into his new calling his old, merry smirk, and the roguish twinkle of his eyes; so that, while his patients were groaning with pain, he seemed to be perpetually giggling at their distress. He next tried the law, but even in his most frantic appeals, when he pulled his hair and tore his coat-tails, no jury would believe him in earnest; and so he abandoned this calling, too, declaring that his facetious face would be the ruin of him in any serious vocation. Not less unhappy in his physiognomy was an Irish comedian of brilliant talents, who believed himself cut out intellectually for high tragedy, while his face and figure compelled him to perform only comic parts. In his own opinion, fat and fortune only had made him a comedian; and, while he elicited shouts of laughter as a bog-trotter, with buskins composed of straw-ropes, he thought only "how

great a Kemble was in a Patrick lost," and viewed himself as one who should have been exciting pity or horror as *Lear* or *Macbeth*.

Anomalies like these do not invalidate the general truth, that the mind stamps its character on the features of the face. It is still true that, as the Scripture says, "a man may be known by his look, and one that has understanding by his countenance when thou meetest him." How often do we hit upon the character of a stranger at a glance, with a thousand-fold more accuracy than if we were to make it the subject of long and laborious study! The ruling principle of the man flashes upon us instantly, from some peculiar expression imprinted upon the features by the thoughts and feelings of years, when, if we were to wait and judge by the equivocal signs of words and deeds, we might be led into the grossest error. Montaigne observes that, in a crowd of victorious enemies, you shall presently choose, amongst men you never saw before, one rather than another to whom to surrender, and to whom to entrust your life. It is said of the celebrated physiognomist, Lavater, that a stranger was once introduced to him, whose features, though he exhibited high intellectual endowments and the most accomplished manners, impressed him at once with the conviction,—“This man is a murderer.” Dining with him the next day, Lavater forgot his impression; but scarcely had the elegant and polished gentleman left town, when news came that he was an assassin, who had fled from Sweden to escape arrest. Douglas Jerrold, in one of his plays, makes one of the *personæ* thus comment on the looks of another: “You have a most Tyburn-like physiognomy. There’s Turpin in the curl of your upper lip,—Jack Shepherd in the under one,—

Duval and Barrington are in your eyes,—and as for your chin, why, Sixteen-String Jack lives in it!” Even Moore, whose thrust at the physiognomists we have quoted, betrays his belief in their general principles by giving to the veiled prophet of Khorassan a visage fit for his hideous soul, while the young Nourmahal, the light of the harem, has features worthy of an angel:

While her laugh, full of life, without any control,  
But the sweet one of gracefulness, rung from her soul;  
And where it most sparkled, no glance could discover  
In lips, cheeks or eyes, for it brightened all over,—  
Like any fair lake that the breeze was upon,  
When it breaks into dimples, and laughs in the sun.

It is a fact well fitted to provoke serious thought, that the spiritual principle moulds and fashions the plastic substance of its home,—that it writes its own character on its exterior walls, and chronicles from month to month, from year to year, its upward aspirations, or its increasing abasement. Even after one has reached middle life, the face may undergo great changes; and many a human countenance becomes a drama of profound interest,—“a visible incarnation of the Manichæan dream,”—mirroring, as it does, with terrible fidelity, the alternations of a fierce inward struggle between good and evil, darkness and light. Somewhere in our readings we have met with the story of a painter, who, seeing a beautiful child, was so fascinated by the loveliness of its face that he resolved to paint it. He did so, and hung the picture, his favorite, in his study. It became a kind of guardian angel; in sorrow and in passion he tranquillized his soul by gazing upon that heavenly countenance. By-and-by he resolved, should he ever find its counterpart, to paint

that also; but years passed, and he was despairing of ever finding the latter, when he discovered a face so intensely ugly as fully to realize his idea. It was that of a wretch lying in despair upon the floor of his prison cell. He painted that terrible face; but what were his emotions when he learned that it was the same person he had painted before! The first was the face of the innocent child,—the last, that of the profligate, ruined youth. The likeness of an angel had been transformed into the reality of a fiend.

## COMPULSORY MORALITY.

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ONE of the saddest signs of the times we live in, is the increasing scepticism which good men manifest regarding the efficacy of moral influences in repressing vice. After ages of bitter experience,—after Bartholomews, *auto-da-fès*, and “booted missions” without number,—the world has at last learned that the true way to exterminate heresy is not by the sword, the dungeon, or the stake, but by letting truth and error grapple. When will men also learn that *sin* is to be exterminated, not by the “beggarly elements” of force and compulsion, but by the moral weapons of argument and persuasion? When will they learn that to reform men by force,—to break down individual independence, whether of judgment or choice,—to frown and scold men into self-denial,—to rely upon custom, law, opinion, anything rather than conviction and persuasion, as the means of changing moral conduct,—to jam the reluctant between a noisy public sentiment on the one hand, and a statutory prohibition on the other, and to drive them, thus guarded, into the line of sobriety and morality,—is the worst kind of scepticism, because it is a distrust of the holiest influences, a substitution of mechanism for soul, law for gospel?

That philanthropists should sometimes get impatient, and, in moments of exhaustion, doubt the efficacy of moral influences in regenerating the world, we can well

understand; but that the wheels of reform can ever be made to revolve more swiftly by applying to them the strong arm of the law, all history disproves. What lasting progress was ever made in social reformation, except when every step was insured by appeals to the understanding and the will? Who that has read the history of sumptuary laws, laws restraining amusements, and other such rude agencies, does not know that what is seemingly gained by them is gained only while these agencies operate, and is invariably followed by a reaction? Are nations essentially different from individuals, and do not the latter, when forced to do right against their will, avenge the insult to their manhood by doing wrong wilfully where before they did it thoughtlessly or from inveterate habit? Dam up the stream of vice by rigid laws, and will it not creep into other channels, or, bursting all barriers, inundate regions through which it would otherwise have flowed quietly? The Puritans of the English Commonwealth, the forefathers of those who would now make men virtuous by law, tried to extirpate impiety by statutory enactments, and we know the results. Scarcely had Charles II. ascended the throne when the nation, disgusted with the long faces and longer prayers of Cromwell's followers, and suddenly freed from their tyrannical restrictions, rushed to the opposite extreme of impiety; debauchery was identified with loyalty, and oaths, deep draughts, and a contempt for all the decencies of social life, became the badges and insignia of a good cavalier. Such will always be the result when men are whipped, dragooned and pilloried into morality, instead of being coaxed by rhetoric or convinced by logic.

It has been truly said that when honest men infer from their desire to do good, that they have the

knowledge and talents requisite to govern wisely, it is incalculable what evil-doers they may innocently become. A French gentleman once said to the minister, Colbert, "You found the state carriage overturned on one side, and you have overturned it on the other." Not unlike this is the policy of those reformers, who, forgetting that a conflagration may be extinguished without a deluge, would overcome one extreme of evil by turning to another hardly less objectionable. Even were the experiment successful of making men moral by statute, we doubt, whether, on the whole, the race would be benefited. The scheme would be akin to that employed in the Middle Ages, when, a false theology tried to make angels of men by shutting them up in cloisters and crushing their natural instincts. Those who are familiar with the history of that period will readily recall those frightful phenomena, once not uncommon in convents, when nuns suddenly lapsed from the extremest austerities into an almost demoniac wickedness, — a fact which only shows the uncontrollable vehemence of a long-denied desire. Saints made such by social compulsion are not men, but monsters. We have no wish to see the world filled with such; we look for nobler and loftier results, more in keeping with the dignity and majesty of man. God has so framed us as to make freedom of choice and action the very basis of all moral improvement, and all our faculties, mental and moral, resent and revolt against the idea of virtue by coercion. The whole scheme of Providence implies and is founded upon this freedom. Temptations abound on every hand. Means of self-indulgence and of self-ruin are furnished us in boundless profusion. There is no good thing which may not be perverted

into an instrument of mischief. "Do we not," says Sir Philip Sydney, in his "Defense of Poesy," "see skill of physic, the best rampart to our often assaulted bodies, being abused, teach poison, the most violent destroyer? Doth not God's word abused breed heresy, and His name abused become blasphemy? With a sword thou mayest kill thy father, and with a sword thou mayest defend thy prince and country." We do not chop off men's fingers because they become pickers and stealers; nor does God withhold from us the blessings of life because they may be made instruments of mischief; and why? Because life is a discipline, and not a final state; because virtue comes through self-control by resistance to evil; and because it is better, and more conducive to ultimate progress, to secure an independent and robust virtue, even at the cost of occasional falls and relapses, than to produce a sickly and feeble morality, which needs continual props and supports, and which has been forced on us from without, rather than generated within.

Who, indeed, is the truly virtuous man? Is it he who never struggles with temptation,—who closes his eyes and ears, and shuts every avenue of enjoyment, that he may escape the necessity of self-control; or is it he who accepts the conditions God has imposed on his life, and, instead of skulking from the field, or retiring to some anchorite's cave or hermit's cell, fights manfully the battles of life?—who, indeed, never needlessly rushes to meet temptation, but who, trusting in God, boldly confronts it when assailed? Let John Milton answer this question. Nobly has he said: "He that *can apprehend and consider vice*, with all her baits and seeming pleasures, *and yet abstain*, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly bet-



ter, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." Golden words, which have been a thousand times quoted, but which can never lose their freshness nor value, because they declare a principle which is for all time. It is only by courtesy that this fugitive "virtue" can be allowed the name. Self-denial it is not, but simply abdication of self-government and responsibility, and out of it can grow no stalwart and defiant virtue, but only a dwarfish and decent morality, or rather effeminacy and moral cowardice, ready to surrender at the first attack, when assailed outside of the bulwarks of law.

Modern philanthropy has yet to learn that that which purifies us, is trial, and that there can be no trial where there is no opportunity to do wrong. It is not in the hothouse or well sheltered garden, but on the Alpine cliff, where the storm howls most furiously, that the toughest plants are found. It is not by treading "the primrose paths of dalliance," but by climbing the craggy steeps of difficulty, that either intellectual or moral athletes are reared. Hence it is that Spenser, describing his Temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he may see and know and yet abstain. Men do not learn to swim by buoying themselves up with cork jackets and life preservers, still less by keeping clear of the water; nor do they use crutches to strengthen their legs. No doubt, by stringent laws, we may fill the world with *negative* virtue; but let us not cheat ourselves into the

belief that, by removing the provocation to sin, we have removed the sin itself,—that we have tamed the human passions, because we have caged them in law.

When will men understand that many results, desirable in themselves, are rendered comparatively valueless by the means employed to bring them about, and that a very small amount of *voluntary* well-doing is worth immeasurably more than all the compulsory well-doing which legislation can effect? We may twist and bend human nature into fantastic shapes, if we will; but that tough and hardy virtue which grows out of deliberate choice, will always be as much superior to the snug and trim morality which the lawgiver rears, as the rough, gnarled oak, with the grotesque contortions of its branches, is superior to the smoothly-clipped uniformity of the Dutch yew tree. Philanthropy is never so powerless as when she leans on the strong arm of the law for support,—never so mighty as when she seeks to achieve her lofty ends by means in harmony with her own spirit. It has been justly said that the vast amount of individual anxiety, self-denial, enterprise, action, which the more compendious method of working by law will supersede, is of far more importance to permanent progress than the artificial order which the law may establish. Let the schemes of modern sentimentalists be adopted; let them, as Milton says, “go on subtilizing and casuisting till they have straightened and pared that liberal path which God has allowed us *into a razor’s edge to walk on;*” let temperance, the support of the church, and the Lord’s day observance, be handed over to compulsory, instead of voluntary effort, and all the virtue which is now elicited, exercised, and matured in seeking the accomplishment of these ends will remain dormant. Virtue will become

mean and dwarfish; manly and robust morality will be supplanted by a canting sentimentalism; mere utilitarianism, with its scales and hair-balance, will become the standard by which every man's conduct will be regulated; and a thin varnish of outward morality will hide a depraved and rotten heart. Against such measures we shall always oppose a stubborn resistance, believing, with another, that the continuance of blotches, however frightful, is preferable to any skin-deep cure, which involves the destruction of the individuality of virtue.

## THE POWER OF TRIFLES.

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OF the various forms of exaggeration to which sensational writers and speakers are addicted, there is none more common than that of attributing great events to petty and insignificant causes. Accident, the sudden interposition of some trivial event, has been supposed in thousands of cases to have determined not only the destinies of individuals, but those of States. Matters of the highest moment are assumed to have been the product of others the most trivial, incidental, capricious, and foreign; and but for these minor events, it is asserted, the greater would have never happened. Not only epigrammatists, who must have their antithesis at whatever cost, but grave moralists and philosophers, are fond of showing "what great events from little causes spring," and, in their anxiety to point a moral, make deductions of which a moment's reflection would show the absurdity. As the fall of an apple led to the sublimest discoveries in science, so, we are told, the slightest moral act may lead to events which no scale, save one that can graduate eternity, can estimate. The first of a series of crimes has often been "a little thing,"—a slight deviation, by an almost imperceptible angle, from the path of rectitude; but, though deemed of trifling moment, it has led the mistaken wanderer eternally astray. "A happy marriage, which might have been prevented by any one of

numberless accidents," says a writer in an English journal, "will lead a man to take a cheerful view of life. Some secret stab in the affections, of which only two or three people are aware, may convert a man, who would otherwise have been satisfied and amiable, into a stoic, a sour fanatic, or a rebel against society, as the case may be. If Dante had been personally happy, or Shakspeare personally wretched, if Byron had married Miss Chaworth, if Voltaire had met with no personal ill-usage, their literary influence would have been very different."

History, as well as biography, is pointed to as confirming the same view. Was not Rome saved by a goose, and captured by a hare? Does not Pascal tell us, in his brilliant, epigrammatic way, that if the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter, Antony might have kept the world? What can be imagined, asks Hume in one of his essays, more trivial than the difference between one color of livery and another in horse-races? Yet this difference, he adds, "begat two most important factions in the Greek Empire,—the Prasini and the Veneti,—who never suspended their animosities till they ruined that unhappy Government." Does not Duclos tell us that the vermin that for a long time infested the Roman conclave, by expediting the votes of the Cardinals, often defeated the grossest bribery and corruption, and placed on the Papal throne men who otherwise never would have sat there? Was not the Treaty of Utrecht, which put an end to the bloody war of the Spanish Succession, occasioned by a quarrel between the Duchess of Marlborough and Queen Anne about a pair of gloves? Have we not been assured by historians, that, had not Louis VII., in obedience to the injunctions of his Bishops, cropped his head, and

shaved his beard, and thus rendered himself disgusting to his Queen Eleanor, she would never have been divorced, nor married the Count of Anjou, afterwards Henry II. of England, who through her became entitled to the rich provinces of Poitou and Guienne; and thus France would have been saved from the wars which for three centuries ravaged her territory, and cost her the bitterest humiliations and three millions of men? Did not Cromwell come near being strangled in his cradle by a monkey,—a wretched ape thus holding in his paws the destinies of Europe? A grain of sand in the sensorium of the same Cromwell re-established the Stuarts, and changed the fate of England. The absence of a comma decided the violent death of the predecessor of Edward III. A child plays with a pair of lenses, and lo! myriads of new suns and systems are discovered. Pascal hears a dinner-plate ring, and he writes his tract upon sound. Cuvier dissects a cuttle-fish, and he is prompted to solve the mystery of the whole animal kingdom. Thorswalden sees a boy in a striking attitude, and models his *Mercury* drawing his sword after he has played Argus to sleep.

Who has not listened to such reasoning as this, and yet who, on a moment's reflection, does not see that it involves a logical *non-sequitur*? Can any event happen which is not the product of adequate causes? Admit that we cannot always trace the causes,—does it follow that they do not exist, or that we must ascribe the inexplicable occurrence to a blind and capricious Fate? “*If* Dante had been happy, or Shakspeare unhappy,” their entire careers would have been different. No doubt; and “*if* my aunt had been a man, she would have been my uncle.” But is human happiness the sport of accident,—of blind chance? Does it not depend upon

temperament, itself dependent upon a man's whole ancestry, and upon his education, which, again, is dependent upon his age, country, and a myriad of underlying conditions? Have men no wills by which they can react upon the circumstances that act upon them? If men become "stoics or sour fanatics" after marriage, it is because they were previously prepared to be such by their mental and moral constitutions. Whether a person is to be sweetened or soured by Hymen depends upon the constituents of his mind. Out of the same substances one stomach will extract nutriment, another poison; and so the same disappointments in life will chasten and refine one man's spirit, and embitter another's. If outward events are to give "their whole color" to our lives, we shall all become "rebels against society;" for where is the man who does not receive "a secret stab" or an open one in the course of his life? Is not disappointment the lot of mortals?

Grant the truth of the story of Newton and the apple, is it not evident that, unless observed by a mind already so prepared to make the discovery that *any* falling body would have started the train of ideas, the falling of ten thousand apples would have led to no discovery of gravitation? When Oken picked up, in a chance walk, the skull of a deer, bleached and disintegrated by the weather, and exclaimed, after a glance, "It is part of a vertebral column!"—a reflection which led to the system of anatomy which has immortalized his name,—was not this flash of anticipation the result of the deepest previous study of the problems of the animal kingdom? Had the apple and the deer's skull been wanting, would not some other falling body, or some other skull, have touched the string so ready to vibrate? If these discoveries were accidental, it is cer-

tain that such accidents do not happen to common men. Again, would the first petty crime necessitate the one that leads to the gallows, did it not argue a lack of self-control which is the source alike of pigmy and of giant vices? Would not Antony have been Antony still had he never seen Egypt's queen, and had there been no other Delilahs to ensnare and ruin him? "They are not skillful considerers of human things," says Milton, "who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin. 'Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness.'" Of what account, so far as the peace of Utrecht was concerned, would have been the trumpety quarrel between Queen Anne and the Duchess of Marlborough, had not the Tories longed to end the war, so as to get rid of the Duke of Marlborough, the leader of the Whig party, and had not the Emperor Joseph I. of Austria died without heirs, thus leaving the throne to his brother, the intended inheritor of the Spanish monarchy? As to the grain of sand in Cromwell's sensorium, but for which, Pascal says, the royal family would have been lost, and his own established forever, there is no evidence that this was the cause of the Protector's death; but, had he lived, it is extremely doubtful whether he would have been able to keep his position; and, as to his family's retaining the sceptre, no one of them would have had the ghost of a chance.

Pliny somewhere says that it was the sight of a fig which caused the destruction of Carthage; but does not every schoolboy know better? It was the deep, undying hatred of the Romans, aggravated by weighty causes through a long series of years, that caused the famous decree, *Carthago delenda est*; else Cato might



have dumped down a wagon-load of figs on the floor of the Senate-House, and the Senators would not have cared a fig for it. Again: Livy intimates that the admission of plebeians to the Consulate was owing to the accident of the Consul's lictor knocking at the door of his house to announce his return, whilst his wife's sister, who was married to a plebeian, was present. She was indignant that her own husband could not acquire such a distinction, and hence arose the contest which ended in breaking down the exclusion. But here the train had been laid twenty years before by Cameleius, and this was but the spark that lighted it. So the Reformation would have come, had there been no sale of indulgences, for there had been twenty incipient Reformations before Luther; and without the stamp act and the threepenny tax on tea, the young American giant would still have ceased to bow to the British sceptre.

Victor Hugo absurdly says that "a few drops of water, more or less, prostrated Napoleon;" that is, the battle of Waterloo was postponed five hours by the rain of the previous night, enabling Blucher to arrive in time to save Wellington from annihilation. But the truth is, as we have already shown in another part of this volume, the "few drops," which were really torrents, impeded the Prussians as much as the French, and Napoleon's defeat was due simply to his own unaccountable delays and blunders before and during the battle. The arrival of Blucher only converted what was already a defeat into a total rout.

"But did not Joan of Arc," asks an objector, "expel the British from France,—a poor, weak maiden triumphing over foes that had baffled the ablest French generals?" We answer that substantially the same

results would have occurred had no Joan of Arc appeared. The fact was that the English had undertaken a gigantic task, utterly disproportionate to their means. By great military prowess, aided by the defection of some of the French nobles, they had struck a paralytic terror into their foes. But this could not long continue. The scale was already turning when the enthusiast of Lorraine entered the field. She sprang from among the people; it was by the sentiments, the religious belief, the passions of the people, that she was inspired and supported; and the one pervading sentiment of all hearts was a burning desire to expel the foreign invader. One might as well say that the match which fires a cannon blows up a fortification, or that a spark falling upon a mass of combustibles is the cause of a conflagration, without reference to the gunpowder in the one case or to the combustibles in the other, as affirm that men's destinies are shaped by chance, or that human civilization has been developed, thwarted, or controlled by petty and insufficient causes,—the accidents and incidental circumstances which dramatic and sensational writers are fond of assigning.

## A PEEP INTO LITERARY WORKSHOPS.

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HOW shall we write? Shall we, who earn our living with the pen, jot down our first thoughts in the first order that occurs to us, or shall we, before wreaking them upon expression, brood over them like a hen over her eggs, and, when we have put them on paper, blot, prune, touch, and retouch our sentences, with the utmost care? That literature, though it requires peculiar talents for its successful prosecution, is also to be regarded as an *art* which exacts a certain degree of acquired skill, will be admitted by all. Unlike the other arts, however, it has no apprenticeships, no recognized schools of instruction, no grades of teachers or scholars, but is learned and practised by every man in his own way, with no hints or helps but such as his own brain or chance observations may afford him; and hence a peep into the workshops of those whom the world has honored as masters of the art,—a glance at their methods of producing their magical effects,—may be both pleasant and profitable.

There are some literary advisers, of high repute, who denounce all blots, erasures, and alterations. "Write as you talk," says John Neal. Unfortunately his success does not commend his counsel. No writer has shown more conclusively by his failures that a merciless pruning of the vine is necessary to its fruitfulness. Neal has abundant talents, even genius; but Washington

Irving would make more of a Scotch pebble by its brilliant setting, than Neal, by his method, of the crown jewel of the Emperor of all the Russias. "Never think of mending what you write," says Cobbett; "let it go; no patching." "Endeavor," says Niebuhr, "never to strike out anything of what you have once written down. Punish yourself by allowing, once or twice, something to pass, though you see you might give it better." "Write, write, by all means," says another. "Take, if you will, the first subject that comes to your hand; but be sure to treat it in the first mode that comes into your head. By pursuing this process you will soonest arrive at the art of thinking with your own thoughts. Celerity best disperses the valor of the brain, and rallies ideas into shape and service. \* \*

As to the modes of explaining your subject, lay aside your pen, drop the design of authorship altogether, go back to your ordinary walking and talking, and endeavour to content yourself therewith, if you feel within you the stirrings of a moment's hesitation on this head. 'Second thoughts are best,' is a beggarly adage, the invention of the timid, the refuge of the weak, the parent of universal scepticism. How can that claim to be the birth of your mind, which is the production of deliberate selection, and of which you may never determine whether it shall be born at all? And what right have you to offer to the world wisdom which has need to be criticised and sifted beforehand? Ganganelli says truly that a man might often find at the nib of his pen what he goes a great way in search of,—and I maintain that no man who writes from pure love of writing, should be allowed to hold a pen, if he require to travel for its illustrations much beyond its nib. I should like to know where originality is to be found,

if it be not in a man's first thoughts, or truth, save in the spontaneous testimony of his faculties for discerning it?"

There is force in these suggestions; no doubt there are persons with intellectual idiosyncrasies, for whom this is the best advice that could be given. Some writers cannot correct. They exhaust their ardor in the first creative act, and every addition is a weakness. There are others, again, who by long practice acquire at last a facility by which they can dash off sentences and chapters with marvellous ease and rapidity. Sir Walter Scott was a writer of this class. Indefatigable in gathering the materials of a novel, spending whole days in verifying a point of history, or in working up the details of a bit of scenery, he troubled himself little about the plot of his novels, and less about his style. He never knew what it is to bite the nails for a thought or an expression, nor did he ever waste a moment with the file. He wrote in a whirlwind of inspiration, and was so hurried along that his brain resembled a high-pressure engine, the steam of which is perpetually up, every time he entered his study and lifted a pen. Gifted with a prodigious memory, — a memory that held everything with a vice-like grasp, — a vivid imagination, a fluent pen, and a spirit that courted difficulties instead of quailing before them, he needed only an incident or a tradition to start with in any of his novels; and when he had laid down "the keel of a story," it grew under his hands like a ship under the hands of a thousand carpenters. The second and third volumes of *Waverley* he dashed off in three weeks, and a half-dozen weeks sufficed to produce the whole of *Guy Mannering*. "I have often been amused," he says, "with the critics

distinguishing some passages as particularly labored, when the pen passed over the whole as fast as it could move, and the eye never again saw them except in proof." A wondrous talent this; yet it must be admitted that Scott was an incorrect writer. Scotticisms and awkward peculiarities of phrase abound in his writings, and his poetry is often as slovenly as his prose. He wrote with a wonderful concentration of mind; but this taxed his brain fearfully, and at last destroyed it.

Byron wrote with equal rapidity. He had a volcanic brain, and threw off "The Corsair" in ten days, and "The Bride of Abydos" in four. While his poems were printing, he added to and corrected them, but never recast them. "I told you before," he writes, "that I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger. If I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle again; but if I do it, it is crushing." It was his custom to write out his first ideas as they came, and continue until the afflatus was over, when, finding his blood cooling in reaction, he would set himself critically to work, and retrench, and pare, and modify as liberally as he had written. When writing his *Don Juan* in Italy, he used to sit up far into the night, with his brandy and water,—his later substitute for the glorious Hippocrene of his first efforts,—and write away till the cock-shout of light summoned him to bed. The next day was usually spent in cutting down the production of the night to one half the number of stanzas, polishing, and otherwise improving the work. Byron's writing, though swift, was not easy; it was hard and harassing, and, aided by brandy, it bowed him, "gray and ghastly," into the grave at the early age of thirty-seven. Sydney Smith was another rapid

writer. Writing as he talked, with the dash of a man of keen wit and high intelligence, he never stopped to round off or polish his periods, — never altered or corrected. Indeed, he was so impatient of this, that he could hardly bear the trouble even of looking over what he had written; but would frequently throw down the manuscript on the table as soon as finished, and say, starting up and addressing his wife: “There, it is done; now, Kate, do look it over, and put in the dots to the i’s and strokes to the t’s.” It is said that Fenelon wrote his *Télémaque* in three months, and there were not ten erasures in the original manuscript. Godwin dashed off a large part of a novel in a single night. Gibbon, who was so long in hitting the keynote in the first chapters of his immortal history, sent the last three quarto volumes uncopied to the press; and the same copious readiness attended Adam Smith, who dictated to his amanuensis while he walked about his study.

Dr. Johnson, in counselling young writers, advises them to train their minds to start promptly, for it is easier to improve in accuracy than in speed. Robert Hall used to lament that he wrote so slowly and laboriously,—found it so hard to realize his ideal,—that he could write but little, while that had a stiffness from which his spoken style was free. Whatever the advantages of deliberate composition, no man of sense will pretend that the Horatian rule, *nonnum prematur in annum*, is of universal application. Thackeray has shrewdly suggested that a man who thinks of putting away a composition for ten years before giving it to the world, or exercising his own mature judgment upon it, should first be sure of the original strength and duration of the work; otherwise, on withdrawing

it from the crypt, he may find that, like some small wine, it has lost what flavor it once had, and, when opened, is only tasteless. Again, it must be admitted that even to be unpleasantly hurried is not always and purely an evil in writing for the press. All rules for writing must have respect to personal idiosyncrasies. While many men are paralyzed by hurry, there are some who work best under the sense of pressure. Hundreds of persons can testify that hurry and severe compression from an instant summons that brooks no delay, have a tendency to furnish the flint and steel for eliciting sudden scintillations of originality,—originality displayed at one time in the picturesque felicity of the phrase, at another in the thought or its illustrations. Who does not know that to improvise is, sometimes, in effect, to be forced into a consciousness of creative energies that would else have slumbered through life? Such was the case with the "Wizard of the North," Sir Walter Scott. "I cannot pull well in long traces," he used to say, "when the draught is far behind me. I love to hear the press thumping, clattering, and banging in my ear; it creates the necessity which almost always makes me work best." The moment he was ahead of the press, and the cry of the printer's devil ceased to sound in his ear, his spirits drooped, his pen flagged, and the story came to a halt.

De Quincey remarks that the same stimulation to the creative faculty occurs even more notoriously in musical improvisations; and all great executants on the organ have had reason to bemoan their inability to arrest those sudden felicities of impassioned combinations, and those flying arabesques of loveliest melody, which the magnetic inspiration of the moment has availed to suggest.



Rossini positively advised a young composer never to write his overture until the evening before the first performance. "Nothing," he declared, "excites inspiration like necessity; the presence of a copyist waiting for your work, and the view of a manager in despair tearing out his hair by handfuls. In Italy in my time all the managers were bald at thirty. I composed the overture to *Othello* in a small room in the Barbaja Palace, where the baldest and most ferocious of managers had shut me up by force, with nothing but a dish of maccaroni, and the threat that I should not leave the place alive until I had written the last note. I wrote the overture to the '*Gazza Ladra*' on the day of the first performance, in the upper loft of the *La Scala*, where I had been confined by the manager, under the guard of four scene-shifters, who had orders to throw my text out of the windows bit by bit to copyists, who were waiting below to transcribe it. In default of music, I was to be thrown out myself." Handel composed with equal rapidity. His pen could not keep pace with the current of ideas that flowed through his volcanic brain. Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven, on the other hand, composed slowly, retouching and elaborating with the same patient love with which the sculptor puts the finishing stroke to the creation of his brain and his chisel. Ries, the biographer of Beethoven, says that when he was in London, negotiating the sale of some of that composer's later compositions, he was not a little surprised to receive a letter from Vienna, in which Beethoven begged him to add two notes (A C) to the beginning of the *Adagio* of the grand sonata in B flat, Op. 106. Ries was astonished that an alteration should be required in a composition finished nine months previously; but his

astonishment gave place to admiration when he saw the wonderful effect of these introductory notes, which De Lenz calls "two steps leading down to the gate of the tomb."

But, while some writers dash off their best things at a heat, and others, like Campbell, the poet, *dawdle* too much over their compositions, and only weaken them by the excessive use of the file, for *most* men the rule is absolute, that great labor is the price of excellence. The promptness of conception and quick master-touch of the fine writer are acquired only after years of toil; it is the experience of the veteran, accomplishing with ease what seemed impossible to the raw recruit. By years of incessant practice and painstaking, the delicate instruments of the mind become at last so lubricated, and so fitted to their work, that, when the steam is up, it performs its task with the promptness and precision of a machine. As Pope says:

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
As they move easiest who have learned to dance.

The author of these lines was himself one of the most painstaking of poets. He tells us that in his boyhood he "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came;" but if they came unsought it was a felicity which forsook him when his genius had reached its full stature. Though he was not a very prolific author, yet Swift complained of him that he never was at leisure for conversation, because he "had always some poetical scheme in his head." Economizing everything that could serve his purpose, he used to jot down in the night, as he lay in bed, any striking thought or lucky expression which flitted through his brain, lest it should be forgotten before morning. Every line, or fragment

of a line, which could be turned to account at a future period, he carefully recorded, not allowing a crumb to fall to the ground. What he composed with care, he corrected with a never-tiring patience; and it was not till after innumerable blots and erasures, and till he had kept a poem in his portfolio for many years, that he gave it to the printer.

Shenstone has finely said that fine writing is the result of spontaneous thoughts and laborious composition. If we look at the first draughts of the great works that have immortalized their authors, we shall find that they are often comparatively slight and imperfect, like the rude chalking for a masterly picture. Virgil toiled so long over his productions that he compared himself to a she-bear licking her misshapen offspring into shape. He spent eleven years in composing the *Æneid*, and set apart three more for its revisal; but, being prevented by sickness from giving it the finishing touches which his exquisite judgment deemed necessary, he was so dissatisfied with the poem that he ordered it to be burned. Sterne was incessantly employed for six months in perfecting one diminutive volume. Ten long years elapsed between the first sketch of Goldsmith's *Traveller* and its final completion. Twenty lines in a day he thought a brilliant feat, and Bishop Percy tells us that not a line in all his poems stands as he first wrote it. Young, ridiculing hasty composition, counsels authors to "write and re-write, blot out, and write again," adding:

Time only can mature the laboring brain,  
Time is the father, and the midwife pain:  
The same good sense that makes a man excel,  
Still makes him doubt he e'er has written well.  
Downright impossibilities they seek:  
What man can be immortal in a week?

Cowper, a vigorous, but most painstaking poet, declares that "*to touch and retouch* is the secret of almost all good writing, especially in verse." Burns was another hard worker with the brain. Easily as his verse seems to have dropped from his pen, it was really the product of much toil. He was fastidious to a fault in perfecting his phrase and rhythm. "Easy composition, but laborious correction," is his own characterization of his mode of writing. Even the poet Moore, whose verse is so singularly mellifluous, liquid, and facile, has remarked that "labor is the parent of all the lasting wonders of the world, whether in verse or stone, whether poetry or pyramids." He tells us that he himself was, at all times, a far slower and more painstaking workman than would ever be guessed from the result. The first shadowy imagining of a new poem was, indeed, a delicious fool's paradise; but the labor of composition was something wholly different. To gather the illustrations for "*Lalla Rookh*" required months of laborious reading; much farther time was needed to familiarize himself with them; and again and again, while writing the poem, he found the task so difficult that he was on the point of abandoning it in despair. Of Shelley, Medwin, his biographer, tells us that he practised the severest self-criticism, and that his manuscripts, like those of Tasso at Ferrara, were so full of blots and interlineations as to be scarcely decipherable. Campbell was so scrupulously fastidious as to nicety of expression, that, in ridicule of the rareness and difficulty of his literary parturition, especially when the offspring of his throes was poetical, one of his waggish friends used gravely to assert that, on passing his residence when he was writing *Theodoric*, he observed that the knocker was tied up, and the street in front of the

house covered with straw. Alarmed at these appearances, he gently rang the bell, and inquired anxiously after the poet's health. "Thank you, sir," was the servant's reply, "master is doing as well as can be expected." "Good heavens! as well as can be expected! What has happened to him?" "Why, sir, he was this morning delivered of a couplet!"

Burke's gorgeous imagery had little of that rush which is commonly heard in it. He had all his principal works printed once or twice at a private press, before handing them to his publisher. Sheridan not only watched long and anxiously for a fine idea, but turned it over and over on the literary anvil, and rewarded himself for the toil by a glass of generous port. Gray wrote slowly and fastidiously; so did Pope and Akenside. Addison wore out the patience of his printer; frequently, when nearly a whole impression of the *Spectator* was worked off, he would stop the press to insert a new preposition. Charles Lamb's most sportive essays were the result of intense brain labor; he used to spend a week at times in elaborating a single humorous letter to a friend. It is curious, considering the mercurial character of the French, with what wearisome care and slowness many of their authors have written. Malherbe, the father of French poetry, composed with prodigious care and tardiness, and racked his brain unceasingly to correct what he had produced. Molière passed whole days in fixing upon a proper epithet for rhyme. Pascal spent not less than twenty days in writing and revising one of his immortal letters, justifying the observation of M. Faugière, that, with that great writer, revision was "a second creation." The Benedictine editor of Bossuet's works, declared that they were obscured by so many interlineations as to

be nearly illegible. Rousseau's works, which so charm us by their simplicity and ease, were written with almost incredible pains. He sat in full dress always, like Handel at the organ, and wrote on the finest gilt-edged paper, with extreme fastidiousness and care. On the other hand, Dr. Johnson's *Rambler* papers, the style of which is so elephantine, cumbrous, and labored, were thrown off with the utmost rapidity, and sent in hot haste to the press. Buffon was another spruce and trim author, who, from title-page to colophon, wrote in bag-wig and ruffles, and has left the well-known saying that "genius is patience." So slowly did he shape and polish his sentences,—so often did he turn a paragraph in his mind and on his tongue, speaking it over and over, until his ear was satisfied,—that he was able to repeat whole pages of his works.

Of the late French critic, Sainte-Beuve, it is said that he never wrote even an article for a newspaper, without having subjected his mind to a special training for that particular article. The preparations for one of his *Causeries du Lundi* cost him days of severe labor; and, before beginning the composition, his mind had been disciplined into a state of the most complete readiness, like the fingers of a musician, who has been practising a piece before he executes it. Even Béranger's light, chirping verse, which seems as spontaneous as the twittering of a sparrow, was the result of intense labor, the author bestowing weeks and months upon a single song, to give it that appearance of ease and simplicity which aided so much in witching the reader. Vaugelas touched and retouched his productions so many times, that Voiture declared that, while he was polishing one part, the French language was undergoing change enough to necessitate his rewriting all the rest. La

Rochefoucauld spent fifteen years in preparing a little book of two hundred pages.

Canning changed, amended and polished his speeches till he nearly polished away the original spirit. He altered the proofs so much that the printers found it easier to recompose the matter anew than to correct it. Macaulay wrote his brilliant Essays and his History with the greatest care and nicety. The first rough draft was absolutely illegible from erasures and corrections. "You have no conception," says Prescott, who saw two or three pages of the MSS. of his History, "of the amount of labor that one of these sheets of foolscap represents."

On the whole, the result of our peep into the workshops of literary men is not to prepossess us in favor of rapid writing. It was wisely said by the Bishop of Exeter, England, in a recent address to a body of students, that "of all work that produces results, nine-tenths must be drudgery." The remark is as true of literary composition as of any other product. The best writers do not time themselves like racehorses, and the boast of facility which we sometimes hear from young writers, instead of being creditable, only shows "a pitiful ambition in the fool who makes it." The veins of golden thought do not lie upon the surface of the mind; time and patience are required to work the shafts, and bring out the glittering ore. The compositions whose subtle grace has a perennial charm,—which we sip, like old wine, sentence by sentence, and phrase by phrase, till their delicate aroma and exquisite flavor diffuse themselves through every cell of the brain,—are wrought out, not under "high pressure," but quietly, slowly, leisurely, in the dreamy and caressing atmosphere of fancy. They are the mellow vintage of a ripe and unforced imagination. "*Le temps n'épargne pas ce*

*qu'on fait sans lui*,—Time spares nothing produced without his aid," says Boileau. It is a literary as well as a physiological law, that longevity demands a long period of gestation. An elephant is not prolific, but its offspring outlives whole generations of the inferior animals whose gestation is of more frequent occurrence. Half the failures that occur in literature are due, as they are due in art, in business, in every kind of pursuit, to self-conceit in the aspirant, leading him to despise labor, and to fancy that his slightest effort is sufficient to win success. It is an age of improvisation that we live in,—of impromptu reform, impromptu legislation, impromptu invention, literature, philosophy. The volubility and vehemence of extempore eloquence in the pulpit, the cut-and-thrust style of criticism in magazines and reviews, the labor-saving, hothouse schemes of education, so much in vogue, indicate, by their popularity, the spirit of the age. All is steam, electricity, railroad rush. "Who shall deliver me from the Greeks and Romans?" cried in agony the classic-ridden Frenchman. "Who will deliver us from these annihilators of time and space?" cry we.



## FRENCH TRAITS.

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OF all the civilized peoples on the globe there is no one whose character is so full of seeming, if not real, paradoxes, as that of the French. Always better or worse than they are expected to be,—one day sinking far below the level of humanity, at another soaring far above it,—now electrifying the world by their brilliant thoughts or deeds, and anon provoking its indignation or scorn by their servility, egotism, or meanness,—the French are so unchangeable that their distinctive features may be recognized in portraits drawn by Cæsar and others nearly two thousand years ago, and yet so fickle that one not familiar with their whole career is often half inclined to doubt their identity. Coleridge says of them, with the usual English narrowness, that they are like gunpowder; each individual is smutty and contemptible; but mass them together, and they are terrible. Intellectually they are equally solid and brilliant; do everything thoroughly, yet display the most exquisite taste in trifles. We are wont to speak of them as superficial; yet where do you find profounder scholars than in France, or workmen who better understand the rules and principles of their art? Looking on this lively and chattering people, one is about ready to conclude that your profound bigwigs are mostly shallow dogs,—that it is only your gay and frivolous fellows that are deep! No people

have quicker or keener perceptions; none probe more thoroughly to the core everything which they investigate. They are equally skilled in cards and chess, and in marshaling battallions on the field; they are alike at home in calculating the revolutions of planets in their orbits, and in cutting pigeon-wings in a ball-room. They have their Laplaces and their Lubins; they are alike unrivaled in fillagree and in mathematics. Their profoundest thoughts are bon-mots; their jests veil deep philosophical theories.

It is Paris that is foremost in learned monkeys and in learned scientists; Paris that furnishes us with our latest theories of philosophy; Paris that furnishes us with our latest styles of fancy goods, our latest fashions in dress. Our coxcombs ape the Parisian manners; our novelists steal the French writers' plots; our Generals borrow from Turenne and Napoleon their art of war. Sydney Smith once said of Lord John Russell, that he was ready at a moment's notice to go up in a balloon, to perform an operation for cataract, or to take command of the channel fleet. But a Frenchman's genius is far more versatile; he can in the same day discover a new planet, draw a caricature that will convulse the public with merriment, invent a new soup that will make an epicure scream with joy, solve an enigma that would have puzzled the Sphinx, and carry a Malakoff by a *coup de main*. There is but one thing which a Frenchman cannot learn to do well, and that is, — *to govern and to be governed*. Byron hardly slandered them when he pronounced them

a people who will not be ruled,  
And love much rather to be scourged than schooled.

France was rightly characterized by De Maistre, in 1796,

as a republic without republicans,—a nation too noble to be enslaved, and too impetuous to be free. Indeed, they are the only people that ever existed, among whom a government can be hissed off the stage like a bad play, and its fall excite less consternation than the violation of a fashion in dress.

In what other people can be found such a union of genius and childhood; such a fondness for routine, yet such a proneness, when forced to abandon old customs and principles, to push the new to their farthest limit; so profound a love of freedom in theory, and yet such a willingness to recognize a vast standing army as the only basis of civil government; so exquisite a taste in the ornamental, and so savage an ignorance of the comfortable; so much outward refinement with so much inward unscrupulousness; so much etiquette, with so little self-sacrifice; such fertility of resources in exigencies, and such a blindness to the lessons of experience; aspirations so vivid, with so little sense of what constitutes true glory; such a sensitiveness to trifles, and such an indifference to a political revolution?

A Frenchman is versatile, and does all things with equal gust and enthusiasm; he chuckles with equal joy at finishing a toy to his mind, and in giving to a new science its crowning perfection. *Sa gaiété est de la foudre, et sa farce tient un sceptre.* He can spend hours in chasing butterflies, or he can pass a life-time in elaborating a favorite theory, and in digging into the mysteries of a dry and complex subject. He is the gayest man on the globe, and the likeliest to send a pistol-ball through his own brain; the most fickle of men, and the most obstinate; the politest, and the most irascible; the devoutest, and the most atheistic;

a friend whom you shall win with a feather, and lose with a straw; the most pregnant of talkers, and the most diffuse; an orator who, as Dr. Donne said of Lady Anne, can glide at once "from predestination to slea-silk," or, as De Quincey said of Bishop Berkeley, "pass with the utmost ease and speed from tar-water to the Trinity,—from a mole-heap to the thrones of a Godhead." He will wear, without shame, the shabbiest clothes, yet stop in the street before a looking-glass to curl his moustache and adjust his cravat; he will fight like a tiger for a republic, yet lie meek as a spaniel under an empire. In short, to the casual observer, a Frenchman is a riddle that defies solution,—a psychological puzzle. He is a compound of paradoxes; a harmony of differences; a being born under the contending influences of Mercury and Saturn.

But, lest we should seem to be aiming at antithesis rather than at truth, let us cite the authority of a late French writer, who, perhaps, better than any other, understood the true character of his countrymen. "Qualified for every pursuit," says Alexis De Tocqueville, "but excelling in nothing but war, more prone to worship chance, force, success, *éclat*, noise, than real glory; endowed with more heroism than virtue, more genius than common sense; better adapted to the conception of grand designs than the accomplishment of great enterprises; the French are the most brilliant and the most dangerous nation of Europe, and the one that is surest to inspire admiration, hatred, terror, or pity, but *never* indifference."

It is unfortunate that, in judging of the French, our estimates are unconsciously more or less affected by the impressions derived from English literature. Nothing can be more ludicrous or more untrue than

the caricatures which most English tourists have given to the world as photographs of the French people. Till lately, it has seemed hardly possible for an Englishman to write about his neighbors across the channel without dipping his pen in *gall*; and just as the first and 360th degrees of the circle are the farthest apart, though the nearest together, so these two peoples, though but twenty miles apart, have understood each other as little as though living on opposite sides of the globe. Judging by many of these libels, one would suppose that one of Nature's journeymen had made the Frenchman, and not made him well. An English historian admits that, till a few years ago, the Frenchman was regarded by John Bull with utter contempt. He was "a lean, half-starved, lankey-legged creature, looking in hopeless despair, and with watery mouth and bleared eyes, at a round of English beef. His attitude was grotesque; his language even became immensely amusing, because he did not speak English with the slang of a hackney-coachman and the pronunciation of a Cockney. He was nicknamed Jack Frog, because he was supposed to feed on those insubstantial animals, which were also fancied to be the exact image of himself in hoppiness of motion and yellowness of skin." Of course, he was an arrant coward, as well as a mere physical ghost of a man, and one Englishman could flog half-a-dozen "mounseers" as easily as a Yankee could flog the whole seven. And all this was believed, in spite of the fact that the French nation, from the earliest period of history, has been the leading nation of Europe. Its original races long disputed the supremacy of the else all-conquering Romans. They gave to Roman literature some of its most accomplished orators, and some of its most elegant writers. Cicero learned eloquence from

one of their teachers, and Cæsar acquired in Gaul new arts of war. All through the middle ages, in the Crusades, in the great national wars, in the religious commotions of the sixteenth century, their gallantry was the conspicuous splendor of the times. Their writers have since electrified human thought; their brave deeds have revolutionized modern politics; their more elegant arts have been the despair of all other peoples, and their manners the standard of whatever was polished, courteous, graceful, and pleasing in address. In spite of all these facts, to many Englishmen, as they look across the straits through the fogs by which they are surrounded, the Frenchman is either a dancing-master or a buffoon, grimacing and shrugging his shoulders more like a monkey than a man.

Disabusing our minds, then, so far as possible, of the prejudices derived from Anglo-Saxon sources, let us proceed to analyze the French character, and see if we can ascertain its principal elements. In comparing him with the Englishman, the first thing that strikes us in the Frenchman is his mercurial nature,—the extreme delicacy and sensitiveness of his organism. It seems almost a truism to speak of his flexibility and versatility, so unlike the cast-iron mould of the Englishman's mind,—of the capricious desires of the one, and the unchanging wants of the other; but these facts have their value, as showing how all the traits of the English character are bound up in the one idea of stability, while the essence of the French nature is mobility. The English mind is comparatively slow and heavy; it proceeds laboriously from fact to fact; it seldom jumps or flies, but advances cautiously, step by step, making sure always of the first before it takes the second. Hence, it is jealous of other minds that have

much facility of association, and cannot conceal its contempt for sallies of thought, however lawful, whose steps it cannot measure by its twelve-inch rule. It has little sympathy for eccentric greatness, and therefore a man of genius can make his way in England by violence only, fighting wildly against all that is traditional, as did Byron, Wordsworth, and Shelley. The mental qualities of the French are directly the opposite of these,—consisting in quickness of perception, self-confidence, and precision of thought; and their physical peculiarities in promptness of action and extreme nervous excitability. It is this intellectual and sensitive organism which has fitted them for the part they have played in the world's history, whether in the realm of matter or of mind. The ancient Gauls were like a firebrand in the midst of Europe, setting everything about them in a blaze; and the modern French have been equally successful in their efforts to disturb the peace of nations. Whether led by a Charlemagne or Francis I., by a Luxemburg or a Napoleon, they have burst like a tempest upon the phlegmatic people of the North, and, until the slower energies of their Gothic foes were roused, have swept all before them. The one crowning quality of greatness which they have lacked, is patience. They could carry their victorious eagles over the burning sands of Syria, or through the chilling snows of Russia; but they could never have stood all day in one place, and been mowed down by an enemy's artillery, or cut down by his cavalry, as did Wellington's troops at Waterloo. They could build a road over the Alps under the leadership of Napoleon, while another people would have frozen in despair; but in executing internal improvements which require long and anxious deliberation to plan and years to complete,

they have lagged behind other nations, especially the English.

What Cæsar said of the ancient Gauls is equally true of their descendants to-day: "*Nam, ut ad bella suscipienda Gallorum alacer ac promptus est animus, sic mollis ac minime resistens ad calamitates perferendas mens eorum est.*" It is because of this lack of patience under calamity that all the French wars with England have ended unfortunately for France. The long and bloody conflict between William III. and Louis XIV. was marked by no signal triumphs of the English, but it was organized and protracted by British money and persistence; and the "asthmatic skeleton" who disputed, sword in hand, the bloody field of Landen, succeeded at last, without winning a single great victory, in destroying the prestige of his antagonist, exhausting his resources, and sowing the seeds of his final ruin, simply by the superiority of British patience and perseverance. So, too, in the "war of giants" waged with Napoleon, when all the great military powers of the continent went down before the iron flail of "the child of destiny" like ninepins, England wearied him out by her pertinacity, rather than by the brilliancy of her operations, triumphing by sheer dogged determination over the greatest master of combination the world ever saw.

Another striking peculiarity in the character of the French is what may be called the *histrionic* element,—their fondness for the theatrical. In their buildings, dress, deportment, they have always an eye to effect. The traveller finds London, like its inhabitants, solid and substantial, but gloomy. The houses and shops are heavy and cumbersome, with many marks of utility, but few of grace and beauty. In Paris he finds a city of palaces,



light, airy, and graceful, designed not more for convenience than for architectural effect. Every Frenchman is a born actor. Life is to him a stage, and all his plans and acts have more or less reference to stage effect. French human nature is not like English or German human nature; it is human nature elaborated and adorned by art. Hence the matchless excellence of the French vaudevilles, which are so many photographs of the national manners; and hence, also, the insipidity of French tragedy, which, scorning to be natural, and striving to be classical, neither satisfies the judgment nor grapples with the heart. The proofs of this peculiarity are seen everywhere in Paris; in the open street and in the brilliant *salon*; in the Houses of Parliament and in the judicial halls; in the artist and in the author; in the *garçon* and in the greybeard; from the Prime Minister down to the *gamin*. No occasion is too solemn, no scene too impressive, no object too beautiful, to check this love of display. Where but in France do men twist the graceful forms of vegetable life into artificial shapes, sell painted wreaths at cemetery gates, and pronounce rhetorical panegyrics over the fresh graves of their friends? In what other city than Paris is notoriety, even when scandalous, as sure a passport to social distinction as birth, beauty, or fame? Where else, when a *savant* dies, do students drag the hearse and scatter flowers over his grave? Where else would a soldier commit suicide by casting himself from a lofty monument, or a maiden and her lover make their exit from life's stage with a last embrace and the fumes of charcoal? In what other country would a mechanic, in praising a favorite living author, exclaim, as did a Parisian in extolling Béranger: "What a man! what sublime virtue! how is

he beloved! Could I but live to see his funeral! *Quelle spectacle! Quelle grande emotion!*" In what English, American, or German cemetery can one find sorrowing affection expressed as at Montmartre—viz.: by a tombstone with a colossal tear carved on it, and underneath the words, "Judge how we loved him!" In what city but Paris, when a triumphant enemy was thundering at the gates, would the newspapers, as lately in the French capital, publish lists of citizens who swear to die rather than surrender? A correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, writing from Paris during the siege by the Germans, tells us that the *bourgeois*, when he went to the ramparts, embraced his wife in public, and assumed a martial strut as though he were a very Curtius on the way to the pit. Jules was perpetually embracing Auguste, and raving about "the altar of our country," which he intended to mount; while every girl who tripped along fancied she was a maid of Saragossa.

This anxiety about appearances, this fondness for display, has marked the French character in all ages. Montaigne, three centuries ago, declared that lying was "not a vice among the French, but a *way of speaking*." "Paris," said Frederic W. Robertson, "is the natural birthplace of all that is refinedly brutal." "To a Frenchman," says Mrs. Jameson, "the words that express things seem the things themselves, and he pronounces the words *amour, grace, sensibilité*, etc., with a relish in his mouth, as if he tasted them, as if he possessed them." It is to be feared that a Frenchman will even forgive an atrocious crime to the author of a sounding sentiment; an example of which we have in Louis Blanc, whose one unanswerable reason for supposing that there must be some way or other of explaining away Robespierre's criminality is, that he once said

something extremely benevolent about the hardship of being poor. "In this country," wrote Laurence Sterne, at the close of the eighteenth century, "nothing must be spared for the back; and if you dine on an onion, and live in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your clothes." "Here," continues another traveler in France, "things are estimated by their *air*; a watch may be a masterpiece without exactness, and a woman rule the whole town without beauty, *if they have an air*. Her life's a dance, and awkwardness of step its greatest disgrace." A late panegyrist of the French admits that the necessity of attracting is in the Gallic blood. It may be controlled, he says, by the deep sentiment of one absorbing duty; it may be temporarily suppressed by other more urgent needs; it may be modified in its expression by the thousand accidents of position; but it is at the bottom of all Frenchwomen's hearts, though it comes out in so many varied forms, that it is not always easy to recognize its presence. "Concentrated in her 'manners,' all the varied elements of her coquetry come out. Her every bow is critically measured according to the person to whom it is addressed, and the effect which it is intended to produce. From the long, low, sweeping curtsey with which, on a first introduction, she salutes a woman of high rank, through the long, delicately graduated scale of forms of recognition, down to the familiar nod and extended hand, with which, without rising from her sofa-corner, she greets her male friends, each movement implies a thought, each variation telegraphs a meaning, each shade suggests the nature of the reply which she expects." This vanity of the French causes them to boast even of those things which would cause an American or Englishman to hang down his head with

shame. For example, an Englishman chanced to be in the Elysian Fields at a grand review of the Prussian and English soldiers who occupied Paris in 1815. From a feeling of delicacy he shunned all allusion to an event which he fancied must be a source of deep humiliation to France. But a Parisian came up to him, and said jauntily: "Look here, sir! What a magnificent spectacle! *It's only in Paris that you see such sights!*"

The moral gulf that separates the Frenchman and the Englishman is illustrated by nothing more vividly than by the different motives addressed by Napoleon and Nelson to their respective followers. "Soldiers!" exclaimed the former, "forty centuries are looking down upon you from the summits of those pyramids!" "England," telegraphed the latter to his fleet, "expects every man to do his duty." The fact that the word "glory" perpetually occurs in Bonaparte's despatches, while in Wellington's, which fill twelve enormous volumes, it never once occurs, but "duty" is invariably named as the motive for every action, is also intensely significant regarding the characters of the two peoples. *Glory*,—that word forever on a Frenchman's lips,—has been in all ages the will-o-the-wisp which has led France astray; the golden calf before which, as Strauss lately reminded Renan, she has danced for centuries; the Fata Morgana which has allured her again and again from the prosperous fields of labor into the desert, often to the very brink of an abyss. It is this "staginess," this untruth, this lack of loyalty to nature, that provokes the dissatisfaction we feel in the last analysis of French character. We find that the qualities which dazzled us are a sham. The promise of beauty held out by external taste is not fulfilled; the

fascination of manner,— the courtesies, bows, and smiles, —bear, as another has said, a vastly undue proportion to the substantial kindness and trust which that immediate charm suggests.

The gruffness of an Englishman, when a stranger addresses him, does anything but awaken expectation of courtesy or entertainment; yet, if he consents to entertain you, with what a princely hospitality does he welcome you to his home! and, if he calls you friend, how does he grapple you to his heart with hooks of steel! On the other hand, the profusion of courtesies with which a Frenchman greets a woman as she enters a public conveyance is not followed by the offer of his seat; while the roughest backwoodsman in America, who never touched his hat or crooked his body to a stranger, will guard the poorest woman from insult, and incommode himself with respectful alacrity to promote her comfort. So generally is the lack of simplicity recognized as an essential element in the French character, that when we wish to express the opposite of natural tastes, we can find no word more significant than “Frenchified.” The morbid self-consciousness which characterizes the French, which runs through their oratory, their conversation, and their manners, is fatal to the highest excellence, intellectual or moral. Simplicity and earnestness,—self-forgetfulness and abandonment,—the ability, as Coleridge terms it, “to lose self in an idea dearer than self,”—is the condition of all greatness. It is this which has distinguished pre-eminently the heroes and martyrs of every age; all who have bled or died to maintain a principle; all who have electrified us by their oratory, or charmed us by their numbers, all who by deed or word have won a lasting place in the affections or memories of mankind.

A late writer justly remarks that in loyalty to a method the French are unrivalled, in the triumph of individualities weak. Their artisans can make a glove fit perfectly, but have yet to learn how to cut out a coat. "Their authors, like their soldiers, can be marshalled in groups; means are superior to ends; manners, the exponent of nature in other lands, there color, modify, and characterize the development of intellect; the subordinate principle in government, in science, and in life becomes paramount; the laws of disease are profoundly studied, while this knowledge bears no proportional relation to the practical art of healing; the ancient rules of dramatic literature are pedantically followed, while the 'pity and terror' they were made to illustrate are unawakened. So, in politics, the programme of republican government is lucidly announced, its watchwords adopted, its philosophy expounded, while its spirit and realization continue in abeyance; and thus everywhere we find a singular disproportion between formula and fact, profession and practice, specific knowledge and its application."

Another peculiarity of the Frenchman is, that he is not self-centred and self-contained; that, more than other men, he is dependent for happiness upon things without himself. The famous song of Sir Walter Raleigh, "My mind to me a kingdom is," we may be sure that no Frenchman could ever have written. It is certain that the sentiment, "Never less alone than when alone," came not from the pen of a native of France. While the Englishman shrinks like the turtle within his shell, the Frenchman is gregarious; the former is happiest when he shuts his door on the world, and hugs his fireside; the latter, when mingling with his fellows, in the crowded theatre or the noisy

street. A life spent in discharging the plain, homely duties of his calling, with no alternations but domestic joys and recreations,—with no factitious excitements or public diversions,—would be to him the ideal of tamedness and insipidity. Give an Englishman a home, and he can easily forego society. Even the solitude of the wilderness has no terrors for him, and he is happy on the very borders of civilization. The French, on the other hand, have failed almost utterly as colonizers, because of their intense social instincts,—the secret, no doubt, of their exquisite courtesy of manner,—and because they can never forget that they are Frenchmen. The shortest absence from “*la belle France*” is regarded as a calamity; and the people, as a whole, shrink from expatriation, and even refrain from foreign travel,—not because they lack adaptability, for they have it in a preëminent degree,—but because they count every moment as lost in which they are cut off from the society and sympathy of their fellows. “*Le Français,*” says Maurice Sand, “*vit dans son semblable autant qu’en lui-même. Quand il est longtemps seul, il dépérit, et quand il est toujours seul, il meurt.*” The same writer has justly observed that in America the individual absorbs society; in France, society absorbs the individual. It is not a meaningless fact that the French language has no such words as *comfort* and *home*. Hence it is that in Paris the triumph of material niceties reaches its acme; that, for superficial amusements, that city has grown to be the capital of the world. Paris is the theatre of the nations; a vast museum; a place of amusement, not of work; an Elysium, to which all the world’s idlers and triflers,—all who are plethoric with wealth which they are puzzled to spend,—all who are dying of *ennui*, and seeking for new devices to kill

time,—naturally flock. Here are the appliances, multiplied and diversified with the keenest refinement of sensual ingenuity, for keeping the mind busy without labor, and fascinated without sensibility. The senses of the Parisian are everywhere captivated with piquant baits; as he steps into the world, he finds a life all prepared for him, and selects it as he does his dinner from the long *carte* of the *restaurant*. Where but in France would a grave jurist write a learned work on the Physiology of Taste, and announce that “the discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a new star;” or a great statesman complain of the English people that they have one hundred and fifty forms of religion and but one sauce, namely, melted butter? It is a significant fact that Paris has scarcely any other employment for its two millions of inhabitants than just those which are the first to fail in the hour of adversity. Its faubourgs are occupied by manufacturers, not of articles that men *must* have, but of bronzes, ormolu, marqueterie, buhl-work-furniture, mirrors, china, clocks, table-ornaments, marbles, and all that contributes to mere appearance and enjoyment. You will find in the city about an equal number of celebrated dancing-masters and celebrated teachers of mathematics; and the municipality pays one third more for its fêtes than it does for its religion.

It was a Frenchman who said of his countrymen, that there never was a nation more led by its sensations, and less by its principles. It is said that, in the latter days of Charles James Fox, a conversation took place in his presence, on the comparative wisdom of the French and English character. “The Frenchman,” it was observed, “delights himself with the present;



the Englishman makes himself anxious about the future. Is not the Frenchman the wiser?" "He may be the merrier," said Fox, "but did you ever hear of a savage who did not buy a mirror in preference to a telescope?"

But it is in the literature of a people that, more faithfully than in anything else, is mirrored the national character; and true as this is of every civilized nation, it is especially true of the French. The leading intellects of France have been always, not only the authors, but also the exponents of the thoughts and feelings of the people; and nowhere has a more perfect allegiance been rendered to those intellectual kings who govern by the divine right of wit and genius, and who, when dead, still "rule us from their urns." The first fact that impresses every student of French literature is the remarkable clearness of the writers; their superiority to all their European rivals in perspicuity and precision. It is a remarkable fact that, in the age of our great writers, when our literature was unrivalled in the gorgeous opulence of its rhetoric, the English *language* was never once made the object of conscious attention. No man seems ever to have reflected that there was a wrong and a right in the choice of words or phrases, in the mechanism of sentences, or even in the grammar. Men wrote eloquently because they wrote feelingly; they wrote idiomatically because they wrote naturally and without affectation; but if a false or acephalous structure of sentence,—if a barbarous word or a foreign idiom,—chanced to present itself, no writer of the seventeenth century was scrupulous enough to correct it. The French writers, on the other hand, early saw the supreme importance of artistic expression, and gave more attention to the cultivation of their language,—to the study of its idiomatic niceties

and delicacies,—than any other people. Partly because the French mind has a keener perception than the English of the Greek-like simplicity and directness which belong to the highest artistic beauty; partly because the French have more conscience in intellectual matters, and partly because the French Academy acted as a literary police for the suppression of verbal license, France, more than two centuries ago, took the lead in literary workmanship, and that supremacy she still maintains. While the great writers of England were still pouring forth their thoughts with inartistic skill, or were rising to perfect beauty of statement only when possessed with that white-heat of passion which gives to rhetoric an arrowy directness and a rhythmical flow, France had already achieved a classic propriety of style, and to-day she teaches rhetoric to England with as much authority as Greece taught it to Rome. What English author of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries rivals in style the exquisite beauty of Pascal? Who in the eighteenth exhibits such a command of all the luxuries and delicacies of expression—such a marriage of rhythmical music with logical accuracy of thought—as Paul Louis Courier? and where in the nineteenth shall we find another style so artistic as that of Renan or George Sand; so delicate, brilliant, equable, and strong as that of Sainte-Beuve?

It is a singular fact that the oft-quoted saying, “Language was given to man to conceal his thought,” should have come from a Frenchman,—the man who of all men on the face of the earth, wears his heart on his sleeve, and no sooner has a thought or emotion than he is in an agony to communicate it. Of all the faults of style, there is no other for which a Frenchman has so profound a horror as for obscurity. Take all

the Gallic writers, from Montaigne to Lamartine, and search through the works of each, from title-page to finis, and you will hunt as vainly for an obscure passage, as in a German author for a clear one. Dip where you will into Pascal, Descartes, Bossuet, Rousseau, or Taine, you will find every sentence written as with a sunbeam. Nothing can be more even than the flow, nothing more logical than the structure of the periods; the limpid clearness of the rippled brook runs through them all; while, on the other hand, Taylor, Hooker, and Milton abound with ellipses, parentheses, and involutions, and your great German thinker,—especially if a metaphysician,—treats a sentence as a sort of carpet-bag, into which to cram all the ideas it can be made to hold. As with the giants of French literature, so with the dwarfs; shallow these may be, but foggy and incomprehensible, never. Even one of the most distinguished English critics admits that, in the competition of the literary chiefs of Europe, the palm of superiority must be given to the writers, not of his own country, but of France. “Darkened,” he says, “as the literary language of France has often been by the fumes of undigested metaphysics, there is no author, and scarcely any reader there, who would not stand aghast at the introduction into his native tongue of that inorganic language which even Samuel Taylor Coleridge himself tumbled out, in some of his more elaborate speculations, and with which the imitators of that great man are at this day distorting and Germanizing the speech of our progenitors.”

Now what do these facts indicate regarding the French mind? What are the qualities of the French people that render clearness a fundamental law with them of all good composition? We have in it, first,

a proof of the genial, sympathetic, and communicative spirit of the nation. The French are an eminently social people, and their authors have always their readers directly before them. A German writes obscurely, because his happiness is in secluded rumination. A Frenchman always writes clearly, because his happiness is in social and intellectual intercourse. The first calls up shadowy dreams not less with his pen than with his pipe. The other is engaged in the commerce of thought in his study, not less than in the *salon*. Hence the superiority of the French in conversation and letter-writing, and in all the forms of literature where grace, sprightliness, and sportiveness are required. The ease, liveliness, brilliancy, and *naïveté* of their familiar letters are confessed by the critics of every nation; and their "Historical Memoirs,"—which are but another kind of familiar letters, addressed to society at large,—surpass in number and excellence those of all other countries put together. The language of the French being that of a people which speaks more than it thinks, which needs to speak in order to think, and which thinks only to speak, is preëminently adapted to conversation. The delicacy and keenness of French wit must strike every reader of their literature. Light, playful, brilliant,—glancing as the sunbeam,—its meaning can travel from one mind to another by the airy conveyance of an intonation, an interjection, or a word. Anglo-Saxon wit, in comparison, is ponderous and clumsy, reminding one of the elephant "wreathing his lithe proboscis;" and, indeed, one might as well attempt to catch the sunbeam, and shut it up in a box, as to express in Saxon-English the delicate, ethereal beauty of French wit or sentiment, which, expressible only by that tongue of polished steel, defies alike imitation and translation.

As the French are the wittiest of the European peoples, so there is none by whom wit is more keenly appreciated, or among whom it produces so prodigious effects. How many political events in France has a *bon mot* heralded! How many has it occasioned! Never was there a government in France that did not turn pale at a caricature, shudder at a political song, or tremble at an epigram. Lemercur says, in his address to the Academy, "The history of France is written by its song-makers;" and Chamfort wittily designates "the old regime" as "an absolute monarchy tempered by epigrams." Hardly any man ever became famous in France without having a witticism of some kind attached to his reputation. Henry IV., it has been said, reigned by *bon mots*; and even Bonaparte could not dispense with them. A series of *bon mots*,—begun by Voltaire, continued by Diderot, and systematized by Helvetius,—destroyed the ancient religion, sapped the foundations of the throne, and changed the destinies of the monarchy which Louis XIV. imagined he had fixed for centuries.

It is the social nature of the French,—this intense power of sympathy,—which is the foundation not only of their virtues, but also of their most beautiful intellectual qualities, and of their unrivaled influence (at least till very recently), in Europe. What other nation has exhibited so constant and so vivid a sympathy for the struggles for freedom beyond its border, and in what other literature shall we find so expansive and ecumenical a genius, or so generous an appreciation of foreign ideas? Who will say that Guizot claims too much when he asserts that France is the focus, the centre of the civilization of Europe; that the best ideas and institutions of other countries, before they

could become general, have had to undergo in France a new preparation, and thence start forth for the conquest of the world? Or who will accuse Demogeot of exaggeration when he declares that, though England started the eighteenth century on its literary career, it was from France that it received its most powerful and lasting impulse? That which among the English was scattered, he says, centred in France in a burning focus; a common aim gave to new ideas an irresistible power. Disciplined even in mutiny, the French philosophers, notwithstanding their bickerings, had in common one purpose, one method, one will; for France is everywhere one. "They gave to the cold speculations of Englishmen the fiery life of a rousing popular eloquence; the discreet and learned skepticism of Collins, Tindal, and Bolingbroke was sharpened by the biting sarcasm of Voltaire, and glowed with the burning theism of Rousseau. Newton left his sanctuary and came among us, thanks to the author of the 'Lettres Anglaises,' and of the 'Éléments de Philosophie;' the frigid and didactic analysis of Locke felt cold and unpalatable after the spirit-stirring pages of 'Émile' and of the 'Contrat Social.' It seemed, indeed, as though an English idea could get a hearing in the world only after having found in France its European expression and its immortal form."

Lord Macaulay admits that the literature of France has been to that of England what Aaron was to Moses, the expositor of great truths which would else have perished for want of a voice to utter them with distinctness. "The great discoveries in physics, in metaphysics, in political science, are ours. But scarcely any foreign nation, except France, has received them from us by direct communication. Isolated in our situation,

isolated by our manners, we found truth, but we did not impart it. France has been the interpreter between England and mankind." De Maistre, who had profoundly studied the French character, shows in the "Soirées de St. Pétersbourg," that there never existed a nation easier to deceive, harder to undeceive, or more powerful to deceive others. "Two peculiar characteristics," says he, addressing the French, "distinguish you from all the other peoples of the world,—the spirit of association and the spirit of proselytism. All your ideas are national and passionate to the core. The electric spark, running, like the lightning from which it comes, through a mass of men in communication, feebly represents the instantaneous, I had almost said thundering, invasion of a taste, of a system, of a passion among the French, who cannot live *isolated*. If you would but act upon yourselves, one might let you alone; but the passion, the necessity, the rage for acting upon others, is the most salient trait of your character. \* \* \* Every people has its mission; such is yours. The slightest opinion which you launch upon Europe is a battering-ram propelled by thirty millions of men."

It is true that, in the recent deplorable war, France was the unjust aggressor; yet, we need not fear to ask, in what other land would a war for a down-trodden and outraged people find so enthusiastic a support as from her? The national crimes of France are many and grievous, but, as Mr. Lecky remarks, "much will be forgiven her, because she has loved much." On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon race, while it has been distinguished for its keen moral sense and its loyalty to duty, and while its sympathies for others have been momentarily roused even to a lofty pitch, has been, on

the whole, hard, narrow, and unsympathetic. It engages in no crusades of philanthropy, no wars against oppressors, till it has taken up the slate and found that the expedition will "pay." Even in his private charities, John Bull never lets his feelings run away with his reason. In the midst of the most heartrending narratives, according to Sydney Smith, he requires the day of the month, the year of our Lord, the name of the parish, and the countersign of three or four respectable householders. "After these affecting circumstances he can no longer hold out, but gives way to the kindness of his nature,—puffs, blubbers, and subscribes." In the management of his own affairs, the Englishman exhibits the grandest qualities of endurance, energy, and skill. His literature is rich, exalted, copious, and profound. The researches of his scientists exhaust the secrets of nature; his travellers scour the globe; his accumulations of wealth surpass the fabled hoards of the Roman patricians; and his countless fleets teach the world to stand in awe of his gigantic power. But in his judgments of other men, he is the narrowest of men. His eyes cannot pierce beyond the thick fogs which surround his island into the regions beyond. "Our country," acknowledges a late English writer, "is an island, and we despise the rest of Europe, our county is an island, and we despise the other shires; our parish is an island, with peculiar habits, modes, and institutions; our households are islands; and, to complete the whole, each stubborn, broad-shouldered, strong-backed Englishman is an island, surrounded by a misty, tumultuous sea of prejudices and hatreds, generally unapproachable, and at all times utterly repudiative of a permanent bridge."

The exquisite perspicuity of the French literature



shows, further, that in the French mind the reasoning faculty predominates. Implicit believers in logic, anxious to sound all the depths, and to scale all the heights of human knowledge, the French are mortal foes to obscurity, and wage an unending war against all the powers of mental darkness. "The most subtle of analysts," says Sir James Stephen, "the Frenchman dissects his ideas into their component parts with a touch at once so delicate and so firm as almost to justify his exulting comparison of his own vocabulary with that of Athens. The most perspicuous of experimentalists, he explores with the keenest glance all the phenomena from which his conclusions are to be derived. The most precise of logicians, he reasons from such premises with the most undiscolored mental vision. The most aspiring of theorists, he fixes an eagle gaze on the highest eminences of thought, and passes from one mountain-top of speculation to another with a vigor and an ease peculiar to himself. And hence it has happened that the writers of France have become either the teachers or the interpreters of science and philosophy to the world at large; that their civil jurisprudence forms the most simple and comprehensive of all existing codes of law; and that their historians, their moralists, and their poets breathe freely in a transcendental atmosphere too rare and attenuated to sustain the intellectual life of grosser minds than theirs."

On the other hand, this logical structure of the French understanding, while it insures the highest clearness and luminousness of style, has led to that tendency to push every conclusion to its utmost consequences,—to that remorseless *Ergoisme*, as they have happily termed it,—which is so striking a feature in their intellectual character. The slaves of syllogism,

they march with unflinching intrepidity to any consequence, however absurd, which seems to follow from what they regard as well established premises; while they reject any doctrine, however strongly it commends itself to their instincts and to the instincts of the race, if it cannot be demonstrated in mood and figure. Unfortunately, there are some ideas which cannot be expressed in terms perfectly transparent or unambiguous, because they relate to subjects beyond the range of human observation and of human experience. There are certain supersensuous notions and doctrines which command our implicit assent, but which cannot be explained with the clearness with which one can define material things, and the proofs of which cannot be adequately stated in syllogisms; yet these are condemned by the intellectual leaders of France as senseless and superstitious. Hence we find that from Abelard to Montaigne, from Rabelais to Bayle and Voltaire, and from Voltaire to Renan, the acutest thinkers of that country have been sceptics; and this Pyrrhonism has permeated all classes from the noble to the peasant. When Napoleon asked La Place to account for his atheism, he replied, "*Je n'ai pas besoin de Dieu dans mon système.*" The "spirit of system," as the French term it, has often proved, in all departments of thought and action, the great bane of that people. It is a striking fact that the French language has no such word as *spiritual*; while, on the other hand, *spirituel* and *esprit* express what the French deem the highest glory of the human mind. No highly civilized people of modern times have been so destitute of profound and unchangeable convictions as the French, and of this the popularity of their sceptical teachers has been both the effect and the cause.

When Cromwell and his Roundheads triumphed over the Cavaliers, and swept away the English church, the Sabbath was more strictly observed than before; the soldiers spent their leisure hours in reading the Bible and singing psalms; stern laws were passed against betting; the theatres were destroyed, and the actors whipt at the cart's tail; "in order to reach crime more surely, they persecuted pleasure." On the other hand, when, in the beginning of their Revolution, the French demolished the Bastile, they wrote on the ruins these words: "*Ici l'on danse.*" When that acute observer of men, Nathaniel Hawthorne, visited Amiens, he was surprised and gratified to find the cathedral in excellent condition,—the statues still keeping their places in numerous niches, almost as perfect as when first placed there in the thirteenth century; and he remarks that it is perhaps a mark of difference between French and English character, that the Revolution in the former country, though all religious worship disappeared before it, does not seem to have caused such violence to ecclesiastical monuments, as the Reformation and the reign of Puritanism in the latter. "I did not see a mutilated shrine, or even a broken-nosed image, in the whole cathedral. But, probably, the very rage of the English fanatics against idolatrous tokens, and their smashing blows at them, were tokens of a sincerer religious faith than the French were capable of. These last did not care enough about their Saviour to beat down his crucified image; and they preserved the works of sacred art, for the sake only of what beauty there was in them." This lack of profound convictions is well illustrated by the conduct of one of the most popular French kings, Henry IV., who, to get possession of the metropolis, renounced his Protestant faith

and became a Catholic, saying that Paris was well worth a mass,—“*Il vaut un messe.*”

The French passion for logic is well illustrated by a comparison of Luther's method of reasoning with that of John Calvin. While the Teuton, though he fights the Romish doctrines to the extremity, yet pauses when confronted by conclusions at which his moral instincts are shocked, and, believing that the best-reasoned is not always the most reasonable doctrine, is content to be illogical rather than advocate doctrines from which his whole soul recoils, the Frenchman bows submissively to the decrees of his logic, and accepts unflinchingly any conclusion, however revolting, to which his premises conduct him. Closely connected with this logical habit of the French, is the dogmatism for which they are so notorious. No man, we are sure, who ever argued with a Frenchman, can fail to sympathize with Prof. Masson in his statement that it is hard to look on and see a Frenchman generalizing to the utmost of his national manner, when it breaks loose, without a longing to knock him down and put him in a strait-waistcoat. “There is such a confidence about him, such a systematizing rapidity, such an unhesitating sureness about things, where we Goths are clogged and restrained by traditional considerations, and a sense of difficulty and complexity! But there is something superb, nevertheless, in the speculative moments of a first-class French intellect.”

The same qualities of mind which have rendered the French preëminent as logicians and rhetoricians, have also made them preëminent as orators; for what is true oratory but “ignited logic,” or “reason permeated and made red-hot by passion?” The English historian, Hume, long ago acknowledged, with shame,

that a French orator pleading for the restoration of a horse is more eloquent than the orators of Great Britain discussing the gravest interests of the nation in the Houses of Parliament. The debates of the French Assemblies, Parliaments, and States-General,—the éloges of her academies, the discourses of her Judges, the sermons of her Massillons, her Bossuets, and her Lacordaires,—nay, even the fiery declamations of her Revolutionary Clubs, her Mirabeaus, her Dantons, and her Robespierres,—all proclaim that, in every age and on every platform, her orators have been gifted with almost superhuman powers of rousing and swaying the crowds that have hung upon their lips.

The same qualities of mind which lead the French to excel in logic render inevitable their inferiority in poetry, especially in the highest forms of the art. Unrivaled in scientific precision, scaling with ease the dizzy peaks of speculative philosophy, they are stricken with impotence when they would soar to the higher regions of poetical or spiritual thought. The highest quality of their tragic, as well as of their epic, verse is an exquisite and dazzling rhetoric. *Fancy* it exhibits in abundance, but a sad lack of *imagination*. In the long roll of their poets, from Malherbe to Lamartine, there is not one who has given evidence of high creative power; of that power which peoples the elements with fantastic forms, and fills the earth with unearthly heroism, intellect and beauty; which gave us the "Inferno" of Dante and Milton's vision of hell, Spencer's palaces and haunted woods, and Una taming the forest lion by her beauty, and those wondrous creations of Shakspeare, Titania and Oberon, Ariel and Puck, and the cloudy witches of "Macbeth." It has been justly said of the French tragedy that the

*dramatis personæ* are not individual agents, acting and talking as their natures prompt them; they are but so many aspects of the author himself,—vehicles for his eloquence, his wisdom, or his wit. When we read “Henry IV.,” we think only of Falstaff; when we read “Andromache,” we think only of Racine. Another fault of the French drama is that the personages leave little to the imagination. They are almost always egotists, who do, indeed, most thoroughly “unpack their souls with words,” but who, conveying in measured speech feelings which should find but broken utterance, fail to touch our sympathies. Hence, neither in the literature of the French, nor in their familiar talk, do we meet with those ever-recurring allusions to the fictitious characters of the national stage which we meet with in the conversation and literature of England. Sir Toby Belch, and Shallow, and Dogberry, Uncle Toby, Tom Jones, Pickwick, Micawber, and Becky Sharp, are as real to us as any beings we jostle against in the street; but the kings and sages, the lackeys and chambermaids of the classical French theatre, are all “graduates of the Cartesian academy,—reasoners from whom, indeed, you learn no fallacies, but associates from whom you catch no inspiration.”

Though France herself has loudly denied, yet all other nations with one voice proclaim her inferiority to her rivals in the realms of imaginative art. What one of her acutest modern critics has said of the Latin races generally is doubly true of her. “The Latin races,” says M. Taine, “show a decided taste for the external and decorative aspect of things, for a pompous display feeding the senses and vanity, for logical order, outward symmetry, and pleasing arrangement; in short, for form. The Germanic literatures, on the contrary,

are romantic; their principal source is the Edda, and the ancient Sagas of the North; their greatest masterpiece is the drama of Shakspeare, that is to say, the crude and complete representation of actual life, with all its atrocious, ignoble, and commonplace details, its sublime and brutal instincts, the entire outgrowth of human character displayed before us, now in familiar style, bordering on the trivial, and now poetic even to lyricism, incoherent, excessive, *but of incomparable force, and filling our souls with the warm and palpitating passion of which it is the outcry.*" A French Homer, or Dante, or Cervantes, or Goethe, or Milton, would be an anomaly such as the world has never seen. The very language, moulded by the mental character of a people wanting depth of sensibility and grandeur of imagination, is not a vehicle for the highest species of poetry. It has been justly said that, in other cultivated languages, the form meets the substance half-way,—is, as it were, on the watch for it; so that the man, Italian or German, far from being impeded by the versification of his thoughts, finds himself thereby facilitated, the metre embracing the poetic matter with such closeness and alacrity as to encourage and accelerate its production and utterance. On the other hand, French verse, which requires a delicate attention to the metre, or the mechanical constituent, affords little scope for rhythm, and is, therefore, a shackle rather than a help to the true poet. So in music, sculpture, and painting; a French Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn, a French Raphael or Michael Angelo, would startle the world.

Again, the logical tastes of the French explain the national passion for abstract ideas, to the despotism of which their best writers admit that they have always

been a prey. Doubtless this passion has had its advantages. The habit of dealing largely in abstractions has contributed not a little to aid the French mind in philosophical inquiries, and we may thank it for making luminous the misty depths of metaphysics. Guizot claims with justice that science, properly so called, has prospered more in France than in England,—that political ideas in the former country, though less practical than in the latter, have had a grander elevation and a more vigorous flight. It is unquestionably true that, in the revolutions of France, *ideas* have almost invariably preceded *action*; changes in doctrine have preceded changes in institutions; and, in the march of civilization, mind has always led the van. An able English writer,—Mr. John Morley, in his late work on Voltaire,—justly emphasizes the fact that, in France, absolutism in Church and State fell before the sinewy genius of stark reason, while in England it fell before a respect for social convenience, protesting against monopolies, benevolences, and ship-money. In France, he says, speculation had penetrated over the whole field of social inquiry before a single step had been taken towards application, while in England social principles were applied before they received any kind of speculative application. In France, the most effective enemy of the principles of despotism was Voltaire,—poet, philosopher, historian, and critic; in England, a band of homely squires. The same writer has noted the comparative weakness of the English aphoristic literature, lacking, as it does, the psychological element, which is so marked a feature of the French. Even Bacon's precepts, acute and subtle as they are, "refer rather to external conduct and worldly fortune, than to the inner composition of character, or to the



‘wide, gray, lampless depths’ of human destiny.” The English writers, whether on politics or philosophy, seldom dig down to the eternal granite of first principles; they rarely give the fundamental reason of things; they are content to hug their fact, and hence are as noted for their want of elevation of thought upon theoretical questions as for their steady good sense and practical ability. Taine, in his notice of Addison, bitterly complains that his morality, thoroughly English, always crawls among commonplaces, discovering no principles, making no deductions. “It is a sort of commercial common sense,” says the French critic, “applied to the interests of the soul; a preacher here is only an economist in a white tie, who treats conscience like food, and refutes vice as a set of prohibitions.”

The French, on the other hand, have been engaged in a perpetual struggle to escape from the control of facts, and to substitute therefor some ideal with which facts have had nothing to do. For eighty years their thoughts have been concentrated on the one purpose of finding that “abstract perfection of government,” which, as an English statesman has said, “is not an object of reasonable pursuit, because it is not one of possible attainment;” yet, with a fair field open to them, they are to-day no nearer the realization of their ideals than in 1792. Ever ready to accept splendid phrases as a substitute for plain sense and practical measures, they are at one time the sport of any demagogue who can veil his selfish ambition under the cañt of “pure ideas,” and at another the victims of any despot who may be strong enough to trample the Ideologists and their verbal science under his feet. The commonplaces of politics in France, as John Stuart Mill has justly observed, are large and sweeping practical maxims, from

which, as ultimate premises, men reason downwards to particular applications, and this they call being logical and consistent. "For instance they are perpetually arguing that such and such a measure ought to be adopted, because it is a consequence of the principle on which the form of government is founded,—of the principle of legitimacy, or the principle of the sovereignty of the people. To which it may be answered that, if these be really practical principles, they must rest upon speculative grounds: the sovereignty of the people (for example) must be a right foundation for government, because a government thus constituted tends to produce certain beneficial effects. Inasmuch, however, as no government produces all possible beneficial effects, but all are attended with more or fewer inconveniences, and since these cannot be combated by means drawn from the very causes which produce them, it would be often a much stronger recommendation of some practical arrangement that it does not follow from what is called the general principle of the government, than that it does. Under a government of legitimacy, the presumption is far rather in favor of institutions of a popular origin; and in a democracy, in favor of arrangements tending to check the impetus of popular will. The line of argumentation—so commonly mistaken in France for political philosophy tends to the practical conclusion that we should exert our utmost efforts to aggravate, instead of alleviating, whatever are the characteristic imperfections of the system of institutions which we prefer, or under which we happen to live."

The French idealism in government is well characterized by Burke, in his memorable sketch of the Abbé Sieyès, "with his nests of pigeon-holes full of constitutions, ready-made, ticketed, sorted and numbered; suited

to every season and to every fancy; some with the top of the pattern at the bottom, and some with the bottom at the top; some plain, some flowered; \* \* \* some with directories, others without direction; some with councils of elders, and councils of youngers, and some without any council at all; \* \* \* so that no constitution-fancier may go unsuited from his shop." Yet deplorable as were the final results of the revolution which Sieyes and his *confrères* brought about, the passage of this Red Sea was honorable to the people, even if they did not at once enter the Promised Land. That a whole nation should have been penetrated with a passion for pure reason, and an ardent desire to have its prescriptions triumph, is an extraordinary fact when we consider how rarely pure reason moves the masses of men. While the French thus live in a world of ideas, the English, on the other hand, have always hated abstract thought, and looked with suspicion or contempt on all endeavors after scientific accuracy in political questions or moral. Empiric, experimental,—often blundering, always unsystematic,—to-day sleeping in contented apathy, to-morrow waking with a panic start,—self-contradictory and inconsistent,—now growling at the smallest hardship, now welcoming the most outrageous oppression,—now overlooking the growth of the most fearful evils, and anon watching the slightest innovations with microscopic vigilance,—at one time indignant, almost infuriated, if a criminal is harshly treated, or a pauper poorly fed, and then contemplating with stoical indifference the wretchedness of thousands,—they have yet contrived to advance with giant strides in the path of material prosperity, and with every generation to secure a solid and lasting improvement in their political condition.

The legislation of England corresponds to this character of the people. Selfish it may be, and unenlightened; often it betrays extreme narrowness of vision, and incapacity for taking broad views; but it is always *practical*, and free from all that is visionary and fanciful. If the Frenchman loves a revolution, it is equally the instinct of the Englishman to search for a precedent. With Bacon, he believes that "Time is the best reformer." Political good sense, as Guizot has well observed, consists in understanding and appreciating every fact, every force, and every social element; and in assigning to each its proper place; and that the English have this good sense is shown by the fact that in the whole course of English history no ancient political element has ever entirely perished, nor any new one gained a total ascendancy, that all the forces of society have developed themselves simultaneously and moved abreast. An English legislator prefers a very little attainable good to a vast amount that is barely possible of attainment; an acre in Middlesex he deems better than a principality in Utopia. The House of Commons is an eminently practical body; its members hate rhetoric, and are fiercely intolerant of abstractions. Fine speeches they cough down; but *facts*,—information,—however awkwardly communicated, they will listen to with the patience of Job. For all "bunkum talk,"—for all declamations about the rights of man and the eternal fitness of things,—for all "spread-eagleism," invocations of the shades of Hampden and Sidney, and other such nonsense,—they have an unmitigated contempt. Many things which an American legislator would think it necessary to prove by syllogisms in *Barbara* or *Celarent*, they take for granted, thus economizing time and lungs. Acts of Parliament

are often awkwardly drawn (and O'Connell declared that he could drive a coach and four through any of those passed in his day); they are anything but models of style; but they generally hit the grievance between wind and water. Hence, a French writer has justly said of England and his own country: "*L'Angleterre veut le pratique, et s'y enfonce; la France cherche l'idée, et s'y perd.*" Nothing can be more superb than the promptness with which the English ignore their political doctrines the moment they are found to be inconvenient in practice. How long was the "divine right of kings" preached from Protestant pulpits!—yet the moment Protestant kings carried the theory out into practice, the genius of the people as readily extemporized a divine right of regicide and revolution. The national genius of England, it has been well observed, cares little for abstract liberty, but it will defend its *liberties* to the death. It cares little for the Rights of Man, but for the rights of *English* man, it will fight "till from its bones the flesh be hacked."\*

Swift long ago said that the Englishman is a political animal, the Frenchman a social animal; and the remark is true to this day. The French are always discussing the merits of different forms of government abstractly considered, when it is evident that every form has a relative, not an absolute value. Nothing is more puerile than to discuss the *theoretical* advantages of monarchy, aristocracy, or republicanism. As well discuss the abstract value of the costumes worn in different latitudes. Their worth depends, of course, on the climate. "All the French constitutions," says De Maistre, "have been made for *man*, when no such being exists; I have seen Frenchmen, Englishmen,

\*Edwin P. Whipple.

but never man, except in some imaginary cloud-land." Edmund Burke was a good type of the English mind. Again and again he affirms that, in politics, we are concerned not with barren rights, but with duties; not with abstract truth, but with a shifting expediency. The lines of morality, he contends, are not like ideal lines of mathematics. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. He scorns the argument that England has a right to tax her American Colonies; "so has a man a right to shear a wolf. \* \* This point is 'the great Serbonian bog, betwixt Damiatra and Mount Casius old, where armies whole have sunk.' I do not intend to be overwhelmed in that bog, though in such respectable company. The question is not, whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy." Again, of the distinctions of rights, he says: "I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions: *I hate the very sound of them.*" Circumstances, he never tires of insisting, give to every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect.

Let us hope that the time may come when the Englishman will prize ideas more in politics without ceasing to be practical, and when his mind, with a broader hospitality for foreign views, will be, in the beautiful language of Bacon, "not an island cut off from other men's lands, but a continent that joins to them;" and when the Frenchman, convinced of the fruitlessness of abstract rights and abstract ideals, yet surrendering none of his love of pure truth, shall recognize the stubbornness of facts, and cease to waste a life of noble purposes, lofty ideas, and heroic endurance, in abortive efforts to carry out beneficent schemes against an iron antagonism of circumstances and conditions.

## PLEASANTRY IN LITERATURE.

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AN English critic, in treating of the character of English literature at this time, complains that periodical writing, which flourished so vigorously at the beginning of this century, is nearly a lost art. This kind of writing, he remarks, is to literature what conversation is to speech; it should not be too personal, nor too scientific, nor too earnest, but a mixture of all these, the play of fancy over all subjects, lighting up here and there their depths, but not grappling with them,—pouring itself abroad, but not contracting itself to any too determinate aim. A fatal defect of English periodical literature to-day is its excessive gravity; the impulse of the English mind being almost entirely toward concentration, and earnestness, and definiteness of thought. The effect of this is to quench all life and spirit, as certainly as does carbonic acid gas. “Does laughter or light satire,” asks the critic, “ever ring through the solemn precincts of *Macmillan*? Do the apostles of the *Fortnightly* ever introduce a joke into their evangelical discourses? Mr. Frederic Harrison, if we remember right, attempted it some little time ago; but he did it with so preternaturally a solemn tone, and with such earnestness of asseveration that he really did not mean to joke at all, that all fear of the risk that the attempt might be repeated was at once removed.”

The justice of this criticism will be admitted, we think, by all who are familiar with the periodicals of the old country. Nothing can be more solemn than their ordinary tone. It is rarely that even the ghost of a joke haunts their pages; and when a bit of pleasantry does stray in, it seems accidental, and as much out of place as on a gravestone or in a ledger. The periodical writers of to-day have plenty of intensity and fiery earnestness, much acuteness of observation and large stores of knowledge; but they are heavy and elephantine; they lack flexibility, litheness, and versatility; and in the power which is so strikingly exemplified by Shakspeare's fools of saying wise things in a sportive way,—the power so often seen in Lamb and Hood, of conveying a deep philosophical verity in a jest, uniting the wildest merriment with the truest pathos and the deepest wisdom,—in short, in that genial, lambent humor, of which Shakspeare was the Pope and Sydney Smith the Chief Cardinal, a humor like summer sheet-lightning, that hurts nobody, and illuminates everything with soft, bright flashes,—they seem almost wholly wanting. We must go back half a century to the days of Horace Smith, Maginn, and Leigh Hunt, if we would enjoy in English periodicals that agreeable trifling which, as Goldsmith says, often deceives us into instruction. The solemnity of their successors, which is certainly not the mask of dullness, tempts one to cry out with Cicero, "*Civem mehercule non puto esse qui his temporibus ridere possit*: on my conscience, I believe we have all forgotten to laugh in these days." History is always repeating itself, and we find by Goldsmith's "Essay on the Present State of Polite Learning," that the same fault characterized the literature of England a hundred years ago. He



complains bitterly of "a disgusting solemnity of manner", as the besetting sin of the prose writers and poets of his day. The finest sentiment and the weightiest truth, he urges, may put on a pleasant face; but, instead of this, "the most trifling performance among us now assumes all the didactic stiffness of wisdom. The most diminutive son of fame or of famine has his *we* and his *us*, his *firstlys* and his *secondlys*, as methodical as if bound in cowhide and closed in clasps of brass. Were these monthly reviews and magazines frothy, pert, or absurd, they might find some pardon; but to be dull and dronish is an encroachment on the prerogative of a folio."

American literature is not amenable to the charge of excessive gravity; our newspapers and magazines have plenty of comic matter, only it is apt to be of a broad and extravagant kind. We have professional wits and humorists who furnish funny articles by the column,—mechanical jokers, who turn out jokes as the patent bread manufacturer turns out loaves; but what we need is, not more wits, who can spin out jests as a juggler spins endless ribbons from his mouth,—writers who can make us laugh, and nothing more,—but those who can treat the gravest themes in a playful manner, intermingle, as did Pascal and Sydney Smith, pleasantry with logic, bind the rod of the moralist with the roses of the muse, and hide with the ivy wreath the point of the Thyrsus. Can any man doubt the inestimable value of such writers to a community? Even the coarsest wit has its uses. There are men whose risibles can be tickled by no other. To laugh they must hear or read something "dreadfully funny,"—something as irresistibly mirth-provoking as Sir Toby's catch that could "draw three souls out of one weaver." Charles Lamb tells of

such a man,—of such gravity that Newton might have deduced from it the law of gravitation. But the mass of men do not want their pleasantry in a lump, but as sauce and seasoning to more solid dishes.

In the highest order of wit there is an essential element of truthfulness. The profounder the truth, the keener and more telling the wit. The true humorist is no provoker of barren laughter,—no cynic, heel-biter, or libeller, who, because his own cup of happiness has been soured, is bent upon filling every other man's with gall and wormwood,—but a genial, loving reformer. People breathe more freely when such a man is "around;" for they know the wicked man will fear him, weak men will feel stronger, and quacks will no longer have things all their own way. Crises are continually occurring in the history of society when it can be delivered from peril only by the Damascus blade of the wit. Evils creep in unawares; some good but foolish man perpetrates a deal of nonsense which is tolerated and even admired on account of his goodness, and fixed as an institution before its inconvenience is suspected. Some isolated and pampered truth, detached from its relations, weighs down society like a nightmare, till its disproportions are shown up by the wit. The cause of good sense, virtue, and decorum has been indebted hardly more to the orator and moralist than to the satirist who has set folly, crime, and impropriety in a ludicrous or hateful light. The "roar of laughter" has heralded the defeat of more errors than the roar of battle. Woe to the cheat, the dunce, the wind-bag, when a great laugh is let loose on the planet! Bad customs, which all theoretically condemn, though society may still condone or exact them; acts of wickedness, whose very daring secures them exceptional impunity;

all those polite delinquencies that shelter themselves under the garb of decency, and that flourish most rankly in the most advanced periods of civilization,—against these it is that the humorist hurls his shafts, and society cries “All Hail!” to its deliverer.

What moralist in old Rome did so much to repress the vulgar insolence of newly-acquired wealth,—the airs and pomposity of the parvenue,—as Horace when he bade him take note, as he strutted along the street,

Ut ora vertat huc et huc euntium  
Liberrima indignatio?

Did any Aristippus, with his bran-bread and saw-dust theories of diet, do so much to lessen the luxury of his age as the sarcasm that lurks beneath the poet's bombastic account of a banquet, or the epic grandiloquence of the monster turbot? Would Luther's battle-axe, mighty though it was, have struck so fatal blows at Popery, had it not been preceded by the keen arrows of Erasmus? Or would not the monks and priests have made a far more desperate resistance had not the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* keenly satirized their vices before they could be denounced,—been widely circulated, and prepared the way for the Reformers? Might not the Jesuits have defied the club of Pascal's logic, had he not also showered upon them the feathered shafts of his ridicule? Who can doubt that the brilliant and sparkling satirist of the *Dunciad*, the “little wasp of Twickenham,” vengeful and venomous though he was, did more to provoke a feeling of revolt and contempt against the vices of his time than all the dictates of morality, or the denunciations of the pulpit? How many match-making mothers have paused as they have followed the miserable episodes of Ho-

garth's "Marriage a la Mode!" And how many a would-be fine gentleman in our own day, tickled with vanity and inclined to vulgar ostentation, has been impelled, by the keen irony of Thackeray, to avoid the "sorrows of gentility," and, by living inside of his income, to keep out of the "Book of Snobs!"

The yeoman service which that prince of wits, Sydney Smith, did to Catholic Emancipation, by his "Letters to Peter Plymley," is familiar to all. By what syllogisms in *Barbara* or *Celarent* could he have so effectually annihilated the influence of Percival and Canning, as by declaring of the latter that "when he is jocular, he is strong; when he is serious, he is like Samson in a wig;" and by holding up the former to ridicule as the projector of "the great plan of conquest and constipation,"—as the statesman "in whose mind was first engendered the idea of destroying the pride and plasters of France,"—and "who would bring the French to reason by keeping them without rhubarb, and exhibit to mankind the awful spectacle of a nation deprived of neutral salts?" It was but yesterday that duelling was prevalent throughout the civilized world. In vain the pulpit thundered, and the press denounced the practice; Christian men still continued to expose their lives for the merest trifle, to the accident of a lucky shot. It was only when "the code of honor" was made the butt of ridicule, and so became contemptible in the eyes of those who were its slaves, and who were more sensitive to sarcasm than to logic, that they ceased to make their bodies targets for the bullets of any bully or braggart who chose to consider himself aggrieved, or whom a craven fear of public opinion impelled to send a challenge. But we need not cross the Atlantic for illustrations. Who has forgotten the

powerful aid rendered to the North in our late civil war by "Petroleum V. Nasby," of the "Confederate Cross-Roads." Though he assumed the cap and bells, Rabelais was not more terribly in earnest. As one of his admirers has well said, whenever his loud and often boisterous laugh was heard, there was sure to be a funeral procession in some dark corner of the land. Like the grave-digger in "Hamlet," he made fun, but he kept digging graves all the while. His rib-tickling irony cheered the patriots, as well as confounded the Copperheads and the Rebels. President Lincoln found relief from the wearing anxieties of office in reading the letters of this Toledo blade. Grant declared that he "couldn't get through a Sunday without one;" and Secretary Boutwell publicly attributed the overthrow of the Rebels to three great forces,—the Army and Navy, the Republican Party, and the Letters of Petroleum V. Nasby.

What was the secret of Dr. Nott's power over bad men,—what, but his contagious, resistless humor? He would disperse any mob sooner than the Mayor with his drilled police. He would meet them armed with clubs, looking lean, hungry and defiant. In five minutes they would be seen dropping their bludgeons, and dispersing in roars of laughter.

Then let us laugh. It is the cheapest luxury man enjoys, and, as Charles Lamb says, "is worth a hundred groans in any state of the market." It stirs up the blood, expands the chest, electrifies the nerves, clears away the cobwebs from the brain, and gives the whole system a shock to which the voltaic pile is as nothing. Nay, its delicious alchemy converts even tears into the quintessence of merriment, and makes wrinkles themselves expressive of youth and frolic. Americans, espe-

cially, need to laugh, and to laugh often. The demand for humor is great among us, and the supply is not equal to the demand. Most of us are overworked, and the excess of work renders imperative the need of increased play to balance it. Nature prompts the overworked man to seek an atmosphere of mirth as truly as she sends the deer to the saltlick. Wealth, ingenuity, worldly wisdom, and popular information abound among us; but our social salad lacks the oil of joy; and hence we need to cultivate good humor, as De Quincey comically inculcates murder, as "one of the fine arts."

We are aware that there are some owlish and eminently respectable people who are averse to merriment and to the pleasantry that provokes it. But what a world this would be without laughter! To what a dreary complexion should we all come, were all fun and cachinnation expunged from our solemn and scientific planet! Care would soon overwhelm us, the heart would corrode, life would be all relieve, and no alto; the River of Life would be like the Lake of the Dismal Swamp; we should begin our days with a sigh, and end them with a groan; while cadaverous faces, and words to the tune of "The Dead March in Saul," would make up the whole interlude of existence. Hume, the historian, in examining a French manuscript containing accounts of some private disbursements of King Edward II. of England, found among others one article of a crown paid to somebody for making the King laugh. Could His Majesty have made a wiser investment? "The most utterly lost of all days," says Chamfort, "is that in which you have not once laughed." Even that grimmest and most saturnine of wits, Dean Swift, calls laughter "the most innocent of diuretics." Let us, then, indulge freely in the rationality of laughter. In

the words of the witty Maginn, let our Christmas laugh echo till Saint Valentine's day; our laugh of Saint Valentine till the 1st of April; our April humor till May-day, and our May merriment till Midsummer. And so let us go on, from holiday to holiday, philosophers in laughter, at least, till, at the expiration of our century, we die the death of old Democritus; cheerful, hopeful, and contented; surrounded by many a friend, but without an enemy; and remembered principally because we have never, either in life or death, given pain for a moment to any being that lived.

## OUR DUAL LIVES.

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**A**MONG the oddities and eccentricities of human nature there are few more singular than the disposition which we often see in men who have been eminently successful in any calling to conceive themselves to have been designed by nature for something quite different. There is hardly a pursuit or profession in which some persons may not be found, who, though highly skilled and distinguished therein, yet fancy that they could have attained far higher distinction had they followed some other walk in life more congenial to their tastes. It is said that Canova, whenever the conversation turned upon sculpture, would fetch a freshly-bedaubed tablet, and exhibit it with a smile of paternal pride. The witty Douglas Jerrold wanted to write a treatise on natural philosophy; the French painter, Girardet, valued his wretched verses far more highly than his magnificent pictures; and Dr. Thomas Brown, in thinking of his own tasteless effusions, doubtless often exclaimed, "How sweet an Ovid in a metaphysician lost." David regretted having spent his life in painting; it was diplomacy, he thought, that he ought to have studied, having been intended by nature to change the politics of two hemispheres. The celebrated comic actor, Liston, who nightly convulsed London with laughter by his delineations, and whose face was one that a sensitive sculptor would almost faint to



look upon, believed that tragedy was his true vocation, and that nothing prevented him from shining therein but his droll and mirth-provoking visage. Another London comedian, equally famous, believed himself fitted to dazzle as Romeo, but for the accident of a weak leg; and an Irish comedian, whose face, figure, manner, and every motion were irresistibly ludicrous and provocative of merriment,—rendering it impossible for him to wink or stir a muscle without convulsing the spectators with laughter,—yet believed most firmly that high tragic parts were his *forte*, and that while he was tickling the sides of his audience as an Irish bog-trotter or servant, he should have been exciting their hate as *Shylock*, their tears as *Werner*, or their horror as *Macbeth*.

Even when they do not altogether believe that they have missed their true vocation, men of genius often fancy themselves strongest in those departments of intellectual effort where they are the weakest, and waste precious hours upon some art in which they are doomed to lasting mediocrity. Montaigne calls attention to the fact that Julius Cæsar is at vast pains to make us understand his inventions in bridge-building and war-engines, while he is very succinct and reserved in speaking of the rules of his profession and of his military exploits. Sir Walter Scott believed himself designed by nature for a soldier, and that his lameness spoiled an excellent life-guardsman. Milton preferred “Paradise Regained” to any of his other poems; and Shakespeare, indifferent to the fate of his dramas, believed that his sonnets would immortalize himself; and the mysterious “W. H.” Byron was prouder of his “Hints from Horace” than of “Childe Harold;” and Campbell was distressed at the thought of his tombstone being

inscribed to the memory of the author of "The Pleasures of Hope," when "Gertrude of Wyoming" was his masterpiece. Goethe used repeatedly to say: "As for what I have done as a poet, I take no pride in it whatever. But that in my century *I am the only person who knows the truth in the difficult science of colors*,—of that, I say, I am not a little proud. There I have a consciousness of superiority to many." Not less *naïve* was the reply of Michael Angelo, who, when he proposed to fortify his native city, and was told to stick to his painting and sculpture, observed that these were his recreations,—what he *really* understood was architecture.

Perhaps no mistake touching our fellow-men is more common than that of judging of the ordinary feelings and habitual disposition of a writer by the tone of his productions. Especially is this true of wits and humorists, who, though able to make others merry, have themselves often been profoundly melancholy. No doubt there is a thrill of pleasure, rising even to ecstasy, at the first flashing of a droll idea on the mental horizon; but the elaboration of it in writing is often to the last degree irksome and painful. Many a rib-tickling production, which is a source of exquisite enjoyment to the public, has been produced in an agony of mental misery, at the expense of the author's happiness and of his life. The gayest and most sparkling essays are often but the result of a temporary successful effort to escape from the gloom of mental depression, or from the pangs of a gangrened and festered spirit. No others are so keenly alive to the enjoyment of the ludicrous as they whose ordinary feelings partake deeply of the tragic; they fly to it as an escape from the monotonous gloom and wearing agony of their

habitual thoughts; they cling to it with feverish fondness, from a melancholy anticipation of the gloom which will be felt in contrast at the departure of mirth. In such circumstances jokes may be said to be coined from the heart's blood,—mirth to be distilled from tears. Who, that is not familiar with Cowper's biography, would dream of the circumstances under which "John Gilpin" was written? The poet seems bubbling over with animal spirits; yet, in the very hour when he threw off this piece so steeped in fun, he was in a state of mental gloom bordering on madness. There is, indeed, hardly a verse of his which he did not compose for the same reason that he painted or planed, made rabbit-hutches or tamed hares, to get rid of his melancholy thoughts. "I wonder," says the poet in a letter to Mr. Newton, "that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellect, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if Harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state. \* \* \* But the mind, long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix its eyes on anything that may make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail." It may be doubted whether Shakspeare, in his youth at least, lived so constantly in the sunshine as we are apt to imagine. Many of his sonnets breathe the spirit of hopeless despair. He laments his lameness; deplores the necessity of "goring his own thoughts," and making himself "a motley to the view;" anticipates a "coffined doom;" and utters a profoundly pathetic cry for "restful death."

There have been writers who seemed to possess the power to charm only in proportion to the acuteness and intensity of their own sufferings; the beauty and

power of whose minds were displayed only while the work of death was going on within their diseased frames,—like the dolphin, the richness and splendor of whose colors are exhibited only while the unhappy fish lies panting on the deck, and the blood swiftly courses its veins amid the throes and agonies of death. It has been truly remarked of Butler, the satirist of the Puritans, that nothing remains of his private history but the record of his miseries; and Swift, we are told, was never known to smile. It is well known that the fantastic doggerel of the latter was composed while he was the prey of misanthropy and discontent. The last nine years of his life were dragged out in intense mental and bodily suffering, and he died, as he had feared and half predicted, “in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole.” Gay, the careless laugher of “The Beggar’s Opera,” lived a sad life, and wrote for his own epitaph these saddest of lines:

Life is a jest, and all things show it;  
I thought so once, but now I know it.

When Goldsmith was composing one of his merriest comedies, he was harassed by debt, and wrote to a friend: “Here I am, studying jests with a most tragical countenance.” It was in the chill and desolation of a fireless garret that this vagabond of literature sketched his bright pictures of domestic happiness. The gayest flights of “Don Juan” originated in the gloomiest and most desolate hours of the morbidly-sensitive Byron, when, like his own *Manfred*, he “felt his soul was ebbing from him,” and his body, “limb by limb, destroyed.” Burns confessed, in one of his letters, that his design in seeking society was to fly from constitutional melancholy; but they who were

fascinated by his wit, or entranced by his eloquence, little thought that all his liveliness, keenness and energy sprang less from an anxiety for display than from a horror of solitude. "Even in the hour of social mirth," he tells us, "my gayety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner." As the nightingale is said to sing the most sweetly with the thorn in its breast, so the most exquisite songs of poets have often been prompted by the acuteness of their personal sufferings. As Shelley says, they are

—cradled into poetry by wrong;  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

The most facetious of all Charles Lamb's letters was written to Bernard Barton in a fit of the deepest melancholy. In his correspondence he often alludes to his exquisite "Elia" and other essays as "wrung from him with slow pain." "I wish all the ink in the ocean dried up," he says, "and would listen to the quills shrivelling up in the candle-flame like parching martyrs." Blanchard wrote the first three, and the best, of the inimitable "Candle Lectures" while tortured by the gripe of poverty, and when his wife lay at the point of death,—a blow the poignancy of which led him to put an end to his own life. Cervantes, Molière, and nearly all of the most celebrated humorists, were melancholy men; and their dismal experiences remind us of the comic actor who, having split the sides of the Parisians with his fun, asked a physician to prescribe for his profound melancholy, and was told there was but one cure,—to go and see Carlini. "Alas!" was the reply, "I am Carlini." We all know the story of Thomas Hood; how he got his bread by puns; paid his butcher and

baker by painfully-elaborated jocosities,—of all businesses the most dreary, and the one which gives the most ghastly aspect to human life. In him it was the thinnest of partitions that divided tears from laughter; his whole life was an illustration of the truth that

There's not a string attuned to mirth  
Has not its chord of melancholy.

In short, the "quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles" of an author's writings afford but a doubtful key to the state of his feelings; and it would seem as if, in almost every case, the delicious humor which so charms us in his pages gushes from him like the sweet gum from a wounded tree.

Another of the remarkable contrasts between the outer and the inner man is the discrepancy we often notice between the profession one follows in public, and the private tastes which he cultivates and cherishes. "Blessed is the man that hath a hobby!" said Lord Brougham; and Brougham himself, who ranged all the fields of politics, philosophy, science, and literature,—who had so many hobbies that "Science was his forte, and omniscience his foible,"—was a burlesque of his own doctrine. Could we know how every man of our acquaintance, who has a regular calling by which he pays his butcher's bills, passes his leisure-hours, we should often be surprised to find how slight a clue one's public character affords to the profounder sympathies of his nature. Some of the most drudging, business-devoted men in the community,—who apparently think and talk of nothing but "two per cent. a month" or "corner lots,"—we should find in private indulging in some taste, such as a love for pictures or belles-lettres, which argues a totally different character

beneath the surface. A merchant who is noted for the keenness with which he pursues every means of money-making, and the inflexibility with which he insists on the last cent of his dues, is found to be overflowing with zeal for the cause of temperance, education, missions, or some other of a kindred character, for which he is ready to pour out his money like water.

How often the plodding, black-letter lawyer, who seemingly has not a thought beyond the hard, dry technicalities of Coke or Littleton, is known by his bosom-friends to be an ardent lover of literature, and to spend his leisure-hours in drawing from the "pure wells of English undefiled," or in distilling the sweetness of the Greek and Roman spring! Perhaps this "gowned vulture," as old Burton would term him, whom the million suppose to be perpetually busy in exasperating the bickerings of Doe and Roe, and blowing up every little spark of a dispute into a blazing quarrel, is deeply interested in some philanthropic movement,—some Christian-Association, or Freedmen's-Aid-Commission, or Orphan-Asylum, or Public-Library movement,—and divides his leisure-time between the study of his favorite authors and the preparation of elaborate articles on the enterprise for the reviews, magazines, or newspapers. Perhaps his hobby is Greek-Testament translation, and, after toiling all day to convict a criminal, he flies on the wings of steam to some snuggery in the outskirts of the town, where, surrounded by copies of the Sinaitic and other manuscripts, and all the English, German, and American Commentaries, piled up on the floor and table, he may detect some false rendering of a Greek particle, or hit upon a happier reading of an aorist, which shall provoke a louder "Eureka!" than the baffling of a cut-

throat's lawyers. Perhaps this "hired master of tongue-fence" is a picture-fancier, who is profoundly impressed with the glories of art, and is learned in oils and varnishes; who drops often into the auction-room, and nods his head to the knight of the hammer, at the cost of fifty dollars a nod; who descants by the hour on his Bierstadt, or his Vandyke, of whom "an undoubted original" hangs in his parlor, sups with a Holbein or a Titian confronting him on the wall, and dreams all night of the mysterious gloom of Rembrandt, the savageness of Salvator Rosa, and the "corregiosity of Correggio." Perhaps, again, his hobby is autographs,—old letters, scraps of paper, fly-leaves from books, and bits of franked envelopes,—which he keeps under lock and key, lest Bridget should take them for litter, and consign them to the fire, or convert them into lamp-lighters. Or, lastly, he may be passionately fond of music; giving private concerts in his own parlor; often scraping away himself on the violin, or puffing at the trombone, or thumping on the piano; and dinning the ears of his friends with eternal praises of Mozart, and Mendelssohn, and Beethoven,—of Martini and Rhigini, and all the others that end in "ini,"—and fifty more whom to pronounce were to dislocate one's jaws, but whom to hear is Elysium.

There are few persons who are not familiar with more or fewer instances of men who have thus an inner self strongly contrasting with their outer self,—something nobler or meaner than the visible man,—something which makes him think more highly of himself than the world thinks of him, or which, if known, would make him the target of universal ridicule and scorn. Some years ago, one of the best entomologists in Chicago was a common workman in



a cabinet-maker's shop. To-day, one of the profoundest and best-read metaphysicians in the same city is a German educated in the best German and Scotch universities, who earns the leisure which he spends in brooding over the mysteries of our spiritual being by selling, as a clerk, coats, vests, and trowsers for the physical man. The most extensive book-publisher in Great Britain, whose publications would of themselves form a large private library, we know to be a rose-fancier, who has in his garden, just out of London, fifteen hundred distinct varieties of roses, for many of which he has sent to the farthest corners of the globe, and paid fabulous sums. A single rose-tree has cost him two hundred and fifty dollars. When one visits a public office, he is often greatly struck by the mechanical regularity of the scene. The officials look like automata, or pieces of clock-work wound up to do certain duties; and he can scarcely persuade himself that they have under their waistcoats hearts beating with the same passions as his own. Yet, perhaps, there is not one of these stiff, formal-looking beings, or cast-iron men, who does not indulge in some curious, out-of-the-way taste or hobby in his ex-officio character. Some years ago there was in Dundee, Scotland, a servant to the Magistrates, wearing their livery, who was by far the most learned man in town. There was about the same time a butcher in the Edinburgh market who spent all his spare time in reading books of a profoundly philosophical character. Hobbes, Hutcheson, Stewart, and Brown were his constant companions. In the same metropolis there was a porter who was remarkable for the zeal with which, with self-made machinery, he pursued experiments in electricity; and in a public office might have been seen a dull-looking man, who,

though seemingly devoted only to its dry details, was a most profound student of the etymologies of European and Eastern languages, and wrote little tracts on obscure texts, which attracted the attention of English Bishops.

The greatest monarchs have not always been happiest when wearing the crown. One of the Kings of Macedon loved better to make lanterns than to wield the sceptre; and a King of France found his chief delight in making locks. Domitian spent hours in catching flies. The French statesman, Turgot, found a solace for the loss of office in the study of physical science, and cheated the gout of its torture by making Latin verses; a sample of which we have in the famous line on Franklin:

*Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis.*

Sir George C. Lewis, when not busied with budgets, copied Greek manuscripts in the British Museum, or investigated reported cases of longevity. Occasionally we hear of a discrepancy between a man's public and private character that is too ludicrous for belief. "I have heard," says an English writer, "of a clever, active farmer, who, while universally respected as a first-rate agriculturist, a man of large means and liberal understanding, was accessible to no flattery on these accounts; but, if you had only told him that you had heard of his possessing a wonderful power of squeaking like a pig, and were extremely anxious to hear him try it, he would blush and hesitate, like a young lady asked to sing, disclaim all merit, say it was great nonsense, and finally, after a sufficiency of pressing, he would exhibit as a pig—evidently believing that, if fortune had played him fair, he would have astonished the

whole world by his art, instead of being only a 'respectable farmer.'"

Another striking discrepancy between the outer and the inner man is the vivid contrast which we often observe of a person's talk or writings with his life,—of his speculation with his acts. It has been truly said that there is a division of labor even in vice; some men addict themselves to the speculation only, others to the practice. Montaigne tells us that he "always observed supercelestial opinions and subterranean morals to be of singular accord;" and it is a fact which has escaped the notice of few, that purists, hypocrisy apart, are sometimes the freest livers; while, on the other hand, some of the most latitudinarian professors of a general license of behavior have been the last to take the benefit of their own doctrines, from which they reap nothing but the obloquy, and the pleasure of startling their "wonder-wounded" hearers. An author's book is often a poor key with which to unlock his character. Because certain poets have been enthusiastic in their praises of wine, we may not positively infer that they were addicted to tippling. It was the very rarity of the indulgence that gave such zest to their strains; for, as the truly heart-broken mourner suffers only an occasional sob to escape him, so no man cares to descant ecstatically upon any subject with which he is thoroughly familiarized. Men of genius who have happy homes do not babble about that happiness in their writings. Nine-tenths of those who have raved in rapturous stanzas about the sweets of conjugal love were bachelors shivering in solitary garrets.

Could the secrets of authorship be disclosed, it would be found that romances of foreign lands come generally from persons who have never smelt salt-water,

just as "stories of real life," showing "a deep insight of human nature," come from those who would be shocked at an iron spoon. Rural life is the eternal burden of a sailor's talk; while farmers, who are fixtures of the soil, think nothing so pleasant as a life of sight-seeing and adventure in foreign lands. Mountaineers and rustics have an intense appreciation of the advantages of great cities; while, on the other hand, the denizens of great, ugly, smoky towns have a passionate longing for beautiful scenery and rustic retirement. The author of "The Intellectual Life" says truly that the development of modern landscape-painting has been due, not to habits of rural existence, but to the growth of very big and hideous modern cities, which made men long for shady forests, and pure streams, and magnificent spectacles of sunset, and dawn, and moonlight. Paul Jones, the hero of desperate sea-fights, loved Thomson's "Seasons"; Bonaparte, who overran Europe with his armies, recreated himself with the wild rhapsodies of Ossian; and Spinoza, who passed his days among the cobwebs of metaphysics, amused himself by seeing spiders fight.

The most exquisitely-delicate artists in literature and painting have astonished their friends by their coarseness; and Swift even declared that a nice man is a man of nasty ideas. It is said that within the Chateaubriand of "Atala" there existed an obscene Chateaubriand that would burst forth occasionally in talk that no biographer would repeat; and the same has been affirmed of the sentimental Lamartine. Turner, dreamer of enchanted landscapes, took the pleasures of a sailor on a spree. Too much thinking drove Johnson to his cat for conviviality; and a similar reaction drove Byron to fight for Greece.

Heron's "Comforts of Human Life" was written, under the most painful circumstances, in prison; Beresford's "Miseries of Human Life" was composed in a drawing-room, amid the most elegant appointments and luxuries. Seneca was never more eloquent in his praises of poverty than when writing on a table of gold, with a large sum on deposit at his banker's. It was from a sick bed, in exile, and in sore distress, that Tom Hood shook all England with laughter. He who was so thin and spectre-like that he looked like an afternoon shadow of somebody else, was always writing about fat people; and, though the prince of jesters, was so grave and saturnine, that, when travelling with the Prussian army to Berlin, he was taken for the Chaplain of the regiment. Johnson, who wrote so well on politeness, trampled on all the "linen decencies" of life; and Sterne, who wept over a dead ass, neglected his living mother. "Go, poor fly, I will not harm thee; surely, the world is big enough for thee and me," could be said by a domestic tyrant; and the tender love-notes to the unhappy Stella came from a man of so cruel a heart that it has been said that his tenderness was manifest only on paper. On the other hand, when Lady Blessington's effects were sold by auction, who, think you, of the twenty thousand persons who visited the house previously, alone showed any visible emotion at the wreck of a prosperity in which most of them had shared? It was Thackeray, the cynic and satirist of woman, whose theory of her, expressed with bitter irony in one formula,—all clever women are wicked, and all good women are fools,—has made his name hateful to the sex. The finest pastorals have been written in the city; the most mirth-provoking jests have fallen from the lips of the gloomiest men;

and great wits in society have startled the world with tragedies in their closets. Dr. Young, whose Parnassus was a churchyard, who drank of the River Styx instead of Hippocrene, and who sought his inspiration from cross-bones and skulls, was a jovial, pleasure-loving man and a court-sycophant, who, having supped full of the world and its follies, turned state's evidence against them, and satirized the pursuits in which he had failed. On the other hand, Liston, the comic actor, who maddened London nightly with laughter, used to sit up after midnight to read the Doctor's "Night Thoughts," delighting in its monotonous gloom. Men's characters, like dreams, must be unriddled by contraries.

But how shall we explain this phenomenon,—this dualism by which a man lives, from youth to age, two different and strongly contrasted lives? Shall we say, in all cases where a man fancies himself "cut out" for some other calling than that in which he has signalized himself, that he is self-deluded? Is it impossible that opposite intellectual powers can coëxist in the same person? Is every man doomed to play, Paganini-like, on a single string? Shall every Brougham who astonishes us by his many-sidedness, be told that "science is his *forte*, omniscience his *foible*?" Even if we reject Dr. Johnson's notion, that genius is nothing more than great general powers of mind, capable of being turned any way, and that "a man who has vigor may walk to the East just as well as to the West," must we of necessity adopt the opposite extreme of Emerson, that every man is born to some one thing, and that only, which no other man can do? that "he is like a ship in a river; he runs against obstructions on every side but one: on that side all obstruction is taken away,

and he sweeps serenely over a deepening channel into an infinite sea?"

Doubtless, in the vast majority of cases, though there may be some foundation for the individual's belief that he has missed his true vocation, and that nature intended him for something better or higher, yet he exaggerates his qualifications, and only dreams of another self grander than that with which the world has credited him. The truth of the matter is, the mind wearies of monotony, and needs the rest of alternation as much as the body. We all hate self-imprisonment; we long occasionally to get out of ourselves; to throw off the yoke of our own personality; and, like Pope's youth,

"Foredoomed his father's soul to cross,  
Who pens a stanza when he should engross,"

if we can escape for a time from the drudgery of our ordinary calling, and soar into some higher atmosphere where we can breathe more freely, we feel like a bird that has escaped from its cage, or a prisoner who has thrown off his shackles. Merely in getting out of our groove, in forgetting for a few hours the iron realities of our daily life, and imagining ourselves something else,—there is a new and unwonted sensation. New faculties are called into play, and we experience a delight akin to that which is felt in our dreams, when we fancy ourselves giants, and perform physical impossibilities. Hence Pascal has remarked that if an artisan could imagine for twelve hours that he was a king, he would be almost as happy as a king who for twelve hours imagined himself an artisan.

Again, in a man's true calling, wherein he has won distinction, he sees and appreciates all the difficulties

to be overcome; and because they loom up in fearful proportions, and seem insurmountable, he sinks into despondency while others are echoing his praises. It is precisely because he has adopted a lofty standard,—because he is haunted by an ideal which forever lures him on, yet, like the horizon, forever flies before him, mocking him with its unattainable beauty,—because, as he climbs one rugged steep after another,

“Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise,”

—that he is self-dissatisfied, and regrets that he did not choose some other calling. In an art, however, for which his genius does not fit him,—in which no impossible ideal tantalizes him,—he sees no difficulties which he does not readily overcome, and, being easily self-satisfied, applauds himself where the true artist, the master, would be filled with profound dissatisfaction and melancholy. Yet it is doubtless true that chance, not the bent of one's genius, often determines his profession, and hence “the round man” often gets into “the square hole,” and dies in obscurity, when, under different circumstances, he might have won distinction and happiness.

Vanity may fool one here, but who will deny that a vast amount of talent in society does thus run to waste? Who has not thought, again and again, of what, under more favorable circumstances, he might have been? Do angels ever weep? It must be when they see men walk through life as through a masque,—veiling their true selves from every eye,—giving only occasional glimpses of the real man in whimsical tastes and eccentricities,—drudging through tasks in which they feel no enthusiasm,—acting up to characters imposed upon them,—doing nothing from the heart, and



“goring” their best thoughts to make them lie still. When we consider how much of the world’s menial work must be done by those who feel within themselves incessant promptings to nobler tasks, we see the need of Christian principle that we may stand like true soldiers to the posts which our Maker has assigned us. Viewed in this light, no labor that is necessary can be low or sordid, but, as good George Herbert beautifully sings:

“A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine:  
Who *sweeps a room*, as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.”

Again,—when we reflect how many thousands are compelled by stern necessity to follow vocations unsuited to their tastes and powers, we shall pause before thinking meanly of any man on account of the lowliness of the duties which God has called him to perform. There is a class of religionists in the East, says a writer, who will strike no animal, from a belief that possibly the soul of some late endeared relative of their own may now occupy its body; just so, when we feel disposed to contemn the lowly duties of any man, we might do well to consider that possibly faculties are there which might, under advantageous circumstances, have ruled “listening senates,” or “waked to ecstasy the living lyre.”

## MERRY SAINTS.

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MERRY saints! Yes, reader, and why not merry saints, as well as jovial sinners? Why, if religion be designed to make us happy, should it come to us always in the shape of a death's head and a cross-bones, or any other *memento mori*? When will the old theological idea that mortals are sent here as to a place of sore chastisement and mortification, be rooted from our minds? We are not living in the middle ages, nor can we be made to believe that the sect of Flagellants, who lashed themselves during the day till the blood ran into their shoes, and who sang penitential psalms all night in cold rooms in midwinter,—or any of the other old saints the longitude of whose faces so far exceeded the latitude,—had the true secret of piety. "True godliness is cheerful as the day," wrote Cowper, himself lugubrious enough; and even the founder of our faith, by directing us when we fast to anoint our countenances, and not to seem to fast, enjoins a certain liveliness of face. It has been well said that all great, whole-hearted peoples have been lively and bustling, noisy almost, in their progress, pushing, energetic, broad in shoulder, strong in lung, loud in voice, of free, brave color, bold look, and bright eyes. They are the cheerful people in the world,—

Active doers, noble livers,—strong to labor, sure to conquer,  
and soon outstrip in their course the gloomy and the

despondent. An hilarious elasticity of nature is surely one of the most invaluable qualities a man can have; why, then, should not the faculty of being merry,—of finding an eager pleasure in all sorts of objects and pursuits,—be trained and encouraged? And why should the man who goes through the world with sober, solemn jowl be thought to be showing a deeper sense of the worth of life, and to be making more of his abilities, than the elastic man? We would not see the pious man with a perpetual broad grin on his face, for the pious are thoughtful, and thoughtfulness cannot endure to be a long while yoked with “laughter holding both its sides;” yet there is a harmless mirth, as old Fuller calls it,—in the middle zones between frantic merriment and the indigo blues,—which the devout man will find no hindrance to the cultivation of his religious feelings, while it is the best cordial for his spirits.

It was a maxim of Bishop Elphinstone, an eminent Scottish saint, that when any one sits in company, and any merry thought comes into his head, he ought to give utterance to it immediately, so that all present may be benefited. Sydney Smith, when a poor, struggling curate at Foston-le-Clay, a dreary, out-of-the-way place, wrote: “I am resolved to like it, and to reconcile myself to it, which is more manly than to fancy myself above it, and to send up complaints by the post of being thrown away, or being desolate, and such like trash.” Acting in this spirit, he said his prayers, made his jokes, cheered and helped his neighbors, and upon fine mornings used to draw up the blinds of his little parlor, open the window, and “glorify the room,” as he called the act, with sunshine. Yet this was nothing to the sunshine that flooded his heart and lighted up his face; and so buoyant was he in spirit when his

physical strength was nearly exhausted, that, just before he died, he playfully described his condition by saying, "I feel so weak, both in body and mind, that I verily believe if a knife were put into my hand, I should not have strength or energy enough to stick it into a dis-senter."

A more striking example was Robert Hall, who could indulge in merry jests and pungent sayings even when suffering from sharp pain. "Mr. Hall," said some one to him, "I understand you are going to marry Miss ——?" "I marry Miss ——! I would as soon marry Beelzebub's eldest daughter, and go home and live with the old folks." To a solemn brother who rebuked him for his vivacity, he replied: "You carry your nonsense into the pulpit; I keep mine out." Even when stricken with mental hallucination, he did not lose his relish for a jest. When a stereotyped condoler called upon him at the asylum, and asked, in a whining tone, "What brought you here, Mr. Hall?" he significantly touched his head and replied, "What'll never bring you, sir! too much brain, sir! too much brain!" Thomas Paine, writing against the Bible, he characterized as "a mouse nibbling at the wing of an archangel." Dr. Gill's Commentary was a "continent of mud;" the writings of Owen "a valley of dry bones." When we think of the dreadful agonies that racked Mr. Hall's powerful frame, we cannot wonder that he thought of heaven chiefly as a place of rest, nor that his experience was sometimes clouded by storms and darkness, just as many of his majestic sermons are tinged by the shades and terrors that grew upon his great soul; but it is a marvel to which we can find nothing more wondrous in the whole library of brave anecdote, that, after tossing and writhing upon the rug before the

fire, the only place in which he could get ease, he could start up livid with exhaustion, and with the sweat of anguish on his brow, to proclaim without a murmur from his pulpit the message of God to a lost world. "I suffered much," the noble hero used to say after these paroxysms, "but I did not cry out, did I? did I cry out?"

We do not deny that a laughter may be,—nay, too often is,—a scoffer and a scorner. Some jesting there is that is like "the crackling of thorns under a pot;" and some jesters there be, who are fools of a worse breed than those that used to wear the cap and the bells. But, as Archdeacon Hare so justly observes, though a certain kind of wit, like other intellectual gifts, may coëxist with moral depravity, there has often been a playfulness in the best and greatest men,—in Phocion, in Socrates, in Luther, in Sir Thomas More, —which, as it were, adds a bloom to the severer graces of their character, shining forth with amaranthine brightness when storms assail them, and springing up in fresh blossoms under the axe of the executioner. It is the strongest and most thoughtful mind that perceives most keenly the manifold and perpetually-occurring contradictions, and incongruities, and inconsistencies of life; and hence a great writer regards humor as often "the natural associate of an intense love of truth, if it be not rather a particular form and manifestation of that love,"—leading one to strip off the artificial drapery and conventional formalities of life, and to look straight at the realities hidden beneath them in their naked contrasts and contradictions. Such was the humor of Luther, of whom it has been said that he was "open as the sky, merry as the sunshine, bold and fearless as the storm." He believed that the earth was the Lord's

and the fulness thereof, and never thought that he honored God by wearing a long face. So he cracked jokes with Lord Cate, as he playfully called his wife; talked to his cat, and patted the head of his old dog, which he had for sixteen years; laughed, body and soul, at the caricatures of the Pope which hung upon his study wall; and replied to the denunciations of his enemies by merry jests. Not so John Calvin. To him this world was a waste, howling wilderness; God's curse was upon it, and therefore he had no eye for its beauty, no ear for its music. He had no favorite cats and pet dogs, no flutes and pictures and merry games, like Luther; he rarely smiled, and still more rarely laughed; and when he did laugh, it was a very weak, thin, sniggering, husky affair,—what Carlyle calls a kind of laughing through wool,—not at all like the clear, loud, ringing laugh of Luther. We may respect the great Genevan as a giant of theology; but who, as he reads his biography, thinks of clasping him to his heart, as he does Doctor Martin?

That pink of propriety, Lord Chesterfield, thought it ungentlemanlike to laugh. It was a shocking distortion of the face. "I am sure," he wrote to his son, "that since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh." We cannot help thinking that it would have been far better for him if he had occasionally given way to his feelings, and not impressed the world with the notion that he was all starch and formality,—that everything he said or did was calculated. He was the politest, best-bred, most insinuating man about the Court; and yet he was continually outflanked and outmanœuvred by Sir Robert Walpole, who had the heartiest laugh in the Kingdom, and by the Duke of Newcastle, who had the worst

manners in the world. The over-sober Christian will hardly be proud of Chesterfield as an ally.

The truth is, the best men have been the fondest of innocent mirth. It has been truly said that the clergy, as a body, are among the most humorous of men. Were their quips, and pranks, and mirth-provoking jests collected into a volume, they would make one of the most amusing books in literature. Old Dr. Emmons, of Franklin, Mass., said as pungent things at table as in the pulpit. His wit was as sharp as his logic. A young preacher occupied his pulpit one day, and at dinner angled for a compliment. "I hope I did not weary you by the length of my sermon, Doctor?" "No, nor by its breadth, either." "I am afraid," said another young clergyman, "I did not get fairly into my subject, in my sermon to-day." "Well, young man, do you know the reason why? It was because your subject never got into *you*." Lyman Beecher was full to bursting with humor. Some friends wished him to prosecute a libeller. "I once threw a folio of divinity at a skunk. I got a new suit of clothing, and had to pay for the rebinding of the volume." Henry Ward Beecher's witticisms would fill a volume. To a brother who was to preach an official sermon in Plymouth church,—who was celebrated for the length and ponderosity of his performances,—the pastor said: "Right under your feet is a genuine Baptist pool. It is of the orthodox dimensions, and half full of water. The spring is under my foot. If the preacher is dry and long, I touch the spring and let him in!" Spurgeon is noted for the keenness and causticity of his wit, and during his gravest sermons the hearer's face often relaxes into a smile. When a well-known bore sent word to him that "a servant of

the Lord" wished to see him,—“Tell him,” was the reply, “that I am engaged with his Master.” In preaching to a company of butchers, he opened with the hymn,

Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain, etc.

When told that twins were born to him, he cried out:

Not more than others I deserve,  
Yet God has given me more.

Some years ago a clergyman near Boston asked another, who was noted for his prolixity, to preach for him. “I cannot,” was the reply, “for I am busy writing a sermon on the Golden Calf.” “That’s just the thing,” was the rejoinder; “come and give us a forequarter of it.”

The fact that so many men who have been brimful and running over with wit and humor have been among the simplest and kindest-hearted,—nay, among the devoutest of men,—convinces us that it is the harshness of an irreligious temper, masking itself as religious zeal, that scowls on all manifestations of mirth. If in the Church of to-day there are many conscientious persons who

“In arioso trills and graces  
Never stray,  
But gravissimo, solemn bases,  
Hum away,”

it was not so with Latimer, Bishop Earle, Fuller, Fénelon, and many others whom we could name, in the olden time. Then, a ready wit and a talent for clever answers were deemed not unsuitable accompaniments to a devout soul completely resigned to the will of heaven. Some of the sharp sayings of Thomas Aquinas are to be



found among the pleasantries of Joe Miller. Where is the writer whose pungent witticisms oftener provoke a laugh than do those of Dr. South, of the English Church? What humorist ever shook the world with more inextinguishable laughter than the gloomy and mortified Pascal? Though he belonged to the sour sect of the Jansenists, the "Old Light" seceders of the Romish Church, yet his Provincial Letters is the wittiest book that France can boast. One of the most illustrious divines whom that Church has produced thus speaks of jocular discourse in a treatise whose express object is to inculcate holiness: "As for jesting words which are spoken by one to another with modest and innocent mirth, they belong to the virtues called *Eutraphia* by the Greeks, which we may call good conversation, by which we take an honest and pleasant recreation upon such frivolous occasions as human imperfections do offer; only we must take heed of passing from this honest mirth to scoffing, for mocking causeth laughter in scorn and contempt of our neighbor, but mirth and drollery provoke laughter by an innocent liberty, confidence, and familiar freedom, joined to the witness of some conceit." So talks one of the old, mediæval writers of the Church; and yet an opinion prevails that they were a set of crabbed, morose, ascetic religionists, who were shocked at every burst of laughter, and looked upon a jest with horror! Why, they were the very incarnation of mirth, compared with some of the gloomy, long-faced pietists of the present day.

## ONE BOOK.

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**A**MONG the maxims which have come down to us from antiquity, there are few wiser than the Latin proverb, "Beware of the man of one book!" By "the man of one book" is meant, not, as some interpret the words, the man who has read but a single volume, but the person who has made some book his pet, his chosen companion,—devoting his time to the critical, exclusive study of it till, like the iron atoms of the blood, its ideas have become a part of his mental constitution. Who can doubt that such a study would be eminently profitable to the majority of readers to-day? Of two young men of equal capacity, let one read widely and miscellaneously, browsing freely upon every kind of literary provender that falls in his way, and let the other limit himself to the vigorous and exhaustive study of some great paramount author, some masterpiece exacting close attention and continuous thought, such as Butler's Analogy, Edwards on the Will, Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, Burke's French Revolution, Gibbon's Decline and Fall, etc., or Mill's Logic,—conning and brooding over it day by day and hour by hour,—and can any man doubt which of the two students would be the most dangerous antagonist in the intellectual arena? While the former would have acquired a mass of heterogeneous impressions lying in confused masses in his memory, like the

shreds and patches of a rag-bag, the latter would have both enriched his mind and gymnazed it by a rigid mental discipline, invigorating every faculty.

But we are not left to theorize on the effects of such a discipline, for the biographies of the profoundest thinkers and the most accomplished orators and authors show that they have been preëminently, in the just sense of the phrase, "men of one book." Demosthenes, we are told, was so fascinated by the history of Thucydides, that, to obtain a perfect mastery of his style, he recopied the work eight times. Sir William Jones never wearied of the works of Cicero, reading them through every year. Leibnitz, who drove all the sciences abreast, spent a large portion of his leisure hours upon one or two chosen authors. At such time, Virgil, his favorite, was always in his hand, and, when old, he could repeat whole books of the *Æneid* by heart. Dante, too, thumbed the Roman poet from morning till night. Clarendon acquired his masterly style of literary portrait-painting from Tacitus, whom he read day and night; and Montesquieu, the tersest of French authors, got the secret of condensation from the same Roman historian, who, he said, "abridged everything because he saw everything." Voltaire had always at his elbow the *Athalie* of Racine and the *Petite Carême* of Massillon,—the one the finest model of French verse, the other of French prose. Rousseau went to Plutarch, Montaigne, and Locke for inspiration, and Lord Chatham hung over the pages of the mighty Barrow till he could repeat some of his long sermons by heart. Tonson, the bookseller, rarely called upon Addison without finding Bayle's Dictionary on the table. Gray drank inspiration from Spenser; Coleridge lighted his lamp at that of Collins. In a

large circle of men of letters, some years ago in England, the readiest man was one who had diligently and devotedly studied Homer,—so diligently and devotedly indeed, that, upon any line being given him, he was able in most cases to repeat the next. The old bard was his passion, his idol, his book of books; and there was not a difficulty in the idiom, an obscurity in the allusion, a labyrinth in the construction, or a subtle beauty in the poetry, with which he was not thoroughly familiar, and could not acutely and agreeably explain. By the intensity of that study he had not only so developed his reasoning powers as to become a most prompt and clear-headed debater, but he had also acquired a completeness of execution which he carried into every pursuit, and, more than that, his intellect had gained a weight and power which were felt by all who knew him.

Pycroft, in his *Course of Reading*, tells us that an eminent literary character of the present day was often found in his childhood lying on his bed, where he would not be interrupted, reading *Robinson Crusoe*. “Only reading Robin, only Robin,” was the constant excuse for all absence or idleness; and, beginning as a boy with this devotion to one book, he became a man of one book,—making Shakspeare his favorite author, and devoting a lifetime of labor to the interpretation and illustration of the thousand-souled bard. Are there not many desultory, indiscriminate, wholesale readers,—mere “*helluones librorum*,” or book-gluttons,—who would profit by thus thoroughly digesting and assimilating one great author, instead of regaling themselves upon all the luscious, lulling fruits that tempt their literary appetites? Is it not as true now as in the days of Seneca, that “he that is everywhere is nowhere,” and that the trav-

eler who is always in motion, though he may experience much hospitality, will make no friendships?

We are aware of the replies that may be made to all this; that the man who feeds upon one kind of intellectual diet, will be in danger of mental scurvy; that mental, like physical stomachs, have their idiosyncrasies, and no one sweeping rule can be laid down for all; that variety of knowledge is always useful *when pursued with singleness of aim*, and, if it result in mere superficiality, it is because it "goes into a bad skin;" that though a weak mind, which cannot digest a single wholesome meal, may be rendered still weaker by indulging its whimsical incongruous tastes, and nibbling at a multitude of dishes, yet such is the constitution of a healthy intellect, that it can grasp from every side with avidity, and yet without surfeit, thought of all sorts, studies from every direction, varieties, coincidences, differences, and contrasts, and assimilate them all to its growth and needs. All this we do not dispute, for literary history abounds with instances of men who have plunged headlong into a sea of miscellaneous reading, and found in it a stimulus and an inspiration which they could never have found in a single pond or lakelet of thought. Sir Walter Scott and Dr. Johnson are examples. The former, when a boy, had an anaconda-like digestion; history, poetry, tale, romance, legend, all were devoured by him with a most voracious appetite. But is an intellect like Scott's to be a gauge of the capacity of men in general? The mind of the great "Wizard of the North" was a law unto itself, and independent of common discipline. There are cases,—and his was one,—where the very strength of the craving more than compensates for the absence of an outward rule. His mind swooped down like an eagle

upon everything that was suited to its tastes, fastened upon it instinctively, and converted it into just the kind of nourishment it required. Not a jot or tittle was wasted; every thought, anecdote, illustration, simile, was assimilated, and became a part of his mental life-blood.

But how many Scotts are there in every nation or generation? Is it not clear that a tithe of the indiscriminate reading which he could digest so quickly and profitably, would only breed dyspepsia in an ordinary mind? Does not the truth still remain, that, for the generality of men, miscellaneous reading is, as Rev. F. W. Robertson says in one of his letters, "the idlest of all idleness, and leaves more impotency than any other;" that "it becomes a necessity, at last, like smoking, and is an excuse for the mind to lie dormant, while thought is poured in, and runs through a clear stream of unproductive gravel on which not even mosses grow?" Widely and indiscriminately as Johnson read,—ranging, as he did, over all the fields of literature,—he did not commend his example to others. "Beware," he said, "of the man of one book. Beware of the man who knows anything well. He is a dangerous antagonist." What was it, but his profounder knowledge of the history of American politics than any other man had, that made Horace Greeley so formidable an opponent? That profound thinker, Hobbes of Malmesbury, used to say, that if he had read as many books as other men, he should have known as little. It may be doubted whether the facilities for obtaining books in these days are not a curse to many persons rather than a blessing. Certain it is that the literary giants of old were very differently situated in this respect, and that this was, in no small degree, the secret of their greatness.

The very scantiness of their libraries, by compelling them to think for themselves, was an advantage,—just as, by the law of compensation, financial poverty is often a blessing in disguise. The great majority of men must concentrate,—must patiently cultivate some province of thought,—or they will experience the disappointment of those heroes whose empire has been lost in the ambition of universal conquest.

Take note that, in so warmly commending the man of one book, we do not mean the reader who ignores all others, but one who, while making not a few great works his companions, yet selects one among them to be not only his companion but his bosom friend, which he will *nocturna versare manu, versare diurna*,—with which he will commune till his mind is thoroughly saturated with its thought, dyed and colored by its ideas, yet, while drinking in its inspiration in ox-like draughts, never losing his own mental identity or independence, but growing in stature and strength by what he feeds on, upon the principle that *serpens, nisi serpentem comederit, non fit draco*. We emphasize the word *communion* because it is evident that though reading is common, communion with books is rare in this hurrying age, and that if we would get the greatest good from any great thinker, we should cultivate the closest acquaintance with him, till we have sounded all the depths of his intellect, and made his intellectual treasures our own. Of such a communion with books,—especially if they are the bravest and noblest books, books forged at the heart and fashioned by the intellect of the bravest and noblest men,—who can be dull enough not to feel the benefit when he returns to the common world?

## PULPIT ORATORY.

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WHY is it that pulpit oratory is productive of comparatively small results? Why is it that of the millions of sermons delivered annually in the United States, so few are remembered for a day, fewer for a week, and fewer still make a lasting impression, and revolutionize men's convictions, feelings, habits, tastes, characters? Reasoning *a priori*, would not one suppose that the results of pulpit oratory would be so brilliant as, in comparison, utterly to "pale the ineffectual fires" of the lecture-room, the hustings, and the forum? Had an ancient critic, an Aristotle or a Quintilian, been told that a time was coming when myriads of persons should assemble every seventh day to be addressed upon the truths of a religion sublime beyond all the speculations of philosophers, yet, in all fundamental points, within a child's apprehension,—that the loftiest, the profoundest, the most heart-moving of all themes were to be the topics of the address,—that the reception given to it might, and probably would, affect the hearer's condition for weal or woe through inconceivable cycles of time,—could the critic for a moment doubt that such occasions must train up a race of consummate orators, the overwhelming effect of whose eloquence must make the efforts of Demosthenes and Cicero seem puny and contemptible? Yet what is the fact? Out of the fifty thousand or more discourses that will be delivered next



Sunday between the St. Croix river and the Golden Gate, how many will startle or coax men out of their sins? Will one in a hundred of the arrows shot by the clerical bowmen prove barbed ones, not only lodging in the heart, but sticking there? Or, will not the fact be, that, with comparatively few exceptions, they will but graze the surface of that organ, or scratch the epidermis of the hearer, or, perhaps, fall short of the mark,—in other words, that while the preacher is haranguing, some of his hearers will be brooding over problems in their business, others planning a “corner” in wheat or some stock, others pursuing a strain of thought suggested by some chance word of the speaker, others building air-castles, others uneasily pulling out their watches and counting the minutes to dinner or bed-time, and others criticising their neighbors’ dresses, or criticising the preacher, and wondering that on so inspiring a theme he should harangue in so humdrum a way? We fear the latter supposition will prove to be the correct one, and we propose to state what we think to be one of the fundamental reasons why the ministrations of the pulpit are so often abortive of results.

This reason, we believe to be, in the vast majority of cases, not a defect in the matter, but in the *manner*, chiefly the *delivery*, of discourses. Of course, in the clerical, as in all other professions, there are men who have mistaken their calling. Many a man, as South says, “runs his head against a pulpit” who should have followed the plough; and it is still true as when Milton uttered his sarcasm, that “if any carpenter, smith, or weaver, were such a bungler in his trade as are many clergymen in their profession, he would starve for any custom.” It is perfectly true that ministers

fail, like other men, from incapacity, dullness, laziness, half-heartedness,—from all the causes that cripple men's intellects, and paralyze men's energies. So long as parents continue to think that weak, sickly boys, who have not force enough to succeed in law, medicine, or trade, "will do" for the ministry,—that a youth who has not sharpness enough to sift evidence or expose a sophism, who lacks nerve to badger a witness or amputate a leg, may yet be qualified for that profession whose members are to scatter the sophistries of Strauss and Renan, and to smite wickedness in high places,—the pulpit will continue to have its incapables. With all these concessions, however, it is still true that the main element of ineffectiveness in preaching is the disregard, the almost contempt, of manner in speaking. The crying want of the pulpit to-day is not profound scholarship, hair-splitting metaphysic subtlety, rhetorical talent, a firmly accentuated conscience, or the moral aroma of character, but oratorical skill and power. Of what use is learning to a preacher, if it is communicated to his hearers in squeaking tones that grate on their ears, or in a drawling, sing-song voice that puts them to sleep? What matters it that a soldier has a sword of dazzling finish, of the keenest edge, and the finest temper, if he has never learned the art of fence?

All life abounds with illustrations showing that manner is as potent an element of success as matter, form as substance. It is said that Dryden used to speak his plays so coldly as utterly to emasculate them; while Nat. Lee delivered very poor dramas with such force and taste that a performer threw down his part, in despair of acting up to the recital of the author. That famous angler and devout man, Izaak Walton, who, being a brother-in-law of Bishop Ken, knew inti-

mately many of the most successful clergymen of the seventeenth century, seems to have understood the secret of fishing for men better than many of the professors in our theological seminaries. In "The Complete Angler" he tells of a certain youthful sprig of divinity, who, going "to procure the approbation of a parish," and wishing to make his success certain, borrowed of a fellow student a sermon which the latter had preached with great *éclat*. After a few days the borrower came back very much crestfallen, and complained that the sermon, which he had delivered word for word, was a failure. "I lent you, indeed, my fiddle," was the reply, "but not my fiddlestick." From this, honest Izaak very sensibly concludes that "the ill pronunciation or ill accenting of words in a sermon spoils it."

The truth is, there never was a great preacher who was not also a great orator; and there was never a great orator who did not pay immense attention to the science of expressing by tongue and gesture the burning thoughts within him. Some of the most extraordinary effects of oratory have been produced by passages which, when we read them in our closets, seem tame and commonplace. The Country Parson justly remarks that we can see nothing remarkable in those quotations from Chalmers which are recorded as having so overwhelmingly oppressed those who heard them. It was his manner, not his matter, that electrified his hearers. The elder Booth, being once asked to repeat the Lord's Prayer, did it with such power and pathos that every heart in the room was hushed, and every eye was wet; and the gentleman who made the request said: "I have heard the words a thousand times, but I never heard the *Lord's Prayer* before."

It is, indeed, astonishing how much weight, and effect, and pathos may be communicated by sonorous depth and melodious cadences of the human voice to sentiments the most trivial; and, on the other, how the grandest may be emasculated by a style of delivery which fails in distributing the lights and shadows of a musical intonation. In what other way can we account for the fact that some of the profoundest and most scholarly discourses,—discourses which, when read, seem full of “reason permeated and made red-hot with passion,”—have fallen almost powerless from the lips of their authors, while a single verse of Scripture, coming from the lips of another man, has acted like an electric shock, “tearing and shattering the heart,” to use De Quincey’s fine figure, “with volleying discharges, peal after peal?”

If there is a preacher in this country who, by the weight of his thought, and the impressiveness of his style, could afford to dispense with elocutionary helps, it is Dr. Bushnell. He is a preacher of the rarest intellectual gifts, whose masterly sermons on “The New Life” show that, except in the charms of delivery, which he undervalues, if not despises, he has no superior in America. Yet, in spite of the weight of his thoughts, the cogency of his logic, and the dazzling fence of his rhetoric, who could listen to a sermon of his for the *fourth*, or even *third* time, without a sense of being bored? Yet such was the charm of Whitefield’s oratory, that a man heard him preach the same discourse seventeen times, and liked it the seventeenth time far better than the first time. Indeed, the cold-blooded and skeptical Dr. Franklin, who was so often swept away from his conservative moorings by the mighty flood of Whitefield’s eloquence, declared that his

oratory never reached its full height till he had delivered a sermon forty times. Were Dr. Bushnell to listen to one of his own impressive discourses pronounced by a Summerfield or a Spurgeon, or any other preacher capable of presenting it to his ear in its full significance, he would probably be amazed at its vast possibilities of impressive utterance, and would cease to recommend to neophytes, as he did a few years since, to cultivate mental gifts to the comparative neglect of oratorical, even if he should not half doubt whether he were listening to his own production. Even of Henry Ward Beecher's sermons, it has been justly observed, that he who knows them only as they appear in print, can form but a dim conception of their omnipotence as they burst into being from the flaming breath of the great preacher. "Show me," said Omar the Caliph to Amru the Warrior, "the sword with which you have fought so many battles, and slain so many infidels." "Ah!" replied Amru, "the sword without the arm of the master is no sharper nor heavier than the sword of Farezdak the poet."

The immense importance of manner in preaching is still further illustrated by an anecdote which Professor Lawson, a theological teacher in England, used to tell of one of his pupils, Andrew Fletcher. Dr. Fletcher, after completing his theological studies, passed the first two years of his ministry in a colleagueship with his father, a clergyman of Perthshire, Scotland. When the father preached, the listeners were few; when the son discoursed, the house was flooded. The father's sermons elicited no praises,—the son's were loudly applauded; whereat the former became jealous and irritable. At length the son borrowed one of his father's sermons, and on the following Sunday preached it from memory

with great emphasis and animation. The hearers were louder than ever in praise of the youthful orator, and one worthy remarked, "The old man never in his life preached a sermon equal to that!" It has been well observed that a discourse delivered by one man becomes an entirely different discourse when delivered from another's lips, and charged with another's spirit. When Mirabeau's friend complained that the Assembly would not listen to him, that fiery leader asked for his speech, and the next day electrified the Assembly by uttering as his own the words they had refused to hear from another. "The words were the same; the force and the fire that made them thrilling and electric, were not his friend's, but his own."

Need we add to all these illustrations the further ones that, according to Lord Chesterfield, the Duke of Argyle, his contemporary, though the shallowest thinker and the weakest reasoner, was listened to with more delight than any other man in the House of Lords; and that while the speech for the Gregorian Calendar by Lord Macclesfield, a consummate astronomer, was received with yawns, that of Chesterfield himself, who, as he himself tells us, was utterly ignorant of the science, but a captivating orator, chained the attention and won the votes of the House?

Bishop Berkeley once said that nine-tenths of the talent and learning of England were lost to it for want of attention to elocution. The profoundest knowledge of the elocutionary art, and the most perfect facility in the application of its rules, will not avail, however, without deep feeling,—unaffected earnestness,—in the preacher. Next to lack of oratorical skill, the greatest defect of our preachers, as a body, is, not that they are, but they too often *seem* to be, wanting in heart.

They are not flames, but icicles. They preach to the head, not to the heart. They may argue with logical precision, but they argue coldly. They convince the understanding, but do not manifest sensibility enough to touch the warm sympathies, and make a vivid impression upon the feelings of even the devout soul. Instead of giving a deep and commanding interest to their arguments by applying them to those feelings which are common to all hearts, and which will eagerly answer when appealed to, they endeavor to interest the understandings of men in opposition to their feelings, and to set up the intellect in contemptuous despotism over every generous and glowing sympathy. Who can wonder, when religious truth is enforced in this dry, argumentative, phlegmatic manner,—when the preacher reads his drowsy lucubration without lifting his nose from the text, or venturing to earn the shame of an enthusiast,—that the harangues of the pulpit are so destitute of living energy, and fail to alarm the profligate, or to animate the desponding? What would be the result, if an actor at the theatre, instead of throwing his whole soul into his “counterfeit presentment” of feeling,—his mimicry of the “billowy ecstasy of wo,”—should draw through his part in the freezing manner of many preachers? Would he not be hissed from the stage, or play to empty boxes?

Lord Erskine, who is so celebrated for the delicacy and tenderness with which he sometimes describes scenes of domestic endearment and felicity, and for the lofty tone of indignation with which he lashes and scourges their invaders, remarks, in the letter introductory to the published speeches of Fox, that “intellect alone, however exalted, without strong feelings,—without, even, irritable sensibility,—would be only like an

immense magazine of powder, if there were no such element as fire in the natural world. It is the *heart* which is the spring and fountain of all eloquence." Sheridan,—himself, in the opinion of Burke and Fox, the greatest orator of modern times,—held evidently the same opinion, for he said of one whose ministry he attended, "I go to hear Rowland Hill, because his ideas *come red-hot from the heart.*" Nothing can be more true. To be eloquent, a man must be himself affected. He must be sincere. He must be in earnest. In his own heart must burn the fire which he would kindle in the bosoms of others:

"Si vis me flere, dolendum est  
Primum ipsi tibi,"

says Horace, and the maxim will hold to the "last syllable of recorded time." There must be a certain honesty and open-heartedness of manner,—an apparently entire and thorough conviction of being in the right,—an everlasting pursuit of, and devotion to, the subject, to a seeming neglect and unconcern as to everything else: emotion, feeling, passion. Even in discourses of a logical character, where the reasoning approaches almost to mathematical demonstration, the hearers will not be impressed,—they will scarcely listen with patience, unless they are persuaded that the conclusions to which the speaker would force them, are the deliberate and solemn convictions of his own mind. A cold-blooded, phlegmatic preacher may produce a discourse irresistible in argument, elaborately perfect in rhetorical embellishment, and painfully correct in style, but nothing can give it that electric fire which darts through and through an audience, kindling each heart into enthusiasm, save natural feeling expressed with the fervor of earnest sensibility.



The only way to be eloquent in the pulpit is to banish every thought of self,—to forget everything but God and duty. The triumphs of true eloquence, touching, grand, sublime, awful, as they sometimes have been, are seen only when the orator stands before you in the simple majesty of truth, and, overpowered by the weight of his convictions, forgets himself and forgets everything but his momentous subject. You think not of who speaks, or how he speaks, but of what is spoken; transported by his pathos, your rapt imagination pictures new visions of happiness; subdued by the gushes of his tenderness, your ears mingle with his; determined by the power of his reasoning, you are prompt to admit, if not prepared to yield to, the force of his arguments; entering with your whole heart and soul into the subject of his address, you sympathize with those strong emotions which you see are in his bosom, burning and struggling for utterance; and soon find yourself moving onward with him on the same impetuous and resistless current of feeling and passion. “It is amazing,” says Goldsmith, “to what heights eloquence of this kind may reach. This is that eloquence which the ancients represented as lightning, bearing down every opposer; this is the power which has turned whole assemblies into astonishment, admiration, and awe; that is described by the torrent, the flame, and every other instance of irresistible impetuosity.”

To conclude,—let our theological professors cease to expend all their energies in cramming their pupils with Hebrew, ecclesiastical history, and exegesis, and spend more time in teaching them how to communicate their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings in a pleasing yet weighty and impressive manner. Let the student be told with continual iteration, till the truth is burned

into his brain, that he may be armed *cap-a-pié* with the most approved theological weapons, yet fail to win a single victory from lack of skill in using them. A few pebbles from a brook, in the sling of a David, who knows how to send them to the mark, are more effective than a Goliath's spear and a Goliath's strength with a Goliath's clumsiness.

## ORIGINALITY IN LITERATURE.

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**A**MONG the complaints made against the literature of our day, one of the commonest is that it lacks originality. Not only the poets, as Tennyson, Longfellow, and Alexander Smith, are accused of stringing their lyres to the old tunes, and singing songs which have been sung substantially a thousand times before, but our philosophers and historians, our novelists, essayists, and theologians, are included in the same sweeping condemnation. There are some cynical critics who not only claim that originality is rare,—almost as rare as honesty in Congressmen,—but contend that it is nearly, if not quite, impossible. If an enthusiastic reader goes into raptures over what he fancies to be some fresh, unique, and suggestive work, full of seed-thoughts, and which positively gives him a new sensation, these critical Velveaus will proceed to dissect it, and show that every thought and illustration is traceable to some preceding writer who flourished a hundred or a thousand years ago. The raw material out of which poems and novels are made is limited, they say, in quantity, and speedily exhausted. The number of human passions upon which the changes can be rung is very small; and the situations to which their play gives rise may be counted on the fingers. Love returned, and love unrequited, jealousy and envy, anger, pride, avarice, generosity, and revenge, are the hinges upon which all

poems and romances turn, and these passions have been the same ever since Adam. In Homer, Virgil, Plautus, and Terence, we have an epitome of all the men and women on the planet; and there is nothing new in the world except the costumes of men and the cut of their hair and whiskers. Even in invention, it is urged, there is nothing new. The moderns have utilized many old ideas, but they have originated nothing. Franklin stole the thunder, if not the lightning, of somebody else; Colt's revolver is as old as Cromwell's troopers; and it is quite certain that neither Fulton, nor Watt, nor the Marquis of Worcester, nor Blasco de Garay, but some countryman of Confucius, living centuries ago, invented that wondrous engine through which the lawless winds have been made to cower before the mightier powers of steam. In short, in literature and in science it is alike true that there is nothing of which it may be said, "See, this is new!" but, as Chaucer complained, five hundred years ago,

Out of the olde fields, as men saithe,  
Cometh all this new corn fro year to year;  
And out of olde books, in good faithe,  
Cometh all this newe science that men lere.

Is this a just statement of the case? Must we admit that every domain of thought was preëmpted before the moderns appeared,—that the ancients stole all their ideas before they had them,—and that to seek for originality in our day is to chase a will-o-the wisp? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand clearly what "originality" is. If by originality is meant the invention of something absolutely new, whether in science, art, action, reflection, method, or application,—it is hard to believe in its existence now or at any

time since the germs of thought first began to shoot forth in the prehistoric ages. No people on the earth can claim, independently of others, to have struck out any thoughts for the good of mankind. Of all the nations of antiquity, the Phœnicians might most plausibly make this boast. The first known metallurgists, they also displayed a brilliant genius for navigation and trade, and introduced the letters of the alphabet into Europe. But as to originality, they had none, except "original sin." Possessing a powerful receptive nature, and imbibing largely from earlier and more Oriental peoples, they quickly digested and assimilated their borrowed knowledge, and, as the great middlemen between the East and West, played an important part. But, though admirable literary merchants, they were not producers of thought. So, too, the Arabs, with all their wonderful quickness and muscularity of intellect, were "the hierophants, and not the oracle." They were the purveyors and expounders of science between ancient Greece and modern Europe; but they gave to the world nothing unthought of before.

Nearly all the great discoveries and original inventions of modern times have been shown to have existed in their germs, if not in full bloom, thousands of years ago. Disraeli believes that the Romans knew the secret of movable types, but would not let it be known, for fear of the spread of knowledge, and the loss of the aristocratic monopoly of enlightened thought. De Quincey holds that printing was long known to the ancients, but made no progress for want of paper. Gunpowder was a pyrotechnic plaything long before it was used to kill men. Telescopes, some scientists tell us, must have been directed to the stars of the antique heavens, or their astronomy could not have existed.

Alexander's copy of the Iliad, inclosed in a nutshell, could hardly have been written without a microscope; and the gem through which Nero looked at the distant gladiators was essentially an opera-glass. "The malleability of glass, the indelibility of colors, and fifty other things of importance, dropped by the ancients into the stream of time," says a well-informed writer, "we have to fish up anew." Photography, which the nineteenth century claims as beyond all cavil its own invention, is described by a French writer in 1760 with even greater perfection of detail than we can now attain to,—photography producing color as well as form; and M. Fournier has shown that the magnetic telegraph was invented more than two centuries ago.

What shall we say, then? That originality in our day is an impossibility?—that Parnassus has been robbed of its richest laurels, and the unhappy writer of this century can only pick up what bygone explorers have left behind? Yes, if by originality is meant an absolute creation of new material,—an isolated act of bare imitation, instead of an act of adaptation or moulding so as to resemble a new creation, and, indeed, to be one. But if by originality is meant a just selection and vitalizing of materials that already exist, a fresh and novel combination of ideas, imparting new life to what is combined,—and this is the only originality that is or ever was possible in any age,—then the writers of to-day are as original as any that ever held a stile or dipped their pens in ink. To be a literary creator, it is not necessary that a man should make a *tabula rasa* of his brain. Genius would soon starve and pine away, if not ceaselessly fed by the memory. As Burke justly says, "there is no faculty of the mind which can bring its energy into effect,

unless the memory be stored with ideas for it to work upon;" to which we may add that the very best pumps will not play till you pour in water to start them. Originality in the creative arts, as well as in science, may be displayed as signally in method as in subject-matter. To reproduce is, in fact, to produce again. The process is the same, provided that it is carried out with equal energy; and it is simply nonsense to say that vigor ceases to be vigor because it starts upon a beaten track.

True, it is the mark and the prerogative of genius, as John Foster has said, to be capable of lighting its own fire; but it is no mark or proof of theft or lack of inventive power, if it sometimes kindles its fire by an electric spark caught from some kindred mind. Grant that Morse, for example, who is regarded as the inventor of the electric telegraph, was indebted, like Franklin, Watt, and Arkwright before him, to the suggestions of others; grant that Leverrier, as he searched the boundless realms of space with his telescope for a spot in which to locate the undiscovered planet, availed himself of the labors and recorded demonstrations of Newton; and that even the starry Newton availed himself of the numerical labors of a humble contemporary at the very moment when he lay under suspicion of trying to retard that individual's hard-earned profits and impede his fame; do these facts detract one jot or tittle from these great men's fame? By no means. It is true enough that when Franklin sent his kite into the clouds, the world was not wholly ignorant of the laws of electricity; he had some scattered facts and ideas to start with; but it was *the step beyond* that gave him immortality. Admit that Morse stood on the shoulders, so to speak, of Priestley and Franklin, ap-

propriated the labors of Galvani and Volta, and even derived from the all-suggesting Jackson, in 1832, as the ship Sully was breasting the waves, the first hint of the magnetic telegraph,—still his merit is not lessened. The fact is, that in all cases of invention the praise of it is due not to the first conceiver of it, but to the last complete applier of it. As Dr. Paley says, “He only discovers who proves.”—Twenty men thought of steamboats, but Fulton is the inventor of the steamboat, because he first set a steamboat a-going; the rest were dreamers,—inventors mentally, but not inventors in the art.

All of the great poets have at some time been accused of being great thieves; but nothing can be more foolish than most of these attempts to rob them of their fame. Every great writer is necessarily indebted both to his contemporaries and to his predecessors. The finest passages in prose and poetry are often but embellished recollections of other men’s productions. Thought and memory, it has been no less finely than justly said, are the Alpheus and the Arethusa of metaphysics; commit any material to the latter, and after a long period of forgetfulness, by some subterranean transition, it will appear floating on the surface of the former, as though it had been thrown up from no other sources than those of pure invention. Had Shakespeare, thousand-souled as he was, been confined from childhood to a desert island, could he have written the poorest of his matchless dramas; or could Newton, unaided by the preceding mathematicians, have discovered the law of gravitation? What, indeed, is every great poem but a compendium of the imagination of centuries? What the masterpieces of painting, but a combination of the finest lines and the most exquisite



touches of earlier and inferior artists,—or the noblest works of statuary, but a blending into one form of angelic beauty of the loveliest features and the most graceful lineaments wrought by hands and chisels long ago crumbled into dust?

In all ages, the greatest literary geniuses have been the greatest borrowers. Omniverous devourers of books, with memories like hooks of steel, they have not scrupled to seize and to turn to account every good thought they could pick up in their readings. Milton, who has been called “the celestial thief,” boldly plagiarized from Dante and Tasso, and all of them from Homer; and who believes that Homer had no reservoir of learning to draw from, no mysterious lake of knowledge, into which he could now and then throw a bucket? Goethe laughed the idea of absolute originality to scorn, and declared that it was an author’s duty to use all that was suggested to him from any quarter. “What is a great man,” asks Emerson, “but one of great affinities, who takes up into himself all arts, sciences, all knowables, as his food? \* \* \* Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests, and mines, and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.” There are some minds, and those, too, really productive, that require the provocation of more suggestive and stimulating ones to make them work. They need the fertilizing pollen of other men’s thoughts to make them productive. To attract every available thing to itself is a natural characteristic of the magnetic ardor of genius.

All these great poets had enormous powers of assimilation; and it is evident to every scholar who reads their works, that the metal in which they wrought was not dug newly from the earth, but, like the Corinthian

brass of the ancients, was melted up from the spoils of a city.

Occasional accidental coincidences of thought and expression will not detract from a writer's just fame. It is only the habitual and conscious thief, the man who *lives* by plunder, and who thus shows himself to be both weak and wicked, that merits the pillory. Literal, bald borrowing, whether of the plan or treatment,—the substance or form,—the thoughts or expressions,—of a work, is absolutely indefensible; but he is not a thief who borrows the ideas of a hundred other men and repays them with compound interest. It is one thing to purloin finely-tempered steel, and another to take a pound of literary old iron, and convert it in the furnace of one's mind into a hundred watch-springs, worth each a thousand times as much as the iron. When genius borrows, it borrows grandly, giving to the borrowed matter a life and beauty it lacked before. When Shakspeare is accused of pilfering, Landor replies: "Yet he was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies, and brought them into life." It has been said of Pope that, whatever jewel he appropriated, he set it in gold. Perhaps the best definition of legitimate appropriation was given by Hegel, when Cousin was accused of stealing his ideas. "Cousin," said he, "has caught some small fishes in my pond, but he has drowned them in his own sauce." This was quite different from the case of a patchwork essay read by a Mr. Fish, of which an old lady complained that it was "so full of pollywogs that she could'n't see the Fish."

For these reasons, about the meanest business a literary man can engage in is that of arraigning authors for theft on the score of petty parallelisms and coinci-

dences. The small critics who stoop to this are like constables who thrive by catching thieves; they hunt down the culprits, not because their moral sense is outraged, but because they get a fee for hanging the offender. The instinct of imitation,—that affinity for beauty and brightness, wherever found, which leads to the appropriation and assimilation of other men's conceptions,—that delicacy of sympathy, which causes the mind to be possessed and haunted by their beautiful thoughts and images to a degree that defies expulsion,—is one of the surest marks of genius.

When Molière was taunted with having plagiarized a scene here, a situation there, a character elsewhere, he replied: "*Je reprends mon bien ou je le trouve*,—I recover my property wherever I find it." The whole philosophy of plagiarism lies in that sentence. A man of genius takes unhesitatingly whatever he can organize; a vulgar plagiarist is a vulgar thief, a liar, and a braggart, calling upon men to admire the peacock splendor of his wretched daw nature. Nine-tenths of what is denounced as plagiarism is only such as the plants exercise upon the earth and air, or the bee upon the flowers and honeysuckles,—to organize the stolen material into higher forms, and make it suitable for the food of man.

The fact is, our literature, and all literature, abounds with those similarities of thought and expression which are so hastily denounced as larcenies. Roman literature was one immense plagiarism. The Roman dramatists adapted Greek plays, just as the English now adapt the French. Virgil "conveyed" many of his most beautiful passages, picturesque images, and striking epithets from the old Greek and Latin poets. Chaucer borrowed from the Italian and Provençaux

romances and the *fabliaux* of the middle ages. Paley, Butler, Southey, Gray, helped themselves freely to other men's thoughts. "Garth did not write his own Dispensary." Ben Jonson got the materials of his mosaics from the classics. His song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," is from the love-letters of Philostratus; "Still to be neat, still to be drest," is from a Latin poem of Jean Bonnefons; and two of his others are boldly borrowed from Catullus. Happy adaptation, old Ben believed, was as great an act of genius as invention. Mirabeau got the ablest of his speeches from Dumont. Fox was often primed by Burke, and Burke by Bolingbroke. Critics with provokingly tenacious memories have declared that many of Robert Hall's gems of illustration were "conveyed" from Burke, Grattan, and Warburton; and that some of them have been reconveyed by Macaulay from Hall. Coleridge "lifted" from Frederica Brun the framework of his glorious hymn to Mont Blanc. It has been asserted that all the thinking in Chalmers's astronomical discourses is cribbed from Andrew Fuller's *The Gospel Its Own Witness*.

Byron, who helped himself freely to other men's ideas, declared that all pretensions to originality are ridiculous. Tom Moore once caught him with a book filled with paper marks, and asked him what he was doing. Byron replied, "Only a book from which I am trying to *crib*, which I do whenever I can, and that is the way I get the character of an original poet." Moore, in relating this incident, says of Byron's reply, "Though, in imputing to himself deliberate plagiarism, he was, of course, but jesting, it was, I am inclined to think, his practice, when engaged in the composition of any work, thus to excite his vein by the perusal of others on the

same subject or plan, from which the slightest hint, caught from his imagination as he read, was sufficient to kindle there such a train of thought as, but for that spark, had never been awakened, and of which he himself soon forgot the source."

A writer in the *British and Foreign Review*, speaking of this laboring after originality, says Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is almost a centoism of extracts, "yet, like the irregular forms and intricate colors of cathedral windows, they produce a solemn and religious harmony, of which the effect is more transparent than the cause or the components." Dean Swift was a notorious poacher. His voyages to Brobdingnag and Laputa were borrowed from Cyreno Bergerac. M. Véricour, in his work on *Modern French Literature*, tells us that Rousseau borrowed largely from Sidney and Locke; Byron borrowed from Rousseau and Goethe's *Faust*. The German, Klopstock, borrowed from Milton; Herder from Vico. Goethe openly acknowledged his indebtedness to Shakspeare. M. Véricour, speaking of Sir Walter Scott's habit of appropriating fragments of history scornfully rejected by modern historians, and weaving them into his romances, beautifully illustrates this departure from originality by relating that, in the Lincoln Cathedral, there is a beautifully-painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of pieces of glass rejected by his master. It was so far superior to every other window in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished *original* artist killed himself from mortification.

Literature is filled with stock ideas and illustrations, which have become the property of whoever chooses to use them. Calhoun's "masterly inactivity" is only a translation of Horace's *strenua inertia*. Webster's "sea

of upturned faces" was supposed to be very fine and very new, until some literary riever scented it in the pages of Scott. Paley's watch was obtained on tick from Dr. Bernard Nieuwentyt, a learned Dutchman. Bacon's saying, "*Antiquitas sæculi juvenus mundi*" is as old as Giordano Bruns, who said that the first people of the world should rather be called the youngsters than the ancients. Talleyrand's famous saying, "Language was given to man to conceal his thought," has a long pedigree. It has been traced to Goldsmith, to Voltaire, to South, to Job, and, we know not how many others. Macaulay is deemed an original writer, yet few authors have been indebted more to books for illustrations. His *New Zealander* dates back to Kirke White, to Shelley, to Horace Walpole, and to Volney. Everybody laughed over his famous hit at Dr. Nares, but few who were tickled by the conceit suspected that he had borrowed the weapon he was using. Some mouser in mediæval history at last discovered that the Italian, Boccalin, was the author of the sarcasm. He pretended that the laconic Venetian Senate once condemned an unfortunate author who had been convicted of using three words where two were sufficient, to read once over the history of the war of Pisa by Guicciardini. The culprit with great agony labored through a single page, and then prayed his judges to commute his sentence to labor at the galleys for life. Another saying is quoted from Macaulay, to the effect that it was not so much the pain given to the bear, as the pleasure experienced by the spectators, that led the Roundheads, during the English civil wars, to put a stop to bear-baiting. The same remark was made by Hume long before, and was probably adopted by him from some antecedent author.

The complaint so often made that "there is nothing new under the sun" is itself old,—as old as literature itself. Ovid complains of the early writers for having "stolen all the good things;" the early writers stole from the Greeks; the Greeks cribbed from the Egyptians; the Egyptians filched from the antediluvians; and they, we suppose, purloined from the Prometheus who stole the fire directly from heaven. It is easy to raise the hue-and-cry of plagiarism; but, in many cases, the similarities upon which the literary tipstaff puts his finger are no more thefts than a chemical compound, the result of mysterious affinities, is identical with the elements that enter into it. "There is all the difference between suggestion and plagiarism," says Henry Rogers, "that there is between *making* blood from blood, and receiving it into the veins by transfusion." "There are some persons," says Pascal, "who would never have an author speak of things of which others have spoken; otherwise they accuse him of telling them nothing that is new. But if the subjects he treats of be not new, the method of treating them may be new. When two men play at tennis, they both play with the same ball, but one directs it best. I should as soon accuse him of using old words; as if the same ideas did not form another body of discourse by a different arrangement of them, just as truly as the same words express quite different ideas by a different arrangement."

## IS LITERATURE ILL-PAID?

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YES! will be the prompt and indignant reply of nineteen out of twenty of those who, as Lamb says, suck their sustenance, like sick people, through a quill:—and they will be astonished that any one should ask the question. Did not Scott long ago say that literature does well enough as a staff, but not as a crutch,—as a dilettante pursuit, but not as a means of getting one's bread and butter? Have you forgotten the fate of Chatterton, Otway, and Savage?—how the “impransus” Johnson struggled through his fifty years of poverty?—and what an amount of hack-work Goldsmith did to keep the wolf from his door while he was producing those exquisite poems, essays, and fictions, which, though they have made his name immortal, could not keep him from dying £3,000 in debt? Is it not notorious that Shelley's writings brought him no profit, having hardly a hundred buyers? Did not Schiller translate at a shilling a page? Has not Goethe told us that his works were “an expense to him,” though all Europe rang with his name? Did not Godwin, while startling England with his extraordinary works, earn his crust by bookselling? Would M. Jasmin have been able long to delight France with his songs, had he abandoned his humble calling of a hair-dresser? Have you never heard how the *spirituelle* Maginn lived and died, how Hogg's last moments were passed, and that



he who sang the "Song of the Shirt" with a pathos that thrilled all Europe, died with the sad plaint that, though his friends might be able "to *urn a lively Hood*" after his death, he could not do it while living? Is not Sheridan Knowles's hand-to-hand struggle with want yet fresh in the public memory, and do we not remember the three Caudle Letters of Laman Blanchard, penned in his wife's dying hours to keep the Sheriff from his house?

Again, if literature is well paid in this nineteenth century, why can it boast no profound, encyclopedic scholars, no great poets, like those of past ages? We have swarms of essayists and feuilletonists, magazine scribblers, who manufacture fiction by the hundred-weight, and more thoughtful writers who exhaust their mental wealth on reviews; but where are our great epic and tragic poets? Where are our great linguists? Where is our Scaliger, our Jones, our Porson, or our Parr? Would the exquisite and myriad-volumed learning of the second keep him, in these iron, utilitarian times, from starvation; or would his command of all the treasures of Greek lore insure to the third any place or station commensurate with his merits? Have we not seen the greatest scholars of the age starving in England in miserable curacies, and in other countries in miserable professorships, while lawyers of less ability have clad themselves "in purple and fine linen," ridden in coaches drawn by long-tailed, silky-coated steeds, and fared sumptuously every day?

In replying to these questions, and affirming that literature, on the whole, *is* well paid, we shall leave out of consideration the amateurs who "write for glory, and print for fun," and speak only of the toilers, those who devote themselves to literature as a regular calling,

a means of subsistence and of self-advancement. We maintain that Paternoster Row is not a misnomer, for which, on account of its step-motherly heartlessness, *Noverca* Row might be aptly substituted; that, whatever provocation Campbell might have had for saying that he forgave Napoleon his crimes because he once shot a bookseller, it is not true that publishers drink their sherry out of authors' skulls; that literature, far from being necessarily associated with vexation and penury, is, when pursued steadfastly and conscientiously, as sure a means of support and of advancement as law, medicine, or trade.

In considering the profitableness of the literary calling, it should be remembered that there is hardly any other which requires so little capital for its pursuit. The lawyer must have an office, and at least an apology for a library, to say nothing of furniture, signs, and advertisements. The physician must have all these, and, in addition, a horse and carriage, besides being well dressed, for nobody will trust in his skill till, by an air of prosperity, he indicates that he is trusted by others. Even the artist must have his studio and a steady supply of canvas and paint. But all the capital the writer needs is a few quires of paper, a steel pen, and five cents worth of ink. If he lives in a city, the public libraries will furnish him with books; he may travel in horse-cars, live in the fourth story of a cheap boarding-house, and dress, if he pleases, like a scarecrow, yet, if he have real ability, meet with brilliant success. But, setting aside these compensations, let us see whether literary labor during the last two or three hundred years has been well requited. To begin with the "Father of English Poetry," Dan Chaucer, though his last days were clouded by embarrassment, yet,

during most of his life, he held profitable offices, and was even employed in diplomatic negotiations. Shakspeare we do not cite as a proof of our position, because, though born a wool-stapler's son, he retired with a large fortune. He never published his works, except on the stage, and made all his money by acting and shrewd investments. Spenser received from Queen Elizabeth a grant of three thousand acres of land in Ireland,—which, it is true, was very much like giving him a domain in Florida, inhabited by rattlesnakes and prowling Indians; but then he also received a pension of fifty pounds, equal to three hundred pounds or more now, for burning incense to the “Maiden Queen,” and transforming, by the magic of genius, her red wig into “yellow locks, crisped like golden wire;” and though he was driven by Tyrone's Rebellion to die in sorrow and distress in London, yet he provoked his fate by his injustice to a proud and savage people, as Clerk of the Council and Sheriff of Cork, and by his recommendation of coercive measures against them in his “View of the State of Ireland.” How much money “rare Ben Jonson” received we do not know; but it is probable that only his continual guzzling of canary wine, and other intemperate habits, kept him from becoming rich.

In the next century we find Milton receiving but £13 for his grand epic; but we must remember that he held an important State office, and enjoyed a degree of consideration not estimable in money. Moreover, he was eminently unpractical, and had a boundless scorn for those “drossy spirits” that are forever seeking to turn a penny,—that “need the lure and whistle of earthly preferment, like those animals that fetch and carry for a morsel.” Dryden, who received £1,200 for

his translation of Virgil, and who, as poet-laureate and stockholder in a theatre, had a fixed income of £1,000 a year, was not ill-paid. With a brain of such fecundity that he could dash off the "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day" at a single jet, he must have won riches as well as honors but for the shrew who called him husband. The hunch-backed, spider-legged dwarf of Twickenham, who would have starved in almost any other calling, got £8,000,—an almost fabulous sum in those times,—for his translation of the Iliad only. Swift attained to ecclesiastical preferment, and might have had the object of his heart's desire, a bishopric, had he not shocked Archbishop Sharp by his profanity and indecency, and learned *furens quid femina possit* by lampooning the Duchess of Somerset. Addison rose to be Secretary of State, and Prior, from a pot-house boy, became like our Irving, Motley, Cushing, and Bancroft, an ambassador.

Johnson, it is true, had a long, up-hill fight against adversity. It was not the golden age of authors when he ate his dinners behind the screen in Cave's parlor, back of the shop, because he was too much out at the elbows to be presented at a tradesman's table; and when Savage, as if to show by contrast the inferiority of civilized life to the days when

"Wild through the woods the noble *savage* ran,"

roamed about the streets of London all night, for want of a shilling to pay for a lodging. But Johnson conquered success at last, and his position, when he had scaled the literary Alps, and could scornfully reject the tardily proffered aid of Chesterfield,—not to speak of a later period when he was the seven-tailed bashaw of the literary realm,—was an enviable one. Hume, from

absolute obscurity, raised himself by his writings to considerable wealth, and to high offices which brought him more,—so that he died with an income of a thousand a year, and leaving an estate of fifteen thousand pounds. Goldsmith was always in hot water, and died three thousand pounds in debt; but he received large, and even splendid sums for his writings; his society was courted by the most brilliant wits, artists, statesmen, and men of letters; and even when wasting his exquisite genius as a literary hack, he might have won an independence but for his extreme improvidence, his almost childish generosity, his passion for pleasure and fine clothes, and, above all, his propensity for gambling.

Coming to the nineteenth century, we find Sir Walter Scott, who, as a barrister, would probably never have been heard of outside of Scotland, earning a world-wide fame, fabulous sums of money, and a title, as an author. Had he trusted to literature only, instead of dreading its precariousness, and becoming a publisher, he might have died worth a hundred thousand pounds, and realized his life-long dream of a landed and titled family. Again, look at Wordsworth and Southey. The former was never rich, but some admirer of his genius or office-holder became always conveniently defunct at every crisis in his finances, leaving him money or a place, and he lived an eminently dignified and happy life. The latter, a man of second-rate genius, but of colossal industry, won comfort if not affluence, by his pen, and when disposed to grumble at his enforced drudgery at literary ephemera, used to exclaim, "Patience!—it is, after all, better than pleading in a stinking court of law, or being called up at midnight to a patient. It is better than being a soldier, or a

sailor, better than calculating profit and loss on a counter,—better, in short, than anything but independence.” Would Campbell, who spoke so spitefully of publishers, have lived in the same style, moved in the same circles, and been petted as he was, had he been a poor teacher or preacher? Yet to one of the latter callings he seemed destined when, a poor, friendless youth at a Scottish University, he had not yet by his first poem won friends and fame. Jeffrey, mainly through his literary celebrity, became rich and a Judge. The author of *Lalla Rookh* got a large income from his writings, besides a pension of £300; Byron received princely sums from Mr. Murray, coining even his misanthropy and “blue devils” into guineas; and if Coleridge was always steeped in poverty, it was because he was morally as well as physically out at the elbows, and so wayward and capricious, so utterly untrustworthy, that he could never have kept his head above water in any calling.

Has any profession “paid” better than the literary, all things considered, during the last fifty years? Look at the large sums which Macaulay received, besides a coveted title and a seat in Parliament! Think of the enormous receipts and the world-wide fame of Dickens, originally a poor and obscure newspaper reporter! Think of the fortune acquired by Fenimore Cooper! Consider the price paid to Tennyson for a single poem, or to Disraeli for a single novel, the large earnings of Miss Evans, of Lewes, Trollope, Dumas, Miss Braddon, Froude, Reade, Ruskin, Yates, Milman, Mill, and the two Bulwers, especially Lord Lytton! The latter published nearly seventy volumes, some of them upon subjects exacting much special research; and for many of his novels received £1,500 each, besides winning a Bar-

onety and a seat in Parliament as the result of his literary distinction. And yet how hard, think you, did Bulwer work? Never, he tells us, so laboriously as to degenerate into a slave of the pen, a mere literary drudge. He won his proud position by devoting, as a rule, not over three hours a day to reading and writing; and yet Bulwer was not a man of genius. He was only a man of prodigious talent, who narrowly escaped being a genius.

Think, again, of the generous sums paid in our own country to Irving, Mrs. Stowe, Motley, Prescott, Emerson, Longfellow, and hundreds of minor literary magnates, many of whom have swelled their income by lectures, not a few of whom have been Ambassadors, Consuls, etc., etc., and all of whom have held a position in society which no amount of mere wealth would have secured to them! Look at the remuneration of authorship, in France, where, it is said, Victor Hugo was paid \$80,000 for "Les Misérables"; where Lamartine earned and squandered a fortune; where Dumas, George Sand, Paul Feval, and Eugene Sue have been paid enormous sums; and where Scribe left to his heirs \$800,000! In view of these facts is it just to whine about the beggarly rewards of literature, and the doom of indigence and starvation which are so often said to hang over those who give themselves to pen and ink?

But, says an objector, the instances you have mentioned of well-remunerated authorship are exceptional. You omit all mention of the innumerable scribblers who have stranded on the sands of popular neglect; you cite all the prizes in the lottery, and say nothing about the blanks. What of Collins, of Burns, of Clare, Nicoll, and Poe? In reply, we readily admit that some men of letters have lived lives of penury, ending

in starvation,—that some of the works which have charmed the world, have been written with the heart's blood of their authors. But are such failures the doom of literary men only? Do we not see them in every calling and walk of life? Are there no starving doctors who find it harder to keep the vital spark in their own bodies than in those of their patients,—no lawyers, of whom some future Gray may truthfully sing:

But ah! to them no clerk his golden page  
 Rich with retaining fees did e'er unroll;  
 Chill negligence repressed their legal rage,  
 And froze the quibbling current of the soul?

Has not the Church its army of martyrs,—pastors steeped in poverty to the lips, yet having as many mouths to feed as the anti-Malthusian John Rogers? Is money a drug with every druggist,—is every tailor as familiar with turkey as with goose,—and are teachers never impecunious? Is any fact better established than that ninety-five out of every hundred merchants quit business in disgust, or become bankrupt? Not much is said of the unhappy lot of these men; but we hear a continual ding-dong about the miseries of authors.

The *New York World*, in speaking of the pecuniary receipts of the authors of that metropolis, says that they do not average five hundred dollars a year. "No profession," it adds, "even when successful, is so precarious,—demands greater brain-labor at smaller compensation. There are dozens of literary men in this city, whose names are popularly familiar, living on incomes that a stone-cutter would laugh at." This, we believe, is an exaggerated statement; but allowing it to be substantially true, why is the fact thus? We cannot help thinking that, in a great majority of cases, it is the fault



of the literary men themselves,—of their own imprudence. When a vulgar mortal, a tailor, mechanic, or stone-cutter, despises economy, and spends in one day the earnings of ten, he goes to wreck. He knows perfectly well that no matter how hard he may work, unless he carefully husbands his receipts, and jealously guards against the little leaks of useless expenditure, he can never become independent. Why should the man of genius expect to be exempted from this rule? Does he expect a miracle to be worked, or rather a series of miracles, to save him from the consequences of his own acts?

Look again at Goldsmith. How is it possible for any man to thrive who squanders his money so recklessly as he did his? Emptying his pockets as soon as they were filled, he was eternally harassed by creditors; and though receiving large sums for his writings, had always his daily bread to earn. No sooner had the proceeds of the "Good-Natured Man" come into his hands than the bulk was spent in purchasing and furnishing with elegance a set of chambers in the Temple, paying for this four hundred pounds, at a time when he had just been sorely distressed by his debts. At another time, when he had not a shilling in his pocket, he gave away his bed-clothes to a poor woman, and was found sleeping on the feathers of his bed, with his arms thrust through holes in the tick. Goldsmith might have been independent had he not thrown away his earnings. True, he died three thousand pounds in debt, as we have already stated; but when was any other man in similar circumstances so trusted?

There are scores of literary men at the present day of whom Goldsmith was a prototype. They realize for years a fair or a large income; they live beyond it; they

get into debt, and are dogged by sheriffs; they borrow of their friends till they can borrow no longer; houseless, moneyless, shabby, and hungry, they join in the cry about the miserable rewards of literature and the woes of literary men. Yet who does not see that, till the laws of nature are reversed, they cannot reasonably expect, unless they themselves change, a change in their condition?

It is a misfortune of the literary profession that it is one to which hardly any person is bred. It is recruited largely by persons who, having tried several other callings and failed, adopt this as a *pis-aller*, or because they have, or fancy they have, for it a natural taste. It is made up, in short, of the vagrant talent of the world. The complaint of Pope, and of Horace before him, is too true of the Bohemians of to-day:

He served a 'prenticeship who sets up shop;  
Ward tried on puppies and the poor his drop;  
But those who cannot write, and those who can,  
All rhyme, and scrawl, and scribble to a man.

It is well, perhaps, that there is such a *L'Hôpital des Invalides*, such a House of Refuge, for the lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and others, who have found out that, in the pursuit of their callings, the round men get into the square holes. It is fortunate that there is one kind of business in which any man who has a nimble brain, a quire of paper, a steel pen, and an ink-bottle, can set up shop. But, having adopted this calling, the writer should consecrate himself to it religiously. He should give up his gipsy habits, his contempt for rule and system, and recognize the iron conditions that hem every man in. He should realize that he has a life of toil before him, and brace himself

to it with all the coolness and energy of a man of the world. He should see, and profoundly feel, that, while he has many advantages over other toilers, in the ability to command his time, and go to bed when he has a headache or a heart-ache, he is not, at other times, to be continually dwelling among the roses and lilies of life, but must grapple with its stern realities.

He should never forget that on him, as on his brethren of coarser clay, the world will press with its prosaic needs; that the tax-gatherer will visit him as well as others; that, if he run in debt at Christmas time, around his head will drive a snow-storm of bills. It has been well said that "the finest expression will not liquidate a butcher's account. If Apollo puts his name to a bill, he must meet it when it becomes due, or go into the gazette." The literary adventurer, therefore, should abandon all hope of following out his own fancies merely,—at least while the world spins on the principle that bread and meat are to be got only for cash. Not having had any special preliminary training for his profession, he should, for that very reason, set himself deliberately to work to remedy his defects. He should take especial care of the tool or instrument he is to work with, his mind,—giving it edge and sharpness by the right studies, enlarging it by serviceable knowledge, and keeping it clear and bright instead of letting it rust by indolence, or dimming it by dissipation. He should browse freely in all the fields of literature and history, and acquaint himself with the leading facts of physical science, political economy, politics, and philosophy, as a part of his necessary stock in trade. Above all, he should rid himself of the silly notion that it is the nature of genius to be wayward and irregular. Instead of working by fits and starts, lying idle six

days and crowding into one day the labors of six, he must, as a rule, toil at stated times, and if he is contributing to a periodical or newspaper, do his work punctually and to the wishes of his employer.

But whether an employé or working independently, let him husband his gains, remembering that to be poor is the surest way to keep poor, and that the only way to command the money of others is not to need it. While he should never economize so far as "to think candle ends" and become a niggard, he should yet seek to be independent by all honorable means, as necessary not only to his self-respect, but to the untrammelled and vigorous exercise of the faculties by which he is to earn his bread. Can anyone doubt that a literary man thus equipped and thus acting would make head in the world? Is it not as true of this calling as of every other, that so far from first-class employment being wanting for first-class men, the men are wanting for the employment? Need any author plead his fine tastes as an excuse for extravagant expenditures, when Burns, with seventy pounds a year, could keep free of debt? Or will anyone talk of the incompatibility of vulgar cares about beef and bread with the lofty conceptions of genius, when he remembers that Shakspeare, the king of authors, amassed a sum equal to more than two hundred thousand dollars in our own day, and that Scott neglected no duty as a man and a citizen while he wrought out his marvellous fictions?

The truth is, it is with other literary men as it is with the toilers connected with the daily and weekly press; their calling is what they choose to make it. A generation ago there was a deal of cant in the newspapers about the hard lot of the gentlemen of the press.

Almost every country editor had his monthly or quarterly Jeremiad, in which he indulged in a long and lugubrious wail over his herculean labors and his beggarly receipts. Now that, by energy, tact, and persistence, the press has become an engine of power, the "Fourth Estate" of the realm, we hear no more of these piteous complaints. A journalist thrives or fails, according to his qualifications and habits. The "b'hoys" and "fast" men of the profession who "go in" for a short life and a merry one,—who mortgage morrows of happiness for moments of present gratification,—whose fingers itch to get rid of a dollar the moment they receive it,—who make larger investments in champagne suppers than in interest-bearing notes,—who despise the homely virtues of temperance and frugality, and, Micawber-like, are always counting upon some miraculous piece of good fortune to "turn up,"—this class is, doubtless, miserable enough, and think their profession, as they would think any other, if they belonged to it, the hardest-worked and most poorly-requited in the world. Such men are always "hard up" for ideas and money, have a natural horror of the printer's devil, and when not engaged in digging out leaders from their brains, are excavating their own graves. But those who stick to their legitimate business, and do their duties faithfully, steer clear of bar-rooms and billiard-saloons, have a horror of race-courses, go home at night before the key-hole is "stolen," pay one hundred cents to the dollar, and bear in mind that there is a "rainy day" coming, for which it would be well to lay by a snug sum,—get along well enough, and find their calling as pleasant and profitable, to say the least, as that of feeling pulses, preaching to sleepy congregations, or piercing the skulls of stupid jury-

men. The owners of our great representative journals are always on the watch for such men; they have the eyes of a lynx to detect them in the humblest and most obscure positions; and if to these qualifications they add mental grasp, large resources, and that tact and worldly knowledge which put the key-stone to the arch of all their other qualifications, their ascent to the topmost round of the ladder will be as sure and rapid in this profession as in any other.

## CURIOSITIES OF CRITICISM.

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**A**MONG the amusing and instructive books that remain to be written, one of the most piquant would be a history of the criticisms with which the most celebrated literary productions have been greeted on their first appearance before the world. Such a volume, if faithfully written, would probably show that if works of genius are rare, just criticisms of them are rarer still; that if Homer sometimes nods, Aristarchus is often found napping; and that the oracles of literature are just as fallible as all other oracles, and never make more egregious or ludicrous mistakes than when they are most confident and most dogmatic in their decisions. The circumstances that may warp the judgment of the critic are legion. Not only jealousy, envy, bigotry, self-conceit, an exclusive love for special kinds of literature, a latent idiosyncrasy, may cause an obliquity in his judgment, but he is almost always too easily accessible to outside influences to pronounce an unerring opinion. The mind of almost every man is as delicately poised, and as easily moved, as those scales which are so nicely constructed that a passing insect's wing will disturb them; and the mental insects are sometimes very large and numerous, and flap their wings most vigorously.

Who can credit the fact that the poet who overtops all the other poets of ancient or modern times as

Mont Blanc overtops the other Alps, was denounced by "a great critic" in the seventeenth century as "raving and rambling in tragedy, without any coherence, any spark of reason?" Yet such was the judgment of Rymer, for whom Dryden had a profound reverence. *Othello* he pronounces "a bloody farce, without salt or savor," which can only fill the head with "vanity, confusion, *tintamarre*, and *jingle-jangle*. \* \* No woman bred out of a pigstye could talk so meanly as Desdemona." Voltaire pronounced Shakspeare's tragedies "monstrous farces;" Mr. Secretary Pepys, an inveterate play-goer, thought *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the most insipid, ridiculous play he had ever witnessed; Goldsmith, in his *Citizen of the World*, declares the famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy a chaos of incongruous metaphors; and Wallack, the actor, tells us that when he attempted to read *Macbeth* to a French friend, the latter broke out in the first scene with the most violent exclamations of disgust: "*Eh bien!* now dis is not nature! dis is not common sense! Oh, no! De tree old veetch shall nevere to go out to meet upon de blasted heath with no close on in tondare, lightning, and in rain. Ah, no! It is not common sense! *ma foi*, day stay at home! Aha!" Byron contended most stoutly that Pope was equal, if not superior, to the thousand-souled dramatist.

"Rare old Ben Jonson," if we may credit Drummond's notes of his conversation, was anything but a just and impartial critic. His judgments on contemporary poets were insolently magisterial,—in the very tone of Sir Oracle. "Spenser's stanzas pleased him not, nor his matter." Donne, though the first poet in the world in some things, for "not keeping of accent, deserved hanging." Sharpham, Day, and Dekkar, were all rogues;



and Abram Fraunce, "in his English hexameters, was a foole." The facile, melodious Waller, who never wrote a line that touches the heart, saw nothing in Milton but a poor, blind old schoolmaster, who had written a dull poem, remarkable for nothing but its length; and even Milton himself preferred the cold intellectual conceits, the metaphysical ingenuity, of Cowley to Dryden's masculine energy and "full-resounding line." Dryden objected to Milton's blank verse, to which he is positive the author of *Paradise Lost* was driven because "rhyme was not his talent." Locke,—of whose *Essay on the Human Understanding* the acute De Maistre says that it is a misnomer, and that it should have been entitled "An Essay on the Understanding of Locke,"—declares that, Milton excepted, all the other English poets are mere ballad-makers compared with "everlasting Blackmore." Yet the verse of this now forgotten poet was so rough that it was said that he wrote to the sound of his own chariot-wheels. Pope, the little wasp of Twickenham, who stung so many rivals by his criticism, writhed more than once under the stings of his enemies. His *Essay on Criticism* was characterized as "a pert, insipid heap of commonplace;" his *Windsor Forest* as a "barbarous rhapsody;" and on one occasion when, angling for a compliment, he asked his friend Mallet what new things there were in literature, he was answered, "Nothing worth notice; only a *thing* called an *Essay on Man*, made up of shocking poetry and insufferable philosophy." "*I wrote it!*" cried Pope, stung with rage, and his friend blushed, bowed, and darted out of the room, never to return.

It seems incredible that the great literary bashaw of the eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson, should have blundered so egregiously as he did in some of his crit-

ical judgments. Analyzing with extraordinary acuteness and sagacity poetry of the same class as his own, and dissecting with Velpeau-like precision the nonsense and extravagances of the metaphysical poets, he fails utterly when he applies his scalpel to the more imaginative bards. In his estimate of the classic poets, like Pope and Dryden, he has shown a mastery and solidity of criticism rarely rivaled; but the moment he treads the enchanted ground of romantic poetry he betrays an almost utter want of perception. Like a deaf man seated at a symphony of Beethoven, he lacks a sense; and hence for what is picturesque and passionate,—the “enchanting ravishment” that “would take the prisoned soul” of a more sensitive critic and “lap it in Elysium,”—he has no ear. The reading of *Paradise Lost* he pronounced a duty rather than a pleasure. He declared the diction of Milton’s *Lycidas* harsh, its numbers unpleasing; and told Anna Seward that “he would hang a dog that read that poem twice.” Gerald Griffin says that, when he was a reviewer, he used to receive novels from the publishers, accompanied with a request not to cut the leaves, a request that prevented him from employing Hood’s expedient for rapid reviewing,—to cut the leaves, and smell of the paper-knife! Johnson’s mistakes sometimes provoke one to believe that he adopted a similar method in doing hack-work for Cave and his *confrères*. He confessed that he never read Milton through till he was compelled to do so, to gather words for his dictionary. Chatterton he pronounced “a vulgar, uneducated stripling;” and Collins, the author of the *Ode to Evening*,—a poem that floats into the reader’s mind like a stream of celestial music, and which has been compared to a melody of Schubert,—he pronounces harsh and prosaic in his diction.

Beattie, the poet, moralist, and metaphysician, stigmatized Churchill's verse as "driveling and dull;" and, in speaking of the fastidious Gray, who pruned and polished and repolished his poetry with ceaseless care, commends his "*unlabored art!*" Dr. Kenrick declared Goldsmith's *Traveller* flimsy, and the *Deserted Village* "pretty, but deficient in fancy, dignity, genius, and fire." Gray could not see a spark of genius in Voltaire, except in his plays, which no literary resurrectionist now thinks of disentombing; nor could he discover any merit in Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*. David Hume, he said, had continued all his days an infant, but, unhappily, had been taught to read and write. The luxurious dreaminess and Æolian-harp-like music of Thomson's finest poem, *The Castle of Indolence*, Gray could not appreciate; and he thought Collins lacked imagery.

When the "Wizard of the North" was charming the world with his matchless creations, the author of "Crotchet Castle" could see no merit in "Waverley" or any of its successors. All of Scott's romances, he boldly declared, were like the pantomimes of the stage. "They are both one, with a slight difference. The one is the literature of pantomime, the other is the pantomime of literature. There is the same variety of character, the same diversity of story, the same copiousness of incident, the same research into costume, the same display of heraldry, falconry, minstrelsy, scenery, monkery, witchery, devilry, poachery, robbery, piracy, fishery, gipsy astrology, demonology, architecture, fortification, castrametation, navigation; the same running base of love and battle. The main difference is, that the one set of amusing fictions is told in music and action; the other in the worst dialects of the English language.

As to any sentence worth remembering, any moral or political truth, anything having a tendency, however remote, to make men wiser or better, to make them think, to make them even think of thinking,—they are both precisely alike." When Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" was published, it was received with a tempest of enthusiasm only paralleled by that which greeted Macaulay's "History of England." Yet Porson, in speaking of its style, said that there could not be a better exercise for a schoolboy than to turn a page of the work into English. Thomas Moore found Chaucer absolutely unreadable, and Samuel Rogers had no admiration for Shakspeare.

The savage Gifford, who broke so many bardlings on the wheel of his satire, did good service to literature; yet nothing can be more senseless than some of his critical judgments. Think of a reviewer calling Hazlitt a dull blockhead, and affirming that Shelley's poetry was generally meaningless! The slaughterer of the Della Cruscans long had the unenviable distinction of having killed Keats with a critique, and Byron gave currency to the story by expressing his astonishment that

The soul, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

But Keats, sensitive and tender-souled as he was, was made of stuff too stern to be stabbed by a goose-quill. Such an onslaught, however, as that of the Quarterly on his first literary venture, could have been dictated only by the bitterest political partisanship, mingled with religious bigotry. The critic who declares the *Prometheus Unbound* to be "driveling prose run mad," may be expected to characterize *The Eve of St. Agnes* as "gratuitous nonsense."

The reader has seen from these examples that of all the critics upon poetry the most fallible are poets. The frequency with which their predictions concerning the popularity of a brother bard are falsified, shows that the time has gone by when

The sacred name  
Of poet and of prophet was the same.

The poet may sing like an angel, but when he leaves the sky and touches the earth, he may trip like other mortals. He does better on his wings than on his feet. Having a secret bias toward that species of literary composition in which he himself excels, an author is often the very poorest judge of writings radically different from his own. What, then, is more natural than that he should invent canons that would limit all literary merit to the limits of his own school? How otherwise could Byron have called Spenser "a dull fellow," Chaucer "contemptible," and scornfully characterize Wordsworth's chief poem as

A clumsy, frowsy poem called *The Excursion*,  
Writ in a manner that is my aversion?

Who has forgotten the reception with which Wordsworth was greeted from all quarters on the publication of his maiden volume? From John O'Groat's to Land's End, his *Lyrical Ballads* provoked a loud roar of laughter; he was the butt of small wittlings, and the object of the critic's hissing scorn. His theory of poetry was looked upon as a defiance to all the laws of criticism, and to his brethren of the tuneful tribe was hardly less startling than if he had announced some new and monstrous heresy. The *Edinburgh Review*, especially, out-Jeffreyed Jeffrey in its merciless sarcasms; it not merely

ridiculed his perversities, his occasional puerility of theme, and tastelessness of diction, but scoffed at some of the finest productions of his genius. *Ruth*, *The Pet Lamb*, *We are Seven*, and the immortal *Intimations of Immortality*, were dismissed with the same flippant and contemptuous criticism as *Alice Fell*, and such verses as these:

A household tub, like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes.

Is it not strange that a poet who had himself been the victim of so merciless and scornful criticism, should speak in the most sweepingly depreciatory terms of some of his famous contemporaries and predecessors? Yet Dryden's great music-ode,—which rushes on with a swing and a flow like that of Pindar himself, and has been called the Heroic Symphony of Beethoven in words,—he stigmatizes as “a drunken song;” and for some of the most glorious poetry of Burns he professes a profound contempt. Mrs. Hemans tells us that the poet and herself were sitting on a bank overlooking Rydal Lake, and talking of the Scotch bard, when she said, “Mr. Wordsworth, do you not think his war ode, ‘Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,’ has been a good deal overrated,—especially by Mr. Carlyle, who calls it the noblest lyric in the language?” “I am delighted to hear you ask the question,” was the reply; “overrated?—trash! stuff! miserable inanity! without a thought,—without an image!” Then he recited the piece in a tone of unutterable scorn, and concluded with a *da capo* of “Wretched stuff!” Southey called “The Ancient Mariner,” of Coleridge, “the clumsiest attempt at German sublimity he ever saw;” and Wordsworth attributed the cold reception by the public of the

“Lyrical Ballads” to that poem, now admitted to be the gem of the book.

It is well known that neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge could see any merit in Gray’s *Elegy*. Fielding thought Richardson a solemn prig, and Richardson could never adequately express his disgust at Fielding’s vulgarity. Keats regarded the poets of Queen Anne’s time as “a school of dolts,” who had no more than

A puling infant’s force  
That swayed upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus.

Who has forgotten the fierce attack of the *Quarterly Review* on “Jane Eyre,” in which the unknown author, who was a clergyman’s daughter, is pronounced “a person who, with great mental powers, combines a total ignorance of society, a great coarseness of taste, and a heathenish doctrine of religion? If we ascribe the book to a woman at all,” continues the keen-sighted critic, “we have no alternative but to ascribe it to one who has, for some sufficient reason, forfeited the society of her own sex.”

To conclude, about the rarest thing in the world, next after a work of genius, is a bit of genuine criticism. The man of creative genius is hardly less disqualified than the unthinking million to decide upon the merit of an original production. The very fact that one has attained to mastery in some high walk of art shows that some of his faculties have been developed at the expense of the rest; for, as another has well said, it is not given to the human intellect to expand itself widely in all directions at once, and to be at the same time gigantic and well proportioned. One painter is distinguished by his exquisite finishing. He toils day after day to bring

the veins of a cabbage-leaf, the folds of a lace veil, the wrinkles of an old woman's face, nearer and nearer to perfection. In the time which he employs on a square foot of canvas, a master of a different order covers the walls of a palace with gods burying giants under mountains, or makes the cupolas of a church alive with cherubim and martyrs. Will either of these artists be likely fully to appreciate the other? or will the critic, who is charmed with the savageness of Salvator, and the "corregiosity of Correggio," do justice to the grandeur and lofty imagination of the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel and to the cartoons?



## TIMIDITY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING.

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WHENCE comes that bashfulness which men of great ability so often feel in addressing a large assembly? How happens it that a man who never hesitates or stammers in pouring out his thoughts to a friend, is embarrassed or struck dumb if he attempts to say the same things, however suitable, to fifty persons? Why is it that though he is awed by the presence of no one of them, and feels himself to be intellectually superior to every individual he faces, yet collectively they inspire him with a kind of terror? Why is it that while a man can talk fluently enough if sitting in a chair, yet perpendicularity paralyzes him; that the moment he gets upon his legs, his ideas, like a sailor's money on shore, like a twenty-dollar note in New York, or like thieves at sight of a detective, make themselves wings and fly away? Whately finds a solution of the problem in the curious and complex play of sympathies which takes place in a large assembly, and which increases in proportion to its numbers. In addressing a large assembly, a person knows that each hearer sympathizes both with his own anxiety to acquit himself well, and also with the same feelings in the minds of the rest. He knows that every slip or blunder he may make, tending to excite mirth, pity, or contempt, will make a stronger impression on each of the hearers from their mutual sympathy and their consciousness of it,—and

this doubles his anxiety. Again, he knows that each hearer, putting himself mentally in the speaker's place, sympathizes with this increased anxiety, which is, by this thought, increased still more; and finally, if he becomes at all embarrassed, the knowledge that there are so many to sympathize, not only with that embarrassment, but also with each other's feelings on the perception of it, heightens the speaker's confusion to the extreme, and makes him, perhaps, speechless.

Whatever may be the explanation of the phenomenon, we are all familiar with that perturbation,—that Belshazzarish knocking of the knees, and that cleaving of the tongue to the roof of the mouth,—which seizes upon newly-fledged orators, when they look upon a “sea of upturned faces,” especially for the first time. That panoramic aspect of the human face divine has a powerful fascination for most men,—a terrible one for the sensitive, or those inexperienced in public addresses! They may express themselves fluently enough in solitude, or to a small circle of friends, but the moment they mount the rostrum and face an audience, their intense consciousness of the human presence, of its reality, and of the impossibility of escaping it, petrifies the mind,—paralyzes all its powers. Even the most distinguished orators tell us that their first attempts at public speaking were fiery ordeals; and not a few broke down opprobriously, “throttling their practised accents in their fears,” and losing the thread of their thoughts in an access of helpless consternation. The finest wits have been disgraced in this way, as well as the dullest. Indeed, men of the most thorough accomplishment in other respects, often fail as public speakers from sheer excess of ideas and good taste, while a mere parrot of a fellow, with little culture and but a

thimbleful of brains, "goes off" in a steady stream of words, like a rain-spout in a thunderstorm. It has been well observed that the very delicacy of perception, the exquisite sensibility to impressions, and the impulsiveness, which are essential to eloquence, are almost necessarily accompanied by a certain degree of nervous tremulousness, just as a finely strung harp vibrates at the slightest touch, or whenever the faintest breeze passes over it.

Addison and Gibbon attempted oratory in the British senate, only to fall flat and shame their worshipers. The latter tells us that the bad speakers filled him with apprehension, the good ones with despair. Pope, whom one would suppose to have been a pale, austere, self-sustained mortal, could not speak ten consecutive words correctly in public. It is amusing to hear from him, who never feared to confront the stoutest adversary with his pen, and who demolished a host of enemies at one fell swoop in the most sweeping, fierce and brilliant satire in the whole range of literature, the confession that he could tell a thing to three persons very well, but if his audience were a dozen, his polished intellect was bewildered; that he was unequal to a conversation with twelve individuals! Perhaps his dwarfish stature had something to do with his nervous timidity; and if, instead of having, when he got up in the morning, to be sewed up in stiff canvas stays, in order to stand erect, and having to plump out his meagre, spectral legs with three pairs of stockings to give them a respectable look, he had had the average bulk and thews of a man, he might have flashed and thundered with his tongue as well as with his pen. The "little, crooked man" was once examined as a witness in the House of Lords, in the case of the Bishop of Rochester; and

though he had only to state how the bishop spent his time at Bromley, and though when the poet cast his eyes along the nearest bench of peers (for he dared not look farther,) he saw they were nearly all his personal acquaintances, he actually made three blunders in a testimony of less than twenty words. Erskine, the great advocate, was at first painfully unready of speech, and so embarrassed in his maiden efforts that he would have abandoned the attempt to be an orator, had he not felt, as he tells us, his children tugging at his gown, and urging him on, in spite of his boggling and stammering. Sheridan, as all know, "hung fire" in his first speech; and Curran was almost knocked down by the sound of his own voice when he first addressed his "gentlemen" in a little room of a tavern.

Sir Philip Francis, of whose audacious letters even Burke tells us that they made his blood run cold, (for we assume that Francis was the real *Stat Nominis Umbra*,—the mysterious Junius,) was hesitating and unready in speech. He said on one occasion in the House of Commons, "I am not accustomed to speak in public, and I very much fear, that, although what I have to say is clear enough in my own mind, it will appear in great disorder." At another time he says: "I am thoroughly conscious of my own infirmities. Even *signs* and *gestures* are sufficient to disconcert me." Cowper is another instance of extreme bashfulness, or lack of presence of mind, before a public assembly. In early life, through his aristocratic connexions, he obtained the place of clerk in the House of Lords, where his duties would have been little more than to stand up and read parliamentary notices or documents to the House; but so timid was he, that the idea of being obliged to speak before a large audience terrified

him exceedingly, and so wrought upon his imagination as the time drew near when he should begin his attendance, that he gave way to an agony of apprehension, and tried to hang himself. Rather than make a figure in the eye of the public, he deliberately got a rope, and tried to put an end to his mental sufferings. But for a servant, who entered the room as he was about executing his design, the world would have wanted some immortal songs. Cowper's shyness and fear of the public eye never wholly forsook him. While he lived in retirement with Mrs. Unwin, her son and daughter, he avoided the company of strangers; and he was often known in his rural walks to leave the road, and conceal himself inside the fence, if he saw any one, especially a lady, approaching. When the danger was past, he would come forth and proceed on his ramble.

Theodore Hook complained, to his dying day, that he had never completely overcome the unpleasant sensation felt on entering a room; and an English reviewer tells of an eminent law-lord, the very model of senatorial and judicial eloquence of the composed and dignified order, who has been seen to tremble, when he rose to address the House of Lords, like a thorough-bred racer when first brought to the starting-post. Even the great reviewer, Jeffrey, though generally fluent, once stuck in a speech. When John Kemble was about to quit the Edinburgh stage, some of his admirers decided to give him a dinner and a snuff-box, and chose Jeffrey to make the presentation address. As the latter rose, the great tragedian, who sat beside him, rose also with most formidable dignity. Being thus forced to look up to his man, Jeffrey found himself annihilated by the tall tragic god, who sank him to the earth at every compliment, by obeisances of overwhelming grace and

stateliness. Beginning well, the great critic got confused, and mortified his friends by sitting down, and not only leaving his speech unfinished, but even forgetting to thrust the box into the hands of the intended receiver. Dr. Chalmers, though a giant in the pulpit, never was able to speak extempore in a way satisfactorily to himself, though the cause was not bashfulness, but the overmastering fluency of his mind. Thoughts and words came to his lips in a flood, and thus impeded each other, like water which one attempts to pour all at once out of a narrow-mouthed jug.

Even years of practice in public speaking do not always extinguish the timidity which many feel in confronting an assemblage of listeners. John Quincy Adams, who was one of the readiest of public debaters, and seemed always armed *cap-a-pié*, told Governor Slade, of Vermont, that he never got upon his legs to speak without nervousness and fear of failure. Gough is said to be still troubled with stage-fright, though he has lectured for twenty-six years, and appeared before Boston audiences three hundred and fifty times. Many speakers who have no fear of a familiar audience, are yet nervous in a new position. Lord Eldon once said that he was always a little nervous in speaking at the Goldsmiths' Dinner, though he could talk before Parliament with as much indifference as if it were so many cabbage-plants.

The question has been asked: Why is it that men who have ranked high as writers, have so often miserably failed as speakers? They who may be said on paper to roar you in the ears of the groundlings an 'twere any lion, aggravate their voice on the platform like a sucking dove. The explanation is that very different and quite opposite intellectual gifts are required

to form a good writer and a good speaker. Abstraction of mind, seclusion from the din and tumult of public assemblies, unwearied patience in gathering the materials of composition, and exquisite taste, that will be satisfied only with the utmost nicety and finish of style, are demanded by the writer; while quickness of thought, boundless self-confidence, tact in seizing upon the most available, though not the most satisfactory arguments, and a certain intellectual coarseness that is not offended by a slip or a blunder, are necessary to the orator. Again, a writer may spend an hour in choosing a word, and a day in polishing a sentence, but, as the author of *Lacon* has observed, eloquence, to produce its full effect, must start from the head of the orator, as Pallas from the brain of Jove, clad in full panoply. The fastidious writer may blot out words and substitute new ones by the hundred, and it is his own fault if the fact is known to his dearest friend; but if an orator chances to boggle once with his tongue, the detection is immediate, and the punishment certain. Great writers, too, having a reputation to support, often suffer as speakers from a self-defeating over-anxiety to do well; like Sheridan, who was said to have been all his life afraid of the author of "*The School for Scandal*," they are frightened at the shadow of their own reputation.

Let, then, the stammerers, the tongue-tied and scatter-brained members of society console themselves,—for this is the moral of our remarks,—under their inability to wield at will the fierce democracy. If the *os magna sonaturum* is denied them, let them remember the saying that speech is silver, but silence gold; that Grant is tongue-tied in public; that Moltke is silent in eight languages; that Hawthorne was dumb before a large company, and that Irving could not give an after-dinner

toast without fright; that neither Washington nor Jefferson were orators, nor even glib talkers, and yet John Adams said of the former that he had the most remarkable mouth he had seen, for nothing foolish escaped from it; that deeds are higher proof of genius than words, and that

“One true thought, from the deepest heart upspringing,  
May from within a whole life fertilize;  
One true word, like the lightning sudden gleaming,  
May rend the night of a whole world of lies.  
Much speech, much thought, may often be but seeming,  
But in one truth might boundless ever lies.”



## NOSES.

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HOW very odd that poets should suppose  
There is no poetry about a nose,  
When plain as a man's nose upon his face,  
A noseless face would lack poetic grace!  
Why, what would be the fragrance of a rose,  
And where would be the mortal means of telling  
Whether a vile or wholesome odor flows  
Around us, if we owned no sense of smelling?  
'Neath starry eyes, o'er ruby lips it grows,—  
Beauty in its form,—and music in its blows!

So sings a modern bard, with more truth than poetry. To us, as to him, it has been always a profound and inexplicable mystery that poets and other writers, in extolling the glories of the human face divine, should so uniformly turn up their noses at its most prominent and significant feature. The eye, whether of lustrous gray or of witching hazel, of sweet, pellucid blue, or of the mysterious, unsearchable black, has been pictured as "the window of the soul;" the peach-like beauty of the cheek has never wanted praise; the mouth has been called the dwelling-place of the loves and the graces; but the nose has been contemptuously overlooked, or handled only to be snubbed. Many a bard has indited a sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow; but who ever heard of one's making a woful ballad to his mistress's nose, or entreating her to drink to him only with her nose,

or to "take, oh, take that nose away"? Had Byron's famous stanza run —

When we two parted  
 In silence and tears,  
 Half broken-hearted,  
 To sever for years,  
 Pale grew thy *nose* and cold,  
 Colder thy kiss,—

the lines would have been true to nature, for the cheeks cannot be cold without the nose being cold also; yet we fear there is hardly a critic in the land who would not regard this change of a word as absolutely fatal to the pathos.

Not only poets have thus failed to discover any ideality or sentiment in this feature, but all the essayists have regarded it with equal coldness. Neither Montaigne nor Swift has devoted a chapter to the Nose, though the one has given us a learned and elaborate dissertation on Thumbs, and the other a disquisition on Ears, in the "Tale of a Tub." Perhaps, in the case of many authors, the reason of this may be that they find it difficult to think seriously of noses. Unfortunately, the nose is the feature where all the *mauvaise honte* of our nature seems embodied; and it often happens that it is associated in our minds, not with blissful or dignified recollections, but with some ludicrous, mirth-provoking occasion, when a sleeping hearer in church involuntarily startled a whole congregation by a note from his nasal bassoon like that of a trumpet; or when, during a personal *rencontre*, somebody's nose was tweaked before a crowd of spectators, and, with its owner, made the butt of inextinguishable laughter. Again, we often find it difficult to banish the recollection of some nasal enormity we have seen, such as Martial describes, which almost touches the earth:—

Quod pene terram tanget indecens nasus ;

or that which is the butt of a still sharper epigram:—

Tongilianus habet nasum ; scio, non nego ; sed jam  
Nil praeter nasum Tongilianus habet.

Placed conspicuously in the very front of the human countenance, the nose is in many respects the most unhappy of human organs ; no other is so exposed to the rude buffets of the world ; no other in its delicate and sensitive organization is so subject to disgust. As a valiant champion of its rights has said : “ Boreas assails it ; Sol burns it ; Bacchus inflames it. Put forward as a leader in front of the battle, men follow it blindly in a course which it is very often unwilling to pursue, and then blame it for every mischance. Whatever hard blows are given, it comes in for more than its share, and, after weeping tears of blood, has to atone for the faults of other members, over which it has no control. The fists are continually getting it into scrapes ; its bad neighbor, the tongue, brings down upon it indignation undeserved ; the eye plays it false on a thousand occasions ; and the whole body corporate is continually poking it into situations the most repugnant to its better feelings.”

In spite of the neglect and insult to which this feature of the face has been by turns subjected, we believe there are few sciences which will more richly reward the pains of investigation and study than that of Nasology. Treated with the precision and the exhaustiveness and fulness of Eden Warwick, it teems alike with instruction and interest. It has been shown by a comprehensive induction by that writer, leading to a conclusion as inevitable and as unerring as those of mathematics, that the nose is the great facial sign-post which

points to character; that, in judging of any man, we have only to follow our nose, or rather his nose, to be on the right road to knowledge. A broad, expansive forehead, and a low monkey one, do not more certainly indicate greatness and littleness of intellect, than the varieties of nose indicate the peculiarities of the intellectual and moral man. Not to refine too nicely, the pointed and flexible nose has always indicated a capacity for keen research, as also a fox-like, prying, mischievous disposition; the hawk-nose, a Jewish shrewdness and penetration; the broad, flab nose, enthusiasm of temperament; the thin, pinched, starved nose, a sneaking, miserly disposition, so well portrayed in the inimitable picture of "The Misers," in Windsor Castle, whose sharp-pointed noses so strongly mark their avidity; and the cocked nose, a conceited and contemptuous feeling. What other feature forms so perfect an anthropometer or index of the man whom it prefaces? Where else, so vividly as upon the nose, do intemperance and lust write their degrading signs, scorn her vulgar sneer, concentration its singleness of aim, and blood its graduated refinements? What other direction so terse and significant as "Follow your nose"?—what other synonym for imbecility so striking as "To be led by the nose"?—and by what other term so expressive as "Nose out of joint," can one describe mortification or defeat? It is, indeed, marvellous how much this small organ, in its form and relation to the other features, may express. From the nostrils, spiritually thin, and the graceful, long arch of the finest Caucasian type, to the thick, flat proboscis of the African, is a change that marks the very extremes of culture and civilization.

In all ages of the world a liberal allowance of proboscis has been admired, while a niggardly one has

been held in contempt. The Romans liked a long, large nose, like Julius Cæsar's; and it is a significant fact that the same word in Latin, *Nasutus*, means *having a large nose*, and *acute* or *sagacious*. All their distinguished men had snuff-taking organs not to be sneezed at. Cicero had a large nose, with the addition of an 'excrement' thereon. Ovid, it is well known, derived his *sobriquet* of Naso from the magnitude of that appendage; and it was upon the strength of this, no doubt, that he aspired to the affections of Julia, the daughter of Augustus. Juvenal speaks of a *nasus, quasi murus, oculis interjectus*,—a nose thrown up like a wall between the eyes. Catullus even went so far, on a certain occasion, as to express a wish that he were all nose. In modern days, large noses have been not less coveted and esteemed than in the ancient. "Give me," said Napoleon, "a man with a large allowance of nose. In my observations of men I have almost invariably found a long nose and a long head to go together." The philosophy of this seems to be that a man thus favored is usually endowed with large energy and intelligence,—seeming to say (as his fingers, with the thumb for a pivot, describe a spiral at the tip of his facial bowsprit) to all who would outwit or overreach him, "Not as you *knows* on." On the contrary, a small pug nose is generally indicative of febleness of will and vacillation of purpose. A pug may be smart and witty, quick at repartee, and capable of writing a newspaper paragraph or a song; but when did a pug conquer a kingdom, write an epic, carve a statue, or invent a new mode of locomotion? Never. Is there a pug among all Plutarch's heroes remarkable for anything,—even for pugnacity?

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. By a large

nose we do not mean a huge, disproportionate organ, nor a diseased, unhealthy one, such as a reader is too apt to picture in his mind's eye when a generous nose is spoken of. We refer to no such enormities as the well-fed beak of Bardolph, glowing with carbuncles, and hissing hot with the fumes of sack; or Cromwell's proboscis, whose warty rubicundity was compared by Butler and other lampooners to a meteor, "perplexing monarchs with fear of change." Far less have we in view so immense a promontory of flesh as that which jutted out from the face of the traveller in Slawkenbergius; or an eccentric cutwater like Sulla's, which the besieged Athenians called "a mulberry dredged over with meal,"—a joke, by the way, which cost the inventors of it dearly, when the revengeful dictator put his nose within their gates. From all such bulbous excrescences,—such nasal monstrosities,—we pray to be delivered; as also from the alderman's nose of a thousand bottles, concentrating in itself the fiery essences of "potations deep,"—a polypetalous enormity, "whose blushing honors," says Horace Smith, "as becoming to it as the stars, crosses and ribbons of a successful general, are trophies of past victories, the colors won in tavern campaigns." Such noses are our horror; yet Shakspeare seems to have regarded them with a kindly feeling, and even to have petted them. How long and fondly does his wit buzz and hover about Bardolph's red nose! That volcanic promontory threatens to coruscate forever on his page; and when he parts with it finally, he does so with profound and evident regret.

Among the great poets of the present century, few have had countenances more strikingly intellectual than Wordsworth; and to what was this owing? Not to the eyes, for they lacked lustre, and were always more or

less diseased; nor to his cheeks, for they hung loose; nor to his chin, which was small and retreating; nor to his mouth, for it was by no means handsome or suggestive of the refined qualities he exhibited. Most of his features were commonplace; but they were redeemed by a noble expanse of forehead, and, above all, by the nose, which was worthy of a Trajan or an Antoninus. What a contrast with this was the physiognomy of Coleridge! Hazlitt, who has painted him to the life, represents him as having a mouth gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; a chin good-humored and round; "but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was a small, feeble nothing,—like what he has done." No wonder that Charles Lamb wrote, after his death: "Coleridge has died, leaving behind him, it is said, forty thousand treatises on Metaphysics and Divinity, *not one of them complete.*" Equally characteristic was the nose of Tom Moore, as described by Leigh Hunt. It was "sensual and prominent, and at the same time the reverse of aquiline; there was a very peculiar characteristic in it,—as if it were looking forward to and scenting a feast or an orchard."

One of the largest noses ever attached to the human face divine was possessed by the Abbé Genest, who flourished in the time of Louis XIV. Rarely has the world seen such a nasal enormity, such a Brobdingnagian olfactory; it was literally an immense nose, and when its owner sneezed it must have startled the bystanders like the trumpet stop of an organ or the explosion of distant cannon. The Duke of Burgoyne and the Duke of Maine, his scholars, made it the butt of endless pleasantries; and even his royal friend, the grand monarch himself, lost his gravity, starch, and stateliness, in beholding it, and burst into a laugh. Nay, we are told

he so far forgot his dignity as to join in the *espiégleries* of which the *Abbé au nez royal* was the victim, and to hurl a shaft of his own at the unoffending proboscis. One of the happiest anagrams on record is one made by a wag of the day, in allusion to the Abbé's nose, on the latter's name, which was *Charles Genest*: "*Eh! c'est large nez*—Eh! it is a large nose." Such a nose would have been invaluable to Hiss, the immortal chairman of the Massachusetts "smelling committee." Hardly less imperial in its proportions was the nose of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, who flourished a little earlier in the same century. Like most persons thus gifted, he was sensitive regarding any allusion to its size, and fought several duels to maintain a due respect for it among his neighbors. If his portrait may be trusted, his nose was such a one as many men who lack a sign of power on their faces would be glad to own; and we are told that he defended it with his pen as well as with his sword, retaliating upon his irreverent commentators by showing how the inhabitants of the moon destroy at birth all small-nosed infants, having no hope for their future.

It is said that *François*, Duke of Anjou, had a nose so swollen and distorted that it seemed to be double; which provoked from his countrymen, among other sarcasms, the gibe that the man who always wore two faces might be expected to have two noses also. Still more unfortunate was *Turner*, Bishop of Ely, who in 1691 fled from England to the Continent to avoid apprehension for treason. His friends considered his escape almost hopeless, "for his nose was such that none who had seen it could forget it." Hardly less marked than this was the nose of *Grimm*, the German scholar, which was large and twisted, but, according to a shrewd observer, "twisted always in the right direction"; or that of *Godwin*, au-



thor of "The Political Justice,"—which had so fearful a "downward elongation" that Southey declared that no language was vituperative enough to describe it.

Among the modern wearers of large noses, few have eclipsed Sir Charles Napier, the hero of Scinde. He had a prodigious proboscis, and his energy was in proportion. Everyone remembers the colossal proportions of President Tyler's nose, and the inflexibility, not to say obstinacy, of will which always accompanied it. Among modern literary men, Bulwer arrests attention by the extraordinary size of that organ, which is quite Dantean in length and shape. Of all the famous authors of our time, none owe less to genius and more to persistent effort.

Directly opposed to the Roman style of noses is the Greek, the owners of which have far less firmness, decision, and energy than the Romans, but more subtlety, tact, craft, and refinement. Men with this kind of nose prefer diagonal action to straightforward; they are powerful obliquely, by the indirect rather than by the direct stroke. All the history of Greece confirms this view. The Greeks loved the arts better than war; they liked to talk better than to fight. They were ten years in conquering Troy, when the Romans would have battered it down in three months. When Rome aided Greece against Philip of Macedon, the Athenians, according to Livy, furnished none of the sinews of war; they could contribute to the common cause only declamations and despatches—"quibus solum valent." If the Greeks have made a prodigious noise in history, they may thank Homer, Æschylus, Demosthenes, and Phidias,—not Alexander or Epaminondas.

While strength of character, persistence, and intellectual breadth are thus indicated by a large nose, docility,

or willingness to be led by others, is revealed by nasal flexibility—though this quality has other meanings, dependent on the other peculiarities of the organ. The docility of the elephant is indicated by the wonderful flexibility of his proboscis, while the rhinoceros betrays his stubbornness by his inflexible snout surmounted by a horn. It has been suggested that the men of Brazenose College, Oxford, may have acquired that appellation by their obstinate and unyielding disposition, as a person of opposite temper is said to be easily led by the nose.

The Jewish or hawk nose generally indicates shrewdness in worldly matters, especially when accompanying the narrow, concentrative forehead, which is so symbolical of singleness of purpose. Scholars with this nose are generally curious wranglers, ingenius cabalists, fine splitters of hairs, keen detectors of discrepancies and analogies, rather than men of deep wisdom or profound learning. Among the Romans, according to Horace, this kind of nose was looked upon as signifying a turn for wit and sarcasm; for, speaking of his friend Virgil, he says that though he was one of the best of men, he was no joker, and no match in sneering for those who had sharper noses than his own;

—minus aptus acutis  
Naribus horum hominum;

that is, as it has been translated—

Unfit  
For the brisk petulance of modern wit.

Akin to the hawk, though a distant species, is the hook nose, of which William Pitt's was one of the most striking examples. The great commoner had a perfect bowsprit

of a nose,—a pert, hook-shaped appendage, on which his enemies used to say that “he dangled the Opposition” at his will. It was a nose that snuffed every evil intent of his enemies with the keenest scent; but in most other respects was one of the most unpromising noses that genius ever blew.

Of all the odious forms of noses, perhaps the flat was the most execrated by the Greeks and Romans. The Hebrews coincided in this opinion, and held such a frontispiece to be so great a blemish in a man’s character, that, though of the lineage of Aaron, he was absolutely excluded by the laws of Moses from the sacerdotal office. In our estimation, a more unfortunate form of nose,—perhaps the most unfortunate, take it all in all, that one can possess,—is the snub. The wearers of them are often amiable; they have rich stores of humor and drollery, and are “men of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy,” rendering them the most glorious of boon companions; but, unfortunately, their noses invite aggression,—everybody regards them as made to be tweaked. Tristram Shandy’s father indicated the general opinion of them when he said that no family, however high, could stand against a succession of short noses. Eden Warwick, who is so enthusiastic upon noses in general, says of this: “*Poenitet me hujus nasi.* The mind shrinks from the thought that, after contemplating the powerful Roman-nosed movers of the world’s destinies, or the refined and elegant Greek-nosed arbiters of art, or the deep and serious-minded thinkers with Cogitative noses, it must descend to the horrid bathos, the imbecile inanity, of the snub.” Yet nature delights in freaks; and there have been cases of men and women born into the world with this despised species of nose, who have attained to great eminence, and outstripped in the race of life

men with far more auspicious noses. Was not Kosciusko's a snub nose? Was it not the *petit nez retroussé* of Marmontel's heroine that captivated a sultan and overturned the laws of an empire? Was not the downfall of another empire, so eloquently portrayed in the immortal page of Gibbon, written under a nose of the very snubbiest construction? So intangible was the historian's smeller, that it is said, when his face was submitted to the touch of a blind old French lady, who used to judge of her acquaintances by feeling their features, she exclaimed: "*Voilà une mauvaise plaisanterie!*" Wilkes, the immortal demagogue, had a nose of this kind, and was in other respects so ugly that a lottery-office keeper once offered him ten guineas not to pass his window while the tickets were drawing, lest he should bring ill-luck upon the house; yet so bewitching were his conversation and his courtesies, that in thirty minutes he could talk away his ugly face!

One of the oddest and most eccentric noses that the world has ever seen, was that prefixed to the front of Lord Brougham. Nasologists have vainly tried to classify it. It is a most perplexing nose; a nose *sui generis*; one which comes within no category, and which defies all classification and analysis. It is like no other man's; it has its good points, and bad points, and no point at all. We doubt whether the painter or daguerreotypist ever lived, however dexterous, who could catch "this Cynthia of the minute." It is a perfect Proteus; when you think it is going right on for a Roman, it suddenly becomes a Greek; when you have written it down a Cogitative, it becomes as sharp as a knife. Generally it may be pronounced a compound of Roman, Greek, Cogitative, and Celestial, with a button at the end of it. It is said that its owner used to punct-

uate his sentences with it; that just at the end of a long parenthesis he turned up his nose, which served to note the change of subject as well as, or better than, a printed mark. Few noses have been a more fruitful theme of wit. There was no satirist of his Lordship who did not make it a point to gird at his proboscis. A million of conceits have hung from it as from a peg. For years it was the target of *Punch's* jokes, till it became almost a part of his stock in trade:

A thousand scapes of wit  
Made it the father of their idle dream,  
And racked it with their fancies.

Such a nose, though a godsend to the wags of the press, must be the despair of painters. Yet, with all its lines, "centric and eccentric," it is not more puzzling than have been others of less equivocal beauty. When in 1784 Gainsborough painted Mrs. Siddons, then in the prime of her glorious beauty and in the full blaze of her popularity, he found great difficulty in delineating the nose; and, after repeatedly altering its shape, he exclaimed, "Confound the nose! there is no end to it."

Persons unskilled in physiognomy cannot understand how the nose can be significant of character. To talk of an organ so unchangeable as being expressive, seems to them absurd. In opposition to this, Dugazon, a French actor distinguished in the period immediately preceding Talma, used to maintain that the nose is the most complete organ of expression, and that there are forty distinct modes of moving this single feature with variety of effect. Many a cool, calculating hypocrite, who has gained a complete mastery over the expression of his thoughts and feelings by his other facial features, has been betrayed by a refractory nose. Bal-

zac, in his *Théorie de la Démarche*, tells of a cunning dissembler, who had schooled his countenance into a wonderful immobility,—eye, cheek, and lip becoming at his bidding absolutely devoid of meaning,—and who had reduced his voice to an imperturbable evenness of tone, yet could not subdue the end of his nose. “*Que voulez-vous?*” he adds: “*le Vice n’est pas parfait.*”

While it is just to speak of some noses as eccentric and provocative of laughter, it must not be forgotten that all beauty is relative. Though in Europe and America the Grecian nose is accepted as the highest type, yet the Kalmucks prefer a dumpy club nose, the Hottentots a flat one, and the Chinese a short, thick one. The wife of the celebrated Jenghiz Khan, the Tartar, was deemed irresistible because she had only two holes for a nose. Artists, however, contend that a nose, to be well formed, should be one-third of the length of the face, from the tip of the chin to the roots of the hair. It should also be straight,—with the nostrils small and fine, springing well from the face, and meeting in that delicate bracket which seems lightly to sustain the weight of both nose and forehead, yet also open and instinct with life, for the breath of man resides in them. Even the most hideous nasal enormity, however, provided it be a *bona fide* flesh-and-blood nose, is preferable to an artificial nose,—a bogus frontispiece,—a mere nasal hypocrisy, however beautiful. It is a remark of Lessing that “every man has his own style, like his own nose;” commenting on which, Carlyle adds, that no nose can be justly amputated by the public, if only it be a real nose, and no wooden one put on for mere show and deception.

It is a profound remark of the Roman poet, Martial, that not every man is so lucky as to have a nose.

The observation is more applicable to his own country than to ours, for it may be questioned whether in a climate like ours, made up chiefly of highly concentrated and biting Northeasters, and where flowers are so scentless and transitory, noses are not sometimes an inconvenience as well as a blessing. We have six bleak months in our solar year, in which the sensation produced by cold upon the nose is as though a rat were hanging from the tip of it by his teeth.

We conclude our nasological observations with a sonnet by Horace Smith, the banker-poet, who is evidently "up to snuff," and speaks what he *knows*:

O nose! thou rudder in my face's centre,  
 Since I must follow thee until I die;  
 Since we are bound together by indenture,—  
 The master thou, and the apprentice I:  
 Oh! be to your Telemachus a mentor,  
 Though oft invisible, forever nigh:  
 Guard him from all disgrace and misadventure,  
 From hostile tweak, or Love's blind mastery.  
 So shalt thou quit the city's stench and smoke  
 For hawthorn lanes and copses of young oak,  
 Scenting the gales of heaven that have not yet  
 Lost their fresh fragrance since the morning broke,  
 And breath of flowers with rosy May-dews wet,  
 The primrose—cowslip—bluebell—violet.

## THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.\*

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*Singulière campagne, où j'ai vu trois fois s'échapper de nos mains le triomphe de la France!—NAPOLEON.*

OF the sixteen or seventeen decisive battles of the world, there is no one of deeper interest, if there is one of greater importance, than the battle of Waterloo. Fought by the greatest Generals of the world, at the very prime of their reputation, and being, as it were, the crown and finish, not only of a splendid piece of strategy, but of the experience of twenty years' war, this duel, which closed the wars of the French Revolution, is one which will always be invested with a peculiar fascination for the reader, whether viewed in itself only, or in connection with the vast results that hung on its issue. Never was a victory more complete than that of the allied armies. It was not only a defeat of the French army and its chief; it was an extermination. It was a shipwreck of a people. On the 18th of June, 1815, between sunrise and sunset, the French empire breathed its last breath; at eight o'clock in the morning it stood erect, with all its hopes,—at nine o'clock in the evening it was only a name and a recollection.

Why was this? How happened it that the hero of Austerlitz, and Jena, and Wagram, whose genius had never shone forth more resplendently than while fighting against fearful odds in the last campaign before

\* See the map at the end of this essay.



his banishment to Elba, was now, after a hundred victories, foiled? Was it because, as is popularly supposed, Marshal Grouchy was treacherous, and failed to intercept the Prussians, and because of the heavy rains which delayed Napoleon's attack till nearly noon,—or was it because of the superior energy, strategy, and, above all, promptness of his foes, that he was so overwhelmingly defeated? These questions we purpose to answer; and if we succeed in disabusing any reader of the notion that the Emperor was beaten through no fault of his own, simply because “the stars fought against him in their courses,” and that he never showed more consummate generalship than on the fatal day when he left the field of Waterloo for exile, premature decay, and a grave amidst “the immensity of the seas,”—we shall deem our labor well expended.

The truth is, Napoleon owed his defeat to himself alone,—to a series of blunders and delays which he would have denounced as unpardonable in another chief. Probably no one of his campaigns was more sagaciously planned. The brilliancy and justness of his conception are admitted by every authority except Wellington, nay, even by critics who utterly condemn his execution, and who charge the failure to his inexplicable mismanagement. His first great error was in beginning the campaign with such an inferiority in numbers. The troops of Wellington and Blucher numbered about 226,000 men, with 496 guns. Napoleon's army amounted to 124,000 combatants, mostly veterans, with 344 guns, and under tried commanders. Of this force, 22,000 were cavalry, and 10,000 artillery. Compact in organization, homogeneous in composition, speaking one tongue, moving by the volition of a single will, devoted to its chief, and inspired “not merely with enthusiasm, but

an actual passion against its enemies," it must be admitted that it was one of the most compactly formidable masses of troops ever moved into the field of war. But Napoleon had, at various points in France, not less than 164,000 troops of the line, and about 220,000 of different reserves, such as gardes mobiles, old soldiers, and sailors drawn from retreat, chasseurs of the Alps and Pyrenees, etc.; and what was there to prevent his adding 40,000 or 50,000 of these to the army with which he was moving upon Belgium? By so doing, he might have fought Wellington and Blucher, confessedly the bitterest and most powerful of his foes, with 175,000 men and 500 guns; and as the English and Prussians alone fought with vengeful feelings, like men personally interested in the quarrel, and impelled, too, by a fanatical love of honor, it was vitally important to crush *them* at all hazards. The Emperor himself acknowledged that a victory over these enemies would have probably broken the alliance. To beat the allies out of Belgium by a masterstroke before the Austrians were ready for action,—to win that country to his side, and excite a movement in his favor among the small German states, which should end in dissolving the coalition,—these, he tells us, were the objects he had in view. The Prussians and English crushed, he would have troubled himself little about the gigantic hosts which the coalition was rolling up from the South and West. Of all soldiers the French need most to be encouraged by early successes. Defeat at the beginning of a war greatly demoralizes them. Napoleon should have neglected no precaution, therefore, to insure a victory at the start in "the Cockpit of Europe."

On the 15th of June the campaign began. Napoleon had ordered the left and centre of his army,—

which was all to concentrate at Charleroi, thirty-four miles south of Brussels,—to move at three A. M.; but, by sending his orders to Vandamme, the commander of the vanguard, *by only one messenger*, who was captured by the enemy, seven precious hours were lost, and a considerable portion of the army,—at least 35,000 men,—did not cross the Sambre till the next day. An indirect result of this delay was that Ney, instead of advancing to Quatre Bras that night, did not reach it till next day. Nevertheless, Napoleon had at night about 90,000 men on the north bank of the river, and the Prussians, under Zieten, though fighting bravely, had been driven back on Fleurus at every point. Blucher had but one corps, namely, Zieten's, of 30,000 men, on the ground chosen by the allies for a battle; another, Pirch's, comprising 32,000, was at Mazy, on the road from Namur, six miles east; a third, Thielmann's, 24,000, was at Namur, on the road from Ciney, fifteen miles away; and the fourth, under Bulow, 30,000 men, was at Liege, a distance of sixty miles. Meantime Wellington had not moved a man to meet the enemy, and had ordered a concentration, which would have left Ney at liberty to push within fourteen miles of Brussels. The French advance was almost within gunshot of Zieten's corps at Fleurus; why, then, did not Napoleon attack the Prussians early the next morning, before Thielmann could come to their aid, when their defeat would have been sure? The Napoleon of Austerlitz and Rivoli would have hurled his men at daybreak on the enemy; in which case, with his great numerical superiority, he could have scattered them like sheep. Scattered as they were, the Prussian corps must infallibly have been beaten in detail. Instead of this, it was not until eight o'clock in the morning,

five hours later, that the dispositions of the day had been made; and seven or eight precious hours in all had passed away before his troops began to move.

By that time the Prussians had collected three-fourths of their army in position at Ligny, to do him battle. Blucher stood awaiting the shock of what he thought the whole French army, with 85,000 men; while Napoleon, who thought he had only the right wing of the Prussians in front of him, was about to fight them with only 65,000 men. Why was this disparity of numbers? Because of the Emperor's delay, and because Lobau, with 10,500 men, had been kept back at Charleroi as a reserve. Napoleon's plan of battle, as stated in a despatch to Ney was this: Grouchy was to attack a body of the enemy posted between Sombreffe and Bry; Ney was also to attack sharply what was before him, and, after routing it, to wheel and aid in enveloping this corps. If the latter were first pierced, the Emperor would manœuvre in the Marshal's direction. The battle began at half-past two o'clock, and raged with great fury for five and a half hours, when, at last, the Prussian centre was pierced, and their position carried, with the loss of twenty-one guns. Let us add that the Prussians fought with an obstinacy which can be accounted for only by the positive hatred which, as we have already said, they felt toward the French army. "Man engaged man," says an eye-witness, "with all the animosity of personal rancor. It appeared as if each had encountered in the individual who confronted him his mortal enemy." The *main* object of the battle of Ligny, with Napoleon, was to prevent the junction of the two allied armies; the secondary object to rout his enemy. The strategic point of the Prussian position, therefore, was evidently the Prussian right, and hence Napoleon did wrong

in attacking the enemy at all points at once; for success itself could only drive Blucher's troops back upon Wellington, when the English and Prussians should have been separated at all hazards. Nevertheless, the Prussians got what Wellington, on surveying the ground that morning, had predicted, "an awful thrashing," and Blucher himself was wounded. But now it was night-fall, and under the cover of the darkness, the defeated army, by ten o'clock, under the command of Gneisenau, was safely retreating northward on Wavre, eleven miles east of Waterloo.

Meanwhile, by the mistake of an aide-de-camp, D'Erlon's corps of 20,000 men, which should have aided Ney in attacking the English at Quatre Bras, had been passing the whole afternoon in marching and counter-marching between the road to that place and Ligny. So ignorant was Napoleon of the movements of this force, that its appearance on his left paralyzed his own operations; and he checked the grand and decisive charge which he was about to make on the enemy with the Imperial Guard, in order to receive this supposed dangerous intruder. D'Erlon's corps had actually been mistaken for Prussians, and the redistribution of his troops lost Napoleon another half-hour. Had D'Erlon, with his 20,000 men and forty-six guns, combined with the Emperor in his attack on Blucher, who can doubt that the French would have inflicted on the Prussians a defeat so smashing as to have prevented them from rallying in season to aid Wellington at Waterloo? As it was, D'Erlon helped neither Ney nor the Emperor. Going back to Quatre Bras, he arrived too late, for Wellington had now 30,000 men on the ground, and Ney, finally outnumbered, was driven back on Frasnes. All the blunders of the allies were redeemed by the bold order

for the retreat on Wavre. By moving on a line parallel to the road by which Wellington must retire, the Prussians snatched from Napoleon the hoped-for fruits of his victory; and his own want of insight into their new combination made complete the triumph they had prepared.

Having lost seven or eight precious hours on the 16th, Napoleon must lose nine or ten more the next day. Fancying that the Prussians were in full retreat *eastward, on the road to Namur*, he took no steps towards pursuing them till noon. Neither did he molest the English till the same hour, when he gave directions for attacking them in flank. Had he marched by three o'clock in the morning, he could have moved directly upon Wellington's rear and left flank, and, placed thus between the Emperor's troops on the one hand and Ney's force of 40,000 men on the other, the British commander would have been completely enveloped. Wellington knew nothing of the result at Ligny till some hours after daybreak, and, when the news came, he was astonished at the dilatoriness of the French. He then coolly retreated, and, when his adversary got ready to move, was already well advanced towards Waterloo. Of all Napoleon's inexplicable acts, the most puzzling is this dilly-dallying for so many hours at Ligny. He had often said that the reason why the Austrians lost so many battles was because they did not know the value of five minutes. Yet here he was wasting hours inestimably precious,—nay, an entire half day,—in talking with the Prussian prisoners, and conversing with his Generals on party politics, the Royalists and Jacobins, and other such topics.

It was after mid-day when he called Grouchy to his side, and placing under him 33,000 men, directed him to pursue the Prussians, complete their defeat, and report

to him by the Namur road. Grouchy, justly disliking so vague a charge, with such critical responsibility, remonstrated against this order; and, showing that it would be next to an impossibility to overtake or discover the Prussians, with their long start in advance, begged to go with the Emperor against the English. Immovable in his decision, and asking him if "he pretended to give *him* lessons," Napoleon directed him to march on Gembloux, and find out at what the Prussians were driving. He did not, however, at any time, order Grouchy to *reconnoitre the roads between the Marshal's line and his own*, by which the whole of Zieten's and Pirch's corps had gone to Wavre. The Prussian army at that place was now strengthened by the junction of Bulow's troops, 30,000 strong, which had taken no part in the fight at Ligny. Meanwhile, Wellington, before deciding to fight on his chosen ground next day, had had the full assurance of support by Blucher. Wellington had 68,000 men only on the field, but had 18,000 on detachment ten miles to his right, and 90,000 Prussians twelve miles to his left, while Napoleon's fighting strength was reduced to 72,000 men. The only possible aid the latter could receive was from Grouchy's 33,000; and these were *double the distance from him that Blucher's army was*, and this owing to his own orders! Is it not evident from these facts that the hero of Austerlitz had been completely out-manceuvred, and that, both by the superior strategy of the enemy and his own blunders, he was placed at a fearful disadvantage in the struggle of the morrow?

The counsel of Grouchy that the whole French army should pursue the English, was undoubtedly the best that could be given. Had Napoleon accepted it instead of sending off the Marshal on a wild-goose chase after

the Prussians, the result at Waterloo might have been wholly different. He would then have had a hundred thousand men at Waterloo, besides force enough to defend his left flank against Bulow. Though he made a number of glaring blunders on that day, it was the lack of troops which, as much as any other cause, caused his overthrow. His attacking force was weakened to the extent of 16,500 men by the necessity of keeping off the Prussians from his right. Napoleon's worshipers are always declaiming about the treachery or stupidity of Grouchy. Had he not been a dull leader or a traitor, they say, he would have marched on the 18th upon Waterloo. But if he was wanted at Waterloo, why, in the name of common sense, did Napoleon send him in the opposite direction? The Emperor's orders were, "Move to Gembloux. You will reconnoitre the roads to Namur and Maestrecht, and will follow up the enemy." Grouchy's conduct, his position at nightfall, and his occupation by cavalry of Sart-les-Walhain, were the exact performance of these orders. Struggling along in the torrents of rain and over frightful roads, he made the utmost progress possible. It was not Grouchy who put off the hour of pursuit until the fine half of the day was spent. It was not Grouchy who sent Grouchy to the east instead of north toward Wavre, where the Prussians were concentrating, or west across the Dyle. It was not till two o'clock on the morning of the 18th that the Marshal learned what route the Prussians had taken.

But why, it is said, did he not march upon Waterloo at eleven o'clock, when the deep and constant rolling from the left told his practised ears that Napoleon was engaged in another general battle? Why, let us ask in return, did Napoleon send him so far a-field



that he could not have reached Waterloo until the fate of the day was decided? It has been shown conclusively that, with the utmost exertions, Grouchy could not have got his troops over the fourteen miles of difficult ground, as the roads then were, and with an uncertain river passage to make, in less than eight or nine hours,—that is, at seven or eight in the evening. At four in the afternoon he received his first and only communication from Napoleon, distinctly telling him that the Emperor was about to fight the English at Waterloo, and ordering him “*to direct his movements on Wavre.*” What more natural than that the Marshal should thereupon conclude his noonday choice to push on to that place, instead of wheeling about towards Waterloo, to have been the correct one? The rest of this letter,—which we have not space to quote,—shows that even then Napoleon, though made aware that some of the retreating Prussians had moved in a line parallel to his own, looked on them as a mere detachment, and still clung to the delusion that a great part, at least, of Blucher’s troops had gone eastward. How ridiculous, then, Napoleon’s complaints against the Marshal for not aiding him in his last struggle! As the Marshal himself justly said, a Lieutenant cannot conduct a war of inspirations, but must obey orders. Never was a brave officer more outrageously maligned,—never was a single reputation more grossly sacrificed to salve national vanity,—than in this matter of Grouchy and Waterloo. That his old age was not crowned with honor, is due simply to the popular cry in France for a scapegoat to bear the shame of her defeat, and to the readiness with which Napoleon supplied it in his Lieutenant.

Even had Grouchy overtaken the Prussians after

their unmolested retreat, he had not force enough to cope with them. Blucher's army, be it remembered, though beaten back at Ligny, was neither routed nor disheartened. At Wavre it was joined by 30,000 men under Bulow, who had not been under fire. In spite of his defeat, Blucher was as indefatigable as ever in bringing his men into action again, and had the resolution to expose a part of his army, under Thielmann, to be overwhelmed by Grouchy at Wavre on the 18th, while he urged on the mass of his troops over the swampy roads to Waterloo. "It is not at Wavre, but at Waterloo," said the old Field-Marshal, "that the campaign is to be decided;" and he risked a detachment, and won the campaign accordingly.

The sum of the whole matter is this: Napoleon made two fatal mistakes, first, in permitting himself to be ignorant of the direction of the Prussian retreat, and of their flank march from Wavre; and second, in supposing that, without the aid of Grouchy, he could whip Wellington. Up to the 17th, all had prospered with him; but from that hour his star of destiny steadily waned. On the morning of that day he was operating with 100,000 men against 200,000. It was absolutely indispensable, therefore, that he should defeat, separate, and paralyze the armies of Wellington and Blucher, as his only hope of reëstablishing himself on the throne of France. The Anglo-Allied army was the greatest obstacle in his way, and against it he should have led his last man and horse; for, the English defeated, it would have been comparatively easy to crush the Prussians. Instead of doing this, and playing a great game as he should have done when all his fortunes were staked, he divided his army, and from that hour his doom was sealed. The strategy to which he had looked to atone,

as in his early glories, for inferiority of numbers, failed him utterly when opposed to the concerted union of Blucher and Wellington, and in the desperate struggle of the 18th, the sword was wrested from his grasp forever. Of that memorable fight we shall now proceed to speak.

Notwithstanding his blunders on the 16th and 17th, Napoleon on the morning of the 18th was fully confident of success. Believing that he would have only the English to contend with, he felt sure of victory, and, on seeing them posted before the forest of Soignes, he exclaimed, "*At last I have them! There are nine chances to one in my favor.*" Marshal Soult warned him not to be too confident, and Gen. Foy observed, "The English infantry are the very devil in the fight"; but the Emperor treated their remonstrances with contempt: "You think, because he beat you, that Wellington is a great General." His whole air and bearing was that of one who scented a coming triumph, and he indicated neither by word nor look that he feared such a disaster as might follow the arrival of a fresh army on his flank. In his own narratives of the battle there is no allusion to any possible aid from Grouchy, nor any hint that he thought the Prussians near.

From midday on the 17th to four o'clock in the morning of the 18th, the rain had been pouring down in torrents, the ground was terribly beaten up, and the troops on both sides had suffered much in their marches and in the bivouacs. Was this the reason that led Napoleon to suspend his attack till eleven o'clock in the forenoon? Did the miry state of the soil make it impossible for his cavalry or artillery to manœuvre till after the sun had shone for some hours, or was he trying to

strike terror into a part of the motley army opposed to him by an imposing array of his forces? Did he secretly cherish a hope that the Belgian regiments would quit Wellington in a body, and range themselves under his own eagles? Be all this as it may, he again lost hours, when every minute was precious to him, and played into the very hands of his enemies. Had he begun the attack two or three hours sooner, he might have thrown his whole army upon Wellington, and thus, perhaps, have crushed him before Bulow arrived. General Jomini, an acute French critic, denies the validity of the Emperor's excuse touching the state of the ground; and Brialmont, the able Belgian critic, holds the same opinion; "ground is not made much better," he says, "by a few hours of dry weather." Besides this, Napoleon himself tells us in his *Mémoires*, that the artillery officers who had examined the ground announced at eight o'clock that the guns could be manœuvred, though with some difficulty; and we know that Wellington by the same hour had made all his dispositions for the battle.

The position in which "the Iron Duke" awaited the attack of his adversary, and which he had surveyed a year before for this purpose, was one of great natural strength, and its selection was a proof of his military sagacity. Let any one traverse the field, as we have, and, after a careful survey, he will find it hard to regard the battle, as delivered by Napoleon, as better than butchery. The scene of the battle, as is well known, was a valley between two and three miles long, of various breadths at different points, but generally not exceeding half a mile. On each side of the valley there is a winding chain of low hills running nearly parallel with each other. The English army was posted on the Northern, the French army on the Southern

ridge. The highroad from Charleroi to Brussels bisects both the French and English positions nearly in the centre. Merk Braine, a village and a ravine, secured Wellington's right, while his left was less strongly protected by two small hamlets, called La Haye and Pápillote. The key to his position was an old Flemish farm-house of brick, called Hougoumont, which, with its outbuildings and large garden inclosed by a very high and strong brick wall,—also its orchard, and copse of beech trees, of about two acres, surrounding it, and pond serving as a moat,—was a small fortress. This stronghold, which fronted the British right, was strengthened by loopholing the walls for musketry fire, and, by the erection of scaffolding, to enable the troops within the garden to fire from the top of the wall. Nearly in front of the British centre, at a less distance down the slope, was another smaller farm-house, called La Haye Sainte, which, like Hougoumont, was filled with English troops, and not a little strengthened the English position. During the whole of this fierce contest there was no strategy,—no attempt at turning flanks,—but all was straightforward fighting, from the first gun to the last.

Napoleon's first mistake, we have seen, was in delaying his attack till nearly noon. A far greater blunder was his neglect to occupy with a small infantry force the Wood of Paris, through which the Prussians had to pass on their way from Wavre to attack his right wing. By this neglect, Bulow was enabled to form therein and debouch upon his right, to defend which Napoleon was compelled to detach during the battle not less than 16,500 of his choicest men, and 66 guns, which he had intended to employ against Wellington. Of this we shall speak again in a more appropriate

place. His next mistake was in throwing away so many troops on the almost impregnable fortress,—for such the English had made it,—of Hougoumont. Napoleon began the battle by hurling Jerome's division against that post. Had "the Iron Duke" himself chosen the point at which he should be assailed, he would unquestionably have selected that. It was the very strongest British bulwark. Column after column of the French swept down the ridges, and assailed it with fiery valor; but it was like butting their heads against a wall. It has been well said that "all defensive positions would be successful, if the adversary would attack them on the points where there are the best advantages for receiving him. Few defensive positions *are* successful, because the adversary is generally cruel enough to attack them in quite a different place." Not so with Napoleon; against Hougoumont he sent 10,000 men, all of whom were placed, sooner or later, *hors du combat*. Foy's division alone lost 3,000 men; 1,500 fell in a single half-hour.

The wood which surrounds the chateau, and which was occupied by some of the British guards, was taken and retaken several times, and finally remained in the possession of the French; but the chateau itself was impregnable to the last. Why, at the outset, a strong howitzer battery was not directed upon it, as it was after some hours, nobody can tell. Only the upper part of the walls and buildings, however, was assailable by cannon; they could be reached only by shells. There was no necessity, we think, for making a formidable attack upon this post, for it lay in front of the British extreme right, and might have been neglected by the Emperor altogether. His aim should have been to overwhelm the British left, where they

were weakest, and where the Prussians were expected to join them. It has been said that this was precisely the object of Napoleon,—that in the attack on Hougoumont he was only manœuvring to draw off the attention of Wellington to his right, and thus to mask the main attack on his left. If this was so, why did Napoleon send so many troops against the chateau, when he saw that he was only sending them to be butchered—to instant death? A very strange kind of feigned attack, surely!

About half-past one o'clock, Napoleon perceived at a great distance a sort of mirage, or mist, which some declared to be troops in motion, some to be a column halted, and others to be trees. It was soon discovered to be a body of troops in motion, on the hill of St. Lambert; but whether they were Prussians, or a detachment of Grouchy's force, none could tell. The apparition did not apparently alarm Napoleon, as he sent only two divisions of light cavalry, 2,400 sabres, to check the strange corps. He was not long in ignorance. A Prussian hussar was brought in with a letter from Bulow, announcing his arrival at St. Lambert, about midway between Wavre and Waterloo. Bulow had been delayed for two hours by a fire breaking out in Wavre in the narrow street through which his corps defiled; and he was kept back still more by the miry nature of the lanes through which he had to march. On hearing the alarming intelligence that 30,000 Prussians were approaching his flank, the Emperor sent off Lobau with two infantry divisions to support the cavalry, thus detaching a force of 10,000 men to resist the Prussians at Planchenoit, while pressing his own battle with the rest of his troops. Three times the Prussians fought their way into that place, and as often did the

French drive them out. The combat here was desperate and bloody, the hate of the combatants being such that quarter was seldom given or even asked.

No attempt had been made *to arrest the enemy in their passage over the deep valley of the Lasne*; yet, so difficult was this by nature, and so many were the obstacles in Blucher's way that it took three hours from Bulow's first appearance on St. Lambert before half his corps could be brought into action. It was half-past four when the Prussians began their attack. Here, again, we cannot but regard Napoleon as guilty of an unpardonable neglect. Blucher saw at once the importance of the steep valley of the Lasne, and, lest his movement should be discovered and intercepted, seized the Wood of Paris on the other side. But Napoleon, still clinging to the delusion that only a detachment or two of Prussians had gone to Wavre after the fight at Ligny, had taken no steps to prevent their march to Waterloo. Upon the capture of the huzzar, he at once dispatched to Marshal Grouchy intelligence of the intercepted letter, with orders to march upon St. Lambert, and take the enemy in rear. "Lose not an instant in drawing near to us," he added, "in order to crush Bulow, whom you will catch in the very act (*en flagrant délit*)." This letter reached Grouchy, but not till seven in the evening, when he was engaged in a fight with Thielmann. Of course, he could lend no help to the Emperor that day, and was obliged to content himself with the hope that Napoleon might have triumphed without him.

Napoleon made, during the battle, five distinct attacks on the English line, only one of which was successful, and that but partially. His second attack, which was made by D'Erlon's infantry corps, 18,000 strong,



aided by Kellerman's cavalry, was a furious onslaught on the British centre and left wing. Led by Ney, "the bravest of the brave," and supported by an artillery fire from 74 guns, in battery upon the French right, it drove before it the Dutch brigade forming the front line of the allies; but received so deadly a volley from Picton's English infantry that it reeled back in confusion, and lost 2,000 men as prisoners. The chief fault of this charge was that the columns were too deep for attack, and too close to be deployed. Unfortunately, owing to the softness of the soil, the artillery was obliged to remain stationary, and fifteen pieces were captured by the pursuing English squadrons, and rendered useless by being upset in the mud. It was now half-past three o'clock, and, though Wellington's army had suffered severely, the British line remained everywhere unbroken, while each passing hour had carried away a fragment of Napoleon's Empire.

The third attack was that made by the French cavalry, unsupported, upon the British centre. These magnificent troops passed through the first line of the enemy shouting, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" but the second opposed to them an impenetrable barrier. Squadron after squadron, amounting to not less than 12,000 men, dashed against the British squares, but in vain. They could not break through the impenetrable hedges of bayonets, while, as they retreated, the fire from the inner ranks mowed them down like grass. Through whose fatal blunder the first brigade, requested by Ney, was followed by *the whole of the reserves*, nobody can tell. It was a fearful mistake. Napoleon declares, in his Memoirs, that he sent Gen. Bertrand to recall them, but that, when he arrived, it was too late, as they were already engaged, and a retrograde movement attempted

under such circumstances is very dangerous. Afterwards, as he crossed the threshold of the Tuilleries, he is said to have remarked: "Ney behaved like a fool. He sacrificed my cavalry." These stories may be true, but they look to us like fictions invented after the fact. Can any one believe that Napoleon, sitting in the midst of a great battle, fought on a narrow space, and surrounded by an ample staff, was unable to prevent his lieutenants from sacrificing his cavalry at the wrong moments? The murderous loss to that splendid arm, which resulted from the useless assaults on the British squares, may not have been caused by Napoleon's orders or by Ney's; but both *permitted* the vain charges to be repeated, until the horsemen were almost totally destroyed. This disaster not only had a fatal influence on the fortunes of the day, but was the main cause that Napoleon's defeat became one of the most overwhelming routs known in history.

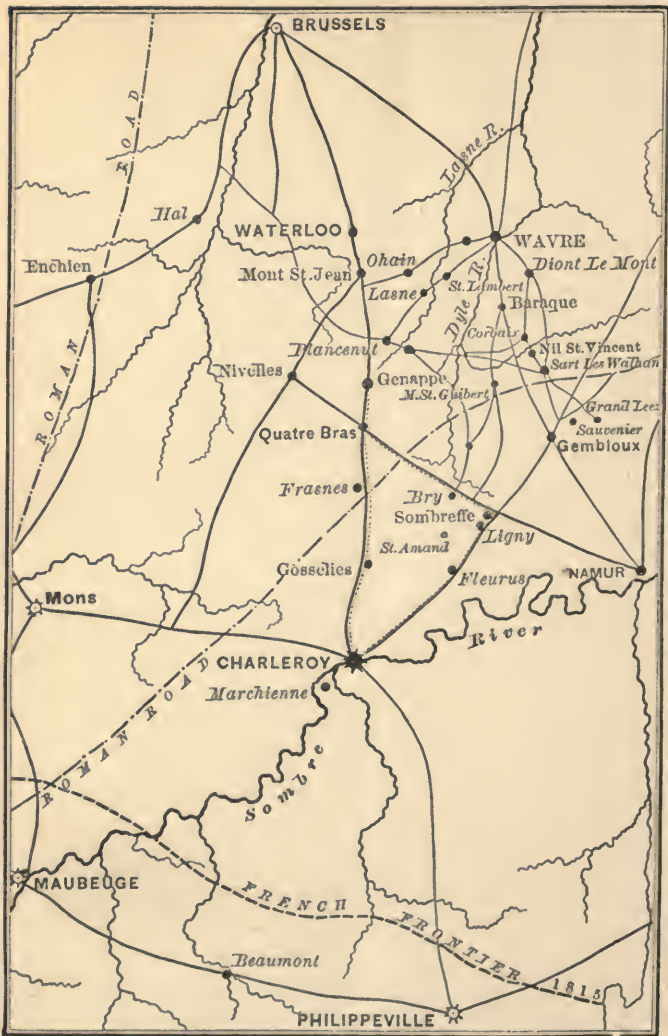
Napoleon's fourth grand attack, made by infantry under Ney's direction, was the only successful one of the day. It lodged the French in La Haye Sainte, and penetrated, for a brief time, the British line. The grape-shot from several field-pieces, which the French had brought up, tore fearful gaps in the German brigades, and the side of one square was literally blown away by a tremendous volley from the French guns. Meanwhile the howitzer batteries upon the French left had set fire to the chateau of Hougoumont, where the English continued to maintain themselves amid flames and ruins. This resistance, however, scarcely arrested the attention of the Emperor, who was concerned wholly about the centre, where the crisis seemed at hand. For the first time the situation of the allied army was really critical. The Anglo-Netherlands troops were growing impatient

at acting always on the defensive; the promised succor had not arrived; and Wellington often turned his glass toward the left. Had the Young Guard been present, to support Donzelot at La Haye Sainte, the result to Wellington might have been most disastrous. Why, then, were they not there? Because they had been sent to Planchenoit, on Napoleon's right, to aid Lobau in keeping off Bulow. In like manner, the last desperate attacks on the British line, made at half-past seven o'clock, by the two columns of the Imperial Guard, failed because there was no cavalry to support them. And why was there no cavalry? Because this force had been needlessly sacrificed in the third attack, and because some 2,500 of them had been detached against the Prussians early in the afternoon, when, by seizing the defile of Lasnes with an infantry force, Bulow might have been kept back without a horseman being sent to that point. The Guard was attacked by a destructive fire both in front and flank, and whole ranks fell at once, like grain before the reaper. Even under these disadvantageous circumstances, it might have maintained somewhat longer its impetuous attack, which has been called "the madness of despair," but at this moment a cry of alarm was heard on the right; it announced the arrival of the Prussians under Zieten, who, debouching from the Ohain road upon the English left, and, attacking the French right wing, drove all before it. In vain did Napoleon order up his four squadrons of body-guard, all the cavalry he had left; what could that feeble band do to stem such a torrent? The allies were pouring, wave after wave, across the plain; five squares of the French were broken, and cut to pieces; and now the effect produced on the rest of the French army by the repulse of the Guard and the sudden onslaught of

Zieten, was completed by the general advance, for which Wellington, with the instinct of genius, suddenly forsook his attitude of defence; and, as Blucher's victorious legions were pouring across the sole line of retreat, while the last reserves of the French had been exhausted, the defeat was turned into a panic and a rout unparalleled in history. Napoleon, seeing that all was lost, was anxious to die in Cambronne's square; but Soult turned his horse away, saying, "Ah, sire! the enemy are fortunate enough already!" From that moment the man of destiny fled like the rest. "The eagle was no more in the keeping of the gods."

To sum all up,—the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, which decided the fate of the Empire, and sent the victor of so many fields an exile to St. Helena, was due to no accident, but to his own blunders, and the superior strategy of the allied Generals. It resulted simply from his own delays before and after Ligny; from his failure to separate the Prussians in that battle from the English, by attacking their right wing, instead of the centre and left; from not employing D'Erlon's corps either to help Ney or to crush the Prussians, instead of suffering them to reorganize and retreat on Wavre; from sending Grouchy to the east to pursue them, when they were out of his reach, and thus placing 33,000 men "in the air;" from fighting a battle with Wellington on the 18th of June, instead of on the 17th, when Blucher could not have helped him; from beginning the battle at Waterloo several hours too late; from the non-occupation of the Wood of Paris, and the worse than useless slaughter of thousands of brave soldiers at Hougomont; from the hurling of his troops against the enemy in too dense masses; from the failure to support his infantry charges by cavalry,

and his cavalry charges by a sufficient force of infantry; and lastly, from the terrible mistake of suffering the cavalry reserves to be engaged too soon. "A few drops of water, more or fewer," says Victor Hugo, "prostrated Napoleon." What nonsense! Did not the rain retard the Prussians? What else was it but the execrable roads that kept them from attacking the French several hours earlier? "But Wellington would have been beaten, but for the arrival of the Prussians." Indeed! Was he not *looking for* and *counting upon* the approaching army of his ally as part of the fight? Was he not watching from early afternoon the lessening pressure which told him that Napoleon was forced to strip himself of his formidable reserves, to keep off the Prussians? Above all, had he not prepared, on the days before, in concert with the fiery old Prussian Marshal, this fatal stroke of war, and was it not precisely because of this that he took up the gauntlet which Napoleon had thrown down?



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