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OF THE
BREAKFAST
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THE AUTOCRAT OF THE
BREAKFAST-TABLE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOWARD PYLE

IN TWO VOLUMES



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1893.

Of the Breakfast-Table

With Illustrations by

Howard Pyle



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To the Readers of the
Autocrat
of the
Breakfast-Table

TWENTY-FIVE years more have passed since the silence of the preceding twenty-five years was broken by the first words of the self-recording personage who lends his title to these pages, in the "Atlantic Monthly" for November, 1857. The children of those who first read these papers as they appeared are still reading them as kindly as their fathers and mothers read them a quarter of

a century ago. And now, for the first time for many years I have read them myself, thinking that they might be improved by various corrections and changes.

But it is dangerous to tamper in cold blood and in after life with what was written in the glow of an earlier period. Its very defects are a part of its organic individuality. It would spoil any character these records may have to attempt to adjust them to the present age of the world or of the author. We have all of us, writer and readers, drifted away from many of our former habits, tastes, and perhaps beliefs. The world could spare every human being who was living when the first sentence of these papers was written: its destinies would be safe in the hands of the men and women of twenty-five years and under.

This book was written for a generation which knew nothing or next to nothing of war, and hardly dreamed of it; which felt as if invention must have exhausted itself in the miracles it had already wrought. To-day, in a small sea-side village of a few hundred inhabitants, I see the graveyard fluttering with little flags that mark the soldiers' graves; we read, by the light the rocks of

Pennsylvania have furnished for us, all that is most important in the morning papers of the civilized world; the lightning, so swift to run our errands, stands shining over us, white and steady as the moonbeams, burning, but unconsumed; we talk with people in the neighboring cities as if they were at our elbow, and as our equipages flash along the highway, the silent bicycle glides by us and disappears in the distance. All these since 1857, and how much more than these changes in our every-day conditions! I can say without offence to-day that which called out the most angry feelings and the hardest language twenty-five years ago. I may doubt everything to-day if I will only do it civilly.

I cannot make over again the book and those which followed it, and I will not try to mend old garments with new cloth. Let the sensible reader take it for granted that the author would agree with him in changing whatever he would alter, in leaving out whatever he would omit, if it seemed worth while to tamper with what was finished long ago. The notes which have been added will not interrupt the current of the conversational narrative.

I can never be too grateful for the tokens

of regard which these papers and those which followed them have brought me. The kindness of my far-off friends has sometimes over-taxed my power of replying to them, but they may be assured that their pleasant words were always welcome, however insufficiently acknowledged.

I have experienced the friendship of my readers so long that I cannot help anticipating some measure of its continuance. If I should feel the burden of correspondence too heavily in the coming years, I desire to record in advance my gratitude to those whom I may not be able to thank so fully and so cordially as I could desire.

BEVERLY FARMS, MASS.. *August 29, 1882.*

ANOTHER decade has nearly closed since the above Preface was written. The Autocrat still finds readers, among the young as well as among the old. The children of my early readers were writing to me about my books, especially *The Autocrat*, as I mentioned in that other Preface. Now it is the grandchildren who are still turning to these pages, which I might well have thought would be voted old-fashioned, outworn, an unvalued bequest to posterity with Oblivion

as residuary legatee. I have nothing of importance to add in the way of prefatory remarks. I can only repeat my grateful acknowledgments to the reading public at home and abroad for the hospitable manner in which my thoughts have been received. The expressions of personal regard, esteem, confidence, sympathetic affinity, may I not add affection, which this book has brought to me have become an habitual experience and an untiring source of satisfaction. I have thanked hundreds, yes, thousands, and many thousands, of these kind correspondents, until my eyes have grown dim and I can no longer read many of their letters except through younger eyes. If my hand does not refuse to hold the pen or to guide it in the form of presentable characters, an occasional cramp of a little muscle which knows its importance and insists on having it recognized by *striking*, after its own fashion, is a hint that I must at length do what I have long said I ought to do, content myself with an encyclical of thanks and write no more letters except to a few relatives and intimates.

A single fact strikes me as worth mentioning. Ten years ago I said that there had

been a feeling at the time when this book was written as if mechanical invention had exhausted itself. I referred in the Preface of 1882 to the new miracles of the telephone and of electric illumination. Since then a new wonder has been sprung upon us in the shape of the electric motor, which has already familiarized itself among us as a common carrier. It is not safe to speculate on what the last decade of the century may yet bring us, but it looks as if the wasted energies of the winds and the waters were to be converted into heat, light, and mechanical movement, in that mysterious form which we call electricity, so as to change the material conditions of life to an extent to which we can hardly dare to set limits. As to what social and other changes may accompany the altered conditions of human life in the coming era, it is safer to leave the question open to exercise the ingenuity of some as yet youthful, perhaps unborn Autocrat.

O. W. H.

BEVERLY FARMS, MASS., *July 28, 1891.*



The Autocrat's Autobiography

THE interruption referred to in the first sentence of the first of these papers was just a quarter of a century in duration.

Two articles entitled "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" will be found in the "New England Magazine," formerly published in Boston by J. T. and E. Buckingham. The date of the first of these articles is November, 1831, and that of the second, February, 1832. When "The Atlantic Monthly" was begun, twenty-five years afterwards, and the author was asked to write for it, the recollection of these crude products of his uncombed literary boyhood suggested the thought that it would be a

curious experiment to shake the same bough again, and see if the ripe fruit were better or worse than the early windfalls.

So began this series of papers, which naturally brings those earlier attempts to my own notice and that of some few friends who were idle enough to read them at the time of their publication. The man is father to the boy that was, and I am my own son, as it seems to me, in those papers of the "New England Magazine." If I find it hard to pardon the boy's faults, others would find it harder. They will not, therefore, be reprinted here, nor, as I hope, anywhere.

But a sentence or two from them will perhaps bear reproducing, and with these I trust the gentle reader, if that kind being still breathes, will be contented.

— "It is a capital plan to carry a tablet with you, and, when you find yourself felicitous, take notes of your own conversation." —

— "When I feel inclined to read poetry I take down my Dictionary. The poetry of words is quite as beautiful as that of sentences. The author may arrange the gems effectively, but their shape and lustre have been given by the attrition of ages. Bring me the finest simile from the whole range of imaginative writing, and I will show you a single word which conveys a more profound, a more accurate, and a more eloquent analogy." —

—“Once on a time, a notion was started, that if all the people in the world would shout at once, it might be heard in the moon. So the projectors agreed it should be done in just ten years. Some thousand shiploads of chronometers were distributed to the selectmen and other great folks of all the different nations. For a year beforehand, nothing else was talked about but the awful noise that was to be made on the great occasion. When the time came, everybody had their ears so wide open, to hear the universal ejaculation of Boo,—the word agreed upon,—that nobody spoke except a deaf man in one of the Fejee Islands, and a woman in Pekin, so that the world was never so still since the creation.”—

There was nothing better than these things and there was not a little that was much worse. A young fellow of two or three and twenty has as good a right to spoil a magazine-full of essays in learning how to write, as an oculist like Wenzel had to spoil his hat-full of eyes in learning how to operate for cataract, or an *elegant* like Brummel to point to an armful of failures in the attempt to achieve a perfect neck-tie. This son of mine, whom I have not seen for these twenty-five years, generously counted, was a self-willed youth, always too ready to utter his unchastised fancies. He, like too many American young people, got the spur when

he should have had the rein. He therefore helped to fill the market with that unripe fruit which his father says in one of these papers abounds in the marts of his native country. All these by-gone shortcomings he would hope are forgiven, did he not feel sure that very few of his readers know anything about them. In taking the old name for the new papers, he felt bound to say that he had uttered unwise things under that title, and if it shall appear that his un wisdom has not diminished by at least half while his years have doubled, he promises not to repeat the experiment if he should live to double them again and become his own grandfather.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

BOSTON. *November 1, 1858.*





The Autocrat
of the
Breakfast-Table

I

I WAS just going to say, when I was interrupted, that one of the many ways of classifying minds is under the heads of arithmetical and algebraical intellects. All economical and practical wisdom is an extension or variation of the following arithmetical formula: $2 + 2 = 4$. Every philosophical proposition has the more general character of the expression $a + b = c$. We are mere

operatives, empirics, and egotists, until we learn to think in letters instead of figures.

They all stared. There is a divinity student lately come among us to whom I commonly address remarks like the above, allowing him to take a certain share in the conversation, so far as assent or pertinent questions are involved. He abused his liberty on this occasion by presuming to say that Leibnitz had the same observation. — No, sir, I replied, he has not. But he said a mighty good thing about mathematics, that sounds something like it, and you found it, *not in the original*, but quoted by Dr. Thomas Reid. I will tell the company what he did say, one of these days.

— If I belong to a Society of Mutual Admiration? — I blush to say that I do not at this present moment. I once did, however. It was the first association to which I ever heard the term applied; a body of scientific young men in a great foreign city¹ who

¹ The “body of scientific young men in a great foreign city” was the Société d’Observation Médicale, of Paris, of which M. Louis was president, and MM. Barth, Grisotte, and our own Dr. Bowditch were members. They agreed in admiring their justly-honored president, and thought highly of some of their associates, who have since made good their promise of distinction.

admired their teacher, and to some extent each other. Many of them deserved it; they have become famous since. It amuses me to hear the talk of one of those beings described by Thackeray —

“ Letters four do form his name ” —

about a social development which belongs to the very noblest stage of civilization. All generous companies of artists, authors, philanthropists, men of science, are, or ought to be, Societies of Mutual Admiration. A

About the time when these papers were published, the Saturday Club was founded, or, rather, found itself in existence, without any organization, almost without parentage. It was natural enough that such men as Emerson, Longfellow, Agassiz, Peirce, with Hawthorne, Motley, Sumner, when within reach, and others who would be good company for them, should meet and dine together once in a while, as they did, in point of fact. every month, and as some who are still living, with other and newer members, still meet and dine. If some of them had not admired each other they would have been exceptions in the world of letters and science. The club deserves being remembered for having no constitution or by-laws, for making no speeches, reading no papers, observing no ceremonies, coming and going at will without remark, and acting out, though it did not proclaim the motto, “ Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn ? ” There was and is nothing of the Bohemian element about this club, but it has had many good times and not a little good talking.

man of genius, or any kind of superiority, is not debarred from admiring the same quality in another, nor the other from returning his admiration. They may even associate together and continue to think highly of each other. And so of a dozen such men, if any one place is fortunate enough to hold so many. The being referred to above assumes several false premises. First, that men of talent necessarily hate each other. Secondly, that intimate knowledge or habitual association destroys our admiration of persons whom we esteemed highly at a distance. Thirdly, that a circle of clever fellows, who meet together to dine and have a good time, have signed a constitutional compact to glorify themselves and to put down him and the fraction of the human race not belonging to their number. Fourthly, that it is an outrage that he is not asked to join them.

Here the company laughed a good deal, and the old gentleman who sits opposite said: "That's it! that's it!"

I continued, for I was in the talking vein. As to clever people's hating each other, I think *a little* extra talent does sometimes make people jealous. They become irritated

by perpetual attempts and failures, and it hurts their tempers and dispositions. Unpretending mediocrity is good, and genius is glorious; but a weak flavor of genius in an essentially common person is detestable. It spoils the grand neutrality of a commonplace character, as the rinsings of an unwashed wine-glass spoil a draught of fair water. No wonder the poor fellow we spoke of, who always belongs to this class of slightly flavored mediocrities, is puzzled and vexed by the strange sight of a dozen men of capacity working and playing together in harmony. He and his fellows are always fighting. With them familiarity naturally breeds contempt. If they ever praise each other's bad drawings, or broken-winded novels, or spavined verses, nobody ever supposed it was from admiration; it was simply a contract between themselves and a publisher or dealer.

If the Mutuals have really nothing among them worth admiring, that alters the question. But if they are men with noble powers and qualities, let me tell you that, next to youthful love and family affections, there is no human sentiment better than that which unites the Societies of Mutual Admiration.

And what would literature or art be without such associations? Who can tell what we owe to the Mutual Admiration Society of which Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher were members? Or to that of which Addison and Steele formed the centre, and which gave us the Spectator? Or to that where Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Burke, and Reynolds, and Beauclerk, and Boswell, most admiring among all admirers, met together? Was there any great harm in the fact that the Irvings and Paulding wrote in company? or any unpardonable cabal in the literary union of Verplanck and Bryant and Sands, and as many more as they chose to associate with them?

The poor creature does not know what he is talking about when he abuses this noblest of institutions. Let him inspect its mysteries through the knot-hole he has secured, but not use that orifice as a medium for his popgun. Such a society is the crown of a literary metropolis; if a town has not material for it, and spirit and good feeling enough to organize it, it is a mere caravansary, fit for a man of genius to lodge in, but not to live in. Foolish people hate and dread and envy such an association of men of varied





powers and influence, because it is lofty, serene, impregnable, and, by the necessity of the case, exclusive. Wise ones are prouder of the title M. S. M. A. than of all their other honors put together.

— All generous minds have a horror of what are commonly called "facts." They are the brute beasts of the intellectual domain. Who does not know fellows that always have an ill-conditioned fact or two which they lead after them into decent company like so many bull-dogs, ready to let them slip at every ingenious suggestion, or convenient generalization, or pleasant fancy? I allow no "facts" at this table. What! Because bread is good and wholesome, and necessary and nourishing, shall you thrust a crumb into my windpipe while I am talking? Do not these muscles of mine represent a hundred loaves of bread? and is not my thought the abstract of ten thousand of these crumbs of truth with which you would choke off my speech?

[The above remark must be conditioned and qualified for the vulgar mind. The reader will of course understand the precise amount of seasoning which must be added to it before he adopts it as one of the axioms

of his life. The speaker disclaims all responsibility for its abuse in incompetent hands.]

This business of conversation is a very serious matter. There are men whom it weakens one to talk with an hour more than a day's fasting would do. Mark this which I am going to say, for it is as good as a working professional man's advice, and costs you nothing: It is better to lose a pint of blood from your veins than to have a nerve tapped. Nobody measures your nervous force as it runs away, nor bandages your brain and marrow after the operation.

There are men of *esprit* who are excessively exhausting to some people. They are the talkers who have what may be called *jerky* minds. Their thoughts do not run in the natural order of sequence. They say bright things on all possible subjects, but their zig-zags rack you to death. After a jolting half-hour with one of these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief. It is like taking the cat in your lap after holding a squirrel.

What a comfort a dull but kindly person is, to be sure, at times! A ground-glass shade over a gas-lamp does not bring more

solace to our dazzled eyes than such a one to our minds.

“Do not dull people bore you?” said one of the lady-boarders. — the same who sent me her autograph-book last week with a request for a few original stanzas, not remembering that “The Pactolian” pays me five dollars a line for everything I write in its columns.

“Madam,” said I (she and the century were in their teens together), “all men are bores, except when we want them. There never was but one man whom I would trust with my latch-key.”

“Who might that favored person be?”

“Zimmermann.”¹

— The men of genius that I fancy most have erectile heads like the cobra-di-capello. You remember what they tell of William Pinkney, the great pleader; how in his eloquent paroxysms the veins of his neck would swell and his face flush and his eyes glitter, until he seemed on the verge of apoplexy. The hydraulic arrangements for supplying

¹ The *Treatise on Solitude* is not so frequently seen lying about on library tables as in our younger days. I remember that I always respected the title and let the book alone.

the brain with blood are only second in importance to its own organization. The bulbous-headed fellows who steam well when they are at work are the men that draw big audiences and give us marrowy books and pictures. It is a good sign to have one's feet grow cold when he is writing. A great writer and speaker once told me that he often wrote with his feet in hot water; but for this, *all* his blood would have run into his head, as the mercury sometimes withdraws into the ball of a thermometer.

— You don't suppose that my remarks made at this table are like so many postage-stamps, do you, — each to be only once uttered? If you do, you are mistaken. He must be a poor creature who does not often repeat himself. Imagine the author of the excellent piece of advice, "Know thyself," never alluding to that sentiment again during the course of a protracted existence! Why, the truths a man carries about with him are his tools; and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once to smooth a knotty board with, or to hang up his hammer after it has driven its first nail? I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea often. I shall use the same types when I

like, but not commonly the same stereotypes. A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, by a new and express train of associations.

Sometimes, but rarely, one may be caught making the same speech twice over, and yet be held blameless. Thus, a certain lecturer, after performing in an inland city, where dwells a *Littératrice* of note, was invited to meet her and others over the social teacup. She pleasantly referred to his many wanderings in his new occupation. "Yes," he replied, "I am like the Huma,¹ the bird that never lights, being always in the cars, as he is always on the wing." — Years elapsed. The lecturer visited the same place once more for the same purpose. Another social cup after the lecture, and a second meeting with the distinguished lady. "You are constantly going from place to place," she said. — "Yes!" he answered, "I am like

¹ It was an agreeable incident of two consecutive visits to Hartford, Conn., that I met there the late Mrs. Sigourney. The second meeting recalled the first, and with it the allusion to the Huma, which bird is the subject of a short poem by another New England authoress, which may be found in Mr. Griswold's collection.

the Huma." — and finished the sentence as before.

What horrors, when it flashed over him that he had made this fine speech, word for word, twice over! Yet it was not true, as the lady might perhaps have fairly inferred, that he had embellished his conversation with the Huma daily during that whole interval of years. On the contrary, he had never once thought of the odious fowl until the recurrence of precisely the same circumstances brought up precisely the same idea. He ought to have been proud of the accuracy of his mental adjustments. Given certain factors, and a sound brain should always evolve the same fixed product with the certainty of Babbage's calculating machine.

— What a satire, by the way, is that machine on the mere mathematician! A Frankenstein-monster, a thing without brains and without heart, too stupid to make a blunder; which turns out results like a corn-sheller, and never grows any wiser or better, though it grind a thousand bushels of them!

I have an immense respect for a man of talents *plus* "the mathematics." But the calculating power alone should seem to be the least human of qualities, and to have

the smallest amount of reason in it ; since a machine can be made to do the work of three or four calculators, and better than any one of them. Sometimes I have been troubled that I had not a deeper intuitive apprehension of the relations of numbers. But the triumph of the ciphering hand-organ has consoled me. I always fancy I can hear the wheels clicking in a calculator's brain. The power of dealing with numbers is a kind of "detached lever" arrangement, which may be put into a mighty poor watch. I suppose it is about as common as the power of moving the ears voluntarily, which is a moderately rare endowment.

— Little localized powers, and little narrow streaks of specialized knowledge, are things men are very apt to be conceited about. Nature is very wise ; but for this encouraging principle how many small talents and little accomplishments would be neglected ! Talk about conceit as much as you like, it is to human character what salt is to the ocean ; it keeps it sweet, and renders it endurable. Say rather it is like the natural unguent of the sea-fowl's plumage, which enables him to shed the rain that falls on him and the wave in which he dips.

When one has had *all* his conceit taken out of him, when he has lost *all* his illusions, his feathers will soon soak through, and he will fly no more.

“So you admire conceited people, do you?” said the young lady who has come to the city to be finished off for — the duties of life.

I am afraid you do not study logic at your school, my dear. It does not follow that I wish to be pickled in brine because I like a salt-water plunge at Nahant. I say that conceit is just as natural a thing to human minds as a centre is to a circle. But little-minded people's thought move in such small circles that five minutes' conversation gives you an arc long enough to determine their whole curve. An arc in the movement of a large intellect does not sensibly differ from a straight line. Even if it have the third vowel as its centre, it does not soon betray it. The highest thought that is, is the most seemingly impersonal; it does not obviously imply any individual centre.

Audacious self-esteem, with good ground for it, is always imposing. What resplendent beauty that must have been which could have authorized Phryne to “peel” in the way

she did! What fine speeches are those two: “*Non omnis moriar.*” and “I have taken all knowledge to be my province”! Even in common people, conceit has the virtue of making them cheerful; the man who thinks his wife, his baby, his house, his horse, his dog, and himself severally unequalled, is almost sure to be a good-humored person, though liable to be tedious at times.

—What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners, are the principal ones. I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else:—long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles upon which these points depend. No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain *ultima* of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source. In short, just as a written constitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is

like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music.

— Do you mean to say the pun-question is not clearly settled in your minds? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and *verbicide* — that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life — are alike forbidden. Manslaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as man's laughter, which is the end of the other. A pun is *primâ facie* an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious. I speak of total depravity, and one says all that is written on the subject is deep raving. I have committed my self-respect by talking with such a person. I should like to commit him, but cannot, because he is a nuisance. Or I speak of geological convulsions, and he asks me what was the cosine of Noah's ark; also, whether the Deluge was not a deal huger than any modern inundation.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow

in return. But if a blow were given for such cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided before Miller, J., Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, When charity was like a top? It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then — and not till then — struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany, intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother justices, who unanimously replied, "Jest so." The chief rejoined, that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun orderèd to be burned by the sheriff. The bound volume was forfeited as a deodand, but not claimed.

People that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks. They amuse themselves and other children,

but their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

I will thank you, B. F., to bring down two books, of which I will mark the places on this slip of paper. (While he has gone, I may say that this boy, our landlady's youngest, is called BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, after the celebrated philosopher of that name. A highly merited compliment.)

I wished to refer to two eminent authorities. Now be so good as to listen. The great moralist says: "To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of social intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctities of his mother tongue would invade the recesses of the paternal till without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn without an indigestion."

And, once more, listen to the historian. "The Puritans hated puns. The Bishops were notoriously addicted to them. The Lords Temporal carried them to the verge of license. Majesty itself must have its Royal quibble. 'Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh,' said Queen Elizabeth, 'but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my

Lord of Leicester.' The gravest wisdom and the highest breeding lent their sanction to the practice. Lord Bacon playfully declared himself a descendant of 'Og, the King of Bashan. Sir Philip Sidney, with his last breath, reproached the soldier who brought him water, for wasting a casque full upon a dying man. A courtier, who saw Othello performed at the Globe Theatre, remarked, that the blackamoor was a brute, and not a man. 'Thou hast reason,' replied a great Lord, 'according to Plato his saying; for this be a two-legged animal *with* feathers.' The fatal habit became universal. The language was corrupted. The infection spread to the national conscience. Political double-dealings naturally grew out of verbal double meanings. The teeth of the new dragon were sown by the Cadmus who introduced the alphabet of equivocation. What was levity in the time of the Tudors grew to regicide and revolution in the age of the Stuarts."

Who was that boarder that just whispered something about the Macaulay-flowers of literature?—There was a dead silence.—I said calmly, I shall henceforth consider any interruption by a pun as a hint to ,

change my boarding-house. Do not plead my example. If *I* have used any such, it has been only as a Spartan father would show up a drunken helot. We have done with them.

— If a logical mind ever found out anything with its logic? — I should say that its most frequent work was to build a *pons asi-norum* over chasms which shrewd people can bestride without such a structure. You can hire logic, in the shape of a lawyer, to prove anything that you want to prove. You can buy treatises to show that Napoleon never lived, and that no battle of Bunker-hill was ever fought. The great minds are those with a wide span,¹ which couple truths related to, but far removed from, each other. Logicians carry the surveyor's chain over the track of which these are the true explorers. I value a man mainly for his primary relations with truth, as I understand truth. — not for any secondary artifice in handling his ideas. Some of the sharpest men in argument are notoriously unsound in judgment. I should not trust the counsel of a clever debater, any more than that of

¹ There is something like this in J. H. Newman's *Grammar of Assent*. See *Characteristics*, arranged by W. S. Lilly, p. 81.

a good chess-player. Either may of course advise wisely, but not necessarily because he wrangles or plays well.

The old gentleman who sits opposite got his hand up, as a pointer lifts his forefoot, at the expression, "his relations with truth, as I understand truth," and when I had done, sniffed audibly, and said I talked like a transcendentalist. For his part, common sense was good enough for him.

Precisely so, my dear sir, I replied: common sense, *as you understand it*. We all have to assume a standard of judgment in our own minds, either of things or persons. A man who is willing to take another's opinion has to exercise his judgment in the choice of whom to follow, which is often as nice a matter as to judge of things for one's self. On the whole, I had rather judge men's minds by comparing their thoughts with my own, than judge of thoughts by knowing who utter them. I must do one or the other. It does not follow, of course, that I may not recognize another man's thoughts as broader and deeper than my own; but that does not necessarily change my opinion, otherwise this would be at the mercy of every superior mind that held a different one. How many of our most cher-

ished beliefs are like those drinking-glasses of the ancient pattern, that serve us well so long as we keep them in our hand, but spill all if we attempt to set them down! I have sometimes compared conversation to the Italian game of *mora*, in which one player lifts his hand with so many fingers extended, and the other gives the number if he can. I show my thought, another his; if they agree, well; if they differ, we find the largest common factor, if we can, but at any rate avoid disputing about remainders and fractions, which is to real talk what tuning an instrument is to playing on it.

— What if, instead of talking this morning, I should read you a copy of verses, with critical remarks by the author? Any of the company can retire that like.



WHEN Eve had led her lord away,
 And Cain had killed his brother,
 The stars and flowers, the poets say,
 Agreed with one another

To cheat the cunning tempter's art,
And teach the race its duty,
By keeping on its wicked heart
Their eyes of light and beauty.

A million sleepless lids, they say,
Will be at least a warning ;
And so the flowers would watch by day
The stars from eve to morning.

On hill and prairie, field and lawn,
Their dewy eyes upturning,
The flowers still watch from reddening dawn
Till western skies are burning.

Alas! each hour of daylight tells
A tale of shame so crushing,
That some turn white as sea-bleached shells,
And some are always blushing.

But when the patient stars look down
On all their light discovers,
The traitor's smile, the murderer's frown,
The lips of lying lovers,

They try to shut their saddening eyes,
And in the vain endeavor
We see them twinkling in the skies,
And so they wink forever.

What do *you* think of these verses, my friends? — Is that piece an impromptu? said my landlady's daughter. (Æt. 19+. Tender-eyed blonde. Long ringlets. Cameo pin. Gold pencil-case on a chain. Locket. Bracelet. Album. Autograph book. Ac-

cordeon. Reads Byron, Tupper, and Sylvanus Cobb, Junior, while her mother makes the puddings. Says "Yes?" when you tell her anything.) — *Oui et non, ma petite*, — Yes and no, my child. Five of the seven verses were written off-hand; the other two took a week, — that is, were hanging round the desk in a ragged, forlorn, unrhymed condition as long as that. All poets will tell you just such stories. *C'est le DERNIER pas qui conte*. Don't you know how hard it is for some people to get out of a room after their visit is really over? They want to be off, and you want to have them off, but they don't know how to manage it. One would think they had been built in your parlor or study, and were waiting to be launched. I have contrived a sort of ceremonial inclined plane for such visitors, which being lubricated with certain smooth phrases, I back them down, metaphorically speaking, stern-foremost, into their "native element," the great ocean of out-doors. Well, now, there are poems as hard to get rid of as these rural visitors. They come in glibly, use up all the serviceable rhymes, *day, ray, beauty, duty, skies, eyes, other, brother, mountain, fountain*, and the like; and so

Nine tenths of the "Juvenile Poems" written spring out of the above musical and suggestive coincidences.

"Yes?" said our landlady's daughter.

I did not address the following remark to her, and I trust, from her limited range of reading, she will never see it; I said it softly to my next neighbor.

When a young female wears a flat circular side-curl, gummed on each temple, — when she walks with a male, not arm in arm, but his arm against the back of hers, — and when she says "Yes?" with the note of interrogation, you are generally safe in asking her what wages she gets, and who the "feller" was you saw her with.

"What were you whispering?" said the daughter of the house, moistening her lips, as she spoke, in a very engaging manner.

"I was only laying down a principle of social diagnosis."

"Yes?"

— It is curious to see how the same wants and tastes find the same implements and modes of expression in all times and places. The young ladies of Otaheite, as you may see in Cook's Voyages, had a sort of erinoline arrangement fully equal in radius to the

largest spread of our own lady-baskets. When I fling a Bay-State shawl over my shoulders, I am only taking a lesson from the climate which the Indian had learned before me. A *blanket*-shawl we call it, and not a plaid; and we wear it like the aborigines, and not like the Highlanders.

— We are the Romans of the modern world, — the great assimilating people. Conflicts and conquests are of course necessary accidents with us, as with our prototypes. And so we come to their style of weapon. Our army sword is the short, stiff, pointed *gladius* of the Romans; and the American bowie-knife is the same tool, modified to meet the daily wants of civil society. I announce at this table an axiom not to be found in Montesquieu or the journals of Congress: —

The race that shortens its weapons lengthens its boundaries.

Corollary. It was the Polish *lance* that left Poland at last with nothing of her own to bound.

“Dropped from her nerveless grasp the *shattered spear!*”

What business had Sarmatia to be fighting for liberty with a fifteen-foot pole be-

tween her and the breasts of her enemies? If she had but clutched the old Roman and young American weapon, and come to close quarters, there might have been a chance for her; but it would have spoiled the best passage in "The Pleasures of Hope."

— Self-made men? — Well, yes. Of course everybody likes and respects self-made men. It is a great deal better to be made in that way than not to be made at all. Are any of you younger people old enough to remember that Irishman's house on the marsh at Cambridgeport, which house he built from drain to chimney-top with his own hands? It took him a good many years to build it, and one could see that it was a little out of plumb, and a little wavy in outline, and a little queer and uncertain in general aspect. A regular hand could certainly have built a better house: but it was a very good house for a "self-made" carpenter's house, and people praised it, and said how remarkably well the Irishman had succeeded. They never thought of praising the fine blocks of houses a little farther on.

Your self-made man, whittled into shape with his own jack-knife, deserves more credit, if that is all, than the regular engine-turned

article, shaped by the most approved pattern, and French-polished by society and travel. But as to saying that one is every way the equal of the other, that is another matter. The right of strict social discrimination of all things and persons, according to their merits, native or acquired, is one of the most precious republican privileges. I take the liberty to exercise it when I say that, *other things being equal*, in most relations of life I prefer a man of family.

What do I mean by a man of family? — Oh, I'll give you a general idea of what I mean. Let us give him a first-rate fit out; it costs us nothing.

Four or five generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen; among them a member of his Majesty's Council for the Province, a Governor or so, one or two Doctors of Divinity, a member of Congress, not later than the time of long boots with tassels.

Family portraits.¹ The member of the

¹ The full-length pictures by Copley I was thinking of are such as may be seen in the Memorial Hall of Harvard University, but many are to be met with in different parts of New England, sometimes in the possession of the poor descendants of the rich gentlefolks in lace ruffles and glistening stains, grandees and grand dames of the ante-Revolutionary period. I remember one poor old gentle-

Council, by Smibert. The great merchant-uncle, by Copley, full length, sitting in his arm-chair, in a velvet cap and flowered robe,

man who had nothing left of his family possessions but the full-length portraits of his ancestors, the Counsellor and his lady, saying, with a gleam of the pleasantry which had come down from the days of Mather Byles, and "Balch the Hatter," and Sigourney, that he fared not so badly after all, for he had a pair of *canvas-backs* every day through the whole year.

The mention of these names, all of which are mere traditions to myself and my contemporaries, reminds me of the long succession of wits and humorists whose companionship has been the delight of their generation, and who leave nothing on record by which they will be remembered; Yoricks who set the table on a roar, story-tellers who gave us scenes of life in monologue better than the stilted presentments of the stage, and those always welcome friends with social interior furnishings, whose smile provoked the wit of others and whose rich, musical laughter was its abundant reward. Who among us in my earlier days ever told a story or carolled a rippling *chanson* so gayly, so easily, so charmingly as John Sullivan, whose memory is like the breath of a long by-gone summer? Mr. Arthur Gilman has left his monument in the stately structures he planned; Mr. James T. Fields, in the pleasant volumes full of precious recollections; but twenty or thirty years from now old men will tell their boys that the Yankee story-teller died with the first, and that the chief of our literary reminiscents, whose ideal portrait gallery reached from Wordsworth to Swinburne, left us when the second bowed his head and "fell on sleep," no longer to delight the guests whom his hospitality gathered around him with the pictures to which his lips gave life and action.



with a globe by him, to show the range of his commercial transactions, and letters with large red seals lying round, one directed conspicuously to The Honorable, etc., etc. Great-grandmother, by the same artist; brown satin, lace very fine, hands superlative; grand old lady, stiffish, but imposing. Her mother, artist unknown; flat, angular, hanging sleeves; parrot on fist. A pair of Stuarts, viz., 1. A superb, full-blown, mediæval gentleman, with a fiery dash of Tory blood in his veins, tempered down with that of a fine old rebel grandmother, and warmed up with the best of old India Madeira; his face is one flame of ruddy sunshine; his ruffled shirt rushes out of his bosom with an impetuous generosity, as if it would drag his heart after it; and his smile is good for twenty thousand dollars to the Hospital, besides ample bequests to all relatives and dependents. 2. Lady of the same; remarkable cap; high waist, as in time of Empire; bust *à la Josephine*; wisps of curls, like eelery-tips, at sides of forehead; complexion clear and warm, like rose-cordial. As for the miniatures by Malbone, we don't count them in the gallery.

Books, too, with the names of old college-

students in them. — family names ; — you will find them at the head of their respective classes in the days when students took rank on the catalogue from their parents' condition. Elzevirs with the Latinized appellations of youthful progenitors, and *Hic liber est meus* on the title-page. A set of Hogarth's original plates. Pope, original edition, 15 volumes, London, 1717. Barrow on the lower shelves, in folio. Tillotson on the upper, in a little dark platoon of octodecimos.

Some family silver ; a string of wedding and funereal rings ; the arms of the family curiously blazoned ; the same in worsted, by a maiden aunt.

If the man of family has an old place to keep these things in, furnished with claw-footed chairs and black mahogany tables, and tall bevel-edged mirrors, and stately upright cabinets, his outfit is complete.

No, my friends, I go (always, other things being equal) for the man who inherits family traditions and the cumulative humanities of at least four or five generations. Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books, who have not handled them from in-

fancy. Do you suppose our dear *didascalos*¹ over there ever read *Poli Synopsis*, or consulted *Castelli Lexicon*, while he was growing up to their stature? Not he; but virtue passed through the hem of their parchment and leather garments whenever he touched them, as the precious drugs sweated through the bat's handle in the Arabian story. I tell you he is at home wherever he smells the invigorating fragrance of Russia leather. No self-made man feels so. One may, it is true, have all the antecedents I have spoken of, and yet be a boor or a shabby fellow. One may have none of them, and yet be fit for councils and courts. Then let them change places. Our social arrangement has this great beauty, that its strata shift up and down as they change specific gravity, without being clogged by layers of prescription. But I still insist on my democratic liberty of

¹ "Our dear *didascalos*" was meant for Professor James Russell Lowell, now Minister to England. It requires the union of exceptional native gifts and generations of training to bring the "natural man" of New England to the completeness of scholarly manhood, such as that which adds new distinction to the name he bears, already remarkable for its successive generations of eminent citizens.

"Self-made" is imperfectly made, or education is a superfluity and a failure.

choice, and I go for the man with the gallery of family portraits against the one with the twenty-five-cent daguerreotype, unless I find out that the last is the better of the two.

—I should have felt more nervous about the late comet, if I had thought the world was ripe. But it is very green yet, if I am not mistaken; and besides, there is a great deal of coal to use up, which I cannot bring myself to think was made for nothing. If certain things, which seem to me essential to a millennium, had come to pass, I should have been frightened; but they have n't. Perhaps you would like to hear my



WHEN legislators keep the law,
 When banks dispense with bolts and locks,
 When berries, whortle — rasp — and straw —
 Grow bigger *downwards* through the box, —

When he that selleth house or land
Shows leak in roof or flaw in right, —

When haberdashers choose the stand
Whose window hath the broadest light, —

When preachers tell us all they think,
And party leaders all they mean, —

When what we pay for, that we drink,
From real grape and coffee-bean, —

When lawyers take what they would give,
And doctors give what they would take, —

When city fathers eat to live,
Save when they fast for conscience' sake, —

When one that hath a horse on sale
Shall bring his merit to the proof,

Without a lie for every nail
That holds the iron on the hoof, —

When in the usual place for rips
Our gloves are stitched with special care,
And guarded well the whalebone tips
Where first umbrellas need repair, —

When Cuba's weeds have quite forgot
The power of suction to resist,
And claret-bottles harbor not
Such dimples as would hold your fist, —

When publishers no longer steal,
And pay for what they stole before, —

When the first locomotive's wheel
Rolls through the Hoosac tunnel's bore ;¹ —

¹ This hoped-for but almost despaired-of event occurred on the 9th of February, 1875. The writer of the above lines was as much pleased as his fellow-citizens at the termination of an enterprise which gave constant oc-

Till then let Cumming blaze away,
And Miller's saints blow up the globe;
But when you see that blessed day,
Then order your ascension robe!

The company seemed to like the verses, and I promised them to read others occasionally, if they had a mind to hear them. Of course they would not expect it every morning. Neither must the reader suppose that all these things I have reported were said at any one breakfast-time. I have not taken the trouble to date them, as Raspail, *père*, used to date every proof he sent to the printer; but they were scattered over several breakfasts; and I have said a good many more things since, which I shall very possibly print some time or other, if I am urged to do it by judicious friends.

I finished off with reading some verses of my friend the Professor, of whom you may perhaps hear more by and by. The Professor read them, he told me, at a farewell meeting, where the youngest of our great historians¹ met a few of his many friends at their invitation.

occasion for the most inveterate pun on record. When the other conditions referred to are as happily fulfilled as this has been, he will still say as before, that it is time for the ascension garment to be ordered.

¹ "The youngest of our great historians," referred to

Yes, we knew we must lose him. — though friendship
may claim

To blend her green leaves with the laurels of fame ;

Though fondly, at parting, we call him our own.

'T is the whisper of love when the bugle has blown.

As the rider who rests with the spur on his heel. —

As the guardsman who sleeps in his corselet of steel, —

As the archer who stands with his shaft on the string.

He stoops from his toil to the garland we bring.

What pictures yet slumber unborn in his loom

Till their warriors shall breathe and their beauties shall
bloom.

While the tapestry lengthens the life-glowing dyes

That caught from our sunsets the stain of their skies !

In the alcoves of death, in the charnels of time,

Where flit the gaunt spectres of passion and crime,

There are triumphs untold, there are martyrs unsung,

There are heroes yet silent to speak with his tongue !

Let us hear the proud story which time has bequeathed

From lips that are warm with the freedom they breathed !

Let him summon its tyrants, and tell us their doom.

Though he sweep the black past like Van Tromp with
his broom !

The dream flashes by, for the west-winds awake

On pampas, on prairie, o'er mountain and lake,

To bathe the swift bark, like a sea-girdled shrine,

With incense they stole from the rose and the pine.

in the poem, was John Lothrop Motley. His career of authorship was as successful as it was noble, and his works are among the chief ornaments of our national literature. Are Republics still ungrateful, as of old ?

So fill a bright cup with the sunlight that gushed
When the dead summer's jewels were trampled and
crushed :

THE TRUE KNIGHT OF LEARNING. — the world holds
him dear. —

Love bless him. Joy crown him, God speed his career !



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II

I REALLY believe some people save their bright thoughts as being too precious for conversation. What do you think an admiring friend said the other day to one that was talking good things. — good enough to print?

“Why,” said he, “you are wasting merchantable literature, a cash article, at the rate, as nearly as I can tell, of fifty dollars an hour.” The talker took him to the window and asked him to look out and tell him what he saw.

“Nothing but a very dusty street,” he said, “and a man driving a sprinkling-machine through it.”

“Why don't you tell the man he is wasting that water? What would be the state of the highways of life, if we did not drive our *thought-sprinklers* through them with the valves open, sometimes?

“Besides, there is another thing about this talking, which you forget. It shapes our thoughts for us:—the waves of conversation roll them as the surf rolls the pebbles on the shore. Let me modify the image a little. I rough out my thoughts in talk as an artist models in clay. Spoken language is so plastic,—you can pat and coax, and spread and shave, and rub out, and fill up, and stick on so easily, when you work that soft material, that there is nothing like it for modelling. Out of it come the shapes which you turn into marble or bronze in your immortal books, if you happen to write such. Or, to use another illustration, writing or printing is like shooting with a rifle; you may hit your reader's mind, or miss it;—but talking is like playing at a mark with the pipe of an engine; if it is within reach, and you have time enough, you can't help hitting it.”

The company agreed that this last illustration was of superior excellence, or, in

the phrase used by them. "Fust-rate." I acknowledged the compliment, but gently rebuked the expression. "Fust-rate," "prime," "a prime article," "a superior piece of goods," "a handsome garment," "a gent in a flowered vest," — all such expressions are final. They blast the lineage of him or her who utters them, for generations up and down. There is one other phrase which will soon come to be decisive of a man's social *status*, if it is not already: "That tells the whole story." It is an expression which vulgar and conceited people particularly affect, and which well-meaning ones, who know better, catch from them. It is intended to stop all debate, like the previous question in the General Court. Only it does n't; simply because "that" does not usually tell the whole, nor one half of the whole story.

— It is an odd idea, that almost all our people have had a professional education. To become a doctor a man must study some three years and hear a thousand lectures, more or less. Just how much study it takes to make a lawyer I cannot say, but probably not more than this. Now, most decent people hear one hundred lectures or sermons (dis-

courses) on theology every year. — and this, twenty, thirty, fifty years together. They read a great many religious books besides. The clergy, however, rarely hear any sermons except what they preach themselves. A dull preacher might be conceived, therefore, to lapse into a state of *quasi* heathenism, simply for want of religious instruction. And, on the other hand, an attentive and intelligent hearer, listening to a succession of wise teachers, might become actually better educated in theology than any one of them. We are all theological students, and more of us qualified as doctors of divinity than have received degrees at any of the universities.

It is not strange, therefore, that very good people should often find it difficult, if not impossible, to keep their attention fixed upon a sermon treating feebly a subject which they have thought vigorously about for years, and heard able men discuss scores of times. I have often noticed, however, that a hopelessly dull discourse acts *inductively*, as electricians would say, in developing strong mental currents. I am ashamed to think with what accompaniments and variations and flourishes I have sometimes followed the droning

of a heavy speaker, — not willingly, — for my habit is reverential. — but as a necessary result of a slight continuous impression on the senses and the mind, which kept both in action without furnishing the food they required to work upon. If you ever saw a crow with a king-bird after him, you will get an image of a dull speaker and a lively listener. The bird in sable plumage flaps heavily along his straightforward course, while the other sails round him, over him, under him, leaves him, comes back again, tweaks out a black feather, shoots away once more, never losing sight of him, and finally reaches the crow's perch at the same time the crow does, having cut a perfect labyrinth of loops and knots and spirals while the slow fowl was painfully working from one end of his straight line to the other.

[I think these remarks were received rather coolly. A temporary boarder from the country, consisting of a somewhat more than middle-aged female, with a parchment forehead and a dry little "frisette" shingling it, a sallow neck with a necklace of gold beads, a black dress too rusty for recent grief, and contours in basso-rilievo, left the table prematurely, and was reported to have

been very virulent about what I said. So I went to my good old minister, and repeated the remarks, as nearly as I could remember them, to him. He laughed good-naturedly, and said there was considerable truth in them. He thought he could tell when people's minds were wandering, by their looks. In the earlier years of his ministry he had sometimes noticed this, when he was preaching; — very little of late years. Sometimes, when his colleague was preaching, he observed this kind of inattention; but after all, it was not so very unnatural. I will say, by the way, that it is a rule I have long followed, to tell my worst thoughts to my minister, and my best thoughts to the young people I talk with.]

— I want to make a literary confession now, which I believe nobody has made before me. You know very well that I write verses sometimes, because I have read some of them at this table. (The company assented, — two or three of them in a resigned sort of way, as I thought, as if they supposed I had an epic in my pocket, and were going to read half a dozen books or so for their benefit.) — I continued. Of course I write some lines or passages which are bet-

ter than others: some which, compared with the others, might be called relatively excellent. It is in the nature of things that I should consider these relatively excellent lines or passages as absolutely good. So much must be pardoned to humanity. Now I never wrote a "good" line in my life, but the moment after it was written it seemed a hundred years old. Very commonly I had a sudden conviction that I had seen it somewhere. Possibly I may have sometimes unconsciously stolen it, but I do not remember that I ever once detected any historical truth in these sudden convictions of the antiquity of my new thought or phrase. I have learned utterly to distrust them, and never allow them to bully me out of a thought or line.

This is the philosophy of it. (Here the number of the company was diminished by a small secession.) Any new formula which suddenly emerges in our consciousness has its roots in long trains of thought; it is virtually old when it first makes its appearance among the recognized growths of our intellect. Any crystalline group of musical words has had a long and still period to form in. Here is one theory.

But there is a larger law which perhaps comprehends these facts. It is this. The rapidity with which ideas grow old in our memories is in a direct ratio to the squares of their importance. Their apparent age runs up miraculously, like the value of diamonds, as they increase in magnitude. A great calamity, for instance, is as old as the trilobites an hour after it has happened. It stains backward through all the leaves we have turned over in the book of life, before its blot of tears or of blood is dry on the page we are turning. For this we seem to have lived; it was foreshadowed in dreams that we leaped out of in the cold sweat of terror; in the "dissolving views" of dark day-visions: all omens pointed to it; all paths led to it. After the tossing half-forgetfulness of the first sleep that follows such an event, it comes upon us afresh, as a surprise, at waking: in a few moments it is old again, — old as eternity.

[I wish I had not said all this then and there. I might have known better. The pale schoolmistress, in her mourning dress, was looking at me, as I noticed, with a wild sort of expression. All at once the blood dropped out of her cheeks as the mercury

drops from a broken barometer-tube, and she melted away from her seat like an image of snow ; a slung-shot could not have brought her down better. God forgive me !

After this little episode, I continued, to some few who remained balancing teaspoons on the edges of cups, twirling knives, or tilting upon the hind legs of their chairs until their heads reached the wall, where they left gratuitous advertisements of various popular cosmetics.]

When a person is suddenly thrust into any strange, new position of trial, he finds the place fits him as if he had been measured for it. He has committed a great crime, for instance, and is sent to the State Prison. The traditions, prescriptions, limitations, privileges, all the sharp conditions of his new life, stamp themselves upon his consciousness as the signet on soft wax ; — a single pressure is enough. Let me strengthen the image a little. Did you ever happen to see that most soft-spoken and velvet-handed steam-engine at the Mint ? The smooth piston slides backward and forward as a lady might slip her delicate finger in and out of a ring. The engine lays one of *its* fingers calmly, but firmly, upon a bit of

metal; it is a coin now, and will remember that touch, and tell a new race about it, when the date upon it is crusted over with twenty centuries. So it is that a great silent-moving misery puts a new stamp on us in an hour or a moment, — as sharp an impression as if it had taken half a lifetime to engrave it.

It is awful to be in the hands of the wholesale professional dealers in misfortune; undertakers and jailers magnetize you in a moment, and you pass out of the individual life you were living into the rhythmical movements of their horrible machinery. Do the worst thing you can, or suffer the worst that can be thought of, you find yourself in a category of humanity that stretches back as far as Cain, and with an expert at your elbow who has studied your case all out beforehand, and is waiting for you with his implements of hemp or mahogany. I believe, if a man were to be burned in any of our cities to-morrow for heresy, there would be found a master of ceremonies who knew just how many fagots were necessary, and the best way of arranging the whole matter.¹

¹ Accidents are liable to happen if no thoroughly trained expert happens to be present. When Catharine Hays was burnt at Tyburn, in 1726, the officiating artist

—So we have not won the Goodwood cup; *au contraire*, we were a "bad fifth," if not worse than that; and trying it again, and the third time, has not yet bettered the matter. Now I am as patriotic as any of my fellow-citizens, — too patriotic in fact, for I have got into hot water by loving too much of my country; in short, if any man, whose fighting weight is not more than eight stone four pounds, disputes it, I am ready to discuss the point with him. I should have gloried to see the stars and stripes in front at the finish. I love my country and I love horses. Stubbs's old mezzotint of Eclipse

scorched his own hands, and the whole business was awkwardly managed for want of practical familiarity with the process. We have still remaining a guide to direct us in one important part of the arrangements. Bishop Hooper was burned at Gloucester, England, in the year 1555. A few years ago in making certain excavations, the charred stump of the stake to which he was bound was discovered. An account of the interesting ceremony, so important in ecclesiastical history — *the argumentum ad ignem*, with a photograph of the half-burned stick of timber was sent me by my friend, Mr. John Bellows, of Gloucester, a zealous antiquarian, widely known by his wonderful miniature French dictionary, one of the scholarly printers and publishers who honor the calling of Aldus and the Elzevirs. The stake was big enough to chain the whole Bench of Bishops to as fast as the Athanasian creed still holds them.

hangs over my desk, and Herring's portrait of Plenipotentiary — whom I saw run at Epsom — over my fireplace. Did I not elope from school to see Revenge, and Prospect, and Little John, and Peacemaker run over the race-course where now yon suburban village flourishes, in the year eighteen hundred and ever-so-few? Though I never owned a horse, have I not been the proprietor of six equine females, of which one was the prettiest little "Morgin" that ever stepped? Listen, then, to an opinion I have often expressed long before this venture of ours in England. Horse-racing is not a republican institution; horse-trotting is. Only very rich persons can keep race-horses, and everybody knows they are kept mainly as gambling implements. All that matter about blood and speed we won't discuss; we understand all that; useful, very, — *of course*, — great obligations to the Godolphin "Arabian," and the rest. I say racing-horses are essentially gambling implements, as much as roulette tables. Now, I am not preaching at this moment; I may read you one of my sermons some other morning; but I maintain that gambling, on the great scale, is not republican. It be-

longs to two phases of society, — a cankered over-civilization, such as exists in rich aristocracies, and the reckless life of borderers and adventurers, or the semi-barbarism of a civilization resolved into its primitive elements. Real Republicanism is stern and severe; its essence is not in forms of government, but in the omnipotence of public opinion which grows out of it. This public opinion cannot prevent gambling with dice or stocks, but it can and does compel it to keep comparatively quiet. But horse-racing is the most public way of gambling, and with all its immense attractions to the sense and the feelings, — to which I plead very susceptible, — the disguise is too thin that covers it, and everybody knows what it means. Its supporters are the Southern gentry. — fine fellows, no doubt, but not republicans exactly, as we understand the term. — a few Northern millionaires more or less thoroughly millioned, who do not represent the real people, and the mob of sporting men, the best of whom are commonly idlers, and the worst very bad neighbors to have near one in a crowd, or to meet in a dark alley. In England, on the other hand, with its aristocratic institutions, racing is a natural

growth enough; the passion for it spreads downwards through all classes, from the Queen to the costermonger. London is like a shelled corn-cob on the Derby day, and there is not a clerk who could raise the money to hire a saddle with an old hack under it that can sit down on his office-stool the next day without wincing.

Now just compare the racer with the trotter for a moment. The racer is incidentally useful, but essentially something to bet upon, as much as the thimble-rigger's "little joker." The trotter is essentially and daily useful, and only incidentally a tool for sporting men.

What better reason do you want for the fact that the racer is most cultivated and reaches his greatest perfection in England, and that the trotting horses of America beat the world? And why should we have expected that the pick — if it was the pick — of our few and far-between racing stables should beat the pick of England and France? Throw over the fallacious time-test, and there was nothing to show for it but a natural kind of patriotic feeling, which we all have, with a thoroughly provincial conceit, which some of us must plead guilty to.

We may beat yet.¹ As an American, I hope we shall. As a moralist and occasional sermonizer, I am not so anxious about it. Wherever the trotting horse goes, he carries in his train brisk omnibuses, lively bakers' carts, and therefore hot rolls, the jolly butcher's wagon, the cheerful gig, the wholesome afternoon drive with wife and child, — all the forms of moral excellence, except truth, which does not agree with any kind of horse-flesh. The racer brings with him gambling, cursing, swearing, drinking, and a distaste for mob-caps and the middle-aged virtues.

¹ We have beaten in many races in England since this was written, and at last carried off the blue ribbon of the turf at Epsom. But up to the present time trotting matches and base-ball are distinctively American, as contrasted with running races and cricket, which belong, as of right, to England. The wonderful effects of breeding and training in a particular direction are shown in the records of the trotting horse. In 1844 Lady Suffolk trotted a mile in 2:26½, which was, I think, the fastest time to that date. In 1859 Flora Temple's time at Kalamazoo — I remember Mr. Emerson surprised me once by correcting my error of a quarter of a second in mentioning it — was 2:19¾. Dexter in 1867 brought the figure down to 2:17¼. There is now a whole class of horses that can trot under 2:20, and in 1881 Mand S. distanced all previous records with 2:10¼. Many of our best running horses go to England. Racing in distine-

And by the way, let me beg you not to call a *trotting match* a *race*, and not to speak of a "thoroughbred" as a "*blooded*" horse, unless he has been recently phlebotomized. I consent to your saying "blood horse," if you like. Also, if, next year, we send out Posterior and Posterioress, the winners of the great national four-mile race in 7:18½, and they happen to get beaten, pay your bets, and behave like men and gentlemen about it, if you know how.

[I felt a great deal better after blowing off the ill-temper condensed in the above paragraph. To brag little, — to show well, — to crow gently, if in luck, — to pay up, to own up, and to shut up, if beaten, are the virtues of a sporting man, and I can't say that I think we have shown them in any great perfection of late.]

— Apropos of horses. Do you know how important good jockeying is to authors? Judicious management; letting the public see your animal just enough, and not too much; holding him up hard when the market is too full of him; letting him out at

tion from trotting. I think, attracts less attention in this country now than in the days of American Eclipse and Henry.



just the right buying intervals : always gently feeling his mouth ; never slacking and never jerking the rein : — this is what I mean by jockeying.

— When an author has a number of books out, a cunning hand will keep them all spinning, as Signor Blitz does his dinner-plates ; fetching each one up, as it begins to “ wabble,” by an advertisement, a puff, or a quotation.

— Whenever the extracts from a living writer begin to multiply fast in the papers, without obvious reason, there is a new book or a new edition coming. The extracts are *ground-bait*.

— Literary life is full of curious phenomena. I don't know that there is anything more noticeable than what we may call *conventional reputations*. There is a tacit understanding in every community of men of letters that they will not disturb the popular fallacy respecting this or that electro-gilded celebrity. There are various reasons for this forbearance : one is old ; one is rich ; one is good-natured ; one is such a favorite with the pit that it would not be safe to hiss him from the manager's box. The venerable augurs of the literary or scientific temple may

smile faintly when one of the tribe is mentioned; but the faree is in general kept up as well as the Chinese comic scene of entreating and imploring a man to stay with you, with the implied compact between you that he shall by no means think of doing it. A poor wretch he must be who would wantonly sit down on one of these handbox reputations. A Prince-Rupert's-drop, which is a tear of unannealed glass, lasts indefinitely, if you keep it from meddling hands; but break its tail off, and it explodes and resolves itself into powder. These celebrities I speak of are the Prince-Rupert's-drops of the learned and polite world. See how the papers treat them! What an array of pleasant kaleidoscopic phrases, which can be arranged in ever so many charming patterns, is at their service! How kind the "Critical Notices" — where small authorship comes to pick up chips of praise, fragrant, sugary, and sappy — always are to them! Well, life would be nothing without paper-credit and other fictions; so let them pass current. Don't steal their chips; don't puncture their swimming-bladders; don't come down on their pasteboard boxes; don't break the ends of their brittle and unstable reputations,

you fellows who all feel sure that your names will be household words a thousand years from now.

“A thousand years is a good while,” said the old gentleman who sits opposite, thoughtfully.

—Where have I been for the last three or four days? Down at the Island,¹ deer shooting. — How many did I bag? I brought home one buck shot. — The Island is where? No matter. It is the most splendid domain that any man looks upon in these latitudes. Blue sea around it, and running up into its heart, so that the little boat slumbers like a baby in lap, while the tall ships are stripping naked to fight the hurricane outside, and storm-stay-sails banging and flying in ribbons. Trees, in stretches of miles; beeches, oaks, most numerous; — many of them hung with moss, looking like bearded Druids; some coiled in the clasp of huge, dark-stemmed grape-vines. Open patches where the sun gets in and goes to sleep, and

¹ The beautiful island referred to is Naushon, the largest of a group lying between Buzzard's Bay and the Vineyard Sound, south of the main land of Massachusetts. It is the noblest domain in New England, and the present Lord of the Manor is worthy of succeeding “the Governor” of blessed memory.

the winds come so finely sifted that they are as soft as swan's-down. Rocks scattered about, — Stonehenge-like monoliths. Fresh-water lakes; one of them, Mary's lake, crystal-clear, full of flashing pickerel lying under the lily-pads like tigers in the jungle. Six pounds of ditto killed one morning for breakfast. *Ego fecit.*

The divinity-student looked as if he would like to question my Latin. No sir, I said, — you need not trouble yourself. There is a higher law in grammar not to be put down by Andrews and Stoddard. Then I went on.

Such hospitality as that island has seen there has not been the like of in these our New England sovereignties. There is nothing in the shape of kindness and courtesy that can make life beautiful, which has not found its home in that ocean-principality. It has welcomed all who were worthy of welcome, from the pale clergyman who came to breathe the sea-air with its medicinal salt and iodine, to the great statesman who turned his back on the affairs of empire, and smoothed his Olympian forehead, and flashed his white teeth in merriment over the long table, where his wit was the keenest and his story the best.

[I don't believe any man ever talked like that in this world. I don't believe *I* talked just so; but the fact is, in reporting one's conversation, one cannot help *Blair-ing* it up more or less, ironing out crumpled paragraphs, starching limp ones, and crimping and plaiting a little sometimes; it is as natural as prinking at the looking-glass.]

— How can a man help writing poetry in such a place? Everybody does write poetry that goes there. In the state archives, kept in the library of the Lord of the Isle, are whole volumes of unpublished verse, — some by well-known hands, and others quite as good, by the last people you would think of as versifiers, — men who could pension off all the genuine poets in the country, and buy ten acres of Boston Common, if it was for sale, with what they had left. Of course I had to write my little copy of verses with the rest; here it is, if you will hear me read it. When the sun is in the west, vessels sailing in an easterly direction look bright or dark to one who observes them from the north or south, according to the tack they are sailing upon. Watching them from one of the windows of the great mansion, I saw these perpetual changes, and moralized thus :



AS I look from the isle, o'er its billows of green,
 To the billows of foam-crested blue,
 Yon bark, that afar in the distance is seen,
 Half dreaming, my eyes will pursue :
 Now dark in the shadow, she scatters the spray
 As the chaff in the stroke of the flail ;
 Now white as the sea-gull, she flies on her way,
 The sun gleaming bright on her sail.

Yet her pilot is thinking of dangers to shun, —
 Of breakers that whiten and roar ;
 How little he cares, if in shadow or sun
 They see him that gaze from the shore !
 He looks to the beacon that looms from the reef,
 To the rock that is under his lee,
 As he drifts on the blast, like a wind-wafted leaf,
 O'er the gulfs of the desolate sea.

Thus drifting afar to the dim-vaulted caves
 Where life and its ventures are laid,
 The dreamers who gaze while we battle the waves
 May see us in sunshine or shade ;
 Yet true to our course, though our shadow grow dark,
 We 'll trim our broad sail as before ;
 And stand by the rudder that governs the bark,
 Nor ask how we look from the shore !

—Insanity is often the logic of an accu-
 rate mind overtasked. Good mental machin-
 ery ought to break its own wheels and levers,

if anything is thrust among them suddenly which tends to stop them or reverse their motion. A weak mind does not accumulate force enough to hurt itself; stupidity often saves a man from going mad. We frequently see persons in insane hospitals, sent there in consequence of what are called *religious* mental disturbances. I confess that I think better of them than of many who hold the same notions, and keep their wits and appear to enjoy life very well, outside of the asylums. Any decent person ought to go mad, if he really holds such or such opinions. It is very much to his discredit in every point of view, if he does not. What is the use of my saying what some of these opinions are? Perhaps more than one of you hold such as I should think ought to send you straight over to Somerville, if you have any logic in your heads or any human feeling in your hearts. Anything that is brutal, cruel, heathenish, that makes life hopeless for the most of mankind and perhaps for entire races, — anything that assumes the necessity of the extermination of instincts which were given to be regulated, — no matter by what name you call it, — no matter whether a fakir, or a monk, or

a deacon believes it, — if received, ought to produce insanity in every well-regulated mind. That condition becomes a normal one, under the circumstances. I am very much ashamed of some people for retaining their reason, when they know perfectly well that if they were not the most stupid or the most selfish of human beings, they would become *non-comptes* at once.

[Nobody understood this but the theological student and the schoolmistress. They looked intelligently at each other; but whether they were thinking about my paradox or not, I am not clear. — It would be natural enough. Stranger things have happened. Love and Death enter boarding-houses without asking the price of board, or whether there is room for them. Alas! these young people are poor and pallid! Love *should* be both rich and rosy, but *must* be either rich or rosy. Talk about military duty! What is that to the warfare of a married maid-of-all-work, with the title of mistress, and an American female constitution, which collapses just in the middle third of life, and comes out vulcanized India-rubber, if it happen to live through the period when health and strength are most wanted?]

— Have I ever acted in private theatricals? Often. I have played the part of the "Poor Gentleman," before a great many audiences, — more, I trust, than I shall ever face again. I did not wear a stage-costume, nor a wig, nor moustaches of burnt cork, but I was placarded and announced as a public performer, and at the proper hour I came forward with the ballet-dancer's smile upon my countenance, and made my bow and acted my part. I have seen my name stuck up in letters so big that I was ashamed to show myself in the place by daylight. I have gone to a town with a sober literary essay in my pocket, and seen myself everywhere announced as the most desperate of *buffos*, — one who was obliged to restrain himself in the full exercise of his powers, from prudential considerations. I have been through as many hardships as Ulysses, in the pursuit of my histrionic vocation. I have travelled in cars until the conductors all knew me like a brother. I have run off the rails, and stuck all night in snow-drifts, and sat behind females that would have the window open when one could not wink without his eyelids freezing together. Perhaps I shall give you some of my experiences one

of these days;— I will not now, for I have something else for you.

Private theatricals, as I have figured in them in country lyceum-halls, are one thing, — and private theatricals, as they may be seen in certain gilded and frescoed saloons of our metropolis, are another. Yes, it is pleasant to see real gentlemen and ladies, who do not think it necessary to mouth, and rant, and stride, like most of our stage heroes and heroines, in the characters which show off their graces and talents; most of all to see a fresh, unrouged, unspoiled, high-bred young maiden, with a lithe figure, and a pleasant voice, acting in those love-dramas which make us young again to look upon, when real youth and beauty will play them for us.

— Of course I wrote the prologue I was asked to write. I did not see the play, though. I knew there was a young lady in it, and that somebody was in love with her, and she was in love with him, and somebody (an old tutor, I believe) wanted to interfere, and, very naturally, the young lady was too sharp for him. The play of course ends charmingly; there is a general reconciliation, and all concerned form a line and take each

other's hands, as people always do after they have made up their quarrels, — and then the curtain falls, — if it does not stick, as it commonly does at private theatrical exhibitions, in which case a boy is detailed to pull it down, which he does, blushing violently.

Now, then, for my prologue. I am not going to change my cæsuras and cadences for anybody ; so if you do not like the heroic, or iambic trimeter brachycatalectic, you had better not wait to hear it.



A

PROLOGUE? Well, of course the ladies know ; —

I have my doubts. No matter, — here we go!

What is a prologue? Let our Tutor teach :

Pro means beforehand ; *logus* stands for speech.

'T is like the harper's prelude on the strings,

The prima donna's courtesy ere she sings.

“ The world 's a stage,” — as Shakespeare said, one day ;

The stage a world — was what he meant to say.

The outside world 's a blunder, that is clear ;

The real world that Nature meant is here.

Here every foundling finds its lost mamma :

Each rogue, repentant, melts his stern papa ;

Misers relent, the spendthrift's debts are paid,

The cheats are taken in the traps they laid ;
 One after one the troubles all are past
 Till the fifth act comes right side up at last,
 When the young couple, old folks, rogues, and all,
 Join hands, *so* happy at the curtain's fall.
 — Here suffering virtue ever finds relief,
 And black-browed ruffians always come to grief,
 — When the lorn damsel, with a frantic speech,
 And cheeks as hueless as a brandy-peach,
 Cries, " Help, kyind Heaven! " and drops upon her
 knees

On the green — baize, — beneath the (canvas) trees, —
 See to her side avenging Valor fly : —
 " Ha! Villain! Draw! Now, Terraitorr, yield or die! "
 — When the poor hero flounders in despair,
 Some dear lost uncle turns up millionaire, —
 Clasps the young scapegrace with paternal joy,
 Sobs on his neck, " *My boy! My boy!! MY BOY!!!* "

Ours, then, sweet friends, the real world to-night
 Of love that conquers in disaster's spite.
 Ladies, attend! While woful cares and doubt
 Wrong the soft passion in the world without,
 Though fortune scowl, though prudence interfere,
 One thing is certain: Love will triumph here!

Lords of creation, whom your ladies rule, —
 The world's great masters, when you're out of school, —
 Learn the brief moral of our evening's play:
 Man has his will, — but woman has her way!
 While man's dull spirit toils in smoke and fire,
 Woman's swift instinct threads the electric wire, —
 The magic bracelet stretched beneath the waves
 Beats the black giant with his score of slaves.
 All earthly powers confess your sovereign art
 But that one rebel, — woman's wilful heart,

All foes you master ; but a woman's wit
 Lets daylight through you ere you know you 're lit.
 So, just to picture what her art can do,
 Hear an old story made as good as new.

Rudolph, professor of the headsman's trade,
 Alike was famous for his arm and blade.
 One day a prisoner Justice had to kill
 Knelt at the block to test the artist's skill.
 Bare-armed, swart-visaged, gaunt, and shaggy-browed,
 Rudolph the headsman rose above the crowd.
 His falchion lightened with a sudden gleam,
 As the pike's armor flashes in the stream.
 He sheathed his blade ; he turned as if to go ;
 The victim knelt, still waiting for the blow.
 " Why strikest not ? Perform thy murderous act."
 The prisoner said. (His voice was slightly cracked.)
 " Friend I *have* struck," the artist straight replied ;
 " Wait but one moment, and yourself decide."

He held his snuff-box, — " Now then, if you please !"
 The prisoner sniffed, and with a crashing sneeze,
 Off his head tumbled, — bowled along the floor. —
 Bounced down the steps ; — the prisoner said no more !

Woman ! thy falchion is a glittering eye ;
 If death lurks in it, oh, how sweet to die !
 Thou takest hearts as Rudolph took the head ;
 We die with love, and never dream we 're dead !

The prologue went off very well, as I hear.
 No alterations were suggested by the lady
 to whom it was sent, so far as I know.
 Sometimes people criticise the poems one
 sends them, and suggest all sorts of im-

provements.¹ Who was that silly body that wanted Burns to alter "Scots wha hae," so as to lengthen the last line, thus? —

"*Edward!*" Chains and slavery.

Here is a little poem I sent a short time since to a committee for a certain celebration. I understood that it was to be a festive and convivial occasion, and ordered myself accordingly. It seems the president of the day was what is called a "teetotaller." I received a note from him in the following words, containing the copy subjoined, with the emendations annexed to it.

"DEAR SIR, — Your poem gives good satisfaction to the committee. The sentiments expressed with reference to liquor are not, however, those generally entertained by this community. I have therefore consulted the clergyman of this place, who has made some slight changes, which he thinks will remove

¹ I remember being asked by a celebrated man of letters to let him look over an early, but somewhat elaborate poem of mine. He read the manuscript and suggested the change of one word, which I adopted in deference to his opinion. The emendation was anything but an improvement, and in later editions the passage reads as when first written.

all objections. and keep the valuable portions of the poem. Please to inform me of your charge for said poem. Our means are limited, etc., etc., etc.

“Yours with respect.”

Here it is, — with the slight alterations.¹

Come! fill a fresh bumper, — for why should we go

While the ^{logwood}~~nectar~~ still reddens our cups as they flow!

Pour out the ^{decoction}~~rich juices~~ still bright with the sun,

Till o'er the brimmed crystal the ^{drue-stuff}~~rubies~~ shall run.

The ^{half-ripened apples}~~purple globed clusters~~ their life-dews have bled;

How sweet is the ^{taste}~~breath~~ of the ^{sugar of lead}~~fragrance they shed!~~

For summer's ^{rank poisons}~~last roses~~ lie hid in the ^{wines ' ' ' !}~~wines~~

That were garnered by ^{stable-boys smoking long-pipes.}~~maidens who laughed through the~~
~~vines.~~

Then a ^{scowl}~~smile~~ and a ^{howl}~~glass~~ and a ^{scoff}~~toast~~ and a ^{sneer}~~cheer~~

For all the ^{strychnine and whiskey, and ratsbane and beer}~~good wine, and we've some of it here~~

In cellar, in pantry, in attic, in hall.

~~Down, down, with thee tyrant that masters us!~~
~~Long live the gay servant that laughs for us all!~~

¹ I recollect a British criticism of the poem “with the slight alterations,” in which the writer was quite indignant at the treatment my convivial song had received. No committee, he thought, would dare to treat a Scotch

The company said I had been shabbily treated, and advised me to charge the committee double, — which I did. But as I never got my pay, I don't know that it made much difference. I am a very particular person about having all I write printed as I write it. I require to see a proof, a revise, a re-revise, and a double re-revise, or fourth-proof rectified impression of all my productions, especially verse. A misprint kills a sensitive author. An intentional change of his text murders him. No wonder so many poets die young!

I have nothing more to report at this time, except two pieces of advice I gave to the young women at table. One relates to a vulgarism of language, which I grieve to say is sometimes heard even from female lips. The other is of more serious purport, and applies to such as contemplate a change of condition, — matrimony, in fact.

— The woman who “calcu'lates” is lost.

— Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust.

author in that way. I could not help being reminded of Sydney Smith, and the surgical operation he proposed, in order to get a pleasantry into the head of a North Briton.



III

THE “Atlantic” obeys the moon, and its LUNIVERSARY has come round again. I have gathered up some hasty notes of my remarks made since the last high tides, which I respectfully submit. Please to remember this is *talk*; just as easy and just as formal as I choose to make it.]

— I never saw an author in my life — saving, perhaps, one — that did not purr as audibly as a full-grown domestic cat (*Felis Catus*, LINN.) on having his fur smoothed in the right way by a skilful hand.

But let me give you a caution. Be very careful how you tell an author he is *droll*. Ten to one he will hate you; and if he does,

be sure he can do you a mischief, and very probably will. Say you *cried* over his romance or his verses, and he will love you and send you a copy. You can laugh over that as much as you like, — in private.

— Wonder why authors and actors are ashamed of being funny? — Why, there are obvious reasons, and deep philosophical ones. The clown knows very well that the women are not in love with him, but with Hamlet, the fellow in the black cloak and plumed hat. Passion never laughs. The wit knows that his place is at the tail of a procession.

If you want the deep underlying reason, I must take more time to tell it. There is a perfect consciousness in every form of wit, — using that term in its general sense, — that its essence consists in a partial and incomplete view of whatever it touches. It throws a single ray, separated from the rest, — red, yellow, blue, or any intermediate shade, — upon an object: never white light, that is the province of wisdom. We get beautiful effects from wit, — all the prismatic colors, — but never the object as it is in fair daylight. A pun, which is a kind of wit, is a different and much shallower trick

in mental optics; throwing the *shadows* of two objects so that one overlies the other. Poetry uses the rainbow tints for special effects, but always keeps its essential object in the purest white light of truth. — Will you allow me to pursue this subject a little farther?

[They didn't allow me at that time, for somebody happened to scrape the floor with his chair just then; which accidental sound, as all must have noticed, has the instantaneous effect that the cutting of the yellow hair by Iris had upon infelix Dido. It broke the charm, and that breakfast was over.]

— Don't flatter yourselves that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. On the contrary, the nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become. Except in cases of necessity, which are rare, leave your friend to learn unpleasant truths from his enemies; they are ready enough to tell them. Good-breeding *never* forgets that *amour-propre* is universal. When you read the story of the Archbishop and Gil Blas, you may laugh, if you will, at the poor old man's delusion; but don't forget that the youth was the greater fool of the two, and

that his master served such a booby rightly in turning him out of doors.

— You need not get up a rebellion against what I say, if you find everything in my sayings is not exactly new. You can't possibly mistake a man who means to be honest for a literary pickpocket. I once read an introductory lecture that looked to me too learned for its latitude. On examination, I found all its erudition was taken ready-made from Disraeli. If I had been ill-natured, I should have shown up the little great man, who had once belabored me in his feeble way. But one can generally tell these wholesale thieves easily enough, and they are not worth the trouble of putting them in the pillory. I doubt the entire novelty of my remarks just made on telling unpleasant truths, yet I am not conscious of any larceny.

Neither make too much of flaws and occasional overstatements. Some persons seem to think that absolute truth, in the form of rigidly stated propositions, is all that conversation admits. This is precisely as if a musician should insist on having nothing but perfect chords and simple melodies,—no diminished fifths, no flat sevenths, no flour-

ishes, on any account. Now it is fair to say, that, just as music must have all these, so conversation must have its partial truths, its embellished truths, its exaggerated truths. It is in its higher forms an artistic product, and admits the ideal element as much as pictures or statues. One man who is a little too literal can spoil the talk of a whole tableful of men of *esprit*. — “Yes,” you say, “but who wants to hear fanciful people’s nonsense? Put the facts to it, and then see where it is!” — Certainly, if a man is too fond of paradox, — if he is flighty and empty, — if, instead of striking those fifths and sevenths, those harmonious discords, often so much better than the twinned octaves, in the music of thought, — if, instead of striking these, he jangles the chords, stick a fact into him like a stiletto. But remember that talking is one of the fine arts, — the noblest, the most important, and the most difficult, — and that its fluent harmonies may be spoiled by the intrusion of a single harsh note. Therefore conversation which is suggestive rather than argumentative, which lets out the most of each talker’s results of thought, is commonly the pleasantest and the most profitable. It is not easy,

at the best, for two persons talking together to make the most of each other's thoughts, there are so many of them.

[The company looked as if they wanted an explanation.]

When John and Thomas, for instance, are talking together, it is natural enough that among the six there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension.

[Our landlady turned pale;—no doubt she thought there was a screw loose in my intellects,—and that involved the probable loss of a boarder. A severe-looking person, who wears a Spanish cloak and a sad cheek, fluted by the passions of the melodrama, whom I understand to be the professional ruffian of the neighboring theatre, alluded, with a certain lifting of the brow, drawing down of the corners of the mouth, and somewhat rasping *voce di petto*, to Falstaff's nine men in buckram. Everybody looked up; I believe the old gentleman opposite was afraid I should seize the carving-knife; at any rate, he slid it to one side, as it were carelessly.]

I think, I said, I can make it plain to Benjamin Franklin here, that there are at least six personalities distinctly to be rec-

ognized as taking part in that dialogue between John and Thomas.

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Three Johns. | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The real John; known only to his Maker. 2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him. 3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either. |
| Three Thomases. | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The real Thomas. 2. Thomas's ideal Thomas. 3. John's ideal Thomas. |

Only one of the three Johns is taxed; only one can be weighed on a platform-balance: but the other two are just as important in the conversation. Let us suppose the real John to be old, dull, and ill-looking. But as the Higher Powers have not conferred on men the gift of seeing themselves in the true light, John very possibly conceives himself to be youthful, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of view of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue, we will say; therefore he *is*, so far as Thomas's attitude in the conversation is concerned, an artful rogue though really simple and stupid. The same conditions apply to the three Thomases. It

follows, that, until a man can be found who knows himself as his Maker knows him, or who sees himself as others see him, there must be at least six persons engaged in every dialogue between two. Of these, the least important, philosophically speaking, is the one that we have called the real person. No wonder two disputants often get angry, when there are six of them talking and listening all at the same time.

[A very unphilosophical application of the above remarks was made by a young fellow answering to the name of John, who sits near me at table. A certain basket of peaches, a rare vegetable, little known to boarding-houses, was on its way to me *viâ* this unlettered Johannes. He appropriated the three that remained in the basket, remarking that there was just one apiece for him. I convinced him that his practical inference was hasty and illogical, but in the mean time he had eaten the peaches.]

— The opinions of relatives as to a man's powers are very commonly of little value; not merely because they sometimes overrate their own flesh and blood, as some may suppose; on the contrary, they are quite as likely to underrate those whom they have

grown into the habit of considering like themselves. The advent of genius is like what florists style the *breaking* of a seedling tulip into what we may call high-caste colors. — ten thousand dingy flowers, then one with the divine streak; or, if you prefer it, like the coming up in old Jacob's garden of that most gentlemanly little fruit, the seckel pear, which I have sometimes seen in shop-windows. It is a surprise. — there is nothing to account for it. All at once we find that twice two make *five*. Nature is fond of what are called "gift-enterprises." This little book of life which she has given into the hands of its joint possessors is commonly one of the old story-books bound over again. Only once in a great while there is a stately poem in it, or its leaves are illuminated with the glories of art, or they unfold a draft for untold values signed by the million-fold millionnaire old mother herself. But strangers are commonly the first to find the "gift" that came with the little book.

It may be questioned whether anything can be conscious of its own flavor. Whether the musk-deer, or the civet-cat, or even a still more eloquently silent animal that might be mentioned, is aware of any personal pe-

culiarity, may well be doubted. No man knows his own voice; many men do not know their own profiles. Every one remembers Carlyle's famous "Characteristics" article; allow for exaggerations, and there is a great deal in his doctrine of the self-unconsciousness of genius. It comes under the great law just stated. This incapacity of knowing its own traits is often found in the family as well as in the individual. So never mind what your cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and the rest, say about that fine poem you have written, but send it (postage-paid) to the editors, if there are any, of the "Atlantic," — which, by the way, is not so called because it is *a notion*, as some dull wits wish they had said, but are too late.

— Scientific knowledge, even in the most modest persons, has mingled with it a something which partakes of insolence. Absolute, peremptory facts are bullies, and those who keep company with them are apt to get a bullying habit of mind; — not of manners, perhaps; they may be soft and smooth, but the smile they carry has a quiet assertion in it, such as the Champion of the Heavy Weights, commonly the best-natured,

but not the most diffident of men, wears upon what he very inelegantly calls his "mug." Take the man, for instance, who deals in the mathematical sciences. There is no elasticity in a mathematical fact; if you bring up against it, it never yields a hair's breadth; everything must go to pieces that comes in collision with it. What the mathematician knows being absolute, unconditional, incapable of suffering question, it should tend, in the nature of things, to breed a despotic way of thinking. So of those who deal with the palpable and often unmistakable facts of external nature; only in a less degree.— Every probability — and most of our common, working beliefs are probabilities — is provided with *buffers* at both ends, which break the force of opposite opinions clashing against it; but scientific certainty has no spring in it, no courtesy, no possibility of yielding. All this must react on the minds which handle these forms of truth.

— Oh, you need not tell me that Messrs. A. and B. are the most gracious, unassuming people in the world, and yet preëminent in the ranges of science I am referring to. I know that as well as you. But mark this

which I am going to say once for all: If I had not force enough to project a principle full in the face of the half dozen most obvious facts which seem to contradict it, I would think only in single file from this day forward. A rash man, once visiting a certain noted institution at South Boston, ventured to express the sentiment, that man is a rational being. An old woman who was an attendant in the Idiot School contradicted the statement, and appealed to the facts before the speaker to disprove it. The rash man stuck to his hasty generalization, notwithstanding.

[—It is my desire to be useful to those with whom I am associated in my daily relations. I not unfrequently practise the divine art of music in company with our landlady's daughter, who, as I mentioned before, is the owner of an accordion. Having myself a well-marked barytone voice of more than half an octave in compass, I sometimes add my vocal powers to her execution of

“Thou, thou reign'st in this bosom.”

not, however, unless her mother or some other discreet female is present, to prevent misinterpretation or remark. I have also

taken a good deal of interest in Benjamin Franklin, before referred to, sometimes called B. F., or more frequently Frank, in imitation of that felicitous abbreviation, combining dignity and convenience, adopted by some of his betters. My acquaintance with the French language is very imperfect, I having never studied it anywhere but in Paris, which is awkward, as B. F. devotes himself to it with the peculiar advantage of an Alsatian teacher. The boy, I think, is doing well, between us, notwithstanding. The following is an *uncorrected* French exercise, written by this young gentleman. His mother thinks it very creditable to his abilities; though, being unacquainted with the French language, her judgment cannot be considered final.

LE RAT DES SALONS À LECTURE.

CE rat çï est un animal fort singulier. Il a deux pattes de derrière sur lesquelles il marche, et deux pattes de devant dont il fait usage pour tenir les journaux. Cet animal a la peau noire pour le plupart, et porte un cercle blanchâtre autour de son cou. On le trouve tous les jours aux dits salons, ou il demeure, digere, s'il y a de quoi dans son intérieur, respire, toussé, éternue, dort, et ronfle quelquefois, ayant toujours le semblant de lire. On ne sait pas s'il a une autre gîte que çelà. Il a l'air d'une bête très stupide, mais il est d'une sagacité et d'une vitesse extraordinaire quand il s'agit de saisir un

journal nouveau. On ne sait pas pourquoi il lit, parcequ'il ne paraît pas avoir des idées. Il vocalise rarement, mais en revanche, il fait des bruits nasaux divers. Il porte un crayon dans une de ses poches pectorales, avec lequel il fait des marques sur les bords des journaux et des livres, semblable aux suivans: !!! — Bah! Pooh! Il ne faut pas cependant les prendre pour des signes d'intelligence. Il ne vole pas, ordinairement; il fait rarement même des échanges de parapluie, et jamais de chapeau, parceque son chapeau a toujours un caractère spécifique. On ne sait pas au juste ce dont il se nourrit. Feu Cuvier était d'avis que c'était de l'odeur du cuir des reliures; ce qu'on dit d'être une nourriture animale fort saine, et peu chère. Il vit bien longtems. Enfin il meure, en laissant à ses héritiers une carte du Salon à Lecture ou il avait existé pendant sa vie. On prétend qu'il revient toutes les nuits, après la mort, visiter le Salon. On peut le voir, dit on, à minuit, dans sa place habituelle, tenant le journal du soir, et ayant à sa main un crayon de charbon. Le lendemain on trouve des caractères inconnus sur les bords du journal. Ce qui prouve que le spiritualisme est vrai, et que Messieurs les Professeurs de Cambridge sont des imbeciles qui ne savent rien du tout, du tout.

I think this exercise, which I have not corrected, or allowed to be touched in any way, is not discreditable to B. F. You observe that he is acquiring a knowledge of zoölogy at the same time that he is learning French. Fathers of families in moderate circumstances will find it profitable to their children, and an economical mode of instruction, to set them to revising and amending

this boy's exercise. The passage was originally taken from the "Histoire Naturelle des Bêtes Ruminans et Rongeurs, Bipèdes et Antres," lately published in Paris. This was translated into English and published in London. It was republished at Great Pedlington, with notes and additions by the American editor. The notes consist of an interrogation-mark on page 53d, and a reference (p. 127th) to another book "edited" by the same hand. The additions consist of the editor's name on the title-page and back, with a complete and authentic list of said editor's honorary titles in the first of these localities. Our boy translated the translation back into French. This may be compared with the original, to be found on Shelf 13, Division X, of the Public Library of this metropolis.]

—Some of you boarders ask me from time to time why I don't write a story, or a novel, or something of that kind. Instead of answering each one of you separately, I will thank you to step up into the wholesale department for a few moments, where I deal in answers by the piece and by the bale.

That every articulately-speaking human being has in him stuff for *one* novel in three

volumes duodecimo has long been with me a cherished belief. It has been maintained, on the other hand, that many persons cannot write more than one novel, — that all after that are likely to be failures. — Life is so much more tremendous a thing in its heights and depths than any transcript of it can be, that all records of human experience are as so many bound *herbaria* to the innumerable glowing, glistening, rustling, breathing, fragrance-laden, poison-sucking, life-giving, death-distilling leaves and flowers of the forest and the prairies. All we can do with books of human experience is to make them alive again with something borrowed from our own lives. We can make a book alive for us just in proportion to its resemblance in essence or in form to our own experience. Now an author's first novel is naturally drawn, to a great extent, from his personal experiences; that is, is a literal copy of nature under various slight disguises. But the moment the author gets out of his personality, he must have the creative power, as well as the narrative art and the sentiment, in order to tell a living story; and this is rare.

Besides, there is great danger that a man's

first life-story shall clean him out, so to speak, of his best thoughts. Most lives, though their stream is loaded with sand and turbid with alluvial waste, drop a few golden grains of wisdom as they flow along. Oftentimes a single *cradling* gets them all, and after that the poor man's labor is only rewarded by mud and worn pebbles. All which proves that I, as an individual of the human family, could write one novel or story at any rate, if I would.

— Why don't I, then? — Well, there are several reasons against it. In the first place, I should tell all my secrets, and I maintain that verse is the proper medium for such revelations. Rhythm and rhyme and the harmonies of musical language, the play of fancy, the fire of imagination, the flashes of passion, so hide the nakedness of a heart laid open, that hardly any confession, transfigured in the luminous halo of poetry, is reproached as self-exposure. A beauty shows herself under the chandeliers, protected by the glitter of her diamonds, with such a broad snow-drift of white arms and shoulders laid bare, that, were she unadorned and in plain calico, she would be unendurable — in the opinion of the ladies.

Again, I am terribly afraid I should show up all my friends. I should like to know if all story-tellers do not do this? Now I am afraid all my friends would not bear showing up very well; for they have an average share of the common weakness of humanity, which I am pretty certain would come out. Of all that have told stories among us there is hardly one I can recall who has not drawn too faithfully some living portrait which might better have been spared.

Once more, I have sometimes thought it possible I might be too dull to write such a story as I should wish to write.

And finally, I think it very likely I *shall* write a story one of these days. Don't be surprised at any time, if you see me coming out with "The Schoolmistress," or "The Old Gentleman Opposite." [*Our* schoolmistress and *our* old gentleman that sits opposite had left the table before I said this.] I want my glory for writing the same discounted now, on the spot, if you please. I will write when I get ready. How many people live on the reputation of the reputation they might have made!

— I saw you smiled when I spoke about the possibility of my being too dull to write

a good story. I don't pretend to know what you meant by it, but I take occasion to make a remark which may hereafter prove of value to some among you. — When one of us who has been led by native vanity or senseless flattery to think himself or herself possessed of talent arrives at the full and final conclusion that he or she is really dull, it is one of the most tranquillizing and blessed convictions that can enter a mortal's mind. All our failures, our short-comings, our strange disappointments in the effect of our efforts are lifted from our bruised shoulders, and fall, like Christian's pack, at the feet of that Omnipotence which has seen fit to deny us the pleasant gift of high intelligence, — with which one look may overflow us in some wider sphere of being.

— How sweetly and honestly one said to me the other day, "I hate books!" A gentleman, — singularly free from affectations, — not learned, of course, but of perfect breeding, which is often so much better than learning, — by no means dull, in the sense of knowledge of the world and society, but certainly not clever either in the arts or sciences, — his company is pleasing to all who know him. I did not recognize in him inferiority

of literary taste half so distinctly as I did simplicity of character and fearless acknowledgment of his inaptitude for scholarship. In fact, I think there are a great many gentlemen and others, who read with a mark to keep their place, that really "hate books," but never had the wit to find it out, or the manliness to own it. [*Entre nous*, I always read with a mark.]

We get into a way of thinking as if what we call an "intellectual man" was, as a matter of course, made up of nine tenths, or thereabouts, of book-learning, and one tenth himself. But even if he is actually so compounded, he need not read much. Society is a strong solution of books. It draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of tea-leaves. If I were a prince, I would hire or buy a private literary tea-pot, in which I would steep all the leaves of new books that promised well. The infusion would do for me without the vegetable fibre. You understand me; I would have a person whose sole business should be to read day and night, and talk to me whenever I wanted him to. I know the man I would have: a quick-witted, out-spoken, incisive fellow; knows his-

tory, or at any rate has a shelf full of books about it, which he can use handily, and the same of all useful arts and sciences; knows all the common plots of plays and novels, and the stock company of characters that are continually coming on in new costume; can give you a criticism of an octavo in an epithet and a wink, and you can depend on it; cares for nobody except for the virtue there is in what he says; delights in taking off big wigs and professional gowns, and in the dis-embalming and unbandaging of all literary mummies. Yet he is as tender and reverential to all that bears the mark of genius, — that is, of a new influx of truth or beauty, — as a nun over her missal. In short, he is one of those men that know everything except how to make a living. Him would I keep on the square next my own royal compartment on life's chessboard. To him I would push up another pawn, in the shape of a comely and wise young woman, whom he would of course take, — to wife. For all contingencies I would liberally provide. In a word, I would, in the plebeian, but expressive phrase, "put him through" all the material part of life: see him sheltered, warmed, fed, button-mended, and all that, just to be

able to lay on his talk when I liked, — with the privilege of shutting it off at will.

A Club is the next best thing to this, strung like a harp, with about a dozen ringing intelligences,¹ each answering to some chord of the macrocosm. They do well to dine together once in a while. A dinner-party made up of such elements is the last triumph of civilization over barbarism. Nature and art combine to charm the senses; the equatorial zone of the system is soothed by well-studied artifices; the faculties are off duty, and fall into their natural attitudes; you see wisdom in slippers and science in a short jacket.

The whole force of conversation depends on how much you can take for granted. Vulgar chess-players have to play their game out; nothing short of the brutality of an actual checkmate satisfies their dull apprehensions. But look at two masters of that noble game! White stands well enough, so far as you can see; but Red says, Mate in

¹ The "Saturday Club," before referred to, answered as well to this description as some others better known to history. Mathematics, music, art, the physical and biological sciences, history, philosophy, poetry, and other branches of imaginative literature were all represented by masters in their several realms.



six moves; — White looks. — nods; — the game is over. Just so in talking with first-rate men; especially when they are good-natured and expansive, as they are apt to be at table. That blessed clairvoyance which sees into things without opening them, — that glorious license, which, having shut the door and driven the reporter from its key-hole, calls upon Truth, majestic virgin! to get down from her pedestal and drop her academic poses, and take a festive garland and the vacant place on the *medius lectus*, — that carnival-shower of questions and replies and comments, large axioms bowled over the mahogany like bomb-shells from professional mortars, and explosive wit dropping its trains of many-colored fire, and the mischief-making rain of *bon-bons* pelting everybody that shows himself, — the picture of a truly intellectual banquet is one which the old Divinities might well have attempted to reproduce in their —

— “Oh, oh, oh!” cried the young fellow whom they call John. — “that is from one of your lectures!”

I know it, I replied, — I concede it, I confess it, proclaim it.

“The trail of the serpent is over them all!”

All lecturers, all professors, all schoolmasters, have ruts and grooves in their minds into which their conversation is perpetually sliding. Did you never, in riding through the woods of a still June evening, suddenly feel that you had passed into a warm stratum of air, and in a minute or two strike the chill layer of atmosphere beyond? Did you never, in cleaving the green waters of the Back Bay, — where the Provincial bluenoses are in the habit of beating the “Metropolitan” boat-clubs, find yourself in a tepid streak, a narrow, local gulf-stream, a gratuitous warm-bath a little underdone, through which your glistening shoulders soon flashed, to bring you back to the cold realities of full-sea temperature? Just so, in talking with any of the characters above referred to, one not unfrequently finds a sudden change in the style of the conversation. The lack-lustre eye, rayless as a Beacon-Street door-plate in August, all at once fills with light; the face flings itself wide open like the church-portals when the bride and bridegroom enter; the little man grows in stature before your eyes, like the small prisoner with hair on end, beloved yet dreaded of early childhood; you were talk-

ing with a dwarf and an imbecile. — you have a giant and a trumpet-tongued angel before you! — Nothing but a streak out of a fifty-dollar lecture. — As when, at some unlooked-for moment, the mighty fountain-column springs into the air before the astonished passer-by. — silver-footed, diamond-crowned, rainbow-scarfed. — from the bosom of that fair sheet, sacred to the hymns of quiet batrachians at home, and the epigrams of a less amiable and less elevated order of *reptilia* in other latitudes.

— Who was that person that was so abused some time since for saying that in the conflict of two races our sympathies naturally go with the higher? No matter who he was. Now look at what is going on in India, — a white, superior “Caucasian” race, against a dark-skinned, inferior, but still “Caucasian” race, — and where are English and American sympathies? We can’t stop to settle all the doubtful questions; all we know is, that the brute nature is sure to come out most strongly in the lower race, and it is the general law that the human side of humanity should treat the brutal side as it does the same nature in the inferior animals. — tame it or crush it.

The India mail brings stories of women and children outraged and murdered ; the royal stronghold is in the hands of the babe-killers. England takes down the Map of the World, which she has girdled with empire, and makes a correction thus : DELHI. *Dele.* The civilized world says, Amen.

— Do not think, because I talk to you of many subjects briefly, that I should not find it much lazier work to take each one of them and dilute it down to an essay. Borrow some of my old college themes and water my remarks to suit yourselves, as the Homeric heroes did with their *melas oinos*, — that black, sweet, syrupy wine which they used to alloy with three parts or more of the flowing stream. [Could it have been *melasses*, as Webster and his provincials spell it, — or *Molossa's*, as dear old smattering, chattering, would-be-College-President, Cotton Mather, has it in the “Magnalia” ? Ponder thereon, ye small antiquaries who make barn-door-fowl flights of learning in “Notes and Queries” ! — ye Historical Societies, in one of whose venerable triremes I, too, ascend the stream of time, while other hands tug at the oars ! — ye Amines of parasitical literature, who pick up your grains

of native-grown food with a bodkin, having gorged upon less honest fare, until, like the great minds Goethe speaks of, you have "made a Golgotha" of your pages! — ponder thereon !]

— Before you go, this morning, I want to read you a copy of verses. You will understand by the title that they are written in an imaginary character. I don't doubt they will fit some family-man well enough. I send it forth as "Oak Hall" projects a coat, on *a priori* grounds of conviction that it will suit somebody. There is no loftier illustration of faith than this. It believes that a soul has been clad in flesh; that tender parents have fed and nurtured it; that its mysterious *compages* or frame-work has survived its myriad exposures and reached the stature of maturity; that the Man, now self-determining, has given in his adhesion to the traditions and habits of the race in favor of artificial clothing; that he will, having all the world to chose from, select the very locality where this audacious generalization has been acted upon. It builds a garment cut to the pattern of an Idea, and trusts that Nature will model a material shape to fit it. There is a prophecy in

every seam, and its pockets are full of inspiration. — Now hear the verses.



THE OLD MAN DREAMS

O FOR one hour of youthful joy!
 Give back my twentieth spring!
 I'd rather laugh a bright-haired boy
 Than reign a gray-beard king!

Off with the wrinkled spoils of age!
 Away with learning's crown!
 Tear out life's wisdom-written page,
 And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream
 From boyhood's fount of flame!

Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame !

— My listening angel heard the prayer,
And calmly smiling, said,
“ If I but touch thy silvered hair,
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

“ But is there nothing in thy track
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day ? ”

— Ah, truest soul of womankind !
Without thee, what were life ?
One bliss I cannot leave behind :
I ’ll take — my — precious — wife !

— The angel took a sapphire pen
And wrote in rainbow dew,
“ The man would be a boy again,
And be a husband too ! ”

— “ And is there nothing yet unsaid
Before the change appears ?
Remember, all their gifts have fled
With those dissolving years ! ”

Why, yes ; for memory would recall
My fond paternal joys ;
I could not bear to leave them all ;
I ’ll take — my — girl — and — boys !

The smiling angel dropped his pen, —
“ Why this will never do ;

The man would be a boy again,
And be a father too!"

And so I laughed. — my laughter woke
The household with its noise, —
And wrote my dream, when morning broke,
To please the gray-haired boys.





I AM so well pleased with my boarding-house that I intend to remain there, perhaps for years. Of course I shall have a great many conversations to report, and they will necessarily be of different tone and on different subjects. The talks are like the breakfasts, — sometimes dipped toast, and sometimes dry. You must take them as they come. How can I do what all these letters ask me to?¹ No. 1. wants

¹ The letters received by authors from unknown correspondents form a curious and, I believe, almost unrecorded branch of literature. The most interesting fact connected with these letters is this. If a writer has a

serious and earnest thought. No. 2. (letter smells of bad cigars) must have more jokes ;

distinct personality of character, an intellectual flavor peculiarly his own, and his writings are somewhat widely spread abroad, he will meet with some, and it may be many, readers who are specially attracted to him by a certain singularly strong affinity. A writer need not be surprised when some simple-hearted creature, evidently perfectly sincere, with no poem or story in the background for which he or she wants your critical offices, meaning too frequently your praise, and nothing else, — when this kind soul assures him or her that he or she, the correspondent, loves to read the productions of him or her, the writer, better than those of any other author living or dead. There is no need of accounting for their individual preferences. What if a reader prefer you to the classics, whose words are resounding through “the corridors of time”! You probably come much nearer to his intellectual level. The rose is the sweetest growth of the garden, but shall not your harmless, necessary cat prefer the aroma of that antiquesly odorous valerian, not unfamiliar to hysteric womanhood? “How can we stand the fine things that are said of us?” asked one of a bright New Englander, whom New York has borrowed from us. “Because we feel that they are *true*,” he answered. At any rate if they are true for those who say them, we need not quarrel with their superlatives.

But what revelations are to be read in these letters! From the lisp of vanity, commending itself to the attention of the object of its admiration, to the cry of despair, which means insanity or death, if a wise word of counsel or a helping hand does not stay it, what a gamut of human utterances! Each individual writer feels as if he or she were the only one to be listened to and succored, little remembering that merely to acknowledge the re-

wants me to tell a "good storey" which he has copied out for me. (I suppose two letters before the word "good" refer to some Doctor of Divinity who told the story.) No. 3. (in female hand) — more poetry. No. 4. wants something that would be of use to a practical man. (*Practical mahn* he probably pronounces it.) No. 5. (gilt-edged, sweet-scented) — "more sentiment," — "heart's outpourings." —

My dear friends, one and all, I can do nothing but report such remarks as I happen to have made at our breakfast-table. Their character will depend on many accidents, — a good deal on the particular persons in the company to whom they were addressed. It so happens that those which follow were mainly intended for the divinity-student and the schoolmistress; though others whom I need not mention saw fit to interfere, with more or less propriety, in the conversation. This is one of my privileges as a talker; and of course, when I was not talking for our whole company I don't expect all the readers of this periodical to be inter-

ceipt of the letters that come by every post is no small part of every day's occupation to a good-natured and moderately popular writer.

ested in my notes of what was said. Still, I think there may be a few that will rather like this vein, — possibly prefer it to a livelier one, — serious young men, and young women generally, in life's roseate parenthesis from — years of age to — inclusive.

Another privilege of talking is to misquote. — Of course it was n't Proserpina that actually cut the yellow hair, — but *Iris*. (As I have since told you) it was the former lady's regular business, but Dido had used herself ungentlely, and Madame d'Enfer stood firm on the point of etiquette. So the bathycolpian Here, — Juno, in Latin, — sent down Iris instead. But I was mightily pleased to see that one of the gentlemen that do the heavy articles for the celebrated "Oceanic Miscellany" misquoted Campbell's line without any excuse. "Waft us home the message" of course it ought to be. Will he be duly grateful for the correction?]

— The more we study the body and the mind, the more we find both to be governed, not *by*, but *according to* laws, such as we observe in the larger universe. — You think you know all about *walking*, — don't you, now? Well, how do you suppose your lower limbs are held to your body? They are

sucked up by two cupping vessels ("cotyloid" — cup-like — cavities), and held there as long as you live, and longer. At any rate, you think you move them backward and forward at such a rate as your will determines, don't you? On the contrary, they swing just as any other pendulums swing, at a fixed rate, determined by their length. You can alter this by muscular power, as you can take hold of the pendulum of a clock and make it move faster or slower; but your ordinary gait is timed by the same mechanism as the movements of the solar system.

[My friend, the Professor, told me all this, referring me to certain German physiologists by the name of Weber for proof of the facts, which, however, he said he had often verified. I appropriated it to my own use; what can one do better than this, when one has a friend that tells him anything worth remembering?

The Professor seems to think that man and the general powers of the universe are in partnership. Some one was saying that it had cost nearly half a million to move the Leviathan¹ only so far as they had got it

¹ "The Leviathan" was the name first applied to the

already. — Why. — said the Professor, — they might have hired an EARTHQUAKE for less money !]

Just as we find a mathematical rule at the bottom of many of the bodily movements, just so thought may be supposed to have its regular cycles. Such or such a thought comes round periodically, in its turn. Accidental suggestions, however, so far interfere with the regular cycles, that we may find them practically beyond our power of recognition. Take all this for what it is worth, but at any rate you will agree that there are certain particular thoughts which do not come up once a day, nor once a week, but that a year would hardly go round without your having them pass through your mind. Here is one which comes up at intervals in this way. Some one speaks of it, and there is an instant and eager smile of assent in the listener or listeners. Yes, indeed ; they have often been struck by it.

All at once a conviction flashes through

huge vessel afterwards known as the "Great Eastern." The trouble which rose from its being built out of its "native element," as the newspapers call it, was like the puzzle of the Primrose household after the great family picture, with "as many sheep as the painter could put in for nothing," was finished.

us that we have been in the same precise circumstances as at the present instant, once or many times before.

O, dear, yes! — said one of the company, — everybody has had that feeling.

The landlady did n't know anything about such notions; it was an idee in folks' heads, she expected.

The schoolmistress said, in a hesitating sort of way, that she knew the feeling well, and did n't like to experience it; it made her think she was a ghost, sometimes.

The young fellow whom they call John said he knew all about it; he had just lighted a cheroot the other day, when a tremendous conviction all at once came over him that he had done just that same thing ever so many times before. I looked severely at him, and his countenance immediately fell — *on the side toward me*; I cannot answer for the other, for he can wink and laugh with either half of his face without the other half's knowing it.

— I have noticed — I went on to say — the following circumstances connected with these sudden impressions. First, that the condition which seems to be the duplicate of a former one is often very trivial, — one

that might have presented itself a hundred times. Secondly, that the impression is very evanescent, and that it is rarely, if ever, recalled by any voluntary effort, at least after any time has elapsed. Thirdly, that there is a disinclination to record the circumstances, and a sense of incapacity to reproduce the state of mind in words. Fourthly, I have often felt that the duplicate condition had not only occurred once before, but that it was familiar and, as it seemed, habitual. Lastly, I have had the same convictions in my dreams.

How do I account for it? — Why, there are several ways that I can mention, and you may take your choice. The first is that which the young lady hinted at; — that these flashes are sudden recollections of a previous existence. I don't believe that; for I remember a poor student I used to know told me he had such a conviction one day when he was blacking his boots, and I can't think he had ever lived in another world where they use Day and Martin.

Some think that Dr. Wigan's doctrine of the brain's being a double organ, its hemispheres working together like the two eyes, accounts for it. One of the hemispheres

hangs fire, they suppose, and the small interval between the perceptions of the nimble and the sluggish half seems an indefinitely long period, and therefore the second perception appears to be the copy of another, ever so old. But even allowing the centre of perception to be double, I can see no good reason for supposing this indefinite lengthening of the time, nor any analogy that bears it out. It seems to me most likely that the coincidence of circumstances is very partial, but that we take this partial resemblance for identity, as we occasionally do resemblances of persons. A momentary posture of circumstances is so far like some preceding one that we accept it as exactly the same, just as we accost a stranger occasionally, mistaking him for a friend. The apparent similarity may be owing, perhaps, quite as much to the mental state at the time as to the outward circumstances.

— Here is another of these curiously recurring remarks. I have said it, and heard it many times, and occasionally met with something like it in books. — somewhere in Bulwer's novels, I think, and in one of the works of Mr. Olmsted, I know.

Memory, imagination, old sentiments and

associations, are more readily reached through the sense of SMELL than by almost any other channel.

Of course the particular odors which act upon each person's susceptibilities differ. — O, yes! I will tell you some of mine. The smell of *phosphorus* is one of them. During a year or two of adolescence I used to be dabbling in chemistry a good deal, and as about that time I had my little aspirations and passions like another, some of these things got mixed up with each other: orange-colored fumes of nitrous acid, and visions as bright and transient; reddening litmus-paper, and blushing cheeks; — *cheu!*

“*Soles occidere et redire possunt,*”

but there is no reagent that will redden the faded roses of eighteen hundred and — spare them! But, as I was saying, phosphorus fires this train of associations in an instant; its luminous vapors with their penetrating odor throw me into a trance; it comes to me in a double sense “trailing clouds of glory.” Only the confounded Vienna matches, *ohne phosphorgeruch*, have worn my sensibilities a little.

Then there is the *marigold*. When I

was of smallest dimensions, and went to ride impacted between the knees of fond parental pair, we would sometimes cross the bridge to the next village-town and stop opposite a low, brown, "gambrel-roofed" cottage. Out of it would come one Sally, sister of its swarthy tenant, swarthy herself, shady-lipped, sad-voiced, and, bending over her flower-bed, would gather a "posy," as she called it, for the little boy. Sally lies in the churchyard with a slab of blue slate at her head, lichen-crustcd, and leaning a little within the last few years. Cottage, garden-beds, posies, grenadier-like rows of seedling onions, — stateliest of vegetables, — all are gone, but the breath of a marigold brings them all back to me.

Perhaps the herb *everlasting*, the fragrant *immortelle* of our autumn fields, has the most suggestive odor to me of all those that set me dreaming. I can hardly describe the strange thoughts and emotions which come to me as I inhale the aroma of its pale, dry, rustling flowers. A something it has of sepulchral spicery, as if it had been brought from the core of some great pyramid, where it had lain on the breast of a mummied Pharaoh. Something, too, of im-

mortality in the sad, faint sweetness lingering so long in its lifeless petals. Yet this does not tell why it fills my eyes with tears and carries me in blissful thought to the banks of asphodel that border the River of Life.

— I should not have talked so much about these personal susceptibilities, if I had not a remark to make about them which I believe is a new one. It is this. There may be a physical reason for the strange connection between the sense of smell and the mind. The olfactory nerve — so my friend, the Professor, tells me — is the only one directly connected with the hemispheres of the brain, the parts in which, as we have every reason to believe, the intellectual processes are performed. To speak more truly, the olfactory “nerve” is not a nerve at all, he says, but a part of the brain, in intimate connection with its anterior lobes. Whether this anatomical arrangement is at the bottom of the facts I have mentioned, I will not decide, but it is curious enough to be worth remembering. Contrast the sense of taste, as a source of suggestive impressions, with that of smell. Now the Professor assures me that you will find the nerve of taste has no immediate connection with the brain proper, but only with the prolongation of the spinal cord.



[The old gentleman opposite did not pay much attention, I think, to this hypothesis of mine. But while I was speaking about the sense of smell he nestled about in his seat, and presently succeeded in getting out a large red bandanna handkerchief. Then he lurched a little to the other side, and after much tribulation at last extricated an ample round snuff-box. I looked as he opened it and felt for the wonted pugil. Moist rap-pee, and a Tonka-bean lying therein. I made the manual sign understood of all mankind that use the precious dust, and presently my brain, too, responded to the long unused stimulus. — O boys, — that were, — actual papas and possible grand-papas, — some of you with crowns like billiard-balls, — some in locks of sable silvered, and some of silver sabled. — do you remember, as you doze over this, those after-dinners at the Trois Frères, when the Scotch-plaided snuff-box went round, and the dry Lundy-Foot tickled its way along into our happy sensoria? Then it was that the Chambertin or the Clos Vougeot came in, slumbering in its straw cradle. And one among you, — do you remember how he would sit dreaming over his Burgundy, and tinkle his fork

against the sides of the bubble-like glass, saying that he was hearing the cow-bells as he used to hear them, when the deep-breathing kine came home at twilight from the huckleberry pasture, in the old home a thousand leagues towards the sunset?]

Ah me! what strains and strophes of unwritten verse pulsate through my soul when I open a certain closet in the ancient house where I was born! On its shelves used to lie bundles of sweet-marjoram and pennyroyal and lavender and mint and catnip; there apples were stored until their seeds should grow black, which happy period there were sharp little milk-teeth always ready to anticipate; there peaches lay in the dark, thinking of the sunshine they had lost, until, like the hearts of saints who dream of heaven in their sorrow, they grew fragrant as the breath of angels. The odorous echo of a score of dead summers lingers yet in those dim recesses.

— Do I remember Byron's line about "striking the electric chain"? — To be sure I do. I sometimes think the less the hint that stirs the automatic machinery of association, the more easily this moves us. What can be more trivial than that old story of

opening the folio Shakespeare that used to lie in some ancient English hall and finding the flakes of Christmas pastry between its leaves, shut up in them perhaps a hundred years ago? And, lo! as one looks on these poor relics of a bygone generation, the universe changes in the twinkling of an eye; old George the Second is back again, and the elder Pitt is coming into power, and General Wolfe is a fine, promising young man, and over the Channel they are pulling the *Sieur Damiens* to pieces with wild horses, and across the Atlantic the Indians are tomahawking *Hirams* and *Jonathans* and *Jonases* at *Fort William Henry*; all the dead people who have been in the dust so long — even to the stout-armed cook that made the pastry — are alive again; the planet unwinds a hundred of its luminous coils, and the precession of the equinoxes is retraced on the dial of heaven! And all this for a bit of pie-crust!

— I will thank you for that pie, — said the provoking young fellow whom I have named repeatedly. He looked at it for a moment, and put his hands to his eyes as if moved. — I was thinking, — he said indistinctly —

— How? What is 't? — said our landlady.

— I was thinking — said he — who was king of England when this old pie was baked, — and it made me feel bad to think how long he must have been dead.

[Our landlady is a decent body, poor, and a widow of course; *cela va sans dire*. She told me her story once; it was as if a grain of corn that had been ground and bolted had tried to individualize itself by a special narrative. There was the wooing and the wedding, — the start in life, — the disappointment, — the children she had buried, — the struggle against fate, — the dismantling of life, first of its small luxuries, and then of its comforts — the broken spirits, — the altered character of the one on whom she leaned, — and at last the death that came and drew the black curtain between her and all her earthly hopes.

I never laughed at my landlady after she had told me her story, but I often cried, — not those pattering tears that run off the eaves upon our neighbors' grounds, the *stillicidium* of self-conscious sentiment, but those which steal noiselessly through their conduits until they reach the cisterns lying

round about the heart ; those tears that we weep inwardly with unchanging features ; — such I did shed for her often when the imps of the boarding-house Inferno tugged at her soul with their red-hot pincers.]

Young man, — I said, — the pasty you speak lightly of is not old, but courtesy to those who labor to serve us, especially if they are of the weaker sex, is very old, and yet well worth retaining. May I recommend to you the following caution, as a guide, whenever you are dealing with a woman, or an artist, or a poet, — if you are handling an editor or politician, it is superfluous advice. I take it from the back of one of those little French toys which contain pasteboard figures moved by a small running stream of fine sand ; Benjamin Franklin will translate it for you : “ *Quoiqu'elle soit très solidement montée, il faut ne pas BRUTALISER la machine.* ” — I will thank you for the pie, if you please.

[I took more of it than was good for me, — as much as 85°, I should think, — and had an indigestion in consequence. While I was suffering from it, I wrote some sadly desponding poems, and a theological essay which took a very melancholy view of crea-

tion. When I got better I labelled them all "Pie-crust," and laid them by as scarecrows and solemn warnings. I have a number of books on my shelves which I should like to label with some such title; but, as they have great names on their title-pages, — Doctors of Divinity, some of them, — it would n't do.]

— My friend, the Professor, whom I have mentioned to you once or twice, told me yesterday that somebody had been abusing him in some of the journals of his calling. I told him that I did n't doubt he deserved it; that I hoped he did deserve a little abuse occasionally, and would for a number of years to come; that nobody could do anything to make his neighbors wiser or better without being liable to abuse for it; especially that people hated to have their little mistakes made fun of, and perhaps he had been doing something of the kind. — The Professor smiled. — Now, said I, hear what I am going to say. It will not take many years to bring you to the period of life when men, at least the majority of writing and talking men, do nothing but praise. Men, like peaches and pears, grow sweet a little while before they begin to decay. I don't

know what it is. — whether a spontaneous change, mental or bodily, or whether it is thorough experience of the thanklessness of critical honesty. — but it is a fact, that most writers, except sour and unsuccessful ones, get tired of finding fault at about the time when they are beginning to grow old. As a general thing, I would not give a great deal for the fair words of a critic, if he is himself an author, over fifty years of age. At thirty we are all trying to cut our names in big letters upon the walls of this tenement of life; twenty years later we have carved it, or shut up our jack-knives. Then we are ready to help others, and more anxious not to hinder any, because nobody's elbows are in our way. So I am glad you have a little life left; you will be saccharine enough in a few years.

— Some of the softening effects of advancing age have struck me very much in what I have heard or seen here and elsewhere. I just now spoke of the sweetening process that authors undergo. Do you know that in the gradual passage from maturity to helplessness the harshest characters sometimes have a period in which they are gentle and placid as young children? I have heard

it said, but I cannot be sponsor for its truth, that the famous chieftain, Lochiel, was rocked in a cradle like a baby, in his old age. An old man, whose studies had been of the severest scholastic kind, used to love to hear little nursery-stories read over and over to him. One who saw the Duke of Wellington in his last years describes him as very gentle in his aspect and demeanor. I remember a person of singularly stern and lofty bearing who became remarkably gracious and easy in all his ways in the later period of his life.

And that leads me to say that men often remind me of pears in their way of coming to maturity. Some are ripe at twenty, like human Jargonelles, and must be made the most of, for their day is soon over. Some come into their perfect condition late, like the autumn kinds, and they last better than the summer fruit. And some, that, like the Winter-Nelis, have been hard and uninviting until all the rest have had their season, get their glow and perfume long after the frost and snow have done their worst with the orchards. Beware of rash criticisms: the rough and astringent fruit you condemn may be an autumn or a winter pear, and

that which you picked up beneath the same bough in August may have been only its worm-eaten windfalls. Milton was a Saint-Germain with a graft of the roseate Early-Catherine. Rich. juicy, lively, fragrant. russet skinned old Chaucer was an Easter-Beurré; the buds of a new summer were swelling when he ripened.

— There is no power I envy so much, — said the divinity-student, — as that of seeing analogies and making comparisons. I don't understand how it is that some minds are continually coupling thoughts or objects that seem not in the least related to each other, until all at once they are put in a certain light and you wonder that you did not always see that they were as like as a pair of twins. It appears to me a sort of miraculous gift.

[He is a rather nice young man, and I think has an appreciation of the higher mental qualities remarkable for one of his years and training. I try his head occasionally as housewives try eggs. — give it an intellectual shake and hold it up to the light, so to speak, to see if it has life in it, actual or potential, or only contains lifeless albumen.]

You call it *miraculous*, — I replied, — tossing the expression with my facial eminence, a little smartly, I fear. — Two men are walking by the polyphlœsbœan ocean, one of them having a small tin cup with which he can scoop up a gill of sea-water when he will, and the other nothing but his hands, which will hardly hold water at all, — and you call the tin cup a miraculous possession! It is the ocean that is the miracle, my infant apostle! Nothing is clearer than that all things are in all things, and that just according to the intensity and extension of our mental being we shall see the many in the one and the one in the many. Did Sir Isaac think what he was saying when he made *his* speech about the ocean, — the child and the pebbles, you know? Did he mean to speak slightly of a pebble? Of a spherical solid which stood sentinel over its compartment of space before the stone that became the pyramids had grown solid, and has watched it until now! A body which knows all the currents of force that traverse the globe; which holds by invisible threads to the ring of Saturn and the belt of Orion! A body from the contemplation of which an archangel could infer

the entire inorganic universe as the simplest of corollaries! A throne of the all-pervading Deity, who has guided its every atom since the rosary of heaven was strung with beaded stars!

So, — to return to *our* walk by the ocean, — if all that poetry has dreamed, all that insanity has raved, all that maddening narcotics have driven through the brains of men, or smothered passion nursed in the fancies of women, — if the dreams of colleges and convents and boarding-schools, — if every human feeling that sighs, or smiles, or curses, or shrieks, or groans, should bring all their innumerable images, such as come with every hurried heart-beat, — the epic which held them all, though its letters filled the zodiac, would be but a cupful from the infinite ocean of similitudes and analogies that rolls through the universe.

[The divinity-student honored himself by the way in which he received this. He did not swallow it at once, neither did he reject it; but he took it as a pickerel takes the bait, and carried it off with him to his hole (in the fourth story) to deal with at his leisure.]

— Here is another remark made for his

especial benefit. — There is a natural tendency in many persons to run their adjectives together in *triads*, as I have heard them called, — thus: He was honorable, courteous, and brave; she was graceful, pleasing, and virtuous. Dr. Johnson is famous for this; I think it was Bulwer who said you could separate a paper in the “Rambler” into three distinct essays. Many of our writers show the same tendency, — my friend, the Professor, especially. Some think it is in humble imitation of Johnson, — some that it is for the sake of the stately sound only. I don’t think they get to the bottom of it. It is, I suspect, an instinctive and involuntary effort of the mind to present a thought or image with the *three dimensions* which belong to every solid, — an unconscious handling of an idea as if it had length, breadth, and thickness. It is a great deal easier to say this than to prove it, and a great deal easier to dispute it than to disprove it. But mind this: the more we observe and study, the wider we find the range of the automatic and instinctive principles in body, mind, and morals, and the narrower the limits of the self-determining conscious movement.

— I have often seen piano-forte players and singers make such strange motions over their instruments or song-books that I wanted to laugh at them. “Where did our friends pick up all these fine ecstatic airs?” I would say to myself. Then I would remember My Lady in “Marriage à la Mode,” and amuse myself with thinking how affectation was the same thing in Hogarth’s time and in our own. But one day I bought me a Canary-bird and hung him up in a cage at my window. By and by he found himself at home, and began to pipe his little tunes; and there he was, sure enough, swimming and waving about, with all the droopings and liftings and languishing side-turnings of the head that I had laughed at. And now I should like to ask, WHO taught him all this?—and me, through him, that the foolish head was not the one swinging itself from side to side and bowing and nodding over the music, but that other which was passing its shallow and self-satisfied judgment on a creature made of finer clay than the frame which carried that same head upon its shoulders?

— Do you want an image of the human will or the self-determining principle, as

compared with its pre-arranged and impassable restrictions? A drop of water, imprisoned in a crystal; you may see such a one in any mineralogical collection. One little fluid particle in the crystalline prism of the solid universe!

— Weaken moral obligations? — No, not weaken but define them. When I preach that sermon I spoke of the other day, I shall have to lay down some principles not fully recognized in some of your text-books.

I should have to begin with one most formidable preliminary. You saw an article the other day in one of the journals, perhaps, in which some old Doctor or other said quietly that patients were very apt to be fools and cowards. But a great many of the clergyman's patients are not only fools and cowards, but also liars.

[Immense sensation at the table. — Sudden retirement of the angular female in oxydated bombazine. Movement of adhesion — as they say in the Chamber of Deputies — on the part of the young fellow they call John. Falling of the old-gentleman-opposite's lower jaw — (gravitation is beginning to get the better of him). Our landlady to Benjamin Franklin, briskly, —

Go to school right off, there 's a good boy! Schoolmistress curious, — takes a quick glance at divinity-student. Divinity-student slightly flushed; draws his shoulders back a little, as if a big falsehood — or truth — had hit him in the forehead. Myself calm.]

— I should not make such a speech as that, you know without having pretty substantial indorsers to fall back upon, in case my credit should be disputed. Will you run up-stairs, Benjamin Franklin (for B. F. had *not* gone right off, of course), and bring down a small volume from the left upper corner of the right-hand shelves?

[Look at the precious little black, ribbed backed, clean-typed, vellum-papered 32mo. “DESIDERII ERASMI COLLOQUIA. Amstelodami. Typis Ludovici Elzevirii. 1650.” Various names written on title-page. Most conspicuous this: Gul. Cookeson, E. Coll. Omn. Anim. 1725. Oxon.

— O William Cookeson, of All-Souls College, Oxford, — then writing as I now write, — now in the dust, where I shall lie, — is this line all that remains to thee of earthly remembrance? Thy name is at least once more spoken by living men; — is it a pleas-

ure to thee? Thou shalt share with me my little draught of immortality. — its week, its month, its year. — whatever it may be, — and then we will go together into the solemn archives of Oblivion's Uncatalogued Library !]

— If you think I have used rather strong language, I shall have to read something to you out of the book of this keen and witty scholar. — the great Erasmus, — who “laid the egg of the Reformation which Luther hatched.” Oh, you never read his *Naufragium*, or “Shipwreck,” did you? Of course not; for, if you had, I don't think you would have given me credit, — or discredit, — for entire originality in that speech of mine. That men are cowards in the contemplation of futurity he illustrates by the extraordinary antics of many on board the sinking vessel; that they are fools, by their praying to the sea, and making promises to bits of wood from the true cross, and all manner of similar nonsense; that they are fools, cowards, and liars all at once, by this story: I will put it into rough English for you. — “I could n't help laughing to hear one fellow bawling out, so that he might be sure to be heard, a promise to Saint Chris-

topher of Paris, — the monstrous statue in the great church there, — that he would give him a wax taper as big as himself. ‘Mind what you promise!’ said an acquaintance who stood near him, poking him with his elbow; ‘you could n’t pay for it, if you sold all your things at auction.’ ‘Hold your tongue, you donkey!’ said the fellow, — but softly, so that Saint Christopher should not hear him, — ‘do you think I’m in earnest? If I once get my foot on dry ground, catch me giving him so much as a tallow candle!’”

Now, therefore, remembering that those who have been loudest in their talk about the great subject of which we were speaking have not necessarily been wise, brave, and true men, but, on the contrary, have very often been wanting in one or two or all of the qualities these words imply, I should expect to find a good many doctrines current in the schools which I should be obliged to call foolish, cowardly, and false.

— So you would abuse other people’s beliefs, Sir, and yet not tell us your own creed! — said the divinity-student, coloring up with a spirit for which I liked him all the better.

— I have a creed, — I replied ; — none better, and none shorter. It is told in two words, — the two first of the Paternoster. And when I say these words I mean them. And when I compared the human will to a drop in a crystal, and said I meant to *define* moral obligations, and not weaken them, this was what I intended to express : that the fluent, self-determining power of human beings is a very strictly limited agency in the universe. The chief planes of its enclosing solid are, of course, organization, education, condition. Organization may reduce the power of the will to nothing, as in some idiots : and from this zero the scale mounts upwards by slight gradations. Education is only second to nature. Imagine all the infants born this year in Boston and Timbuctoo to change places ! Condition does less, but “ Give me neither poverty nor riches ” was the prayer of Agur, and with good reason. If there is any improvement in modern theology, it is in getting out of the region of pure abstractions and taking these every-day working forces into account. The great theological question now heaving and throbbing in the minds of Christian men is this : —

No, I won't talk about these things now. My remarks might be repeated, and it would give my friends pain to see with what personal incivilities I should be visited. Besides, what business has a mere boarder to be talking about such things at a breakfast-table? Let him make puns. To be sure, he was brought up among the Christian fathers, and learned his alphabet out of a quarto "Concilium Tridentinum." He has also heard many thousand theological lectures by men of various denominations; and it is not at all to the credit of these teachers, if he is not fit by this time to express an opinion on theological matters.

I know well enough that there are some of you who had a great deal rather see me stand on my head than use it for any purpose of thought. Does not my friend, the Professor, receive at least two letters a week, requesting him to
 . . ., — on the strength of some youthful antic of his, which, no doubt, authorizes the intelligent constituency of autograph-hunters to address him as a harlequin?

— Well, I can't be savage with you for wanting to laugh, and I like to make you laugh well enough, when I can. But then

observe this : if the sense of the ridiculous is one side of an impressible nature, it is very well ; but if that is all there is in a man, he had better have been an ape at once, and so have stood at the head of his profession. Laughter and tears are meant to turn the wheels of the same machinery of sensibility ; one is wind-power, and the other water-power ; that is all. I have often heard the Professor talk about hysterics as being Nature's cleverest illustration of the reciprocal convertibility of the two states of which these acts are the manifestations. But you may see it every day in children ; and if you want to choke with stifled tears at sight of the transition, as it shows itself in older years, go and see Mr. Blake play *Jesse Rural*.

It is a very dangerous thing for a literary man to indulge his love for the ridiculous. People laugh *with* him just so long as he amuses them ; but if he attempts to be serious, they must still have their laugh, and so they laugh *at* him. There is in addition, however, a deeper reason for this than would at first appear. Do you know that you feel a little superior to every man who makes you laugh, whether by making faces or verses ? Are you aware that you have a

pleasant sense of patronizing him. when you condescend so far as to let him turn somersets, literal or literary, for your royal delight? Now if a man can only be allowed to stand on a dais, or raised platform, and look down on his neighbor who is exerting his talent for him, oh, it is all right! — first-rate performance! — and all the rest of the fine phrases. But if all at once the performer asks the gentleman to come upon the floor, and, stepping upon the platform, begins to talk down at him, — ah, that was n't in the programme!

I have never forgotten what happened when Sydney Smith — who, as everybody knows, was an exceedingly sensible man, and a gentleman, every inch of him — ventured to preach a sermon on the Duties of Royalty. The “Quarterly,” “so savage and tartarly,” came down upon him in the most contemptuous style, as “a joker of jokes,” a “diner-out of the first water,” in one of his own phrases; sneering at him, insulting him, as nothing but a toady of a court, sneaking behind the anonymous, would ever have been mean enough to do to a man of his position and genius, or to any decent person even. — If I were giving advice to a young fellow

of talent, with two or three facets to his mind. I would tell him by all means to keep his wit in the background until after he had made a reputation by his more solid qualities. And so to an actor: *Hamlet* first, and *Bob Logic* afterwards, if you like; but don't think, as they say poor Liston used to, that people will be ready to allow that you can do anything great with *Macbeth's* dagger after flourishing about with *Paul Pry's* umbrella. Do you know, too, that the majority of men look upon all who challenge their attention. — for a while, at least, — as beggars, and nuisances? They always try to get off as cheaply as they can; and the cheapest of all things they can give a literary man — pardon the forlorn pleasantry! — is the *funny-bone*. That is all very well so far as it goes, but satisfies no man, and makes a good many angry, as I told you on a former occasion.

— Oh, indeed, no! — I am not ashamed to make you laugh, occasionally. I think I could read you something I have in my desk which would probably make you smile. Perhaps I will read it one of these days, if you are patient with me when I am sentimental and reflective; not just now. The ludicrous

has its place in the universe ; it is not a human invention, but one of the Divine ideas, illustrated in the practical jokes of kittens and monkeys long before Aristophanes or Shakespeare. How curious it is that we always consider solemnity and the absence of all gay surprises and encounter of wits as essential to the idea of the future life of those whom we thus deprive of half their faculties and then call *blessed* ! There are not a few who, even in this life, seem to be preparing themselves for that smileless eternity to which they look forward, by banishing all gayety from their hearts and all joyousness from their countenances. I meet one such in the street not unfrequently, a person of intelligence and education, but who gives me (and all that he passes) such a rayless and chilling look of recognition, — something as if he were one of Heaven's assessors, come down to "doom" every acquaintance he met, — that I have sometimes begun to sneeze on the spot, and gone home with a violent cold, dating from that instant. I don't doubt he would cut his kitten's tail off, if he caught her playing with it. Please tell me, who taught her to play with it ?

No, no ! — give me a chance to talk to

you, my fellow-boarders, and you need not be afraid that I shall have any scruples about entertaining you, if I can do it, as well as giving you some of my serious thoughts, and perhaps my sadder fancies. I know nothing in English or any other literature more admirable than that sentiment of Sir Thomas Browne "EVERY MAN TRULY LIVES, SO LONG AS HE ACTS HIS NATURE, OR SOME WAY MAKES GOOD THE FACULTIES OF HIMSELF."

I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, — but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor. There is one very sad thing in old friendships, to every mind which is really moving onward. It is this: that one cannot help using his early friends as the seaman uses the log, to mark his progress. Every now and then we throw an old schoolmate over the stern with a string of thought tied to him, and look, — I am afraid with a kind of luxurious and sanctimonious compassion, — to see the rate at which the string reels off, while he lies there bobbing up and down,

poor fellow! and we are dashing along with the white foam and bright sparkle at our bows; — the ruffled bosom of prosperity and progress, with a sprig of diamonds stuck in it! But this is only the sentimental side of the matter; for grow we must, if we out-grow all that we love.

Don't misunderstand that metaphor of heaving the log, I beg you. It is merely a smart way of saying that we cannot avoid measuring our rate of movement by those with whom we have long been in the habit of comparing ourselves; and when they once become stationary, we can get our reckoning from them with painful accuracy. We see just what we were when they were our peers, and can strike the balance between that and whatever we may feel ourselves to be now. No doubt we may sometimes be mistaken. If we change our last simile to that very old and familiar one of a fleet leaving the harbor and sailing in company for some distant region, we can get what we want out of it. There is one of our companions; — her streamers were torn into rags before she had got into the open sea, then by and by her sails blew out of the ropes one after another, the waves swept her deck,

and as night came on we left her a seeming wreck, as we flew under our pyramid of canvas. But lo! at dawn she is still in sight, — it may be in advance of us. Some deep ocean-current has been moving her on, strong, but silent, — yes, stronger than these noisy winds that puff our sails until they are swollen as the cheeks of jubilant cherubim. And when at last the black steam-tug with the skeleton arms, which comes out of the mist sooner or later and takes us all in tow, grapples her and goes off panting and groaning with her, it is to that harbor where all wrecks are refitted and where, alas! we, towering in our pride, may never come.

So you will not think I mean to speak lightly of old friendships, because we cannot help instituting comparisons between our present and former selves by the aid of those who were what we were, but are not what we are. Nothing strikes one more, in the race of life, than to see how many give out in the first half of the course. “Commencement day” always reminds me of the start for the “Derby,” when the beautiful high-bred three-year-olds of the season are brought up for trial. That day is the start, and life

is the race. Here we are at Cambridge, and a class is just "graduating." Poor Harry! he was to have been there too, but he has paid forfeit; step out here into the grass behind the church; ah! there it is:—

"HUNC LAPIDEM POSUERUNT
SOCI MERENTES."

But this is the start, and here they are,— coats bright as silk, and manes as smooth as *eau lustrale* can make them. Some of the best of the colts are pranced round, a few minutes each, to show their paces. What is that old gentleman crying about? and the old lady by him, and the three girls, what are they all covering their eyes for? Oh, that is *their* colt which has just been trotted up on the stage. Do they really think those little thin legs can do anything in such a slashing sweepstakes as is coming off in these next forty years? Oh, this terrible gift of second-sight that comes to some of us when we begin to look through the silvered rings of the *arcus senilis!*

Ten years gone. First turn in the race. A few broken down; two or three bolted. Several show in advance of the ruck. *Cassock*, a black colt, seems to be ahead of the

rest; those black colts commonly get the start, I have noticed, of the others, in the first quarter. *Meteor* has pulled up.

Twenty years. Second corner turned. *Cassock* has dropped from the front, and *Judee*, an iron-gray, has the lead. But look! how they have thinned out! Down flat, — five, — six, — how many? They lie still enough! they will not get up again in this race, be very sure! And the rest of them, what a “tailing off”! Anybody can see who is going to win, — perhaps.

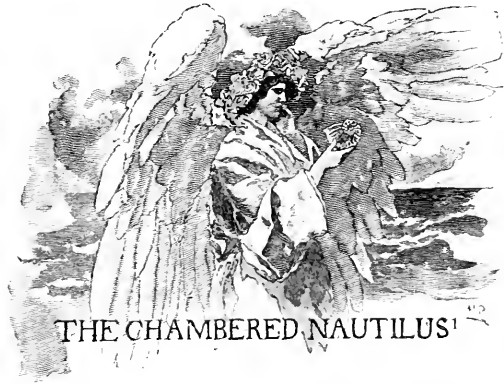
Thirty years. Third corner turned. *Dives*, bright sorrel, ridden by the fellow in a yellow jacket, begins to make play fast; is getting to be the favorite with many. But who is that other one that has been lengthening his stride from the first, and now shows close up to the front? Don't you remember the quiet brown colt *Asteroid*, with the star in his forehead? That is he; he is one of the sort that lasts; look out for him! The black “colt,” as we used to call him, is in the background, taking it easily in a gentle trot. There is one they used to call *the Filly*, on account of a certain feminine air he had; well up, you see; the Filly is not to be despised, my boy!

Forty years. More dropping off, — but places much as before.

Fifty years. Race over. All that are on the course are coming in at a walk; no more running. Who is ahead? Ahead? What! and the winning-post a slab of white or gray stone standing out from that turf where there is no more jockeying or straining for victory! Well, the world marks their places in its betting-book; but be sure that these matter very little, if they have run as well as they knew how!

— Did I not say to you a little while ago that the universe swam in an ocean of similitudes and analogies? I will not quote Cowley, or Burns, or Wordsworth, just now, to show you what thoughts were suggested to them by the simplest natural objects, such as a flower or a leaf; but I will read you a few lines, if you do not object, suggested by looking at a section of one of those chambered shells to which is given the name of Pearly Nautilus. We need not trouble ourselves about the distinction between this and the Paper Nautilus, the *Argonauta* of the ancients. The name applied to both shows that each has long been compared to a ship, as you may see more fully in Webster's

Dictionary, or the "Encyclopædia," to which he refers. If you will look into Roget's Bridgewater Treatise, you will find a figure of one of these shells and a section of it. The last will show you the series of enlarging compartments successively dwelt in by the animal that inhabits the shell, which is built in a widening spiral. Can you find no lesson in this?



THIS is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
 Sails the unshadowed main, —
 The venturous bark that flings
 On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
 In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,
 And coral reefs lie bare,
 Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

¹ I have now and then found a naturalist who still wor-

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl ;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl !
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed, —
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed !

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil ;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no
more.

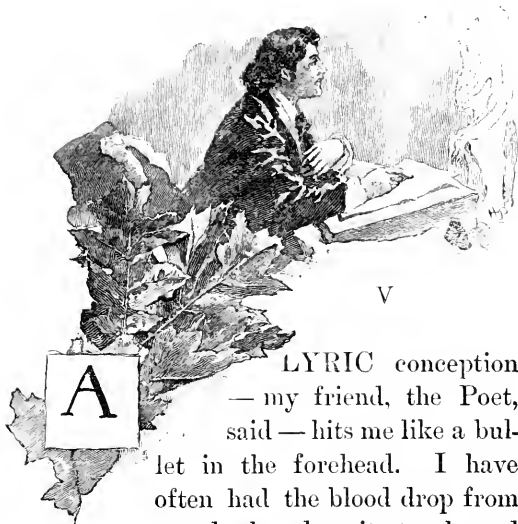
Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap forlorn !
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathéd horn !
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that
sings: —

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul.
As the swift seasons roll !

ried over the distinction between the Pearly Nautilus and the Paper Nautilus, or Argonauta. As the stories about both are mere fables, attaching to the Physalia, or Portuguese man-of-war, as well as to these two molluscs, it seems over-nice to quarrel with the poetical handling of a fiction sufficiently justified by the name commonly applied to the ship of pearl as well as the ship of paper.

Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!





V

A LYRIC conception — my friend, the Poet, said — hits me like a bullet in the forehead. I have often had the blood drop from my cheeks when it struck, and felt that I turned as white as death. Then comes a creeping as of centipedes running down the spine, — then a gasp and a great jump of the heart, — then a sudden flush and a beating in the vessels of the head, — then a long sigh, — and the poem is written.

It is an impromptu, I suppose, then, if you write it so suddenly, — I replied.

No, — said he, — far from it. I said written, but I did not say *copied*. Every such poem has a soul and a body, and it is the body of it, or the copy, that men read

and publishers pay for. The soul of it is born in an instant in the poet's soul. It comes to him a thought, tangled in the meshes of a few sweet words, — words that have loved each other from the cradle of the language, but have never been wedded until now. Whether it will ever fully embody itself in a bridal train of a dozen stanzas or not is uncertain; but it exists potentially from the instant that the poet turns pale with it. It is enough to stun and scare anybody, to have a hot thought come crashing into his brain, and ploughing up those parallel ruts where the wagon trains of common ideas were jogging along in their regular sequences of association. No wonder the ancients made the poetical impulse wholly external. *Μῆτιν ἄειδε Θεά*. Goddess, — Muse, — divine afflatus, — something outside always. *I* never wrote any verses worth reading. I can't. I am too stupid. If I ever copied any that were worth reading, I was only a medium.

[I was talking all this time to our boarders, you understand, — telling them what this poet told me. The company listened rather attentively, I thought, considering the literary character of the remarks.]

The old gentleman opposite all at once asked me if I ever read anything better than Pope's "Essay on Man"? Had I ever perused McFingal? He was fond of poetry when he was a boy, — his mother taught him to say many little pieces, — he remembered one beautiful hymn; — and the old gentleman began, in a clear, loud voice, for his years, —

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens," —

He stopped, as if startled by our silence, and a faint flush ran up beneath the thin white hairs that fell upon his cheek. As I looked round, I was reminded of a show I once saw at the Museum, — the Sleeping Beauty, I think they called it. The old man's sudden breaking out in this way turned every face towards him, and each kept his posture as if changed to stone. Our Celtic Bridget, or Biddy, is not a foolish fat scullion to burst out crying for a sentiment. She is of the serviceable, red-handed, broad-and-high-shouldered type; one of those imported female servants who are known in public by their amorphous style of person, their stoop forwards, and a headlong and as

it were precipitous walk, — the waist plunging downwards into the rocking pelvis at every heavy footfall. Bridget, constituted for action, not for emotion, was about to deposit a plate heaped with something upon the table, when I saw the coarse arm stretched by my shoulder arrested, — motionless as the arm of a terra-cotta caryatid; she could n't set the plate down while the old gentleman was speaking!

He was quite silent after this, still wearing the slight flush on his cheek. Don't ever think the poetry is dead in an old man because his forehead is wrinkled, or that his manhood has left him when his hand trembles! If they ever *were* there, they *are* there still!

By and by we got talking again. — Does a poet love the verses written through him, do you think, Sir? — said the divinity-student.

So long as they are warm from his mind, — carry any of his animal heat about them, *I know* he loves them, — I answered. When they have had time to cool, he is more indifferent.

A good deal as it is with buckwheat cakes, — said the young fellow whom they call John.

The last words, only, reached the ear of the economically organized female in black bombazine. — Buckwheat is skerce and high, — she remarked. [Must be a poor relation sponging on our landlady — pays nothing, — so she must stand by the guns and be ready to repel boarders.]

I liked the turn the conversation had taken, for I had some things I wanted to say, and so, after waiting a minute, I began again. — I don't think the poems I read you sometimes can be fairly appreciated, given to you as they are in the green state.

— You don't know what I mean by the *green state*? Well, then, I will tell you. Certain things are good for nothing until they have been kept a long while; and some are good for nothing until they have been long kept and *used*. Of the first, wine is the illustrious and immortal example. Of those which must be kept and used I will name three, — meerschaum pipes, violins, and poems. The meerschaum is but a poor affair until it has burned a thousand offerings to the cloud-compelling deities. It comes to us without complexion or flavor, — born of the sea-foam, like Aphrodite, but colorless as *pallida Mors* herself. The fire

is lighted in its central shrine, and gradually the juices which the broad leaves of the Great Vegetable had sucked up from an acre and curdled into a drachm are diffused through its thirsting pores. First a discoloration, then a stain, and at last a rich, glowing, umber tint spreading over the whole surface. Nature true to her old brown autumnal hue, you see, — as true in the fire of the meerschaum as in the sunshine of October! And then the cumulative wealth of its fragrant reminiscences! he who inhales its vapors takes a thousand whiffs in a single breath; and one cannot touch it without awakening the old joys that hang around it as the smell of flowers clings to the dresses of the daughters of the house of Farina!

[Don't think I use a meerschaum myself, for *I do not*, though I have owned a calumet since my childhood, which from a naked Pict (of the Mohawk species) my grandsire won, together with a tomahawk and beaded knife-sheath; paying for the lot with a bullet-mark on his right cheek. On the maternal side I inherit the loveliest silver-mounted tobacco-stopper you ever saw. It is a little box-wood Triton, carved with

charming liveliness and truth. I have often compared it to a figure in Raphael's "Triumph of Galatea." It came to me in an ancient shagreen case, — how old it is I do not know, — but it must have been made since Sir Walter Raleigh's time. If you are curious, you shall see it any day. Neither will I pretend that I am so unused to the more perishable smoking contrivance that a few whiffs would make me feel as if I lay in a ground-swell on the Bay of Biscay. I am not unacquainted with that fusiform, spiral-wound bundle of chopped stems and miscellaneous incombustibles, the *cigar*, so called, of the shops, — which to "draw" asks the suction-power of a nursling infant Hercules, and to relish, the leathery palate of an old Silenus. I do not advise you, young man, even if my illustration strike your fancy, to consecrate the flower of your life to painting the bowl of a pipe, for, let me assure you, the stain of a reverie-breeding narcotic may strike deeper than you think for. I have seen the green leaf of early promise grow brown before its time under such Nicotian regimen, and thought the umbered meerschaum was dearly bought at the cost of a brain enfeebled and a will enslaved.]

Violins, too,—the sweet old Amati!—the divine Stradivarius! Played on by ancient *maestros* until the bow-hand lost its power and the flying fingers stiffened. Bequeathed to the passionate young enthusiast, who made it whisper his hidden love, and ery his inarticulate longings, and scream his untold agonies, and wail his monotonous despair. Passed from his dying hand to the cold *virtuoso*, who let it slumber in its case for a generation, till, when his hoard was broken up, it came forth once more and rode the stormy symphonies of royal orchestras, beneath the rushing bow of their lord and leader. Into lonely prisons with improvident artists; into convents from which arose, day and night, the holy hymns with which its tones were blended; and back again to orgies in which it learned to howl and laugh as if a legion of devils were shut up in it; then again to the gentle *dilettante* who calmed it down with easy melodies until it answered him softly as in the days of the old *maestros*. And so given into our hands, its pores all full of music; stained, like the meerschaum, through and through, with the concentrated hue and sweetness of all the harmonies which have kindled and faded on its strings.



Now I tell you a poem must be kept *and used*, like a meerschaum, or a violin. A poem is just as porous as the meerschaum; — the more porous it is, the better. I mean to say that a genuine poem is capable of absorbing an indefinite amount of the essence of our own humanity, — its tenderness, its heroism, its regrets, its aspirations, so as to be gradually stained through with a divine secondary color derived from ourselves. So you see it must take time to bring the sentiment of a poem into harmony with our nature, by staining ourselves through every thought and image our being can penetrate.

Then again as to the mere music of a new poem, why, who can expect anything more from that than from the music of a violin fresh from the maker's hands? Now you know very well that there are no less than fifty-eight different pieces in a violin. These pieces are strangers to each other, and it takes a century, more or less, to make them thoroughly acquainted. At last they learn to vibrate in harmony and the instrument becomes an organic whole, as if it were a great seed-capsule which had grown from a garden-bed in Cremona, or elsewhere. Besides, the wood is juicy and

full of sap for fifty years or so, but at the end of fifty or a hundred more gets tolerably dry and comparatively resonant.

Don't you see that all this is just as true of a poem? Counting each word as a piece, there are more pieces in an average copy of verses than in a violin. The poet has forced all these words together, and fastened them, and they don't understand it at first. But let the poem be repeated aloud and murmured over in the mind's muffled whisper often enough, and at length the parts become knit together in such absolute solidarity that you could not change a syllable without the whole world's crying out against you for meddling with the harmonious fabric. Observe, too, how the drying process takes place in the stuff of a poem just as in that of a violin. Here is a Tyrolese fiddle that is just coming to its hundredth birthday, — (Pedro Klauss, Tyroli, fecit, 1760), — the sap is pretty well out of it. And here is the song of an old poet whom Næra cheated: —

“Nox erat, et cœlo fulgebat Luna sereno
 Inter minora sidera,
 Cum tu magnorum numen læsura deorum
 In verba jurabas mea.”

Don't you perceive the sonorousness of these old dead Latin phrases? Now I tell you that every word fresh from the dictionary brings with it a certain succulence; and though I cannot expect the sheets of the "Pactolian," in which, as I told you, I sometimes print my verses, to get so dry as the crisp papyrus that held those words of Horatius Flaccus, yet you may be sure, that, while the sheets are damp, and while the lines hold their sap, you can't fairly judge of my performances, and that, if made of the true stuff, they will ring better after a while.

[There was silence for a brief space, after my somewhat elaborate exposition of these self-evident analogies. Presently *a person* turned towards me — I do not choose to designate the individual — and said that he rather expected my pieces had given pretty good "sahtisfahction." — I had, up to this moment, considered this complimentary phrase as sacred to the use of secretaries of lyceums, and, as it has been usually accompanied by a small pecuniary testimonial, have acquired a certain relish for this moderately tepid and unstimulating expression of enthusiasm. But as a reward for gratuitous services I confess I thought it a little

below that blood-heat standard which a man's breath ought to have, whether silent, or vocal and articulate. I waited for a favorable opportunity, however, before making the remarks which follow.]

— There are single expressions, as I have told you already, that fix a man's position for you before you have done shaking hands with him. Allow me to expand a little. There are several things, very slight in themselves, yet implying other things not so unimportant. Thus, your French servant has *dévalisé* your premises and got caught. *Excusez*, says the *sergent-de-ville*, as he politely relieves him of his upper garments and displays his bust in the full daylight. Good shoulders enough, — a little marked, — traces of smallpox, perhaps, — but white. . . . *Crac!* from the *sergent-de-ville*'s broad palm on the white shoulder! Now look! *Vogue la galère!* Out comes the big red V — mark of the hot iron; — he had blistered it out pretty nearly, — had n't he? — the old rascal VOLEUR, branded in the galleys at Marseilles! [Don't! What if he has got something like this? — nobody supposes I *invented* such a story.]

My man John, who used to drive two of

those six equine females which I told you I had owned, — for, look you, my friends, simple though I stand here, I am one that has been driven in his “kerridge,” — not using that term, as liberal shepherds do, for any battered old shabby-genteel go-cart which has more than one wheel, but meaning thereby a four-wheeled vehicle *with a pole*, — my man John, I say, was a retired soldier. He retired unostentatiously, as many of Her Majesty’s modest servants have done before and since. John told me, that when an officer thinks he recognizes one of these retiring heroes, and would know if he has really been in the service, that he may restore him, if possible, to a grateful country, he comes suddenly upon him, and says, sharply, “Strap!” If he has ever worn the shoulder-strap, he has learned the reprimand for its ill adjustment. The old word of command flashes through his muscles, and his hand goes up in an instant to the place where the strap used to be.

[I was all the time preparing for my grand *coup*, you understand: but I saw they were not quite ready for it, and so continued, — always in illustration of the general principle I had laid down.]

Yes, odd things come out in ways that nobody thinks of. There was a legend, that, when the Danish pirates made descents upon the English coast, they caught a few Tartars occasionally, in the shape of Saxons, who would not let them go, — on the contrary, insisted on their staying, and, to make sure of it, treated them as Apollo treated Marsyas, or as Bartholinus has treated a fellow-creature in his title-page, and, having divested them of the one essential and perfectly fitting garment, indispensable in the mildest climates, nailed the same on the church-door as we do the banns of marriage, *in terrorem*.

[There was a laugh at this among some of the young folks; but as I looked at our landlady, I saw that “the water stood in her eyes,” as it did in Christiana’s when the interpreter asked her about the spider, and I fancied, but wasn’t quite sure that the schoolmistress blushed, as Mercy did in the same conversation, as you remember.]

That sounds like a cock-and-bull-story, — said the young fellow whom they call John. I abstained from making Hamlet’s remark to Horatio, and continued.

Not long since, the church-wardens were

repairing and beautifying an old Saxon church in a certain English village, and among other things thought the doors should be attended to. One of them particularly, the front-door, looked very badly, crusted, as it were, and as if it would be all the better for scraping. There happened to be a microscopist in the village who had heard the old pirate story, and he took it into his head to examine the crust on this door. There was no mistake about it; it was a genuine historical document, of the Ziska drum-head pattern, — a real *cutis humana*, stripped from some old Scandinavian filibuster, and the legend was true.

My friend, the Professor, settled an important historical and financial question once by the aid of an exceedingly minute fragment of a similar document. Behind the pane of plate-glass which bore his name and title burned a modest lamp, signifying to the passers-by that at all hours of the night the slightest favors (or fevers) were welcome. A youth who had freely partaken of the cup which cheers and likewise inebriates, following a moth-like impulse very natural under the circumstances, dashed his fist at the light and quenched the meek lumi-

nary, — breaking through the plate-glass, of course, to reach it. Now I don't want to go into *minutiae* at table, you know, but a naked hand can no more go through a pane of thick glass without leaving some of its cuticle, to say the least, behind it, than a butterfly can go through a sausage-machine without looking the worse for it. The Professor gathered up the fragments of glass, and with them certain very minute but entirely satisfactory documents which would have identified and hanged any rogue in Christendom who had parted with them. — The historical question, *Who did it?* and the financial question, *Who paid for it?* were both settled before the new lamp was lighted the next evening.

You see, my friends, what immense conclusions, touching our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor, may be reached by means of very insignificant premises. This is eminently true of manners and forms of speech; a movement or a phrase often tells you all you want to know about a person. Thus, “How 's your health?” (commonly pronounced *haülth*) instead of, How do you do? or, How are you? Or calling your little dark entry a “hall,” and your old rickety

one-horse wagon a "kerridge." Or telling a person who has been trying to please you that he has given you pretty good "satisfaction." Or saying that you "remember of" such a thing, or that you have been "stoppin'" at Deacon Somebody's, — and other such expressions. One of my friends had a little marble statuette of Cupid in the parlor of his country-house, — bow, arrows, wings, and all complete. A visitor, indigenuous to the region, looking pensively at the figure, asked the lady of the house "if that was a statoo of her deceased infant?" What a delicious, though somewhat voluminous biography, social, educational, and æsthetic, in that brief question!

[Please observe with what Machiavellian astuteness I smuggled in the particular offence which it was my object to hold up to my fellow-boarders, without too personal an attack on the individual at whose door it lay.]

That was an exceedingly dull person who made the remark, *Ex pede Herculem*. He might as well have said, "from a peck of apples you may judge of the barrel." *EX PEDE*, to be sure! Read, instead, *Ex ungue minimi digiti pedis, Herculem, ejusque pa-*

trem, matrem, avos et proucos, filios, nepotes et pronepotes! Talk to me about your *δὸς πῶ στω!* Tell me about Cuvier's getting up a megatherium from a tooth, or Agassiz's drawing a portrait of an undiscovered fish from a single scale! As the "O" revealed Giotto, — as the one word "moi" betrayed the Stratford-atte-Bowe-taught Anglais, — so all a man's antecedents and possibilities are summed up in a single utterance which gives at once the gauge of his education and his mental organization.

Possibilities, Sir? — said the divinity-student; can't a man who says *Haïw?* arrive at distinction?

Sir, — I replied, — in a republic all things are possible. But the man *with a future* has almost of necessity sense enough to see that any odious trick of speech or manners must be got rid of. Does n't Sydney Smith say that a public man in England never gets ever a false quantity uttered in early life? *Our* public men are in little danger of this fatal mis-step, as few of them are in the habit of introducing Latin into their speeches, — for good and sufficient reasons. But they are bound to speak decent English, — unless, indeed, they are rough old campaign-

ers, like General Jackson or General Taylor ; in which case, a few scars on Priscian's head are pardoned to old fellows who have quite as many on their own, and a constituency of thirty empires is not at all particular, provided they do not swear in their Presidential Messages.

However, it is not for me to talk. I have made mistakes enough in conversation and print. I never find them out until they are stereotyped, and then I think they rarely escape me. I have no doubt I shall make half a dozen slips before this breakfast is over, and remember them all before another. How one does tremble with rage at his own intense momentary stupidity about things he knows perfectly well, and to think how he lays himself open to the impertinences of the *captatores verborum*, those useful but humble scavengers of the language, whose business it is to pick up what might offend or injure, and remove it, hugging and feeding on it as they go ! I don't want to speak too slightly of these verbal critics ; — how can I, who am so fond of talking about errors and vulgarisms of speech ? Only there is a difference between those clerical blunders which almost every man commits.

knowing better, and that habitual grossness or meanness of speech which is uneendurable to educated persons, from anybody that wears silk or broadcloth.

[I write down the above remarks this morning, January 26th, making this record of the date that nobody may think it was written in wrath, on account of any particular grievance suffered from the invasion of any individual *scarabæus grammaticus*.]

— I wonder if anybody ever finds fault with anything I say at this table when it is repeated? I hope they do, I am sure. I should be very certain that I had said nothing of much significance, if they did not.

Did you never, in walking in the fields, come across a large flat stone, which had lain, nobody knows how long, just where you found it, with the grass forming a little hedge, as it were, all round it, close to its edges, — and have you not, in obedience to a kind of feeling that told you it had been lying there long enough, insinuated your stick or your foot or your fingers under its edge and turned it over as a housewife turns a cake, when she says to herself, “It’s done brown enough by this time”?

What an odd revelation, and what an unforeseen and unpleasant surprise to a small community, the very existence of which you had not suspected, until the sudden dismay and scattering among its members produced by your turning the old stone over! Blades of grass flattened down, colorless, matted together, as if they had been bleached and ironed; hideous crawling creatures, some of them coleopterous or horny-shelled, — turtle-bugs one wants to call them; some of them softer, but cunningly spread out and compressed like Lepine watches; (Nature never loses a crack or a crevice, mind you, or a joint in a tavern bedstead, but she always has one of her flat-pattern live timekeepers to slide into it;) black, glossy crickets, with their long filaments sticking out like the whips of four-horse stage-coaches; motionless, slug-like creatures, young larvæ, perhaps more horrible in their pulpy stillness than even in the infernal wriggle of maturity! But no sooner is the stone turned and the wholesome light of day let upon this compressed and blinded community of creeping things, than all of them which enjoy the luxury of legs — and some of them have a good many — rush round wildly, butting

each other and everything in their way, and end in a general stampede for underground retreats from the region poisoned by sunshine. *Next year* you will find the grass growing tall and green where the stone lay; the ground-bird builds her nest where the beetle had his hole; the dandelion and the buttercup are growing there, and the broad fans of insect-angels open and shut over their golden disks, as the rhythmic waves of blissful consciousness pulsate through their glorified being.

— The young fellow whom they call John saw fit to say, in his very familiar way, — at which I do not choose to take offence, but which I sometimes think it necessary to repress, that I was coming it rather strong on the butterflies.

No, I replied; there is meaning in each of those images, — the butterfly as well as the others. The stone is ancient error. The grass is human nature borne down and bleached of all its color by it. The shapes which are found beneath are the crafty beings that thrive in darkness, and the weaker organisms kept helpless by it. He who turns the stone over is whosoever puts the staff of truth to the old lying incubus, no

matter whether he do it with a serious face or a laughing one. The next year stands for the coming time. Then shall the nature which had lain blanched and broken rise in its full stature and native hues in the sunshine. Then shall God's minstrels build their nests in the hearts of a newborn humanity. Then shall beauty — Divinity taking outlines and color — light upon the souls of men as the butterfly, image of the beatified spirit rising from the dust, soars from the shell that held a poor grub, which would never have found wings had not the stone been lifted.

You never need think you can turn over any old falsehood without a terrible squirming and scattering of the horrid little population that dwells under it.

— Every real thought on every real subject knocks the wind out of somebody or other. As soon as his breath comes back, he very probably begins to expend it in hard words. These are the best evidence a man can have that he has said something it was time to say. Dr. Johnson was disappointed in the effect of one of his pamphlets. "I think I have not been attacked enough for it," he said; — "attack is the reaction;

I never think I have hit hard unless it rebounds."

— If a fellow attacked my opinions in print would I reply? Not I. Do you think I don't understand what my friend, the Professor, long ago called *the hydrostatic paradox of controversy*?

Don't know what that means? — Well, I will tell you. You know, that, if you had a bent tube, one arm of which was of the size of a pipe-stem, and the other big enough to hold the ocean, water would stand at the same height in one as in the other. Controversy equalizes fools and wise men in the same way, — *and the fools know it.*

— No, but I often read what they say about other people. There are about a dozen phrases which all come tumbling along together, like the tongs, and the shovel, and the poker, and the brush, and the bellows, in one of those domestic avalanches that everybody knows. If you get one, you get the whole lot.

What are they? — Oh, that depends a good deal on latitude and longitude. Epithets follow the isothermal lines pretty accurately. Grouping them in two families, one finds himself a clever, genial, witty,

wise, brilliant, sparkling, thoughtful, distinguished, celebrated, illustrious scholar and perfect gentleman, and first writer of the age; or a dull, foolish, wicked, pert, shallow, ignorant, insolent, traitorous, black-hearted outcast, and disgrace to civilization.

What do I think determines the set of phrases a man gets?—Well, I should say a set of influences something like these:—1st. Relationships, political, religious, social, domestic. 2d. Oysters, in the form of suppers given to gentlemen connected with criticism. I believe in the school, the college, and the clergy; but my sovereign logic, for regulating public opinion—which means commonly the opinion of half a dozen of the critical gentry—is the following.
Major proposition. Oysters *au naturel*.
Minor proposition. The same “scalloped.”
Conclusion. That—(here insert entertainer’s name) is clever, witty, wise, brilliant,—and the rest.

—No, it is n’t exactly bribery. One man has oysters, and another epithets. It is an exchange of hospitalities; one gives a “spread” on linen, and the other on paper,—that is all. Don’t you think you and I

should be apt to do just so, if we were in the critical line? I am sure I could n't resist the softening influences of hospitality. I don't like to dine out, you know, — I dine so well at our own table [our landlady looked radiant], and the company is so pleasant [a rustling movement of satisfaction among the boarders]; but if I did partake of a man's salt, with such additions as that article of food requires to make it palatable, I could never abuse him, and if I had to speak of him, I suppose I should hang my set of jingling epithets round him like a string of sleigh-bells. Good feeling helps society to make liars of most of us, — not absolute liars, but such careless handlers of truth that its sharp corners get terribly rounded. I love truth as chiefest among the virtues; I trust it runs in my blood; but I would never be a critic, because I know I could not always tell it. I might write a criticism of a book that happened to please me; that is another matter.

— Listen, Benjamin Franklin! This is for you, and such others of tender age as you may tell it to.

When we are as yet small children, long before the time when those two grown la-

dies offer us the choice of Hercules, there comes up to us a youthful angel, holding in his right hand cubes like dice, and in his left spheres like marbles. The cubes are of stainless ivory, and on each is written in letters of gold — TRUTH. The spheres are veined and streaked and spotted beneath, with a dark crimson flush above, where the light falls on them, and in a certain aspect you can make out upon every one of them the three letters L, I, E. The child to whom they are offered very probably clutches at both. The spheres are the most convenient things in the world ; they roll with the least possible impulse just where the child would have them. The cubes will not roll at all ; they have a great talent for standing still, and always keep right side up. But very soon the young philosopher finds that things which roll so easily are very apt to roll into the wrong corner, and to get out of his way when he most wants them, while he always knows where to find the others, which stay where they are left. Thus he learns — thus we learn — to drop the streaked and speckled globes of falsehood and to hold fast the white angular blocks of truth. But then comes Timidity, and after her Good-nature,

and last of all Polite-behavior, all insisting that truth must *roll*, or nobody can do anything with it: and so the first with her coarse rasp, and the second with her broad file, and the third with her silken sleeve, do so round off and smooth and polish the snow-white cubes of truth, that, when they have got a little dingy by use, it becomes hard to tell them from the rolling spheres of falsehood.

The schoolmistress was polite enough to say that she was pleased with this, and that she would read it to her little flock the next day. But she should tell the children, she said, that there were better reasons for truth than could be found in mere experience of its convenience and the inconvenience of lying.

Yes. — I said, — but education always begins through the senses, and works up to the idea of absolute right and wrong. The first thing the child has to learn about this matter is, that lying is unprofitable, — afterwards that it is against the peace and dignity of the universe.

— Do I think that the particular form of lying often seen in newspapers, under the title. “From our Foreign Correspondent,”

does any harm? — Why, no. — I don't know that it does. I suppose it does n't really deceive people any more than the "Arabian Nights" or "Gulliver's Travels" do. Sometimes the writers compile *too* carelessly, though, and mix up facts out of geographies, and stories out of the penny papers, so as to mislead those who are desirous of information. I cut a piece out of one of the papers the other day, which contains a number of improbabilities, and, I suspect, misstatements. I will send up and get it for you, if you would like to hear it. — Ah, this is it; it is headed

“OUR SUMATRA CORRESPONDENCE.

“This island is now the property of the Stamford family, — having been won, it is said, in a raffle, by Sir — Stamford, during the stock-gambling mania of the South-Sea Scheme. The history of this gentleman may be found in an interesting series of questions (unfortunately not yet answered) contained in the 'Notes and Queries.' This island is entirely surrounded by the ocean, which here contains a large amount of saline substance, crystallizing in cubes remarkable for their symmetry, and frequently displays

on its surface, during calm weather, the rainbow tints of the celebrated South-Sea bubbles. The summers are oppressively hot, and the winters very probably cold; but this fact cannot be ascertained precisely, as, for some peculiar reason, the mercury in these latitudes never shrinks, as in more northern regions, and thus the thermometer is rendered useless in winter.

“The principal vegetable productions of the island are the pepper tree and the bread-fruit tree. Pepper being very abundantly produced, a benevolent society was organized in London during the last century for supplying the natives with vinegar and oysters, as an addition to that delightful condiment. [Note received from Dr. D. P.] It is said, however, that, as the oysters were of the kind called *natives* in England, the natives of Sumatra, in obedience to a natural instinct, refused to touch them, and confined themselves entirely to the crew of the vessel in which they were brought over. This information was received from one of the oldest inhabitants, a native himself, and exceedingly fond of missionaries. He is said also to be very skilful in the *cuisine* peculiar to the island.

“During the season of gathering the pepper, the persons employed are subject to various incommodities, the chief of which is violent and long-continued sternutation, or sneezing. Such is the vehemence of these attacks, that the unfortunate subjects of them are often driven backwards for great distances at immense speed, on the well-known principle of the æolipile. Not being able to see where they are going, these poor creatures dash themselves to pieces against the rocks or are precipitated over the cliffs, and thus many valuable lives are lost annually. As, during the whole pepper-harvest, they feed exclusively on this stimulant, they become exceedingly irritable. The smallest injury is resented with ungovernable rage. A young man suffering from the *pepper-fever*, as it is called, cudgelled another most severely for appropriating a superannuated relative of trifling value, and was only pacified by having a present made him of a pig of that peculiar species of swine called the *Peccari* by the Catholic Jews, who, it is well known, abstain from swine’s flesh in imitation of the Mahometan Buddhists.

“The bread-tree grows abundantly. Its branches are well known to Europe and

America under the familiar name of *maccaroni*. The smaller twigs are called *vermicelli*. They have a decided animal flavor, as may be observed in the soups containing them. Maccaroni, being tubular, is the favorite habitat of a very dangerous insect, which is rendered peculiarly ferocious by being boiled. The government of the island, therefore, never allows a stick of it to be exported without being accompanied by a piston with which its cavity may at any time be thoroughly swept out. These are commonly lost or stolen before the maccaroni arrives among us. It therefore always contains many of these insects, which, however, generally die of old age in the shops, so that accidents from this source are comparatively rare.

“The fruit of the bread-tree consists principally of hot rolls. The buttered-muffin variety is supposed to be a hybrid with the cocoa-nut palm, the cream found on the milk of the cocoa-nut exuding from the hybrid in the shape of butter, just as the ripe fruit is splitting, so as to fit it for the tea-table, where it is commonly served up with cold” —

—There, — I don't want to read any

more of it. You see that many of these statements are highly improbable. — No, I shall not mention the paper. — No, neither of them wrote it, though it reminds me of the style of these popular writers. I think the fellow who wrote it must have been reading some of their stories, and got them mixed up with his history and geography. I don't suppose *he* lies — he sells it to the editor, who knows how many squares off "Sumatra" is. The editor, who sells it to the public — By the way, the papers have been very civil — have n't they? — to the — the — what d' ye call it? — "Northern Magazine," — is n't it? — got up by some of those Come-outers, down East, as an organ for their local peculiarities.

— The Professor has been to see me. Came in, glorious, at about twelve o'clock, last night. Said he had been with "the boys." On inquiry, found that "the boys" were certain baldish and grayish old gentlemen that one sees or hears of in various important stations of society. The Professor is one of the same set, but he always talks as if he had been out of college about ten years, whereas [Each of these dots was a little nod, which the com-

pany understood, as the reader will, no doubt.] He calls them sometimes "the boys," and sometimes "the old fellows." Call him by the latter title, and see how he likes it. — Well, he came in last night glorious, as I was saying. Of course I don't mean vinously exalted; he drinks little wine on such occasions, and is well known to all the Peters and Patricks as the gentleman who always has indefinite quantities of black tea to kill any extra glass of red claret he may have swallowed. But the Professor says he always gets tipsy on old memories at these gatherings. He was, I forget how many years old when he went to the meeting; just turned of twenty now, — he said. He made various youthful proposals to me, including a duet under the landlady's daughter's window. He had just learned a trick, he said, of one of "the boys," of getting a splendid bass out of a door-panel by rubbing it with the palm of his hand. Offered to sing "The sky is bright," accompanying himself on the front-door, if I would go down and help in the chorus. Said there never was such a set of fellows as the old boys of the set he has been with. Judges, mayors, Congress-men, Mr. Speakers, lead-

ers in science, clergymen better than famous, and famous too, poets by the half-dozen, singers with voices like angels, financiers, wits, three of the best laughers in the Commonwealth, engineers, agriculturists, — all forms of talent and knowledge he pretended were represented in that meeting. Then he began to quote Byron about Santa Croce, and maintained that he could “furnish out creation” in all its details from that set of his. He would like to have the whole boodle of them (I remonstrated against this word, but the Professor said it was a diabolish good word, and he would have no other), with their wives and children shipwrecked on a remote island, just to see how splendidly they would reorganize society. They could build a city, — they have done it; make constitutions and laws; establish churches and lyceums; teach and practise the healing art; instruct in every department; found observatories; create commerce and manufactures; write songs and hymns, and sing 'em, and make instruments to accompany the songs with; lastly, publish a journal almost as good as the “Northern Magazine,” edited by the Come-outers. There was nothing they were not up to, from a christening

to a hanging; the last, to be sure, could never be called for, unless some stranger got in among them.

—I let the Professor talk as long as he liked; it didn't make much difference to me whether it was all truth, or partly made up of pale Sherry and similar elements. All at once he jumped up and said, —

Don't you want to hear what I just read to the boys?

I have had questions of a similar character asked me before, occasionally. A man of iron mould might perhaps say, No! I am not a man of iron mould, and said that I should be delighted.

The Professor then read—with that slightly sing-song cadence which is observed to be common in poets reading their own verses — the following stanzas; holding them at a focal distance of about two feet and a half, with an occasional movement back or forward for better adjustment, the appearance of which has been likened by some impertinent young folks to that of the act of playing on the trombone. His eyesight was never better; I have his word for it.



MARE RUBRUM

FLASH out a stream of blood-red wine! —
 For I would drink to other days;
 And brighter shall their memory shine,
 Seen flaming through its crimson blaze.
 The roses die, the summers fade;
 But every ghost of boyhood's dream
 By Nature's magic power is laid
 To sleep beneath this blood-red stream.

It filled the purple grapes that lay
 And drank the splendors of the sun
 Where the long summer's cloudless day
 Is mirrored in the broad Garonne;
 It pictures still the bacchant shapes
 That saw their boarded sunlight shed, —
 The maidens dancing on the grapes. —
 Their milk-white ankles splashed with red.

Beneath these waves of crimson lie,
 In rosy fetters prisoned fast,

Those flitting shapes that never die,
 The swift-winged visions of the past.
 Kiss but the crystal's mystic rim,
 Each shadow reads its flowery chain,
 Springs in a bubble from its brim
 And walks the chambers of the brain.

Poor Beauty! time and fortune's wrong
 No form nor feature may withstand, —
 Thy wrecks are scattered all along,
 Like emptied sea-shells on the sand; —
 Yet, sprinkled with this blushing rain,
 The dust restores each blooming girl,
 As if the sea-shells moved again
 Their glistening lips of pink and pearl.

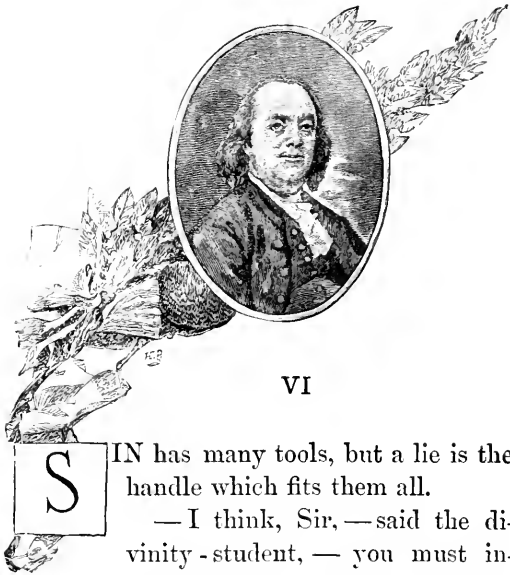
Here lies the home of school-boy life,
 With creaking stair and wind-swept hall,
 And, scarred by many a truant knife,
 Our old initials on the wall;
 Here rest — their keen vibrations mute —
 The shout of voices known so well,
 The ringing laugh, the wailing flute,
 The chiding of the sharp-tongued bell.

Here, clad in burning robes, are laid
 Life's blossomed joys, untimely shed;
 And here those cherished forms have strayed
 We miss awhile, and call them dead.
 What wizard fills the maddening glass?
 What soil the enchanted clusters grew,
 That buried passions wake and pass
 In beaded drops of fiery dew?

Nay, take the cup of blood-red wine, —
 Our hearts can boast a warmer glow,

Filled from a vintage more divine,
Calmed, but not chilled by winter's snow !
To-night the palest wave we sip
Rich as the priceless draught shall be
That wet the bride of Cana's lip. —
The wedding wine of Galilee !





VI

SIN has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all.

— I think, Sir, — said the divinity - student, — you must intend that for one of the sayings of the Seven Wise Men of Boston you were speaking of the other day.

I thank you, my young friend, — was my reply, — but I must say something better than that, before I could pretend to fill out the number.

— The schoolmistress wanted to know how many of these sayings there were on record, and what, and by whom said.

-- Why, let us see, — there is that one of

Benjamin Franklin, "the great Bostonian," after whom this lad was named. To be sure, he said a great many wise things,—and I don't feel sure he did n't borrow this,—he speaks as if it were old. But then he applied it so neatly!—

"He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yourself have obliged."

Then there is that glorious Epicurean paradox, uttered by my friend, the Historian, in one of his flashing moments:—

"Give us the luxuries of life, and we will dispense with its necessaries."

To these must certainly be added that other saying of one of the wittiest of men:—

"Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris."

—The divinity-student looked grave at this, but said nothing.

The schoolmistress spoke out, and said she did n't think the wit meant any irreverence. It was only another way of saying, Paris is a heavenly place after New York or Boston.

A jaunty-looking person, who had come in with the young fellow they call John,—evidently a stranger,—said there was one more wise man's saying that he had heard;

it was about our place, but he did n't know who said it. — A civil curiosity was manifested by the company to hear the fourth wise saying. I heard him distinctly whispering to the young fellow who brought him to dinner, *Shall I tell it?* To which the answer was, *Go ahead!* — Well, — he said, — this was what I heard: —

“Boston State-House is the hub of the solar system. You could n't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar.”

Sir, — said I, — I am gratified with your remark. It expresses with pleasing vivacity that which I have sometimes heard uttered with malignant dulness. The satire of the remark is essentially true of Boston, — and of all other considerable — and inconsiderable — places with which I have had the privilege of being acquainted. Cockneys think London is the only place in the world. Frenchmen — you remember the line about Paris, the Court, the World, etc. — I recollect well, by the way, a sign in that city which ran thus: “Hôtel de l'Univers et des États Unis;” and as Paris *is* the universe to a Frenchman, of course the United States are outside of it. — “See Naples and then

die." It is quite as bad with smaller places. I have been about, lecturing, you know, and have found the following propositions to hold true of all of them.

1. The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town or city.

2. If more than fifty years have passed since its foundation, it is affectionately styled by the inhabitants the "*good old town of*" — (whatever its name may happen to be).

3. Every collection of its inhabitants that comes together to listen to a stranger is invariably declared to be a "remarkably intelligent audience."

4. The climate of the place is particularly favorable to longevity.

5. It contains several persons of vast talent little known to the world. (One or two of them, you may perhaps chance to remember, sent short pieces to the "*Pactolian*" some time since, which were "respectfully declined.")

Boston is just like other places of its size; — only, perhaps, considering its excellent fish-market, paid fire-department, superior monthly publications, and correct habit of

spelling the English language, it has some right to look down on the mob of cities. I'll tell you, though, if you want to know it, what is the real offence of Boston. It drains a large water-shed of its intellect, and will not itself be drained. If it would only send away its first-rate men, instead of its second-rate ones (no offence to the well-known exceptions, of which we are always proud), we should be spared such epigrammatic remarks as that which the gentleman has quoted. There can never be a real metropolis in this country, until the biggest centre can drain the lesser ones of their talent and wealth. — I have observed, by the way, that the people who really live in two great cities are by no means so jealous of each other as are those of smaller cities situated within the intellectual basin, or *suction-range*, of one large one, of the pretensions of any other. Don't you see why? Because their promising young author and rising lawyer and large capitalist have been drained off to the neighboring big city, — their prettiest girl has been exported to the same market; all their ambition points there, and all their thin gilding of glory comes from there. I hate little toad-eating cities.

— Would I be so good as to specify any particular example? — Oh, — an example? Did you ever see a bear-trap? Never? Well, shouldn't you like to see me put my foot into one? With sentiments of the highest consideration I must beg leave to be excused.

Besides, some of the smaller cities are charming. If they have an old church or two, a few stately mansions of former grandees, here and there an old dwelling with the second story projecting (for the convenience of shooting the Indians knocking at the front-door with their tomahawks), — if they have, scattered about, those mighty square houses built something more than half a century ago, and standing like architectural boulders dropped by the former diluvium of wealth, whose reflux wave has left them as its monument, — if they have gardens with elbowed apple-trees that push their branches over the high board-fence and drop their fruit on the side-walk, — if they have a little grass in the side-streets, enough to betoken quiet without proclaiming decay, — I think I could go to pieces, after my life's work were done, in one of those tranquil places, as sweetly as in any

cradle that an old man may be rocked to sleep in. I visit such spots always with infinite delight. My friend, the Poet, says, that rapidly growing towns are most unfavorable to the imaginative and reflective faculties. Let a man live in one of these old quiet places, he says, and the wine of his soul, which is kept thick and turbid by the rattle of busy streets, settles, and, as you hold it up, you may see the sun through it by day and the stars by night.

— Do I think that the little villages have the conceit of the great towns? — I don't believe there is much difference. You know how they read Pope's line in the smallest town in our State of Massachusetts? — Well, they read it

“ All are but parts of one stupendous HULL! ”

— Every person's feelings have a front-door and a side-door by which they may be entered. The front-door is on the street. Some keep it always open; some keep it latched; some, locked; some, bolted, — with a chain that will let you peep in, but not get in; and some nail it up, so that nothing can pass its threshold. This front-door leads into a passage which opens into an ante-



room, and this into the interior apartments. The side-door opens at once into the sacred chambers.

There is almost always at least one key to this side-door. This is carried for years hidden in a mother's bosom. Fathers, brothers, sisters, and friends, often, but by no means so universally, have duplicates of it. The wedding-ring conveys a right to one; alas, if none is given with it!

If nature or accident has put one of these keys into the hands of a person who has the torturing instinct, I can only solemnly pronounce the words that Justice utters over its doomed victim, — *The Lord have mercy on your soul!* You will probably go mad within a reasonable time, — or, if you are a man, run off and die with your head on a curb-stone, in Melbourne or San Francisco, — or, if you are a woman, quarrel and break your heart, or turn into a pale, jointed petrification that moves about as if it were alive, or play some real life-tragedy or other.

Be very careful to whom you trust one of these keys of the side-door. The fact of possessing one renders those even who are dear to you very terrible at times. You can

keep the world out from your front-door, or receive visitors only when you are ready for them; but those of your own flesh and blood, or of certain grades of intimacy, can come in at the side-door. if they will, at any hour and in any mood. Some of them have a scale of your whole nervous system, and can play all the gamut of your sensibilities in semi-tones, — touching the naked nerve-pulps as a pianist strikes the keys of his instrument. I am satisfied that there are as great masters of this nerve-playing as Vieuxtemps or Thalberg in their lines of performance. Married life is the school in which the most accomplished artists in this department are found. A delicate woman is the best instrument; she has such a magnificent compass of sensibilities! From the deep inward moan which follows pressure on the great nerves of right, to the sharp cry as the filaments of taste are struck with a crashing sweep, is a range which no other instrument possesses. A few exercises on it daily at home fit a man wonderfully for his habitual labors, and refresh him immensely as he returns from them. No stranger can get a great many notes of torture out of a human soul; it takes one that knows it well,

— parent, child, brother, sister, intimate. Be very careful to whom you give a side-door key ; too many have them already.

— You remember the old story of the tender-hearted man, who placed a frozen viper in his bosom, and was stung by it when it became thawed ? If we take a cold-blooded creature into our bosom, better that it should sting us and we should die than that its chill should slowly steal into our hearts ; warm it we never can ! I have seen faces of women that were fair to look upon, yet one could see that the icicles were forming round these women's hearts. I knew what freezing image lay on the white breasts beneath the laces !

A very simple *intellectual* mechanism answers the necessities of friendship, and even of the most intimate relations of life. If a watch tells us the hour and the minute, we can be content to carry it about with us for a life-time, though it has no second-hand and is not a repeater, nor a musical watch, — though it is not enamelled nor jewelled, — in short, though it has little beyond the wheels required for a trustworthy instrument, added to a good face and a pair of useful hands. The more wheels there are

in a watch or a brain, the more trouble they are to take care of. The movements of exaltation which belong to genius are egotistic by their very nature. A calm, clear mind, not subject to the spasms and crises which are so often met with in creative or intensely perceptive natures, is the best basis for love or friendship. — Observe, I am talking about *minds*. I won't say, the more intellect, the less capacity for loving; for that would do wrong to the understanding and reason; — but, on the other hand, that the brain often runs away with the heart's best blood, which gives the world a few pages of wisdom or sentiment or poetry, instead of making one other heart happy, I have no question.

If one's intimate in love or friendship cannot or does not share all one's intellectual tastes or pursuits, that is a small matter. Intellectual companions can be found easily in men and books. After all, if we think of it, most of the world's loves and friendships have been between people that could not read nor spell.

But to radiate the heat of the affections into a clod, which absorbs all that is poured into it, but never warms beneath the sunshine of smiles or the pressure of hand or

lip,— this is the great martyrdom of sensitive beings,— most of all in that perpetual *auto da fé* where young womanhood is the sacrifice.

— You noticed, perhaps, what I just said about the loves and friendships of illiterate persons,— that is, of the human race, with a few exceptions here and there. I like books,— I was born and bred among them, and have the easy feeling, when I get into their presence, that a stable-boy has among horses. I don't think I undervalue them either as companions or instructors. But I can't help remembering that the world's great men have not commonly been great scholars, nor its great scholars great men. The Hebrew patriarchs had small libraries, I think, if any; yet they represent to our imaginations a very complete idea of manhood, and, I think, if we could ask in Abraham to dine with us men of letters next Saturday, we should feel honored by his company.

What I wanted to say about books is this: that there are times in which every active mind feels itself above any and all human books.

— I think a man must have a good opin-

ion of himself, Sir, — said the divinity-student, — who should feel himself above Shakespeare at any time.

My young friend, — I replied, — the man who is never conscious of a state of feeling or of intellectual effort entirely beyond expression by any form of words whatsoever is a mere creature of language. I can hardly believe there are any such men. Why, think for a moment of the power of music. The nerves that make us alive to it spread out (so the Professor tells me) in the most sensitive region of the marrow, just where it is widening to run upwards into the hemispheres. It has its seat in the region of sense rather than of thought. Yet it produces a continuous and, as it were, logical sequence of emotional and intellectual changes; but how different from trains of thought proper! how entirely beyond the reach of symbols! — Think of human passions as compared with all phrases? Did you ever hear of a man's growing lean by the reading of "Romeo and Juliet," or blowing his brains out because Desdemona was maligned? There are a good many symbols, even, that are more expressive than words. I remember a young wife who had to part

with her husband for a time. She did not write a mournful poem; indeed, she was a silent person, and perhaps hardly said a word about it; but she quietly turned of a deep orange color with jaundice. A great many people in this world have but one form of rhetoric for their profoundest experiences,—namely, to waste away and die. When a man can *read*, his paroxysm of feeling is passing. When he can *read*, his thought has slackened its hold.—You talk about reading Shakespeare, using him as an expression for the highest intellect, and you wonder that any common person should be so presumptuous as to suppose his thought can rise above the text which lies before him. But think a moment. A child's reading of Shakespeare is one thing, and Coleridge's or Schlegel's reading of him is another. The saturation-point of each mind differs from that of every other. But I think it is as true for the small mind which can only take up a little as for the great one which takes up much, that the suggestive trains of thought and feeling ought always to rise above—not the author, but the reader's mental version of the author, whoever he may be.

I think most readers of Shakespeare sometimes find themselves thrown into exalted mental conditions like those produced by music. Then they may drop the book, to pass at once into the region of thought without words. We may happen to be very dull folks, you and I, and probably are, unless there is some particular reason to suppose the contrary. But we get glimpses now and then of a sphere of spiritual possibilities, where we, dull as we are now, may sail in vast circles round the largest compass of earthly intelligences.

— I confess there are times when I feel like the friend I mentioned to you some time ago, — I hate the very sight of a book. Sometimes it becomes almost a physical necessity to talk out what is in the mind, before putting anything else into it. It is very bad to have thoughts and feelings, which were meant to come out in talk, *strike in*, as they say of some complaints that ought to show outwardly.

I always believed in life rather than in books. I suppose every day of earth, with its hundred thousand deaths and something more of births, — with its loves and hates, its triumphs and defeats, its pangs and

blisses, has more of humanity in it than all the books that were ever written, put together. I believe the flowers growing at this moment send up more fragrance to heaven than was ever exhaled from all the essences ever distilled.

— Don't I read up various matters to talk about at this table or elsewhere? — No, that is the last thing I would do. I will tell you my rule. Talk about those subjects you have had long in your mind, and listen to what others say about subjects you have studied but recently. Knowledge and timber should n't be much used till they are seasoned.

— Physiologists and metaphysicians have had their attention turned a good deal of late to the automatic and involuntary actions of the mind. Put an idea into your intelligence and leave it there an hour, a day, a year, without ever having occasion to refer to it. When, at last, you return to it, you do not find it as it was when acquired. It has domiciliated itself, so to speak, — become at home, — entered into relations with your other thoughts, and integrated itself with the whole fabric of the mind. — Or take a simple and familiar example; Dr. Carpenter has adduced it. You forget a

name. in conversation, — go on talking, without making any effort to recall it, — and presently the mind evolves it by its own involuntary and unconscious action, while you were pursuing another train of thought, and the name rises of itself to your lips.

There are some curious observations I should like to make about the mental machinery, but I think we are getting rather didactic.

— I should be gratified, if Benjamin Franklin would let me know something of his progress in the French language. I rather liked that exercise he read us the other day, though I must confess I should hardly dare to translate it, for fear some people in a remote city where I once lived might think I was drawing their portraits.

— Yes, Paris is a famous place for societies. I don't know whether the piece I mentioned from the French author was intended simply as Natural History, or whether there was not a little malice in his description. At any rate, when I gave my translation to B. F. to turn back again into French, one reason was that I thought it would sound a little bald in English, and some people might think it was meant to

have some local bearing or other, — which the author, of course, didn't mean, inasmuch as he could not be acquainted with anything on this side of the water.

[The above remarks were addressed to the schoolmistress, to whom I handed the paper after looking it over. The divinity-student came and read over her shoulder. — very curious, apparently, but his eyes wandered, I thought. Fancying that her breathing was somewhat hurried and high, or *thoracic*, as my friend, the Professor, calls it, I watched her a little more closely. — It is none of my business. — After all, it is the imponderables that move the world, — heat, electricity, love. — *Habet?*]

This is the piece that Benjamin Franklin made into boarding-school French, such as you see here; don't expect too much; — the mistakes give a relish to it, I think.

LES SOCIÉTÉS POLYPHYSIOPHILOSOPHIQUES.

Ces Sociétés là sont une Institution pour suppléer aux besoins d'esprit et de cœur de ces individus qui ont survécu à leurs émotions à l'égard du beau sexe, et qui n'ont pas la distraction de l'habitude de boire.

Pour devenir membre d'une de ces Sociétés, on doit avoir le moins de cheveux possible. S'il y en reste plusieurs qui résistent aux dépilatoires naturelles et autres,

on doit avoir quelques connaissances, n'importe dans quel genre. Dès le moment qu'on ouvre la porte de la Société, on a un grand intérêt dans toutes les choses dont on ne sait rien. Ainsi, un microscopiste démontre un nouveau *flexor* du *tarse* d'un *melolontha vulgaris*. Douze savans improvisés, portans des besicles, et qui ne connaissent rien des insectes, si ce n'est les morsures du *culex*, se précipitent sur l'instrument, et voient, — une grande bulle d'air, dont ils s'émerveillent avec effusion. Ce qui est un spectacle plein d'instruction, — pour ceux qui ne sont pas de ladite Société. Tous les membres regardent les chimistes en particulier avec un air d'intelligence parfaite pendant qu'ils prouvent dans un discours d'une demiheure que $O^3 N^3 H^5 C^3$ etc. font quelque chose qui n'est bonne à rien, mais qui probablement a une odeur très désagréable, selon l'habitude des produits chimiques. Après celà vient un mathématicien qui vous bourre avec des $a + b$ et vous rapporte enfin un $x + y$, dont vous n'avez pas besoin et qui ne change nullement vos relations avec la vie. Un naturaliste vous parle des formations spéciales des animaux excessivement inconnus, dont vous n'avez jamais soupçonné l'existence. Ainsi il vous décrit les *follicules* de l'*appendix vermiformis* d'un *dziguetai*. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un *follicule*. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un *appendix vermiformis*. Vous n'avez jamais entendu parler du *dziguetai*. Ainsi vous gagnez toutes ces connaissances à la fois, qui s'attachent à votre esprit comme l'eau adhère aux plumes d'un canard. On connaît toutes les langues *ex officio* en devenant membre d'une de ces Sociétés. Ainsi quand on entend lire un Essai sur les dialectes Tchutchiens, on comprend tout celà de suite, et s'instruit énormément.

Il y a deux espèces d'individus qu'on trouve toujours à ces Sociétés: 1^o Le membre à questions; 2^o Le membre à "Bylaws."

La *question* est une spécialité. Celui qui en fait métier ne fait jamais des réponses. La question est une manière très commode de dire les choses suivantes: "Me voilà! Je ne suis pas fossil, moi, — je respire encore! J'ai des idées, — voyez mon intelligence! Vous ne croyiez pas, vous autres, que je savais quelque chose de celà! Ah, nous avons un peu de sagacité, voyez vous! Nous ne sommes nullement la bête qu'on pense!" — *Le faiseur de questions donne peu d'attention aux réponses qu'on fait; ce n'est pas là dans sa spécialité.*

Le membre à "Bylaws" est le bouchon de toutes les émotions moussenses et généreuses qui se montrent dans la Société. C'est un empereur manqué, — un tyran à la troisième trituration. C'est un esprit dur, borné, exact, grand dans les petites, petit dans les grandes, selon le mot du grand Jefferson. On ne l'aime pas dans la Société, mais on le respecte et on le craint. Il n'y a qu'un mot pour ce membre audessus de "Bylaws." Ce mot est pour lui ce que l'Om est aux Hindous. C'est sa religion; il n'y a rien audelà. Ce mot là c'est la CONSTITUTION!

Lesdites Sociétés publient des feuillets de tems en tems. On les trouve abandonnés à sa porte, nus comme des enfans nouveaunés, faute de membrane cutanée, ou même papyracée. Si on aime la botanique, on y trouve une mémoire sur les coquilles; si on fait des études zoologiques, on trouve un grand tas de q'✓ — 1, ce qui doit être infiniment plus commode que les encyclopédies. Ainsi il est clair comme la métaphysique qu'on doit devenir membre d'une Société telle que nous décrivons.

Recette pour le Dépilatoire Physiophilosophique.

Chaux vive lb. ss. Eau bouillante Oj.

Dépillez avec. Polissez ensuite.

— I told the boy that his translation into French was creditable to him; and some of

the company wishing to hear what there was in the piece that made me smile, I turned it into English for them, as well as I could, on the spot.

The landlady's daughter seemed to be much amused by the idea that a depilatory could take the place of literary and scientific accomplishments; she wanted me to print the piece, so that she might send a copy of it to her cousin in Mizzourah; she did n't think he 'd have to do anything to the outside of his head to get into any of the societies; he had to wear a wig once, when he played a part in a tabullo.

No, — said I, — I should n't think of printing that in English. I 'll tell you why. As soon as you get a few thousand people together in a town, there is somebody that every sharp thing you say is sure to hit. What if a thing was written in Paris or in Pekin? — that makes no difference. Everybody in those cities, or almost everybody, has his counterpart here, and in all large places. — You never studied *averages*, as I have had occasion to.

I 'll tell you how I came to know so much about averages. There was one season when I was lecturing, commonly, five

evenings in the week, through most of the lecturing period. I soon found, as most speakers do, that it was pleasanter to work one lecture than to keep several in hand.

— Don't you get sick to death of one lecture? — said the landlady's daughter, — who had a new dress on that day, and was in spirits for conversation.

I was going to talk about averages, — I said, — but I have no objection to telling you about lectures, to begin with.

A new lecture always has a certain excitement connected with its delivery. One thinks well of it, as of most things fresh from his mind. After a few deliveries of it, one gets tired and then disgusted with its repetition. Go on delivering it, and the disgust passes off, until, after one has repeated it a hundred or a hundred and fifty times, he rather enjoys the hundred and first or hundred and fifty-first time, before a new audience. But this is on one condition, — that he never lays the lecture down and lets it cool. If he does, there comes on a loathing for it which is intense, so that the sight of the old battered manuscript is as bad as sea-sickness.

A new lecture is just like any other new

tool. We use it for a while with pleasure. Then it blisters our hands, and we hate to touch it. By and by our hands get callous, and then we have no longer any sensitiveness about it. But if we give it up, the calluses disappear; and if we meddle with it again, we miss the novelty and get the blisters. — The story is often quoted of Whitefield, that he said a sermon was good for nothing until it had been preached forty times. A lecture does n't begin to be old until it has passed its hundredth delivery; and some, I think, have doubled, if not quadrupled, that number. These old lectures are a man's best, commonly; they improve by age, also, — like the pipes, fiddles, and poems I told you of the other day. One learns to make the most of their strong points and to carry off their weak ones, — to take out the really good things which don't tell on the audience, and put in cheaper things that do. All this degrades him, of course, but it improves the lecture for general delivery. A thoroughly popular lecture ought to have nothing in it which five hundred people cannot all take in a flash, just as it is uttered.

— No, indeed, — I should be very sorry to

say anything disrespectful of audiences. I have been kindly treated by a great many, and may occasionally face one hereafter. But I tell you the *average* intellect of five hundred persons, taken as they come, is not very high. It may be sound and safe, so far as it goes, but it is not very rapid or profound. A lecture ought to be something which all can understand, about something which interests everybody. I think, that, if any experienced lecturer gives you a different account from this, it will probably be one of those eloquent or forcible speakers who hold an audience by the charm of their manner, whatever they talk about, — even when they don't talk very well.

But an *average* which was what I meant to speak about, is one of the most extraordinary subjects of observation and study. It is awful in its uniformity, in its automatic necessity of action. Two communities of ants or bees are exactly alike in all their actions, so far as we can see. Two lyceum assemblies, of five hundred each, are so nearly alike, that they are absolutely undistinguishable in many cases by any definite mark, and there is nothing but the place and time by which one can tell the “remarkably intelli-

gent audience" of a town in New York or Ohio from one in any New England town of similar size. Of course, if any principle of selection has come in, as in those special associations of young men which are common in cities, it deranges the uniformity of the assemblage. But let there be no such interfering circumstances, and one knows pretty well even the look the audience will have, before he goes in. Front seats: a few old folks, — shiny-headed, — slant up best ear towards the speaker, — drop off asleep after a while, when the air begins to get a little narcotic with carbonic acid. Bright women's faces, young and middle-aged, a little behind these, but toward the front, — (pick out the best, and lecture mainly to that.) Here and there a countenance, sharp and scholarlike, and a dozen pretty female ones sprinkled about. An indefinite number of pairs of young people, — happy, but not always very attentive. Boys, in the background, more or less quiet. Dull faces, here, there, — in how many places! I don't say dull *people*, but faces without a ray of sympathy or a movement of expression. They are what kill the lecturer. These negative faces with their vacuous eyes and stony lin-

eaments pump and suck the warm soul out of him ; — that is the chief reason why lecturers grow so pale before the season is over. They render *latent* any amount of vital caloric ; they act on our minds as those cold-blooded creatures I was talking about act on our hearts.

Out of all these inevitable elements the audience is generated, — a great compound vertebrate, as much like fifty others you have seen as any two mammals of the same species are like each other. Each audience laughs, and each cries, in just the same places of your lecture ; that is, if you make one laugh or cry, you make all. Even those little indescribable movements which a lecturer takes cognizance of, just as a driver notices his horse's cocking his ears, are sure to come in exactly the same place of your lecture always. I declare to you, that as the monk said about the picture in the convent, — that he sometimes thought the living tenants were the shadows, and the painted figures the realities, — I have sometimes felt as if I were a wandering spirit, and this great unchanging multivertebrate which I faced night after night was one ever-listening animal, which writhed along

after me wherever I fled, and coiled at my feet every evening, turning up to me the same sleepless eyes which I thought I had closed with my last drowsy incantation!

— Oh yes! A thousand kindly and courteous acts, — a thousand faces that melted individually out of my recollection as the April snow melts, but only to steal away and find the beds of flowers whose roots are memory, but which blossom in poetry and dreams. I am not ungrateful, nor unconscious of all the good feeling and intelligence everywhere to be met with through the vast parish to which the lecturer ministers. But when I set forth, leading a string of my mind's daughters to market, as the country-folk fetch in their strings of horses — Pardon me, that was a coarse fellow who sneered at the sympathy wasted on an unhappy lecturer, as if, because he was decently paid for his services, he had therefore sold his sensibilities. — Family men get dreadfully homesick. In the remote and bleak village the heart returns to the red blaze of the logs in one's fireplace at home.

“There are his young barbarians all at play,” —

if he owns any youthful savages. — No, the

world has a million roosts for a man, but only one nest.

— It is a fine thing to be an oracle to which an appeal is always made in all discussions. The men of facts wait their turn in grim silence, with that slight tension about the nostrils which the consciousness of carrying a “settler” in the form of a fact or a revolver gives the individual thus armed. When a person is really full of information, and does not abuse it to crush conversation, his part is to that of the real talkers what the instrumental accompaniment is in a trio or quartette of vocalists.

— What do I mean by the real talkers? — Why, the people with fresh ideas, of course, and plenty of good warm words to dress them in. Facts always yield the place of honor in conversation, to thoughts about facts; but if a false note is uttered, down comes the finger on the key and the man of facts asserts his true dignity. I have known three of these men of facts, at least, who were always formidable, — and one of them was tyrannical.

— Yes, a man sometimes makes a grand appearance on a particular occasion; but these men knew something about almost

everything, and never made mistakes. — He? *Veneers* in first-rate style. The mahogany scales off now and then in spots, and then you see the cheap light stuff. — I found — very fine in conversational information, the other day when we were in company. The talk ran upon mountains. He was wonderfully well acquainted with the leading facts about the Andes, the Apennines, and the Appalachians; he had nothing in particular to say about Ararat, Ben Nevis, and various other mountains that were mentioned. By and by some Revolutionary anecdote came up, and he showed singular familiarity with the lives of the Adamses, and gave many details relating to Major André. A point of Natural History being suggested, he gave an excellent account of the air-bladder of fishes. He was very full upon the subject of agriculture, but retired from the conversation when horticulture was introduced in the discussion. So he seemed well acquainted with the geology of anthracite, but did not pretend to know anything of other kinds of coal. There was something so odd about the extent and limitations of his knowledge, that I suspected all at once what might be the meaning of it, and waited till I got an

opportunity. — Have you seen the “New American Cyclopædia?” said I. — I have, he replied; I received an early copy. — How far does it go? — He turned red, and answered, — To Araguay. — Oh, said I to myself, — not quite so far as Ararat; — that is the reason he knew nothing about it; but he must have read all the rest straight through, and, if he can remember what is in this volume, until he has read all those which are to come, he will know more than I ever thought he would.

Since I had this experience, I hear that somebody else has related a similar story. I didn't borrow it for all that. — I made a comparison at table some time since, which has often been quoted and received many compliments. It was that of the mind of a bigot to the pupil of the eye: the more light you pour on it, the more it contracts. The simile is a very obvious, and, I suppose I may now say, a happy one; for it has just been shown me that it occurs in a Preface to certain Political Poems of Thomas Moore's, published long before my remark was repeated. When a person of fair character for literary honesty uses an image such as another has employed before him, the pre-

sumption is, that he has struck upon it independently, or unconsciously recalled it, supposing it his own.

It is impossible to tell, in a great many cases, whether a comparison which suddenly suggests itself is a new conception or a recollection. I told you the other day that I never wrote a line of verse that seemed to me comparatively good, but it appeared old at once, and often as if it had been borrowed. But I confess I never suspected the above comparison of being old, except from the fact of its obviousness. It is proper, however, that I proceed by a formal instrument to relinquish all claim to any property in an idea given to the world at about the time when I had just joined the class in which Master Thomas Moore was then a somewhat advanced scholar.

I, therefore, in full possession of my native honesty, but knowing the liability of all men to be elected to public office, and for that reason feeling uncertain how soon I may be in danger of losing it, do hereby renounce all claim to being considered the *first* person who gave utterance to a certain simile or comparison referred to in the accompanying documents, and relating to the

pupil of the eye on the one part and the mind of the bigot on the other. I hereby relinquish all glory and profit, and especially all claims to letters from autograph collectors, founded upon my supposed property in the above comparison. — knowing well, that, according to the laws of literature, they who speak first hold the fee of the thing said. I do also agree that all Editors of Cyclopædias and Biographical Dictionaries, all Publishers of Reviews and Papers, and all Critics writing therein, shall be at liberty to retract or qualify any opinion predicated on the supposition that I was the sole and undisputed author of the above comparison. But, inasmuch as I do affirm that the comparison aforesaid was uttered by me in the firm belief that it was new and wholly my own, and as I have good reason to think that I had never seen or heard it when first expressed by me, and as it is well known that different persons may independently utter the same idea. — as is evinced by that familiar line from Donatus,

“*Pereant illi qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*” —

now, therefore, I do request by this instrument that all well-disposed persons will ab-

stain from asserting or implying that I am open to any accusation whatsoever touching the said comparison, and, if they have so asserted or implied, that they will have the manliness forthwith to retract the same assertion or insinuation.

I think few persons have a greater disgust for plagiarism than myself. If I had even suspected that the idea in question was borrowed, I should have disclaimed originality, or mentioned the coincidence, as I once did in a case where I had happened to hit on an idea of Swift's. — But what shall I do about these verses I was going to read you? I am afraid that half mankind would accuse me of stealing their thoughts, if I printed them. I am convinced that several of you, especially if you are getting a little on in life, will recognize some of these sentiments as having passed through your consciousness at some time. I can't help it, — it is too late now. The verses are written, and you must have them. Listen, then, and you shall hear

VITA



WHAT WE ALL THINK

THAT age was older once than now
 In spite of locks untimely shed,
 Or silvered on the youthful brow ;
 That babes make love and children wed.

That sunshine had a heavenly glow,
 Which faded with those " good old days,"
 When winters came with deeper snow,
 And autumns with a softer haze.

That — mother, sister, wife, or child —
 The " best of women " each has known.
 Were school-boys ever half so wild ?
 How young the grandpapas have grown !

That *but for this* our souls were free,
 And *but for that* our lives were blest ;
 That in some season yet to be
 Our cares will leave us time to rest.

Whene'er we groan with ache or pain,
 Some common ailment of the race, —
 Though doctors think the matter plain, —
 That ours is "a peculiar case."

That when like babes with fingers burned
 We count one bitter maxim more,
 Our lesson all the world has learned,
 And men are wiser than before.

That when we sob o'er fancied woes,
 The angels hovering overhead
 Count every pitying drop that flows
 And love us for the tears we shed.

That when we stand with tearless eye
 And turn the beggar from our door,
 They still approve us when we sigh
 "Ah, had I but *one thousand more* !"

That weakness smoothed the path of sin,
 In half the slips our youth has known ;
 And whatsoe'er its blame has been,
 That Mercy flowers on faults outgrown.

Though temples crowd the crumbled brink
 O'erhanging truth's eternal flow,
 Their tablets bold with *what we think*,
 Their echoes dumb to *what we know* ;

THE BREAKFAST-TABLE

219

That one unquestioned text we read,
All doubt beyond, all fear above,
Nor crackling pile nor cursing creed
Can burn or blot it : GOD IS LOVE!



H.P.



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THE
AVTOCRAT
OF THE
BREAKFAST
TABLE

