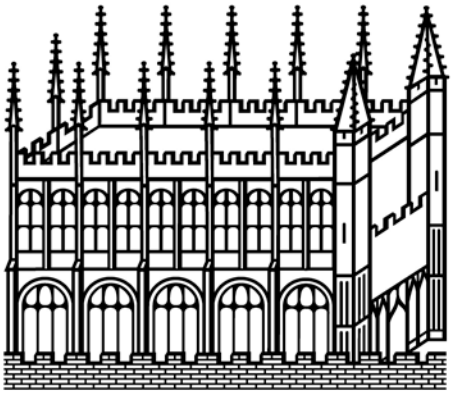
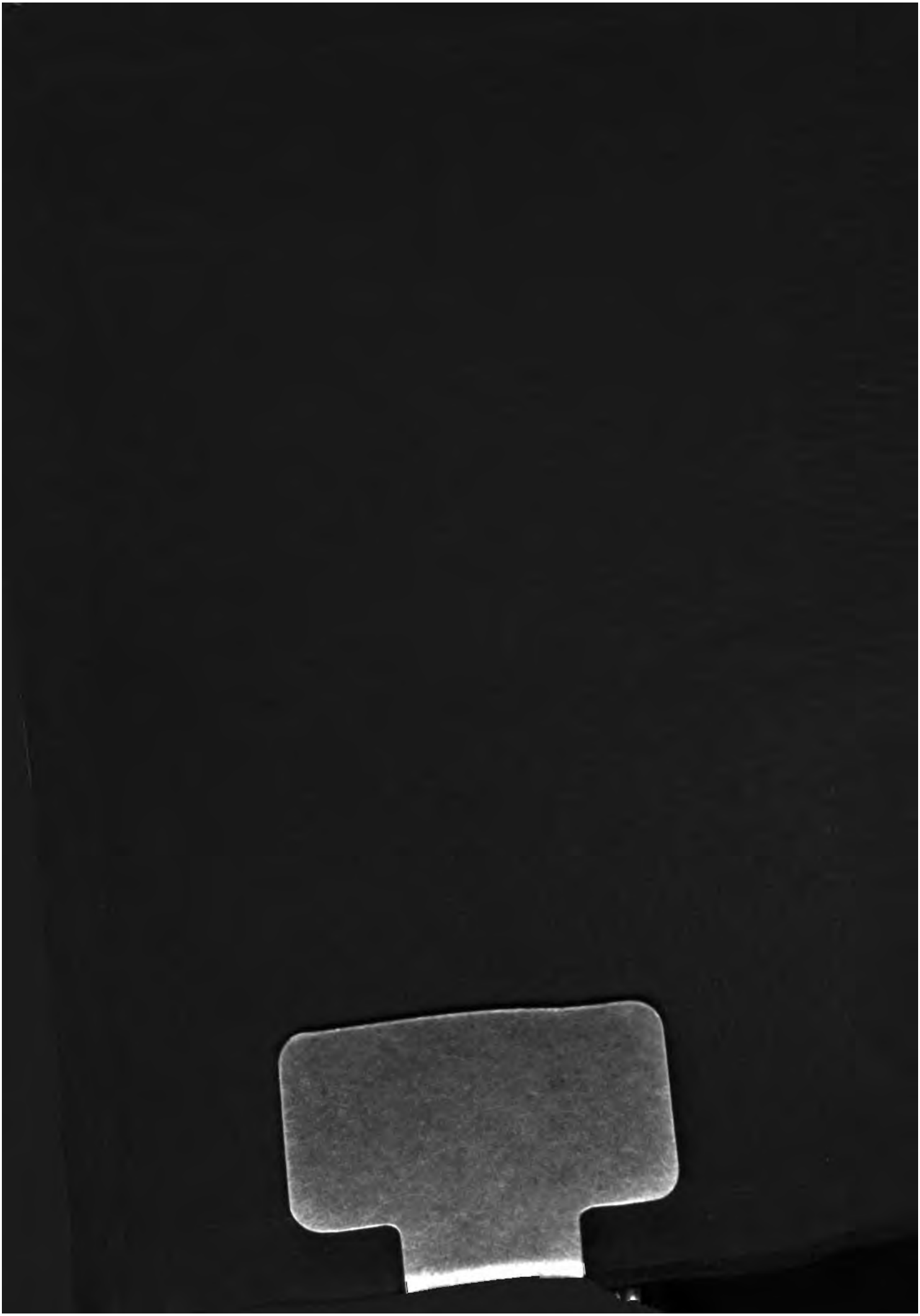
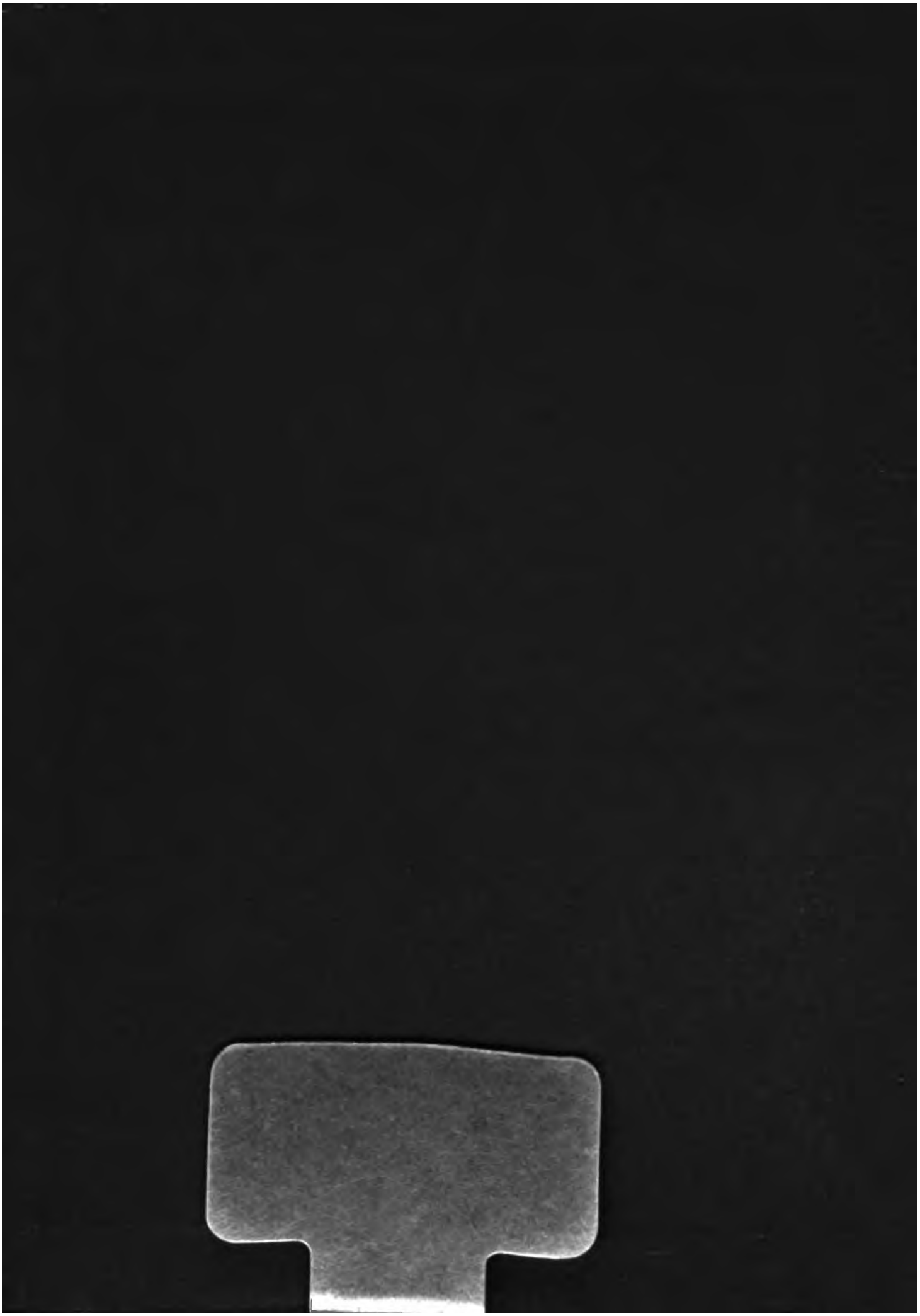



Oliver Wendell Holmes





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THE POET

AT

THE BREAKFAST TABLE

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THE POET

AT THE

BREAKFAST TABLE

BY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

Author's Edition

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH
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1884

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PREFACE.

In this, the third series of Breakfast-Table conversations, a slight dramatic background shows off a few talkers and writers, aided by certain silent supernumeraries. The machinery is much like that of the two preceding series. Some of the characters must seem like old acquaintances to those who have read the former papers. As I read these over for the first time for a number of years, I notice one character representing a class of beings who have greatly multiplied during the interval which separates the earlier and later Breakfast-Table papers,—I mean the scientific specialists. The entomologist, who confines himself rigidly to the study of the coleoptera, is intended to typify this class. The subdivision of labour, which, as we used to be told, required fourteen

different workmen to make a single pin, has reached all branches of knowledge. We find new terms in all the professions, implying that special provinces have been marked off, each having its own school of students. In theology we have many curious subdivisions, among the rest eschatology, that is to say, the geography, geology, etc., of the "undiscovered country;" in medicine, if the surgeon who deals with dislocations of the right shoulder declines to meddle with a displacement on the other side, we are not surprised, but ring the bell of the practitioner who devotes himself to injuries of the left shoulder.

On the other hand, we have had or have the encyclopædic intelligences like Cuvier, Buckle, and more emphatically Herbert Spencer, who take all knowledge, or large fields of it, to be their province. The author of *Thoughts on the Universe* has something in common with these, but he appears also to have a good deal about him of what we call the humourist; that is, an individual with a somewhat heterogeneous personality, in

which various distinctly human elements are mixed together, so as to form a kind of coherent and sometimes pleasing whole, which is to a symmetrical character as a breccia is to a mosaic.

As for the young Astronomer, his rhythmical discourse may be taken as expressing the reaction of what some would call "the natural man" against the unnatural beliefs which he found in that lower world to which he descended by day from his midnight home in the firmament.

I have endeavoured to give fair play to the protest of gentle and reverential conservatism in the letter of the Lady, which was not copied from, but suggested by, one which I received long ago from a lady bearing an honoured name, and which I read thoughtfully and with profound respect.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

December 1882.

THE POET

AT

THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

I.

THE idea of a man's "interviewing" himself *is* rather odd, to be sure. But then that is what we are all of us doing every day. I talk half the time to find out my own thoughts, as a school-boy turns his pockets inside out to see what is in them. One brings to light all sorts of personal property he had forgotten in his inventory.

—You don't know what your thoughts are going to be beforehand? said the "Member of the Haouse," as he calls himself.

—Why, of course I don't. Bless your honest legislative soul, I suppose I have as many bound volumes of notions of one kind and another in my head as you have in your

Representatives' library up there at the State House. I have to tumble them over and over, and open them in a hundred places, and sometimes cut the leaves here and there, to find what I think about this and that. And a good many people who flatter themselves they are talking wisdom to me, are only helping me to get at the shelf and the book and the page where I shall find my own opinion about the matter in question.

—The Member's eyes began to look heavy.

—It's a queer place, that receptacle a man fetches his talk out of. The library comparison doesn't exactly hit it. You stow away some idea and don't want it, say for ten years. When it turns up at last it has got so jammed and crushed out of shape by the other ideas packed with it, that it is no more like what it was than a raisin is like a grape on the vine, or a fig from a drum like one hanging on the tree. Then, again, some kinds of thoughts breed in the dark of one's mind like the blind fishes in the Mammoth Cave. We can't see them, and they can't see us ; but sooner or later the daylight gets in and we find that some cold, fishy little negative has been spawning all over our beliefs, and the brood of blind questions it has given birth to are

burrowing round and under and butting their blunt noses against the pillars of faith we thought the whole world might lean on. And then, again, some of our old beliefs are dying out every year, and others feed on them and grow fat, or get poisoned, as the case may be. And so, you see, you can't tell what the thoughts are that you have got salted down, as one may say, till you run a streak of talk with them, as the market people run a butter-scoop through a firkin.

Don't talk, thinking you are going to find out your neighbour, for you won't do it, but talk to find out yourself. There is more of you—and less of you, in spots, very likely—than you know.

—The Member gave a slight but unequivocal start just here. It does seem as if perpetual somnolence was the price of listening to other people's wisdom. This was one of those transient nightmares that one may have in a doze of twenty seconds. He thought a certain imaginary Committee of Safety of a certain imaginary Legislature was proceeding to burn down his haystack, in accordance with an Act, entitled an Act to make the Poor Richer by making the Rich Poorer. And the chairman of the committee was instituting a forcible ex-

change of hats with him, to his manifest disadvantage, for he had just bought him a new beaver. He told this dream afterwards to one of the boarders.

There was nothing very surprising, therefore, in his asking a question not very closely related to what had gone before.

—Do you think they mean business?

—I beg your pardon, but it would be of material assistance to me in answering your question if I knew who "they" might happen to be.

—Why, those chaps that are setting folks on to burn us all up in our beds. Political firebugs we call 'em up our way. Want to substitoot the match-box for the ballot-box. Scare all our old women half to death.

—Oh—ah—yes—to be sure. I don't believe they say what the papers put in their mouths any more than that a friend of mine wrote the letter about Worcester's and Webster's Dictionaries, that he had to disown the other day. These newspaper fellows are half asleep when they make up their reports at two or three o'clock in the morning, and fill out the speeches to suit themselves. I do remember some things that sounded pretty bad,—about as bad as nitro-glycerine, for that matter. But I don't

believe they ever said 'em, when they spoke their pieces, or if they said 'em, I know they didn't mean 'em. Something like this, wasn't it? If the majority didn't do something the minority wanted 'em to, then the people were to burn up our cities, and knock us down and jump on our stomachs. That was about the kind of talk, as the papers had it; I don't wonder it scared the old women.

—The Member was wide awake by this time.

—I don't seem to remember of them partickler phrases, he said.

—Dear me, no; only levelling everything smack, and trampling us under foot, as the reporters made it out. That means FIRE, I take it, and knocking you down and stamping on you, whichever side of your person happens to be uppermost. Sounded like a threat; meant, of course, for a warning. But I don't believe it was in the piece as they spoke it,—couldn't have been. Then, again, Paris wasn't to blame,—as much as to say—so the old women thought—that New York or Boston wouldn't be to blame if it did the same thing. I've heard of political gatherings where they barbecued an ox, but I can't think there's a party in

this country that wants to barbecue a city. But it isn't quite fair to frighten the old women. I don't doubt there are a great many people wiser than I am that wouldn't be hurt by a hint I am going to give them. It 's no matter what you say when you talk to yourself, but when you talk to other people, your business is to use words with reference to the way in which those other people are like to understand them. These pretended inflammatory speeches, so reported as to seem full of combustibles, even if they were as threatening as they have been represented, would do no harm if read or declaimed in a man's study to his books, or by the sea-shore to the waves. But they are not so wholesome moral entertainment for the dangerous classes. Boys must not touch off their squibs and crackers too near the powder-magazine. This kind of speech doesn't help on the millennium much.

—It ain't jest the thing to grease your ex with ile o' vitrul, said the Member.

—No, the wheel of progress will soon stick fast if you do. You can't keep a dead level long, if you burn everything down flat to make it. Why, bless your soul, if all the cities of the world were reduced to ashes, you 'd have a new set of millionaires in a

couple of years or so, out of the trade in potash. In the meantime, what is the use of setting the man with the silver watch against the man with the gold watch, and the man without any watch against them both?

—You can't go agin human natur', said the Member.

—You speak truly. Here we are travelling through the desert together like the children of Israel. Some pick up more manna and catch more quails than others, and ought to help their hungry neighbours more than they do; that will always be so until we come back to primitive Christianity, the road to which does not seem to be *via* Paris, just now; but we don't want the incendiary's pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead us in the march to civilisation, and we don't want a Moses who will smite the rock, not to bring out water for our thirst, but petroleum to burn us all up with.

—It isn't quite fair to run an opposition to the other funny speaker, Rev. Petroleum V. What 's-his-name,—spoke up an anonymous boarder.

—You may have been thinking, perhaps,

that it was I,—I, the Poet, who was the chief talker in the one-sided dialogue to which you have been listening. If so, you were mistaken. It was the old man in the spectacles with large round glasses and the iron-grey hair. He does a good deal of the talking at our table, and, to tell the truth, I rather like to hear him. He stirs me up, and finds me occupation in various ways, and especially, because he has good solid prejudices, that one can rub against, and so get up and let off a superficial intellectual irritation, just as the cattle rub their backs against a rail (you remember Sydney Smith's contrivance in his pasture) or their sides against an apple-tree (I don't know why they take to these so particularly, but you will often find the trunk of an apple-tree as brown and smooth as an old saddle at the height of a cow's ribs). I think they begin rubbing in cold blood, and then, you know, *l'appétit vient en mangeant*, the more they rub the more they want to. That is the way to use your friend's prejudices. This is a sturdy-looking personage of a good deal more than middle age, his face marked with strong manly furrows, records of hard thinking and square stand-up fights with life and all its devils. There is a slight touch of

satire in his discourse now and then, and an odd way of answering one that makes it hard to guess how much more or less he means than he seems to say. But he is honest, and always has a twinkle in his eye to put you on your guard when he does not mean to be taken quite literally. I think old Ben Franklin had just that look. I know his great-grandson (*in pace!*) had it, and I don't doubt he took it in the straight line of descent, as he did his grand intellect.

The Member of the Haouse evidently comes from one of the lesser inland centres of civilisation, where the flora is rich in checkerberries and similar bounties of nature, and the fauna lively with squirrels, woodchucks, and the like; where the leading sportsmen snare patridges, as they are called, and "hunt" foxes with guns; where rabbits are entrapped in "figgery fours," and trout captured with the unpretentious earth-worm, instead of the gorgeous fly; where they get prizes for butter and cheese, and rag-carpets executed by ladies more than seventy years of age; where they wear dress-coats before dinner, and cock their hats on one side when they feel conspicuous and distinguished; where they say Sir to you in their common

talk, and have other Arcadian and bucolic ways which are highly unobjectionable, but are not so much admired in cities, where the people are said to be not half so virtuous.

There is with us a boy of modest dimensions, not otherwise especially entitled to the epithet, who ought to be six or seven years old, to judge by the gap left by his front milk teeth, these having resigned in favour of their successors, who have not yet presented their credentials. He is rather old for an *enfant terrible*, and quite too young to have grown into the bashfulness of adolescence; but he has some of the qualities of both these engaging periods of development. The Member of the Haouse calls him "Bub," invariably, which term I take to be an abbreviation of "Beelzebub," as "bus" is the short form of "omnibus." Many eminently genteel persons, whose manners make them at home anywhere, being evidently unaware of the true derivation of this word, are in the habit of addressing all unknown children by one of the two terms, "bub" and "sis," which they consider endears them greatly to the young people, and recommends them to the acquaintance of their honoured parents, if these happen to accompany them. The other boarders commonly call our diminu-

tive companion That Boy. He is a sort of expletive at the table, serving to stop gaps, taking the same place a *washer* does that makes a loose screw fit, and contriving to get driven in like a wedge between any two chairs where there is a crevice. I shall not call that boy by the monosyllable referred to, because, though he has many impish traits at present, he may become civilised and humanised by being in good company. Besides, it is a term which I understand is considered vulgar by the nobility and gentry of the Mother Country, and it is not to be found in Mr. Worcester's Dictionary, on which, as is well known, the literary men of this metropolis are by special statute allowed to be sworn in place of the Bible. I know one, certainly, who never takes his oath on any other dictionary, any advertising fiction to the contrary, notwithstanding.

I wanted to write out my account of some of the other boarders, but a domestic occurrence—a somewhat prolonged visit from the landlady, who is rather too anxious that I should be comfortable—broke in upon the continuity of my thoughts, and occasioned—in short, I gave up writing for that day.

—I wonder if anything like this ever happened.

Author writing,—

"*To be, or not to be: that is the question:—*
Whether 'tis nobl—"

—"William, shall we have pudding to-day, or flapjacks?"

—"Flapjacks, an' it please thee, Anne, or a pudding, for that matter; or what thou wilt, good woman, so thou come not betwixt me and my thought."

—Exit Mistress Anne, with strongly accented closing of the door and murmurs to the effect: "Ay, marry, 'tis well for thee to talk as if thou hadst no stomach to fill. We poor wives must swink for our masters, while they sit in their arm-chairs growing as great in the girth through laziness as that ill-mannered old fat man William hath writ of in his books of players' stuff. One had as well meddle with a pork-pen, which hath thorns all over him, as try to deal with William when his eyes be rolling in that mad way.

William—writing once more—after an exclamation in strong English of the older pattern—

"*Whether 'tis nobler—nobler—nobler—*
To do what? O these women! these women! to have puddings or flapjacks! Oh!—

"*Whether 'tis nobler—in the mind—to suffer*
The slings—and arrows—of—

Oh! oh! these women! I will e'en step over to the parson's and have a cup of sack with His Reverence, for methinks Master Hamlet hath forgot that which was just now on his lips to speak."

So I shall have to put off making my friends acquainted with the other boarders, some of whom seem to me worth studying and describing. I have something else of a graver character for my readers. I am talking, you know, as a poet; I do not say I deserve the name, but I have taken it, and if you consider me at all it must be in that aspect. You will, therefore, perhaps, be willing to run your eyes over a few pages which I read, of course by request, to a select party of the boarders.

THE GAMBREL-ROOFED HOUSE AND ITS OUTLOOK.

A PANORAMA, WITH SIDE-SHOWS.

My birthplace, the home of my childhood and earlier and later boyhood, has within a few months passed out of the ownership of my family into the hands of that venerable Alma Mater who seems to have renewed her

youth, and has certainly repainted her dormitories. In truth, when I last revisited that familiar scene and looked upon the *flammantia mœnia* of the old halls, "Massachusetts" with the dummy clock-dial, "Harvard" with the garrulous belfry, little "Holden" with the sculptured unpunishable cherub over its portal, and the rest of my early brick-and-mortar acquaintances, I could not help saying to myself that I had lived to see the peaceable establishment of the Red Republic of Letters.

Many of the things I shall put down I have no doubt told before in a fragmentary way, how many I cannot be quite sure, as I do not very often read my own prose works. But when a man dies a great deal is said of him which has often been said in other forms, and now this dear old house is dead to me in one sense, and I want to gather up my recollections and wind a string of narrative round them, tying them up like a nosegay for the last tribute: the same blossoms in it I have often laid on its threshold while it was still living for me.

We Americans are all cuckoos,—we make our homes in the nests of other birds. I have read somewhere that the lineal descendants of the man who carted off the body of

William Rufus, with Walter Tyrrel's arrow sticking in it, have driven a cart (not absolutely the same one, I suppose) in the New Forest, from that day to this. I don't quite understand Mr. Ruskin's saying (if he said it) that he couldn't get along in a country where there were no castles, but I do think we lose a great deal in living where there are so few permanent homes. You will see how much I parted with which was not reckoned in the price paid for the old homestead.

I shall say many things which an uncharitable reader might find fault with as personal. I should not dare to call myself a poet if I did not; for if there is anything that gives one a title to that name, it is that his inner nature is naked and is not ashamed. But there are many such things I shall put in words, not because they are personal, but because they are human, and are born of just such experiences as those who hear or read what I say are like to have had in greater or less measure. I find myself so much like other people that I often wonder at the coincidence. It was only the other day that I sent out a copy of verses about my great-grandmother's picture, and I was surprised to find how many other people had portraits

of their great-grandmothers or other progenitors, about which they felt as I did about mine, and for whom I had spoken, thinking I was speaking for myself only. And so I am not afraid to talk very freely with you, my precious reader or listener. You too, Beloved, were born somewhere, and remember your birthplace or your early home; for you some house is haunted by recollections; to some roof you have bid farewell. Your hand is upon mine, then, as I guide my pen. Your heart frames the responses to the litany of my remembrance. For myself it is a tribute of affection I am rendering, and I should put it on record for my own satisfaction, were there none to read or to listen.

I hope you will not say that I have built a pillared portico of introduction to a humble structure of narrative. For when you look at the old gambrel-roofed house, you will see an unpretending mansion, such as very possibly you were born in yourself, or at any rate such a place of residence as your minister or some of your well-to-do country cousins find good enough, but not at all too grand for them. We have stately old Colonial palaces in our ancient village, now a city, and a thriving one,—square-

fronted edifices that stand back from the vulgar highway, with folded arms, as it were ; social fortresses of the time when the twilight lustre of the throne reached as far as our half-cleared settlement, with a glacis before them in the shape of a long broad gravel-walk, so that in King George's time they looked as formidably to any but the silk-stocking gentry as Gibraltar or Ehrenbreitstein to a visitor without the password. We forget all this in the kindly welcome they give us to-day ; for some of them are still standing and doubly famous, as we all know. But the gambrel-roofed house, though stately enough for college dignitaries and scholarly clergymen, was not one of those old Tory, Episcopal-church-goer's strongholds. One of its doors opens directly upon the green, always called the Common ; the other, facing the south, a few steps from it, over a paved foot-walk, on the other side of which is the miniature front-yard, bordered with lilacs and syringas. The honest mansion makes no pretensions. Accessible, companionable, holding its hand out to all, comfortable, respectable, and even in its way dignified, but not imposing, not a house for his Majesty's Counsellor, or the Right Reverend successor of Him who

had not where to lay his head, for something like a hundred and fifty years it has stood in its lot, and seen the generations of men come and go like the leaves of the forest. I passed some pleasant hours, a few years since, in the Registry of Deeds and the Town Records, looking up the history of the old house. How those dear friends of mine, the antiquarians, for whose grave councils I compose my features on the too rare Thursdays when I am at liberty to meet them, in whose human herbarium the leaves and blossoms of past generations are so carefully spread out and pressed and laid away, would listen to an expansion of the following brief details into an Historical Memoir !

The estate was the third lot of the eighth "Squadron" (whatever that might be), and in the year 1707 was allotted in the distribution of undivided lands to "Mr. ffox," the Reverend Jabez Fox, of Woburn, it may be supposed, as it passed from his heirs to the first Jonathan Hastings ; from him to his son, the long-remembered College Steward ; from him in the year 1792 to the Reverend Eliphalet Pearson, Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental languages in Harvard College, whose large personality swam into my ken when I was looking forward to my teens ;

from him to the progenitors of my unborn self.

I wonder if there are any such beings nowadays as the great Eliphalet, with his large features and conversational *basso profundo*, seemed to me. His very name had something elephantine about it, and it seemed to me that the house shook from cellar to garret at his footfall. Some have pretended that he had Olympian aspirations, and wanted to sit in the seat of Jove and bear the academic thunderbolt and the ægis inscribed *Christo et Ecclesiæ*. It is a common weakness enough to wish to find one's-self in an empty saddle; Cotton Mather was miserable all his days, I am afraid, after that entry in his Diary: "This Day Dr. Sewall was chosen President, *for his Piety*."

There is no doubt that the men of the older generation look bigger and more formidable to the boys whose eyes are turned up at their venerable countenances than the race which succeeds them, to the same boys grown older. Everything *is* twice as large, measured on a three-year-old's three-foot scale as on a thirty-year-old's six-foot scale; but age magnifies and aggravates persons out of due proportion. Old people are a

kind of monsters to little folks; mild manifestations of the terrible, it may be, but still with their white locks and ridged and grooved features, which those horrid little eyes exhaust of their details, like so many microscopes, not exactly what human beings ought to be. The middle-aged and young men have left comparatively faint impressions in my memory, but how grandly the procession of the old clergymen who filled our pulpit from time to time, and passed the day under our roof, marches before my closed eyes! At their head the most venerable David Osgood, the majestic minister of Medford, with massive front and shaggy overshadowing eyebrows; following in the train, mild-eyed John Foster of Brighton, with the lambent aurora of a smile about his pleasant mouth, which not even the "Sabbath" could subdue to the true Levitical aspect; and bulky Charles Stearns of Lincoln, author of "*The Ladies' Philosophy of Love.* A Poem. 1797" (how I stared at him! he was the first living person ever pointed out to me as a poet); and Thaddeus Mason Harris of Dorchester (the same who, a poor youth, trudging along, staff in hand, being then in a stress of sore need, found all at once that somewhat was adhering to the

end of his stick, which somewhat proved to be a gold ring of price, bearing the words, "God speed thee, Friend!"), already in decadence as I remember him, with head slanting forward and downward as if looking for a place to rest in after his learned labours; and that other Thaddeus, the old man of West Cambridge, who outwatched the rest so long after they had gone to sleep in their own churchyards, that it almost seemed as if he meant to sit up until the morning of the resurrection; and bringing up the rear, attenuated but vivacious little Jonathan Homer of Newton, who was, to look upon, a kind of expurgated, reduced and Americanised copy of Voltaire, but very unlike him in wickedness or wit. The good-humoured junior member of our family always loved to make him happy by setting him chirruping about Miles Coverdale's Version, and the Bishop's Bible, and how he wrote to his friend Sir Isaac (Coffin) about something or other, and how Sir Isaac wrote back that he was very much pleased with the contents of his letter, and so on about Sir Isaac, *ad libitum*,—for the admiral was his old friend, and he was proud of him. The kindly little old gentleman was a collector of Bibles, and made himself believe

he thought he should publish a learned Commentary some day or other; but his friends looked for it only in the Greek Calends,—say on the 31st of April, when that should come round, if you would modernise the phrase. I recall also one or two exceptional and infrequent visitors with perfect distinctness: cheerful Elijah Kellogg, a lively missionary from the region of the Quoddy Indians, with much hopeful talk about Sock Bason and his tribe; also poor old Poorhouse-Parson Isaac Smith, his head going like a China mandarin, as he discussed the possibilities of the escape of that distinguished captive whom he spoke of under the name, if I can reproduce phonetically its vibrating nasalities, of "General Mmbonga-party,"—a name suggestive to my young imagination of a dangerous, loose-jointed skeleton, threatening us all like the armed figure of Death in my little New England Primer.

I have mentioned only the names of those whose images come up pleasantly before me, and I do not mean to say anything which any descendant might not read smilingly. But there were some of the black-coated gentry whose aspect was not so agreeable to me. It is very curious to me to look back

on my early likes and dislikes, and see how as a child I was attracted or repelled by such and such ministers, a good deal, as I found out long afterwards, according to their theological beliefs. On the whole, I think the old-fashioned New England divine softening down into Arminianism was about as agreeable as any of them. And here I may remark, that a mellowing rigorist is always a much pleasanter object to contemplate than a tightening liberal, as a cold day warming up to 32° Fahrenheit is much more agreeable than a warm one chilling down to the same temperature. The least pleasing change is that kind of mental hemiplegia which now and then attacks the rational side of a man at about the same period of life when one side of the body is liable to be palsied, and in fact is, very probably, the same thing as palsy, in another form. The worst of it is that the subjects of it never seem to suspect that they are intellectual invalids, stammerers and cripples at best, but are all the time hitting out at their old friends with the well arm, and calling them hard names out of their twisted mouths.

It was a real delight to have one of those good, hearty, happy, benignant old clergymen pass the Sunday with us, and I can

remember some whose advent made the day feel almost like "Thanksgiving." But now and then would come along a clerical visitor with a sad face and a wailing voice, which sounded exactly as if somebody must be lying dead up-stairs, who took no interest in us children, except a painful one, as being in a bad way with our cheery looks, and did more to unchristianise us with his woebegone ways than all his sermons were like to accomplish in the other direction. I remember one in particular, who twitted me so with my blessings as a Christian child, and whined so to me about the naked black children who, like the "Little Vulgar Boy," "hadn't got no supper and hadn't got no ma," and hadn't got no Catechism (how I wished for the moment I was a little black boy !) that he did more in that one day to make me a heathen than he had ever done in a month to make a Christian out of an infant Hottentot. What a debt we owe to our friends of the left centre, the Brooklyn and the Park Street and the Summer Street ministers; good, wholesome, sound-bodied, sane-minded, cheerful-spirited men, who have taken the place of those wailing *poitrinaires* with the bandanna handkerchiefs round their meagre throats and a funeral service in their forlorn

physiognomies ! I might have been a minister myself, for aught I know, if this clergyman had not looked and talked so like an undertaker.

All this belongs to one of the side-shows, to which I promised those who would take tickets to the main exhibition should have entrance *gratis*. If I were writing a poem, you would expect, as a matter of course, that there would be a digression now and then.

To come back to the old house and its former tenant, the Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental languages. Fifteen years he lived with his family under its roof. I never found the slightest trace of him until a few years ago, when I cleaned and brightened with pious hands the brass lock of "the study," which had for many years been covered with a thick coat of paint. On that I found scratched, as with a nail or fork, the following inscription :—

E PE

Only that and nothing more, but the story told itself. Master Edward Pearson, then about as high as the lock, was disposed to immortalise himself in monumental brass, and had got so far towards it, when a sudden

interruption, probably a smart box on the ear, cheated him of his fame, except so far as this poor record may rescue it. Dead long ago. I remember him well, a grown man, as a visitor at a later period ; and, for some reason, I recall him in the attitude of the Colossus of Rhodes, standing full before a generous wood-fire, not facing it, but quite the contrary, a perfect picture of the content afforded by a blazing hearth contemplated from that point of view, and, as the heat stole through his person and kindled his emphatic features, seeming to me a pattern of manly beauty. What a statue gallery of posturing friends we all have in our memory ! The old Professor himself sometimes visited the house after it had changed hands. Of course, my recollections are not to be wholly trusted, but I always think I see his likeness in a profile face to be found among the illustrations of *Rees's Cyclopædia.* (See Plates, Vol. IV., Plate 2, Painting, Diversities of the Human Face, Fig. 4.)

And now let us return to our chief picture. In the days of my earliest remembrance, a row of tall Lombardy poplars mounted guard on the western side of the old mansion. Whether, like the cypress, these trees

suggest the idea of the funeral torch or the monumental spire, whether their tremulous leaves make us afraid by sympathy with their nervous thrills, whether the faint balsamic smell of their leaves and their closely swathed limbs have in them vague hints of dead Pharaohs stiffened in their cerements, I will not guess; but they always seemed to me to give an air of sepulchral sadness to the house before which they stood sentries. Not so with the row of elms which you may see leading up towards the western entrance. I think the patriarch of them all went over in the great gale of 1815; I know I used to shake the youngest of them with my hands, stout as it is now, with a trunk that would defy the bully of Crotona, or the strong man whose *liaison* with the Lady Delilah proved so disastrous.

The college plain would be nothing without its elms. As the long hair of a woman is a glory to her, so are these green tresses that bank themselves against the sky in thick clustered masses the ornament and the pride of the classic green. You know the "Washington elm," or if you do not, you had better rekindle your patriotism by reading the inscription, which tells you that under its shadow the great leader first drew

his sword at the head of an American army. In a line with that you may see two others: the *coral fan*, as I always called it from its resemblance in form to that beautiful marine growth, and a third a little farther along. I have heard it said that all three were planted at the same time, and that the difference of their growth is due to the slope of the ground,—the Washington elm being lower than either of the others. There is a row of elms just in front of the old house on the south. When I was a child the one at the south-west corner was struck by lightning, and one of its limbs and a long ribbon of bark torn away. The tree never fully recovered its symmetry and vigour, and forty years and more afterwards a second thunderbolt crashed upon it and set its heart on fire, like those of the lost souls in the Hall of Eblis. Heaven had twice blasted it, and the axe finished what the lightning had begun.

The soil of the University town is divided into patches of sandy and of clayey ground. The Common and the College green, near which the old house stands, are on one of the sandy patches. Four curses are the local inheritance: droughts, dust, mud, and canker-worms. I cannot but think that all

the characters of a region help to modify the children born in it. I am fond of making apologies for human nature, and I think I could find an excuse for myself if I, too, were dry and barren and muddy-witted and "cantankerous,"—disposed to get my back up, like those other natives of the soil.

I know this, that the way Mother Earth treats a boy shapes out a kind of natural theology for him. I fell into Manichean ways of thinking from the teaching of my garden experiences. Like other boys in the country, I had my patch of ground, to which, in the spring-time, I intrusted the seeds furnished me, with a confident trust in their resurrection and glorification in the better world of summer. But I soon found that my lines had fallen in a place where a vegetable growth had to run the gauntlet of as many foes and trials as a Christian pilgrim. Flowers would not blow; daffodils perished like criminals in their condemned caps, without their petals ever seeing daylight; roses were disfigured with monstrous protrusions through their very centres,—something that looked like a second bud pushing through the middle of the corolla; lettuces and cabbages would not head; radishes knotted themselves until they looked like centenarians'

fingers; and on every stem, on every leaf, and both sides of it, and at the root of everything that grew, was a professional specialist in the shape of grub, caterpillar, aphis, or other expert, whose business it was to devour that particular part, and help murder the whole attempt at vegetation. Such experiences must influence a child born to them. A sandy soil, where nothing flourishes but weeds and evil beasts of small dimensions, must breed different qualities in its human offspring from one of those fat and fertile spots which the wit whom I have once before quoted described so happily that, if I quoted the passage, its brilliancy would spoil one of my pages, as a diamond breastpin sometimes kills the social effect of the wearer, who might have passed for a gentleman without it. Your arid patch of earth should seem to be the natural birthplace of the leaner virtues and the feebler vices,—of temperance and the domestic proprieties on the one hand, with a tendency to light weights in groceries and provisions, and to clandestine abstraction from the person on the other, as opposed to the free hospitality, the broadly planned burglaries, and the largely conceived homicides of our rich Western alluvial regions. Yet Nature is never wholly unkind.

Economical as she was in my unparadised Eden, hard as it was to make some of my floral houris unveil, still the damask roses sweetened the June breezes, the bladed and plumed flower-de-luces unfolded their close-wrapped cones, and larkspurs and lupins, lady's delights,—plebeian manifestations of the pansy,—self-sowing marigolds, hollyhocks, the forest flowers of two seasons, and the perennial lilacs and syringas,—all whispered to the winds blowing over them that some caressing presence was around me.

Beyond the garden was "the field," a vast domain of four acres or thereabout, by the measurement of after years, bordered to the north by a fathomless chasm,—the ditch the base-ball players of the present era jump over ; on the east by unexplored territory ; on the south by a barren enclosure, where the red sorrel proclaimed liberty and equality under its *drapeau rouge*, and succeeded in establishing a vegetable commune where all were alike, poor, mean, sour, and uninteresting ; and on the west by the Common, not then disgraced by jealous enclosures, which make it look like a cattle-market. Beyond, as I looked round, were the Colleges, the meeting-house, the little square market-house, long vanished ; the burial-

ground where the dead Presidents stretched their weary bones under epitaphs stretched out at as full length as their subjects; the pretty church where the gouty Tories used to kneel on their hassocks; the district school-house, and hard by it Ma'am Hancock's cottage, never so called in those days, but rather "tenfooter;" then houses scattered near and far, open spaces, the shadowy elms, round hilltops in the distance, and over all the great bowl of the sky. Mind you, this was the WORLD, as I first knew it; *terra veteribus cognita*, as Mr. Arrowsmith would have called it, if he had mapped the universe of my infancy.

But I am forgetting the old house again in the landscape. The worst of a modern stylish mansion is, that it has no place for ghosts. I watched one building not long since. It had no proper garret, to begin with, only a sealed interval between the roof and attics, where a spirit could not be accommodated, unless it were flattened out like Ravel, Brother, after the millstone had fallen on him. There was not a nook or a corner in the whole house fit to lodge any respectable ghost, for every part was as open to observation as a literary man's character and condition, his figure and estate, his coat and his countenance, are to his (or her)

Bohemian Majesty on a tour of inspection through his (or her) subjects' keyholes.

Now the old house had wainscots, behind which the mice were always scampering and squeaking and rattling down the plaster, and enacting family scenes and parlour theatricals. It had a cellar where the cold slug clung to the walls, and the misanthropic spider withdrew from the garish day ; where the green mould loved to grow, and the long white potato-shoots went feeling along the floor, if haply they might find the daylight ; it had great brick pillars, always in a cold sweat with holding up the burden they had been aching under day and night for a century and more ; it had sepulchral arches closed by rough doors that hung on hinges rotten with rust, behind which doors, if there was not a heap of bones connected with a mysterious disappearance of long ago, there well might have been, for it was just the place to look for them. It had a garret, very nearly such a one as it seems to me one of us has described in one of his books ; but let us look at this one as I can reproduce it from memory. It has a flooring of laths with ridges of mortar squeezed up between them, which if you tread on you will go to—the Lord have mercy on you! where *will* you go to ?—

the same being crossed by narrow bridges of boards, on which you may put your feet, but with fear and trembling. Above you and around you are beams and joists, on some of which you may see, when the light is let in, the marks of the conchoidal clippings of the broadaxe, showing the rude way in which the timber was shaped as it came, full of sap, from the neighbouring forest. It is a realm of darkness and thick dust, and shroud-like cobwebs and dead things they wrap in their grey folds. For a garret is like a sea-shore, where wrecks are thrown up and slowly go to pieces. There is the cradle which the old man you just remember was rocked in; there is the ruin of the bedstead he died on; that ugly slanting contrivance used to be put under his pillow in the days when his breath came hard; there is his old chair with both arms gone, symbol of the desolate time when he had nothing earthly left to lean on; there is the large wooden reel which the blear-eyed old deacon sent the minister's lady, who thanked him graciously, and twirled it smilingly, and in fitting season bowed it out decently to the limbo of troublesome conveniences. And there are old leather portmanteaus, like stranded porpoises, their mouths gaping in gaunt hunger for the food

with which they used to be gorged to bulging repletion; and old brass and irons, waiting until time shall revenge them on their paltry substitutes, and they shall have their own again, and bring with them the forestick and the back-log of ancient days; and the empty churn, with its idle dasher, which the Nancys and Phœbes, who have left their comfortable places to the Bridgets and Norahs, used to handle to good purpose; and the brown, shaky old spinning-wheel, which was running, it may be, in the days when they were hanging the Salem witches.

Under the dark and haunted garret were attic chambers which themselves had histories. On a pane in the north-eastern chamber may be read these names: "John Tracy," "Robert Roberts," "Thomas Prince;" "*Stultus*" another hand had added. When I found these names a few years ago (wrong side up, for the window had been reversed), I looked at once in the Triennial to find them, for the epithet showed that they were probably students. I found them all under the years 1771 and 1773. Does it please their thin ghosts thus to be dragged to the light of day? Has "*Stultus*" forgiven the indignity of being thus characterised?

The south-east chamber was the Library Hospital. Every scholar should have a book infirmary attached to his library. There should find a peaceable refuge the many books, invalids from their birth, which are sent "with the best regards of the Author;" the respected, but unpresentable cripples which have lost a cover; the odd volumes of honoured sets which go mourning all their days for their lost brother; the school-books which have been so often the subjects of assault and battery, that they look as if the police court must know them by heart; these and still more the pictured story-books, beginning with Mother Goose (which a dear old friend of mine has just been amusing his philosophic leisure with turning most ingeniously and happily into the tongues of Virgil and Homer), will be precious mementoes by-and-by, when children and grandchildren come along. What would I not give for that dear little paper-bound quarto, in large and most legible type, on certain pages of which the tender hand that was the shield of my infancy had crossed out with deep black marks something awful, probably about BEARS, such as once tare two-and-forty of us little folks for making faces, and the very name of

which made us hide our heads under the bedclothes.

I made strange acquaintances in that book infirmary up in the south-west attic. The "Negro Plot" at New York helped to implant a feeling in me which it took Mr. Garrison a good many years to root out. *Thinks I to Myself*, an old novel, which has been attributed to a famous statesman, introduced me to a world of fiction which was not represented on the shelves of the library proper, unless perhaps by *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, or allegories of the bitter tonic class, as the young doctor that sits on the other side of the table would probably call them. I always, from an early age, had a keen eye for a story with a moral sticking out of it, and gave it a wide berth, though in my later years I have myself written a couple of "medicated novels," as one of my dearest and pleasantest old friends wickedly called them, when somebody asked her if she had read the last of my printed performances. I forgave the satire for the charming *esprit* of the epithet. Besides the works I have mentioned, there was an old, old Latin alchemy book, with the manuscript annotations of some ancient Rosicrucian, in the pages of which I had a vague notion that

I might find the mighty secret of the *Lapis Philosophorum*, otherwise called Chaos, the Dragon, the Green Lion, the *Quinta Essentia*, the Soap of Sages, the Vinegar of Philosophers, the Dew of Heavenly Grace, the Egg, the Old Man, the Sun, the Moon, and by all manner of odd aliases, as I am assured by the plethoric little book before me, in parchment covers browned like a meerschaum with the smoke of furnaces and the thumbing of dead gold-seekers, and the fingering of bony-handed book misers, and the long intervals of dusty slumber on the shelves of the *bouquiniste;* for next year it will be three centuries old, and it had already seen nine generations of men when I caught its eye (*Alchemiæ Doctrina*) and recognised it at pistol-shot distance as a prize, among the breviaries and *Heures* and trumpery volumes of the old open-air dealer who exposed his treasures under the shadow of St. Sulpice. I have never lost my taste for alchemy since I first got hold of the *Palladium Spagyricum* of Peter John Faber, and sought—in vain, it is true—through its pages for a clear, intelligible, and practical statement of how I could turn my lead sinkers and the weights of the tall kitchen clock into good yellow gold, specific gravity 19·2, and ex-

changeable for whatever I then wanted, and for many more things than I was then aware of. One of the greatest pleasures of childhood is found in the mysteries which it hides from the scepticism of the elders, and works up into small mythologies of its own. I have seen all this played over again in adult life,—the same delightful bewilderment of semi-emotional belief in listening to the gaseous promises of this or that fantastic system, that I found in the pleasing mirages conjured up for me by the ragged old volume I used to pore over in the south-east attic-chamber.

The rooms of the second story, the chambers of birth and death, are sacred to silent memories.

Let us go down to the ground-floor. I should have begun with this, but that the historical reminiscences of the old house have been recently told in a most interesting memoir by a distinguished student of our local history. I retain my doubts about those "dents" on the floor of the right-hand room, "the study" of successive occupants, said to have been made by the butts of the Continental militia's firelocks, but this was the cause the story told me in childhood laid them to. That military consultations were held in that room when the house was

General Ward's headquarters, that the Provincial generals and colonels and other men of war there planned the movement which ended in the fortifying of Bunker's Hill, that Warren slept in the house the night before the battle, that President Langdon went forth from the western door and prayed for God's blessing on the men just setting forth on their bloody expedition,— all these things have been told, and perhaps none of them need be doubted.

But now for fifty years and more that room has been a meeting-ground for the platoons and companies which range themselves at the scholar's word of command. Pleasant it is to think that the retreating host of books is to give place to a still larger army of volumes, which have seen service under the eye of a great commander. For here the noble collection of him so freshly remembered as our silver-tongued orator, our erudite scholar, our honoured College President, our accomplished statesman, our courtly ambassador, are to be reverently gathered by the heir of his name, himself not unworthy to be surrounded by that august assembly of the wise of all ages and of various lands and languages.

Could such a many-chambered edifice have

stood a century and a half and not have had its passages of romance to bequeath their lingering legends to the after-time? There are other names on some of the small window-panes, which must have had young flesh-and-blood owners, and there is one of early date which elderly persons have whispered was borne by a fair woman, whose graces made the house beautiful in the eyes of the youth of that time. One especially—you will find the name of Fortescue Vernon, of the class of 1780, in the Triennial Catalogue—was a favoured visitor to the old mansion; but he went over seas, I think they told me, and died still young, and the name of the maiden which is scratched on the window-pane was never changed. I am telling the story honestly, as I remember it, but I may have coloured it unconsciously, and the legendary pane may be broken before this for aught I know. At least, I have named no names except the beautiful one of the supposed hero of the romantic story.

It was a great happiness to have been born in an old house haunted by such recollections, with harmless ghosts walking its corridors, with fields of waving grass and trees and singing birds, and that vast territory of four or five acres around it to give a child

the sense that he was born to a noble principality. It has been a great pleasure to retain a certain hold upon it for so many years; and since in the natural course of things it must at length pass into other hands, it is a gratification to see the old place making itself tidy for a new tenant, like some venerable dame who is getting ready to entertain a neighbour of condition. Not long since a new cap of shingles adorned this ancient mother among the village—now city—mansions. She has dressed herself in brighter colours than she has hitherto worn, so they tell me, within the last few days. She has modernised her aspects, in several ways; she has rubbed bright the glasses through which she looks at the Common and the Colleges; and as the sunset shines upon her through the flickering leaves or the wiry spray of the elms I remember from my childhood, they will glorify her into the aspect she wore when President Holyoke, father of our long since dead centenarian, looked upon her in her youthful comeliness.

The quiet corner formed by this and the neighbouring residences has changed less than any place I can remember. Our kindly, polite, shrewd, and humorous old neighbour, who in former days has served the town as

constable and auctioneer, and bids fair to become the oldest inhabitant of the city, was there when I was born, and is living there to-day. By-and-by the stony foot of the great University will plant itself on this whole territory, and the private recollections which clung so tenaciously and fondly to the place and its habitations will have died with those who cherished them.

Shall they ever live again in the memory of those who loved them here below? What is this life without the poor accidents which made it our own, and by which we identify ourselves? Ah me! I might like to be a winged chorister, but still it seems to me I should hardly be quite happy if I could not recall at will the Old House with the Long Entry, and the White Chamber (where I wrote the first verses that made me known, with a pencil, *stans pede in uno*, pretty nearly), and the Little Parlour, and the Study, and the old books in uniform as varied as those of the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company used to be, if my memory serves me right, and the front yard with the stars-of-Bethlehem growing, flowerless, among the grass, and the dear faces to be seen no more there or anywhere on this earthly place of farewells.

I have told my story. I do not know what special gifts have been granted or denied me; but this I know, that I am like so many others of my fellow-creatures, that when I smile, I feel as if they must; when I cry, I think their eyes fill; and it always seems to me that when I am most truly myself I come nearest to them and am surest of being listened to by the brothers and sisters of the larger family into which I was born so long ago. I have often feared they might be tired of me and what I tell them. But then, perhaps, would come a letter from some quiet body in some out-of-the-way place, which showed me that I had said something which another had often felt but never said, or told the secret of another's heart in unburdening my own. Such evidences that one is in the highway of human experience and feeling lighten the footsteps wonderfully. So it is that one is encouraged to go on writing as long as the world has anything that interests him, for he never knows how many of his fellow-beings he may please or profit, and in how many places his name will be spoken as that of a friend.

In the mood suggested by my story I have ventured on the poem that follows. Most

people love this world more than they are willing to confess, and it is hard to conceive ourselves weaned from it so as to feel no emotion at the thought of its most sacred recollections—even after a sojourn of years, as we should count the lapse of earthly time —in the realm where, sooner or later, all tears shall be wiped away. I hope, therefore, the title of my lines will not frighten those who are little accustomed to think of men and women as human beings in any state but the present.

HOMESICK IN HEAVEN.

THE DIVINE VOICE.

Go seek thine earth-born sisters,—thus the Voice
That all obey,—the sad and silent three;
These only, while the hosts of heaven rejoice,
Smile never: ask them what their sorrows be:

And when the secret of their griefs they tell,
Look on them with thy mild, half-human eyes;
Say what thou wast on earth; thou knowest well;
So shall they cease from unavailing sighs.

THE ANGEL.

—Why thus, apart,—the swift-winged herald spake,—
Sit ye with silent lips and unstrung lyres
While the trisagion's blending chords awake
In shouts of joy from all the heavenly choirs?

THE FIRST SPIRIT.

—Chide not thy sisters,—thus the answer came;—
Children of earth, our half-weaned nature clings
To earth's fond memories, and her whispered name
Untunes our quivering lips, our saddened strings;

For there we loved, and where we love is home,
Home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts,
Though o'er us shine the jasper-lighted dome:—
The chain may lengthen, but it never parts!

Sometimes a sunlit sphere comes rolling by,
And then we softly whisper,—*can it be?*
And leaning toward the silvery orb, we try
To hear the music of its murmuring sea;

To catch, perchance, some flashing glimpse of green,
Or breathe some wild-wood fragrance, wafted through
The opening gates of pearl, that fold between
The blinding splendours and the changeless blue.

THE ANGEL.

—Nay, sister, nay ! a single healing leaf
Plucked from the bough of yon twelve-fruited tree,
Would soothe such anguish,—deeper stabbing grief
Has pierced thy throbbing heart—

THE FIRST SPIRIT.

—Ah, woe is me !
I from my clinging babe was rudely torn ;
His tender lips a loveless bosom pressed ;
Can I forget him in my life new-born ?
O that my darling lay upon my breast !

THE ANGEL.

—And thou ?—

THE SECOND SPIRIT.

I was a fair and youthful bride,
The kiss of love still burns upon my cheek,
He whom I worshipped, ever at my side,—
Him through the spirit realm in vain I seek.

Sweet faces turn their beaming eyes on mine;
Ah! not in these the wished-for look I read;
Still for that one dear human smile I pine;
Thou and none other!—is the lover's creed.

THE ANGEL.

—And whence *thy* sadness in a world of bliss
Where never parting comes, nor mourner's tear?
Art thou, too, dreaming of a mortal's kiss
Amid the seraphs of the heavenly sphere?

THE THIRD SPIRIT.

—Nay, tax me not with passion's wasting fire;
When the swift message set my spirit free,
Blind, helpless, lone, I left my grey-haired sire;
My friends were many, he had none save me.

I left him, orphaned, in the starless night;
Alas, for him no cheerful morning's dawn!
I wear the ransomed spirit's robe of white,
Yet still I hear him moaning, *She is gone!*

THE ANGEL.

—Ye know me not, sweet sisters?—All in vain
Ye seek your lost ones in the shapes they wore;
The flower once opened may not bud again,
The fruit once fallen finds the stem no more.

Child, lover, sire,—yea, all things loved below,—
Fair pictures damasked on a vapour's fold,—
Fade like the roseate flush, the golden glow,
When the bright curtain of the day is rolled.

I was the babe that slumbered on *thy* breast.
—And, sister, mine the lips that called *thee* bride.
—Mine were the silvered locks *thy* hand caressed,
That faithful hand, my faltering footstep's guide!

Each changing form, frail vesture of decay,
The soul unclad forgets it once hath worn,
Stained with the travel of the weary day,
And shamed with rents from every wayside thorn.

To lie, an infant, in *thy* fond embrace,—
To come with love's warm kisses back to *thee*,—
To show *thine* eyes thy grey-haired father's face,
Not Heaven itself could grant; this may not be!

Then spread your folded wings, and leave to earth
The dust once breathing ye have mourned so long,
Till Love, new risen, owns his heavenly birth,
And sorrow's discords sweeten into song!

II.

I AM going to take it for granted now and henceforth, in my report of what was said and what was to be seen at our table, that I have secured one good, faithful, loving reader, who never finds fault, who never gets sleepy over my pages, whom no critic can bully out of a liking for me, and to whom I am always safe in addressing myself. My one elect may be man or woman, old or young, gentle or simple, living in the next block or on a slope of Nevada, my fellow-countryman or an alien; but one such reader I shall assume to exist, and have always in my thought when I am writing.

A writer is so like a lover! And a talk with the right listener is so like an arm-in-arm walk in the moonlight with the soft heartbeat just felt through the folds of muslin and broadcloth! But it takes very little to spoil everything for writer, talker, lover. There are a great many cruel things besides poverty that freeze the genial current of the soul, as the poet of the Elegy calls it. Fire

can stand any wind, but flame is easily blown out, and then come smouldering and smoke, and profitless, slow combustion without the cheerful blaze which sheds light all round it. The One Reader's hand may shelter the flame ; the one blessed ministering spirit with the vessel of oil may keep it bright in spite of the stream of cold water on the other side doing its best to put it out.

I suppose, if any writer, of any distinguishable individuality, could look into the hearts of all his readers, he might very probably find one in his parish of a thousand or a million who honestly preferred him to any other of his kind. I have no doubt we have each one of us, somewhere, our exact fac-simile, so like us in all things except the accidents of condition, that we should love each other like a pair of twins, if our natures could once fairly meet. I know I have my counterpart in some State of this Union. I feel sure that there is an Englishman somewhere precisely like myself. (I hope he does not drop his *h*s, for it does not seem to me possible that the Royal Dane could have remained faithful to his love for Ophelia, if she had addressed him as 'Amlet.) There is also a certain Monsieur, to me at this moment unknown, and likewise a Herr Von

Something, each of whom is essentially my double. An Arab is at this moment eating dates, a Mandarin is just sipping his tea, and a South-Sea-Islander (with undeveloped possibilities) drinking the milk of a cocoa-nut, each one of whom, if he had been born in the gambrel-roofed house, and cultivated my little sand-patch, and grown up in "the Study" from the height of Walton's Polyglot Bible to that of the shelf which held the Elzevir Tacitus and Casaubon's Polybius, with all the complex influences about him that surrounded me, would have been so nearly what I am that I should have loved him like a brother,—always provided that I did not hate him for his resemblance to me, on the same principle as that which makes bodies in the same electric condition repel each other.

For, perhaps after all, my One Reader is quite as likely to be not the person most resembling myself, but the one to whom my nature is complementary. Just as a particular soil wants some one element to fertilise it, just as the body in some conditions has a kind of famine for one special food, so the mind has its wants, which do not always call for what is best, but which know themselves and are as peremptory as the salt-sick

sailor's call for a lemon or a raw potato, or, if you will, as those capricious "longings," which have a certain meaning, we may suppose, and which at any rate we think it reasonable to satisfy if we can.

I was going to say something about our boarders the other day when I got run away with by my local reminiscences. I wish you to understand that we have a rather select company at the table of our boarding-house.

Our landlady is a most respectable person, who has seen better days, of course,—all landladies have,—but has also, I feel sure, seen a good deal worse ones. For she wears a very handsome silk dress on state occasions, with a breastpin set, as I honestly believe, with genuine pearls, and appears habitually with a very smart cap, from under which her grey curls come out with an unmistakable expression, conveyed in the hieratic language of the feminine priesthood, to the effect that while there is life there is hope. And when I come to reflect on the many circumstances which go to the making of matrimonial happiness, I cannot help thinking that a personage of her presentable exterior, thoroughly experienced in all the

domestic arts which render life comfortable, might make the later years of some hitherto companionless bachelor very endurable, not to say pleasant.

The condition of the landlady's family is, from what I learn, such as to make the connection I have alluded to, I hope with delicacy, desirable for incidental as well as direct reasons, provided a fitting match could be found. I was startled at hearing her address by the familiar name of *Benjamin* the young physician I have referred to, until I found on inquiry, what I might have guessed by the size of his slices of pie and other little marks of favouritism, that he was her son. He has recently come back from Europe, where he has topped off his home training with a first-class foreign finish. As the landlady could never have educated him in this way out of the profits of keeping boarders, I was not surprised when I was told that she had received a pretty little property in the form of a bequest from a former boarder, a very kind-hearted, worthy old gentleman who had been long with her, and seen how hard she worked for food and clothes for herself and this son of hers, Benjamin Franklin by his baptismal name. Her daughter had also married well, to a member of what we

may call the post-medical profession, that, namely, which deals with the mortal frame after the practitioners of the healing art have done with it and taken their leave. So thriving had this son-in-law of hers been in his business, that his wife drove about in her own carriage, drawn by a pair of jet-black horses of most dignified demeanour, whose only fault was a tendency to relapse at once into a walk after every application of a stimulus that quickened their pace to a trot; which application always caused them to look round upon the driver with a surprised and offended air, as if he had been guilty of a grave indecorum.

The landlady's daughter had been blessed with a number of children, of great sobriety of outward aspect, but remarkably cheerful in their inward habit of mind, more especially on the occasion of the death of a doll, which was an almost daily occurrence, and gave them immense delight in getting up a funeral, for which they had a complete miniature outfit. How happy they were under their solemn aspect! For the head mourner, a child of remarkable gifts, could actually make the tears run down her cheeks,—as real ones as if she had been a grown person following a rich relative, who had not for-

gotten his connections, to his last unfurnished lodgings.

So this was a most desirable family connection for the right man to step into,—a thriving, thrifty mother-in-law, who knew what was good for the sustenance of the body, and had no doubt taught it to her daughter; a medical artist at hand in case the luxuries of the table should happen to disturb the physiological harmonies; and in the worst event, a sweet consciousness that the last sad offices would be attended to with affectionate zeal, and probably a large discount from the usual charges.

It seems as if I could hardly be at this table for a year, if I should stay so long, without seeing some romance or other work itself out under my eyes; and I cannot help thinking that the landlady is to be the heroine of the love-history like to unfold itself. I think I see the little cloud in the horizon, with a silvery lining to it, which may end in a rain of cards tied round with white ribbons. Extremes meet, and who so like to be the other party as the elderly gentleman at the other end of the table, as far from her now as the length of the board permits? I may be mistaken, but I think this is to be the romantic episode of the

year before me. Only it seems so natural it is improbable, for you never find your dropped money just where you look for it, and so it is with these *a priori* matches.

This gentleman is a tight, tidy, wiry little man, with a small, brisk head, close-cropped white hair, a good wholesome complexion, a quiet, rather kindly face, quick in his movements, neat in his dress, but fond of wearing a short jacket over his coat, which gives him the look of a pickled or preserved schoolboy. He has retired, they say, from a snug business, with a snug property, suspected by some to be rather more than snug, and entitling him to be called a capitalist, except that this word seems to be equivalent to highway robber in the new gospel of Saint Petroleum. That he is economical in his habits cannot be denied, for he saws and splits his own wood,—for exercise, he says, —and makes his own fires, brushes his own shoes, and, it is whispered, darns a hole in a stocking now and then,—all for exercise, I suppose. Every summer he goes out of town for a few weeks. On a given day of the month a wagon stops at the door and takes up, not his trunks, for he does not indulge in any such extravagance, but the stout brown linen bags in which he

packs the few conveniences he carries with him.

I do not think this worthy and economical personage will have much to do or to say, unless he marries the Landlady. If he does that, he will play a part of some importance, —but I don't feel sure at all. His talk is little in amount, and generally ends in some compact formula condensing much wisdom in few words, as that *a man should not put all his eggs in one basket;* that *there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it;* and one in particular, which he surprised me by saying in pretty good French one day, to the effect that *the inheritance of the world belongs to the phlegmatic people*, which seems to me to have a good deal of truth in it.

The other elderly personage, the old man with iron-grey hair and large round spectacles, sits at my right at table. He is a retired college officer, a man of books and observation, and himself an author. *Magister Artium* is one of his titles on the College Catalogue, and I like best to speak of him as a Master, because he has a certain air of authority which none of us feel inclined to dispute. He has given me a copy of a work of his which seems to me not wanting in suggestiveness, and which I hope I shall be

able to make some use of in my records by-and-by. I said the other day that he had good solid prejudices, which is true, and I like him none the worse for it; but he has also opinions more or less original, valuable, probable, fanciful; fantastic, or whimsical, perhaps, now and then; which he promulgates at table somewhat in the tone of imperial edicts. Another thing I like about him is, that he takes a certain intelligent interest in pretty much everything that interests other people. I asked him the other day what he thought most about in his wide range of studies.

—Sir,—said he,—I take stock in everything that concerns anybody. *Humani nihil*, —you know the rest. But if you ask me what is my specialty, I should say, I applied myself more particularly to the contemplation of the Order of Things.

—A pretty wide subject,—I ventured to suggest.

—Not wide enough, sir,—not wide enough to satisfy the desire of a mind which wants to get at absolute truth, without reference to the empirical arrangements of our particular planet and its environments. I want to subject the formal conditions of space and time to a new analysis, and project a pos-

sible universe outside of the Order of Things. But I have narrowed myself by studying the actual facts of being. By-and-by—by-and-by—perhaps—perhaps. I hope to do some sound thinking in heaven—if I ever get there,—he said seriously, and it seemed to me not irreverently.

—I rather like that,—I said. I think your telescopic people are, on the whole, more satisfactory than your microscopic ones.

[—My left-hand neighbour fidgeted about a little in his chair as I said this. But the young man sitting not far from the landlady, to whom my attention had been attracted by the expression of his eyes, which seemed as if they saw nothing before him, but looked beyond everything, smiled a sort of faint starlight smile, that touched me strangely ; for until that moment he had appeared as if his thoughts were far away, and I had been questioning whether he had lost friends lately, or perhaps had never had them, he seemed so remote from our boarding-house life. I will inquire about him, for he interests me, and I thought he seemed interested as I went on talking.]

—No,—I continued,—I don't want to have the territory of a man's mind fenced in. I

don't want to shut out the mystery of the stars and the awful hollow that holds them. We have done with those hypæthral temples, that were open above to the heavens, but we can have attics and skylights to them. Minds with skylights,—yes,—stop, let us see if we can't get something out of that.

One-story intellects, two-story intellects, three-story intellects with skylights. All fact-collectors, who have no aim beyond their facts, are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalise, using the labours of the fact-collectors as well as their own. Three-story men idealise, imagine, predict; their best illumination comes from above, through the skylight. There are minds with large ground-floors, that can store an infinite amount of knowledge; some librarians, for instance, who know enough of books to help other people, without being able to make much other use of their knowledge, have intellects of this class. Your great working lawyer has two spacious stories; his mind is clear, because his mental floors are large, and he has room to arrange his thoughts so that he can get at them,—facts below, principles above, and all in ordered series; poets are often narrow below, incapable of clear statement, and

with small power of consecutive reasoning, but full of light, if sometimes rather bare of furniture, in the attics.

—The Old Master smiled. I think he suspects himself of a three-story intellect, and I don't feel sure that he isn't right.

—Is it dark meat or white meat you will be helped to ?—said the landlady, addressing the Master.

—Dark meat for me, always,—he answered. Then turning to me, he began one of those monologues of his, such as that which put the Member of the Haouse asleep the other day.

—It 's pretty much the same in men and women and in books and everything, that it is in turkeys and chickens. Why, take your poets, now, say Browning and Tennyson. Don't you think you can say which is the dark-meat and which is the white-meat poet? And so of the people you know; can't you pick out the full-flavoured, coarse-fibred characters from the delicate, fine-fibred ones? And in the same person, don't you know the same two shades in different parts of the character that you find in the wing and thigh of a partridge? I suppose you poets may like white meat best, very pro-

bably; you had rather have a wing than a drumstick, I dare say.

—Why, yes,—said I,—I suppose some of us do. Perhaps it is because a bird flies with his white-fleshed limbs and walks with the dark-fleshed ones. Besides, the wing-muscles are nearer the heart than the leg-muscles.

I thought that sounded mighty pretty, and paused a moment to pat myself on the back, as is my wont when I say something that I think of superior quality. So I lost my innings; for the Master is apt to strike in at the end of a bar, instead of waiting for a rest, if I may borrow a musical phrase. No matter, just at this moment, what he said; but he talked the Member of the Haouse asleep again.

They have a new term nowadays (I am speaking to you, the Reader) for people that do a good deal of talking; they call them "conversationists," or "conversationalists;" talkists, I suppose, would do just as well. It is rather dangerous to get the name of being one of these phenomenal manifestations, as one is expected to say something remarkable every time one opens one's mouth in company. It seems hard not to be able to ask for a piece of bread or a tumbler of water,

without a sensation running round the table, as if one were an electric eel or a torpedo, and couldn't be touched without giving a shock. A fellow isn't all battery, is he? The idea that a Gymnotus can't swallow his worm without a coruscation of animal lightning, is hard on that brilliant but sensational being. Good talk is not a matter of will at all; it depends—you know we are all half-materialists nowadays—on a certain amount of active congestion of the brain, and that comes when it is ready, and not before. I saw a man get up the other day in a pleasant company, and talk away for about five minutes, evidently by a pure effort of will. His person was good, his voice was pleasant, but anybody could see that it was all mechanical labour; he was sparring for wind, as the Hon. John Morrissey, M.C., would express himself. Presently—

Do you—Beloved, I am afraid you are not old enough—but *do* you remember the days of the tin tinder-box, the flint, and steel? Click! click! click!—Ah-h-h! knuckles that time! click! click! CLICK! a spark has taken, and is eating into the black tinder, as a six-year-old eats into a sheet of gingerbread.

Presently, after hammering away for his

five minutes with mere words, the spark of a happy expression took somewhere among the mental combustibles, and then for ten minutes we had a pretty, wandering, scintillating play of eloquent thought, that enlivened, if it did not kindle, all around it. If you want the real philosophy of it, I will give it to you. The chance thought or expression struck the nervous centre of consciousness, as the rowel of a spur stings the flank of a racer. Away through all the telegraphic radiations of the nervous cords flashed the intelligence that the brain was kindling, and must be fed with something or other, or it would burn itself to ashes. And all the great hydraulic engines poured in their scarlet blood, and the fire kindled, and the flame rose; for the blood is a stream that, like burning rock-oil, at once kindles, and is itself the fuel. You can't order these organic processes, any more than a milliner can make a rose. She can make something that *looks* like a rose, more or less, but it takes all the forces of the universe to finish and sweeten that blossom in your buttonhole; and you may be sure that when the orator's brain is in a flame, when the poet's heart is in a tumult, it is something mightier than he and his will that is dealing with

him! As I have looked from one of the northern windows of the street which commands our noble estuary,—the view through which is a picture on an illimitable canvas and a poem in innumerable cantos,—I have sometimes seen a pleasure-boat drifting along, her sail flapping, and she seeming as if she had neither will nor aim. At her stern a man was labouring to bring her head round with an oar, to little purpose, as it seemed to those who watched him pulling and tugging. But all at once the wind of heaven, which had wandered all the way from Florida or from Labrador, it may be, struck full upon the sail, and it swelled and rounded itself, like a white bosom that had burst its bodice, and—

—You are right; it is too true! but how I love these pretty phrases! I am afraid I am becoming an epicure in words, which is a bad thing to be, unless it is dominated by something infinitely better than itself. But there is a fascination in the mere sound of articulated breath: of consonants that resist with the firmness of a maid of honour, or half or wholly yield to the wooing lips; of vowels that flow and murmur each after its kind; the peremptory *b* and *p*, the brittle *k*, the vibrating *r*, the insinuating *s*, the feathery *f*, the velvety *v*, the bell-voiced *m*,

the tranquil broad *a*, the penetrating *e*, the cooing *u*, the emotional *o*, and the beautiful combinations of alternate rock and stream, as it were, that they give to the rippling flow of speech,—there is a fascination in the skilful handling of these, which the great poets and even prose-writers have not disdained to acknowledge and use to recommend their thought. What do you say to this line of Homer as a piece of poetical full-band music? I know you read the Greek characters with perfect ease, but permit me, just for my own satisfaction, to put it into English letters :—

Aiglē pamphanöosa di' aitheros ouranon ike !

as if he should have spoken in our poorer phrase of

Splendour far shining through ether to heaven ascending.

That Greek line, which I do not remember having heard mention of as remarkable, has nearly every consonantal and vowel sound in the language. Try it by the Greek and by the English alphabet; it is a curiosity. Tell me that old Homer did not roll his sightless eyeballs about with delight, as he thundered out these ringing syllables! It seems hard to think of his going round like

a hand-organ man, with such music and such thought as his to earn his bread with. One can't help wishing that Mr. Pugh could have got at him for a single lecture, at least, of the "Star Course," or that he could have appeared in the Music Hall, "for this night only."

—I know I have rambled, but I hope you see that this is a delicate way of letting you into the nature of the individual who is, officially, the principal personage at our table. It would hardly do to describe him directly, you know. But you must not think, because the lightning zigzags, it does not know where to strike.

I shall try to go through the rest of my description of our boarders with as little of digression as is consistent with my nature. I think we have a somewhat exceptional company. Since our landlady has got up in the world, her board has been decidedly a favourite with persons a little above the average in point of intelligence and education. In fact, ever since a boarder of hers, not wholly unknown to the reading public, brought her establishment into notice, it has attracted a considerable number of literary and scientific people, and now and then a politician, like the Member of the House of

Representatives, otherwise called the Great and General Court of the State of Massachusetts. The consequence is, that there is more individuality of character than in a good many similar boarding-houses, where all are business-men, engrossed in the same pursuit of money-making, or all are engaged in politics, and so deeply occupied with the welfare of the community that they can think and talk of little else.

At my left hand sits as singular-looking a human being as I remember seeing outside of a regular museum or tent-show. His black coat shines as if it had been polished; and it has been polished on the wearer's back, no doubt, for the arms and other points of maximum attrition are particularly smooth and bright. Round shoulders, —stooping over some minute labour, I suppose. Very slender limbs, with bends like a grasshopper's; sits a great deal, I presume; looks as if he might straighten them out all of a sudden, and jump instead of walking. Wears goggles very commonly; says it rests his eyes, which he strains in looking at very small objects. Voice has a dry creak, as if made by some small piece of mechanism that wanted oiling. I don't think he is a botanist, for he does not smell of dry herbs,

but carries a camphorated atmosphere about with him, as if to keep the moths from attacking him. I must find out what is his particular interest. One ought to know something about his immediate neighbours at the table. This is what I said to myself, before opening a conversation with him. Everybody in our ward of the city was in a great stir about a certain election, and I thought I might as well begin with that as anything.

—How do you think the vote is likely to go to-morrow?—I said.

—It isn't to-morrow,—he answered,—its next month.

—Next month!—said I.—Why, what election do you mean?

—I mean the election to the Presidency of the Entomological Society, sir,—he creaked, with an air of surprise, as if nobody could by any possibility have been thinking of any other.—Great competition, sir, between the dipterists and the lepidopterists as to which shall get in their candidate. Several close ballotings already; adjourned for a fortnight. Poor concerns both of 'em. Wait till our turn comes.

—I suppose you are an entomologist?—I said with a note of interrogation.

—Not quite so ambitious as that, sir. I should like to put my eyes on the individual entitled to that name! A *society* may call itself an Entomological Society, but the man who arrogates such a broad title as that to himself, in the present state of science, is a pretender, sir, a dilettante, an impostor! No man can be truly called an entomologist, sir; the subject is too vast for any single human intelligence to grasp.

—May I venture to ask,—I said, a little awed by his statement and manner,—what is your special province of study?

I am often spoken of as a Coleopterist,—he said,—but I have no right to so comprehensive a name. The genus Scarabæus is what I have chiefly confined myself to, and ought to have studied exclusively. The beetles proper are quite enough for the labour of one man's life. Call me a Scarabeeist if you will; if I can prove myself worthy of that name, my highest ambition will be more than satisfied.

I think, by way of compromise and convenience, I shall call him the Scarabee. He has come to look wonderfully like those creatures,—the beetles, I mean,—by being so much among them. His room is hung round with cases of them, each impaled on

a pin driven through him, something as they used to bury suicides. These cases take the place for him of pictures and all other ornaments. That Boy steals into his room sometimes, and stares at them with great admiration, and has himself undertaken to form a rival cabinet, chiefly consisting of flies, so far, arranged in ranks superintended by an occasional spider.

The Old Master, who is a bachelor, has a kindly feeling for this little monkey, and those of his kind.

—I like children,—he said to me one day at table,—I like 'em, and I respect 'em. Pretty much all the honest truth-telling there is in the world is done by them. Do you know they play the part in the household which the king's jester, who very often had a mighty long head under his cap and bells, used to play for a monarch? There 's no radical club like a nest of little folks in a nursery. Did you ever watch a baby's fingers? I have, often enough, though I never knew what it was to own one.—The Master paused half a minute or so,—sighed, —perhaps at thinking what he had missed in life,—looked up at me a little vacantly. I saw what was the matter; he had lost the thread of his talk.

—Baby's fingers,—I intercalated.

—Yes, yes; did you ever see how they will poke those wonderful little fingers of theirs into every fold and crack and crevice they can get at? That is their first education, feeling their way into the solid facts of the material world. When they begin to talk, it is the same thing over again in another shape. If there is a crack or a flaw in your answer to their confounded shoulder-hitting questions, they will poke and poke until they have got it gaping just as the baby's fingers have made a rent out of that atom of a hole in his pinafore that your old eyes never took notice of. Then they make such fools of us by copying on a small scale what we do in the grand manner. I wonder if it ever occurs to our dried-up neighbour there to ask himself whether That Boy's collection of flies isn't about as significant in the Order of Things as his own Museum of Beetles?

—I couldn't help thinking that perhaps That Boy's questions about the simpler mysteries of life might have a good deal of the same kind of significance as the Master's inquiries into the Order of Things.

—On my left, beyond my next neighbour the Scarabee, at the end of the table, sits a

person of whom we know little, except that he carries about him more palpable reminiscences of tobacco and the allied sources of comfort than a very sensitive organisation might find acceptable. The Master does not seem to like him much, for some reason or other,—perhaps he has a special aversion to the odour of tobacco. As his forefinger shows a little too distinctly that he uses a pen, I shall compliment him by calling him the Man of Letters, until I find out more about him.

—The Young Girl who sits on my right, next beyond the Master, can hardly be more than nineteen or twenty years old. I wish I could paint her so as to interest others as much as she does me. But she has not a profusion of sunny tresses wreathing a neck of alabaster, and a cheek where the rose and the lily are trying to settle their old quarrel with alternating victory. Her hair is brown, her cheek is delicately pallid, her forehead is too ample for a ball-room beauty's. A single faint line between the eyebrows is the record of long-continued anxious efforts to please in the task she has chosen, or rather which has been forced upon her. It is the same line of anxious and conscientious effort which I saw not long since on the forehead

of one of the sweetest and truest singers who has visited us ; the same which is so striking on the masks of singing women painted upon the façade of our Great Organ,—that Himalayan home of harmony which you are to see and then die, if you don't live where you can see and hear it often. Many deaths have happened in a neighbouring large city from that well-known complaint, *Icterus Invidiosorum*, after returning from a visit to the Music Hall. The invariable symptom of a fatal attack is the *Risus Sardonicus*.—But the Young Girl. She gets her living by writing stories for a newspaper. Every week she furnishes a new story. If her head aches or her heart is heavy, so that she does not come to time with her story, she falls behindhand and has to live on credit. It sounds well enough to say that "she supports herself by her pen," but her lot is a trying one ; it repeats the doom of the Danaides. The *Weekly Bucket* has no bottom, and it is her business to help fill it. Imagine for one moment what it is to tell a tale that must flow on, flow ever, without pausing ; the lover miserable and happy this week, to begin miserable again next week and end as before ; the villain scowling, plotting, punished ; to scowl, plot,

and get punished again in our next ; an endless series of woes and blisses, into each paragraph of which the forlorn artist has to throw all the liveliness, all the emotion, all the graces of style she is mistress of, for the wages of a maid-of-all-work, and no more recognition or thanks from anybody than the apprentice who sets the types for the paper that prints her ever-ending and ever-beginning stories. And yet she has a pretty talent, sensibility, a natural way of writing, an ear for the music of verse, in which she sometimes indulges to vary the dead monotony of everlasting narrative, and a sufficient amount of invention to make her stories readable. I have found my eyes dimmed over them oftener than once, more with thinking about her, perhaps, than about her heroes and heroines. Poor little body ! Poor little mind ! Poor little soul ! She is one of that great company of delicate, intelligent, emotional young creatures, who are waiting, like that sail I spoke of, for some breath of heaven to fill their white bosoms,—love, the right of every woman ; religious emotion, sister of love, with the same passionate eyes, but cold, thin, bloodless hands, —some enthusiasm of humanity or divinity ; and find that life offers them, instead, a seat

on a wooden bench, a chain to fasten them to it, and a heavy oar to pull day and night. We read the Arabian tales and pity the doomed lady who must amuse her lord and master from day to day or have her head cut off; how much better is a mouth without bread to fill it than no mouth at all to fill, because no head? We have all round us a weary-eyed company of Scheherazades! This is one of them, and I may call her by that name when it pleases me to do so.

The next boarder I have to mention is the one who sits between the Young Girl and the Landlady. In a little chamber into which a small thread of sunshine finds its way for half an hour or so every day during a month or six weeks of the spring or autumn, at all other times obliged to content itself with ungilded daylight, lives this boarder, whom, without wronging any others of our company, I may call, as she is very generally called in the household, The Lady. In giving her this name it is not meant that there are no other ladies at our table, or that the handmaids who serve us are not ladies, or to deny the general proposition that everybody who wears the unbifurcated garment is entitled to that appellation. Only this lady has a look and manner

which there is no mistaking as belonging to a person always accustomed to refined and elegant society. Her style is perhaps a little more courtly and gracious than some would like. The language and manner which betray the habitual desire of pleasing, and which add a charm to intercourse in the higher social circles, are liable to be construed by sensitive beings unused to such amenities as an odious condescension when addressed to persons of less consideration than the accused, and as a still more odious —you know the word—when directed to those who are esteemed by the world as considerable personages. But of all this the accused are fortunately wholly unconscious, for there is nothing so entirely natural and unaffected as the highest breeding.

From an aspect of dignified but undisguised economy which showed itself in her dress as well as in her limited quarters, I suspected a story of shipwrecked fortune, and determined to question our Landlady. That worthy woman was delighted to tell the history of her most distinguished boarder. She was, as I had supposed, a gentlewoman whom a change of circumstances had brought down from her high estate.

—Did I know the Goldenrod family?—

Of course I did.—Well, the Lady was first cousin to Mrs. Midas Goldenrod. She had been here in her carriage to call upon her, —not very often.—Were her rich relations kind and helpful to her?—Well,—yes; at least they made her presents now and then. Three or four years ago they sent her a silver waiter, and every Christmas they sent her a bōquet,—it must cost as much as five dollars, the Landlady thought.

—And how did the Lady receive these valuable and useful gifts?

—Every Christmas she got out the silver waiter and borrowed a glass tumbler and filled it with water, and put the bōquet in it and set it on the waiter. It smelt sweet enough and looked pretty for a day or two, but the Landlady thought it wouldn't have hurt 'em if they'd sent a piece of goods for a dress, or at least a pocket-handkercher or two, or something or other that she could 'a' made some kind of use of; but beggars mustn't be choosers; not that she was a beggar, for she'd sooner die than do that if she was in want of a meal of victuals. There was a lady I remember, and she had a little boy and she was a widow, and after she'd buried her husband she was dreadful poor, and she was ashamed to let her little

boy go out in his old shoes, and copper-toed shoes they was too, because his poor little ten—toes—was a coming out of 'em; and what do you think my husband's rich uncle, —well, there now, it was me and my little Benjamin, as he was then, there 's no use in hiding of it,—and what do you think my husband's uncle sent me but a plaster of Paris image of a young woman, that was—well, her appearance wasn't respectable, and I had to take and wrap her up in a towel and poke her right into my closet, and there she stayed till she got her head broke and served her right, for she wasn't fit to show folks. You needn't say anything about what I told you, but the fact is I was desperate poor before I began to support myself taking boarders, and a lone woman without her—her—

The sentence plunged into the gulf of her great remembered sorrow, and was lost to the records of humanity.

—Presently she continued in answer to my questions: The Lady was not very sociable; kept mostly to herself. The Young Girl (our Scheherazade) used to visit her sometimes, and they seemed to like each other, but the Young Girl had not many spare hours for visiting. The Lady never

found fault, but she was very nice in her tastes, and kept everything about her looking as neat and pleasant as she could.

—What did she do?—Why, she read, and she drew pictures, and she did needlework patterns, and played on an old harp she had; the gilt was mostly off, but it sounded very sweet, and she sung to it sometimes, those old songs that used to be in fashion twenty or thirty years ago, with words to 'em that folks could understand.

Did she do anything to help support herself?—The Landlady couldn't say she did, but she thought there was rich people enough that ought to buy the flowers and things she worked and painted.

All this points to the fact that she was bred to be an ornamental rather than what is called a useful member of society. This is all very well as long as fortune favours those who are chosen to be the ornamental personages; but if the golden tide recedes and leaves them stranded, they are more to be pitied than almost any other class. "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed."

I think it is unpopular in this country to talk much about gentlemen and gentlewomen. People are touchy about social distinctions, which no doubt are often invidious

and quite arbitrary and accidental, but which it is impossible to avoid recognising as facts of natural history. Society stratifies itself everywhere, and the stratum which is generally recognised as the uppermost will be apt to have the advantage in easy grace of manner and in unassuming confidence, and consequently be more agreeable in the superficial relations of life. To compare these advantages with the virtues and utilities would be foolish. Much of the noblest work in life is done by ill-dressed, awkward, ungainly persons; but that is no more reason for undervaluing good manners and what we call high-breeding, than the fact that the best part of the sturdy labour of the world is done by men with exceptionable hands is to be urged against the use of Brown Windsor as a preliminary to appearance in cultivated society.

I mean to stand up for this poor lady, whose usefulness in the world is apparently problematical. She seems to me like a picture which has fallen from its gilded frame, and lies, face downward, on the dusty floor. The picture never was as needful as a window or a door, but it was pleasant to see it in its place, and it would be pleasant to see it there again, and I, for one, should be

thankful to have the Lady restored by some turn of fortune to the position from which she has been so cruelly cast down.

—I have asked the Landlady about the young man sitting near her, the same who attracted my attention the other day while I was talking, as I mentioned. He passes most of his time in a private observatory, it appears ; a watcher of the stars. That I suppose gives the peculiar look to his lustrous eyes. The Master knows him, and was pleased to tell me something about him.

You call yourself a Poet,—he said,—and we call you so too, and so you are ; I read your verses and like 'em. But that young man lives in a world beyond the imagination of poets, let me tell you. The daily home of his thought is in illimitable space, hovering between the two eternities. In his contemplations the divisions of time run together, as in the thought of his Maker. With him also,—I say it not profanely,—one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

This account of his occupation increased the interest his look had excited in me, and I have observed him more particularly and found out more about him. Sometimes, after a long night's watching, he looks so pale and

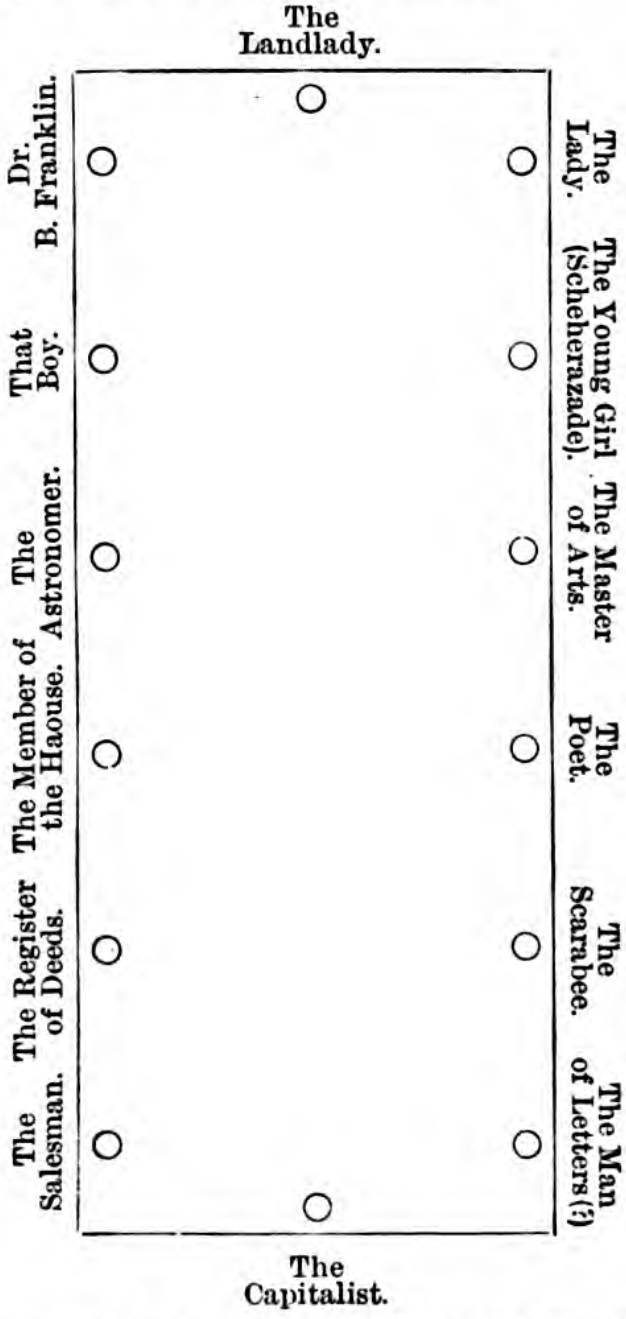
worn, that one would think the cold moonlight had stricken him with some malign effluence, such as it is fabled to send upon those who sleep in it. At such times he seems more like one who has come from a planet farther away from the sun than our earth, than like one of us terrestrial creatures. His home is truly in the heavens, and he practises an asceticism in the cause of science almost comparable to that of Saint Simeon Stylites. Yet they tell me he might live in luxury if he spent on himself what he spends on science. His knowledge is of that strange, remote character, that it seems sometimes almost superhuman. He knows the ridges and chasms of the moon as a surveyor knows a garden-plot he has measured. He watches the snows that gather around the poles of Mars; he is on the lookout for the expected comet at the moment when its faint stain of diffused light first shows itself; he analyses the ray that comes from the sun's photosphere; he measures the rings of Saturn; he counts his asteroids to see that none are missing, as the shepherd counts the sheep in his flock. A strange unearthly being; lonely, dwelling far apart from the thoughts and cares of the planet on which he lives,—an enthusiast who gives his life to

knowledge ; a student of antiquity, to whom the records of the geologist are modern pages in the great volume of being, and the pyramids a memorandum of yesterday, as the eclipse or occultation that is to take place thousands of years hence is an event of to-morrow in the diary without beginning and without end where he enters the aspect of the passing moment as it is read on the celestial dial.

In very marked contrast with this young man is the something more than middle-aged Register of Deeds, a rusty, sallow, smoke-dried looking personage, who belongs to this earth as exclusively as the other belongs to the firmament. His movements are as mechanical as those of a pendulum,—to the office, where he changes his coat and plunges into messuages and building-lots ; then, after changing his coat again, back to our table, and so, day by day, the dust of years gradually gathering around him as it does on the old folios that fill the shelves all round the great cemetery of past transactions of which he is the sexton.

Of the Salesman who sits next him, nothing need be said except that he is good-looking, rosy, well-dressed, and of very polite manners, only a little more brisk than the approved style of carriage permits,—as

one in the habit of springing with a certain alacrity at the call of a customer.



You would like to see, I don't doubt, how

we sit at the table, and I will help you by means of a diagram which shows the present arrangement of our seats.

Our young Scheherazade varies her prose stories now and then, as I told you, with compositions in verse, one or two of which she has let me look over. Here is one of them, which she allowed me to copy. It is from a story of hers, *The Sun-Worshipper's Daughter*, which you may find in the periodical before mentioned, to which she is a contributor, if you can lay your hand upon a file of it. I think our Scheherazade has never had a lover in human shape, or she would not play so lightly with the firebrands of the great passion.

FANTASIA.

Kiss mine eyelids, beauteous Morn,
Blushing into life new-born !
Lend me violets for my hair,
And thy russet robe to wear,
And thy ring of rosiest hue
Set in drops of diamond dew !

Kiss my cheek, thou noontide ray,
From my Love so far away !
Let thy splendour streaming down
Turn its pallid lilies brown,

Till its darkening shades reveal
Where his passion pressed its seal.

Kiss my lips, thou Lord of light,
Kiss my lips a soft good-night!
Westward sinks thy golden car;
Leave me but the evening star,
And my solace that shall be,
Borrowing all its light from thee!

III.

THE old Master was talking about a concert he had been to hear.

—I don't like your chopped music any way. That woman—she had more sense in her little finger than forty medical societies—Florence Nightingale—says that the music you *pour* out is good for sick folks, and the music you *pound* out isn't. Not that exactly, but something like it. I have been to hear some music-pounding. It was a young woman, with as many white muslin flounces round her as the planet Saturn has rings, that did it. She gave the music-stool a twirl or two and fluffed down on to it like a whirl of soap-suds in a hand-basin. Then she pushed up her cuffs as if she was going to fight for the champion's belt. Then she worked her wrists and her hands, to limber 'em, I suppose, and spread out her fingers till they looked as though they would pretty much cover the key-board, from the growling end to the little squeaky one. Then those two hands of hers made a jump at the

keys as if they were a couple of tigers coming down on a flock of black and white sheep, and the piano gave a great howl as if its tail had been trod on. Dead stop,—so still you could hear your hair growing. Then another jump, and another howl, as if the piano had two tails, and you had trod on both of 'em at once, and then a grand clatter and scramble and string of jumps, up and down, back and forward, one hand over the other, like a stampede of rats and mice more than like anything I call music. I like to hear a woman sing, and I like to hear a fiddle sing, but these noises they hammer out of their wood and ivory anvils—don't talk to me, I know the difference between a bullfrog and a woodthrush and—

Pop ! went a small piece of artillery such as is made of a stick of elder and carries a pellet of very moderate consistency. That Boy was in his seat and looking demure enough, but there could be no question that he was the artillery-man who had discharged the missile. The aim was not a bad one, for it took the Master full in the forehead, and had the effect of checking the flow of his eloquence. How the little monkey had learned to time his interruptions I do not know, but I have observed more than once

before this, that the popgun would go off just at the moment when some one of the company was getting too energetic or prolix. The boy isn't old enough to judge for himself when to intervene to change the order of conversation; no, of course he isn't. Somebody.—Who is it? I suspect Dr. B. Franklin. He looks too knowing. There is certainly a trick somewhere. Why, a day or two ago I was myself discoursing, with considerable effect, as I thought, on some of the new aspects of humanity, when I was struck full on the cheek by one of these little pellets, and there was such a confounded laugh that I had to wind up and leave off with a preposition instead of a good mouthful of polysyllables. I have watched our young Doctor, however, and have been entirely unable to detect any signs of communication between him and this audacious child, who is like to become a power among us, for that popgun is fatal to any talker who is hit by its pellet. I have suspected a foot under the table as the prompter, but I have been unable to detect the slightest movement, or look as if he were making one, on the part of Dr. Benjamin Franklin. I cannot help thinking of the *flappers* in Swift's Laputa, only they gave one a hint

when to speak and another a hint to listen, whereas the popgun says unmistakably, "Shut up!"

I should be sorry to lose my confidence in Dr. B. Franklin, who seems very much devoted to his business, and whom I mean to consult about some small symptoms I have had lately. Perhaps it is coming to a new boarding-house. The young people who come into Paris from the provinces are very apt —so I have been told by one that knows—to have an attack of typhoid fever a few weeks or months after their arrival. I have not been long enough at this table to get well acclimated; perhaps that is it. Boarding-House Fever. Something like horse-ail, very likely,—horses get it, you know, when they are brought to city stables. A little "off my feed," as Hiram Woodruff would say. A queer discoloration about my forehead. Query, a bump? Cannot remember any. Might have got it against bedpost or something while asleep. Very unpleasant to look so. I wonder how my portrait would look, if anybody should take it now! I hope not quite so badly as one I saw the other day, which I took for the end man of the Ethiopian Serenaders, or some traveller who had been exploring the sources of the

Niger, until I read the name at the bottom and found it was a face I knew as well as my own.

I must consult somebody, and it is nothing more than fair to give our young Doctor a chance. Here goes for Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

The young Doctor has a very small office and a very large sign, with a transparency at night big enough for an oyster-shop. These young doctors are particularly strong, as I understand, on what they call *diagnosis*, —an excellent branch of the healing art, full of satisfaction to the curious practitioner, who likes to give the right Latin name to one's complaint; not quite so satisfactory to the patient, as it is not so very much pleasanter to be bitten by a dog with a collar round his neck telling you that he is called *Snap* or *Teaser*, than by a dog without a collar. Sometimes, in fact, one would a little rather not know the exact name of his complaint, as if he does he is pretty sure to look it out in a medical dictionary, and then if he reads, *This terrible disease is attended with vast suffering, and is inevitably mortal*, or any such statement, it is apt to affect him unpleasantly.

I confess to a little shakiness when I

knocked at Dr. Benjamin's office door. "Come in!" exclaimed Dr. B. F. in tones that sounded ominous and sepulchral. And I went in.

I don't believe the chambers of the Inquisition ever presented a more alarming array of implements for extracting a confession, than our young Doctor's office did of instruments to make nature tell what was the matter with a poor body.

There were Ophthalmoscopes and Rhinoscopes and Otoscopes and Laryngoscopes and Stethoscopes; and Thermometers and Spirometers and Dynamometers and Sphygmometers and Pleximeters; and Probes and Probangs and all sorts of frightful inquisitive exploring contrivances; and scales to weigh you in, and tests and balances and pumps and electro-magnets and magneto-electric machines; in short, apparatus for doing everything but turn you inside out.

Dr. Benjamin set me down before his one window and began looking at me with such a superhuman air of sagacity, that I felt like one of those open-breasted clocks which make no secret of their inside arrangements, and almost thought he could see through me as one sees through a shrimp or a jelly-fish. First he looked at the place inculpated,

which had a sort of greenish-brown colour, with his naked eyes, with much corrugation of forehead and fearful concentration of attention; then through a pocket-glass which he carried. Then he drew back a space, for a perspective view. Then he made me put out my tongue and laid a slip of blue paper on it, which turned red and scared me a little. Next he took my wrist; but instead of counting my pulse in the old-fashioned way, he fastened a machine to it that marked all the beats on a sheet of paper,—for all the world like a scale of the heights of mountains, say from Mount Tom up to Chimborazo and then down again, and up again, and so on. In the meantime he asked me all sorts of questions about myself and all my relatives, whether we had been subject to this and that malady, until I felt as if we must some of us have had more or less of them, and could not feel quite sure whether Elephantiasis and Beriberi and Progressive Locomotor Ataxy did not run in the family.

After all this overhauling of myself and my history, he paused and looked puzzled. Something was suggested about what he called an "exploratory puncture." This I at once declined, with thanks. Suddenly a

thought struck him. He looked still more closely at the discoloration I have spoken of.

—Looks like—I declare it reminds me of —very rare! very curious! It would be strange if my first case—of this kind—should be one of our boarders!

What kind of a case do you call it?—I said, with a sort of feeling that he could inflict a severe or a light malady on me, as if he were a judge passing sentence.

—The colour reminds me,—said Dr. B. Franklin,—of what I have seen in a case of Addison's Disease, *Morbus Addisonii.*

—But my habits are quite regular,—I said; for I remembered that the distinguished essayist was too fond of his brandy and water, and I confess that the thought was not pleasant to me of following Dr. Johnson's advice, with the slight variation of giving my days and my nights to trying on the favourite maladies of Addison.

—Temperance people are subject to it!—exclaimed Dr. Benjamin, almost exultingly, I thought.

—But I had the impression that the author of the *Spectator* was afflicted with a dropsy, or some such inflated malady, to which persons of sedentary and bibacious habits are

liable. [A literary swell,—I thought to myself, but I did not say it. I felt too serious.]

—The author of the *Spectator!*—cried out Dr. Benjamin,—I mean the celebrated Dr. Addison, inventor, I would say discoverer, of the wonderful new disease called after him.

—And what may this valuable invention or discovery consist in?—I asked, for I was curious to know the nature of the gift which this benefactor of the race had bestowed upon us.

—A most interesting affection, and rare, too. Allow me to look closely at that discoloration once more for a moment. *Cutis æenea*, bronze skin, they call it sometimes—extraordinary pigmentation—a little more to the light, if you please—ah! now I get the bronze colouring admirably, beautifully! Would you have any objection to showing your case to the Societies of Medical Improvement and Medical Observation?

[—My case!—O dear!] May I ask if any vital organ is commonly involved in this interesting complaint?—I said, faintly.

—Well, sir,—the young Doctor replied,—there is an organ which is—sometimes—a little—touched, I may say; a very curious

and—ingenious little organ or pair of organs. Did you ever hear of the *Capsulæ Suprarenales.*

—No,—said I,—is it a mortal complaint? —I ought to have known better than to ask such a question, but I was getting nervous, and thinking about all sorts of horrid maladies people are liable to, with horrid names to match.

—It isn't a complaint,—I mean they are not a complaint,—they are two small organs, as I said, inside of you, and nobody knows what is the use of them. The most curious thing is that when anything is the matter with them you turn of the colour of bronze. After all, I didn't mean to say that I believed it was *Morbus Addisonii;* I only thought of that when I saw the discoloration.

So he gave me a recipe, which I took care to put where it could do no hurt to anybody, and I paid him his fee (which he took with the air of a man in the receipt of a great income) and said Good morning.

—What in the name of a thousand diablos is the reason these confounded doctors will mention their guesses about "a case," as they call it, and all its conceivable possibili-

ties, out loud before their patients? I don't suppose there is anything in all this nonsense about "Addison's Disease," but I wish he hadn't spoken of that very interesting ailment, and I should feel a little easier if that discoloration would leave my forehead. I will ask the Landlady about it,—these old women often know more than the young doctors just come home with long names for everything they don't know how to cure. But the name of this complaint sets me thinking. Bronzed skin! What an odd idea! Wonder if it spreads all over one. That would be picturesque and pleasant, now, wouldn't it? To be made a living statue of,—nothing to do but strike an attitude. Arm up—so—like the one in the Garden. John of Bologna's Mercury—thus—on one foot. Needy knife-grinder in the Tribune at Florence. No, not "needy," come to think of it. Marcus Aurelius on horseback. Query. Are horses subject to the *Morbus Addisonii?* Advertise for a bronzed living horse—Lyceum invitations and engagements—bronze *versus* brass.—What 's the use in being frightened? Bet it was a bump. Pretty certain I bumped my forehead against something. Never heard of a bronzed man before. Have seen white

men, black men, red men, yellow men, two or three blue men, stained with doctor's stuff; some green ones,—from the country; but never a bronzed man. Poh, poh! Sure it was a bump. Ask Landlady to look at it.

—Landlady did look at it. Said it was a bump, and no mistake. Recommended a piece of brown paper dipped in vinegar. Made the house smell as if it was in quarantine for the plague from Smyrna, but discoloration soon disappeared,—so I did not become a bronzed man after all,—hope I never shall while I am alive. Shouldn't mind being done in bronze after I was dead. On second thoughts not so clear about it, remembering how some of them look that we have got stuck up in public; think I had rather go down to posterity in an Ethiopian Minstrel portrait, like our friend's the other day.

—You were kind enough to say, I remarked to the Master, that you read my poems and liked them. Perhaps you would be good enough to tell me what it is you like about them?

The Master harpooned a breakfast-roll and held it up before me.—Will you tell me—he said—why you like that breakfast-roll?—I suppose he thought that would stop

my mouth in two senses. But he was mistaken.

—To be sure I will,—said I.—First, I like its mechanical consistency; brittle externally,—that is for the teeth, which want resistance to be overcome; soft, spongy, well tempered and flavoured internally,—that is for the organ of taste; wholesome, nutritious,—that is for the internal surfaces and the system generally.

—Good!—said the Master, and laughed a hearty terrestrial laugh.

I hope he will carry that faculty of an honest laugh with him wherever he goes,—why shouldn't he? The "order of things," as he calls it, from which hilarity was excluded, would be crippled and one-sided enough. I don't believe the human gamut will be cheated of a single note after men have done breathing this fatal atmospheric mixture and die into the ether of immortality!

I didn't *say* all that; if I had said it, it would have brought a pellet from the popgun, I feel quite certain.

The Master went on after he had had out his laugh.

—There is one thing I am His Imperial Majesty about, and that is my likes and

dislikes. What if I do like your verses,—you can't help yourself. I don't doubt somebody or other hates 'em and hates you and everything you do, or ever did, or ever can do. He is all right; there is nothing you or I like that somebody doesn't hate. Was there ever anything wholesome that was not poison to somebody? If you hate honey or cheese, or the products of the dairy,—I know a family a good many of whose members can't touch milk, butter, cheese, and the like,—why, say so, but don't find fault with the bees and the cows. Some are afraid of roses, and I have known those that thought a pond-lily a disagreeable neighbour. That Boy will give you the metaphysics of likes and dislikes. Look here,—you young philosopher over there,—do you like candy?

That Boy.—You bet! Give me a stick and see if I don't.

And can you tell me why you like candy?

That Boy.—Because I do.

—There, now, that is the whole matter in a nutshell. Why do your teeth like crackling crust, and your organs of taste like spongy crumb, and your digestive contrivances take kindly to bread rather than toadstools—

That Boy (thinking he was still being catechised).—Because they do.

Whereupon the Landlady said, Sh ! and the Young Girl laughed, and the Lady smiled ; and Dr. Ben. Franklin kicked him, moderately, under the table, and the Astronomer looked up at the ceiling to see what had happened, and the member of the Haouse cried, Order ! Order ! and the Salesman said, Shut up, cash-boy ! and the rest of the boarders kept on feeding ; except the Master, who looked very hard but half approvingly at the small intruder, who had come about as nearly right as most professors would have done.

— You poets,—the Master said after this excitement had calmed down,—you poets have one thing about you that is odd. You talk about everything as if you knew more about it than the people whose business it is to know *all* about it. I suppose you do a little of what we teachers used to call "cramming" now and then ?

—If you like your breakfast you mustn't ask the cook too many questions.—I answered.

—Oh, come now, don't be afraid of letting out your secrets. I have a notion I can tell a poet that gets himself up just as I can tell a make-believe old man on the stage by

the line where the grey skull-cap joins the smooth forehead of the young fellow of seventy. You 'll confess to a rhyming dictionary anyhow, won't you ?

—I would as lief use that as any other dictionary, but I don't want it. When a word comes up fit to end a line with I can *feel* all the rhymes in the language fit to go with it without naming them. I have tried them all so many times, I know all the polygamous words and all the monogamous ones, and all the unmarrying ones,—the whole lot that have no mates,—as soon as I hear their names called. Sometimes I run over a string of rhymes, but generally speaking it is strange what a short list it is of those that are good for anything. That is the pitiful side of all rhymed verse. Take two such words as *home* and *world*. What can you do with *chrome* or *loam* or *gnome* or *tome ?* You have *dome*, *foam*, and *roam*, and not much more to use in your *pome*, as some of our fellow-countrymen call it. As for *world*, you know that in all human probability somebody or something will be *hurled* into it or out of it ; its clouds may be *furled* or its grass *impearled ;* possibly something may be *whirled*, or *curled*, or have *swirled*,—one of Leigh Hunt's words, which with *lush*, one of Keats's, is

an important part of the stock in trade of some dealers in rhyme.

—And how much do you versifiers know of all those arts and sciences you refer to as if you were as familiar with them as a cobbler is with his wax and lapstone?

—Enough not to make too many mistakes. The best way is to ask some expert before one risks himself very far in illustrations from a branch he does not know much about. Suppose, for instance, I wanted to use the *double star* to illustrate anything, say the relation of two human souls to each other, what would I do? Why, I would ask our young friend there to let me look at one of those loving celestial pairs through his telescope, and I don't doubt he 'd let me do so, and tell me their names and all I wanted to know about them.

—I should be most happy to show any of the double stars or whatever else there might be to see in the heavens to any of our friends at this table,—the young man said, so cordially and kindly that it was a real invitation.

—Show us the man in the moon,—said That Boy.

—I should so like to see a double star!—said Scheherazade, with a very pretty air of smiling modesty.

—Will you go, if we make up a party?—I asked the Master.

—A cold in the head lasts me from three to five days,—answered the Master.—I am not so very fond of being out in the dew like Nebuchadnezzar: that will do for you young folks.

—I suppose I must be one of the young folks,—not so young as our Scheherazade, nor so old as the Capitalist,—young enough at any rate to want to be of the party. So we agreed that on some fair night when the Astronomer should tell us that there was to be a fine show in the skies, we would make up a party and go to the Observatory. I asked the Scarabee whether he would not like to make one of us.

—Out of the question, sir, out of the question. I am altogether too much occupied with an important scientific investigation to devote any considerable part of an evening to star-gazing.

—Oh, indeed,— said I,—and may I venture to ask on what particular point you are engaged just at present?

—Certainly, sir, you may. It is, I suppose, as difficult and important a matter to be investigated as often comes before a student of natural history. I wish to settle the

point once for all whether the *Pediculus Melittæ* is or is not the larva of *Meloe.*

[—Now isn't this the drollest world to live in that one could imagine, short of being in a fit of *delirium tremens?* Here is a fellow-creature of mine and yours who is asked to see all the glories of the firmament brought close to him, and he is too busy with a little unmentionable parasite that infests the bristly surface of a bee to spare an hour or two of a single evening for the splendours of the universe! I must get a peep through that microscope of his and see the *pediculus* which occupies a larger space in his mental vision than the midnight march of the solar systems.—The creature, the human one, I mean, interests me.]

—I am very curious,—I said,—about that *pediculus melittæ,*—(just as if I knew a good deal about the little wretch and wanted to know more, whereas I had never heard him spoken of before, to my knowledge),—could you let me have a sight of him in your microscope?

—You ought to have seen the way in which the poor dried-up little Scarabee turned towards me. His eyes took on a really human look, and I almost thought those antennæ-like arms of his would have stretched themselves out and embraced me.

I don't believe any of the boarders had ever shown any interest in him, except the little monkey of a Boy, since he had been in the house. It is not strange; he had not seemed to me much like a human being, until all at once I touched the one point where his vitality had concentrated itself, and he stood revealed a man and a brother.

—Come in,—said he,—come in, right after breakfast, and you shall see the animal that has convulsed the entomological world with questions as to his nature and origin.

—So I went into the Scarabee's parlour, lodging-room, study, laboratory, and museum,—a single apartment applied to these various uses, you understand.

—I wish I had time to have you show me all your treasures,—I said,—but I am afraid I shall hardly be able to do more than look at the bee-parasite. But what a superb butterfly you have in that case!

—O yes, yes, well enough,—came from South America with the beetle there; look at *him!* These *Lepidoptera* are for children to play with, pretty to look at, so some think. Give me the *Coleoptera*, and the kings of the *Coleoptera* are the beetles! *Lepidoptera* and *Neuroptera* for little folks; *Coleoptera* for men, sir!

—The particular beetle he showed me in the case with the magnificent butterfly was an odious black wretch that one would say, Ugh ! at, and kick out of his path, if he did not serve him worse than that. But he looked at it as a coin-collector would look at a Pescennius Niger, if the coins of that Emperor are as scarce as they used to be when I was collecting halfpenny tokens and pine-tree shillings and battered bits of Roman brass with the head of Gallienus or some such old fellow on them.

—A beauty !—he exclaimed,—and the only specimen of the kind in this country, to the best of my belief. A unique, sir, and there is a pleasure in exclusive possession. Not another beetle like that short of South America, sir.

—I was glad to hear that there were no more like it in this neighbourhood, the present supply of cockroaches answering every purpose, so far as I am concerned, that such an animal as this would be likely to serve.

—Here are my bee-parasites,—said the Scarabee, showing me a box full of glass slides, each with a specimen ready mounted for the microscope. I was most struck with one little beast flattened out like a turtle, semi-transparent, six-legged, as I remember

him, and every leg terminated by a single claw hooked like a lion's and as formidable for the size of the creature as that of the royal beast.

—Lives on a bumblebee, does he ?—I said.

—That 's the way I call it. Bumblebee or bumblybee and huckleberry. Humblebee and whortleberry for people that say Woos-ses-ter and Nor-wich.

The Scarabee did not smile ; he took no interest in trivial matters like this.

—[Lives on a bumblebee. When you come to think of it, he must lead a pleasant kind of life. Sails through the air without the trouble of flying. Free pass everywhere that the bee goes. No fear of being dislodged ; look at those six grappling-hooks. Helps himself to such juices of the bee as he likes best ; the bee feeds on the choicest vegetable nectars, and he feeds on the bee. Lives either in the air or in the perfumed pavilion of the fairest and sweetest flowers. Think what tents the hollyhocks and the great lilies spread for him ! And wherever he travels a band of music goes with him, for this hum which wanders by us is doubtless to him a vast and inspiring strain of melody.]

—I thought all this, while the Scarabee supposed I was studying the minute characters of the enigmatical specimen.

—I know what I consider your *pediculus melittæ*,—I said at length.

Do you think it really the larva of *meloe?*

—Oh, I don't know much about that, but I think he is the best cared for, on the whole, of any animal that I know of; and if I wasn't a man I believe I had rather be that little sybarite than anything that feasts at the board of nature.

—The question is, whether he is the larva of *meloe*,—the Scarabee said, as if he had not heard a word of what I had just been saying.—If I live a few years longer it shall be settled, sir; and if my epitaph can say honestly that I settled it, I shall be willing to trust my posthumous fame to that achievement.

I said good morning to the specialist, and went off feeling not only kindly, but respectfully towards him. He is an enthusiast, at any rate, as "earnest" a man as any philanthropic reformer who, having passed his life in worrying people out of their misdoings into good behaviour, comes at last to a state in which he is never contented except when he is making somebody uncomfortable. He does certainly know one thing well, very likely better than anybody in the world.

I find myself somewhat singularly placed

at our table between a minute philosopher who has concentrated all his faculties on a single subject, and my friend who finds the present universe too restricted for his intelligence. I would not give much to hear what the Scarabee says about the old Master, for he does not pretend to form a judgment of anything but beetles, but I should like to hear what the Master has to say about the Scarabee. I waited after breakfast until he had gone, and then asked the Master what he could make of our dried-up friend.

—Well,—he said,—I am hospitable enough in my feelings to him and all his tribe. These specialists are the coral-insects that build up a reef. By-and-by it will be an island, and for aught we know may grow into a continent. But I don't want to be a coral-insect myself. I had rather be a voyager that visits all the reefs and islands the creatures build, and sails over the seas where they have as yet built up nothing. I am a little afraid that science is breeding us down too fast into coral-insects. A man like Newton or Leibnitz or Haller used to paint a picture of outward or inward nature with a free hand, and stand back and look at it as a whole and feel like an archangel; but nowadays you have a Society, and they

come together and make a great mosaic, each man bringing his little bit and sticking it in its place, but so taken up with his petty fragment that he never thinks of looking at the picture the little bits make when they are put together. You can't get any talk out of these specialists away from their own subjects, any more than you can get help from a policeman outside of his own beat.

—Yes,—said I,—but why shouldn't we always set a man talking about the thing he knows best?

—No doubt, no doubt, if you meet him once; but what are you going to do with him if you meet him every day? I travel with a man, and we want to make change very often in paying bills. But every time I ask him to change a pistareen, or give me two fo'pencehappennies for a ninepence, or help me to make out two and thrippence (mark the old Master's archaisms about the currency), what does the fellow do but put his hand in his pocket and pull out an old Roman coin; I have no change, says he, but this assarion of Diocletian. Mighty deal of good that 'll do me!

—It isn't quite so handy as a few specimens of the modern currency would be, but you can pump him on numismatics.

—To be sure, to be sure. I've pumped a thousand men of all they could teach me, or at least all I could learn from 'em; and if it comes to that, I never saw the man that couldn't teach me something. I can get along with everybody in his place, though I think the place of some of my friends is over there among the feeble-minded pupils, and I don't believe there 's one of *them* I couldn't go to school to for half an hour and be the wiser for it. But people you talk with every day have got to have feeders for their minds, as much as the stream that turns the mill-wheel has. It isn't one little rill that 's going to keep the float-boards turning round. Take a dozen of the brightest men you can find in the brightest city, wherever that may be,—perhaps you and I think we know, —and let 'em come together once a month, and you 'll find out in the course of a year or two the ones that have feeders from all the hill-sides. Your common talkers, that exchange the gossip of the day, have no wheel in particular to turn, and the wash of the rain as it runs down the street is enough for them.

—Do you mean you can always see the sources from which a man fills his mind,—his feeders, as you call them?

—I don't go quite so far as that,—the Master said.—I 've seen men whose minds were always overflowing, and yet they didn't read much nor go much into the world. Sometimes you 'll find a bit of a pond-hole in a pasture, and you 'll plunge your walking-stick into it, and think you are going to touch the bottom. But you find you are mistaken. Some of these little stagnant pond-holes are a good deal deeper than you think; you may tie a stone to a bed-cord and not get soundings in some of 'em. The country boys will tell you they have no bottom, but that only means that they are mighty deep; and so a good many stagnant, stupid-seeming people are a great deal deeper than the length of your intellectual walking-stick, I can tell you. There are hidden springs that keep the little pond-holes full when the mountain-brooks are all dried up. You poets ought to know that.

—I can't help thinking you are more tolerant towards the specialists than I thought at first, by the way you seemed to look at our dried-up neighbour and his small pursuits.

—I don't like the word *tolerant*,—the Master said.— As long as the Lord can tolerate me I think I can stand my fellow-

creatures. Philosophically, I love 'em all; empirically, I don't think I am very fond of all of 'em. It depends on how you look at a man or a woman. Come here, Youngster, will you?—he said to That Boy.

The Boy was trying to catch a blue-bottle to add to his collection, and was indisposed to give up the chase; but he presently saw that the Master had taken out a small coin and laid it on the table, and felt himself drawn in that direction.

Read that,—said the Master.

U-n-i-ni—United States of America 5 cents.

The Master turned the coin over. Now read that.

In God is our t-r-u-s-t—trust. 1869.

—Is that the same piece of money as the other one?

—There ain't any other one,—said the Boy,—there ain't but one, but it 's got two sides to it with different reading.

—That 's it, that 's it,—said the Master, —two sides to everybody, as there are to that piece of money. I've seen an old woman that wouldn't fetch five cents if you should put her up for sale at public auction; and yet come to read the other side of her, she had a trust in God Almighty that was

like the bow anchor of a three-decker. It 's faith in something and enthusiasm for something that makes a life worth looking at. I don't think your ant-eating specialist, with his sharp nose and pin-head eyes, is the best everyday companion; but any man who knows one thing well is worth listening to for once; and if you are of the large-brained variety of the race, and want to fill out your programme of the order of things in a systematic and exhaustive way, and get all the half-notes and flats and sharps of humanity into your scale, you 'd a great deal better shut your front door and open your two side ones when you come across a fellow that has made a real business of doing anything.

—That Boy stood all this time looking hard at the five-cent piece.

—Take it,—said the Master, with a good-natured smile.

—The Boy made a snatch at it and was off for the purpose of investing it.

—A child naturally snaps at a thing as a dog does at his meat,—said the Master.—If you think of it, we 've all been quadrupeds. A child that can only crawl has all the instincts of a four-footed beast. It carries things in its mouth just as cats and dogs do. I 've seen the little brutes do it over and

over again. I suppose a good many children would stay quadrupeds all their lives, if they didn't learn the trick of walking on their hind legs from seeing all the grown people walking in that way.

—Do you accept Mr. Darwin's notions about the origin of the race?—said I.

The Master looked at me with that twinkle in his eye which means that he is going to parry a question.

—Better stick to Blair's Chronology; that settles it. Adam and Eve, created Friday, October 28th, B.C. 4004. You 've been in a ship for a good while, and here comes Mr. Darwin on deck with an armful of sticks and says, "Let 's build a raft, and trust ourselves to that."

If your ship springs a leak, what *would* you do?

He looked me straight in the eyes for about half a minute.—If I heard the pumps going, I 'd look and see whether they were gaining on the leak or not. If they were gaining I 'd stay where I was.—Go and find out what 's the matter with that young woman.

I had noticed that the Young Girl—the story-writer, our Scheherazade, as I called her—looked as if she had been crying or

lying awake half the night. I found on asking her,—for she is an honest little body, and is disposed to be confidential with me for some reason or other,—that she had been doing both.

—And what was the matter now, I questioned her in a semi-paternal kind of way, as soon as I got a chance for a few quiet words with her.

She was engaged to write a serial story, it seems, and had only got as far as the second number, and some critic had been jumping upon it, she said, and grinding his heel into it, till she couldn't bear to look at it. He said she did not write half so well as half a dozen other young women. She didn't write half so well as she used to write herself. She hadn't any characters and she hadn't any incidents. Then he went to work to show how her story was coming out —trying to anticipate everything she could make of it, so that her readers should have nothing to look forward to, and he should have credit for his sagacity in guessing, which was nothing so very wonderful, she seemed to think. Things she had merely hinted and left the reader to infer, he told right out in the bluntest and coarsest way. It had taken all the life out of her, she said.

It was just as if at a dinner-party one of the guests should take a spoonful of soup and get up and say to the company, "Poor stuff, poor stuff; you won't get anything better; let 's go somewhere else where things are fit to eat.

What do you read such things for, my dear?—said I.

The film glistened in her eyes at the strange sound of those two soft words; she had not heard such very often, I am afraid.

—I know I am a foolish creature to read them,—she answered,—but I can't help it; somebody always sends me everything that will make me wretched to read, and so I sit down and read it, and ache all over for my pains, and lie awake all night.

—She smiled faintly as she said this, for she saw the sub-ridiculous side of it, but the film glittered still in her eyes. There are a good many real miseries in life that we cannot help smiling at, but they are the smiles that make wrinkles and not dimples. "Somebody always sends her everything that will make her wretched." Who can those creatures be who cut out the offensive paragraph and send it anonymously to us, who mail the newspaper which has the article we had much better not have seen,

who take care that we shall know everything which can, by any possibility, help to make us discontented with ourselves and a little less light-hearted than we were before we had been fools enough to open their incendiary packages? I don't like to say it to myself, but I cannot help suspecting, in this instance, the doubtful-looking personage who sits on my left beyond the Scarabee. I have some reason to think that he has made advances to the young girl which were not favourably received, to state the case in moderate terms, and it may be that he is taking his revenge in cutting up the poor girl's story. I know this very well, that some personal pique or favouritism is at the bottom of half the praise and dispraise which pretend to be so very ingenuous and discriminating. (Of course I have been thinking all this time, and telling you what I thought.)

—What you want is encouragement, my dear,—said I,—I know that as well as you. I don't think the fellows that write such criticisms as you tell me of want to correct your faults. I don't mean to say that you can learn nothing from them, because they are not all fools by any means, and they will often pick out your weak points with a

malignant sagacity, as a pettifogging lawyer will frequently find a real flaw in trying to get at everything he can quibble about. But is there nobody who will praise you generously when you do well,—nobody that will lend you a hand now while you want it, —or must they all wait until you have made yourself a name among strangers, and then all at once find out that you have something in you?

Oh,—said the girl, and the bright film gathered too fast for her young eyes to hold much longer,—I ought not to be ungrateful! I have found the kindest friend in the world. Have you ever heard the Lady—the one that I sit next to at the table — say anything about me?

I have not really made her acquaintance, I said. She seems to me a little distant in her manners, and I have respected her pretty evident liking for keeping mostly to herself.

—Oh, but when you once do know her! I don't believe I could write stories all the time as I do, if she didn't ask me up to her chamber, and let me read them to her. Do you know I can make her laugh and cry, reading my poor stories? And sometimes, when I feel as if I had written out all there

is in me, and want to lie down and go to sleep and never wake up except in a world where there are no weekly papers,—when everything goes wrong, like a car off the track,—she takes hold and sets me on the rails again all right.

—How does she go to work to help you?

—Why, she *listens* to my stories, to begin with, as if she really liked to hear them. And then you know I am dreadfully troubled now and then with some of my characters, and can't think how to get rid of them. And she 'll say, perhaps, Don't shoot your villain this time, you 've shot three or four already in the last six weeks; let his mare stumble and throw him and break his neck. Or she 'll give me a hint about some new way for my lover to make a declaration. She must have had a good many offers, it 's my belief, for she has told me a dozen different ways for me to use in my stories. And whenever I read a story to her, she always laughs and cries in the right places; and that 's such a comfort, for there are some people that think everything pitiable is so funny, and will burst out laughing when poor Rip Van Winkle—you 've seen Mr. Jefferson, haven't you?—is breaking your heart for you if you have one. Sometimes

she takes a poem I have written and reads it to me so beautifully, that I fall in love with it, and sometimes she sets my verses to music and sings them to me.

—You have a laugh together sometimes, do you?

—Indeed we do. I write for what they call the "Comic Department" of the paper now and then. If I did not get so tired of story-telling, I suppose I should be gayer than I am; but as it is, we two get a little fun out of my comic pieces. I begin them half-crying sometimes, but after they are done they amuse me. I don't suppose my comic pieces are very laughable; at any rate the man who makes a business of writing me down says the last one I wrote is very melancholy reading, and that if it was only a little better perhaps some bereaved person might pick out a line or two that would do to put on a grave-stone.

—Well, that is hard, I must confess. Do let me see those lines which excite such sad emotions.

—Will you read them very good-naturedly? If you will, I will get the paper that has "Aunt Tabitha." That is the one the fault-finder said produced such deep depression of feeling. It was written for the

"Comic Department." Perhaps it will make you cry, but it wasn't meant to.

—I will finish my report this time with our Scheherazade's poem, hoping that any critic who deals with it will treat it with the courtesy due to all a young lady's literary efforts.

AUNT TABITHA.

Whatever I do, and whatever I say,
Aunt Tabitha tells me that isn't the way;
When *she* was a girl (forty summers ago)
Aunt Tabitha tells me they never did so.

Dear Aunt! If I only would take her advice!
But I like my own way, and I find it *so* nice!
And besides, I forget half the things I am told;
But they all will come back to me—when I am old.

If a youth passes by, it may happen, no doubt,
He may chance to look in as I chance to look out;
She would never endure an impertinent stare,—
It is *horrid*, she says, and I mustn't sit there.

A walk in the moonlight has pleasures, I own,
But it isn't quite safe to be walking alone;

So I take a lad's arm,—just for safety, you know,—
But Aunt Tabitha tells me *they* didn't do so.

How wicked we are, and how good they were then!
They kept at arm's length those detestable men;
What an era of virtue she lived in!—But stay—
Were the *men* all such rogues in Aunt Tabitha's day?

If the men *were* so wicked, I 'll ask my papa
How he dared to propose to my darling mamma;
Was he like the rest of them? Goodness! Who knows?
And what shall *I* say, if a wretch should propose?

I am thinking if Aunt knew so little of sin,
What a wonder Aunt Tabitha's aunt must have been!
And her grand-aunt—it scares me—how shockingly sad
That we girls of to-day are so frightfully bad!

A martyr will save us, and nothing else can;
Let *me* perish—to rescue some wretched young man!
Though when to the altar a victim I go,
Aunt Tabitha 'll tell me *she* never did so!

IV.

THE old Master has developed one quality of late for which I am afraid I hardly gave him credit. He has turned out to be an excellent listener.

—I love to talk,—he said,—as a goose loves to swim. Sometimes I think it is because I *am* a goose. For I never talked much at any one time in my life without saying something or other I was sorry for.

—You too!—said I.—Now that is very odd, for it is an experience *I* have habitually. I thought you were rather too much of a philosopher to trouble yourself about such small matters as to whether you had said just what you meant to or not; especially as you know that the person you talk to does not remember a word of what you said the next morning, but is thinking, it is much more likely, of what she said, or how her new dress looked, or some other body's new dress which made hers look as if it had been patched together from the leaves

of last November. That 's what she 's probably thinking about.

—*She !*—said the Master, with a look which it would take at least half a page to explain to the entire satisfaction of thoughtful readers of both sexes.

—I paid the respect due to that most significant monosyllable, which, as the old Rabbi spoke it, with its *targum* of tone and expression, was not to be answered flippantly, but soberly, advisedly, and after a pause long enough for it to unfold its meaning in the listener's mind. For there are short single words (all the world remembers Rachel's *Hélas !*) which are like those Japanese toys that look like nothing of any significance as you throw them on the water, but which after a little time open out into various strange and unexpected figures, and then you find that each little shred had a complicated story to tell of itself.

—Yes,—said I, at the close of this silent interval, during which the monosyllable had been opening out its meanings,—*She.* When I think of talking, it is of course with a woman. For talking at its best being an inspiration, it wants a corresponding divine quality of receptiveness ; and where will you find this but in women ?

The Master laughed a pleasant little laugh, —not a harsh, sarcastic one, but playful, and tempered by so kind a look that it seemed as if every wrinkled line about his old eyes repeated, "God bless you," as the tracings on the walls of the Alhambra repeat a sentence of the Koran.

I said nothing, but *looked* the question, What are you laughing at?

—Why, I laughed because I couldn't help saying to myself that a woman whose mind was taken up with thinking how she looked, and how her pretty neighbour looked, wouldn't have a great deal of thought to spare for all your fine discourse.

—Come, now,—said I,—a man who contradicts himself in the course of two minutes must have a screw loose in his mental machinery. I never feel afraid that such a thing can happen to me, though it happens often enough when I turn a thought over suddenly, as you did that five-cent piece the other day, that it reads differently on its two sides. What I meant to say is something like this. A woman, notwithstanding she is the best of listeners, knows her business, and it is a woman's business to please. I don't say that it is *not* her business to vote, but I do say that the woman who does not

please is a false note in the harmonies of nature. She may not have youth, or beauty, or even manner; but she must have something in her voice or expression, or both, which it makes you feel better disposed towards your race to look at or listen to. She knows that as well as we do; and her first question after you have been talking your soul into her consciousness is, Did *I* please? A woman never forgets her sex. She would rather talk with a man than an angel, any day.

—This frightful speech of mine reached the ear of our Scheherazade, who said that it was perfectly shocking, and that I deserved to be shown up as the outlaw in one of her bandit stories.

Hush, my dear,—said the Lady,—you will have to bring John Milton into your story with our friend there, if you punish everybody who says naughty things like that. Send the little boy up to my chamber for *Paradise Lost*, if you please. He will find it lying on my table. The little old volume,—he can't mistake it.

So the girl called That Boy round and gave him the message; I don't know why *she* should give it, but she did, and the Lady helped her out with a word or two.

The little volume—its cover protected with soft white leather from a long kid glove, evidently suggesting the brilliant assemblies of the days when friends and fortune smiled —came presently, and the Lady opened it.—You may read that, if you like,—she said, —it may show you that our friend is to be pilloried in good company.

The young girl ran her eye along the passage the Lady pointed out, blushed, laughed, and slapped the book down as though she would have liked to box the ears of Mr. John Milton, if he had been a contemporary and fellow-contributor to the *Weekly Bucket*.—I won't touch the thing,—she said. —He was a horrid man to talk so-; and he had as many wives as Blue-Beard.

—Fair play,—said the Master. Bring me the book, my little fractional superfluity,—I mean you, my nursling,—my boy, if that suits your small Highness better.

The Boy brought the book.

The old Master, not unfamiliar with the great epic, opened pretty nearly to the place, and very soon found the passage. He read aloud with grand scholastic intonation, and in a deep voice that silenced the table as if a prophet had just uttered Thus saith the Lord :—

"So spake our sire, and by his countenance seemed
Entering on studious thoughts abstruse; which Eve
Perceiving—"

went to water her geraniums, to make a short story of it, and left the two "conversationists," to wit, the angel Raphael and the gentleman,—there was but one gentleman in society then, you know,—to talk it out.

"Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high; such pleasure she reserved,
Adam relating, she sole auditress;
Her husband the relater she preferred
Before the angel, and of him to ask
Chose rather; he she knew would intermix
Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal caresses: from his lips
Not words alone pleased her."

Everybody laughed except the Capitalist, who was a little hard of hearing, and the Scarabee, whose life was too earnest for demonstrations of that kind. He had his eyes fixed on the volume, however, with eager interest.

—The p'int 's carried,—said the Member of the Haouse.

Will you let me look at that book a single minute?—said the Scarabee. I passed it to him, wondering what in the world he wanted of *Paradise Lost.*

Dermestes lardarius,—he said, pointing to a place where the edge of one side of the outer cover had been slightly tasted by some insect.—Very fond of leather while they're in the larva state.

—Damage the goods as bad as mice,—said the Salesman.

—Eat half the binding off Folio 67,—said the Register of Deeds. Something did, anyhow, and it wasn't mice. Found the shelf covered with little hairy cases belonging to something or other that had no business there.

Skins of the *Dermestes lardarius,*—said the Scarabee,—you can always tell them by those brown hairy coats. That's the name to give them.

—What good does it do to give 'em a name after they've eat the binding off my folios?—asked the Register of Deeds.

The Scarabee had too much respect for science to answer such a question as that; and the book, having served its purposes, was passed back to the Lady.

I return to the previous question,—said I,

—if our friend the Member of the House of Representatives will allow me to borrow the phrase. Womanly women are very kindly critics, except to themselves, and now and then to their own sex. The less there is of sex about a woman, the more she is to be dreaded. But take a real woman at her best moment,—well dressed enough to be pleased with herself, not so resplendent as to be a show and a sensation, with those varied outside influences which set vibrating the harmonic notes of her nature stirring in the air about her,—and what has social life to compare with one of those vital interchanges of thought and feeling with her that make an hour memorable? What can equal her tact, her delicacy, her subtlety of apprehension, her quickness to feel the changes of temperature as the warm and cool currents of talk blow by turns? At one moment she is microscopically intellectual, critical, scrupulous in judgment as an analyst's balance, and the next as sympathetic as the open rose that sweetens the wind from whatever quarter it finds its way to her bosom. It is in the hospitable soul of a woman that a man forgets he is a stranger, and so becomes natural and truthful, at the same time that he is mesmerised

by all those divine differences which make her a mystery and a bewilderment to—

If you fire your popgun at me, you little chimpanzee, I will stick a pin right through the middle of you and put you into one of this gentleman's beetle-cases!

I caught the imp that time, but what started him was more than I could guess. It is rather hard that this spoiled child should spoil such a sentence as that was going to be; but the wind shifted all at once, and the talk had to come round on another tack, or at least fall off a point or two from its course.

—I 'll tell you who I think are the best talkers in all probability,—said I to the Master, who, as I mentioned, was developing interesting talent as a listener,—poets who never write verses. And there are a good many more of these than it would seem at first sight. I think you may say every young lover is a poet, to begin with. I don't mean either that *all* young lovers are good talkers,—they have an eloquence all their own when they are with the beloved object, no doubt, emphasised after the fashion the solemn bard of Paradise refers to with such delicious humour in the passage we just heard,—but a little talk goes a good

way in most of these cooing matches, and it wouldn't do to report them too literally. What I mean is, that a man with the gift of musical and impassioned phrase (and love often *lends* that to a young person for a while), who "wreaks" it, to borrow Byron's word, on conversation as the natural outlet of his sensibilities and spiritual activities, is likely to talk better than the poet, who plays on the instrument of verse. A great pianist or violinist is rarely a great singer. To write a poem is to expend the vital force which would have made one brilliant for an hour or two, and to expend it on an instrument with more pipes, reeds, keys, stops, and pedals than the Great Organ that shakes New England every time it is played in full blast.

Do you mean that it is hard work to write a poem?—said the old Master.—I had an idea that a poem wrote itself, as it were, very often; that it came by influx, without voluntary effort; indeed, you have spoken of it as an inspiration rather than a result of volition.

—Did you ever see a great ballet-dancer? —I asked him.

—I have seen Taglioni,—he answered.— She used to take her steps rather prettily.

I have seen the woman that danced the capstone on to Bunker Hill Monument, as Orpheus moved the rocks by music,—the Elssler woman,—Fanny Elssler. She would dance you a rigadoon or cut a pigeon's wing for you very respectably.

(Confound this old college book-worm,—he has seen everything !)

Well, did these two ladies dance as if it was hard work to them ?

—Why no, I should say they danced as if they liked it, and couldn't help dancing; they looked as if they felt so "corky" it was hard to keep them down.

—And yet they had been through such work to get their limbs strong and flexible and obedient, that a cart-horse lives an easy life compared to theirs while they were in training.

—The Master cut in just here—I had sprung the trap of a reminiscence.

—When I was a boy,—he said,—some of the mothers in our small town, who meant that their children should know what was what as well as other people's children, laid their heads together and got a dancing-master to come out from the city and give instruction at a few dollars a quarter to the young folks of condition in the village.

Some of their husbands were ministers and some were deacons, but the mothers knew what they were about, and they didn't see any reason why ministers' and deacons' wives' children shouldn't have as easy manners as the sons and daughters of Belial. So, as I tell you, they got a dancing-master to come out to our place,—a man of good repute, a most respectable man,— madam (to the Landlady), you must remember the worthy old citizen, in his advanced age, going about the streets, a most gentlemanly bundle of infirmities,—only he always cocked his hat a little too much on one side, as they do here and there along the Connecticut River, and sometimes on our city sidewalks, when they've got a new beaver; they got him, I say, to give us boys and girls lessons in dancing and deportment. He was as grey and as lively as a squirrel, as I remember him, and used to spring up in the air and "cross his feet," as we called it, three times before he came down. Well, at the end of each term there was what they called an "exhibition ball," in which the scholars danced cotillons and country-dances; also something called a "gavotte," and I think one or more walked a minuet. But all this is not what I wanted to say. At this exhi-

bition ball he used to bring out a number of hoops wreathed with roses, of the perennial kind, by the aid of which a number of amazingly complicated and startling evolutions were exhibited; and also his two daughters, who figured largely in these evolutions, and whose wonderful performances to us, who had not seen Miss Taglioni or Miss Elssler, were something quite wonderful, in fact, surpassing the natural possibilities of human beings. Their extraordinary powers were, however, accounted for by the following explanation, which was accepted in the school as entirely satisfactory. A certain little bone in the ankles of each of these young girls had been broken intentionally, *secundum artem*, at a very early age, and thus they had been fitted to accomplish these surprising feats which threw the achievements of the children who were left in the condition of the natural man into ignominious shadow.

—Thank you,—said I,—you have helped out my illustration so as to make it better than I expected. Let me begin again. Every poem that is worthy of the name, no matter how easily it seems to be written, represents a great amount of vital force expended at some time or other. When you

find a beach strewed with the shells and other spoils that belonged once to the deep sea, you know the tide has been there, and that the winds and waves have wrestled over its naked sands. And so, if I find a poem stranded in my soul, and have nothing to do but seize it as a wrecker carries off the treasure he finds cast ashore, I know I have paid at some time for that poem with some inward commotion, were it only an excess of enjoyment, which has used up just so much of my vital capital. But besides all the impressions that furnished the stuff of the poem, there has been hard work to get the management of that wonderful instrument I spoke of,—the great organ, language. An artist that works in marble or colours has them all to himself and his tribe, but the man who moulds his thought in verse has to employ the materials vulgarised by everybody's use, and glorify them by his handling. I don't know that you must break any bones in a poet's mechanism before his thought can dance in rhythm, but read your Milton and see what training, what patient labour, it took before he could shape our common speech into his majestic harmonies.

It is rather singular, but the same kind of thing has happened to me not very rarely

before, as I suppose it has to most persons, that just when I happened to be thinking about poets and their conditions, this very morning, I saw a paragraph or two from a foreign paper which is apt to be sharp, if not cynical, relating to the same matter. I can't help it ; I want to have my talk about it, and if I say the same things that writer did, somebody else can have the satisfaction of saying I stole them all.

[I thought the person whom I have called hypothetically the *Man of Letters* changed colour a little, and betrayed a certain awkward consciousness that some of us were looking at him or thinking of him ; but I am a little suspicious about him and may do him wrong.]

That poets are treated as privileged persons by their admirers and the educated public can hardly be disputed. That they consider themselves so there is no doubt whatever. On the whole, I do not know so easy a way of shirking all the civic and social and domestic duties, as to settle it in one's mind that one is a poet. I have, therefore, taken great pains to advise other persons labouring under the impression that they were gifted beings, destined to soar in the atmosphere of song above the vulgar reali-

ties of earth, not to neglect any homely duty under the influence of that impression. The number of these persons is so great that if they were suffered to indulge their prejudice against everyday duties and labours, it would be a serious loss to the productive industry of the country. My skirts are clear (so far as other people are concerned) of countenancing that form of intellectual opium-eating in which rhyme takes the place of the narcotic. But what are you going to do when you find John Keats an apprentice to a surgeon or apothecary? Isn't it rather better to get another boy to sweep out the shop and shake out the powders and stir up the mixtures, and leave him undisturbed to write his Ode on a Grecian Urn or to a Nightingale? O yes, the critic I have referred to would say, if he is John Keats; but not if he is of a much lower grade, even though he be genuine, what there is of him. But the trouble is, the sensitive persons who belong to the lower grades of the poetical hierarchy do not know their own poetical limitations, while they do feel a natural unfitness and disinclination for many pursuits which young persons of the average balance of faculties take to pleasantly enough. What is forgotten is this, that every real poet, even of

the humblest grade, is an *artist*. Now I venture to say that any painter or sculptor of real genius, though he may do nothing more than paint flowers and fruit, or carve cameos, is considered a privileged person. It is recognised perfectly that to get his best work he must be insured the freedom from disturbances which the creative power absolutely demands, more absolutely perhaps in these slighter artists than in the great masters. His nerves must be steady for him to finish a rose-leaf or the fold of a nymph's drapery in his best manner; and they will be unsteadied if he has to perform the honest drudgery which another can do for him quite as well. And it is just so with the poet, though he were only finishing an epigram; you must no more meddle roughly with him than you would shake a bottle of Chambertin and expect the "sunset glow" to redden your glass unclouded. On the other hand, it may be said that poetry is not an article of prime necessity, and potatoes are. There is a disposition in many persons just now to deny the poet his benefit of clergy, and to hold him no better than other people. Perhaps he is not, perhaps he is not so good, half the time; but he is a luxury, and if you want him you must

pay for him, by not trying to make a drudge of him while he is all his lifetime struggling with the chills and heats of his artistic intermittent fever.

There may have been some lesser interruptions during the talk I have reported as if it was a set speech, but this was the drift of what I said and should have said if the other man, in the Review I referred to, had not seen fit to meddle with the subject, as some fellow always does, just about the time when I am going to say something about it. The Old Master listened beautifully, except for cutting in once, as I told you he did. But now he had held in as long as it was in his nature to contain himself, and must have his say or go off in an apoplexy, or explode in some way.

—I think you 're right about the poets,— he said.—They are to common folks what repeaters are to ordinary watches. They carry music in their inside arrangements, but they want to be handled carefully or you put them out of order. And perhaps you mustn't expect them to be quite as good timekeepers as the professional chronometer watches that make a specialty of being exact within a few seconds a month. They think

too much of themselves. So does everybody that considers himself as having a right to fall back on what he calls his idiosyncrasy. Yet a man *has* such a right, and it is no easy thing to adjust the private claim to the fair public demand on him. Suppose you are subject to *tic douloureux*, for instance. Every now and then a tiger that nobody can see catches one side of your face between his jaws and holds on till he is tired and lets go. Some concession must be made to you on that score, as everybody can see. It is fair to give you a seat that is not in the draught, and your friends ought not to find fault with you if you do not care to join a party that is going on a sleigh-ride. Now take a poet like Cowper. He had a mental neuralgia, a great deal worse in many respects than *tic douloureux* confined to the face. It was well that he was sheltered and relieved, by the cares of kind friends, especially those good women, from as many of the burdens of life, as they could lift off from him. I am fair to the poets,—don't you agree that I am?

Why, yes,—I said,—you have stated the case fairly enough, a good deal as I should have put it myself.

—Now, then,—the Master continued,—I'll tell you what is necessary to all these artistic

idiosyncrasies to bring them into good square human relations outside of the special province where their ways differ from those of other people. I am going to illustrate what I mean by a comparison. I don't know, by the way, but you would be disposed to think and perhaps call me a wine-bibber on the strength of the freedom with which I deal with that fluid for the purposes of illustration. But I make mighty little use of it, except as it furnishes me an image now and then, as it did, for that matter, to the Disciples and their Master. In my younger days they used to bring up the famous old wines, the White-top, the Juno, the Eclipse, the Essex Junior, and the rest, in their old cobwebbed, dusty bottles. The resurrection of one of these old sepulchred dignitaries had something of solemnity about it; it was like the disinterment of a king; the bringing to light of the Royal Martyr King Charles I., for instance, that Sir Henry Halford gave such an interesting account of. And the bottle seemed to inspire a personal respect; it was wrapped in a napkin and borne tenderly and reverently round to the guests, and sometimes a dead silence went before the first gush of its amber flood, and

> "The boldest held his breath
> For a time."

But nowadays the precious juice of a long-dead vintage is transferred carefully into a cut-glass decanter, and stands side by side with the sherry from a corner grocery, which looks just as bright and apparently thinks just as well of itself. The old historic Madeiras, which have warmed the periods of our famous rhetoricians of the past and burned in the impassioned eloquence of our earlier political demigods, have nothing to mark them externally but a bit of thread, it may be, round the neck of the decanter, or a slip of ribbon, pink on one of them and blue on another.

Go to a London club,—perhaps I might find something nearer home that would serve my turn,—but go to a London club, and there you will see the celebrities all looking alike modern, all decanted off from their historic antecedents and their costume of circumstance into the everyday aspect of the gentleman of common cultivated society. That is Sir Cœur de Lion Plantagenet in the mutton-chop whiskers and the plain grey suit; there is the Laureate in a frock-coat like your own, and the leader of the House of Commons in a necktie you do not envy. That is the kind of thing you want to take the nonsense out of you. If you are not

decanted off from yourself every few days or weeks, you will think it sacrilege to brush a cobweb from your cork by-and-by. O little fool, that has published a little book full of little poems or other sputtering tokens of an uneasy condition, how I love you for the one soft nerve of special sensibility that runs through your exiguous organism, and the one phosphorescent particle in your unilluminated intelligence! But if you don't leave your spun-sugar confectionery business once in a while, and come out among lusty men,—the bristly, pachydermatous fellows that hew out the highways for the material progress of society, and the broad-shouldered, out-of-door men that fight for the great prizes of life,—you will come to think that the spun-sugar business is the chief end of man, and begin to feel and look as if you believed yourself as much above common people as that personage of whom Tourguéneff says that "he had the air of his own statue erected by national subscription."

—The Master paused and fell into a deep thinking fit, as he does sometimes. He had had his own say, it is true, but he had established his character as a listener to my own perfect satisfaction, for I, too, was conscious of having preached with a certain prolixity.

—I am always troubled when I think of my very limited mathematical capacities. It seems as if every well-organised mind should be able to handle numbers and quantities through their symbols to an indefinite extent; and yet, I am puzzled by what seems to a clever boy with a turn for calculation as plain as counting his fingers. I don't think any man feels well grounded in knowledge unless he has a good basis of mathematical certainties, and knows how to deal with them and apply them to every branch of knowledge where they can come in to advantage.

Our young Astronomer is known for his mathematical ability, and I asked him what he thought was the difficulty in the minds that are weak in that particular direction, while they may be of remarkable force in other provinces of thought, as is notoriously the case with some men of great distinction in science.

The young man smiled and wrote a few letters and symbols on a piece of paper.—Can you see through that at once?—he said.

I puzzled over it for some minutes and gave it up.

—He said, as I returned it to him, You

have heard military men say that such a person had *an eye for country*, haven't you? One man will note all the landmarks, keep the points of compass in his head, observe how the streams run, in short, carry a map in his brain of any region that he has marched or galloped through. Another man takes no note of any of these things; always follows somebody else's lead when he can, and gets lost if he is left to himself; a mere owl in daylight. Just so some men have an *eye for an equation*, and would read at sight the one that you puzzled over. It is told of Sir Isaac Newton that he required no demonstration of the propositions in Euclid's *Geometry*, but as soon as he had read the enunciation the solution or answer was plain at once. The power may be cultivated, but I think it is to a great degree a natural gift, as is the eye for colour, as is the ear for music.

—I think I could read equations readily enough,—I said,—if I could only keep my attention fixed on them; and I think I could keep my attention on them if I were imprisoned in a thinking-cell, such as the Creative Intelligence shapes for its studio when at its divinest work.

The young man's lustrous eyes opened

very widely as he asked me to explain what I meant.

—What is the Creator's divinest work?—I asked.

—Is there anything more divine than the sun; than a sun with its planets revolving about it, warming them, lighting them, and giving conscious life to the beings that move on them?

—You agree, then, that conscious life is the grand aim and end of all this vast mechanism. Without life that could feel and enjoy, the splendours and creative energy would all be thrown away. You know Harvey's saying, *omnia animalia ex ovo*,—all animals come from an egg. You ought to know it, for the great controversy going on about spontaneous generation has brought it into special prominence lately. Well, then, the *ovum*, the egg, is, to speak in human phrase, the Creator's more private and sacred studio, for his *magnum opus*. Now, look at a hen's egg, which is a convenient one to study, because it is large enough and built solidly enough to look at and handle easily. That would be the form I would choose for my thinking-cell. Build me an oval with smooth, translucent walls, and put me in the centre of it with Newton's *Principia* or Kant's

Kritik, and I think I shall develop "an eye for an equation," as you call it, and a capacity for an abstraction.

But do tell me,—said the Astronomer, a little incredulously,—what there is in that particular form which is going to help you to be a mathematician or a metaphysician?

—It isn't help I want, it is removing hindrances. I don't want to see anything to draw off my attention. I don't want a cornice, or an angle, or anything but a containing curve. I want diffused light and no single luminous centre to fix my eye, and so distract my mind from its one object of contemplation. The metaphysics of *attention* have hardly been sounded to their depths. The mere fixing the look on any single object for a long time may produce very strange effects. Gibbon's well-known story of the monks of Mount Athos and their contemplative practice is often laughed over, but it has a meaning. They were to shut the door of the cell, recline the beard and chin on the breast, and contemplate the abdominal centre. "At first all will be dark and comfortless; but if you persevere day and night, you will feel an ineffable joy; and no sooner has the soul discovered the place of the heart, than it is involved in a

mystic and ethereal light." And Mr. Braid produces absolute anæsthesia, so that surgical operations can be performed without suffering to the patient, only by making him fix his eyes and his mind on a single object; and Newton is said to have said, as you remember, "I keep the subject constantly before me, and wait till the first dawnings open slowly by little and little into a full and clear light." These are different, but certainly very wonderful, instances of what can be done by attention. But now suppose that your mind is in its nature discursive, erratic, subject to electric attractions and repulsions, *volage;* it may be impossible for you to compel your attention except by taking away all external disturbances. I think the poets have an advantage and a disadvantage as compared with the steadier-going people. Life is so vivid to the poet, that he is too eager to seize and exhaust its multitudinous impressions. Like Sindbad in the valley of precious stones, he wants to fill his pockets with diamonds, but, lo! there is a great ruby like a setting sun in its glory and a sapphire that, like Bryant's blue gentian, seems to have dropped from the cerulean walls of heaven, and a nest of pearls that look as if they might be unhatched

angel's eggs, and so he hardly knows what to seize, and tries for too many, and comes out of the enchanted valley with more gems than he can carry, and those that he lets fall by the wayside we call his poems. You may change the image a thousand ways to show you how hard it is to make a mathematician or a logician out of a poet. He carries the tropics with him wherever he goes; he is in the true sense *filius naturæ*, and Nature tempts him, as she tempts a child walking through a garden where all the finest fruits are hanging over him and dropping round him, where

> The luscious clusters of the vine
> Upon (his) mouth do crush their wine,
> The nectarine and curious peach,
> Into (his) hands themselves do reach;

and he takes a bite out of the sunny side of this and the other, and, ever stimulated and never satisfied, is hurried through the garden, and, before he knows it, finds himself at an iron gate which opens outward, and leaves the place he knows and loves—

—For one he will perhaps soon learn to love and know better,—said the Master.—But I can help you out with another comparison, not quite so poetical as yours.

Why did not you think of a railway-station, where the cars stop five minutes for refreshments? Isn't that a picture of the poet's hungry and hurried feast at the banquet of life? The traveller flings himself on the bewildering miscellany of delicacies spread before him, the various tempting forms of ambrosia and seducing draughts of nectar, with the same eager hurry aud restless ardour that you describe in the poet. Dear me! If it wasn't for All aboard! that summons of the deaf conductor which tears one away from his half-finished sponge-cake and coffee, how I, who do not call myself a poet, but only a questioner, should have enjoyed a good long stop—say a couple of thousand years—at this way-station on the great railroad leading to the unknown terminus!

—You say you are not a poet,—I said, after a little pause, in which I suppose both of us were thinking where the great railroad would land us after carrying us into the dark tunnel, the farther end of which no man has seen and taken a return train to bring us news about it,—You say you are not a poet, and yet it seems to me you have some of the elements which go to make one.

—I don't think you mean to flatter me,—the Master answered,—and, what is more,

for I am not afraid to be honest with you, I don't think you do flatter me. I have taken the inventory of my faculties as calmly as if I was an appraiser. I *have* some of the qualities, perhaps I may say many of the qualities, that make a man a poet, and yet I am not one. And in the course of a pretty wide experience of men—and women—(the Master sighed, I thought, but perhaps I was mistaken)—I have met a good many poets who were not rhymesters and a good many rhymesters who were not poets. So I am only one of the Voiceless, that I remember one of you singers had some verses about. I think there is a little music in me, but it has not found a voice, and it never will. If I should confess the truth, there is no mere earthly immortality that I envy so much as the poet's. If your name is to live at all, it is so much more to have it live in people's hearts than only in their brains! I don't know that one's eyes fill with tears when he thinks of the famous inventor of logarithms, but a song of Burns's or a hymn of Charles Wesley's goes straight to your heart, and you can't help loving both of them, the sinner as well as the saint. The works of other men live, but their personality dies out of their labours; the poet, who reproduces

himself in his creation, as no other artist does or can, goes down to posterity with all his personality blended with whatever is imperishable in his song. We see nothing of the bees that built the honeycomb and stored it with its sweets, but we can trace the veining in the wings of insects that flitted through the forests which are now coal-beds, kept unchanging in the amber that holds them; and so the passion of Sappho, the tenderness of Simonides, the purity of holy George Herbert, the lofty contemplativeness of James Shirley, are before us to-day as if they were living, in a few tears of amber verse. It seems, when one reads,

"Sweet day! so cool, so calm, so bright,"

or,

"The glories of our birth and state,"

as if it were not a very difficult matter to gain immortality,—such an immortality at least as a perishable language can give. A single lyric is enough, if one can only find in his soul and finish in his intellect one of those jewels fit to sparkle "on the stretched forefinger of all time." A coin, a ring, a string of verses. These last, and hardly anything else does. Every century is an overloaded ship that must sink at last with

most of its cargo. The small portion of its crew that get on board the new vessel which takes them off don't pretend to save a great many of the bulky articles. But they must not and will not leave behind the hereditary jewels of the race; and if you have found and cut a diamond, were it only a spark with a single polished facet, it will stand a better chance of being saved from the wreck than anything, no matter what, that wants much room for stowage.

The pyramids last, it is true, but most of them have forgotten their builders' names. But the ring of Thothmes III., who reigned some fourteen hundred years before our era, before Homer sang, before the Argonauts sailed, before Troy was built, is in the possession of Lord Ashburnham, and proclaims the name of the monarch who wore it more than three thousand years ago. The gold coins with the head of Alexander the Great are some of them so fresh one might think they were newer than much of the silver currency we were lately handling. As we have been quoting from the poets this morning, I will follow the precedent, and give some lines from an epistle of Pope to Addison after the latter had written, but not yet published, his *Dialogue on Medals*. Some

of these lines have been lingering in my memory for a great many years, but I looked at the original the other day and was so pleased with them that I got them by heart. I think you will say they are singularly pointed and elegant.

" Ambition sighed ; she found it vain to trust
The faithless column and the crumbling bust :
Huge moles, whose shadows stretched from shore to shore,
Their ruins perished, and their place no more !
Convinced, she now contracts her vast design,
And all her triumphs shrink into a coin.
A narrow orb each crowded conquest keeps,
Beneath her palm here sad Judæa weeps ;
Now scantier limits the proud arch confine,
And scarce are seen the prostrate Nile or Rhine ;
A small Euphrates through the piece is rolled,
And little eagles wave their wings in gold."

It is the same thing in literature. Write half a dozen folios full of other people's ideas (as all folios are pretty sure to be), and you serve as ballast to the lower shelves of a library, about as like to be disturbed as the kentledge in the hold of a ship. Write a story, or a dozen stories, and your book will be in demand like an oyster while it is freshly opened, and after that——. The

highways of literature are spread over with the shells of dead novels, each of which has been swallowed at a mouthful by the public, and is done with. But write a volume of poems. No matter if they are all bad but one, if that one is very good. It will carry your name down to posterity like the ring of Thothmes, like the coin of Alexander. I don't suppose one would care a great deal about it a hundred or a thousand years after he is dead, but I don't feel quite sure. It seems as if, even in heaven, King David might remember "The Lord is my Shepherd" with a certain twinge of earthly pleasure. But we don't know, we don't know.

—What in the world can have become of That Boy and his popgun while all this somewhat extended sermonising was going on? I don't wonder you ask, beloved Reader, and I suppose I must tell you how we got on so long without interruption. Well, the plain truth is, the youngster was contemplating his gastric centre, like the monks of Mount Athos, but in a less happy state of mind than those tranquil recluses, in consequence of indulgence in the heterogeneous assortment of luxuries procured with the five-cent piece given him by the kind-hearted

old Master. But you need not think I am going to tell you every time his popgun goes off, making a *Selah* of him whenever I want to change the subject. Sometimes he was ill-timed in his artillery practice and ignominiously rebuked, sometimes he was harmlessly playful and nobody minded him, but every now and then he came in so *apropos*, that I am morally certain he gets a hint from somebody who watches the course of the conversation, and means through him to have a hand in it and stop any of us when we are getting prosy. But in consequence of That Boy's indiscretion, we were without a check upon our expansiveness, and ran on in the way you have observed and may be disposed to find fault with.

One other thing the Master said before we left the table, after our long talk of that day.

—I have been tempted sometimes,—said he,—to envy the immediate triumphs of the singer. He enjoys all that praise can do for him and at the very moment of exerting his talent. And the singing women! Once in a while, in the course of my life, I have found myself in the midst of a tulip-bed of full-dressed, handsome women in all their glory, and when some one among them has

shaken her gauzy wings, and sat down before the piano, and then, only giving the keys a soft touch now and then to support her voice, has warbled some sweet, sad melody intertwined with the longings or regrets of some tender-hearted poet, it has seemed to me that so to hush the rustling of the silks and silence the babble of the buds, as they call the chicks of a new season, and light up the flame of romance in cold hearts, in desolate ones, in old burnt-out ones,—like mine, I was going to say, but I won't, for it isn't so, and you may laugh to hear me say it isn't so, if you like,—was perhaps better than to be remembered a few hundred years by a few perfect stanzas, when your grave-stone is standing aslant, and your name is covered over with a lichen as big as a militia colonel's cockade, and nobody knows or cares enough about you to scrape it off and set the tipsy old slate-stone upright again.

—I said nothing in reply to this, for I was thinking of a sweet singer to whose voice I had listened in its first freshness, and which is now only an echo in my memory. If any reader of the periodical in which these conversations are recorded can remember so far back as the first year

of its publication, he will find among the papers contributed by a friend not yet wholly forgotten a few verses, lively enough in their way, headed "The Boys." The sweet singer was one of this company of college classmates, the constancy of whose friendship deserves a better tribute than the annual offerings, kindly meant as they are, which for many years have not been wanting at their social gatherings. The small company counts many noted personages on its list, as is well known to those who are interested in such local matters, but it is not known that every fifth man of the whole number now living is more or less of a poet, —using that word with a generous breadth of significance. But it should seem that the divine gift it implies is more freely dispensed than some others, for while there are (or were, for one has taken his Last Degree), eight musical quills, there was but one pair of lips which could claim any special consecration to vocal melody. Not that one should undervalue the half-recitative of doubtful barytones, or the brilliant escapades of slightly unmanageable *falsettos*, or the concentrated efforts of the proprietors of two or three effective notes, who may be observed lying in wait for them, and coming

down on them with all their might, and the look on their countenances of "I too am a singer." But the voice that led all, and that all loved to listen to, the voice that was at once full, rich, sweet, penetrating, expressive, whose ample overflow drowned all the imperfections and made up for all the shortcomings of the others, is silent henceforth for evermore for all earthly listeners.

And these were the lines that one of "The Boys," as they have always called themselves for ever so many years, read at the first meeting after the voice which had never failed them was hushed in the stillness of death.

J. A.

1871.

One memory trembles on our lips:
  It throbs in every breast;
In tear-dimmed eyes, in mirth's eclipse,
  The shadow stands confessed.

O silent voice, that cheered so long
  Our manhood's marching day,
Without thy breath of heavenly song,
  How weary seems the way!

Vain every pictured phrase to tell
  Our sorrowing hearts' desire ;
The shattered harp, the broken shell,
  The silent unstrung lyre ;

For youth was round us while he sang ;
  It glowed in every tone ;
With bridal chimes the echoes rang,
  And made the past our own.

O blissful dream ! Our nursery joys
  We know must have an end,
But love and friendship's broken toys
  May God's good angels mend !

The cheering smile, the voice of mirth
  And laughter's gay surprise
That please the children born of earth
  Why deem that Heaven denies ?

Methinks in that refulgent sphere
  That knows not sun or moon,
An earth-born saint might long to hear
  One verse of " Bonny Doon ; "

Or walking through the streets of gold
  In Heaven's unclouded light,
His lips recall the song of old
  And hum " The sky is bright."

. . . . .

And can we smile when thou art dead?
Ah, brothers, even so!
The rose of summer will be red,
In spite of winter's snow.

Thou wouldst not leave us all in gloom
Because thy song is still,
Nor blight the banquet-garland's bloom
With grief's untimely chill.

The sighing wintry winds complain,—
The singing bird has flown,—
Hark! heard I not that ringing strain,
That clear celestial tone?

How poor these pallid phrases seem,
How weak this tinkling line,
As warbles through my waking dream
That angel voice of thine!

Thy requiem asks a sweeter lay
It falters on my tongue;
For all we vainly strive to say,
Thou shouldst thyself have sung!

V.

I FEAR that I have done injustice in my conversation and my report of it to a most worthy and promising young man whom I should be very sorry to injure in any way. Dr. Benjamin Franklin got hold of my account of my visit to him, and complained that I had made too much of the expression he used. He did not mean to say that he thought I was suffering from the rare disease he mentioned, but only that the colour reminded him of it. It was true that he had shown me various instruments, among them one for exploring the state of a part by means of a puncture, but he did not propose to make use of it upon my person. In short, I had coloured the story so as to make him look ridiculous.

—I am afraid I did,—I said,—but wasn't I coloured myself so as to look ridiculous? I've heard it said that people with the jaundice see everything yellow? Perhaps I saw things looking a little queerly, with that black and blue spot I couldn't account for threatening

to make a coloured man and brother of me. But I am sorry if I have done you any wrong. I hope you won't lose any patients by my making a little fun of your meters and scopes and contrivances. They seem so odd to us outside people. Then the idea of being bronzed all over was such an alarming suggestion. But I did not mean to damage your business, which I trust is now considerable, and I shall certainly come to you again if I have need of the services of a physician. Only don't mention the names of any diseases in English or Latin before me next time. I dreamed about *cutis æneæ* half the night after I came to see you.

Dr. Benjamin took my apology very pleasantly. He did not want to be touchy about it, he said, but he had to make his way in the world, and found it a little hard at first, as most young men did. People were afraid to trust them, no matter how much they knew. One of the old doctors asked him to come in and examine a patient's heart for him the other day. He went with him accordingly, and when they stood by the bedside, he offered his stethoscope to the old doctor. The old doctor took it and put the wrong end to his ear and the other to the patient's chest, and kept it there about two

minutes, looking all the time as wise as an old owl. Then he, Dr. Benjamin, took it and applied it properly, and made out where the trouble was in no time at all. But what was the use of a young man's pretending to know anything in the presence of an old owl? I saw by their looks, he said, that they all thought *I* used the stethoscope wrong end up, and was nothing but a 'prentice hand to the old doctor.

—I am much pleased to say that since Dr. Benjamin has had charge of a dispensary district, and been visiting forty or fifty patients a day, I have reason to think he has grown a great deal more practical than when I made my visit to his office. I think I was probably one of his first patients, and that he naturally made the most of me. But my second trial was much more satisfactory. I got an ugly cut from the carving-knife in an affair with a goose of iron constitution in which I came off second best. I at once adjourned with Dr. Benjamin to his small office, and put myself in his hands.

It was astonishing to see what a little experience of miscellaneous practice had done for him. He did not ask me any more questions about my hereditary predisposi-

tions on the paternal and maternal sides. He did not examine me with the stethoscope or the laryngoscope. He only strapped up my cut, and informed me that it would speedily get well by the "first intention,"—an odd phrase enough, but sounding much less formidable than *cutis œnea*.

I am afraid I have had something of the French prejudice which embodies itself in the maxim "young surgeon, old physician." But a young physician who has been taught by great masters of the profession, in ample hospitals, starts in his profession knowing more than some old doctors have learned in a lifetime. Give him a little time to get the use of his wits in emergencies, and to know the little arts that do so much for a patient's comfort,—just as you give a young sailor time to get his sea-legs on and teach his stomach to behave itself,—and he will do well enough.

The old Master knows ten times more about this matter and about all the professions, as he does about everything else, than I do. My opinion is that he has studied two, if not three, of these professions in a regular course. I don't know that he has ever preached, except as Charles Lamb said Coleridge always did, for when he gets the

bit in his teeth he runs away with the conversation, and if he only took a text his talk would be a sermon; but if he has not preached, he has made a study of theology, as many laymen do. I know he has some shelves of medical books in his library, and has ideas on the subject of the healing art. He confesses to having attended law lectures and having had much intercourse with lawyers. So he has something to say on almost any subject that happens to come up. I told him my story about my visit to the young doctor, and asked him what he thought of youthful practitioners in general and of Dr. Benjamin in particular.

I 'll tell you what,—the Master said,—I know something about these young fellows that come home with their heads full of "science," as they call it, and stick up their signs to tell people they know how to cure their headaches and stomach-aches. Science is a first-rate piece of furniture for a man's upper chamber, if he has common sense on the ground-floor. But if a man hasn't got plenty of good common sense, the more science he has the worse for his patient.

—I don't know that I see exactly how it is *worse* for the patient,—I said.

—Well, I 'll tell you, and you 'll find it 's

a mighty simple matter. When a person is sick, there is always something to be done for him, and done at once. If it is only to open or shut a window, if it is only to tell him to keep on doing just what he is doing already, it wants a man to bring his mind right down to the fact of the present case and its immediate needs. Now the present case, as the doctor sees it, is just exactly such a collection of paltry individual facts as never was before,—a snarl and tangle of special conditions which it is his business to wind as much thread out of as he can. It is a good deal as when a painter goes to take the portrait of any sitter who happens to send for him. He has seen just such noses and just such eyes and just such mouths, but he never saw exactly such a face before, and his business is with that and no other person's,—with the features of the worthy father of a family before him, and not with the portraits he has seen in galleries or books, or Mr. Copley's grand pictures of the fine old Tories, or the Apollos and Jupiters of Greek sculpture. It is the same thing with the patient. His disease has features of its own; there never was and never will be another case in all respects exactly like it. If a doctor has science

without common sense, he treats a fever, but not this man's fever. If he has common sense without science, he treats this man's fever without knowing the general laws that govern all fevers and all vital movements. I'll tell you what saves these last fellows. They go for weakness whenever they see it, with stimulants and strengtheners, and they go for overaction, heat, and high pulse, and the rest, with cooling and reducing remedies. That is three-quarters of medical practice. The other quarter wants science and common sense too. But the men that have science only, begin too far back, and, before they get as far as the case in hand, the patient has very likely gone to visit his deceased relatives. You remember Thomas Prince's *Chronological History of New England*, I suppose? He begins, you recollect, with Adam, and has to work down five thousand six hundred and twenty-four years before he gets to the Pilgrim Fathers and the *Mayflower*. It was all very well, only it didn't belong there, but got in the way of something else. So it is with "science" out of place. By far the larger part of the facts of structure and function you find in the books of anatomy and physiology have no immediate application to the

daily duties of the practitioner. You must learn systematically, for all that; it is the easiest way and the only way that takes hold of the memory, except mere empirical repetition, like that of the handicraftsman. Did you ever see one of those Japanese figures with the points for acupuncture marked upon it?

—I had to own that my schooling had left out that piece of information.

Well, I'll tell you about it. You see they have a way of pushing long, slender needles into you for the cure of rheumatism and other complaints, and it seems there is a choice of spots for the operation, though it is very strange how little mischief it does in a good many places one would think unsafe to meddle with. So they had a doll made, and marked the spots where they had put in needles without doing any harm. They must have had accidents from sticking the needles into the wrong places now and then, but I suppose they didn't say a great deal about those. After a time, say a few centuries of experience, they had their doll all spotted over with safe places for sticking in the needles. That is their way of registering practical knowledge. We, on the other hand, study the structure of the body

as a whole, systematically, and have no difficulty at all in remembering the track of the great vessels and nerves, and knowing just what tracks will be safe and what unsafe. It is just the same thing with the geologists. Here is a man close by us boring for water through one of our ledges, because somebody else got water somewhere else in that way; and a person who knows geology, or ought to know it, because he has given his life to it, tells me he might as well bore there for lager-beer as for water.

—I thought we had had enough of this particular matter, and that I should like to hear what the Master had to say about the three professions he knew something about, each compared with the others.

What is your general estimate of doctors, lawyers, and ministers?—said I.

—Wait a minute, till I have got through with your first question,—said the Master. —One thing at a time. You asked me about the young doctors, and about our young doctor. They come home *très bien chaussés*, as a Frenchman would say, mighty well shod with professional knowledge. But when they begin walking round among their poor patients,—they don't commonly start with millionaires,—they find that their new

shoes of scientific acquirements have got to be broken in just like a pair of boots or brogans. I don't know that I have put it quite strong enough. Let me try again. You 've seen those fellows at the circus that get up on horseback so big that you wonder how they could climb into the saddle. But pretty soon they throw off their outside coat, and the next minute another one, and then the one under that, and so they keep peeling off one garment after another till people begin to look queer and think they are going too far for strict propriety. Well, that is the way a fellow with a real practical turn serves a good many of his scientific wrappers,—flings 'em off for other people to pick up, and goes right at the work of curing stomach-aches and all the other little mean unscientific complaints that make up the larger part of every doctor's business. I think our Dr. Benjamin is a worthy young man, and if you are in need of a doctor at any time I hope you will go to him ; and if you come off without harm, I will—recommend some other friend to try him.

—I thought he was going to say he would try him in his own person, but the Master is not fond of committing himself.

Now, I will answer your other question,—

he said.— The lawyers are the cleverest men, the ministers are the most learned, and the doctors are the most sensible.

The lawyers are a picked lot, "first scholars" and the like, but their business is as unsympathetic as Jack Ketch's. There is nothing humanising in their relations with their fellow-creatures. They go for the side that retains them. They defend the man they know to be a rogue, and not very rarely throw suspicion on the man they know to be innocent. Mind you, I am not finding fault with them ; every side of a case has a right to the best statement it admits of ; but I say it does not tend to make them sympathetic. Suppose in a case of Fever *vs.* Patient, the doctor should side with either party according to whether the old miser or his expectant heir was his employer. Suppose the minister should side with the Lord or the Devil, according to the salary offered and other incidental advantages, where the soul of a sinner was in question. You can see what a piece of work it would make of their sympathies. But the lawyers are quicker witted than either of the other professions, and abler men generally. They are good-natured, or, if they quarrel, their quarrels are above-board. I don't think they are as

accomplished as the ministers, but they have a way of cramming with special knowledge for a case which leaves a certain shallow sediment of intelligence in their memories about a good many things. They are apt to talk law in mixed company, and they have a way of looking round when they make a point, as if they were addressing a jury, that is mighty aggravating, as I once had occasion to see when one of 'em, and a pretty famous one, put me on the witness-stand at a dinner-party once.

The ministers come next in point of talent They are far more curious and widely interested outside of their own calling than either of the other professions. I like to talk with 'em. They are interesting men, full of good feelings, hard workers, always foremost in good deeds, and on the whole the most efficient civilising class, working downwards from knowledge to ignorance, that is,—not so much upwards, perhaps,—that we have. The trouble is, that so many of 'em work in harness, and it is pretty sure to chafe somewhere. They feed us on canned meats mostly. They cripple our instincts and reason, and give us a crutch of doctrine. I have talked with a great many of 'em of all sorts of belief, and I don't think they are

quite so easy in their minds, the greater number of them, nor so clear in their convictions, as one would think to hear 'em lay down the law in the pulpit. They used to lead the intelligence of their parishes; now they do pretty well if they keep up with it, and they are very apt to lag behind it. Then they must have a colleague. The old minister thinks he can hold to his old course, sailing right into the wind's eye of human nature, as straight as that famous old skipper John Bunyan; the young minister falls off three or four points and catches the breeze that left the old man's sails all shivering. By-and-by the congregation will get ahead of *him*, and then it must have another new skipper. The *priest* holds his own pretty well; the *minister* is coming down every generation nearer and nearer to the common level of the useful citizen,—no oracle at all, but a man of more than average moral instincts, who, if he knows anything, knows how little he knows. The ministers are good talkers, only the struggle between nature and grace makes some of 'em a little awkward occasionally. The women do their best to spoil 'em, as they do the poets; you find it very pleasant to be spoiled, no doubt; so do they. Now

and then one of 'em goes over the dam; no wonder, they 're always in the rapids.

By this time our three ladies had their faces all turned toward the speaker, like the weathercocks in a north-easter, and I thought it best to switch off the talk on to another rail.

How about the doctors?—I said.

—Theirs is the least learned of the professions, in this country at least. They have not half the general culture of the lawyers, nor a quarter of that of the ministers. I rather think, though, they are more agreeable to the common run of people than the men with black coats or the men with green bags. People can swear before 'em if they want to, and they can't very well before ministers. I don't care whether they want to swear or not, they don't want to be on their good behaviour. Besides, the minister has a little smack of the sexton about him; he comes when people are *in extremis*, but they don't send for him every time they make a slight moral slip,—tell a lie for instance, or smuggle a silk dress through the custom-house; but they call in the doctor when a child is cutting a tooth or gets a splinter in its finger. So it doesn't mean much to send for him, only a pleasant chat about the news of

the day; for putting the baby to rights doesn't take long. Besides, everybody doesn't like to talk about the next world; people are modest in their desires, and find this world as good as they deserve; but everybody loves to talk physic. Everybody loves to hear of strange cases; people are eager to tell the doctor of the wonderful cures they have heard of; they want to know what is the matter with somebody or other who is said to be suffering from "a complication of diseases," and above all to get a hard name, Greek or Latin, for some complaint which sounds altogether too commonplace in plain English. If you will only call a headache a *Cephalalgia*, it acquires dignity at once, and a patient becomes rather proud of it. So I think doctors are generally welcome in most companies.

In old times, when people were more afraid of the Devil and of witches than they are now, they liked to have a priest or a minister somewhere near to scare 'em off; but nowadays, if you could find an old woman that would ride round the room on a broomstick, Barnum would build an amphitheatre to exhibit her in; and if he could come across a young imp, with hoofs, tail, and budding horns, a lineal descendant of

one of those "dæmons" which the good people of Gloucester fired at, and were fired at by "for the best part of a month together" in the year 1692, the great showman would have him at any cost for his museum or menagerie. Men are cowards, sir, and are driven by fear as the sovereign motive. Men are idolaters, and want something to look at and kiss and hug, or throw themselves down before; they always did, they always will; and if you don't make it of wood, you must make it of words, which are just as much used for idols as promissory notes are used for values. The ministers have a hard time of it without bell and book and holy water; they are dismounted men in armour since Luther cut their saddle-girths, and you can see they are quietly taking off one piece of iron after another until some of the best of 'em are fighting the devil (not the zoological Devil with the big D) with the sword of the Spirit, and precious little else in the way of weapons of offence or defence. But we couldn't get on without the spiritual brotherhood, whatever became of our special creeds. There is a genius for religion, just as there is for painting or sculpture. It is half-sister to the genius for music, and has some of the features

which remind us of earthly love. But it lifts us all by its mere presence. To see a good man and hear his voice once a week would be reason enough for building churches and pulpits. — The Master stopped all at once, and after about half a minute laughed his pleasant laugh.

What is it?—I asked him.

I was thinking of the great coach and team that is carrying us fast enough, I don't know but too fast, somewhere or other. The D.D.'s used to be the leaders, but now they are the wheel-horses. It's pretty hard to tell how much they pull, but we know they can hold back like the—

—When we're going down hill,—I said, as neatly as if I had been a High-Church curate trained to snap at the last word of the response, so that you couldn't wedge in the tail of a comma between the end of the congregation's closing syllable and the beginning of the next petition. They do it well, but it always spoils my devotion. To save my life, I can't help watching them, as I watch to see a duck dive at the flash of a gun, and that is not what I go to church for. It is a juggler's trick, and there is no more religion in it than in catching a ball on the fly.

I was looking at our Scheherazade the other day, and thinking what a pity it was that she had never had fair play in the world. I wish I knew more of her history. There is one way of learning it,—making love to her. I wonder whether she would let me and like it. It is an absurd thing, and I ought not to confess, but I tell you and you only, Beloved, my heart gave a perceptible jump when it heard the whisper of that possibility overhead! Every day has its ebb and flow, but such a thought as that is like one of those tidal waves they talk about, that rolls in like a great wall and overtops and drowns out all your landmarks, and you too, if you don't mind what you are about and stand ready to run or climb or swim. Not quite so bad as that, though, this time. I take an interest in our Scheherazade. I am glad she didn't smile on the pipe and the Bohemian-looking fellow that finds the best part of his life in sucking at it. A fine thing, isn't it, for a young woman to marry a man who will hold her

> "Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse,"

but not quite so good as his meerschaum? It isn't for me to throw stones, though, who

have been a Nicotian a good deal more than half my days. Cigar-stump out now, and consequently have become very bitter on more persevering sinners. I say I take an interest in our Scheherazade, but I rather think it is more paternal than anything else, though my heart did give that jump. It has jumped a good many times without anything very remarkable coming of it.

This visit to the Observatory is going to bring us all, or most of us, together in a new way, and it wouldn't be very odd if some of us should become better acquainted than we ever have been. There is a chance for the elective affinities. What tremendous forces they are, if two subjects of them come within range! There lies a bit of iron. All the dynamic agencies of the universe are pledged to hold it just in that position, and there it will lie until it becomes a heap of red-brown rust. But see, I hold a magnet to it,—it looks to you like just such a bit of iron as the other,—and lo! it leaves them all,—the tugging of the mighty earth; of the ghostly moon that walks in white, trailing the snaky waves of the ocean after her; of the awful sun, twice as large as a sphere that the whole orbit of the moon would but just girdle,—it leaves the wrestling of all their

forces, which are at a dead lock with each other, all fighting for it, and springs straight to the magnet. What a lucky thing it is for well-conducted persons that the maddening elective affinities don't come into play in full force very often!

I suppose I am making a good deal more of our prospective visit than it deserves. It must be because I have got it into my head that we are bound to have some kind of sentimental outbreak amongst us, and that this will give a chance for advances on the part of anybody disposed in that direction. A little change of circumstance often hastens on a movement that has been long in preparation. A chemist will show you a flask containing a clear liquid; he will give it a shake or two, and the whole contents of the flask will become solid in an instant. Or you may lay a little heap of iron-filings on a sheet of paper with a magnet beneath it, and they will be quiet enough as they are, but give the paper a slight jar and the specks of metal will suddenly find their way to the north or the south pole of the magnet and take a definite shape not unpleasing to contemplate, and curiously illustrating the laws of attraction, antagonism, and average, by which the worlds, conscious and unconscious,

are alike governed. So with our little party, with any little party of persons who have got used to each other; leave them undisturbed and they might remain in a state of equilibrium for ever; but let anything give them a shake or a jar, and the long-striving but hindered affinities come all at once into play and finish the work of a year in five minutes.

We were all a good deal excited by the anticipation of this visit. The Capitalist, who for the most part keeps entirely to himself, seemed to take an interest in it, and joined the group in the parlour who were making arrangements as to the details of the eventful expedition, which was very soon to take place. The Young Girl was full of enthusiasm; she is one of those young persons, I think, who are impressible, and of necessity depressible when their nervous systems are overtasked, but elastic, recovering easily from mental worries and fatigues, and only wanting a little change of their conditions to get back their bloom and cheerfulness. I could not help being pleased to see how much of the child was left in her, after all the drudgery she had been through. What is there that youth will not endure and triumph over? Here she was; her story for the week was done in good season; she

had got rid of her villain by a new and original catastrophe; she had received a sum of money for an extra string of verses,—painfully small, it is true, but it would buy her a certain ribbon she wanted for the great excursion; and now her eyes sparkled so that I forgot how tired and hollow they sometimes looked when she had been sitting up half the night over her endless manuscript.

The morning of the day we had looked forward to promised as good an evening as we could wish. The Capitalist, whose courteous and bland demeanour would never have suggested the thought that he was a robber and an enemy of his race, who was to be trampled underfoot by the beneficent regenerators of the social order as preliminary to the universal reign of peace on earth and good-will to men, astonished us all with a proposal to escort the three ladies and procure a carriage for their conveyance. The Lady thanked him in a very cordial way, but said she thought nothing of the walk. The Landlady looked disappointed at this answer. For her part she was on her legs all day and should be glad enough to ride, if so be he was going to have a carriage at any rate. It would be a sight

pleasanter than to trudge afoot, but she wouldn't have him go to the expense on her account.—Don't mention it, madam,—said the Capitalist, in a generous glow of enthusiasm. As for the Young Girl, she did not often get a chance for a drive, and liked the idea of it for its own sake, as children do, and she insisted that the Lady should go in the carriage with her. So it was settled that the Capitalist should take the three ladies in a carriage, and the rest of us go on foot.

The evening behaved as it was bound to do on so momentous an occasion. The Capitalist was dressed with almost suspicious nicety. We pedestrians could not help waiting to see them off, and I thought he handed the ladies into the carriage with the air of a French marquis

I walked with Dr. Benjamin and That Boy, and we had to keep the little imp on the trot a good deal of the way in order not to be too long behind the carriage party. The Member of the Haouse walked with our two dummies,—I beg their pardon, I mean the Register of Deeds and the Salesman.

The Man of Letters, hypothetically so called, walked by himself, smoking a short pipe which was very far from suggesting the

spicy breezes that blow soft from Ceylon's isle.

I suppose everybody who reads this paper has visited one or more observatories, and of course knows all about them. But as it may hereafter be translated into some foreign tongue and circulated among barbarous, but rapidly improving people, people who have as yet no astronomers among them, it may be well to give a little notion of what kind of place an observatory is.

To begin then: a deep and solid stone foundation is laid in the earth, and a massive pier of masonry is built up on it. A heavy block of granite forms the summit of this pier, and on this block rests the equatorial telescope. Around this structure a circular tower is built, with two or more floors which come close up to the pier, but do not touch it at any point. It is crowned with a hemispherical dome, which, I may remark, half realises the idea of my egg-shell studio. This dome is cleft from its base to its summit by a narrow, ribbon-like opening, through which is seen the naked sky. It revolves on cannon-balls, so easily that a single hand can move it, and thus the opening may be turned towards any point of the compass. As the telescope can be

raised or depressed so as to be directed to any elevation from the horizon to the zenith, and turned around the entire circle with the dome, it can be pointed to any part of the heavens. But as the star or other celestial object is always apparently moving, in consequence of the real rotatory movement of the earth, the telescope is made to follow it automatically by an ingenious clockwork arrangement. No place, short of the temple of the living God, can be more solemn. The jars of the restless life around it do not disturb the serene intelligence of the half-reasoning apparatus. Nothing can stir the massive pier but the shocks that shake the solid earth itself. When an earthquake thrills the planet, the massive turret shudders with the shuddering rocks on which it rests, but it pays no heed to the wildest tempest, and while the heavens are convulsed and shut from the eye of the far-seeing instrument it waits without a tremor for the blue sky to come back. It is the type of the true and steadfast man of the Roman poet, whose soul remains unmoved while the firmament cracks and tumbles about him. It is the material image of the Christian; his heart resting on the Rock of Ages, his eye fixed on the brighter world above.

I did not say all this while we were looking round among these wonders, quite new to many of us. People don't talk in straight-off sentences like that. They stumble and stop, or get interrupted, change a word, begin again, miss connections of verbs and nouns, and so on, till they blunder out their meaning. But I did let fall a word or two, showing the impression the celestial laboratory produced upon me. I rather think I must own to the "Rock of Ages" comparison. Thereupon the "Man of Letters," so called, took his pipe from his mouth, and said that he didn't go in "for sentiment and that sort of thing. Gush was played out."

The Member of the Haouse, who, as I think, is not wanting in that homely good sense which one often finds in plain people from the huckleberry districts, but who evidently supposes the last speaker to be what he calls "a tahlented mahn," looked a little puzzled. My remark seemed natural and harmless enough to him, I suppose, but I had been distinctly snubbed, and the Member of the Haouse thought I must defend myself, as is customary in the deliberative body to which he belongs, when one gentleman accuses another gentleman of mental

weakness or obliquity. I could not make up my mind to oblige him at that moment by showing fight. I suppose that would have pleased my assailant, as I don't think he has a great deal to lose, and might have made a little capital out of me if he could have got a laugh out of the Member or either of the dummies,—I beg their pardon again, I mean the two undemonstrative boarders. But I will tell *you*, Beloved, just what I think about this matter.

We poets, you know, are much given to indulging in sentiment, which is a mode of consciousness at a discount just now with the new generation of analysts who are throwing everything into their crucibles. Now we must not claim too much for sentiment. It does not go a great way in deciding questions of arithmetic, or algebra, or geometry. Two and two will undoubtedly make four, irrespective of the emotions or other idiosyncrasies of the calculator ; and the three angles of a triangle insist on being equal to two right angles, in the face of the most impassioned rhetoric or the most inspired verse. But inasmuch as religion and law and the whole social order of civilised society, to say nothing of literature and art, are so founded on and pervaded by senti-

ment that they would all go to pieces without it, it is a word not to be used too lightly in passing judgment, as if it were an element to be thrown out or treated with small consideration. Reason may be the lever, but sentiment gives you the fulcrum and the place to stand on if you want to move the world. Even "sentimentality," which is sentiment overdone, is better than that affectation of superiority to human weakness which is only tolerable as one of the stage properties of full-blown dandyism, and is, at best, but half-blown cynicism; which participle and noun you can translate, if you happen to remember the derivation of the last of them, by a single familiar word. There is a great deal of false sentiment in the world, as there is of bad logic and erroneous doctrine; but it is very much less disagreeable to hear a young poet overdo his emotions, or even deceive himself about them, than to hear a caustic-epithet flinger repeating such words as "sentimentality" and "entusymusy,"—one of the least admirable of Lord Byron's bequests to our language,—for the purpose of ridiculing him into silence. An over-dressed woman is not so pleasing as she might be, but at any rate she is better than the oil of vitriol squirter,

whose profession it is to teach young ladies to avoid vanity by spoiling their showy silks and satins.

The Lady was the first of our party who was invited to look through the equatorial. Perhaps this world had proved so hard to her that she was pained to think that other worlds existed, to be homes of suffering and sorrow. Perhaps she was thinking it would be a happy change when she should leave this dark planet for one of those brighter spheres. She sighed, at any rate, but thanked the young astronomer for the beautiful sights he had shown her, and gave way to the next comer, who was That Boy, now in a state of irrepressible enthusiasm to see the Man in the Moon. He was greatly disappointed at not making out a colossal human figure moving round among the shining summits and shadowy ravines of the "spotty globe."

The Landlady came next, and wished to see the moon also, in preference to any other object. She was astonished at the revelations of the powerful telescope. Was there any live creatures to be seen on the moon? she asked. The young astronomer shook his head, smiling a little at the question. Was there any meet'n'-houses? There

was no evidence, he said, that the moon was inhabited. As there did not seem to be either air or water on its surface, the inhabitants would have a rather hard time of it, and if they went to meeting the sermons would be apt to be rather dry. If there were a building on it as big as York minster, as big as the Boston Coliseum, the great telescopes like Lord Rosse's would make it out. But it seemed to be a forlorn place; those who had studied it most agreed in considering it a "cold, crude, silent, and desolate" ruin of nature, without the possibility, if life were on it, of articulate speech, of music, even of sound. Sometimes a greenish tint was seen upon its surface, which might have been taken for vegetation, but it was thought not improbably to be a reflection from the vast forests of South America. The ancients had a fancy, some of them, that the face of the moon was a mirror in which the seas and shores of the earth were imaged. Now we know the geography of the side toward us about as well as that of Asia, better than that of Africa. The astronomer showed them one of the common small photographs of the moon. He assured them that he had received letters inquiring in all seriousness if

these alleged lunar photographs were not really taken from a *peeled orange*. People had got angry with him for laughing at them for asking such a question. Then he gave them an account of the famous moon-hoax which came out, he believed, in 1835. It was full of the most barefaced absurdities, yet people swallowed it all, and even Arago is said to have treated it seriously as a thing that could not well be true, for Mr. Herschel would have certainly notified him of these marvellous discoveries. The writer of it had not troubled himself to invent probabilities, but had borrowed his scenery from the *Arabian Nights* and his lunar inhabitants from *Peter Wilkins*.

After this lecture the Capitalist stepped forward and applied his eye to the lens. I suspect it to have been shut most of the time, for I observe a good many elderly people adjust the organ of vision to any optical instrument in that way. I suppose it is from the instinct of protection to the eye, the same instinct as that which makes the raw militia-man close it when he pulls the trigger of his musket the first time. He expressed himself highly gratified, however, with what he saw, and retired from the instrument to make room for the Young Girl.

She threw her hair back and took her position at the instrument. Saint Simeon Stylites the Younger explained the wonders of the moon to her,—Tycho and the grooves radiating from it, Kepler and Copernicus with their craters and ridges, and all the most brilliant shows of this wonderful little world. I thought he was more diffuse and more enthusiastic in his descriptions than he had been with the older members of the party. I don't doubt the old gentleman who lived so long on the top of his pillar would have kept a pretty sinner (if he could have had an elevator to hoist her up to him) longer than he would have kept her grandmother. These young people are so ignorant, you know. As for our Scheherazade, her delight was unbounded, and her curiosity insatiable. If there were any living creatures there, what odd things they must be. They couldn't have any lungs, nor any hearts. What a pity! Did they ever die? How could they expire if they didn't breathe? Burn up? No air to burn in. Tumble into some of those horrid pits, perhaps, and break all to bits. She wondered how the young people there liked it, or whether there were any young people there; perhaps nobody was young and nobody was old, but they

were like mummies all of them—what an idea—two mummies making love to each other! So she went on in a rattling, giddy kind of way, for she was excited by the strange scene in which she found herself, and quite astonished the young Astronomer with her vivacity. All at once she turned to him.

Will you show me the double star you said I should see.

With the greatest pleasure,—he said, and proceeded to wheel the ponderous dome, and then to adjust the instrument, I think to the one in Andromeda, or that in Cygnus, but I should not know one of them from the other.

How beautiful!—she said as she looked at the wonderful object.—One is orange red and one is emerald green.

The young man made an explanation in which he said something about complementary colours.

Goodness!—exclaimed the Landlady.—What! complimentary to our party?

Her wits must have been a good deal confused by the strange sights of the evening. She had seen tickets marked *complimentary*, she remembered, but she could not for the life of her understand why our party should be particularly favoured at a celestial exhibi-

tion like this. On the whole, she questioned inwardly whether it might not be some subtle pleasantry, and smiled, experimentally, with a note of interrogation in the smile, but, finding no encouragement, allowed her features to subside gradually as if nothing had happened. I saw all this as plainly as if it had all been printed in great-primer type, instead of working itself out in her features. I like to see other people muddled now and then, because my own occasional dulness is relieved by a good solid background of stupidity in my neighbours.

—And the two revolve round each other? —said the Young Girl.

—Yes,—he answered,—two suns, a greater and a less, each shining, but with a different light, for the other.

—How charming! It must be so much pleasanter than to be alone in such a great empty space! I should think one would hardly care to shine if its light wasted itself in the monstrous solitude of the sky. Does not a single star seem very lonely to you up there?

—Not more lonely than I am myself,— answered the young Astronomer.

—I don't know what there was in those few words, but I noticed that for a minute or two after they were uttered I heard the

ticking of the clockwork that moved the telescope as clearly as if we had all been holding our breath, and listening for the music of the spheres.

The Young Girl kept her eye closely applied to the eye-piece of the telescope a very long time, it seemed to me. Those double stars interested her a good deal, no doubt. When she looked off from the glass I thought both her eyes appeared very much as if they had been a little strained, for they were suffused and glistening. It may be that she pitied the lonely young man.

I know nothing in the world tenderer than the pity that a kind-hearted young girl has for a young man who feels lonely. It is true that these dear creatures are all compassion for every form of human woe, and anxious to alleviate all human misfortunes. They will go to Sunday schools through storms their brothers are afraid of, to teach the most unpleasant and intractable classes of little children the age of Methuselah and the dimensions of Og the King of Bashan's bedstead. They will stand behind a table at a fair all day until they are ready to drop, dressed in their prettiest clothes and their sweetest smiles, and lay hands upon you, like so many Lady Potiphars,—perfectly

correct ones, of course,—to make you buy what you do not want, at prices which you cannot afford ; all this as cheerfully as if it were not martyrdom to them as well as to you. Such is their love for all good objects, such their eagerness to sympathise with all their suffering fellow-creatures ! But there is nothing they pity as they pity a lonely young man.

I am sure, I sympathise with her in this instance. To see a pale student burning away, like his own midnight lamp, with only dead men's hands to hold, stretched out to him from the sepulchres of books, and dead men's souls imploring him from their tablets to warm them over again just for a little while in a human consciousness, when all this time there are soft, warm, living hands that would ask nothing better than to bring the blood back into those cold thin fingers, and gently caressing natures that would wind all their tendrils about the unawakened heart which knows so little of itself, is pitiable enough and would be sadder still if we did not have the feeling that sooner or later the pale student will be pretty sure to feel the breath of a young girl against his cheek as she looks over his shoulder ; and that he will come all at once

to an illuminated page in his book that never writer traced in characters, and never printer set up in type, and never binder enclosed within his covers! But our young man seems further away from life than any student whose head is bent downwards over his books. His eyes are turned away from all human things. How cold the moonlight is that falls upon his forehead, and how white he looks in it! Will not the rays strike through to his brain at last, and send him to a narrower cell than this egg-shell dome which is his workshop and his prison?

I cannot say that the young Astronomer seemed particularly impressed with a sense of his miserable condition. He said he was lonely, it is true, but he said it in a manly tone, and not as if he were repining at the inevitable condition of his devoting himself to that particular branch of science. Of course, he is lonely, the most lonely being that lives in the midst of our breathing world. If he would only stay a little longer with us when we get talking; but he is busy almost always either in observation or with his calculations and studies, and when the nights are fair loses so much sleep that he must make it up by day. He wants contact with human beings. I wish he would

change his seat and come round and sit by our Scheherazade!

The rest of the visit went off well enough, except that the "Man of Letters," so called, rather snubbed some of the heavenly bodies as not quite up to his standard of brilliancy. I thought myself that the double-star episode was the best part of it.

I have an unexpected revelation to make to the reader. Not long after our visit to the Observatory, the young Astronomer put a package into my hands, a manuscript, evidently, which he said he would like to have me glance over. I found something in it which interested me, and told him the next day that I should like to read it with some care. He seemed rather pleased at this, and said that he wished I would criticise it as roughly as I liked, and if I saw anything in it which might be dressed to better advantage to treat it freely, just as if it were my own production. It had often happened to him, he went on to say, to be interrupted in his observations by clouds covering the objects he was examining for a longer or shorter time. In these idle moments he had put down many thoughts, unskilfully he feared, but just as they came into his

mind. His blank verse he suspected was often faulty. His thoughts he knew must be crude, many of them. It would please him to have me amuse myself by putting them into shape. He was kind enough to say that I was an artist in words, but he held himself as an unskilled apprentice.

I confess I was appalled when I cast my eye upon the title of the manuscript, "Cirri and Nebulæ."

—Oh ! oh !—I said,—that will never do. People don't know what Cirri are, at least not one out of fifty readers. "Wind-Clouds and Star-Drifts" will do better than that.

—Anything you like,—he answered,—what difference does it make how you christen a foundling? These are not my legitimate scientific offspring, and you may consider them left on your doorstep.

—I will not attempt to say just how much of the diction of these lines belongs to him, and how much to me. He said he would never claim them, after I read them to him in my version. I, on my part, do not wish to be held responsible for some of his more daring thoughts, if I should see fit to reproduce them hereafter. At this time I shall give only the first part of the series of poetical outbreaks for which the young devotee

of science must claim his share of the responsibility. I may put some more passages into shape by-and-by.

WIND-CLOUDS AND STAR-DRIFTS.

Another clouded night ; the stars are hid,
The orb that waits my search is hid with them.
Patience ! Why grudge an hour, a month, a year,
To plant my ladder and to gain the round
That leads my footsteps to the heaven of fame,
Where waits the wreath my sleepless midnights won ?
Not the stained laurel such as heroes wear
That withers when some stronger conqueror's heel
Treads down their shrivelling trophies in the dust ;
But the fair garland whose undying green
Not time can change, nor wrath of gods or men !

With quickened heart-beats I shall hear the tongues
That speak my praise ; but better far the sense
That in the unshaped ages, buried deep
In the dark mines of unaccomplished time
Yet to be stamped with morning's royal die
And coined in golden days,—in those dim years
I shall be reckoned with the undying dead,

My name emblazoned on the fiery arch,
Unfading till the stars themselves shall fade.
Then, as they call the roll of shining worlds,
Sages of race unborn in accents new
Shall count me with the Olympian ones of old,
Whose glories kindle through the midnigh sky :
Here glows the God of Battles ; this recalls
The Lord of Ocean, and yon far-off sphere
The Sire of Him who gave his ancient name
To the dim planet with the wondrous rings ;
Here flames the Queen of Beauty's silver lamp,
And there the moon-girt orb of mighty Jove ;
But *this*, unseen through all earth's æons past,
A youth who watched beneath the western star
Sought in the darkness, found, and showed to men ;
Linked with his name thenceforth and evermore !
So shall that name be syllabled anew
In all the tongues of all the tribes of men :
I that have been through immemorial years
Dust in the dust of my forgotten time
Shall live in accents shaped of blood-warm breath,
Yea, rise in mortal semblance, newly born
In shining stone, in undecaying bronze,
And stand on high, and look serenely down
On the new race that calls the earth its own.

Is this a cloud, that, blown athwart my soul,
Wears a false seeming of the pearly stain

Where worlds beyond the world their mingling rays
Blend in soft white,—a cloud that, born of earth,
Would cheat the soul that looks for light from heaven?
Must every coral-insect leave his sign
On each poor grain he lent to build the reef,
As Babel's builders stamped their sunburnt clay,
Or deem his patient service all in vain?
What if another sit beneath the shade
Of the broad elm I planted by the way,—
What if another heed the beacon light
I set upon the rock that wrecked my keel,—
Have I not done my task and served my kind?
Nay, rather act thy part, unnamed, unknown,
And let Fame blow her trumpet through the world
With noisy wind to swell a fool's renown,
Joined with some truth he stumbled blindly o'er,
Or coupled with some single shining deed
That in the great account of all his days
Will stand alone upon the bankrupt sheet
His pitying angel shows the clerk of Heaven.
The noblest service comes from nameless hands,
And the best servant does his work unseen.
Who found the seeds of fire and made them shoot,
Fed by his breath, in buds and flowers of flame?
Who forged in roaring flames the ponderous stone,
And shaped the moulded metal to his need?
Who gave the dragging car its rolling wheel,

And tamed the steed that whirls its circling round?
All these have left their work and not their names,—
Why should I murmur at a fate like theirs
This is the heavenly light; the pearly stain
Was but a wind-cloud drifting o'er the stars!

VI.

I FIND I have so many things in common with the old Master of Arts, that I do not always know whether a thought was originally his or mine. That is what always happens where two persons of a similar cast of mind talk much together. And both of them often gain by the interchange. Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up. That which was a weed in one intelligence becomes a flower in the other. A flower, on the other hand, may dwindle down to a mere weed by the same change. Healthy growths may become poisonous by falling upon the wrong mental soil, and what seemed a night-shade in one mind unfold as a morning glory in the other.

—I thank God,—the Master said,—that a great many people believe a great deal more than I do. I think, when it comes to serious matters, I like those who believe more than I do better than those who believe less.

—Why,—said I,—you have got hold of one of my own working axioms. I should like to hear you develop it.

The Member of the Haouse said he should be glad to listen to the debate. The gentleman had the floor. The Scarabee rose from his chair and departed;—I thought his joints creaked as he straightened himself.

The Young Girl made a slight movement; it was a purely accidental coincidence, no doubt, but I saw That Boy put his hand in his pocket and pull out his popgun, and begin loading it. It cannot be that our Scheherazade, who looks so quiet and proper at the table, can make use of That Boy and his catapult to control the course of conversation and change it to suit herself! She certainly looks innocent enough; but what does a blush prove, and what does its absence prove, on one of these innocent faces? There is nothing in all this world that can lie and cheat like the face and the tongue of a young girl. Just give her a little touch of hysteria,—I don't mean enough of it to make her friends call the doctor in, but a slight hint of it in the nervous system,—and "Machiavel the waiting-maid" might take lessons of her. But I cannot think our Scheherazade is one

of that kind, and I am ashamed of myself for noting such a trifling coincidence as that which excited my suspicion.

—I say,—the Master continued,—that I had rather be in the company of those who believe more than I do, in spiritual matters at least, than of those who doubt what I accept as a part of my belief.

—To tell the truth,—said I,—I find that difficulty sometimes in talking with you. You have not quite so many hesitations as I have in following out your logical conclusions. I suppose you would bring some things out into daylight questioning that I had rather leave in that twilight of half-belief peopled with shadows—if they are only shadows—more sacred to me than many realities.

There is nothing I do not question,—said the Master;—I not only begin with the precept of Descartes, but I hold all my opinions involving any chain of reasoning always open to revision.

—I confess that I smiled internally to hear him say that. The old Master thinks he is open to conviction on all subjects; but if you meddle with some of his notions and don't get tossed on his horns as if a bull had hold of you, I should call you lucky.

—You don't mean you doubt everything? —I said.

—What do you think I question everything for,—the Master replied,—if I never get any answers? You 've seen a blind man with a stick, feeling his way along? Well, I am a blind man with a stick, and I find the world pretty full of men just as blind as I am, but without any stick. I try the ground to find out whether it is firm or not before I rest my weight on it; but after it has borne my weight, that question at least is answered. It very certainly was strong enough once; the presumption is that it is strong enough now. Still the soil may have been undermined, or I may have grown heavier. Make as much of that as you will. I say I question everything; but if I find Bunker Hill Monument standing as straight as when I leaned against it a year or ten years ago, I am not very much afraid that Bunker Hill will cave in if I trust myself again on the soil of it.

I glanced off, as one often does in talk.

The Monument is an awful place to visit, —I said.—The waves of time are like the waves of the ocean; the only thing they beat against without destroying it is a rock; and they destroy that at last. But it takes a good while. There is a stone now stand-

ing in very good order that was as old as a monument of Louis XIV. and Queen Anne's day is now when Joseph went down into Egypt. Think of the shaft on Bunker Hill standing in the sunshine on the morning of January 1st in the year 5872!

It won't be standing,—the Master said.—We are poor bunglers compared to those old Egyptians. There are no joints in one of their obelisks. They are our masters in more ways than we know of, and in more ways than some of us are willing to know. That old Lawgiver wasn't learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians for nothing. It scared people well a couple of hundred years ago when Sir John Marsham and Dr. John Spencer ventured to tell their stories about the sacred ceremonies of the Egyptian priesthood. People are beginning to find out now that you can't study any religion by itself to any good purpose. You must have comparative theology as you have comparative anatomy. What would you make of a cat's foolish little good-for-nothing collar-bone, if you did not know how the same bone means a good deal in other creatures,—in yourself, for instance, as you 'll find out if you break it? You can't know too much of your race and its beliefs, if you want to know any-

thing about your Maker. I never found but one sect large enough to hold the whole of me.

—And may I ask what that was?—I said.

—The Human sect,—the Master answered. —That has about room enough for me,—at present, I mean to say.

—Including cannibals and all?—said I.

—Oh, as to that, the *eating* of one's kind is a matter of taste, but the *roasting* of them has been rather more a specialty of our own particular belief than of any other I am acquainted with. If you broil a saint, I don't see why, if you have a mind, you shouldn't serve him up at your—

Pop! went the little piece of artillery. Don't tell me it was accident. I know better. You can't suppose for one minute that a boy like that one would time his interruptions so cleverly. Now it so happened that at that particular moment *Dr. B. Franklin was not at the table.* You may draw your own conclusions. I say nothing, but I think a good deal.

—I came back to the Bunker Hill Monument.—I often think—I said—of the dynasty which is to reign in its shadow for some thousands of years, it may be.

The "Man of Letters," so called, asked me, in a tone I did not exactly like, whether I

expected to live long enough to see a monarchy take the place of a republic in this country.

—No,—said I,—I was thinking of something very different. I was indulging a fancy of mine about the Man who is to sit at the foot of the monument for one, or it may be two or three thousand years. As long as the monument stands and there is a city near it, there will always be a man to take the names of visitors and extract some small tribute from their pockets, I suppose. I sometimes get thinking of the long, unbroken succession of these men, until they come to look like one Man; continuous in being, unchanging as the stone he watches, looking upon the successive generations of human beings as they come and go, and outliving all the dynasties of the world in all probability. It has come to such a pass that I never speak to the Man of the Monument without wanting to take my hat off and feeling as if I were looking down a vista of twenty or thirty centuries.

The "Man of Letters," so called, said, in a rather contemptuous way, I thought, that he hadn't got so far as that. He wasn't quite up to moral reflections on toll-men and ticket-takers. Sentiment wasn't his tap.

He looked round triumphantly for a response: but the Capitalist was a little hard of hearing just then; the Register of Deeds was browsing on his food in the calm bovine abstraction of a quadruped, and paid no attention; the Salesman had bolted his breakfast, and whisked himself away with that peculiar alacrity which belongs to the retail-dealer's assistant; and the Member of the Haouse, who had sometimes seemed to be impressed with his "tahlented mahn's" air of superiority to the rest of us, looked as if he thought the speaker was not exactly parliamentary. So he failed to make his point, and reddened a little, and was not in the best humour, I thought, when he left the table. I hope he will not let off any of his irritation on our poor little Scheherazade; but the truth is, the first person a man of this sort (if he is what I think him) meets, when he is out of humour, has to be made a victim of, and I only hope our Young Girl will not have to play Jephthah's daughter.

And that leads me to say, I cannot help thinking that the kind of criticism to which this Young Girl has been subjected from some person or other, who is willing to be smart at her expense, is hurtful and not wholesome. The question is a delicate one.

So many foolish persons are rushing into print, that it requires a kind of literary police to hold them back and keep them in order. Where there are mice there must be cats, and where there are rats we may think it worth our while to keep a terrier, who will give them a shake and let them drop, with all the mischief taken out of them. But the process is a rude and cruel one at best, and it too often breeds a love of destructiveness for its own sake in those who get their living by it. A poor poem or essay does not do much harm after all; nobody reads it who is like to be seriously hurt by it. But a sharp criticism with a drop of witty venom in it stings a young author almost to death, and makes an old one uncomfortable to no purpose. If it were my business to sit in judgment on my neighbours, I would try to be courteous, at least, to those who had done any good service, but, above all, I would handle tenderly those young authors who are coming before the public in the flutter of their first or early appearance, and are in the trembling delirium of stage-fright already. Before you write that brilliant notice of some alliterative Angelina's book of verses, I wish you would try this experiment.

Take half a sheet of paper and copy upon it any of Angelina's stanzas,—the ones you were going to make fun of, if you will. Now go to your window, if it is a still day, open it, and let the half-sheet of paper drop on the outside. How gently it falls through the soft air, always tending downwards, but sliding softly, from side to side, wavering, hesitating, balancing, until it settles as noiselessly as a snow-flake upon the all-receiving bosom of the earth! Just such would have been the fate of poor Angelina's fluttering effort, if you had left it to itself. It would have slanted downward into oblivion so sweetly and softly that she would have never known when it reached that harmless consummation.

Our *epizoic* literature is becoming so extensive that nobody is safe from its *ad infinitum* progeny. A man writes a book of criticisms. A Quarterly Review criticises the critic. A Monthly Magazine takes up the critic's critic. A Weekly Journal criticises the critic of the critic's critic, and a daily paper favours us with some critical remarks on the performance of the writer in the Weekly, who has criticised the critical notice in the Monthly of the critical essay in the Quarterly on the critical work we started with. And thus

we see that as each flea "has smaller fleas that on him prey," even the critic himself cannot escape the common lot of being bitten. Whether all this is a blessing or a curse, like that one which made Pharaoh and all his household run to their toilet-tables, is a question about which opinions might differ. The physiologists of the time of Moses—if there were vivisectors other than priests in those days—would probably have considered that other plague, of the frogs, as a fortunate opportunity for science, as this poor little beast has been the *souffre-douleur* of experimenters and schoolboys from time immemorial.

But there is a form of criticism to which none will object. It is impossible to come before a public so alive with sensibilities as this we live in, with the smallest evidence of a sympathetic disposition, without making friends in a very unexpected way. Everywhere there are minds tossing on the unquiet waves of doubt. If you confess to the same perplexities and uncertainties that torture them, they are grateful for your companionship. If you have groped your way out of the wilderness in which you were once wandering with them, they will follow your footsteps, it may be, and bless you as their

deliverer. So, all at once, a writer finds he has a parish of devout listeners, scattered, it is true, beyond the reach of any summons but that of a trumpet like the archangel's, to whom his slight discourse may be of more value than the exhortations they hear from the pulpit, if these last do not happen to suit their special needs. Young men with more ambition and intelligence than force of character, who have missed their first steps in life and are stumbling irresolute amidst vague aims and changing purposes, hold out their hands, imploring to be led into, or at least pointed towards, some path where they can find a firm foothold. Young women born into a chilling atmosphere of circumstance which keeps all the buds of their nature unopened and always striving to get to a ray of sunshine, if one finds its way to their neighbourhood, tell their stories, sometimes simply and touchingly, sometimes in a more or less affected and rhetorical way, but still stories of defeated and disappointed instincts which ought to make any moderately impressible person feel very tenderly toward them.

In speaking privately to these young persons, many of whom have literary aspirations, one should be very considerate of their human feelings. But addressing them

collectively, a few plain truths will not give any one of them much pain. Indeed, almost every individual among them will feel sure that he or she is an exception to those generalities which apply so well to the rest.

If I were a literary Pope sending out an Encyclical, I would tell these inexperienced persons that nothing is so frequent as to mistake an ordinary human gift for a special and extraordinary endowment. The mechanism of breathing and that of swallowing are very wonderful, and if one had seen and studied them in his own person only, he might well think himself a prodigy. Everybody knows these and other bodily faculties are common gifts; but nobody except editors and school-teachers and here and there a literary man knows how common is the capacity of rhyming and prattling in readable prose, especially among young women of a certain degree of education. In my character of Pontiff, I should tell these young persons that most of them laboured under a delusion. It is very hard to believe it; one feels so full of intelligence and so decidedly superior to one's dull relations and schoolmates; one writes so easily and the lines sound so prettily to one's-self; there are such felicities of expression, just like

those we hear quoted from the great poets; and besides one has been told by so many friends that all one had to do was to print and be famous! Delusion, my poor dear, delusion at least nineteen times out of twenty, yes, ninety-nine times in a hundred.

But as private father confessor, I always allow as much as I can for the one chance in the hundred. I try not to take away all hope, unless the case is clearly desperate, and then to direct the activities into some other channel.

Using kind language, I can talk pretty freely. I have counselled more than one aspirant after literary fame to go back to his tailor's board or his lapstone. I have advised the *dilettanti*, whose foolish friends praised their verses or their stories, to give up all their deceptive dreams of making a name by their genius, and go to work in the study of a profession which asked only for the diligent use of average, ordinary talents. It is a very grave responsibility which these unknown correspondents throw upon their chosen counsellors. One whom you have never seen, who lives in a community of which you know nothing, sends you specimens more or less painfully voluminous of his writings, which he asks you to read over,

think over, and pray over, and send back an answer informing him whether fame and fortune are awaiting him as the possessor of the wonderful gifts his writings manifest, and whether you advise him to leave all,—the shop he sweeps out every morning, the ledger he posts, the mortar in which he pounds, the bench at which he urges the reluctant plane, — and follow his genius whithersoever it may lead him. The next correspondent wants you to mark out a whole course of life for him, and the means of judgment he gives you are about as adequate as the brick which the simpleton of old carried round as an advertisement of the house he had to sell. My advice to all the young men that write to me depends somewhat on the handwriting and spelling. If these are of a certain character, and they have reached a mature age, I recommend some honest manual calling, such as they have very probably been bred to, and which will, at least, give them a chance of becoming President of the United States by-and-by, if that is any object to them. What would *you* have done with the young person who called on me a good many years ago,—so many that he has probably forgotten his literary effort,—and read as specimens of

his literary workmanship lines like those which I will favour you with presently? He was an able-bodied, grown-up young person, whose ingenuousness interested me; and I am sure if I thought he would ever be pained to see his maiden effort in print, I would deny myself the pleasure of submitting it to the reader. The following is an exact transcript of the lines he showed me, and which I took down on the spot :—

"Are you in the vein for cider?
Are you in the tune for pork?
Hist! for Betty's cleared the larder
And turned the pork to soap."

Do not judge too hastily this sincere effort of a maiden muse. Here was a sense of rhythm, and an effort in the direction of rhyme; here was an honest transcript of an occurrence of daily life, told with a certain idealising expression, recognising the existence of impulses, mysterious instincts, impelling us even in the selection of our bodily sustenance. But I had to tell him that it wanted dignity of incident and grace of narrative, that there was no atmosphere to it, nothing of the light that never was, and so forth. I did not say this in these very words, but I gave him to understand, with-

out being too hard upon him, that he had better not desert his honest toil in pursuit of the poet's bays. This, it must be confessed, was a rather discouraging case. A young person like this may *pierce*, as the Frenchmen say, by-and-by, but the chances are all the other way.

I advise aimless young men to choose some profession without needless delay, and so get into a good strong current of human affairs, and find themselves bound up in interests with a compact body of their fellow-men.

I advise young women who write to me for counsel,—perhaps I do not advise them at all, only sympathise a little with them, and listen to what they have to say (eight closely written pages on the average, which I always read from beginning to end, thinking of the widow's cruse and myself in the character of Elijah) and—and—come now, I don't believe Methuselah would tell you what he said in his letters to young ladies, written when he was in his nine hundredth and sixty-ninth year.

But, dear me! how much work all this private criticism involves! An editor has only to say "respectfully declined," and there is the end of it. But the confiden-

tial adviser is expected to give the reasons of his likes and dislikes in detail, and sometimes to enter into an argument for their support. *That* is more than any martyr can stand, but what trials he must go through, as it is! Great bundles of manuscripts, verse or prose, which the recipient is expected to read, perhaps to recommend to a publisher, at any rate to express a well-digested and agreeably flavoured opinion about; which opinion, nine times out of ten, disguise it as we may, has to be a bitter draught; every form of egotism, conceit, false sentiment, hunger for notoriety, and eagerness for display of anserine plumage before the admiring public;—all these come in by mail or express, covered with postage-stamps of so much more cost than the value of the waste words they overlie, that one comes at last to groan and change colour at the very sight of a package, and to dread the postman's knock as if it were that of the other visitor whose naked knuckles rap at every door.

Still there are experiences which go far towards repaying all these inflictions. My last young man's case looked desperate enough; some of his sails had blown from the rigging, some were backing in the wind,

and some were flapping and shivering, but I told him which way to head, and to my surprise he promised to do just as I directed, and I do not doubt is under full sail at this moment.

What if I should tell my last, my very recent experience with the other sex? I received a paper containing the inner history of a young woman's life, the evolution of her consciousness from its earliest record of itself, written so thoughtfully, so sincerely, with so much firmness and yet so much delicacy, with such truth of detail and such grace in the manner of telling, that I finished the long manuscript almost at a sitting, with a pleasure rarely, almost never, experienced in voluminous communications which one has to spell out of handwriting. This was from a correspondent who made my acquaintance by letter when she was little more than a child some years ago. How easy at that early period to have silenced her by indifference, to have wounded her by a careless epithet, perhaps even to have crushed her as one puts his heel on a weed. A very little encouragement kept her from despondency, and brought back one of those overflows of gratitude which make one more ashamed of himself for being so overpaid, than he would

be for having committed any of the lesser sins. But what pleased me most in the paper lately received was to see how far the writer had outgrown the need of any encouragement of mine; that she had strengthened out of her tremulous questionings into a self-reliance and self-poise which I had hardly dared to anticipate for her. Some of my readers who are also writers have very probably had more numerous experiences of this kind than I can lay claim to; self-revelations from unknown and sometimes nameless friends, who write from strange corners where the winds have wafted some stray words of theirs which have lighted in the minds and reached the hearts of those to whom they were as the angel that stirred the pool of Bethesda. Perhaps this is the best reward authorship brings; it may not imply much talent or literary excellence, but it means that your way of thinking and feeling is just what some one of your fellow-creatures needed.

—I have been putting into shape, according to his request, some further passages from the young Astronomer's manuscript, some of which the reader will have a chance to read if he is so disposed. The conflict

in the young man's mind between the desire for fame and the sense of its emptiness as compared with nobler aims has set me thinking about the subject from a somewhat humbler point of view. As I am in the habit of telling you, Beloved, many of my thoughts, as well as of repeating what was said at our table, you may read what follows as if it were addressed to you in the course of an ordinary conversation, where I claimed rather more than my share, as I am afraid I am a little in the habit of doing.

I suppose we all, those of us who write in verse or prose, have the habitual feeling that we should like to be remembered. It is to be awake when all of those who were round us have been long wrapped in slumber. It is a pleasant thought enough that the name by which we have been called shall be familiar on the lips of those who come after us, and the thoughts that wrought themselves out in our intelligence, the emotions that trembled through our frames, shall live themselves over again in the minds and hearts of others.

But is there not something of rest, of calm, in the thought of gently and gradually fading away out of human remem-

brance? What line have we written that was on a level with our conceptions? What page of ours that does not betray some weakness we would fain have left unrecorded? To become a classic and share the life of a language is to be ever open to criticisms, to comparisons, to the caprices of successive generations, to be called into court and stand a trial before a new jury, once or more than once in every century. To be forgotten is to sleep in peace with the undisturbed myriads, no longer subject to the chills and heats, the blasts, the sleet, the dust, which assail in endless succession that shadow of a man which we call his reputation. The line which dying we could wish to blot has been blotted out for us by a hand so tender, so patient, so used to its kindly task, that the page looks as fair as if it had never borne the record of our infirmity or our transgression. And then so few would be wholly content with their legacy of fame. You remember poor Monsieur Jacques's complaint of the favouritism shown to Monsieur Berthier,—it is in that exquisite *Week in a French Country-House.* "Have you seen his room? Have you seen how large it is? Twice as large as mine! He has two jugs, a large one and a little one. I have only

one small one. And a tea-service and a gilt Cupid on the top of his looking-glass." The famous survivor of himself has had his features preserved in a medallion, and the slice of his countenance seems clouded with the thought that it does not belong to a bust; the bust ought to look happy in its niche, but the statue opposite makes it feel as if it had been cheated out of half its personality, and the statue looks uneasy because another stands on a loftier pedestal. But "Ignotus" and "Miserrimus" are of the great majority in that vast assembly, that House of Commons whose members are all peers, where to be forgotten is the standing rule. The dignity of a silent memory is not to be undervalued. Fame is after all a kind of rude handling, and a name that is often on vulgar lips seems to borrow something not to be desired, as the paper money that passes from hand to hand gains somewhat which is a loss thereby. O sweet, tranquil refuge of oblivion, so far as earth is concerned, for us poor blundering, stammering, misbehaving creatures who cannot turn over a leaf of our life's diary without feeling thankful that its failure can no longer stare us in the face! Not unwelcome shall be the baptism of dust which hides for ever

the name that was given in the baptism of water! We shall have good company whose names are left unspoken by posterity. "Who knows whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been; to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century."

I have my moods about such things as the young Astronomer has, as we all have. There are times when the thought of becoming utterly nothing to the world we knew so well and loved so much is painful and oppressive; we gasp as if in a vacuum, missing the atmosphere of life we have so long been in the habit of breathing. Not the less are there moments when the aching need of repose comes over us and the *requiescat in pace*, heathen benediction as it is, sounds more sweetly in our ears than all the promises that Fame can hold out to us.

I wonder whether it ever occurred to you

to reflect upon another horror there must be in leaving a name behind you. Think what a horrid piece of work the biographers make of a man's private history! Just imagine the subject of one of those extraordinary fictions called biographies coming back and reading the life of himself, written very probably by somebody or other who thought he could turn a penny by doing it, and having the pleasure of seeing

> "His little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph and partake the gale."

The ghost of the person condemned to walk the earth in a biography glides into a public library, and goes to the shelf where his mummied life lies in its paper cerements. I can see the pale shadow glancing through the pages and hear the comments that shape themselves in the bodiless intelligence as if they were made vocal by living lips.

"Born in *July* 1776!" And my honoured father killed at the battle of Bunker Hill! Atrocious libeller! to slander one's family at the start after such a fashion!

"The death of his parents left him in charge of his Aunt Nancy, whose tender care took the place of those parental attentions which should have guided and pro-

tected his infant years, and consoled him for the severity of another relative."

—Aunt *Nancy!* It was Aunt *Betsey*, you fool! Aunt Nancy used to—she has been dead these eighty years, so there is no use in mincing matters—she used to keep a bottle and a stick, and when she had been tasting a drop out of the bottle the stick used to come off the shelf and I had to taste that. And here she is made a saint of, and poor Aunt Betsey, that did everything for me, is slandered by implication as a horrid tyrant!

"The subject of this commemorative history was remarkable for a precocious development of intelligence. An old nurse who saw him at the very earliest period of his existence is said to have spoken of him as one of the most promising infants she had seen in her long experience. At school he was equally remarkable, and at a tender age he received a paper adorned with a cut, inscribed REWARD OF MERIT."

—I don't doubt the nurse said that,—there were several promising children born about that time. As for *cuts*, I got more from the schoolmaster's rattan than in any other shape. Didn't one of my teachers split a Gunter's scale into three pieces over

the palm of my hand? And didn't I ring when I saw the pieces fly? No humbug, now, about my boyhood!

"His personal appearance was not singularly prepossessing. Inconspicuous in stature and unattractive in features—"

—You misbegotten son of an ourang and grandson of an ascidian (ghosts keep up with science, you observe), what business have you to be holding up my person to the contempt of my posterity? Haven't I been sleeping for this many a year in quiet, and don't the dandelions and buttercups look as yellow over me as over the best-looking neighbour I have in the dormitory? Why do you want to people the minds of everybody that reads your good-for-nothing libel which you call a "biography" with your impudent caricatures of a man who was a better-looking fellow than yourself, I'll bet you ten to one, a man whom his Latin tutor called *formosus puer* when he was only a freshman? If that's what it means to make a reputation,—to leave your character and your person, and the good name of your sainted relatives, and all you were, and all you had and thought and felt, so far as can be gathered by digging you out of your most private records, to be manipulated and bandied about

and cheapened in the literary market as a chicken or a turkey or a goose is handled and bargained over at a provision stall, isn't it better to be content with the honest blue slate-stone and its inscription informing posterity that you were a worthy citizen and a respected father of a family?

—I should like to see any man's biography with corrections and emendations by his ghost. We don't know each other's secrets quite so well as we flatter ourselves we do. We don't always know our own secrets as well as we might. You have seen a tree with different grafts upon it, an apple or a pear tree we will say. In the late summer months the fruit on one bough will ripen; I remember just such a tree, and the early ripening fruit was the Jargonelle. By-and-by the fruit of another bough will begin to come into condition; the lovely Saint Michael, as I remember, grew on the same stock as the Jargonelle in the tree I am thinking of; and then, when these have all fallen or been gathered, another, we will say the Winter Nelis, has its turn, and so, out of the same juices have come in succession fruits of the most varied aspects and flavours. It is the same thing with ourselves, but it takes us a long while to find it out. The

various inherited instincts ripen in succession. You may be nine-tenths paternal at one period of your life, and nine-tenths maternal at another. All at once the traits of some immediate ancestor may come to maturity unexpectedly on one of the branches of your character, just as your features at different periods of your life betray different resemblances to your nearer or more remote relatives.

But I want you to let me go back to the Bunker Hill Monument and the dynasty of twenty or thirty centuries whose successive representatives are to sit in the gate, like the Jewish monarchs, while the people shall come by hundreds and by thousands to visit the memorial shaft until the story of Bunker's Hill is as old as that of Marathon.

Would not one like to attend twenty consecutive *soirées*, at each one of which the lion of the party should be the Man of the Monument, at the beginning of each century, all the way, we will say, from Anno Domini 2000 to Ann. Dom. 4000,—or, if you think the style of dating will be changed, say to Ann. Darwinii (we can keep A. D. you see) 1872? Will the Man be of the Indian type, as President Samuel Stanhope Smith and others have supposed the transplanted Euro-

pean will become by-and-by? Will he have shortened down to four feet and a little more, like the Esquimaux, or will he have been bred up to seven feet by the use of new chemical diets, ozonised and otherwise improved atmospheres, and animal fertilisers? Let us summon him in imagination and ask him a few questions.

Isn't it like splitting a toad out of a rock to think of this man of nineteen or twenty centuries hence coming out from his stony dwelling-place and speaking with us? What are the questions we should ask him? He has but a few minutes to stay. Make out your own list; I will set down a few that come up to me as I write.

—What is the prevalent religious creed of civilisation?

—Has the planet met with any accident of importance?

—How general is the republican form of government?

—Do men fly yet?

—Has the universal language come into use?

—Is there a new fuel since the English coal-mines have given out?

—Is the euthanasia a recognised branch of medical science?

—Is the oldest inhabitant still living?

—Is the *Daily Advertiser* still published?

—And the *Evening Transcript?*

—Is there much inquiry for the works of a writer of the nineteenth century (Old Style) by—the—name———of—of—

My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth. I cannot imagine the putting of that question without feeling the tremors which shake a wooer as he falters out the words the answer to which will make him happy or wretched.

Whose works was I going to question him about, do you ask me?

Oh, the writings of a friend of mine, much esteemed by his relatives and others. But it 's of no consequence, after all; I think he says he does not care much for posthumous reputation.

I find something of the same interest in thinking about one of the boarders at our table that I find in my waking dreams concerning the Man of the Monument. This personage is the Register of Deeds. He is an unemotional character, living in his business almost as exclusively as the Scarabee, but without any of that eagerness and enthusiasm which belongs to our scientific

specialist. His work is largely, principally, I may say, mechanical. He has developed, however, a certain amount of taste for the antiquities of his department, and once in a while brings out some curious result of his investigations into ancient documents. He too belongs to a dynasty which will last as long as there is such a thing as property in land and dwellings. When that is done away with, and we return to the state of villanage, holding our tenement houses, all to be of the same pattern, of the State,—that is to say, of the Tammany Ring which is to take the place of the feudal lord,—the office of Register of Deeds will, I presume, become useless, and the dynasty will be deposed.

As we grow older we think more and more of old persons and of old things and places. As to old persons, it seemed as if we never knew how much they had to tell until we are old ourselves and they have been gone twenty or thirty years. Once in a while we come upon some survivor of his or her generation that we have overlooked, and feel as if we had recovered one of the lost books of Livy or fished up the golden candlestick from the ooze of the Tiber. So it was the other day after my reminiscences of the old gambrel-roofed house and its visitors. They

found an echo in the recollections of one of the brightest and liveliest of my suburban friends, whose memory is exact about everything except her own age, which, there can be no doubt, she makes out a score or two of years more than it really is. Still she was old enough to touch some lights—and a shadow or two—into the portraits I had drawn, which made me wish that she and not I had been the artist who sketched the pictures. Among the lesser regrets that mingle with graver sorrows for the friends of an earlier generation we have lost, are our omissions to ask them so many questions they could have answered easily enough, and would have been pleased to be asked. There! I say to myself sometimes, in an absent mood, I must ask *her* about that. But she of whom I am now thinking has long been beyond the reach of any earthly questioning, and I sigh to think how easily I could have learned some fact which I should have been happy to have transmitted with pious care to those who are to come after me. How many times I have heard her quote the line about blessings brightening as they take their flight, and how true it proves in many little ways that one never thinks of until it is too late!

The Register of Deeds is not himself advanced in years. But he borrows an air of antiquity from the ancient records which are stored in his sepulchral archives. I love to go to his ossuary of dead transactions, as I would visit the catacombs of Rome or Paris. It is like wandering up the Nile to stray among the shelves of his monumental folios. Here stands a series of volumes, extending over a considerable number of years, all of which volumes are in his handwriting. But as you go backward there is a break, and you come upon the writing of another person, who was getting old apparently, for it is beginning to be a little shaky, and then you know that you have gone back as far as the last days of his predecessor. Thirty or forty years more carry you to the time when this incumbent began the duties of his office ; his hand was steady then ; and the next volume beyond it in date betrays the work of a still different writer. All this interests me, but I do not see how it is going to interest my reader. I do not feel very happy about the Register of Deeds. What can I do with him ? Of what use is he going to be in my record of what I have seen and heard at the breakfast-table ? The fact of his being one of the boarders was not so

important that I was obliged to speak of him, and I might just as well have drawn on my imagination and not allowed this dummy to take up the room which another guest might have profitably filled at our breakfast-table.

I suppose he will prove a superfluity, but I have got him on my hands, and I mean that he shall be as little in the way as possible. One always comes across people in actual life who have no particular business to be where we find them, and whose right to be at all is somewhat questionable.

I am not going to get rid of the Register of Deeds by putting him out of the way; but I confess I do not see what service he is going to be of to me in my record. I have often found, however, that the Disposer of men and things understands much better than we do how to place his pawns and other pieces on the chess-board of life. A fish more or less in the ocean does not seem to amount to much. It is not extravagant to say that any one fish may be considered a supernumerary. But when Captain Coram's ship sprung a leak and the carpenter could not stop it, and the passengers had made up their minds that it was all over with them, all at once, without any apparent reason, the pumps began gaining on the leak, and the

sinking ship to lift herself out of the abyss which was swallowing her up. And what do you think it was that saved the ship, and Captain Coram, and so in due time gave to London that Foundling Hospital which he endowed, and under the floor of which he lies buried? Why, it was that very supernumerary fish, which we held of so little account, but which had wedged itself into the rent of the yawning planks, and served to keep out the water until the leak was finally stopped.

I am very sure it was Captain Coram, but I almost hope it was somebody else, in order to give some poor fellow who is lying in wait for the periodicals a chance to correct me. That will make him happy for a month, and besides, he will not want to pick a quarrel about anything else if he has that splendid triumph. You remember Alcibiades and his dog's tail.

Here you have the extracts I spoke of from the manuscript placed in my hands for revision and emendation. I can understand these alternations of feeling in a young person who has been long absorbed in a single pursuit, and in whom the human instincts which have been long silent are now beginning to find expression. I know well what he wants; a great deal better, I think, than he knows himself.

WIND-CLOUDS AND STAR-DRIFTS.

II.

Brief glimpses of the bright celestial spheres,
False lights, false shadows, vague uncertain gleams,
Pale vaporous mists, wan streaks of lurid flame,
The climbing of the upward-sailing cloud,
The sinking of the downward-falling star,—
All these are pictures of the changing moods
Borne through the midnight stillness of my soul.

Here am I, bound upon this pillared rock,
Prey to the vulture of a vast desire
That feeds upon my life. I burst my bands
And steal a moment's freedom from the beak,
The clinging talons and the shadowing plumes;
Then comes the false enchantress, with her song;
"Thou wouldst not lay thy forehead in the dust
Like the base herd that feeds and breeds and dies!
Lo, the fair garlands that I weave for thee,
Unchanging as the belt Orion wears,
Bright as the jewels of the seven-starred Crown,
The spangled stream of Berenice's hair!"
And so she twines the fetters with the flowers
Around my yielding limbs, and the fierce bird
Stoops to his quarry,—then to feed his rage
Of ravening hunger I must drain my blood
And let the dew-drenched, poison-breeding night
Steal all the freshness from my fading cheek,
And leave its shadows round my caverned eyes.

All for a line in some unheeded scroll ;
All for a stone that tells to gaping clowns,
" Here lies a restless wretch beneath a clod
Where squats the jealous nightmare men call
Fame !"

I marvel not at him who scorns his kind
And thinks not sadly of the time foretold
When the old hulk we tread shall be a wreck,
A slag, a cinder drifting through the sky
Without its crew of fools ! We live too long
And even so are not content to die,
But load the mould that covers up our bones
With stones that stand like beggars by the road
And show death's grievous wound and ask for
tears ;
Write our great books to teach men who we are,
Sing our fine songs that tell in artful phrase
The secrets of our lives, and plead and pray
For alms of memory with the after time,
Those few swift seasons while the earth shall wear
Its leafy summers, ere its core grows cold
And the moist life of all that breathes shall die ;
Or as the new-born seer, perchance more wise,
Would have us deem, before its growing mass,
Pelted with star-dust, stoned with meteor-balls,
Heats like a hammered anvil, till at last
Man and his works and all that stirred itself
Of its own motion, in the fiery glow
Turns to a flaming vapour, and our orb
Shines a new sun for earths that shall be born.

I am as old as Egypt to myself,
Brother to them that squared the pyramids
By the same stars I watch. I read the page
Where every letter is a glittering world,
With them who looked from Shinar's clay-built towers,
Ere yet the wanderer of the Midland sea
Had missed the fallen sister of the seven.
I dwell in spaces vague, remote, unknown,
Save to the silent few, who, leaving earth,
Quit all communion with their living time.
I lose myself in that ethereal void,
Till I have tired my wings and long to fill
My breast with denser air, to stand, to walk
With eyes not raised above my fellow-men.
Sick of my unwalled, solitary realm,
I ask to change the myriad lifeless worlds
I visit as mine own for one poor patch
Of this dull spheroid and a little breath
To shape in word or deed to serve my kind.

Was ever giant's dungeon dug so deep,
Was ever tyrant's fetter forged so strong,
Was e'er such deadly poison in the draught
The false wife mingles for the trusting fool,
As he whose willing victim is himself,
Digs, forges, mingles, for his captive soul?

END OF VOL. I.

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