Society and Solitude

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.

TWELVE CHAPTERS.

BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.

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I fell in with a humorist, on my travels, who had in his chamber a cast of the Rondanini Medusa, and who assured me that the name which that fine work of art bore in the catalogues was a misnomer, as he was convinced that the sculptor who carved it intended it for Memory, the mother of the Muses. In the conversation that followed, my new friend made some extraordinary confessions. "Do you not see," he said, "the penalty of learning, and that each of these scholars whom you have met at S——, though he were to be the last man, would, like the executioner in Hood's poem, guillotine the last but one?" He added many lively remarks, but his evident earnestness engaged my attention, and, in the weeks that followed, we became better acquainted. He had good abilities, a genial temper, and no vices; but he had one defect,—he could not speak in the tone of the people. There was some paralysis on his will, such that, when he met men on common terms, he spoke weakly, and from the point, like a flighty girl. His consciousness of the fault made it worse. He envied every drover and lumberman in the tavern their manly speech. He coveted Mirabeau's don terrible de la familiarité, believing that he whose sympathy goes

lowest is the man from whom kings have the most to fear. For himself, he declared that he could not get enough alone to write a letter to a friend. He left the city; he hid himself in pastures. The solitary river was not solitary enough; the sun and moon put him out. When he bought a house, the first thing he did was to plant trees. He could not enough conceal himself. Set a hedge here; set oaks there,—trees behind trees; above all, set evergreens, for they will keep a secret all the year round. The most agreeable compliment you could pay him was, to imply that you had not observed him in a house or a street where you had met him. Whilst he suffered at being seen where he was, he consoled himself with the delicious thought of the inconceivable number of places where he was not. All he wished of his tailor was to provide that sober mean of color and cut which would never detain the eye for a moment. He went to Vienna, to Smyrna, to London. In all the variety of costumes, a carnival, a kaleidoscope of clothes, to his horror he could never discover a man in the street who wore anything like his own dress. He would have given his soul for the ring of Gyges. His dismay at his visibility had blunted the fears of mortality. “Do you think,” he said, “I am in such great terror of being shot,—I, who am only waiting to shuffle off my corporeal jacket, to slip away into the back stars, and put diameters of the solar system and sidereal orbits between me and all souls,—there to wear out ages in solitude, and forget memory itself, if it be possible?” He had a remorse running to despair, of his social gaucheries, and walked miles and miles to get the twitchings out of his face, the starts and shrugs out of his arms and shoulders. God may forgive sins, he said, but awkwardness has no forgiveness in heaven or earth. He admired in Newton, not so much his theory of the moon, as his letter to Collins, in which he forbade him to insert his name with the solution of the problem in the “Philosophical Transactions”: “It would perhaps increase my acquaintance, the thing which I chiefly study to decline.”

These conversations led me somewhat later to the knowledge of similar cases, and to the discovery that they are not of very infrequent occurrence. Few substances are

found pure in nature. Those constitutions which can bear in open day the rough dealing of the world must be of that mean and average structure,—such as iron and salt, atmospheric air, and water. But there are metals, like potassium and sodium, which, to be kept pure, must be kept under naphtha. Such are the talents determined on some specialty, which a culminating civilization fosters in the heart of great cities and in royal chambers. Nature protects her own work. To the culture of the world, an Archimedes, a Newton is indispensable; so she guards them by a certain aridity. If these had been good fellows, fond of dancing, port, and clubs, we should have had no "Theory of the Sphere," and no "Principia." They had that necessity of isolation which genius feels. Each must stand on his glass tripod, if he would keep his electricity. Even Swedenborg, whose theory of the universe is based on affection, and who reprobates to weariness the danger and vice of pure intellect, is constrained to make an extraordinary exception: "There are also angels who do not live consociated, but separate, house and house; these dwell in the midst of heaven, because they are the best of angels."

We have known many fine geniuses with that imperfection that they cannot do anything useful, not so much as write one clean sentence. 'Tis worse, and tragic, that no man is fit for society who has fine traits. At a distance, he is admired; but bring him hand to hand, he is a cripple. One protects himself by solitude, and one by courtesy, and one by an acid, worldly manner,—each concealing how he can the thinness of his skin and his incapacity for strict association. But there is no remedy that can reach the heart of the disease, but either habits of self-reliance that should go in practice to making the man independent of the human race, or else a religion of love. Now he hardly seems entitled to marry; for how can he protect a woman, who cannot protect himself?

We pray to be conventional. But the wary Heaven takes care you shall not be, if there is anything good in you. Dante was very bad company, and was never invited to dinner. Michel Angelo had a sad, sour time of it. The ministers of beauty are

rarely beautiful in coaches and saloons. Columbus discovered no isle or key so lonely as himself. Yet each of these potentates saw well the reason of his exclusion. Solitary was he? Why, yes; but his society was limited only by the amount of brain Nature appropriated in that age to carry on the government of the world. “If I stay,” said Dante, when there was question of going to Rome, “who will go? and if I go, who will stay?”

But the necessity of solitude is deeper than we have said, and is organic. I have seen many a philosopher whose world is large enough for only one person. He affects to be a good companion; but we are still surprising his secret, that he means and needs to impose his system on all the rest. The determination of each is from all the others, like that of each tree up into free space. ’Tis no wonder, when each has his whole head, our societies should be so small. Like President Tyler, our party falls from us every day, and we must ride in a sulky at last. Dear heart! take it sadly home to thee,—there is no co-operation. We begin with friendships, and all our youth is a reconnoitring and recruiting of the holy fraternity they shall combine for the salvation of men. But so the remoter stars seem a nebula of united light; yet there is no group which a telescope will not resolve, and the dearest friends are separated by impassable gulfs. The co-operation is involuntary, and is put upon us by the Genius of Life, who reserves this as a part of his prerogative. ’Tis fine for us to talk, we sit and muse, and are serene and complete; but the moment we meet with anybody, each becomes a fraction.

Though the stuff of tragedy and of romances is in a moral union of two superior persons, whose confidence in each other for long years, out of sight, and in sight, and against all appearances, is at last justified by victorious proof of probity to gods and men, causing joyful emotions, tears and glory,—though there be for heroes this moral union, yet, they, too, are as far off as ever from an intellectual union, and the moral union is for comparatively low and external purposes, like the co-operation of a ship’s company or of a fire-club. But how insular and pathetically solitary are all

the people we know! Nor dare they tell what they think of each other, when they meet in the street. We have a fine right, to be sure, to taunt men of the world with superficial and treacherous courtesies!

Such is the tragic necessity which strict science finds underneath our domestic and neighborly life, irresistibly driving each adult soul as with whips into the desert, and making our warm covenants sentimental and momentary. We must infer that the ends of thought were peremptory, if they were to be secured at such ruinous cost. They are deeper than can be told, and belong to the immensities and eternities. They reach down to that depth where society itself originates and disappears,—where the question is, Which is first, man or men?—where the individual is lost in his source.

But this banishment to the rocks and echoes no metaphysics can make right or tolerable. This result is so against nature, such a half-view, that it must be corrected by a common sense and experience. “A man is born by the side of his father, and there he remains.” A man must be clothed with society, or we shall feel a certain bareness and poverty, as of a displaced and unfurnished member. He is to be dressed in arts and institutions, as well as in body-garments. Now and then a man exquisitely made can live alone, and must; but coop up most men, and you undo them. “The king lived and ate in his hall with men, and understood men,” said Selden. When a young barrister said to the late Mr. Mason, “I keep my chamber to read law,”—“Read law!” replied the veteran, “’tis in the court-room you must read law.” Nor is the rule otherwise for literature. If you would learn to write, ’tis in the street you must learn it. Both for the vehicle and for the aims of fine arts, you must frequent the public square. The people, and not the college, is the writer’s home. A scholar is a candle which the love and desire of all men will light. Never his lands or his rents, but the power to charm the disguised soul that sits veiled under this bearded and that rosy visage is his rent and ration. His products are as needful as those of the baker or the weaver. Society cannot do without cultivated men. As soon as the first wants are satisfied, the higher wants become imperative.

’Tis hard to mesmerize ourselves, to whip our own top; but through sympathy we are capable of energy and endurance. Concert fires people to a certain fury of performance they can rarely reach alone. Here is the use of society: it is so easy with the great to be great; so easy to come up to an existing standard;—as easy as it is to the lover to swim to his maiden through waves so grim before. The benefits of affection are immense; and the one event which never loses its romance is the encounter with superior persons on terms allowing the happiest intercourse.

It by no means follows that we are not fit for society, because soirées are tedious, and because the soirée finds us tedious. A backwoodsman, who had been sent to the university, told me that, when he heard the best-bred young men at the law-school talk together, he reckoned himself a boor; but whenever he caught them apart, and had one to himself alone, then they were the boors, and he the better man. And if we recall the rare hours when we encountered the best persons, we then found ourselves, and then first society seemed to exist. That was society, though in the transom of a brig, or on the Florida Keys.

A cold, sluggish blood thinks it has not facts enough to the purpose, and must decline its turn in the conversation. But they who speak have no more,—have less. ’Tis not new facts that avail, but the heat to dissolve everybody’s facts. Heat puts you in right relation with magazines of facts. The capital defect of cold, arid natures is the want of animal spirits. They seem a power incredible, as if God should raise the dead. The recluse witnesses what others perform by their aid, with a kind of fear. It is as much out of his possibility as the prowess of Cœur de Lion, or an Irishman’s day’s-work on the railroad. ’Tis said, the present and the future are always rivals. Animal spirits constitute the power of the present, and their feats are like the structure of a pyramid. Their result is a lord, a general, or a boon companion. Before these, what a base mendicant is Memory with his leathern badge! But this genial heat is latent in all constitutions, and is disengaged only by the friction of society. As Bacon said of manners, “To obtain them, it only needs not to despise them,” so

we say of animal spirits, that they are the spontaneous product of health and of a social habit. “For behavior, men learn it, as they take diseases, one of another.”

But the people are to be taken in very small doses. If solitude is proud, so is society vulgar. In society, high advantages are set down to the individual as disqualifications. We sink as easily as we rise, through sympathy. So many men whom I know are degraded by their sympathies, their native aims being high enough, but their relation all too tender to the gross people about them. Men cannot afford to live together on their merits, and they adjust themselves by their demerits,—by their love of gossip, or by sheer tolerance and animal good-nature. They untune and dissipate the brave aspirant.

The remedy is, to reinforce each of these moods from the other. Conversation will not corrupt us, if we come to the assembly in our own garb and speech, and with the energy of health to select what is ours and reject what is not. Society we must have; but let it be society, and not exchanging news, or eating from the same dish. Is it society to sit in one of your chairs? I cannot go to the houses of my nearest relatives, because I do not wish to be alone. Society exists by chemical affinity, and not otherwise.

Put any company of people together with freedom for conversation, and a rapid self-distribution takes place, into sets and pairs. The best are accused of exclusiveness. It would be more true to say, they separate as oil from water, as children from old people, without love or hatred in the matter, each seeking his like; and any interference with the affinities would produce constraint and suffocation. All conversation is a magnetic experiment. I know that my friend can talk eloquently; you know that he cannot articulate a sentence: we have seen him in different company. Assort your party, or invite none. Put Stubbs and Coleridge, Quintilian and Aunt Miriam, into pairs, and you make them all wretched. ’Tis an extempore Sing-Sing built in a parlor. Leave them to seek their own mates, and they

will be as merry as sparrows.

A higher civility will re-establish in our customs a certain reverence which we have lost. What to do with these brisk young men who break through all fences, and make themselves at home in every house? I find out in an instant if my companion does not want me, and ropes cannot hold me when my welcome is gone. One would think that the affinities would pronounce themselves with a surer reciprocity.

Here again, as so often, Nature delights to put us between extreme antagonisms, and our safety is in the skill with which we keep the diagonal line. Solitude is impracticable, and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy. These wonderful horses need to be driven by fine hands. We require such a solitude as shall hold us to its revelations when we are in the street and in palaces; for most men are cowed in society, and say good things to you in private, but will not stand to them in public. But let us not be the victims of words. Society and solitude are deceptive names. It is not the circumstance of seeing more or fewer people, but the readiness of sympathy, that imports; and a sound mind will derive its principles from insight, with ever a purer ascent to the sufficient and absolute right, and will accept society as the natural element in which they are to be applied.

CIVILIZATION.

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A certain degree of progress from the rudest state in which man is found,—a dweller in caves, or on trees, like an ape,—a cannibal, and eater of pounded snails, worms, and offal,—a certain degree of progress from this extreme is called Civilization. It is a vague, complex name, of many degrees. Nobody has attempted a definition. Mr. Guizot, writing a book on the subject, does not. It implies the evolution of a highly organized man, brought to supreme delicacy of sentiment, as in practical power,

religion, liberty, sense of honor, and taste. In the hesitation to define what it is, we usually suggest it by negations. A nation that has no clothing, no iron, no alphabet, no marriage, no arts of peace, no abstract thought, we call barbarous. And after many arts are invented or imported, as among the Turks and Moorish nations, it is often a little complaisant to call them civilized.

Each nation grows after its own genius, and has a civilization of its own. The Chinese and Japanese, though each complete in his way, is different from the man of Madrid or the man of New York. The term imports a mysterious progress. In the brutes is none; and in mankind to-day the savage tribes are gradually extinguished rather than civilized. The Indians of this country have not learned the white man's work; and in Africa, the negro of to-day is the negro of Herodotus. In other races the growth is not arrested; but the like progress that is made by a boy "when he cuts his eye-teeth," as we say,—childish illusions passing daily away, and he seeing things really and comprehensively,—is made by tribes. It is the learning the secret of cumulative power, of advancing on one's self. It implies a facility of association, power to compare, the ceasing from fixed ideas. The Indian is gloomy and distressed when urged to depart from his habits and traditions. He is overpowered by the gaze of the white, and his eye sinks. The occasion of one of these starts of growth is always some novelty that astounds the mind, and provokes it to dare to change. Thus there is a Cadmus, a Pytheas, a Manco Capac at the beginning of each improvement,—some superior foreigner importing new and wonderful arts, and teaching them. Of course, he must not know too much, but must have the sympathy, language, and gods of those he would inform. But chiefly the sea-shore has been the point of departure to knowledge, as to commerce. The most advanced nations are always those who navigate the most. The power which the sea requires in the sailor makes a man of him very fast, and the change of shores and population clears his head of much nonsense of his wigwam.

Where shall we begin or end the list of those feats of liberty and wit, each of which

feats made an epoch of history? Thus, the effect of a framed or stone house is immense on the tranquillity, power, and refinement of the builder. A man in a cave or in a camp, a nomad, will die with no more estate than the wolf or the horse leaves. But so simple a labor as a house being achieved, his chief enemies are kept at bay. He is safe from the teeth of wild animals, from frost, sun-stroke, and weather; and fine faculties begin to yield their fine harvest. Invention and art are born, manners and social beauty and delight. 'Tis wonderful how soon a piano gets into a log-hut on the frontier. You would think they found it under a pine-stump. With it comes a Latin grammar,—and one of those tow-head boys has written a hymn on Sunday. Now let colleges, now let senates take heed! for here is one who, opening these fine tastes on the basis of the pioneer's iron constitution, will gather all their laurels in his strong hands.

When the Indian trail gets widened, graded, and bridged to a good road, there is a benefactor, there is a missionary, a pacificator, a wealth-bringer, a maker of markets, a vent for industry. Another step in civility is the change from war, hunting, and pasturage to agriculture. Our Scandinavian forefathers have left us a significant legend to convey their sense of the importance of this step. "There was once a giantess who had a daughter, and the child saw a husbandman ploughing in the field. Then she ran and picked him up with her finger and thumb, and put him and his plough and his oxen into her apron, and carried them to her mother, and said, 'Mother, what sort of a beetle is this that I found wriggling in the sand?' But the mother said, 'Put it away, my child; we must begone out of this land, for these people will dwell in it.'" Another success is the post-office, with its educating energy augmented by cheapness and guarded by a certain religious sentiment in mankind; so that the power of a wafer or a drop of wax or gluten to guard a letter, as it flies over sea, over land, and comes to its address as if a battalion of artillery brought it, I look upon as a fine metre of civilization.

The division of labor, the multiplication of the arts of peace, which is nothing but a

large allowance to each man to choose his work according to his faculty,—to live by his better hand,—fills the State with useful and happy laborers; and they, creating demand by the very temptation of their productions, are rapidly and surely rewarded by good sale: and what a police and ten commandments their work thus becomes. So true is Dr. Johnson's remark that "men are seldom more innocently employed than when they are making money."

The skilful combinations of civil government, though they usually follow natural leadings, as the lines of race, language, religion, and territory, yet require wisdom and conduct in the rulers, and in their result delight the imagination. "We see insurmountable multitudes obeying, in opposition to their strongest passions, the restraints of a power which they scarcely perceive, and the crimes of a single individual marked and punished at the distance of half the earth."[A]

Right position of woman in the State is another index. Poverty and industry with a healthy mind read very easily the laws of humanity, and love them: place the sexes in right relations of mutual respect, and a severe morality gives that essential charm to woman which educates all that is delicate, poetic, and self-sacrificing, breeds courtesy and learning, conversation and wit, in her rough mate; so that I have thought a sufficient measure of civilization is the influence of good women.

Another measure of culture is the diffusion of knowledge, overrunning all the old barriers of caste, and, by the cheap press, bringing the university to every poor man's door in the newsboy's basket. Scraps of science, of thought, of poetry are in the coarsest sheet, so that in every house we hesitate to burn a newspaper until we have looked it through.

The ship, in its latest complete equipment, is an abridgment and compend of a nation's arts: the ship steered by compass and chart,—longitude reckoned by lunar observation and by chronometer,—driven by steam; and in wildest sea-mountains, at vast distances from home,

“The pulses of her iron heart

Go beating through the storm.”

No use can lessen the wonder of this control, by so weak a creature, of forces so prodigious. I remember I watched, in crossing the sea, the beautiful skill whereby the engine in its constant working was made to produce two hundred gallons of fresh water out of salt-water, every hour,—thereby supplying all the ship’s want.

The skill that pervades complex details; the man that maintains himself; the chimney taught to burn its own smoke; the farm made to produce all that is consumed on it; the very prison compelled to maintain itself and yield a revenue, and, better still, made a reform school, and a manufactory of honest men out of rogues, as the steamer made fresh water out of salt,—all these are examples of that tendency to combine antagonisms, and utilize evil, which is the index of high civilization.

Civilization is the result of highly complex organization. In the snake, all the organs are sheathed; no hands, no feet, no fins, no wings. In bird and beast, the organs are released, and begin to play. In man, they are all unbound, and full of joyful action. With this unswaddling he receives the absolute illumination we call Reason, and thereby true liberty.

Climate has much to do with this melioration. The highest civility has never loved the hot zones. Wherever snow falls, there is usually civil freedom. Where the banana grows, the animal system is indolent and pampered at the cost of higher qualities: the man is sensual and cruel. But this scale is not invariable. High degrees of moral sentiment control the unfavorable influences of climate; and some of our grandest examples of men and of races come from the equatorial regions,—as the genius of Egypt, of India, and of Arabia.

These feats are measures or traits of civility; and temperate climate is an important influence, though not quite indispensable, for there have been learning, philosophy, and art in Iceland, and in the tropics. But one condition is essential to the social

education of man, namely, morality. There can be no high civility without a deep morality, though it may not always call itself by that name, but sometimes the point of honor, as in the institution of chivalry; or patriotism, as in the Spartan and Roman republics; or the enthusiasm of some religious sect which imputes its virtue to its dogma; or the cabalism, or esprit de corps, of a masonic or other association of friends.

The evolution of a highly-destined society must be moral; it must run in the grooves of the celestial wheels. It must be catholic in aims. What is moral? It is the respecting in action catholic or universal ends. Hear the definition which Kant gives of moral conduct: “Act always so that the immediate motive of thy will may become a universal rule for all intelligent beings.”

Civilization depends on morality. Everything good in man leans on what is higher. This rule holds in small as in great. Thus, all our strength and success in the work of our hands depend on our borrowing the aid of the elements. You have seen a carpenter on a ladder with a broad-axe chopping upward chips from a beam. How awkward! at what disadvantage he works! But see him on the ground, dressing his timber under him. Now, not his feeble muscles, but the force of gravity brings down the axe; that is to say, the planet itself splits his stick. The farmer had much ill-temper, laziness, and shirking to endure from his hand-sawyers, until one day he bethought him to put his saw-mill on the edge of a waterfall; and the river never tires of turning his wheel: the river is good-natured, and never hints an objection.

We had letters to send: couriers could not go fast enough, nor far enough; broke their wagons, foundered their horses; bad roads in spring, snow-drifts in winter, heats in summer; could not get the horses out of a walk. But we found out that the air and earth were full of Electricity; and always going our way,—just the way we wanted to send. Would he take a message? Just as lief as not; had nothing else to do; would carry it in no time. Only one doubt occurred, one staggering objection,—he

had no carpet-bag, no visible pockets, no hands, not so much as a mouth, to carry a letter. But, after much thought and many experiments, we managed to meet the conditions, and to fold up the letter in such invisible compact form as he could carry in those invisible pockets of his, never wrought by needle and thread,—and it went like a charm.

I admire still more than the saw-mill the skill which, on the sea-shore, makes the tides drive the wheels and grind corn, and which thus engages the assistance of the moon, like a hired hand, to grind, and wind, and pump, and saw, and split stone, and roll iron.

Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labor, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see his chore done by the gods themselves. That is the way we are strong, by borrowing the might of the elements. The forces of steam, gravity, galvanism, light, magnets, wind, fire, serve us day by day, and cost us nothing.

Our astronomy is full of examples of calling in the aid of these magnificent helpers. Thus, on a planet so small as ours, the want of an adequate base for astronomical measurements is early felt, as, for example, in detecting the parallax of a star. But the astronomer, having by an observation fixed the place of a star, by so simple an expedient as waiting six months, and then repeating his observation, contrived to put the diameter of the earth’s orbit, say two hundred millions of miles, between his first observation and his second, and this line afforded him a respectable base for his triangle.

All our arts aim to win this vantage. We cannot bring the heavenly powers to us, but, if we will only choose our jobs in directions in which they travel, they will undertake them with the greatest pleasure. It is a peremptory rule with them, that they never go out of their road. We are dapper little busybodies, and run this way and that way superserviceably; but they swerve never from their foreordained paths,—neither the sun, nor the moon, nor a bubble of air, nor a mote of dust.

And as our handiworks borrow the elements, so all our social and political action leans on principles. To accomplish anything excellent, the will must work for catholic and universal ends. A puny creature walled in on every side, as Daniel wrote,—

“Unless above himself he can

Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!”

but when his will leans on a principle, when he is the vehicle of ideas, he borrows their omnipotence. Gibraltar may be strong, but ideas are impregnable, and bestow on the hero their invincibility. “It was a great instruction,” said a saint in Cromwell’s war, “that the best courages are but beams of the Almighty.” Hitch your wagon to a star. Let us not fag in paltry works which serve our pot and bag alone. Let us not lie and steal. No god will help. We shall find all their teams going the other way,—Charles’s Wain, Great Bear, Orion, Leo, Hercules: every god will leave us. Work rather for those interests which the divinities honor and promote,—justice, love, freedom, knowledge, utility.

If we can thus ride in Olympian chariots by putting our works in the path of the celestial circuits, we can harness also evil agents, the powers of darkness, and force them to serve against their will the ends of wisdom and virtue. Thus, a wise government puts fines and penalties on pleasant vices. What a benefit would the American government, not yet relieved of its extreme need, render to itself, and to every city, village, and hamlet in the States, if it would tax whiskey and rum almost to the point of prohibition! Was it Bonaparte who said that he found vices very good patriots?—“he got five millions from the love of brandy, and he should be glad to know which of the virtues would pay him as much.” Tobacco and opium have broad backs, and will cheerfully carry the load of armies, if you choose to make them pay high for such joy as they give and such harm as they do.

These are traits, and measures, and modes; and the true test of civilization is, not the

census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops,—no, but the kind of man the country turns out. I see the vast advantages of this country, spanning the breadth of the temperate zone. I see the immense material prosperity,—towns on towns, states on states, and wealth piled in the massive architecture of cities; California quartz-mountains dumped down in New York to be repiled architecturally along-shore from Canada to Cuba, and thence westward to California again. But it is not New York streets built by the confluence of workmen and wealth of all nations, though stretching out towards Philadelphia until they touch it, and northward until they touch New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston,—not these that make the real estimation. But, when I look over this constellation of cities which animate and illustrate the land, and see how little the government has to do with their daily life, how self-helped and self-directed all families are,—knots of men in purely natural societies,—societies of trade, of kindred blood, of habitual hospitality, house and house, man acting on man by weight of opinion, of longer or better-directed industry, the refining influence of women, the invitation which experience and permanent causes open to youth and labor,—when I see how much each virtuous and gifted person, whom all men consider, lives affectionately with scores of excellent people who are not known far from home, and perhaps with great reason reckons these people his superiors in virtue, and in the symmetry and force of their qualities, I see what cubic values America has, and in these a better certificate of civilization than great cities or enormous wealth.

In strictness, the vital refinements are the moral and intellectual steps. The appearance of the Hebrew Moses, of the Indian Buddh,—in Greece, of the Seven Wise Masters, of the acute and upright Socrates, and of the Stoic Zeno,—in Judæa, the advent of Jesus,—and in modern Christendom, of the realists Huss, Savonarola, and Luther, are causal facts which carry forward races to new convictions, and elevate the rule of life. In the presence of these agencies, it is frivolous to insist on the invention of printing or gunpowder, of steam-power or gas-light,

percussion-caps and rubber-shoes, which are toys thrown off from that security, freedom, and exhilaration which a healthy morality creates in society. These arts add a comfort and smoothness to house and street life; but a purer morality, which kindles genius, civilizes civilization, casts backward all that we held sacred into the profane, as the flame of oil throws a shadow when shined upon by the flame of the Bude-light. Not the less the popular measures of progress will ever be the arts and the laws.

But if there be a country which cannot stand any one of these tests,—a country where knowledge cannot be diffused without perils of mob-law and statute-law,—where speech is not free,—where the post-office is violated, mail-bags opened, and letters tampered with,—where public debts and private debts outside of the State are repudiated,—where liberty is attacked in the primary institution of social life,—where the position of the white woman is injuriously affected by the outlawry of the black woman,—where the arts, such as they have, are all imported, having no indigenous life,—where the laborer is not secured in the earnings of his own hands,—where suffrage is not free or equal,—that country is, in all these respects, not civil, but barbarous; and no advantages of soil, climate, or coast can resist these suicidal mischiefs.

Morality and all the incidents of morality are essential; as, justice to the citizen, and personal liberty. Montesquieu says: “Countries are well cultivated, not as they are fertile, but as they are free”; and the remark holds not less but more true of the culture of men, than of the tillage of land. And the highest proof of civility is, that the whole public action of the State is directed on securing the greatest good of the greatest number.

ART.

ART.

All departments of life at the present day,—Trade, Politics, Letters, Science, or Religion,—seem to feel, and to labor to express, the identity of their law. They are rays of one sun; they translate each into a new language the sense of the other. They are sublime when seen as emanations of a Necessity contradistinguished from the vulgar Fate, by being instant and alive, and dissolving man, as well as his works, in its flowing beneficence. This influence is conspicuously visible in the principles and history of Art.

On one side in primary communication with absolute truth through thought and instinct, the human mind on the other side tends, by an equal necessity, to the publication and embodiment of its thought, modified and dwarfed by the impurity and untruth which, in all our experience, injure the individuality through which it passes. The child not only suffers, but cries; not only hungers, but eats. The man not only thinks, but speaks and acts. Every thought that arises in the mind, in its rising aims to pass out of the mind into act; just as every plant, in the moment of germination, struggles up to light. Thought is the seed of action; but action is as much its second form as thought is its first. It rises in thought, to the end that it may be uttered and acted. The more profound the thought, the more burdensome. Always in proportion to the depth of its sense does it knock importunately at the gates of the soul, to be spoken, to be done. What is in, will out. It struggles to the birth. Speech is a great pleasure, and action a great pleasure; they cannot be foreborne.

The utterance of thought and emotion in speech and action may be conscious or unconscious. The sucking child is an unconscious actor. The man in an ecstasy of fear or anger is an unconscious actor. A large part of our habitual actions are unconsciously done, and most of our necessary words are unconsciously said.

The conscious utterance of thought, by speech or action, to any end, is Art. From the first imitative babble of a child to the despotism of eloquence, from his first pile of toys or chip bridge to the masonry of Minot Rock Light-house or the Pacific

Railroad, from the tattooing of the Owhyhees to the Vatican Gallery, from the simplest expedient of private prudence to the American Constitution, from its first to its last works, Art is the spirit's voluntary use and combination of things to serve its end. The Will distinguishes it as spiritual action. Relatively to themselves, the bee, the bird, the beaver, have no art; for what they do, they do instinctively; but relatively to the Supreme Being, they have. And the same is true of all unconscious action: relatively to the doer, it is instinct; relatively to the First Cause, it is Art. In this sense, recognizing the Spirit which informs Nature, Plato rightly said, "Those things which are said to be done by Nature are indeed done by Divine Art." Art, universally, is the spirit creative. It was defined by Aristotle, "The reason of the thing, without the matter."

If we follow the popular distinction of works according to their aim, we should say, the Spirit, in its creation, aims at use or at beauty, and hence Art divides itself into the Useful and the Fine Arts.

The useful arts comprehend not only those that lie next to instinct, as agriculture, building, weaving, &c., but also navigation, practical chemistry, and the construction of all the grand and delicate tools and instruments by which man serves himself: as language, the watch, the ship, the decimal cipher; and also the sciences, so far as they are made serviceable to political economy.

When we reflect on the pleasure we receive from a ship, a railroad, a dry-dock; or from a picture, a dramatic representation, a statue, a poem, we find that these have not a quite simple, but a blended origin. We find that the question, What is Art? leads us directly to another,—Who is the artist? and the solution of this is the key to the history of Art.

I hasten to state the principle which prescribes, through different means, its firm law to the useful and the beautiful arts. The law is this. The universal soul is the alone creator of the useful and the beautiful; therefore, to make anything useful or

beautiful, the individual must be submitted to the universal mind.

In the first place, let us consider this in reference to the useful arts. Here the omnipotent agent is Nature; all human acts are satellites to her orb. Nature is the representative of the universal mind, and the law becomes this,—that Art must be a complement to nature, strictly subsidiary. It was said, in allusion to the great structures of the ancient Romans,—the aqueducts and bridges,—that "their Art was a Nature working to municipal ends." That is a true account of all just works of useful art. Smeaton built Eddystone Light-house on the model of an oak-tree, as being the form in nature best designed to resist a constant assailing force. Dollond formed his achromatic telescope on the model of the human eye. Duhamel built a bridge by letting in a piece of stronger timber for the middle of the under surface, getting his hint from the structure of the shin-bone.

The first and last lesson of the useful arts is, that Nature tyrannizes over our works. They must be conformed to her law, or they will be ground to powder by her omnipresent activity. Nothing droll, nothing whimsical will endure. Nature is ever interfering with Art. You cannot build your house or pagoda as you will, but as you must. There is a quick bound set to your caprice. The leaning tower can only lean so far. The verandah or pagoda roof can curve upward only to a certain point. The slope of your roof is determined by the weight of snow. It is only within narrow limits that the discretion of the architect may range: gravity, wind, sun, rain, the size of men and animals, and such like, have more to say than he. It is the law of fluids that prescribes the shape of the boat,—keel, rudder, and bows,—and, in the finer fluid above, the form and tackle of the sails. Man seems to have no option about his tools, but merely the necessity to learn from Nature what will fit best, as if he were fitting a screw or a door. Beneath a necessity thus almighty, what is artificial in man's life seems insignificant. He seems to take his task so minutely from intimations of Nature, that his works become as it were hers, and he is no longer free.

But if we work within this limit, she yields us all her strength. All powerful action is performed by bringing the forces of nature to bear upon our objects. We do not grind corn or lift the loom by our own strength, but we build a mill in such position as to set the north wind to play upon our instrument, or the elastic force of steam, or the ebb and flow of the sea. So in our handiwork, we do few things by muscular force, but we place ourselves in such attitudes as to bring the force of gravity, that is, the weight of the planet, to bear upon the spade or the axe we wield. In short, in all our operations we seek not to use our own, but to bring a quite infinite force to bear.

Let us now consider this law as it affects the works that have beauty for their end, that is, the productions of the Fine Arts. Here again the prominent fact is subordination of man. His art is the least part of his work of art. A great deduction is to be made before we can know his proper contribution to it.

Music, Eloquence, Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture. This is a rough enumeration of the Fine Arts. I omit Rhetoric, which only respects the form of eloquence and poetry. Architecture and eloquence are mixed arts, whose end is sometimes beauty and sometimes use.

It will be seen that in each of these arts there is much which is not spiritual. Each has a material basis, and in each the creating intellect is crippled in some degree by the stuff on which it works. The basis of poetry is language, which is material only on one side. It is a demi-god. But being applied primarily to the common necessities of man, it is not new-created by the poet for his own ends.

The basis of music is the qualities of the air and the vibrations of sonorous bodies. The pulsation of a stretched string or wire gives the ear the pleasure of sweet sound, before yet the musician has enhanced this pleasure by concords and combinations.

Eloquence, as far as it is a fine art, is modified how much by the material organization of the orator, the tone of the voice, the physical strength, the play of the eye and countenance. All this is so much deduction from the purely spiritual

pleasure,—as so much deduction from the merit of Art,—and is the attribute of Nature.

In painting, bright colors stimulate the eye, before yet they are harmonized into a landscape. In sculpture and in architecture the material, as marble or granite, and in architecture the mass, are sources of great pleasure, quite independent of the artificial arrangement. The art resides in the model, in the plan; for it is on that the genius of the artist is expended, not on the statue or the temple. Just as much better as is the polished statue of dazzling marble than the clay model, or as much more impressive as is the granite cathedral or pyramid than the ground-plan or profile of them on paper, so much more beauty owe they to Nature than to Art.

There is a still larger deduction to be made from the genius of the artist in favor of Nature than I have yet specified.

A jumble of musical sounds on a viol or a flute, in which the rhythm of the tune is played without one of the notes being right, gives pleasure to the unskilful ear. A very coarse imitation of the human form on canvas, or in wax-work,—a coarse sketch in colors of a landscape, in which imitation is all that is attempted,—these things give to unpractised eyes, to the uncultured, who do not ask a fine spiritual delight, almost as much pleasure as a statue of Canova or a picture of Titian.

And in the statue of Canova, or the picture of Titian, these give the great part of the pleasure; they are the basis on which the fine spirit rears a higher delight, but to which these are indispensable.

Another deduction from the genius of the artist is what is conventional in his art, of which there is much in every work of art. Thus how much is there that is not original in every particular building, in every statue, in every tune, painting, poem, or harangue!—whatever is national or usual; as the usage of building all Roman churches in the form of a cross, the prescribed distribution of parts of a theatre, the custom of draping a statue in classical costume. Yet who will deny that the merely

conventional part of the performance contributes much to its effect?

One consideration more exhausts, I believe, all the deductions from the genius of the artist in any given work. This is the adventitious. Thus the pleasure that a noble temple gives us is only in part owing to the temple. It is exalted by the beauty of sunlight, the play of the clouds, the landscape around it, its grouping with the houses, trees, and towers in its vicinity. The pleasure of eloquence is in greatest part owing often to the stimulus of the occasion which produces it,—to the magic of sympathy, which exalts the feeling of each by radiating on him the feeling of all.

The effect of music belongs how much to the place,—as the church, or the moonlight walk; or to the company; or, if on the stage, to what went before in the play, or to the expectation of what shall come after.

In poetry, “It is tradition more than invention that helps the poet to a good fable.” The adventitious beauty of poetry may be felt in the greater delight which a verse gives in happy quotation than in the poem.

It is a curious proof of our conviction that the artist does not feel himself to be the parent of his work, and is as much surprised at the effect as we, that we are so unwilling to impute our best sense of any work of art to the author. The highest praise we can attribute to any writer, painter, sculptor, builder, is, that he actually possessed the thought or feeling with which he has inspired us. We hesitate at doing Spenser so great an honor as to think that he intended by his allegory the sense we affix to it. We grudge to Homer the wide human circumspection his commentators ascribe to him. Even Shakspeare, of whom we can believe everything, we think indebted to Goethe and to Coleridge for the wisdom they detect in his Hamlet and Antony. Especially have we this infirmity of faith in contemporary genius. We fear that Allston and Greenough did not foresee and design all the effect they produce on us.

Our arts are happy hits. We are like the musician on the lake, whose melody is

sweeter than he knows, or like a traveller, surprised by a mountain echo, whose trivial word returns to him in romantic thunders.

In view of these facts, I say that the power of Nature predominates over the human will in all works of even the fine arts, in all that respects their material and external circumstances. Nature paints the best part of the picture; carves the best part of the statue; builds the best part of the house; and speaks the best part of the oration. For all the advantages to which I have adverted are such as the artist did not consciously produce. He relied on their aid, he put himself in the way to receive aid from some of them; but he saw that his planting and his watering waited for the sunlight of Nature, or were vain.

Let us proceed to the consideration of the law stated in the beginning of this essay, as it affects the purely spiritual part of a work of art.

As, in useful art, so far as it is useful, the work must be strictly subordinated to the laws of Nature, so as to become a sort of continuation, and in nowise a contradiction of Nature; so, in art that aims at beauty, must the parts be subordinated to Ideal Nature, and everything individual abstracted, so that it shall be the production of the universal soul.

The artist who is to produce a work which is to be admired, not by his friends or his townspeople or his contemporaries, but by all men, and which is to be more beautiful to the eye in proportion to its culture, must disindividualize himself, and be a man of no party, and no manner, and no age, but one through whom the soul of all men circulates, as the common air through his lungs. He must work in the spirit in which we conceive a prophet to speak, or an angel of the Lord to act; that is, he is not to speak his own words, or do his own works, or think his own thoughts, but he is to be an organ through which the universal mind acts.

In speaking of the useful arts, I pointed to the fact that we do not dig, or grind, or hew, by our muscular strength, but by bringing the weight of the planet to bear on

the spade, axe, or bar. Precisely analogous to this, in the fine arts, is the manner of our intellectual work. We aim to hinder our individuality from acting. So much as we can shove aside our egotism, our prejudice, and will, and bring the omniscience of reason upon the subject before us, so perfect is the work. The wonders of Shakspeare are things which he saw whilst he stood aside, and then returned to record them. The poet aims at getting observations without aim; to subject to thought things seen without (voluntary) thought.

In eloquence, the great triumphs of the art are, when the orator is lifted above himself; when consciously he makes himself the mere tongue of the occasion and the hour, and says what cannot but be said. Hence the term abandonment, to describe the self-surrender of the orator. Not his will, but the principle on which he is horsed, the great connection and crisis of events, thunder in the ear of the crowd.

In poetry, where every word is free, every word is necessary. Good poetry could not have been otherwise written than it is. The first time you hear it, it sounds rather as if copied out of some invisible tablet in the Eternal mind, than as if arbitrarily composed by the poet. The feeling of all great poets has accorded with this. They found the verse, not made it. The muse brought it to them.

In sculpture, did ever anybody call the Apollo a fancy piece? Or say of the Laocoön how it might be made different? A masterpiece of art has in the mind a fixed place in the chain of being, as much as a plant or a crystal.

The whole language of men, especially of artists, in reference to this subject, points at the belief that every work of art, in proportion to its excellence, partakes of the precision of fate: no room was there for choice, no play for fancy; for in the moment, or in the successive moments, when that form was seen, the iron lids of Reason were unclosed, which ordinarily are heavy with slumber. The individual mind became for the moment the vent of the mind of humanity.

There is but one Reason. The mind that made the world is not one mind, but the

mind. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. And every work of art is a more or less pure manifestation of the same. Therefore we arrive at this conclusion, which I offer as a confirmation of the whole view, that the delight which a work of art affords, seems to arise from our recognizing in it the mind that formed Nature, again in active operation.

It differs from the works of Nature in this, that they are organically reproductive. This is not; but spiritually it is prolific by its powerful action on the intellects of men.

Hence it follows that a study of admirable works of art sharpens our perceptions of the beauty of Nature; that a certain analogy reigns throughout the wonders of both; that the contemplation of a work of great art draws us into a state of mind which may be called religious. It conspires with all exalted sentiments.

Proceeding from absolute mind, whose nature is goodness as much as truth, the great works are always attuned to moral nature. If the earth and sea conspire with virtue more than vice,—so do the masterpieces of art. The galleries of ancient sculpture in Naples and Rome strike no deeper conviction into the mind than the contrast of the purity, the severity, expressed in these fine old heads, with the frivolity and grossness of the mob that exhibits and the mob that gazes at them. These are the countenances of the first-born,—the face of man in the morning of the world. No mark is on these lofty features, of sloth, or luxury, or meanness, and they surprise you with a moral admonition, as they speak of nothing around you, but remind you of the fragrant thoughts and the purest resolutions of your youth.

Herein is the explanation of the analogies which exist in all the arts. They are the reappearance of one mind, working in many materials to many temporary ends. Raphael paints wisdom; Handel sings it, Phidias carves it, Shakspeare writes it, Wren builds it, Columbus sails it, Luther preaches it, Washington arms it, Watt mechanizes it. Painting was called “silent poetry”; and poetry, “speaking painting.”

The laws of each art are convertible into the laws of every other.

Herein we have an explanation of the necessity that reigns in all the kingdom of Art.

Arising out of eternal Reason, one and perfect, whatever is beautiful rests on the foundation of the necessary. Nothing is arbitrary, nothing is insulated in beauty. It depends forever on the necessary and the useful. The plumage of the bird, the mimic plumage of the insect, has a reason for its rich colors in the constitution of the animal. Fitness is so inseparable an accompaniment of beauty, that it has been taken for it. The most perfect form to answer an end is so far beautiful. We feel, in seeing a noble building, which rhymes well, as we do in hearing a perfect song, that it is spiritually organic; that is, had a necessity, in nature, for being, was one of the possible forms in the Divine mind, and is now only discovered and executed by the artist, not arbitrarily composed by him.

And so every genuine work of art has as much reason for being as the earth and the sun. The gayest charm of beauty has a root in the constitution of things. The Iliad of Homer, the songs of David, the odes of Pindar, the tragedies of Æschylus, the Doric temples, the Gothic cathedrals, the plays of Shakspeare, all and each were made not for sport, but in grave earnest, in tears and smiles of suffering and loving men.

Viewed from this point, the history of Art becomes intelligible, and, moreover, one of the most agreeable studies. We see how each work of art sprang irresistibly from necessity, and, moreover, took its form from the broad hint of Nature. Beautiful in this wise is the obvious origin of all the known orders of architecture; namely, that they were the idealizing of the primitive abodes of each people. There was no wilfulness in the savages in this perpetuating of their first rude abodes. The first form in which they built a house would be the first form of their public and religious edifice also. This form becomes immediately sacred in the eyes of their children, and, as more traditions cluster round it, is imitated with more splendor in each succeeding generation.

In like manner, it has been remarked by Goethe that the granite breaks into parallelepipeds, which broken in two, one part would be an obelisk; that in Upper Egypt the inhabitants would naturally mark a memorable spot by setting up so conspicuous a stone. Again, he suggested, we may see in any stone wall, on a fragment of rock, the projecting veins of harder stone, which have resisted the action of frost and water which has decomposed the rest. This appearance certainly gave the hint of the hieroglyphics inscribed on their obelisk. The amphitheatre of the old Romans,—any one may see its origin who looks at the crowd running together to see any fight, sickness, or odd appearance in the street. The first comers gather round in a circle; those behind stand on tiptoe; and farther back they climb on fences or window-sills, and so make a cup of which the object of attention occupies the hollow area. The architect put benches in this, and enclosed the cup with a wall,—and, behold a coliseum!

It would be easy to show of many fine things in the world,—in the customs of nations, the etiquette of courts, the constitution of governments,—the origin in quite simple local necessities. Heraldry, for example, and the ceremonies of a coronation, are a dignified repetition of the occurrences that might befall a dragoon and his footboy. The College of Cardinals were originally the parish priests of Rome. The leaning towers originated from the civil discords which induced every lord to build a tower. Then it became a point of family pride,—and for more pride the novelty of a leaning tower was built.

This strict dependence of Art upon material and ideal Nature, this adamantine necessity which underlies it, has made all its past, and may foreshow its future history. It never was in the power of any man, or any community, to call the arts into being. They come to serve his actual wants, never to please his fancy. These arts have their origin always in some enthusiasm, as love, patriotism, or religion. Who carved marble? The believing man, who wished to symbolize their gods to the waiting Greeks.

The Gothic cathedrals were built when the builder and the priest and the people were overpowered by their faith. Love and fear laid every stone. The Madonnas of Raphael and Titian were made to be worshipped. Tragedy was instituted for the like purpose, and the miracles of music: all sprang out of some genuine enthusiasm, and never out of dilettanteism and holidays. Now they languish, because their purpose is merely exhibition. Who cares, who knows what works of art our government have ordered to be made for the Capitol? They are a mere flourish to please the eye of persons who have associations with books and galleries. But in Greece, the Demos of Athens divided into political factions upon the merits of Phidias.

In this country, at this time, other interests than religion and patriotism are predominant, and the arts, the daughters of enthusiasm, do not flourish. The genuine offspring of our ruling passions we behold. Popular institutions, the school, the reading-room, the telegraph, the post-office, the exchange, the insurance-company, and the immense harvest of economical inventions, are the fruit of the equality and the boundless liberty of lucrative callings. These are superficial wants; and their fruits are these superficial institutions. But as far as they accelerate the end of political freedom and national education, they are preparing the soil of man for fairer flowers and fruits in another age. For beauty, truth, and goodness are not obsolete; they spring eternal in the breast of man; they are as indigenous in Massachusetts as in Tuscany or the Isles of Greece. And that Eternal Spirit, whose triple face they are, moulds from them forever, for his mortal child, images to remind him of the Infinite and Fair.

ELOQUENCE.

ELOQUENCE.

It is the doctrine of the popular music-masters, that whoever can speak can sing. So, probably, every man is eloquent once in his life. Our temperaments differ in

capacity of heat, or, we boil at different degrees. One man is brought to the boiling-point by the excitement of conversation in the parlor. The waters, of course, are not very deep. He has a two-inch enthusiasm, a patty-pan ebullition. Another requires the additional caloric of a multitude, and a public debate; a third needs an antagonist, or a hot indignation; a fourth needs a revolution; and a fifth, nothing less than the grandeur of absolute ideas, the splendors and shades of Heaven and Hell.

But because every man is an orator, how long soever he may have been a mute, an assembly of men is so much more susceptible. The eloquence of one stimulates all the rest, some up to the speaking-point, and all others to a degree that makes them good receivers and conductors, and they avenge themselves for their enforced silence by increased loquacity on their return to the fireside.

The plight of these phlegmatic brains is better than that of those who prematurely boil, and who impatiently break silence before their time. Our county conventions often exhibit a small-pot-soon-hot style of eloquence. We are too much reminded of a medical experiment where a series of patients are taking nitrous-oxide gas. Each patient, in turn, exhibits similar symptoms,—redness in the face, volubility, violent gesticulation, delirious attitudes, occasional stamping, an alarming loss of perception of the passage of time, a selfish enjoyment of his sensations, and loss of perception of the sufferings of the audience.

Plato says, that the punishment which the wise suffer, who refuse to take part in the government, is, to live under the government of worse men; and the like regret is suggested to all the auditors, as the penalty of abstaining to speak,—that they shall hear worse orators than themselves.

But this lust to speak marks the universal feeling of the energy of the engine, and the curiosity men feel to touch the springs. Of all the musical instruments on which men play, a popular assembly is that which has the largest compass and variety, and out of which, by genius and study, the most wonderful effects can be drawn. An

audience is not a simple addition of the individuals that compose it. Their sympathy gives them a certain social organism, which fills each member, in his own degree, and most of all the orator, as a jar in a battery is charged with the whole electricity of the battery. No one can survey the face of an excited assembly, without being apprised of new opportunity for painting in fire human thought, and being agitated to agitate. How many orators sit mute there below! They come to get justice done to that ear and intuition which no Chatham and no Demosthenes has begun to satisfy.

The Welsh Triads say, “Many are the friends of the golden tongue.” Who can wonder at the attractiveness of Parliament, or of Congress, or the bar, for our ambitious young men, when the highest bribes of society are at the feet of the successful orator? He has his audience at his devotion. All other fames must hush before his. He is the true potentate; for they are not kings who sit on thrones, but they who know how to govern. The definitions of eloquence describe its attraction for young men. Antiphon the Rhamnusian, one of Plutarch’s ten orators, advertised in Athens, “that he would cure distempers of the mind with words.” No man has a prosperity so high or firm but two or three words can dishearten it. There is no calamity which right words will not begin to redress. Isocrates described his art as “the power of magnifying what was small and diminishing what was great,”—an acute but partial definition. Among the Spartans, the art assumed a Spartan shape, namely, of the sharpest weapon. Socrates says: “If any one wishes to converse with the meanest of the Lacedæmonians, he will at first find him despicable in conversation; but, when a proper opportunity offers, this same person, like a skilful jaculator, will hurl a sentence worthy of attention, short and contorted, so that he who converses with him will appear to be in no respect superior to a boy.” Plato’s definition of rhetoric is, “the art of ruling the minds of men.” The Koran says, “A mountain may change its place, but a man will not change his disposition” yet the end of eloquence is,—is it not?—to alter in a pair of hours, perhaps in a half-hour’s discourse, the convictions and habits of years. Young men, too, are eager to enjoy

this sense of added power and enlarged sympathetic existence. The orator sees himself the organ of a multitude, and concentrating their valors and powers:

“But now the blood of twenty thousand men

Blushed in my face.”

That which he wishes, that which eloquence ought to reach, is, not a particular skill in telling a story, or neatly summing up evidence, or arguing logically, or dexterously addressing the prejudice of the company,—no, but a taking sovereign possession of the audience. Him we call an artist, who shall play on an assembly of men as a master on the keys of the piano,—who, seeing the people furious, shall soften and compose them, shall draw them, when he will, to laughter and to tears. Bring him to his audience, and, be they who they may,—coarse or refined, pleased or displeased, sulky or savage, with their opinions in the keeping of a confessor, or with their opinions in their bank-safes,—he will have them pleased and humored as he chooses; and they shall carry and execute that which he bids them.

This is that despotism which poets have celebrated in the “Pied Piper of Hamelin,” whose music drew like the power of gravitation,—drew soldiers and priests, traders and feasters, women and boys, rats and mice; or that of the minstrel of Meudon, who made the pall-bearers dance around the bier. This is a power of many degrees, and requiring in the orator a great range of faculty and experience, requiring a large composite man, such as Nature rarely organizes; so that, in our experience, we are forced to gather up the figure in fragments, here one talent, and there another.

The audience is a constant metre of the orator. There are many audiences in every public assembly, each one of which rules in turn. If anything comic and coarse is spoken, you shall see the emergence of the boys and rowdies, so loud and vivacious that you might think the house was filled with them. If new topics are started, graver and higher, these roisters recede; a more chaste and wise attention takes place. You would think the boys slept, and that the men have any degree of profoundness. If the

speaker utter a noble sentiment, the attention deepens, a new and highest audience now listens, and the audiences of the fun and of facts and of the understanding are all silenced and awed. There is also something excellent in every audience,—the capacity of virtue. They are ready to be beatified. They know so much more than the orator,—and are so just! There is a tablet there for every line he can inscribe, though he should mount to the highest levels. Humble persons are conscious of new illumination; narrow brows expand with enlarged affections;—delicate spirits, long unknown to themselves, masked and muffled in coarsest fortunes, who now hear their own native language for the first time, and leap to hear it. But all these several audiences, each above each, which successively appear to greet the variety of style and topic, are really composed out of the same persons; nay, sometimes the same individual will take active part in them all, in turn.

This range of many powers in the consummate speaker, and of many audiences in one assembly, leads us to consider the successive stages of oratory.

Perhaps it is the lowest of the qualities of an orator, but it is, on so many occasions, of chief importance,—a certain robust and radiant physical health; or,—shall I say?—great volumes of animal heat. When each auditor feels himself to make too large a part of the assembly, and shudders with cold at the thinness of the morning audience, and with fear lest all will heavily fail through one bad speech, mere energy and mellowness are then inestimable. Wisdom and learning would be harsh and unwelcome, compared with a substantial cordial man, made of milk, as we say, who is a house-warmer, with his obvious honesty and good meaning, and a hue-and-cry style of harangue, which inundates the assembly with a flood of animal spirits, and makes all safe and secure, so that any and every sort of good speaking becomes at once practicable. I do not rate this animal eloquence very highly; and yet, as we must be fed and warmed before we can do any work well,—even the best,—so is this semi-animal exuberance, like a good stove, of the first necessity in a cold house.

Climate has much to do with it,—climate and race. Set a New-Englander to describe any accident which happened in his presence. What hesitation and reserve in his narrative! He tells with difficulty some particulars, and gets as fast as he can to the result, and, though he cannot describe, hopes to suggest the whole scene. Now listen to a poor Irishwoman recounting some experience of hers. Her speech flows like a river,—so unconsidered, so humorous, so pathetic, such justice done to all the parts! It is a true transubstantiation,—the fact converted into speech, all warm and colored and alive, as it fell out. Our Southern people are almost all speakers, and have every advantage over the New England people, whose climate is so cold that, 'tis said, we do not like to open our mouths very wide. But neither can the Southerner in the United States, nor the Irish, compare with the lively inhabitant of the south of Europe. The traveller in Sicily needs no gayer melodramatic exhibition than the table d'hôte of his inn will afford him in the conversation of the joyous guests. They mimic the voice and manner of the person they describe; they crow, squeal, hiss, cackle, bark, and scream like mad, and, were it only by the physical strength exerted in telling the story, keep the table in unbounded excitement. But in every constitution some large degree of animal vigor is necessary as material foundation for the higher qualities of the art.

But eloquence must be attractive, or it is none. The virtue of books is, to be readable, and of orators, to be interesting; and this is a gift of Nature; as Demosthenes, the most laborious student in that kind, signified his sense of this necessity when he wrote, "Good Fortune," as his motto on his shield. As we know, the power of discourse of certain individuals amounts to fascination, though it may have no lasting effect. Some portion of this sugar must intermingle. The right eloquence needs no bell to call the people together, and no constable to keep them. It draws the children from their play, the old from their arm-chairs, the invalid from his warm chamber: it holds the hearer fast; steals away his feet, that he shall not depart,—his memory, that he shall not remember the most pressing affairs,—his belief, that he

shall not admit any opposing considerations. The pictures we have of it in semi-barbarous ages, when it has some advantages in the simpler habit of the people, show what it aims at. It is said that the Khans, or story-tellers, in Ispahan and other cities of the East, attain a controlling power over their audience, keeping them for many hours attentive to the most fanciful and extravagant adventures. The whole world knows pretty well the style of these improvisators, and how fascinating they are, in our translations of the “Arabian Nights.” Scheherezade tells these stories to save her life, and the delight of young Europe and young America in them proves that she fairly earned it. And who does not remember in childhood some white or black or yellow Scheherezade, who, by that talent of telling endless feats of fairies and magicians, and kings and queens, was more dear and wonderful to a circle of children than any orator in England or America is now? The more indolent and imaginative complexion of the Eastern nations makes them much more impressible by these appeals to the fancy.

These legends are only exaggerations of real occurrences, and every literature contains these high compliments to the art of the orator and the bard, from the Hebrew and the Greek down to the Scottish Glenkindie, who

“harpit a fish out o’ saut-water,

Or water out of a stone,

Or milk out of a maiden’s breast

Who bairn had never none.”

Homer specially delighted in drawing the same figure. For what is the “Odyssey” but a history of the orator, in the largest style, carried through a series of adventures furnishing brilliant opportunities to his talent? See with what care and pleasure the poet brings him on the stage. Helen is pointing out to Priam, from a tower, the different Grecian chiefs. “The old man asked: ‘Tell me, dear child, who is that man, shorter by a head than Agamemnon, yet he looks broader in his shoulders and breast.

His arms lie on the ground, but he, like a leader, walks about the bands of the men. He seems to me like a stately ram, who goes as a master of the flock.' Him answered Helen, daughter of Jove: 'This is the wise Ulysses, son of Laertes, who was reared in the state of craggy Ithaca, knowing all wiles and wise counsels.' To her the prudent Antenor replied again: 'O woman, you have spoken truly. For once the wise Ulysses came hither on an embassy, with Menelaus, beloved by Mars. I received them, and entertained them at my house. I became acquainted with the genius and the prudent judgments of both. When they mixed with the assembled Trojans, and stood, the broad shoulders of Menelaus rose above the other; but, both sitting, Ulysses was more majestic. When they conversed, and interweaved stories and opinions with all, Menelaus spoke succinctly,—few but very sweet words, since he was not talkative, nor superfluous in speech, and was the younger. But when the wise Ulysses arose, and stood, and looked down, fixing his eyes on the ground, and neither moved his sceptre backward nor forward, but held it still, like an awkward person, you would say it was some angry or foolish man; but when he sent his great voice forth out of his breast, and his words fell like the winter snows, not then would any mortal contend with Ulysses; and we, beholding, wondered not afterwards so much at his aspect.'"[B] Thus he does not fail to arm Ulysses at first with this power of overcoming all opposition by the blandishments of speech. Plutarch tells us that Thucydides, when Archidamus, king of Sparta, asked him which was the best wrestler,—Pericles or he,—replied, "When I throw him, he says he was never down, and he persuades the very spectators to believe him." Philip of Macedon said of Demosthenes, on hearing the report of one of his orations, "Had I been there, he would have persuaded me to take up arms against myself"; and Warren Hastings said of Burke's speech on his impeachment, "As I listened to the orator, I felt for more than half an hour as if I were the most culpable being on earth."

In these examples, higher qualities have already entered; but the power of detaining the ear by pleasing speech, and addressing the fancy and imagination, often exists

without higher merits. Thus separated, as this fascination of discourse aims only at amusement, though it be decisive in its momentary effect, it is yet a juggle, and of no lasting power. It is heard like a band of music passing through the streets, which converts all the passengers into poets, but is forgotten as soon as it has turned the next corner; and unless this oiled tongue could, in Oriental phrase, lick the sun and moon away, it must take its place with opium and brandy. I know no remedy against it but cotton-wool, or the wax which Ulysses stuffed into the ears of his sailors to pass the Sirens safely.

There are all degrees of power, and the least are interesting, but they must not be confounded. There is the glib tongue and cool self-possession of the salesman in a large shop, which, as is well known, overpower the prudence and resolution of housekeepers of both sexes. There is a petty lawyer's fluency, which is sufficiently impressive to him who is devoid of that talent, though it be, in so many cases, nothing more than a facility of expressing with accuracy and speed what everybody thinks and says more slowly, without new information, or precision of thought,—but the same thing, neither less nor more. It requires no special insight to edit one of our country newspapers. Yet whoever can say off currently, sentence by sentence, matter neither better nor worse than what is there printed, will be very impressive to our easily pleased population. These talkers are of that class who prosper, like the celebrated schoolmaster, by being only one lesson ahead of the pupil. Add a little sarcasm, and prompt allusion to passing occurrences, and you have the mischievous member of Congress. A spice of malice, a ruffian touch in his rhetoric, will do him no harm with his audience. These accomplishments are of the same kind, and only a degree higher than the coaxing of the auctioneer, or the vituperative style well described in the street-word "jawing." These kinds of public and private speaking have their use and convenience to the practitioners; but we may say of such collectively, that the habit of oratory is apt to disqualify them for eloquence.

One of our statesmen said, "The curse of this country is eloquent men." And one

cannot wonder at the uneasiness sometimes manifested by trained statesmen, with large experience of public affairs, when they observe the disproportionate advantage suddenly given to oratory over the most solid and accumulated public service. In a Senate or other business committee, the solid result depends on a few men with working-talent. They know how to deal with the facts before them, to put things into a practical shape, and they value men only as they can forward the work. But a new man comes there, who has no capacity for helping them at all, is insignificant, and nobody in the committee, but has a talent for speaking. In the debate with open doors, this precious person makes a speech, which is printed, and read all over the Union, and he at once becomes famous, and takes the lead in the public mind over all these executive men, who, of course, are full of indignation to find one who has no tact or skill, and knows he has none, put over them by means of this talking-power which they despise.

Leaving behind us these pretensions, better or worse, to come a little nearer to the verity,—eloquence is attractive as an example of the magic of personal ascendency,—a total and resultant power, rare, because it requires a rich coincidence of powers, intellect, will, sympathy, organs, and, over all, good fortune in the cause. We have a half-belief that the person is possible who can counterpoise all other persons. We believe that there may be a man who is a match for events,—one who never found his match,—against whom other men being dashed are broken,—one of inexhaustible personal resources, who can give you any odds and beat you. What we really wish for is a mind equal to any exigency. You are safe in your rural district, or in the city, in broad daylight, amidst the police, and under the eyes of a hundred thousand people. But how is it on the Atlantic, in a storm,—do you understand how to infuse your reason into men disabled by terror, and to bring yourself off safe then?—how among thieves, or among an infuriated populace, or among cannibals? Face to face with a highwayman who has every temptation and opportunity for violence and plunder, can you bring yourself off safe by your wit, exercised through

speech?—a problem easy enough to Cæsar or Napoleon. Whenever a man of that stamp arrives, the highwayman has found a master. What a difference between men in power of face! A man succeeds because he has more power of eye than another, and so coaxes or confounds him. The newspapers, every week, report the adventures of some impudent swindler, who, by steadiness of carriage, duped those who should have known better. Yet any swindlers we have known are novices and bunglers, as is attested by their ill name. A greater power of face would accomplish anything, and, with the rest of their takings, take away the bad name. A greater power of carrying the thing loftily, and with perfect assurance, would confound merchant, banker, judge, men of influence and power,—poet and president,—and might head any party, unseat any sovereign, and abrogate any constitution in Europe and America. It was said that a man has at one step attained vast power, who has renounced his moral sentiment, and settled it with himself that he will no longer stick at anything. It was said of Sir William Pepperel, one of the worthies of New England, that, "put him where you might, he commanded, and saw what he willed come to pass." Julius Cæsar said to Metellus, when that tribune interfered to hinder him from entering the Roman treasury, "Young man, it is easier for me to put you to death than to say that I will"; and the youth yielded. In earlier days, he was taken by pirates. What then? He threw himself into their ship, established the most extraordinary intimacies, told them stories, declaimed to them; if they did not applaud his speeches, he threatened them with hanging,—which he performed afterwards,—and, in a short time, was master of all on board. A man this is who cannot be disconcerted, and so can never play his last card, but has a reserve of power when he has hit his mark. With a serene face, he subverts a kingdom. What is told of him is miraculous; it affects men so. The confidence of men in him is lavish, and he changes the face of the world, and histories, poems, and new philosophies arise to account for him. A supreme commander over all his passions and affections; but the secret of his ruling is higher than that. It is the power of Nature running

without impediment from the brain and will into the hands. Men and women are his game. Where they are, he cannot be without resource. “Whoso can speak well,” said Luther, “is a man.” It was men of this stamp that the Grecian States used to ask of Sparta for generals. They did not send to Lacedæmon for troops, but they said, “Send us a commander”; and Pausanias, or Gylippus, or Brasidas, or Agis, was despatched by the Ephors.

It is easy to illustrate this overpowering personality by these examples of soldiers and kings; but there are men of the most peaceful way of life, and peaceful principle, who are felt, wherever they go, as sensibly as a July sun or a December frost,—men who, if they speak, are heard, though they speak in a whisper,—who, when they act, act effectually, and what they do is imitated; and these examples may be found on very humble platforms, as well as on high ones.

In old countries, a high money-value is set on the services of men who have achieved a personal distinction. He who has points to carry must hire, not a skilful attorney, but a commanding person. A barrister in England is reputed to have made thirty or forty thousand pounds per annum in representing the claims of railroad companies before committees of the House of Commons. His clients pay not so much for legal as for manly accomplishments,—for courage, conduct, and a commanding social position, which enable him to make their claims heard and respected.

I know very well, that, among our cool and calculating people, where every man mounts guard over himself, where heats and panics and abandonments are quite out of the system, there is a good deal of scepticism as to extraordinary influence. To talk of an overpowering mind rouses the same jealousy and defiance which one may observe round a table where anybody is recounting the marvellous anecdotes of mesmerism. Each auditor puts a final stroke to the discourse by exclaiming, “Can he mesmerize me?” So each man inquires if any orator can change his convictions.

But does any one suppose himself to be quite impregnable? Does he think that not possibly a man may come to him who shall persuade him out of his most settled determination?—for example, good sedate citizen as he is, to make a fanatic of him,—or, if he is penurious, to squander money for some purpose he now least thinks of,—or, if he is a prudent, industrious person, to forsake his work, and give days and weeks to a new interest? No, he defies any one, every one. Ah! he is thinking of resistance, and of a different turn from his own. But what if one should come of the same turn of mind as his own, and who sees much farther on his own way than he? A man who has tastes like mine, but in greater power, will rule me any day, and make me love my ruler.

Thus it is not powers of speech that we primarily consider under this word eloquence, but the power that, being present, gives them their perfection, and, being absent, leaves them a merely superficial value. Eloquence is the appropriate organ of the highest personal energy. Personal ascendency may exist with or without adequate talent for its expression. It is as surely felt as a mountain or a planet; but when it is weaponed with a power of speech, it seems first to become truly human, works actively in all directions, and supplies the imagination with fine materials.

This circumstance enters into every consideration of the power of orators, and is the key to all their effects. In the assembly, you shall find the orator and the audience in perpetual balance; and the predominance of either is indicated by the choice of topic. If the talents for speaking exist, but not the strong personality, then there are good speakers who perfectly receive and express the will of the audience, and the commonest populace is flattered by hearing its low mind returned to it with every ornament which happy talent can add. But if there be personality in the orator, the face of things changes. The audience is thrown into the attitude of pupil, follows like a child its preceptor, and hears what he has to say. It is as if, amidst the king’s council at Madrid, Ximenes urged that an advantage might be gained of France, and Mendoza that Flanders might be kept down, and Columbus, being introduced, was

interrogated whether his geographical knowledge could aid the cabinet, and he can say nothing to one party or to the other, but he can show how all Europe can be diminished and reduced under the king, by annexing to Spain a continent as large as six or seven Europes.

This balance between the orator and the audience is expressed in what is called the pertinence of the speaker. There is always a rivalry between the orator and the occasion, between the demands of the hour and the prepossession of the individual. The emergency which has convened the meeting is usually of more importance than anything the debaters have in their minds, and therefore becomes imperative to them. But if one of them have anything of commanding necessity in his heart, how speedily he will find vent for it, and with the applause of the assembly! This balance is observed in the privatest intercourse. Poor Tom never knew the time when the present occurrence was so trivial that he could tell what was passing in his mind without being checked for unseasonable speech; but let Bacon speak, and wise men would rather listen, though the revolution of kingdoms was on foot. I have heard it reported of an eloquent preacher, whose voice is not yet forgotten in this city, that, on occasions of death or tragic disaster, which overspread the congregation with gloom, he ascended the pulpit with more than his usual alacrity, and, turning to his favorite lessons of devout and jubilant thankfulness,—"Let us praise the Lord,"—carried audience, mourners, and mourning along with him, and swept away all the impertinence of private sorrow with his hosannas and songs of praise. Pepys says of Lord Clarendon (with whom "he is mad in love"), on his return from a conference, "I did never observe how much easier a man do speak when he knows all the company to be below him, than in him; for, though he spoke indeed excellent well, yet his manner and freedom of doing it, as if he played with it, and was informing only all the rest of the company, was mighty pretty."[C]

This rivalry between the orator and the occasion is inevitable, and the occasion always yields to the eminence of the speaker; for a great man is the greatest of

occasions. Of course, the interest of the audience and of the orator conspire. It is well with them only when his influence is complete; then only they are well pleased. Especially, he consults his power by making instead of taking his theme. If he should attempt to instruct the people in that which they already know, he would fail; but, by making them wise in that which he knows, he has the advantage of the assembly every moment. Napoleon's tactics of marching on the angle of an army, and always presenting a superiority of numbers, is the orator's secret also.

The several talents which the orator employs, the splendid weapons which went to the equipment of Demosthenes, of Æschines, of Demades the natural orator, of Fox, of Pitt, of Patrick Henry, of Adams, of Mirabeau, deserve a special enumeration. We must not quite omit to name the principal pieces.

The orator, as we have seen, must be a substantial personality. Then, first, he must have power of statement,—must have the fact, and know how to tell it. In any knot of men conversing on any subject, the person who knows most about it will have the ear of the company, if he wishes it, and lead the conversation,—no matter what genius or distinction other men there present may have; and in any public assembly, him who has the facts, and can and will state them, people will listen to, though he is otherwise ignorant, though he is hoarse and ungraceful, though he stutters and screams.

In a court of justice, the audience are impartial; they really wish to sift the statements and know what the truth is. And in the examination of witnesses there usually leap out, quite unexpectedly, three or four stubborn words or phrases which are the pith and fate of the business, which sink into the ear of all parties, and stick there, and determine the cause. All the rest is repetition and qualifying; and the court and the county have really come together to arrive at these three or four memorable expressions, which betrayed the mind and meaning of somebody.

In every company, the man with the fact is like the guide you hire to lead your party

up a mountain, or through a difficult country. He may not compare with any of the party in mind, or breeding, or courage, or possessions, but he is much more important to the present need than any of them. That is what we go to the court-house for,—the statement of the fact, and the elimination of a general fact, the real relation of all the parties; and it is the certainty with which, indifferently in any affair that is well handled, the truth stares us in the face, through all the disguises that are put upon it,—a piece of the well-known human life,—that makes the interest of a court-room to the intelligent spectator.

I remember, long ago, being attracted by the distinction of the counsel, and the local importance of the cause, into the court-room. The prisoner's counsel were the strongest and cunningest lawyers in the Commonwealth. They drove the attorney for the State from corner to corner, taking his reasons from under him, and reducing him to silence, but not to submission. When hard pressed, he revenged himself, in his turn, on the judge, by requiring the court to define what salvage was. The court, thus pushed, tried words, and said everything it could think of to fill the time, supposing cases, and describing duties of insurers, captains, pilots, and miscellaneous sea-officers that are or might be,—like a schoolmaster puzzled by a hard sum, who reads the context with emphasis. But all this flood not serving the cuttle-fish to get away in, the horrible shark of the district-attorney being still there, grimly awaiting with his "The court must define,"—the poor court pleaded its inferiority. The superior court must establish the law for this, and it read away piteously the decisions of the Supreme Court, but read to those who had no pity. The judge was forced at last to rule something, and the lawyers saved their rogue under the fog of a definition. The parts were so well cast and discriminated, that it was an interesting game to watch. The government was well enough represented. It was stupid, but it had a strong will and possession, and stood on that to the last. The judge had a task beyond his preparation, yet his position remained real: he was there to represent a great reality,—the justice of states, which we could well enough see beetling over

his head, and which his trifling talk nowise affected, and did not impede, since he was entirely well-meaning.

The statement of the fact, however, sinks before the statement of the law, which requires immeasurably higher powers, and is a rarest gift, being in all great masters one and the same thing,—in lawyers, nothing technical, but always some piece of common sense, alike interesting to laymen as to clerks. Lord Mansfield's merit is the merit of common sense. It is the same quality we admire in Aristotle, Montaigne, Cervantes, or in Samuel Johnson, or Franklin. Its application to law seems quite accidental. Each of Mansfield's famous decisions contains a level sentence or two, which hit the mark. His sentences are not always finished to the eye, but are finished to the mind. The sentences are involved, but a solid proposition is set forth, a true distinction is drawn. They come from and they go to the sound human understanding; and I read without surprise that the black-letter lawyers of the day sneered at his "equitable decisions," as if they were not also learned. This, indeed, is what speech is for,—to make the statement; and all that is called eloquence seems to me of little use, for the most part, to those who have if, but inestimable to such as have something to say.

Next to the knowledge of the fact and its law is method, which constitutes the genius and efficiency of all remarkable men. A crowd of men go up to Faneuil Hall; they are all pretty well acquainted with the object of the meeting; they have all read the facts in the same newspapers. The orator possesses no information which his hearers have not; yet he teaches them to see the thing with his eyes. By the new placing, the circumstances acquire new solidity and worth. Every fact gains consequence by his naming it, and trifles become important. His expressions fix themselves in men's memories, and fly from mouth to mouth. His mind has some new principle of order. Where he looks, all things fly into their places. What will he say next? Let this man speak, and this man only. By applying the habits of a higher style of thought to the common affairs of this world, he introduces beauty and magnificence wherever he

goes. Such a power was Burke's, and of this genius we have had some brilliant examples in our own political and legal men.

Imagery. The orator must be, to a certain extent, a poet. We are such imaginative creatures, that nothing so works on the human mind, barbarous or civil, as a trope. Condense some daily experience into a glowing symbol, and an audience is electrified. They feel as if they already possessed some new right and power over a fact, which they can detach, and so completely master in thought. It is a wonderful aid to the memory, which carries away the image, and never loses it. A popular assembly, like the House of Commons, or the French Chamber, or the American Congress, is commanded by these two powers,—first by a fact, then by skill of statement. Put the argument into a concrete shape, into an image,—some hard phrase, round and solid as a ball, which they can see and handle and carry home with them,—and the cause is half won.

Statement, method, imagery, selection, tenacity of memory, power of dealing with facts, of illuminating them, of sinking them by ridicule or by diversion of the mind, rapid generalization, humor, pathos, are keys which the orator holds; and yet these fine gifts are not eloquence, and do often hinder a man's attainment of it. And if we come to the heart of the mystery, perhaps we should say that the truly eloquent man is a sane man with power to communicate his sanity. If you arm the man with the extraordinary weapons of this art, give him a grasp of facts, learning, quick fancy, sarcasm, splendid allusion, interminable illustration,—all these talents, so potent and charming, have an equal power to insnare and mislead the audience and the orator. His talents are too much for him, his horses run away with him; and people always perceive whether you drive, or whether the horses take the bits in their teeth and run. But these talents are quite something else when they are subordinated and serve him; and we go to Washington, or to Westminster Hall, or might well go round the world, to see a man who drives, and is not run away with,—a man who, in prosecuting great designs, has an absolute command of the means of representing his ideas, and

uses them only to express these; placing facts, placing men; amid the inconceivable levity of human beings, never for an instant warped from his erectness. There is for every man a statement possible of that truth which he is most unwilling to receive,—a statement possible, so broad and so pungent that he cannot get away from it, but must either bend to it or die of it. Else there would be no such word as eloquence, which means this. The listener cannot hide from himself that something has been shown him and the whole world, which he did not wish to see; and, as he cannot dispose of it, it disposes of him. The history of public men and affairs in America will readily furnish tragic examples of this fatal force.

For the triumphs of the art somewhat more must still be required, namely, a reinforcing of man from events, so as to give the double force of reason and destiny. In transcendent eloquence, there was ever some crisis in affairs, such as could deeply engage the man to the cause he pleads, and draw all this wide power to a point. For the explosions and eruptions, there must be accumulations of heat somewhere, beds of ignited anthracite at the centre. And in cases where profound conviction has been wrought, the eloquent man is he who is no beautiful speaker, but who is inwardly drunk with a certain belief. It agitates and tears him, and perhaps almost bereaves him of the power of articulation. Then it rushes from him as in short, abrupt screams, in torrents of meaning. The possession the subject has of his mind is so entire, that it insures an order of expression which is the order of Nature itself, and so the order of greatest force, and inimitable by any art. And the main distinction between him and other well-graced actors is the conviction, communicated by every word, that his mind is contemplating a whole, and inflamed by the contemplation of the whole, and that the words and sentences uttered by him, however admirable, fall from him as unregarded parts of that terrible whole which he sees, and which he means that you shall see. Add to this concentration a certain regnant calmness, which, in all the tumult, never utters a premature syllable, but keeps the secret of its means and method; and the orator stands before the people as

a demoniacal power to whose miracles they have no key. This terrible earnestness makes good the ancient superstition of the hunter, that the bullet will hit its mark, which is first dipped in the marksman's blood.

Eloquence must be grounded on the plainest narrative. Afterwards, it may warm itself until it exhales symbols of every kind and color, speaks only through the most poetic forms; but, first and last, it must still be at bottom a biblical statement of fact. The orator is thereby an orator, that he keeps his feet ever on a fact. Thus only is he invincible. No gifts, no graces, no power of wit or learning or illustration, will make any amends for want of this. All audiences are just to this point. Fame of voice or of rhetoric will carry people a few times to hear a speaker; but they soon begin to ask, "What is he driving at?" and if this man does not stand for anything, he will be deserted. A good upholder of anything which they believe, a fact-speaker of any kind, they will long follow; but a pause in the speaker's own character is very properly a loss of attraction. The preacher enumerates his classes of men, and I do not find my place therein; I suspect, then, that no man does. Everything is my cousin; and whilst he speaks things, I feel that he is touching some of my relations, and I am uneasy; but whilst he deals in words, we are released from attention. If you would lift me, you must be on higher ground. If you would liberate me, you must be free. If you would correct my false view of facts,—hold up to me the same facts in the true order of thought, and I cannot go back from the new conviction.

The power of Chatham, of Pericles, of Luther, rested on this strength of character, which, because it did not and could not fear anybody, made nothing of their antagonists, and became sometimes exquisitely provoking and sometimes terrific to these.

We are slenderly furnished with anecdotes of these men, nor can we help ourselves by those heavy books in which their discourses are reported. Some of them were writers, like Burke; but most of them were not, and no record at all adequate to their

fame remains. Besides, what is best is lost,—the fiery life of the moment. But the conditions for eloquence always exist. It is always dying out of famous places, and appearing in corners. Wherever the polarities meet, wherever the fresh moral sentiment, the instinct of freedom and duty, come in direct opposition to fossil conservatism and the thirst of gain, the spark will pass. The resistance to slavery in this country has been a fruitful nursery of orators. The natural connection by which it drew to itself a train of moral reforms, and the slight yet sufficient party organization it offered, reinforced the city with new blood from the woods and mountains. Wild men, John Baptists, Hermit Peters, John Knoxes, utter the savage sentiment of Nature in the heart of commercial capitals. They send us every year some piece of aboriginal strength, some tough oak-stick of a man who is not to be silenced or insulted or intimidated by a mob, because he is more mob than they,—one who mobs the mob,—some sturdy countryman, on whom neither money, nor politeness, nor hard words, nor eggs, nor blows, nor brickbats, make any impression. He is fit to meet the bar-room wits and bullies; he is a wit and a bully himself, and something more: he is a graduate of the plough, and the stub-hoe, and the bushwhacker; knows all the secrets of swamp and snow-bank, and has nothing to learn of labor or poverty or the rough of farming. His hard head went through, in childhood, the drill of Calvinism, with text and mortification, so that he stands in the New England assembly a purer bit of New England than any, and flings his sarcasms right and left. He has not only the documents in his pocket to answer all cavils, and to prove all his positions, but he has the eternal reason in his head. This man scornfully renounces your civil organizations,—county, or city, or governor, or army,—is his own navy and artillery, judge and jury, legislature and executive. He has learned his lessons in a bitter school. Yet, if the pupil be of a texture to bear it, the best university that can be recommended to a man of ideas is the gauntlet of the mobs.

He who will train himself to mastery in this science of persuasion must lay the

emphasis of education, not on popular arts, but on character and insight. Let him see that his speech is not differenced from action; that, when he has spoken, he has not done nothing, nor done wrong, but has cleared his own skirts, has engaged himself to wholesome exertion. Let him look on opposition as opportunity. He cannot be defeated or put down. There is a principle of resurrection in him, an immortality of purpose. Men are averse and hostile, to give value to their suffrages. It is not the people that are in fault for not being convinced, but he that cannot convince them. He should mould them, armed as he is with the reason and love which are also the core of their nature. He is not to neutralize their opposition, but he is to convert them into fiery apostles and publishers of the same wisdom.

The highest platform of eloquence is the moral sentiment. It is what is called affirmative truth, and has the property of invigorating the hearer; and it conveys a hint of our eternity, when he feels himself addressed on grounds which will remain when everything else is taken, and which have no trace of time or place or party. Everything hostile is stricken down in the presence of the sentiments; their majesty is felt by the most obdurate. It is observable that, as soon as one acts for large masses, the moral element will and must be allowed for, will and must work; and the men least accustomed to appeal to these sentiments invariably recall them when they address nations. Napoleon, even, must accept and use it as he can.

It is only to these simple strokes that the highest power belongs,—when a weak human hand touches, point by point, the eternal beams and rafters on which the whole structure of Nature and society is laid. In this tossing sea of delusion, we feel with our feet the adamant; in this dominion of chance, we find a principle of permanence. For I do not accept that definition of Isocrates, that the office of his art is, to make the great small and the small great; but I esteem this to be its perfection,—when the orator sees through all masks to the eternal scale of truth, in such sort that he can hold up before the eyes of men the fact of to-day steadily to that standard, thereby making the great great, and the small small, which is the true

way to astonish and to reform mankind.

All the chief orators of the world have been grave men, relying on this reality. One thought the philosophers of Demosthenes's own time found running through all his orations,—this namely, that "virtue secures its own success." "To stand on one's own feet" Heeren finds the key-note to the discourses of Demosthenes, as of Chatham.

Eloquence, like every other art, rests on laws the most exact and determinate. It is the best speech of the best soul. It may well stand as the exponent of all that is grand and immortal in the mind. If it do not so become an instrument, but aspires to be somewhat of itself, and to glitter for show, it is false and weak. In its right exercise, it is an elastic, unexhausted power,—who has sounded, who has estimated it?—expanding with the expansion of our interests and affections. Its great masters, whilst they valued every help to its attainment, and thought no pains too great which contributed in any manner to further it;—resembling the Arabian warrior of fame, who wore seventeen weapons in his belt, and in personal combat used them all occasionally;—yet subordinated all means; never permitted any talent—neither voice, rhythm, poetic power, anecdote, sarcasm—to appear for show; but were grave men, who preferred their integrity to their talent, and esteemed that object for which they toiled, whether the prosperity of their country, or the laws, or a reformation, or liberty of speech or of the press, or letters, or morals, as above the whole world, and themselves also.

DOMESTIC LIFE.

DOMESTIC LIFE.

The perfection of the providence for childhood is easily acknowledged. The care which covers the seed of the tree under tough husks and stony cases provides for the human plant the mother's breast and the father's house. The size of the nestler is

comic, and its tiny beseeching weakness is compensated perfectly by the happy patronizing look of the mother, who is a sort of high reposing Providence toward it. Welcome to the parents the puny struggler, strong in his weakness, his little arms more irresistible than the soldier's, his lips touched with persuasion which Chatham and Pericles in manhood had not. His unaffected lamentations when he lifts up his voice on high, or, more beautiful, the sobbing child,—the face all liquid grief, as he tries to swallow his vexation,—soften all hearts to pity, and to mirthful and clamorous compassion. The small despot asks so little that all reason and all nature are on his side. His ignorance is more charming than all knowledge, and his little sins more bewitching than any virtue. His flesh is angels' flesh, all alive. "Infancy," said Coleridge, "presents body and spirit in unity: the body is all animated." All day, between his three or four sleeps, he coos like a pigeon-house, sputters, and spurs, and puts on his faces of importance; and when he fasts, the little Pharisee fails not to sound his trumpet before him. By lamplight he delights in shadows on the wall; by daylight, in yellow and scarlet. Carry him out of doors,—he is overpowered by the light and by the extent of natural objects, and is silent. Then presently begins his use of his fingers, and he studies power, the lesson of his race. First it appears in no great harm, in architectural tastes. Out of blocks, thread-spools, cards, and checkers, he will build his pyramid with the gravity of Palladio. With an acoustic apparatus of whistle and rattle he explores the laws of sound. But chiefly, like his senior countrymen, the young American studies new and speedier modes of transportation. Mistrusting the cunning of his small legs, he wishes to ride on the necks and shoulders of all flesh. The small enchanter nothing can withstand,—no seniority of age, no gravity of character; uncles, aunts, grandsires, grandams, fall an easy prey: he conforms to nobody, all conform to him; all caper and make mouths, and babble, and chirrup to him. On the strongest shoulders he rides, and pulls the hair of laurelled heads.

"The childhood," said Milton, "shows the man, as morning shows the day." The

child realizes to every man his own earliest remembrance, and so supplies a defect in our education, or enables us to live over the unconscious history with a sympathy so tender as to be almost personal experience.

Fast—almost too fast for the wistful curiosity of the parents, studious of the witchcraft of curls and dimples and broken words—the little talker grows to a boy. He walks daily among wonders: fire, light, darkness, the moon, the stars, the furniture of the house, the red tin horse, the domestics, who like rude foster-mothers befriend and feed him, the faces that claim his kisses, are all in turn absorbing; yet warm, cheerful, and with good appetite the little sovereign subdues them without knowing it; the new knowledge is taken up into the life of to-day and becomes the means of more. The blowing rose is a new event; the garden full of flowers is Eden over again to the small Adam; the rain, the ice, the frost, make epochs in his life. What a holiday is the first snow in which Twoshoes can be trusted abroad!

What art can paint or gild any object in after-life with the glow which Nature gives to the first baubles of childhood! St. Peter’s cannot have the magical power over us that the red and gold covers of our first picture-book possessed. How the imagination cleaves to the warm glories of that tinsel even now! What entertainments make every day bright and short for the fine freshman! The street is old as Nature; the persons all have their sacredness. His imaginative life dresses all things in their best. His fears adorn the dark parts with poetry. He has heard of wild horses and of bad boys, and with a pleasing terror he watches at his gate for the passing of those varieties of each species. The first ride into the country, the first bath in running water, the first time the skates are put on, the first game out of doors in moonlight, the books of the nursery, are new chapters of joy. The “Arabian Nights’ Entertainments,” the “Seven Champions of Christendom,” “Robinson Crusoe,” and the “Pilgrim’s Progress,”—what mines of thought and emotion, what a wardrobe to dress the whole world withal, are in this encyclopædia of young thinking! And so by beautiful traits, which, without art, yet seem the masterpiece of

wisdom, provoking the love that watches and educates him, the little pilgrim prosecutes the journey through nature which he has thus gayly begun. He grows up the ornament and joy of the house, which rings to his glee, to rosy boyhood.

The household is the home of the man, as well as of the child. The events that occur therein are more near and affecting to us than those which are sought in senates and academies. Domestic events are certainly our affair. What are called public events may or may not be ours. If a man wishes to acquaint himself with the real history of the world, with the spirit of the age, he must not go first to the state-house or the court-room. The subtle spirit of life must be sought in facts nearer. It is what is done and suffered in the house, in the constitution, in the temperament, in the personal history, that has the profoundest interest for us. Fact is better than fiction, if only we could get pure fact. Do you think any rhetoric or any romance would get your ear from the wise gypsy who could tell straight on the real fortunes of the man; who could reconcile your moral character and your natural history; who could explain your misfortunes, your fevers, your debts, your temperament, your habits of thought, your tastes, and, in every explanation, not sever you from the whole, but unite you to it? Is it not plain that not in senates, or courts, or chambers of commerce, but in the dwelling-house must the true character and hope of the time be consulted? These facts are, to be sure, harder to read. It is easier to count the census, or compute the square extent of a territory, to criticise its polity, books, art, than to come to the persons and dwellings of men, and read their character and hope in their way of life. Yet we are always hovering round this better divination. In one form or another, we are always returning to it. The physiognomy and phrenology of to-day are rash and mechanical systems enough, but they rest on everlasting foundations. We are sure that the sacred form of man is not seen in these whimsical, pitiful, and sinister masks (masks which we wear and which we meet), these bloated and shrivelled bodies, bald heads, bead eyes, short winds, puny and precarious healths, and early deaths. We live ruins amidst ruins. The great facts are the near ones. The account of the

body is to be sought in the mind. The history of your fortunes is written first in your life.

Let us come, then, out of the public square, and enter the domestic precinct. Let us go to the sitting-room, the table-talk, and the expenditure of our contemporaries. An increased consciousness of the soul, you say, characterizes the period. Let us see if it has not only arranged the atoms at the circumference, but the atoms at the core. Does the household obey an idea? Do you see the man,—his form, genius, and aspiration,—in his economy? Is that translucent, thorough-lighted? There should be nothing confounding and conventional in economy, but the genius and love of the man so conspicuously marked in all his estate, that the eye that knew him should read his character in his property, in his grounds, in his ornaments, in every expense. A man's money should not follow the direction of his neighbor's money, but should represent to him the things he would willingliest do with it. I am not one thing and my expenditure another. My expenditure is me. That our expenditure and our character are twain, is the vice of society.

We ask the price of many things in shops and stalls, but some things each man buys without hesitation, if it were only letters at the post-office, conveyance in carriages and boats, tools for his work, books that are written to his condition, etc. Let him never buy anything else than what he wants, never subscribe at others' instance, never give unwillingly. Thus, a scholar is a literary foundation. All his expense is for Aristotle, Fabricius, Erasmus, and Petrarch. Do not ask him to help with his savings young drapers or grocers to stock their shops, or eager agents to lobby in legislatures, or join a company to build a factory or a fishing-craft. These things are also to be done, but not by such as he. How could such a book as Plato's Dialogues have come down, but for the sacred savings of scholars and their fantastic appropriation of them?

Another man is a mechanical genius, an inventor of looms, a builder of ships,—a

ship-building foundation, and could achieve nothing if he should dissipate himself on books or on horses. Another is a farmer,—an agricultural foundation; another is a chemist,—and the same rule holds for all. We must not make believe with our money, but spend heartily, and buy up and not down.

I am afraid that, so considered, our houses will not be found to have unity, and to express the best thought. The household, the calling, the friendships, of the citizen are not homogeneous. His house ought to show us his honest opinion of what makes his well-being when he rests among his kindred, and forgets all affectation, compliance, and even exertion of will. He brings home whatever commodities and ornaments have for years allured his pursuit, and his character must be seen in them. But what idea predominates in our houses? Thrift first, then convenience and pleasure. Take off all the roofs, from street to street, and we shall seldom find the temple of any higher god than Prudence. The progress of domestic living has been in cleanliness, in ventilation, in health, in decorum, in countless means and arts of comfort, in the concentration of all the utilities of every clime in each house. They are arranged for low benefits. The houses of the rich are confectioners' shops, where we get sweetmeats and wine; the houses of the poor are imitations of these to the extent of their ability. With these ends housekeeping is not beautiful; it cheers and raises neither the husband, the wife, nor the child; neither the host, nor the guest; it oppresses women. A house kept to the end of prudence is laborious without joy; a house kept to the end of display is impossible to all but a few women, and their success is dearly bought.

If we look at this matter curiously, it becomes dangerous. We need all the force of an idea to lift this load; for the wealth and multiplication of conveniences embarrass us, especially in northern climates. The shortest enumeration of our wants in this rugged climate appalls us by the multitude of things not easy to be done. And if you look at the multitude of particulars, one would say: Good housekeeping is impossible; order is too precious a thing to dwell with men and women. See, in

families where there is both substance and taste, at what expense any favorite punctuality is maintained. If the children, for example, are considered, dressed, dieted, attended, kept in proper company, schooled, and at home fostered by the parents,—then does the hospitality of the house suffer; friends are less carefully bestowed, the daily table less catered. If the hours of meals are punctual, the apartments are slovenly. If the linens and hangings are clean and fine, and the furniture good, the yard, the garden, the fences are neglected. If all are well attended, then must the master and mistress be studious of particulars at the cost of their own accomplishments and growth,—or persons are treated as things.

The difficulties to be overcome must be freely admitted; they are many and great. Nor are they to be disposed of by any criticism or amendment of particulars taken one at a time, but only by the arrangement of the household to a higher end than those to which our dwellings are usually built and furnished. And is there any calamity more grave, or that more invokes the best good-will to remove it, than this?—to go from chamber to chamber, and see no beauty; to find in the housemates no aim; to hear an endless chatter and blast; to be compelled to criticise; to hear only to dissent and to be disgusted; to find no invitation to what is good in us, and no receptacle for what is wise;—this is a great price to pay for sweet bread and warm lodging,—being defrauded of affinity, of repose, of genial culture, and the inmost presence of beauty.

It is a sufficient accusation of our ways of living, and certainly ought to open our ear to every good-minded reformer, that our idea of domestic well-being now needs wealth to execute it. Give me the means, says the wife, and your house shall not annoy your taste nor waste your time. On hearing this, we understand how these Means have come to be so omnipotent on earth. And indeed the love of wealth seems to grow chiefly out of the root of the love of the Beautiful. The desire of gold is not for gold. It is not the love of much wheat and wool and household-stuff. It is the means of freedom and benefit. We scorn shifts; we desire the elegance of

munificence; we desire at least to put no stint or limit on our parents, relatives, guests, or dependents; we desire to play the benefactor and the prince with our townsmen, with the stranger at the gate, with the bard, or the beauty, with the man or woman of worth, who alights at our door. How can we do this, if the wants of each day imprison us in lucrative labors, and constrain us to a continual vigilance lest we be betrayed into expense?

Give us wealth, and the home shall exist. But that is a very imperfect and inglorious solution of the problem, and therefore no solution. “Give us wealth.” You ask too much. Few have wealth; but all must have a home. Men are not born rich; and in getting wealth, the man is generally sacrificed, and often is sacrificed without acquiring wealth at last. Besides, that cannot be the right answer;—there are objections to wealth. Wealth is a shift. The wise man angles with himself only, and with no meaner bait. Our whole use of wealth needs revision and reform. Generosity does not consist in giving money or money’s worth. These so-called goods are only the shadow of good. To give money to a sufferer is only a come-off. It is only a postponement of the real payment, a bribe paid for silence,—a credit-system in which a paper promise to pay answers for the time instead of liquidation. We owe to man higher succors than food and fire. We owe to man man. If he is sick, is unable, is mean-spirited and odious, it is because there is so much of his nature which is unlawfully withholden from him. He should be visited in this his prison with rebuke to the evil demons, with manly encouragement, with no mean-spirited offer of condolence because you have not money, or mean offer of money as the utmost benefit, but by your heroism, your purity, and your faith. You are to bring with you that spirit which is understanding, health and self-help. To offer him money in lieu of these is to do him the same wrong as when the bridegroom offers his betrothed virgin a sum of money to release him from his engagements. The great depend on their heart, not on their purse. Genius and virtue, like diamonds, are best plain-set,—set in lead, set in poverty. The greatest man in history was the poorest.

How was it with the captains and sages of Greece and Rome, with Socrates, with Epaminondas? Aristides was made general receiver of Greece, to collect the tribute which each state was to furnish against the barbarian. “Poor,” says Plutarch, “when he set about it, poorer when he had finished it.” How was it with Æmilius and Cato? What kind of house was kept by Paul and John,—by Milton and Marvell,—by Samuel Johnson,—by Samuel Adams in Boston, and Jean Paul Richter at Baireuth?

I think it plain that this voice of communities and ages, ‘Give us wealth, and the good household shall exist,’ is vicious, and leaves the whole difficulty untouched. It is better, certainly, in this form, ‘Give us your labor, and the household begins.’ I see not how serious labor, the labor of all and every day, is to be avoided; and many things betoken a revolution of opinion and practice in regard to manual labor that may go far to aid our practical inquiry. Another age may divide the manual labor of the world more equally on all the members of society, and so make the labors of a few hours avail to the wants and add to the vigor of the man. But the reform that applies itself to the household must not be partial. It must correct the whole system of our social living. It must come with plain living and high thinking; it must break up caste, and put domestic service on another foundation. It must come in connection with a true acceptance by each man of his vocation,—not chosen by his parents or friends, but by his genius, with earnestness and love.

Nor is this redress so hopeless as it seems. Certainly, if we begin by reforming particulars of our present system, correcting a few evils and letting the rest stand, we shall soon give up in despair. For our social forms are very far from truth and equity. But the way to set the axe at the root of the tree is, to raise our aim. Let us understand, then, that a house should bear witness in all its economy that human culture is the end to which it is built and garnished. It stands there under the sun and moon to ends analogous, and not less noble than theirs. It is not for festivity, it is not for sleep: but the pine and the oak shall gladly descend from the mountains to uphold the roof of men as faithful and necessary as themselves; to be the shelter

always open to good and true persons;—a hall which shines with sincerity, brows ever tranquil, and a demeanor impossible to disconcert; whose inmates know what they want; who do not ask your house how theirs should be kept. They have aims: they cannot pause for trifles. The diet of the house does not create its order, but knowledge, character, action, absorb so much life and yield so much entertainment that the refectory has ceased to be so curiously studied. With a change of aim has followed a change of the whole scale by which men and things were wont to be measured. Wealth and poverty are seen for what they are. It begins to be seen that the poor are only they who feel poor, and poverty consists in feeling poor. The rich, as we reckon them, and among them the very rich, in a true scale would be found very indigent and ragged. The great make us feel, first of all, the indifference of circumstances. They call into activity the higher perceptions, and subdue the low habits of comfort and luxury; but the higher perceptions find their objects everywhere: only the low habits need palaces and banquets.

Let a man, then, say, My house is here in the county, for the culture of the county;—an eating-house and sleeping-house for travellers it shall be, but it shall be much more. I pray you, O excellent wife, not to cumber yourself and me to get a rich dinner for this man or this woman who has alighted at our gate, nor a bedchamber made ready at too great a cost. These things, if they are curious in, they can get for a dollar at any village. But let this stranger, if he will, in your looks, in your accent and behavior, read your heart and earnestness, your thought and will, which he cannot buy at any price, in any village or city, and which he may well travel fifty miles, and dine sparely and sleep hard, in order to behold. Certainly, let the board be spread and let the bed be dressed for the traveller; but let not the emphasis of hospitality lie in these things. Honor to the house where they are simple to the verge of hardship, so that there the intellect is awake and reads the laws of the universe, the soul worships truth and love, honor and courtesy flow into all deeds.

There was never a country in the world which could so easily exhibit this heroism as

ours; never anywhere the State has made such efficient provision for popular education, where intellectual entertainment is so within reach of youthful ambition. The poor man's son is educated. There is many a humble house in every city, in every town, where talent and taste, and sometimes genius, dwell with poverty and labor. Who has not seen, and who can see unmoved, under a low roof, the eager, blushing boys discharging as they can their household chores, and hastening into the sitting-room to the study of to-morrow's merciless lesson, yet stealing time to read one chapter more of the novel hardly smuggled into the tolerance of father and mother,—atoning for the same by some pages of Plutarch or Goldsmith; the warm sympathy with which they kindle each other in school-yard, or in barn or wood-shed, with scraps of poetry or song, with phrases of the last oration, or mimicry of the orator; the youthful criticism, on Sunday, of the sermons; the school declamation faithfully rehearsed at home, sometimes to the fatigue, sometimes to the admiration of sisters; the first solitary joys of literary vanity, when the translation or the theme has been completed, sitting alone near the top of the house; the cautious comparison of the attractive advertisement of the arrival of Macready, Booth, or Kemble, or of the discourse of a well-known speaker, with the expense of the entertainment; the affectionate delight with which they greet the return of each one after the early separations which school or business require; the foresight with which, during such absences, they hive the honey which opportunity offers, for the ear and imagination of the others; and the unrestrained glee with which they disburden themselves of their early mental treasures when the holidays bring them again together? What is the hoop that holds them stanch? It is the iron band of poverty, of necessity, of austerity, which, excluding them from the sensual enjoyments which make other boys too early old, has directed their activity in safe and right channels, and made them, despite themselves, reverers of the grand, the beautiful, and the good. Ah! short-sighted students of books, of Nature, and of man! too happy, could they know their advantages. They pine for freedom from that mild

parental yoke; they sigh for fine clothes, for rides, for the theatre, and premature freedom and dissipation, which others possess. Woe to them, if their wishes were crowned! The angels that dwell with them, and are weaving laurels of life for their youthful brows, are Toil, and Want, and Truth, and Mutual Faith.

In many parts of true economy a cheering lesson may be learned from the mode of life and manners of the later Romans, as described to us in the letters of the younger Pliny. Nor can I resist the temptation of quoting so trite an instance as the noble housekeeping of Lord Falkland in Clarendon: “His house being within little more than ten miles from Oxford, he contracted familiarity and friendship with the most polite and accurate men of that University, who found such an immenseness of wit, and such a solidity of judgment in him, so infinite a fancy, bound in by a most logical ratiocination, such a vast knowledge that he was not ignorant in anything, yet such an excessive humility, as if he had known nothing, that they frequently resorted and dwelt with him, as in a college situated in a purer air; so that his house was a university in a less volume, whither they came, not so much for repose as study, and to examine and refine those grosser propositions which laziness and consent made current in vulgar conversation.”

I honor that man whose ambition it is, not to win laurels in the state or the army, not to be a jurist or a naturalist, not to be a poet or a commander, but to be a master of living well, and to administer the offices of master or servant, of husband, father, and friend. But it requires as much breadth of power for this as for those other functions,—as much, or more,—and the reason for the failure is the same. I think the vice of our housekeeping is, that it does not hold man sacred. The vice of government, the vice of education, the vice of religion, is one with that of private life.

In the old fables, we used to read of a cloak brought from fairy-land as a gift for the fairest and purest in Prince Arthur’s court. It was to be her prize whom it would fit.

Every one was eager to try it on, but it would fit nobody: for one it was a world too wide, for the next it dragged on the ground, and for the third it shrunk to a scarf. They, of course, said that the devil was in the mantle, for really the truth was in the mantle, and was exposing the ugliness which each would fain conceal. All drew back with terror from the garment. The innocent Genelas alone could wear it. In like manner, every man is provided in his thought with a measure of man which he applies to every passenger. Unhappily, not one in many thousands comes up to the stature and proportions of the model. Neither does the measurer himself; neither do the people in the street; neither do the select individuals whom he admires,—the heroes of the race. When he inspects them critically, he discovers that their aims are low, that they are too quickly satisfied. He observes the swiftness with which life culminates, and the humility of the expectations of the greatest part of men. To each occurs, soon after the age of puberty, some event, or society, or way of living, which becomes the crisis of life, and the chief fact in their history. In woman, it is love and marriage (which is more reasonable); and yet it is pitiful to date and measure all the facts and sequel of an unfolding life from such a youthful, and generally inconsiderate, period as the age of courtship and marriage. In men, it is their place of education, choice of an employment, settlement in a town, or removal to the East or to the West, or some other magnified trifle, which makes the meridian moment, and all the after years and actions only derive interest from their relation to that. Hence it comes that we soon catch the trick of each man’s conversation, and, knowing his two or three main facts, anticipate what he thinks of each new topic that rises. It is scarcely less perceivable in educated men, so called, than in the uneducated. I have seen finely endowed men at college festivals, ten, twenty years after they had left the halls, returning, as it seemed, the same boys who went away. The same jokes pleased, the same straws tickled; the manhood and offices they brought thither at this return seemed mere ornamental masks: underneath they were boys yet. We never come to be citizens of the world, but are still villagers, who think that

everything in their petty town is a little superior to the same thing anywhere else. In each the circumstance signalized differs, but in each it is made the coals of an ever-burning egotism. In one, it was his going to sea; in a second, the difficulties he combated in going to college; in a third, his journey to the West, or his voyage to Canton; in a fourth, his coming out of the Quaker Society; in a fifth, his new diet and regimen; in a sixth, his coming forth from the abolition organizations; and in a seventh, his going into them. It is a life of toys and trinkets. We are too easily pleased.

I think this sad result appears in the manners. The men we see in each other do not give us the image and likeness of man. The men we see are whipped through the world; they are harried, wrinkled, anxious; they all seem the hacks of some invisible riders. How seldom do we behold tranquillity! We have never yet seen a man. We do not know the majestic manners that belong to him, which appease and exalt the beholder. There are no divine persons with us, and the multitude do not hasten to be divine. And yet we hold fast, all our lives long, a faith in a better life, in better men, in clean and noble relations, notwithstanding our total inexperience of a true society. Certainly, this was not the intention of nature, to produce, with all this immense expenditure of means and power, so cheap and humble a result. The aspirations in the heart after the good and true teach us better,—nay, the men themselves suggest a better life.

Every individual nature has its own beauty. One is struck in every company, at every fireside, with the riches of nature, when he hears so many new tones, all musical, sees in each person original manners, which have a proper and peculiar charm, and reads new expressions of face. He perceives that nature has laid for each the foundations of a divine building, if the soul will build thereon. There is no face, no form, which one cannot in fancy associate with great power of intellect or with generosity of soul. In our experience, to be sure, beauty is not, as it ought to be, the dower of man and of woman as invariably as sensation. Beauty is, even in the

beautiful, occasional,—or, as one has said, culminating and perfect only a single moment, before which it is unripe, and after which it is on the wane. But beauty is never quite absent from our eyes. Every face, every figure, suggests its own right and sound estate. Our friends are not their own highest form. But let the hearts they have agitated witness what power has lurked in the traits of these structures of clay that pass and repass us! The secret power of form over the imagination and affections transcends all our philosophy. The first glance we meet may satisfy us that matter is the vehicle of higher powers than its own, and that no laws of line or surface can ever account for the inexhaustible expressiveness of form. We see heads that turn on the pivot of the spine,—no more; and we see heads that seem to turn on a pivot as deep as the axle of the world,—so slow, and lazily, and great, they move. We see on the lip of our companion the presence or absence of the great masters of thought and poetry to his mind. We read in his brow, on meeting him after many years, that he is where we left him, or that he has made great strides.

Whilst thus nature and the hints we draw from man suggest a true and lofty life, a household equal to the beauty and grandeur of this world, especially we learn the same lesson from those best relations to individual men which the heart is always prompting us to form. Happy will that house be in which the relations are formed from character, after the highest, and not after the lowest order; the house in which character marries, and not confusion and a miscellany of unavowable motives. Then shall marriage be a covenant to secure to either party the sweetness and honor of being a calm, continuing, inevitable benefactor to the other. Yes, and the sufficient reply to the sceptic who doubts the competence of man to elevate and to be elevated is in that desire and power to stand in joyful and ennobling intercourse with individuals, which makes the faith and the practice of all reasonable men.

The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it. There is no event greater in life than the appearance of new persons about our hearth, except it be the progress of the character which draws them. It has been finely added by Landor to his definition

of the great man, “It is he who can call together the most select company when it pleases him.” A verse of the old Greek Menander remains, which runs in translation:—

“Not on the store of sprightly wine,

Nor plenty of delicious meats,

Though generous Nature did design

To court us with perpetual treats,—

’Tis not on these we for content depend,

So much as on the shadow of a Friend.”

It is the happiness which, where it is truly known, postpones all other satisfactions, and makes politics and commerce and churches cheap. For we figure to ourselves,—do we not?—that when men shall meet as they should, as states meet,—each a benefactor, a shower of falling stars, so rich with deeds, with thoughts, with so much accomplishment,—it shall be the festival of nature, which all things symbolize; and perhaps Love is only the highest symbol of Friendship, as all other things seem symbols of love. In the progress of each man’s character, his relations to the best men, which at first seem only the romances of youth, acquire a graver importance; and he will have learned the lesson of life who is skilful in the ethics of friendship.

Beyond its primary ends of the conjugal, parental, and amicable relations, the household should cherish the beautiful arts and the sentiment of veneration.

1. Whatever brings the dweller into a finer life, what educates his eye, or ear, or hand, whatever purifies and enlarges him, may well find place there. And yet let him not think that a property in beautiful objects is necessary to his apprehension of them, and seek to turn his house into a museum. Rather let the noble practice of the Greeks find place in our society, and let the creations of the plastic arts be collected

with care in galleries by the piety and taste of the people, and yielded as freely as the sunlight to all. Meantime, be it remembered, we are artists ourselves, and competitors, each one, with Phidias and Raphael in the production of what is graceful or grand. The fountain of beauty is the heart, and every generous thought illustrates the walls of your chamber. Why should we owe our power of attracting our friends to pictures and vases, to cameos and architecture? Why should we convert ourselves into show-men and appendages to our fine houses and our works of art? If by love and nobleness we take up into ourselves the beauty we admire, we shall spend it again on all around us. The man, the woman, needs not the embellishment of canvas and marble, whose every act is a subject for the sculptor, and to whose eye the gods and nymphs never appear ancient; for they know by heart the whole instinct of majesty.

I do not undervalue the fine instruction which statues and pictures give. But I think the public museum in each town will one day relieve the private house of this charge of owning and exhibiting them. I go to Rome and see on the walls of the Vatican the Transfiguration, painted by Raphael, reckoned the first picture in the world; or in the Sistine Chapel I see the grand sibyls and prophets, painted in fresco by Michael Angelo,—which have every day now for three hundred years inflamed the imagination and exalted the piety of what vast multitudes of men of all nations! I wish to bring home to my children and my friends copies of these admirable forms, which I can find in the shops of the engravers; but I do not wish the vexation of owning them. I wish to find in my own town a library and museum which is the property of the town, where I can deposit this precious treasure, where I and my children can see it from time to time, and where it has its proper place among hundreds of such donations from other citizens who have brought thither whatever articles they have judged to be in their nature rather a public than a private property.

A collection of this kind, the property of each town, would dignify the town, and we should love and respect our neighbors more. Obviously, it would be easy for every

town to discharge this truly municipal duty. Every one of us would gladly contribute his share; and the more gladly, the more considerable the institution had become.

2. Certainly, not aloof from this homage to beauty, but in strict connection therewith, the house will come to be esteemed a Sanctuary. The language of a ruder age has given to common law the maxim that every man's house is his castle: the progress of truth will make every house a shrine. Will not man one day open his eyes and see how dear he is to the soul of Nature,—how near it is to him? Will he not see, through all he miscalls accident, that Law prevails for ever and ever; that his private being is a part of it; that its home is in his own unsounded heart; that his economy, his labor, his good and bad fortune, his health and manners, are all a curious and exact demonstration in miniature of the Genius of the Eternal Providence? When he perceives the Law, he ceases to despond. Whilst he sees it, every thought and act is raised, and becomes an act of religion. Does the consecration of Sunday confess the desecration of the entire week? Does the consecration of the church confess the profanation of the house? Let us read the incantation backward. Let the man stand on his feet. Let religion cease to be occasional; and the pulses of thought that go to the borders of the universe, let them proceed from the bosom of the Household.

These are the consolations,—these are the ends to which the household is instituted and the rooftree stands. If these are sought, and in any good degree attained, can the State, can commerce, can climate, can the labor of many for one, yield anything better, or half as good? Beside these aims, Society is weak and the State an intrusion. I think that the heroism which at this day would make on us the impression of Epaminondas and Phocion must be that of a domestic conqueror. He who shall bravely and gracefully subdue this Gorgon of Convention and Fashion, and show-men how to lead a clean, handsome, and heroic life amid the beggarly elements of our cities and villages; whoso shall teach me how to eat my meat and take my repose, and deal with men, without any shame following, will restore the

life of man to splendor, and make his own name dear to all history.

FARMING.

FARMING.

The glory of the farmer is that, in the division of labors, it is his part to create. All trade rests at last on his primitive activity. He stands close to nature; he obtains from the earth the bread and the meat. The food which was not, he causes to be. The first farmer was the first man, and all historic nobility rests on possession and use of land. Men do not like hard work, but every man has an exceptional respect for tillage, and a feeling that this is the original calling of his race, that he himself is only excused from it by some circumstance which made him delegate it for a time to other hands. If he have not some skill which recommends him to the farmer, some product for which the farmer will give him corn, he must himself return into his due place among the planters. And the profession has in all eyes its ancient charm, as standing nearest to God, the first cause.

Then the beauty of nature, the tranquillity and innocence of the countryman, his independence, and his pleasing arts,—the care of bees, of poultry, of sheep, of cows, the dairy, the care of hay, of fruits, of orchards and forests, and the reaction of these on the workman, in giving him a strength and plain dignity, like the face and manners of nature, all men acknowledge. All men keep the farm in reserve as an asylum where, in case of mischance, to hide their poverty,—or a solitude, if they do not succeed in society. And who knows how many glances of remorse are turned this way from the bankrupts of trade, from mortified pleaders in courts and senates, or from the victims of idleness and pleasure? Poisoned by town life and town vices, the sufferer resolves: ‘Well, my children, whom I have injured, shall go back to the land, to be recruited and cured by that which should have been my nursery, and now shall be their hospital.’

The farmer’s office is precise and important, but you must not try to paint him in rose-color; you cannot make pretty compliments to fate and gravitation, whose minister he is. He represents the necessities. It is the beauty of the great economy of the world that makes his comeliness. He bends to the order of the seasons, the weather, the soils and crops, as the sails of a ship bend to the wind. He represents continuous hard labor, year in, year out, and small gains. He is a slow person, timed to nature, and not to city watches. He takes the pace of seasons, plants, and chemistry. Nature never hurries: atom by atom, little by little, she achieves her work. The lesson one learns in fishing, yachting, hunting, or planting, is the manners of Nature; patience with the delays of wind and sun, delays of the seasons, bad weather, excess or lack of water,—patience with the slowness of our feet, with the parsimony of our strength, with the largeness of sea and land we must traverse, etc. The farmer times himself to Nature, and acquires that livelong patience which belongs to her. Slow, narrow man, his rule is, that the earth shall feed and clothe him; and he must wait for his crop to grow. His entertainments, his liberties, and his spending must be on a farmer’s scale, and not on a merchant’s. It were as false for farmers to use a wholesale and massy expense, as for states to use a minute economy. But if thus pinched on one side, he has compensatory advantages. He is permanent, clings to his land as the rocks do. In the town where I live, farms remain in the same families for seven and eight generations; and most of the first settlers (in 1635), should they reappear on the farms to-day, would find their own blood and names still in possession. And the like fact holds in the surrounding towns.

This hard work will always be done by one kind of man; not by scheming speculators, nor by soldiers, nor professors, nor readers of Tennyson; but by men of endurance,—deep-chested, long-winded, tough, slow and sure, and timely. The farmer has a great health, and the appetite of health, and means to his end: he has broad lands for his home, wood to burn great fires, plenty of plain food; his milk, at least, is unwatered; and for sleep, he has cheaper and better and more of it than

citizens.

He has grave trusts confided to him. In the great household of Nature, the farmer stands at the door of the bread-room, and weighs to each his loaf. It is for him to say whether men shall marry or not. Early marriages and the number of births are indissolubly connected with abundance of food; or, as Burke said, “Man breeds at the mouth.” Then he is the Board of Quarantine. The farmer is a hoarded capital of health, as the farm is the capital of wealth; and it is from him that the health and power, moral and intellectual, of the cities came. The city is always recruited from the country. The men in cities who are the centres of energy, the driving-wheels of trade, politics, or practical arts, and the women of beauty and genius are the children or grandchildren of farmers, and are spending the energies which their fathers’ hardy, silent life accumulated in frosty furrows, in poverty, necessity, and darkness.

He is the continuous benefactor. He who digs a well, constructs a stone fountain, plants a grove of trees by the roadside, plants an orchard, builds a durable house, reclaims a swamp, or so much as puts a stone seat by the wayside, makes the land so far lovely and desirable, makes a fortune which he cannot carry away with him, but which is useful to his country long afterwards. The man that works at home helps society at large with somewhat more of certainty than he who devotes himself to charities. If it be true that, not by votes of political parties, but by the eternal laws of political economy, slaves are driven out of a slave State as fast as it is surrounded by free States, then the true abolitionist is the farmer, who, heedless of laws and constitutions, stands all day in the field, investing his labor in the land, and making a product with which no forced labor can compete.

We commonly say that the rich man can speak the truth, can afford honesty, can afford independence of opinion and action;—and that is the theory of nobility. But it is the rich man in a true sense, that is to say, not the man of large income and large expenditure, but solely the man whose outlay is less than his income and is steadily

kept so.

In English factories, the boy that watches the loom, to tie the thread when the wheel stops to indicate that a thread is broken, is called a minder. And in this great factory of our Copernican globe, shifting its slides; rotating its constellations, times, and tides; bringing now the day of planting, then of watering, then of weeding, then of reaping, then of curing and storing,—the farmer is the minder. His machine is of colossal proportions,—the diameter of the water-wheel, the arms of the levers, the power of the battery, are out of all mechanic measure;—and it takes him long to understand its parts and its working. This pump never “sucks”; these screws are never loose; this machine is never out of gear; the vat and piston, wheels and tires, never wear out, but are self-repairing.

Who are the farmer’s servants? Not the Irish, nor the coolies, but Geology and Chemistry, the quarry of the air, the water of the brook, the lightning of the cloud, the castings of the worm, the plough of the frost. Long before he was born, the sun of ages decomposed the rocks, mellowed his land, soaked it with light and heat, covered it with vegetable film, then with forests, and accumulated the sphagnum whose decays made the peat of his meadow.

Science has shown the great circles in which nature works; the manner in which marine plants balance the marine animals, as the land plants supply the oxygen which the animals consume, and the animals the carbon which the plants absorb. These activities are incessant. Nature works on a method of all for each and each for all. The strain that is made on one point bears on every arch and foundation of the structure. There is a perfect solidarity. You cannot detach an atom from its holdings, or strip off from it the electricity, gravitation, chemic affinity, or the relation to light and heat, and leave the atom bare. No, it brings with it its universal ties.

Nature, like a cautious testator, ties up her estate so as not to bestow it all on one generation, but has a forelooking tenderness and equal regard to the next and the

next, and the fourth, and the fortieth age.

There lie the inexhaustible magazines. The eternal rocks, as we call them, have held their oxygen or lime undiminished, entire, as it was. No particle of oxygen can rust or wear, but has the same energy as on the first morning. The good rocks, those patient waiters, say to him: ‘We have the sacred power as we received it. We have not failed of our trust, and now—when in our immense day the hour is at last struck—take the gas we have hoarded; mingle it with water; and let it be free to grow in plants and animals, and obey the thought of man.’

The earth works for him; the earth is a machine which yields almost gratuitous service to every application of intellect. Every plant is a manufacturer of soil. In the stomach of the plant development begins. The tree can draw on the whole air, the whole earth, on all the rolling main. The plant is all suction-pipe,—imbibing from the ground by its root, from the air by its leaves, with all its might.

The air works for him. The atmosphere, a sharp solvent, drinks the essence and spirit of every solid on the globe,—a menstruum which melts the mountains into it. Air is matter subdued by heat. As the sea is the grand receptacle of all rivers, so the air is the receptacle from which all things spring, and into which they all return. The invisible and creeping air takes form and solid mass. Our senses are sceptics, and believe only the impression of the moment, and do not believe the chemical fact that these huge mountain-chains are made up of gases and rolling wind. But Nature is as subtle as she is strong. She turns her capital day by day; deals never with dead, but ever with quick subjects. All things are flowing, even those that seem immovable. The adamant is always passing into smoke. The plants imbibe the materials which they want from the air and the ground. They burn, that is, exhale and decompose their own bodies into the air and earth again. The animal burns, or undergoes the like perpetual consumption. The earth burns,—the mountains burn and decompose,—slower, but incessantly. It is almost inevitable to push the

generalization up into higher parts of nature, rank over rank into sentient beings. Nations burn with internal fire of thought and affection, which wastes while it works. We shall find finer combustion and finer fuel. Intellect is a fire: rash and pitiless it melts this wonderful bone-house which is called man. Genius even, as it is the greatest good, is the greatest harm. Whilst all thus burns,—the universe in a blaze kindled from the torch of the sun,—it needs a perpetual tempering, a phlegm, a sleep, atmospheres of azote, deluges of water, to check the fury of the conflagration; a hoarding to check the spending; a centripetence equal to the centrifugence: and this is invariably supplied.

The railroad dirt-cars are good excavators; but there is no porter like Gravitation, who will bring down any weights which man cannot carry, and if he wants aid, knows where to find his fellow-laborers. Water works in masses, and sets its irresistible shoulder to your mills or your ships, or transports vast boulders of rock in its iceberg a thousand miles. But its far greater power depends on its talent of becoming little, and entering the smallest holes and pores. By this agency, carrying in solution elements needful to every plant, the vegetable world exists.

But as I said, we must not paint the farmer in rose-color. Whilst these grand energies have wrought for him, and made his task possible, he is habitually engaged in small economies, and is taught the power that lurks in petty things. Great is the force of a few simple arrangements; for instance, the powers of a fence. On the prairie you wander a hundred miles, and hardly find a stick or a stone. At rare intervals, a thin oak opening has been spared, and every such section has been long occupied. But the farmer manages to procure wood from far, puts up a rail fence, and at once the seeds sprout and the oaks rise. It was only browsing and fire which had kept them down. Plant fruit-trees by the roadside, and their fruit will never be allowed to ripen. Draw a pine fence about them, and for fifty years they mature for the owner their delicate fruit. There is a great deal of enchantment in a chestnut rail or picketed pine boards.

Nature suggests every economical expedient somewhere on a great scale. Set out a pine-tree, and it dies in the first year, or lives a poor spindle. But Nature drops a pine-cone in Mariposa, and it lives fifteen centuries, grows three or four hundred feet high, and thirty in diameter,—grows in a grove of giants, like a colonnade of Thebes. Ask the tree how it was done. It did not grow on a ridge, but in a basin, where it found deep soil, cold enough and dry enough for the pine; defended itself from the sun by growing in groves, and from the wind by the walls of the mountain. The roots that shot deepest, and the stems of happiest exposure, drew the nourishment from the rest, until the less thrifty perished and manured the soil for the stronger, and the mammoth Sequoias rose to their enormous proportions. The traveller who saw them remembered his orchard at home, where every year, in the destroying wind, his forlorn trees pined like suffering virtue. In September, when the pears hang heaviest, and are taking from the sun their gay colors, comes usually a gusty day which shakes the whole garden, and throws down the heaviest fruit in bruised heaps. The planter took the hint of the Sequoias, built a high wall, or—better—surrounded the orchard with a nursery of birches and evergreens. Thus he had the mountain basin in miniature; and his pears grew to the size of melons, and the vines beneath them ran an eighth of a mile. But this shelter creates a new climate. The wall that keeps off the strong wind keeps off the cold wind. The high wall reflecting the heat back on the soil gives that acre a quadruple share of sunshine,

“Enclosing in the garden square

A dead and standing pool of air,”

and makes a little Cuba within it, whilst all without is Labrador.

The chemist comes to his aid every year by following out some new hint drawn from nature, and now affirms that this dreary space occupied by the farmer is needless: he will concentrate his kitchen-garden into a box of one or two rods

square, will take the roots into his laboratory; the vines and stalks and stems may go sprawling about in the fields outside, he will attend to the roots in his tub, gorge them with food that is good for them. The smaller his garden, the better he can feed it, and the larger the crop. As he nursed his Thanksgiving turkeys on bread and milk, so he will pamper his peaches and grapes on the viands they like best. If they have an appetite for potash, or salt, or iron, or ground bones, or even now and then for a dead hog, he will indulge them. They keep the secret well, and never tell on your table whence they drew their sunset complexion or their delicate flavors.

See what the farmer accomplishes by a cartload of tiles: he alters the climate by letting off water which kept the land cold through constant evaporation, and allows the warm rain to bring down into the roots the temperature of the air and of the surface-soil; and he deepens the soil, since the discharge of this standing water allows the roots of his plants to penetrate below the surface to the subsoil, and accelerates the ripening of the crop. The town of Concord is one of the oldest towns in this country, far on now in its third century. The selectmen have once in every five years perambulated the boundaries, and yet, in this very year, a large quantity of land has been discovered and added to the town without a murmur of complaint from any quarter. By drainage we went down to a subsoil we did not know, and have found there is a Concord under old Concord, which we are now getting the best crops from; a Middlesex under Middlesex; and, in fine, that Massachusetts has a basement story more valuable, and that promises to pay a better rent, than all the superstructure. But these tiles have acquired by association a new interest. These tiles are political economists, confuters of Malthus and Ricardo; they are so many Young Americans announcing a better era,—more bread. They drain the land, make it sweet and friable; have made English Chat Moss a garden, and will now do as much for the Dismal Swamp. But beyond this benefit, they are the text of better opinions and better auguries for mankind.

There has been a nightmare bred in England of indigestion and spleen among

landlords and loomlords, namely, the dogma that men breed too fast for the powers of the soil; that men multiply in a geometrical ratio, whilst corn only in an arithmetical; and hence that, the more prosperous we are, the faster we approach these frightful limits: nay, the plight of every new generation is worse than of the foregoing, because the first comers take up the best lands; the next, the second best; and each succeeding wave of population is driven to poorer, so that the land is ever yielding less returns to enlarging hosts of eaters. Henry Carey of Philadelphia replied: 'Not so, Mr. Malthus, but just the opposite of so is the fact.'

The first planter, the savage, without helpers, without tools, looking chiefly to safety from his enemy,—man or beast,—takes poor land. The better lands are loaded with timber, which he cannot clear; they need drainage, which he cannot attempt. He cannot plough, or fell trees, or drain the rich swamp. He is a poor creature; he scratches with a sharp stick, lives in a cave or a hutch, has no road but the trail of the moose or bear; he lives on their flesh when he can kill one, on roots and fruits when he cannot. He falls, and is lame; he coughs, he has a stitch in his side, he has a fever and chills: when he is hungry, he cannot always kill and eat a bear;—chances of war,—sometimes the bear eats him. 'Tis long before he digs or plants at all, and then only a patch. Later he learns that his planting is better than hunting; that the earth works faster for him than he can work for himself,—works for him when he is asleep, when it rains, when heat overcomes him. The sun-stroke which knocks him down brings his corn up. As his family thrive, and other planters come up around him, he begins to fell trees, and clear good land; and when, by and by, there is more skill, and tools and roads, the new generations are strong enough to open the lowlands, where the wash of mountains has accumulated the best soil, which yield a hundred-fold the former crops. The last lands are the best lands. It needs science and great numbers to cultivate the best lands, and in the best manner. Thus true political economy is not mean, but liberal, and on the pattern of the sun and sky. Population increases in the ratio of morality: credit exists in the ratio of morality.

Meantime we cannot enumerate the incidents and agents of the farm without reverting to their influence on the farmer. He carries out this cumulative preparation of means to their last effect. This crust of soil which ages have refined he refines again for the feeding of a civil and instructed people. The great elements with which he deals cannot leave him unaffected, or unconscious of his ministry; but their influence somewhat resembles that which the same Nature has on the child,—of subduing and silencing him. We see the farmer with pleasure and respect, when we think what powers and utilities are so meekly worn. He knows every secret of labor: he changes the face of the landscape. Put him on a new planet, and he would know where to begin; yet there is no arrogance in his bearing, but a perfect gentleness. The farmer stands well on the world. Plain in manners as in dress, he would not shine in palaces; he is absolutely unknown and inadmissible therein; living or dying, he never shall be heard of in them; yet the drawing-room heroes put down beside him would shrivel in his presence,—he solid and unexpressive, they expressed to gold-leaf. But he stands well on the world,—as Adam did, as an Indian does, as Homer's heroes, Agamemnon or Achilles, do. He is a person whom a poet of any clime—Milton, Firdusi, or Cervantes—would appreciate as being really a piece of the old Nature, comparable to sun and moon, rainbow and flood; because he is, as all natural persons are, representative of Nature as much as these.

That uncorrupted behavior which we admire in animals and in young children belongs to him, to the hunter, the sailor,—the man who lives in the presence of Nature. Cities force growth, and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial. What possesses interest for us is the naturel of each, his constitutional excellence. This is forever a surprise, engaging and lovely; we cannot be satiated with knowing it, and about it; and it is this which the conversation with Nature cherishes and guards.

WORKS AND DAYS.

WORKS AND DAYS.

Our nineteenth century is the age of tools. They grow out of our structure. “Man is the metre of all things,” said Aristotle; “the hand is the instrument of instruments, and the mind is the form of forms.” The human body is the magazine of inventions, the patent-office, where are the models from which every hint was taken. All the tools and engines on earth are only extensions of its limbs and senses. One definition of man is “an intelligence served by organs.” Machines can only second, not supply, his unaided senses. The body is a metre. The eye appreciates finer differences than art can expose. The apprentice clings to his foot-rule, a practised mechanic will measure by his thumb and his arm with equal precision; and a good surveyor will pace sixteen rods more accurately than another man can measure them by tape. The sympathy of eye and hand by which an Indian or a practised slinger hits his mark with a stone, or a wood-chopper or a carpenter swings his axe to a hair-line on his log, are examples; and there is no sense or organ which is not capable of exquisite performance.

Men love to wonder, and that is the seed of our science; and such is the mechanical determination of our age, and so recent are our best contrivances, that use has not dulled our joy and pride in them; and we pity our fathers for dying before steam and galvanism, sulphuric ether and ocean telegraphs, photograph and spectroscope arrived, as cheated out of half their human estate. These arts open great gates of a future, promising to make the world plastic and to lift human life out of its beggary to a godlike ease and power.

Our century, to be sure, had inherited a tolerable apparatus. We had the compass, the printing-press, watches, the spiral spring, the barometer, the telescope. Yet so many inventions have been added, that life seems almost made over new; and as Leibnitz said of Newton, “that if he reckoned all that had been done by mathematicians from the beginning of the world down to Newton, and what had been done by him, his

would be the better half," so one might say that the inventions of the last fifty years counterpoise those of the fifty centuries before them. For the vast production and manifold application of iron is new; and our common and indispensable utensils of house and farm are new; the sewing-machine, the power-loom, the McCormick reaper, the mowing-machines, gas-light, lucifer-matches, and the immense productions of the laboratory, are new in this century, and one franc's worth of coal does the work of a laborer for twenty days.

Why need I speak of steam, the enemy of space and time, with its enormous strength and delicate applicability, which is made in hospitals to bring a bowl of gruel to a sick man's bed, and can twist beams of iron like candy-braids, and vies with the forces which upheaved and doubled over the geologic strata? Steam is an apt scholar and a strong-shouldered fellow, but it has not yet done all its work. It already walks about the field like a man, and will do anything required of it. It irrigates crops, and drags away a mountain. It must sew our shirts, it must drive our gigs; taught by Mr. Babbage, it must calculate interest and logarithms. Lord Chancellor Thurlow thought it might be made to draw bills and answers in chancery. If that were satire, it is yet coming to render many higher services of a mechanico-intellectual kind, and will leave the satire short of the fact.

How excellent are the mechanical aids we have applied to the human body, as in dentistry, in vaccination, in the rhinoplastic treatment; in the beautiful aid of ether, like a finer sleep; and in the boldest promiser of all,—the transfusion of the blood,—which, in Paris, it was claimed, enables a man to change his blood as often as his linen!

What of this dapper caoutchouc and gutta-percha, which make water-pipes and stomach-pumps, belting for mill-wheels, and diving bells, and rain-proof coats for all climates, which teach us to defy the wet, and put every man on a footing with the beaver and the crocodile? What of the grand tools with which we engineer, like

kobolds and enchanters,—tunnelling Alps, canalling the American Isthmus, piercing the Arabian desert? In Massachusetts, we fight the sea successfully with beach-grass and broom,—and the blowing sand-barrens with pine plantations. The soil of Holland, once the most populous in Europe, is below the level of the sea. Egypt, where no rain fell for three thousand years, now, it is said, thanks Mehemet Ali's irrigations and planted forests for late-returning showers. The old Hebrew king said, "He makes the wrath of man to praise him." And there is no argument of theism better than the grandeur of ends brought about by paltry means. The chain of western railroads from Chicago to the Pacific has planted cities and civilization in less time than it costs to bring an orchard into bearing.

What shall we say of the ocean telegraph, that extension of the eye and ear, whose sudden performance astonished mankind as if the intellect were taking the brute earth itself into training, and shooting the first thrills of life and thought through the unwilling brain?

There does not seem any limit to these new informations of the same Spirit that made the elements at first, and now, through man, works them. Art and power will go on as they have done,—will make day out of night, time out of space, and space out of time.

Invention breeds invention. No sooner is the electric telegraph devised, than gutta-percha, the very material it requires, is found. The aeronaut is provided with gun-cotton, the very fuel he wants for his balloon. When commerce is vastly enlarged, California and Australia expose the gold it needs. When Europe is over-populated, America and Australia crave to be peopled; and so, throughout, every chance is timed, as if Nature, who made the lock, knew where to find the key.

Another result of our arts is the new intercourse which is surprising us with new solutions of the embarrassing political problems. The intercourse is not new, but the scale is new. Our selfishness would have held slaves, or would have excluded from a

quarter of the planet all that are not born on the soil of that quarter. Our politics are disgusting; but what can they help or hinder when from time to time the primal instincts are impressed on masses of mankind, when the nations are in exodus and flux? Nature loves to cross her stocks,—and German, Chinese, Turk, Russ, and Kanaka were putting out to sea, and intermarrying race with race; and commerce took the hint, and ships were built capacious enough to carry the people of a county.

This thousand-handed art has introduced a new element into the state. The science of power is forced to remember the power of science. Civilization mounts and climbs. Malthus, when he stated that the mouths went on multiplying geometrically, and the food only arithmetically, forgot to say that the human mind was also a factor in political economy, and that the augmenting wants of society would be met by an augmenting power of invention.

Yes, we have a pretty artillery of tools now in our social arrangements: we ride four times as fast as our fathers did; travel, grind, weave, forge, plant, till, and excavate better. We have new shoes, gloves, glasses, and gimlets; we have the calculus; we have the newspaper, which does its best to make every square acre of land and sea give an account of itself at your breakfast-table; we have money, and paper money; we have language,—the finest tool of all, and nearest to the mind. Much will have more. Man flatters himself that his command over nature must increase. Things begin to obey him. We are to have the balloon yet, and the next war will be fought in the air. We may yet find a rose-water that will wash the negro white. He sees the skull of the English race changing from its Saxon type under the exigencies of American life.

Tantalus, who in old times was seen vainly trying to quench his thirst with a flowing stream, which ebbed whenever he approached it, has been seen again lately. He is in Paris, in New York, in Boston. He is now in great spirits; thinks he shall reach it yet; thinks he shall bottle the wave. It is, however, getting a little doubtful. Things have

an ugly look still. No matter how many centuries of culture have preceded, the new man always finds himself standing on the brink of chaos, always in a crisis. Can anybody remember when the times were not hard, and money not scarce? Can anybody remember when sensible men, and the right sort of men, and the right sort of women, were plentiful? Tantalus begins to think steam a delusion, and galvanism no better than it should be.

Many facts concur to show that we must look deeper for our salvation than to steam, photographs, balloons, or astronomy. These tools have some questionable properties. They are reagents. Machinery is aggressive. The weaver becomes a web, the machinist a machine. If you do not use the tools, they use you. All tools are in one sense edge-tools, and dangerous. A man builds a fine house; and now he has a master, and a task for life: he is to furnish, watch, show it, and keep it in repair, the rest of his days. A man has a reputation, and is no longer free, but must respect that. A man makes a picture or a book, and, if it succeeds, ’tis often the worse for him. I saw a brave man the other day, hitherto as free as the hawk or the fox of the wilderness, constructing his cabinet of drawers for shells, eggs, minerals, and mounted birds. It was easy to see that he was amusing himself with making pretty links for his own limbs.

Then the political economist thinks “’tis doubtful if all the mechanical inventions that ever existed have lightened the day’s toil of one human being.” The machine unmakes the man. Now that the machine is so perfect, the engineer is nobody. Every new step in improving the engine restricts one more act of the engineer,—unteaches him. Once it took Archimedes; now it only needs a fireman, and a boy to know the coppers, to pull up the handles or mind the water-tank. But when the engine breaks, they can do nothing.

What sickening details in the daily journals! I believe they have ceased to publish the “Newgate Calendar” and the “Pirate’s Own Book” since the family newspapers,

namely, the New York Tribune and the London Times, have quite superseded them in the freshness, as well as the horror, of their records of crime. Politics were never more corrupt and brutal; and Trade, that pride and darling of our ocean, that educator of nations, that benefactor in spite of itself, ends in shameful defaulting, bubble, and bankruptcy, all over the world.

Of course, we resort to the enumeration of his arts and inventions as a measure of the worth of man. But if, with all his arts, he is a felon, we cannot assume the mechanical skill or chemical resources as the measure of worth. Let us try another gauge.

What have these arts done for the character, for the worth of mankind? Are men better? 'Tis sometimes questioned whether morals have not declined as the arts have ascended. Here are great arts and little men. Here is greatness begotten of paltriness. We cannot trace the triumphs of civilization to such benefactors as we wish. The greatest meliorator of the world is selfish, huckstering Trade. Every victory over matter ought to recommend to man the worth of his nature. But now one wonders who did all this good. Look up the inventors. Each has his own knack; his genius is in veins and spots. But the great, equal, symmetrical brain, fed from a great heart, you shall not find. Every one has more to hide than he has to show, or is lamed by his excellence. 'Tis too plain that with the material power the moral progress has not kept pace. It appears that we have not made a judicious investment. Works and days were offered us, and we took works.

The new study of the Sanskrit has shown us the origin of the old names of God,—Dyaus, Deus, Zeus, Zeu pater, Jupiter,—names of the sun, still recognizable through the modifications of our vernacular words, importing that the Day is the Divine Power and Manifestation, and indicating that those ancient men, in their attempts to express the Supreme Power of the universe, called him the Day, and that this name was accepted by all the tribes.

Hesiod wrote a poem which he called “Works and Days,” in which he marked the changes of the Greek year, instructing the husbandman at the rising of what constellation he might safely sow, when to reap, when to gather wood, when the sailor might launch his boat in security from storms, and what admonitions of the planets he must heed. It is full of economies for Grecian life, noting the proper age for marriage, the rules of household thrift, and of hospitality. The poem is full of piety as well as prudence, and is adapted to all meridians, by adding the ethics of works and of days. But he has not pushed his study of days into such inquiry and analysis as they invite.

A farmer said “he should like to have all the land that joined his own.” Bonaparte, who had the same appetite, endeavored to make the Mediterranean a French lake. Czar Alexander was more expansive, and wished to call the Pacific my ocean; and the Americans were obliged to resist his attempts to make it a close sea. But if he had the earth for his pasture, and the sea for his pond, he would be a pauper still. He only is rich who owns the day. There is no king, rich man, fairy, or demon who possesses such power as that. The days are ever divine as to the first Aryans. They are of the least pretension, and of the greatest capacity, of anything that exists. They come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing; and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.

How the day fits itself to the mind, winds itself round it like a fine drapery, clothing all its fancies! Any holiday communicates to us its color. We wear its cockade and favors in our humor. Remember what boys think in the morning of “Election day,” of the Fourth of July, of Thanksgiving or Christmas. The very stars in their courses wink to them of nuts and cakes, bonbons, presents, and fireworks. Cannot memory still descry the old school-house and its porch, somewhat hacked by jack-knives, where you spun tops and snapped marbles; and do you not recall that life was then calendared by moments, threw itself into nervous knots or glittering hours, even as

now, and not spread itself abroad an equable felicity? In college terms, and in years that followed, the young graduate, when the Commencement anniversary returned, though he were in a swamp, would see a festive light, and find the air faintly echoing with plausive academic thunders. In solitude and in the country, what dignity distinguishes the holy time! The old Sabbath, or Seventh Day, white with the religions of unknown thousands of years, when this hallowed hour dawns out of the deep,—a clean page, which the wise may inscribe with truth, whilst the savage scrawls it with fetishes,—the cathedral music of history breathes through it a psalm to our solitude.

So, in the common experience of the scholar, the weathers fit his moods. A thousand tunes the variable wind plays, a thousand spectacles it brings, and each is the frame or dwelling of a new spirit. I used formerly to choose my time with some nicety for each favorite book. One author is good for winter, and one for the dog-days. The scholar must look long for the right hour for Plato’s Timæus. At last the elect morning arrives, the early dawn,—a few lights conspicuous in the heaven, as of a world just created and still becoming,—and in its wide leisures we dare open that book.

There are days when the great are near us, when there is no frown on their brow, no condescension even; when they take us by the hand, and we share their thought. There are days which are the carnival of the year. The angels assume flesh, and repeatedly become visible. The imagination of the gods is excited, and rushes on every side into forms. Yesterday not a bird peeped; the world was barren, peaked, and pining: to-day ’tis inconceivably populous; creation swarms and meliorates.

The days are made on a loom whereof the warp and woof are past and future time. They are majestically dressed, as if every god brought a thread to the skyey web. ’Tis pitiful the things by which we are rich or poor,—a matter of coins, coats, and carpets, a little more or less stone, or wood, or paint, the fashion of a cloak or hat;

like the luck of naked Indians, of whom one is proud in the possession of a glass bead or a red feather, and the rest miserable in the want of it. But the treasures which Nature spent itself to amass,—the secular, refined, composite anatomy of man,—which all strata go to form, which the prior races, from infusory and saurian, existed to ripen; the surrounding plastic natures; the earth with its foods; the intellectual, temperamenting air; the sea with its invitations; the heaven deep with worlds; and the answering brain and nervous structure replying to these; the eye that looketh into the deeps, which again look back to the eye,—abyss to abyss;—these, not like a glass bead, or the coins or carpets, are given immeasurably to all.

This miracle is hurled into every beggar's hands. The blue sky is a covering for a market, and for the cherubim and seraphim. The sky is the varnish or glory with which the Artist has washed the whole work,—the verge or confines of matter and spirit. Nature could no farther go. Could our happiest dream come to pass in solid fact,—could a power open our eyes to behold "millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,"—I believe I should find that mid-plain on which they moved floored beneath and arched above with the same web of blue depth which weaves itself over me now, as I trudge the streets on my affairs.

'Tis singular that our rich English language should have no word to denote the face of the world. Kinde was the old English term, which, however, filled only half the range of our fine Latin word, with its delicate future tense,—natura, about to be born, or what German philosophy denotes as a becoming. But nothing expresses that power which seems to work for beauty alone. The Greek Kosmos did; and therefore, with great propriety, Humboldt entitles his book, which recounts the last results of science, Cosmos.

Such are the days,—the earth is the cup, the sky is the cover, of the immense bounty of nature which is offered us for our daily aliment; but what a force of illusion begins life with us, and attends us to the end! We are coaxed, flattered, and duped,

from morn to eve, from birth to death; and where is the old eye that ever saw through the deception? The Hindoos represent Maia, the illusory energy of Vishnu, as one of his principal attributes. As if, in this gale of warring elements, which life is, it was necessary to bind souls to human life as mariners in a tempest lash themselves to the mast and bulwarks of a ship, and Nature employed certain illusions as her ties and straps,—a rattle, a doll, an apple, for a child; skates, a river, a boat, a horse, a gun, for the growing boy;—and I will not begin to name those of the youth and adult, for they are numberless. Seldom and slowly the mask falls, and the pupil is permitted to see that all is one stuff, cooked and painted under many counterfeit appearances. Hume's doctrine was that the circumstances vary, the amount of happiness does not; that the beggar cracking fleas in the sunshine under a hedge, and the duke rolling by in his chariot, the girl equipped for her first ball, and the orator returning triumphant from the debate, had different means, but the same quantity of pleasant excitement.

This element of illusion lends all its force to hide the values of present time. Who is he that does not always find himself doing something less than his best task? "What are you doing?" "O, nothing; I have been doing thus, or I shall do so or so, but now I am only—" Ah! poor dupe, will you never slip out of the web of the master juggler,—never learn that, as soon as the irrecoverable years have woven their blue glory between to-day and us, these passing hours shall glitter and draw us, as the wildest romance and the homes of beauty and poetry? How difficult to deal erect with them! The events they bring, their trade, entertainments, and gossip, their urgent work, all throw dust in the eyes and distract attention. He is a strong man who can look them in the eye, see through this juggle, feel their identity, and keep his own; who can know surely that one will be like another to the end of the world, nor permit love, or death, or politics, or money, war, or pleasure, to draw him from his task.

The world is always equal to itself, and every man in moments of deeper thought is

apprised that he is repeating the experiences of the people in the streets of Thebes or Byzantium. An everlasting Now reigns in nature, which hangs the same roses on our bushes which charmed the Roman and the Chaldæan in their hanging gardens. ‘To what end, then,’ he asks, ‘should I study languages, and traverse countries, to learn so simple truths?’

History of ancient art, excavated cities, recovery of books and inscriptions,—yes, the works were beautiful, and the history worth knowing; and academies convene to settle the claims of the old schools. What journeys and measurements,—Niebuhr and Müller and Layard,—to identify the plain of Troy and Nimroud town! And your homage to Dante costs you so much sailing; and to ascertain the discoverers of America needs as much voyaging as the discovery cost. Poor child! that flexile clay of which these old brothers moulded their admirable symbols was not Persian, nor Memphian, nor Teutonic, nor local at all, but was common lime and silex and water, and sunlight, the heat of the blood, and the heaving of the lungs; it was that clay which thou heldest but now in thy foolish hands, and threwest away to go and seek in vain in sepulchres, mummy-pits, and old book-shops of Asia Minor, Egypt, and England. It was the deep to-day which all men scorn; the rich poverty, which men hate; the populous, all-loving solitude, which men quit for the tattle of towns. He lurks, he hides,—he who is success, reality, joy, and power. One of the illusions is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour. Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned anything rightly, until he knows that every day is Doomsday. ’Tis the old secret of the gods that they come in low disguises. ’Tis the vulgar great who come dizened with gold and jewels. Real kings hide away their crowns in their wardrobes, and affect a plain and poor exterior. In the Norse legend of our ancestors, Odin dwells in a fisher’s hut, and patches a boat. In the Hindoo legends, Hari dwells a peasant among peasants. In the Greek legend, Apollo lodges with the shepherds of Admetus; and Jove liked to rusticate among the poor Ethiopians. So, in our history, Jesus is born in a barn, and

his twelve peers are fishermen. ’Tis the very principle of science that Nature shows herself best in leasts; ’twas the maxim of Aristotle and Lucretius; and, in modern times, of Swedenborg and of Hahnemann. The order of changes in the egg determines the age of fossil strata. So it was the rule of our poets, in the legends of fairy lore, that the fairies largest in power were the least in size. In the Christian graces, humility stands highest of all, in the form of the Madonna; and in life, this is the secret of the wise. We owe to genius always the same debt, of lifting the curtain from the common, and showing us that divinities are sitting disguised in the seeming gang of gypsies and pedlers. In daily life, what distinguishes the master is the using those materials he has, instead of looking about for what are more renowned, or what others have used well. “A general,” said Bonaparte, “always has troops enough, if he only knows how to employ those he has, and bivouacs with them.” Do not refuse the employment which the hour brings you, for one more ambitious. The highest heaven of wisdom is alike near from every point, and thou must find it, if at all, by methods native to thyself alone.

That work is ever the more pleasant to the imagination which is not now required. How wistfully, when we have promised to attend the working committee, we look at the distant hills and their seductions!

The use of history is to give value to the present hour and its duty. That is good which commends to me my country, my climate, my means and materials, my associates. I knew a man in a certain religious exaltation, who “thought it an honor to wash his own face.” He seemed to me more sane than those who hold themselves cheap.

Zoölogists may deny that horse-hairs in the water change to worms; but I find that whatever is old corrupts, and the past turns to snakes. The reverence for the deeds of our ancestors is a treacherous sentiment. Their merit was not to reverence the old, but to honor the present moment; and we falsely make them excuses of the very

habit which they hated and defied.

Another illusion is, that there is not time enough for our work. Yet we might reflect that though many creatures eat from one dish, each, according to its constitution, assimilates from the elements what belongs to it, whether time, or space, or light, or water, or food. A snake converts whatever prey the meadow yields him into snake; a fox, into fox; and Peter and John are working up all existence into Peter and John. A poor Indian chief of the Six Nations of New York made a wiser reply than any philosopher, to some one complaining that he had not enough time. “Well,” said Red Jacket, “I suppose you have all there is.”

A third illusion haunts us, that a long duration, as a year, a decade, a century, is valuable. But an old French sentence says, “God works in moments,”—“En peu d’heure Dieu labeure.” We ask for long life, but ’tis deep life, or grand moments, that signify. Let the measure of time be spiritual, not mechanical. Life is unnecessarily long. Moments of insight, of fine personal relation, a smile, a glance,—what ample borrowers of eternity they are! Life culminates and concentrates; and Homer said, “The gods ever give to mortals their apportioned share of reason only on one day.”

I am of the opinion of the poet Wordsworth, “that there is no real happiness in this life, but in intellect and virtue.” I am of the opinion of Pliny, “that, whilst we are musing on these things, we are adding to the length of our lives.” I am of the opinion of Glauco, who said, “The measure of life, O Socrates, is, with the wise, the speaking and hearing such discourses as yours.”

He only can enrich me who can recommend to me the space between sun and sun. ’Tis the measure of a man,—his apprehension of a day. For we do not listen with the best regard to the verses of a man who is only a poet, nor to his problems, if he is only an algebraist; but if a man is at once acquainted with the geometric foundations of things and with their festal splendor, his poetry is exact and his arithmetic

musical. And him I reckon the most learned scholar, not who can unearth for me the buried dynasties of Sesostris and Ptolemy, the Sothiac era, the Olympiads and consulships, but who can unfold the theory of this particular Wednesday. Can he uncover the ligaments concealed from all but piety, which attach the dull men and things we know to the First Cause? These passing fifteen minutes, men think, are time, not eternity; are low and subaltern, are but hope or memory, that is, the way to or the way from welfare, but not welfare. Can he show their tie? That interpreter shall guide us from a menial and eleemosynary existence into riches and stability. He dignifies the place where he is. This mendicant America, this curious, peering, itinerant, imitative America, studious of Greece and Rome, of England and Germany, will take off its dusty shoes, will take off its glazed traveller's-cap, and sit at home with repose and deep joy on its face. The world has no such landscape, the aeons of history no such hour, the future no equal second opportunity. Now let poets sing! now let arts unfold!

One more view remains. But life is good only when it is magical and musical, a perfect timing and consent, and when we do not anatomize it. You must treat the days respectfully, you must be a day yourself, and not interrogate it like a college professor. The world is enigmatical,—everything said, and everything known or done,—and must not be taken literally, but genially. We must be at the top of our condition to understand anything rightly. You must hear the bird's song without attempting to render it into nouns and verbs. Cannot we be a little abstemious and obedient? Cannot we let the morning be?

Everything in the universe goes by indirection. There are no straight lines. I remember well the foreign scholar who made a week of my youth happy by his visit. "The savages in the islands," he said, "delight to play with the surf, coming in on the top of the rollers, then swimming out again, and repeat the delicious manœuvre for hours. Well, human life is made up of such transits. There can be no greatness without abandonment. But here your very astronomy is an espionage. I dare not go

out of doors and see the moon and stars, but they seem to measure my tasks, to ask how many lines or pages are finished since I saw them last. Not so, as I told you, was it in Belleisle. The days at Belleisle were all different, and only joined by a perfect love of the same object. Just to fill the hour,—that is happiness. Fill my hour, ye gods, so that I shall not say, whilst I have done this, 'Behold, also, an hour of my life is gone,'—but rather, 'I have lived an hour.'"

We do not want factitious men, who can do any literary or professional feat, as, to write poems, or advocate a cause, or carry a measure, for money; or turn their ability indifferently in any particular direction by the strong effort of will. No, what has been best done in the world,—the works of genius,—cost nothing. There is no painful effort, but it is the spontaneous flowing of the thought. Shakspeare made his Hamlet as a bird weaves its nest. Poems have been written between sleeping and waking, irresponsibly. Fancy defines herself:

"Forms that men spy

With the half-shut eye

In the beams of the setting sun, am I."

The masters painted for joy, and knew not that virtue had gone out of them. They could not paint the like in cold blood. The masters of English lyric wrote their songs so. It was a fine efflorescence of fine powers; as was said of the letters of the Frenchwomen,—"the charming accident of their more charming existence." Then the poet is never the poorer for his song. A song is no song unless the circumstance is free and fine. If the singer sing from a sense of duty or from seeing no way of escape, I had rather have none. Those only can sleep who do not care to sleep; and those only write or speak best who do not too much respect the writing or the speaking.

The same rule holds in science. The savant is often an amateur. His performance is a memoir to the Academy on fish-worms, tadpoles, or spiders' legs; he observes as

other academicians observe; he is on stilts at a microscope, and,—his memoir finished and read and printed,—he retreats into his routinary existence, which is quite separate from his scientific. But in Newton, science was as easy as breathing; he used the same wit to weigh the moon that he used to buckle his shoes; and all his life was simple, wise, and majestic. So was it in Archimedes,—always self-same, like the sky. In Linnæus, in Franklin, the like sweetness and equality,—no stilts, no tiptoe;—and their results are wholesome and memorable to all men.

In stripping time of its illusions, in seeking to find what is the heart of the day, we come to the quality of the moment, and drop the duration altogether. It is the depth at which we live, and not at all the surface extension, that imports. We pierce to the eternity, of which time is the flitting surface; and, really, the least acceleration of thought, and the least increase of power of thought, make life to seem and to be of vast duration. We call it time; but when that acceleration and that deepening take effect, it acquires another and a higher name.

There are people who do not need much experimenting; who, after years of activity, say, we knew all this before; who love at first sight and hate at first sight; discern the affinities and repulsions; who do not care so much for conditions as others, for they are always in one condition, and enjoy themselves; who dictate to others, and are not dictated to; who in their consciousness of deserving success constantly slight the ordinary means of attaining it; who have self-existence and self-help; who are suffered to be themselves in society; who are great in the present; who have no talents, or care not to have them,—being that which was before talent, and shall be after it, and of which talent seems only a tool;—this is character, the highest name at which philosophy has arrived.

’Tis not important how the hero does this or this, but what he is. What he is will appear in every gesture and syllable. In this way the moment and the character are one.

’Tis a fine fable for the advantage of character over talent, the Greek legend of the strife of Jove and Phœbus. Phœbus challenged the gods, and said, “Who will outshoot the far-darting Apollo?” Zeus said, “I will.” Mars shook the lots in his helmet, and that of Apollo leaped out first. Apollo stretched his bow and shot his arrow into the extreme west. Then Zeus arose, and with one stride cleared the whole distance, and said, “Where shall I shoot? there is no space left.” So the bowman’s prize was adjudged to him who drew no bow.

And this is the progress of every earnest mind; from the works of man and the activity of the hands to a delight in the faculties which rule them; from a respect to the works to a wise wonder at this mystic element of time in which he is conditioned; from local skills and the economy which reckons the amount of production per hour to the finer economy which respects the quality of what is done, and the right we have to the work, or the fidelity with which it flows from ourselves; then to the depth of thought it betrays, looking to its universality, or, that its roots are in eternity, not in time. Then it flows from character, that sublime health which values one moment as another, and makes us great in all conditions, and is the only definition we have of freedom and power.

BOOKS.

BOOKS.

It is easy to accuse books, and bad ones are easily found; and the best are but records, and not the things recorded; and certainly there is dilettanteism enough, and books that are merely neutral and do nothing for us. In Plato’s “Gorgias,” Socrates says: “The shipmaster walks in a modest garb near the sea, after bringing his passengers from Ægina or from Pontus, not thinking he has done anything extraordinary, and certainly knowing that his passengers are the same, and in no respect better than when he took them on board.” So is it with books, for the most

part: they work no redemption in us. The bookseller might certainly know that his customers are in no respect better for the purchase and consumption of his wares. The volume is dear at a dollar, and, after reading to weariness the lettered backs, we leave the shop with a sigh, and learn, as I did, without surprise, of a surly bank director, that in bank parlors they estimate all stocks of this kind as rubbish.

But it is not less true that there are books which are of that importance in a man's private experience, as to verify for him the fables of Cornelius Agrippa, of Michael Scott, or of the old Orpheus of Thrace,—books which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences, so medicinal, so stringent, so revolutionary, so authoritative,—books which are the work and the proof of faculties so comprehensive, so nearly equal to the world which they paint, that, though one shuts them with meaner ones, he feels his exclusion from them to accuse his way of living.

Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age.

We owe to books those general benefits which come from high intellectual action. Thus, I think, we often owe to them the perception of immortality. They impart sympathetic activity to the moral power. Go with mean people, and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep. Then, they address the imagination: only poetry inspires poetry. They become the organic culture of the time. College education is the reading of certain books which the common sense of all scholars agrees will represent the science already

accumulated. If you know that,—for instance in geometry, if you have read Euclid and Laplace,—your opinion has some value; if you do not know these, you are not entitled to give any opinion on the subject. Whenever any sceptic or bigot claims to be heard on the questions of intellect and morals, we ask if he is familiar with the books of Plato, where all his pert objections have once for all been disposed of. If not, he has no right to our time. Let him go and find himself answered there.

Meantime the colleges, whilst they provide us with libraries, furnish no professor of books; and, I think, no chair is so much wanted. In a library we are surrounded by many hundreds of dear friends, but they are imprisoned by an enchanter in these paper and leathern boxes; and though they know us, and have been waiting two, ten, or twenty centuries for us,—some of them,—and are eager to give us a sign, and unbosom themselves, it is the law of their limbo that they must not speak until spoken to; and as the enchanter has dressed them, like battalions of infantry, in coat and jacket of one cut, by the thousand and ten thousand, your chance of hitting on the right one is to be computed by the arithmetical rule of Permutation and Combination,—not a choice out of three caskets, but out of half a million caskets all alike. But it happens in our experience, that in this lottery there are at least fifty or a hundred blanks to a prize. It seems, then, as if some charitable soul, after losing a great deal of time among the false books, and alighting upon a few true ones which made him happy and wise, would do a right act in naming those which have been bridges or ships to carry him safely over dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples. This would be best done by those great masters of books who from time to time appear,—the Fabricii, the Seldens, Magliabecchis, Scaligers, Mirandolas, Bayles, Johnsons, whose eyes sweep the whole horizon of learning. But private readers, reading purely for love of the book, would serve us by leaving each the shortest note of what he found.

There are books; and it is practicable to read them, because they are so few. We look over with a sigh the monumental libraries of Paris, of the Vatican, and the British

Museum. In 1858, the number of printed books in the Imperial Library at Paris was estimated at eight hundred thousand volumes, with an annual increase of twelve thousand volumes; so that the number of printed books extant to-day may easily exceed a million. It is easy to count the number of pages which a diligent man can read in a day, and the number of years which human life in favorable circumstances allows to reading; and to demonstrate, that, though he should read from dawn till dark, for sixty years, he must die in the first alcoves. But nothing can be more deceptive than this arithmetic, where none but a natural method is really pertinent. I visit occasionally the Cambridge Library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of it all is already within the four walls of my study at home. The inspection of the catalogue brings me continually back to the few standard writers who are on every private shelf; and to these it can afford only the most slight and casual additions. The crowds and centuries of books are only commentary and elucidation, echoes and weakeners of these few great voices of Time.

The best rule of reading will be a method from nature, and not a mechanical one of hours and pages. It holds each student to a pursuit of his native aim, instead of a desultory miscellany. Let him read what is proper to him, and not waste his memory on a crowd of mediocrities. As whole nations have derived their culture from a single book,—as the Bible has been the literature as well as the religion of large portions of Europe,—as Hafiz was the eminent genius of the Persians, Confucius of the Chinese, Cervantes of the Spaniards; so, perhaps, the human mind would be a gainer, if all the secondary writers were lost,—say, in England, all but Shakspeare, Milton, and Bacon,—through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds. With this pilot of his own genius, let the student read one, or let him read many, he will read advantageously. Dr. Johnson said: “Whilst you stand deliberating which book your son shall read first, another boy has read both: read anything five hours a day, and you will soon be learned.”

Nature is much our friend in this matter. Nature is always clarifying her water and her wine. No filtration can be so perfect. She does the same thing by books as by her gases and plants. There is always a selection in writers, and then a selection from the selection. In the first place, all books that get fairly into the vital air of the world were written by the successful class, by the affirming and advancing class, who utter what tens of thousands feel though they cannot say. There has already been a scrutiny and choice from many hundreds of young pens, before the pamphlet or political chapter which you read in a fugitive journal comes to your eye. All these are young adventurers, who produce their performance to the wise ear of Time, who sits and weighs, and, ten years hence, out of a million of pages reprints one. Again it is judged, it is winnowed by all the winds of opinion, and what terrific selection has not passed on it before it can be reprinted after twenty years,—and reprinted after a century!—it is as if Minos and Rhadamanthus had indorsed the writing. 'Tis therefore an economy of time to read old and famed books. Nothing can be preserved which is not good; and I know beforehand that Pindar, Martial, Terence, Galen, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Erasmus, More, will be superior to the average intellect. In contemporaries, it is not so easy to distinguish betwixt notoriety and fame.

Be sure, then, to read no mean books. Shun the spawn of the press on the gossip of the hour. Do not read what you shall learn, without asking, in the street and the train. Dr. Johnson said, "he always went into stately shops"; and good travellers stop at the best hotels; for, though they cost more, they do not cost much more, and there is the good company and the best information. In like manner, the scholar knows that the famed books contain, first and last, the best thoughts and facts. Now and then, by rarest luck, in some foolish Grub Street is the gem we want. But in the best circles is the best information. If you should transfer the amount of your reading day by day from the newspaper to the standard authors—— But who dare speak of such a thing?

The three practical rules, then, which I have to offer, are,—1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like; or, in Shakspeare's phrase

"No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en:

In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

Montaigne says, "Books are a languid pleasure"; but I find certain books vital and spermatic, not leaving the reader what he was: he shuts the book a richer man. I would never willingly read any others than such. And I will venture, at the risk of inditing a list of old primers and grammars, to count the few books which a superficial reader must thankfully use.

Of the old Greek books, I think there are five which we cannot spare: 1. Homer, who in spite of Pope and all the learned uproar of centuries, has really the true fire, and is good for simple minds, is the true and adequate germ of Greece, and occupies that place as history, which nothing can supply. It holds through all literature, that our best history is still poetry. It is so in Hebrew, in Sanskrit, and in Greek. English history is best known through Shakspeare; how much through Merlin, Robin Hood, and the Scottish ballads!—the German, through the Nibelungenlied;—the Spanish, through the Cid. Of Homer, George Chapman's is the heroic translation, though the most literal prose version is the best of all. 2. Herodotus, whose history contains inestimable anecdotes, which brought it with the learned into a sort of disesteem; but in these days, when it is found that what is most memorable of history is a few anecdotes, and that we need not be alarmed though we should find it not dull, it is regaining credit. 3. Æschylus, the grandest of the three tragedians, who has given us under a thin veil the first plantation of Europe. The "Prometheus" is a poem of the like dignity and scope as the Book of Job, or the Norse Edda. 4. Of Plato I hesitate to speak, lest there should be no end. You find in him that which you have already found in Homer, now ripened to thought,—the poet converted to a philosopher, with

loftier strains of musical wisdom than Homer reached; as if Homer were the youth, and Plato the finished man; yet with no less security of bold and perfect song, when he cares to use it, and with some harp-strings fetched from a higher heaven. He contains the future, as he came out of the past. In Plato, you explore modern Europe in its causes and seed,—all that in thought, which the history of Europe embodies or has yet to embody. The well-informed man finds himself anticipated. Plato is up with him too. Nothing has escaped him. Every new crop in the fertile harvest of reform, every fresh suggestion of modern humanity, is there. If the student wish to see both sides, and justice done to the man of the world, pitiless exposure of pedants, and the supremacy of truth and the religious sentiment, he shall be contented also. Why should not young men be educated on this book? It would suffice for the tuition of the race,—to test their understanding, and to express their reason. Here is that which is so attractive to all men,—the literature of aristocracy shall I call it?—the picture of the best persons, sentiments, and manners, by the first master, in the best times,—portraits of Pericles, Alcibiades, Crito, Prodicus, Protagoras, Anaxagoras, and Socrates, with the lovely background of the Athenian and suburban landscape. Or who can overestimate the images with which Plato has enriched the minds of men, and which pass like bullion in the currency of all nations? Read the "Phædo," the "Protagoras," the "Phædrus," the "Timæus," the "Republic," and the "Apology of Socrates." 5. Plutarch cannot be spared from the smallest library; first, because he is so readable, which is much; then, that he is medicinal and invigorating. The lives of Cimon, Lycurgus, Alexander, Demosthenes, Phocion, Marcellus, and the rest, are what history has of best. But this book has taken care of itself, and the opinion of the world is expressed in the innumerable cheap editions, which make it as accessible as a newspaper. But Plutarch's "Morals" is less known, and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the "Lives." He will read in it the essays "On the Dæmon of Socrates," "On Isis and Osiris," "On Progress in Virtue," "On Garrulity," "On Love," and thank anew the art

of printing, and the cheerful domain of ancient thinking. Plutarch charms by the facility of his associations; so that it signifies little where you open his book, you find yourself at the Olympian tables. His memory is like the Isthmian Games, where all that was excellent in Greece was assembled, and you are stimulated and recruited by lyric verses, by philosophic sentiments, by the forms and behavior of heroes, by the worship of the gods, and by the passing of fillets, parsley and laurel wreaths, chariots, armor, sacred cups, and utensils of sacrifice. An inestimable trilogy of ancient social pictures are the three “Banquets” respectively of Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch. Plutarch’s has the least approach to historical accuracy; but the meeting of the Seven Wise Masters is a charming portraiture of ancient manners and discourse, and is as clear as the voice of a fife, and entertaining as a French novel. Xenophon’s delineation of Athenian manners is an accessory to Plato, and supplies traits of Socrates; whilst Plato’s has merits of every kind,—being a repertory of the wisdom of the ancients on the subject of love,—a picture of a feast of wits, not less descriptive than Aristophanes,—and, lastly, containing that ironical eulogy of Socrates which is the source from which all the portraits of that philosopher current in Europe have been drawn.

Of course a certain outline should be obtained of Greek history, in which the important moments and persons can be rightly set down; but the shortest is the best, and if one lacks stomach for Mr. Grote’s voluminous annals, the old slight and popular summary of Goldsmith or of Gillies will serve. The valuable part is the age of Pericles and the next generation. And here we must read the “Clouds” of Aristophanes, and what more of that master we gain appetite for, to learn our way in the streets of Athens, and to know the tyranny of Aristophanes, requiring more genius and sometimes not less cruelty than belonged to the official commanders. Aristophanes is now very accessible, with much valuable commentary, through the labors of Mitchell and Cartwright. An excellent popular book is J. A. St. John’s “Ancient Greece”; the “Life and Letters” of Niebuhr, even more than his Lectures,

furnish leading views; and Winckelmann, a Greek born out of due time, has become essential to an intimate knowledge of the Attic genius. The secret of the recent histories in German and in English is the discovery, owed first to Wolff, and later to Boeckh, that the sincere Greek history of that period must be drawn from Demosthenes, especially from the business orations, and from the comic poets.

If we come down a little by natural steps from the master to the disciples, we have, six or seven centuries later, the Platonists,—who also cannot be skipped,—Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Synesius, Jamblichus. Of Jamblichus the Emperor Julian said, "that he was posterior to Plato in time, not in genius." Of Plotinus, we have eulogies by Porphyry and Longinus, and the favor of the Emperor Gallienus,—indicating the respect he inspired among his contemporaries. If any one who had read with interest the "Isis and Osiris" of Plutarch should then read a chapter called "Providence," by Synesius, translated into English by Thomas Taylor, he will find it one of the majestic remains of literature, and, like one walking in the noblest of temples, will conceive new gratitude to his fellow-men, and a new estimate of their nobility. The imaginative scholar will find few stimulants to his brain like these writers. He has entered the Elysian Fields; and the grand and pleasing figures of gods and dæmons and dæmoniacal men, of the "azonic" and the "aquatic gods," dæmons with fulgid eyes, and all the rest of the Platonic rhetoric, exalted a little under the African sun, sail before his eyes. The acolyte has mounted the tripod over the cave at Delphi; his heart dances, his sight is quickened. These guides speak of the gods with such depth and with such pictorial details, as if they had been bodily present at the Olympian feasts. The reader of these books makes new acquaintance with his own mind; new regions of thought are opened. Jamblichus's "Life of Pythagoras" works more directly on the will than the others; since Pythagoras was eminently a practical person, the founder of a school of ascetics and socialists, a planter of colonies, and nowise a man of abstract studies alone.

The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done

for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable,—any real insight or broad human sentiment. Nay, I observe that, in our Bible, and other books of lofty moral tone, it seems easy and inevitable to render the rhythm and music of the original into phrases of equal melody. The Italians have a fling at translators,—i traditori traduttori; but I thank them. I rarely read any Latin, Greek, German, Italian, sometimes not a French book in the original, which I can procure in a good version. I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven. I should as soon think of swimming across Charles River when I wish to go to Boston, as of reading all my books in originals, when I have them rendered for me in my mother-tongue.

For history there is great choice of ways to bring the student through early Rome. If he can read Livy, he has a good book; but one of the short English compends, some Goldsmith or Ferguson, should be used, that will place in the cycle the bright stars of Plutarch. The poet Horace is the eye of the Augustan age; Tacitus, the wisest of historians; and Martial will give him Roman manners,—and some very bad ones,—in the early days of the Empire: but Martial must be read, if read at all, in his own tongue. These will bring him to Gibbon, who will take him in charge, and convey him with abundant entertainment down—with notice of all remarkable objects on the way—through fourteen hundred years of time. He cannot spare Gibbon, with his vast reading,—with such wit and continuity of mind, that, though never profound, his book is one of the conveniences of civilization, like the new railroad from ocean to ocean,—and, I think, will be sure to send the reader to his “Memoirs of Himself,” and the “Extracts from my Journal,” and “Abstracts of my Readings,” which will spur the laziest scholar to emulation of his prodigious performance.

Now having our idler safe down as far as the fall of Constantinople in 1453, he is in

very good courses; for here are trusty hands waiting for him. The cardinal facts of European history are soon learned. There is Dante's poem, to open the Italian Republics of the Middle Age; Dante's "Vita Nuova," to explain Dante and Beatrice; and Boccaccio's "Life of Dante,"—a great man to describe a greater. To help us, perhaps a volume or two of M. Sismondi's "Italian Republics" will be as good as the entire sixteen. When we come to Michel Angelo, his Sonnets and Letters must be read, with his Life by Vasari, or, in our day, by Herman Grimm. For the Church, and the Feudal Institution, Mr. Hallam's "Middle Ages" will furnish, if superficial, yet readable and conceivable outlines.

The "Life of the Emperor Charles V.," by the useful Robertson, is still the key of the following age. Ximenes, Columbus, Loyola, Luther, Erasmus, Melanchthon, Francis I., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Henry IV. of France, are his contemporaries. It is a time of seeds and expansions, whereof our recent civilization is the fruit.

If now the relations of England to European affairs bring him to British ground, he is arrived at the very moment when modern history takes new proportions. He can look back for the legends and mythology to the "Younger Edda" and the "Heimskringla" of Snorro Sturleson, to Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," to Ellis's "Metrical Romances," to Asser's "Life of Alfred" and Venerable Bede, and to the researches of Sharon Turner and Palgrave. Hume will serve him for an intelligent guide, and in the Elizabethan era he is at the richest period of the English mind, with the chief men of action and of thought which that nation has produced, and with a pregnant future before him. Here he has Shakspeare, Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, Bacon, Chapman, Jonson, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, Herbert, Donne, Herrick; and Milton, Marvell, and Dryden, not long after.

In reading history, he is to prefer the history of individuals. He will not repent the time he gives to Bacon,—not if he read the "Advancement of Learning," the "Essays," the "Novum Organum," the "History of Henry VII.," and then all the

"Letters" (especially those to the Earl of Devonshire, explaining the Essex business), and all but his "Apophthegms."

The task is aided by the strong mutual light which these men shed on each other. Thus, the works of Ben Jonson are a sort of hoop to bind all these fine persons together, and to the land to which they belong. He has written verses to or on all his notable contemporaries; and what with so many occasional poems, and the portrait sketches in his "Discoveries," and the gossiping record of his opinions in his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden, he has really illustrated the England of his time, if not to the same extent, yet much in the same way, as Walter Scott has celebrated the persons and places of Scotland. Walton, Chapman, Herrick, and Sir Henry Wotton write also to the times.

Among the best books are certain Autobiographies: as, St. Augustine's Confessions; Benvenuto Cellini's Life; Montaigne's Essays; Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Memoirs; Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz; Rousseau's Confessions; Linnæus's Diary; Gibbon's, Hume's, Franklin's, Burns's, Alfieri's, Goethe's, and Haydon's Autobiographies.

Another class of books closely allied to these, and of like interest, are those which may be called Table-Talks: of which the best are Saadi's Gulistan; Luther's Table-Talk; Aubrey's Lives; Spence's Anecdotes; Selden's Table-Talk; Boswell's Life of Johnson; Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe; Coleridge's Table-Talk; and Hazlitt's Life of Northcote.

There is a class whose value I should designate as Favorites: such as Froissart's Chronicles; Southey's Chronicle of the Cid; Cervantes; Sully's Memoirs; Rabelais; Montaigne; Izaak Walton; Evelyn; Sir Thomas Browne; Aubrey; Sterne; Horace Walpole; Lord Clarendon; Doctor Johnson; Burke, shedding floods of light on his times; Lamb; Landor; and De Quincey;—a list, of course, that may easily be swelled, as dependent on individual caprice. Many men are as tender and irritable as

lovers in reference to these predilections. Indeed, a man's library is a sort of harem, and I observe that tender readers have a great pudency in showing their books to a stranger.

The annals of bibliography afford many examples of the delirious extent to which book-fancying can go, when the legitimate delight in a book is transferred to a rare edition or to a manuscript. This mania reached its height about the beginning of the present century. For an autograph of Shakspeare one hundred and fifty-five guineas were given. In May, 1812, the library of the Duke of Roxburgh was sold. The sale lasted forty-two days,—we abridge the story from Dibdin,—and among the many curiosities was a copy of Boccaccio published by Valdarfer, at Venice, in 1471; the only perfect copy of this edition. Among the distinguished company which attended the sale were the Duke of Devonshire, Earl Spencer, and the Duke of Marlborough, then Marquis of Blandford. The bid stood at five hundred guineas. "A thousand guineas," said Earl Spencer: "And ten," added the Marquis. You might hear a pin drop. All eyes were bent on the bidders. Now they talked apart, now ate a biscuit, now made a bet, but without the least thought of yielding one to the other. But to pass over some details,—the contest proceeded until the Marquis said, "Two thousand pounds." The Earl Spencer bethought him like a prudent general of useless bloodshed and waste of powder, and had paused a quarter of a minute, when Lord Althorp with long steps came to his side, as if to bring his father a fresh lance to renew the fight. Father and son whispered together, and Earl Spencer exclaimed, "Two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds!" An electric shock went through the assembly. "And ten," quietly added the Marquis. There ended the strife. Ere Evans let the hammer fall, he paused; the ivory instrument swept the air; the spectators stood dumb, when the hammer fell. The stroke of its fall sounded on the farthest shores of Italy. The tap of that hammer was heard in the libraries of Rome, Milan, and Venice. Boccaccio stirred in his sleep of five hundred years, and M. Van Praet groped in vain among the royal alcoves in Paris, to detect a copy of the famed

Valdarfer Boccaccio.

Another class I distinguish by the term Vocabularies. Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" is a book of great learning. To read it is like reading in a dictionary. 'Tis an inventory to remind us how many classes and species of facts exist, and, in observing into what strange and multiplex by-ways learning has strayed, to infer our opulence. Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read. There is no cant in Germans, it, no excess of explanation, and it is full of suggestion,—the raw material of possible poems and histories. Nothing is wanting but a little shuffling, sorting, ligature, and cartilage. Out of a hundred examples, Cornelius Agrippa "On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences" is a specimen of that scribatiousness which grew to be the habit of the gluttonous readers of his time. Like the modern they read a literature while other mortals read a few books. They read voraciously, and must disburden themselves; so they take any general topic, as, Melancholy, or Praise of Science, or Praise of Folly, and write and quote without method or end. Now and then out of that affluence of their learning comes a fine sentence from Theophrastus, or Seneca, or Boëthius, but no high method, no inspiring efflux. But one cannot afford to read for a few sentences; they are good only as strings of suggestive words.

There is another class, more needful to the present age, because the currents of custom run now in another direction, and leave us dry on this side;—I mean the Imaginative. A right metaphysics should do justice to the co-ordinate powers of Imagination, Insight, Understanding, and Will. Poetry, with its aids of Mythology and Romance, must be well allowed for an imaginative creature. Men are ever lapsing into a beggarly habit, wherein everything that is not ciphering, that is, which does not serve the tyrannical animal, is hustled out of sight. Our orators and writers are of the same poverty, and, in this rag-fair, neither the Imagination, the great awakening power, nor the Morals, creative of genius and of men, are addressed. But though orator and poet be of this hunger party, the capacities remain. We must have symbols. The child asks you for a story, and is thankful for the poorest. It is not poor

to him, but radiant with meaning. The man asks for a novel,—that is, asks leave for a few hours to be a poet, and to paint things as they ought to be. The youth asks for a poem. The very dunces wish to go to the theatre. What private heavens can we not open, by yielding to all the suggestion of rich music! We must have idolatries, mythologies,—some swing and verge for the creative power lying coiled and cramped here, driving ardent natures to insanity and crime if it do not find vent. Without the great arts which speak to the sense of beauty, a man seems to me a poor, naked, shivering creature. These are his becoming draperies, which warm and adorn him. Whilst the prudential and economical tone of society starves the imagination, affronted Nature gets such indemnity as she may. The novel is that allowance and frolic the imagination finds. Everything else pins it down, and men flee for redress to Byron, Scott, Disraeli, Dumas, Sand, Balzac, Dickens, Thackeray, and Reade. Their education is neglected; but the circulating-library and the theatre, as well as the trout-fishing, the Notch Mountains, the Adirondack country, the tour to Mont Blanc, to the White Hills, and the Ghauts, make such amends as they can.

The imagination infuses a certain volatility and intoxication. It has a flute which sets the atoms of our frame in a dance, like planets; and, once so liberated, the whole man reeling drunk to the music, they never quite subside to their old stony state. But what is the imagination? Only an arm or weapon of the interior energy; only the precursor of the reason. And books that treat the old pedantries of the world, our times, places, professions, customs, opinions, histories, with a certain freedom, and distribute things, not after the usages of America and Europe, but after the laws of right reason, and with as daring a freedom as we use in dreams, put us on our feet again, enable us to form an original judgment of our duties, and suggest new thoughts for to-morrow.

“Lucrezia Floriani,” “Le Péché de M. Antoine,” “Jeanne,” and “Consuelo,” of George Sand, are great steps from the novel of one termination, which we all read twenty years ago. Yet how far off from life and manners and motives the novel still

is! Life lies about us dumb; the day, as we know it, has not yet found a tongue. These stories are to the plots of real life what the figures in “La Belle Assemblée,” which represent the fashion of the month, are to portraits. But the novel will find the way to our interiors one day, and will not always be the novel of costume merely. I do not think it inoperative now. So much novel-reading cannot leave the young men and maidens untouched; and doubtless it gives some ideal dignity to the day. The young study noble behavior; and as the player in “Consuelo” insists that he and his colleagues on the boards have taught princes the fine etiquette and strokes of grace and dignity which they practise with so much effect in their villas and among their dependents, so I often see traces of the Scotch or the French novel in the courtesy and brilliancy of young midshipmen, collegians, and clerks. Indeed, when one observes how ill and ugly people make their loves and quarrels, ’tis pity they should not read novels a little more, to import the fine generosities, and the clear, firm conduct, which are as becoming in the unions and separations which love effects under shingle roofs as in palaces and among illustrious personages.

In novels the most serious questions are beginning to be discussed. What made the popularity of “Jane Eyre,” but that a central question was answered in some sort? The question there answered in regard to a vicious marriage will always be treated according to the habit of the party. A person of commanding individualism will answer it as Rochester does,—as Cleopatra, as Milton, as George Sand do,—magnifying the exception into a rule, dwarfing the world into an exception. A person of less courage, that is, of less constitution, will answer as the heroine does,—giving way to fate, to conventionalism, to the actual state and doings of men and women.

For the most part, our novel-reading is a passion for results. We admire parks, and high-born beauties, and the homage of drawing-rooms, and parliaments. They make us sceptical, by giving prominence to wealth and social position.

I remember when some peering eyes of boys discovered that the oranges hanging on the boughs of an orange-tree in a gay piazza were tied to the twigs by thread. I fear ’tis so with the novelist’s prosperities. Nature has a magic by which she fits the man to his fortunes, by making them the fruit of his character. But the novelist plucks this event here, and that fortune there, and ties them rashly to his figures, to tickle the fancy of his readers with a cloying success, or scare them with shocks of tragedy. And so, on the whole, ’tis a juggle. We are cheated into laughter or wonder by feats which only oddly combine acts that we do every day. There is no new element, no power, no furtherance. ’Tis only confectionery, not the raising of new corn. Great is the poverty of their inventions. She was beautiful, and he fell in love. Money, and killing, and the Wandering Jew, and persuading the lover that his mistress is betrothed to another,—these are the main-springs: new names, but no new qualities in the men and women. Hence the vain endeavor to keep any bit of this fairy gold, which has rolled like a brook through our hands. A thousand thoughts awoke; great rainbows seemed to span the sky,—a morning among the mountains;—but we close the book, and not a ray remains in the memory of evening. But this passion for romance, and this disappointment, show how much we need real elevations and pure poetry: that which shall show us, in morning and night, in stars and mountains, and in all the plight and circumstance of men, the analogons of our own thoughts, and a like impression made by a just book and by the face of Nature.

If our times are sterile in genius, we must cheer us with books of rich and believing men who had atmosphere and amplitude about them. Every good fable, every mythology, every biography from a religious age, every passage of love, and even philosophy and science, when they proceed from an intellectual integrity, and are not detached and critical, have the imaginative element. The Greek fables, the Persian history (Firdusi), the “Younger Edda” of the Scandinavians, the “Chronicle of the Cid,” the poem of Dante, the Sonnets of Michel Angelo, the English drama of Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ford, and even the prose of Bacon and

Milton,—in our time, the Ode of Wordsworth, and the poems and the prose of Goethe, have this enlargement, and inspire hope and generous attempts.

There is no room left,—and yet I might as well not have begun as to leave out a class of books which are the best: I mean the Bibles of the world, or the sacred books of each nation, which express for each the supreme result of their experience. After the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which constitute the sacred books of Christendom, these are, the Desatir of the Persians, and the Zoroastrian Oracles; the Vedas and Laws of Menu; the Upanishads, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagvat Geeta, of the Hindoos; the books of the Buddhists; the "Chinese Classic," of four books, containing the wisdom of Confucius and Mencius. Also such other books as have acquired a semi-canonical authority in the world, as expressing the highest sentiment and hope of nations. Such are the "Hermes Trismegistus," pretending to be Egyptian remains; the "Sentences" of Epictetus; of Marcus Antoninus; the "Vishnu Sarma" of the Hindoos; the "Gulistan" of Saadi; the "Imitation of Christ," of Thomas à Kempis; and the "Thoughts" of Pascal.

All these books are the majestic expressions of the universal conscience, and are more to our daily purpose than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper. But they are for the closet, and to be read on the bended knee. Their communications are not to be given or taken with the lips and the end of the tongue, but out of the glow of the cheek, and with the throbbing heart. Friendship should give and take, solitude and time brood and ripen, heroes absorb and enact them. They are not to be held by letters printed on a page, but are living characters translatable into every tongue and form of life. I read them on lichens and bark; I watch them on waves on the beach; they fly in birds, they creep in worms; I detect them in laughter and blushes and eye-sparkles of men and women. These are Scriptures which the missionary might well carry over prairie, desert, and ocean, to Siberia, Japan, Timbuctoo. Yet he will find that the spirit which is in them journeys faster than he, and greets him on his arrival,—was there already long before him. The missionary must be carried by it,

and find it there, or he goes in vain. Is there any geography in these things? We call them Asiatic, we call them primeval; but perhaps that is only optical; for Nature is always equal to herself, and there are as good eyes and ears now in the planet as ever were. Only these ejaculations of the soul are uttered one or a few at a time, at long intervals, and it takes millenniums to make a Bible.

These are a few of the books which the old and the later times have yielded us, which will reward the time spent on them. In comparing the number of good books with the shortness of life, many might well be read by proxy, if we had good proxies; and it would be well for sincere young men to borrow a hint from the French Institute and the British Association, and, as they divide the whole body into sections, each of which sits upon and reports of certain matters confided to it, so let each scholar associate himself to such persons as he can rely on, in a literary club, in which each shall undertake a single work or series for which he is qualified. For example, how attractive is the whole literature of the “Roman de la Rose,” the “Fabliaux,” and the gaie science of the French Troubadours! Yet who in Boston has time for that? But one of our company shall undertake it, shall study and master it, and shall report on it, as under oath; shall give us the sincere result, as it lies in his mind, adding nothing, keeping nothing back. Another member, meantime, shall as honestly search, sift, and as truly report, on British mythology, the Round Table, the histories of Brut, Merlin, and Welsh poetry; a third on the Saxon Chronicles, Robert of Gloucester, and William of Malmesbury; a fourth, on Mysteries, Early Drama, “Gesta Romanorum,” Collier, and Dyce, and the Camden Society. Each shall give us his grains of gold, after the washing; and every other shall then decide whether this is a book indispensable to him also.

CLUBS.

CLUBS.

We are delicate machines, and require nice treatment to get from us the maximum of power and pleasure. We need tonics, but must have those that cost little or no reaction. The flame of life burns too fast in pure oxygen, and nature has tempered the air with nitrogen. So thought is the native air of the mind, yet pure it is a poison to our mixed constitution, and soon burns up the bone-house of man, unless tempered with affection and coarse practice in the material world. Varied foods, climates, beautiful objects,—and especially the alternation of a large variety of objects—are the necessity of this exigent system of ours. But our tonics, our luxuries, are force-pumps which exhaust the strength they pretend to supply; and of all the cordials known to us, the best, safest, and most exhilarating, with the least harm, is society; and every healthy and efficient mind passes a large part of life in the company most easy to him.

We seek society with very different aims, and the staple of conversation is widely unlike in its circles. Sometimes it is facts,—running from those of daily necessity to the last results of science,—and has all degrees of importance; sometimes it is love, and makes the balm of our early and of our latest days; sometimes it is thought, as from a person who is a mind only; sometimes a singing, as if the heart poured out all like a bird; sometimes experience. With some men it is a debate; at the approach of a dispute they neigh like horses. Unless there be an argument, they think nothing is doing. Some talkers excel in the precision with which they formulate their thoughts, so that you get from them somewhat to remember; others lay criticism asleep by a charm. Especially women use words that are not words,—as steps in a dance are not steps,—but reproduce the genius of that they speak of; as the sound of some bells makes us think of the bell merely, whilst the church-chimes in the distance bring the church and its serious memories before us. Opinions are accidental in people,—have a poverty-stricken air. A man valuing himself as the organ of this or that dogma is a dull companion enough; but opinion native to the speaker is sweet and refreshing, and inseparable from his image. Neither do we by any means always go to people

for conversation. How often to say nothing,—and yet must go; as a child will long for his companions, but among them plays by himself. ’Tis only presence which we want. But one thing is certain,—at some rate, intercourse we must have. The experience of retired men is positive,—that we lose our days and are barren of thought for want of some person to talk with. The understanding can no more empty itself by its own action than can a deal box.

The clergyman walks from house to house all day all the year to give people the comfort of good talk. The physician helps them mainly in the same way, by healthy talk giving a right tone to the patient’s mind. The dinner, the walk, the fireside, all have that for their main end.

See how Nature has secured the communication of knowledge. ’Tis certain that money does not more burn in a boy’s pocket than a piece of news burns in our memory until we can tell it. And, in higher activity of mind, every new perception is attended with a thrill of pleasure, and the imparting of it to others is also attended with pleasure. Thought is the child of the intellect, and this child is conceived with joy and born with joy.

Conversation is the laboratory and workshop of the student. The affection or sympathy helps. The wish to speak to the want of another mind assists to clear your own. A certain truth possesses us, which we in all ways strive to utter. Every time we say a thing in conversation, we get a mechanical advantage in detaching it well and delivery. I prize the mechanics of conversation. ’Tis pulley and lever and screw. To fairly disengage the mass, and send it jingling down, a good boulder,—a block of quartz and gold, to be worked up at leisure in the useful arts of life,—is a wonderful relief.

What are the best days in memory? Those in which we met a companion who was truly such. How sweet those hours when the day was not long enough to communicate and compare our intellectual jewels,—the favorite passages of each

book, the proud anecdotes of our heroes, the delicious verses we had hoarded! What a motive had then our solitary days! How the countenance of our friend still left some light after he had gone! We remember the time when the best gift we could ask of fortune was to fall in with a valuable companion in a ship's cabin, or on a long journey in the old stage-coach, where, each passenger being forced to know every other, and other employments being out of question, conversation naturally flowed, people became rapidly acquainted, and, if well adapted, more intimate in a day than if they had been neighbors for years.

In youth, in the fury of curiosity and acquisition, the day is too short for books and the crowd of thoughts, and we are impatient of interruption. Later, when books tire, thought has a more languid flow; and the days come when we are alarmed, and say there are no thoughts. 'What a barren-witted pate is mine!' the student says; 'I will go and learn whether I have lost my reason.' He seeks intelligent persons, whether more wise or less wise than he, who give him provocation, and at once and easily the old motion begins in his brain: thoughts, fancies, humors flow; the cloud lifts; the horizon broadens; and the infinite opulence of things is again shown him. But the right conditions must be observed. Mainly he must have leave to be himself. Sancho Panza blessed the man who invented sleep. So I prize the good invention whereby everybody is provided with somebody who is glad to see him.

If men are less when together than they are alone, they are also in some respects enlarged. They kindle each other; and such is the power of suggestion, that each sprightly story calls out more; and sometimes a fact that had long slept in the recesses of memory hears the voice, is welcomed to daylight, and proves of rare value. Every metaphysician must have observed, not only that no thought is alone, but that thoughts commonly go in pairs; though the related thoughts first appeared in his mind at long distances of time. Things are in pairs: a natural fact has only half its value, until a fact in moral nature, its counterpart, is stated. Then they confirm and adorn each other; a story is matched by another story. And that may be the reason

why, when a gentleman has told a good thing, he immediately tells it again.

Nothing seems so cheap as the benefit of conversation: nothing is more rare. ’Tis wonderful how you are balked and baffled. There is plenty of intelligence, reading, curiosity; but serious, happy discourse, avoiding personalities, dealing with results, is rare: and I seldom meet with a reading and thoughtful person but he tells me, as if it were his exceptional mishap, that he has no companion.

Suppose such a one to go out exploring different circles in search of this wise and genial counterpart,—he might inquire far and wide. Conversation in society is found to be on a platform so low as to exclude science, the saint, and the poet. Amidst all the gay banter, sentiment cannot profane itself and venture out. The reply of old Isocrates comes so often to mind,—“The things which are now seasonable I cannot say; and for the things which I can say it is not now the time.” Besides, who can resist the charm of talent? The lover of letters loves power too. Among the men of wit and learning, he could not withhold his homage from the gayety, grasp of memory, luck, splendor, and speed; such exploits of discourse, such feats of society! What new powers, what mines of wealth! But when he came home, his brave sequins were dry leaves. He found either that the fact they had thus dizened and adorned was of no value, or that he already knew all and more than all they had told him. He could not find that he was helped by so much as one thought or principle, one solid fact, one commanding impulse: great was the dazzle, but the gain was small. He uses his occasions; he seeks the company of those who have convivial talent. But the moment they meet, to be sure they begin to be something else than they were; they play pranks, dance jigs, run on each other, pun, tell stories, try many fantastic tricks, under some superstition that there must be excitement and elevation;—and they kill conversation at once. I know well the rusticity of the shy hermit. No doubt he does not make allowance enough for men of more active blood and habit. But it is only on natural ground that conversation can be rich. It must not begin with uproar and violence. Let it keep the ground, let it feel the connection with

the battery. Men must not be off their centres.

Some men love only to talk where they are masters. They like to go to school-girls, or to boys, or into the shops where the sauntering people gladly lend an ear to any one. On these terms they give information, and please themselves by sallies and chat which are admired by the idlers; and the talker is at his ease and jolly, for he can walk out without ceremony when he pleases. They go rarely to their equals, and then as for their own convenience simply, making too much haste to introduce and impart their new whim or discovery; listen badly, or do not listen to the comment or to the thought by which the company strive to repay them; rather, as soon as their own speech is done, they take their hats. Then there are the gladiators, to whom it is always a battle; 'tis no matter on which side, they fight for victory; then the heady men, the egotists, the monotones, the steriles, and the impracticables.

It does not help that you find as good or a better man than yourself, if he is not timed and fitted to you. The greatest sufferers are often those who have the most to say,—men of a delicate sympathy, who are dumb in mixed company. Able people, if they do not know how to make allowance for them, paralyze them. One of those conceited prigs who value nature only as it feeds and exhibits them is equally a pest with the roysterers. There must be large reception as well as giving. How delightful after these disturbers is the radiant, playful wit of—one whom I need not name,—for in every society there is his representative. Good-nature is stronger than tomahawks. His conversation is all pictures: he can reproduce whatever he has seen; he tells the best story in the county, and is of such genial temper that he disposes all others irresistibly to good-humor and discourse. Diderot said of the Abbé Galiani: "He was a treasure in rainy days; and if the cabinet-makers made such things, everybody would have one in the country."

One lesson we learn early,—that, in spite of seeming difference, men are all of one pattern. We readily assume this with our mates, and are disappointed and angry if

we find that we are premature, and that their watches are slower than ours. In fact, the only sin which we never forgive in each other is difference of opinion. We know beforehand that yonder man must think as we do. Has he not two hands,—two feet,—hair and nails? Does he not eat,—bleed,—laugh,—cry? His dissent from me is the veriest affectation. This conclusion is at once the logic of persecution and of love. And the ground of our indignation is our conviction that his dissent is some wilfulness he practises on himself. He checks the flow of his opinion, as the cross cow holds up her milk. Yes, and we look into his eye, and see that he knows it and hides his eye from ours.

But to come a little nearer to my mark, I am to say that there may easily be obstacles in the way of finding the pure article we are in search of; but when we find it, it is worth the pursuit, for beside its comfort as medicine and cordial, once in the right company, new and vast values do not fail to appear. All that man can do for man is to be found in that market. There are great prizes in this game. Our fortunes in the world are as our mental equipment for this competition is. Yonder is a man who can answer the questions which I cannot. Is it so? Hence comes to me boundless curiosity to know his experiences and his wit. Hence competition for the stakes dearest to man. What is a match at whist, or draughts, or billiards, or chess, to a match of mother-wit, of knowledge, and of resources? However courteously we conceal it, it is social rank and spiritual power that are compared; whether in the parlor, the courts, the caucus, the senate, or the chamber of science,—which are only less or larger theatres for this competition.

He that can define, he that can answer a question so as to admit of no further answer, is the best man. This was the meaning of the story of the Sphinx. In the old time conundrums were sent from king to king by ambassadors. The seven wise masters at Periander’s banquet spent their time in answering them. The life of Socrates is a propounding and a solution of these. So, in the hagiology of each nation, the lawgiver was in each case some man of eloquent tongue, whose sympathy brought

him face to face with the extremes of society. Jesus, Menu, the first Buddhist, Mahomet, Zertusht, Pythagoras, are examples.

Jesus spent his life in discoursing with humble people on life and duty, in giving wise answers, showing that he saw at a larger angle of vision, and at least silencing those who were not generous enough to accept his thoughts. Luther spent his life so; and it is not his theologic works,—his "Commentary on the Galatians," and the rest, but his "Table-Talk" which is still read by men. Dr. Johnson was a man of no profound mind,—full of English limitations, English politics, English Church, Oxford philosophy; yet having a large heart, mother-wit, and good sense, which impatiently overleaped his customary bounds, his conversation as reported by Boswell has a lasting charm. Conversation is the vent of character as well as of thought; and Dr. Johnson impresses his company, not only by the point of the remark, but also, when the point fails, because he makes it. His obvious religion or superstition, his deep wish that they should think so or so, weighs with them,—so rare is depth of feeling, or a constitutional value for a thought or opinion, among the light-minded men and women who make up society; and though they know that there is in the speaker a degree of shortcoming, of insincerity, and of talking for victory, yet the existence of character, and habitual reverence for principles over talent or learning, is felt by the frivolous.

One of the best records of the great German master, who towered over all his contemporaries in the first thirty years of this century, is his conversations as recorded by Eckermann; and the "Table-Talk" of Coleridge is one of the best remains of his genius.

In the Norse legends, the gods of Valhalla, when they meet the Jotuns, converse on the perilous terms that he who cannot answer the other's questions forfeits his own life. Odin comes to the threshold of the Jotun Waftrhudnir in disguise, calling himself Gangrader; is invited into the hall, and told that he cannot go out thence

unless he can answer every question Waftrhudnir shall put. Waftrhudnir asks him the name of the god of the sun, and of the god who brings the night; what river separates the dwellings of the sons of the giants from those of the gods; what plain lies between the gods and Surtur, their adversary, etc.; all which the disguised Odin answers satisfactorily. Then it is his turn to interrogate, and he is answered well for a time by the Jotun. At last he puts a question which none but himself could answer: "What did Odin whisper in the ear of his son Balder, when Balder mounted the funeral pile?" The startled giant replies: "None of the gods knows what in the old time THOU saidst in the ear of thy son: with death on my mouth have I spoken the fate-words of the generation of the Æsir; with Odin contended I in wise words. Thou must ever the wisest be."

And still the gods and giants are so known, and still they play the same game in all the million mansions of heaven and of earth; at all tables, clubs, and tête-à-têtes, the lawyers in the court-house, the senators in the capitol, the doctors in the academy, the wits in the hotel. Best is he who gives an answer that cannot be answered again. Omnis definitio periculosa est, and only wit has the secret. The same thing took place when Leibnitz came to visit Newton; when Schiller came to Goethe; when France, in the person of Madame de Staël, visited Goethe and Schiller; when Hegel was the guest of Victor Cousin in Paris; when Linnæus was the guest of Jussieu. It happened many years ago, that an American chemist carried a letter of introduction to Dr. Dalton of Manchester, England, the author of the theory of atomic proportions, and was coolly enough received by the Doctor in the laboratory where he was engaged. Only Dr. Dalton scratched a formula on a scrap of paper and pushed it towards the guest,—"Had he seen that?" The visitor scratched on another paper a formula describing some results of his own with sulphuric acid, and pushed it across the table,—"Had he seen that?" The attention of the English chemist was instantly arrested, and they became rapidly acquainted. To answer a question so as to admit of no reply, is the test of a man,—to touch bottom every time. Hyde, Earl of

Rochester, asked Lord-Keeper Guilford, “Do you not think I could understand any business in England in a month?” “Yes, my Lord,” replied the other, “but I think you would understand it better in two months.” When Edward I. claimed to be acknowledged by the Scotch (1292) as lord paramount, the nobles of Scotland replied, “No answer can be made while the throne is vacant.” When Henry III. (1217) plead duress against his people demanding confirmation and execution of the Charter, the reply was: “If this were admitted, civil wars could never close but by the extirpation of one of the contending parties.”

What can you do with one of these sharp respondents? What can you do with an eloquent man? No rules of debate, no contempt of court, no exclusions, no gag-laws can be contrived, that his first syllable will not set aside or overstep and annul. You can shut out the light, it may be; but can you shut out gravitation? You may condemn his book; but can you fight against his thought? That is always too nimble for you, anticipates you, and breaks out victorious in some other quarter. Can you stop the motions of good sense? What can you do with Beaumarchais, who converts the censor whom the court has appointed to stifle his play into an ardent advocate? The court appoints another censor, who shall crush it this time. Beaumarchais persuades him to defend it. The court successively appoints three more severe inquisitors; Beaumarchais converts them all into triumphant vindicators of the play which is to bring in the Revolution. Who can stop the mouth of Luther,—of Newton?—of Franklin,—of Mirabeau,—of Talleyrand?

These masters can make good their own place, and need no patron. Every variety of gift—science, religion, politics, letters, art, prudence, war, or love—has its vent and exchange in conversation. Conversation is the Olympic games whither every superior gift resorts to assert and approve itself,—and, of course, the inspirations of powerful and public men, with the rest. But it is not this class,—whom the splendor of their accomplishment almost inevitably guides into the vortex of ambition, makes them chancellors and commanders of council and of action, and makes them at last

fatalists,—not these whom we now consider. We consider those who are interested in thoughts, their own and other men's, and who delight in comparing them, who think it the highest compliment they can pay a man, to deal with him as an intellect, to expose to him the grand and cheerful secrets perhaps never opened to their daily companions, to share with him the sphere of freedom and the simplicity of truth.

But the best conversation is rare. Society seems to have agreed to treat fictions as realities, and realities as fictions; and the simple lover of truth, especially if on very high grounds,—as a religious or intellectual seeker,—finds himself a stranger and alien.

It is possible that the best conversation is between two persons who can talk only to each other. Even Montesquieu confessed that, in conversation, if he perceived he was listened to by a third person, it seemed to him from that moment the whole question vanished from his mind. I have known persons of rare ability who were heavy company to good, social men who knew well enough how to draw out others of retiring habit; and, moreover, were heavy to intellectual men who ought to have known them. And does it never occur that we, perhaps, live with people too superior to be seen,—as there are musical notes too high for the scale of most ears? There are men who are great only to one or two companions of more opportunity, or more adapted.

It was to meet these wants that in all civil nations attempts have been made to organize conversation by bringing together cultivated people under the most favorable conditions. 'Tis certain there was liberal and refined conversation in the Greek, in the Roman, and in the Middle Age. There was a time when in France a revolution occurred in domestic architecture; when the houses of the nobility, which, up to that time, had been constructed on feudal necessities, in a hollow square,—the ground-floor being resigned to offices and stables, and the floors above to rooms of state and to lodging-rooms,—were rebuilt with new purpose. It was the Marchioness

of Rambouillet who first got the horses out of and the scholars into the palaces, having constructed her hôtel with a view to society, with superb suites of drawing-rooms on the same floor, and broke through the morgue of etiquette by inviting to her house men of wit and learning as well as men of rank, and piqued the emulation of Cardinal Richelieu to rival assemblies, and so to the founding of the French Academy. The history of the Hôtel Rambouillet and its brilliant circles makes an important date in French civilization. And a history of clubs from early antiquity, tracing the efforts to secure liberal and refined conversation, through the Greek and Roman to the Middle Age, and thence down through French, English, and German memoirs, tracing the clubs and coteries in each country, would be an important chapter in history. We know well the Mermaid Club, in London, of Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Chapman, Herrick, Selden, Beaumont and Fletcher; its "Rules" are preserved, and many allusions to their suppers are found in Jonson, Herrick, and in Aubrey. Anthony Wood has many details of Harrington's Club. Dr. Bentley's Club held Newton, Wren, Evelyn, and Locke; and we owe to Boswell our knowledge of the club of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, Garrick, Beauclerk, and Percy. And we have records of the brilliant society that Edinburgh boasted in the first decade of this century. Such societies are possible only in great cities, and are the compensation which these can make to their dwellers for depriving them of the free intercourse with Nature. Every scholar is surrounded by wiser men than he—if they cannot write as well. Cannot they meet and exchange results to their mutual benefit and delight? It was a pathetic experience when a genial and accomplished person said to me, looking from his country home to the capital of New England, "There is a town of two hundred thousand people, and not a chair in it for me." If he were sure to find at No. 2000 Tremont Street what scholars were abroad after the morning studies were ended, Boston would shine as the New Jerusalem to his eyes.

Now this want of adapted society is mutual. The man of thought, the man of letters,

the man of science, the administrator skilful in affairs, the man of manners and culture, whom you so much wish to find,—each of these is wishing to be found. Each wishes to open his thought, his knowledge, his social skill to the daylight in your company and affection, and to exchange his gifts for yours; and the first hint of a select and intelligent company is welcome.

But the club must be self-protecting, and obstacles arise at the outset. There are people who cannot well be cultivated, whom you must keep down and quiet if you can. There are those who have the instinct of a bat to fly against any lighted candle and put it out,—marplots and contradictors. There are those who go only to talk, and those who go only to hear: both are bad. A right rule for a club would be,—Admit no man whose presence excludes any one topic. It requires people who are not surprised and shocked, who do and let do, and let be, who sink trifles, and know solid values, and who take a great deal for granted.

It is always a practical difficulty with clubs to regulate the laws of election so as to exclude peremptorily every social nuisance. Nobody wishes bad manners. We must have loyalty and character. The poet Marvell was wont to say “that he would not drink wine with any one with whom he could not trust his life.” But neither can we afford to be superfine. A man of irreproachable behavior and excellent sense preferred on his travels taking his chance at a hotel for company, to the charging himself with too many select letters of introduction. He confessed he liked low company. He said the fact was incontestable, that the society of gypsies was more attractive than that of bishops. The girl deserts the parlor for the kitchen; the boy, for the wharf. Tutors and parents cannot interest him like the uproarious conversation he finds in the market or the dock. I knew a scholar, of some experience in camps, who said that he liked, in a bar-room, to tell a few coon stories, and put himself on a good footing with the company; then he could be as silent as he chose. A scholar does not wish to be always pumping his brains: he wants gossips. The black-coats are good company only for black-coats; but when the manufacturers, merchants, and

ship-masters meet, see how much they have to say, and how long the conversation lasts! They have come from many zones; they have traversed wide countries; they know each his own arts, and the cunning artisans of his craft; they have seen the best and the worst of men. Their knowledge contradicts the popular opinion and your own on many points. Things which you fancy wrong they know to be right and profitable; things which you reckon superstitious they know to be true. They have found virtue in the strangest homes; and in the rich store of their adventures are instances and examples which you have been seeking in vain for years, and which they suddenly and unwittingly offer you.

I remember a social experiment in this direction, wherein it appeared that each of the members fancied he was in need of society, but himself unpresentable. On trial they all found that they could be tolerated by, and could tolerate, each other. Nay, the tendency to extreme self-respect which hesitated to join in a club was running rapidly down to abject admiration of each other, when the club was broken up by new combinations.

The use of the hospitality of the club hardly needs explanation. Men are unbent and social at table; and I remember it was explained to me, in a Southern city, that it was impossible to set any public charity on foot unless through a tavern dinner. I do not think our metropolitan charities would plead the same necessity; but to a club met for conversation a supper is a good basis, as it disarms all parties, and puts pedantry and business to the door. All are in good-humor and at leisure, which are the first conditions of discourse; the ordinary reserves are thrown off, experienced men meet with the freedom of boys, and, sooner or later, impart all that is singular in their experience.

The hospitalities of clubs are easily exaggerated. No doubt the suppers of wits and philosophers acquire much lustre by time and renown. Plutarch, Xenophon, and Plato, who have celebrated each a banquet of their set, have given us next to no data

of the viands; and it is to be believed that an indifferent tavern dinner in such society was more relished by the convives than a much better one in worse company. Herrick's verses to Ben Jonson no doubt paint the fact:—

"When we such clusters had

As made us nobly wild, not mad;

And yet, each verse of thine

Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine."

Such friends make the feast satisfying; and I notice that it was when things went prosperously, and the company was full of honor, at the banquet of the Cid, that "the guests all were joyful, and agreed in one thing,—that they had not eaten better for three years."

I need only hint the value of the club for bringing masters in their several arts to compare and expand their views, to come to an understanding on these points, and so that their united opinion shall have its just influence on public questions of education and politics. 'Tis agreed that in the sections of the British Association more information is mutually and effectually communicated, in a few hours, than in many months of ordinary correspondence, and the printing and transmission of ponderous reports. We know that l'homme de lettres is a little wary, and not fond of giving away his seed-corn; but there is an infallible way to draw him out, namely, by having as good as he. If you have Tuscaroora and he Canada, he may exchange kernel for kernel. If his discretion is incurable, and he dare not speak of fairy gold, he will yet tell what new books he has found, what old ones recovered, what men write and read abroad. A principal purpose also is the hospitality of the club, as a means of receiving a worthy foreigner with mutual advantage.

Every man brings into society some partial thought and local culture. We need range and alternation of topics, and variety of minds. One likes in a companion a phlegm which it is a triumph to disturb, and, not less, to make in an old acquaintance

unexpected discoveries of scope and power through the advantage of an inspiring subject. Wisdom is like electricity. There is no permanently wise man, but men capable of wisdom, who, being put into certain company, or other favorable conditions, become wise for a short time, as glasses rubbed acquire electric power for a while. But, while we look complacently at these obvious pleasures and values of good companions, I do not forget that Nature is always very much in earnest, and that her great gifts have something serious and stern. When we look for the highest benefits of conversation, the Spartan rule of one to one is usually enforced. Discourse, when it rises highest and searches deepest, when it lifts us into that mood out of which thoughts come that remain as stars in our firmament, is between two.

COURAGE.

COURAGE.

I observe that there are three qualities which conspicuously attract the wonder and reverence of mankind:—

1. Disinterestedness, as shown in indifference to the ordinary bribes and influences of conduct,—a purpose so sincere and generous that it cannot be tempted aside by any prospects of wealth or other private advantage. Self-love is, in almost all men, such an overweight, that they are incredulous of a man’s habitual preference of the general good to his own; but when they see it proved by sacrifices of ease, wealth, rank, and of life itself, there is no limit to their admiration. This has made the power of the saints of the East and West, who have led the religion of great nations. Self-sacrifice is the real miracle out of which all the reported miracles grew. This makes the renown of the heroes of Greece and Rome,—of Socrates, Aristides, and Phocion; of Quintus Curtius, Cato, and Regulus; of Hatem Tai’s hospitality; of Chatham, whose scornful magnanimity gave him immense popularity; of Washington, giving his service to the public without salary or reward.

2. Practical power. Men admire the man who can organize their wishes and thoughts in stone and wood and steel and brass,—the man who can build the boat, who has the impiety to make the rivers run the way he wants them, who can lead his telegraph through the ocean from shore to shore; who, sitting in his closet, can lay out the plans of a campaign,—sea-war and land-war; such that the best generals and admirals, when all is done, see that they must thank him for success; the power of better combination and foresight, however exhibited, which, whether it only plays a game of chess, or whether, more loftily, a cunning mathematician, penetrating the cubic weights of stars, predicts the planet which eyes had never seen; or whether, exploring the chemical elements whereof we and the world are made, and seeing their secret, Franklin draws off the lightning in his hand, suggesting that one day a wiser geology shall make the earthquake harmless and the volcano an agricultural resource. Or here is one who, seeing the wishes of men, knows how to come at their end; whispers to this friend, argues down that adversary, moulds society to his purpose, and looks at all men as wax for his hands,—takes command of them as the wind does of clouds, as the mother does of the child, or the man that knows more does of the man that knows less; and leads them in glad surprise to the very point where they would be: this man is followed with acclamation.

3. The third excellence is courage, the perfect will, which no terrors can shake, which is attracted by frowns or threats or hostile armies, nay, needs these to awake and fan its reserved energies into a pure flame, and is never quite itself until the hazard is extreme; then it is serene and fertile, and all its powers play well. There is a Hercules, an Achilles, a Rustem, an Arthur, or a Cid in the mythology of every nation; and in authentic history, a Leonidas, a Scipio, a Cæsar, a Richard Cœur de Lion, a Cromwell, a Nelson, a Great Condé, a Bertrand du Guesclin, a Doge Dandolo, a Napoleon, a Massena, and Ney. ’Tis said courage is common, but the immense esteem in which it is held proves it to be rare. Animal resistance, the instinct of the male animal when cornered, is no doubt common; but the pure article,

courage with eyes, courage with conduct, self-possession at the cannon's mouth, cheerfulness in lonely adherence to the right, is the endowment of elevated characters. I need not show how much it is esteemed, for the people give it the first rank. They forgive everything to it. What an ado we make through two thousand years about Thermopylæ and Salamis! What a memory of Poitiers and Crecy, and Bunker Hill, and Washington's endurance! And any man who puts his life in peril in a cause which is esteemed becomes the darling of all men. The very nursery-books, the ballads which delight boys, the romances which delight men, the favorite topics of eloquence, the thunderous emphasis which orators give to every martial defiance and passage of arms, and which the people greet, may testify. How short a time since this whole nation rose every morning to read or to hear the traits of courage of its sons and brothers in the field, and was never weary of the theme! We have had examples of men who, for showing effective courage on a single occasion, have become a favorite spectacle to nations, and must be brought in chariots to every mass meeting.

Men are so charmed with valor, that they have pleased themselves with being called lions, leopards, eagles, and dragons, from the animals contemporary with us in the geologic formations. But the animals have great advantage of us in precocity. Touch the snapping-turtle with a stick, and he seizes it with his teeth. Cut off his head, and the teeth will not let go the stick. Break the egg of the young, and the little embryo, before yet the eyes are open, bites fiercely; these vivacious creatures contriving,—shall we say?—not only to bite after they are dead, but also to bite before they are born.

But man begins life helpless. The babe is in paroxysms of fear the moment its nurse leaves it alone, and it comes so slowly to any power of self-protection, that mothers say the salvation of the life and health of a young child is a perpetual miracle. The terrors of the child are quite reasonable, and add to his loveliness; for his utter ignorance and weakness, and his enchanting indignation on such a small basis of

capital, compel every by-stander to take his part. Every moment, as long as he is awake, he studies the use of his eyes, ears, hands, and feet, learning how to meet and avoid his dangers, and thus every hour loses one terror more. But this education stops too soon. A large majority of men being bred in families, and beginning early to be occupied day by day with some routine of safe industry, never come to the rough experiences that make the Indian, the soldier, or the frontiersman self-subsistent and fearless. Hence the high price of courage indicates the general timidity. “Mankind,” said Franklin, “are dastardly when they meet with opposition.” In war even, generals are seldom found eager to give battle. Lord Wellington said, “Uniforms were often masks”; and again, “When my journal appears, many statues must come down.” The Norse Sagas relate that when Bishop Magne reproved King Sigurd for his wicked divorce, the priest who attended the bishop, expecting every moment when the savage king would burst with rage and slay his superior, said “that he saw the sky no bigger than a calf-skin.” And I remember when a pair of Irish girls, who had been run away with in a wagon by a skittish horse, said that, when he began to rear, they were so frightened that they could not see the horse.

Cowardice shuts the eyes till the sky is not larger than a calf-skin; shuts the eyes so that we cannot see the horse that is running away with us; worse, shuts the eyes of the mind and chills the heart. Fear is cruel and mean. The political reigns of terror have been reigns of madness and malignity,—a total perversion of opinion; society is upside down, and its best men are thought too bad to live. Then the protection which a house, a family, neighborhood and property, even the first accumulation of savings, gives go in all times to generate this taint of the respectable classes. Voltaire said, “One of the chief misfortunes of honest people is that they are cowardly.” Those political parties which gather-in the well-disposed portion of the community,—how infirm and ignoble! what white lips they have! always on the defensive, as if the lead were intrusted to the journals, often written in great part by women and boys, who, without strength, wish to keep up the appearance of strength.

They can do the hurras, the placarding, the flags,—and the voting, if it is a fair day; but the aggressive attitude of men who will have right done, will no longer be bothered with burglars and ruffians in the streets, counterfeiters in public offices, and thieves on the bench; that part, the part of the leader and soul of the vigilance committee, must be taken by stout and sincere men who are really angry and determined. In ordinary, we have a snappish criticism which watches and contradicts the opposite party. We want the will which advances and dictates. When we get an advantage, as in Congress the other day, it is because our adversary has committed a fault, not that we have taken the initiative and given the law. Nature has made up her mind that what cannot defend itself shall not be defended. Complaining never so loud, and with never so much reason, is of no use. One heard much cant of peace-parties long ago in Kansas and elsewhere, that their strength lay in the greatness of their wrongs, and dissuading all resistance, as if to make this strength greater. But were their wrongs greater than the negro's? and what kind of strength did they ever give him? It was always invitation to the tyrant, and bred disgust in those who would protect the victim. What cannot stand must fall; and the measure of our sincerity, and therefore of the respect of men, is the amount of health and wealth we will hazard in the defence of our right. An old farmer, my neighbor across the fence, when I ask him if he is not going to town-meeting, says: "No; 'tis no use balloting, for it will not stay; but what you do with the gun will stay so." Nature has charged every one with his own defence as with his own support, and the only title I can have to your help is when I have manfully put forth all the means I possess to keep me, and, being overborne by odds, the by-standers have a natural wish to interfere and see fair play.

But with this pacific education, we have no readiness for bad times. I am much mistaken if every man who went to the army in the late war had not a lively curiosity to know how he should behave in action. Tender, amiable boys, who had never encountered any rougher play than a base-ball match or a fishing excursion,

were suddenly drawn up to face a bayonet charge or capture a battery. Of course, they must each go into that action with a certain despair. Each whispers to himself: "My exertions must be of small account to the result; only will the benignant Heaven save me from disgracing myself and my friends and my State. Die! O yes, I can well die; but I cannot afford to misbehave; and I do not know how I shall feel." So great a soldier as the old French Marshal Montluc acknowledges that he has often trembled with fear, and recovered courage when he had said a prayer for the occasion. I knew a young soldier who died in the early campaign, who confided to his sister that he had made up his mind to volunteer for the war. "I have not," he said, "any proper courage, but I shall never let any one find it out." And he had accustomed himself always to go into whatever place of danger, and do whatever he was afraid to do, setting a dogged resolution to resist this natural infirmity. Coleridge has preserved an anecdote of an officer in the British Navy, who told him that when he, in his first boat expedition, a midshipman in his fourteenth year, accompanied Sir Alexander Ball, "as we were rowing up to the vessel we were to attack, amid a discharge of musketry, I was overpowered with fear, my knees shook, and I was ready to faint away. Lieutenant Ball seeing me, placed himself close beside me, took hold of my hand and whispered, 'Courage, my dear boy! you will recover in a minute or so; I was just the same when I first went out in this way.' It was as if an angel spoke to me. From that moment I was as fearless and as forward as the oldest of the boat's crew. But I dare not think what would have become of me, if, at that moment, he had scoffed and exposed me."

Knowledge is the antidote to fear,—Knowledge, Use, and Reason, with its higher aids. The child is as much in danger from a staircase, or the fire-grate, or a bath-tub, or a cat, as the soldier from a cannon or an ambush. Each surmounts the fear as fast as he precisely understands the peril, and learns the means of resistance. Each is liable to panic, which is, exactly, the terror of ignorance surrendered to the imagination. Knowledge is the encourager, knowledge that takes fear out of the

heart, knowledge and use, which is knowledge in practice. They can conquer who believe they can. It is he who has done the deed once who does not shrink from attempting it again. It is the groom who knows the jumping horse well who can safely ride him. It is the veteran soldier, who, seeing the flash of the cannon, can step aside from the path of the ball. Use makes a better soldier than the most urgent considerations of duty,—familiarity with danger enabling him to estimate the danger. He sees how much is the risk, and is not afflicted with imagination; knows practically Marshal Saxe's rule, that every soldier killed costs the enemy his weight in lead.

The sailor loses fear as fast as he acquires command of sails and spars and steam; the frontiersman, when he has a perfect rifle and has acquired a sure aim. To the sailor's experience every new circumstance suggests what he must do. The terrific chances which make the hours and the minutes long to the passenger, he whiles away by incessant application of expedients and repairs. To him a leak, a hurricane, or a water-spout is so much work—no more. The hunter is not alarmed by bears, catamounts, or wolves, nor the grazier by his bull, nor the dog-breeder by his bloodhound, nor an Arab by the simoom, nor a farmer by a fire in the woods. The forest on fire looks discouraging enough to a citizen: the farmer is skilful to fight it. The neighbors run together; with pine boughs they can mop out the flame, and, by raking with the hoe a long but little trench, confine to a patch the fire which would easily spread over a hundred acres.

In short, courage consists in equality to the problem before us. The school-boy is daunted before his tutor by a question of arithmetic, because he does not yet command the simple steps of the solution which the boy beside him has mastered. These once seen, he is as cool as Archimedes, and cheerily proceeds a step farther. Courage is equality to the problem, in affairs, in science, in trade, in council, or in action; consists in the conviction that the agents with whom you contend are not superior in strength or resources or spirit to you. The general must stimulate the

mind of his soldiers to the perception that they are men, and the enemy is no more. Knowledge, yes; for the danger of dangers is illusion. The eye is easily daunted; and the drums, flags, shining helmets, beard, and mustache of the soldier have conquered you long before his sword or bayonet reaches you.

But we do not exhaust the subject in the slight analysis; we must not forget the variety of temperaments, each of which qualifies this power of resistance. It is observed that men with little imagination are less fearful; they wait till they feel pain, whilst others of more sensibility anticipate it, and suffer in the fear of the pang more acutely than in the pang. ’Tis certain that the threat is sometimes more formidable than the stroke, and ’tis possible that the beholders suffer more keenly than the victims. Bodily pain is superficial, seated usually in the skin and the extremities, for the sake of giving us warning to put us on our guard; not in the vitals, where the rupture that produces death is perhaps not felt, and the victim never knew what hurt him. Pain is superficial, and therefore fear is. The torments of martyrdoms are probably most keenly felt by the by-standers. The torments are illusory. The first suffering is the last suffering, the later hurts being lost on insensibility. Our affections and wishes for the external welfare of the hero tumultuously rush to expression in tears and outcries; but we, like him, subside into indifferency and defiance, when we perceive how short is the longest arm of malice, how serene is the sufferer.

It is plain that there is no separate essence called courage, no cup or cell in the brain, no vessel in the heart containing drops or atoms that make or give this virtue; but it is the right or healthy state of every man, when he is free to do that which is constitutional to him to do. It is directness,—the instant performing of that which he ought. The thoughtful man says, you differ from me in opinion and methods; but do you not see that I cannot think or act otherwise than I do? that my way of living is organic? And to be really strong we must adhere to our own means. On organic action all strength depends. Hear what women say of doing a task by sheer force of

will: it costs them a fit of sickness. Plutarch relates that the Pythoness who tried to prophesy without command in the Temple at Delphi, though she performed the usual rites, and inhaled the air of the cavern standing on the tripod, fell into convulsions, and died. Undoubtedly there is a temperamental courage, a warlike blood, which loves a fight, does not feel itself except in a quarrel, as one sees in wasps, or ants, or cocks, or cats. The like vein appears in certain races of men and in individuals of every race. In every school there are certain fighting boys; in every society, the contradicting men; in every town, bravoes and bullies, better or worse dressed, fancy-men, patrons of the cock-pit and the ring. Courage is temperamental, scientific, ideal. Swedenborg has left this record of his king: “Charles XII., of Sweden, did not know what that was which others called fear, nor what that spurious valor and daring that is excited by inebriating draughts, for he never tasted any liquid but pure water. Of him we may say, that he led a life more remote from death, and in fact lived more, than any other man.” It was told of the Prince of Condé, “that there not being a more furious man in the world, danger in fight never disturbs him more than just to make him civil, and to command in words of great obligation to his officers and men, and without any the least disturbance to his judgment or spirit.” Each has his own courage, as his own talent; but the courage of the tiger is one, and of the horse another. The dog that scorns to fight, will fight for his master. The llama that will carry a load if you caress him, will refuse food and die if he is scourged. The fury of onset is one, and of calm endurance another. There is a courage of the cabinet as well as a courage of the field; a courage of manners in private assemblies, and another in public assemblies; a courage which enables one man to speak masterly to a hostile company, whilst another man who can easily face a cannon’s mouth dares not open his own.

There is a courage of a merchant in dealing with his trade, by which dangerous turns of affairs are met and prevailed over. Merchants recognize as much gallantry, well judged too, in the conduct of a wise and upright man of business, in difficult times,

as soldiers in a soldier.

There is a courage in the treatment of every art by a master in architecture, in sculpture, in painting, or in poetry, each cheering the mind of the spectator or receiver as by true strokes of genius, which yet nowise implies the presence of physical valor in the artist. This is the courage of genius, in every kind. A certain quantity of power belongs to a certain quantity of faculty. The beautiful voice at church goes sounding on, and covers up in its volume, as in a cloak, all the defects of the choir. The singers, I observe, all yield to it, and so the fair singer indulges her instinct, and dares, and dares, because she knows she can.

It gives the cutting edge to every profession. The judge puts his mind to the tangle of contradictions in the case, squarely accosts the question, and, by not being afraid of it, by dealing with it as business which must be disposed of, he sees presently that common arithmetic and common methods apply to this affair. Perseverance strips it of all peculiarity, and ranges it on the same ground as other business. Morphy played a daring game in chess: the daring was only an illusion of the spectator, for the player sees his move to be well fortified and safe. You may see the same dealing in criticism; a new book astonishes for a few days, takes itself out of common jurisdiction, and nobody knows what to say of it: but the scholar is not deceived. The old principles which books exist to express are more beautiful than any book; and out of love of the reality he is an expert judge how far the book has approached it and where it has come short. In all applications ’tis the same power,—the habit of reference to one’s own mind, as the home of all truth and counsel, and which can easily dispose of any book because it can very well do without all books. When a confident man comes into a company magnifying this or that author he has freshly read, the company grow silent and ashamed of their ignorance. But I remember the old professor, whose searching mind engraved every word he spoke on the memory of the class, when we asked if he had read this or that shining novelty, “No, I have never read that book”; instantly the book lost credit, and was not to be heard of

again.

Every creature has a courage of his constitution fit for his duties:—Archimedes, the courage of a geometer to stick to his diagram, heedless of the siege and sack of the city; and the Roman soldier his faculty to strike at Archimedes. Each is strong, relying on his own, and each is betrayed when he seeks in himself the courage of others.

Captain John Brown, the hero of Kansas, said to me in conversation, that "for a settler in a new country, one good, believing, strong-minded man is worth a hundred, nay, a thousand men without character; and that the right men will give a permanent direction to the fortunes of a state. As for the bullying drunkards, of which armies are usually made up, he thought cholera, small-pox, and consumption as valuable recruits." He held the belief that courage and chastity are silent concerning themselves. He said, "As soon as I hear one of my men say, 'Ah, let me only get my eye on such a man, I'll bring him down,' I don't expect much aid in the fight from that talker. 'Tis the quiet, peaceable men, the men of principle, that make the best soldiers."

"'Tis still observed those men most valiant are

Who are most modest ere they came to war."

True courage is not ostentatious; men who wish to inspire terror seem thereby to confess themselves cowards. Why do they rely on it, but because they know how potent it is with themselves?

The true temper has genial influences. It makes a bond of union between enemies. Governor Wise of Virginia, in the record of his first interviews with his prisoner, appeared to great advantage. If Governor Wise is a superior man, or inasmuch as he is a superior man, he distinguishes John Brown. As they confer, they understand each other swiftly; each respects the other. If opportunity allowed, they would prefer each other's society and desert their former companions. Enemies would become

affectionate. Hector and Achilles, Richard and Saladin, Wellington and Soult, General Daumas and Abdel Kader, become aware that they are nearer and more alike than any other two, and, if their nation and circumstance did not keep them apart, would run into each other's arms.

See too what good contagion belongs to it. Everywhere it finds its own with magnetic affinity. Courage of the soldier awakes the courage of woman. Florence Nightingale brings lint and the blessing of her shadow. Heroic women offer themselves as nurses of the brave veteran. The troop of Virginian infantry that had marched to guard the prison of John Brown ask leave to pay their respects to the prisoner. Poetry and eloquence catch the hint, and soar to a pitch unknown before. Everything feels the new breath, except the old doting, nigh-dead politicians, whose heart the trumpet of resurrection could not wake.

The charm of the best courages is that they are inventions, inspirations, flashes of genius. The hero could not have done the feat at another hour, in a lower mood. The best act of the marvellous genius of Greece was its first act; not in the statue or the Parthenon, but in the instinct which, at Thermopylæ, held Asia at bay, kept Asia out of Europe,—Asia with its antiquities and organic slavery,—from corrupting the hope and new morning of the West. The statue, the architecture, were the later and inferior creation of the same genius. In view of this moment of history, we recognize a certain prophetic instinct better than wisdom. Napoleon said well, "My hand is immediately connected with my head"; but the sacred courage is connected with the heart. The head is a half, a fraction, until it is enlarged and inspired by the moral sentiment. For it is not the means on which we draw, as health or wealth, practical skill or dexterous talent, or multitudes of followers, that count, but the aims only. The aim reacts back on the means. A great aim aggrandizes the means. The meal and water that are the commissariat of the forlorn hope that stake their lives to defend the pass are sacred as the Holy Grail, or as if one had eyes to see in chemistry the fuel that is rushing to feed the sun.

There is a persuasion in the soul of man that he is here for cause, that he was put down in this place by the Creator to do the work for which he inspires him, that thus he is an overmatch for all antagonists that could combine against him. The pious Mrs. Hutchinson says of some passages in the defence of Nottingham against the Cavaliers, “It was a great instruction that the best and highest courages are beams of the Almighty.” And whenever the religious sentiment is adequately affirmed, it must be with dazzling courage. As long as it is cowardly insinuated, as with the wish to succor some partial and temporary interest, or to make it affirm some pragmatical tenet which our parish church receives to-day, it is not imparted, and cannot inspire or create. For it is always new, leads and surprises, and practice never comes up with it. There are ever appearing in the world men who, almost as soon as they are born, take a bee-line to the rack of the inquisitor, the axe of the tyrant, like Jordano Bruno, Vanini, Huss, Paul, Jesus, and Socrates. Look at Fox’s Lives of the Martyrs, Sewel’s History of the Quakers, Southey’s Book of the Church, at the folios of the Brothers Bollandi, who collected the lives of twenty-five thousand martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and self-tormentors. There is much of fable, but a broad basis of fact. The tender skin does not shrink from bayonets, the timid woman is not scared by fagots; the rack is not frightful, nor the rope ignominious. The poor Puritan, Antony Parsons, at the stake, tied straw on his head, when the fire approached him, and said, “This is God’s hat.” Sacred courage indicates that a man loves an idea better than all things in the world; that he is aiming neither at pelf or comfort, but will venture all to put in act the invisible thought in his mind. He is everywhere a liberator, but of a freedom that is ideal; not seeking to have land or money or conveniences, but to have no other limitation than that which his own constitution imposes. He is free to speak truth; he is not free to lie. He wishes to break every yoke all over the world which hinders his brother from acting after his thought.

There are degrees of courage, and each step upward makes us acquainted with a higher virtue. Let us say then frankly that the education of the will is the object of

our existence. Poverty, the prison, the rack, the fire, the hatred and execrations of our fellow-men, appear trials beyond the endurance of common humanity; but to the hero whose intellect is aggrandized by the soul, and so measures these penalties against the good which his thought surveys, these terrors vanish as darkness at sunrise.

We have little right in piping times of peace to pronounce on these rare heights of character; but there is no assurance of security. In the most private life, difficult duty is never far off. Therefore we must think with courage. Scholars and thinkers are prone to an effeminate habit, and shrink if a coarser shout comes up from the street, or a brutal act is recorded in the journals. The Medical College piles up in its museum its grim monsters of morbid anatomy, and there are melancholy sceptics with a taste for carrion who batten on the hideous facts in history,—persecutions, inquisitions, St. Bartholomew massacres, devilish lives, Nero, Cæsar, Borgia, Marat, Lopez,—men in whom every ray of humanity was extinguished, parricides, matricides, and whatever moral monsters. These are not cheerful facts, but they do not disturb a healthy mind; they require of us a patience as robust as the energy that attacks us, and an unresting exploration of final causes. Wolf, snake, and crocodile are not inharmonious in nature, but are made useful as checks, scavengers, and pioneers; and we must have a scope as large as Nature’s to deal with beast-like men, detect what scullion function is assigned them, and foresee in the secular melioration of the planet how these will become unnecessary, and will die out.

He has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear. I do not wish to put myself or any man into a theatrical position, or urge him to ape the courage of his comrade. Have the courage not to adopt another’s courage. There is scope and cause and resistance enough for us in our proper work and circumstance. And there is no creed of an honest man, be he Christian, Turk, or Gentoo, which does not equally preach it. If you have no faith in beneficent power above you, but see only an adamantine fate coiling its folds about nature and man, then reflect that

the best use of fate is to teach us courage, if only because baseness cannot change the appointed event. If you accept your thoughts as inspirations from the Supreme Intelligence, obey them when they prescribe difficult duties, because they come only so long as they are used; or, if your scepticism reaches to the last verge, and you have no confidence in any foreign mind, then be brave, because there is one good opinion which must always be of consequence to you, namely, your own.

I am permitted to enrich my chapter by adding an anecdote of pure courage from real life, as narrated in a ballad by a lady to whom all the particulars of the fact are exactly known.

GEORGE NIDIVER.

Men have done brave deeds,

And bards have sung them well:

I of good George Nidiver

Now the tale will tell.

In Californian mountains

A hunter bold was he:

Keen his eye and sure his aim

As any you should see.

A little Indian boy

Followed him everywhere,

Eager to share the hunter’s joy,

The hunter’s meal to share.

And when the bird or deer

Fell by the hunter’s skill,

The boy was always near

To help with right good-will.

One day as through the cleft

Between two mountains steep,

Shut in both right and left,

Their questing way they keep,

They see two grizzly bears

With hunger fierce and fell

Rush at them unawares

Right down the narrow dell.

The boy turned round with screams,

And ran with terror wild;

One of the pair of savage beasts

Pursued the shrieking child.

The hunter raised his gun,—

He knew one charge was all,—

And through the boy’s pursuing foe

He sent his only ball.

The other on George Nidiver

Came on with dreadful pace:

The hunter stood unarmed,

And met him face to face.

I say unarmed he stood.

Against those frightful paws

The rifle but, or club of wood,

Could stand no more than straws.

George Nidiver stood still

And looked him in the face;

The wild beast stopped amazed,

Then came with slackening pace.

Still firm the hunter stood,

Although his heart beat high;

Again the creature stopped,

And gazed with wondering eye.

The hunter met his gaze,

Nor yet an inch gave way;

The bear turned slowly round,

And slowly moved away.

What thoughts were in his mind

It would be hard to spell:

What thoughts were in George Nidiver

I rather guess than tell.

But sure that rifle’s aim,

Swift choice of generous part,

Showed in its passing gleam

The depths of a brave heart.

SUCCESS.

SUCCESS.

Our American people cannot be taxed with slowness in performance or in praising their performance. The earth is shaken by our engineries. We are feeling our youth and nerve and bone. We have the power of territory and of sea-coast, and know the use of these. We count our census, we read our growing valuations, we survey our map, which becomes old in a year or two. Our eyes run approvingly along the lengthened lines of railroad and telegraph. We have gone nearest to the Pole. We have discovered the Antarctic continent. We interfere in Central and South America, at Canton, and in Japan; we are adding to an already enormous territory. Our political constitution is the hope of the world, and we value ourselves on all these feats.

'Tis the way of the world; 'tis the law of youth, and of unfolding strength. Men are made each with some triumphant superiority, which, through some adaptation of fingers, or ear, or eye, or ciphering, or pugilistic or musical or literary craft, enriches the community with a new art; and not only we, but all men of European stock value these certificates. Giotto could draw a perfect circle; Erwin of Steinbach could build a minster; Olaf, king of Norway, could run round his galley on the blades of the oars of the rowers, when the ship was in motion; Ojeda could run out swiftly on a plank projected from the top of a tower, turn round swiftly, and come back; Evelyn writes from Rome: "Bernini, the Florentine sculptor, architect, painter, and poet, a little before my coming to Rome, gave a public opera, wherein he painted the scenes, cut the statues, invented the engines, composed the music, writ the comedy, and built the theatre."

"There is nothing in war," said Napoleon, "which I cannot do by my own hands. If there is nobody to make gunpowder, I can manufacture it. The gun-carriages I know how to construct. If it is necessary to make cannons at the forge, I can make them. The details of working them in battle, if it is necessary to teach, I shall teach them. In administration, it is I alone who have arranged the finances, as you know."

It is recorded of Linnæus, among many proofs of his beneficent skill, that when the timber in the shipyards of Sweden was ruined by rot, Linnæus was desired by the government to find a remedy. He studied the insects that infested the timber, and found that they laid their eggs in the logs within certain days in April, and he directed that during ten days at that season the logs should be immersed under water in the docks; which being done the timber was found to be uninjured.

Columbus at Veragua found plenty of gold; but leaving the coast, the ship full of one hundred and fifty skilful seamen,—some of them old pilots, and with too much experience of their craft and treachery to him,—the wise admiral kept his private record of his homeward path. And when he reached Spain, he told the King and Queen, "that they may ask all the pilots who came with him, where is Veragua. Let them answer and say, if they know where Veragua lies. I assert that they can give no other account than that they went to lands where there was abundance of gold, but they do not know the way to return thither, but would be obliged to go on a voyage of discovery as much as if they had never been there before. There is a mode of reckoning," he proudly adds, "derived from astronomy, which is sure and safe to any who understands it."

Hippocrates in Greece knew how to stay the devouring plague which ravaged Athens in his time, and his skill died with him. Dr. Benjamin Rush, in Philadelphia, carried that city heroically through the yellow fever of the year 1793. Leverrier carries the Copernican system in his head, and knew where to look for the new planet. We have seen an American woman write a novel of which a million copies were sold in all languages, and which had one merit, of speaking to the universal heart, and was read with equal interest to three audiences, namely, in the parlor, in the kitchen, and in the nursery of every house. We have seen women who could institute hospitals and schools in armies. We have seen a woman who by pure song could melt the souls of whole populations. And there is no limit to these varieties of talent.

These are arts to be thankful for,—each one as it is a new direction of human power. We cannot choose but respect them. Our civilization is made up of a million contributions of this kind. For success, to be sure, we esteem it a test in other people, since we do first in ourselves. We respect ourselves more if we have succeeded. Neither do we grudge to each of these benefactors the praise or the profit which accrues from his industry.

Here are already quite different degrees of moral merit in these examples. I don't know but we and our race elsewhere set a higher value on wealth, victory, and coarse superiority of all kinds, than other men,—have less tranquillity of mind, are less easily contented. The Saxon is taught from his infancy to wish to be first. The Norseman was a restless rider, fighter, freebooter. The ancient Norse ballads describe him as afflicted with this inextinguishable thirst of victory. The mother says to her son:—

"Success shall be in thy courser tall,

Success in thyself, which is best of all,

Success in thy hand, success in thy foot,

In struggle with man, in battle with brute:—

The holy God and Saint Drothin dear

Shall never shut eyes on thy career;

Look out, look out, Svend Vonved!"

These feats that we extol do not signify so much as we say. These boasted arts are of very recent origin. They are local conveniences, but do not really add to our stature. The greatest men of the world have managed not to want them. Newton was a great man, without telegraph, or gas, or steam-coach, or rubber-shoes, or lucifer-matches, or ether for his pain; so was Shakspeare, and Alfred, and Scipio, and Socrates. These are local conveniences, but how easy to go now to parts of the world where not only

all these arts are wanting, but where they are despised. The Arabian sheiks, the most dignified people in the planet, do not want them; yet have as much self-respect as the English, and are easily able to impress the Frenchman or the American who visits them with the respect due to a brave and sufficient man.

These feats have, to be sure, great difference of merit and some of them involve power of a high kind. But the public values the invention more than the inventor does. The inventor knows there is much more and better where this came from. The public sees in it a lucrative secret. Men see the reward which the inventor enjoys, and they think, 'How shall we win that?' Cause and effect are a little tedious; how to leap to the result by short or by false means? We are not scrupulous. What we ask is victory, without regard to the cause; after the Rob Roy rule, after the Napoleon rule, to be the strongest to-day,—the way of the Talleyrands,—prudent people, whose watches go faster than their neighbors', and who detect the first moment of decline, and throw themselves on the instant on the winning side. I have heard that Nelson used to say, "Never mind the justice or the impudence, only let me succeed." Lord Brougham's single duty of counsel is, "to get the prisoner clear." Fuller says 'tis a maxim of lawyers, "that a crown once worn cleareth all defects of the wearer thereof." Rien ne réussit mieux que le succès. And we Americans are tainted with this insanity, as our bankruptcies and our reckless politics may show. We are great by exclusion, grasping, and egotism. Our success takes from all what it gives to one. 'Tis a haggard, malignant, careworn running for luck.

Egotism is a kind of buckram that gives momentary strength and concentration to men, and seems to be much used in nature for fabrics in which local and spasmodic energy is required. I could point to men in this country of indispensable importance to the carrying on of American life, of this humor, whom we could ill spare; any one of them would be a national loss. But it spoils conversation. They will not try conclusions with you. They are ever thrusting this pampered self between you and them. It is plain they have a long education to undergo to reach simplicity and

plain-dealing, which are what a wise man mainly cares for in his companion. Nature knows how to convert evil to good; Nature utilizes misers, fanatics, show-men, egotists, to accomplish her ends; but we must not think better of the foible for that. The passion for sudden success is rude and puerile, just as war, cannons, and executions are used to clear the ground of bad, lumpish, irreclaimable savages, but always to the damage of the conquerors.

I hate this shallow Americanism which hopes to get rich by credit, to get knowledge by raps on midnight tables, to learn the economy of the mind by phrenology, or skill without study, or mastery without apprenticeship, or the sale of goods through pretending that they sell, or power through making believe you are powerful, or through a packed jury or caucus, bribery and “repeating” votes, or wealth by fraud. They think they have got it, but they have got something else,—a crime which calls for another crime, and another devil behind that; these are steps to suicide, infamy, and the harming of mankind. We countenance each other in this life of show, puffing, advertisement, and manufacture of public opinion; and excellence is lost sight of in the hunger for sudden performance and praise.

There was a wise man, an Italian artist, Michel Angelo, who writes thus of himself: “Meanwhile the Cardinal Ippolito, in whom all my best hopes were placed, being dead, I began to understand that the promises of this world are, for the most part, vain phantoms, and that to confide in one’s self, and become something of worth and value, is the best and safest course.” Now, though I am by no means sure that the reader will assent to all my propositions, yet I think we shall agree in my first rule for success,—that we shall drop the brag and the advertisement, and take Michel Angelo’s course, “to confide in one’s self, and be something of worth and value.”

Each man has an aptitude born with him to do easily some feat impossible to any other. Do your work. I have to say this often, but nature says it oftener. ’Tis

clownish to insist on doing all with one's own hands, as if every man should build his own clumsy house, forge his hammer, and bake his dough; but he is to dare to do what he can do best; not help others as they would direct him, but as he knows his helpful power to be. To do otherwise is to neutralize all those extraordinary special talents distributed among men. Yet, whilst this self-truth is essential to the exhibition of the world and to the growth and glory of each mind, it is rare to find a man who believes his own thought or who speaks that which he was created to say. As nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain-dealing, so nothing is more rare in any man than an act of his own. Any work looks wonderful to him, except that which he can do. We do not believe our own thought; we must serve somebody; we must quote somebody; we dote on the old and the distant; we are tickled by great names; we import the religion of other nations; we quote their opinions; we cite their laws. The gravest and learnedest courts in this country shudder to face a new question, and will wait months and years for a case to occur that can be tortured into a precedent, and thus throw on a bolder party the onus of an initiative. Thus we do not carry a counsel in our breasts, or do not know it; and because we cannot shake off from our shoes this dust of Europe and Asia, the world seems to be born old, society is under a spell, every man is a borrower and a mimic, life is theatrical, and literature a quotation; and hence that depression of spirits, that furrow of care, said to mark every American brow.

Self-trust is the first secret of success, the belief that, if you are here, the authorities of the universe put you here, and for cause, or with some task strictly appointed you in your constitution, and so long as you work at that you are well and successful. It by no means consists in rushing prematurely to a showy feat that shall catch the eye and satisfy spectators. It is enough if you work in the right direction. So far from the performance being the real success, it is clear that the success was much earlier than that, namely, when all the feats that make our civility were the thoughts of good heads. The fame of each discovery rightly attaches to the mind that made the

formula which contains all the details, and not to the manufacturers who now make their gain by it; although the mob uniformly cheers the publisher, and not the inventor. It is the dulness of the multitude that they cannot see the house, in the ground-plan; the working, in the model of the projector. Whilst it is a thought, though it were a new fuel, or a new food, or the creation of agriculture, it is cried down; it is a chimera: but when it is a fact, and comes in the shape of eight per cent, ten per cent, a hundred per cent, they cry, ‘It is the voice of God.’ Horatio Greenough, the sculptor, said to me of Robert Fulton’s visit to Paris: “Fulton knocked at the door of Napoleon with steam, and was rejected; and Napoleon lived long enough to know that he had excluded a greater power than his own.”

Is there no loving of knowledge, and of art, and of our design, for itself alone? Cannot we please ourselves with performing our work, or gaining truth and power, without being praised for it? I gain my point, I gain all points, if I can reach my companion with any statement which teaches him his own worth. The sum of wisdom is, that the time is never lost that is devoted to work. The good workman never says, ‘There, that will do’; but, ‘There, that is it: try it, and come again, it will last always.’ If the artist, in whatever art, is well at work on his own design, it signifies little that he does not yet find orders or customers. I pronounce that young man happy who is content with having acquired the skill which he had aimed at, and waits willingly when the occasion of making it appreciated shall arrive, knowing well that it will not loiter. The time your rival spends in dressing up his work for effect, hastily, and for the market, you spend in study and experiments towards real knowledge and efficiency. He has thereby sold his picture or machine, or won the prize, or got the appointment; but you have raised yourself into a higher school of art, and a few years will show the advantage of the real master over the short popularity of the showman. I know it is a nice point to discriminate this self-trust, which is the pledge of all mental vigor and performance, from the disease to which it is allied,—the exaggeration of the part which we can play;—yet they are two things.

But it is sanity to know, that, over my talent or knack, and a million times better than any talent, is the central intelligence which subordinates and uses all talents; and it is only as a door into this, that any talent or the knowledge it gives is of value. He only who comes into this central intelligence, in which no egotism or exaggeration can be, comes into self-possession.

My next point is that, in the scale of powers, it is not talent, but sensibility, which is best: talent confines, but the central life puts us in relation to all. How often it seems the chief good to be born with a cheerful temper, and well adjusted to the tone of the human race. Such a man feels himself in harmony, and conscious by his receptivity of an infinite strength. Like Alfred, “good fortune accompanies him like a gift of God.” Feel yourself, and be not daunted by things. ’Tis the fulness of man that runs over into objects, and makes his Bibles and Shakspeares and Homers so great. The joyful reader borrows of his own ideas to fill their faulty outline, and knows not that he borrows and gives.

There is something of poverty in our criticism. We assume that there are few great men, all the rest are little; that there is but one Homer, but one Shakspeare, one Newton, one Socrates. But the soul in her beaming hour does not acknowledge these usurpations. We should know how to praise Socrates, or Plato, or Saint John, without impoverishing us. In good hours we do not find Shakspeare or Homer over-great,—only to have been translators of the happy present,—and every man and woman divine possibilities. ’Tis the good reader that makes the good book; a good head cannot read amiss: in every book he finds passages which seem confidences or asides hidden from all else and unmistakably meant for his ear.

The light by which we see in this world comes out from the soul of the observer. Wherever any noble sentiment dwelt, it made the faces and houses around to shine. Nay, the powers of this busy brain are miraculous and illimitable. Therein are the rules and formulas by which the whole empire of matter is worked. There is no

prosperity, trade, art, city, or great material wealth of any kind, but if you trace it home, you will find it rooted in a thought of some individual man.

Is all life a surface affair? 'Tis curious, but our difference of wit appears to be only a difference of impressionability, or power to appreciate faint, fainter, and infinitely faintest voices and visions. When the scholar or the writer has pumped his brain for thoughts and verses, and then comes abroad into Nature, has he never found that there is a better poetry hinted in a boy's whistle of a tune, or in the piping of a sparrow, than in all his literary results? We call it health. What is so admirable as the health of youth?—with his long days because his eyes are good, and brisk circulations keep him warm in cold rooms, and he loves books that speak to the imagination; and he can read Plato, covered to his chin with a cloak in a cold upper chamber, though he should associate the Dialogues ever after with a woollen smell. 'Tis the bane of life that natural effects are continually crowded out, and artificial arrangements substituted. We remember when, in early youth, the earth spoke and the heavens glowed; when an evening, any evening, grim and wintry, sleet and snow, was enough for us; the houses were in the air. Now it costs a rare combination of clouds and lights to overcome the common and mean. What is it we look for in the landscape, in sunsets and sunrises, in the sea and the firmament? what but a compensation for the cramp and pettiness of human performances? We bask in the day, and the mind finds somewhat as great as itself. In Nature, all is large, massive repose. Remember what befalls a city boy who goes for the first time into the October woods. He is suddenly initiated into a pomp and glory that brings to pass for him the dreams of romance. He is the king he dreamed he was; he walks through tents of gold, through bowers of crimson, porphyry, and topaz, pavilion on pavilion, garlanded with vines, flowers, and sunbeams, with incense and music, with so many hints to his astonished senses; the leaves twinkle and pique and flatter him, and his eye and step are tempted on by what hazy distances to happier solitudes. All this happiness he owes only to his finer perception. The owner of the wood-lot finds

only a number of discolored trees, and says, ‘They ought to come down; they aren’t growing any better; they should be cut and corded before spring.’

Wordsworth writes of the delights of the boy in Nature:—

“For never will come back the hour

Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower.”

But I have just seen a man, well knowing what he spoke of, who told me that the verse was not true for him; that his eyes opened as he grew older, and that every spring was more beautiful to him than the last.

We live among gods of our own creation. Does that deep-toned bell, which has shortened many a night of ill nerves, render to you nothing but acoustic vibrations? Is the old church, which gave you the first lessons of religious life, or the village school, or the college where you first knew the dreams of fancy and joys of thought, only boards or brick and mortar? Is the house in which you were born, or the house in which your dearest friend lived, only a piece of real estate whose value is covered by the Hartford insurance? You walk on the beach and enjoy the animation of the picture. Scoop up a little water in the hollow of your palm, take up a handful of shore sand; well, these are the elements. What is the beach but acres of sand? What is the ocean but cubic miles of water? a little more or less signifies nothing. No, it is that this brute matter is part of somewhat not brute. It is that the sand floor is held by spheral gravity, and bent to be a part of the round globe, under the optical sky,—part of the astonishing astronomy, and existing, at last, to moral ends and from moral causes.

The world is not made up to the eye of figures, that is, only half; it is also made of color. How that element washes the universe with its enchanting waves! The sculptor had ended his work, and behold a new world of dream-like glory. ’Tis the last stroke of Nature; beyond color she cannot go. In like manner, life is made up, not of knowledge only, but of love also. If thought is form, sentiment is color. It

clothes the skeleton world with space, variety, and glow. The hues of sunset make life great; so the affections make some little web of cottage and fireside populous, important, and filling the main space in our history.

The fundamental fact in our metaphysic constitution is the correspondence of man to the world, so that every change in that writes a record in the mind. The mind yields sympathetically to the tendencies or law which stream through things, and make the order of nature; and in the perfection of this correspondence or expressiveness, the health and force of man consist. If we follow this hint into our intellectual education, we shall find that it is not propositions, not new dogmas and a logical exposition of the world, that are our first need; but to watch and tenderly cherish the intellectual and moral sensibilities, those fountains of right thought, and woo them to stay and make their home with us. Whilst they abide with us, we shall not think amiss. Our perception far outruns our talent. We bring a welcome to the highest lessons of religion and of poetry out of all proportion beyond our skill to teach. And, further, the great hearing and sympathy of men is more true and wise than their speaking is wont to be. A deep sympathy is what we require for any student of the mind; for the chief difference between man and man is a difference of impressionability. Aristotle, or Bacon, or Kant propound some maxim which is the key-note of philosophy thenceforward. But I am more interested to know, that, when at last they have hurled out their grand word, it is only some familiar experience of every man in the street. If it be not, it will never be heard of again.

Ah! if one could keep this sensibility, and live in the happy sufficing present, and find the day and its cheap means contenting, which only ask receptivity in you, and no strained exertion and cankering ambition, overstimulating to be at the head of your class and the head of society, and to have distinction and laurels and consumption! We are not strong by our power to penetrate, but by our relatedness. The world is enlarged for us, not by new objects, but by finding more affinities and potencies in those we have.

This sensibility appears in the homage to beauty which exalts the faculties of youth, in the power which form and color exert upon the soul; when we see eyes that are a compliment to the human race, features that explain the Phidian sculpture. Fontenelle said: “There are three things about which I have curiosity, though I know nothing of them,—music, poetry, and love.” The great doctors of this science are the greatest men,—Dante, Petrarch, Michel Angelo, and Shakspeare. The wise Socrates treats this matter with a certain archness, yet with very marked expressions. “I am always,” he says, “asserting that I happen to know, I may say, nothing but a mere trifle relating to matters of love; yet in that kind of learning I lay claim to being more skilled than any one man of the past or present time.” They may well speak in this uncertain manner of their knowledge, and in this confident manner of their will, for the secret of it is hard to detect, so deep it is; and yet genius is measured by its skill in this science.

Who is he in youth, or in maturity, or even in old age, who does not like to hear of those sensibilities which turn curled heads round at church, and send wonderful eye-beams across assemblies, from one to one, never missing in the thickest crowd. The keen statist reckons by tens and hundreds; the genial man is interested in every slipper that comes into the assembly. The passion, alike everywhere, creeps under the snows of Scandinavia, under the fires of the equator, and swims in the seas of Polynesia. Lofn is as puissant a divinity in the Norse Edda as Camadeva in the red vault of India, Eros in the Greek, or Cupid in the Latin heaven. And what is specially true of love is, that it is a state of extreme impressionability; the lover has more senses and finer senses than others; his eye and ear are telegraphs; he reads omens on the flower, and cloud, and face, and form, and gesture, and reads them aright. In his surprise at the sudden and entire understanding that is between him and the beloved person, it occurs to him that they might somehow meet independently of time and place. How delicious the belief that he could elude all guards, precautions, ceremonies, means, and delays, and hold instant and sempiternal communication! In

solitude, in banishment, the hope returned, and the experiment was eagerly tried. The supernal powers seem to take his part. What was on his lips to say is uttered by his friend. When he went abroad, he met, by wonderful casualties, the one person he sought. If in his walk he chanced to look back, his friend was walking behind him. And it has happened that the artist has often drawn in his pictures the face of the future wife whom he had not yet seen.

But also in complacences, nowise so strict as this of the passion, the man of sensibility counts it a delight only to hear a child's voice fully addressed to him, or to see the beautiful manners of the youth of either sex. When the event is past and remote, how insignificant the greatest compared with the piquancy of the present! To-day at the school examination the professor interrogates Sylvina in the history class about Odoacer and Alaric. Sylvina can't remember, but suggests that Odoacer was defeated; and the professor tartly replies, "No, he defeated the Romans." But 'tis plain to the visitor, that 'tis of no importance at all about Odoacer, and 'tis a great deal of importance about Sylvina; and if she says he was defeated, why he had better, a great deal, have been defeated, than give her a moment's annoy. Odoacer, if there was a particle of the gentleman in him, would have said, Let me be defeated a thousand times.

And as our tenderness for youth and beauty gives a new and just importance to their fresh and manifold claims, so the like sensibility gives welcome to all excellence, has eyes and hospitality for merit in corners. An Englishman of marked character and talent, who had brought with him hither one or two friends and a library of mystics, assured me that nobody and nothing of possible interest was left in England,—he had brought all that was alive away. I was forced to reply: "No, next door to you, probably, on the other side of the partition in the same house, was a greater man than any you had seen." Every man has a history worth knowing, if he could tell it, or if we could draw it from him. Character and wit have their own magnetism. Send a deep man into any town, and he will find another deep man

there, unknown hitherto to his neighbors. That is the great happiness of life,—to add to our high acquaintances. The very law of averages might have assured you that there will be in every hundred heads, say ten or five good heads. Morals are generated as the atmosphere is. 'Tis a secret, the genesis of either; but the springs of justice and courage do not fail any more than salt or sulphur springs.

The world is always opulent, the oracles are never silent; but the receiver must by a happy temperance be brought to that top of condition, that frolic health, that he can easily take and give these fine communications. Health is the condition of wisdom, and the sign is cheerfulness,—an open and noble temper. There was never poet who had not the heart in the right place. The old trouveur, Pons Capdueil, wrote,—

"Oft have I heard, and deem the witness true,

Whom man delights in, God delights in too."

All beauty warms the heart, is a sign of health, prosperity, and the favor of God. Everything lasting and fit for men, the Divine Power has marked with this stamp. What delights, what emancipates, not what scares and pains us, is wise and good in speech and in the arts. For, truly, the heart at the centre of the universe with every throb hurls the flood of happiness into every artery, vein, and veinlet, so that the whole system is inundated with the tides of joy. The plenty of the poorest place is too great: the harvest cannot be gathered. Every sound ends in music. The edge of every surface is tinged with prismatic rays.

One more trait of true success. The good mind chooses what is positive, what is advancing,—embraces the affirmative. Our system is one of poverty. 'Tis presumed, as I said, there is but one Shakspeare, one Homer, one Jesus,—not that all are or shall be inspired. But we must begin by affirming. Truth and goodness subsist forevermore. It is true there is evil and good, night and day: but these are not equal. The day is great and final. The night is for the day, but the day is not for the night. What is this immortal demand for more, which belongs to our constitution? this

enormous ideal? There is no such critic and beggar as this terrible Soul. No historical person begins to content us. We know the satisfactoriness of justice, the sufficiency of truth. We know the answer that leaves nothing to ask. We know the Spirit by its victorious tone. The searching tests to apply to every new pretender are amount and quality,—what does he add? and what is the state of mind he leaves me in? Your theory is unimportant; but what new stock you can add to humanity, or how high you can carry life? A man is a man only as he makes life and nature happier to us.

I fear the popular notion of success stands in direct opposition in all points to the real and wholesome success. One adores public opinion, the other private opinion; one fame, the other desert; one feats, the other humility; one lucre, the other love; one monopoly, and the other hospitality of mind.

We may apply this affirmative law to letters, to manners, to art, to the decorations of our houses, etc. I do not find executions or tortures or lazar-houses, or grisly photographs of the field on the day after the battle fit subjects for cabinet pictures. I think that some so-called “sacred subjects” must be treated with more genius than I have seen in the masters of Italian or Spanish art to be right pictures for houses and churches. Nature does not invite such exhibition. Nature lays the ground-plan of each creature accurately,—sternly fit for all his functions; then veils it scrupulously. See how carefully she covers up the skeleton. The eye shall not see it: the sun shall not shine on it. She weaves her tissues and integuments of flesh and skin and hair and beautiful colors of the day over it, and forces death down underground, and makes haste to cover it up with leaves and vines, and wipes carefully out every trace by new creation. Who and what are you that would lay the ghastly anatomy bare?

Don’t hang a dismal picture on the wall, and do not daub with sables and glooms in your conversation. Don’t be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don’t bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don’t

waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. When that is spoken which has a right to be spoken, the chatter and the criticism will stop. Set down nothing that will not help somebody;

“For every gift of noble origin

Is breathed upon by Hope’s perpetual breath.”

The affirmative of affirmatives is love. As much love, so much perception. As caloric to matter, so is love to mind; so it enlarges, and so it empowers it. Good-will makes insight, as one finds his way to the sea by embarking on a river. I have seen scores of people who can silence me, but I seek one who shall make me forget or overcome the frigidities and imbecilities into which I fall. The painter Giotto, Vasari tells us, renewed art, because he put more goodness into his heads. To awake in man and to raise the sense of worth, to educate his feeling and judgment so that he shall scorn himself for a bad action, that is the only aim.

’Tis cheap and easy to destroy. There is not a joyful boy or an innocent girl buoyant with fine purposes of duty, in all the street full of eager and rosy faces, but a cynic can chill and dishearten with a single word. Despondency comes readily enough to the most sanguine. The cynic has only to follow their hint with his bitter confirmation, and they check that eager courageous pace and go home with heavier step and premature age. They will themselves quickly enough give the hint he wants to the cold wretch. Which of them has not failed to please where they most wished it? or blundered where they were most ambitious of success? or found themselves awkward or tedious or incapable of study, thought, or heroism, and only hoped by good sense and fidelity to do what they could and pass unblamed? And this witty malefactor makes their little hope less with satire and scepticism, and slackens the springs of endeavor. Yes, this is easy; but to help the young soul, add energy, inspire hope, and blow the coals into a useful flame; to redeem defeat by new thought, by firm action, that is not easy, that is the work of divine men.

We live on different planes or platforms. There is an external life, which is educated at school, taught to read, write, cipher, and trade; taught to grasp all the boy can get, urging him to put himself forward, to make himself useful and agreeable in the world, to ride, run, argue, and contend, unfold his talents, shine, conquer, and possess.

But the inner life sits at home, and does not learn to do things, nor value these feats at all. ’Tis a quiet, wise perception. It loves truth, because it is itself real; it loves right, it knows nothing else; but it makes no progress; was as wise in our first memory of it as now; is just the same now in maturity and hereafter in age, it was in youth. We have grown to manhood and womanhood; we have powers, connection, children, reputations, professions: this makes no account of them all. It lives in the great present; it makes the present great. This tranquil, well-founded, wide-seeing soul is no express-rider, no attorney, no magistrate: it lies in the sun, and broods on the world. A person of this temper once said to a man of much activity, “I will pardon you that you do so much, and you me that I do nothing.” And Euripides says that “Zeus hates busybodies and those who do too much.”

OLD AGE.

OLD AGE.

On the anniversary of the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, in 1861, the venerable President Quincy, senior member of the Society, as well as senior alumnus of the University, was received at the dinner with peculiar demonstrations of respect. He replied to these compliments in a speech, and, gracefully claiming the privileges of a literary society, entered at some length into an Apology for Old Age, and, aiding himself by notes in his hand, made a sort of running commentary on Cicero’s chapter “De Senectute.” The character of the speaker, the transparent good faith of his praise and blame, and the naïveté of his eager preference of Cicero’s

opinions to King David's, gave unusual interest to the College festival. It was a discourse full of dignity, honoring him who spoke and those who heard.

The speech led me to look over at home—an easy task—Cicero's famous essay, charming by its uniform rhetorical merit; heroic with Stoical precepts; with a Roman eye to the claims of the State; happiest, perhaps, in his praise of life on the farm; and rising at the conclusion to a lofty strain. But he does not exhaust the subject; rather invites the attempt to add traits to the picture from our broader modern life.

Cicero makes no reference to the illusions which cling to the element of time, and in which Nature delights. Wellington, in speaking of military men, said, "What masks are these uniforms to hide cowards!" I have often detected the like deception in the cloth shoe, wadded pelisse, wig, spectacles, and padded chair of Age. Nature lends herself to these illusions, and adds dim sight, deafness, cracked voice, snowy hair, short memory and sleep. These also are masks, and all is not Age that wears them. Whilst we yet call ourselves young, and our mates are yet youths with even boyish remains, one good fellow in the set prematurely sports a gray or a bald head, which does not impose on us who know how innocent of sanctity or of Platonism he is, but does deceive his juniors and the public, who presently distinguish him with a most amusing respect: and this lets us into the secret, that the venerable forms that so awed our childhood were just such impostors. Nature is full of freaks, and now puts an old head on young shoulders, and then a young heart beating under fourscore winters.

For if the essence of age is not present, these signs, whether of Art or Nature, are counterfeit and ridiculous: and the essence of age is intellect. Wherever that appears, we call it old. If we look into the eyes of the youngest person, we sometimes discover that here is one who knows already what you would go about with much pains to teach him; there is that in him which is the ancestor of all around him: which fact the Indian Vedas express when they say, "He that can discriminate is the

father of his father." And in our old British legends of Arthur and the Round Table, his friend and counsellor, Merlin the Wise, is a babe found exposed in a basket by the river-side, and, though an infant of only a few days, speaks articulately to those who discover him, tells his name and history, and presently foretells the fate of the by-standers. Wherever there is power, there is age. Don't be deceived by dimples and curls. I tell you that babe is a thousand years old.

Time is, indeed, the theatre and seat of illusion: nothing is so ductile and elastic. The mind stretches an hour to a century, and dwarfs an age to an hour. Saadi found in a mosque at Damascus an old Persian of a hundred and fifty years who was dying, and was saying to himself, "I said, coming into the world by birth, 'I will enjoy myself for a few moments.' Alas! at the variegated table of life I partook of a few mouthfuls, and the Fates said, 'Enough!'" That which does not decay is so central and controlling in us, that, as long as one is alone by himself, he is not sensible of the inroads of time, which always begin at the surface-edges. If, on a winter day, you should stand within a bell-glass, the face and color of the afternoon clouds would not indicate whether it were June or January; and if we did not find the reflection of ourselves in the eyes of the young people, we could not know that the century-clock had struck seventy instead of twenty. How many men habitually believe that each chance passenger with whom they converse is of their own age, and presently find it was his father, and not his brother, whom they knew!

But not to press too hard on these deceits and illusions of Nature, which are inseparable from our condition, and looking at age under an aspect more conformed to the common sense, if the question be the felicity of age, I fear the first popular judgments will be unfavorable. From the point of sensuous experience, seen from the streets and markets and the haunts of pleasure and gain, the estimate of age is low, melancholy, and sceptical. Frankly face the facts, and see the result. Tobacco, coffee, alcohol, hashish, prussic acid, strychnine, are weak dilutions: the surest poison is time. This cup, which Nature puts to our lips, has a wonderful virtue,

surpassing that of any other draught. It opens the senses, adds power, fills us with exalted dreams, which we call hope, love, ambition, science: especially, it creates a craving for larger draughts of itself. But they who take the larger draughts are drunk with it, lose their stature, strength, beauty, and senses, and end in folly and delirium. We postpone our literary work until we have more ripeness and skill to write, and we one day discover that our literary talent was a youthful effervescence which we have now lost. We had a judge in Massachusetts who at sixty proposed to resign, alleging that he perceived a certain, decay in his faculties; he was dissuaded by his friends, on account of the public convenience at that time. At seventy it was hinted to him that it was time to retire; but he now replied, that he thought his judgment as robust, and all his faculties as good as ever they were. But besides the self-deception, the strong and hasty laborers of the street do not work well with the chronic valetudinarian. Youth is everywhere in place. Age, like woman, requires fit surroundings. Age is comely in coaches, in churches, in chairs of state, and ceremony, in council-chambers, in courts of justice, and historical societies. Age is becoming in the country. But in the rush and uproar of Broadway, if you look into the faces of the passengers, there is dejection or indignation in the seniors, a certain concealed sense of injury, and the lip made up with a heroic determination not to mind it. Few envy the consideration enjoyed by the oldest inhabitant. We do not count a man’s years, until he has nothing else to count. The vast inconvenience of animal immortality was told in the fable of Tithonus. In short, the creed of the street is, Old Age is not disgraceful, but immensely disadvantageous. Life is well enough, but we shall all be glad to get out of it, and they will all be glad to have us.

This is odious on the face of it. Universal convictions are not to be shaken by the whimseys of overfed butchers and firemen, or by the sentimental fears of girls who would keep the infantile bloom on their cheeks. We know the value of experience. Life and art are cumulative; and he who has accomplished something in any department alone deserves to be heard on that subject. A man of great employments

and excellent performance used to assure me that he did not think a man worth anything until he was sixty; although this smacks a little of the resolution of a certain “Young Men’s Republican Club,” that all men should be held eligible who were under seventy. But in all governments, the councils of power were held by the old; and patricians or patres, senate or senes, seigneurs or seniors, gerousia, the senate of Sparta, the presbytery of the Church, and the like, all signify simply old men.

The cynical creed or lampoon of the market is refuted by the universal prayer for long life, which is the verdict of Nature, and justified by all history. We have, it is true, examples of an accelerated pace by which young men achieved grand works; as in the Macedonian Alexander, in Raffaelle, Shakspeare, Pascal, Burns, and Byron; but these are rare exceptions. Nature, in the main, vindicates her law. Skill to do comes of doing; knowledge comes by eyes always open, and working hands; and there is no knowledge that is not power. Béranger said, “Almost all the good workmen live long.” And if the life be true and noble, we have quite another sort of seniors than the frowzy, timorous, peevish dotards who are falsely old,—namely, the men who fear no city, but by whom cities stand; who appearing in any street, the people empty their houses to gaze at and obey them: as at “My Cid, with the fleecy beard,” in Toledo; or Bruce, as Barbour reports him; as blind old Dandolo, elected Doge at eighty-four years, storming Constantinople at ninety-four, and after the revolt again victorious, and elected at the age of ninety-six to the throne of the Eastern Empire, which he declined, and died Doge at ninety-seven. We still feel the force of Socrates, “whom well-advised the oracle pronounced wisest of men”; of Archimedes, holding Syracuse against the Romans by his wit, and himself better than all their nation; of Michel Angelo, wearing the four crowns of architecture, sculpture, painting, and poetry; of Galileo, of whose blindness Castelli said, “The noblest eye is darkened that Nature ever made,—an eye that hath seen more than all that went before him, and hath opened the eyes of all that shall come after him”; of

Newton, who made an important discovery for every one of his eighty-five years; of Bacon, who “took all knowledge to be his province”; of Fontenelle, “that precious porcelain vase laid up in the centre of France to be guarded with the utmost care for a hundred years”; of Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams, the wise and heroic statesmen; of Washington, the perfect citizen; of Wellington, the perfect soldier; of Goethe, the all-knowing poet; of Humboldt, the encyclopædia of science.

Under the general assertion of the well-being of age, we can easily count particular benefits of that condition. It has weathered the perilous capes and shoals in the sea whereon we sail, and the chief evil of life is taken away in removing the grounds of fear. The insurance of a ship expires as she enters the harbor at home. It were strange, if a man should turn his sixtieth year without a feeling of immense relief from the number of dangers he has escaped. When the old wife says, ‘Take care of that tumor in your shoulder, perhaps it is cancerous,’—he replies, ‘I am yielding to a surer decomposition.’ The humorous thief who drank a pot of beer at the gallows blew off the froth because he had heard it was unhealthy; but it will not add a pang to the prisoner marched out to be shot, to assure him that the pain in his knee threatens mortification. When the pleuro-pneumonia of the cows raged, the butchers said, that, though the acute degree was novel, there never was a time when this disease did not occur among cattle. All men carry seeds of all distempers through life latent, and we die without developing them; such is the affirmative force of the constitution; but if you are enfeebled by any cause, some of these sleeping seeds start and open. Meantime, at every stage we lose a foe. At fifty years, ’tis said, afflicted citizens lose their sick-headaches. I hope this hegira is not as movable a feast as that one I annually look for, when the horticulturists assure me that the rosebugs in our gardens disappear on the tenth of July; they stay a fortnight later in mine. But be it as it may with the sick-headache,—’tis certain that graver headaches and heart-aches are lulled once for all, as we come up with certain goals of time. The passions have answered their purpose: that slight but dread overweight, with which,

in each instance, Nature secures the execution of her aim, drops off. To keep man in the planet, she impresses the terror of death. To perfect the commissariat, she implants in each a certain rapacity to get the supply, and a little oversupply, of his wants. To insure the existence of the race, she reinforces the sexual instinct, at the risk of disorder, grief, and pain. To secure strength, she plants cruel hunger and thirst, which so easily overdo their office, and invite disease. But these temporary stays and shifts for the protection of the young animal are shed as fast as they can be replaced by nobler resources. We live in youth amidst this rabble of passions, quite too tender, quite too hungry and irritable. Later, the interiors of mind and heart open, and supply grander motives. We learn the fatal compensations that wait on every act. Then,—one after another,—this riotous time-destroying crew disappear.

I count it another capital advantage of age, this, that a success more or less signifies nothing. Little by little, it has amassed such a fund of merit, that it can very well afford to go on its credit when it will. When I chanced to meet the poet Wordsworth, then sixty-three years old, he told me, “that he had just had a fall and lost a tooth, and, when his companions were much concerned for the mischance, he had replied, that he was glad it had not happened forty years before.” Well, Nature takes care that we shall not lose our organs forty years too soon. A lawyer argued a cause yesterday in the Supreme Court, and I was struck with a certain air of levity and defiance which vastly became him. Thirty years ago it was a serious concern to him whether his pleading was good and effective. Now it is of importance to his client, but of none to himself. It has been long already fixed what he can do and cannot do, and his reputation does not gain or suffer from one or a dozen new performances. If he should, on a new occasion, rise quite beyond his mark, and achieve somewhat great and extraordinary, that, of course, would instantly tell; but he may go below his mark with impunity, and people will say, ‘O, he had headache,’ or, ‘He lost his sleep for two nights.’ What a lust of appearance, what a load of anxieties that once degraded him, he is thus rid of! Every one is sensible of this cumulative advantage

in living. All the good days behind him are sponsors, who speak for him when he is silent, pay for him when he has no money, introduce him where he has no letters, and work for him when he sleeps.

A third felicity of age is, that it has found expression. The youth suffers not only from ungratified desires, but from powers untried, and from a picture in his mind of a career which has, as yet, no outward reality. He is tormented with the want of correspondence between things and thoughts. Michel Angelo's head is full of masculine and gigantic figures as gods walking, which make him savage until his furious chisel can render them into marble; and of architectural dreams, until a hundred stone-masons can lay them in courses of travertine. There is the like tempest in every good head in which some great benefit for the world is planted. The throes continue until the child is born. Every faculty new to each man thus goads him and drives him out into doleful deserts, until it finds proper vent. All the functions of human duty irritate and lash him forward, bemoaning and chiding, until they are performed. He wants friends, employment, knowledge, power, house and land, wife and children, honor and fame; he has religious wants, æsthetic wants, domestic, civil, humane wants. One by one, day after day, he learns to coin his wishes into facts. He has his calling, homestead, social connection, and personal power, and thus, at the end of fifty years, his soul is appeased by seeing some sort of correspondence between his wish and his possession. This makes the value of age, the satisfaction it slowly offers to every craving. He is serene who does not feel himself pinched and wronged, but whose condition, in particular and in general, allows the utterance of his mind. In old persons, when thus fully expressed, we often observe a fair, plump, perennial, waxen complexion, which indicates that all the ferment of earlier days has subsided into serenity of thought and behavior.

The compensations of Nature play in age as in youth. In a world so charged and sparkling with power, a man does not live long and actively without costly additions of experience, which, though not spoken, are recorded in his mind. What to the

youth is only a guess or a hope, is in the veteran a digested statute. He beholds the feats of the juniors with complacency, but as one who, having long ago known these games, has refined them into results and morals. The Indian Red Jacket, when the young braves were boasting their deeds, said, “But the sixties have all the twenties and forties in them.”

For a fourth benefit, age sets its house in order, and finishes its works, which to every artist is a supreme pleasure. Youth has an excess of sensibility, before which every object glitters and attracts. We leave one pursuit for another, and the young man’s year is a heap of beginnings. At the end of a twelvemonth, he has nothing to show for it,—not one completed work. But the time is not lost. Our instincts drove us to hive innumerable experiences, that are yet of no visible value, and which we may keep for twice seven years before they shall be wanted. The best things are of secular growth. The instinct of classifying marks the wise and healthy mind. Linnæus projects his system, and lays out his twenty-four classes of plants, before yet he has found in Nature a single plant to justify certain of his classes. His seventh class has not one. In process of time, he finds with delight the little white Trientalis, the only plant with seven petals and sometimes seven stamens, which constitutes a seventh class in conformity with his system. The conchologist builds his cabinet whilst as yet he has few shells. He labels shelves for classes, cells for species: all but a few are empty. But every year fills some blanks, and with accelerating speed as he becomes knowing and known. An old scholar finds keen delight in verifying the impressive anecdotes and citations he has met with in miscellaneous reading and hearing, in all the years of youth. We carry in memory important anecdotes, and have lost all clew to the author from whom we had them. We have a heroic speech from Rome or Greece, but cannot fix it on the man who said it. We have an admirable line worthy of Horace, ever and anon resounding in our mind’s ear, but have searched all probable and improbable books for it in vain. We consult the reading men: but, strangely enough, they who know everything know not this. But

especially we have a certain insulated thought, which haunts us, but remains insulated and barren. Well, there is nothing for all this but patience and time. Time, yes, that is the finder, the unweariable explorer, not subject to casualties, omniscient at last. The day comes when the hidden author of our story is found; when the brave speech returns straight to the hero who said it; when the admirable verse finds the poet to whom it belongs; and best of all, when the lonely thought, which seemed so wise, yet half-wise, half-thought, because it cast no light abroad, is suddenly matched in our mind by its twin, by its sequence, or next related analogy, which gives it instantly radiating power, and justifies the superstitious instinct with which we have hoarded it. We remember our old Greek Professor at Cambridge, an ancient bachelor, amid his folios, possessed by this hope of completing a task, with nothing to break his leisure after the three hours of his daily classes, yet ever restlessly stroking his leg, and assuring himself "he should retire from the University and read the authors." In Goethe's Romance, Makaria, the central figure for wisdom and influence, pleases herself with withdrawing into solitude to astronomy and epistolary correspondence. Goethe himself carried this completion of studies to the highest point. Many of his works hung on the easel from youth to age, and received a stroke in every month or year. A literary astrologer, he never applied himself to any task but at the happy moment when all the stars consented. Bentley thought himself likely to live till fourscore,—long enough to read everything that was worth reading,—"Et tunc magna mei sub terris ibit imago." Much wider is spread the pleasure which old men take in completing their secular affairs, the inventor his inventions, the agriculturist his experiments, and all old men in finishing their houses, rounding their estates, clearing their titles, reducing tangled interests to order, reconciling enmities, and leaving all in the best posture for the future. It must be believed that there is a proportion between the designs of a man and the length of his life: there is a calendar of his years, so of his performances.

America is the country of young men, and too full of work hitherto for leisure and

tranquillity; yet we have had robust centenarians, and examples of dignity and wisdom. I have lately found in an old note-book a record of a visit to ex-President John Adams, in 1825, soon after the election of his son to the Presidency. It is but a sketch, and nothing important passed in the conversation; but it reports a moment in the life of a heroic person, who, in extreme old age, appeared still erect and worthy of his fame.

——, Feb., 1825. To-day, at Quincy, with my brother, by invitation of Mr. Adams's family. The old President sat in a large stuffed arm-chair, dressed in a blue coat, black small-clothes, white stockings; a cotton cap covered his bald head. We made our compliment, told him he must let us join our congratulations to those of the nation on the happiness of his house. He thanked us, and said: "I am rejoiced, because the nation is happy. The time of gratulation and congratulations is nearly over with me: I am astonished that I have lived to see and know of this event. I have lived now nearly a century; [he was ninety in the following October:] a long, harassed, and distracted life."—I said, "The world thinks a good deal of joy has been mixed with it."—"The world does not know," he replied, "how much toil, anxiety, and sorrow I have suffered."—I asked if Mr. Adams's letter of acceptance had been read to him.—"Yes," he said, and, added, "My son has more political prudence than any man that I know who has existed in my time; he never was put off his guard: and I hope he will continue such; but what effect age may work in diminishing the power of his mind, I do not know; it has been very much on the stretch, ever since he was born. He has always been laborious, child and man, from infancy."—When Mr. J. Q. Adams's age was mentioned, he said, "He is now fifty-eight, or will be in July"; and remarked that "all the Presidents were of the same age: General Washington was about fifty-eight, and I was about fifty-eight, and Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Madison, and Mr. Monroe."—We inquired when he expected to see Mr. Adams.—He said: "Never: Mr. Adams will not come to Quincy but to my funeral. It would be a great satisfaction to me to see him, but I don't wish him to come on my

account.”—He spoke of Mr. Lechmere, whom he “well remembered to have seen come down daily, at a great age, to walk in the old town-house,”—adding, “And I wish I could walk as well as he did. He was Collector of the Customs for many years under the Royal Government.”—E. said: “I suppose, sir, you would not have taken his place, even to walk as well as he.”—“No,” he replied, “that was not what I wanted.”—He talked of Whitefield, and “remembered when he was a Freshman in College, to have come into town to the Old South church, [I think,] to hear him, but could not get into the house;—I however, saw him,” he said, “through a window, and distinctly heard all. He had a voice such as I never heard before or since. He cast it out so that you might hear it at the meeting-house, [pointing towards the Quincy meeting-house,] and he had the grace of a dancing-master, of an actor of plays. His voice and manner helped him more than his sermons. I went with Jonathan Sewall.”—“And you were pleased with him, sir?”—“Pleased! I was delighted beyond measure.”—We asked if at Whitefield’s return the same popularity continued.—“Not the same fury,” he said, “not the same wild enthusiasm as before, but a greater esteem, as he became more known. He did not terrify, but was admired.”

We spent about an hour in his room. He speaks very distinctly for so old a man, enters bravely into long sentences, which are interrupted by want of breath, but carries them invariably to a conclusion, without correcting a word.

He spoke of the new novels of Cooper, and “Peep at the Pilgrims,” and “Saratoga,” with praise, and named with accuracy the characters in them. He likes to have a person always reading to him, or company talking in his room, and is better the next day after having visitors in his chamber from morning to night.

He received a premature report of his son’s election, on Sunday afternoon, without any excitement, and told the reporter he had been hoaxed, for it was not yet time for any news to arrive. The informer, something damped in his heart, insisted on

repairing to the meeting-house, and proclaimed it aloud to the congregation, who were so overjoyed that they rose in their seats and cheered thrice. The Reverend Mr. Whitney dismissed them immediately.

When life has been well spent, age is a loss of what it can well spare,—muscular strength, organic instincts, gross bulk, and works that belong to these. But the central wisdom, which was old in infancy, is young in fourscore years, and, dropping off obstructions, leaves in happy subjects the mind purified and wise. I have heard that whoever loves is in no condition old. I have heard, that, whenever the name of man is spoken, the doctrine of immortality is announced; it cleaves to his constitution. The mode of it baffles our wit, and no whisper comes to us from the other side. But the inference from the working of intellect, hiving knowledge, hiving skill,—at the end of life just ready to be born,—affirms the inspirations of affection and of the moral sentiment.

THE END.

Cambridge: Printed by Welch, Bigelow, and Company.

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Dr. Thomas Brown.

[B] Iliad, III. 191.

[C] Diary, I. 169.

TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation have been standardized.

Archaic or variant spelling has been retained.

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