Stories and Essays

W. D. Howells

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WORRIES OF A WINTER WALK

The other winter, as I was taking a morning walk down to the East River, I came upon a bit of our motley life, a fact of our piebald civilization, which has perplexed me from time to time, ever since, and which I wish now to leave with the reader, for his or her more thoughtful consideration.

I.

The morning was extremely cold. It professed to be sunny, and there was really some sort of hard glitter in the air, which, so far from being tempered by this effulgence, seemed all the stonier for it. Blasts of frigid wind swept the streets, and buffeted each other in a fury of resentment when they met around the corners. Although I was passing through a populous tenement−house quarter, my way was not hindered by the sports of the tenement−house children, who commonly crowd one from the sidewalks; no frowzy head looked out over the fire−escapes; there were no peddlers' carts or voices in the road−way; not above three or four shawl− hooded women cowered out of the little shops with small purchases in their hands; not so many tiny girls with jugs opened the doors of the beer saloons. The butchers' windows were painted with patterns of frost, through which I could dimly see the frozen meats hanging like hideous stalactites from the roof. When I came to the river, I ached in sympathy with the shipping painfully atilt on the rocklike surface of the brine, which broke against the piers, and sprayed itself over

them like showers of powdered quartz.

But it was before I reached this final point that I received into my consciousness the moments of the human comedy which have been an increasing burden to it. Within a block of the river I met a child so small that at first I almost refused to take any account of her, until she appealed to my sense of humor by her amusing disproportion to the pail which she was lugging in front of her with both of her little mittened hands. I am scrupulous about mittens, though I was tempted to write of her little naked hands, red with the pitiless cold. This would have been more effective, but it would not have been true, and the truth obliges me to own that she had a stout, warm−looking knit jacket on. The pail−which was half her height and twice her bulk−was filled to overflowing with small pieces of coal and coke, and if it had not been for this I might have taken her for a child of the better classes, she was so comfortably clad. But in that case she would have had to be fifteen or sixteen years old, in order to be doing so efficiently and responsibly the work which, as the child of the worse classes, she was actually doing at five or six. We must, indeed, allow that the early self−helpfulness of such children is very remarkable, and all the more so because they grow up into men and women so stupid that, according to the theories of all polite economists, they have to have their discontent with their conditions put into their heads by malevolent agitators.

From time to time this tiny creature put down her heavy burden to rest; it was, of course, only relatively heavy; a man would have made nothing of it. From time to time she was forced to stop and pick up the bits of coke that tumbled from her heaping pail. She could not consent to lose one of them, and at last, when she found she could not make all of them stay on the heap, she thriftily tucked them into the pockets of her jacket, and trudged sturdily on till she met a boy some years older, who planted himself in her path and stood looking at her, with his hands in his pockets. I do not say he was a bad boy, but I could see in his furtive eye that she was a sore temptation to him. The chance to have fun with her by upsetting her bucket, and scattering her coke about till she cried with vexation, was one which might not often present itself, and I do not know what made him forego it, but I know that he did, and that he finally passed her, as I have seen a young dog pass a little cat, after having stopped it, and thoughtfully considered worrying it.

I turned to watch the child out of sight, and when I faced about towards the river again I received the second instalment of my present perplexity. A cart, heavily laden with coke, drove out of the coal−yard which I now perceived I had come to, and after this cart followed two brisk old women, snugly clothed and tightly tucked in against the cold like the child, who vied with each other in catching up the lumps of coke that were jolted from the load, and filling their aprons with them; such old women, so hale, so spry, so tough and tireless, with the withered apples red in their cheeks, I have not often seen. They may have been about sixty years, or sixty−five, the time of life when most women are grandmothers and are relegated on their merits to the cushioned seats of their children's homes, softly silk−gowned and lace−capped, dear visions of lilac and lavender, to be loved and petted by their grandchildren. The fancy can hardly put such sweet ladies in the place of those nimble beldams, who hopped about there in the wind−swept street, plucking up their day's supply of firing from the involuntary bounty of the cart. Even the attempt is unseemly, and whether mine is at best but a feeble fancy, not bred to strenuous feats of any kind, it fails to bring them before me in that figure. I cannot imagine ladies doing that kind of thing; I can only imagine women who had lived hard and worked hard all their lives doing it; who had begun to fight with want from their cradles, like that little one with the pail, and must fight without ceasing to their graves. But I am not unreasonable; I understand and I understood what I saw to be one of the things that must be, for the perfectly good and sufficient reason that they always have been; and at the moment I got what pleasure I could out of the stolid indifference of the cart−driver, who never looked about him at the scene which interested me, but jolted onward, leaving a trail of pungent odors from his pipe in the freezing eddies of the air behind him.

II.

It is still not at all, or not so much, the fact that troubles me; it is what to do with the fact. The question began with me almost at once, or at least as soon as I faced about and began to walk homeward with the wind at my back. I

was then so much more comfortable that the aesthetic instinct thawed out in me, and I found myself wondering what use I could make of what I had seen in the way of my trade. Should I have something very pathetic, like the old grandmother going out day after day to pick up coke for her sick daughter's freezing orphans till she fell sick herself? What should I do with the family in that case? They could not be left at that point, and I promptly imagined a granddaughter, a girl of about eighteen, very pretty and rather proud, a sort of belle in her humble neighborhood, who should take her grandmother's place. I decided that I should have her Italian, because I knew something of Italians, and could manage that nationality best, and I should call her Maddalena; either Maddalena or Marina; Marina would be more Venetian, and I saw that I must make her Venetian. Here I was on safe ground, and at once the love−interest appeared to help me out. By virtue of the law of contrasts; it appeared to me in the person of a Scandinavian lover, tall, silent, blond, whom I at once felt I could do, from my acquaintance with Scandinavian lovers in Norwegian novels. His name was Janssen, a good, distinctive Scandinavian name; I do not know but it is Swedish; and I thought he might very well be a Swede; I could imagine his manner from that of a Swedish waitress we once had.

Janssen−−Jan Janssen, say−drove the coke−cart which Marina's grandmother used to follow out of the coke−yard, to pick up the bits of coke as they were jolted from it, and he had often noticed her with deep indifference. At first he noticed Marina−−or Nina, as I soon saw I must call her−−with the same unconcern; for in her grandmother's hood and jacket and check apron, with her head held shamefacedly downward, she looked exactly like the old woman. I thought I would have Nina make her self−sacrifice rebelliously, as a girl like her would be apt to do, and follow the cokecart with tears. This would catch Janssen's notice, and he would wonder, perhaps with a little pang, what the old woman was crying about, and then he would see that it was not the old woman. He would see that it was Nina, and he would be in love with her at once, for she would not only be very pretty, but he would know that she was good, if she were willing to help her family in that way.

He would respect the girl, in his dull, sluggish, Northern way. He would do nothing to betray himself. But little by little he would begin to befriend her. He would carelessly overload his cart before he left the yard, so that the coke would fall from it more lavishly; and not only this, but if he saw a stone or a piece of coal in the street he would drive over it, so that more coke would be jolted from his load.

Nina would get to watching for him. She must not notice him much at first, except as the driver of the overladen, carelessly driven cart. But after several mornings she must see that he is very strong and handsome. Then, after several mornings more, their eyes must meet, her vivid black eyes, with the tears of rage and shame in them, and his cold blue eyes. This must be the climax; and just at this point I gave my fancy a rest, while I went into a drugstore at the corner of Avenue B to get my hands warm.

They were abominably cold, even in my pockets, and I had suffered past several places trying to think of an excuse to go in. I now asked the druggist if he had something which I felt pretty sure he had not, and this put him in the wrong, so that when we fell into talk he was very polite. We agreed admirably about the hard times, and he gave way respectfully when I doubted his opinion that the winters were getting milder. I made him reflect that there was no reason for this, and that it was probably an illusion from that deeper impression which all experiences made on us in the past, when we were younger; I ought to say that he was an elderly man, too. I said I fancied such a morning as this was not very mild for people that had no fires, and this brought me back again to Janssen and Marina, by way of the coke−cart. The thought of them rapt me so far from the druggist that I listened to his answer with a glazing eye, and did not know what he said. My hands had now got warm, and I bade him good−morning with a parting regret, which he civilly shared, that he had not the thing I had not wanted, and I pushed out again into the cold, which I found not so bad as before.

My hero and heroine were waiting for me there, and I saw that to be truly modern, to be at once realistic and mystical, to have both delicacy and strength, I must not let them get further acquainted with each other. The affair must simply go on from day to day, till one morning Jan must note that it was again the grandmother and no longer the girl who was following his cart. She must be very weak from a long sickness−−I was not sure whether

to have it the grippe or not, but I decided upon that provisionally and she must totter after Janssen, so that he must get down after a while to speak to her under pretence of arranging the tail−board of his cart, or something of that kind; I did not care for the detail. They should get into talk in the broken English which was the only language they could have in common, and she should burst into tears, and tell him that now Nina was sick; I imagined making this very simple, but very touching, and I really made it so touching that it brought the lump into my own throat, and I knew it would be effective with the reader. Then I had Jan get back upon his cart, and drive stolidly on again, and the old woman limp feebly after.

There should not be any more, I decided, except that one very cold morning, like that; Jan should be driving through that street, and should be passing the door of the tenement house where Nina had lived, just as a little procession should be issuing from it. The fact must be told in brief sentences, with a total absence of emotionality. The last touch must be Jan's cart turning the street corner with Jan's figure sharply silhouetted against the clear, cold morning light. Nothing more.

But it was at this point that another notion came into my mind, so antic, so impish, so fiendish, that if there were still any Evil One, in a world which gets on so poorly without him, I should attribute it to his suggestion; and this was that the procession which Jan saw issuing from the tenement−house door was not a funeral procession, as the reader will have rashly fancied, but a wedding procession, with Nina at the head of it, quite well again, and going to be married to the little brown youth with ear−rings who had long had her heart.

With a truly perverse instinct, I saw how strong this might be made, at the fond reader's expense, to be sure, and how much more pathetic, in such a case, the silhouetted figure on the coke−cart would really be. I should, of course, make it perfectly plain that no one was to blame, and that the whole affair had been so tacit on Jan's part that Nina might very well have known nothing of his feeling for her. Perhaps at the very end I might subtly insinuate that it was possible he might have had no such feeling towards her as the reader had been led to imagine.

III.

The question as to which ending I ought to have given my romance is what has ever since remained to perplex me, and it is what has prevented my ever writing it. Here is material of the best sort lying useless on my hands, which, if I could only make up my mind, might be wrought into a short story as affecting as any that wring our hearts in fiction; and I think I could get something fairly unintelligible out of the broken English of Jan and Nina's grandmother, and certainly something novel. All that I can do now, however, is to put the case before the reader, and let him decide for himself how it should end.

The mere humanist, I suppose, might say, that I am rightly served for having regarded the fact I had witnessed as material for fiction at all; that I had no business to bewitch it with my miserable art; that I ought to have spoken to that little child and those poor old women, and tried to learn something of their lives from them, that I might offer my knowledge again for the instruction of those whose lives are easy and happy in the indifference which ignorance breeds in us. I own there is something in this, but then, on the other hand, I have heard it urged by nice people that they do not want to know about such squalid lives, that it is offensive and out of taste to be always bringing them in, and that we ought to be writing about good society, and especially creating grandes dames for their amusement. This sort of people could say to the humanist that he ought to be glad there are coke−carts for fuel to fall off from for the lower classes, and that here was no case for sentiment; for if one is to be interested in such things at all, it must be aesthetically, though even this is deplorable in the presence of fiction already overloaded with low life, and so poor in grades dames as ours.

SUMMER ISLES OF EDEN

It may be all an illusion of the map, where the Summer Islands glimmer a small and solitary little group of dots

and wrinkles, remote from continental shores, with a straight line descending southeastwardly upon them, to show how sharp and swift the ship's course is, but they seem so far and alien from my wonted place that it is as if I had slid down a steepy slant from the home−planet to a group of asteroids nebulous somewhere in middle space, and were resting there, still vibrant from the rush of the meteoric fall. There were, of course, facts and incidents contrary to such a theory: a steamer starting from New York in the raw March morning, and lurching and twisting through two days of diagonal seas, with people aboard dining and undining, and talking and smoking and cocktailing and hot−scotching and beef−teaing; but when the ship came in sight of the islands, and they began to lift their cedared slopes from the turquoise waters, and to explain their drifted snows as the white walls and white roofs of houses, then the waking sense became the dreaming sense, and the sweet impossibility of that drop through air became the sole reality.

I.

Everything here, indeed, is so strange that you placidly accept whatever offers itself as the simplest and naturalest fact. Those low hills, that climb, with their tough, dark cedars, from the summer sea to the summer sky, might have drifted down across the Gulf Stream from the coast of Maine; but when, upon closer inspection, you find them skirted with palms and bananas, and hedged with oleanders, you merely wonder that you had never noticed these growths in Maine before, where you were so familiar with the cedars. The hotel itself, which has brought the Green Mountains with it, in every detail, from the dormer−windowed mansard−roof, and the white−painted, green−shuttered walls, to the neat, school−mistressly waitresses in the dining−room, has a clump of palmettos beside it, swaying and sighing in the tropic breeze, and you know that when it migrates back to the New England hill−country, at the end of the season, you shall find it with the palmettos still before its veranda, and equally at home, somewhere in the Vermont or New Hampshire July. There will be the same American groups looking out over them, and rocking and smoking, though, alas! not so many smoking as rocking.

But where, in that translation, would be the gold braided red or blue jackets of the British army and navy which lend their lustre and color here to the veranda groups? Where should one get the house walls of whitewashed stone and the garden walls which everywhere glow in the sun, and belt in little spaces full of roses and lilies? These things must come from some other association, and in the case of him who here confesses, the lustrous uniforms and the glowing walls rise from waters as far away in time as in space, and a long−ago apparition of Venetian Junes haunts the coral shore. (They are beginning to say the shore is not coral; but no matter.) To be sure, the white roofs are not accounted for in this visionary presence; and if one may not relate them to the snowfalls of home winters, then one must frankly own them absolutely tropical, together with the green−pillared and green−latticed galleries. They at least suggest the tropical scenery of Prue and I as one remembers seeing it through Titbottom's spectacles; and yet, if one supplies roofs of brown−red tiles, it is all Venetian enough, with the lagoon−like expanses that lend themselves to the fond effect. It is so Venetian, indeed, that it wants but a few silent gondolas and noisy gondoliers, in place of the dark, taciturn oarsmen of the clumsy native boats, to complete the coming and going illusion; and there is no good reason why the rough little isles that fill the bay should not call themselves respectively San Giorgio and San Clemente, and Sant' Elena and San Lazzaro: they probably have no other names!

II.

These summer isles of Eden have this advantage over the scriptural Eden, that apparently it was not woman and her seed who were expelled, when once she set foot here, but the serpent and his seed: women now abound in the Summer Islands, and there is not a snake anywhere to be found. There are some tortoises and a great many frogs in their season, but no other reptiles. The frogs are fabled of a note so deep and hoarse that its vibration almost springs the environing mines of dynamite, though it has never yet done so; the tortoises grow to a great size and a patriarchal age, and are fond of Boston brown bread and baked beans, if their preferences may be judged from those of a colossal specimen in the care of an American family living on the islands. The observer who contributes this fact to science is able to report the case of a parrot− fish, on the same premises, so exactly like a

large brown and purple cockatoo that, seeing such a cockatoo later on dry land, it was with a sense of something like cruelty in its exile from its native waters. The angel−fish he thinks not so much like angels; they are of a transparent purity of substance, and a cherubic innocence of expression, but they terminate in two tails, which somehow will not lend themselves to the resemblance.

Certainly the angel−fish is not so well named as the parrot−fish; it might better be called the ghostfish, it is so like a moonbeam in the pools it haunts, and of such a convertible quality with the iridescent vegetable growths about it. All things here are of a weird convertibility to the alien perception, and the richest and rarest facts of nature lavish themselves in humble association with the commonest and most familiar. You drive through long stretches of wayside willows, and realize only now and then that these willows are thick clumps of oleanders; and through them you can catch glimpses of banana−orchards, which look like dishevelled patches of gigantic cornstalks. The fields of Easter lilies do not quite live up to their photographs; they are presently suffering from a mysterious blight, and their flowers are not frequent enough to lend them that sculpturesque effect near to, which they wear as far off as New York. The potato−fields, on the other hand, are of a tender delicacy of coloring which compensates for the lilies' lack, and the palms give no just cause for complaint, unless because they are not nearly enough to characterize the landscape, which in spite of their presence remains so northern in aspect. They were much whipped and torn by a late hurricane, which afflicted all the vegetation of the islands, and some of the royal palms were blown down. Where these are yet standing, as four or five of them are in a famous avenue now quite one−sided, they are of a majesty befitting that of any king who could pass by them: no sovereign except Philip of Macedon in his least judicial moments could pass between them.

The century−plant, which here does not require pampering under glass, but boldly takes its place out doors with the other trees of the garden, employs much less than a hundred years to bring itself to bloom. It often flowers twice or thrice in that space of time, and ought to take away the reproach of the inhabitants for a want of industry and enterprise: a century−plant at least could do no more in any air, and it merits praise for its activity in the breath of these languorous seas. One such must be in bloom at this very writing, in the garden of a house which this very writer marked for his own on his first drive ashore from the steamer to the hotel, when he bestowed in its dim, unknown interior one of the many multiples of himself which are now pretty well dispersed among the pleasant places of the earth. It fills the night with a heavy heliotropean sweetness, and on the herb beneath, in the effulgence of the waxing moon, the multiple which has spiritually expropriated the legal owners stretches itself in an interminable reverie, and hears Youth come laughing back to it on the waters kissing the adjacent shore, where other white houses (which also it inhabits) bathe their snowy underpinning. In this dream the multiple drives home from the balls of either hotel with the young girls in the little victorias which must pass its sojourn; and, being but a vision itself, fore casts the shapes of flirtation which shall night−long gild the visions of their sleep with the flash of military and naval uniforms. Of course the multiple has been at the dance too (with a shadowy heartache for the dances of forty years ago), and knows enough not to confuse the uniforms.

III.

In whatever way you walk, at whatever hour, the birds are sweetly calling in the way−side oleanders and the wild sage−bushes and the cedar−tops. They are mostly cat−birds, quite like our own; and bluebirds, but of a deeper blue than ours, and redbirds of as liquid a note, but not so varied, as that of the redbirds of our woods. How came they all here, seven hundred miles from any larger land? Some think, on the stronger wings of tempests, for it is not within the knowledge of men that men brought them. Men did, indeed, bring the pestilent sparrows which swarm about their habitations here, and beat away the gentler and lovelier birds with a ferocity unknown in the human occupation of the islands. Still, the sparrows have by no means conquered, and in the wilder places the catbird makes common cause with the bluebird and the redbird, and holds its own against them. The little ground−doves mimic in miniature the form and markings and the gait and mild behavior of our turtle−doves, but perhaps not their melancholy cooing. Nature has nowhere anything prettier than these exquisite creatures, unless it be the long−tailed white gulls which sail over the emerald shallows of the landlocked seas, and take the green upon their translucent bodies as they trail their meteoric splendor against the midday sky. Full twenty−four inches

they measure from the beak to the tip of the single pen that protracts them a foot beyond their real bulk; but it is said their tempers are shorter than they, and they attack fiercely anything they suspect of too intimate a curiosity concerning their nests.

They are probably the only short−tempered things in the Summer Islands, where time is so long that if you lose your patience you easily find it again. Sweetness, if not light, seems to be the prevailing human quality, and a good share of it belongs to such of the natives as are in no wise light. Our poor brethren of a different pigment are in the large majority, and they have been seventy years out of slavery, with the full enjoyment of all their civil rights, without lifting themselves from their old inferiority. They do the hard work, in their own easy way, and possibly do not find life the burden they make it for the white man, whom here, as in our own country, they load up with the conundrum which their existence involves for him. They are not very gay, and do not rise to a joke with that flashing eagerness which they show for it at home. If you have them against a background of banana−stems, or low palms, or feathery canes, nothing could be more acceptably characteristic of the air and sky; nor are they out of place on the box of the little victorias, where visitors of the more inquisitive sex put them to constant question. Such visitors spare no islander of any color. Once, in the pretty Public Garden which the multiple had claimed for its private property, three unmerciful American women suddenly descended from the heavens and began to question the multiple's gardener, who was peacefully digging at the rate of a spadeful every five minutes. Presently he sat down on his wheelbarrow, and then shifted, without relief, from one handle of it to the other. Then he rose and braced himself desperately against the tool− house, where, when his tormentors drifted away, he seemed to the soft eye of pity pinned to the wall by their cruel interrogations, whose barbed points were buried in the stucco behind him, and whose feathered shafts stuck out half a yard before his breast.

Whether he was black or not, pity could not see, but probably he was. At least the garrison of the islands is all black, being a Jamaican regiment of that color; and when one of the warriors comes down the white street, with his swagger−stick in his hand, and flaming in scarlet and gold upon the ground of his own blackness, it is as if a gigantic oriole were coming towards you, or a mighty tulip. These gorgeous creatures seem so much readier than the natives to laugh, that you wish to test them with a joke. But it might fail. The Summer Islands are a British colony, and the joke does not flourish so luxuriantly, here as some other things.

To be sure, one of the native fruits seems a sort of joke when you hear it first named, and when you are offered a 'loquat', if you are of a frivolous mind you search your mind for the connection with 'loquor' which it seems to intimate. Failing in this, you taste the fruit, and then, if it is not perfectly ripe, you are as far from loquaciousness as if you had bitten a green persimmon. But if it is ripe, it is delicious, and may be consumed indefinitely. It is the only native fruit which one can wish to eat at all, with an unpractised palate, though it is claimed that with experience a relish may come for the pawpaws. These break out in clusters of the size of oranges at the top of a thick pole, which may have some leaves or may not, and ripen as they fancy in the indefinite summer. They are of the color and flavor of a very insipid little muskmelon which has grown too near a patch of squashes.

One may learn to like this pawpaw, yes, but one must study hard. It is best when plucked by a young islander of Italian blood whose father orders him up the bare pole in the sunny Sunday morning air to oblige the signori, and then with a pawpaw in either hand stands talking with them about the two bad years there have been in Bermuda, and the probability of his doing better in Nuova York. He has not imagined our winter, however, and he shrinks from its boldly pictured rigors, and lets the signori go with a sigh, and a bunch of pink and crimson roses.

The roses are here, budding and blooming in the quiet bewilderment which attends the flowers and plants from the temperate zone in this latitude, and which in the case of the strawberries offered with cream and cake at another public garden expresses itself in a confusion of red, ripe fruit and white blossoms on the same stem. They are a pleasure to the nose and eye rather than the palate, as happens with so many growths of the tropics, if indeed the Summer Islands are tropical, which some plausibly deny; though why should not strawberries, fresh picked from the plant in mid−March, enjoy the right to be indifferent sweet?

IV.

What remains? The events of the Summer Islands are few, and none out of the order of athletics between teams of the army and navy, and what may be called societetics, have happened in the past enchanted fortnight. But far better things than events have happened: sunshine and rain of such like quality that one could not grumble at either, and gales, now from the south and now from the north, with the languor of the one and the vigor of the other in them. There were drives upon drives that were always to somewhere, but would have been delightful the same if they had been mere goings and comings, past the white houses overlooking little lawns through the umbrage of their palm−trees. The lawns professed to be of grass, but were really mats of close little herbs which were not grass; but which, where the sparse cattle were grazing them, seemed to satisfy their inexacting stomachs. They are never very green, and in fact the landscape often has an air of exhaustion and pause which it wears with us in late August; and why not, after all its interminable, innumerable summers? Everywhere in the gentle hollows which the coral hills (if they are coral) sink into are the patches of potatoes and lilies and onions drawing their geometrical lines across the brown−red, weedless soil; and in very sheltered spots are banana−orchards which are never so snugly sheltered there but their broad leaves are whipped to shreds. The white road winds between gray walls crumbling in an amiable disintegration, but held together against ruin by a network of maidenhair ferns and creepers of unknown name, and overhung by trees where the cactus climbs and hangs in spiky links, or if another sort, pierces them with speary stems as tall and straight as the stalks of the neighboring bamboo. The loquat−trees cluster−−like quinces in the garden closes, and show their pale golden, plum−shaped fruit.

For the most part the road runs by still inland waters, but sometimes it climbs to the high downs beside the open sea, grotesque with wind−worn and wave−worn rocks, and beautiful with opalescent beaches, and the black legs of the negro children paddling in the tints of the prostrate rainbow.

All this seems probable and natural enough at the writing; but how will it be when one has turned one's back upon it? Will it not lapse into the gross fable of travellers, and be as the things which the liars who swap them cannot themselves believe? What will be said to you when you tell that in the Summer Islands one has but to saw a hole in his back yard and take out a house of soft, creamy sandstone and set it up and go to living in it? What, when you relate that among the northern and southern evergreens there are deciduous trees which, in a clime where there is no fall or spring, simply drop their leaves when they are tired of keeping them on, and put out others when they feel like it? What, when you pretend that in the absence of serpents there are centipedes a span long, and spiders the bigness of bats, and mosquitoes that sweetly sing in the drowsing ear, but bite not; or that there are swamps but no streams, and in the marshes stand mangrove−trees whose branches grow downward into the ooze, as if they wished to get back into the earth and pull in after them the holes they emerged from?

These every−day facts seem not only incredible to the liar himself, even in their presence, but when you begin the ascent of that steep slant back to New York you foresee that they will become impossible. As impossible as the summit of the slant now appears to the sense which shudderingly figures it a Bermuda pawpaw−tree seven hundred miles high, and fruiting icicles and snowballs in the March air!

WILD FLOWERS OF THE ASPHALT

Looking through Mrs. Caroline A. Creevey's charming book on the Flowers of Field, Hill, and Swamp, the other day, I was very forcibly reminded of the number of these pretty, wilding growths which I had been finding all the season long among the streets of asphalt and the sidewalks of artificial stone in this city; and I am quite sure that any one who has been kept in New York, as I have been this year, beyond the natural time of going into the country, can have as real a pleasure in this sylvan invasion as mine, if he will but give himself up to a sense of it.

I.

Of course it is altogether too late, now, to look for any of the early spring flowers, but I can recall the exquisite effect of the tender blue hepatica fringing the centre rail of the grip−cars, all up and down Broadway, and apparently springing from the hollow beneath, where the cable ran with such a brooklike gurgle that any damp−living plant must find itself at home there. The water−pimpernel may now be seen, by any sympathetic eye, blowing delicately along the track, in the breeze of the passing cabs, and elastically lifting itself from the rush of the cars. The reader can easily verify it by the picture in Mrs. Creevey's book. He knows it by its other name of brook weed; and he will have my delight, I am sure, in the cardinal−flower which will be with us in August. It is a shy flower, loving the more sequestered nooks, and may be sought along the shady stretches of Third Avenue, where the Elevated Road overhead forms a shelter as of interlacing boughs. The arrow−head likes such swampy expanses as the converging surface roads form at Dead Man's Curve and the corners of Twenty third Street. This is in flower now, and will be till September; and St.−John's−wort, which some call the false golden− rod, is already here. You may find it in any moist, low ground, but the gutters of Wall Street, or even the banks of the Stock Exchange, are not too dry for it. The real golden−rod is not much in evidence with us, for it comes only when summer is on the wane. The other night, however, on the promenade of the Madison Square Roof Garden, I was delighted to see it growing all over the oblong dome of the auditorium, in response to the cry of a homesick cricket which found itself in exile there at the base of a potted ever green. This lonely insect had no sooner sounded its winter−boding note than the fond flower began sympathetically to wave and droop along those tarry slopes, as I have seen it on how many hill−side pastures! But this may have been only a transitory response to the cricket, and I cannot promise the visitor to the Roof Garden that he will find golden−rod there every night. I believe there is always Golden Seal, but it is the kind that comes in bottles, and not in the gloom of "deep, cool, moist woods," where Mrs. Creevey describes it as growing, along with other wildings of such sweet names or quaint as Celandine, and Dwarf Larkspur, and Squirrel−corn, and Dutchman's breeches, and Pearlwort, and Wood−sorrel, and Bishop's−−cap, and Wintergreen, and Indian−pipe, and Snowberry, and Adder's−tongue, and Wakerobin, and Dragon−root, and Adam−and−Eve, and twenty more, which must have got their names from some fairy of genius. I should say it was a female fairy of genius who called them so, and that she had her own sex among mortals in mind when she invented their nomenclature, and was thinking of little girls, and slim, pretty maids, and happy young wives. The author tells how they all look, with a fine sense of their charm in her words, but one would know how they looked from their names; and when you call them over they at once transplant themselves to the depths of the dells between our sky−scrapers, and find a brief sojourn in the cavernous excavations whence other sky−scrapers are to rise.

II.

That night on the Roof Garden, when the cricket's cry flowered the dome with golden−rod, the tall stems of rye growing among the orchestra sloped all one way at times, just like the bows of violins, in the half−dollar gale that always blows over the city at that height. But as one turns the leaves of Mrs. Creevey's magic book−perhaps one ought to say turns its petals−−the forests and the fields come and make themselves at home in the city everywhere. By virtue of it I have been more in the country in a half−hour than if I had lived all June there. When I lift my eyes from its pictures or its letter−press my vision prints the eidolons of wild flowers everywhere, as it prints the image of the sun against the air after dwelling on his brightness. The rose−mallow flaunts along Fifth Avenue and the golden threads of the dodder embroider the house fronts on the principal cross streets; and I might think at times that it was all mere fancy, it has so much the quality of a pleasing illusion.

Yet Mrs. Creevey's book is not one to lend itself to such a deceit by any of the ordinary arts. It is rather matter of fact in form and manner, and largely owes what magic it has to the inherent charm of its subject. One feels this in merely glancing at the index, and reading such titles of chapters as "Wet Meadows and Low Grounds"; "Dry Fields−−Waste Places−− Waysides"; "Hills and Rocky Woods, Open Woods"; and "Deep, Cool, Moist Woods"; each a poem in itself, lyric or pastoral, and of a surpassing opulence of suggestion. The spring and, summer months pass in stately processional through the book, each with her fillet inscribed with the names of her characteristic flowers or blossoms, and brightened with the blooms themselves.

They are plucked from where nature bade them grow in the wild places, or their own wayward wills led them astray. A singularly fascinating chapter is that called "Escaped from Gardens," in which some of these pretty runagates are catalogued. I supposed in my liberal ignorance that the Bouncing Bet was the only one of these, but I have learned that the Pansy and the Sweet Violet love to gad, and that the Caraway, the Snapdragon, the Prince's Feather, the Summer Savory, the Star of Bethlehem, the Day−Lily, and the Tiger−Lily, and even the sluggish Stone Crop are of the vagrant, fragrant company. One is not surprised to meet the Tiger−Lily in it; that must always have had the jungle in its heart; but that the Baby's Breath should be found wandering by the road−sides from Massachusetts and Virginia to Ohio, gives one a tender pang as for a lost child. Perhaps the poor human tramps, who sleep in barns and feed at back doors along those dusty ways, are mindful of the Baby's Breath, and keep a kindly eye out for the little truant.

III.

As I was writing those homely names I felt again how fit and lovely they were, how much more fit and lovely than the scientific names of the flowers. Mrs. Creevey will make a botanist of you if you will let her, and I fancy a very good botanist, though I cannot speak from experience, but she will make a poet of you in spite of yourself, as I very well know; and she will do this simply by giving you first the familiar name of the flowers she loves to write of. I am not saying that the Day−Lily would not smell as sweet by her title of 'Hemerocallis Fulva', or that the homely, hearty Bouncing Bet would not kiss as deliciously in her scholar's cap and gown of 'Saponaria Officinalis'; but merely that their college degrees do not lend themselves so willingly to verse, or even melodious prose, which is what the poet is often after nowadays. So I like best to hail the flowers by the names that the fairies gave them, and the children know them by, especially when my longing for them makes them grow here in the city streets. I have a fancy that they would all vanish away if I saluted them in botanical terms. As long as I talk of cat−tail rushes, the homeless grimalkins of the areas and the back fences help me to a vision of the swamps thickly studded with their stiff spears; but if I called them 'Typha Latifolia', or even 'Typha Angustifolia', there is not the hardiest and fiercest prowler of the roof and the fire−escape but would fly the sound of my voice and leave me forlorn amid the withered foliage of my dream. The street sparrows, pestiferous and persistent as they are, would forsake my sylvan pageant if I spoke of the Bird−foot Violet as the 'Viola Pedata'; and the commonest cur would run howling if he beard the gentle Poison Dogwood maligned as the 'Rhus Venenata'. The very milk−cans would turn to their native pumps in disgust from my attempt to invoke our simple American Cowslip as the 'Dodecatheon Meadia'.

IV

Yet I do not deny that such scientific nomenclature has its uses; and I should be far from undervaluing this side of Mrs. Creevey's book. In fact, I secretly respect it the more for its botanical lore, and if ever I get into the woods or fields again I mean to go up to some of the humblest flowers, such as I can feel myself on easy terms with, and tell them what they are in Latin. I think it will surprise them, and I dare say they will some of them like it, and will want their initials inscribed on their leaves, like those signatures which the medicinal plants bear, or are supposed to bear. But as long as I am engaged in their culture amid this stone and iron and asphalt, I find it best to invite their presence by their familiar names, and I hope they will not think them too familiar. I should like to get them all naturalized here, so that the thousands of poor city children, who never saw them growing in their native places, might have some notion of how bountifully the world is equipped with beauty, and how it is governed by many laws which are not enforced by policemen. I think that would interest them very much, and I shall not mind their plucking my Barmecide blossoms, and carrying them home by the armfuls. When good−will costs nothing we ought to practise it even with the tramps, and these are very welcome, in their wanderings over the city pave, to rest their weary limbs in any of my pleached bowers they come to.

A CIRCUS IN THE SUBURBS

We dwellers in cities and large towns, if we are well−to−do, have more than our fill of pleasures of all kinds; and for now many years past we have been used to a form of circus where surfeit is nearly as great misery as famine in that kind could be. For our sins, or some of our friends' sins, perhaps, we have now gone so long to circuses of three rings and two raised−platforms that we scarcely realize that in the country there are still circuses of one ring and no platform at all. We are accustomed, in the gross and foolish−superfluity of these city circuses, to see no feat quite through, but to turn our greedy eyes at the most important instant in the hope of greater wonders in another ring. We have four or five clowns, in as many varieties of grotesque costume, as well as a lady clown in befitting dress; but we hear none of them speak, not even the lady clown, while in the country circus the old clown of our childhood, one and indivisible, makes the same style of jokes, if not the very same jokes, that we used to hear there. It is not easy to believe all this, and I do not know that I should quite believe it myself if I had not lately been witness of it in the suburban village where I was passing the summer.

I.

The circus announced itself in the good old way weeks beforehand by the vast posters of former days and by a profusion of small bills which fell upon the village as from the clouds, and left it littered everywhere with their festive pink. They prophesied it in a name borne by the first circus I ever saw, which was also an animal show, but the animals must all have died during the fifty years past, for there is now no menagerie attached to it. I did not know this when I heard the band braying through the streets of the village on the morning of the performance, and for me the mangy old camels and the pimpled elephants of yore led the procession through accompanying ranks of boys who have mostly been in their graves for half a lifetime; the distracted ostrich thrust an advertising neck through the top of its cage, and the lion roared to himself in the darkness of his moving prison. I felt the old thrill of excitement, the vain hope of something preternatural and impossible, and I do not know what could have kept me from that circus as soon as I had done lunch. My heart rose at sight of the large tent (which was yet so very little in comparison with the tents of the three−ring and two− platform circuses); the alluring and illusory sideshows of fat women and lean men; the horses tethered in the background and stamping under the fly−bites; the old, weather−beaten grand chariot, which looked like the ghost of the grand chariot which used to drag me captive in its triumph; and the canvas shelters where the cooks were already at work over their kettles on the evening meal of the circus folk.

I expected to be kept a long while from the ticket−wagon by the crowd, but there was no crowd, and perhaps there never used to be much of a crowd. I bought my admittances without a moment's delay, and the man who sold me my reserve seats had even leisure to call me back and ask to look at the change he had given me, mostly nickels. "I thought I didn't give you enough," he said, and he added one more, and sent me on to the doorkeeper with my faith in human nature confirmed and refreshed. It was cool enough outside, but within it was very warm, as it should be, to give the men with palm−leaf fans and ice−cold lemonade a chance. They were already making their rounds, and crying their wares with voices from the tombs of the dead past; and the child of the young mother who took my seat−ticket from me was going to sleep at full length on the lowermost tread of the benches, so that I had to step across its prostrate form. These reserved seats were carpeted; but I had forgotten how little one rank was raised above another, and how very trying they were upon the back and legs. But for the carpeting, I could not see how I was advantaged above the commoner folk in the unreserved seats, and I reflected how often in this world we paid for an inappreciable splendor. I could not see but they were as well off as I; they were much more gayly dressed, and some of them were even smoking cigars, while they were nearly all younger by ten, twenty, forty, or fifty years, and even more. They did not look like the country people whom I rather hoped and expected to see, but were apparently my fellow−villagers, in different stages of excitement. They manifested by the usual signs their impatience to have the performance begin, and I confess that I shared this, though I did not take part in the demonstration.

II.

I have no intention of following the events seriatim. Front time to time during their progress I renewed my old one−sided acquaintance with the circus−men. They were quite the same people, I believe, but strangely softened and ameliorated, as I hope I am, and looking not a day older, which I cannot say of myself, exactly. The supernumeraries were patently farmer boys who had entered newly upon that life in a spirit of adventure, and who wore their partial liveries, a braided coat here and a pair of striped trousers there, with a sort of timorous pride, a deprecating bravado, as if they expected to be hooted by the spectators and were very glad when they were not. The man who went round with a dog to keep boys from hooking in under the curtain had grown gentler, and his dog did not look as if he would bite the worst boy in town. The man came up and asked the young mother about her sleeping child, and I inferred that the child had been sick, and was therefore unusually interesting to all the great, kind−hearted, simple circus family. He was good to the poor supes, and instructed them, not at all sneeringly, how best to manage the guy ropes for the nets when the trapeze events began.

There was, in fact, an air of pleasing domesticity diffused over the whole circus. This was, perhaps, partly an effect from our extreme proximity to its performances; I had never been on quite such intimate terms with equitation and aerostation of all kinds; but I think it was also largely from the good hearts of the whole company. A circus must become, during the season, a great brotherhood and sisterhood, especially sisterhood, and its members must forget finally that they are not united by ties of blood. I dare say they often become so, as husbands and wives and fathers and mothers, if not as brothers.

The domestic effect was heightened almost poignantly when a young lady in a Turkish−towel bath−gown came out and stood close by the band, waiting for her act on a barebacked horse of a conventional pattern. She really looked like a young goddess in a Turkish−towel bath−gown: goddesses must have worn bath−gowns, especially Venus, who was often imagined in the bath, or just out of it. But when this goddess threw off her bath−gown, and came bounding into the ring as gracefully as the clogs she wore on her slippers would let her, she was much more modestly dressed than most goddesses. What I am trying to say, however, is that, while she stood there by the band, she no more interested the musicians than if she were their collective sister. They were all in their shirt−sleeves for the sake of the coolness, and they banged and trumpeted and fluted away as indifferent to her as so many born brothers.

Indeed, when the gyrations of her horse brought her to our side of the ring, she was visibly not so youthful and not so divine as she might have been; but the girl who did the trapeze acts, and did them wonderfully, left nothing to be desired in that regard; though really I do not see why we who have neither youth nor beauty should always expect it of other people. I think it would have been quite enough for her to do the trapeze acts so perfectly; but her being so pretty certainly added a poignancy to the contemplation of her perils. One could follow every motion of her anxiety in that close proximity: the tremor of her chin as she bit her lips before taking her flight through the air, the straining eagerness of her eye as she measured the distance, the frown with which she forbade herself any shrinking or reluctance.

III.

How strange is life, how sad and perplexing its contradictions! Why should such an exhibition as that be supposed to give pleasure? Perhaps it does not give pleasure, but is only a necessary fulfilment of one of the many delusions we are in with regard to each other in this bewildering world. They are of all sorts and degrees, these delusions, and I suppose that in the last analysis it was not pleasure I got from the clown and his clowning, clowned he ever so merrily. I remember that I liked hearing his old jokes, not because they were jokes, but because they were old and endeared by long association. He sang one song which I must have heard him sing at my first circus (I am sure it was he), about "Things that I don't like to see," and I heartily agreed with him that his book of songs, which he sent round to be sold, was fully worth the half−dime asked for it, though I did not buy it.

Perhaps the rival author in me withheld me, but, as a brother man, I will not allow that I did not feel for him and suffer with him because of the thick, white pigment which plentifully coated his face, and, with the sweat drops upon it, made me think of a newly painted wall in the rain. He was infinitely older than his personality, than his oldest joke (though you never can be sure how old a joke is), and, representatively, I dare say he outdated the pyramids. They must have made clowns whiten their faces in the dawn of time, and no doubt there were drolls among the antediluvians who enhanced the effect of their fun by that means. All the same, I pitied this clown for it, and I fancied in his wildest waggery the note of a real irascibility. Shall I say that he seemed the only member of that little circus who was not of an amiable temper? But I do not blame him, and I think it much to have seen a clown once more who jested audibly with the ringmaster and always got the better of him in repartee. It was long since I had known that pleasure.

IV.

Throughout the performance at this circus I was troubled by a curious question, whether it were really of the same moral and material grandeur as the circuses it brought to memory, or whether these were thin and slight, too. We all know how the places of our childhood, the heights, the distances, shrink and dwindle when we go back to them, and was it possible that I had been deceived in the splendor of my early circuses? The doubt was painful, but I was forced to own that there might be more truth in it than in a blind fealty to their remembered magnificence. Very likely circuses have grown not only in size, but in the richness and variety of their entertainments, and I was spoiled for the simple joys of this. But I could see no reflection of my dissatisfaction on the young faces around me, and I must confess that there was at least so much of the circus that I left when it was half over. I meant to go into the side−shows and see the fat woman and the living skeleton, and take the giant by the hand and the armless man by his friendly foot, if I might be so honored. But I did none of these things, and I am willing to believe the fault was in me, if I was disappointed in the circus. It was I who had shrunk and dwindled, and not it. To real boys it was still the size of the firmament, and was a world of wonders and delights. At least I can recognize this fact now, and can rejoice in the peaceful progress all over the country of the simple circuses which the towns never see, but which help to render the summer fairer and brighter to the unspoiled eyes and hearts they appeal to. I hope it will be long before they cease to find profit in the pleasure they give.

A SHE HAMLET

The other night as I sat before the curtain of the Garden Theatre and waited for it to rise upon the Hamlet of Mme. Bernhardt, a thrill of the rich expectation which cannot fail to precede the rise of any curtain upon any Hamlet passed through my eager frame. There is, indeed, no scene of drama which is of a finer horror (eighteenth−century horror) than that which opens the great tragedy. The sentry pacing up and down upon the platform at Elsinore under the winter night; the greeting between him and the comrade arriving to relieve him, with its hints of the bitter cold; the entrance of Horatio and Marcellus to these before they can part; the mention of the ghost, and, while the soldiers are in the act of protesting it a veridical phantom, the apparition of the ghost, taking the word from their lips and hushing all into a pulseless awe: what could be more simply and sublimely real, more naturally supernatural? What promise of high mystical things to come there is in the mere syllabling of the noble verse, and how it enlarges us from ourselves, for that time at least, to a disembodied unity with the troubled soul whose martyry seems foreboded in the solemn accents! As the many Hamlets on which the curtain had risen in my time passed in long procession through my memory, I seemed to myself so much of their world, and so little of the world that arrogantly calls itself the actual one, that I should hardly have been surprised to find myself one of the less considered persons of the drama who were seen but not heard in its course.

I.

The trouble in judging anything is that if you have the materials for an intelligent criticism, the case is already prejudiced in your hands. You do not bring a free mind to it, and all your efforts to free your mind are a species of

gymnastics more or less admirable, but not really effective for the purpose. The best way is to own yourself unfair at the start, and then you can have some hope of doing yourself justice, if not your subject. In other words, if you went to see the Hamlet of Mme. Bernhardt frankly expecting to be disappointed, you were less likely in the end to be disappointed in your expectations, and you could not blame her if you were. To be ideally fair to that representation, it would be better not to have known any other Hamlet, and, above all, the Hamlet of Shakespeare.

From the first it was evident that she had three things overwhelmingly against her−−her sex, her race, and her speech. You never ceased to feel for a moment that it was a woman who was doing that melancholy Dane, and that the woman was a Jewess, and the Jewess a French Jewess. These three removes put a gulf impassable between her utmost skill and the impassioned irresolution of that inscrutable Northern nature which is in nothing so masculine as its feminine reluctances and hesitations, or so little French as in those obscure emotions which the English poetry expressed with more than Gallic clearness, but which the French words always failed to convey. The battle was lost from the first, and all you could feel about it for the rest was that if it was magnificent it was not war.

While the battle went on I was the more anxious to be fair, because I had, as it were, pre−espoused the winning side; and I welcomed, in the interest of critical impartiality, another Hamlet which came to mind, through readily traceable associations. This was a Hamlet also of French extraction in the skill and school of the actor, but as much more deeply derived than the Hamlet of Mme. Bernhardt as the large imagination of Charles Fechter transcended in its virile range the effect of her subtlest womanish intuition. His was the first blond Hamlet known to our stage, and hers was also blond, if a reddish−yellow wig may stand for a complexion; and it was of the quality of his Hamlet in masterly technique.

II.

The Hamlet of Fechter, which rose ghostlike out of the gulf of the past, and cloudily possessed the stage where the Hamlet of Mme. Bernhardt was figuring, was called a romantic Hamlet thirty years ago; and so it was in being a break from the classic Hamlets of the Anglo−American theatre. It was romantic as Shakespeare himself was romantic, in an elder sense of the word, and not romanticistic as Dumas was romanticistic. It was, therefore, the most realistic Hamlet ever yet seen, because the most naturally poetic. Mme. Bernhardt recalled it by the perfection of her school; for Fechter's poetic naturalness differed from the conventionality of the accepted Hamlets in nothing so much as the superiority of its self−instruction. In Mme. Bernhardt's Hamlet, as in his, nothing was trusted to chance, or "inspiration." Good or bad, what one saw was what was meant to be seen. When Fechter played Edmond Dantes or Claude Melnotte, he put reality into those preposterous inventions, and in Hamlet even his alien accent helped him vitalize the part; it might be held to be nearer the Elizabethan accent than ours; and after all, you said Hamlet was a foreigner, and in your high content with what he gave you did not mind its being in a broken vessel. When he challenged the ghost with "I call thee keeng, father, rawl−Dane," you Would hardly have had the erring utterance bettered. It sufficed as it was; and when he said to Rosencrantz, "Will you pleh upon this pyip?" it was with such a princely authority and comradely entreaty that you made no note of the slips in the vowels except to have pleasure of their quaintness afterwards. For the most part you were not aware of these betrayals of his speech; and in certain high things it was soul interpreted to soul through the poetry of Shakespeare so finely, so directly, that there was scarcely a sense of the histrionic means.

He put such divine despair into the words, "Except my life, except my life, except my life!" following the mockery with which he had assured Polonius there was nothing he would more willingly part withal than his leave, that the heart−break of them had lingered with me for thirty years, and I had been alert for them with every Hamlet since. But before I knew, Mme. Bernhardt had uttered them with no effect whatever. Her Hamlet, indeed, cut many of the things that we have learned to think the points of Hamlet, and it so transformed others by its interpretation of the translator's interpretation of Shakespeare that they passed unrecognized. Soliloquies are the weak invention of the enemy, for the most part, but as such things go that soliloquy of Hamlet's, "To be or not to be," is at least very noble poetry; and yet Mme. Bernhardt was so unimpressive in it that you scarcely noticed the

act of its delivery. Perhaps this happened because the sumptuous and sombre melancholy of Shakespeare's thought was transmitted in phrases that refused it its proper mystery. But there was always a hardness, not always from the translation, upon this feminine Hamlet. It was like a thick shell with no crevice in it through which the tenderness of Shakespeare's Hamlet could show, except for the one moment at Ophelia's grave, where he reproaches Laertes with those pathetic words

"What is the reason that you use me thus? I loved you ever; but it is no matter."

Here Mme. Bernhardt betrayed a real grief, but as a woman would, and not a man. At the close of the Gonzago play, when Hamlet triumphs in a mad whirl, her Hamlet hopped up and down like a mischievous crow, a mischievous she−crow.

There was no repose in her Hamlet, though there were moments of leaden lapse which suggested physical exhaustion; and there was no range in her elocution expressive of the large vibration of that tormented spirit. Her voice dropped out, or jerked itself out, and in the crises of strong emotion it was the voice of a scolding or a hysterical woman. At times her movements, which she must have studied so hard to master, were drolly womanish, especially those of the whole person. Her quickened pace was a woman's nervous little run, and not a man's swift stride; and to give herself due stature, it was her foible to wear a woman's high heels to her shoes, and she could not help tilting on them.

In the scene with the queen after the play, most English and American Hamlets have required her to look upon the counterfeit presentment of two brothers in miniatures something the size of tea−plates; but Mme. Bernhardt's preferred full−length, life−size family portraits. The dead king's effigy did not appear a flattered likeness in the scene−painter's art, but it was useful in disclosing his ghost by giving place to it in the wall at the right moment. She achieved a novelty by this treatment of the portraits, and she achieved a novelty in the tone she took with the wretched queen. Hamlet appeared to scold her mother, but though it could be said that her mother deserved a scolding, was it the part of a good daughter to give it her?

One should, of course, say a good son, but long before this it had become impossible to think at all of Mme. Bernhardt's Hamlet as a man, if it ever had been possible. She had traversed the bounds which tradition as well as nature has set, and violated the only condition upon which an actress may personate a man. This condition is that there shall be always a hint of comedy in the part, that the spectator shall know all the time that the actress is a woman, and that she shall confess herself such before the play is over; she shall be fascinating in the guise of a man only because she is so much more intensely a woman in it. Shakespeare had rather a fancy for women in men's roles, which, as women's roles in his time were always taken by pretty and clever boys, could be more naturally managed then than now. But when it came to the eclaircissement, and the pretty boys, who had been playing the parts of women disguised as men, had to own themselves women, the effect must have been confused if not weakened. If Mme. Bernhardt, in the necessity of doing something Shakespearean, had chosen to do Rosalind, or Viola, or Portia, she could have done it with all the modern advantages of women in men's roles. These characters are, of course, "lighter motions bounded in a shallower brain" than the creation she aimed at; but she could at least have made much of them, and she does not make much of Hamlet.

III.

The strongest reason against any woman Hamlet is that it does violence to an ideal. Literature is not so rich in great imaginary masculine types that we can afford to have them transformed to women; and after seeing Mme. Bernhardt's Hamlet no one can altogether liberate himself from the fancy that the Prince of Denmark was a girl of uncertain age, with crises of mannishness in which she did not seem quite a lady. Hamlet is in nothing more a man than in the things to which as a man he found himself unequal; for as a woman he would have been easily superior to them. If we could suppose him a woman as Mme. Bernhardt, in spite of herself, invites us to do, we could only suppose him to have solved his perplexities with the delightful precipitation of his putative sex. As the

niece of a wicked uncle, who in that case would have had to be a wicked aunt, wedded to Hamlet's father hard upon the murder of her mother, she would have made short work of her vengeance. No fine scruples would have delayed her; she would not have had a moment's question whether she had not better kill herself; she would have out with her bare bodkin and ended the doubt by first passing it through her aunt's breast.

To be sure, there would then have been no play of " Hamlet," as we have it; but a Hamlet like that imagined, a frankly feminine Hamlet, Mme. Bernhardt could have rendered wonderfully. It is in attempting a masculine Hamlet that she transcends the imaginable and violates an ideal. It is not thinkable. After you have seen it done, you say, as Mr. Clemens is said to have said of bicycling: "Yes, I have seen it, but it's impossible. It doesn't stand to reason."

Art, like law, is the perfection of reason, and whatever is unreasonable in the work of an artist is inartistic. By the time I had reached these bold conclusions I was ready to deduce a principle from them, and to declare that in a true civilization such a thing as that Hamlet would be forbidden, as an offence against public morals, a violence to something precious and sacred.

In the absence of any public regulation the precious and sacred ideals in the arts must be trusted to the several artists, who bring themselves to judgment when they violate them. After Mme. Bernhardt was perversely willing to attempt the part of Hamlet, the question whether she did it well or not was of slight consequence. She had already made her failure in wishing to play the part. Her wish impugned her greatness as an artist; of a really great actress it would have been as unimaginable as the assumption of a sublime feminine role by a really great actor. There is an obscure law in this matter which it would be interesting to trace, but for the present I must leave the inquiry with the reader. I can note merely that it seems somehow more permissible for women in imaginary actions to figure as men than for men to figure as women. In the theatre we have conjectured how and why this may be, but the privilege, for less obvious reasons, seems yet more liberally granted in fiction. A woman may tell a story in the character of a man and not give offence, but a man cannot write a novel in autobiographical form from the personality of a woman without imparting the sense of something unwholesome. One feels this true even in the work of such a master as Tolstoy, whose Katia is a case in point. Perhaps a woman may play Hamlet with a less shocking effect than a man may play Desdemona, but all the same she must not play Hamlet at all. That sublime ideal is the property of the human imagination, and may not be profaned by a talent enamoured of the impossible. No harm could be done by the broadest burlesque, the most irreverent travesty, for these would still leave the ideal untouched. Hamlet, after all the horse−play, would be Hamlet; but Hamlet played by a woman, to satisfy her caprice, or to feed her famine for a fresh effect, is Hamlet disabled, for a long time, at least, in its vital essence. I felt that it would take many returns to the Hamlet of Shakespeare to efface the impression of Mme. Bernhardt's Hamlet; and as I prepared to escape from my row of stalls in the darkening theatre, I experienced a noble shame for having seen the Dane so disnatured, to use Mr. Lowell's word. I had not been obliged to come; I had voluntarily shared in the wrong done; by my presence I had made myself an accomplice in the wrong. It was high ground, but not too high for me, and I recovered a measure of self−respect in assuming it.

THE MIDNIGHT PLATOON

He had often heard of it. Connoisseurs of such matters, young newspaper men trying to make literature out of life and smuggle it into print under the guard of unwary editors, and young authors eager to get life into their literature, had recommended it to him as one of the most impressive sights of the city; and he had willingly agreed with them that he ought to see it. He imagined it very dramatic, and he was surprised to find it in his experience so largely subjective. If there was any drama at all it was wholly in his own consciousness. But the thing was certainly impressive in its way.

I.

He thought it a great piece of luck that he should come upon it by chance, and so long after he had forgotten about it that he was surprised to recognize it for the spectacle he had often promised himself the pleasure of seeing.

Pleasure is the right word; for pleasure of the painful sort that all hedonists will easily imagine was what he expected to get from it; though upon the face of it there seems no reason why a man should delight to see his fellow−men waiting in the winter street for the midnight dole of bread which must in some cases be their only meal from the last midnight to the next midnight. But the mere thought of it gave him pleasure, and the sight of it, from the very first instant. He was proud of knowing just what it was at once, with the sort of pride which one has in knowing an earthquake, though one has never felt one before. He saw the double file of men stretching up one street, and stretching down the other from the corner of the bakery where the loaves were to be given out on the stroke of twelve, and he hugged himself in a luxurious content with his perspicacity.

It was all the more comfortable to do this because he was in a coup, warmly shut against the sharp, wholesome Christmas−week weather, and was wrapped to the chin in a long fur overcoat, which he wore that night as a duty to his family, with a conscience against taking cold and alarming them for his health. He now practised another piece of self−denial: he let the cabman drive rapidly past the interesting spectacle, and carry him to the house where he was going to fetch away the child from the Christmas party. He wished to be in good time, so as to save the child from anxiety about his coming; but he promised himself to stop, going back, and glut his sensibility in a leisurely study of the scene. He got the child, with her arms full of things from the Christmas−tree, into the coup, and then he said to the cabman, respectfully leaning as far over from his box to listen as his thick greatcoat would let him: "When you get up there near that bakery again, drive slowly. I want to have a look at those men."

"All right, sir," said the driver intelligently, and he found his why skilfully out of the street among the high banks of the seasonable Christmas−week snow, which the street−cleaners had heaped up there till they could get round to it with their carts.

When they were in Broadway again it seemed lonelier and silenter than it was a few minutes before. Except for their own coup, the cable−cars, with their flaming foreheads, and the mechanical clangor of their gongs at the corners, seemed to have it altogether to themselves. A tall, lumbering United States mail van rolled by, and impressed my friend in the coup with a cheap and agreeable sense of mystery relative to the letters it was carrying to their varied destination at the Grand Central Station. He listened with half an ear to the child's account of the fun she had at the party, and he watched with both eyes for the sight of the men waiting at the bakery for the charity of the midnight loaves.

He played with a fear that they might all have vanished, and with an apprehension that the cabman might forget and whirl him rapidly by the place where he had left them. But the driver remembered, and checked his horses in good time; and there were the men still, but in even greater number than before, stretching farther up Broadway and farther out along the side street. They stood slouched in dim and solemn phalanx under the night sky, so seasonably, clear and frostily atwinkle with Christmas−week stars; two by two they stood, slouched close together, perhaps for their mutual warmth, perhaps in an unconscious effort to get near the door where the loaves were to be given out, in time to share in them before they were all gone.

II.

My friend's heart beat with glad anticipation. He was really to see this important, this representative thing to the greatest possible advantage. He rapidly explained to his companion that the giver of the midnight loaves got rid of what was left of his daily bread in that way: the next day it could not be sold, and he preferred to give it away to those who needed it, rather than try to find his account in it otherwise. She understood, and he tried to think that sometimes coffee was given with the bread, but he could not make sure of this, though he would have liked very much to have it done; it would have been much more dramatic. Afterwards he learned that it was done, and he was proud of having fancied it.

He decided that when he came alongside of the Broadway file he would get out, and go to the side door of the bakery and watch the men receiving the bread. Perhaps he would find courage to speak to them, and ask them about themselves. At the time it did not strike him that it would be indecent.

A great many things about them were open to reasonable conjecture. It was not probable that they were any of them there for their health, as the saying is. They were all there because they were hungry, or else they were there in behalf of some one else who was hungry. But it was always possible that some of them were impostors, and he wondered if any test was applied to them that would prove them deserving or undeserving. If one were poor, one ought to be deserving; if one were rich, it did not so much matter.

It seemed to him very likely that if he asked these men questions they would tell him lies. A fantastic association of their double files and those of the galley−slaves whom Don Quixote released, with the tonguey Gines de Passamonte at their head, came into his mind. He smiled, and then he thought how these men were really a sort of slaves and convicts −−slaves to want and self−convicted of poverty. All at once he fancied them actually manacled there together, two by two, a coffle of captives taken in some cruel foray, and driven to a market where no man wanted to buy. He thought how old their slavery was; and he wondered if it would ever be abolished, as other slaveries had been. Would the world ever outlive it? Would some New−Year's day come when some President would proclaim, amid some dire struggle, that their slavery was to be no more? That would be fine.

III.

He noticed how still the most of them were. A few of them stepped a little out of the line, and stamped to shake off the cold; but all the rest remained motionless, shrinking into themselves, and closer together. They might have been their own dismal ghosts, they were so still, with no more need of defence from the cold than the dead have.

He observed now that not one among them had a fur overcoat on; and at a second glance he saw that there was not an overcoat of any kind among them. He made his reflection that if any of them were impostors, and not true men, with real hunger, and if they were alive to feel that stiff, wholesome, Christmas−week cold, they were justly punished for their deceit.

He was interested by the celerity, the simultaneity of his impressions, his reflections. It occurred to him that his abnormal alertness must be something like that of a drowning person, or a person in mortal peril, and being perfectly safe and well, he was obscurely flattered by the fact.

To test his condition further he took note of the fine mass of the great dry−goods store on the hither corner, blocking itself out of the blue− black night, and of the Gothic beauty of the church beyond, so near that the coffle of captives might have issued from its sculptured portal, after vain prayer.

Fragments of conjecture, of speculation, drifted through his mind. How early did these files begin to form themselves for the midnight dole of bread? As early as ten, as nine o'clock? If so, did the fact argue habitual destitution, or merely habitual leisure? Did the slaves in the coffle make acquaintance, or remain strangers to one another, though they were closely neighbored night after night by their misery? Perhaps they joked away the weary hours of waiting; they must have their jokes. Which of them were old−comers, and which novices? Did they ever quarrel over questions of precedence? Had they some comity, some etiquette, which a man forced to leave his place could appeal to, and so get it back? Could one say to his next−hand man, "Will you please keep my place?" and would this man say to an interloper, "Excuse me, this place is engaged"? How was it with them, when the coffle worked slowly or swiftly past the door where the bread and coffee were given out, and word passed to the rear that the supply was exhausted? This must sometimes happen, and what did they do then?

IV.

My friend did not quite like to think. Vague, reproachful thoughts for all the remote and immediate luxury of his life passed through his mind. If he reformed that and gave the saving to hunger and cold? But what was the use? There was so much hunger, so much cold, that it could not go round.

The cabman was obeying his orders too faithfully. He was not only walking by the Broadway coffle, he was creeping by. His action caught the notice of the slaves, and as the coups passed them they all turned and faced it, like soldiers under review making ready to salute a superior. They were perfectly silent, perfectly respectful, but their eyes seemed to pierce the coupe through and through.

My friend was suddenly aware of a certain quality of representivity; he stood to these men for all the ease and safety that they could never, never hope to know. He was Society: Society that was to be preserved because it embodies Civilization. He wondered if they hated him in his capacity of Better Classes. He no longer thought of getting out and watching their behavior as they took their bread and coffee. He would have liked to excuse that thought, and protest that he was ashamed of it; that he was their friend, and wished them well−−as well as might be without the sacrifice of his own advantages or superfluities, which he could have persuaded them would be perfectly useless. He put his hand on that of his companion trembling on his arm with sympathy, or at least with intelligence.

"You mustn't mind. What we are and what we do is all right. It's what they are and what they suffer that's all wrong."

V.

"Does that view of the situation still satisfy you?" I asked, when he had told me of this singular experience; I liked his apparently not coloring it at all.

"I don't know," he answered. "It seems to be the only way out."

"Well, it's an easy way," I admitted, "and it's an idea that ought to gratify the midnight platoon."

THE BEACH AT ROCKAWAY

I confess that I cannot hear people rejoice in their summer sojourn as beyond the reach of excursionists without a certain rebellion; and yet I have to confess also that after spending a Sunday afternoon of late July, four or five years ago, with the excursionists at one of the beaches near New York, I was rather glad that my own summer sojourn was not within reach of them. I know very well that the excursionists must go somewhere, and as a man and a brother I am willing they should go anywhere, but as a friend of quiet and seclusion I should be sorry to have them come much where I am. It is not because I would deny them a share of any pleasure I enjoy, but because they are so many and I am so few that I think they would get all the pleasure and I none. I hope the reader will see how this attitude distinguishes me from the selfish people who inhumanly exult in their remoteness from excursionists.

I.

It was at Rockaway Beach that I saw these fellow−beings whose mere multitude was too much for me. They were otherwise wholly without offence towards me, and so far as I noted, towards each other; they were, in fact, the most entirely peaceable multitude I ever saw in any country, and the very quietest.

There were thousands, mounting well up towards tens of thousands, of them, in every variety of age and sex; yet I heard no voice lifted above the conversational level, except that of some infant ignorant of its privileges in a day

at the sea−side, or some showman crying the attractions of the spectacle in his charge. I used to think the American crowds rather boisterous and unruly, and many years ago, when I lived in Italy, I celebrated the greater amiability and self−control of the Italian crowds. But we have certainly changed all that within a generation, and if what I saw the other day was a typical New York crowd, then the popular joy of our poorer classes is no longer the terror it once was to the peaceful observer. The tough was not visibly present, nor the toughness, either of the pure native East Side stock or of the Celtic extraction; yet there were large numbers of Americans with rather fewer recognizable Irish among the masses, who were mainly Germans, Russians, Poles, and the Jews of these several nationalities.

There was eating and drinking without limit, on every hand and in every kind, at the booths abounding in fried seafood, and at the tables under all the wide−spreading verandas of the hotels and restaurants; yet I saw not one drunken man, and of course not any drunken women. No one that I saw was even affected by drink, and no one was guilty of any rude or unseemly behavior. The crowd was, in short, a monument to the democratic ideal of life in that very important expression of life, personal conduct, I have not any notion who or what the people were, or how virtuous or vicious they privately might be; but I am sure that no society assemblage could be of a goodlier outside; and to be of a goodly outside is all that the mere spectator has a right to ask of any crowd.

I fancied, however, that great numbers of this crowd, or at least all the Americans in it, were Long−Islanders from the inland farms and villages within easy distance of the beach. They had probably the hereditary habit of coming to it, for it was a favorite resort in the time of their fathers and grandfathers, who had

−−"many an hour whiled away Listening to the breakers' roar That washed the beach at Rockaway."

But the clothing store and the paper pattern have equalized the cheaper dress of the people so that you can no longer know citizen and countryman apart by their clothes, still less citizeness and countrywoman; and I can only conjecture that the foreign−looking folk I saw were from New York and Brooklyn. They came by boat, and came and went by the continually arriving and departing trains, and last but not least by bicycles, both sexes. A few came in the public carriages and omnibuses of the neighborhood, but by far the vaster number whom neither the boats nor the trains had brought had their own vehicles, the all−pervading bicycles, which no one seemed so poor as not to be able to keep. The bicyclers stormed into the frantic village of the beach the whole afternoon, in the proportion of one woman to five men, and most of these must have ridden down on their wheels from the great cities. Boys ran about in the roadway with bunches of brasses, to check the wheels, and put them for safekeeping in what had once been the stable−yards of the hotels; the restaurants had racks for them, where you could see them in solid masses, side by side, for a hundred feet, and no shop was without its door−side rack, which the wheelman might slide his wheel into when he stopped for a soda, a cigar, or a sandwich. All along the road the gay bicycler and bicycless swarmed upon the piazzas of the inns, munching, lunching, while their wheels formed a fantastic decoration for the underpinning of the house and a novel balustering for the steps.

II.

The amusements provided for these throngs of people were not different from those provided for throngs of people everywhere, who must be of much the same mind and taste the world over. I had fine moments when I moved in an illusion of the Midway Plaisance; again I was at the Fete de Neuilly, with all of Paris but the accent about me; yet again the county agricultural fairs of my youth spread their spectral joys before me. At none of these places, however, was there a sounding sea or a mountainous chute, and I made haste to experience the variety these afforded, beginning with the chute, since the sea was always there, and the chute might be closed for the day if I waited to view it last. I meant only to enjoy the pleasure of others in it, and I confined my own participation to the ascent of the height from which the boat plunges down the watery steep into the oblong pool below. When I bought my ticket for the car that carried passengers up, they gave me also a pasteboard medal, certifying for me, "You have shot the chute," and I resolved to keep this and show it to doubting friends as a proof of my daring; but it is a curious evidence of my unfitness for such deceptions that I afterwards could not find the

medal. So I will frankly own that for me it was quite enough to see others shoot the chute, and that I came tamely down myself in the car. There is a very charming view from the top, of the sea with its ships, and all the mad gayety of the shore, but of course my main object was to exult in the wild absurdity of those who shot the chute. There was always a lady among the people in the clumsy flat−boat that flew down the long track, and she tried usually to be a pretty girl, who clutched her friends and lovers and shrieked aloud in her flight; but sometimes it was a sober mother of a family, with her brood about her, who was probably meditating, all the way, the inculpation of their father for any harm that came of it. Apparently no harm came of it in any case.

The boat struck the water with the impetus gained from a half− perpendicular slide of a hundred feet, bounded high into the air, struck again and again, and so flounced awkwardly across the pond to the farther shore, where the passengers debarked and went away to commune with their viscera, and to get their breath as they could. I did not ask any of them what their emotions or sensations were, but, so far as I could conjecture, the experience of shooting the chute must comprise the rare transport of a fall from a ten−story building and the delight of a tempestuous passage of the Atlantic, powerfully condensed.

The mere sight was so athletic that it took away any appetite I might have had to witness the feats of strength performed by Madame La Noire at the nearest booth on my coming out, though madame herself was at the door−to testify, in her own living picture, how much muscular force may be masked in vast masses of adipose. She had a weary, bored look, and was not without her pathos, poor soul, as few of those are who amuse the public; but I could not find her quite justifiable as a Sunday entertainment. One forgot, however, what day it was, and for the time I did not pretend to be so much better than my neighbors that I would not compromise upon a visit to, an animal show a little farther on. It was a pretty fair collection of beasts that had once been wild, perhaps, and in the cage of the lions there was a slight, sad−looking, long−haired young man, exciting them to madness by blows of a whip and pistol−shots whom I was extremely glad to have get away without being torn in pieces, or at least bitten in two. A little later I saw him at the door of the tent, very breathless, dishevelled, and as to his dress not of the spotlessness one could wish. But perhaps spotlessness is not compatible with the intimacy of lions and lionesses. He had had his little triumph; one spectator of his feat had declared that you would not see anything like that at Coney Island; and soiled and dusty as he was in his cotton tights, he was preferable to the living picture of a young lady whom he replaced as an attraction of the show. It was professedly a moral show; the manager exhorted us as we came out to say whether it was good or not; and in the box−office sat a kind and motherly faced matron who would have apparently abhorred to look upon a living picture at any distance, much less have it at her elbow.

Upon the whole, there seemed a melancholy mistake in it all; the people to whom the showmen made their appeal were all so much better, evidently, than the showmen supposed; the showmen themselves appeared harmless enough, and one could not say that there was personally any harm in the living picture; rather she looked listless and dull, but as to the face respectable enough.

I would not give the impression that most of the amusements were not in every respect decorous. As a means of pleasure, the merry−go−round, both horizontal with horses and vertical with swinging cradles, prevailed, and was none the worse for being called by the French name of carrousel, for our people aniglicize the word, and squeeze the last drop of Gallic wickedness from it by pronouncing it carousal. At every other step there were machines for weighing you and ascertaining your height; there were photographers' booths, and X−ray apparatus for showing you the inside of your watch; and in one open tent I saw a gentleman (with his back to the public) having his fortune read in the lines of his hand by an Egyptian seeress. Of course there was everywhere soda, and places of the softer drinks abounded.

III.

I think you could only get a hard drink by ordering something to eat and sitting down to your wine or beer at a table. Again I say that I saw no effects of drink in the crowd, and in one of the great restaurants built out over the

sea on piers, where there was perpetual dancing to the braying of a brass−band, the cotillon had no fire imparted to its figures by the fumes of the bar. In fact it was a very rigid sobriety that reigned here, governing the common behavior by means of the placards which hung from the roof over the heads of the dancers, and repeatedly announced that gentlemen were not allowed to dance together, or to carry umbrellas or canes while dancing, while all were entreated not to spit on the floor.

The dancers looked happy and harmless, if not very wise or splendid; they seemed people of the same simple neighborhoods, village lovers, young wives and husbands, and parties of friends who had come together for the day's pleasure. A slight mother, much weighed down by a heavy baby, passed, rapt in an innocent envy of them, and I think she and the child's father meant to join them as soon as they could find a place where to lay it. Almost any place would do; at another great restaurant I saw two chairs faced together, and a baby sleeping on them as quietly amid the coming and going of lagers and frankfurters as if in its cradle at home.

Lagers and frankfurters were much in evidence everywhere, especially frankfurters, which seemed to have whole booths devoted to broiling them. They disputed this dignity with soft−shell crabs, and sections of eels, piled attractively on large platters, or sizzling to an impassioned brown in deep skillets of fat. The old acrid smell of frying brought back many holidays of Italy to me, and I was again at times on the Riva at Venice, and in the Mercato Vecchio at Florence. But the Continental Sunday cannot be felt to have quite replaced the old American Sabbath yet; the Puritan leaven works still, and though so many of our own people consent willingly to the transformation, I fancy they always enjoy themselves on Sunday with a certain consciousness of wrong−doing.

IV.

I have already said that the spectator quite lost sense of what day it was. Nothing could be more secular than all the sights and sounds. It was the Fourth of July, less the fire−crackers and the drunkenness, and it was the high day of the week. But if it was very wicked, and I must recognize that the scene would be shocking to most of my readers, I feel bound to say that the people themselves did not look wicked. They looked harmless; they even looked good, the most of them. I am sorry to say they were not very good−looking. The women were pretty enough, and the men were handsome enough; perhaps the average was higher in respect of beauty than the average is anywhere else; I was lately from New England, where the people were distinctly more hard−favored; but among all those thousands at Rockaway I found no striking types. It may be that as we grow older and our satisfaction with our own looks wanes, we become more fastidious as to the looks of others. At any rate, there seems to be much less beauty in the world than there was thirty or forty years ago.

On the other hand, the dresses seem indefinitely prettier, as they should be in compensation. When we were all so handsome we could well afford to wear hoops or peg−top trousers, but now it is different, and the poor things must eke out their personal ungainliness with all the devices of the modiste and the tailor. I do not mean that there was any distinction in the dress of the crowd, but I saw nothing positively ugly or grotesquely out of taste. The costumes were as good as the customs, and I have already celebrated the manners of this crowd. I believe I must except the costumes of the bicyclesses, who were unfailingly dumpy in effect when dismounted, and who were all the more lamentable for tottering about, in their short skirts, upon the tips of their narrow little, sharp−pointed, silly high−heeled shoes. How severe I am! But those high heels seemed to take all honesty from their daring in the wholesome exercise of the wheel, and to keep them in the tradition of cheap coquetry still, and imbecilly dependent.

V.

I have almost forgotten in the interest of the human spectacle that there is a sea somewhere about at Rockaway Beach, and it is this that the people have come for. I might well forget that modest sea, it is so built out of sight by the restaurants and bath−houses and switch−backs and shops that border it, and by the hotels and saloons and shows flaring along the road that divides the village, and the planked streets that intersect this. But if you walk

southward on any of the streets, you presently find the planks foundering in sand, which drifts far up over them, and then you find yourself in full sight of the ocean and the ocean bathing. Swarms and heaps of people in all lolling and lying and wallowing shapes strew the beach, and the water is full of slopping and shouting and shrieking human creatures, clinging with bare white arms to the life−lines that run from the shore to the buoys; beyond these the lifeguard stays himself in his boat with outspread oars, and rocks on the incoming surf.

All that you can say of it is that it is queer. It is not picturesque, or poetic, or dramatic; it is queer. An enfilading glance gives this impression and no other; if you go to the balcony of the nearest marine restaurant for a flanking eye−shot, it is still queer, with the added effect, in all those arms upstretched to the life−lines, of frogs' legs inverted in a downward plunge.

On the sand before this spectacle I talked with a philosopher of humble condition who backed upon me and knocked my umbrella out of my hand. This made us beg each other's pardon; he said that he did not know I was there, and I said it did not matter. Then we both looked at the bathing, and he said:

"I don't like that."

"Why," I asked, "do you see any harm in it?"

"No. But I don't like the looks of it. It ain't nice. It's queer."

It was indeed like one of those uncomfortable dreams where you are not dressed sufficiently for company, or perhaps at all, and yet are making a very public appearance. This promiscuous bathing was not much in excess of the convention that governs the sea−bathing of the politest people; it could not be; and it was marked by no grave misconduct. Here and there a gentleman was teaching a lady to swim, with his arms round her; here and there a wild nereid was splashing another; a young Jew pursued a flight of naiads with a section of dead eel in his hand. But otherwise all was a damp and dreary decorum. I challenged my philosopher in vain for a specific cause of his dislike of the scene.

Most of the people on the sand were in bathing−dress, but there were a multitude of others who had apparently come for the sea−air and not the sea−bathing. A mother sat with a sick child on her knees; babies were cradled in the sand asleep, and people walked carefully round and over them. There were everywhere a great many poor mothers and children, who seemed getting the most of the good that was going.

VI.

But upon the whole, though I drove away from the beach celebrating the good temper and the good order of the scene to an applausive driver, I have since thought of it as rather melancholy. It was in fact no wiser or livelier than a society function in the means of enjoyment it afforded. The best thing about it was that it left the guests very much to their own devices. The established pleasures were clumsy and tiresome−looking; but one could eschew them. The more of them one eschewed, the merrier perhaps; for I doubt if the race is formed for much pleasure; and even a day's rest is more than most people can bear. They endure it in passing, but they get home weary and cross, even after a twenty−mile run on the wheel. The road, by−the−by, was full of homeward wheels by this time, single and double and tandem, and my driver professed that their multitude greatly increased the difficulties of his profession.

SAWDUST IN THE ARENA

It was in the old Roman arena of beautiful Verona that the circus events I wish to speak of took place; in fact, I had the honor and profit of seeing two circuses there. Or, strictly speaking, it was one entire circus that I saw, and

the unique speciality of another, the dying glory of a circus on its last legs, the triumphal fall of a circus superb in adversity.

I.

The entire circus was altogether Italian, with the exception of the clowns, who, to the credit of our nation, are always Americans, or advertised as such, in Italy. Its chief and almost absorbing event was a reproduction of the tournament which had then lately been held at Rome in celebration of Prince Tommaso's coming of age, and for a copy of a copy it was really fine. It had fitness in the arena, which must have witnessed many such mediaeval shows in their time, and I am sensible still of the pleasure its effects of color gave me. There was one beautiful woman, a red blonde in a green velvet gown, who might have ridden, as she was, out of a canvas of Titian's, if he had ever painted equestrian pictures, and who at any rate was an excellent Carpaccio. Then, the 'Clowns Americani' were very amusing, from a platform devoted solely to them, and it was a source of pride if not of joy with me to think that we were almost the only people present who understood their jokes. In the vast oval of the arena, however, the circus ring looked very little, not half so large, say, as the rim of a lady's hat in front of you at the play; and on the gradines of the ancient amphitheatre we were all such a great way off that a good field−glass would have been needed to distinguish the features of the actors. I could not make out, therefore, whether the 'Clowns Americani' had the national expression or not, but one of them, I am sorry to say, spoke the United States language with a cockney accent. I suspect that he was an Englishman who had passed himself off upon the Italian management as a true Yankee, and who had formed himself upon our school of clowning, just as some of the recent English humorists have patterned after certain famous wits of ours. I do not know that I would have exposed this impostor, even if occasion had offered, for, after all, his fraud was a tribute to our own primacy in clowning, and the Veronese were none the worse for his erring aspirates.

The audience was for me the best part of the spectacle, as the audience always is in Italy, and I indulged my fancy in some cheap excursions concerning the place and people. I reflected that it was the same race essentially as that which used to watch the gladiatorial shows in that arena when it was new, and that very possibly there were among these spectators persons of the same blood as those Veronese patricians who had left their names carved on the front of the gradines in places, to claim this or that seat for their own. In fact, there was so little difference, probably, in their qualities, from that time to this, that I felt the process of the generations to be a sort of impertinence; and if Nature had been present, I might very well have asked her why, when she had once arrived at a given expression of humanity, she must go on repeating it indefinitely? How were all those similar souls to know themselves apart in their common eternity? Merely to have been differently circumstanced in time did not seem enough; and I think Nature would have been puzzled to answer me. But perhaps not; she may have had her reasons, as that you cannot have too much of a good thing, and that when the type was so fine in most respects as the Italian you could not do better than go on repeating impressions from it.

Certainly I myself could have wished no variation from it in the young officer of 'bersaglieri', who had come down from antiquity to the topmost gradine of the arena over against me, and stood there defined against the clear evening sky, one hand on his hip, and the other at his side, while his thin cockerel plumes streamed in the light wind. I have since wondered if he knew how beautiful he was, and I am sure that, if he did not, all the women there did, and that was doubtless enough for the young officer of 'bersaglieri'.

II.

I think that he was preliminary to the sole event of that partial circus I have mentioned. This event was one that I have often witnessed elsewhere, but never in such noble and worthy keeping. The top of the outer arena wall must itself be fifty feet high, and the pole in the centre of its oval seemed to rise fifty feet higher yet. At its base an immense net was stretched, and a man in a Prince Albert coat and a derby hat was figuring about, anxiously directing the workmen who were fixing the guy−ropes, and testing every particular of the preparation with his own hands. While this went on, a young girl ran out into the arena, and, after a bow to the spectators, quickly

mounted to the top of the pole, where she presently stood in statuesque beauty that took all eyes even from the loveliness of the officer of 'bersaglieri'. There the man in the Prince Albert coat and the derby hat stepped back from the net and looked up at her.

She called down, in English that sounded like some delocalized, denaturalized speech, it was so strange then and there, "Is it all right?"

He shouted back in the same alienated tongue, "Yes; keep to the left," and she dived straight downward in the long plunge, till, just before she reached the net, she turned a quick somersault into its elastic mesh.

It was all so exquisitely graceful that one forgot how wickedly dangerous it was; but I think that the brief English colloquy was the great wonder of the event for me, and I doubt if I could ever have been perfectly happy again, if chance had not amiably suffered me to satisfy my curiosity concerning the speakers. A few evenings after that, I was at that copy of a copy of a tournament, and, a few gradines below me, I saw the man of the Prince Albert coat and the derby hat. I had already made up my mind that he was an American, for I supposed that an Englishman would rather perish than wear such a coat with such a hat, and as I had wished all my life to speak to a circus−man, I went down and boldly accosted him. "Are you a brother Yankee?" I asked, and he laughed, and confessed that he was an Englishman, but he said he was glad to meet any one who spoke English, and he made a place for me by his side. He was very willing to tell how he happened to be there, and he explained that he was the manager of a circus, which had been playing to very good business all winter in Spain. In an evil hour he decided to come to Italy, but he found the prices so ruinously low that he was forced to disband his company. This diving girl was all that remained to him of its many attractions, and he was trying to make a living for both in a country where the admission to a circus was six of our cents, with fifty for a reserved seat. But he was about to give it up and come to America, where he said Barnum had offered him an engagement. I hope he found it profitable, and is long since an American citizen, with as good right as any of us to wear a Prince Albert coat with a derby hat.

III.

There used to be very good circuses in Venice, where many Venetians had the only opportunity of their lives to see a horse. The horses were the great attraction for them, and, perhaps in concession to their habitual destitution in this respect, the riding was providentially very good. It was so good that it did not bore me, as circus−riding mostly does, especially that of the silk−clad jockey who stands in his high boots, on his back−bared horse, and ends by waving an American flag in triumph at having been so tiresome.

I am at a loss to know why they make such an ado about the lady who jumps through paper hoops, which have first had holes poked in them to render her transit easy, or why it should be thought such a merit in her to hop over a succession of banners which are swept under her feet in a manner to minify her exertion almost to nothing, but I observe it is so at all circuses. At my first Venetian circus, which was on a broad expanse of the Riva degli Schiavoni, there was a girl who flung herself to the ground and back to her horse again, holding by his mane with one hand, quite like the goddess out of the bath−gown at my village circus the other day; and apparently there are more circuses in the world than circus events. It must be as hard to think up anything new in that kind as in romanticistic fiction, which circus−acting otherwise largely resembles.

At a circus which played all one winter in Florence I saw for the first time−outside of polite society−−the clown in evening dress, who now seems essential to all circuses of metropolitan pretensions, and whom I missed so gladly at my village circus. He is nearly as futile as the lady clown, who is one of the saddest and strangest developments of New Womanhood.

Of the clowns who do not speak, I believe I like most the clown who catches a succession of peak−crowned soft hats on his head, when thrown across the ring by an accomplice. This is a very pretty sight always, and at the

Hippodrome in Paris I once saw a gifted creature take his stand high up on the benches among the audience and catch these hats on his head from a flight of a hundred feet through the air. This made me proud of human nature, which is often so humiliating; and altogether I do not think that after a real country circus there are many better things in life than the Hippodrome. It had a state, a dignity, a smoothness, a polish, which I should not know where to match, and when the superb coach drove into the ring to convey the lady performers to the scene of their events, there was a majesty in the effect which I doubt if courts have the power to rival. Still, it should be remembered that I have never been at court, and speak from a knowledge of the Hippodrome only.

AT A DIME MUSEUM

"I see," said my friend, "that you have been writing a good deal about the theatre during the past winter. You have been attacking its high hats and its high prices, and its low morals; and I suppose that you think you have done good, as people call it."

I.

This seemed like a challenge of some sort, and I prepared myself to take it up warily. I said I should be very sorry to do good, as people called it; because such a line of action nearly always ended in spiritual pride for the doer and general demoralization for the doee. Still, I said, a law had lately been passed in Ohio giving a man who found himself behind a high hat at the theatre a claim for damages against the manager; and if the passage of this law could be traced ever so faintly and indirectly to my teachings, I should not altogether grieve for the good I had done. I added that if all the States should pass such a law, and other laws fixing a low price for a certain number of seats at the theatres, or obliging the managers to give one free performance every month, as the law does in Paris, and should then forbid indecent and immoral plays−−

"I see what you mean," said my friend, a little impatiently. "You mean sumptuary legislation. But I have not come to talk to you upon that subject, for then you would probably want to do all the talking yourself. I want to ask you if you have visited any of the cheaper amusements of this metropolis, or know anything of the really clever and charming things one may see there for a very little money."

"Ten cents, for instance?"

"Yes."

I answered that I would never own to having come as low down as that; and I expressed a hardy and somewhat inconsistent doubt of the quality of the amusement that could be had for that money. I questioned if anything intellectual could be had for it.

"What do you say to the ten−cent magazines?" my friend retorted. "And do you pretend that the two−dollar drama is intellectual?"

I had to confess that it generally was not, and that this was part of my grief with it.

Then he said: "I don't contend that it is intellectual, but I say that it is often clever and charming at the ten−cent shows, just as it is less often clever and charming in the ten−cent magazines. I think the average of propriety is rather higher than it is at the two−dollar theatres; and it is much more instructive at the ten−cent shows, if you come to that. The other day," said my friend, and in squaring himself comfortably in his chair and finding room for his elbow on the corner of my table he knocked off some books for review, "I went to a dime museum for an hour that I had between two appointments, and I must say that I never passed an hour's time more agreeably. In the curio hall, as one of the lecturers on the curios called it−−they had several lecturers in white wigs and scholars'

caps and gowns−−there was not a great deal to see, I confess; but everything was very high−class. There was the inventor of a perpetual motion, who lectured upon it and explained it from a diagram. There was a fortune−teller in a three−foot tent whom I did not interview; there were five macaws in one cage, and two gloomy apes in another. On a platform at the end of the hall was an Australian family a good deal gloomier than the apes, who sat in the costume of our latitude, staring down the room with varying expressions all verging upon melancholy madness, and who gave me such a pang of compassion as I have seldom got from the tragedy of the two−dollar theatres. They allowed me to come quite close up to them, and to feed my pity upon their wild dejection in exile without stint. I couldn't enter into conversation with them, and express my regret at finding them so far from their native boomerangs and kangaroos and pinetree grubs, but I know they felt my sympathy, it was so evident. I didn't see their performance, and I don't know that they had any. They may simply have been there ethnologically, but this was a good object, and the sight of their spiritual misery was alone worth the price of admission.

"After the inventor of the perpetual motion had brought his harangue to a close, we all went round to the dais where a lady in blue spectacles lectured us upon a fire−escape which she had invented, and operated a small model of it. None of the events were so exciting that we could regret it when the chief lecturer announced that this was the end of the entertainment in the curio hall, and that now the performance in the theatre was about to begin. He invited us to buy tickets at an additional charge of five, ten, or fifteen cents for the gallery, orchestra circle, or orchestra.

"I thought I could afford an orchestra stall, for once. We were three in the orchestra, another man and a young mother, not counting the little boy she had with her; there were two people in the gallery, and a dozen at least in the orchestra circle. An attendant shouted, 'Hats off!' and the other man and I uncovered, and a lady came up from under the stage and began to play the piano in front of it. The curtain rose, and the entertainment began at once. It was a passage apparently from real life, and it involved a dissatisfied boarder and the daughter of the landlady. There was not much coherence in it, but there was a good deal of conscience on the part of the actors, who toiled through it with unflagging energy. The young woman was equipped for the dance she brought into it at one point rather than for the part she had to sustain in the drama. It was a very blameless dance, and she gave it as if she was tired of it, but was not going to falter. She delivered her lines with a hard, Southwestern accent, and I liked fancying her having come up in a simpler−hearted section of the country than ours, encouraged by a strong local belief that she was destined to do Juliet and Lady Macbeth, or Peg Woffington at the least; but very likely she had not.

"Her performance was followed by an event involving a single character. The actor, naturally, was blackened as to his skin, but as to his dress he was all in white, and at the first glance I could see that he had temperament. I suspect that he thought I had, too, for he began to address his entire drama to me. This was not surprising, for it would not have been the thing for him to single out the young mother; and the other man in the orchestra stalls seemed a vague and inexperienced youth, whom he would hardly have given the preference over me. I felt the compliment, but upon the whole it embarrassed me; it was too intimate, and it gave me a publicity I would willingly have foregone. I did what I could to reject it, by feigning an indifference to his jokes; I even frowned a measure of disapproval; but this merely stimulated his ambition. He was really a merry creature, and when he had got off a number of very good things which were received in perfect silence, and looked over his audience with a woe−begone eye, and said, with an effect of delicate apology, 'I hope I'm not disturbing you any,' I broke down and laughed, and that delivered me into his hand. He immediately said to me that now he would tell me about a friend of his, who had a pretty large family, eight of them living, and one in Philadelphia; and then for no reason he seemed to change his mind, and said he would sing me a song written expressly for him−−by an expressman; and he went on from one wild gayety to another, until he had worked his audience up to quite a frenzy of enthusiasm, and almost had a recall when he went off.

"I was rather glad to be rid of him, and I was glad that the next performers, who were a lady and a gentleman contortionist of Spanish− American extraction, behaved more impartially. They were really remarkable artists in their way, and though it's a painful way, I couldn't help admiring their gift in bowknots and other difficult poses.

The gentleman got abundant applause, but the lady at first got none. I think perhaps it was because, with the correct feeling that prevailed among us, we could not see a lady contort herself with so much approval as a gentleman, and that there was a wound to our sense of propriety in witnessing her skill. But I could see that the poor girl was hurt in her artist pride by our severity, and at the next thing she did I led off the applause with my umbrella. She instantly lighted up with a joyful smile, and the young mother in the orchestra leaned forward to nod her sympathy to me while she clapped. We were fast becoming a domestic circle, and it was very pleasant, but I thought that upon the whole I had better go."

"And do you think you had a profitable hour at that show?" I asked, with a smile that was meant to be sceptical.

"Profitable?" said my friend. "I said agreeable. I don't know about the profit. But it was very good variety, and it was very cheap. I understand that this is the kind of thing you want the two−dollar theatre to come down to, or up to."

"Not exactly, or not quite," I returned, thoughtfully, "though I must say I think your time was as well spent as it would have been at most of the plays I have seen this winter."

My friend left the point, and said, with a dreamy air: "It was all very pathetic, in a way. Three out of those five people were really clever, and certainly artists. That colored brother was almost a genius, a very common variety of genius, but still a genius, with a gift for his calling that couldn't be disputed. He was a genuine humorist, and I sorrowed over him−−after I got safely away from his intimacy−−as I should over some author who was struggling along without winning his public. Why not? One is as much in the show business as the other. There is a difference of quality rather than of kind. Perhaps by−and−by my colored humorist will make a strike with his branch of the public, as you are always hoping to do with yours."

"You don't think you're making yourself rather offensive?" I suggested.

"Not intentionally. Aren't the arts one? How can you say that any art is higher than the others? Why is it nobler to contort the mind than to contort the body?"

"I am always saying that it is not at all noble to contort the mind," I returned, "and I feel that to aim at nothing higher than the amusement of your readers is to bring yourself most distinctly to the level of the show business."

"Yes, I know that is your pose," said my friend. "And I dare say you really think that you make a distinction in facts when you make a distinction in terms. If you don't amuse your readers, you don't keep them; practically, you cease to exist. You may call it interesting them, if you like; but, really, what is the difference? You do your little act, and because the stage is large and the house is fine, you fancy you are not of that sad brotherhood which aims to please in humbler places, with perhaps cruder means−−"

"I don't know whether I like your saws less than your instances, or your instances less than your saws," I broke in. "Have you been at the circus yet?"

II.

"Yet?" demanded my friend. "I went the first night, and I have been a good deal interested in the examination of my emotions ever since. I can't find out just why I have so much pleasure in the trapeze. Half the time I want to shut my eyes, and a good part of the time I do look away; but I wouldn't spare any actor the most dangerous feat. One of the poor girls, that night, dropped awkwardly into the net after her performance, and limped off to the dressing−room with a sprained ankle. It made me rather sad to think that now she must perhaps give up her perilous work for a while, and pay a doctor, and lose her salary, but it didn't take away my interest in the other trapezists flying through the air above another net.

"If I had honestly complained of anything it would have been of the superfluity which glutted rather than fed me. How can you watch three sets of trapezists at once? You really see neither well. It's the same with the three rings. There should be one ring, and each act should have a fair chance with the spectator, if it took six hours; I would willingly give the time. Fancy three stages at the theatre, with three plays going on at once!"

"No, don't fancy that!" I entreated. "One play is bad enough."

"Or fancy reading three novels simultaneously, and listening at the same time to a lecture and a sermon, which could represent the two platforms between the rings," my friend calmly persisted. "The three rings are an abuse and an outrage, but I don't know but I object still more to the silencing of the clowns. They have a great many clowns now, but they are all dumb, and you only get half the good you used to get out of the single clown of the old one−ring circus. Why, it's as if the literary humorist were to lead up to a charming conceit or a subtle jest, and then put asterisks where the humor ought to come in."

"Don't you think you are going from bad to worse?" I asked.

My friend went on: "I'm afraid the circus is spoiled for me. It has become too much of a good thing; for it is a good thing; almost the best thing in the way of an entertainment that there is. I'm still very fond of it, but I come away defeated and defrauded because I have been embarrassed with riches, and have been given more than I was able to grasp. My greed has been overfed. I think I must keep to those entertainments where you can come at ten in the morning and stay till ten at night, with a perpetual change of bill, only one stage, and no fall of the curtain. I suppose you would object to them because they're getting rather dear; at the best of them now they ask you a dollar for the first seats."

I said that I did not think this too much for twelve hours, if the intellectual character of the entertainment was correspondingly high.

"It's as high as that of some magazines," said my friend, "though I could sometimes wish it were higher. It's like the matter in the Sunday papers−−about that average. Some of it's good, and most of it isn't. Some of it could hardly be worse. But there is a great deal of it, and you get it consecutively and not simultaneously. That constitutes its advantage over the circus."

My friend stopped, with a vague smile, and I asked:

"Then, do I understand that you would advise me to recommend the dime museums, the circus, and the perpetual−motion varieties in the place of the theatres?"

"You have recommended books instead, and that notion doesn't seem to have met with much favor, though you urged their comparative cheapness. Now, why not suggest something that is really level with the popular taste?"

AMERICAN LITERATURE IN EXILE

A recently lecturing Englishman is reported to have noted the unenviable primacy of the United States among countries where the struggle for material prosperity has been disastrous to the pursuit of literature. He said, or is said to have said (one cannot be too careful in attributing to a public man the thoughts that may be really due to an imaginative frame in the reporter), that among us, "the old race of writers of distinction, such as Longfellow, Bryant, Holmes, and Washington Irving, have (sic) died out, and the Americans who are most prominent in cultivated European opinion in art or literature, like Sargent, Henry James, or Marion Crawford, live habitually out of America, and draw their inspiration from England, France, and Italy."

I.

If this were true, I confess that I am so indifferent to what many Americans glory in that it would not distress me, or wound me in the sort of self−love which calls itself patriotism. If it would at all help to put an end to that struggle for material prosperity which has eventuated with us in so many millionaires and so many tramps, I should be glad to believe that it was driving our literary men out of the country. This would be a tremendous object−lesson, and might be a warning to the millionaires and the tramps. But I am afraid it would not have this effect, for neither our very rich nor our very poor care at all for the state of polite learning among us; though for the matter of that, I believe that economic conditions have little to do with it; and that if a general mediocrity of fortune prevailed and there were no haste to be rich and to get poor, the state of polite learning would not be considerably affected. As matters stand, I think we may reasonably ask whether the Americans "most prominent in cultivated European opinion," the Americans who "live habitually out of America," are not less exiles than advance agents of the expansion now advertising itself to the world. They may be the vanguard of the great army of adventurers destined to overrun the earth from these shores, and exploit all foreign countries to our advantage. They probably themselves do not know it, but in the act of "drawing their inspiration" from alien scenes, or taking their own where they find it, are not they simply transporting to Europe "the struggle for material prosperity " which Sir Lepel supposes to be fatal to them here?

There is a question, however, which comes before this, and that is the question whether they have quitted us in such numbers as justly to alarm our patriotism. Qualitatively, in the authors named and in the late Mr. Bret Harte, Mr. Harry Harland, and the late Mr. Harold Frederic, as well as in Mark Twain, once temporarily resident abroad, the defection is very great; but quantitatively it is not such as to leave us without a fair measure of home−keeping authorship. Our destitution is not nearly so great now in the absence of Mr. James and Mr. Crawford as it was in the times before the "struggle for material prosperity" when Washington Irving went and lived in England and on the European continent well−nigh half his life.

Sir Lepel Griffin−−or Sir Lepel Griffin's reporter−−seems to forget the fact of Irving's long absenteeism when he classes him with "the old race" of eminent American authors who stayed at home. But really none of those he names were so constant to our air as he seems−−or his reporter seems−− to think. Longfellow sojourned three or four years in Germany, Spain, and Italy; Holmes spent as great time in Paris; Bryant was a frequent traveller, and each of them "drew his inspiration" now and then from alien sources. Lowell was many years in Italy, Spain, and England; Motley spent more than half his life abroad; Hawthorne was away from us nearly a decade.

II.

If I seem to be proving too much in one way, I do not feel that I am proving too much in another. My facts go to show that the literary spirit is the true world−citizen, and is at home everywhere. If any good American were distressed by the absenteeism of our authors, I should first advise him that American literature was not derived from the folk− lore of the red Indians, but was, as I have said once before, a condition of English literature, and was independent even of our independence. Then I should entreat him to consider the case of foreign authors who had found it more comfortable or more profitable to live out of their respective countries than in them. I should allege for his consolation the case of Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt, and more latterly that of the Brownings and Walter Savage Landor, who preferred an Italian to an English sojourn; and yet more recently that of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who voluntarily lived several years in Vermont, and has "drawn his inspiration" in notable instances from the life of these States. It will serve him also to consider that the two greatest Norwegian authors, Bjornsen and Ibsen, have both lived long in France and Italy. Heinrich Heine loved to live in Paris much better than in Dusseldorf, or even in Hamburg; and Tourguenief himself, who said that any man's country could get on without him, but no man could get on without his country, managed to dispense with his own in the French capital, and died there after he was quite free to go back to St. Petersburg. In the last century Rousseau lived in France rather than Switzerland; Voltaire at least tried to live in Prussia, and was obliged to a long exile elsewhere; Goldoni left fame and friends in Venice for the favor of princes in Paris.

Literary absenteeism, it seems to me, is not peculiarly an American vice or an American virtue. It is an expression and a proof of the modern sense which enlarges one's country to the bounds of civilization. I cannot think it justly a reproach in the eyes of the world, and if any American feels it a grievance, I suggest that he do what he can to have embodied in the platform of his party a plank affirming the right of American authors to a public provision that will enable them to live as agreeably at home as they can abroad on the same money. In the mean time, their absenteeism is not a consequence of "the struggle for material prosperity," not a high disdain of the strife which goes on not less in Europe than in America, and must, of course, go on everywhere as long as competitive conditions endure, but is the result of chances and preferences which mean nothing nationally calamitous or discreditable.

THE HORSE SHOW

"As good as the circus−−not so good as the circus−−better than the circus." These were my varying impressions, as I sat looking down upon the tanbark, the other day, at the Horse Show in Madison Square Garden; and I came away with their blend for my final opinion.

I.

I might think that the Horse Show (which is so largely a Man Show and a Woman Show) was better or worse than the circus, or about as good; but I could not get away from the circus, in my impression of it. Perhaps the circus is the norm of all splendors where the horse and his master are joined for an effect upon the imagination of the spectator. I am sure that I have never been able quite to dissociate from it the picturesqueness of chivalry, and that it will hereafter always suggest to me the last correctness of fashion. It is through the horse that these far extremes meet; in all times the horse has been the supreme expression of aristocracy; and it may very well be that a dream of the elder world prophesied the ultimate type of the future, when the Swell shall have evolved into the Centaur.

Some such teasing notion of their mystical affinity is what haunts you as you make your round of the vast ellipse, with the well−groomed men about you and the well−groomed horses beyond the barrier.

In this first affair of the new−−comer, the horses are not so much on show as the swells; you get only glimpses of shining coats and tossing manes, with a glint here and there of a flying hoof through the lines of people coming and going, and the ranks of people, three or four feet deep, against the rails of the ellipse; but the swells are there in perfect relief, and it is they who finally embody the Horse Show to you. The fact is that they are there to see, of course, but the effect is that they are there to be seen.

The whole spectacle had an historical quality, which I tasted with pleasure. It was the thing that had eventuated in every civilization, and the American might feel a characteristic pride that what came to Rome in five hundred years had come to America in a single century. There was something fine in the absolutely fatal nature of the result, and I perceived that nowhere else in our life, which is apt to be reclusive in its exclusiveness, is the prime motive at work in it so dramatically apparent. "Yes," I found myself thinking, "this is what it all comes to: the 'subiti guadagni' of the new rich, made in large masses and seeking a swift and eager exploitation, and the slowly accumulated fortunes, put together from sparing and scrimping, from slaving and enslaving, in former times, and now in the stainless white hands of the second or third generation, they both meet here to the purpose of a common ostentation, and create a Horse Show."

I cannot say that its creators looked much as if they liked it, now they had got it; and, so far as I have been able to observe them, people of wealth and fashion always dissemble their joy, and have the air of being bored in the midst of their amusements. This reserve of rapture may be their delicacy, their unwillingness to awaken envy in the less prospered; and I should not have objected to the swells at the Horse Show looking dreary if they had looked more like swells; except for a certain hardness of the countenance (which I found my own sympathetically

taking on) I should not have thought them very patrician, and this hardness may have been merely the consequence of being so much stared at. Perhaps, indeed, they were not swells whom I saw in the boxes, but only companies of ordinary people who had clubbed together and hired their boxes; I understand that this can be done, and the student of civilization so far misled. But certainly if they were swells they did not look quite up to themselves; though, for that matter, neither do the nobilities of foreign countries, and on one or two occasions when I have seen them, kings and emperors have failed me in like manner. They have all wanted that indescribable something which I have found so satisfying in aristocracies and royalties on the stage; and here at the Horse Show, while I made my tour, I constantly met handsome, actor−like folk on foot who could much better have taken the role of the people in the boxes. The promenaders may not have been actors at all; they may have been the real thing for which I was in vain scanning the boxes, but they looked like actors, who indeed set an example to us all in personal beauty and in correctness of dress.

I mean nothing offensive either to swells or to actors. We have not distinction, as a people; Matthew Arnold noted that; and it is not our business to have it: When it is our business our swells will have it, just as our actors now have it, especially our actors of English birth. I had not this reflection about me at the time to console me for my disappointment, and it only now occurs to me that what I took for an absence of distinction may have been such a universal prevalence of it that the result was necessarily a species of indistinction. But in the complexion of any social assembly we Americans are at a disadvantage with Europeans from the want of uniforms. A few military scattered about in those boxes, or even a few sporting bishops in shovel−hats and aprons, would have done much to relieve them from the reproach I have been heaping upon them. Our women, indeed, poor things, always do their duty in personal splendor, and it is not of a poverty in their modes at the Horse Show that I am complaining. If the men had borne their part as well, there would not have been these tears: and yet, what am I saying? There was here and there a clean−shaven face (which I will not believe was always an actor's), and here and there a figure superbly set up, and so faultlessly appointed as to shoes, trousers, coat, tie, hat, and gloves as to have a salience from the mass of good looks and good clothes which I will not at last call less than distinction.

II.

At any rate, I missed these marked presences when I left the lines of the promenaders around the ellipse, and climbed to a seat some tiers above the boxes. I am rather anxious to have it known that my seat was not one of those cheap ones in the upper gallery, but was with the virtuous poor who could afford to pay a dollar and a half for their tickets. I bought it of a speculator on the sidewalk, who said it was his last, so that I conceived it the last in the house; but I found the chairs by no means all filled, though it was as good an audience as I have sometimes seen in the same place at other circuses. The people about me were such as I had noted at the other circuses, hotel−sojourners, kindly−looking comers from provincial towns and cities, whom I instantly felt myself at home with, and free to put off that gloomy severity of aspect which had grown upon me during my association with the swells below. My neighbors were sufficiently well dressed, and if they had no more distinction than their betters, or their richers, they had not the burden of the occasion upon them, and seemed really glad of what was going on in the ring.

There again I was sensible of the vast advantage of costume. The bugler who stood up at one end of the central platform and blew a fine fanfare (I hope it was a fanfare) towards the gates where the horses were to enter from their stalls in the basement was a hussar−like shape that filled my romantic soul with joy; and the other figures of the management I thought very fortunate compromises between grooms and ringmasters. At any rate, their nondescript costumes were gay, and a relief from the fashions in the boxes and the promenade; they were costumes, and costumes are always more sincere, if not more effective, than fashions. As I have hinted, I do not know just what costumes they were, but they took the light well from the girandole far aloof and from the thousands of little electric bulbs that beaded the roof in long lines, and dispersed the sullenness of the dull, rainy afternoon. When the knights entered the lists on the seats of their dog−carts, with their squires beside them, and their shining tandems before them, they took the light well, too, and the spectacle was so brilliant that I trust my imagery may be forgiven a novelist pining for the pageantries of the past. I do not know to this moment whether

these knights were bona fide gentlemen, or only their deputies, driving their tandems for them, and I am equally at a loss to account for the variety, of their hats. Some wore tall, shining silk hats; some flat−topped, brown derbys; some simple black pot−hats;−−and is there, then, no rigor as to the head−gear of people driving tandems? I felt that there ought to be, and that there ought to be some rule as to where the number of each tandem should be displayed. As it was, this was sometimes carelessly stuck into the seat of the cart; sometimes it was worn at the back of the groom's waist, and sometimes full upon his stomach. In the last position it gave a touch of burlesque which wounded me; for these are vital matters, and I found myself very exacting in them.

With the horses themselves I could find no fault upon the grounds of my censure of the show in some other ways. They had distinction; they were patrician; they were swell. They felt it, they showed it, they rejoiced in it; and the most reluctant observer could not deny them the glory of blood, of birth, which the thoroughbred horse has expressed in all lands and ages. Their lordly port was a thing that no one could dispute, and for an aristocracy I suppose that they had a high average of intelligence, though there might be two minds about this. They made me think of mettled youths and haughty dames; they abashed the humble spirit of the beholder with the pride of their high−stepping, their curvetting and caracoling, as they jingled in their shining harness around the long ring. Their noble uselessness took the fancy, for I suppose that there is nothing so superbly superfluous as a tandem, outside or inside of the best society. It is something which only the ambition of wealth and unbroken leisure can mount to; and I was glad that the display of tandems was the first event of the Horse Show which I witnessed, for it seemed to me that it must beyond all others typify the power which created the Horse Show. I wished that the human side of it could have been more unquestionably adequate, but the equine side of the event was perfect. Still, I felt a certain relief, as in something innocent and simple and childlike, in the next event.

III.

This was the inundation of the tan−bark with troops of pretty Shetland ponies of all ages, sizes, and colors. A cry of delight went up from a group of little people near me, and the spell of the Horse Show was broken. It was no longer a solemnity of fashion, it was a sweet and kindly pleasure which every one could share, or every one who had ever had, or ever wished to have, a Shetland pony; the touch of nature made the whole show kin. I could not see that the freakish, kittenish creatures did anything to claim our admiration, but they won our affection by every trait of ponyish caprice and obstinacy. The small colts broke away from the small mares, and gambolled over the tanbark in wanton groups, with gay or plaintive whinnyings, which might well have touched a responsive chord in the bosom of fashion itself: I dare say it is not so hard as it looks. The scene remanded us to a moment of childhood; and I found myself so fond of all the ponies that I felt it invidious of the judges to choose among them for the prizes; they ought every one to have had the prize.

I suppose a Shetland pony is not a very useful animal in our conditions; no doubt a good, tough, stubbed donkey would be worth all their tribe when it came down to hard work; but we cannot all be hard−working donkeys, and some of us may be toys and playthings without too great reproach. I gazed after the broken, refluent wave of these amiable creatures, with the vague toleration here formulated, but I was not quite at peace in it, or fully consoled in my habitual ethicism till the next event brought the hunters with their high−jumping into the ring. These noble animals unite use and beauty in such measure that the censor must be of Catonian severity who can refuse them his praise. When I reflected that by them and their devoted riders our civilization had been assimilated to that of the mother−country in its finest expression, and another tie added to those that bind us to her through the language of Shakespeare and Milton; that they had tamed the haughty spirit of the American farmer in several parts of the country so that he submitted for a consideration to have his crops ridden over, and that they had all but exterminated the ferocious anise−seed bag, once so common and destructive among us, I was in a fit mood to welcome the bars and hurdles which were now set up at four or five places for the purposes of the high−jumping. As to the beauty of the hunting−horse, though, I think I must hedge a little, while I stand firmly to my admiration of his use. To be honest, the tandem horse is more to my taste. He is better shaped, and he bears himself more proudly. The hunter is apt to behave, whatever his reserve of intelligence, like an excited hen; he is apt to be ewe−necked and bred away to nothing where the ideal horse abounds; he has the behavior of a turkey−hen when

not behaving like the common or garden hen. But there can be no question of his jumping, which seems to be his chief business in a world where we are all appointed our several duties, and I at once began to take a vivid pleasure in his proficiency. I have always felt a blind and insensate joy in running races, which has no relation to any particular horse, and I now experienced an impartial rapture in the performances of these hunters. They looked very much alike, and if it had not been for the changing numbers on the sign−board in the centre of the ring announcing that 650, 675, or 602 was now jumping, I might have thought it was 650 all the time.

A high jump is not so fine a sight as a running race when the horses have got half a mile away and look like a covey of swift birds, but it is still a fine sight. I became very fastidious as to which moment of it was the finest, whether when the horse rose in profile, or when his aerial hoof touched the ground (with the effect of half jerking his rider's head half off), or when he showed a flying heel in perspective; and I do not know to this hour which I prefer. But I suppose I was becoming gradually spoiled by my pleasure, for as time went on I noticed that I was not satisfied with the monotonous excellence of the horses' execution. Will it be credited that I became willing something should happen, anything, to vary it? I asked myself why, if some of the more exciting incidents of the hunting−field which I had read of must befall; I should not see them. Several of the horses had balked at the barriers, and almost thrown their riders across them over their necks, but not quite done it; several had carried away the green−tufted top rail with their heels; when suddenly there came a loud clatter from the farther side of the ellipse, where a whole panel of fence had gone down. I looked eagerly for the prostrate horse and rider under the bars, but they were cantering safely away.

IV.

It was enough, however. I perceived that I was becoming demoralized, and that if I were to write of the Horse Show with at all the superiority one likes to feel towards the rich and great, I had better come away. But I came away critical, even in my downfall, and feeling that, circus for circus, the Greatest Show on Earth which I had often seen in that place had certain distinct advantages of the Horse Show. It had three rings and two platforms; and, for another thing, the drivers and riders in the races, when they won, bore the banner of victory aloft in their hands, instead of poorly letting a blue or red ribbon flicker at their horses' ears. The events were more frequent and rapid; the costumes infinitely more varied and picturesque. As for the people in the boxes, I do not know that they were less distinguished than these at the Horse Show, but if they were not of the same high level in which distinction was impossible, they did not show it in their looks.

The Horse Show, in fine, struck me as a circus of not all the first qualities; and I had moments of suspecting that it was no more than the evolution of the county cattle show. But in any case I had to own that its great success was quite legitimate; for the horse, upon the whole, appeals to a wider range of humanity, vertically as well as horizontally, than any other interest, not excepting politics or religion. I cannot, indeed, regard him as a civilizing influence; but then we cannot be always civilizing.

THE PROBLEM OF THE SUMMER

It has sometimes seemed to me that the solution of the problem how and where to spend the summer was simplest with those who were obliged to spend it as they spent the winter, and increasingly difficult in the proportion of one's ability to spend it wherever and however one chose. Few are absolutely released to this choice, however, and those few are greatly to be pitied. I know that they are often envied and hated for it by those who have no such choice, but that is a pathetic mistake. If we could look into their hearts, indeed, we should witness there so much misery that we should wish rather to weep over them than to reproach them with their better fortune, or what appeared so.

I.

For most people choice is a curse, and it is this curse that the summer brings upon great numbers who would not perhaps otherwise be afflicted. They are not in the happy case of those who must stay at home; their hard necessity is that they can go away, and try to be more agreeably placed somewhere else; but although I say they are in great numbers, they are an infinitesimal minority of the whole bulk of our population. Their bane is not, in its highest form, that of the average American who has no choice of the kind; and when one begins to speak of the summer problem, one must begin at once to distinguish. It is the problem of the East rather than of the West (where people are much more in the habit of staying at home the year round), and it is the problem of the city and not of the country. I am not sure that there is one practical farmer in the whole United States who is obliged to witness in his household those sad dissensions which almost separate the families of professional men as to where and how they shall pass the summer. People of this class, which is a class with some measure of money, ease, and taste, are commonly of varying and decided minds, and I once knew a family of the sort whose combined ideal for their summer outing was summed up in the simple desire for society and solitude, mountain−air and sea−bathing. They spent the whole months of April, May, and June in a futile inquiry for a resort uniting these attractions, and on the first of July they drove to the station with no definite point in view. But they found that they could get return tickets for a certain place on an inland lake at a low figure, and they took the first train for it. There they decided next morning to push on to the mountains, and sent their baggage to the station, but before it was checked they changed their minds, and remained two weeks where they were. Then they took train for a place on the coast, but in the cars a friend told them they ought to go to another place; they decided to go there, but before arriving at the junction they decided again to keep on. They arrived at their original destination, and the following day telegraphed for rooms at a hotel farther down the coast. The answer came that there were no rooms, and being by this time ready to start, they started, and in due time reported themselves at the hotel. The landlord saw that something must be done, and he got them rooms, at a smaller house, and 'mealed' them (as it used to be called at Mt. Desert) in his own. But upon experiment of the fare at the smaller house they liked it so well that they resolved to live there altogether, and they spent a summer of the greatest comfort there, so that they would hardly come away when the house closed in the fall.

This was an extreme case, and perhaps such a venture might not always turn out so happily; but I think that people might oftener trust themselves to Providence in these matters than they do. There is really an infinite variety of pleasant resorts of all kinds now, and one could quite safely leave it to the man in the ticket−office where one should go, and check one's baggage accordingly. I think the chances of an agreeable summer would be as good in that way as in making a hard−and− fast choice of a certain place and sticking to it. My own experience is that in these things chance makes a very good choice for one, as it does in most non−moral things.

II.

A joke dies hard, and I am not sure that the life is yet quite out of the kindly ridicule that was cast for a whole generation upon the people who left their comfortable houses in town to starve upon farm−board or stifle in the narrow rooms of mountain and seaside hotels. Yet such people were in the right, and their mockers were in the wrong, and their patient persistence in going out of town for the summer in the face of severe discouragements has multiplied indefinitely the kinds of summer resorts, and reformed them altogether. I believe the city boarding−house remains very much what it used to be; but I am bound to say that the country boarding−house has vastly improved since I began to know it. As for the summer hotel, by steep or by strand, it leaves little to be complained of except the prices. I take it for granted, therefore, that the out−of− town summer has come to stay, for all who can afford it, and that the chief sorrow attending it is that curse of choice, which I have already spoken of.

I have rather favored chance than choice, because, whatever choice you make, you are pretty sure to regret it, with a bitter sense of responsibility added, which you cannot feel if chance has chosen for you. I observe that people who own summer cottages are often apt to wish they did not, and were foot−loose to roam where they listed, and I have been told that even a yacht is not a source of unmixed content, though so eminently detachable. To great numbers Europe looks from this shore like a safe refuge from the American summer problem; and yet I am not

sure that it is altogether so; for it is not enough merely to go to Europe; one has to choose where to go when one has got there. A European city is certainly always more tolerable than an American city, but one cannot very well pass the summer in Paris, or even in London. The heart there, as here, will yearn for some blessed seat

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies Deep−meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,"

and still, after your keel touches the strand of that alluring old world, you must buy your ticket and register your trunk for somewhere in particular.

III.

It is truly a terrible stress, this summer problem, and, as I say, my heart aches much more for those who have to solve it and suffer the consequences of their choice than for those who have no choice, but must stay the summer through where their work is, and be humbly glad that they have any work to keep them there. I am not meaning now, of course, business men obliged to remain in the city to earn the bread−−or, more correctly, the cake−−of their families in the country, or even their clerks and bookkeepers, and porters and messengers, but such people as I sometimes catch sight of from the elevated trains (in my reluctant midsummer flights through the city), sweltering in upper rooms over sewing−machines or lap−boards, or stewing in the breathless tenement streets, or driving clangorous trucks, or monotonous cars, or bending over wash−tubs at open windows for breaths of the no−air without. These all get on somehow, and at the end of the summer they have not to accuse themselves of folly in going to one place rather than another. Their fate is decided for them, and they submit to it; whereas those who decide their fate are always rebelling against it. They it is whom I am truly sorry for, and whom I write of with tears in my ink. Their case is hard, and it will seem all the harder if we consider how foolish they will look and how flat they will feel at the judgment−day, when they are asked about their summer outings. I do not really suppose we shall be held to a very strict account for our pleasures because everybody else has not enjoyed them, too; that would be a pity of our lives; and yet there is an old−fashioned compunction which will sometimes visit the heart if we take our pleasures ungraciously, when so many have no pleasures to take. I would suggest, then, to those on whom the curse of choice between pleasures rests, that they should keep in mind those who have chiefly pains to their portion in life.

I am not, I hope, urging my readers to any active benevolence, or counselling them to share their pleasures with others; it has been accurately ascertained that there are not pleasures enough to go round, as things now are; but I would seriously entreat them to consider whether they could not somewhat alleviate the hardships of their own lot at the sea−side or among the mountains, by contrasting it with the lot of others in the sweat−shops and the boiler−factories of life. I know very well that it is no longer considered very good sense or very good morality to take comfort in one's advantages from the disadvantages of others, and this is not quite what I mean to teach. Perhaps I mean nothing more than an overhauling of the whole subject of advantages and disadvantages, which would be a light and agreeable occupation for the leisure of the summer outer. It might be very interesting, and possibly it might be amusing, for one stretched upon the beach or swaying in the hammock to inquire into the reasons for his or her being so favored, and it is not beyond the bounds of expectation that a consensus of summer opinion on this subject would go far to enlighten the world upon a question that has vexed the world ever since mankind was divided into those who work too much and those who rest too much.

AESTHETIC NEW YORK FIFTY−ODD YEARS AGO

A study of New York civilization in 1849 has lately come into my hands, with a mortifying effect, which I should like to share with the reader, to my pride of modernity. I had somehow believed that after half a century of material prosperity, such as the world has never seen before, New York in 1902 must be very different from New York in 1849, but if I am to trust either the impressions of the earlier student or my own, New York is essentially

the same now that it was then. The spirit of the place has not changed; it is as it was, splendidly and sordidly commercial. Even the body of it has undergone little or no alteration; it was as shapeless, as incongruous; as ugly when the author of 'New York in Slices' wrote as it is at this writing; it has simply grown, or overgrown, on the moral and material lines which seem to have been structural in it from the beginning. He felt in his time the same vulgarity, the same violence, in its architectural anarchy that I have felt in my time, and he noted how all dignity and beauty perished, amid the warring forms, with a prescience of my own affliction, which deprives me of the satisfaction of a discoverer and leaves me merely the sense of being rather old−fashioned in my painful emotions.

I.

I wish I could pretend that my author philosophized the facts of his New York with something less than the raw haste of the young journalist; but I am afraid I must own that 'New York in Slices' affects one as having first been printed in an evening paper, and that the writer brings to the study of the metropolis something like the eager horror of a country visitor. This probably enabled him to heighten the effect he wished to make with readers of a kindred tradition, and for me it adds a certain innocent charm to his work. I may make myself better understood if I say that his attitude towards the depravities of a smaller New York is much the same as that of Mr. Stead towards the wickedness of a much larger Chicago. He seizes with some such avidity upon the darker facts of the prisons, the slums, the gambling−houses, the mock auctions, the toughs (who then called themselves b'hoys and g'hals), the quacks, the theatres, and even the intelligence offices, and exploits their iniquities with a ready virtue which the wickedest reader can enjoy with him.

But if he treated of these things alone, I should not perhaps have brought his curious little book to the polite notice of my readers. He treats also of the press, the drama, the art, and, above all, "the literary soirees" of that remote New York of his in a manner to make us latest New−Yorkers feel our close proximity to it. Fifty−odd years ago journalism had already become "the absorbing, remorseless, clamorous thing" we now know, and very different from the thing it was when "expresses were unheard of, and telegraphs were uncrystallized from the lightning's blue and fiery film." Reporterism was beginning to assume its present importance, but it had not yet become the paramount intellectual interest, and did not yet "stand shoulder to shoulder" with the counting−room in authority. Great editors, then as now, ranked great authors in the public esteem, or achieved a double primacy by uniting journalism and literature in the same personality. They were often the owners as well as the writers of their respective papers, and they indulged for the advantage of the community the rancorous rivalries, recriminations, and scurrilities which often form the charm, if not the chief use, of our contemporaneous journals. Apparently, however, notarially authenticated boasts of circulation had not yet been made the delight of their readers, and the press had not become the detective agency that it now is, nor the organizer and distributer of charities.

But as dark a cloud of doubt rested upon its relations to the theatre as still eclipses the popular faith in dramatic criticism. "How can you expect," our author asks, "a frank and unbiassed criticism upon the performance of George Frederick Cooke Snooks . . . when the editor or reporter who is to write it has just been supping on beefsteak and stewed potatoes at Windust's, and regaling himself on brandy−and−water cold, without, at the expense of the aforesaid George Frederick Cooke Snooks?" The severest censor of the press, however, would hardly declare now that "as to such a thing as impartial and independent criticism upon theatres in the present state of the relations between editors, reporters, managers, actors−−and actresses−−the thing is palpably out of the question," and if matters were really at the pass hinted, the press has certainly improved in fifty years, if one may judge from its present frank condemnations of plays and players. The theatre apparently has not, for we read that at that period "a very great majority of the standard plays and farces on the stage depend mostly for their piquancy and their power of interesting an audience upon intrigues with married women, elopements, seductions, bribery, cheating, and fraud of every description . . . . Stage costume, too, wherever there is half a chance, is usually made as lascivious and immodest as possible; and a freedom and impropriety prevails among the characters of the piece which would be kicked out of private society the instant it would have the audacity to make its appearance there."

II.

I hope private society in New York would still be found as correct if not quite so violent; and I wish I could believe that the fine arts were presently in as flourishing a condition among us as they were in 1849. That was the prosperous day of the Art Unions, in which the artists clubbed their output, and the subscribers parted the works among themselves by something so very like raffling that the Art Unions were finally suppressed under the law against lotteries. While they lasted, however, they had exhibitions thronged by our wealth, fashion, and intellect (to name them in the order they hold the New York mind), as our private views now are, or ought to be; and the author "devotes an entire number" of his series "to a single institution"−−fearless of being accused of partiality by any who rightly appreciate the influences of the fine arts upon the morals and refinement of mankind."

He devotes even more than an entire number to literature; for, besides treating of various literary celebrities at the "literary soirees," he imagines encountering several of them at the high−class restaurants. At Delmonico's, where if you had "French and money" you could get in that day "a dinner which, as a work of art, ranks with a picture by Huntington, a poem by Willis, or a statue by Powers," he meets such a musical critic as Richard Grant White, such an intellectual epicurean as N. P. Willis, such a lyric poet as Charles Fenno Hoffman. But it would be a warm day for Delmonico's when the observer in this epoch could chance upon so much genius at its tables, perhaps because genius among us has no longer the French or the money. Indeed, the author of 'New York in Slices' seems finally to think that he has gone too far, even for his own period, and brings himself up with the qualifying reservation that if Willis and Hoffman never did dine together at Delmonico's, they ought to have done so. He has apparently no misgivings as to the famous musical critic, and he has no scruple in assembling for us at his "literary soiree" a dozen distinguished−looking men and "twice as many women.... listening to a tall, deaconly man, who stands between two candles held by a couple of sticks summoned from the recesses of the back parlor, reading a basketful of gilt−edged notes. It is . . . the annual Valentine Party, to which all the male and female authors have contributed for the purpose of saying on paper charming things of each other, and at which, for a few hours, all are gratified with the full meed of that praise which a cold world is chary of bestowing upon its literary cobweb− spinners."

It must be owned that we have no longer anything so like a 'salon' as this. It is, indeed, rather terrible, and it is of a quality in its celebrities which may well carry dismay to any among us presently intending immortality. Shall we, one day, we who are now in the rich and full enjoyment of our far−reaching fame, affect the imagination of posterity as these phantoms of the past affect ours? Shall we, too, appear in some pale limbo of unimportance as thin and faded as "John Inman, the getter−up of innumerable things for the annuals and magazines," or as Dr. Rufus Griswold, supposed for picturesque purposes to be "stalking about with an immense quarto volume under his arm . . . an early copy of his forthcoming 'Female Poets of America'"; or as Lewis Gaylord Clark, the "sunnyfaced, smiling" editor of the Knickerbocker Magazine, "who don't look as if the Ink−Fiend had ever heard of him," as he stands up to dance a polka with "a demure lady who has evidently spilled the inkstand over her dress"; or as "the stately Mrs. Seba Smith, bending aristocratically over the centre−table, and talking in a bright, cold, steady stream, like an antique fountain by moonlight"; or as "the spiritual and dainty Fanny Osgood, clapping her hands and crowing like a baby," where she sits "nestled under a shawl of heraldic devices, like a bird escaped from its cage"; or as Margaret Fuller, "her large, gray eyes Tamping inspiration, and her thin, quivering lip prophesying like a Pythoness"?

I hope not; I earnestly hope not. Whatever I said at the outset, affirming the persistent equality of New York characteristics and circumstances, I wish to take back at this point; and I wish to warn malign foreign observers, of the sort who have so often refused to see us as we see ourselves, that they must not expect to find us now grouped in the taste of 1849. Possibly it was not so much the taste of 1849 as the author of 'New York in Slices' would have us believe; and perhaps any one who trusted his pictures of life among us otherwise would be deceived by a parity of the spirit in which they are portrayed with that of our modern "society journalism."

FROM NEW YORK INTO NEW ENGLAND

There is, of course, almost a world's difference between England and the Continent anywhere; but I do not recall just now any transition between Continental countries which involves a more distinct change in the superficial aspect of things than the passage from the Middle States into New England. It is all American, but American of diverse ideals; and you are hardly over the border before you are sensible of diverse effects, which are the more apparent to you the more American you are. If you want the contrast at its sharpest you had better leave New York on a Sound boat; for then you sleep out of the Middle State civilization and wake into the civilization of New England, which seems to give its stamp to nature herself. As to man, he takes it whether native or alien; and if he is foreign−born it marks him another Irishman, Italian, Canadian, Jew, or negro from his brother in any other part of the United States.

I.

When you have a theory of any kind, proofs of it are apt to seek you out, and I, who am rather fond of my faith in New England's influence of this sort, had as pretty an instance of it the day after my arrival as I could wish. A colored brother of Massachusetts birth, as black as a man can well be, and of a merely anthropoidal profile, was driving me along shore in search of a sea−side hotel when we came upon a weak−minded young chicken in the road. The natural expectation is that any chicken in these circumstances will wait for your vehicle, and then fly up before it with a loud screech; but this chicken may have been overcome by the heat (it was a land breeze and it drew like the breath of a furnace over the hay−cocks and the clover), or it may have mistimed the wheel, which passed over its head and left it to flop a moment in the dust and then fall still. The poor little tragedy was sufficiently distressful to me, but I bore it well, compared with my driver. He could hardly stop lamenting it; and when presently we met a young farmer, he pulled up. "You goin' past Jim Marden's?" "Yes." "Well, I wish you'd tell him I just run over a chicken of his, and I killed it, I guess. I guess it was a pretty big one." "Oh no," I put in, "it was only a broiler. What do you think it was worth?" I took out some money, and the farmer noted the largest coin in my hand; "About half a dollar, I guess." On this I put it all back in my pocket, and then he said, "Well, if a chicken don't know enough to get out of the road, I guess you ain't to blame." I expressed that this was my own view of the case, and we drove on. When we parted I gave the half−dollar to my driver, and begged him not to let the owner of the chicken come on me for damages; and though he chuckled his pleasure in the joke, I could see that he was still unhappy, and I have no doubt that he has that pullet on his conscience yet, unless he has paid for it. He was of a race which elsewhere has so immemorially plundered hen−roosts that chickens are as free to it as the air it breathes, without any conceivable taint of private ownership. But the spirit of New England had so deeply entered into him that the imbecile broiler of another, slain by pure accident and by its own contributory negligence, was saddening him, while I was off in my train without a pang for the owner and with only an agreeable pathos for the pullet.

II.

The instance is perhaps extreme; and, at any rate, it has carried me in a psychological direction away from the simpler differences which I meant to note in New England. They were evident as soon as our train began to run from the steamboat landing into the country, and they have intensified, if they have not multiplied, themselves as I have penetrated deeper and deeper into the beautiful region. The land is poorer than the land to the southward−−one sees that at once; the soil is thin, and often so thickly burdened with granite bowlders that it could never have borne any other crop since the first Puritans, or Pilgrims, cut away the primeval woods and betrayed its hopeless sterility to the light. But wherever you come to a farm−house, whether standing alone or in one of the village groups that New England farm−houses have always liked to gather themselves into, it is of a neatness that brings despair, and of a repair that ought to bring shame to the beholder from more easy−going conditions. Everything is kept up with a strenuous virtue that imparts an air of self−respect to the landscape, which the bleaching and blackening stone walls, wandering over the hill−slopes, divide into wood lots of white

birch and pine, stony pastures, and little patches of potatoes and corn. The mowing−lands alone are rich; and if the New England year is in the glory of the latest June, the breath of the clover blows honey−−sweet into the car windows, and the fragrance of the new−cut hay rises hot from the heavy swaths that seem to smoke in the sun.

We have struck a hot spell, one of those torrid mood of continental weather which we have telegraphed us ahead to heighten our suffering by anticipation. But the farmsteads and village houses are safe in the shade of their sheltering trees amid the fluctuation of the grass that grows so tall about them that the June roses have to strain upward to get themselves free of it. Behind each dwelling is a billowy mass of orchard, and before it the Gothic archway of the elms stretches above the quiet street. There is no tree in the world so full of sentiment as the American elm, and it is nowhere so graceful as in these New England villages, which are themselves, I think, the prettiest and wholesomest of mortal sojourns. By a happy instinct, their wooden houses are all painted white, to a marble effect that suits our meridional sky, and the contrast of their dark−green shutters is deliciously refreshing. There was an evil hour, the terrible moment of the aesthetic revival now happily past, when white walls and green blinds were thought in bad taste, and the village houses were often tinged a dreary ground color, or a doleful olive, or a gloomy red, but now they have returned to their earlier love. Not the first love; that was a pale buff with white trim; but I doubt if it were good for all kinds of village houses; the eye rather demands the white. The pale buff does very well for large colonial mansions, like Lowell's or Longfellow's in Cambridge; but when you come, say, to see the great square houses built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire; early in this century, and painted white, you find that white, after all, is the thing for our climate, even in the towns.

In such a village as my colored brother drove me through on the way to the beach it was of an absolute fitness; and I wish I could convey a due sense of the exquisite keeping of the place. Each white house was more or less closely belted in with a white fence, of panels or pickets; the grassy door−yards glowed with flowers, and often a climbing rose embowered the door−way with its bloom. Away backward or sidewise stretched the woodshed from the dwelling to the barn, and shut the whole under one cover; the turf grew to the wheel−tracks of the road−way, over which the elms rose and drooped; and from one end of the village to the other you could not, as the saying is, find a stone to throw at a dog. I know Holland; I have seen the wives of Scheveningen scrubbing up for Sunday to the very middle of their brick streets, but I doubt if Dutch cleanliness goes so far without, or comes from so deep a scruple within, as the cleanliness of New England. I felt so keenly the feminine quality of its motive as I passed through that village, that I think if I had dropped so much as a piece of paper in the street I must have knocked at the first door and begged the lady of the house (who would have opened it in person after wiping her hands from her work, taking off her apron, and giving a glance at herself in the mirror and at me through the window blind) to report me to the selectmen in the interest of good morals.

III.

I did not know at once quite how to reconcile the present foulness of the New England capital with the fairness of the New England country; and I am still somewhat embarrassed to own that after New York (even under the relaxing rule of Tammany) Boston seemed very dirty when we arrived there. At best I was never more than a naturalized Bostonian; but it used to give me great pleasure−−so penetratingly does the place qualify even the sojourning Westerner−−to think of the defect of New York in the virtue that is next to godliness; and now I had to hang my head for shame at the mortifying contrast of the Boston streets to the well−swept asphalt which I had left frying in the New York sun the afternoon before. Later, however, when I began to meet the sort of Boston faces I remembered so well−−good, just, pure, but set and severe, with their look of challenge, of interrogation, almost of reproof−−they not only ignored the disgraceful untidiness of the streets, but they convinced me of a state of transition which would leave the place swept and garnished behind it; and comforted me against the litter of the winding thoroughfares and narrow lanes, where the dust had blown up against the brick walls, and seemed permanently to have smutched and discolored them.

In New York you see the American face as Europe characterizes it; in Boston you see it as it characterizes Europe; and it is in Boston that you can best imagine the strenuous grapple of the native forces which all alien

things must yield to till they take the American cast. It is almost dismaying, that physiognomy, before it familiarizes itself anew; and in the brief first moment while it is yet objective, you ransack your conscience for any sins you may have committed in your absence from it and make ready to do penance for them. I felt almost as if I had brought the dirty streets with me, and were guilty of having left them lying about, so impossible were they with reference to the Boston face.

It is a face that expresses care, even to the point of anxiety, and it looked into the window of our carriage with the serious eyes of our elderly hackman to make perfectly sure of our destination before we drove away from the station. It was a little rigorous with us, as requiring us to have a clear mind; but it was not unfriendly, not unkind, and it was patient from long experience. In New York there are no elderly hackmen; but in Boston they abound, and I cannot believe they would be capable of bad faith with travellers. In fact, I doubt if this class is anywhere as predatory as it is painted; but in Boston it appears to have the public honor in its keeping. I do not mean that it was less mature, less self− respectful in Portsmouth, where we were next to arrive; more so it could not be; an equal sense of safety, of ease, began with it in both places, and all through New England it is of native birth, while in New York it is composed of men of many nations, with a weight in numbers towards the Celtic strain. The prevalence of the native in New England helps you sensibly to realize from the first moment that here you are in America as the first Americans imagined and meant it; and nowhere in New England is the original tradition more purely kept than in the beautiful old seaport of New Hampshire. In fact, without being quite prepared to defend a thesis to this effect, I believe that Portsmouth is preeminently American, and in this it differs from Newburyport and from Salem, which have suffered from different causes an equal commercial decline, and, though among the earliest of the great Puritan towns after Boston, are now largely made up of aliens in race and religion; these are actually the majority, I believe, in Newburyport.

IV.

The adversity of Portsmouth began early in the century, but before that time she had prospered so greatly that her merchant princes were able to build themselves wooden palaces with white walls and green shutters, of a grandeur and beauty unmatched elsewhere in the country. I do not know what architect had his way with them, though his name is richly worth remembrance, but they let him make them habitations of such graceful proportion and of such delicate ornament that they have become shrines of pious pilgrimage with the young architects of our day who hope to house our well−to−do people fitly in country or suburbs. The decoration is oftenest spent on a porch or portal, or a frieze of peculiar refinement; or perhaps it feels its way to the carven casements or to the delicate iron−work of the transoms; the rest is a simplicity and a faultless propriety of form in the stately mansions which stand under the arching elms, with their gardens sloping, or dropping by easy terraces behind them to the river, or to the borders of other pleasances. They are all of wood, except for the granite foundations and doorsteps, but the stout edifices rarely sway out of the true line given them, and they look as if they might keep it yet another century.

Between them, in the sun−shotten shade, lie the quiet streets, whose gravelled stretch is probably never cleaned because it never needs cleaning. Even the business streets, and the quaint square which gives the most American of towns an air so foreign and Old Worldly, look as if the wind and rain alone cared for them; but they are not foul, and the narrower avenues, where the smaller houses of gray, unpainted wood crowd each other, flush upon the pavements, towards the water−−side, are doubtless unvisited by the hoe or broom, and must be kept clean by a New England conscience against getting them untidy.

When you get to the river−side there is one stretch of narrow, high− shouldered warehouses which recall Holland, especially in a few with their gables broken in steps, after the Dutch fashion. These, with their mouldering piers and grass−grown wharves, have their pathos, and the whole place embodies in its architecture an interesting record of the past, from the time when the homesick exiles huddled close to the water's edge till the period of post−colonial prosperity, when proud merchants and opulent captains set their vast square houses each in its handsome space of gardened ground.

My adjectives might mislead as to size, but they could not as to beauty, and I seek in vain for those that can duly impart the peculiar charm of the town. Portsmouth still awaits her novelist; he will find a rich field when he comes; and I hope he will come of the right sex, for it needs some minute and subtle feminine skill, like that of Jane Austen, to express a fit sense of its life in the past. Of its life in the present I know nothing. I could only go by those delightful, silent houses, and sigh my longing soul into their dim interiors. When now and then a young shape in summer silk, or a group of young shapes in diaphanous muslin, fluttered out of them, I was no wiser; and doubtless my elderly fancy would have been unable to deal with what went on in them. Some girl of those flitting through the warm, odorous twilight must become the creative historian of the place; I can at least imagine a Jane Austen now growing up in Portsmouth.

V.

If Miss Jewett were of a little longer breath than she has yet shown herself in fiction, I might say the Jane Austen of Portsmouth was already with us, and had merely not yet begun to deal with its precious material. One day when we crossed the Piscataqua from New Hampshire into Maine, and took the trolley−line for a run along through the lovely coast country, we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of her own people, who are a little different sort of New−Englanders from those of Miss Wilkins. They began to flock into the car, young maidens and old, mothers and grandmothers, and nice boys and girls, with a very, very few farmer youth of marriageable age, and more rustic and seafaring elders long past it, all in the Sunday best which they had worn to the graduation exercises at the High School, where we took them mostly up. The womenkind were in a nervous twitter of talk and laughter, and the men tolerantly gay beyond their wont, "passing the time of day" with one another, and helping the more tumultuous sex to get settled in the overcrowded open car. They courteously made room for one another, and let the children stand between their knees, or took them in their laps, with that unfailing American kindness which I am prouder of than the American valor in battle, observing in all that American decorum which is no bad thing either. We had chanced upon the high and mighty occasion of the neighborhood year, when people might well have been a little off their balance, but there was not a boisterous note in the subdued affair. As we passed the school−house door, three dear, pretty maids in white gowns and white slippers stood on the steps and gently smiled upon our company. One could see that they were inwardly glowing and thrilling with the excitement of their graduation, but were controlling their emotions to a calm worthy of the august event, so that no one might ever have it to say that they had appeared silly.

The car swept on, and stopped to set down passengers at their doors or gates, where they severally left it, with an easy air as of private ownership, into some sense of which the trolley promptly flatters people along its obliging lines. One comfortable matron, in a cinnamon silk, was just such a figure as that in the Miss Wilkins's story where the bridegroom fails to come on the wedding−day; but, as I say, they made me think more of Miss Jewett's people. The shore folk and the Down−Easters are specifically hers; and these were just such as might have belonged in 'The Country of the Pointed Firs', or 'Sister Wisby's Courtship', or 'Dulham Ladies', or 'An Autumn Ramble', or twenty other entrancing tales. Sometimes one of them would try her front door, and then, with a bridling toss of the head, express that she had forgotten locking it, and slip round to the kitchen; but most of the ladies made their way back at once between the roses and syringas of their grassy door−yards, which were as neat and prim as their own persons, or the best chamber in their white− walled, green−shuttered, story−and−a−half house, and as perfectly kept as the very kitchen itself.

The trolley−line had been opened only since the last September, but in an effect of familiar use it was as if it had always been there, and it climbed and crooked and clambered about with the easy freedom of the country road which it followed. It is a land of low hills, broken by frequent reaches of the sea, and it is most amusing, most amazing, to see how frankly the trolley−car takes and overcomes its difficulties. It scrambles up and down the little steeps like a cat, and whisks round a sharp and sudden curve with a feline screech, broadening into a loud caterwaul as it darts over the estuaries on its trestles. Its course does not lack excitement, and I suppose it does not lack danger; but as yet there have been no accidents, and it is not so disfiguring as one would think. The landscape has already accepted it, and is making the best of it; and to the country people it is an inestimable convenience. It

passes everybody's front door or back door, and the farmers can get themselves or their produce (for it runs an express car) into Portsmouth in an hour, twice an hour, all day long. In summer the cars are open, with transverse seats, and stout curtains that quite shut out a squall of wind or rain. In winter the cars are closed, and heated by electricity. The young motorman whom I spoke with, while we waited on a siding to let a car from the opposite direction get by, told me that he was caught out in a blizzard last Winter, and passed the night in a snowdrift. "But the cah was so wa'm, I neva suff'ed a mite."

"Well," I summarized, "it must be a great advantage to all the people along the line."

"Well, you wouldn't 'a' thought so, from the kick they made."

"I suppose the cottagers"−−the summer colony−−"didn't like the noise."

"Oh yes; that's what I mean. The's whe' the kick was. The natives like it. I guess the summa folks 'll like it, too."

He looked round at me with enjoyment of his joke in his eye, for we both understood that the summer folks could not help themselves, and must bow to the will of the majority.

THE ART OF THE ADSMITH

The other day, a friend of mine, who professes all the intimacy of a bad conscience with many of my thoughts and convictions, came in with a bulky book under his arm, and said, "I see by a guilty look in your eye that you are meaning to write about spring."

"I am not," I retorted, "and if I were, it would be because none of the new things have been said yet about spring, and because spring is never an old story, any more than youth or love."

"I have heard something like that before," said my friend, "and I understand. The simple truth of the matter is that this is the fag−end of the season, and you have run low in your subjects. Now take my advice and don't write about spring; it will make everybody hate you, and will do no good. Write about advertising." He tapped the book under his arm significantly. "Here is a theme for you."

I.

He had no sooner pronounced these words than I began to feel a weird and potent fascination in his suggestion. I took the book from him and looked it eagerly through. It was called Good Advertising, and it was written by one of the experts in the business who have advanced it almost to the grade of an art, or a humanity.

"But I see nothing here," I said, musingly, "which would enable a self− respecting author to come to the help of his publisher in giving due hold upon the public interest those charming characteristics of his book which no one else can feel so penetratingly or celebrate so persuasively."

"I expected some such objection from you," said my friend. "You will admit that there is everything else here?"

"Everything but that most essential thing. You know how we all feel about it: the bitter disappointment, the heart−sickening sense of insufficiency that the advertised praises of our books give us poor authors. The effect is far worse than that of the reviews, for the reviewer is not your ally and copartner, while your publisher−−"

"I see what you mean," said my friend. "But you must have patience. If the author of this book can write so luminously of advertising in other respects, I am sure he will yet be able to cast a satisfactory light upon your

problem. The question is, I believe, how to translate into irresistible terms all that fond and exultant regard which a writer feels for his book, all his pervasive appreciation of its singular beauty, unique value, and utter charm, and transfer it to print, without infringing upon the delicate and shrinking modesty which is the distinguishing ornament of the literary spirit?"

"Something like that. But you understand."

"Perhaps a Roentgen ray might be got to do it," said my friend, thoughtfully, "or perhaps this author may bring his mind to bear upon it yet. He seems to have considered every kind of advertising except book− advertising."

"The most important of all!" I cried, impatiently.

"You think so because you are in that line. If you were in the line of varnish, or bicycles, or soap, or typewriters, or extract of beef, or of malt−−"

"Still I should be interested in book−−advertising, because it is the most vital of human interests."

"Tell me," said my friend, "do you read the advertisements of the books of rival authors?"

"Brother authors," I corrected him.

"Well, brother authors."

I said, No, candidly, I did not; and I forbore to add that I thought them little better than a waste of the publishers' money.

II.

My friend did not pursue his inquiry to my personal disadvantage, but seemed to prefer a more general philosophy of the matter.

"I have often wondered," he said, "at the enormous expansion of advertising, and doubted whether it was not mostly wasted. But my author, here, has suggested a brilliant fact which I was unwittingly groping for. When you take up a Sunday paper"−−I shuddered, and my friend smiled intelligence−−" you are simply appalled at the miles of announcements of all sorts. Who can possibly read them? Who cares even to look at them? But if you want something in particular−−to furnish a house, or buy a suburban place, or take a steamer for Europe, or go, to the theatre−−then you find out at once who reads the advertisements, and cares to look at them. They respond to the multifarious wants of the whole community. You have before you the living operation of that law of demand and supply which it has always been such a bore to hear about. As often happens, the supply seems to come before the demand; but that's only an appearance. You wanted something, and you found an offer to meet your want."

"Then you don't believe that the offer to meet your want suggested it?"

"I see that my author believes something of the kind. We may be full of all sorts of unconscious wants which merely need the vivifying influence of an advertisement to make them spring into active being; but I have a feeling that the money paid for advertising which appeals to potential wants is largely thrown away. You must want a thing, or think you want it; otherwise you resent the proffer of it as a kind of impertinence."

"There are some kinds of advertisements, all the same, that I read without the slightest interest in the subject matter. Simply the beauty of the style attracts me."

"I know. But does it ever move you to get what you don't want?"

"Never; and I should be glad to know what your author thinks of that sort of advertising: the literary, or dramatic, or humorous, or quaint."

"He doesn't contemn it, quite. But I think he feels that it may have had its day. Do you still read such advertisements with your early zest?"

"No; the zest for nearly everything goes. I don't care so much for Tourguenief as I used. Still, if I come upon the jaunty and laconic suggestions of a certain well−known clothing−house, concerning the season's wear, I read them with a measure of satisfaction. The advertising expert−−"

"This author calls him the adsmith."

"Delightful! Ad is a loathly little word, but we must come to it. It's as legitimate as lunch. But as I was saying, the adsmith seems to have caught the American business tone, as perfectly as any of our novelists have caught the American social tone."

"Yes," said my friend, "and he seems to have prospered as richly by it. You know some of those chaps make fifteen or twenty thousand dollars by adsmithing. They have put their art quite on a level with fiction pecuniarily."

"Perhaps it is a branch of fiction."

"No; they claim that it is pure fact. My author discourages the slightest admixture of fable. The truth, clearly and simply expressed, is the best in an ad.

"It is best in a wof, too. I am always saying that."

"Wof?"

"Well, work of fiction. It's another new word, like lunch or ad."

"But in a wof," said my friend, instantly adopting it, "my author insinuates that the fashion of payment tempts you to verbosity, while in an ad the conditions oblige you to the greatest possible succinctness. In one case you are paid by the word; in the other you pay by the word. That is where the adsmith stands upon higher moral ground than the wofsmith."

"I should think your author might have written a recent article in 'The −−−−−−−−−, reproaching fiction with its unhallowed gains."

"If you mean that for a sneer, it is misplaced. He would have been incapable of it. My author is no more the friend of honesty in adsmithing than he is of propriety, He deprecates jocosity in apothecaries and undertakers, not only as bad taste, but as bad business; and he is as severe as any one could be upon ads that seize the attention by disgusting or shocking the reader.

"He is to be praised for that, and for the other thing; and I shouldn't have minded his criticising the ready wofsmith. I hope he attacks the use of display type, which makes our newspapers look like the poster− plastered fences around vacant lots. In New York there is only one paper whose advertisements are not typographically a shock to the nerves."

"Well," said my friend, "he attacks foolish and ineffective display."

"It is all foolish and ineffective. It is like a crowd of people trying to make themselves heard by shouting each at the top of his voice. A paper full of display advertisements is an image of our whole congested and delirious state of competition; but even in competitive conditions it is unnecessary, and it is futile. Compare any New York paper but one with the London papers, and you will see what I mean. Of course I refer to the ad pages; the rest of our exception is as offensive with pictures and scare heads as all the rest. I wish your author could revise his opinions and condemn all display in ads."

"I dare say he will when he knows what you think," said my friend, with imaginable sarcasm.

III.

"I wish," I went on, "that he would give us some philosophy of the prodigious increase of advertising within the last twenty−five years, and some conjecture as to the end of it all. Evidently, it can't keep on increasing at the present rate. If it does, there will presently be no room in the world for things; it will be filled up with the advertisements of things."

"Before that time, perhaps," my friend suggested, "adsmithing will have become so fine and potent an art that advertising will be reduced in bulk, while keeping all its energy and even increasing its effectiveness."

"Perhaps," I said, "some silent electrical process will be contrived, so that the attractions of a new line of dress−goods or the fascination of a spring or fall opening may be imparted to a lady's consciousness without even the agency of words. All other facts of commercial and industrial interest could be dealt with in the same way. A fine thrill could be made to go from the last new book through the whole community, so that people would not willingly rest till they had it. Yes, one can see an indefinite future for advertising in that way. The adsmith may be the supreme artist of the twentieth century. He may assemble in his grasp, and employ at will, all the arts and sciences."

"Yes," said my friend, with a sort of fall in his voice, "that is very well. But what is to become of the race when it is penetrated at every pore with a sense of the world's demand and supply?"

"Oh, that is another affair. I was merely imagining the possible resources of invention in providing for the increase of advertising while guarding the integrity of the planet. I think, very likely, if the thing keeps on, we shall all go mad; but then we shall none of us be able to criticise the others. Or possibly the thing may work its own cure. You know the ingenuity of the political economists in justifying the egotism to which conditions appeal. They do not deny that these foster greed and rapacity in merciless degree, but they contend that when the wealth− winner drops off gorged there is a kind of miracle wrought, and good comes of it all. I never could see how; but if it is true, why shouldn't a sort of ultimate immunity come back to us from the very excess and invasion of the appeals now made to us, and destined to be made to us still more by the adsmith? Come, isn't there hope in that?"

"I see a great opportunity for the wofsmith in some such dream," said my friend. "Why don't you turn it to account?"

"You know that isn't my line; I must leave that sort of wofsmithing to the romantic novelist. Besides, I have my well−known panacea for all the ills our state is heir to, in a civilization which shall legislate foolish and vicious and ugly and adulterate things out of the possibility of existence. Most of the adsmithing is now employed in persuading people that such things are useful, beautiful, and pure. But in any civilization they shall not even be suffered to be made, much less foisted upon the community by adsmiths."

"I see what you mean," said my friend; and he sighed gently. "I had much better let you write about spring."

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLAGIARISM

A late incident in the history of a very widespread English novelist, triumphantly closed by the statement of his friend that the novelist had casually failed to accredit a given passage in his novel to the real author, has brought freshly to my mind a curious question in ethics. The friend who vindicated the novelist, or, rather, who contemptuously dismissed the matter, not only confessed the fact of adoption, but declared that it was one of many which could be found in the novelist's works. The novelist, he said, was quite in the habit of so using material in the rough, which he implied was like using any fact or idea from life, and he declared that the novelist could not bother to answer critics who regarded these exploitations as a sort of depredation. In a manner he brushed the impertinent accusers aside, assuring the general public that the novelist always meant, at his leisure, and in his own way, duly to ticket the flies preserved in his amber.

I.

When I read this haughty vindication, I thought at first that if the case were mine I would rather have several deadly enemies than such a friend as that; but since, I have not been so sure. I have asked myself upon a careful review of the matter whether plagiarism may not be frankly avowed, as in nowise dishonest, and I wish some abler casuist would take the affair into consideration and make it clear for me. If we are to suppose that offences against society disgrace the offender, and that public dishonor argues the fact of some such offence, then apparently plagiarism is not such an offence; for in even very flagrant cases it does not disgrace. The dictionary, indeed, defines it as "the crime of literary theft"; but as no penalty attaches to it, and no lasting shame, it is hard to believe it either a crime or a theft; and the offence, if it is an offence (one has to call it something, and I hope the word is not harsh), is some such harmless infraction of the moral law as white− lying.

The much−perverted saying of Moliere, that he took his own where he found it, is perhaps in the consciousness of those who appropriate the things other people have rushed in with before them. But really they seem to need neither excuse nor defence with the impartial public if they are caught in the act of reclaiming their property or despoiling the rash intruder upon their premises. The novelist in question is by no means the only recent example, and is by no means a flagrant example. While the ratification of the treaty with Spain was pending before the Senate of the United States, a member of that body opposed it in a speech almost word for word the same as a sermon delivered in New York City only a few days earlier and published broadcast. He was promptly exposed by the parallel−column system; but I have never heard that his standing was affected or his usefulness impaired by the offence proven against him. A few years ago an eminent divine in one of our cities preached as his own the sermon of a brother divine, no longer living; he, too, was detected and promptly exposed by the parallel−column system, but nothing whatever happened from the exposure. Every one must recall like instances, more or less remote. I remember one within my youthfuller knowledge of a journalist who used as his own all the denunciatory passages of Macaulay's article on Barrere, and applied them with changes of name to the character and conduct of a local politician whom he felt it his duty to devote to infamy. He was caught in the fact, and by means of the parallel column pilloried before the community. But the community did not mind it a bit, and the journalist did not either. He prospered on amid those who all knew what he had done, and when he removed to another city it was to a larger one, and to a position of more commanding influence, from which he was long conspicuous in helping shape the destinies of the nation.

So far as any effect from these exposures was concerned, they were as harmless as those exposures of fraudulent spiritistic mediums which from time to time are supposed to shake the spiritistic superstition to its foundations. They really do nothing of the kind; the table−tippings, rappings, materializations, and levitations keep on as before; and I do not believe that the exposure of the novelist who has been the latest victim of the parallel column will injure him a jot in the hearts or heads of his readers.

II.

I am very glad of it, being a disbeliever in punishments of all sorts. I am always glad to have sinners get off, for I like to get off from my own sins; and I have a bad moment from my sense of them whenever another's have found him out. But as yet I have not convinced myself that the sort of thing we have been considering is a sin at all, for it seems to deprave no more than it dishonors; or that it is what the dictionary (with very unnecessary brutality) calls a "crime" and a "theft." If it is either, it is differently conditioned, if not differently natured, from all other crimes and thefts. These may be more or less artfully and hopefully concealed, but plagiarism carries inevitable detection with it. If you take a man's hat or coat out of his hall, you may pawn it before the police overtake you; if you take his horse out of his stable, you may ride it away beyond pursuit and sell it; if you take his purse out of his pocket, you may pass it to a pal in the crowd, and easily prove your innocence. But if you take his sermon, or his essay, or even his apposite reflection, you cannot escape discovery. The world is full of idle people reading books, and they are only too glad to act as detectives; they please their miserable vanity by showing their alertness, and are proud to hear witness against you in the court of parallel columns. You have no safety in the obscurity of the author from whom you take your own; there is always that most terrible reader, the reader of one book, who knows that very author, and will the more indecently hasten to bring you to the bar because he knows no other, and wishes to display his erudition. A man may escape for centuries and yet be found out. In the notorious case of William Shakespeare the offender seemed finally secure of his prey; and yet one poor lady, who ended in a lunatic asylum, was able to detect him at last, and to restore the goods to their rightful owner, Sir Francis Bacon.

In spite, however, of this almost absolute certainty of exposure, plagiarism goes on as it has always gone on; and there is no probability that it will cease as long as there are novelists, senators, divines, and journalists hard pressed for ideas which they happen not to have in mind at the time, and which they see going to waste elsewhere. Now and then it takes a more violent form and becomes a real mania, as when the plagiarist openly claims and urges his right to a well−known piece of literary property. When Mr. William Allen Butler's famous poem of "Nothing to Wear" achieved its extraordinary popularity, a young girl declared and apparently quite believed that she had written it and lost the MS. in an omnibus. All her friends apparently believed so, too; and the friends of the different gentlemen and ladies who claimed the authorship of "Beautiful Snow" and "Rock Me to Sleep" were ready to support them by affidavit against the real authors of those pretty worthless pieces.

From all these facts it must appear to the philosophic reader that plagiarism is not the simple "crime" or "theft" that the lexicographers would have us believe. It argues a strange and peculiar courage on the part of those who commit it or indulge it, since they are sure of having it brought home to them, for they seem to dread the exposure, though it involves no punishment outside of themselves. Why do they do it, or, having done it, why do they mind it, since the public does not? Their temerity and their timidity are things almost irreconcilable, and the whole position leaves one quite puzzled as to what one would do if one's own plagiarisms were found out. But this is a mere question of conduct, and of infinitely less interest than that of the nature or essence of the thing itself.

PURITANISM IN AMERICAN FICTION

The question whether the fiction which gives a vivid impression of reality does truly represent the conditions studied in it, is one of those inquiries to which there is no very final answer. The most baffling fact of such fiction is that its truths are self−evident; and if you go about to prove them you are in some danger of shaking the convictions of those whom they have persuaded. It will not do to affirm anything wholesale concerning them; a hundred examples to the contrary present themselves if you know the ground, and you are left in doubt of the verity which you cannot gainsay. The most that you can do is to appeal to your own consciousness, and that is not proof to anybody else. Perhaps the best test in this difficult matter is the quality of the art which created the picture. Is it clear, simple, unaffected? Is it true to human experience generally? If it is so, then it cannot well be false to the special human experience it deals with.

I.

Not long ago I heard of something which amusingly, which pathetically, illustrated the sense of reality imparted by the work of one of our writers, whose art is of the kind I mean. A lady was driving with a young girl of the lighter−minded civilization of New York through one of those little towns of the North Shore in Massachusetts, where the small; wooden houses cling to the edges of the shallow bay, and the schooners slip, in and out on the hidden channels of the salt meadows as if they were blown about through the tall grass. She tried to make her feel the shy charm of the place, that almost subjective beauty, which those to the manner born are so keenly aware of in old−fashioned New England villages; but she found that the girl was not only not looking at the sad−colored cottages, with their weather−worn shingle walls, their grassy door−yards lit by patches of summer bloom, and their shutterless windows with their close−drawn shades, but she was resolutely averting her eyes from them, and staring straightforward until she should be out of sight of them altogether. She said that they were terrible, and she knew that in each of them was one of those dreary old women, or disappointed girls, or unhappy wives, or bereaved mothers, she had read of in Miss Wilkins's stories.

She had been too little sensible of the humor which forms the relief of these stories, as it forms the relief of the bare, duteous, conscientious, deeply individualized lives portrayed in them; and no doubt this cannot make its full appeal to the heart of youth aching for their stoical sorrows. Without being so very young, I, too, have found the humor hardly enough at times, and if one has not the habit of experiencing support in tragedy itself, one gets through a remote New England village, at nightfall, say, rather limp than otherwise, and in quite the mood that Miss Wilkins's bleaker studies leave one in. At mid− day, or in the bright sunshine of the morning, it is quite possible to fling off the melancholy which breathes the same note in the fact and the fiction; and I have even had some pleasure at such times in identifying this or, that one−story cottage with its lean−to as a Mary Wilkins house and in placing one of her muted dramas in it. One cannot know the people of such places without recognizing her types in them, and one cannot know New England without owning the fidelity of her stories to New England character, though, as I have already suggested, quite another sort of stories could be written which should as faithfully represent other phases of New England village life.

To the alien inquirer, however, I should be by no means confident that their truth would evince itself, for the reason that human nature is seldom on show anywhere. I am perfectly certain of the truth of Tolstoy and Tourguenief to Russian life, yet I should not be surprised if I went through Russia and met none of their people. I should be rather more surprised if I went through Italy and met none of Verga's or Fogazzaro's, but that would be because I already knew Italy a little. In fact, I suspect that the last delight of truth in any art comes only to the connoisseur who is as well acquainted with the subject as the artist himself. One must not be too severe in challenging the truth of an author to life; and one must bring a great deal of sympathy and a great deal of patience to the scrutiny. Types are very backward and shrinking things, after all; character is of such a mimosan sensibility that if you seize it too abruptly its leaves are apt to shut and hide all that is distinctive in it; so that it is not without some risk to an author's reputation for honesty that he gives his readers the impression of his truth.

II.

The difficulty with characters in fiction is that the reader there finds them dramatized; not only their actions, but also their emotions are dramatized; and the very same sort of persons when one meets them in real life are recreantly undramatic. One might go through a New England village and see Mary Wilkins houses and Mary Wilkins people, and yet not witness a scene nor hear a word such as one finds in her tales. It is only too probable that the inhabitants one met would say nothing quaint or humorous, or betray at all the nature that she reveals in them; and yet I should not question her revelation on that account. The life of New England, such as Miss Wilkins deals with, and Miss Sarah O. Jewett, and Miss Alice Brown, is not on the surface, or not visibly so, except to the accustomed eye. It is Puritanism scarcely animated at all by the Puritanic theology. One must not be very positive in such things, and I may be too bold in venturing to say that while the belief of some New Englanders approaches this theology the belief of most is now far from it; and yet its penetrating individualism so deeply

influenced the New England character that Puritanism survives in the moral and mental make of the people almost in its early strength. Conduct and manner conform to a dead religious ideal; the wish to be sincere, the wish to be just, the wish to be righteous are before the wish to be kind, merciful, humble. A people are not a chosen people for half a dozen generations without acquiring a spiritual pride that remains with them long after they cease to believe themselves chosen. They are often stiffened in the neck and they are often hardened in the heart by it, to the point of making them angular and cold; but they are of an inveterate responsibility to a power higher than themselves, and they are strengthened for any fate. They are what we see in the stories which, perhaps, hold the first place in American fiction.

As a matter of fact, the religion of New England is not now so Puritanical as that of many parts of the South and West, and yet the inherited Puritanism stamps the New England manner, and differences it from the manner of the straightest sects elsewhere. There was, however, always a revolt against Puritanism when Puritanism was severest and securest; this resulted in types of shiftlessness if not wickedness, which have not yet been duly studied, and which would make the fortune of some novelist who cared to do a fresh thing. There is also a sentimentality, or pseudo−emotionality (I have not the right phrase for it), which awaits full recognition in fiction. This efflorescence from the dust of systems and creeds, carried into natures left vacant by the ancestral doctrine, has scarcely been noticed by the painters of New England manners. It is often a last state of Unitarianism, which prevailed in the larger towns and cities when the Calvinistic theology ceased to be dominant, and it is often an effect of the spiritualism so common in New England, and, in fact, everywhere in America. Then, there is a wide−spread love of literature in the country towns and villages which has in great measure replaced the old interest in dogma, and which forms with us an author's closest appreciation, if not his best. But as yet little hint of all this has got into the short stories, and still less of that larger intellectual life of New England, or that exalted beauty of character which tempts one to say that Puritanism was a blessing if it made the New−Englanders what they are; though one can always be glad not to have lived among them in the disciplinary period. Boston, the capital of that New England nation which is fast losing itself in the American nation, is no longer of its old literary primacy, and yet most of our right thinking, our high thinking, still begins there, and qualifies the thinking of the country at large. The good causes, the generous causes, are first befriended there, and in a wholesome sort the New England culture, as well as the New England conscience, has imparted itself to the American people.

Even the power of writing short stories, which we suppose ourselves to have in such excellent degree, has spread from New England. That is, indeed, the home of the American short story, and it has there been brought to such perfection in the work of Miss Wilkins, of Miss Jewett, of Miss Brown, and of that most faithful, forgotten painter of manners, Mrs. Rose Terry Cook, that it presents upon the whole a truthful picture of New England village life in some of its more obvious phases. I say obvious because I must, but I have already said that this is a life which is very little obvious; and I should not blame any one who brought the portrait to the test of reality, and found it exaggerated, overdrawn, and unnatural, though I should be perfectly sure that such a critic was wrong.

THE WHAT AND THE HOW IN ART

One of the things always enforcing itself upon the consciousness of the artist in any sort is the fact that those whom artists work for rarely care for their work artistically. They care for it morally, personally, partially. I suspect that criticism itself has rather a muddled preference for the what over the how, and that it is always haunted by a philistine question of the material when it should, aesthetically speaking, be concerned solely with the form.

I.

The other night at the theatre I was witness of a curious and amusing illustration of my point. They were playing a most soul−filling melodrama, of the sort which gives you assurance from the very first that there will be no trouble in the end, but everything will come out just as it should, no matter what obstacles oppose themselves in

the course of the action. An over−ruling Providence, long accustomed to the exigencies of the stage, could not fail to intervene at the critical moment in behalf of innocence and virtue, and the spectator never had the least occasion for anxiety. Not unnaturally there was a black−hearted villain in the piece; so very black−hearted that he seemed not to have a single good impulse from first to last. Yet he was, in the keeping of the stage Providence, as harmless as a blank cartridge, in spite of his deadly aims. He accomplished no more mischief, in fact, than if all his intents had been of the best; except for the satisfaction afforded by the edifying spectacle of his defeat and shame, he need not have been in the play at all; and one might almost have felt sorry for him, he was so continually baffled. But this was not enough for the audience, or for that part of it which filled the gallery to the roof. Perhaps he was such an uncommonly black−hearted villain, so very, very cold−blooded in his wickedness that the justice unsparingly dealt out to him by the dramatist could not suffice. At any rate, the gallery took such a vivid interest in his punishment that it had out the actor who impersonated the wretch between all the acts, and hissed him throughout his deliberate passage across the stage before the curtain. The hisses were not at all for the actor, but altogether for the character. The performance was fairly good, quite as good as the performance of any virtuous part in the piece, and easily up to the level of other villanous performances (I never find much nature in them, perhaps because there is not much nature in villany itself; that is, villany pure and simple); but the mere conception of the wickedness this bad man had attempted was too much for an audience of the average popular goodness. It was only after he had taken poison, and fallen dead before their eyes, that the spectators forbore to visit him with a lively proof of their abhorrence; apparently they did not care to "give him a realizing sense that there was a punishment after death," as the man in Lincoln's story did with the dead dog.

II.

The whole affair was very amusing at first, but it has since put me upon thinking (I like to be put upon thinking; the eighteenth−century essayists were) that the attitude of the audience towards this deplorable reprobate is really the attitude of most readers of books, lookers at pictures and statues, listeners to music, and so on through the whole list of the arts. It is absolutely different from the artist's attitude, from the connoisseur's attitude; it is quite irreconcilable with their attitude, and yet I wonder if in the end it is not what the artist works for. Art is not produced for artists, or even for connoisseurs; it is produced for the general, who can never view it otherwise than morally, personally, partially, from their associations and preconceptions.

Whether the effect with the general is what the artist works for or not, he, does not succeed without it. Their brute liking or misliking is the final test; it is universal suffrage that elects, after all. Only, in some cases of this sort the polls do not close at four o'clock on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, but remain open forever, and the voting goes on. Still, even the first day's canvass is important, or at least significant. It will not do for the artist to electioneer, but if he is beaten, he ought to ponder the causes of his defeat, and question how he has failed to touch the chord of universal interest. He is in the world to make beauty and truth evident to his fellowmen, who are as a rule incredibly stupid and ignorant of both, but whose judgment he must nevertheless not despise. If he can make something that they will cheer, or something that they will hiss, he may not have done any great thing, but if he has made something that they will neither cheer nor hiss, he may well have his misgivings, no matter how well, how finely, how truly he has done the thing.

This is very humiliating, but a tacit snub to one's artist−pride such as one gets from public silence is not a bad thing for one. Not long ago I was talking about pictures with a painter, a very great painter, to my thinking; one whose pieces give me the same feeling I have from reading poetry; and I was excusing myself to him with respect to art, and perhaps putting on a little more modesty than I felt. I said that I could enjoy pictures only on the literary side, and could get no answer from my soul to those excellences of handling and execution which seem chiefly to interest painters. He replied that it was a confession of weakness in a painter if he appealed merely or mainly to technical knowledge in the spectator; that he narrowed his field and dwarfed his work by it; and that if he painted for painters merely, or for the connoisseurs of painting, he was denying his office, which was to say something clear and appreciable to all sorts of men in the terms of art. He even insisted that a picture ought to tell a story.

The difficulty in humbling one's self to this view of art is in the ease with which one may please the general by art which is no art. Neither the play nor the playing that I saw at the theatre when the actor was hissed for the wickedness of the villain he was personating, was at all fine; and yet I perceived, on reflection, that they had achieved a supreme effect. If I may be so confidential, I will say that I should be very sorry to have written that piece; yet I should be very proud if, on the level I chose and with the quality I cared for, I could invent a villain that the populace would have out and hiss for his surpassing wickedness. In other words, I think it a thousand pities whenever an artist gets so far away from the general, so far within himself or a little circle of amateurs, that his highest and best work awakens no response in the multitude. I am afraid this is rather the danger of the arts among us, and how to escape it is not so very plain. It makes one sick and sorry often to see how cheaply the applause of the common people is won. It is not an infallible test of merit, but if it is wanting to any performance, we may be pretty sure it is not the greatest performance.

III.

The paradox lies in wait here, as in most other human affairs, to confound us, and we try to baffle it, in this way and in that. We talk, for instance, of poetry for poets, and we fondly imagine that this is different from talking of cookery for cooks. Poetry is not made for poets; they have enough poetry of their own, but it is made for people who are not poets. If it does not please these, it may still be poetry, but it is poetry which has failed of its truest office. It is none the less its truest office because some very wretched verse seems often to do it.

The logic of such a fact is not that the poet should try to achieve this truest office of his art by means of doggerel, but that he should study how and where and why the beauty and the truth he has made manifest are wanting in universal interest, in human appeal. Leaving the drama out of the question, and the theatre which seems now to be seeking only the favor of the dull rich, I believe that there never was a time or a race more open to the impressions of beauty and of truth than ours. The artist who feels their divine charm, and longs to impart it, has now and here a chance to impart it more widely than ever artist had in the world before. Of course, the means of reaching the widest range of humanity are the simple and the elementary, but there is no telling when the complex and the recondite may not universally please. 288

The art is to make them plain to every one, for every one has them in him. Lowell used to say that Shakespeare was subtle, but in letters a foot high.

The painter, sculptor, or author who pleases the polite only has a success to be proud of as far as it goes, and to be ashamed of that it goes no further. He need not shrink from giving pleasure to the vulgar because bad art pleases them. It is part of his reason for being that he should please them, too; and if he does not it is a proof that he is wanting in force, however much he abounds in fineness. Who would not wish his picture to draw a crowd about it? Who would not wish his novel to sell five hundred thousand copies, for reasons besides the sordid love of gain which I am told governs novelists? One should not really wish it any the less because chromos and historical romances are popular.

Sometime, I believe, the artist and his public will draw nearer together in a mutual understanding, though perhaps not in our present conditions. I put that understanding off till the good time when life shall be more than living, more even than the question of getting a living; but in the mean time I think that the artist might very well study the springs of feeling in others; and if I were a dramatist I think I should quite humbly go to that play where they hiss the villain for his villany, and inquire how his wickedness had been made so appreciable, so vital, so personal. Not being a dramatist, I still cannot indulge the greatest contempt of that play and its public.

POLITICS OF AMERICAN AUTHORS

No thornier theme could well be suggested than I was once invited to consider by an Englishman who wished to

know how far American politicians were scholars, and how far American authors took part in politics. In my mind I first revolted from the inquiry, and then I cast about, in the fascination it began to have for me, to see how I might handle it and prick myself least. In a sort, which it would take too long to set forth, politics are very intimate matters with us, and if one were to deal quite frankly with the politics of a contemporary author, one might accuse one's self of an unwarrantable personality. So, in what I shall have to say in answer to the question asked me, I shall seek above all things not to be quite frank.

I.

My uncandor need not be so jealously guarded in speaking of authors no longer living. Not to go too far back among these, it is perfectly safe to say that when the slavery question began to divide all kinds of men among us, Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier, Curtis, Emerson, and Bryant more or less promptly and openly took sides against slavery. Holmes was very much later in doing so, but he made up for his long delay by his final strenuousness; as for Hawthorne, he was, perhaps, too essentially a spectator of life to be classed with either party, though his associations, if not his sympathies, were with the Northern men who had Southern principles until the civil war came. After the war, when our political questions ceased to be moral and emotional and became economic and sociological, literary men found their standing with greater difficulty. They remained mostly Republicans, because the Republicans were the anti−slavery party, and were still waging war against slavery in their nerves.

I should say that they also continued very largely the emotional tradition in politics, and it is doubtful if in the nature of things the politics of literary men can ever be otherwise than emotional. In fact, though the questions may no longer be so, the politics of vastly the greater number of Americans are so. Nothing else would account for the fact that during the last ten or fifteen years men have remained Republicans and remained Democrats upon no tangible issues except of office, which could practically concern only a few hundreds or thousands out of every million voters. Party fealty is praised as a virtue, and disloyalty to party is treated as a species of incivism next in wickedness to treason. If any one were to ask me why then American authors were not active in American politics, as they once were, I should feel a certain diffidence in replying that the question of other people's accession to office was, however emotional, unimportant to them as compared with literary questions. I should have the more diffidence because it might be retorted that literary men were too unpractical for politics when they did not deal with moral issues.

Such a retort would be rather mild and civil, as things go, and might even be regarded as complimentary. It is not our custom to be tender with any one who doubts if any actuality is right, or might not be bettered, especially in public affairs. We are apt to call such a one out of his name and to punish him for opinions he has never held. This may be a better reason than either given why authors do not take part in politics with us. They are a thin−skinned race, fastidious often, and always averse to hard knocks; they are rather modest, too, and distrust their fitness to lead, when they have quite a firm faith in their convictions. They hesitate to urge these in the face of practical politicians, who have a confidence in their ability to settle all affairs of State not surpassed even by that of business men in dealing with economic questions.

I think it is a pity that our authors do not go into politics at least for the sake of the material it would yield them; but really they do not. Our politics are often vulgar, but they are very picturesque; yet, so far, our fiction has shunned them even more decidedly than it has shunned our good society−−which is not picturesque or apparently anything but a tiresome adaptation of the sort of drama that goes on abroad under the same name. In nearly the degree that our authors have dealt with our politics as material, they have given the practical politicians only too much reason to doubt their insight and their capacity to understand the mere machinery, the simplest motives, of political life.

II.

There are exceptions, of course, and if my promise of reticence did not withhold me I might name some striking ones. Privately and unprofessionally, I think our authors take as vivid an interest in public affairs as any other class of our citizens, and I should be sorry to think that they took a less intelligent interest. Now and then, but only very rarely, one of them speaks out, and usually on the unpopular side. In this event he is spared none of the penalties with which we like to visit difference of opinion; rather they are accumulated on him.

Such things are not serious, and they are such as no serious man need shrink from, but they have a bearing upon what I am trying to explain, and in a certain measure they account for a certain attitude in our literary men. No one likes to have stones, not to say mud, thrown at him, though they are not meant to hurt him badly and may be partly thrown in joke. But it is pretty certain that if a man not in politics takes them seriously, he will have more or less mud, not to say stones, thrown at him. He might burlesque or caricature them, or misrepresent them, with safety; but if he spoke of public questions with heart and conscience, he could not do it with impunity, unless he were authorized to do so by some practical relation to them. I do not mean that then he would escape; but in this country, where there were once supposed to be no classes, people are more strictly classified than in any other. Business to the business man, law to the lawyer, medicine to the physician, politics to the politician, and letters to the literary man; that is the rule. One is not expected to transcend his function, and commonly one does not. We keep each to his last, as if there were not human interests, civic interests, which had a higher claim than the last upon our thinking and feeling. The tendency has grown upon us severally and collectively through the long persistence of our prosperity; if public affairs were going ill, private affairs were going so well that we did not mind the others; and we Americans are, I think, meridional in our improvidence. We are so essentially of to−day that we behave as if to− morrow no more concerned us than yesterday. We have taught ourselves to believe that it will all come out right in the end so long that we have come to act upon our belief; we are optimistic fatalists.

III.

The turn which our politics have taken towards economics, if I may so phrase the rise of the questions of labor and capital, has not largely attracted literary men. It is doubtful whether Edward Bellamy himself, whose fancy of better conditions has become the abiding faith of vast numbers of Americans, supposed that he was entering the field of practical politics, or dreamed of influencing elections by his hopes of economic equality. But he virtually founded the Populist party, which, as the vital principle of the Democratic party, came so near electing its candidate for the Presidency some years ago; and he is to be named first among our authors who have dealt with politics on their more human side since the days of the old antislavery agitation. Without too great disregard of the reticence concerning the living which I promised myself, I may mention Dr. Edward Everett Hale and Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson as prominent authors who encouraged the Nationalist movement eventuating in Populism, though they were never Populists. It may be interesting to note that Dr. Hale and Colonel Higginson, who later came together in their sociological sympathies, were divided by the schism of 1884, when the first remained with the Republicans and the last went off to the Democrats. More remotely, Colonel Higginson was anti slavery almost to the point of Abolitionism, and he led a negro regiment in the war. Dr. Hale was of those who were less radically opposed to slavery before the war, but hardly so after it came. Since the war a sort of refluence of the old anti−slavery politics carried from his moorings in Southern tradition Mr. George W. Cable, who, against the white sentiment of his section, sided with the former slaves, and would, if the indignant renunciation of his fellow−Southerners could avail, have consequently ceased to be the first of Southern authors, though he would still have continued the author of at least one of the greatest American novels.

If I must burn my ships behind me in alleging these modern instances, as I seem really to be doing, I may mention Mr. R. W. Gilder, the poet, as an author who has taken part in the politics of municipal reform, Mr. Hamlin Garland has been known from the first as a zealous George man, or single−taxer. Mr. John Hay, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, and Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge are Republican politicians, as well as recognized literary men. Mr. Joel Chandler Harris, when not writing Uncle Remus, writes political articles in a leading Southern journal. Mark Twain is a leading anti− imperialist.

IV.

I am not sure whether I have made out a case for our authors or against them; perhaps I have not done so badly; but I have certainly not tried to be exhaustive; the exhaustion is so apt to extend from the subject to the reader, and I wish to leave him in a condition to judge for himself whether American literary men take part in American politics or not. I think they bear their share, in the quieter sort of way which we hope (it may be too fondly) is the American way. They are none of them politicians in the Latin sort. Few, if any, of our statesmen have come forward with small volumes of verse in their hands as they used to do in Spain; none of our poets or historians have been chosen Presidents of the republic as has happened to their French confreres; no great novelist of ours has been exiled as Victor Hugo was, or atrociously mishandled as Zola has been, though I have no doubt that if, for instance, one had once said the Spanish war wrong he would be pretty generally 'conspue'. They have none of them reached the heights of political power, as several English authors have done; but they have often been ambassadors, ministers, and consuls, though they may not often have been appointed for political reasons. I fancy they discharge their duties in voting rather faithfully, though they do not often take part in caucuses or conventions.

As for the other half of the question−−how far American politicians are scholars−−one's first impulse would be to say that they never were so. But I have always had an heretical belief that there were snakes in Ireland; and it may be some such disposition to question authority that keeps me from yielding to this impulse. The law of demand and supply alone ought to have settled the question in favor of the presence of the scholar in our politics, there has been such a cry for him among us for almost a generation past. Perhaps the response has not been very direct, but I imagine that our politicians have never been quite so destitute of scholarship as they would sometimes make appear. I do not think so many of them now write a good style, or speak a good style, as the politicians of forty, or fifty, or sixty years ago; but this may be merely part of the impression of the general worsening of things, familiar after middle life to every one's experience, from the beginning of recorded time. If something not so literary is meant by scholarship, if a study of finance, of economics, of international affairs is in question, it seems to go on rather more to their own satisfaction than that of their critics. But without being always very proud of the result, and without professing to know the facts very profoundly, one may still suspect that under an outside by no means academic there is a process of thinking in our statesmen which is not so loose, not so unscientific, and not even so unscholarly as it might be supposed. It is not the effect of specific training, and yet it is the effect of training. I do not find that the matters dealt with are anywhere in the world intrusted to experts; and in this sense scholarship has not been called to the aid of our legislation or administration; but still I should not like to say that none of our politicians were scholars. That would be offensive, and it might not be true. In fact, I can think of several whom I should be tempted to call scholars if I were not just here recalled to a sense of my purpose not to deal quite frankly with this inquiry.

STORAGE

It has been the belief of certain kindly philosophers that if the one half of mankind knew how the other half lived, the two halves might be brought together in a family affection not now so observable in human relations. Probably if this knowledge were perfect, there would still be things, to bar the perfect brotherhood; and yet the knowledge itself is so interesting, if not so salutary as it has been imagined, that one can hardly refuse to impart it if one has it, and can reasonably hope, in the advantage of the ignorant, to find one's excuse with the better informed.

I.

City and country are still so widely apart in every civilization that one can safely count upon a reciprocal strangeness in many every−day things. For instance, in the country, when people break up house−keeping, they sell their household goods and gods, as they did in cities fifty or a hundred years ago; but now in cities they

simply store them; and vast warehouses in all the principal towns have been devoted to their storage. The warehouses are of all types, from dusty lofts over stores, and ammoniacal lofts over stables, to buildings offering acres of space, and carefully planned for the purpose. They are more or less fire−proof, slow−burning, or briskly combustible, like the dwellings they have devastated. But the modern tendency is to a type where flames do not destroy, nor moth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Such a warehouse is a city in itself, laid out in streets and avenues, with the private tenements on either hand duly numbered, and accessible only to the tenants or their order. The aisles are concreted, the doors are iron, and the roofs are ceiled with iron; the whole place is heated by steam and lighted by electricity. Behind the iron doors, which in the New York warehouses must number hundreds of thousands, and throughout all our other cities, millions, the furniture of a myriad households is stored−−the effects of people who have gone to Europe, or broken up house−keeping provisionally or definitively, or have died, or been divorced. They are the dead bones of homes, or their ghosts, or their yet living bodies held in hypnotic trances; destined again in some future time to animate some house or flat anew. In certain cases the spell lasts for many years, in others for a few, and in others yet it prolongs itself indefinitely.

I may mention the case of one owner whom I saw visiting the warehouse to take out the household stuff that had lain there a long fifteen years. He had been all that while in Europe, expecting any day to come home and begin life again, in his own land. That dream had passed, and now he was taking his stuff out of storage and shipping it to Italy. I did not envy him his feelings as the parts of his long−dead past rose round him in formless resurrection. It was not that they were all broken or defaced. On the contrary, they were in a state of preservation far more heartbreaking than any decay. In well−managed storage warehouses the things are handled with scrupulous care, and they are so packed into the appointed rooms that if not disturbed they could suffer little harm in fifteen or fifty years. The places are wonderfully well kept, and if you will visit them, say in midwinter, after the fall influx of furniture has all been hidden away behind the iron doors of the several cells, you shall find their far−branching corridors scrupulously swept and dusted, and shall walk up and down their concrete length with some such sense of secure finality as you would experience in pacing the aisle of your family vault.

That is what it comes to. One may feign that these storage warehouses are cities, but they are really cemeteries: sad columbaria on whose shelves are stowed exanimate things once so intimately of their owners' lives that it is with the sense of looking at pieces and bits of one's dead self that one revisits them. If one takes the fragments out to fit them to new circumstance, one finds them not only uncomformable and incapable, but so volubly confidential of the associations in which they are steeped, that one wishes to hurry them back to their cell and lock it upon them forever. One feels then that the old way was far better, and that if the things had been auctioned off, and scattered up and down, as chance willed, to serve new uses with people who wanted them enough to pay for them even a tithe of their cost, it would have been wiser. Failing this, a fire seems the only thing for them, and their removal to the cheaper custody of a combustible or slow−burning warehouse the best recourse. Desperate people, aging husbands and wives, who have attempted the reconstruction of their homes with these

"Portions and parcels of the dreadful past "

have been known to wish for an earthquake, even, that would involve their belongings in an indiscriminate ruin.

II.

In fact, each new start in life should be made with material new to you, if comfort is to attend the enterprise. It is not only sorrowful but it is futile to store your possessions, if you hope to find the old happiness in taking them out and using them again. It is not that they will not go into place, after a fashion, and perform their old office, but that the pang they will inflict through the suggestion of the other places where they served their purpose in other years will be only the keener for the perfection with which they do it now. If they cannot be sold, and if no fire comes down from heaven to consume them, then they had better be stored with no thought of ever taking them out again.

That will be expensive, or it will be inexpensive, according to the sort of storage they are put into. The inexperienced in such matters may be surprised, and if they have hearts they may be grieved, to learn that the fire−proof storage of the furniture of the average house would equal the rent of a very comfortable domicile in a small town, or a farm by which a family's living can be earned, with a decent dwelling in which it can be sheltered. Yet the space required is not very great; three fair−sized rooms will hold everything; and there is sometimes a fierce satisfaction in seeing how closely the things that once stood largely about, and seemed to fill ample parlors and chambers, can be packed away. To be sure they are not in their familiar attitudes; they lie on their sides or backs, or stand upon their heads; between the legs of library or dining tables are stuffed all kinds of minor movables, with cushions, pillows, pictures, cunningly adjusted to the environment; and mattresses pad the walls, or interpose their soft bulk between pieces of furniture that would otherwise rend each other. Carpets sewn in cotton against moths, and rugs in long rolls; the piano hovering under its ample frame a whole brood of helpless little guitars, mandolins, and banjos, and 3supporting on its broad back a bulk of lighter cases to the fire−proof ceiling of the cell; paintings in boxes indistinguishable outwardly from their companioning mirrors; barrels of china and kitchen utensils, and all the what−not of householding and house−keeping contribute to the repletion.

There is a science observed in the arrangement of the various effects; against the rear wall and packed along the floor, and then in front of and on top of these, is built a superstructure of the things that may be first wanted, in case of removal, or oftenest wanted in some exigency of the homeless life of the owners, pending removal. The lightest and slightest articles float loosely about the door, or are interwoven in a kind of fabric just within, and curtaining the ponderous mass behind. The effect is not so artistic as the mortuary mosaics which the Roman Capuchins design with the bones of their dead brethren in the crypt of their church, but the warehousemen no doubt have their just pride in it, and feel an artistic pang in its provisional or final disturbance.

It had better never be disturbed, for it is disturbed only in some futile dream of returning to the past; and we never can return to the past on the old terms. It is well in all things to accept life implicitly, and when an end has come to treat it as the end, and not vainly mock it as a suspense of function. When the poor break up their homes, with no immediate hope of founding others, they must sell their belongings because they cannot afford to pay storage on them. The rich or richer store their household effects, and cheat themselves with the illusion that they are going some time to rehabilitate with them just such a home as they have dismantled. But the illusion probably deceives nobody so little as those who cherish the vain hope. As long as they cherish it, however−−and they must cherish it till their furniture or themselves fall to dust−−they cannot begin life anew, as the poor do who have kept nothing of the sort to link them to the past. This is one of the disabilities of the prosperous, who will probably not be relieved of it till some means of storing the owner as well as the' furniture is invented. In the immense range of modern ingenuity, this is perhaps not impossible. Why not, while we are still in life, some sweet oblivious antidote which shall drug us against memory, and after time shall elapse for the reconstruction of a new home in place of the old, shall repossess us of ourselves as unchanged as the things with which we shall again array it? Here is a pretty idea for some dreamer to spin into the filmy fabric of a romance, and I handsomely make a present of it to the first comer. If the dreamer is of the right quality he will know how to make the reader feel that with the universal longing to return to former conditions or circumstances it must always be a mistake to do so, and he will subtly insinuate the disappointment and discomfort of the stored personality in resuming its old relations. With that just mixture of the comic and pathetic which we desire in romance, he will teach convincingly that a stored personality is to be desired only if it is permanently stored, with the implication of a like finality in the storage of its belongings.

Save in some signal exception, a thing taken out of storage cannot be established in its former function without a sense of its comparative inadequacy. It stands in the old place, it serves the old use, and yet a new thing would be better; it would even in some subtle wise be more appropriate, if I may indulge so audacious a paradox; for the time is new, and so will be all the subconscious keeping in which our lives are mainly passed. We are supposed to have associations with the old things which render them precious, but do not the associations rather render them painful? If that is true of the inanimate things, how much truer it is of those personalities which once environed

and furnished our lives! Take the article of old friends, for instance: has it ever happened to the reader to witness the encounter of old friends after the lapse of years? Such a meeting is conventionally imagined to be full of tender joy, a rapture that vents itself in manly tears, perhaps, and certainly in womanly tears. But really is it any such emotion? Honestly is not it a cruel embarrassment, which all the hypocritical pretences cannot hide? The old friends smile and laugh, and babble incoherently at one another, but are they genuinely glad? Is not each wishing the other at that end of the earth from which he came? Have they any use for each other such as people of unbroken associations have?

I have lately been privy to the reunion of two old comrades who are bound together more closely than most men in a community of interests, occupations, and ideals. During a long separation they had kept account of each other's opinions as well as experiences; they had exchanged letters, from time to time, in which they opened their minds fully to each other, and found themselves constantly in accord. When they met they made a great shouting, and each pretended that he found the other just what he used to be. They talked a long, long time, fighting the invisible enemy which they felt between them. The enemy was habit, the habit of other minds and hearts, the daily use of persons and things which in their separation they had not had in common. When the old friends parted they promised to meet every day, and now, since their lines had been cast in the same places again, to repair the ravage of the envious years, and become again to each other all that they had ever been. But though they live in the same town, and often dine at the same table, and belong to the same club, yet they have not grown together again. They have grown more and more apart, and are uneasy in each other's presence, tacitly self−reproachful for the same effect which neither of them could avert or repair. They had been respectively in storage, and each, in taking the other out, has experienced in him the unfitness which grows upon the things put away for a time and reinstated in a former function.

III.

I have not touched upon these facts of life, without the purpose of finding some way out of the coil. There seems none better than the counsel of keeping one's face set well forward, and one's eyes fixed steadfastly upon the future. This is the hint we will get from nature if we will heed her, and note how she never recurs, never stores or takes out of storage. Fancy rehabilitating one's first love: how nature would mock at that! We cannot go back and be the men and women we were, any more than we can go back and be children. As we grow older, each year's change in us is more chasmal and complete. There is no elixir whose magic will recover us to ourselves as we were last year; but perhaps we shall return to ourselves more and more in the times, or the eternity, to come. Some instinct or inspiration implies the promise of this, but only on condition that we shall not cling to the life that has been ours, and hoard its mummified image in our hearts. We must not seek to store ourselves, but must part with what we were for the use and behoof of others, as the poor part with their worldly gear when they move from one place to another. It is a curious and significant property of our outworn characteristics that, like our old furniture, they will serve admirably in the life of some other, and that this other can profitably make them his when we can no longer keep them ours, or ever hope to resume them. They not only go down to successive generations, but they spread beyond our lineages, and serve the turn of those whom we never knew to be within the circle of our influence.

Civilization imparts itself by some such means, and the lower classes are clothed in the cast conduct of the upper, which if it had been stored would have left the inferiors rude and barbarous. We have only to think how socially naked most of us would be if we had not had the beautiful manners of our exclusive society to put on at each change of fashion when it dropped them.

All earthly and material things should be worn out with use, and not preserved against decay by any unnatural artifice. Even when broken and disabled from overuse they have a kind of respectability which must commend itself to the observer, and which partakes of the pensive grace of ruin. An old table with one leg gone, and slowly lapsing to decay in the woodshed, is the emblem of a fitter order than the same table, with all its legs intact, stored with the rest of the furniture from a broken home. Spinning−wheels gathering dust in the garret of a house that is

itself falling to pieces have a dignity that deserts them when they are dragged from their refuge, and furbished up with ribbons and a tuft of fresh tow, and made to serve the hollow occasions of bric−a−brac, as they were a few years ago. A pitcher broken at the fountain, or a battered kettle on a rubbish heap, is a venerable object, but not crockery and copper−ware stored in the possibility of future need. However carefully handed down from one generation to another, the old objects have a forlorn incongruity in their successive surroundings which appeals to the compassion rather than the veneration of the witness.

It was from a truth deeply mystical that Hawthorne declared against any sort of permanence in the dwellings of men, and held that each generation should newly house itself. He preferred the perishability of the wooden American house to the durability of the piles of brick or stone which in Europe affected him as with some moral miasm from the succession of sires and sons and grandsons that had died out of them. But even of such structures as these it is impressive how little the earth makes with the passage of time. Where once a great city of them stood, you shall find a few tottering walls, scarcely more mindful of the past than "the cellar and the well" which Holmes marked as the ultimate monuments, the last witnesses, to the existence of our more transitory habitations. It is the law of the patient sun that everything under it shall decay, and if by reason of some swift calamity, some fiery cataclysm, the perishable shall be overtaken by a fate that fixes it in unwasting arrest, it cannot be felt that the law has been set aside in the interest of men's happiness or cheerfulness. Neither Pompeii nor Herculaneum invites the gayety of the spectator, who as he walks their disinterred thoroughfares has the weird sense of taking a former civilization out of storage, and the ache of finding it wholly unadapted to the actual world. As far as his comfort is concerned, it had been far better that those cities had not been stored, but had fallen to the ruin that has overtaken all their contemporaries.

IV

No, good friend, sir or madam, as the case may be, but most likely madam: if you are about to break up your household for any indefinite period, and are not so poor that you need sell your things, be warned against putting them in storage, unless of the most briskly combustible type. Better, far better, give them away, and disperse them by that means to a continuous use that shall end in using them up; or if no one will take them, then hire a vacant lot, somewhere, and devote them to the flames. By that means you shall bear witness against a custom that insults the order of nature, and crowds the cities with the cemeteries of dead homes, where there is scarcely space for the living homes. Do not vainly fancy that you shall take your stuff out of storage and find it adapted to the ends that it served before it was put in. You will not be the same, or have the same needs or desire, when you take it out, and the new place which you shall hope to equip with it will receive it with cold reluctance, or openly refuse it, insisting upon forms and dimensions that render it ridiculous or impossible. The law is that nothing taken out of storage is the same as it was when put in, and this law, hieroglyphed in those rude 'graffiti' apparently inscribed by accident in the process of removal, has only such exceptions as prove the rule.

The world to which it has returned is not the same, and that makes all the difference. Yet, truth and beauty do not change, however the moods and fashions change. The ideals remain, and these alone you can go back to, secure of finding them the same, to−day and to−morrow, that they were yesterday. This perhaps is because they have never been in storage, but in constant use, while the moods and fashions have been put away and taken out a thousand times. Most people have never had ideals, but only moods and fashions, but such people, least of all, are fitted to find in them that pleasure of the rococo which consoles the idealist when the old moods and fashions reappear.

"FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER ON THE O−HI−O "

There was not much promise of pleasure in the sodden afternoon of a mid− March day at Pittsburg, where the smoke of a thousand foundry chimneys gave up trying to rise through the thick, soft air, and fell with the constant rain which it dyed its own black. But early memories stirred joyfully in the two travellers in whose consciousness I was making my tour, at sight of the familiar stern−wheel steamboat lying beside the wharf boat at the foot of the

dilapidated levee, and doing its best to represent the hundreds of steamboats that used to lie there in the old days. It had the help of three others in its generous effort, and the levee itself made a gallant pretence of being crowded with freight, and succeeded in displaying several saturated piles of barrels and agricultural implements on the irregular pavement whose wheel−worn stones, in long stretches, were sunken out of sight in their parent mud. The boats and the levee were jointly quite equal to the demand made upon them by the light−hearted youngsters of sixty−five and seventy, who were setting out on their journey in fulfilment of a long−cherished dream, and for whom much less freight and much fewer boats would have rehabilitated the past.

I.

When they mounted the broad stairway, tidily strewn with straw to save it from the mud of careless boots, and entered the long saloon of the steamboat, the promise of their fancy was more than made good for them. From the clerk's office, where they eagerly paid their fare, the saloon stretched two hundred feet by thirty away to the stern, a cavernous splendor of white paint and gilding, starred with electric bulbs, and fenced at the stern with wide windows of painted glass. Midway between the great stove in the bow where the men were herded, and the great stove at the stern where the women kept themselves in the seclusion which the tradition of Western river travel still guards, after well−nigh a hundred years, they were given ample state−rooms, whose appointments so exactly duplicated those they remembered from far−off days that they could have believed themselves awakened from a dream of insubstantial time, with the events in which it had seemed to lapse, mere feints of experience. When they sat down at the supper−table and were served with the sort of belated steamboat dinner which it recalled as vividly, the kind, sooty faces and snowy aprons of those who served them were so quite those of other days that they decided all repasts since were mere Barmecide feasts, and made up for the long fraud practised upon them with the appetites of the year 1850.

II.

A rigider sincerity than shall be practised here might own that the table of the good steamboat 'Avonek' left something to be desired, if tested by more sophisticated cuisines, but in the article of corn−bread it was of an inapproachable preeminence. This bread was made of the white corn which North knows not, nor the hapless East; and the buckwheat cakes at breakfast were without blame, and there was a simple variety in the abundance which ought to have satisfied if it did not flatter the choice. The only thing that seemed strangely, that seemed sadly, anomalous in a land flowing with ham and bacon was that the 'Avonek' had not imagined providing either for the guests, no one of whom could have had a religious scruple against them.

The thing, indeed, which was first and last conspicuous in the passengers, was their perfectly American race and character. At the start, when with an acceptable observance of Western steamboat tradition the 'Avonek' left her wharf eight hours behind her appointed time, there were very few passengers; but they began to come aboard at the little towns of both shores as she swam southward and westward, till all the tables were so full that, in observance of another Western steamboat tradition; one did well to stand guard over his chair lest some other who liked it should seize it earlier. The passengers were of every age and condition, except perhaps the highest condition, and they seemed none the worse for being more like Americans of the middle of the last century than of the beginning of this. Their fashions were of an approximation to those of the present, but did not scrupulously study detail; their manners were those of simpler if not sincerer days.

The women kept to themselves at their end of the saloon, aloof from the study of any but their husbands or kindred, but the men were everywhere else about, and open to observation. They were not so open to conversation, for your mid−Westerner is not a facile, though not an unwilling, talker. They sat by their tall, cast−iron stove (of the oval pattern unvaried since the earliest stove of the region), and silently ruminated their tobacco and spat into the clustering, cuspidors at their feet. They would always answer civilly if questioned, and oftenest intelligently, but they asked nothing in return, and they seemed to have none of that curiosity once known or imagined in them by Dickens and other averse aliens. They had mostly faces of resolute power, and such a

looking of knowing exactly what they wanted as would not have promised well for any collectively or individually opposing them. If ever the sense of human equality has expressed itself in the human countenance it speaks unmistakably from American faces like theirs.

They were neither handsome nor unhandsome; but for a few striking exceptions, they had been impartially treated by nature; and where they were notably plain their look of force made up for their lack of beauty. They were notably handsomest in a tall young fellow of a lean face, absolute Greek in profile, amply thwarted with a branching mustache, and slender of figure, on whom his clothes, lustrous from much sitting down and leaning up, grew like the bark on a tree, and who moved slowly and gently about, and spoke with a low, kind voice. In his young comeliness he was like a god, as the gods were fancied in the elder world: a chewing and a spitting god, indeed, but divine in his passionless calm.

He was a serious divinity, and so were all the mid−Western human−beings about him. One heard no joking either of the dapper or cockney sort of cities, or the quaint graphic phrasing of Eastern country folk; and it may have been not far enough West for the true Western humor. At any rate, when they were not silent these men still were serious.

The women were apparently serious, too, and where they were associated with the men were, if they were not really subject, strictly abeyant, in the spectator's eye. The average of them was certainly not above the American woman's average in good looks, though one young mother of six children, well grown save for the baby in her arms, was of the type some masters loved to paint, with eyes set wide under low arched brows. She had the placid dignity and the air of motherly goodness which goes fitly with such beauty, and the sight of her was such as to disperse many of the misgivings that beset the beholder who looketh upon the woman when she is New. As she seemed, so any man might wish to remember his mother seeming.

All these river folk, who came from the farms and villages along the stream, and never from the great towns or cities, were well mannered, if quiet manners are good; and though the men nearly all chewed tobacco and spat between meals, at the table they were of an exemplary behavior. The use of the fork appeared strange to them, and they handled it strenuously rather than agilely, yet they never used their knives shovel−wise, however they planted their forks like daggers in the steak: the steak deserved no gentler usage, indeed. They were usually young, and they were constantly changing, bent upon short journeys between the shore villages; they were mostly farm youth, apparently, though some were said to be going to find work at the great potteries up the river for wages fabulous to home−keeping experience.

One personality which greatly took the liking of one of our tourists was a Kentucky mountaineer who, after three years' exile in a West Virginia oil town, was gladly returning to the home for which he and all his brood−of large and little comely, red−haired boys and girls−had never ceased to pine. His eagerness to get back was more than touching; it was awing; for it was founded on a sort of mediaeval patriotism that could own no excellence beyond the borders of the natal region. He had prospered at high wages in his trade at that oil town, and his wife and children had managed a hired farm so well as to pay all the family expenses from it, but he was gladly leaving opportunity behind, that he might return to a land where, if you were passing a house at meal−time, they came out and made you come in and eat. "When you eat where I've been living you pay fifty cents," he explained. "And are you taking all your household stuff with you?" "Only the cook−stove. Well, I'll tell you: we made the other things ourselves; made them out of plank, and they were not worth−moving." Here was the backwoods surviving into the day of Trusts; and yet we talk of a world drifted hopelessly far from the old ideals!

III.

The new ideals, the ideals of a pitiless industrialism, were sufficiently expressed along the busy shores, where the innumerable derricks of oil− wells silhouetted their gibbet shapes against the horizon, and the myriad chimneys of the foundries sent up the smoke of their torment into the quiet skies and flamed upon the forehead of the evening

like baleful suns. But why should I be so violent of phrase against these guiltless means of millionairing? There must be iron and coal as well as wheat and corn in the world, and without their combination we cannot have bread. If the combination is in the form of a trust, such as has laid its giant clutch upon all those warring industries beside the Ohio and swept them into one great monopoly, why, it has still to show that it is worse than competition; that it is not, indeed, merely the first blind stirrings of the universal cooperation of which the dreamers of ideal commonwealths have always had the vision.

The derricks and the chimneys, when one saw them, seem to have all the land to themselves; but this was an appearance only, terrifying in its strenuousness, but not, after all, the prevalent aspect. That was rather of farm, farms, and evermore farms, lying along the rich levels of the stream, and climbing as far up its beautiful hills as the plough could drive. In the spring and in the Mall, when it is suddenly swollen by the earlier and the later rains, the river scales its banks and swims over those levels to the feet of those hills, and when it recedes it leaves the cornfields enriched for the crop that, has never failed since the forests were first cut from the land. Other fertilizing the fields have never had any, but they teem as if the guano islands had been emptied into their laps. They feel themselves so rich that they part with great lengths and breadths of their soil to the river, which is not good for the river, and is not well for the fields; so that the farmers, whose ease learns slowly, are beginning more and more to fence their borders with the young willows which form a hedge in the shallow wash such a great part of the way up and down the Ohio. Elms and maples wade in among the willows, and in time the river will be denied the indigestion which it confesses in shoals and bars at low water, and in a difficulty of channel at all stages.

Meanwhile the fields flourish in spite of their unwise largesse to the stream, whose shores the comfortable farmsteads keep so constantly that they are never out of sight. Most commonly they are of brick, but sometimes of painted wood, and they are set on little eminences high enough to save them from the freshets, but always so near the river that they cannot fail of its passing life. Usually a group of planted evergreens half hides the house from the boat, but its inmates will not lose any detail of the show, and come down to the gate of the paling fence to watch the 'Avonek' float by: motionless men and women, who lean upon the supporting barrier, and rapt children who hold by their skirts and hands. There is not the eager New England neatness about these homes; now and then they have rather a sloven air, which does not discord with their air of comfort; and very, very rarely they stagger drunkenly in a ruinous neglect. Except where a log cabin has hardily survived the pioneer period, the houses are nearly all of one pattern; their facades front the river, and low chimneys point either gable, where a half−story forms the attic of the two stories below. Gardens of pot−herbs flank them, and behind cluster the corn−cribs, and the barns and stables stretch into the fields that stretch out to the hills, now scantily wooded, but ever lovely in the lines that change with the steamer's course.

Except in the immediate suburbs of the large towns, there is no ambition beyond that of rustic comfort in the buildings on the shore. There is no such thing, apparently, as a summer cottage, with its mock humility of name, up or down the whole tortuous length of the Ohio. As yet the land is not openly depraved by shows of wealth; those who amass it either keep it to themselves or come away to spend it in European travel, or pause to waste it unrecognized on the ungrateful Atlantic seaboard. The only distinctions that are marked are between the homes of honest industry above the banks and the homes below them of the leisure, which it is hoped is not dishonest. But, honest or dishonest, it is there apparently to stay in the house−boats which line the shores by thousands, and repeat on Occidental terms in our new land the river−life of old and far Cathay.

They formed the only feature of their travel which our tourists found absolutely novel; they could clearly or dimly recall from the past every other feature but the houseboats, which they instantly and gladly naturalized to their memories of it. The houses had in common the form of a freight−car set in a flat−bottomed boat; the car would be shorter or longer, with one, or two, or three windows in its sides, and a section of stovepipe softly smoking from its roof. The windows might be curtained or they might be bare, but apparently there was no other distinction among the houseboat dwellers, whose sluggish craft lay moored among the willows, or tied to an elm or a maple, or even made fast to a stake on shore. There were cases in which they had not followed the fall of the river

promptly enough, and lay slanted on the beach, or propped up to a more habitable level on its slope; in a sole, sad instance, the house had gone down with the boat and lay wallowing in the wash of the flood. But they all gave evidence of a tranquil and unhurried life which the soul of the beholder envied within him, whether it manifested itself in the lord of the house−boat fishing from its bow, or the lady coming to cleanse some household utensil at its stern. Infrequently a group of the house− boat dwellers seemed to be drawing a net, and in one high event they exhibited a good−sized fish of their capture, but nothing so strenuous characterized their attitude on any other occasion. The accepted theory of them was that they did by day as nearly nothing as men could do and live, and that by night their forays on the bordering farms supplied the simple needs of people who desired neither to toil nor to spin, but only to emulate Solomon in his glory with the least possible exertion. The joyful witness of their ease would willingly have sacrificed to them any amount of the facile industrial or agricultural prosperity about them and left them slumberously afloat, unmolested by dreams of landlord or tax− gatherer. Their existence for the fleeting time seemed the true interpretation of the sage's philosophy, the fulfilment of the poet's aspiration.

"Why should we only toil, that are the roof and crown of things.

How did they pass their illimitable leisure, when they rested from the fishing−net by day and the chicken−coop by night? Did they read the new historical fictions aloud to one another? Did some of them even meditate the thankless muse and not mind her ingratitude? Perhaps the ladies of the house−boats, when they found themselves−−as they often did−−in companies of four or five, had each other in to "evenings," at which one of them read a paper on some artistic or literary topic.

IV.

The trader's boat, of an elder and more authentic tradition, sometimes shouldered the house−boats away from a village landing, but it, too, was a peaceful home, where the family life visibly went hand−in−hand with commerce. When the trader has supplied all the wants and wishes of a neighborhood, he unmoors his craft and drops down the river's tide to where it meets the ocean's tide in the farthermost Mississippi, and there either sells out both his boat and his stock, or hitches his home to some returning steamboat, and climbs slowly, with many pauses, back to the upper Ohio. But his home is not so interesting as that of the houseboatman, nor so picturesque as that of the raftsman, whose floor of logs rocks flexibly under his shanty, but securely rides the current. As the pilots said, a steamboat never tries to hurt a raft of logs, which is adapted to dangerous retaliation; and by night it always gives a wide berth to the lantern tilting above the raft from a swaying pole. By day the raft forms one of the pleasantest aspects of the river−life, with its convoy of skiffs always searching the stream or shore for logs which have broken from it, and which the skiffmen recognize by distinctive brands or stamps. Here and there the logs lie in long ranks upon the shelving beaches, mixed with the drift of trees and fence−rails, and frames of corn−cribs and hencoops, and even house walls, which the freshets have brought down and left stranded. The tops of the little willows are tufted gayly with hay and rags, and other spoil of the flood; and in one place a disordered mattress was lodged high among the boughs of a water− maple, where it would form building material for countless generations of birds. The fat cornfields were often littered with a varied wreckage which the farmers must soon heap together and burn, to be rid of it, and everywhere were proofs of the river's power to devastate as well as enrich its shores. The dwellers there had no power against it, in its moments of insensate rage, and the land no protection from its encroachments except in the simple device of the willow hedges, which, if planted, sometimes refused to grow, but often came of themselves and kept the torrent from the loose, unfathomable soil of the banks, otherwise crumbling helplessly into it.

The rafts were very well, and the house−boats and the traders' boats, but the most majestic feature of the riverlife was the tow of coal−barges which, going or coming, the 'Avonek' met every few miles. Whether going or coming they were pushed, not pulled, by the powerful steamer which gathered them in tens and twenties before her, and rode the mid−current with them, when they were full, or kept the slower water near shore when they were empty. They claimed the river where they passed, and the 'Avonek' bowed to an unwritten law in giving them the full right of way, from the time when their low bulk first rose in sight, with the chimneys of their steamer towering

above them and her gay contours gradually making themselves seen, till she receded from the encounter, with the wheel at her stern pouring a cataract of yellow water from its blades. It was insurpassably picturesque always, and not the tapering masts or the swelling sails of any sea−going craft could match it.

V.

So at least the travellers thought who were here revisiting the earliest scenes of childhood, and who perhaps found them unduly endeared. They perused them mostly from an easy seat at the bow of the hurricane−deck, and, whenever the weather favored them, spent the idle time in selecting shelters for their declining years among the farmsteads that offered themselves to their choice up and down the shores. The weather commonly favored them, and there was at least one whole day on the lower river when the weather was divinely flattering. The soft, dull air lulled their nerves while it buffeted their faces, and the sun, that looked through veils of mist and smoke, gently warmed their aging frames and found itself again in their hearts. Perhaps it was there that the water− elms and watermaples chiefly budded, and the red−birds sang, and the drifting flocks of blackbirds called and clattered; but surely these also spread their gray and pink against the sky and filled it with their voices. There were meadow−larks and robins without as well as within, and it was no subjective plough that turned the earliest furrows in those opulent fields.

When they were tired of sitting there, they climbed, invited or uninvited, but always welcomed, to the pilothouse, where either pilot of the two who were always on watch poured out in an unstinted stream the lore of the river on which all their days had been passed. They knew from indelible association every ever−changing line of the constant hills; every dwelling by the low banks; every aspect of the smoky towns; every caprice of the river; every−tree, every stump; probably every bud and bird in the sky. They talked only of the river; they cared for nothing else. The Cuban cumber and the Philippine folly were equally far from them; the German prince was not only as if he had never been here, but as if he never had been; no public question concerned them but that of abandoning the canals which the Ohio legislature was then foolishly debating. Were not the canals water−ways, too, like the river, and if the State unnaturally abandoned them would not it be for the behoof of those railroads which the rivermen had always fought, and which would have made a solitude of the river if they could?

But they could not, and there was nothing more surprising and delightful in this blissful voyage than the evident fact that the old river traffic had strongly survived, and seemed to be more strongly reviving. Perhaps it was not; perhaps the fondness of those Ohio−river−born passengers was abused by an illusion (as subjective as that of the buds and birds) of a vivid variety of business and pleasure on the beloved stream. But again, perhaps not. They were seldom out of sight of the substantial proofs of both in the through or way packets they encountered, or the nondescript steam craft that swarmed about the mouths of the contributory rivers, and climbed their shallowing courses into the recesses of their remotest hills, to the last lurking−places of their oil and coal.

VI.

The Avonek was always stopping to put off or take on merchandise or men. She would stop for a single passenger, plaited in the mud with his telescope valise or gripsack under the edge of a lonely cornfield, or to gather upon her decks the few or many casks or bales that a farmer wished to ship. She lay long hours by the wharf−boats of busy towns, exchanging one cargo for another, in that anarchic fetching and carrying which we call commerce, and which we drolly suppose to be governed by laws. But wherever she paused or parted, she tested the pilot's marvellous skill; for no landing, no matter how often she landed in the same place, could be twice the same. At each return the varying stream and shore must be studied, and every caprice of either divined. It was always a triumph, a miracle, whether by day or by night, a constant wonder how under the pilot's inspired touch she glided softly to her moorings, and without a jar slipped from them again and went on her course.

But the landings by night were of course the finest. Then the wide fan of the search−light was unfurled upon the point to be attained and the heavy staging lowered from the bow to the brink, perhaps crushing the willow hedges

in it's fall, and scarcely touching the land before a black, ragged deck−hand had run out through the splendor and made a line fast to the trunk of the nearest tree. Then the work of lading or unlading rapidly began in the witching play of the light that set into radiant relief the black, eager faces and the black, eager figures of the deck−hands struggling up or down the staging under boxes of heavy wares, or kegs of nails, or bales of straw, or blocks of stone, steadily mocked or cursed at in their shapeless effort, till the last of them reeled back to the deck down the steep of the lifting stage, and dropped to his broken sleep wherever he could coil himself, doglike, down among the heaps of freight.

No dog, indeed, leads such a hapless life as theirs; and ah! and ah! why should their sable shadows intrude in a picture that was meant to be all so gay and glad? But ah! and ah! where, in what business of this hard world, is not prosperity built upon the struggle of toiling men, who still endeavor their poor best, and writhe and writhe under the burden of their brothers above, till they lie still under the lighter load of their mother earth?