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PEAPACK PAPERS

BY

ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE

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PEAPACK

PEAPACK.

It was once a favorite amusement of journalistic humorists to provide moderate merriment for the masses by disporting with the names of places, but the time has almost gone by when the mention of Oshkosh, Kalamazoo, Ypsilanti, and Red Dog is regarded as passably funny. The Australian settlements, the English rural villages, and the lakes of Maine, about which Orpheus C. Kerr wrote a long and fairly tedious poem, are no longer provocative of even limited mirth. There still remains, however, a lingering element of the comic in "Peapack," a name at once concise, alliterative and pastoral. I have known grave physicians, solemn brokers, and even learned lawyers—one of the most eminent living members of that profession was born there—to indulge in bursts of glee over it, while others, with less sense of the ridiculous, have expressed serious doubts whether it ever existed, whether it was not a kind of geographical Mrs. Harris; and others still have sought to merge its simple personality in the more sonorous but essentially commonplace appellation of "Gladstone." Pea-

pack is not and never can be Gladstone any more than Tarrytown can be Scarborough, or Whippany, Morristown. It preserves its individuality although it lies but a short railway journey from Hoboken; triumphantly American, notwithstanding that it is comprehended within the county of Somerset and that township of Bedminster which took its name from a hamlet in Somersetshire, and it is not at all envious of Pluckemin, Roxiticus, Piscataway, or Parsippany.

There is no place within my knowledge more seductive to the weary struggler who comes upon it after a life of contention in that high-cliffed valley of torture appropriately denominated "Wall Street," or to the despondent patriot who has dimmed the purity of his soul and impaired the vigor of his intellect in wrestling with the problems of tariff reform, the income tax, the anti-trust laws, direct primaries, the initiative, referendum and recall, and how to be virtuous and happy though rich. "It is one of the quietest places in the whole world," as Irving wrote of his beloved Sleepy Hollow; and "if ever I should wish for a retreat whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this

little valley" or those green, attractive hills. Even the invasion of a few gentle and unobtrusive men of wealth has not impaired its beauty, and the snorts and smoke of the motor-car seldom disturb its profound repose. When, from time to time, the hoarse whistle of a Lackawanna locomotive startles the inoffensive rabbit or puts to flight a casual flock of melancholy crows, the sound dies away quickly and is lost in the hollows of the wood-clad heights or mingles with the hum of the bees or the chant of the locusts.

I cannot learn that even one heroic deed was ever performed within its boundaries, although there may have been many of them which history has omitted to chronicle. I am not aware that any mute, inglorious Milton or any Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood rests under the sod of its ancient cemetery. When Baskingridge was convulsed with the excitement attending the capture of the vainglorious Charles Lee at Mrs. White's tavern on that frosty December morning in 1776; while Pluckemin was thrilling with wonder at the grand *fête* and ball given in honor of the French Alliance—"a most genteel entertainment," according to the patriotic and ponderous Knox,—attended by "above seventy ladies, all of the first *ton* in the State,"

and while the ragged army of Washington was marching patiently back and forth through the classic precincts of Vealtown, on its way to or from Morristown, Peapack preserved its restful calm, its placid coolness, its unruffled equanimity. None of these things moved Peapack.

The historian of these parts, the industrious but often garrulous Melick, tells us that the name is Indian, and that it was applied not only to the north branch of the Raritan (which joins the Allametank or Lamington River, and is not on any account to be confounded with the Rackawack), but also to the old Indian thoroughfare which ran from east to west through northern New Jersey, crossing the Lamington at the falls, and trodden for generations by countless aboriginal moccasins. The "Peapack Patent" was granted by the Proprietors to George Willocks and John Johnstone in 1701, and from that remote period Peapack has watched with somnolent serenity the disappearance of the Indians from the well-worn trail, has listened to the tread of armies, and has witnessed the expulsion of the British rulers, the creation and growth of a powerful republic, the waging of a great Civil War, the quadrennial rescue of the nation from destruction, by

the unselfish efforts of disinterested statesmen, the advent of the automobile, and the arrival of the millionaires, without a quiver of its equable pulse or a quickening of its pacific heart-beat. Thirty years ago the *History of Somerset County*—one of those portentous repositories of wearisome details, crammed with strange and awful portraits of severe-looking rustics adorned with all the infinite variety of bucolic whisker for which they are so famous—records that “the village is located on a road running north and south along Peapack or Lawrence Brook and is a long, straggling village extending about two miles”; and further, that it “now contains a hotel, two grist-mills, post office, two churches (Reformed and Methodist), four stores, three blacksmith shops, three wheelwrights, distillery, six perpetual lime-kilns, and nine set kilns.” There is something quite impressive about a “perpetual lime-kiln,” suggestive of the Pyramids, the Temple of Memnon, the Acropolis at Athens, and of Mr. Richard Swiveller and the Lodge of Glorious Apollos. It typifies the persistent pertinacity of Peapack. The statistical information, so characteristic of American local histories, is useful, perhaps, but not enlivening. Somehow it fails to convey to the mind a notion of the charm of

the place. I confess I do not know how many hotels, distilleries, or even lime-kilns now contribute to its material prosperity, nor do I care. The urban qualities of Peapack are not alluring to me; its rural spirit and the sense of remoteness from what Artemus Ward called "the busy haunts of trade" are what make my Peapack, and neither hotel nor distillery adds to my enjoyment of it. For metropolitan gaiety, the giddy disciples of fashion may hie them to the neighboring city of Vealtown, now Bernardsville, looked down upon by all loyal Peapackians, whose modern name was shamelessly borrowed as history reveals. A Bernardsville burrower in the dust-heaps of antiquity lately felt a momentary glow of pride when, in Barber and Howe's *Historical Collections of New Jersey*—that rather quaint but fascinating volume, embellished with ravishing wood-cuts of Bound Brook, Branchville, and the county buildings at Salem—he came upon the astounding statement that "Bernardsville, formerly called *8 Mile Ferry*, is situated on the Delaware, has a tavern, store, and a canal basin attached to the feeder of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. There is a lattice bridge opposite to this place, connecting it with Taylorsville. This is the spot at which Wash-

ington crossed the Delaware previous to his capture of the Hessians at Trenton." Alas, prematurely exultant Bernardsvillain, it was not the same! Your boastful burgh has a tavern—yea, several of them; but Washington never crossed anything there, except, possibly, Mine Brook, and I fear me that if he had remained for any length of time near its banks, the Hessians would have been the captors. But it is difficult to understand why any one should wish to borrow the name of that Royalist Governor, of whom Trevelyan says: "Since Machiavelli undertook to teach the Medici how principalities might be governed and maintained, no such body of literature was put on paper as that in which Sir Francis Bernard (for his services procured him a baronetcy) instructed George the Third and his Ministers in the art of throwing away a choice portion of a mighty Empire."

Those who regard that nation as happy which has no history, will deem Peapack fortunate in possessing none whatever save the chronicle of the building of a saw-mill and grist-mill in the latter part of the eighteenth century; the construction of Van Dorn's mill in 1808, and subsequently of the three blacksmith shops of Logan, Doren and Ferdinand Van Dorn; and, later

on, the erection of the Methodist and Reformed churches. For many years the annual picnic of the multitudinous Smiths caused much labored facetiousness in the columns of the New York journals, which repeated, year after year, with the monotonous reiteration of newspapers, the same well-worn jests and time-honored pleasantries; but the picnics have fallen into oblivion, and the grounds, once neat and trim, are now shabby and neglected. There is literally nothing here for the antiquarians to dispute about, and careful research fails to disclose even that ordinary possession of a New Jersey village, a house where Washington slept or where he once had his headquarters. This saves much wear and tear on our faculty of credulity; my own has been sorely strained in the effort to believe in the house over by Kimball's Hill as the veritable one in which Tempe Wicks or Wicke, as you may prefer, concealed her famous steed, about which Frank Stockton wrote almost his only poor story; or that the lonely-looking edifice pointed out to me in the fields was once actually a part of the stately mansion of Lord Stirling; or that the pretty modern villa on the road from Lyons to Baskingridge is the genuine inn of Mrs. White, where the redoubtable Charles Lee took lodging ap-

parently for the express purpose of facilitating his seizure by Harcourt's cavalry. Peapack scorns to impose such arduous tasks upon the visiting stranger. Whether in the future its short and simple annals are to be continued in their innocence and brevity is sadly uncertain. In recent days the telephone—ruthless destroyer of human tranquillity—has come to disturb its peacefulness, and I fear that golf and tennis will follow soon; perhaps even “bridge” may bring bad passions and unseemly strife into this virtuous community. It is strange how fashions repeat themselves. Not very many years ago, cards were resorted to chiefly by young and “sporty” men or by elderly, respectable persons. In our modern craze for them, we are reviving the experience of the eighteenth century, when “Whist, that desolating Hun,” overran society, and Johnson and Mrs. Chapone said in the *Rambler*: “At card table, however brilliant, I have always thought my visit lost, for I could know nothing of the company but their clothes and their faces. I saw their looks clouded at the beginning of every game, with a uniform solicitude, now and then in its progress varied with a short triumph; at one time wrinkled with cunning, at another deadened by despondency, or, by accident, flushed with

rage at the unskilful or unlucky play of a partner. From such assemblies * * * I was quickly forced to retire; they were too trifling for me when I was grave, and too dull when I was cheerful." Hannah More said that Mrs. Montagu and herself were "the two monsters in creation who never touch a card." We cannot forget, though, Doctor Johnson's confession: "I am sorry I have not learnt to play at cards. It is very useful in life; it generates kindness and consolidates society." I do not know about the "kindness," but it certainly does "consolidate society." I believe that it has not yet seized upon the fashionable circles of Peapack, but I have occasionally observed some of the male citizens beguiling themselves by toying with "the devil's picture-books," as well as with some curious, flat, circular objects of divers hues, and it would not be surprising if cards ultimately became popular in Peapack.

There has been foxless fox hunting there, or in the immediate vicinity; but I cannot say that there has been any of the sport called "polo." It is an amusement too violent and dangerous to suit the tranquil folk of this neighborhood. Southey mentions—but he may be merely quoting from the *Letters* of Don Manuel

Alvarez Espriella—that at Bristol he saw “a shaved monkey shown for a fairy, and a shaved bear, in a check waistcoat and trousers, sitting in a great chair as an Ethiopian savage”; and Southey’s son-in-law, John Wood Warter, B. D., adds in a note: “I saw the like disgusting exhibition in Wolverhampton about the year 1817. The poor beast was then called, as I well recollect, the *Polo Savage*.” I never knew exactly what he meant, but from this reminiscent observation we must conclude that nearly a hundred years ago the polo player was even more wild and awe-inspiring than he is now. I can understand about the trousers, but the allusion to a check waistcoat is puzzling, for it has never been my privilege to behold either a bear, shaved or otherwise, or a devotee of polo thus attired, that variety of costume being generally associated with statesmen of Brooklyn.

But at present it is still a notable place in which to do nothing at all, and we have the word of Thomas Gray that “doing nothing is a most amusing business.” In our scientific age even the farming is reduced to a mere matter of machinery, and it is no longer possible, much to the sorrow of the indolent, to lie idly on a warm June day and enjoy

“The music of the scythes that glide and leap,
The young men whistling, as their great arms sweep,
And all the perfume and sweet sense of sleep.”

One is more apt to hear the emphatic remarks of encouragement or censure, addressed by the driver to his team, although there is a certain melody in the mowing machine and the steel sulky rake. Still, they are not clamorous for innovations at Peapack. The brains of tillers of the soil, as we all know, are naturally unprogressive and conservative, which is no doubt the reason why the farmer is such a pet of our Congressmen. Peapack is not possessed of that potent promoter of civilization, a Carnegie Library, but it has its weekly newspaper, full of social intelligence and patent insides, where one may read the pleasant intelligence that Miss Stokes is “visiting with” the Noakeses, or the rather startling announcement “to the public” that Miss Snyder has “purchased a stock of ladies and children’s dry goods and notions,” and “will be pleased to show her line to prospective customers.” But the innocent little paper does not drive the public to frenzy over questions of politics, and the normal citizen cares as little for them as Gilbert White of Selborne did for the corruption of Walpole or the fortunes of Pitt or Newcastle, pre-

ferring to study the habits of Timothy the Tortoise. One may dwell there in comfort and refuse to be unhappy because some one else is amassing a fortune larger than his own. Nor does any one appear to suffer from the apprehension that his right of absolute equality with all others is about to be destroyed by designing plutocrats. They have not been trained by oratorical ex-schoolmasters to be dissatisfied with their lot. They are not believers in the sacred duty of him who happens to be discontented about something, to get his neighbors in a ferment over the matter. Nevertheless they are not wholly indifferent to politics truly so-called.

A persistent notoriety-seeker, one of the sort of humbugs so dear to the cheap magazines, not long ago, in the presence of a large audience, delivered himself of this platitude: "The most dangerous citizen in any city is the man who affects indifference and considers himself above politics, and no war can more surely accomplish the ruin than such a citizen." This has the same flavor which pervades some remarks made recently by a District Attorney of lofty ideals, who proclaimed that it was the worst crime conceivable by the human mind to arrange a combination of manufac-

turers and dealers in wire! Most decent people "consider themselves above" the politics of the day, although they are not "indifferent" to them. I may "consider myself above" the picking of pockets, and yet not be indifferent to it. But politics in its true sense—"the art or science of conducting the affairs of communities"—is something quite different from the "politics" which, by a perversion of terms, is used to characterize the business of obtaining money and offices under false pretences, the game of graft and greed as it is played by the professionals who have made the name of "politician" synonymous with "trickster." There are no politicians in Peapack, and I doubt if its voters would care a straw whether they had a "Commission" form of government or an ordinary Board of Pirates to rule over them.

As to the eternal feminine, the sage of Peapack believes in letting the dear things vote if they will only not grow so unbecomingly warm and angry about it. This venerable personage once submitted to be "interviewed" with all the coyness of a reluctant statesman just returned from foreign sojournings and awaiting on the pier with gentle resignation the onslaught of the reporters. "We learn from the *Travels of Cyrus*," he

observed, "that the Lycians were governed by women and found it the easiest and most convenient form of government. Their queens had a council of Senators who assisted them with their advice. The men proposed good laws, but the women caused them—that is, the laws—to be executed. The sweetness and mildness of the sex prevented all the mischief of tyranny, and the counsel of the wise Senators qualified that inconsistency with which women are reproached." When I thought of the sweetness and mildness of the Pankhursts and the Milhollands, tempered by the wisdom of the Jeff Davises (of Arkansas) and the Martines, I could but bow my acquiescence. Peapack was only maintaining ancient precedents. Candidly, a slight acquaintance with some of the good dames of Peapack confirms me in my long-cherished belief that the world will never be perfectly happy until the women do all the voting and absolutely exclude the other sex from the ballot-box. Truly, the men have made a rather bad job of it, all things considered; the women could not possibly do worse. The mistake which the so-called "suffragettes" have made during their long years of striving has been in not demanding enough; they have been too conservative, too modest about the matter. As for the "incon-

sistency" maliciously referred to by Cyrus, there is not much to be said without a blush by those masculine leaders of political thought in our day, some of whom brag of having taught a certain creed during two decades, but discovered that they had been utterly wrong as soon as they began to hear themselves "talked of for the Presidency."

The liberal views of the sage led me to beseech my aged friend to favor me with some of his ideas respecting the true theory of government, but here I regretted to find that he was sadly unprogressive. Instead of quoting from the works of those enlightened philosophers, Bryan, Bourne, and Wickersham, he betrayed his fondness for long-refuted sophistries by taking from the shelf a well-worn volume and reading to me this passage from Macaulay's review of Southey's *Colloquies on Society*:

"It is not by the intermeddling of Mr. Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilization, and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope. Our rulers will best

promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the State. Let the Government do this, the People will assuredly do the rest."

This was so hopelessly old-fashioned that I could not refrain from informing him that this theory had long since been exploded; that the function of government, in the modern view, was to extend itself to all fields of business and even of private life; to discourage trade; to drive away capital; to deter men from wicked extravagance by imposing heavy taxes upon their property while living and to lead them away from habits of pernicious accumulation by robbing their estates after they were dead; to support and maintain at the public cost the idle, the foolish, and the unthrifty; to lavish the revenue in all sorts of fantastical enterprises; nay, more, to make all laws and its administration depend upon the passing whim of a chance majority

swayed by the newest demagogue. He shook his head incredulously and assured me that it would never do for Peapack. I inquired, "Why not?" and he replied, "Because." I saw that his woman-suffrage ideas were having their effect.

Bearing in mind that he had inflicted upon me an extract from an obsolete book, I said to him: "O man of Peapack, listen to me while I unfold unto you the wisdom of an English person named Brooks, as it is revealed to us in the *North American Review* of August, 1911:

"Half a century ago the instinctive feeling of the average man was that the less there was of government the better. So long as the institutions under which he lived fulfilled, with reasonable efficiency, the *rôle* of a superior policeman and protected personal and property rights, he was content. It was all, or almost all, he asked of them. He lacked what we should call to-day the larger civic consciousness; he had little conception of a *régime* powerful for positive as well as for negative ends, and of a community organized and using its collective strength and energy for purposes of constructive and universal beneficence; it hardly occurred to him to make of local or national adminis-

tration an agency for the active promotion of the common welfare; he retained in something like its pristine freshness the robust pioneer spirit of individualism; and so far from welcoming, he resented and strongly opposed everything that smacked of official meddlesomeness. We are far removed from him to-day; he seems in our eyes a poor, stunted, almost inexplicable figure."

"These be fine words," he observed serenely. "I read the article you mention. The writer displays his learning and perspicacity by referring to the late General Winfield Scott Hancock as 'not the least shrewd of American statesmen,' and he belongs to a class of beings who earn a precarious living by that kind of silliness. Those who know the men who make up our Legislatures—State and National—are unable to regard them seriously as agents 'for the promotion of the common welfare' or to imagine them engaged in 'constructive and universal beneficence.' Theoretically, they should be, but it requires a much larger 'civic consciousness' than I possess to fancy them organizing the 'collective strength and energy' of the community for beneficent purposes. When we study the characters of our modern Solons who occupy so much space in the

Senate House and in the muck-raking magazines, we can understand why they should find the statesmen of the past 'inexplicable,' but I doubt whether they would venture to consider their predecessors as 'poor' or 'stunted.' Certainly, in Peapack, Washington and Franklin, Madison and Webster, continue to loom more largely than La Follette of Wisconsin or Owen of Oklahoma."

I endeavored to make it plain to him that no individual should seek to exalt himself above his fellows, either by cultivating his mind or by practising industry and economy, for thereby he may destroy equality. I reminded him that Jefferson and a whole Congress had declared that all men were created equal and were endowed with certain inalienable rights, including "the pursuit of happiness," so that whatever *you* do to interfere with *my* pursuit of happiness is wrong, although the rule does not work both ways. But he insisted that it is not true; that Doctor Eliot says it is not true, which ought to be conclusive; that Jefferson was referring only to political rights; that he, Jefferson, did not believe it himself, for he owned slaves. I answered that the illustrious Virginian did not mean to forbid slavery any more than the inspired author of the "Sherman

Act" meant to forbid all trade combinations; and it has been finally adjudged that this author intended to prohibit only those which might be distasteful to some gentlemen for the time being occupying seats on something which is called "the Supreme Bench," although it is really nine large and not particularly comfortable-looking chairs. When he prayed to be told just how one could determine in advance what would or would not be agreeable to the nine gentlemen of the black robes, I could only say, "Guess." "And," he persisted, "if one guesses wrong?" "Then," I responded oracularly, "he is an outlaw, guilty of the most atrocious crime known to society; he will be pursued by fierce Attorney-Generals, hounded by hundreds of hungry District Attorneys, harassed by hordes of special counsel, bent on glory and a hundred thousand a year, not including disbursements, and it would be better for that man if he had never been born." "Let us talk of something worth while," he sighed; "these are but the follies of a day."

It may be inferred that the dwellers in this secluded Paradise are fond of their books; not so much of those which are flavored with tabasco and which scream at us from title-page to colophon, as of those which are rest-

ful and soothing, the perusal whereof is like a pleasant loitering through quiet lanes and not a furious prancing in a crowded thoroughfare. They are what Mr. James Hosmer Penniman, in his *Books and How to Make the Most of Them*, calls "nomadic readers," complaining severely of them because, he says, they read "as the gypsies live, camping everywhere but for a night, without purpose and without profit." To a slow, dry intellect such reading may seem to be without profit, if life is to be restricted to mere profit-gaining; but the genuine lover of books understands how to derive from it a very substantial profit—a mind well stored and contented. The gypsies camp, I fancy, for a purpose, to wit: that of obtaining needed rest; and it may sometimes be better to camp with the gypsies than to be immured in a palace or shut up in a tenement house. You might as well tell me that I can derive no health and happiness from a ramble in the woods or an aimless strolling in the fields, but must devote myself wholly to a formal "constitutional" or a walk from home to office. He must, indeed, be a stupid reader, a veritable prig of a reader, who always seats himself solemnly with a "useful" book in hand, saying complacently to himself, "I am reading for a purpose; I am bent upon

a profit." Such a man would scorn the *Essays of Elia*, the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, the *Sketch Book* of Irving and nearly all the fiction which has amused and comforted mankind, and betake himself to a text-book on Elementary Logic or a treatise on Quarternions.

It must be admitted, though reluctantly, that in point of fact I have never seen a resident of Peapack in the act of reading anything but a newspaper, and my judgment concerning his literary taste is not empirical but the result of *à priori* reasoning. To be strictly truthful, I have never enjoyed the blessing of living in Peapack. In that respect it has been my Carcassonne, almost within my reach, but never fully attained. My occasional glimpses of it have been sadly infrequent. But I have presumed upon slight acquaintance to borrow its name as a title for a few "papers" which make no pretensions to utility. As Taylor, the Water Poet, said of some of his own work, "The chiefest cause why I wrote this was on set purpose to please myself." The Pennimans will flout them, the intellectual Gradgrinds will pass them contemptuously by; they will not be found to teach any great moral lesson or to inculcate any of the "uplifting" principles so

popular in our day, when we are all so concerned about the uplifting of other people. Perhaps it may be well for a man of becoming modesty not to strain his uplifting energies too much, but to try to exercise them on himself for awhile and not exhaust his powers in the effort to uplift all the rest of the world, which will surely get along somehow without his solicitous interference. At all events, these papers may possibly find some readers—in Peapack.

A CHAPTER OF TRIFLES

A CHAPTER OF TRIFLES.

The reading division of mankind seems to be composed of two brigades; one absorbed in the contemplation of the serious and overpowering problems of science and sociology, devoted to the modern "fad" of endeavoring to make all men perfect and absolutely equal by writing books and organizing "Societies for the Improvement" of everything and everybody, while the other is chiefly occupied about trifles—the details of automobile and aviation statistics, polo scores, batting averages, golf records, novels, Public Service Commission reports, and—in a very small degree—the gossip of literature. Mr. Street says in *Books and Things*: "It is a reading age and country and our people are at present trivial in their interests; inevitably what they read will be trivial also; most of their favorite novels are trivial in effect." He is referring, of course, to his own country and to works of fiction, but his remark is applicable to us and to the products of our presses. There is nothing especially new in this criticism of popular preferences. We are apt to sneer at the tastes of the majority, fancying that only we of

the select minority are competent to judge with discrimination. Fanny Burney said of Sir Philip Jennings Clerk that "he was a professed minority man," and many of us like to affect that pose, particularly if we belong to the class of the unappreciated. Long ago that tedious and eccentric *litterateur*, Sir Egerton Brydges—who, to give him his due, proclaimed in his *Anti-Critic* "the folly of the cry against multiplying books"—wrote in his *Autobiography*: "What are so frivolous and insufferably foolish as many of the popular books? They are not only trite and vulgar, but misrepresent everything both of principles and manners." He knew that he himself was not popular, and he spoke with feeling. Unappreciated authors are apt to groan about the folly of the day and the decadence of literature, and one should not take them as seriously as they take themselves.

It is true, nevertheless, that we occasionally encounter manifestations of dulness which tend to impair our confidence in the public taste; but they are found chiefly in the vapid utterances of our daily press. It was quite startling, but in a way it was comforting to a benighted New Yorker, to discover in the *Boston Globe* of July 18, 1911—the "*Boston Globe*," be it remembered—this evidence of the present state of culture

in our modern Athens: "Centenary of the birth of William Makepeace Thackeray, born July 18, 1811, in Calcutta. Time can be spent to better advantage than in reading his novels." It is undoubtedly true that "time may be spent to better advantage" than in reading novels at all; possibly in perusing the writings of Burton J. Hendrick, or of Judson C. Welliver, or the illuminating disquisitions contained in the *Globe*; or, perhaps, in the case of editors, pursuing a course of elementary instruction in the use of the English language. But what better illustrates the petty vulgarity of the sensational newspaper than this silly sneer at the man who has delighted and inspired the intelligent readers of two or three generations, and whose fame is secure in the minds of all lovers of literature? For having once carelessly ventured to express a sneaking preference for Anthony Trollope as a teller of stories, I was pilloried by a critic as "a very small dog, barking at the heels of Thackeray." I deny the barking, which existed wholly in the critic's imagination, but it affords to me a sort of mild revenge to call the *Globe* person a very pestiferous mosquito buzzing about the good, gray head of the greatest of English novelists.

In spite of the newspapers, I doubt whether the interests or the reading of our day are any more trivial than they were in past generations. People do not read as much poetry as they did a hundred years ago when poetry was a very serious matter, or as many verbose and dreary dissertations on theological subjects as they did in preceding centuries or in New England during colonial times, when they appear to have been wholly devoid of cheerfulness until they had a Revolution. The good, old books are still loved and appreciated. It was but a few days ago when I came upon a laudatory review in the *Sun*, of a new volume called "Comfort Found in Old Books," by Mr. George Hamlin Fitch, where we are taught that there are things worthy of attention in the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, Don Quixote, Paradise Lost, Boswell's Johnson, and other tolerably well-known works. I had always supposed that I myself had uttered more venerable platitudes about books than any other living person, but I yield humbly to Fitch. He tells us, for example, that "to discuss favorite books with congenial associates is one of the greatest pleasures of life as well as one of the best tests of knowledge." In the words of Joey Ladle, "Arter that ye may all on ye get to bed."

There are more books printed now than ever before, but I do not think that there are too many. The complaint about "too many books" is as old as printing itself, and I am not sure that it is not even older. We have heard it from the most unexpected sources. Does not Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* thus deliver himself? "What a catalogue of new books all this year, all this age (I say) have our *Franc-furt* marts, our domestic marts, brought out! * * * Who can read them? As already we shall have a vast *chaos* and confusion of Books, we are oppressed with them, our eyes ache with reading, our fingers with turning." His greater and wiser contemporary, with more philosophical calmness, suggests a remedy. "The opinion of plenty is among the causes of want," said Bacon, "and the great quantity of books maketh a shew rather of superfluity than lack; which surcharge, nevertheless, is not to be remedied by making no more books, but by making more good books, which, as the serpent of Moses, might devour the serpents of the enchanters." More than three hundred years ago, Barnabe Rich, the translator of Herodotus, wrote in *A New Description of Ireland*: "One of the diseases of this age is the multitude of books, that doth so overcharge the world

that it is not able to digest the abundance of idle matter that is every day hatched and brought into the world." After all, few books are absolutely bad, except perhaps those of Mr. Francis Gribble, who years ago kindled my wrath by sneering at Hawthorne, and who has been engaged for a considerable time in the fabrication of literary omelets composed of defective eggs, such as his *Life of Rachel*. He is one of those literary scavengers who, in a biography of Alexander Hamilton, would find little to talk about except the Reynolds affair, or in a "Life of George Eliot" would devote his energies chiefly to her irregularities of private conduct. In England, they call a certain sort of writing "Birrelling," and a pleasant sort it is; no doubt a certain other sort, extremely unpleasant, may well be called "Gribbling," although I do not assert any claim of originality in the matter, for the same idea must have occurred to others. My chief wonder is that this man has been dealt with so gently by the reviewers.

Most of us are fond of trifles, literary and otherwise; they divert us and give us comfort. But everyone has a hearty scorn of other people's trifles, being unfamiliar with them. "We all have a dark feeling of resistance towards people we have never met," says

Chesterton, "and a profound and manly dislike of the authors we have never read." I am conscious that the trifles which are pleasant to me are odious to large numbers of my intelligent fellow-beings, and I know that I detest theirs and would gladly forbid their enjoyment if I were a legislature in a "progressive" State. I have a friend, charming and scholarly, who for many years has carefully noted the state of the thermometer at the hour of his rising, and keeps the record of his observations. I knew another—one of the founders of the Grolier Club—who carried with him a memorandum book in which he set down the names of all the sleeping-cars he encountered, with divers particulars about their interiors. I cannot comprehend what satisfaction is to be derived from such labors; but my own hobbies may be just as distasteful to sensible persons. Perhaps that is why I am often "called names." A wise and decent newspaper in New York recently dubbed me "an antiquarian," because I had written of Francis Jeffrey, who died in 1853. No doubt sixty years ago is, to the journalist of to-day, a period of remote antiquity, and the man who troubles himself about anything which was done or written then, is a dry-as-dust burrower in a far-distant past. That may be a reason why, in the

columns of our favorite morning or evening paper and even in our magazines, we are constantly coming upon alleged novelties which were just as new to our great-grandfathers as they appear to be to the joyous youth of the twentieth century. Perhaps it is for the best, and nobody is actually injured by the imposition often practised innocently. We are all of us apt to think that because a thing is new to us, it must be an original discovery of our own; particularly those of us who never received a true education, but have plumed ourselves upon the fact that *we* never wasted precious years in silly colleges, but "educated" ourselves in our own way, untrammelled by the bonds of a discarded past. I have sometimes wondered what the ideas of Mr. Carnegie about education really were. Judging from some of his utterances, they must be very much like Mrs. Todgers's idea of a wooden leg.

I cannot conceal the fact, if I would, that I am a little wounded by the accusation of being an "antiquarian," partly because I have not "the sweet consciousness of guilt." A real antiquarian who deals with things truly ancient and recondite, has a certain dignity even if this lively generation does look upon him with a sort of pity akin to that with which a lordly Pan-

hard regards a modest road-wagon, or that which a soaring aeroplane feels for the eclipsed Panhard. I am aware that in using the name "Panhard" I am displaying the antiquarian's alleged ignorance of modern things; I remember that name because it is appropriately ugly, for ordinarily I look upon the automobile as "a deed without a name."

The luckless citizen who has been unsuccessful in avoiding a rampaging motor car has a natural shiver of indignation when he reads in the daily press that he is "an aged man of fifty," and I own that I am justly incensed at this epithet of "antiquarian." One never thinks of "the ancients"—Plato, Tarquin, Julius Cæsar, and the like—as infants in short clothes. So "antiquarian" conveys the idea of a man wearing spectacles of enormous size, bowed with his burden of useless information and clad in a dilapidated swallow-tailed coat well covered with the dust of what are commonly called "musty tomes" and odorous of mouldering parchment. Not so irritating is the charge of having erred in bestowing upon the great purveyor of paradoxes, the aforesaid Gilbert Chesterton, the name of "George" instead of the one conferred upon him by his sponsors in baptism, because the indictment is well founded. The

right to blunder occasionally is an inalienable one to which every writer has become entitled by prescription. It is consecrated by its association with the great. Readers of Trevelyan's "Life" will remember the catastrophe which a wandering attention or a perverse pen brought upon the "cock-sure" Macaulay. The *Essay on Warren Hastings*, as it first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, contained in the very second paragraph this remarkable reference to the author of the book which Macaulay was reviewing: "More eminent men than Mr. Gleig have written nearly as ill as he, when they have stooped to similar drudgery. It would be unjust to estimate Goldsmith by 'The Vicar of Wakefield' or Scott by the 'Life of Napoleon.'" It is not surprising that the horrified Macaulay, finding this strange misfortune staring him boldly in the face as the printed error always does after having hidden itself with shrinking modesty in the manuscript, hurried to point out to Macvey Napier the "absurd blunder," with this sad confession: "I have not, I am sorry to say, the consolation of being able to blame either you or the printer; for it must have been a slip of my own pen. I have put 'The Vicar of Wakefield' instead of the 'History of Greece.'" "

It is easy to explain an error like that, but not so easy to understand how the author of that interesting work, *The Victorian Chancellors*—Mr. J. B. Atlay, “of Lincoln’s Inn, barrister at law”—came to insert this note, referring to Basil Montagu, the lawyer and scholar: “And the husband of Mrs. Montagu, Queen of the Blue-stockings.” Elizabeth Montagu, who held that royal title, fifty years the senior of Basil, married Edward Montagu twenty-eight years before the birth of the accomplished editor of Bacon. Mr. Atlay elsewhere assures us that “President Jefferson” approved a declaration of war against Great Britain in June, 1812, some three years after the Sage of Monticello had given place to Madison. That is pardonable in an Englishman; but when a writer deliberately perpetrates such a blunder as the one about Montagu, which was not committed *currente calamo*, we cannot help feeling a doubt about the accuracy of all the rest of his historical and biographical information.

The late Mr. W. E. Henley, who had an attractive style, much originality and a very unpleasant disposition, due possibly to ill health, observed that: “An American literary journal once assured its readers that Congreve has ‘a niche in the Valhalla of Ben Jonson.’

The remark is injudicious, of course, even for a literary American." Whether there has ever been such a thing, strictly speaking, as "an American literary journal," may be doubted. Perhaps the New York *Evening Post* comes near to it, although it does not formally lay claim to the title; and it is a delight to the soul of one whom it has treated very kindly—such is the depravity of man—to discover the journal which boasts of Bryant, Godwin and Godkin as editors of bygone years, tripping in manner following: "There are times when we would like to believe that * * * Oliver Wendell Holmes will retain fame for his 'Autocrat at (*sic*) the Breakfast Table,' his 'Old Ironsides,' and his 'Chambered Nautilus,' and not for his 'Father William' only." In a day or two after the appearance of this editorial outgiving, an unliterary morning contemporary, in justifiable glee, burst forth in glad rejoicings, saying: "There are also times when one would like to believe that Bryant will retain fame for his 'Thanatopsis' and 'Lines to a Water Fowl,' and not for 'Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?' But there is no reason why Southey's estimable and moral verses about Father William should be despised even when they are attributed to Holmes."

Nor is there any reason why the aforesaid dictatorial and frequently offensive Mr. W. E. Henley should miscall the great French critic "M. *Henri Taine*" as he does in his essay on Fielding. Many people with less pretensions know that the critic's name was "Hippolyte Adolphe Taine," although John Durand's translation of the *History of English Literature*, published in 1872, does bear "Henri Taine" on the title-page. No "literary American," judicious or otherwise, would be guilty of Henley's offence, but Taine was a Frenchman and we must assume, I suppose, that he is unworthy to have his name remembered by a literary Englishman.

There is probably little profit in the investigation and exposure of trifling literary inaccuracies; they are generally unimportant, and my slip about Chesterton is not of much consequence to anybody except to those queer persons who busy themselves in detecting authors, particularly poets and novelists, in errors about the moon. For some occult reason, fiction-writers are perpetually in trouble with that interesting satellite, causing her to rise and to set at unusual hours and in impossible places, to be eclipsed when she should not be eclipsed, and to shine when she has no astronomical

right to shine. In *King Solomon's Mines*, Rider Haggard eclipsed her when she was new, and Sir Walter Besant made her rise in the east at two o'clock in the morning, although that is of no more consequence than the amazing lessons in natural history presented to us in dear old *Swiss Family Robinson* or in Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*. No less a personage than Robert Louis Stevenson had difficulties with Luna in *Prince Otto*, as Sir Walter Scott had with the sun in *The Antiquary*. Like Artemus Ward, every novelist should have "a good moonist" at hand when he is about to perform lunar exploits. Historical misstatements are of a different order, for they may do serious harm by misleading the unwary. When McMaster confuses John Armstrong of the *Newburg Addresses* with John Armstrong the father, or when Doctor Woodrow Wilson derives the name of the battle of Tippecanoe from that of Tecumseh's brother, "the Prophet," they not only offend the microscopic eye of the "antiquarian," but they misinform the innocent student. The world has been afflicted with many such proofs of carelessness. Mr. Powell, in *Excursions in Libraria*, tells of an eminent professor who published a series of lectures which he had delivered before a "guileless university audi-

ence," in one whereof occurred the following typical passage: "About this time the young Earl of Shrewsbury, riding down the leafy lanes of ——, was met and cut down by a party of Roundheads." "This," says Powell, "smacks as much of orthodox English history as the paragraph repeated by 'Alice' in 'Wonderland,' and beginning 'Edwin and Morcar, the Earls of Mercia and Northumbria.' But a truculent and hostile reviewer, entering upon the picturesque scene, pointed out with ill-concealed exultation, that, apart from other inaccuracies, the Earl of Shrewsbury in question (whose title was, it seems, correctly given), being fifty-four years of age, was no longer young, that the lanes—it being January—were presumably not 'leafy,' and finally, that the Earl was not 'met' or 'cut down,' but (though that is little matter to us in the year 1895) shot with a musket ball as he was endeavoring to escape." But the most reprehensible mistakes are those of historical misjudgment.

Mr. J. Holland Rose, the careful biographer of Napoleon, ordinarily as dry as he is accurate, affords an example of the manner in which a sober and sedate chronicler now and then indulges in extraordinary historical vaticination. He says in regard to the proposed

flight to America, after Waterloo: "If he (Napoleon) had gone to the United States, who would have competed with him for the Presidency?" If Mr. Rose possessed the faintest trace of humor, one might suppose that he was wandering into the regions of pleasantry. Napoleon, who did not speak a word of English, would have been a famous candidate and might have aroused the enthusiasm of the Federalists of New England and the Democrats of the West, but he would have found a few good-sized obstacles in his way—constitutional ones especially. It is easier to fancy him climbing into the Papal chair than to think of him as occupying the White House. Emperor he might have sought to be, but in this country in 1815 there was a slight prejudice against Emperors, and, on the whole, it is safe to say that Mr. Rose's inquiry involves a preposterous exercise of imagination.

The late Richard Holt Hutton, of the *Spectator*, was an estimable editor and essayist, whose grave and labored performances are somewhat prosy. His "Literary Essays," published some fifty years ago, must, however, have been of interest to his countrymen, for they passed through a number of editions, the latest appearing, I think, in 1903. They belong to the class

of productions which affect readers less by their soundness or originality than by their impressive solemnity of judgment which causes them to possess that air of finality so satisfying to some minds. I suppose there is no terrestrial being more distinctly awe-inspiring than the editor of an English literary periodical. Among these "Essays" there is a study of Nathaniel Hawthorne, appreciative enough in a literary way, but condescending withal after the old-fashioned English style. Among other strange things, Mr. Hutton says: "In the great Civil War his (Hawthorne's) sympathies, as might be expected, were with *the trimming Buchanans and Douglasses* of the hour, and not with Mr. Lincoln, of whom he spoke slightly as a man incapable of true statesmanship." It is needless to enter into a full explanation of Hawthorne's attitude towards the political questions of his day; but the reference to "Douglass"—meaning, no doubt, Stephen Arnold Douglas—is curiously inept and unjust. Douglas died on June 3, 1861, when the "great Civil War" was barely seven weeks old; and if there is one incident in his career which preserves his honorable fame, it is the exhibition of his loyalty to the Union in 1861 and his hearty support of Lincoln, the man who had defeated

him for the Presidency. Whatever mistakes he may have committed, he was no "trimmer." It is a mockery of fate that his name should be thus associated with that of Buchanan, against whom he had for years been fighting with a bitterness seldom equalled in our political history. Apart from its historical inaccuracy, this little passage illustrates the irresistible tendency of English writers to distort the names of our public men. Even J. Comyns Carr, in a recent book of reminiscences, wishing to say something pleasant of George W. Childs, insists on calling him "Child" again and again, and Lord Jeffrey wrote of "Mr. Maddison" and "Mr. Munroe."* We find Lady St. Helier (better known, perhaps, as Lady Jeune) in her *Memories of Fifty Years*, describing her troubles at Salt Lake City in 1872, arising from the alleged fact that "General Maclellan was on a tour of inspection and was staying there with his staff," whereas McClellan had left the army in 1864; and speaking of Judah P. Benjamin, although she gives his name correctly because he lived in England, she says that he "attained the highest legal position in his own country, that, namely, of Attorney-General of the

*Even Trevelyan, the excellent historian of the American Revolution, praises the fifth President under the name of *Alexander* Monroe, Vol. II, Part 2, 84.

Southern Confederacy! The English are not ashamed of such blunders, because of their well-settled conviction that nothing which is not English is worth caring about.

Hawthorne died in 1864, and if he misjudged Lincoln in the early years of the Rebellion, he had goodly company not only in his own land, but in the land of Hutton. An instance of the wisdom and prophetic powers of Sir George Cornwall Lewis, and incidentally of Walter Bagehot, may be found in Bagehot's *Biographical Studies*. "The need of a definite aim," says Bagehot, writing in 1864 and referring to Lewis, "ran through all his speculations. To take an example from the foreign politics now most interesting to us—American politics—'I have never,' said Sir George Lewis, in a letter of March, 1861, now lying before me, 'been able, either in conversation or by reading, to obtain an answer to the question: What will the North do if they beat the South? To restore the old Union would be an absurdity. What other state of things does that village lawyer, Lincoln, contemplate as the fruit of victory? It seems to me that the men now in power at Washington are just such persons as in this country get possession of a disreputable joint stock company. There is almost

the same amount of ability and honesty.' After nearly three years of experience it would be difficult to describe Washington more justly. But we do not cite the instance to prove Sir George Lewis's power of prediction, so much as to prove his unflinching desire for a distinct aim."* So one would suppose; but it does not seem to profit a man very much to strive for "a distinct aim" if the aim is all wrong.

Our Civil War has always been a stumbling-block for the English. They made a false start and large numbers of them are even at this day sadly befogged about it. Some of them still believe that it was a war between North America and South America, but the best of them are usually in hopeless geographical confusion concerning us, reminding us of the Londoner who wrote to a friend in "the States" to ask if there were any buffalo in New York, and received the reply that "there is *one* Buffalo in New York." Still, we are almost as ignorant about Australia, and America is about as remote for an untravelled Englishman as Australia is for us. They are still convinced that an American always "guesses," is always in a hurry, and drinks "slings" and "cobblers," although subsisting chiefly

*Biographical Studies (1899), pp. 359-360.

upon ice-water; but I have no doubt that there are Americans who would look for kangaroos in the streets of Sydney and expect to encounter emus in the thoroughfares of Melbourne. I had a courier once who spent a weary hour endeavoring to convince me that Brooklyn is in New Jersey, but he was an Austrian and it turned out that he was thinking of Hoboken; and on a steamer which was passing the Scilly Islands I heard a lady remark with conscious pride and in unmistakable Bostonese accents, "We have just seen Sicily." However, no one but Dickens ever met an American who believed that Queen Victoria dwelt in the Tower of London.

Musical references are apt to be pitfalls for the man who does not know but merely assumes to know. The "sparkling adagio" mentioned by Charles Reade in *Peg Woffington* and "the grand old masses of Mendelssohn" discovered by Ouida, illustrate the perils of the inexperienced. Reade surely should have escaped, for he had a mania for violins and possessed a lot of curious lore about them. Perhaps Tennyson nodded when he made his orchestra for the ball in *Maud* consist of "flute, violin, and bassoon." Mr. Sutherland Edwards kindly attempts to defend the Laureate by suggesting that

“violin” may be intended to mean “the various instruments of the violin family”; and it is true that we might supply a working band for ball purposes if we interpret “violin” as signifying also “second violin,” “viola” and “’cello,” but it is “making believe very much.” Undoubtedly we ought not to demand of a poet a list of musical instruments after the catalogue style of Walt Whitman. Even musicians may wander a little at times. Sir Arthur Sullivan feared that some censorious critic might discover a slip in the great song “The Lost Chord,” where it tells us that “I struck one chord of music like the sound of a grand Amen,” because, strictly speaking, “Amen” requires *two* chords. He was rather hypercritical. Surely one chord may be prolonged so as to cover the two syllables, although the effect might not be particularly “grand”; but no one seems to have found the mistake, if it was a mistake, and Sir Arthur appears to have been unduly apprehensive.

If the lover of trifles should attempt to make an exhaustive collection of misquotations, the result would be appalling. Almost every one who quotes makes a mess of it, and even the standard Cyclopædias of Quotations may not be trusted implicitly. I was told by my father, who was a member of the military staff of Gen-

eral John A. Dix (the first Governor of that name), that the scholarly General was accustomed to occupy the spare time in the mornings, between the completion of his toilet and the breakfast hour, in verifying the citations in Bohn's Dictionary of Classical Quotations, and that he succeeded in detecting I forget how many hundred errors. Hazlitt generally wrote without any books at hand and almost always misquoted; Bagehot, too, suffered from the same disorder; and, I may add as a climax in my inventory of eminent offenders, I myself invariably misquote unless I have the original under my eyes and sometimes even then. Hence it is extremely pleasant to detect the misdoings of others. A few days ago I encountered one which gave me joy, not so much because of its importance as because it gave me an excuse for hunting the original in the obscurity of the by-ways of biography and because of the evidence it affords of the impervious condition of mind of the ordinary British official.

Almost every reader who is familiar with the history of the earlier half of the nineteenth century knows of George Canning's celebrated rhyming despatch to his friend, Sir Charles Bagot, English Minister at The Hague. There was a dispute between England and

Holland—which was then represented by Falck—about various commercial questions, and Canning, Foreign Secretary, sent the despatch in cipher to Bagot. The formal despatches had been forwarded, but this one was added for the sake of pure fun. There was great trouble in reading it, but it was finally made out by a group of heavy-witted attachés, who thereupon gravely made it public without apparently becoming aware of its humorous character. Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer in his “Historical Characters” gives this version of it, which is usually accepted:

“Dear Bagot, in commerce the fault of the Dutch
 Is giving too little and asking too much.
 So since on this policy Mynheer seems bent
 We’ll clap on his vessels just twenty per cent.”

The witty and versatile statesman might well groan in his grave over such a mutilation of one of the few diplomatic jokes ever recorded; such a shameful ruin of a harmless jest. What Canning really wrote is set forth in Josceline Bagot’s *George Canning and His Friends* (Vol. II, 321) as follows:

“FOREIGN OFFICE,
January 31, 1826.

Sir:—

In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
Is offering too little and asking too much.
The French are with equal advantage content,
So we clap on Dutch bottoms just twenty per cent.

(Chorus) Twenty per cent, twenty per cent.

(Chorus of English Custom House Officers and French
douaniers.)

(English) We clap on Dutch bottoms just twenty per
cent.

(French) Vous frapperez Falck avec twenty per cent.

I have no other commands from His Majesty
to convey to your Excellency to-day.

I am, with great truth and respect, Sir, your Excel-
lency's most obedient humble servant

GEORGE CANNING.

His Excellency, the Rt.

Honorable Sir Charles Bagot K. B.”

This is all very trivial, to be sure; and it is a glorious waste of time to be occupied with it. Yet the stiff and formal despatches of that period are no less trivial to us now, albeit not nearly as amusing. There is an element of the heroic in the audacious attempt of the

Foreign Secretary to enliven diplomatic correspondence by facetious verse as well as to mystify thick-skulled representatives of His Majesty's government. In our own serious times such innocent fooling would end the career of a public man; John Hay would never have dared to indulge in like *persiflage*, and the imagination refuses to picture Philander C. Knox venturing upon such jocosity in his communications with Mr. Whitelaw Reid or the Minister to Germany. It would be considered as criminal as to jest about reciprocity or the referendum.

Every now and then one finds during his excursions in the remote corners of the library a new example of the antiquity of wise sayings attributed to eminent men. I used to think that Tennyson said a good thing when he made the observation so often accredited to him, that "it was well that the Carlyles married each other, for, had they married differently, there would have been four unhappy persons instead of two." But long before the domestic infelicities of the Carlyles had become the subject of gossip, Joanna Baillie had said, in *The Match*, "If they are together, two people may lead an uneasy life, to be sure; but it will in all probability save four from being in the like condition." It is quite possible

that Tennyson had read Joanna Baillie's works or some of them, for she was known and honored in her day, beloved and admired by Sir Walter Scott, and she survived until 1851. It was a case of unconscious conversational plagiarism, and the responsibility for its perpetuation rests not upon Tennyson, but upon his friends who had probably never read *The Match*. Other poets have deliberately written down and printed their larcenies. "Great wits are sure to madness near allied," observed a famous poet, who had doubtless a faint recollection that many centuries earlier Seneca had said, "*Nullum magnum ingenium absque mixtura dementiæ est,*" and Aristotle had said it before him. Parenthetically, one may derive a lot of vicarious learning from the Commonplace Books of Southey, and gain much credit for being an "antiquarian," if indeed there is any credit about it, by filching from them judiciously. Whoever is curious about the repetition of ideas and coincidences of thought in literature will find an extensive collection of examples in Clouston's *Literary Coincidences*, published twenty years ago, although many of those which are there cited are mere cases of the reiteration of commonplaces, and others are so shadowy that

some effort is required to detect the resemblance. When Byron says in *Mazeppa*:

“Where the Spahi’s foot has trod
The verdure flies the bloody sod,”

I refuse to believe that he was borrowing from Swift’s *Pethox the Great*, where the Dean wrote:

“Byzantines boast, that on the clod
Where once their Sultan’s horse hath trod,
Grows neither grass, nor shrub nor tree.”

It is true, as Mr. Clouston says, that “human thought seems to move in certain grooves, and men whose minds are cast in a large and comprehensive mould generally think alike.”

We have often heard of the reply which the late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll is alleged to have made to one who asked him how, if he had the world to make over, he would improve it, to the effect that he would make health catching instead of disease. Doubtless he never said it, but if he did he may have been recalling the argument of Gregorius Nyssenus that “sickness cannot be contagious because health is not.” More probably, as Gregorius Nyssenus was not a “best seller” in Peoria, Ill., he evolved it in his own mind

without being aware that the idea, in a different form, had occurred to the mind of a godly Bishop in the fourth century. Yet again he may have discovered it in the same place where I found it, for I am ready to admit that I have never even seen a volume of the works of Gregorius, nor did I ever know personally any one who had.

There was current at one time a popular anecdote of the late John Stetson, manager, to the effect that on one occasion he noticed a member of the orchestra sitting idly in his place, and upon inquiry was told that the idle one had "fifty bars rest"; whereupon Stetson remarked, with energy: "Well, he's paid to play, and he has got to play, and after the performance he can rest at as many bars as he pleases." In J. R. Planché's *Recollections* (1872), David Morris, proprietor of the Haymarket Theatre in the twenties, is reported as saying to a musician under similar circumstances: "Rest! Don't talk to me about rest, sir! Don't you get your salary, sir? I pay you to play and not to rest, sir! Rest when you've done your work, and not in the middle of it." Planché adds that a similar tale is told about old Astley. Worse than this is the retort of Rev. Richard Harris Barham (miscalled "Thomas" by Planché)

apropos of a dispute between two archæological factions, to a man who remarked, "Oh, we of the —— always hang together." Barham is made to say: "Ah! that's only metaphorically. I should like to *see* two or three of you hanging separately." Possibly the genial Ingoldsby had never heard of Benjamin Franklin's historical *bon-mot* in reply to Harrison's appeal for unanimity at the time of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence: "Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Almost every well-informed American knows now that Chief Justice Taney never said that "the negro had no rights which the white man was bound to respect"; that Martin Van Buren did not promise, in his inaugural address or elsewhere, to "follow in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor"; and that General Taylor did not say at Buena Vista, "A little more grape, Captain Bragg," any more than Wellington said, "Up, Guards, and at them!" or Cambronne, "The Old Guard dies, but never surrenders," at Waterloo. The Duke's remarks on the occasion referred to were commonplace in the extreme, while Cambronne's could not have been reproduced in the *New York Times*. Of most of these fictions we are from time to time reminded by the news-

paper "antiquarian" when the unwelcome lack of murders, accidents, or the mysterious disappearances of beautiful young ladies leaves a portentous void in the columns, which must be filled somehow, even from the well-thumbed compendiums of useful information without which no newspaper library is complete. It is surely better to disabuse the readers' minds of these common errors than it is to retail the old stories of Daniel Webster's intemperance, recently refuted by Professor Wilkinson, or Polk's mendacity, proclaimed by the blundering and over-rated Von Holst, or of the feminine disguise of Jefferson Davis when he was seized by the Union soldiers. Most of these falsehoods are the creation of the high-minded Abolitionists of New England, who, like Garrison, pronounced the Federal Constitution to be "a league with hell and a covenant with death," or who in 1856—like the late Thomas Wentworth Higginson—believed the existing Union to be a failure and joined in a call for a Convention to consider measures for its dissolution. Thanks to these malevolent individuals, large numbers of our countrymen continue to believe that Webster was generally drunk, that Polk was a weak and contemptible liar, and that Mr. Davis was attired in a hoop-skirt when he was

captured by Wilson's cavalry. They believe it because they have so often seen it in print; just as they believe that McClellan was wretchedly "slow" and utterly incompetent as a military commander because he did not crush the South in six months when it was strongest, while they exalt Grant, who took nearly two years to do it when the South was at its weakest; or that Buchanan was a traitor, while one of his most trusted advisers, one Edwin M. Stanton, was a thoroughgoing Patriot, notwithstanding the fact that he was a rank "Copperhead" until he was taken into camp by that astute judge of human nature, Abraham Lincoln, and was made Secretary of War.

Sometimes I wish that I could free myself from the propensity to rejoice in trifles; it is so much more noble and lofty to engage in the work of "reform"; to be devising plans to get rid of this human nature of ours which has been such a burden to the race since the days of Eden—this unreasonable longing for apples, this partiality for the counsel of serpents in preference to that of the socialistic regenerators of all mundane things who are by habit gloomy, sour, and in a chronic condition of ill-temper and dissatisfaction. It is noble, for example, to carry on by essays, speeches and legisla-

tion the war against political corruption; the results up to the present time having been so eminently satisfactory. It is heroic to bring about—by essays, speeches and legislation—the annihilation of wealth and the abolition of poverty; we are so much nearer the goal than we were in my boyhood when “one hundred thousand dollars” was a fortune. It is glorious to feel that you are the guardian of “the true interests of the people” and that “the grass will not grow at night unless you lie awake to watch it.” And yet—it is very comfortable to slumber occasionally and to let the grass grow according to its own nature, without our personal assistance; to indulge in a little relaxation; and to dally fondly with trifles unencumbered by the weight of an awful responsibility for the well-being of creation. We read and hear much about “broad-minded men” whose energies are given wholly to the work of making other people over again to suit their ideas of what men ought to be; but I have observed that, like the Croton River as it was in my childhood, where they are broadest they are also shallowest. The deep-minded man is not always finding fault with his fellow-countrymen, or their institutions, or their methods of life; his time is not given up exclusively to the exposure of the sins and

crimes of the community. A newspaper critic in San Francisco recently informed me that if, instead of dealing with autographs and Jeffrey and Dean Swift, I would tell a few of the things I had learned in Wall Street and some of the facts I gleaned while Receiver of the Metropolitan Street Railway, I would furnish "reading to sit up to." But I do not want to make people "sit up"; I would much rather make them doze a little with Jeffrey and the Dean than to be striving continually for "progress," in whose name more crimes have been committed than were ever committed in the name of "Liberty." Roscoe Conkling sonorously declared that when Doctor Johnson said that patriotism was the last refuge of a scoundrel he was unaware of the infinite possibilities that lay in the word "Reform"; and he might have added "Progress" as well. When a man is walking blindfold towards the edge of a precipice, he may suffer in time from a little too much "progress." The relish for trifles is not altogether reprehensible. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus observes with severity: "The spider is proud of catching a fly—so is one man of catching a hare, another of netting a sprat, another boars, or bears, or Sarmatians. Tested by philosophical principles, are they not brigands every

one?" These were not the trifles which appealed to the soul of Marcus Aurelius, but no doubt he had a few of his own. Some men are proud of shooting lions and antelope—for scientific purposes, of course—and their pride may be pardonable, but that is no reason why we should all engage in the slaughter of lions and antelope; there are numbers of other trivial amusements less sanguinary but more sedentary, like "pottering about" in the alcoves of the library. I prefer to lull my reader into repose rather than to make him ruin his health and impair his eyesight by "sitting up" to devour revelations of sin in Wall Street and in street railways—topics of such vital importance to individuals who never gambled in a broker's office or owned a share of stock in a railway company. Moreover, I confess that, as the "Needy Knife Grinder" of Frere and Canning replied to the inquiry of the Friend of Humanity, "Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!" Let us have peace. The world is not as wretched as our "progressives" and reformers would have us believe. When Croaker in *The Good-Natured Man* spoke of our bad world, his wife said to him, "Never mind the world, my dear, you were never in a pleasanter place in your life"; and the capacity for this enjoyment of trifles is not the least of its pleasures.

PHILOSOPHERS

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An old friend used to regard it as a merciful dispensation of Providence that some men are willing to be physicians. Many of us wonder that the profession of medicine, the hardest worked profession of them all, should be attractive to anybody; but to my mind it is not as strange that men should voluntarily become doctors as it is that any of them should become philosophers. When I say "doctors," I mean, of course, what we ordinarily call "doctors," and when I say "philosophers," I am speaking not of "lovers of wisdom" in the broad sense, but of persons who devote themselves to speculative thinking about life in general and who, from the time of Solon to the time of Spencer, have never been able to agree upon a definite answer to the question, "What is philosophy?" It may be heresy to doubt if the world has enjoyed much substantial benefit from the labors of the philosophers, but there have been those who were rash enough to express such a doubt, braving the floods of withering scorn which poured from the "high thinkers" who dwell in clouds of abstractions and regions of intellectual gymnastics. It

is rash, however, to say that any innocent human effort is absolutely without advantage to mankind, and the person who would make such an assertion deserves to be described in the words which Hamlet applied to Polonius. Even the investigations of a Congressional Committee may be productive of something new, useful, or beautiful, and it is not easy to go further than that, in the spirit of charity for all. There may be comfort and consolation in perusing the lists of automobile owners vouchsafed to us by one of our most respectable newspapers, and of the guests "registered" at countless summer hotels scattered from Maine to California. But it must be confessed that the philosophers often irritate us, for they look upon themselves and their pursuits with a sublime satisfaction and arrogant conceit which exceed the limit of endurance.

One of our most learned professors informs us that "the peculiar characteristics of philosophy are held to be its certainty, universality, independence, supremacy and a kind of divine character; the last characteristic makes it worthy of honor even by Deity itself." This surely seems to be a little overwrought. If it might be permitted to avail of slang, we might say that it was "going it some." It certainly does not exhibit the deli-

cate modesty which is the attribute of the truly wise, and it makes the assertion of Papal infallibility a thing of inglorious insignificance. To that much-renowned person, "the average man," philosophy appears to be devoid of every one of the characteristics ascribed to it by Professor Ladd. When no two of its disciples are willing to concur about anything essential—even in the definition of terms—it surely lacks certainty, at least. Its apostles appear to be unanimous only in the enunciation of imposing commonplaces. The late John Fiske declared with much profundity that "life, including also intelligence as the highest human manifestation of life, is the continuous establishment of relations within the organism in correspondence with relations existing or arising in the environment." After reading this, one is not surprised at the startling cross-reference said to have been discovered in a book catalogue: "God: see Fiske, J.," even if Mr. Roberts does speak of it as "a gem of absent-mindedness." Fiske's dictum, we may readily believe, would not cause much heated debate; it is helpful, indeed, and vastly enlightening to the seeker after truth. It is nearly as consoling as that soul-satisfying assurance which we received from our college instructor, that "happiness is the harmony or

the result of the harmony of the susceptibilities of a sentient being and the objects which were created to gratify them." The aspiring student who could not take fresh heart to go on cheerfully and confidently in his life-work after comprehending this embodiment of the wisdom of ages must be indeed a desperate scoffer and a hardened Philistine. The amount of enlightenment derivable from a proposition like that may justly be compared with the store of historical information contained in the brief but memorable deliverance of Mr. F.'s aunt: "When we lived at Henley, Barnes's gander was stole by tinkers."

But the discussion concerning the fruitlessness of philosophy is a never-ending one, and it has been about as fruitless as philosophy itself, although we can perceive a distinct falling off in the volume of philosophical product. Against the sceptics, the philosopher triumphantly quotes the saying of Aristotle that "If you forbid men to philosophize, they will go on philosophizing," and one is tempted to reply, "You might as well tell us that if you forbid men to become intoxicated, they will go on getting drunk." The argument is a pretty feeble one, even for a philosopher; but we cannot fail to observe that drunkenness has declined as well as philoso-

phy, and that men do not indulge now in the debauches, intellectual or physical, to which they were addicted in the olden days.

Let me not be misunderstood; I am not presuming to find fault with pursuits which have for their object the improvement and regeneration of mankind, which I suppose to be the ultimate aim of philosophy, even though they may not give much promise of success. But if a man makes it his purpose to be honest, upright, and industrious, to cultivate the faculties he possesses, to make happy those about him, to obey the moral law, and to be a good citizen, guided by reason and conscience, he will accomplish more good in the world than the pretentious "reformers" and philanthropists who ever paraded ostentatiously their reforming and philanthropic zeal, largely stimulated by the desire for self-advertisement. When a human being sets out with the notion that he is about to engage in something which is worthy of honor "by deity itself," he flatters himself overmuch; he may better aim at doing something within his reach which will win for him the respect and confidence of his fellow-beings.

It may not be quite fair to decry philosophy as it is called, merely because of the inconsistencies or imper-

fections of the philosophers themselves. We all realize that the science of medicine should not be disparaged because there have been some unworthy physicians, nor the science of law sneered at because there have been a few unworthy lawyers. But physicians do not ordinarily attempt to lay down rules of moral guidance except so far as may be required for the preservation of health, nor do lawyers undertake to instruct their clients concerning the principles by which men's lives should be regulated except so far as their civil conduct needs regulation. It is expected of a Christian minister, who is a sort of Christian philosopher, that he should in some degree practice what he preaches, and there is good reason why all philosophers, Christian or pagan, should in their behavior set good examples to their brethren. I am not referring so much to metaphysicians, whose occupation is harmless enough, if, as Professor Ormond says, "all metaphysics arises* out of the question whether thought is adequate to the apprehension of reality." It is interesting to observe that Professor Ormond adds: "This question may be answered either negatively or affirmatively," and apparently it does not make much difference to mankind which answer is given. I am thinking more especially of those who

*So in the text.

voluntarily assume the task of informing us how much better we and the world ought to be and how human society should be reconstructed so as to conform to their personal views.

Luckily, the majority of these philosophers are not remembered very long, except by name and occasionally for some attractive quality of speech or style; their teachings soon grow obsolete. There was a time when Ralph Waldo Emerson was the prophet and the seer of America, sometimes invading foreign lands, where he eventually accomplished the not very difficult feat of wearing out the patience of Carlyle, who evidently valued his friendship when at a distance, but not so highly when they were at close quarters. He certainly had a powerful influence in the primitive days before we had emerged from the limitations of provincialism, but it has diminished visibly and he has become almost a tradition. He survives purely in a literary way, for he had an artfulness of style and discourse. He understood how to veil the expression of a thought in a delicate fabric which made the commonplace charmingly mysterious, and he shrewdly refused to engage in argument with those who disagreed with him—a method not infrequently adopted by the wily who know that if you make assertions and heed no objections you are fairly

sure of getting some one to believe you. It is significant that the man who, in 1838, announced that the office of the preacher was dying and the church tottering to its fall has ceased to maintain his power, while the church which he contemptuously rejected has survived his repudiation and continues to be a living force.

It is always easier to say pleasant things than unpleasant ones. Those who insist upon the duty of "always telling the truth"—meaning what they may happen to regard as the truth—irrespective of their competency to decide, are usually very disagreeable people. But Emerson could not complain of frankness in the expression of views, for he proclaimed that "we will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak with our own minds." A critic once said of me that I was "never so sure and never so offensive as when I was wrong"—meaning, of course, as when *he* thought I was wrong. One may be as offensive in denying a thing because he happens not to believe it as another may be in asserting it because he does happen to believe it. If no sufficient reasons are given by either of them, their contentions are fruitless. I fail to see why we should hide our real opinions, however unpopular they may be—that is, if we are not "running

for office." The man who has such perfect confidence in himself as to suppose that his judgments are final, is what Mr. Bumble said that, in certain contingencies, the law is; but these judgments may be good until reversed by competent authority. I do not feel that I am offensive when I say that to me, at least, there seems to be little sincerity in Emerson's gospel; and nothing endures long in this world that is not sustained by sincerity. The lack of it is betrayed in mysterious ways which it is difficult to explain or to describe. I have listened to a vigorous and eloquent argument, brilliant, deserving admiration, which failed to convince because the hearer could not resist the feeling that brilliant as the speaker was, there was no sincerity behind what he was saying. It is easy to suggest that the fault may be in the hearer; but even so, the speaker is unsuccessful if he cannot correct that fault.

Let me plead Emerson's behest about "speaking with our own minds" as some justification for saying that a careful observer, who is not blinded by the disease of indiscriminating admiration, must be impressed, in considering his life, with the fact that like most apostles of individualism, he was disposed to depend upon other individuals and to get as much as he could

from them for his personal benefit without exerting himself to any considerable extent outside of rhetorical fields. Emerson would have cut a sorry figure if he had practised literally and faithfully his gospel of absolute individualism. "Have no regard to the influence of your example, but act always from the simplest motives," is one of his precepts. If he meant what he said he was advising men to act in accordance with the principles of the hyena or of the wild men of Borneo, who care nothing for their example and who act from the very simplest of motives. He recalls the sailor in *Ruddigore*, who always acted according to the prompting of his heart, when it prompted him to do just as he wished to do. Another of his contributions to the stock of human wisdom is: "The great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." This has a pretty sound, but are we to infer that the way to greatness is to shut one's eyes in a crowd and think of no one but self? At that rate, greatness is fairly cheap. Possibly it was meant only as a phrase.

Mr. Ireland in his *Biographical Sketch* says of him, as if it were vastly creditable, that "it was a peculiarity in Emerson that the thing he most disliked was sick-

ness, while disease he regarded with the strongest aversion." From this astounding revelation we are led to suppose that ordinary people are fond of sickness—by which Mr. Ireland doubtless means "illness"—and regard disease with positive affection. Many ardent self-lovers are sorely distressed at the sight of suffering because it annoys them, disturbs their contentment, interferes with their personal comfort. It may have been so in Emerson's case, for we must assume that Mr. Ireland is not ascribing to him any singularity in disliking his own sicknesses and being averse to his own diseases. This "peculiar" antipathy to the contemplation of illness does not appear to have led him to *do* anything to help the sufferers. In effect, he proclaimed the duty of selfishness, the ultimate development of the creed of laziness; to that degree he was sincere. After the expulsion from Eden he would have used his "rich, baritone voice" and his subtle phrases in advising the stricken pair to gather fig-leaves at once, but he himself would have sedulously refrained from gathering any, even for his own protection; he would have borrowed some from Adam. He seems to have been afflicted with a sort of constitutional indolence. In his younger days he was the pastor of a church, an office

which called for some effort, but he gave it up, ostensibly because of a conscientious objection to the rite of the Lord's Supper, thereby ridding himself of an obligation to do systematic work and assigning a reason which permitted no argument. He might well have placed his abdication on the ground that he was not fit for pastoral labor; his heart was not in it. The dying Revolutionary veteran, who, it is related, was so dissatisfied with the "consolations" administered by the philosopher that he rose up from his bed saying, "Young man, if you don't know your business, you had better go home," was an accurate observer. Emerson, by his own showing, entered the ministry without any serious conviction, although it may be unjust to surmise that the pecuniary consideration affected his action. Indeed, one of his admirers applies to him the words used by Sir Leslie Stephen about himself, that "he did not discover that his creed was false, but that he had never really believed it." Sir Leslie, however, did not become a minister, while Emerson studied theology for six years before he became assistant to Rev. Henry Ware in the Second (Unitarian) Church in Boston. To say that after all this preparation he became a minister without a sincere belief in the creed he professed to teach, is

discreditable either to his honesty or to his mental capacity. It shows weakness either of intellect or of moral sense. The circumstances of his awakening to his error are not without significance. Fortunately for him, he had done what not a few philosophers are wise enough to do—he married a wife, of whom it may be said that, like Mrs. Pecksniff, “she had a small property.” Upon her early demise—in February, 1832—he came into the enjoyment of about twelve hundred dollars a year, and almost immediately perceived the advisability and propriety of abandoning the ministerial function. It may have been merely a coincidence; one of those which figure largely in cases of circumstantial evidence. Philosophers are supposed to have a lofty contempt for such a sordid thing as property, but the matter of his pecuniary profit appears to have been perpetually before his mind. Pointing to the pride of his orchard, he said: “That apple tree is worth more than my head to me. My income from the former is greater than the revenue from all my books.” At one time we find him dwelling, not altogether unostentatiously, upon his poverty, alleging that he had only a house, a garden, an orchard, twenty-two thousand dollars in cash investments, and an income of about eight hundred dollars a

winter from his lectures. Under the conditions prevailing in New England three-quarters of a century ago, he was rather well off than otherwise. He had his start with property which some one else had toiled for and accumulated for purposes not connected with Emerson's support. You may say, "Oh, he *lectured*," but it is only the echo of the remark of the Ant to the Grasshopper, "Oh, you *sang*!" He was as content that others should have labored for his profit as he was satisfied to have others do the fighting for him, when in 1861, he said, at Charlestown Navy Yard: "Ah! sometimes gunpowder smells good." That was the true philosophic spirit. He was several hundred miles away from the spot where gunpowder was burning and apparently gave no thought to the suffering and slaughter among those who were burning it. In his address on "The American Scholar," in 1837, he uncovered this pearl of thought: "If the single man plant himself indomitably upon his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him." It might be supposed that this would depend somewhat upon the nature of the instincts. The "huge world" ordinarily has something else to do than to be trotting about to suit the varying instincts of millions of mortals—some of them

being the reverse of sublime. It is true that for a while, the world seemed to have "come round" to Emerson, to feed on his flattery of the "individual man" who enjoys the delusion that he is and may continue to be self-sufficient, wholly independent of all other individuals. We have learned better; we know that such pseudo-individualism means only savagery; we have been taught by experience that sane independence is best secured by intelligent co-operation; not by the vague and incoherent speculations of the Transcendentalists, whose ill-fated experiment at Brook Farm effectually disposed of their impractical nonsense.

In the *Century* for July, 1882, Emma Lazarus paid an elaborate tribute to Emerson, boasting that he founded no school, formulated no theory, and "abstained from uttering a single dogma." I do not know what she calls a "dogma." I had an idea that in its general sense it meant "a fixed opinion," at least that is one of its principal meanings. Emerson was going about, writing and speaking during all his active years, and it is dubious praise to say that he never uttered a fixed opinion. If that were true, what on earth was he talking about?

Whether or not the eccentric Mr. Henry D. Thoreau may be regarded as a philosopher in a technical sense, he fancied that he was, and he was a devout disciple of the Sage of Concord. His views of life and of his duties in life were full of the spirit of his master. "Local as a woodchuck," according to John Burroughs, he had a literary faculty which is charming to many; but he, too, was something of a *poseur* and understood the art of self-advertisement almost as well as a modern "progressive" statesman. In the words of Lowell, he was "a man with so high a conceit of himself that he accepted without questioning, and insisted on our accepting, his defects and weaknesses of character as virtues and powers peculiar to himself." He posed as an enthusiastic lover and observer of nature; but, as Lowell further points out, he was really no observer. "Till he built his Walden shanty he did not know that the hickory grew in Concord. Till he went to Maine, he had never seen phosphorescent wood, a phenomenon early familiar to most country boys. At forty, he speaks of the seeding of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold-dust of blowing pollen might have earlier drawn his eye. * * * He discovered nothing. He thought everything

a discovery of his own, from moonlight to the planting of acorns and nuts by squirrels.”* Burroughs, in his enthusiastic eulogy of him, feels obliged to admit that “considering that Thoreau spent half of each day for upwards of twenty years in the open air, bent upon spying out Nature’s ways and doings, it is remarkable that he made so few real observations. * * * He has added no new line or touch to the portrait of bird or beast that I can recall—no important or significant fact to their lives.” And Burroughs easily discerns the reason; he had no self-forgetfulness; he was thinking more about Henry D. Thoreau than about anything else; if he looked into the glass of Nature, he could see only himself. He was a monument of egotism. Having neither persistency nor purpose, he regarded or affected to regard all success as contemptible.

His hermit life at Walden has been one of his principal “properties,” as a stage-manager might say; but slight investigation discloses how much imposture there was about it. The gentle but commonplace Donald Mitchell, amiably and conventionally flattering to all writers dealt with in his *American Lands and Letters*, expresses the general idea when he says of Thoreau at

*My Study Windows (1871), 200.

Walden that "he built his own house under the pines, measuring costs by pennies." What he really did was to avail himself largely of the property of others in orthodox philosophical style. He began characteristically by "borrowing Alcott's axe." He took possession of land belonging to Emerson. He procured planks by "dismantling a shanty" which he bought from an Irishman. It is true that he performed the work of constructing the cabin, having no other occupation and being bent on possessing a retreat where he would be under no necessity of doing anything for the benefit of any one else; but he had the help of friends, including Alcott and George William Curtis, in "raising it." He was, however, only an amateur hermit, for Channing tells us that "he bivouacked there and really lived at home, where he went every day," the "home" being that of his father. Mr. William Morton Payne, in his entertaining book about "Leading American Essayists"—to which I am indebted for many of my facts—while quoting these words of Channing, thinks that they were not "literally true," because, I infer, the "hermit" did not go home "*every day*"; but it is plain that the "cabin" was only a picnic place of resort, of the kind much favored in these times by busy men who seek to escape

for a brief season the daily cares of life. I wish I knew whether he ever returned Alcott's axe. Several years he passed as an inmate of Emerson's house, paying for his support, as well as I can make out, by "playing with the kittens"; and Emerson submitted to it meekly, possibly because he was incapable of the effort involved in getting rid of his non-paying "boarder." In 1848, Thoreau, at the age of thirty-one, went back to the house of his father, the worthy maker of lead-pencils, "and remained under the family roof for the rest of his life."

Thoreau explains the motive of his "hermit" masquerade by saying: "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion." This seems to the ordinary mind to have a nauseous flavor of absurd self-sufficiency—to learn "life" by ignoring the existence of one's fellow-beings, to evade the re-

sponsibilities of life, and then to proclaim a decision on the whole great subject as if it were final and conclusive. To ignore our brother-men, to refuse obedience to law, and to defy the rules of decent society, may be characteristic of the unwhipped schoolboy, who usually outgrows such childish diseases when he assumes the toga of manhood; but in a mature man they appear to be quite pitiable and altogether contemptible. The arrogant person who does such things may justly be called a savage, but there was a time when the "noble savage" was regarded with some affection and great admiration by a considerable number of educated people. Lowell in *My Study Windows* sums up the Walden matter when he says: "Thoreau's experiment actually presupposed all that complicated civilization which it theoretically abjured. He squatted on another man's land; he borrows an axe; his boards, his nails, his bricks, his mortar, his books, his lamp, his fish-hooks, his plough, his hoe, all turn State's evidence against him as an accomplice in the sin of that artificial civilization which rendered it possible that such a person as Henry D. Thoreau should exist at all."

Burroughs thinks that Thoreau "had humor, but it had worked a little; it was not quite sweet." A humor

that is sour must be a very bad humor ; but Burroughs has about as much humor as one of his own wood-chucks, and is not a competent judge. Lowell says that "Thoreau had no humor," and most of us will regard him as better qualified to pass judgment. The fact is that no great egotist, absorbed in self-admiration, ever has any sense of humor, for if he had he could not take himself so seriously.

But these examples of minor personal failings of some of our American preachers are of no serious importance in comparison with the revolting spectacle of Jean Jacques Rousseau; yet there is a college professor who talks about "the sincerity of Rousseau, who preached community of privilege and universal duty" and numbers him among "those who trust in conscience." He probably meant the conscience of other men, for if Jean Jacques had any he must have been profoundly miserable. And we are told in the Gallic prattle of Van Laun that "he preaches a return to nature, independence, earnestness, passion, and effusion, a manly, active, unselfish and happy existence in the open air and sunshine." He was doing all this, probably, while he was sending his illegitimate offspring to the Foundling Asylum. As well might

Judas Iscariot preach the duty of loyalty, or Benedict Arnold the nobility of patriotism. Rousseau also had the literary trick, and he made full use of it; but Simond, one of those who admired him, admitted that "very possibly some of the fundamental opinions he defended so earnestly, and for which his disciples would willingly have suffered martyrdom, were originally adopted because a bright thought, caught as it flew, was entered in his commonplace book." The revelations of his private life—his abominable treatment of his poor father, for example, and the story of the ignorant servant-woman and her five children—are fit only for the pages of the professional preserver of unsavory scandals, who writes about the "loves" of famous men and women and revels in the shameful details which ought to be forgotten. We may not reasonably expect to get pure water from a filthy jug. The infamy of Rousseau is so well understood that until I read the balderdash of the Princeton Professor about his "sincerity" and his "conscience," I supposed that it was universally recognized by decent people. The philosophy of Rousseau—"a crude philosophy with its bad method and its false and precipitous solutions," as Mr. Bodley, the historian of the French,

justly called it—has ceased to be of interest, except to the student of eighteenth century history and literature; but as long as the world loves to be deceived by humbug, his false gospel will survive in some form—a gospel which Carlyle describes as “a Gospel of Brotherhood, not according to any of the Four Old Evangelists, and calling on men to repent, and amend *each his own* wicked existence, that they might be saved; but a Gospel rather, as we often hint, according to a new Fifth Evangelist, Jean Jacques, calling on men to amend *each the whole world's* wicked existence, and to be saved by making the Constitution.”

It was once common to refer to men like Hobbes and Bentham as the “selfish philosophers,” because their systems proceeded upon the idea of the paramount influence of self-interest in man. Strangely enough, the lives of the “selfish” ones were far more pleasant to contemplate than those of the sentimentalists who profess to be so altruistic and to have such a high opinion of the merits of men in general. It is true that both Hobbes and Bentham were vain, apparently confident that they had “a monopoly of all truth and that whatever was not of their own manufacture was contraband”; but Hobbes was personally attractive and it was said of

him that he was "exceptionally good-tempered perhaps for a philosopher," while Bentham lived a retired life, absorbed in methodical labor and study, loved by those about him. The "unselfish" philosophers have been unselfish only in theory. I do not know that anything is to be gained by scolding them. It is just as well to leave them to themselves while they "travel over a road strewn with the wreckage of discarded theories and broken-down opinions," as even Professor Creighton describes their unattractive pathways. One is tempted at times, however, to rebel against their arrogant, overweening, contemptuous self-conceit, their absurd pretensions, and their unwarranted assumption of lofty virtue and superiority.

THE COLLECTING OF BOOKS

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Not long ago there was a book sale in New York which, for several days, aroused the attention of the press and the public, chiefly because the auction prices attained an aggregate of very nearly a million dollars. We were regaled with the usual homilies concerning the joy of the poor man in the possession of his few hardily-won volumes and the comparatively insignificant pleasure of the rich man lavishing his thousands upon a single book; but the principal topic appeared to be the enormous amount of money paid for the prizes and the foresight of the former owner who bought for rather small sums what was sold at a huge profit. The Hoe sale did not throw much new light on what a certain writer has called "collectaneomania." It afforded only another proof of the well-known fact that the competing bidders who flock to the sale of famous collections always raise the standard of values. As Mr. Slater says, "When first-rate libraries are dispersed, prices rule high," and he adds that "Cautious buyers avoid such sales; they prefer to angle in less troubled waters, and are wise." It is not so with the man who

can afford to entrust to his agent unlimited power to bid, and to give \$50,000 for a Mazarine Bible, when less than twenty-five years ago a perfect copy brought only £2,650. There is distinction in owning the most expensive volume in the world. But Dives is often the despair of the impecunious book-fancier. Whether it be true that the wealthy man has less delight in his costly books than the poor man has in his cheaper ones, I do not know; but it is certain that as long ago as the seventeenth century, Thomas Baker, an "unceasing collector," had his fling at what has been called "purse-ability" when he wrote to Humphrey Wanley: "I begin to complain of the men of quality who lay out so much for books and give such prices, that there is nothing to be had for poor scholars, whereof I have found the effects. When I bid a fair price for an old book, I am answered the 'quality' will give twice as much, and so I have done." This, in effect, is what the English often say now, when they speak sorrowfully of "those Americans."

It may seem presumptuous for any one who is a mere lover of books to attempt to treat of collecting and of the collector even in a brief and desultory fashion; yet perhaps he may be better qualified to deal with

the fascinating subject than one who is himself a member of the inner brotherhood. A man may, of course, be an ardent bibliophile, and even a bibliolater, without deserving the name of "collector," although it must be confessed that bibliophilism and bibliolater lead to collecting almost as surely as all those things abhorred by my ancient Professor of Moral Philosophy used to "lead to Pantheism"; but bibliophilism and collecting are by no means synonymous, and a bibliophile is no more a collector than a "collection" is a library. The lists of members of our Book Clubs and Bibliophile Societies contain, if I am not mistaken, the names of many who make no pretensions to the rank of collector. Possibly it is because of their modesty, for all book-lovers and nearly all lawyers are afflicted with that overestimated virtue. As I venture to enroll myself in both of these divisions of mankind, it will readily be perceived that as far as modesty is concerned, I am worthy of what our English cousins used to call "a double first-class."

In a volume published some years since, the title of which my shrinking diffidence does not permit me to mention, I remarked with much apparent profundity that the appellation of "collector" carries with it "the

suggestion of a wise and discriminating man who gathers the old and the rare, who selects only the best examples; and who knows precisely what he wants." There is only a modicum of truth in that rather dogmatic assertion, because a genuine collector, a choice specimen of the charming *genus*, is often unwise and indiscriminating, gathering not only the old and the rare but the new and the common, all the more lovable for his insatiate thirst for books, and wanting "everything in sight," if one may be allowed to indulge in that condensed expression of thought which the narrow purist calls slang, but which broader-minded men employ when they wish to drive an idea home to a reader or to a listener.

But whether the collector be fastidious in his taste and dainty in his appetite, or greedy, gormandizing, omnivorous and cormorantish, he is an object of interest, for he arouses in some observers a feeling of envy and of admiration, mingled with a slight infusion of awe, and in others who are unfortunately lacking in that catholicity of spirit which the judicious commonly possess, an emotion of pity, an indulgent tenderness, a sort of kindly commiseration. Carlyle once wrote to some youthful gleaner of autographs, sneeringly char-

acterizing that pursuit as a "poor" one, a judgment in which many will heartily concur, more's the pity, and many, but not so many, have a like estimation of the hobby of collecting books. A newspaper reviewer—that most airy and affectedly omniscient of creatures—recently said of a writer of books about books, that "he does seem to be more interested in books than in life, which is a bad thing." It was a fatuous remark, and if he had been considering a treatise on geometry he might with equal propriety have said that the author was less interested in life than in mathematics. It is, however, an illustration of the attitude which persons of moderate intelligence are apt to assume towards those who rejoice in books and who love to bring together in fond companionship the best of them, creating Carlyle's "true university." There is no incompatibility between an interest in life and an interest in books. It may be that a few of the famous collectors lost in their bibliophilic zeal an interest in what is called life; a concern for the happiness of their fellow-beings; a desire to leave the world better for their living in it; but as an amiable writer has said: "In these busy days most bibliophiles and book collectors are men of affairs." In my own small circle of acquaintances I know men who

are kings in the world of finance, men who are among the great builders and constructors, men who are leaders in their professions, who are at the same time among the most enthusiastic lovers of books. What of life could that shallow critic have seen or known which had not been comprehended by these men of stalwart intellect, of broad culture, who find in their beloved libraries that relief from the strain of great responsibilities which helps them to perform their tasks successfully and gives them strength for the daily conflicts in the world of business, the battles of the courts, the strife of human endeavor!

As a rule, these accumulators of books and ancient manuscripts are a long-lived race. There was the Right Honorable Thomas Grenville, statesman and collector, whose fame still dwells among bookmen, who died at ninety-one, leaving to the British Museum a library of over twenty thousand volumes which had cost him in those less expensive days more than £54,000. Panizzi said of it that except the library of George III the Museum had never received so important an accession. When we recall that there were among the vellum copies a Mazarine Bible of 1454, an Aldine Dante of 1502, and a marvelous Vitruvius of Giunta dated in

1503—but the catalogue would rival that of the ships in the *Iliad*—we may imagine the rest. Grenville used to boast that when he was in the Coldstream Guards and under twenty-five—for he entered Parliament at that age in 1780—he “bid at a sale against a whole bench of Bishops” for some rare Bible. It is delightful to think of nearly seventy years of collecting, especially when we remember that during much of the time he had abundant leisure, being splendidly paid by the State for doing nothing of much account—which was the reason assigned by this man, who surely deserved the title of “Right Honorable,” for giving his books to the nation instead of bestowing them upon his great-nephew, the Duke of Buckingham. It is no discredit that he held a sinecure in that century.

Another collector who attained a patriarchal age was the gorgeous William Beckford, who came into a fortune of £100,000 a year and who spent right royally not only his income but his principal during his eighty-five years. Not a small part of it was lavished upon a library which as lately as 1882-1883 came to the ultimate fate of libraries, the auction room, under the auspices of those princes of the book-selling realm, Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge, who still continue to

be, all things considered, the greatest book auctioneers in the world. It was just a century after the time when, if tradition does not mislead us, Beckford wrote *Vathek* in a single sitting of three days and two nights. I wonder if anybody reads *Vathek* in these twentieth century times. I own that I never read it myself, but we have all read about it so often that we feel almost as intimate with it as we do with *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is but an honored name in this generation. Possibly I am incautious in making that assertion, because a dozen men may cry out that they have read every word of Bunyan's immortal masterpiece; but no one can say truthfully that it is read by the many, as it once was. It has become a book for the student of literary antiquities.

So preservative of health is the pastime—or, if the solemn person prefers it, the occupation—of book collecting, that almost to the day of his death Beckford seemed to be strong and vigorous, showing few signs of advanced years. His son-in-law, Alexander, tenth Duke of Hamilton, reached the same great age, dying in 1852 at eighty-nine. The library of Beckford was sold in 1822 to John Farquhar for £330,000, not including, however, some choice treasures; and these,

with what he acquired later, passed to Beckford's son-in-law, the tenth Duke of Hamilton, and were sold at Sotheby's in 1881-84 for £73,551 18s. I am particular about the shillings. The Duke was himself a collector, and his own printed books were sold at Sotheby's in 1884 for £12,892 12s. 6d. His manuscripts were disposed of separately, most of them going to the Royal Museum in Berlin at a price of £70,000. Among them was the celebrated *Golden Gospels*, inscribed in gold letters on purple vellum, at one time the property of Henry VIII, and also the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, with illustrations attributed to Sandro Botticelli, valued at £5,000. Those which the Royal Museum did not purchase were sold at Sotheby's in 1889 for £15,189 15s. 6d. Our poor modern millionaires pay much higher prices now for books of far less rarity and distinction. Such statistics bring to our saddened minds the lines of that delightful preserver of all good things about books, Andrew Lang, who sings of

The Books I cannot buy,
 Their phantoms round me waltz and wheel,
 They pass before the dreaming eye,
 Ere sleep the dreaming eye can seal.

While we are talking of sales, it may not be amiss to recall that the library of Charles, Earl of Sunderland and second Duke of Marlborough, brought, in 1881-83, no less than £55,581 6s.; and it is said that the Althorp Library, formed originally by George John, Earl Spencer, was sold in 1892 for a sum not far short of £250,000.

Grolier had come to his eighty-sixth year when he died among his books at his Hotel de Lyon; and Antonio Magliabecchi, who read every catalogue and knew the actual situs of almost every book of importance in his day, passed out of life in his eighty-second year, "dirty, ragged and happy as a king," according to the Eltons. It was of Magliabecchi that the familiar tale is told about his answer to the Grand Duke's inquiry concerning a certain work: "The only copy is at Constantinople in the Sultan's library, the seventh volume in the second book-case on the right as you go in." Thomas Caldecott, John Bellingham Inglis, and John Wingfield Larking at ninety, Sir Christopher Wren at ninety-one, Samuel Rogers at ninety-two, and John Payne Collier at ninety-four are only a few additional examples of the well-known truth that the collecting of books is the preservative of life as the printing of

them is the "art preservative of all arts." Study the record of "English Book Collectors" as written down by Mr. Fletcher, and you will be forced to admit that the old-fashioned collectors were hopelessly addicted to the habit of octogenarianism. It may not be worth our while to search into the reasons why, but we may conjecture that the placid and peaceful retirement of the book-lover may be more conducive to long life than the contests and struggles of the world, with their strain upon the vital force and their concomitant waste and dissipation. The contentment of noble minds is not an insignificant factor in the prolonging of human existence.

They are generous, too, these lovers of books. There was Nicolas Fabry de Peiresc, whose books "came rolling in on every side"; who always had at least one binder in his house; and who, despite his profuse purchases, left only a small collection because he lent so much and gave away so many. The great Jean Grolier was bountiful in his gifts, and the bookman will recall the inscription "Et Amicorum" stamped on many of his books immediately after his name, to show that they belonged to his friends as well as to himself, although some students have reached the con-

clusion, by a course of reasoning which does not convince me, that he was merely indicating the possession of duplicates. Richard Heber, the most liberal in his loaning of volumes from his immense assemblage, aroused the enthusiasm of Dibdin—which, perhaps, was not a difficult task—and his willingness to share his treasures with others evoked from the pedantic doctor a glowing tribute. “This,” says Dibdin in his *Bibliomania*, referring to the liberality of Heber, “is the *pars melior* of every book collector and it is indeed the better part with Atticus. The learned and curious, whether rich or poor, have always free access to his library.

The volumes, open as his heart,
Delight, amusement, science, art,
To every eye and ear impart.”

The learned author's verse is not of the highest order of poetry, but his intentions were excellent, even if he was one of the most slipshod of bibliographers, whom it is customary to hold up to ridicule in these days. Lloyd Sanders accuses him of having achieved the feat of making a list of the important books in Lord Spencer's library containing scarcely a single correct entry. But I regret that Mr. Roberts should go so far as to call him “the devil-hunting Thomas Frognall

Dibdin” and to characterize his account of the Althorp Library, of which he was the first librarian, as “flatulent and sycophantic records.” Heber, lovers of Walter Scott will remember, was the man to whom the sixth canto of *Marmion* was dedicated, and one never hears of him and of his generosity without being reminded of Scott’s lines in the dedication:

“But why such instances to you
 Who, in an instant, can renew
 Your treasured hoards of various lore,
 And furnish twenty thousand more?
 Hoards, not like theirs whose volumes rest
 Like treasures in the Franch’mont chest.
 While gripple owners still refuse
 To others what they cannot use.”

The Parisian book-stall men of the *Rive Gauche*—who can forget the charm of a ramble among their pleasant shelves, spread out along the *quais*?—are not likely to lose the memory of the kind spirit which prompted Xavier Marmier to leave a thousand francs to be expended “by these good and honest dealers, who number fifty or thereabouts, in paying for a jolly dinner and in spending an hour in conviviality and in thinking of me.” “This,” adds the amiable Marmier, “will be

my acknowledgment for the many hours I have lived intellectually in my almost daily walks on the quays between the Pont Royal and the Pont Saint-Michel." It is in this way, says M. Uzanne, that memories are kept green. It is sad to reflect that in recent years those grazing grounds for collectors have lost much of their former charm. The book-stall men used to be considerate indeed, as I can testify. I bought from one of them an ancient copy of Voltaire's *Henriade*, containing a fascinating plate, for a few centimes. It was unbound and shabby, but it was curious and would have brought at least twenty times the amount if it had been sold in this country.

While it is pleasant to think of the free and bountiful ways of the men about whom we have been chatting, I am not sure that it is wise to lend carelessly. It affords a temptation to the unscrupulous and it encourages those who should be sternly suppressed, the piratical purloiners of books, the shameless filchers of personal property. The dangers of injudicious lending must not be underrated, and many a vacant space on the shelves of kind-hearted bookmen testifies that it is not always prudent to yield to friendly impulse and that there is a disposition on the part of the unworthy

to convert the books of others to their own use. As Laman Blanchard wrote in his *Art of Book-Keeping*,

“How hard, when those who do not wish
 To lend, that’s lose, their books
 Are snared by anglers—folks that fish
 With literary hooks,
 Who call and take some favorite tome
 But never read it through,
 They thus complete their set at home
 By making one on you.”

With all his attractive qualities, the collector has been the victim of the modern nomenclature constructed on a basis of Greek, and he has been held up to ridicule and scorn under the title of “bibliomaniac,” one which, nevertheless, men like Dibdin have gloried in and exalted. It is a much-abused word and it is often applied without just discrimination. “If a man spends lavishly on his library,” said Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies*, “you call him mad—a bibliomaniac—but you never call one a horse-maniac, though men ruin themselves every day by their horses, and you do not hear of people ruining themselves by their books.” Ruskin, who might well have written “hippo-maniac,” never heard of course of the sad fate of that unfortunate who,

some years ago, was accused of robbing extensively for the purpose of obtaining funds wherewith to purchase costly *éditions de luxe*, falsely so-called, and whose downfall brought to the inevitable auction-block all his loved accumulations. They were sold at prices absurdly disproportionate to their cost; his Cooper, which cost him \$3,300, going for \$561; his Dumas, costing \$6,000, for \$660, and his Waverly, costing \$5,100, for \$510. Seldom has there been such a pitiful book-disaster. He was a bibliomaniac as defined by Jean Joseph Rive, quoted by Isaac D'Israeli in his *Curiosities* and again in Burton's *Book Hunter*, who said "a bibliomaniac is an indiscriminate accumulator, who blunders faster than he buys, cock-brained and purse-heavy." D'Israeli himself in his essay on "The Bibliomania" calls that malady "the collecting of an enormous heap of books without intelligent curiosity," which, the dear old fellow adds, "has, since libraries have existed, infected weak minds, who imagine that they themselves acquire knowledge when they keep it on their shelves." He condescends, however, to joke mildly about it, saying: "It was facetiously observed, these collectors are not without a *Lock on the Human Understanding*," and he chuckles in a foot-note over the unfortunate French-

man who translated *Curiosities of Literature*, and with that excusable inability, shared with the Scotchman, to see the point of an English jest, rendered the passage—"mettant, comme on l'a très judicieusement fait observer, l'entendement humain sous la clef." Many book-devotees will remember the verses of Doctor John Ferriar, whose epistle to Richard Heber, styled "The Bibliomania," was published in 1909, beginning

"What wild desires, what restless torments seize
The helpless man who feels the book-disease."

Those who are not acquainted with it will find Ferriar's poem in a neat little volume called *Book Verse*, edited by Mr. Roberts and published by Elliot Stock in 1896, a charming collection designed to gladden the heart of the fortunate possessor.

The term "bibliomaniac" has come to mean a good deal more than is asserted by either Rive or D'Israeli, and every one, whether poor or purse-heavy, whether he blunders or not, whether or not he has a curiosity, intelligent or otherwise, is called a bibliomaniac if he has what his fellow-beings consider to be an overweening regard for books, a glorious passion for the ownership of them and a preference for them over all other

earthly things. But the bibliophile, defined by the aforesaid Abbé Rive as “the lover of books, the only one in the class who appears to read them for his own pleasure,” may well entertain the opinion that there is good foundation for the charge of mania against some of the fraternity whose freaks and oddities have made them famous—or infamous as you may prefer—and even against those who have never attained notoriety. There is scarcely any limit to the whims and caprices of collectors. Mr. Rees speaks of a sale in 1883 by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, of “A Unique Collection of Illustrated Matchbox Covers.” I have told elsewhere a story—which happens to be untrue—of a learned judge who had the fad of gathering old almanacs, and there have been people who cherished the labels on wine bottles. Passing by such hobbies as those concerning miniature books—*Sextodecimos et Infra* according to our much-honored bookman of Gotham, William Loring Andrews—and of first editions, because one might fill volumes with reflections on themes like those, think of the condition of mind of him who collects title-pages! Yet he flourished luxuriantly not so very long ago. Students of book history are acquainted with the tale of old John Bagford, shoemaker and biblioclast—the latter

word is unknown to the Century Dictionary—whose collection of title-pages and fragments filled sixty-four folio volumes, or, as Mr. Blades will have it, over one hundred volumes. One can never be absolutely certain about those statistics, and when I have been fortunate enough to enjoy glimpses of the wonderful agglomeration under the dome which looks out upon Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury—surpassed only, in respect to numbers, by the *Bibliothèque Nationale*—I have had no leisure to count Bagford's books, but I sympathize with Blades when he proclaims in righteous indignation, that “when you find the colophon from the end or the ‘insignum typographi’ from the first leaf of a rare ‘fifteener’ pasted down with dozens of others varying in value, you cannot bless the memory of the antiquarian shoemaker, John Bagford.”

Dibdin says of Bagford that he was “the most hungry and rapacious of all book and print collectors, and in his ravages he spared neither the most delicate nor costly specimens.” I was surprised to see this quotation badly mangled by no less a person than Richard Garnett in that work of inestimable value, the *Dictionary of National Biography*; but perhaps he took it from another edition of *Bibliomania* than the one which I am

permitted to pore over and to fondle. Bagford pretended that his depredations, his conscienceless mutilations of old volumes, were designed to aid him in his contemplated General History of Printing which he never finished, but I think it was only a manufactured excuse; and he collected even covers, bosses and clasps. He had numerous followers, but Mr. Slater calls our attention to the fact that collections of book-titles are not much in evidence of recent years, regarded as things rather to be ashamed of, and he remarks that "it is abundantly manifest that the wicked man hath turned away from much of his wickedness." I will not take up the mooted subject of "Grangerizing," for it would require a volume to deal with it adequately; I will merely confess that I am a besotted and benighted disciple of the Shiplake parson.

The devotee of strange and curious bindings affords occasionally some testimony tending to prove that a hobby otherwise harmless may be carried to the borderland between sanity and the reverse. Percy Fitzgerald, the industrious compiler and book-maker, tells us that Mordaunt Cracherode—the father of an eminent collector, the Reverend Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode—wore one pair of buckskin breeches exclusively during

a voyage around the world, and a volume in the son's collection, now in the British Museum, "is bound in a part of those circumnavigating unmentionables." We learn, moreover, that one offspring of the first and great French Revolution was the grim humor of binding books in the skin of human beings. There is an octavo volume of the trial of Cordes for the murder of a young woman named Martin—the Red Barn murder, so often told of in books of criminal trials—bound in the murderer's skin, tanned by some surgeon. Mr. Slater describes a copy of Johnson's *Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers and Street Robbers*—a sweet and enlivening work, if we may judge of it by its title—bound in human cuticle taken from a criminal executed at Tyburn. Owing either to dampness or to some imperfection in the process of curing, it sweats what seem to be great smears of blood. It must be a cheerful ornament in a snug and cosy library.

The story of this appalling book brings to my recollection a friend's account of a book which is said to be in the possession of a gentleman in New Orleans. A physician of that city intending to prepare a treatise on yellow fever, heard of a work on the West Indies, published about the middle of the eighteenth century,

in which the first account of that dire malady was given to the world. He gave an order to the Napoleon of books, as he has been styled, the famous Quaritch, who discovered a copy in the heart of Spain. This copy had a number of maps and plates, whose blank backs were stained with curious brown spots. The owner, after careful scrutiny detected on one of the soiled pages the words "*Sang de Marat.*" It is said, but I will not vouch for the truth of it, that Marat was intending to visit the West Indies in the hope of restoring his shattered health, and it is believed that when he was stabbed by Charlotte Corday—"stewing in slipper bath," with "strong, three-footed stool for writing on" close by him, according to the historian whose name need not be given for the style bewrays him—he may have been reading this very book; and "when his life, with a groan, gushed out, indignant, to the shades below," those pages may have received their sanguinary baptism. I have not seen the book and I do not comprehend why the maps and plates should have been the sole recipients of the blood of Marat, as would seem to be the case; but while the volume must be quite gruesome in its suggestions, it has surely an association which entitles it to be possessed in a dark corner, to be exhibited only to those who ap-

proach a book with a dignified and becoming reverence. It must be a melancholy but interesting piece of property.

I have in my library an extra-illustrated copy of Dowden's Shelley containing a lock of Wordsworth's hair and one of Southey's. In looking at them, one always feels as if he were in the very presence of the illustrious dead. There is a funereal taint about them by no means agreeable, like that which clings to the bindings of the Cordes book and the Highwaymen's biographies. I do not rejoice over such mortuary relics; I would much prefer to own George Napier's copy of the book about the dwarf Jeffrey Hudson, bound in a fragment of Charles the First's silk waistcoat, or the Duke of Roxburghe's collection of pamphlets about Mary Tofts (who pretended to be confined of rabbits), which is appropriately dressed in rabbit skin.

It has been said and written countless times that the collector delights above all things in the making of "lucky finds," in "picking up" for a trifle some unique volume, and he dreams of such good fortunes as in childhood we used to dream of finding money. The "find" must as a rule be associated with a small price, or it loses its distinctive value. There are, however, but

few authentic records of these happy discoveries, and as a recent writer has observed, whenever one begins to read of them he invariably encounters the same ancient fables, like the Old Hüngrford Market tale and the story of Dame Juliana Berner's *Boke of St. Albans* in Thorneck Hall. I have long indulged in the pleasing hope that somehow and somewhere I myself might, in my wanderings, achieve something in the way of a "find" whereof during the remainder of my life I might boast, with that peculiar self-satisfaction exhibited by those who congratulate themselves on the making of a good bargain. My nearest approach to it was in Rome when in one of the shops where the innocent American purchases what he fondly believes to be antiques, there chanced to be, among the rubbish of shabby vases and broken statuettes, a casual volume in old mottled calf, with red edges, lonesome and desolate in the midst of the dubious *bric-à-brac*. After a peep at the title and the fly-leaf, I pocketed it with glee, and the proprietor, more interested in selling his alleged antiquities than in "mere literature," accepted an insignificant number of *lire* with apparent satisfaction. It was a copy of the first edition of the *Tancredè* of Voltaire, not particularly scarce, it is true, but it was the copy which the author

presented in 1761 to the famous lawyer-dramatist of Venice, Carlo Goldoni, whose marble statue looks out upon the Ponte Alla Carraja in Florence, and it bears upon the last page, in Goldoni's handwriting, the words, "Proprieta dell' avvocato Carlo Goldoni, Veneto." This is a very trifling and insignificant "find," scarcely deserving the name, and I mention it chiefly because of its loneliness.

Once upon a time, if further personal reminiscence may be pardoned, I was the victim of a pleasing delusion which occasionally affects the man who forgets that what was rare may suddenly become common by the appearance of copies formerly unknown. I had read of the scarce first edition of that small pamphlet of seventy-one pages, the operetta of Dickens, that is to say: "The Village Coquettes: a Comic Opera in Two Acts; London, Richard Bentley, 1836," and had heard of prices of £30 and £40. When I "picked up" one—clean, uncut, even unbound—for a paltry £5, my surprise was tempered with natural delight, until I learned that not long before my unexpected good fortune, "a mass of waste paper from a printer's warehouse was returned to the mills to be pulped," as Mr. Roberts relates in *The Book Hunter in London*, "and would

certainly have been destroyed had not one of the workmen employed on the premises caught sight of the name of 'Charles Dickens' upon some of the sheets." In this way nearly a hundred copies of "The Village Coquettes," in quires, unbound, came into the market—and mine was one of them. It was like Andrew Carnegie's boasted "mansuscript" of old Doctor Smith's "America," of which there are at least fifty extant; only I found out my error and I fancy that the library-founder is still in happy ignorance of the truth.

Much has been written of the wanton extravagance of book collectors; of the squandering of their scanty means in the acquisition of curiosities without substantial value; and of their depriving themselves of even the necessities of life in order to gratify their unholy passion for choice books. Pretty pieces of fiction have been published which have this idea for their *motif*. The collector's wife, unsympathetic and sorely afflicted, grieving over her ragged babes and lamenting the vagaries of her spouse, is a familiar character in imaginary chronicles. There is but a slight foundation for these fables, and the collector's wife is usually as enthusiastic—almost—as he is about the fascinating pursuit, often urging him to increase his store; but I

will own that sometimes, although not very often, the purchase of a long-coveted volume incidentally involves an investment in a Japanese sword-guard, a precious bit of faded tapestry, a new dress or in a hat the like of which is not preserved in the British Museum. Observation teaches one that, excepting the very rich men who are well able to afford to buy Mazarine (or Gutenberg) Bibles, Shakespeare folios and Golden Gospels, the collector is extremely prudent in his expenditures. "Carefully and judiciously pursued," says the gentle Mr. Rees in his *Pleasures of a Book-Worm*, "the collecting of books is not expensive and is likely to ruin no one." The world at large is fond of cherishing delusions and of perpetuating fallacies; for which reason the general public wholly overestimates the folly of the book-buyer. The public judgment is not infallible, and hence I think we should not disturb ourselves unduly about it.

As now and then there are great misers, there are once and awhile men who seem to aim only at amassing an enormous number of books; men like Magliabecchi, who lived in a kind of cave made of piles of books, covering floor, bed and all the house with books. When he wished to sleep he would repose in a sort of wooden

cradle, lined with pamphlets, which he slung between his shelves, or he would throw a rug over the books on the floor and stretch himself upon them. Heber bought libraries without seeing them, and at the sale of his collection in 1834 and succeeding years, 119,613 volumes were disposed of, realizing £56,774. He is said to have collected in England alone 127,500 volumes and he probably owned at one time between 145,000 and 150,000 books. That is too many for genuine interest and enjoyment. But Heber pales in the presence of the Frenchman Boulard, the greatest buyer of old books during the last century, who "bought books by the metre, by the toise, and by the acre, and who left 300,000 volumes." There are not many persons so unreasonably covetous: the *Miser Helluo Librorum* is more frequently encountered in literature than in actual life. It must be owned, however, that the temptation to increase one's stores is hard to resist when the catalogues are so seductive; the shelves must always be a little overcrowded. Abraham Hayward probably invented the story about Madame de Genlis who, it was said, kept her books in detached book-cases, the male authors in one and the female authors in another, because, as Lord Lyndhurst suggested, she did not wish to add to her library. Most of us cannot be so heroic.

Mr. A. P. Russell in his attractive book, *In a Club Corner*, quotes the story of the Oriental king whose library was so large that it required one hundred persons to take care of it and a thousand dromedaries to transport it. He ordered all useless matter weeded out and after thirty years' labor it was reduced to the capacity of thirty camels. Still appalled by the number of volumes, he ordered it to be condensed to a single dromedary load, and when the task was completed, age had crept upon him and death awaited him. I do not attempt to explain the moral, for every one will explain it to suit himself. I believe, however, that when the private library is swollen to an extent which forbids an intimate personal relation between the owner and each particular volume, it ceases to be what it ought to be, a source of comfort and of consolation, a precious possession, whose value is not to be measured in mere money.

There is a temptation to ramble aimlessly through the broad field in which for so many centuries the book collector has disported himself and which has been explored with such diligence that it is not unlike the surface of our terrestrial globe, trotted over so thoroughly that few nooks and corners remain undiscovered and untrodden. With the enormous increase in the

production of books—they appear so profusely that we are likely to suffer from a fit of literary indigestion—I fancy that before this century is much older the old-fashioned, all-absorbing collector may be destined to join the ranks of the disappearing *fauna*, like the bison, a victim of the disastrous effects of civilization. Yet there will always be a few who will cling to the traditions. They will preserve the traits and characteristics of the earnest enthusiasts whose names are cherished in the hearts of all who regard the book as a thing apart from the mean and sordid in life, men about whom the elder D'Israeli wrote and the fantastic and inaccurate Dibdin prattled so voluminously. They will not be concerned chiefly about the value of their hoards in the market-place; they will have, it may be, a gentle and pardonable vanity in the ownership of some treasure which others cannot procure; they will be proud of their possessions and a little scornful of the Philistine who is ignorant of their merit; but they will be, as they have always been, happy, kindly, and fond of research in the records of the past; not strenuous or overeager in the pursuit of fame or of fortune, but useful in their modest way, sympathetic and full to the brim with love for their fellow-men. For no man can be a true lover of books who does not also love his brothers.

REFLECTIONS OF A RECEIVER

REFLECTIONS OF A RECEIVER.

In some other paper I have referred to the observation in the San Francisco *Bulletin* that if the present writer should "tell us a few of the things he had learned in Wall Street, and some of the facts he gleaned while Receiver of the Metropolitan Company, then there would be reading to sit up to." Incited by this kindly scribe, but with no expectation or intention of inducing nocturnal perturbation of mind on the part of the gentle reader, I am led to bestow upon those members of the community who are capable of keen intellectual enjoyment a few reflections arising out of four years of experience as a Receiver of some lines of street railway in the City of New York. I know well that the tale of a Receiver could be unfolded with far more effectiveness and skill by a rival Receiver, justly regarded as "a man of letters," whose epistolary accomplishments have made of Chesterfield a faded tradition, of Junius a puerile scribbler, and of Madame de Sevigné something no better than the modern *Dea ex machina*, the lady manipulator of a type-writing machine. From his keen-pointed pen would have proceeded pages

rivalling the disquisitions of De Quincey on "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts," or confessions as soul-stirring as those of the immortal Jean Jacques. The future may, however, have in store for us a "History of the Decline and Fall of the Third Avenue Railway Company," which will rack with envy the shade of Gibbon and may live to be numbered among the classics of the Twentieth Century. Let us be hopeful.

Upon assuming the robe, or perhaps one might say with more accuracy the linen-duster, of a Receiver, the first thing which was brought most distinctly to my attention was the persistence of a simple form of jocosity manifesting itself in the remarks of nine out of ten of those who continued to honor me with their acquaintance. I have never met a like unanimity concerning a jest since I ceased to be a resident of the village formerly known as Sing Sing and was greeted almost daily by the monotonous inquiry as to how long I had been "out." The spirit of Momus or of the late Joseph Miller seemed to move each merry friend to inform me that "a receiver is as bad as a thief." This, coupled with the production in the public prints of divers weird representations of my humble countenance in company with that of my honored associate,

served for a time to cheer my drooping spirits, but it also reminded me as I rode—free of charge—in my majestic trolley-car that, like the Roman General celebrating his triumph in his less imposing chariot, I was merely mortal. I thought of that remark of Cosmo de Medici, which Bacon called “a desperate saying,” that “Holy Writ bids us to forgive our enemies, but it is nowhere enjoined upon us that we should forgive our friends.”

About the same time I became aware of the infinite capacity of the human mind for finding fault. Really, it is natural enough to find fault, for there is no more delightful method of flattering one’s vanity. It demonstrates the clearness of vision and perspicacity of mind which enable the fault-finder to detect and to denounce the fault, and it is attended by the pleasing implication of the ability of the finder to discover and apply the remedy. It will be a melancholy day for the greater number of our intelligent population when it is no longer possible to find fault with a common carrier. A common carrier is the pariah of modern civilization, contemned and despised by society. He does not usually suffer much pain, for he is generally a corporation, and, according to an ancient saying, “hath neither a body

to be kicked, nor a soul to be damned," and I once thought that his unpopularity was largely due to his corporate character. I was undeceived; it was because he was common and a carrier. At first it was quite disheartening to behold all mankind, with mouth open, pouring forth torrents of abusive criticism, and to reflect that the voice of the People, while theoretically *vox Dei*, frequently sounds like something quite different; but after a little, those of us who do not intend to run for office reach that happy state when the universal bray loses its power to disturb our digestion or to impair the flavor of our after-dinner cigar.

Another interesting discovery was that of the fatal propensity of individuals with foreign names to sustain personal injuries curable only by a liberal use of large quantities of the admirable currency of our glorious Republic. The facility with which those whose names end in "off," "ski," "stein" and "heimer" contrive to fall off, or under, or into street cars, or get put out or otherwise maltreated without any fault of their own, may be compared only with the ease with which they recover, almost by a miracle, from such dreadful complaints as "traumatic myositis," after a single application of the wonderful greenback-salve, or

so much of it as may be allowed to them by their attorneys; a sort of salvage as it were. This leads to a tale told among lawyers, of a Hibernian plaintiff, formerly a client of the present Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, who recovered a large verdict against a street railway company. After an affirmance in the highest court, he received only a small portion of the amount awarded by the jury, and could get no satisfactory explanation. Finally he procured a copy of the opinion of the court, and after reading it carefully he observed at the end the phrase: "All concur. Cullen, C. J., taking no part." "Ah, bedad!" he exclaimed—Irishmen in stories always say "bedad"—"I knew it; Ed. Cullen wouldn't take any part! If he had, I suppose there wouldn't have been a divil of a cent left for *me*."

We entered upon our labors with a serene and innocent confidence in our ability to satisfy the demands of the most exacting. Our motto was, "We aim to please." We had been taught that "charity" is the greatest of all good things, and we know that Benezet, one of the best men that ever lived, used to say that the highest act of charity was to bear with the unreasonableness of mankind. But in course of time we began

to comprehend the reasons why many years ago Mr. William H. Vanderbilt made a certain remark about the public, forcible but not polite. We soon discovered that our patrons were divided into two great classes—those who thought our cars too hot and those who thought them too cold. Some citizens growled sullenly at a feeble attempt of ours to enforce compliance with the law that prohibits smoking on rear platforms, while others denounced us bitterly for not enforcing it to the letter. Along in the early spring we had timidly ventured to put in service a few open cars, and a dozen persons assailed us violently for so doing, while another dozen wrote scorching letters to us to upbraid us for not putting on more. The pet grievance was that cars would not stop to take on passengers when, after a block in the traffic, it became necessary to restore the normal headway in order to furnish accommodations for the greater number. A good second, however, was the outcry against being required to take another car when there had been an accident to the one on which the offended nobleman happened to be riding. The subject of “flat wheels” also elicited much vociferous complaint, nearly all the complainants being wholly ignorant of what

a "flat wheel" really is and of what causes it. Bondholders were clamorous because conductors "knocked down" fares—according to the custom of conductors from the very beginnings of conducting—and scolded us soundly for not preventing it; while others took pleasure in directing our attention to that form of peculation, as if they held a patent for discovering it and as if we had never given it any thought whatsoever. Others still were severe about the bad manners of our said conductors, surprised, no doubt, that the three thousand or more of those long-suffering functionaries were not recruited from the alumni of our universities or the circles of the "four hundred." One gentleman, angry to the extent of several pages of manuscript, was bitter because there had been tendered to him in change what he was pleased to call "five grimy pennies." Saddest of all was the disillusionizing discovery that the mass of the people, the fount of all law and justice, the honest public, so severely righteous over the sins of the predatory capitalists, considered the evasion of payment of fare as commendable and praiseworthy; upon the theory, possibly, that as all things belong to and emanate from the people, it is not theft when they steal from themselves. For this reason, probably, the placarding of the eighth command-

ment, resorted to by one Receiver, did not appear to have any noticeable effect. Indeed, a man of large experience in street-railway operation informs me that, with all the outcry about the thefts of the poor conductors, carefully compiled records show that the dear public steals at least four times as much. We had a practical illustration of popular morality the morning after we began operating the "pay-as-you-enter" cars on Madison Avenue; we were obliged to put twenty-five extra cars on the Lexington Avenue line to provide for the overflow. The triumph of ingenious patience in fraud was achieved by a woman who passed off a transfer ticket on a certain day in April, 1911, which had been issued on the corresponding date in 1905, having waited six years for that April day to fall on the same day of the week! I can imagine the lady hoarding the precious treasure; taking it from time to time from its place of deposit in order to gloat over it, and finally attaining the summit of human happiness by consummating the long cherished design and defrauding the creditors of an insolvent company out of the princely sum of five cents. The ticket was photographed and filed in court as an exhibit tending to prove the lofty standard of integrity prevailing in the metropolis of America.

Vigorously assailed because the tracks were in bad condition, we set to work at the earliest practicable time to repair them. This rendered it necessary to pile up some rails and other articles temporarily in the street. Instantly a worthy lawyer wrote to us that we had wilfully obstructed the roadway in front of his house, when there was a vacant lot across the way in front of which we could easily have stored the materials. An hour or two later another wrathful writer informed us that we had "purposely placed in front of his house a heap of rails and paving stones, when there was a vacant lot adjoining his premises in front of which it might just as well have been deposited." Depressed in mind, I wended my way that noon to the Down Town Club to restore my spirits by a little healthful refreshment, and as I entered I was hailed by a friend who said, "Hay! I want to make a complaint——" I turned upon him fiercely. "Don't tell me," I cried, "that rails have been piled up in front of your house when there is a vacant lot——" "Why," he exclaimed, in some astonishment, "that was just what I was going to say!"

Looking back over the past, I am unable to recall that any human being ever said, orally or in print, a sin-

gle kind or encouraging word about us. Sometimes we received messages commending the politeness of a conductor, but these were like angel's visits; they brightened our lives but for a brief season. For these much-abused conductors we learned to have a deep sympathy, sharing, as we did, their uniform unpopularity. It was a lesson in patience to see one of them struggling with a mob of women shoppers on Twenty-third Street; a liberal education in philosophy to behold them beset from morn till midnight by a horde of careless, selfish, unreasonable and often insolent people; expected to be always courteous and ready to impart information on almost every conceivable subject; blamed for everything that went amiss, and abused for merely obeying orders; blamed for delays for which they were in no-wise responsible; blamed for opening a window and scolded for shutting it; blamed now for starting the car too slowly and now for starting it too quickly; blamed for not knowing how to direct an inquiring female to the address of some shop-keeper; blamed for not stopping to let off a lady who, at Grand Street, had asked to be set down at West 47th Street; blamed for being unable to supply change for a ten-dollar bill; blamed for asking passengers to "move up in front,"

as well as for permitting the rear of the car to be crowded; blamed for letting people get on when the car was full and blamed for not stopping to take on some more when every strap was adorned with a clinging traveler. It would seem that the public expected to obtain the services of a Chesterfield, a Mezzofanti, a Chevalier Bayard and a Solomon, all rolled into one individual, for the sum of \$2.60 a day. I began to think that his woes were greater than my own, and he certainly was paid less for enduring them; but one day a famous banker and magnate called upon me and required me to redeem, personally, a counterfeit fifty-cent piece which had been foisted on him by one of these self-same conductors. This affliction was almost too much to bear; but true to our motto, I complied without a murmur.

It is almost needless to say that at the outset of our Receptorial career we came into immediate contact with the majority of the People as represented by the Public Service Commission of the State of New York in the First District. We were new at the business; had almost as little knowledge and experience of it as they had themselves. They were just then threatening to do some direful deed, I forget exactly what, and I

waited upon them to beg them for a little time in which to get our bearings. They were affable—suspiciously so; they fell upon my neck, metaphorically speaking. They assured me that they would withhold their mighty hand and would never, never do that deed without further ample notice; and almost as soon as I had shaken from my feet the sacred dust of their sanctuary—they did it. This led me to repose the most unlimited confidence in their later assurances, which was never misplaced; for they continued thereafter to fall upon me with energy and promptness—if not upon my neck, upon some other valued portion of my corporosity. To this treatment my associate and I submitted with becoming meekness; content to learn the nature of their decrees from the newspapers before receiving their official mandates; and actually chuckling with uncounterfeited glee—mind, I did not say “ghoulish”—when they sternly ordered us to “increase the service” on Madison Avenue by running a less number of cars than were already in operation on that particular thoroughfare. Even when, by a complication of accidents, one of our electric cars ran away and collided with another, both being empty, and the P. S. C. sternly required us to inform them “what steps, if any, we were taking to pre-

vent a recurrence" of the event, we straightway took all the steps we could think of and solemnly promised that it should never happen again.

It was curious what a maw these gentlemen had for statistics; an unholy craving, a cormorantish hunger, a Gargantuan appetite; they were manifestly bent upon making figures in the world. All imaginable inquiries, calling upon us for figurative responses, were showered upon us day by day. I have an impression that they wanted to know how many red-headed conductors and motormen we had on the Eighth Avenue line; how many times an hour we were cursed by people who could not get a car to stop on the wrong corner; how many women a day alighted from the cars the wrong way; and if we would not arrive at a proper basis of "amortization" by multiplying the car-mileage by the gross earnings, dividing the result by the number of bad nickels received *per diem*, and subtracting the amount of the fares which the conductors accidentally forgot to "ring up" during the "rush hours." They were great on "amortization"—as if the property was not already dead enough, financially, to satisfy the most progressive of statesmen. I never did set much store by statistics. It never really concerned me whether

a greater number of people came over the bridges from Brooklyn to New York in a day than returned to Brooklyn the same day, because I was morally convinced that they must have gone back by some other way or on some other day, or eventually there would be no people left in Brooklyn—a contingency too horrible to contemplate. The value of statistics is forcibly illustrated by an incident related by Judge L—. A western town undertook to ascertain, by a careful study of its record of arrests, the comparative percentages of criminality among the different races represented in its population. They discovered that there was such and such a percentage of Italians, of Hungarians, of Scandinavians, of Irish, of native Americans, and two hundred per cent of Persians. It turned out that there was only one Persian in the place and he had been arrested twice.

One form of expression used by the Commission in their affectionate and familiar correspondence with us we found of considerable comfort. Whenever anyone addressed to them a complaint or a suggestion relative to the railway, they transmitted it to us at once with the remark that “it may be an isolated case or it may be due to some defect in your organization.” Not being

aware of any serious defect in my own organization and being absolutely positive that there was none in that of my stalwart and warm-hearted associate, I usually elected to consider it "an isolated case," especially when one kind and thoughtful gentleman proposed that we should indicate by a chalk line the sweep of the curve described by the rear platforms of our "pay-as-you-enter" cars as they swung from Park Avenue into Forty-second Street, and we were duly notified that "it might be an isolated case" and all the rest of it. But we considered it most urbane on the part of the commissioners to give us our choice in the matter, and endeavored to make some sort of sense out of it as we always did, with varying success, out of all their numerous recommendations.

In the early days of their dominion the commissioners became possessed of the favorite idea of amateurs, that the *ne plus ultra* of street-car management is to "provide a seat for every passenger." Now every one except an amateur knows that it is comparatively an easy thing to furnish a seat for every passenger, but extremely difficult to persuade him to sit in it. The mischief arises largely from the fact that, although the people as a whole are theoretically omniscient, inerrant

and infallible, the several units of which they are composed are frequently thoughtless, generally unreasonable and always in a hurry. Each man, woman and child wants a seat in the first car that makes its appearance. In order to attain the ideal, there must be (1) a seat, (2) a fairly patient passenger, (3) a line of railway, (*a*) free from interfering trucks and coal-wagons, (*b*) having cars not subject to the ordinary vicissitudes of car life, (*c*) having a power plant which can never by any possibility get out of order, (*d*) with conductors and motormen exempt from all human defects or frailties. This combination is rarely secured.

It is strange, by the way, how a human being may be simply perfect in private life but invariably becomes in the mind of the public a criminal and an enemy of mankind when he is once transformed into a motorman. This popular estimate of him—which is as wrong as popular estimates are apt to be—is encouraged by the habit of the police to arrest the motorman whenever anyone is injured, even when an intoxicated gentleman becomes suddenly weary and lies down to rest in front of a swiftly moving car; or a wandering infant, by abruptly changing its line of progress, rambles directly in the path of a car without giving a moment's warning

of its intention. It makes a decent man's blood boil to think of the atrocious injustice of thus putting upon an innocent person the stigma of arrest and arraignment in a police court—an outrage impossible in a country like England and almost peculiar to an alleged "free country" like our own, where one-half of the population seems to be engaged daily in arresting and indicting the other half, and "probing" and "grilling" have come to be the national games. But all this, I confess, is irrelevant to the seat question.

Thanks to the commissioners, we were often enabled to afford the spectacle of one or two cars crowded to the steps, followed by a procession of others only half filled and of others still wholly empty. According to the gospel of statistics, with ten cars having thirty-six seats each, three hundred and sixty passengers should each have had a seat; but when three hundred and sixty passengers insist on boarding five cars with only one hundred and eighty seats, statistics receive what the scoffers call a hard jolt and are temporarily knocked out, as it were.

The principle of the Public Service law is fairly sound and the law itself is an excellent one—in principle—but it has some weak features which may in time be

eliminated, if the subject is dealt with intelligently. The troubles which have attended its execution have been caused mainly by lack of practical wisdom on the part of its administrators. The problems presented to them have been grave and perplexing—too grave for satisfactory solution by doctrinaires or by amateurs. It is no disparagement of the members personally to say that, in the beginning, they were not eminently fit for their task. It was one which could be well performed only after long and systematic study and training. Men are not created with an inborn capacity for directing and regulating systems of passenger transportation in great cities as the Receivers well know, or for managing the financial affairs of the corporations which have them in charge; yet the commission was expected to do both, without experience in either field. To expect five men, selected almost at random, to do it successfully is as unreasonable as it would be to put musical instruments in the hands of five persons ignorant of music and ask them to perform the great quintet of Schumann without even a rehearsal.

It is one of the traits of the American to fancy that he is entirely competent to decide vexed questions of

law without legal education; to teach in colleges without preparation; and to perform the operation for appendicitis without any knowledge of surgery. It is magnificent, but it has its drawbacks. We learned during the Civil War that we could not make successful commanders by adorning men with epaulets and calling them Major-Generals—even politicians like Banks and Butler. Abernethy “spoiled a hatful of eyes” in learning to operate for cataract, and no one can measure the amount of havoc done in perfecting the instruction of untrained commissioners.

Then, too—and I say it with all respect—it was a mistake to approach the consideration of their problems in a spirit of hostility to the men who were endeavoring in good faith to discharge their duties not only to the owners of the property but to the public as well. It must be remembered that for four years the principal street railways of New York have been operated under the direction of a court having regard to the interests of the city and of its people as well as to those of the large body of creditors whose money is involved and who were in nowise responsible for any of the acts which made the companies bankrupt. These agents of the court, having no personal concern

in the affair other than to obey judicial decrees and to do what is reasonable and proper, were justly entitled to the same presumption of fairness and disinterestedness as was accorded to the commissioners themselves. We should have had the intelligent co-operation of these public officers instead of their ill-disguised enmity, and should not have been subjected to the impertinences and insults of their petty subordinates. It is not a good way, if you wish to be helpful, to issue a peremptory order to do a certain thing and call upon the victim to appear before you to show cause, if possible, why that thing should not be done. To be frank, one of the misfortunes has been that the commissioners stood too much in awe of a populace misled by false guides into the belief that the Receivers and the Court were merely the representatives of the old corporations and of mercenary plutocrats. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was never any good reason why the commission, instead of being a hindrance, should not have been a help to the street railways as the commission in Canada is to the railways of the Dominion—a body which does not consider the advertisement of its members in the newspapers to be the chief purpose of its existence. I am glad to say

that in course of time our commissioners or some of them learned that we were not as bad as they originally thought we were.

If these gentlemen had been confronted by the necessity of raising money to defray the enormous expenses for interest, rentals, taxes, wages, supplies, repairs, renewals, and operation generally, they would soon have found that it is far easier to make orders than it is to carry them out. It is all an illustration of the truth of what one of our best practical railway managers said years ago, that the power to control business enterprises without financial responsibility is one of the most dangerous that can be entrusted to any man or set of men.

It would not be very surprising if the increasing tendency to disregard property rights and to appropriate the possessions of corporations should result in what is termed "municipal ownership" of street railways, and perhaps, in the course of time, free transportation of all passengers. This would be infinitely pleasing to the multitude, for it would give the "bosses" a delightful amount of patronage and the large expenses would fall wholly upon the luckless taxpayers. With a Legislature made up as our own usually is, and the almost

unlimited powers vested in it, there would be little difficulty in effecting a substantial confiscation of the property of the present owners. Possibly the taxpayers might groan a little, but their woes are not commonly regarded very seriously; and after a while there might be little or nothing left to them wherewith to pay. What would happen then, it is hard to predict. Perhaps they may be obliged to resort to the methods of the inhabitants of some of the Channel Islands and make a precarious living by taking in one another's washing. It is to be hoped, however, that the danger may be averted in some such way as that which was recently adopted in Chicago, where the city has become a virtual partner in the street railway business, entitled to a share of net profits, but not liable for losses; or everybody may become so wealthy under the rule of the "progressives" that "trams" may be abolished and every citizen will possess his own motor-car.

There was an object-lesson to the public which has been carefully ignored by the press, in the circumstance that although, under the pet theory of the cheapening of cost by competition, the destruction of the combination of all the lines in New York in the "Metropolitan" should have made rates lower, it actually resulted in a

greater cost to the passengers. The theory is false, of course, as a generalization, and the Government has practically repudiated it in destroying competition among inter-state railways by requiring uniformity of rates. Most of the objections to the consolidation of railroads resolve themselves into the one proclaimed by the celebrated Hibernian who used to be charged two fares of five cents each to travel from his home to his factory, and the same on his return, but, after a "merger," was required to pay only five cents each way; "the devilish ingenuity of these hellish combines," as he characterized them, being shown by the fact that while formerly he could save twenty cents a day by walking, he could now save only ten. It has always been unfortunate that the tariff on imports has been made the shuttlecock of politics, but it is a far greater calamity that all trade and business should be made the playthings of the demagogues.

These reflections are not, I confess, as profound as they ought to be. When men who, during a portion of their lives, have indulged in the pleasing illusion that they were ordinarily respectable citizens, with a decent reputation for honesty and patriotic impulse, awake to a consciousness that by a fortuitous combination of

circumstances they have suddenly become Ishmaelites, with no effective means of self-defence—unless they are provided with a skilful press-bureau, which itself is not always effective—they are apt to become morose and soured in their temper, and their reflections are of a nature which it is doubtless good policy not to disclose even in the bosom of one's family. The Public Service Law, with that lack of kindness so characteristic of statutes, insists that the terms "receiver" and "corporation" are synonymous, so that when innocent human beings are made "receivers" of corporations, not only the property of the corporations but all the wickedness, offences and crimes of those much-abused artificial persons are *ipso facto* unloaded upon the receivers, who are then turned out into the wilderness like scapegoats, with all the burden upon them. No one ever seemed to care very much about the feelings of the scapegoat. It may be said that this afflicted animal was worse off than the Receivers, because he did not have the consolation of a quarterly cheque to alleviate his miseries; but there *are* chords in man's nature which, when rudely smitten, cannot be attuned to harmony by such sordid things as cheques, even when certified and drawn for considerable

amounts. Taking one consideration with another, the Receiver's lot, like the policeman's, is not a happy one. Still there is comfort in the thought that as our fellow-beings quickly forget all about us, we forget all our troubles almost as quickly.

READING AND OTHER THINGS.

READING AND OTHER THINGS.

It may well be said that there is nothing new to be written about the reading habit, and that there is altogether too much of what Mr. Roberts calls "the somewhat labored commonplaces of the ordinary book-lover." But there is nothing very new to be written about most old subjects, and the subject of books is fairly ancient. Hence I have added "and other things" to my title, in the hope that before I have done I may be able to utter something which is as new, at least, as the Constitution of a progressive Western State, but I trust more harmless.

Great personages are apt to treat books in a condescending way, occasionally a little scornfully, but they do not pretend to be able to do without them altogether. Mr. John Milton, attempting to ride two horses in a manner hardly worthy of so famous a bard, after the fashion of a modern statesman endeavoring to please two opposing factions in his party, said in *Paradise Regained*:

“However, many books
 Wise men have said, are wearisome: who reads
 Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
 A spirit and a judgment equal or superior
 (And what he brings, what need he elsewhere seek?)
 Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
 Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself.”

This is pretty poor stuff for a real poet. It implies that a man who already has “a spirit and a judgment equal or superior” need not read, and that the object of reading should be to procure that kind of a spirit and a judgment, equal to something undisclosed or superior to something about which we are not informed. It also implies that a man is shallow who is “deep-versed in books,” a generalization which is unfounded in fact. He appears, however, to be willing to concede that a fairly intelligent reader, if he does not devote himself incessantly to his nefarious pursuit, may get some good out of his books. Indeed, had there been no books, it may be doubted whether we should have had any *Paradise Lost*, and surely we would have had no *Areopagitica*. But one must not expect much logical sense from poets; and when Milton wrote *Paradise Regained*—a tame and chilly piece of work, although

Wordsworth and Coleridge affected to prefer it to *Paradise Lost*—he was at the stage of his career when it would have been better for him to rest on the laurels already won.

Milton's *dicta* belong to the class of observations designed for the purpose of flattering the unfortunates who know little and care less about books, for, sad to relate, there are not a few of such benighted creatures. Even true book-lovers occasionally fall into the snare and appear to accept those observations, half-apologizing for their affectionate interest in the printed word. A distinguished old gentleman of my acquaintance, who has been a soldier, a legislator, a judge, and an editor—mark the ascending scale—and who is as bookish a man as I ever knew, delivered an eloquent address at a college not long ago, in the course of which he said: "It is a distressing reflection to the student how little he remembers of what he reads," and he quoted the remark of "a celebrated author" whom, in his dignified, old-style way, he characterized as "a man of uncommon erudition," that "he who remembers most, remembers little compared with what he forgets." Neither the plaint of the distinguished octogenarian nor the sententious deliverance of the gentleman of

uncommon erudition indicate much profundity of thought. Each belongs to the order of solemn platitudes, dear to the admirers of Martin Farquhar Tupper—if there are any left at present; and the apothegm of the celebrated author has about as much real meaning as the assertion that “he who has eaten most has eaten little compared with what he has not eaten,” or that “he who has seen most has seen little compared with what he has never seen.” There should be nothing to distress a rational being in the reflection that he has read more than he remembers. There is a good deal of profit as well as a vast amount of comfort in a judicious forgetting. Carlyle said in one of his *Note Books* that “no man without Themistocles’ gift of forgetting can possibly spend his days in reading,” and he comes back to the thought in *Sartor Resartus* when he tells us that “vain was the prayer of Themistocles for a talent of forgetting.” The mind which could retain all that its owner had ever read would soon become a miserable lumber-room full of useless old furniture, a wretched rag-bag of a mind, so crowded with rubbish as to be altogether valueless to its possessor. Some ingenious persons, it is true, insist that we never forget anything, that whatever is once received in our

consciousness remains there, dormant, perhaps, but ready to be roused and recalled when touched aright. While we do, sometimes, have a flash of recollection of something which we thought had utterly disappeared from our ken, the instances are too few to warrant the assertion of a general rule. At all events, I see no good reason why any one should be moved to melancholy because he is unable to remember all he ever read, sense and nonsense. If he has read with intelligence, he will remember enough for any good purpose; he will remember the substance, and if he needs the exact words, he will know where to go to look for them. The really distressing reflection is that of De Quincey, told of in Rev. Francis Jacox's recollections of the Opium-Eater: "It is one of the afflictions of life that one must read thousands of books only to discover that one need not have read them." Genuine lovers of books are not accustomed to fret over their reading, but if they are in need of something to worry over, De Quincey's reflection is worth their while. Even that cannot be accepted without qualification. It is often a delight to read a book merely to find out for oneself that it is worthless. It is a pleasure to feel that you are wise enough to discern that it is

of no value; it tickles that vanity which all men and a few—very few—women have, although some conceal it better than others. A thoughtful reader wearies of a monotonous diet of perfection. Even Sir Francis Burnand's burlesques of popular novels, inane and tedious as they are, give one a better appetite for Bret Harte's, and I would add for Thackeray's, if one needed to have the appetite whetted for *George de Barnwell*, *Codlingsby*, and *Phil Fogarty*. A book by William Carew Hazlitt endears to us the graceful fancies of Andrew Lang all the more by its awkward ineptitude, and one of Mr. Carnegie's light and airy volumes of persiflage will make almost any other printed thing a joy forever.

We certainly remember the substance of good books. Last summer I read for the second time the Autobiography of Anthony Trollope, a most entertaining one, whose only fault is that it incited Mr. Samuel Smiles, the "Self-Help" man, to write a very dull one. The side dissertations on novel-writing generally are passably uninteresting in comparison with the personal details, but I found that I recalled almost all that was actually autobiographical. Next I re-read *The Speakers of the House*, by Herbert Bruce Fuller,

dealing with the Speakers of our House, from Muhlenberg to Cannon, replete with inaccuracies mingled with some infantile comments worthy of a Freshman fumbling over his first "essay," and discovered that I had utterly forgotten every word of it.

I knew a man of high distinction in politics and in finance who was so blessed that after having "gone through" one of our modern novels and laid it aside, he could pick it up next day and read it all over again in blissful ignorance of ever having seen it before. Themistocles would have envied him.

Judging by the multitude of books produced and by the number of libraries existing, there must be a lot of reading done even in these days of engrossing sports and persistent money-grubbing. It is a question if most of the reading done in libraries is really "reading"; one may study there, but that is altogether a different thing. It is a coincidence that within an hour after this last sentence was written, I found in my morning newspaper a notice of the annual meeting of the New York Library Association, at which the President of the society "explained the benefits to be derived from what she described as 'joy reading' as opposed to the perusal of

books for the purpose merely of gaining knowledge." The "slang" is horrifying when uttered by a lady librarian, but the idea is good; I wish merely to record my objection to the phrase on the ground that the sort of reading she was describing is scarcely as deadly and destructive as the "joy riding" the lady had in mind.

The very best reading is that which we do for pleasure only. I am not unaware that Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies* denounces "mere reading" and, particularly, purposeless reading. Ruskin was never quite sane, and a man who excludes from his catalogue of books worth reading Thackeray, George Eliot, Kingsley, Swift, Hume, and Macaulay does not deserve much credence. Carlyle, too, said in his Inaugural Address at the University of Edinburgh that "it would be safer and better for many a reader that he had no concern with books at all," and that "there is a number of books that are decidedly to the readers of them not useful." The first assertion is a mere attempt to say something startling, and the second is only a platitude. If we should throw away all books that are not useful, fully half of Carlyle's, if not more, would go in the wastebasket. Ruskin and Carlyle were *poseurs*, brilliant,

erratic, and frequently wrong-headed. Arthur Christopher Benson, in his *Cambridge Lectures* on Ruskin, while defending the former in his gentle, captivating way, is forced to admit it, and as to Carlyle, nobody denies it.

Reading a library book or a borrowed book can never be as delightful as reading one's own book. It is like dwelling in a hired house compared with living in your own home. No well-constituted person can love a hired house, and as for a rented "apartment," he might as well become attached to a trolley car. We all understand the sentiment of the beloved Autocrat when he was speaking of "the old gambrel-roof house at Cambridge" and said, referring to his affection for even "the stone with a whitish band" in the pavement in the back yard, "our hearts are held down in our homes by innumerable fibres, trivial as that I have just recalled, but Gulliver was fixed to the soil, you remember, by pinning his head a hair at a time." Yet he was compelled reluctantly to admit that the demolition of the old house was "a case of justifiable domicile," and I could never believe that the destruction of the old copy of *Knickerbocker's History*, on which, so to speak, I cut my literary teeth, could

be justified on any ground whatsoever. When I last saw it the binding was gradually coming off, but it seemed as sacred as it did fifty years or more ago.

Doubtless the reading habit, which, in the words of Andrew Lang, "has been praised as a virtue and has been denounced as a crime," should be acquired in childhood. If it is not, it rarely rises to the dignity of a habit. I used to be surprised to learn from the autobiographies and reminiscences of eminent personages—men as unlike, for example, as Charles Dickens and Samuel Smiles—how they began their reading orgies with the tales of Fielding and of Smollett. The parents of those days were evidently accustomed to stow away in obscure closets the works of these authors in order that small boys might there come upon them and devour them eagerly. Those stories appear to us now to be rather strong meat for babes, but I suppose the babes saw only the charm of the narrative and did not comprehend the indecencies. A child of the present day would not be likely to proceed much beyond the title-page of a novel of Fielding or of Smollett, and I sneakingly confess that I have never myself had the courage to read one of them entirely through. I break down in the mire before I have made half the journey.

About 1780 some inspired idiot produced abridgments of *Tom Jones* and other tales of Fielding “adapted to infant minds,” but I never saw one or heard that anybody ever read one of them.

Lang, in *Adventures Among Books*, excusing himself for apparent egotism, dwells upon the books he loved in childhood, saying, “There is no other mind, naturally, of which the author knows so much as of his own. ‘*On n’a que soi,*’ as the poor girl says in one of M. Paul Bourget’s novels. In literature, as in love, one can speak only for himself.” When I was a very small boy—which is more years ago than I care to disclose at present—the accessible books were rather few and quite varied in their nature. I remember the aforesaid *Knickerbocker*—“*il decano di miei libri,*” as Alfieri styled his Machiavelli, but the book was not actually my own property; the *Sketch Book*; *Elia*; G. P. R. James’s *Philip Augustus*; *The Lamplighter*; *Widow Bedott Papers*; Frost’s *History of the United States*; and a lot of early numbers of *Harper’s Magazine* of the period when that publication had some literary value. These were queerly mixed up with the library of a physician, so that they were all oddly confused in my mind with such enlivening works as *Dunglison’s Prac-*

tice of Medicine, Stewart On the Diseases of Children, somebody's *Materia Medica* and the *London Lancet*. There was also *Youatt On the Dog*, in which I studied the subject of hydrophobia so assiduously that I would run like a deer if I saw a puppy coming around the corner. I could have passed a fairly creditable examination in *Knickerbocker*, every line of which was accepted as veritable history. I remember being surprised that the members of a very respectable family living in our village were not given to playing on the jewsharp, an occupation to which their namesakes, according to the veracious Diedrich, were hopelessly addicted. The *Essays of Elia* were a little beyond my understanding, save only the immortal *Dissertation Upon Roast Pig*, and even of that I suppose I missed the inner significance; but I am proud to recall that I did not have much respect for *The Lamplighter*, which was a sort of "best seller" in those times. Of course, I had *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Swiss Family Robinson*, both of which I adored; and *Sandford and Merton*, which I heartily detested. Later there were some of Mayne Reid's fascinating tales of hunting adventures, and I am inclined to think that my assortment of literature was a tolerably good one to begin with. It is

almost needless to say that in *Harper's, the Life of Napoleon*, by John S. C. Abbott, was the *pièce de résistance*, and such is the permanence of childish impressions, that none of the more pretentious biographies of Bonaparte which have since appeared have destroyed my belief that Napoleon was a maligned and persecuted benefactor of mankind. I hated the Duke of Wellington, but felt that his conduct at Waterloo was only what might be expected from one of a race so lost to all sense of shame as to make George Washington uneasy, and so depraved as to fire upon the *Chesapeake* in times of peace and annoy Commodore Barron, who never did anybody any harm—not even the enemy. I think that Mr. Lang is wrong when he announces that “a boy of five is more at home in fairyland than in his own country.” It may be so in Scotland, but not in these United States if he has a grandfather skilled in the relation of stories of the Revolution. At that early age I knew more about Washington and a certain mythical hero of 1775-1783, called by my said grandfather “Dan Tucker,” than I ever did about fairies, who, at least within thirty miles of New York, seemed undeserving of belief, while the patriotic and resourceful Tucker might well have per-

formed his prodigies of skill and valor in the "neutral ground" between the Croton River and Spuyten Duyvil Creek or in the swamps and woods of South Carolina.

Of course, all children have queer ideas at times about what they read and still queerer about what is read to them. Pip, in *Great Expectations*, supposed that his declaration in the Catechism that he was "to walk in the same all the days of his life," laid him under obligation "always to go through the village from his home in one particular direction and never to vary it by turning down by the wheelwright's or up by the mill," and one of our Sunday-school pupils was curious about the words of the Commandment, "the earth, the sea and all that in them is," wanting to know where "the miz" was. A like misapprehension existed in the mind of another who asked why the minister said in the Collect every Sunday, "Give us that two cents." I really thought that the poet's adjuration to "drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring" required me, when I drank, to swallow the entire contents of the bowl which stood by the side of the well. When the lady who told me of General Jackson and was quite severe about his "duels"—a word she pronounced in an old-fashioned way—I firmly believed that the hero of New Orleans

at some time in his eventful career had been concerned in discreditable transactions about jewels, akin to the theft of the Diamond Necklace; and being a scion of a Democratic race, I was puzzled because the "Black Republicans" whom I met in the street were by no means of a sable complexion. Still, I was able to arrive quite successfully at the meaning of most of the books which I pored over diligently.

I have now indulged my egotism so unduly that I refrain from dwelling upon the later delightful period of introduction to the enchanted world of Marryat and Cooper, Walter Scott and Dickens, which to this day has never lost its charm. I omit Thackeray, for he is not a boy's novelist; an appreciation of him does not come ordinarily until about the time of Junior year at college, when the youngster usually begins with *Pendennis* and fancies himself quite a man of the world. At least that was so *consule Planco*; how it may be now, I confess I do not know. Often I wonder, having no boys of my own, what boys read now. I am quite sure that they do not devote themselves to *Knickerbocker* or *Elia*, to Marryat, Cooper, Scott or Dickens. Our young men who read must do so by stealth. I never see them engaged over books, and if

they read at all they must be a little ashamed of it, for they carefully avoid any mention of it. The demands of society, of sport, and of business are too pressing, I infer, among the well-to-do; the poor lads who are anticipating a "career" may do a good deal of reading in their way, but it is mostly for profit and not for pleasure, I fancy. I may be all wrong about this, and I hope I am.

It is a question in my mind which is the more odious person, the one who tells you what you ought to read or the one who favors you with a list of the "one hundred best books." There cannot be "one hundred *best* books"; it reminds me of the remark of a colored porter on a Pullman car who, when I asked him what was the best hotel in Keokuk, Iowa, replied, "Dar ain't no best hotel in Keokuk." These volunteer advisers are all kindly people, quite well satisfied with themselves and with their own judgment, but the perversity of man is such that with most of us the surest way to condemn a book and to make it repulsive is to have it recommended by a well-meaning friend. If ever I am guilty of telling any one that he should read any particular book, I trust that I may be sentenced to read nothing for the remainder of my life but the

works of Mr. Upton Sinclair and of Mr. Jack London or the so-called historical effusions of Mr. Alfred Henry Lewis. I have heretofore confided to the extremely intellectual but numerically inconsiderable portion of the human race which feeds upon my productions that the true way to lead people to read the book you wish to urge upon them is to leave the volume in some place where they themselves will come upon it casually, and after they have dipped into it, they may, if it should appeal to their tastes, go on with it and enjoy all the pleasure of an original discovery. I believe there is a maxim that no one ever reads a book which is given to him, but like most maxims it is not universally true. I owe to a considerate friend my first acquaintance with that refined and satisfactory writer, E. V. Lucas; but as a rule one is much more apt to read the book he buys than the presented one, because he usually selects it himself. It is but natural that each man should have his own likes and dislikes even if, like the gentleman who, from the time of Martial to that of Tom Brown, found himself unable to formulate his reasons for his antipathy to an obnoxious individual; he cannot define the causes of either. Some do not care to spend time over any books which are not

of the latest imprint, wholly up to date in form and contents, while others, like the scholarly Mr. Beverly Chew, are proud to assure us that

“What though the prints be not so bright,
 The paper dark, the binding slight?
 Our author, be he dull or sage,
 Returning from a distant age
 So lives again. We say of right,
 Old books are best.”

There are books of a certain class very common in England, but not often produced in this country, which have always been to me a source of curious interest. I mean such books as *The Fair Quaker*, *Glimpses of the Twenties*, by Toynbee, *Ghosts of Piccadilly*, by Street, and *Noble Dames and Notable Men* by John Fyvie, to take a few at random. They are mostly of an historical nature and our neighbors over the water will, of course, account for our lack of them by saying that we have no history worth gossiping about, but only the ordinary and unromantic story of politics and economics. Some of these English books, well-printed and handsomely illustrated as they are, seem poor and feeble, like *The Fair Quaker*, which is a monumental mass of padding and leads to no definite conclusion, for

after we have toiled through well-nigh three hundred and fifty pages of text we are as uncertain whether George III ever did marry Hannah Lightfoot as we were when we began, and we are positive only that it makes no difference to any human being in any quarter of the world whether he did or not. But many of them are both instructive and amusing. A few days ago an author and critic of well-deserved reputation was glancing at the backs of my books, and coming upon the title, "Piccadilly to Pall Mall," expressed wonder why things of that kind were written and whether people really bought them and read them. His own experience of nearly thirty years in association with literature and with one of our most famous publishing houses had convinced him that the only general demand is for fiction. I confessed with becoming meekness that I not only bought them—second-hand copies—but read them, too, and even enjoyed them. They must be well-esteemed in England, or no one would print them, "commercial success" being the end and aim of publishers there as well as here. I am not quite conceited enough to regard my own views of the matter as of consequence or presumptuous enough to obtrude them upon my countrymen, but I cannot help

thinking that if we would cast aside most of the tons of trash and vats of slush which are called "novels" and find out for ourselves that there is some interest in real things, the results of immature intelligence and untrained imaginations would be ascertained to be little deserving of attention and the better it would be for us. Of course, there must be novels and newspapers, but to call the devouring of modern novels and daily newspapers "reading" is as much a misuse of language as it would be to apply that term to a child's perusal of its pictured primer.

Having thus relieved my mind, and with the pleasing consciousness that my fervent protest will be about as effective as a plea for political sanity would be in an Arizona convention, and remarking, by the way, that we have in Locke a contemporary novelist worthy to rank with the boasted fiction-purveyors of the last century, let me proceed with that "chatter about books" which Mr. Frederic Harrison, with a vindictive cruelty unbecoming to a being generally so harmless, accuses of "choking the seed which is sown in the greatest books of the world," although I fail to understand how it can possibly have such a disastrous agricultural effect. Surely "the seed of the greatest books of the

world, whatever that may be, should be strong enough not to be choked by such feeble means; and if the seed is choked, how can the solemn Mr. Harrison know that it would have produced anything? It might depend on the soil. In the words of the philosopher Dundreary, "What (condemned) nonsense that is! Birds of *a* feather!" One would not be at all humiliated or cast down to be thus scolded by a writer of great books, but when it comes to Mr. Frederic Harrison, as Artemus Ward observed to Brigham Young, it is "2 mutch," even from a Person who was called "the chief living representative in England of Positivism and the Religion of Humanity." Assuredly nobody ever chattered about Harrison's books; one would as soon think of chattering about the works of William Prynne or the poetry of Alfred Austin. Men are apt to call "chatter" whatever talk they happen not to fancy; but to many excellent people the "quack-quacking" (*vide* Carlyle) of the Positive Philosophers is as odious as book-talk is to Harrison. Travelers frequently describe the language of foreigners as "jabbering," ignoring the fact that to the "poor foreigner" the speech of the travelers must seem just as "jabberous." And now, as Speaker Tom Reed observed of an

interrupting Democrat, "having embalmed that fly in the liquid amber of my remarks," we may return to books.

One's enjoyment of a book is often strangely marred by the size and weight of the volume. Almost every one is attracted by a little book which may easily be held in the hand. We are told that it was Darwin's habit, when a book was too big and heavy for his convenience, to cut it in two; perhaps the necessity of such violent and disrespectful treatment is responsible for the word "tome" which comes from a Greek word meaning "a piece cut off"—a fragment of learning which I throw out carelessly, having acquired it by the strange method of looking it up in the dictionary. Darwin's custom must have been rather an expensive one and it was as biblioclastic as De Quincey's pastime of tearing out the leaves of rare books and scribbling copy for the printer on the broad margins of valuable folios. Those big books are well enough for the library and for the shelves of a "collector," but they are a burden to the reader, especially if he is that beloved friend of the old writers, a "gentle" reader. Another annoyance is the multiplication of notes on the page, in which the editor is fond of parading his learning.

How this may affect others I cannot say, but to me it is refreshing to get in my hands a gem of a book like my *Boswell*, edited by Augustine Birrell, with only a few notes and a page seven inches by four. Mr. Birrell wisely says in his charming introduction: "As for the learned editors who load the page of their author with notes and references and cross-references, personally I delight in their labours and reverence their devotion; but in the first instance, at all events (I repeat) the book is the thing"; and he tells us that he made many notes, but on reflection struck most of them out, feeling himself convinced not of their worthlessness, but of their unimportance. Noble editor! One longs to greet you with hurrahs—or perhaps "huzzas" would be more appropriate to the time of Boswell. Why they cried "huzza!" in the eighteenth century and "hurrah!" in the nineteenth, I could never find out, possibly because I never tried. The preferable way of dealing with the long and elaborate notes is to group them in an appendix, where they do not distract the eye and divert the attention. Even the most assiduous reader, the most enthusiastic lover of books, finds that his attention wanders at times in spite of himself. Now and then we all experience difficulty in following

the sense of what we may happen to be reading, an inability to take mental hold of the words before our eyes. We may read the same sentence over again and again without having the least idea of what the author intended to convey, and it is disheartening, when one has turned over page after page, to discover that they might as well have been so much blank paper. De Maistre had a theory worth consideration, and common honesty requires that I should confess here and now that I found the quotation not in any book of his, but on the front of one of Goodspeed's excellent book-catalogues emanating from the pleasant little shop in Park Street, Boston. "I have it from an old professor," says De Maistre, "and this as long ago as I can remember, that Plato used to call matter the OTHER. This is all very well, but I prefer this name *par excellence* for the animal which is joined to our soul. * * * But this requires illustration. When, sir, you are reading a book, and an agreeable idea suddenly strikes your imagination, your soul attaches herself to the new idea at once, and forgets the book, while your eyes follow mechanically the words and lines. You get through the page without understanding and without remembering what you have read. Now this is

because your soul, having ordered her companion to read to her, gave no warning of the short absence she contemplated, so that the OTHER went on reading what the soul no longer attended to." This explanation, pleasantly fanciful, is not devoid of truth, but summed up, it means simply that the reader was thinking of something else. That is one of the reasons why when you are crossing the ocean it is almost impossible to read anything serious as you sit on the steamer deck in one of those exceedingly uncomfortable chairs which, for some inscrutable reason, are provided for the torture of passengers at the extremely modest price of one dollar each. Often we have promised ourselves to occupy the abundant leisure of a transatlantic journey with a collection of real literature, and, when the voyage was over, have discovered that we had encumbered our luggage to no purpose, for we had left the meritorious books untouched. All we could do was to dawdle over something like *The Broad Highway*, where if you miss a fisticuff-fight or two it is really no loss, or the gruesome *One Braver Thing*, where one horror more or less is no great matter. Once I bravely began *The Early Life of Charles James Fox* as we left behind us the great docks of Southampton, but by the

time we sighted Sandy Hook and were nerving ourselves to meet our Customary warm reception, Fox was scarcely out of his knickerbockers—if he wore them. The sight of a porpoise, the appearance of a tramp steamer, the flight of a stray bird, even the glimpse of the white crest of an unusually big wave, were enough to destroy all interest in the lucid sentences of the scholarly Trevelyan. It was on this particular voyage that there was demonstrated to me the uselessness of singing, “Where, oh! where are the Hebrew children?” for I had not the least difficulty in ascertaining their whereabouts, and their playful and vociferous gambols proved to be by no means conducive to calm reflection or the pursuit of historical knowledge.

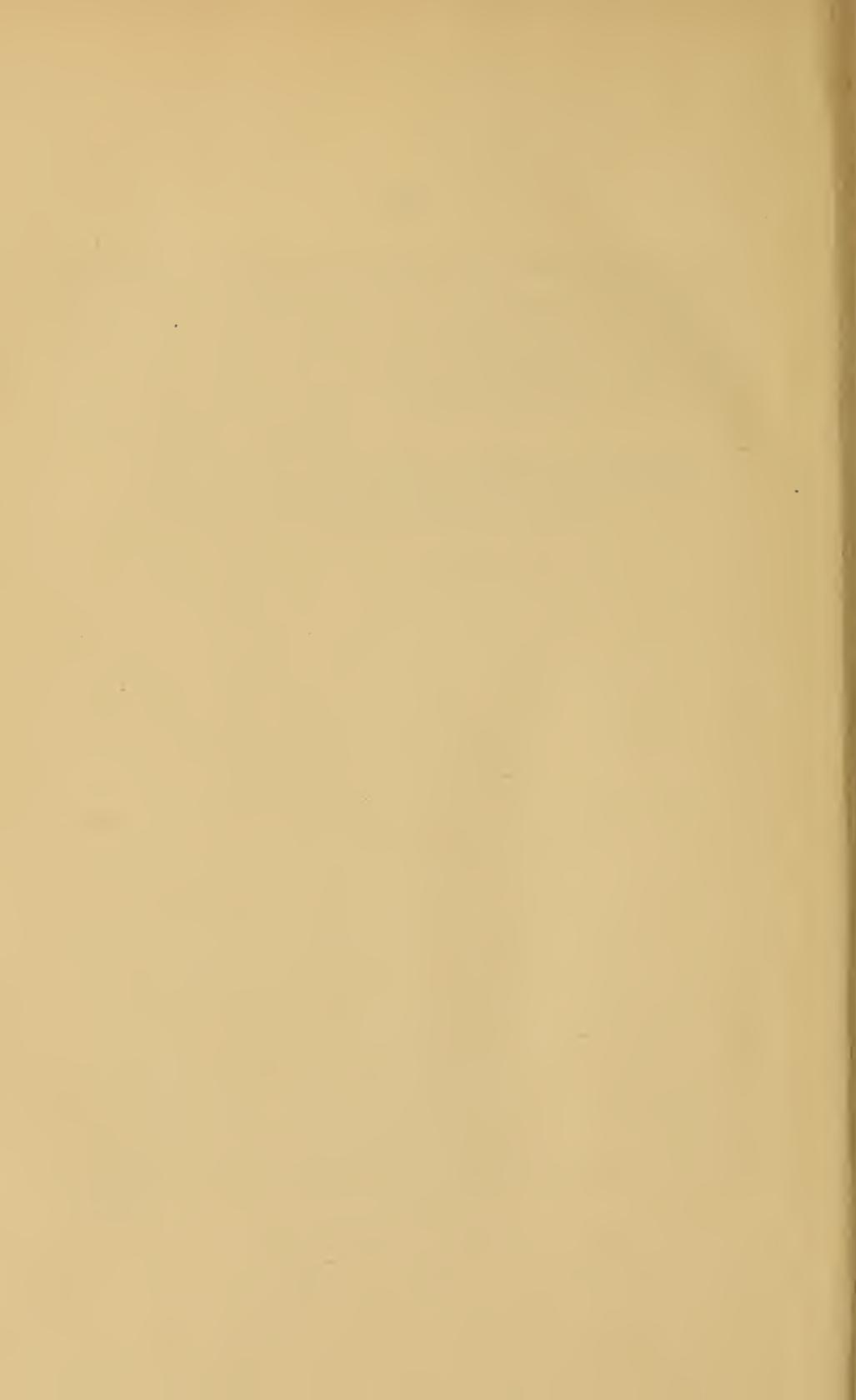
After all, I find that even with the comprehensive subject of “other things,” I have kept close to books and have not been guilty of uttering anything which by the exercise of the most vivid imagination can be called “new.” Perhaps it is just as well that I gave up the attempt; whenever I have fondly believed that I had evolved a novel idea, I have found that it had been expressed years ago by some miscreant who, in turn, had borrowed it from an ancient Greek or Egyptian person. What a delightful time those very old fellows

must have had when they could never be told that some one else had said their good things before them! Once upon a time I invented a little story about an incident supposed to have happened to one of my nearest relatives, and some months later I was overcome with amazement to find it set forth in a newspaper as having occurred in the experience of a man of whom I had heard, but whom I had never seen. He was an eminent political individual not wholly unconnected with Tammany Hall.

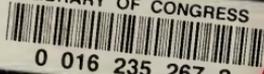
Adam may have uttered some new things. It is not recorded that he had any books; even Noah had none on the Ark except Tauchnitz novels, and he threw them overboard before daring to face the Ararat custom house. Mark Twain said that Adam kept a diary, but I doubt it; although, according to Southey, "some one, I know not who, has said, upon an equally unknown authority, that Adam died of hereditary gout," and that I can believe. He, Adam, could not have been the one who first referred to books as "beloved companions," "friends that never tire," or "the best of good comrades," but it must have been some one who lived very near his time. I demand due credit for not having availed of any of those affectionate expressions, which,

I regret to say, have become rather shop-worn; but I must yield to the temptation to let the curtain drop to the music of that beloved of all Centurions, the book-lover and poet, Richard Henry Stoddard, who wrote with absolute sincerity,

“When others fail him, the wise man looks
To the sure companionship of books.”



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