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THE GREAT FAILURE

The *crucial* fact, in this epoch of commercial catastrophes, is not the stoppage of Smith, Jones, and Robinson,—nor the suspension of specie payments by a greater or less number of banks,—but the paralysis of the trade of the civilized globe. We have had presented to us, within the last quarter, the remarkable, though by no means novel, spectacle of a sudden overthrow of business,—in the United States, in England, in France, and over the greater part of the Continent.

At a period of profound and almost universal peace,—when there had been no marked deficit in the productiveness of industry, when there had been no extraordinary dissipation of its results by waste and extravagance,—when no pestilence or famine or dark rumor of civil revolution had benumbed its

energies,—when the needs for its enterprise were seemingly as active and stimulating as ever,—all its habitual functions are arrested, and shocks of disaster run along the ground from Chicago to Constantinople, toppling down innumerable well-built structures, like the shock of some gigantic earthquake.

Everybody is of course struck by these phenomena, and everybody has his own way of accounting for them; it will not, therefore, appear presumptuous in us to offer a word on the common theme. Let it be premised, however, that we do not undertake a scientific solution of the problem, but only a suggestion or two as to what the problem itself really is. In a difficult or complicated case, a great deal is often accomplished when the terms of it are clearly stated.

It is not enough, in considering the effects before us, to say that they are the results of a panic. No doubt there has been a panic, a contagious consternation, spreading itself over the commercial world, and strewing the earth with innumerable wrecks of fortune; but that accounts for nothing, and simply describes a symptom. What is the cause of the panic itself? These daring Yankees, who are in the habit of braving the wildest tempests on every sea, these sturdy English, who march into the mouths of devouring cannon without a throb, these gallant Frenchmen, who laugh as they scale the Malakoff in the midst of belching fires, are not the men to run like sheep before an imaginary terror. When a whole nation of such drop their arms and scatter panic-stricken, there must be something behind the

panic; there must be something formidable in it, some real and present danger threatening a very positive evil, and not a mere sympathetic and groundless alarm.

Neither do we conceive it as sufficiently expressing or explaining the whole facts of the case, to say that the currency has been deranged. There has been unquestionably a great derangement of the currency; but this may have been an effect rather than a cause of the more general disturbance; or, again, it may have been only one cause out of many causes. In an article in the first number of this magazine, the financial fluctuations in this country are ascribed to the alternate inflation and collapse of our factitious paper-money. Adopting the prevalent theory, that the universal use of specie in the regulation of the international trade of the world determines for each nation the amount of its metallic treasure, it was there argued that any redundant local circulation of paper must raise the level of local prices above the legitimate specie over exports; which imports can be paid for only in specie,—the very basis of the inordinate local circulation. Of course, then, there is a rapid contraction in the issue of notes, and an inevitable and wide-spread rupture of the usual relations of trade. But although this view is true in principle, and particularly true in its application to the United States, where trade floats almost exclusively upon a paper ocean, it is yet an elementary and local view;—local, as not comprising the state of facts in England and France; and elementary, inasmuch as it omits all reference to the possibility of a great fluctuation

of prices being produced by other means than an excess or deficiency of money.¹ In France, as we know, the currency is almost entirely metallic, while in England it is metallic so far as the lesser exchanges of commerce are concerned; there is an obvious impropriety, therefore, in extending to the financial difficulties of those nations a theory founded upon a peculiarity in the position of our own.

If, however, it be alleged that the disturbances there are only a reaction from the disturbances here, we must say that that point is not clear, and Brother Jonathan may be exaggerating his commercial importance. The ties of all the maritime nations are growing more and more intimate every year, and the trouble of one is getting to be more and more the trouble of the others in consequence; but as yet any unsettled balance of American trade, compared with the whole trade of those nations, is but as the drop in the bucket. John Bull, with a productive industry of five thousand millions of dollars a year, and Johnny Crapaud, with an industry only less, are not both to be thrown flat on their backs by the failure of a few millions of money remittances from Jonathan. The houses immediately engaged in the American trade will suffer, and others again immediately dependent upon them; but the disturbing shock, as it spreads through the widening circle of the national trade, will very soon be dissipated and lost in its immensity. That is, it will be lost, if trade there is itself

¹ A failure of one half the cotton or wheat crop, we suspect, would play a considerable part among "the prices," whatever the state of the note circulation.

sound, and not tottering under the same or similar conditions of weakness which produced the original default in this country; in which event, we submit, our troubles are to be considered as the mere accidental occasion of the more general downfall,—while the real cause is to be sought in the internal state of the foreign nations. Accordingly, let any one read the late exposures of the methods in which business is transacted among the Glasgow banks, the London discount-houses, and the speculators of the French Bourse, and he will see at a glance that we Americans have no right to assume and ought not to be charged with the entire responsibility of this stupendous syncope. Our bankruptcy has aggravated, as our restoration will relieve the general effects; but the vicious currency on this side the water, whatever domestic sins it may have to answer for, cannot properly be made the scapegoat for the offences of the other side of the water. The disasters abroad have occurred under conditions of currency differing in many respects from our own, and we believe that if there had been no troubles in America, there would still have been considerable troubles in England and France, as, indeed, the financial writers of both these countries long ago predicted from the local signs.

The same train of remark may be applied to those who impute the existing embarrassments to our want of a protective tariff; for, granting that to be an adequate explanation of our own difficulties, it is not therefore an adequate explanation of those in Europe. The external characteristics of the phenomena before

us are everywhere pretty much the same, namely,—a prosperous trade gradually slackening, an increasing demand for money, depreciation and sacrifice of securities, numerous failures, disappearance of gold, panic, and the complete stagnation of every branch of labor; and it should seem that the cause or causes to be assigned for them ought also to be everywhere pretty much the same. At any rate, no local cause is in itself to be regarded as sufficient, unless it can be shown that such local cause has a universal operation. But who will undertake to contend that the absence of a protective system here is enough to prostrate both Great Britain and France,—the nations which the same theory supposes to have been chiefly benefited by such deficiency? The scheme of free trade is often denounced by its opponents as British free trade; but we respectfully suggest that if its operations lead to so serious a destruction of British interests as is now alleged, the phrase is at least a misnomer. No! as the characteristics of the crisis are common to the United States, England, and France, so the causes of that crisis are to be sought in something which is also common to the United States, England, and France.

Now the one thing common to all these nations, and to all commercial nations, is the universal use of Credit, in the transactions of business. We conceive, therefore, that the existing condition of things may be most correctly and comprehensively described as a suspension of credit, and the consequent pressure for payment of immense masses of outstanding debt. This, we

say, is the central fact, common to all the nations; and the solution of it, as a problem, is to be sought in some vice or disturbing element common to the general system, and not in any local incident or cause.

Credit has gained so enormous an extension within the last two centuries, that it may almost be pronounced the distinctive feature of modern times. It existed, undoubtedly, in ancient days,—for its correlative, Debt, existed; and we know, that, among the Jews, Moses enacted a sponging law, which was to be carried into effect every fifty years; that Solon, among the Greeks, began his administration with the *Seisachtheia*, or relief-laws, designed to rescue the poor borrowers from their overbearing creditors; and that the usurers were a numerous class at Rome, where also the Patrician houses were immense debtor-prisons. But in ancient times, when the chief source of wealth (aside from conquest and confiscation by the State) was the labor of slaves, and the principal exchanges were effected either by direct barter or the coined metals, the system of credit could not have been very complicated or general. As for the lending of money on interest, it appears to have been looked at askance by most of the ancients; and the prejudice against it continued, under the fostering care of the Church, far down into the Middle Ages. With the emancipation of the towns, however, with the splendid development of the Italian republics, with the noble commercial triumphs of the cities of the Hansa, credit was recovered from the hands of the Jews,

and began a career of rapid and beneficent expansion. It was in an especial manner promoted by the magnificent prospects unfolded to colonial and mining enterprise in the discovery of the New World, by the stimulus and the facilities afforded to industrial skill by the researches of natural science, and by the emancipation won for all the activities of the human mind through the free principles of the Reformation. Thus, by degrees, credit came to intervene in nearly every operation of commerce and of social exchange, from the small daily dealings of the mechanic at the shop, to the larger wholesale transactions of merchant with merchant, and to the prodigious expenditures and debts of imperial governments. Credit by note of hand, credit by book account, credit by mortgages and hypothecations, credit by bills of exchange, credit by certificates of stock, credit by bank-notes and post-notes, credit by exchequer and treasury drafts, credit, in short, in a thousand ways, enters into trade, filling up all its channels, turning all its wheels, freighting all its ships, coming down from the past, pervading the present, hovering over the future, reaching every nook and affecting every man and woman in the civilized world.

Such is the extent of credit; but let it be remarked in connection, that, in all these innumerable and multifarious forms of it, in all the stupendous interchanges of Mine and Thine, the ultimate reference is to one sole standard of value, which is the value of the precious metals. The civilized world has adopted these as the universal solvent of its vast masses of obligation.

It is assumed that some standard is indispensable; it is asserted to be the imperative duty of governments, if they would not make their exactions of taxes arbitrary, unequal, and oppressive,—if they would render the dealings of individuals mutual and just,—if they would preserve the property and labor of their subjects from the merciless caprices of the powerful, and keep society from reverting to a more or less barbarous state,—to supply a fixed and equable money-measure; and the majority of the governments have selected gold and silver as the best. As seemingly less changeable in quantity and value than anything else, as imperishable, as portable, as divisible, as both convenient and safe, the precious metals challenge superiority over every other product; and accordingly every contract and every debt is resolvable into gold and silver. From this fact, the reader will see at once the prodigious significance of those materials in the economy of trade, and the prime necessity that they should be not only uniform in value, but so equally distributed that they may be easily attainable when needed. Every change in their value is a virtual change in the value of the vast variety of obligations which are measured and liquidated by them; and every apprehension of their scarcity or disappearance, by whatever cause excited, is an apprehension of embarrassment on the part of all those who have debts to pay or to receive.

But it happens that this standard is not an accurate standard. It does not *stand*, while other things alone move, but moves itself; its value is changeable,—fluctuating from time to time

according to the relation of supply and demand, and from place to place according to the perturbations of the trade of the world. Moreover, its very preeminence of function—the universality and the durability of its worth—renders it peculiarly sensitive to accidental influences, or to influences outside of the usual workings of trade. A great war or revolution occurring anywhere, the loss by tempests or frosts of an important staple, such as wheat or cotton, the fall and reaction consequent upon some great speculative excitement, are all likely to produce enormous drains or sequestrations of this valuable material. When the revolt of 1848 broke out in Italy, every particle of specie disappeared as effectually as if it had been thrown into the Adriatic or the mouth of Vesuvius; when the corn crop failed in England in 1846, the Bank of England lost ten millions of dollars in gold in less than nine days, and the country five times that in about a month; and in our own late experiences, with three hundred millions of gold among the people, we have seen it so put away, that no charm or bait could allure it from its hiding-places.

Need we go any farther, then, than these simple truths, to lay our finger on the primal fact which underlies all financial embarrassments and panics? The mass of the transactions in commerce rests upon credit; the solvent of that credit is gold; and gold has not only a sliding scale of value, but is apt to disappear when most wanted. While business is moving on in the ordinary way, it is more than ample for every purpose; but the moment any event arises, such as a rapidly falling market, inducing hurried

sales, or a drain of specie, disturbing the general confidence, everybody gets apprehensive, everybody calls upon everybody for payment, and everybody puts everybody off,—till a feeling of *sauve qui peut* becomes universal.

If there were no currency anywhere but a metallic currency, this liability to sudden revulsions would still hang over trade, provided credit and paper tokens of credit continued to be the media of exchanges; and the instinctive or experimental perception of this truth, combined with other motives, is what has led men to their various attempts to provide a money substitute for gold and silver. Lycurgus, in Sparta, found it, as he supposed, in stamped leather; but modern wisdom has preferred paper. The degree of success attained by Lycurgus we do not know; but of the success of the moderns we do know, by some one hundred and fifty years of recurring disaster. There are some steeds that cannot be ridden; they are so fractious and intractable, that, put whom you will upon their back, he is thrown, and invent what snaffle or breaking-bit you may, they will not be held to an equable or moderate pace. And of this sort, judging by the past attempts, is Paper Money. All the ingenuity and efforts of the most skillful trainers of the Old World, and of the most cunning jockeys of the New, have been tasked in vain to devise an effective discipline and curb for this impatient colt. Paper Money either refuses to be ridden, and runs rampant away, or, if any one succeed in mounting him for a time, he performs a journey like that which Don Quixote took on the back of the

famous Cavalino, or Winged Horse. In imagination he ascended to the enchanted regions,—but in reality he was only dragged through alternate gusts of fire and of cold winds, to find the horse himself, in the end, a mere depository of squibs and crackers.

Paper money has been issued, for the most part, on the one or the other of two conditions, namely: as irredeemable, when it has been made to rest on the vague obligation of some government to pay it some time or other in property; or as convertible into gold and silver on demand. But under both conditions it seems to have been impossible to preserve it from excess and consequent depreciation. Nothing would appear to be safer and sounder, on the face of it, than a money-obligation backed by all the responsibility and property of a government; and yet we do not recall a single instance in which an irredeemable government-money has been issued, where it did not sooner or later swamp the government beyond all hope of its redemption. No virtue of statesmanship is proof against the temptation of creating money at will. Even where there has been a nominal convertibility on demand of the bills of government banks, they have worked badly in practice. In 1637, for instance, the monarch of Sweden established the Bank of Stockholm; yet in a little while its issues amounted to forty-eight millions of roubles, and their depreciation to ninety-six per cent. In 1736, Denmark created the Bank of Copenhagen; but within nine years from its foundation it suspended redemptions altogether, and its notes were depreciated forty-six per cent. We need not refer

to the extraordinary issues of French *assignats*, or of American continental money,—nor to the deluges of paper which have fallen upon Russia and Austria. During all these experiments, the sufferings of the people, according to the different historians, were absolutely appalling. One of these experiments of paper money, however, begun under the most promising auspices, and on a professed basis of convertibility, was yet so stupendous and awful in its effects, that it has taken its place as a Pharos in History, and is never to be forgotten. We refer, of course, to the banking prodigalities of the Regency of France, undertaken in connection with the scheme known as Law's Mississippi Bubble,—although the Bank and the Bubble were not essentially connected. We presume that our readers are acquainted with the incidents, because all the modern historians have described them, and because the more philosophical impute to them an active agency in the origination of that moral corruption and lack of political principle which hastened the advent of the great Revolution. Louis XIV. having left behind him, as the price of his glory, a debt of about a thousand millions of dollars, the French ministry, with a view to reduce it, ordered a re-coinage of the louis-d'or. An edict was promulgated, calling in the coin at sixteen livres, to be issued again at twenty; but Law, an acute and enterprising Scotchman, suggested that the end might be more happily accomplished by a project for a bank, which he carried in his pocket. He proposed to buy up the old coin at a higher rate than the mint allowed, and to pay for it in bank-

notes. This project was so successful that the Regent took it into his own hands, and then began an issue of bills which literally intoxicated the whole of France. No scenes of stock-jobbing, of gambling, of frenzied speculation, of reckless excitement and licentiousness ever surpassed the scenes daily enacted in the Rue Quincampoix; and when the bubble burst, the distress was universal, heartrending, and frightful. With millions in their pockets, says a contemporary memoir, many did not know where to get a dinner; complaints and imprecations resounded on every side; some, utterly ruined, killed themselves in despair; and mysterious rumors of popular risings spread throughout Paris the terror of another expected St. Bartholomew.

In this case the phenomena were the more striking because they were gathered within a short compass of time, and took place among a people proverbial for the versatility and extravagance of their impressions. The French are an excitable race, who carry whatever they do or suffer to the last extreme of theatrical effect; and for that reason it might be supposed that the tremendous revulsions we have alluded to were owing in part to national temperament. But similar effects have been wrought, by similar causes, among the slower and cooler English, with whom commercial disturbances have been as numerous and as disastrous as among the French, only that they have been distributed over wider spaces of time, and controlled by the more sluggish and conservative habits of the nation. Some twenty years before Law made his approaches to the French Regent, another

Scotchman, William Patterson, had got the ear of Macaulay's hero, William, and of his ministers, and laid the foundations of the great Bank of England. It was chartered in 1694, on advances made to the government; and gradually, under its auspices, the vast system of English banking, which gives tone to that of the world, grew up. Let us see with what results; they may be expressed in a few words: every ten or fifteen years, a terrific commercial overturn, with intermediate epochs of speculation, panic, and bankruptcy.

We cannot here go into a history of this bank, nor of the various causes of its reverses; but we select from a brief chronological table, in its own words, some of the principal events, which are also the events of British trade and finance.

1694. The Bank went into operation.

1696. Bank suspended specie payments. Panic and failures.

1707. Threatened invasion of the Pretender. Run upon the Bank,—panic. Government helped it through, by guarantying its bills at six per cent.

1714. The Pretender proclaimed in Scotland. Run upon the Bank,—panic.

1718-20. Time of the South-Sea Bubble. Reaction,—demand for money,—Bank of England nearly swept away,—trade suspended,—nation involved in suffering.

1744. Charles Edward sails for Scotland, and marches upon Derby. Panic. Run upon the Bank,—is obliged to pay in sixpences, and to block its doors, in order to gain time.

1772. Extensive failures and a monetary panic. The Bank maintains the convertibility of its notes for several years, at an annual expense of £850,000.

1793. War with France,—drain of gold,—Bank contracts,—panic,—failures throughout the country,—universal hoarding,—one hundred country banks stop,—notes as low as five pounds first issued,—general fall of prices.

1796. An Order in Council suspends specie payment by the Bank.

1799. Numerous failures,—chiefly on the Continent. The pressure in England relieved by an issue of Exchequer bills.

1807-9. Great speculations in flax, hemp, silk, wool, etc.

1810. Recoil of speculation,—extensive failures, and great demand for money.

1811. Parliament adopts a resolution declaring a one-pound note and a shilling legal tender for a guinea.

1814-16. Heavy losses and bankruptcies,—failure of two hundred and forty country banks,—the distress and suffering of the people compared to that in France after the bursting of the Mississippi Scheme.

1819. Law passed for the resumption of specie payments in 1823,—after a suspension of twenty-seven years.

1822. Great commercial depression throughout Europe,—agricultural distress,—famine in Ireland.

1824. Speculations in scrips and shares of foreign loans and new companies, to a fabulous amount.

1825. Recoil of the speculations,—run upon the banks,—seventy banks stop,—a drain of gold exhausts the bullion of the Bank.

1826. Depression of trade,—government advances Exchequer bills to the Bank.

1832. A run for gold,—bullion in the Bank again alarmingly reduced.

1834-7. Jackson vs. Biddle in America produces considerable derangements in England,—drain of gold,—great alternate contractions and expansions,—severe mercantile distress.

1844. Renewal of the Bank Charter, limiting its issues,—great speculations in railroad shares, to the amount of £500,000,000.

1845. Recoil of the speculations,—immense sacrifice of property.

1846. Drain of gold,—large importations of corn,—alarm.

1847. Drain of gold continues,—panic and universal mercantile depression,—Bank refuses discounts,—forced sales of all kinds of property,—the Bank Charter suspended.

1857. The experiences of 1847 repeated on a more injurious scale, with another suspension of the Bank Charter Act.

Now this record does not show a brilliant success in banking; it does not encourage the hopes of those who place great hopes in a national institution; for the Bank of England is the highest result of the financial sagacity and political wisdom of the first commercial nation of the globe. A recognized ally of the government,—at the very centre of the world's trade,—enjoying

a large freedom of movement within its sphere,—conducted by the most eminent merchants of the metropolis, assisted by the advice of the most accomplished political economists,—sanctioned and amended, from time to time, by the greatest ministers, from Walpole to Peel,—it has had, from its position, its power, and the talent at its command, every opportunity for doing the best things that a bank could do; and yet behold this record of periodical impotence! Its periodical mischiefs we leave out of the account.

In the United States, we have suffered from similarly recurring attacks of financial epilepsy; we have tried every expedient, and we have failed in each one; we have had three national banks; we have had thousands of chartered banks, under an infinity of regulations and restrictions against excesses and frauds; and we have had, as the appropriate commentary, three tremendous cataclysms, in which the whole continent was submerged in commercial ruin, besides a dozen lesser epochs of trying vicissitude. The history of our trade has been that of an incessant round of inflations and collapses; and the amount of rascality and fraud perpetrated in connection with the banks, in order to defeat the restrictions upon them, has no parallel but in the sponging-houses. A Belgian philosopher, from the study of statistics, has deduced a certain order in disorder,—or a law of periodicity in the recurrence of murders, suicides, crimes, and illegitimate births; and it appears that a similar regularity of irregularity might be easily detected in our cyclic bank explosions.

With the sad experiences of other nations before us,—with the rocks of danger standing high out of the water, and covered all over with the fragments of former wrecks, we have yet persisted in following the old wretched way. What a humiliating confession! what a comment on the alleged practical discernment of this practical people! what a text for radicals, socialists, and all sorts of Utopian dreamers! If the mischiefs of these monetary aberrations were confined to a mere loss of wealth,² which is proverbial for its winged uncertainty, we might regard them as a seeming admonition of Providence against putting too much trust in riches; but they are to be considered as something infinitely worse than mere reverses of fortune: the disorders they generate shake the very foundations of morals; and while shattering the industry, they undermine the economy and frugality and rend the integrity of mankind. We doubt whether any of the great forms of evil incident to our imperfect civilization—the slave-trade, debauchery, pauperism—cause more individual anguish or more public detriment than these incessant revolutions in the value and tenure of property. Those afflict limited classes alone, but these every class; they relax and pervert the whole moral regimen of society; and if, as it is sometimes alleged, the present age is more profoundly steeped in materialism than any before,—if its enterprise is not simply more bold, but more reckless and

² Yet this is not to be lightly estimated. Seaman, in his *Progress of Nations* says the direct losses by paper money, within the last century and a half, have equalled \$2,000,000,000.

prodigal,—if the monitions of conscience have lost their force in practical affairs, and the dictates of religion and honor alike their sanctity, it is because of the uncertain principle, the gambling spirit, the feverish eagerness, and the insane extravagance, which beset the ways of traffic. Living in a world in which days of golden and delusive dreams are rapidly succeeded by nights of monstrous nightmares and miseries, society loses its grasp upon the realities of life, and goes staggering blindly on towards a fatal degeneracy and dissolution.

The question, then, is, whether this melancholy march of things should be allowed to proceed, or whether we should strive to do better. Our good sense, our moral sense, our progressive instincts, conspire with our interests in proclaiming that we ought to do better; but how shall we do better? "Why," reply the great Democratic doctors,—Mr. Buchanan, the President, and Mr. Benton, the Nestor of the people,—"suppress the issue of small bank-notes!" Well, that nostrum is not to be despised; there would be some advantages in such a measure; it would, to a certain extent, operate as a check upon the issues of the banks; it would enlarge the specie basis, by confining the note circulation to the larger dealers, and so exempt the poorer and laboring classes from the chances of bank failures and suspensions. But if these gentlemen suppose that the extrusion of small notes would be in any degree a remedy for overtrading, or moderate in any degree the disastrous fluctuations of which everybody complains, they have read the history of commerce only in

the most superficial manner. Speculations, overtrading, panics, money convulsions, occur in countries where small notes are not tolerated, just as they do in countries where they are; and they occur in both without our being able to trace them always to the state of the currency. The truth is, indeed, that nearly all the great catastrophes of trade have occurred in times and places when and where there were no small notes. Every one has heard of the tulip-mania of Holland,—when the Dutchmen, nobles, farmers, mechanics, sailors, maid-servants, and even chimney-sweeps and old-clothes-women, dabbled in bulbs,—when immense fortunes were staked upon the growth of a root, and the whole nation went mad about it, although there was never a bank nor a paper florin yet in existence.³ Every one has heard of the great South-Sea Bubble in England, in 1719, when the stock of a company chartered simply to trade in the South Seas rose in the course of a few weeks to the extraordinary height of *eight hundred and ninety per cent.*, and filled all England with an epidemic frenzy of gambling, so that the recoil ruined thousands upon thousands of persons, who dragged down with them vast companies and institutions.⁴ Yet there was not a banknote in England, at that time, for less than twenty pounds, or nearly a hundred dollars.

More recent revulsions are still more to the point. In 1825, in England, there were enormous speculations in joint-stock enterprises and foreign loans. Some five hundred and thirty-two

³ Mackay's *History of Popular Delusions*.

⁴ Doubleday's *Financial History of England*, p. 93.

new companies were formed, with a nominal capital of about \$2,200,000,000, and Greek, Austrian, and South American loans were negotiated, to the extent of \$275,000,000. Scarcely one of these companies or of these loans ever paid a dividend; and the consequence was a general destruction of credit and property, and a degree of distress which was compared to the terrible sufferings inflicted by the Mississippi and the South-Sea Bubbles. Yet there were no bank-notes in circulation in England under five pounds, or twenty-five dollars. Again, our readers may recall the monstrous overtrading in railroad shares in the years 1845-6. Projects involving the investment of £500,000,000 were set on foot in a very little while; the contagion of purchasing spread to all the provincial towns; the traditionally staid and sober Englishman got as mad as a March hare about them; Mr. Murdle reigned triumphant; and, in the end, the nation had to pay for its delirium with another season of panic, misery, and ruin. Yet during all this excitement there were not only no small notes in circulation, but, what is most remarkable, there was no unusual increase in the issues of the banks, of any kind.

Let us not hope too much, therefore, from the suppression of small notes, should that scheme be carried into effect; let us not delude ourselves with the expectation that it will prove a satisfactory remedy, in any sense, for the periodical disease of the currency; for its benefits, though probable, must be limited.⁵

⁵ It is very curious, that, while our leaders are in favor of exorcising small notes, many of the French and English Liberals are calling for an issue of them!

It is a remedy which merely plays round the extremities of the disorder, without invading the seat of it at all.

We have endeavored, in the foregoing remarks, to point out (for our limits do not allow us to expound) two things: first, that in the universal modern use of credit as the medium of exchanges,—which credit refers to a standard in itself fluctuating,—there is a liability to certain critical derangements, when the machinery will be thrown out of gear, if we may so speak, or when credit will dissolve in a vain longing for cash; and, second, that in the paper-money substitutes which men have devised as a provision against the consequences of this liability, they have enormously aggravated, instead of counteracting or alleviating the danger. But if these views be correct, the questions to be determined by society are also two, namely: whether it be possible to get rid of these aggravations; and whether credit itself may not be so organized as to be self-sufficient and self-supporting, whatever the vagaries of the standard. The suppression of small notes might have a perceptible effect in lessening the aggravations of paper, but it would not touch the more fundamental point, as to a stable organization of credit. Yet it is in this direction, we are persuaded, that all reformatory efforts must turn. Credit is the new principle of trade,—the *nexus* of modern society; but it has scarcely yet been properly considered. While it has been shamefully *exploited*, as the French say, it has never been scientifically constituted.

Neither will it be, under the influence of the old methods,

—not until legislators and politicians give over the business of tampering with the currency,—till they give over the vain hope of "hedging the cuckoo," to use Locke's figure,—and the principle of FREEDOM be allowed to adjust this, as it has already adjusted equally important matters. Let the governments adhere to their task of supplying a pure standard of the precious metals, and of exacting it in the discharge of what is due to them, if they please; but let them leave to the good sense, the sagacity, and the self-interest of Commerce, under the guardianship of just and equal laws, the task of using and regulating its own tokens of credit. Our past experiments in the way of providing an artificial currency are flagrant and undeniable failures; but as it is still possible to deduce from them, as we believe, ample proof of the principle, that the security, the economy, and the regularity of the circulation have improved just in the degree in which the entire money business has been opened to the healthful influences of unobstructed trade,—so we infer that a still larger liberty would insure a still more wholesome action of the system. The currency is rightly named *the circulation*, and, like the great movements of blood in the human body, depends upon a free inspiration of the air.

Under a larger freedom, we should expect Credit to be organized on a basis of MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND GUARANTY, which would afford a stable and beautiful support to the great systolic and diastolic movements of trade; that it would reduce all paper emissions to their legitimate character as

mere mercantile tokens, and liberate humanity from the fearful debaucheries of a factitious money; and that Commerce, which has been compelled hitherto to sit in the markets of the world, like a courtesan at the gaming-table, with hot eye and panting chest and painted cheeks, would be regenerated and improved, until it should become, what it was meant to be, a beneficent goddess, pouring out to all the nations from her horns of plenty the grateful harvests of the earth.

THE BUSTS OF GOETHE AND SCHILLER

This is GOETHE, with a forehead
Like the fabled front of Jove;
In its massive lines the tokens
More of majesty than love.

This is SCHILLER, in whose features,
With their passionate calm regard,
We behold the true ideal
Of the high heroic Bard,

Whom the inward world of feeling
And the outward world of sense
To the endless labor summon,
And the endless recompense.

These are they, sublime and silent,
From whose living lips have rung
Words to be remembered ever
In the noble German tongue:

Thoughts whose inspiration, kindling
Into loftiest speech or song,
Still through all the listening ages

Pours its torrent swift and strong.

As to-day in sculptured marble
Side by side the Poets stand,
So they stood in life's great struggle,
Side by side and hand to hand,

In the ancient German city,
Dowered with many a deathless name,
Where they dwelt and toiled together,
Sharing each the other's fame:

One till evening's lengthening shadows
Gently stilled his faltering lips,
But the other's sun at noonday
Shrouded in a swift eclipse.

There their names are household treasures,
And the simplest child you meet
Guides you where the house of Goethe
Fronts upon the quiet street;

And, hard by, the modest mansion
Where full many a heart has felt
Memories uncounted clustering
Round the words, "Here Schiller dwelt."

In the churchyard both are buried,
Straight beyond the narrow gate,

In the mausoleum sleeping
With Duke Charles in sculptured state.

For the Monarch loved the Poets,
Called them to him from afar,
Wooded them near his court to linger,
And the planets sought the star.

He, his larger gifts of fortune
With their larger fame to blend,
Living, counted it an honor
That they named him as their friend;

Dreading to be all-forgotten,
Still their greatness to divide,
Dying, prayed to have his Poets
Buried one on either side.

But this suited not the gold-laced
Ushers of the royal tomb,
Where the princely House of Weimar
Slumbered in majestic gloom.

So they ranged the coffins justly,
Each with fitting rank and stamp,
And with shows of court precedence
Mocked the grave's sepulchral damp.

Fitly now the clownish sexton

Narrow courtier-rules rebukes;
First he shows the grave of Goethe,
Schiller's next, and last—the Duke's.

Vainly 'midst these truthful shadows
Pride would daunt her painted wing;
Here the Monarch waits in silence,
And the Poet is the King!

THE LIBRARIAN'S STORY

Librarians are a singular class of men,—or rather, a class of singular men. I choose the latter phrase, because I think that the singularities do not arise from the employment, but characterize the men who are most likely to gravitate toward it. A great philosopher, whom nobody knows, once stated the Problem of Humanity thus: "There are two kinds of people,—round people, and three-cornered people; and two kinds of holes,—round holes, and three-cornered holes. All mysterious providences, misfortunes, dispensations, evils, and wrong things generally, are attributable to this cause, namely, that round people get into three-cornered holes, and three-cornered people get into round holes." The librarian is not only a three-cornered person, but a many-cornered one,—a human polyhedron. And he is in his right place,—a many-cornered man in a many-cornered hole; especially if the hole be like that which I am thinking of,—an Historical Library.

The only bibliothecarian peculiarity in point at present is, a gift to root up, (country boys, speaking of pigs, say *rootle*; it is more onomatopoeian,) to rootle up the most obscure and useless pieces of information; not, like Mr. Nadgett, to work them into a chain of connected evidence for some actual purpose, but merely to know them, to possess a record of them, either as found in some printed or manuscript document, or as recorded by the

librarian himself; and to keep the record pickled away in some place where it will be as little likely as possible to be found or read by anybody else.

So much concerning Librarians; a word now about Character.

Bad blood is hereditary. I don't mean scrofulous, but wicked blood. Vicious tendencies pass down in a family, appearing in the most various manifestations, until at last the evil of the race works its only possible remedy, by resulting in its extinction. There is, in some sense, an absolute unity amongst the successive generations of those of one blood; at least, so much so that our feeling of poetical justice is rather gratified than otherwise when the crimes of one are avenged, it may be a century after, upon the person of another of the name. This was the truth which underlay the vast gloomy fables of the ancient Fates, and the stories of the inevitable destruction of the great ancient houses of Greece. It is the same which the Indian feels when he revenges upon one of the white race the wrongs inflicted by another. Succession in time does not interfere with the stern promise of Jehovah to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.—The reader will see presently how I have been led into this train of reflection.

My predecessor in office had a strong fancy for Numismatology. I have, too; nobody would more enjoy a vast collection of coins; but, oddly enough, I should prefer contemporary ones. He was simple and almost penurious in personal expenditure; yet, besides a great collection of books, he had, from his scanty income, got together, in the course of a long

life, a large and very valuable collection of coins and medals, especially rich in gold. These coins lay—they do not now, for I assure you I keep them pretty carefully out of sight latterly—luxuriously imbedded in a neat case, among the great collection of antique objects, weapons, ornaments, furniture, clothing, etc., which usually accumulate within the precincts of an Historical Society's Library.

In the one under my charge there is an astonishing number of them; and naturally, where the long series of the ancient Indian wars, and later ones with civilized foes, form together so strong a strand in the thread of our history, there is a very great number proportionally of warlike weapons.

I like to read old books, both *ex officio* and *ex naturâ*. But I need not enlarge upon this liking. For my part, however, they please me most when I am wholly alone, in that deep silence which by listening you can seem to hear, and in a place well furnished,—especially in such a place as the Historical Library is, with many full bookshelves, and a great multitude of ancient portraits, grim curiosities, and weapons of war.

It may be unfortunate to be sensitive, but I am. The few things that do excite me excite me easily, and by virtue of the trooping together and thronging on of the procession of my own imaginations, thus awakened, I am prone to reveries of the most various complexion.

In one of the secret repositories where during his latter years my venerable predecessor used with senile cunning to

hide, indiscriminately, the coins of the Romans and of the Yankees, rags, bottles of rhubarb and magnesia, books, papers, and buttons, I had found, one night, an ancient MS. I had been all the evening reading a High-German Middle-Age volume, illustrated with wood-cuts, cut as with a hatchet, and being, as per title-page, *Julius der erste Römische Kayser, von seinen Kriegen*,—"Julius the first Roman Emperor, of his Wars."

Buried in the extraordinary adventures of the Kayser, not to be found in any Roman historian, and full of quaint and ludicrous jumbles of the ancient and the modern, I was suddenly stopped by finding that the last folios were missing.

After a moment of ineffectual vexation, I bethought me of several repositories in which I had seen portions of *débris*,—leaves, covers, brazen bosses, and other *membra disjecta*; in one of these I might very probably find the missing pages.

I fumbled through half a dozen; did not find what I sought, but did find the aforesaid MS. I was interested at once by the close but clear penmanship, and by the date, February 29, 1651/2; for this day, by its numeral, would be in leap-year, according to old style, but not according to new. How did they settle it? I asked; and what was to determine for lovelorn maidens, whether they might or might not use the privilege of the year?

I returned to my desk, and sat down to read; and, as I remember, the heavy bell of the First Church, close by, just then struck eleven, and I listened with pleasure to the long, mellow cadence of the reverberations after each deliberate and solid

stroke.

Beginning at the beginning, I read until past midnight. The contents, after all, were not remarkable. It was a collection of copies of papers relating to various matters of accounts and law, all pertaining to a certain Beardsley family, of high and ancient fame in the Colony, and afterwards in the State. Somewhat beyond the middle, however, I lighted upon a document which attracted my more particular attention. It was a transcript from the State Records, and, as the date showed, from a very early volume of them, now missing from the office of the Secretary of State. It immediately occurred to me that this volume was strongly suspected to have been purloined by one Isaac Beardsley, an unscrupulous man, of some influence, who used, for amusement, to potter about in various antiquarian enterprises of no moment, but who had now been dead for some fifteen years. I then also recollected that he had an only child, a graceless gallows-bird of a son, who broke his father's heart, then wasted his substance in riotous living, and, after being long a disgrace and nuisance at home, had sunk out of sight amid the lowest strata of vice and crime in New York.

The document was a complaint to the "Generall Court" against "Goodman Joab Brice"—the complainant being designated by the honorable prefix of "Mr."—"for y't hee, the s'd Goodman Brice, had sayd in y'e hearing of" various persons mentioned, "and to the verry face of y'e s'd Mr. Isaac Beardslie, y't y'e s'd Mr. Beardslie did grind y'e faces of the poor, and had

served him, the s'd Brice, worse than anie Turk w'd serve his slaves; and this with fearfull and blasphemous curses, and prayres that God would return evill upon the heads of this complaynant and his children after him," etc.

The transcript was long, alleging various similar offences. Its perusal recalled to my mind several hints and obscure allusions, and one or two brief histories of the proceedings in this case, which may be found in ancient books relating to the Colony. These proceedings between Beardsley and Brice were famous in their day, and were thought little creditable to the head of the Beardsley family. That he himself partook of the general opinion is shown by the circumstance that the matter was diligently hushed up in that day; and those most familiar with the ancient records of the State averred, that upon the pages of the missing volume was spread matter amply sufficient to account for its theft and destruction by the late Col. Isaac Beardsley.

The details of this ancient quarrel have perished out of remembrance. The chief substance of it was, however, a lawsuit which ended in the rich man's obtaining possession of the poor man's land. Brice, a yeoman of vindictive, obstinate, and fearless character, had insulted his opponent, who was a magistrate, had threatened his life, and otherwise so bore himself that his oppressor procured him to be whipped at the cart's tail, and to be held to give large sureties for the peace, with the alternative penalty of banishment. The bitter vehemence of Brice's curses was remarkable even among the dry phrases of the complaint;

and tradition relates that his fearful imprecations even caused his dignified opponent, the magistrate, to turn pale and tremble.

I was sure, too, that among the stores of the Library I had seen some memorial of Brice as well as of Beardsley; but could not at the time call up any remembrance more definite than an impression that this memorial was something which had belonged to a descendant of Joab Brice, who had been in his youth a soldier in the old French War, and later a subaltern in the "State line" during the Revolution.

The Library room, in which I was reading, is a large, lofty hall, fitted with dark bookcases, heavy and huge as if for giants, singularly perfect in point of inconvenience and inaccessibility, and good only in that they bore a certain architectural proportion to the great height and expanse of the dark room. My desk was so placed that my back was toward the entrance, which was the balustraded opening, in the Library floor, of a wide staircase; and close at my side and before me were racks with muskets and spears, cases of curiosities, and other appurtenances of the room. It being now past the middle of the night, when sleep is heaviest, the stillness was perfect. My two shaded lamps made a small sphere of dusky yellow light, which I felt to be surrounded and, as it were, compressed by the thick darkness, which I could easily fancy to be something tangible and heavy, settling noiselessly down from beneath the lofty arches of the roof. The ancient penmanship and curious contents of the faded pages before me carried my thoughts backward into the old Colonial times, with

their rigid social distinctions, lofty manners, and ill-concealed superstition; and I mused upon grim old magistrates, wizened witches, stately dames, rugged Indian-fighters, and all their strange doings and sayings in the ancient days, until, between drowsiness and imagining, I fell into a tangled labyrinth of romance, history, and reverie.

Then all at once I seemed half to awake, and fell into one of those fits of foolish nervous apprehension to which many even of the coolest and bravest are liable in deep solitude and darkness,—and if they, how much more an excitable person like myself! My heart throbbed for no reason, and, sitting with my head bowed down upon my hands, I fancied the most impossible dangers,—of men taking aim at me with the antique firearms out of the far dark corners, or casting heavy weights upon me through the skylight overhead. How easily, I fancied, could it happen. Did not the cellar-door open just now?

I half arose, almost frightened. I believe I should have taken an old rapier and a light and gone to look, but for very shame. And besides, there were two thick floors between me and the door, and that itself was set in the heavy wall between the cellar of this wing of the building and that under its main body; so that if it had been opened, I could not have heard it. Accordingly I resumed my posture and my painful intense musing. But now I could have almost sworn that I heard soft steps coming up the staircase, and whispers floating upon the air of the great solitary room:—*I did!*

But not soon enough. At the sound of a distinct, heavy footstep behind me, I sprang up and turned about, but only to find myself pinioned by one of the arms of a rough-looking, vicious-faced man, who pressed his other hand tightly over my mouth. A confederate was busy at the case of coins.

Although only a librarian, I have in my day been something of an athlete; much more than the person who had rushed into so sudden an intimacy reckoned upon. And I was pretty well strung up, too, with my nonsensical fancies.

Being face to face with me, therefore, my assailant had mastered my right arm, and was clasping my back with his left hand, while his right was over my mouth. So driving back my left elbow, I struck him a sharp and cruel blow in the right side, just above the hip-bone. It is a bad place to strike; I would not hit there, unless unfairly attacked. The sudden pain jerked a groan out of him, and surprised him into slackening his hold; so that I wrenched myself loose, and gave him a straight, heavy, right-hand hit in the nose, sending him reeling against the old chest that came over in the *Mayflower*, which saved him from a fall.

At one and the same moment, both the thieves drew knives and made at me together, and I, springing backwards, seized from the wooden rack of weapons the first which my hand reached. It was a musket. Instinctively, for there was no time to reason, I cocked, presented in a sort of charge-bayonet attitude, the only one possible, and pulled trigger. The old weapon went off with a deafening report, sending out a blinding sheet of flame

in the darkness. One thief fell headlong at my very feet; the other, turning, fled blindly towards the staircase. I ought to have caught him; but, in the unreflecting anger of the moment, coming up with him at the stair-head, I struck at him with such good will and good effect, that he fell down stairs faster than I cared to chase him in the dark. Scrambling up at the bottom, he hurried out by the way he had come, and fled; while I returned to my prisoner.

He was quite dead. The charge, a bullet, had passed in just above the region of the heart, killing him instantly. I searched him, but found only a knife, a little money, and some tobacco; nothing which could identify him. He was well-made, middle-aged, and of a thoroughly vile and repulsive countenance.

The necessary legal formalities were gone through as quickly and quietly as possible, and the entrances by which the burglars had come in well secured. They had evidently reconnoitred within and without the building during the day, and selected a back way into the cellar, through which they found no trouble in ascending to the Library.

Some days afterwards, I bethought me to examine the old musket. It was a heavy, old-fashioned "queen's arm," with no unusual marks, as I thought; but upon a silver plate, let into the hollow of the butt, I found, coarsely and strongly engraved, "JOAB BRYCE, 1765."

Upon mentioning this circumstance to our Recording Secretary, and wondering how the gun came to be loaded, he told me that the fault was his. The weapon, he said, had been

deposited in the Library by a son of the old revolutionary soldier; and he added, that this son had informed him that the old man, who seems to have inherited something of the peculiar traits of his ancient race, having had this charge in his gun at the conclusion of the siege of Yorktown, where he was present with a New England regiment, had managed afterwards to avoid discharging or drawing it, and had left it by will to his eldest son to be kept loaded as it was; with the strange clause, that the charge "might sarve out a Beardsley, if it couldn't a Britisher."

The depositor, the Secretary further told me, had religiously kept the old gun, and, with a curious, simple strictness of adherence to the spirit of his father's directions, had oiled the lock, picked the flint, wired the touch-hole, and put in fresh priming, when he brought the weapon to the Library.

"I meant to have unloaded it, of course," pursued the excellent Secretary, "but it passed out of my mind."

A week or two afterwards, I found in one of those obscure columns of "minion solid," in which the great New York papers embalm the memory of their current metropolitan crime, the following notice:—

"We are informed that the burglar lately killed in an attempt to rob the – Historical Library has been found to be the notorious cracksman, 'Bill Young'; but that his real name was Isaac Beardsley."

* * * * *

DAYLIGHT AND MOONLIGHT

In broad daylight, and at noon,
Yesterday I saw the moon
Sailing high, but faint and white,
As a school-boy's paper kite.

In broad daylight, yesterday,
I read a poet's mystic lay;
And it seemed to me at most
As a phantom, or a ghost.

But at length the feverish day
Like a passion died away,
And the night, serene and still,
Fell on village, vale, and hill.

Then the moon, in all her pride,
Like a spirit glorified,
Filled and overflowed the night
With revelations of her light.

And the poet's song again
Passed like music through my brain;
Night interpreted to me
All its grace and mystery.

SOMETHING ABOUT PICTURES

It is not surprising that pictures, with all their attraction for eye and mind, are, to many honest and intelligent people, too much of a riddle to be altogether pleasant. What with the oracular dicta of self-constituted arbiters of taste, the discrepancies of popular writers on Art, the jargon of connoisseurship, the vagaries of fashion, the endless theories about color, style, *chiaro 'scuro*, composition, design, imitation, nature, schools, etc., painting has become rather a subject for the gratification of vanity and the exercise of pedantic dogmatism, than a genuine source of enjoyment and culture, of sympathy and satisfaction,—like music, literature, scenery, and other recognized intellectual recreations. In these latter spheres it is not thought presumptuous to assert and enjoy individual taste; the least independent talkers will bravely advocate their favorite composer, describe the landscape which has charmed or the book which has interested them; but when a picture is the subject of discussion, few have the moral courage to say what they think; there is a self-distrust of one's own impressions and even convictions in regard to what is represented on canvas, that never intervenes between thought and expression, where ideas or sentiments are embodied in writing or in melody. Nor is this to be ascribed wholly to the technicalities of pictorial art, in which so few are deeply versed, but in a great measure to the incongruous and irrelevant associations

which have gradually overlaid and mystified a subject in itself as open to the perception of a candid mind and healthy senses as any other department of human knowledge. Half the want of appreciation of pictures arises from ignorance, not of the principles of Art, but of the elements of Nature. Good observers are rare. The peasant's criticism upon Moreland's "Farm-yard"—that three pigs never eat together without one foot at least in the trough—was a strict inference from personal knowledge of the habits of the animal; so the surgeon found a head of the Baptist untrue, because the skin was not withdrawn somewhat from the line of decollation. These and similar instances show that some knowledge of or interest in the thing represented is essential to the appreciation of pictures. Sailors and their wives crowded around Wilkie's "Chelsea Pensioners," when first exhibited; French soldiers enjoy the minutiae of Vernet's battle-pieces; a lover can judge of his betrothed's miniature; and the most unrefined sportsman will point out the niceties of breed in one of Landseer's dogs. To the want of correspondence so frequent between the subject of a picture and the observer's experience may, therefore, be attributed no small degree of the prevalent want of sympathy and confident judgment. "Gang into an Exhibition," says the Ettrick Shepherd, "and only look at a crowd o' cockneys, some with specs, and some wi' quizzing-glasses, and faces without ae grain o' meaning in them o' ony kind whatsomever, a' glowering, perhaps, at a picture o' ane o' Nature's maist fearfu' or magnificent warks! What, I ask, could a

Prince's-Street maister or missy ken o' sic a wark mair than a red deer wad ken o' the inside o' George's-Street Assembly-Rooms?"

The incidental associations of pictures link them to history, tradition, and human character, in a manner which indefinitely enhances their suggestiveness. Horace Walpole wove a standard collection of anecdotes from the lives and works of painters. The frescoes of St. Mark's, at Florence, have a peculiar significance to the spectator familiar with Fra Angelico's life. One of the most pathetic and beautiful tragedies in modern literature is that which a Danish poet elaborated from Correggio's artist career. Lamb's great treasure was a print from Da Vinci, which he called "My Beauty," and its exhibition to a literal Scotchman gave rise to one of the richest jokes in Elia's record. The pen-drawing Andre made of himself the night before his execution,—the curtain painted in the space where Faliero's portrait should have been, in the ducal palace at Venice,—and the head of Dante, discovered by Mr. Kirkup, on the wall of the Bargello, at Florence,—convey impressions far beyond the mere lines and hues they exhibit; each is a drama, a destiny. And the hard but true lineaments of Holbein, the aërial grace of Malbone's "Hours," Albert Durer's mediaeval sanctities, Overbeck's conservative self-devotion, a market-place by Ostade, Reynolds's "Strawberry Girl," one of Copley's colonial grandees in a New England farmer's parlor, a cabinet gem by Greuze, a dog or sheep of Landseer's, the misty depths of Turner's "Carthage," Domenichino's "Sibyl," Claude's sunset, or Allston's "Rosalie,"—how much of eras in

Art, events in history, national tastes, and varieties of genius do they each foreshadow and embalm! Even when no special beauty or skill is manifest, the character of features transmitted by pictorial art, their antiquity or historical significance, often lends a mystery and meaning to the effigies of humanity. In the carved faces of old German church choirs and altars, the existent facial peculiarities of race are curiously evident; a Grecian life breathes from many a profile in the Elgin marbles, and a sacred marvel invests the exhumed giants of Nineveh; in the cartoons of Raphael, and the old Gobelin tapestries, are hints of what is essential in the progress and the triumphs of painting. Considered as a language, how definitely is the style of painters associated with special forms of character and spheres of life! It is this variety of human experience typified and illustrated on canvas, that forms our chief obligations to the artist; through him our perception of and acquaintance with our race, its individuality and career, its phases and aspects, is indefinitely enlarged. "The greatest benefit," says a late writer, "we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the *extension of our sympathies*. Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying our experience and extending our contact with our fellow-creatures beyond the bounds of our personal lot."

The effect of a picture is increased by isolation and surprise. I never realized the physiognomical traits of Madame de Maintenon, until her portrait was encountered in a solitary country-house, of whose drawing-room it was the sole ornament;

and the romance of a miniature by Malbone first came home to me, when an ancient dame, in the costume of the last century, with trembling fingers drew one of her husband from an antique cabinet, and descanted on the manly beauty of the deceased original, and the graceful genius of the young and lamented artist. Hazlitt wrote an ingenious essay on "A Portrait by Vandyck," which gives us an adequate idea of what such a masterpiece is to the eye and mind of genuine artistic perception and sympathy. Few sensations, or rather sentiments, are more inextricably made up of pleasure and sadness than that with which we contemplate (as is not infrequent in some old gallery of Europe) a portrait which deeply interests or powerfully attracts us, and whose history is irrevocably lost. A better homily on the evanescence of human love and fame can scarcely be imagined: a face alive with moral personality and human charms, such as win and warm our stranger eyes, yet the name, subject, artist, owner, all lost in oblivion! To pause before an interesting but "unknown portrait" is to read an elegy as pathetic as Gray's.

The mechanical processes by which Nature is so closely imitated, and the increase of which during the last few years is one of the most remarkable facts in science, may at the first glance appear to have lessened the marvellous in Art, by making available to all the exact representation of still-life. But, when duly considered, the effect is precisely the reverse; for exactly in proportion as we become familiar with the mechanical production of the similitudes of natural and artificial objects,

do we instinctively demand higher powers of conception, greater spiritual expression in the artist. The discovery of Daguerre and its numerous improvements, and the unrivalled precision attained by Photography, render exact imitation no longer a miracle of crayon or palette; these must now create as well as reflect, invent and harmonize as well as copy, bring out the soul of the individual and of the landscape, or their achievements will be neglected in favor of the fac-similes obtainable through sunshine and chemistry. The best photographs of architecture, statuary, ruins, and, in some cases, of celebrated pictures, are satisfactory to a degree which has banished mediocre sketches, and even minutely finished but literal pictures. Specimens of what is called "Nature-printing," which gives an impression directly from the veined stone, the branching fern, or the sea-moss, are so true to the details as to answer a scientific purpose; natural objects are thus lithographed without the intervention of pencil or ink. And these several discoveries have placed the results of mere imitative art within reach of the mass; in other words, her prose language, that which mechanical science can utter, is so universal, that her poetry, that which must be conceived and expressed through individual genius, the emanation of the soul, is more distinctly recognized and absolutely demanded from the artist, in order to vindicate his claim to that title, than ever before.

Perhaps, indeed, the scope which Painting offers to experimental, individual, and prescriptive taste, the loyalty it invokes from the conservative, the "infinite possibilities" it offers

to the imaginative, the intimacy it promotes with Nature and character, are the cause of so much originality and attractiveness in its votaries. The Lives of Painters abound in the characteristic, the adventurous, and the romantic. Open Vasari, Walpole, or Cunningham, at random, and one is sure to light upon something odd, genial, or exciting. One of the most popular novelists of our day assured me, that, in his opinion, the richest unworked vein for his craft, available in these days of civilized uniformity, is artist-life at Rome, to one thoroughly cognizant of its humors and aspirations, its interiors and vagrancies, its self-denials and its resources. I have sometimes imagined what a story the old white dog who so long frequented the Lepri and the Caffè Greco, and attached himself so capriciously to the brother artists of his deceased master, could have told, if blest with memory and language. He had tasted the freedom and the zest of artist-life in Rome, and scorned to follow trader or king. He preferred the odor of canvas and oil to that of conservatories, and had more frolic and dainty morsels at an *al fresco* of the painters, in the Campagna, than the kitchen of an Italian prince could furnish. His very name betokened good cheer, and was pronounced after the manner of the pert waiters who complacently enunciate a few words of English. *Bif-steck* was a privileged dog; and though occasionally made the subject of a practical joke, taught absurd tricks, sent on fools' errands, and his white coat painted like a zebra, these were but casual troubles; he was a sensible dog to despise them, when he could enjoy such quaint companionship,

behold such experiments in color and drawing, serve as a model himself, and go on delicious sketching excursions to Albano and Tivoli, besides inhaling tobacco-smoke and hearing stale jests and love soliloquies *ad infinitum*. I am of *Bif-steck's* opinion. There is no such true, earnest, humorous, and individual life, in these days of high civilization, as that of your genuine painter; impoverished as it often is, baffled in its aspirations, unregarded by the material and the worldly, it often rears and keeps pure bright, genial natures whose contact brings back the dreams of youth. It is pleasant, too, to realize, in a great commercial city, that man "does not live by bread alone," that fun is better than furniture, and a private resource of nature more prolific of enjoyment than financial investments. It is rare comfort, here, in the land of bustle and sunshine, to sit in a tempered light and hear a man sing or improvise stories over his work, to behold once more vagaries of costume, to let the eye rest upon pictorial fragments of Italy,—the "old familiar faces" of Roman models, the endeared outlines of Apennine hills, the *contadina* bodice and the brigand hat, until these objects revive to the heart all the romance of travel.

The technicalities of Art, its refinements of style, its absolute significance, are, indeed, as dependent for appreciation on a special endowment as are mathematics; but the general and incidental associations, in which is involved a world of poetry, may be enjoyed to the full extent by those whose perception of form, sense of color, and knowledge of the principles of

sculpture, painting, music, and architecture are notably deficient. It is a law of life and nature, that truth and beauty, adequately represented, create and diffuse a limitless element of wisdom and pleasure. Such memorials are talismanic, and their influence is felt in all the higher and more permanent spheres of thought and emotion; they are the gracious landmarks that guide humanity above the commonplace and the material, along the "line of infinite desires." Art, in its broad and permanent meaning, is a language,—the language of sentiment, of character, of national impulse, of individual genius; and for this reason it bears a lesson, a charm, or a sanction to all,—even those least versed in its rules and least alive to its special triumphs. Sir Walter Scott was no amateur, yet, through his reverence for ancestry and his local attachments, portraiture and architecture had for him a romantic interest. Sydney Smith was impatient of galleries when he could talk with men and women, and made a practical joke of buying pictures; yet Newton and Leslie elicited his best humor. Talfourd cared little and knew less of the treasures of the Louvre, but lingered there because it had been his friend Hazlitt's Elysium. Indeed, there are constantly blended associations in the history of English authors and artists; Reynolds is identified with Johnson and Goldsmith, Smibert with Berkeley, Barry with Burke, Constable and Wilkie with Sir George Beaumont, Haydon with Wordsworth, and Leslie with Irving; the painters depict their friends of the pen, the latter celebrate in verse or prose the artist's triumphs, and both intermingle thought

and sympathy; and from this contact of select intelligences of diverse vocation has resulted the choicest wit and the most genial companionship. If from special we turn to general associations, from biography to history, the same prolific affinities are evident, whereby the artist becomes an interpreter of life, and casts the halo of romance over the stern features of reality. Hampton Court is the almost breathing society of Charles the Second's reign; the Bodleian Gallery is vivid with Britain's past intellectual life; the history of France is pictured on the walls of Versailles; the luxury of color bred by the sunsets of the Euganean hills, the waters of the Adriatic, the marbles of San Marco, and the skies and atmosphere of Venice, are radiant on the canvas of Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese; Michel Angelo has embodied the soul of his era and the loftiest spirit of his country; Salvator typified the half-savage picturesqueness, Neapolitan Claude the atmospheric enchantments, Carlo Dolce the effeminate grace, Titian the voluptuous energy, Guido the placid self-possession, and Raphael and Correggio the religious sentiment of Italy; Watteau put on canvas the *fête champêtre*; the peasant-life of Spain is pictured by Murillo, her asceticism by the old religious limners; what English rustics were before steam and railroads Gainsborough and Moreland reveal, Wilkie has permanently symbolized Scotch shrewdness and domesticity, and Lawrence framed and fixed the elegant shapes of a London drawing-room; and each of these is a normal type and suggestive exemplar to the imagination, a chapter of romance, a sequestration and initial

token of the characteristic and the historical, either of what has become traditional or what is forever true.

The indirect service good artists have rendered by educating observation has yet to be acknowledged. The Venetian painters cannot be even superficially regarded, without developing the sense of color; nor the Roman, without enlarging our cognizance of expression; nor the English, without refining our perception of the evanescent effects in scenery. Raphael has made infantile grace obvious to unmaternal eyes; Turner opened to many a preoccupied vision the wonders of atmosphere; Constable guided our perception of the casual phenomena of wind; Landseer, that of the natural language of the brute creation; Lely, of the coiffure; Michel Angelo, of physical grandeur; Rolfe, of fish; Gerard Dow, of water; Cuyp, of meadows; Cooper, of cattle; Stanfield, of the sea; and so on through every department of pictorial art. Insensibly these quiet but persuasive teachers have made every phase and object of the material world interesting, environed them with more or less of romance, by such revelations of their latent beauty and meaning; so that, thus instructed, the sunset and the pastoral landscape, the moss-grown arch and the craggy seaside, the twilight grove and the swaying cornfield, an old mill, a peasant, light and shade, form and feature, perspective and anatomy, a smile, a gesture, a cloud, a waterfall, weather-stains, leaves, deer,—every object in Nature, and every impress of the elements, speaks more distinctly to the eye and more effectively to the imagination.

The vicissitudes which sometimes attend a picture or statue furnish no inadequate materials for narrative interest. Amateur collectors can unfold a tale in reference to their best acquisitions which outvies fiction. Beckford's table-talk abounded in such reminiscences. An American artist, who had resided long in Italy and made a study of old pictures, caught sight at a shop-window in New Orleans of an "Ecce Homo" so pathetic in expression as to arrest his steps and engross his attention. Upon inquiry, he learned that it had been purchased of a soldier fresh from Mexico, after the late war between that country and the United States; he bought it for a trifle, carried it to Europe, and soon authenticated it as an original Guercino, painted for the royal chapel in Madrid, and sent thence by the government to a church in Mexico, whence, after centuries, it had found its way, through the accidents of war, to a pawnbroker's shop in Louisiana. A lady in one of our eastern cities, wishing to possess, as a memorial, some article which had belonged to a deceased neighbor, and not having the means, at the public sale of her effects, to bid for an expensive piece of furniture, contented herself with buying for a few shillings a familiar chimney-screen. One day she discovered a glistening surface under the flowered paper which covered it, and when this was torn away, there stood revealed a picture of Jacob and Rebecca at the Well, by Paul Veronese; doubtless thus concealed with a view to its secret removal during the first French Revolution. The missing Charles First of Velasquez was lately exhibited in this country, and the account its possessor gives of

the mode of its discovery and the obstacles which attended the establishment of its legal ownership in England is a remarkable illustration both of the tact of the connoisseur and the mysteries of jurisprudence.

There is scarcely, indeed, an artist or a patron of art, of any eminence, who has not his own "story of a picture." Like all things of beauty and of fame, the very desire of possession which a painting excites, and the interest it awakens, give rise to some costly sacrifice, or incidental circumstance, which associates the prize with human fortune and sentiment. I remember an anecdote of this kind told me by a friend in Western New York.

"Waiting," said he, "in the little front-parlor of a house in the town of C—, to transact some business with its occupant, I was attracted by a clean sketch in oil that hung above the fireplace. It might have escaped notice elsewhere, but traces of real skill in Art were too uncommon in this region to be disregarded by any lover of her fruits. The readiness to seize upon any casual source of interest, common with those who "stand and wait" in a place where they are strangers, doubtless had something to do with the careful attention I bestowed upon this production. It was a very modest attempt,—a bit of landscape, with two horses grazing and a man at work in the foreground. Quiet in tone, and half-concealed by the shaded casement, it was only by degrees, and to ward off the *ennui* of a listless half-hour, that I gradually became absorbed in its examination. There were some masterly lines, clever arrangement, a true feeling, and a peculiar delicacy

of treatment, that implied the hand of a trained artist.

"My pleasant communion with the unknown was at last interrupted by the entrance of my tardy man-of-business, but the instant our affair was transacted I inquired about the sketch. It proved to be the work of a young Englishman then residing in the neighborhood. I obtained his address and sought his dwelling. He was scraping an old palette as we entered, and advanced with it in one hand, while he saluted me with the air of a gentleman and the simplicity of an honest man. He wore a linen blouse, his collar was open, his hair long and dark, his complexion pale, his eye thoughtful, and a settled expression of sweetness and candor about the mouth made me feel, at a glance, that I had rightly interpreted the sketch. I mentioned it as an apology for my intrusion, and added, that a natural fondness for Art, and rare opportunities for gratifying the taste, induced me to improve occasions like this with alacrity. He seemed delighted to welcome such a visitor, as his life, for several weeks, had been quite isolated. The retirement and agreeable scenery of this inland town harmonized with his feelings; he was unambitious, happy in his domestic relations, and had managed, from time to time, to execute a portrait or dispose of a sketch, and thus subsist in comfort; so that an accidental and temporary visit to this secluded region had unconsciously lengthened into a whole summer's residence,— partly to be ascribed to the kindness and easy terms of his good old host, a thrifty farmer, whose wife, having no children of her own, doted upon the painter's boy,

and grieved at the mention of their departure. I doubt if my new friend would have had the enterprise to migrate at all, but for my urgency; but I soon discovered, that, with the improvidence of his tribe, he had laid nothing by, and that he stood in need of medical advice, and, after a long conversation, upon my engaging to secure him an economical home and plenty of work in Utica, he promised to remove thither in a month; and then becoming more cheerful, he exhibited, one by one, the trophies of Art in his possession.

"Among them were a Moreland and a Gainsborough, some fine engravings after Reynolds, prints, cartoons, and crayon heads by famous artists, and two or three Hogarth proof-impressions; but the treasure which riveted my gaze was a masterly head of such vigorous outline and effective tints, that I immediately recognized the strong, free, bold handling of Gilbert Stuart. 'That was given me,' said the gratified painter, 'by the son of an Edinburgh physician, who, when a young practitioner, had the good-fortune to call one day upon Stuart when he was suffering from the effects of a fall. He had been thrown from a vehicle and had broken his arm, which was so unskilfully set that it became inflamed and swollen, and the clumsy surgeon talked of amputation. Imagine the feeling of such an artist at the idea of losing his right arm! The doctor's visit was not professional, but, seeing the despondent mood of the invalid artist, he could not refrain the offer of service. It was accepted, and proved successful, and the patient's gratitude was unbounded. As the

doctor refused pecuniary compensation, Stuart insisted upon painting a likeness of his benefactor; and as he worked under no common impulse, the result, as you see, was a masterpiece.'

"A few weeks after this pleasant interview, I had established my *protégé* at Utica, and obtained him several commissions. But his medical attendant pronounced his disease incurable; he lingered a few months, conversing to the last, during the intervals of pain and feebleness, with a resignation and intelligence quite endearing. When he died, I advised his widow to preserve as long as possible the valuable collection he had left, and with it she repaired to one of her kindred in affluent circumstances, living fifty miles away. She endeavored to force upon my acceptance one, at least, of her husband's cherished pictures; but, knowing her poverty, I declined, only stipulating that if ever she parted with the Stuart, I should have the privilege of taking it at her own price.

"A year passed, and I was informed that many of her best things had become the property of her relative, who, however, knew not how to appreciate them. I commissioned a friend, who knew him, to purchase at any cost the one I craved. He discovered that a native artist, who had been employed to delineate the family, had obtained this work in payment, and had it carefully enshrined in his studio at Syracuse. This was Charles Elliot; and the possession of so excellent an original by one of the best of our artists in this department explains his subsequent triumphs in portraiture. He made a study of this trophy; it inspired his

pencil; from its contemplation he caught the secret of color, the breadth and strength of execution, which have since placed him among the first of American portrait-painters, especially for old and characteristic heads. Thus, in the centre of Western New York, he found his Academy, his Royal College, his Gallery and life-school, in one adequate effort of Stuart's masterly hand; the offering of gratitude became the model and the impulse whereby a farmer's son on the banks of the Mohawk rose to the highest skill and eminence. But this was a gradual process; and meantime it is easy to imagine what a treasure the picture became in his estimation. It was only by degrees that his merit gained upon public regard. His first visit to New York was a failure; and after waiting many weeks in vain for a sitter, he was obliged to pay his indulgent landlord with a note of hand, and return to the more economical latitude of Syracuse. There he learned that a wealthy trader, desirous of the *éclat* of a connoisseur, was resolved to possess the cherished portrait. Although poor, he was resolved never to part with it; but the sagacious son of Mammon was too keen for him; discovering his indebtedness, he bought the artist's note of the inn-keeper, and levied an execution upon his effects. But genius is often more than a match for worldly-wisdom. Elliot soon heard of the plot, and determined to defeat it. He worked hard and secretly, until he had made so good a copy that the most practised eye alone could detect the counterfeit; and then concealing the original at his lodgings, he quietly awaited the legal attachment. It was duly levied, the sale took place, and

the would-be amateur bought the familiar picture hanging in its accustomed position, and then boasted in the market-place of the success of his base scheme. Ere long one of Elliot's friends revealed the clever trick. The enraged purchaser commenced a suit, and, although the painter eventually retained the picture, the case was carried to the Supreme Court, and he was condemned to pay costs. Ten years elapsed. The artist became an acknowledged master, and prosperity followed his labors. No one can mistake the rich tints and vigorous expression, the character and color, which distinguish Elliot's portraits; but few imagine how much he is indebted to the long possession and study of so invaluable an original for these traits, moulded by his genius into so many admirable representations of the loved, the venerable, and the honored, both living and dead."

Another friend of mine, in exploring the more humble class of boarding-houses in one of our large commercial towns, in search of an unfortunate relation, found himself, while expecting the landlady, absorbed in a portrait on the walls of a dingy back-parlor. The furniture was of the most common description. A few smutched and faded annuals, half-covered with dust, lay on the centre-table, beside an old-fashioned astral lamp, a cracked porcelain vase of wax-flowers, a yellow satin pincushion embroidered with tarnished gold-lace, and an album of venerable hue filled with hyperbolic apostrophes to the charms of some ancient beauty; which, with the dilapidated window-curtains, the obsolete sideboard, the wooden effigy of a red-faced man with

a spyglass under his arm, and the cracked alabaster clock-case on the mantel, all bespoke an impoverished establishment, so devoid of taste that the beautiful and artistic portrait seemed to have found its way there by a miracle. It represented a young and *spirituelle* woman, in the costume, so elegant in material and formal in mode, which Copley has immortalized; in this instance, however, there was a French look about the coiffure and robe. The eyes were bright with intelligence chastened by sentiment, the features at once delicate and spirited, and altogether the picture was one of those visions of blended youth, grace, sweetness, and intellect, from which the fancy instinctively infers a tale of love, genius, or sorrow, according to the mood of the spectator. Subdued by his melancholy errand and discouraged by a long and vain search, my friend, whose imagination was quite as excitable as his taste was correct, soon wove a romance around the picture. It was evidently not the work of a novice; it was as much out of place in this obscure and inelegant domicile, as a diamond set in filigree, or a rose among pigweed. How came it there? who was the original? what her history and her fate? Her parentage and her nurture must have been refined; she must have inspired love in the chivalric; perchance this was the last relic of an illustrious exile, the last memorial of a princely house.

This reverie of conjecture was interrupted by the entrance of the landlady. My friend had almost forgotten the object of his visit; and when his anxious inquiries proved vain, he drew the loquacious hostess into general conversation, in order to elicit the

mystery of the beautiful portrait. She was a robust, gray-haired woman, with whose constitutional good-nature care had waged a long and partially successful war. That indescribable air which speaks of better days was visible at a glance; the remnants of bygone gentility were obvious in her dress; she had the peculiar manner of one who had enjoyed social consideration; and her language indicated familiarity with cultivated society; yet the anxious expression habitual to her countenance, and the bustling air of her vocation which quickly succeeded conversational repose, hinted but too plainly straitened circumstances and daily toil. But what struck her present curious visitor more than these casual traits were the remains of great beauty in the still lovely contour of the face, the refined lines of her mouth, and the depth and varied play of the eyes. He was both sympathetic and ingenious, and ere long gained the confidence of his auditor. The unfeigned interest and the true perception he manifested in speaking of the portrait rendered him, in its owner's estimation, worthy to know the story his own intuition had so nearly divined. The original was Theodosia, the daughter of Aaron Burr. His affection for her was the redeeming fact of his career and character. Both were anomalous in our history. In an era remarkable for patriotic self-sacrifice, he became infamous for treasonable ambition; among a phalanx of statesmen illustrious for directness and integrity, he pursued the tortuous path of perfidious intrigue; in a community where the sanctities of domestic life were unusually revered, he bore the stigma of

unscrupulous libertinism. With the blood of his gallant adversary and his country's idol on his hands, the penalties of debt and treason hanging over him, the fertility of an acute intellect wasted on vain expedients,—an outlaw, an adventurer, a plausible reasoner with one sex and fascinating betrayer of the other, poor, bereaved, contemned,—one holy, loyal sentiment lingered in his perverted soul,—love for the fair, gifted, gentle being who called him father. The only disinterested sympathy his letters breathe is for her; and the feeling and sense of duty they manifest offer a remarkable contrast to the parallel record of a life of unprincipled schemes, misused talents, and heartless amours. As if to complete the tragic antithesis of destiny, the beloved and gifted woman who thus shed an angelic ray upon that dark career was soon after her father's return from Europe lost in a storm at sea while on her way to visit him, thus meeting a fate which, even at the distance of time, is remembered with pity. Her wretched father bore with him, in all his wanderings and through all his remorseful exile, her picture—emblem of filial love, of all that is beautiful in the ministry of woman, and all that is terrible in human fate. At length he lay dangerously ill in a garret. He had parted with one after another of his articles of raiment, books, and trinkets, to defray the expenses of a long illness; Theodosia's picture alone remained; it hung beside him,—the one talisman of irreproachable memory, of spotless love, and of undying sorrow; he resolved to die with this sweet relic of the loved and lost in his possession; there his sacrifices

ended. Life seemed slowly ebbing; the underpaid physician lagged in his visits; the importunate landlord threatened to send this once dreaded partisan, favored guest, and successful lover to the almshouse; when, as if the spell of woman's affection were spiritually magnetic, one of the deserted old man's early victims—no other than she who spoke—accidentally heard of his extremity, and, forgetting her wrongs, urged by compassion and her remembrance of the past, sought her betrayer, provided for his wants, and rescued him from impending dissolution. In grateful recognition of her Christian kindness, he gave her all he had to bestow,—Theodosia's portrait.

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CRETINS AND IDIOTS:

WHAT HAS BEEN AND WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR THEM

Among the numerous philanthropic movements which have characterized the nineteenth century, none, perhaps, are more deserving of praise than those which have had for their object the improvement of the cretin and the idiot, classes until recently considered as beyond the reach of curative treatment.

The traveller, whom inclination or science may have led into the Canton Valais, or Pays-de-Vaud, in Switzerland, or into the less frequented regions of Savoy, Aosta, or Styria, impressed as he may be with the beauty and grandeur of the scenery through which he passes, finds himself startled also at the frightful deformity and degradation of the inhabitants. By the roadside, basking in the sun, he beholds beings whose appearance seems such a caricature upon humanity, that he is at a loss to know whether to assign them a place among the human or the brute creation. Unable to walk,—usually deaf and dumb,—with bleared eyes, and head of disproportionate size,—brown, flabby, and leprous skin,—a huge goitre descending from the throat and resting upon the breast,—an abdomen enormously distended,—the lower limbs crooked, weak, and ill-

shaped,—without the power of utterance, or thoughts to utter,—and generally incapable of seeing, not from defect of the visual organs, but from want of capacity to fix the eye upon any object,—the cretin seems beyond the reach of human sympathy or aid. In intelligence he is far below the horse, the dog, the monkey, or even the swine; the only instincts of his nature are hunger and lust, and even these are fitful and irregular.

The number of these unfortunate beings in the mountainous districts of Europe, and especially of Central and Southern Europe, is very great. In several of the Swiss cantons they form from four to five per cent of the population. In Rhenish Prussia, and in the Danubian provinces of Austria, the number is still greater; in Styria, many villages of four or five thousand inhabitants not having a single man capable of bearing arms. In Würtemberg and Bavaria, in Savoy, Sardinia, the Alpine regions of France, and the mountainous districts of Spain, the disease is very prevalent.

The causes of so fearful a degeneration of body and mind are not satisfactorily ascertained. Extreme poverty, impure air, filthiness of person and dwelling, unwholesome diet, the use of water impregnated with some of the magnesian salts, intemperance, (particularly in the use of the cheap and vile brandy of Switzerland,) and the intermarriage of near relatives and of those affected with goitre, have all been assigned, and with apparently good reason; yet there are cases which are attributable to none of these causes.

The disease is not, however, confined to Europe. It is prevalent also in China and Chinese Tartary, in Thibet, along the base of the Himalaya range in India, in Sumatra, in the vicinity of the Andes in South America, in Mexico; and sporadic cases are found along the line of the Alleghanies. It is said not to occur in Europe at a higher elevation than four thousand feet above the sea level.

The derivation of the name is involved in some mystery; most writers regarding it as a corruption of the French *Chrétien*, as indicative of the incapacity of these unfortunate beings to commit sin. A more probable theory, however, is that which deduces it from the Grison-Romance *Cretira*, "creature."

The existence of this disease has long been known; references are made to it by Pliny, as well as by some of the Roman writers in the second century of the Christian era; and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its prevalence and causes were frequently discussed. Most of the writers on the subject, however, considered the case of the poor cretin as utterly hopeless; and the few who deemed a partial improvement of his health, though not of his intellect, possible, merely suggested some measures for that purpose, without making any effort to reduce them to practice. It was reserved for a young physician of Zurich, Doctor Louis Guggenbühl, whose practical benevolence was active enough to overcome any repugnance he might feel to labors in behalf of a class so degraded and apparently unpromising, to be the pioneer in an effort to improve their

physical, mental, and moral condition.

It is now twenty-one years since this noble philanthropist, then just entering upon the duties of his profession, was first led by some incidents occurring during a tour in the Bernese Alps to investigate the condition of the cretin. For three years he devoted himself to the study of the disease and the method of treating it. Two years of this period were spent in the small village of Seruf, in the Canton Glarus, where he was successful in restoring several to the use of their limbs. It was at the end of this period, that, with a moral courage and devotion of which history affords but few examples, Doctor Guggenbühl resolved to dedicate his life to the elevation of the cretins from their degraded condition. Consecrating his own property to the work, he asked assistance from the Canton Bern in the purchase of land for a hospital, and received a grant of six hundred francs (\$120) for the work. His investigations had satisfied him that an elevated and dry locality was desirable, and that it was only the young who could be benefited. He accordingly purchased, in 1840, a tract of about forty acres of land, comprising a portion of the hill called the Abendberg, in the Canton Bern, above Interlachen. The site of his Hospital buildings is about four thousand feet above the sea, and one or two hundred feet below the summit of the hill; it is well protected from the cold winds, and the soil is tolerably fertile.

There are few spots, even among the Alps, which can compare with the Abendberg in beauty and grandeur of scenery. Doctor

Guggenbühl was led to select it as much for this reason as for its salubrity, in the belief, which his subsequent experience has fully justified, that the striking nobleness of the landscape would awaken, even in the torpid mind of the cretin, that sense of the beautiful in Nature which would materially aid in his intellectual culture.

On the southern slope of the Abendberg he erected his Hospital buildings, plain, wooden structures, without ornament, but comfortable, and well adapted to his purpose. Here he gathered about thirty cretin children, mostly under ten years of age, and began his work.

To understand fully what was to be accomplished, in order to transform the young cretin into an active, healthy child, it is necessary that we should glance at his physical and mental condition, when placed under treatment.

Cretinism seems to be a combination of two diseases, the one physical, the other mental. The physical disorder is akin to *Rachitis*, or rickets, while the mental is substantially idiocy. The osseous structure, deficient in the phosphate of lime, is unable to sustain the weight of the body, and the cretin is thus incapacitated for active motion; the muscles are soft and wasted; the skin dingy, cold, and unhealthy; the appetite voracious; spasmodic and convulsed action frequent; and the digestion imperfect and greatly disordered. The mind seems to exist only in a germinal state; observation, memory, thought, the power of combination, are all wanting. The external senses are so torpid, that, for months

perhaps, it is in vain to address either eye or ear; nor is the sense of touch much more active. The cretin is insensible to pain or annoyance, and seems to have as little sensation as an oyster.

It was to the work of restoring these diseased and enfeebled bodies to health, and of developing these germs of intellect, that Doctor Guggenbühl addressed himself. For this purpose, pure air, enforced exercise, the use of cold, warm, and vapor baths, of spirituous lotions and frictions, a simple yet eminently nutritive diet, regular habits, and the administration of those medicinal alternatives which would give tone to the system, activity to the absorbents, and vigor to the muscles, were the remedial measures adopted. As their strength increased, they were led to practise the simpler gymnastic exercises,—running, jumping, climbing, marching, the use of the dumb-bells, etc.

The body thus partially invigorated, the culture of the mind was next to be attempted,—a far more difficult task. The first step was, to teach the child to speak; and as this implied the ability to hear, the ear, hitherto dead to all sounds, must be impressed. For this purpose, sound was communicated by speaking trumpets or other instruments, which should force and fix the attention. The lips and vocal organs were then moulded to imitate these sounds. The process was long and wearisome, often occupying months, and even years; but in the end it was successful. The eye was trained by the attraction of bright and varied colors, and little by little simple ideas were communicated to the feeble intellect,—great care being necessary, however, to

proceed very slowly, as the cretin is easily discouraged, and when once overtaken, will make no further attempts to learn.

It was only by gaining the love of these poor creatures that they could be led to make any progress; and at an early stage of their training, Doctor Guggenbühl deemed it wise to infuse into their dawning minds the knowledge and the love of a higher Being, to teach them something of the power and goodness of God. The result, he assures us, has been highly satisfactory; the mind, too feeble for earthly lore, too weak to grasp the simplest facts of science, has yet comprehended something of the love of the All-father, and lifted up to him its imperfect but plaintive supplication. That the enthusiasm of this good man may have led him to exaggerate somewhat the extent of the religious attainments of his pupils is possible; but the experience of every teacher of the cretin or the idiot has satisfactorily demonstrated that simple religious truths are acquired by those who seem incapable of understanding the plainest problems in arithmetic or the most elementary facts of science. God has so willed it, that the mightiest intellect which strives unavailingly to comprehend the wisdom and glory of his creation, and the feeblest intelligence which knows only and instinctively his love, shall alike find in that love their highest solace and delight.

The phenomena of Nature were next made the objects of instruction; and to this the well-chosen position of the establishment largely contributed. Sunshine and storm, the light clouds which mottled the sky and the black heaps which

foreboded the tempest, the lightning and the rainbow, all in turn served to awaken the slumbering faculties, and to rouse the torpid intellect to greater activity.

The next step was, to teach the cretin some knowledge of objects around him, animate and inanimate, and of his relations to them. The exercise of the senses followed, and gayly colored pictures were presented to the eye, charming music to the ear, fragrant odors to the smell, and the varieties of sweet, bitter, sour, and pungent substances to the taste.

When the perceptive faculties were thus trained, books were made to take the place of object lessons; reading and writing were taught by long and patient endeavor; the elements of arithmetic, of Scripture history, and of geography were communicated; and mechanical instruction was imparted at the same time.

Under this general routine of instruction, Dr. Guggenbühl has conducted his establishment for seventeen years, often with limited means, and at times struggling with debt, from which, more than once, kind English friends, who have visited the Hospital, or become interested in the man, during his occasional hasty visits to Great Britain, have relieved him. His personal appearance is thus described by a friend who was on terms of intimacy with him; the place is at one of Lord Rosse's *conversazioni*. "Imagine in the crowd which swept through his Lordship's suite of rooms a small, foreign-looking man, with features of a Grecian cast, and long, shoulder-covering, black hair; look at that man's face; there is a gentleness, an amiability

combined with intelligence, which wins you to him. His dress is peculiar in that crowd of white cravats and acres of cambric shirt-fronts; black, well-worn black, is his suit; but his waistcoat is of black satin,—double-breasted, and buttoned closely up to the throat. It is Dr. Guggenbühl, the mildest, the gentlest of men, but one of those calm, reflecting minds that push on after a worthy object, undismayed by difficulties, undeterred by ridicule or rebuff."

In his labors in behalf of the unfortunate class to whom he has devoted himself, Dr. Guggenbühl has been assisted very greatly by the Protestant Sisters of Charity, who, like the Catholic sisterhood, dedicate their lives to offices of charity and love to the sick, the unfortunate, and the erring.

Dr. Guggenbühl claims to have effected a perfect cure in about one third of the cases which have been under his charge, by a treatment of from three to six years' duration. The attainment of so large a measure of success has been questioned by some who have visited the Hospital on the Abendberg; and while a part of these critics were undoubtedly actuated by a jealous and fault-finding disposition, it is not impossible that the enthusiasm of the philanthropist may have led him to regard the acquirements of his pupils as beyond what they really were.

A greater source of fallacy, however, is in the want of fixed standards for estimating the comparative capacity of children affected with cretinism, when placed under treatment, and the degree of intellectual and physical development which

constitutes a "perfect cure," in the opinion of such men as Dr. Guggenbühl. It is a fact, which all who have long had charge of either cretins or idiots well understand, that a great degree of physical deformity and disorder, a strongly marked rachitic condition of the body, complicated even with loss of hearing and speech, may exist, while the intellectual powers are but slightly affected; in other words, that a child may be in external appearance a cretin, and even one of low grade, yet with a higher degree of intellectual capacity than most cretins possess. On the other hand, the bodily weakness and deformity may be slight, while the mental condition is very low. In the former case, we might reasonably expect, on the successful treatment of the rachitic symptoms, a rapid intellectual development; the child would soon be able to pursue its studies in an ordinary school, and a "perfect cure" would be effected. In the latter case, though far more promising, apparently, at first, a longer course of training would be requisite, and the most strenuous efforts on the part of the teacher would not, in all probability, bring the pupil up to the level of a respectable mediocrity.

From a great number of cases, narrated in the different Reports of Dr. Guggenbühl before us, we select one as the type of a large class, in which the development of the intellect seems to have been retarded by the physical disorder, but proceeded regularly on the return of health.

"C. was four years old when she entered, with every symptom of confirmed rachitic cretinism. Her nervous system

was completely out of order, so that the strongest electric shocks produced scarcely any effect on her for some months. Aromatic baths, frictions, moderate exercise, a regimen of meat and milk, were the means of restoring her. Her bones and muscles grew so strong, that, in the course of a year, she could run and jump. Her mind appeared to advance in proportion to her body, for she learned to talk in French as well as in German. The life and spirits of her age at length burst forth, and she was as gay and happy as she had before been cross and disagreeable. She was particularly open-hearted, active, kind, and cleanly. She learned to read, write, and cipher, to sew and knit, and above all she loved to sing. It is now two years since she left, and she continues quite well, and goes to school."

We think our readers will perceive that this was not a case of confirmed intellectual degradation, but only of retarded mental development, the result of diseased bodily condition. These diseases are distressing to parents and friends, and he who succeeds in restoring them to health, intelligence, and the enjoyment of life, accomplishes a great and good work; but it does not necessarily follow that the cases where the mental degeneration is as complete as the physical would as readily yield to treatment; and we are driven to the conviction that the enthusiasm and zeal of Dr. Guggenbühl have led him to exaggerate the measure of success attained in these cases of low grade, and thus to excite hopes which could never be fulfilled.⁶

⁶ Dr. F. Kern, Superintendent of the Idiot School at Gohlis, near Leipzig, in an article

There are four other institutions in Germany devoted wholly or in part to the treatment of cretins; they are located at Bendorf, Mariaberg, Winterbach, and Hubertsburg. There are also two in Sardinia. All together they may contain three hundred children. The success of these institutions has not been equal to that of the Abendberg, although the teachers seem to have been faithful and patient. The statistics of the latest census of the countries of Central and Southern Europe render it certain that those countries contain from seventy-five to eighty thousand cretins, and as the cretin seldom passes his thirtieth year, the number under ten years of age must exceed thirty thousand. The provision for their training is, of course, entirely inadequate to their needs.

The limited experience of the few institutions already established warrants, we think, the conclusion, that too high expectations have been raised in regard to the complete cure of cretinism; that only a small proportion (cases in which the bodily disease is the principal difficulty, and the mental deterioration slight) can be perfectly cured; but that these institutions, regarded as hospitals for the treatment and training of cretins, are in the

in the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*, published the present year, (1857,) states that he examined a boy in the Abendberg Hospital in 1853, of whom Dr. Guggenbühl had said, in his work *Upon the Cure of Cretinism*, published a few months previously, that, "after the painstaking examination of Dr. Naville, he was held to be capable of entering a training school for teachers, in order to qualify himself for a teacher": Dr. Kern found that he knew neither the day of the week or the month, nor his birthday, nor his age.

highest degree important and beneficial; and that, under proper care and medication, the physical symptoms of the disease may be greatly diminished and in many cases entirely eradicated, and the mental condition so far improved, that the patient shall be able, under proper direction, to support himself wholly or in part by his own labor. The hideous and repulsive condition of the body can be cured; the mental deformity will yield less readily; yet in some instances this, too, may disappear, and the cretin take his place with his fellow-men.

Let us now turn our attention to another class, in whom, as a people, we have a deeper interest; for though cretinism does undoubtedly exist in the United States, yet the cases are but few; while idiocy is fearfully prevalent throughout the country.

The possibility of improving the condition of the idiot is one of those discoveries which will make the nineteenth century remarkable in the annals of the future for its philanthropic spirit. Idiots have existed in all ages, and have commonly vegetated through life in utter wretchedness and degrading filth, concealed from public view.

During the early part of the present century, a few attempts were made to instruct them; the earliest known being at the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, in Hartford, in 1818. In 1824, Dr. Belhomme, of Paris, published an essay on the possibility of improving the condition of idiots; and in 1828, a few were instructed for a short time at the Bicêtre, one of the large insane hospitals of Paris. In 1831, M. Falret attempted the

same work at the Salpêtrière, another of the hospitals for the insane in the same city. Neither of these efforts was continued long in existence. In 1833, Dr. Voisin, a distinguished French physiologist and phrenologist, attempted the organization of a school for idiots in Paris. In 1839, aided by Dr. Leuret, he revived the School for Idiots in the Bicêtre, subsequently under the charge of M. Vallée. The "Apostle to the Idiots," however, to use a French expression, was Dr. Edward Seguin. The friend and pupil of Itard, the celebrated surgeon and philanthropist, he had in early youth entered into the views of his master respecting the practicability of their instruction; and when, during his last illness, Itard, with a philanthropy which triumphed over the terrible pangs of disease, reminded him of the work which he had himself longed to undertake, and urged him to devote his abilities to it, the young physician accepted the sacred trust, and thenceforth consecrated his life to the work of endeavoring to elevate the helpless idiot in the scale of humanity.

Previous teachers of the imbecile had not attempted to master the philosophy of idiocy. They had gone to work at hap-hazard, striking at random, hoping somehow, they knew not exactly how, to get some ideas into the mind of the patient, and, by exciting the faculty of imitation, perhaps improve his condition. They succeeded in making him more cleanly, and in inducing him to perform certain acts and exercises, as a well-trained dog, monkey, or parrot might perform them.

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