VARIOUS

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Содержание

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LETTER TO A YOUNG CONTRIBUTOR

My dear young gentleman or young lady,—for many are the Cecil Dreemes of literature who superscribe their offered manuscripts with very masculine names in very feminine handwriting,—it seems wrong not to meet your accumulated and urgent epistles with one comprehensive reply, thus condensing many private letters into a printed one. And so large a proportion of "Atlantic" readers either might, would, could, or should be "Atlantic" contributors also, that this epistle will be sure of perusal, though Mrs. Stowe remain uncut and the Autocrat go for an hour without readers.

Far from me be the wild expectation that every author will not habitually measure the merits of a periodical by its appreciation of his or her last manuscript. I should as soon ask a young lady not to estimate the management of a ball by her own private luck in respect to partners. But it is worth while at least to point out that in the treatment of every contribution the real interests of editor and writer are absolutely the same, and any antagonism is merely traditional, like the supposed hostility between France and England, or between England and Slavery. No editor can ever afford the rejection of a good thing, and no author the publication of a bad one. The only difficulty lies in drawing the line. Were all offered manuscripts unequivocally good or bad, there would be no great trouble; it is the vast range of mediocrity which perplexes: the majority are too bad for blessing and too good for banning; so that no conceivable reason can be given for either fate, save that upon the destiny of any single one may hang that of a hundred others just like it. But whatever be the standard fixed, it is equally for the interest of all concerned that it be enforced without flinching.

Nor is there the slightest foundation for the supposed editorial prejudice against new or obscure contributors. On the contrary, every editor is always hungering and thirsting after novelties. To take the lead in bringing forward a new genius is as fascinating a privilege as that of the physician who boasted to Sir Henry Halford of having been the first man to discover the Asiatic cholera and to communicate it to the public. It is only stern necessity which compels the magazine to fall back so constantly on the regular old staff of contributors, whose average product has been gauged already; just as every country-lyceum attempts annually to arrange an entirely new list of lecturers, and ends with no bolder experiment than to substitute Chapin and Beecher in place of last year's Beecher and Chapin.

Of course no editor is infallible, and the best magazine contains an occasional poor article. Do not blame the unfortunate conductor. He knows it as well as you do,—after the deed is done. The newspapers kindly pass it over, still preparing their accustomed opiate of sweet praises, so much for each contributor, so much for the magazine collectively,—like a hostess with her tea-making, a spoonful for each person and one for the pot. But I can tell you that there is an official person who meditates and groans, meanwhile, in the night-watches, to think that in some atrocious moment of good-nature or sleepiness he left the door open and let that ungainly intruder in. Do you expect him to acknowledge the blunder, when you tax him with it? Never,—he feels it too keenly. He rather stands up stoutly for the surpassing merits of the misshapen thing, as a mother for her deformed child; and as the mother is nevertheless inwardly imploring that there may never be such another born to her,

so be sure that it is not by reminding the editor of this calamity that you can allure him into risking a repetition of it.

An editor thus shows himself to be but human; and it is well enough to remember this fact, when you approach him. He is not a gloomy despot, no Nemesis or Rhadamanthus, but a bland and virtuous man, exceedingly anxious to secure plenty of good subscribers and contributors, and very ready to perform any acts of kindness not inconsistent with this grand design. Draw near him, therefore, with soft approaches and mild persuasions. Do not treat him like an enemy, and insist on reading your whole manuscript aloud to him, with appropriate gestures. His time has some value, if yours has not; and he has therefore educated his eye till it has become microscopic, like a naturalist's, and can classify nine out of ten specimens by one glance at a scale or a feather. Fancy an ambitious echinoderm claiming a private interview with Agassiz, to demonstrate by verbal arguments that he is a mollusk! Besides, do you expect to administer the thing orally to each of the two hundred thousand, more or less, who turn the leaves of the "Atlantic"? You are writing for the average eye, and must submit to its verdict. "Do not trouble yourself about the light on your statue; it is the light of the public square which must test its value."

Do not despise any honest propitiation, however small, in dealing with your editor. Look to the physical aspect of your manuscript, and prepare your page so neatly that it shall allure instead of repelling. Use good pens, black ink, nice white paper and plenty of it. Do not emulate "paper-sparing Pope," whose chaotic manuscript of the "Iliad," written chiefly on the backs of old letters, still remains in the British Museum. If your document be slovenly, the presumption is that its literary execution is the same, Pope to the contrary notwithstanding. An editor's eye becomes carnal, and is easily attracted by a comely outside. If you really wish to obtain his good-will for your production, do not first tax his time for deciphering it, any more than in visiting a millionnaire to solicit a loan you would begin by asking him to pay for the hire of the carriage which takes you to his door.

On the same principle, send your composition in such a shape that it shall not need the slightest literary revision before printing. Many a bright production dies discarded which might have been made thoroughly presentable by a single day's labor of a competent scholar, in shaping, smoothing, dovetailing, and retrenching. The revision seems so slight an affair that the aspirant cannot conceive why there should be so much fuss about it.

> "The piece, you think, is incorrect; why, take it;
> I'm all submission; what you'd have it, make it."

But to discharge that friendly office no universal genius is salaried; and for intellect in the rough there is no market.

Rules for style, as for manners, must be chiefly negative: a positively good style indicates certain natural powers in the individual, but an unexceptionable style is merely a matter of culture and good models. Dr. Channing established in New England a standard of style which really attained almost the perfection of the pure and the colorless, and the disciplinary value of such a literary influence, in a raw and crude nation, has been very great; but the defect of this standard is that it ends in utterly renouncing all the great traditions of literature, and ignoring the magnificent mystery of words. Human language may be polite and powerless in itself, uplifted with difficulty into expression by the high thoughts it utters, or it may in itself become so saturated with warm life and delicious association that every sentence shall palpitate and thrill with the mere fascination of the syllables. The statue is not more surely included in the block of marble than is all conceivable splendor of utterance in "Worcester's Unabridged." And as Ruskin says of painting that it is in the perfection and precision of the instantaneous line that the claim to immortality is made, so it is easy to see that a phrase may outweigh a library. Keats heads the catalogue of things real with "sun, moon, and passages of Shakspeare"; and Keats himself has left behind him winged wonders of expression which are not

surpassed by Shakspeare, or by any one else who ever dared touch the English tongue. There may be phrases which shall be palaces to dwell in, treasure-houses to explore; a single word may be a window from which one may perceive all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Oftentimes a word shall speak what accumulated volumes have labored in vain to utter: there may be years of crowded passion in a word, and half a life in a sentence.

Such being the majesty of the art you seek to practise, you can at least take time and deliberation before dishonoring it. Disabuse yourself especially of the belief that any grace or flow of style can come from writing rapidly. Haste can make you slipshod, but it can never make you graceful. With what dismay one reads of the wonderful fellows in fashionable novels, who can easily dash off a brilliant essay in a single night! When I think how slowly my poor thoughts come in, how tardily they connect themselves, what a delicious prolonged perplexity it is to cut and contrive a decent clothing of words for them, as a little girl does for her doll,—nay, how many new outfits a single sentence sometimes costs before it is presentable, till it seems at last, like our army on the Potomac, as if it never could be thoroughly clothed,—I certainly should never dare to venture into print, but for the confirmed suspicion that the greatest writers have done even so. I can hardly believe that there is any autograph in the world so precious or instructive as that scrap of paper, still preserved at Ferrara, on which Ariosto wrote in sixteen different revisions one of his most famous stanzas. Do you know, my dear neophyte, how Balzac used to compose? As a specimen of the labor that sometimes goes to make an effective style, the process is worth recording. When Balzac had a new work in view, he first spent weeks in studying from real life for it, haunting the streets of Paris by day and night, note-book in hand. His materials gained, he shut himself up till the book was written, perhaps two months, absolutely excluding everybody but his publisher. He emerged pale and thin, with the complete manuscript in his hand,—not only written, but almost rewritten, so thoroughly was the original copy altered, interlined, and rearranged. This strange production, almost illegible, was sent to the unfortunate printers; with infinite difficulty a proof-sheet was obtained, which, being sent to the author, was presently returned in almost as hopeless a chaos of corrections as the manuscript first submitted. Whole sentences were erased, others transposed, everything modified. A second and a third followed, alike torn to pieces by the ravenous pen of Balzac. The despairing printers labored by turns, only the picked men of the office being equal to the task, and they relieving each other at hourly intervals, as beyond that time no one could endure the fatigue. At last, by the fourth proof-sheet, the author too was wearied out, though not contented. "I work ten hours out of the twenty-four," said he, "over the elaboration of my unhappy style, and I am never satisfied, myself, when all is done."

Do not complain that this scrupulousness is probably wasted, after all, and that nobody knows. The public knows. People criticize higher than they attain. When the Athenian audience hissed a public speaker for a mispronunciation, it did not follow that any one of the malcontents could pronounce as well as the orator. In our own lyceum-audiences there may not be a man who does not yield to his own private eccentricities of dialect, but see if they do not appreciate elegant English from Phillips or Everett! Men talk of writing down to the public taste who have never yet written up to that standard. "There never yet was a good tongue," said old Fuller, "that wanted ears to hear it." If one were expecting to be judged by a few scholars only, one might hope somehow to cajole them; but it is this vast, unimpassioned, unconscious tribunal, this average judgment of intelligent minds, which is truly formidable,—something more undying than senates and more omnipotent than courts, something which rapidly cancels all transitory reputations, and at last becomes the organ of eternal justice and infallibly awards posthumous fame.

The first demand made by the public upon every composition is, of course, that it should be attractive. In addressing a miscellaneous audience, whether through eye or ear, it is certain that no man living has a right to be tedious. Every editor is therefore compelled to insist that his contributors should make themselves agreeable, whatever else they may do. To be agreeable, it is not necessary to be amusing; an essay may be thoroughly delightful without a single witticism, while a monotone

of jokes soon grows tedious. Charge your style with life, and the public will not ask for conundrums. But the profounder your discourse, the greater must necessarily be the effort to refresh and diversify. I have observed, in addressing audiences of children in schools and elsewhere, that there is no fact so grave, no thought so abstract, but you can make it very interesting to the small people, if you will only put in plenty of detail and illustration; and I have not observed that in this respect grown men are so very different. If, therefore, in writing, you find it your mission to be abstruse, fight to render your statement clear and attractive, as if your life depended on it: your literary life does depend on it, and, if you fail, relapses into a dead language, and becomes, like that of Coleridge, only a *Biographia Literaria*. Labor, therefore, not in thought alone, but in utterance; clothe and reclothe your grand conception twenty times, until you find some phrase that with its grandeur shall be lucid also. It is this unwearied literary patience that has enabled Emerson not merely to introduce, but even to popularize, thoughts of such a quality as never reached the popular mind before. And when such a writer, thus laborious to do his utmost for his disciples, becomes after all incomprehensible, we can try to believe that it is only that inevitable obscurity of vast thought which Coleridge said was a compliment to the reader.

In learning to write availably, a newspaper-office is a capital preparatory school. Nothing is so good to teach the use of materials, and to compel to pungency of style. Being always at close quarters with his readers, a journalist must shorten and sharpen his sentences, or he is doomed. Yet this mental alertness is bought at a severe price; such living from hand to mouth cheapens the whole mode of intellectual existence, and it would seem that no successful journalist could ever get the newspaper out of his blood, or achieve any high literary success.

For purposes of illustration and elucidation, and even for amplitude of vocabulary, wealth of accumulated materials is essential; and whether this wealth be won by reading or by experience makes no great difference. Coleridge attended Davy's chemical lectures to acquire new metaphors, and it is of no consequence whether one comes to literature from a library, a machine-shop, or a forecastle, provided he has learned to work with thoroughness the soil he knows. After all is said and done, however, books remain the chief quarries. Johnson declared, putting the thing perhaps too mechanically, "The greater part of an author's time is spent in reading in order to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book." Addison collected three folios of materials before publishing the first number of the "Spectator." Remember, however, that copious preparation has its perils also, in the crude display to which it tempts. The object of high culture is not to exhibit culture, but its results. You do not put guano on your garden that your garden may blossom guano. Indeed, even for the proper subordination of one's own thoughts the same self-control is needed; and there is no severer test of literary training than in the power to prune out one's most cherished sentence, when it grows obvious that the sacrifice will help the symmetry or vigor of the whole.

Be noble both in the affluence and the economy of your diction; spare no wealth that you can put in, and tolerate no superfluity that can be struck out. Remember the Lacedemonian who was fined for saying that in three words which might as well have been expressed in two. Do not throw a dozen vague epithets at a thing, in the hope that some one of them will fit; but study each phrase so carefully that the most ingenious critic cannot alter it without spoiling the whole passage for everybody but himself. For the same reason do not take refuge, as was the practice a few years since, in German combinations, heart-utterances, soul-sentiments, and hyphenized phrases generally; but roll your thought into one good English word. There is no fault which seems so hopeless as commonplaceness, but it is really easier to elevate the commonplace than to reduce the turgid. How few men in all the pride of culture can emulate the easy grace of a bright woman's letter!

Have faith enough in your own individuality to keep it resolutely down for a year or two. A man has not much intellectual capital who cannot treat himself to a brief interval of modesty. Premature individualism commonly ends either in a reaction against the original whims, or in a mannerism which perpetuates them. For mannerism no one is great enough, because, though in the hands of a

strong man it imprisons us in novel fascination, yet we soon grow weary, and then hate our prison forever. How sparkling was Reade's crisp brilliancy in "Peg Woffington"!—but into what disagreeable affectations it has since degenerated! Carlyle was a boon to the human race, amid the lameness into which English style was declining; but who is not tired of him and his catchwords now? He was the Jenner of our modern style, inoculating and saving us all by his quaint frank Germanism, then dying of his own disease. Now the age has outgrown him, and is approaching a mode of writing which unites the smoothness of the eighteenth century with the vital vigor of the seventeenth, so that Sir Thomas Browne and Andrew Marvell seem quite as near to us as Pope or Addison,—a style penetrated with the best spirit of Carlyle, without a trace of Carlylism.

Be neither too lax nor too precise in your use of language: the one fault ends in stiffness, the other in slang. Some one told the Emperor Tiberius that he might give citizenship to men, but not to words. To be sure, Louis XIV. in childhood, wishing for a carriage, called for *mon carrosse*, and made the former feminine a masculine to all future Frenchmen. But do not undertake to exercise these prerogatives of royalty until you are quite sure of being crowned. The only thing I remember of our college text-book of Rhetoric is one admirable verse of caution which it quoted:—

> "In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,
> Alike fantastic, if too new or old;
> Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Especially do not indulge any fantastic preference for either Latin or Anglo-Saxon, the two great wings on which our magnificent English soars and sings; we can spare neither. The combination gives an affluence of synonymes and a delicacy of discrimination such as no unmixed idiom can show.

While you utterly shun slang, whether native-or foreign-born,—(at present, by the way, our popular writers use far less slang than the English,)—yet do not shrink from Americanisms, so they be good ones. American literature is now thoroughly out of leading-strings; and the nation which supplied the first appreciative audience for Carlyle, Tennyson, and the Brownings, can certainly trust its own literary instincts to create the new words it needs. To be sure, the inelegancies with which we are chiefly reproached are not distinctively American: Burke uses "pretty considerable"; Miss Burney says, "I trembled a few"; the English Bible says "reckon," Locke has "guess," and Southey "realize," in the exact senses in which one sometimes hears them used colloquially here. Nevertheless such improprieties are of course to be avoided; but whatever good Americanisms exist, let us hold to them by all means. The diction of Emerson alone is a sufficient proof, by its unequalled range and precision, that no people in the world ever had access to a vocabulary so rich and copious as we are acquiring. To the previous traditions and associations of the English tongue we add resources of contemporary life such as England cannot rival. Political freedom makes every man an individual; a vast industrial activity makes every man an inventor, not merely of labor-saving machines, but of labor-saving words; universal schooling popularizes all thought and sharpens the edge of all language. We unconsciously demand of our writers the same dash and the same accuracy which we demand in railroading or dry-goods-jobbing. The mixture of nationalities is constantly coining and exchanging new felicities of dialect: Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Africa are present everywhere with their various contributions of wit and shrewdness, thought and geniality; in New York and elsewhere one finds whole thoroughfares of France, Italy, Spain, Portugal; on our Western railways there are placards printed in Swedish; even China is creeping in. The colonies of England are too far and too provincial to have had much reflex influence on her literature, but how our phraseology is already amplified by our relations with Spanish-America! The life-blood of Mexico flowed into our newspapers while the war was in progress; and the gold of California glitters in our primer: Many foreign cities may show a greater variety of mere national costumes, but the representative value of our immigrant tribes is far

greater from the very fact that they merge their mental costume in ours. Thus the American writer finds himself among his phrases like an American sea-captain amid his crew: a medley of all nations, waiting for the strong organizing New-England mind to mould them into a unit of force.

There are certain minor matters, subsidiary to elegance, if not elegancies, and therefore worth attention. Do not habitually prop your sentences on crutches, such as Italics and exclamation-points, but make them stand without aid; if they cannot emphasize themselves, these devices are commonly but a confession of helplessness. Do not leave loose ends as you go on, straggling things, to be caught up and dragged along uneasily in foot-notes, but work them all in neatly, as Biddy at her bread-pan gradually kneads in all the outlying bits of dough, till she has one round and comely mass.

Reduce yourself to short allowance of parentheses and dashes; if you employ them merely from clumsiness, they will lose all their proper power in your hands. Economize quotation-marks also, clear that dust from your pages, assume your readers to be acquainted with the current jokes and the stock epithets: all persons like the compliment of having it presumed that they know something, and prefer to discover the wit or beauty of your allusion without a guide-board.

The same principle applies to learned citations and the results of study. Knead these thoroughly in, supplying the maximum of desired information with a minimum of visible schoolmaster. It requires no pedantic mention of Euclid to indicate a mathematical mind, but only the habitual use of clear terms and close connections. To employ in argument the forms of Whately's Logic would render it probable that you are juvenile and certain that you are tedious; wreathe the chain with roses. The more you have studied foreign languages, the more you will be disposed to keep Ollendorff in the background: the proper result of such acquirements is visible in a finer ear for words; so that Goethe said, the man who had studied but one language could not know that one. But spare the raw material; deal as cautiously in Latin as did General Jackson when Jack Downing was out of the way; and avoid French as some fashionable novelists avoid English.

Thus far, these are elementary and rather technical suggestions, fitted for the very opening of your literary career. Supposing you fairly in print, there are needed some further counsels.

Do not waste a minute, not a second, in trying to demonstrate to others the merit of your own performance. If your work does not vindicate itself, you cannot vindicate it, but you can labor steadily on to something which needs no advocate but itself. It was said of Haydon, the English artist, that, if he had taken half the pains to paint great pictures that he took to persuade the public he had painted them, his fame would have been secure. Similar was the career of poor Horne, who wrote the farthing epic of "Orion" with one grand line in it, and a prose work without any, on "The False Medium excluding Men of Genius from the Public." He spent years in ineffectually trying to repeal the exclusion in his own case, and has since manfully gone to the grazing regions in Australia, hoping there at least to find the sheep and the goats better discriminated. Do not emulate these tragedies. Remember how many great writers have created the taste by which they were enjoyed, and do not be in a hurry. Toughen yourself a little, and perform something better. Inscribe above your desk the words of Rivarol, "Genius is only great patience." It takes less time to build an avenue of shingle palaces than to hide away unseen, block by block, the vast foundation-stones of an observatory. Most by-gone literary fames have been very short-lived in America, because they have lasted no longer than they deserved. Happening the other day to recur to a list of Cambridge lyceum-lecturers in my boyish days, I find with dismay that the only name now popularly remembered is that of Emerson: death, oblivion, or a professorship has closed over all the rest, while the whole standard of American literature has been vastly raised meanwhile, and no doubt partly through their labors. To this day, some of our most gifted writers are being dwarfed by the unkind friendliness of too early praise. It was Keats, the most precocious of all great poets, the stock victim of critical assassination,—though the charge does him utter injustice,—who declared that "nothing is finer for purposes of production than a very gradual ripening of the intellectual powers."

Yet do not be made conceited by obscurity, any more than by notoriety. Many fine geniuses have been long neglected; but what would become of us, if all the neglected were to turn out geniuses? It is unsafe reasoning from either extreme. You are not necessarily writing like Holmes because your reputation for talent began in college, nor like Hawthorne because you have been before the public ten years without an admirer. Above all, do not seek to encourage yourself by dwelling on the defects of your rivals: strength comes only from what is above you. Northcote, the painter, said, that, in observing an inferior picture, he always felt his spirits droop, with the suspicion that perhaps he deceived himself and his own paintings were no better; but the works of the mighty masters always gave him renewed strength, in the hope that perhaps his own had in their smaller way something of the same divine quality.

Do not complacently imagine, because your first literary attempt proved good and successful, that your second will doubtless improve upon it. The very contrary sometimes happens. A man dreams for years over one projected composition, all his reading converges to it, all his experience stands related to it, it is the net result of his existence up to a certain time, it is the cistern into which he pours his accumulated life. Emboldened by success, he mistakes the cistern for a fountain, and instantly taps his brain again. The second production, as compared with the first, costs but half the pains and attains but a quarter part of the merit; a little more of fluency and facility perhaps,—but the vigor, the wealth, the originality, the head of water, in short, are wanting. One would think that almost any intelligent man might write one good thing in a lifetime, by reserving himself long enough: it is the effort after quantity which proves destructive. The greatest man has passed his zenith, when he once begins to cheapen his style of work and sink into a book-maker: after that, though the newspapers may never hint at it, nor his admirers own it, the decline of his career is begun.

Yet the author is not alone to blame for this, but also the world which first tempts and then reproves him. Goethe says, that, if a person once does a good thing, society forms a league to prevent his doing another. His seclusion is gone, and therefore his unconsciousness and his leisure; luxuries tempt him from his frugality, and soon he must toil for luxuries; then, because he has done one thing well, he is urged to squander himself and do a thousand things badly. In this country especially, if one can learn languages, he must go to Congress; if he can argue a case, he must become agent of a factory: out of this comes a variety of training which is very valuable, but a wise man must have strength to call in his resources before middle-life, prune off divergent activities, and concentrate himself on the main work, be it what it may. It is shameful to see the indeterminate lives of many of our gifted men, unable to resist the temptations of a busy land, and so losing themselves in an aimless and miscellaneous career.

Yet it is unjust and unworthy in Marsh to disfigure his fine work on the English language by traducing all who now write that tongue. "None seek the audience, fit, though few, which contented the ambition of Milton, and all writers for the press now measure their glory by their gains," and so indefinitely onward,—which is simply cant. Does Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., who honestly earns his annual five thousand dollars from the "New York Ledger," take rank as head of American literature by virtue of his salary? Because the profits of true literature are rising,—trivial as they still are beside those of commerce or the professions,—its merits do not necessarily decrease, but the contrary is more likely to happen; for in this pursuit, as in all others, cheap work is usually poor work. None but gentlemen of fortune can enjoy the bliss of writing for nothing and paying their own printer. Nor does the practice of compensation by the page work the injury that has often been ignorantly predicted. No contributor need hope to cover two pages of a periodical with what might be adequately said in one, unless he assumes his editor to be as foolish as himself. The Spartans exiled Ctesiphon for bragging that he could speak the whole day on any subject selected; and a modern magazine is of little value, unless it has a Spartan at its head.

Strive always to remember—though it does not seem intended that we should quite bring it home to ourselves—that "To-Day is a king in disguise," and that this American literature of ours

will be just as classic a thing, if we do our part, as any which the past has treasured. There is a mirage over all literary associations. Keats and Lamb seem to our young people to be existences as remote and legendary as Homer, yet it is not an old man's life since Keats was an awkward boy at the door of Hazlitt's lecture-room, and Lamb was introducing Talfourd to Wordsworth as his own only admirer. In reading Spence's "Anecdotes," Pope and Addison appear no farther off; and wherever I open Bacon's "Essays," I am sure to end at last with that one magical sentence, annihilating centuries, "When I was a child, and Queen Elizabeth was in the flower of her years."

And this imperceptible transformation of the commonplace present into the storied past applies equally to the pursuits of war and to the serenest works of peace. Be not misled by the excitements of the moment into overrating the charms of military life. In this chaos of uniforms, we seem to be approaching times such as existed in England after Waterloo, when the splenetic Byron declared that the only distinction was to be a little undistinguished. No doubt, war brings out grand and unexpected qualities, and there is a perennial fascination in the Elizabethan Raleighs and Sidneys, alike heroes of pen and sword. But the fact is patent, that there is scarcely any art whose rudiments are so easy to acquire as the military; the manuals of tactics have no difficulties comparable to those of the ordinary professional text-books; and any one who can drill a boat's crew or a ball-club can learn in a very few weeks to drill a company or even a regiment. Given in addition the power to command, to organize, and to execute,—high qualities, though not rare in this community,—and you have a man needing but time and experience to make a general. More than this can be acquired only by an exclusive absorption in this one art; as Napoleon said, that, to have good soldiers, a nation must be always at war.

If, therefore, duty and opportunity call, count it a privilege to obtain your share in the new career; throw yourself into it as resolutely and joyously as if it were a summer-campaign in the Adirondack, but never fancy for a moment that you have discovered any grander or manlier life than you might be leading every day at home. It is not needful here to decide which is intrinsically the better thing, a column of a newspaper or a column of attack, Wordsworth's "Lines on Immortality" or Wellington's Lines of Torres Vedras; each is noble, if nobly done, though posterity seems to remember literature the longest. The writer is not celebrated for having been the favorite of the conqueror, but sometimes the conqueror only for having favored or even for having spurned the writer. "When the great Sultan died, his power and glory departed from him, and nothing remained but this one fact, that he knew not the worth of Ferdousi." There is a slight delusion in this dazzling glory. What a fantastic whim the young lieutenants thought it, when General Wolfe, on the eve of battle, said of Gray's "Elegy," "Gentlemen, I would rather have written that poem than have taken Quebec." Yet, no doubt, it is by the memory of that remark that Wolfe will live the longest,—aided by the stray line of another poet, still reminding us, not needlessly, that "Wolfe's great name's cotemporal with our own."

Once the poets and the sages were held to be pleasing triflers, fit for hours of relaxation in the lulls of war. Now the pursuits of peace are recognized as the real, and war as the accidental. It interrupts all higher avocations, as does the cry of fire: when the fire is extinguished, the important affairs of life are resumed. Six years ago the London "Times" was bewailing that all thought and culture in England were suspended by the Crimean War. "We want no more books. Give us good recruits, at least five feet seven, a good model for a floating-battery, and a gun to take effect at five thousand yards,—and Whigs and Tories, High and Low Church, the poets, astronomers, and critics, may settle it among themselves." How remote seems that epoch now! and how remote will the present soon appear! while art and science will resume their sway serene, beneath skies eternal. Yesterday I turned from treatises on gunnery and fortification to open Milton's Latin Poems, which I had never read, and there, in the "Sylvarum Liber," I came upon a passage as grand as anything in "Paradise Lost,"—his description of Plato's archetypal man, the vast ideal of the human race, eternal, incorrupt, coeval with the stars, dwelling either in the sidereal spaces, or among the Lethean mansions of souls unborn, or pacing the unexplored confines of the habitable globe. There stood the majestic image, veiled in a dead language, yet still visible; and it was as if one of the poet's own sylvan groves had

been suddenly cut down, and opened a view of Olympus. Then all these present fascinating trivialities of war and diplomacy ebbed away, like Greece and Rome before them, and there seemed nothing real in the universe but Plato's archetypal man.

Indeed, it is the same with all contemporary notorieties. In all free governments, especially, it is the habit to overrate the *dramatis personae* of the hour. How empty to us are now the names of the great politicians of the last generation, as Crawford and Lowndes!—yet it is but a few years since these men filled in the public ear as large a space as Clay or Calhoun afterwards, and when they died, the race of the giants was thought ended. The path to oblivion of these later idols is just as sure; even Webster will be to the next age but a mighty tradition, and all that he has left will seem no more commensurate with his fame than will his statue by Powers. If anything preserves the statesmen of to-day, it will be only because we are coming to a contest of more vital principles, which may better embalm the men. Of all gifts, eloquence is the most short-lived. The most accomplished orator fades forgotten, and his laurels pass to some hoarse, inaudible Burke, accounted rather a bore during his lifetime, and possessed of a faculty of scattering, not convincing, the members of the House. "After all," said the brilliant Choate, with melancholy foreboding, "a book is the only immortality."

So few men in any age are born with a marked gift for literary expression, so few of this number have access to high culture, so few even of these have the personal nobleness to use their powers well, and this small band is finally so decimated by disease and manifold disaster, that it makes one shudder to observe how little of the embodied intellect of any age is left behind. Literature is attar of roses, one distilled drop from a million blossoms. Think how Spain and Portugal once divided the globe between them in a treaty, when England was a petty kingdom of illiterate tribes!—and now all Spain is condensed for us into Cervantes, and all Portugal into the fading fame of the unread Camoens. The long magnificence of Italian culture has left us only *I Quattro Poeti*, the Four Poets. The difference between Shakspeare and his contemporaries is not that he is read twice, ten times, a hundred times as much as they: it is an absolute difference; he is read, and they are only printed.

Yet, if our life be immortal, this temporary distinction is of little moment, and we may learn humility, without learning despair, from earth's evanescent glories. Who cannot bear a few disappointments, if the vista be so wide that the mute inglorious Miltons of this sphere may in some other sing their Paradise as Found? War or peace, fame or forgetfulness, can bring no real injury to one who has formed the fixed purpose to live nobly day by day. I fancy that in some other realm of existence we may look back with some kind interest on this scene of our earlier life, and say to one another,—"Do you remember yonder planet, where once we went to school?" And whether our elective study here lay chiefly in the fields of action or of thought will matter little to us then, when other schools shall have led us through other disciplines.

* * * * *

JOHN LAMAR

The guard-house was, in fact, nothing but a shed in the middle of a stubble-field. It had been built for a cider-press last summer; but since Captain Dorr had gone into the army, his regiment had camped over half his plantation, and the shed was boarded up, with heavy wickets at either end, to hold whatever prisoners might fall into their hands from Floyd's forces. It was a strong point for the Federal troops, his farm,—a sort of wedge in the Rebel Cheat counties of Western Virginia. Only one prisoner was in the guard-house now. The sentry, a raw boat-hand from Illinois, gaped incessantly at him through the bars, not sure if the "Secesh" were limbed and headed like other men; but the November fog was so thick that he could discern nothing but a short, squat man, in brown clothes and white hat, heavily striding to and fro. A negro was crouching outside, his knees cuddled in his arms to keep warm: a field-hand, you could be sure from the face, a grisly patch of flabby black, with a dull eluding word of something, you could not tell what, in the points of eyes,—treachery or gloom. The prisoner stopped, cursing him about something: the only answer was a lazy rub of the heels.

"Got any 'baccy, Mars' John?" he whined, in the middle of the hottest oath.

The man stopped abruptly, turning his pockets inside out.

"That's all, Ben," he said, kindly enough. "Now begone, you black devil!"

"Dem's um, Mars'! Goin' 'mediate,"—catching the tobacco, and lolling down full length as his master turned off again.

Dave Hall, the sentry, stared reflectively, and sat down.

"Ben? Who air you next?"—nursing his musket across his knees, baby-fashion.

Ben measured him with one eye, polished the quid in his greasy hand, and looked at it.

"Pris'ner o' war," he mumbled, finally,—contemptuously; for Dave's trousers were in rags like his own, and his chilblained toes stuck through the shoe-tops. Cheap white trash, clearly.

"Yer master's some at swearin'. Heow many, neow, hes he like you, down to Georgy?"

The boatman's bony face was gathering a woful pity. He had enlisted to free the Uncle Toms, and carry God's vengeance to the Legrees. Here they were, a pair of them.

Ben squinted another critical survey of the "miss'able Linkinite."

"How many wells hev *yer* poisoned since yer set out?" he muttered.

The sentry stopped.

"How many 'longin' to de Lamars? 'Bout as many as der's dam' Yankees in Richmond 'baccy-houses!"

Something in Dave's shrewd, whitish eye warned him off.

"Ki yi! yer white nigger, yer!" he chuckled, shuffling down the stubble.

Dave clicked his musket,—then, choking down an oath into a grim Methodist psalm, resumed his walk, looking askance at the coarse-moulded face of the prisoner peering through the bars, and the diamond studs in his shirt,—bought with human blood, doubtless. The man was the black curse of slavery itself in the flesh, in his thought somehow, and he hated him accordingly. Our men of the Northwest have enough brawny Covenanter muscle in their religion to make them good haters for opinion's sake.

Lamar, the prisoner, watched him with a lazy drollery in his sluggish black eyes. It died out into sternness, as he looked beyond the sentry. He had seen this Cheat country before; this very plantation was his grandfather's a year ago, when he had come up from Georgia here, and loitered out the summer months with his Virginia cousins, hunting. That was a pleasant summer! Something in the remembrance of it flashed into his eyes, dewy, genial; the man's leather-covered face reddened like a child's. Only a year ago,—and now–The plantation was Charley Dorr's now, who had married Ruth. This very shed he and Dorr had planned last spring, and now Charley held him a prisoner in it. The very thought of Charley Dorr warmed his heart. Why, he could thank God there were such men.

True grit, every inch of his little body! There, last summer, how he had avoided Ruth until the day when he (Lamar) was going away!—then he told him he meant to try and win her. "She cared most for you always," Lamar had said, bitterly; "why have you waited so long?" "You loved her first, John, you know." That was like a man! He remembered that even that day, when his pain was breathless and sharp, the words made him know that Dorr was fit to be her husband.

Dorr was his friend. The word meant much to John Lamar. He thought less meanly of himself, when he remembered it. Charley's prisoner! An odd chance! Better that than to have met in battle. He thrust back the thought, the sweat oozing out on his face,—something within him muttering, "For Liberty! I would have killed him, so help me God!"

He had brought despatches to General Lee, that he might see Charley, and the old place, and —Ruth again; there was a gnawing hunger in his heart to see them. Fool! what was he to them? The man's face grew slowly pale, as that of a savage or an animal does, when the wound is deep and inward.

The November day was dead, sunless: since morning the sky had had only enough life in it to sweat out a few muddy drops, that froze as they fell: the cold numbed his mouth as he breathed it. This stubbly slope was where he and his grandfather had headed the deer: it was covered with hundreds of dirty, yellow tents now. Around there were hills like uncouth monsters, swathed in ice, holding up the soggy sky; shivering pine-forests; unmeaning, dreary flats; and the Cheat, coiled about the frozen sinews of the hills, limp and cold, like a cord tying a dead man's jaws. Whatever outlook of joy or worship this region had borne on its face in time gone, it turned to him to-day nothing but stagnation, a great death. He wondered idly, looking at it, (for the old Huguenot brain of the man was full of morbid fancies,) if it were winter alone that had deadened color and pulse out of these full-blooded hills, or if they could know the colder horror crossing their threshold, and forgot to praise God as it came.

Over that farthest ridge the house had stood. The guard (he had been taken by a band of Snake-hunters, back in the hills) had brought him past it. It was a heap of charred rafters. "Burned in the night," they said, "when the old Colonel was alone." They were very willing to show him this, as it was done by his own party, the Secession "Bush-whackers"; took him to the wood-pile to show him where his grandfather had been murdered, (there was a red mark,) and buried, his old hands above the ground. "Colonel said 't was a job fur us to pay up; so we went to the village an' hed a scrimmage,"—pointing to gaps in the hedges where the dead Bush-whackers yet lay unburied. He looked at them, and at the besotted faces about him, coolly.

Snake-hunters and Bush-whackers, he knew, both armies used in Virginia as tools for rapine and murder: the sooner the Devil called home his own, the better. And yet, it was not God's fault, surely, that there were such tools in the North, any more than that in the South Ben was—Ben. Something was rotten in freer States than Denmark, he thought.

One of the men went into the hedge, and brought out a child's golden ringlet as a trophy. Lamar glanced in, and saw the small face in its woollen hood, dimpled yet, though dead for days. He remembered it. Jessy Birt, the ferryman's little girl. She used to come up to the house every day for milk. He wondered for which flag *she* died. Ruth was teaching her to write. *Ruth!* Some old pain hurt him just then, nearer than even the blood of the old man or the girl crying to God from the ground. The sergeant mistook the look. "They'll be buried," he said, gruffly. "Ye brought it on yerselves." And so led him to the Federal camp.

The afternoon grew colder, as he stood looking out of the guard-house. Snow began to whiten through the gray. He thrust out his arm through the wicket, his face kindling with childish pleasure, as he looked closer at the fairy stars and crowns on his shaggy sleeve. If Floy were here! She never had seen snow. When the flakes had melted off, he took a case out of his pocket to look at Floy. His sister,—a little girl who had no mother, nor father, nor lover, but Lamar. The man among his brother officers in Richmond was coarse, arrogant, of dogged courage, keen palate at the table, as keen eye on the turf. Sickly little Floy, down at home, knew the way to something below all this: just as they of

the Rommany blood see below the muddy boulders of the streets the enchanted land of Boabdil bare beneath. Lamar polished the ivory painting with his breath, remembering that he had drunk nothing for days. A child's face, of about twelve, delicate,—a breath of fever or cold would shatter such weak beauty; big, dark eyes, (her mother was pure Castilian,) out of which her little life looked irresolute into the world, uncertain what to do there. The painter, with an unapt fancy, had clustered about the Southern face the Southern emblem, buds of the magnolia, unstained, as yet, as pearl. It angered Lamar, remembering how the creamy whiteness of the full-blown flower exhaled passion of which the crimsonest rose knew nothing,—a content, ecstasy, in animal life. Would Floy–Well, God help them both! they needed help. Three hundred souls was a heavy weight for those thin little hands to hold sway over,—to lead to hell or heaven. Up North they could have worked for her, and gained only her money. So Lamar reasoned, like a Georgian: scribbling a letter to "My Baby" on the wrapper of a newspaper,—drawing the shapes of the snowflakes,—telling her he had reached their grandfather's plantation, but "have not seen our Cousin Ruth yet, of whom you may remember I have told you, Floy. When you grow up, I should like you to be just such a woman; so remember, my darling, if I"– He scratched the last words out: why should he hint to her that he could die? Holding his life loose in his hand, though, had brought things closer to him lately,—God and death, this war, the meaning of it all. But he would keep his brawny body between these terrible realities and Floy, yet awhile. "I want you," he wrote, "to leave the plantation, and go with your old maumer to the village. It will be safer there." He was sure the letter would reach her. He had a plan to escape to-night, and he could put it into a post inside the lines. Ben was to get a small hand-saw that would open the wicket; the guards were not hard to elude. Glancing up, he saw the negro stretched by a camp-fire, listening to the gaunt boatman, who was off duty. Preaching Abolitionism, doubtless: he could hear Ben's derisive shouts of laughter. "And so, good bye, Baby Florence!" he scrawled. "I wish I could send you some of this snow, to show you what the floor of heaven is like."

While the snow fell faster—without, he stopped writing, and began idly drawing a map of Georgia on the tan-bark with a stick. Here the Federal troops could effect a landing: he knew the defences at that point. If they did? He thought of these Snake-hunters who had found in the war a peculiar road for themselves downward with no gallows to stumble over, fancied he saw them skulking through the fields at Cedar Creek, closing around the house, and behind them a mass of black faces and bloody bayonets. Floy alone, and he here,—like a rat in a trap! "God keep my little girl!" he wrote, unsteadily. "God bless you, Floy!" He gasped for breath, as if he had been writing with his heart's blood. Folding up the paper, he hid it inside his shirt and began his dogged walk, calculating the chances of escape. Once out of this shed, he could baffle a blood-hound, he knew the hills so well.

His head bent down, he did not see a man who stood looking at him over the wicket. Captain Dorr. A puny little man, with thin yellow hair, and womanish face: but not the less the hero of his men,—they having found out, somehow, that muscle was not the solidest thing to travel on in war-times. Our regiments of "roughs" were not altogether crowned with laurel at Manassas! So the men built more on the old Greatheart soul in the man's blue eyes: one of those souls born and bred pure, sent to teach, that can find breath only in the free North. His hearty "Hillo!" startled Lamar.

"How are you, old fellow?" he said, unlocking the gate and coming in.

Lamar threw off his wretched thoughts, glad to do it. What need to borrow trouble? He liked a laugh,—had a lazy, jolly humor of his own. Dorr had finished drill, and come up, as he did every day, to freshen himself with an hour's talk to this warm, blundering fellow. In this dismal war-work, (though his whole soul was in that, too,) it was like putting your hands to a big blaze. Dorr had no near relations; Lamar—they had played marbles together—stood to him where a younger brother might have stood. Yet, as they talked, he could not help his keen eye seeing him just as he was.

Poor John! he thought: the same uncouth-looking effort of humanity that he had been at Yale. No wonder the Northern boys jeered him, with his sloth-ways, his mouthed English, torpid eyes, and brain shut up in that worst of mud-moulds,—belief in caste. Even now, going up and down the tan-

bark, his step was dead, sodden, like that of a man in whose life God had not yet wakened the full live soul. It was wakening, though, Dorr thought. Some pain or passion was bringing the man in him out of the flesh, vigilant, alert, aspirant. A different man from Dorr.

In fact, Lamar was just beginning to think for himself, and of course his thoughts were defiant, intolerant. He did not comprehend how his companion could give his heresies such quiet welcome, and pronounce sentence of death on them so coolly. Because Dorr had gone farther up the mountain, had he the right to make him follow in the same steps? The right,—that was it. By brute force, too? Human freedom, eh? Consequently, their talks were stormy enough. To-day, however, they were on trivial matters.

"I've brought the General's order for your release at last, John. It confines you to this district, however."

Lamar shook his head.

"No parole for me! My stake outside is too heavy for me to remain a prisoner on anything but compulsion. I mean to escape, if I can. Floy has nobody but me, you know, Charley."

There was a moment's silence.

"I wish," said Dorr, half to himself, "the child was with her cousin Ruth. If she could make her a woman like herself!"

"You are kind," Lamar forced out, thinking of what might have been a year ago.

Dorr had forgotten. He had just kissed little Ruth at the door-step, coming away: thinking, as he walked up to camp, how her clear thought, narrow as it was, was making his own higher, more just; wondering if the tears on her face last night, when she got up from her knees after prayer, might not help as much in the great cause of truth as the life he was ready to give. He was so used to his little wife now, that he could look to no hour of his past life, nor of the future coming ages of event and work, where she was not present,—very flesh of his flesh, heart of his heart. A gulf lay between them and the rest of the world. It was hardly probable he could see her as a woman towards whom another man looked across the gulf, dumb, hopeless, defrauded of his right.

"She sent you some flowers, by the way, John,—the last in the yard,—and bade me be sure and bring you down with me. Your own colors, you see?—to put you in mind of home,"—pointing to the crimson asters flaked with snow.

The man smiled faintly: the smell of the flowers choked him: he laid them aside. God knows he was trying to wring out this bitter old thought: he could not look in Dorr's frank eyes while it was there. He must escape to-night: he never would come near them again, in this world, or beyond death,—never! He thought of that like a man going to drag through eternity with half his soul gone. Very well: there was man enough left in him to work honestly and bravely, and to thank God for that good pure love he yet had. He turned to Dorr with a flushed face, and began talking of Floy in hearty earnest,—glancing at Ben coming up the hill, thinking that escape depended on him.

"I ordered your man up," said Captain Dorr. "Some canting Abolitionist had him open-mouthed down there."

The negro came in, and stood in the corner, listening while they talked. A gigantic fellow, with a gladiator's muscles. Stronger than that Yankee captain, he thought,—than either of them: better breathed,—drawing the air into his brawny chest. "A man and a brother." Did the fool think he didn't know that before? He had a contempt for Dave and his like. Lamar would have told you Dave's words were true, but despised the man as a crude, unlicked bigot. Ben did the same, with no words for the idea. The negro instinct in him recognized gentle blood by any of its signs,—the transparent animal life, the reticent eye, the mastered voice: he had better men than Lamar at home to learn it from. It is a trait of serfdom, the keen eye to measure the inherent rights of a man to be master. A negro or a Catholic Irishman does not need "Sartor Resartus" to help him to see through any clothes. Ben leaned, half-asleep, against the wall, some old thoughts creeping out of their hiding-places through the torpor, like rats to the sunshine: the boatman's slang had been hot and true enough to rouse them in his brain.

"So, Ben," said his master, as he passed once, "your friend has been persuading you to exchange the cotton-fields at Cedar Creek for New-York alleys, eh?"

"Ki!" laughed Ben, "white darkey. Mind ole dad, Mars' John, as took off in der swamp? Um asked dat Linkinite ef him saw dad up Norf. Guess him's free now. Ki! ole dad!"

"The swamp was the place for him," said Lamar. "I remember."

"Dunno," said the negro, surlily: "him's dad, af'er all: tink him's free now,"—and mumbled down into a monotonous drone about "Oh yo, bredern, is yer gwine ober Jordern?"

Half-asleep, they thought,—but with dull questionings at work in his brain, some queer notions about freedom, of that unknown North, mostly mixed with his remembrance of his father, a vicious old negro, that in Pennsylvania would have worked out his salvation in the under cell of the penitentiary, but in Georgia, whipped into heroism, had betaken himself into the swamp, and never returned. Tradition among the Lamar slaves said he had got off to Ohio, of which they had as clear an idea as most of us have of heaven. At any rate, old Kite became a mystery, to be mentioned with awe at fish-bakes and barbecues. He was this uncouth wretch's father,—do you understand? The flabby-faced boy, flogged in the cotton-field for whining after his dad, or hiding away part of his flitch and molasses for months in hopes the old man would come back, was rather a comical object, you would have thought. Very different his, from the feeling with which you left your mother's grave,—though as yet we have not invented names for the emotions of those people. We'll grant that it hurt Ben a little, however. Even the young polypus, when it is torn from the old one, bleeds a drop or two, they say. As he grew up, the great North glimmered through his thought, a sort of big field,—a paradise of no work, no flogging, and white bread every day, where the old man sat and ate his fill.

The second point in Ben's history was that he fell in love. Just as you did,—with the difference, of course: though the hot sun, or the perpetual foot upon his breast, does not make our black Prometheus less fierce in his agony of hope or jealousy than you, I am afraid. It was Nan, a pale mulatto house-servant, that the field-hand took into his dull, lonesome heart to make life of, with true-love defiance of caste. I think Nan liked him very truly. She was lame and sickly, and if Ben was black and a picker, and stayed in the quarters, he was strong, like a master to her in some ways: the only thing she could call hers in the world was the love the clumsy boy gave her. White women feel in that way sometimes, and it makes them very tender to men not their equals. However, old Mrs. Lamar, before she died, gave her house-servants their free papers, and Nan was among them. So she set off, with all the finery little Floy could give her: went up into that great, dim North. She never came again.

The North swallowed up all Ben knew or felt outside of his hot, hated work, his dread of a lashing on Saturday night. All the pleasure left him was 'possum and hominy for Sunday's dinner. It did not content him. The spasmodic religion of the field-negro does not teach endurance. So it came, that the slow tide of discontent ebbing in everybody's heart towards some unreached sea set in his ignorant brooding towards that vague country which the only two who cared for him had found. If he forgot it through the dogged, sultry days, he remembered it when the overseer scourged the dull tiger-look into his eyes, or when, husking corn with the others at night, the smothered negro-soul, into which their masters dared not look, broke out in their wild, melancholy songs. Aimless, unappealing, yet no prayer goes up to God more keen in its pathos. You find, perhaps, in Beethoven's seventh symphony the secrets of your heart made manifest, and suddenly think of a Somewhere to come, where your hope waits for you with late fulfilment. Do not laugh at Ben, then, if he dully told in his song the story of all he had lost, or gave to his heaven a local habitation and a name.

From the place where he stood now, as his master and Dorr walked up and down, he could see the purplish haze beyond which the sentry had told him lay the North. The North! Just beyond the ridge. There was a pain in his head, looking at it; his nerves grew cold and rigid, as yours do when something wrings your heart sharply: for there are nerves in these black carcasses, thicker, more quickly stung to madness than yours. Yet if any savage longing, smouldering for years, was

heating to madness now in his brain, there was no sign of it in his face. Vapid, with sordid content, the huge jaws munching tobacco slowly, only now and then the beady eye shot a sharp glance after Dorr. The sentry had told him the Northern army had come to set the slaves free; he watched the Federal officer keenly.

"What ails you, Ben?" said his master. "Thinking over your friend's sermon?"

Ben's stolid laugh was ready.

"Done forgot dat, Mars'. Wouldn't go, nohow. Since Mars' sold dat cussed Joe, gorry good times 't home. Dam' Abolitioner say we ums all goin' Norf,"—with a stealthy glance at Dorr.

"That's more than your philanthropy bargains for, Charley," laughed Lamar.

The men stopped; the negro skulked nearer, his whole senses sharpened into hearing. Dorr's clear face was clouded.

"This slave question must be kept out of the war. It puts a false face on it."

"I thought one face was what it needed," said Lamar. "You have too many slogans. Strong government, tariff, Sumter, a bit of bunting, eleven dollars a month. It ought to be a vital truth that would give soul and *vim* to a body with the differing members of your army. You, with your ideal theory, and Billy Wilson with his 'Blood and Baltimore!' Try human freedom. That's high and sharp and broad."

Ben drew a step closer.

"You are shrewd, Lamar. I am to go below all constitutions or expediency or existing rights, and tell Ben here that he is free? When once the Government accepts that doctrine, you, as a Rebel, must be let alone."

The slave was hid back in the shade.

"Dorr," said Lamar, "you know I'm a groping, ignorant fellow, but it seems to me that prating of constitutions and existing rights is surface talk; there is a broad common-sense underneath, by whose laws the world is governed, which your statesmen don't touch often. You in the North, in your dream of what shall be, shut your eyes to what is. You want a republic where every man's voice shall be heard in the council, and the majority shall rule. Granting that the free population are educated to a fitness for this,—(God forbid I should grant it with the Snake-hunters before my eyes!)—look here!"

He turned round, and drew the slave out into the light: he crouched down, gaping vacantly at them.

"There is Ben. What, in God's name, will you do with him? Keep him a slave, and chatter about self-government? Pah! The country is paying in blood for the lie, to-day. Educate him for freedom, by putting a musket in his hands? We have this mass of heathendom drifted on our shores by your will as well as mine. Try to bring them to a level with the whites by a wrench, and you'll waken out of your dream to a sharp reality. Your Northern philosophy ought to be old enough to teach you that spasms in the body-politic shake off no atom of disease,—that reform, to be enduring, must be patient, gradual, inflexible as the Great Reformer. 'The mills of God,' the old proverb says, 'grind surely.' But, Dorr, they grind exceeding slow!"

Dorr watched Lamar with an amused smile. It pleased him to see his brain waking up, eager, vehement. As for Ben, crouching there, if they talked of him like a clod, heedless that his face deepened in stupor, that his eyes had caught a strange, gloomy treachery,—we all do the same, you know.

"What is your remedy, Lamar? You have no belief in the right of Secession, I know," said Dorr.

"It's a bad instrument for a good end. Let the white Georgian come out of his sloth, and the black will rise with him. Jefferson Davis may not intend it, but God does. When we have our Lowell, our New York, when we are a self-sustaining people instead of lazy land-princes, Ben here will have climbed the second of the great steps of Humanity. Do you laugh at us?" said Lamar, with a quiet self-reliance. "Charley, it needs only work and ambition to cut the brute away from my face, and

it will leave traits very like your own. Ben's father was a Guinea fetich-worshipper; when we stand where New England does, Ben's son will be ready for his freedom."

"And while you theorize," laughed Dorr, "I hold you a prisoner, John, and Ben knows it is his right to be free. He will not wait for the grinding of the mill, I fancy."

Lamar did not smile. It was womanish in the man, when the life of great nations hung in doubt before them, to go back so constantly to little Floy sitting in the lap of her old black maumer. But he did it,—with the quick thought that to-night he must escape, that death lay in delay.

While Dorr talked, Lamar glanced significantly at Ben. The negro was not slow to understand,—with a broad grin, touching his pocket, from which projected the dull end of a hand-saw. I wonder what sudden pain made the negro rise just then, and come close to his master, touching him with a strange affection and remorse in his tired face, as though he had done him some deadly wrong.

"What is it, old fellow?" said Lamar, in his boyish way. "Homesick, eh? There's a little girl in Georgia that will be glad to see you and your master, and take precious good care of us when she gets us safe again. That's true, Ben!" laying his hand kindly on the man's shoulder, while his eyes went wandering off to the hills lying South.

"Yes, Mars'," said Ben, in a low voice, suddenly bringing a blacking-brush, and beginning to polish his master's shoes,—thinking, while he did it, of how often Mars' John had interfered with the overseers to save him from a flogging,—(Lamar, in his lazy way, was kind to his slaves,)—thinking of little Mist' Floy with an odd tenderness and awe, as a gorilla might of a white dove: trying to think thus,—the simple, kindly nature of the negro struggling madly with something beneath, new and horrible. He understood enough of the talk of the white men to know that there was no help for him,—none. Always a slave. Neither you nor I can ever know what those words meant to him. The pale purple mist where the North lay was never to be passed. His dull eyes turned to it constantly,—with a strange look, such as the lost women might have turned to the door, when Jesus shut it: they forever outside. There was a way to help himself? The stubby black fingers holding the brush grew cold and clammy,—noting withal, the poor wretch in his slavish way, that his master's clothes were finer than the Northern captain's, his hands whiter, and proud that it was so,—holding Lamar's foot daintily, trying to see himself in the shoe, smoothing down the trousers with a boorish, affectionate touch,—with the same fierce whisper in his ear, Would the shoes ever be cleaned again? would the foot move to-morrow?

It grew late. Lamar's supper was brought up from Captain Dorr's, and placed on the bench. He poured out a goblet of water.

"Come, Charley, let's drink. To Liberty! It is a war-cry for Satan or Michael."

They drank, laughing, while Ben stood watching. Dorr turned to go, but Lamar called him back,—stood resting his hand on his shoulder: he never thought to see him again, you know.

"Look at Ruth, yonder," said Dorr, his face lighting. "She is coming to meet us. She thought you would be with me."

Lamar looked gravely down at the low field-house and the figure at the gate. He thought he could see the small face and earnest eyes, though it was far off, and night was closing.

"She is waiting for you, Charley. Go down. Good night, old chum!"

If it cost any effort to say it, Dorr saw nothing of it.

"Good night, Lamar! I'll see you in the morning."

He lingered. His old comrade looked strangely alone and desolate.

"John!"

"What is it, Dorr?"

"If I could tell the Colonel you would take the oath? For Floy's sake."

The man's rough face reddened.

"You should know me better. Good bye."

"Well, well, you are mad. Have you no message for Ruth?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Tell her I say, God bless her!"

Dorr stopped and looked keenly in his face,—then, coming back, shook hands again, in a different way from before, speaking in a lower voice,—

"God help us all, John! Good night!"—and went slowly down the hill.

It was nearly night, and bitter cold. Lamar stood where the snow drifted in on him, looking out through the horizon-less gray.

"Come out o' dem cold, Mars' John," whined Ben, pulling at his coat.

As the night gathered, the negro was haunted with a terrified wish to be kind to his master. Something told him that the time was short. Here and there through the far night some tent-fire glowed in a cone of ruddy haze, through which the thick-falling snow shivered like flakes of light. Lamar watched only the square block of shadow where Dorr's house stood. The door opened at last, and a broad, cheerful gleam shot out red darts across the white waste without; then he saw two figures go in together. They paused a moment; he put his head against the bars, straining his eyes, and saw that the woman turned, shading her eyes with her hand, and looked up to the side of the mountain where the guard-house lay,—with a kindly look, perhaps, for the prisoner out in the cold. A kind look: that was all. The door shut on them. Forever: so, good night, Ruth!

He stool there for an hour or two, leaning his head against the muddy planks, smoking. Perhaps, in his coarse fashion, he took the trouble of his manhood back to the same God he used to pray to long ago. When he turned at last, and spoke, it was with a quiet, strong voice, like one who would fight through life in a manly way. There was a grating sound at the back of the shed: it was Ben, sawing through the wicket, the guard having lounged off to supper. Lamar watched him, noticing that the negro was unusually silent. The plank splintered, and hung loose.

"Done gone, Mars' John, now,"—leaving it, and beginning to replenish the fire.

"That's right, Ben. We'll start in the morning. That sentry at two o'clock sleeps regularly."

Ben chuckled, heaping up the sticks.

"Go on down to the camp, as usual. At two, Ben, remember! We will be free to-night, old boy!"

The black face looked up from the clogging smoke with a curious stare.

"Ki! we'll be free to-night, Mars'!"—gulping his breath.

Soon after, the sentry unlocked the gate, and he shambled off out into the night. Lamar, left alone, went closer to the fire, and worked busily at some papers he drew from his pocket: maps and schedules. He intended to write until two o'clock; but the blaze dying down, he wrapped his blanket about him, and lay down on the heaped straw, going on sleepily, in his brain, with his calculations.

The negro, in the shadow of the shed, watched him. A vague fear beset him,—of the vast, white cold,—the glowering mountains,—of himself; he clung to the familiar face, like a man drifting out into an unknown sea, clutching some relic of the shore. When Lamar fell asleep, he wandered uncertainly towards the tents. The world had grown new, strange; was he Ben, picking cotton in the swamp-edge?—plunging his fingers with a shudder in the icy drifts. Down in the glowing torpor of the Santilla flats, where the Lamar plantations lay, Ben had slept off as maddening hunger for life and freedom as this of to-day; but here, with the winter air stinging every nerve to life, with the perpetual mystery of the mountains terrifying his bestial nature down, the strength of the man stood up: groping, blind, malignant, it may be; but whose fault was that? He was half-frozen: the physical pain sharpened the keen doubt conquering his thought. He sat down in the crusted snow, looking vacantly about him, a man, at last,—but wakening, like a new-born soul, into a world of unutterable solitude. Wakened dully, slowly; sitting there far into the night, pondering stupidly on his old life; crushing down and out the old parasite affection for his master, the old fears, the old weight threatening to press out his thin life; the muddy blood heating, firing with the same heroic dream that bade Tell and Garibaldi lift up their hands to God, and cry aloud that they were men and free: the same,—God-given, burning in the imbruted veins of a Guinea slave. To what end? May God be merciful to America while she

answers the question! He sat, rubbing his cracked, bleeding feet, glancing stealthily at the southern hills. Beyond them lay all that was past; in an hour he would follow Lamar back to—what? He lifted his hands up to the sky, in his silly way sobbing hot tears. "Gor-a'mighty, Mars' Lord, I'se tired," was all the prayer he made. The pale purple mist was gone from the North; the ridge behind which love, freedom waited, struck black across the sky, a wall of iron. He looked at it drearily. Utterly alone: he had always been alone. He got up at last, with a sigh.

"It's a big world,"—with a bitter chuckle,—"but der's no room in it fur poor Ben."

He dragged himself through the snow to a light in a tent where a voice in a wild drone, like that he had heard at negro camp-meetings, attracted him. He did not go in: stood at the tent-door, listening. Two or three of the guard stood around, leaning on their muskets; in the vivid fire-light rose the gaunt figure of the Illinois boatman, swaying to and fro as he preached. For the men were honest, God-fearing souls, members of the same church, and Dave, in all integrity of purpose, read aloud to them,—the cry of Jeremiah against the foul splendors of the doomed city,—waving, as he spoke, his bony arm to the South. The shrill voice was that of a man wrestling with his Maker. The negro's fired brain caught the terrible meaning of the words,—found speech in it: the wide, dark night, the solemn silence of the men, were only fitting audience.

The man caught sight of the slave, and, laying down his book, began one of those strange exhortations in the manner of his sect. Slow at first, full of unutterable pity. There was room for pity. Pointing to the human brute crouching there, made once in the image of God,—the saddest wreck on His green foot-stool: to the great stealthy body, the revengeful jaws, the foreboding eyes. Soul, brains,—a man, wifeless, homeless, nationless, hawked, flung from trader to trader for a handful of dirty shinplasters. "Lord God of hosts," cried the man, lifting up his trembling hands, "lay not this sin to our charge!" There was a scar on Ben's back where the lash had buried itself: it stung now in the cold. He pulled his clothes tighter, that they should not see it; the scar and the words burned into his heart: the childish nature of the man was gone; the vague darkness in it took a shape and name. The boatman had been praying for him; the low words seemed to shake the night:—

"Hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications! Is not this what Thou hast chosen: to loose the bands, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free? O Lord, hear! O Lord, hearken and do! Defer not for Thine own sake, O my God!"

"What shall I do?" said the slave, standing up.

The boatman paced slowly to and fro, his voice chording in its dull monotone with the smothered savage muttering in the negro's brain.

"The day of the Lord cometh; it is nigh at hand. Who can abide it? What saith the prophet Jeremiah? 'Take up a burden against the South. Cry aloud, spare not. Woe unto Babylon, for the day of her vengeance is come, the day of her visitation! Call together the archers against Babylon; camp against it round about; let none thereof escape. Recompense her: as she hath done unto my people, be it done unto her. A sword is upon Babylon: it shall break in pieces the shepherd and his flock, the man and the woman, the young man and the maid. I will render unto her the evil she hath done in my sight, saith the Lord.'"

It was the voice of God: the scar burned fiercer; the slave came forward boldly,—

"Mars'er, what shall I do?"

"Give the poor devil a musket," said one of the men. "Let him come with us, and strike a blow for freedom."

He took a knife from his belt, and threw it to him, then sauntered off to his tent.

"A blow for freedom?" mumbled Ben, taking it up.

"Let us sing to the praise of God," said the boatman, "the sixty-eighth psalm," lining it out while they sang,—the scattered men joining, partly to keep themselves awake. In old times David's harp charmed away the demon from a human heart. It roused one now, never to be laid again. A dull, droning chant, telling how the God of Vengeance rode upon the wind, swift to loose the fetters of the

chained, to make desert the rebellious land; with a chorus, or refrain, in which Ben's wild, melancholy cry sounded like the wail of an avenging spirit:—

"That in the blood of enemies
  Thy foot imbrued may be:
And of thy dogs dipped in the same
  The tongues thou mayest see."

The meaning of that was plain; he sang it lower and more steadily each time, his body swaying in cadence, the glitter in his eye more steely.

Lamar, asleep in his prison, was wakened by the far-off plaintive song: he roused himself, leaning on one elbow, listening with a half-smile. It was Naomi they sang, he thought,—an old-fashioned Methodist air that Floy had caught from the negroes, and used to sing to him sometimes. Every night, down at home, she would come to his parlor-door to say good-night: he thought he could see the little figure now in its white nightgown, and hear the bare feet pattering on the matting. When he was alone, she would come in, and sit on his lap awhile, and kneel down before she went away, her head on his knee, to say her prayers, as she called it. Only God knew how many times he had remained alone after hearing those prayers, saved from nights of drunken debauch. He thought he felt Floy's pure little hand on his forehead now, as if she were saying her usual "Good night, Bud." He lay down to sleep again, with a genial smile on his face, listening to the hymn.

"It's the same God," he said,—"Floy's and theirs."

Outside, as he slept, a dark figure watched him. The song of the men ceased. Midnight, white and silent, covered the earth. He could hear only the slow breathing of the sleeper. Ben's black face grew ashy pale, but he did not tremble, as he crept, cat-like, up to the wicket, his blubber lips apart, the white teeth clenched.

"It's for Freedom, Mars' Lord!" he gasped, looking up to the sky, as if he expected an answer. "Gor-a'mighty, it's for Freedom!" And went in.

A belated bird swooped through the cold moonlight into the valley, and vanished in the far mountain-cliffs with a low, fearing cry, as though it had passed through Hades.

They had broken down the wicket: he saw them lay the heavy body on the lumber outside, the black figures hurrying over the snow. He laughed low, savagely, watching them. Free now! The best of them despised him; the years past of cruelty and oppression turned back, fused in a slow, deadly current of revenge and hate, against the race that had trodden him down. He felt the iron muscles of his fingers, looked close at the glittering knife he held, chuckling at the strange smell it bore. Would the Illinois boatman blame him, if it maddened him? And if Ben took the fancy to put it to his throat, what right has he to complain? Has not he also been a dweller in Babylon? He hesitated a moment in the cleft of the hill, choosing his way, exultantly. He did not watch the North now; the quiet old dream of content was gone; his thick blood throbbed and surged with passions of which you and I know nothing: he had a lost life to avenge. His native air, torrid, heavy with latent impurity, drew him back: a fitter breath than this cold snow for the animal in his body, the demon in his soul, to triumph and wallow in. He panted, thinking of the saffron hues of the Santilla flats, of the white, stately dwellings, the men that went in and out from them, quiet, dominant,—feeling the edge of his knife. It was his turn to be master now! He ploughed his way doggedly through the snow,—panting, as he went,—a hotter glow in his gloomy eyes. It was his turn for pleasure now: he would have his fill! Their wine and their gardens and–He did not need to choose a wife from his own color now. He stopped, thinking of little Floy, with her curls and great listening eyes, watching at the door for her brother. He had watched her climb up into his arms and kiss his cheek. She never would do that again! He laughed aloud, shrilly. By God! she should keep the kiss for other lips! Why should he not say it?

Up on the hill the night-air throbbed colder and holier. The guards stood about in the snow, silent, troubled. This was not like a death in battle: it put them in mind of home, somehow. All that the dying man said was, "Water," now and then. He had been sleeping, when struck, and never had thoroughly wakened from his dream. Captain Poole, of the Snake-hunters, had wrapped him in his own blanket, finding nothing more could be done. He went off to have the Colonel summoned now, muttering that it was "a damned shame." They put snow to Lamar's lips constantly, being hot and parched; a woman, Dorr's wife, was crouching on the ground beside him, chafing his hands, keeping down her sobs for fear they would disturb him. He opened his eyes at last, and knew Dorr, who held his head.

"Unfasten my coat, Charley. What makes it so close here?"

Dorr could not speak.

"Shall I lift you up, Captain Lamar?" asked Dave Hall, who stood leaning on his rifle.

He spoke in a subdued tone, Babylon being far off for the moment. Lamar dozed again before he could answer.

"Don't try to move him,—it is too late," said Dorr, sharply.

The moonlight steeped mountain and sky in a fresh whiteness. Lamar's face, paling every moment, hardening, looked in it like some solemn work of an untaught sculptor. There was a breathless silence. Ruth, kneeling beside him, felt his hand grow slowly colder than the snow. He moaned, his voice going fast,—

"At two, Ben, old fellow! We'll be free to-night!"

Dave, stooping to wrap the blanket, felt his hand wet: he wiped it with a shudder.

"As he hath done unto My people, be it done unto him!" he muttered, but the words did not comfort him.

Lamar moved, half-smiling.

"That's right, Floy. What is it she says? 'Now I lay me down'–I forget. Good night. Kiss me, Floy."

He waited,—looked up uneasily. Dorr looked at his wife: she stooped, and kissed his lips. Charley smoothed back the hair from the damp face with as tender a touch as a woman's. Was he dead? The white moonlight was not more still than the calm face.

Suddenly the night-air was shattered by a wild, revengeful laugh from the hill. The departing soul rushed back, at the sound, to life, full consciousness. Lamar started from their hold,—sat up.

"It was Ben," he said, slowly.

In that dying flash of comprehension, it may be, the wrongs of the white man and the black stood clearer to his eyes than ours: the two lives trampled down. The stern face of the boatman bent over him: he was trying to stanch the flowing blood. Lamar looked at him: Hall saw no bitterness in the look,—a quiet, sad question rather, before which his soul lay bare. He felt the cold hand touch his shoulder, saw the pale lips move.

"Was this well done?" they said.

Before Lamar's eyes the rounded arch of gray receded, faded into dark; the negro's fierce laugh filled his ear: some woful thought at the sound wrung his soul, as it halted at the gate. It caught at the simple faith his mother taught him.

"Yea," he said aloud, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me."

Dorr gently drew down the uplifted hand. He was dead.

"It was a manly soul," said the Northern captain, his voice choking, as he straightened the limp hair.

"He trusted in God? A strange delusion!" muttered the boatman.

Yet he did not like that they should leave him alone with Lamar, as they did, going down for help. He paced to and fro, his rifle on his shoulder, arming his heart with strength to accomplish the

vengeance of the Lord against Babylon. Yet he could not forget the murdered man sitting there in the calm moonlight, the dead face turned towards the North,—the dead face, whereon little Floy's tears should never fall. The grave, unmoving eyes seemed to the boatman to turn to him with the same awful question. "Was this well done?" they said. He thought in eternity they would rise before him, sad, unanswered. The earth, he fancied, lay whiter, colder,—the heaven farther off; the war, which had become a daily business, stood suddenly before him in all its terrible meaning. God, he thought, had met in judgment with His people. Yet he uttered no cry of vengeance against the doomed city. With the dead face before him, he bent his eyes to the ground, humble, uncertain,—speaking out of the ignorance of his own weak, human soul.

"The day of the Lord is nigh," he said; "it is at hand; and who can abide it?"

MOUNTAIN PICTURES

II

MONADNOCK FROM WACHUSET

I would I were a painter, for the sake
  Of a sweet picture, and of her who led,
  A fitting guide, with light, but reverent tread,
Into that mountain mystery! First a lake
  Tinted with sunset; next the wavy lines
    Of far receding hills; and yet more far,
  Monadnock lifting from his night of pines
    His rosy forehead to the evening star.
Beside us, purple-zoned, Wachuset laid
His head against the West, whose warm light made
    His aureole; and o'er him, sharp and clear,
Like a shaft of lightning in mid launching stayed,
  A single level cloud-line, shone upon
  By the fierce glances of the sunken sun,
    Menaced the darkness with its golden spear!

So twilight deepened round us. Still and black
The great woods climbed the mountain at our back;
And on their skirts, where yet the lingering day
On the shorn greenness of the clearing lay,
  The brown old farm-house like a bird's nest hung.
With home-life sounds the desert air was stirred:
The bleat of sheep along the hill we heard,
The bucket plashing in the cool, sweet well,
The pasture-bars that clattered as they fell;
Dogs barked, fowls fluttered, cattle lowed; the gate
Of the barn-yard creaked beneath the merry weight
  Of sun-brown children, listening, while they swung,
    The welcome sound of supper-call to hear;
    And down the shadowy lane, in tinklings clear,
  The pastoral curfew of the cow-bell rung.
Thus soothed and pleased, our backward path we took,
  Praising the farmer's home. He only spake,
  Looking into the sunset o'er the lake,
    Like one to whom the far-off is most near:
"Yes, most folks think it has a pleasant look;
  I love it for my good old mother's sake,
    Who lived and died here in the peace of God!"

The lesson of his words we pondered o'er,
As silently we turned the eastern flank
Of the mountain, where its shadow deepest sank,
Doubling the night along our rugged road:
We felt that man was more than his abode,—
The inward life than Nature's raiment more;
And the warm sky, the sundown-tinted hill,
The forest and the lake, seemed dwarfed and dim
Before the saintly soul, whose human will
Meekly in the Eternal footsteps trod,
Making her homely toil and household ways
An earthly echo of the song of praise
Swelling from angel lips and harps of seraphim!

INDIVIDUALITY

At a certain depth, as has already been intimated in our literature, all bosoms communicate, all hearts are one. Hector and Ajax, in Homer's great picture, stand face to face, each with advanced foot, with levelled spear, and turgid sinew, eager to kill, while on either side ten thousand slaughterous wishes poise themselves in hot breasts, waiting to fly with the flying weapons; yet, though the combatants seem to surrender themselves wholly to this action, there is in each a profound element that is no party to these hostilities. It is the pure nature of man. Ajax is not all Greek, nor is Hector wholly Trojan: both are also men; and to the extent of their mutual participation in this pure and perpetual element of Manhood, they are more than friends, more than relatives,—they are of identical spirit. For there is an imperishable nature of Man, ever and everywhere the same, of which each particular man is a testimony and representation. As the solid earth underruns the "dissociating sea"—*Oceano dissociabili*—and joins in one all sundered lands, so does this nature dip beneath the dividing parts of our being, and make of all men one simple and inseparable humanity. In love, in friendship, in true conversation, in all happiness of communion between men, it is this unchangeable substratum or substance of man's being that is efficient and supreme: out of divers bosoms, Same calls, and replies to Same with a great joy of self-recognition. It is only in virtue of this nature that men understand, appreciate, admire, trust each other,—that books of the earliest times remain true in the latest,—that society is possible; and he in whom the virtue of it dwells divinely is admitted to the secret confidence of all bosoms, lives in all times, and converses with each soul and age in its own vernacular. Socrates looked beyond the gates of death for happy communion with Homer and all the great; but already we interchange words with these, whenever we are so sweetly prospered as to become, in some good degree, identical with the absolute nature of man.

Not only, moreover, is this immortal substance of man's being common and social, but it is so great and venerable that no one can match it with an equal report. All the epithets by which we would extol it are disgraced by it, as the most brilliant artificial lights become blackness when placed between the eye and the noonday sun. It is older, it is earlier in existence than the earliest star that shone in heaven; and it will outlive the fixed stars that now in heaven seem fixed forever. There is nothing in the created universe of which it was not the prophecy in its primal conception; there is nothing of which it is not the interpretation and ultimatum in its final form. The laws which rule the world as forces are, in it, thoughts and liberties. All the grand imaginations of men, all the glorified shapes, the Olympian gods, cherubic and seraphic forms, are but symbols and adumbrations of what it contains. As the sun, having set, still leaves its golden impress on the clouds, so does the absolute nature of man throw up and paint, as it were, on the sky testimonies of its power, remaining itself unseen. Only, therefore, is one a poet, as he can cause particular traits and events, without violation of their special character, or concealment of their peculiar interest, to bear the deep, sweet, and infinite suggestion of this. All princeliness and imperial worth, all that is regal, beautiful, pure in men, comes from this nature; and the words by which we express reverence, admiration, love, borrow from it their entire force: since reverence, admiration, love, and all other grand sentiments, are but modes or forms of *noble unification* between men, and are therefore shown to spring from that spiritual unity of which persons are exponents; while, on the other hand, all evil epithets suggest division and separation. Of this nature all titles of honor, all symbols that command homage and obedience on earth, are pensioners. How could the claims of kings survive successions of Stuarts and Georges, but for a royalty in each peasant's bosom that pleads for its poor image on the throne?

In the high sense, no man is great save he that is a large continent of this absolute humanity. The common nature of man it is; yet those are ever, and in the happiest sense, uncommon men, in whom it is liberally present.

But every man, besides the nature which constitutes him man, has, so to speak, another nature, which constitutes him a particular individual. He is not only like all others of his kind, but, at the same time, unlike all others. By physical and mental feature he is distinguished, insulated; he is endowed with a quality so purely in contrast with the common nature of man, that in virtue of it he can be singled out from hundreds of millions, from all the myriads of his race. So far, now, as one is representative of absolute humanity, he is a Person; so far as, by an element peculiar to himself, he is contrasted with absolute humanity, he is an Individual. And having duly chanted our *Credo* concerning man's pure and public nature, let us now inquire respecting this dividing element of Individuality,—which, with all the force it has, strives to cut off communication, to destroy unity, and to make of humanity a chaos or dust of biped atoms.

Not for a moment must we make this surface nature of equal estimation with the other. It is secondary, *very* secondary, to the pure substance of man. The Person first in order of importance; the Individual next,—

"Proximus huic, longo sed proximus intervallo,"—

"next with an exceeding wide remove."

Take from Epaminondas or Luther all that makes him man, and the rest will not be worth selling to the Jews. Individuality is an accompaniment, an accessory, a red line on the map, a fence about the field, a copyright on the book. It is like the particular flavors of fruits,—of no account but in relation to their saccharine, acid, and other staple elements. It must therefore keep its place, or become an impertinence. If it grow forward, officious, and begin to push in between the pure nature and its divine ends, at once it is a meddling Peter, for whom there is no due greeting but "Get thee behind me, Satan." If the fruit have a special flavor of such ambitious pungency that the sweets and acids cannot appear through it, be sure that to come at this fruit no young Wilhelm Meister will purloin keys. If one be so much an Individual that he wellnigh ceases to be a Man, we shall not admire him. It is the same in mental as in physical feature. Let there, by all means, be slight divergence from the common type; but by all means let it be no more than a slight divergence. Too much is monstrous: even a very slight excess is what we call *ugliness*. Gladly I perceive in my neighbor's face, voice, gait, manner, a certain charm of peculiarity; but if in any the peculiarity be so great as to suggest a doubt whether he be not some other creature than man, may he not be neighbor of mine!

A little of this surface nature suffices; yet that little cannot be spared. Its first office is to guard frontiers. We must not lie quite open to the inspection or invasion of others: yet, were there no medium of unlikeness interposed between one and another, privacy would be impossible, and one's own bosom would not be sacred to himself. But Nature has secured us against these profanations; and as we have locks to our doors, curtains to our windows, and, upon occasion, a passport system on our borders, so has she cast around each spirit this veil to guard it from intruding eyes, this barrier to keep away the feet of strangers. Homer represents the divinities as coming invisibly to admonish their favored heroes; but Nature was beforehand with the poet, and every one of us is, in like manner, a celestial nature walking concealed. Who sees *you*, when you walk the street? Who would walk the street, did be not feel himself fortressed in a privacy that no foreign eyes can enter? But for this, no cities would be built. Society, therefore, would be impossible, save for this element, which seems to hinder society. Each of us, wrapt in his opaque individuality, like Apollo or Athene in a blue mist, remains hidden, if he will; and therefore do men dare to come together.

But this superficial element, while securing privacy to the pure nature, also aids it to expression. It emphasizes the outlines of Personality by gentle contrast. It is like the shadow in the landscape, without which all the sunbeams of heaven could not reveal with precision a single object. Assured lovers resort to happy banter and light oppositions, to give themselves a sweeter sense of unity of heart. The child, with a cunning which only Nature has taught, will sometimes put a little honey of refusal into its kisses before giving them; the maiden adds to her virgin blooms the further attraction of virgin coyness and reserve; the civilizing dinner-table would lose all its dignity in losing its delays;

and so everywhere, delicate denial, withholding reserve have an inverse force, and add a charm of emphasis to gift, assent, attraction, and sympathy. How is the word Immortality emphasized to our hearts by the perpetual spectacle of death! The joy and suggestion of it could, indeed, never visit us, had not this momentary loud denial been uttered in our ears. Such, therefore, as have learned to interpret these oppositions in Nature, hear in the jarring note of Death only a jubilant proclamation of life eternal; while all are thus taught the longing for immortality, though only by their fear of the contrary. And so is the pure universal nature of man affirmed by these provocations of contrast and insulation on the surface. We feel the personality far more, and far more sweetly, for its being thus divided from our own. From behind this veil the pure nature comes to us with a kind of surprise, as out of another heaven. The joy of truth and delight of beauty are born anew for us from each pair of chanting lips and beholding eyes; and each new soul that comes promises another gift of the universe. Whoever, in any time or under any sky, sees the worth and wonder of existence, sees it for me; whatever language he speak, whatever star he inhabit, we shall one day meet, and through the confession of his heart all my ancient possessions will become a new gain; he shall make for me a natal day of creation, showing the producing breath, as it goes forth from the lips of God, and spreads into the blue purity of sky, or rounds into the luminance of suns; the hills and their pines, the vales and their blooms, and heroic men and beauteous women, all that I have loved or reverenced, shall come again, appearing and trooping out of skies never visible before. Because of these dividing lines between souls, each new soul is to all the others a possible factor of heaven.

Such uses does individuality subserve. Yet it is capable of these ministries only as it does indeed *minister*. All its uses are lost with the loss of its humility and subordinance. It is the porter at the gate, furthering the access of lawful, and forbidding the intrusion of unlawful visitors to the mansion; who becomes worse than useless, if in surly excess of zeal he bar the gate against all, or if in the excess of self-importance he receive for himself what is meant for his master, and turn visitors aside into the porter's lodge. Beautiful is virgin reserve, and true it is that delicate half-denial reinforces attraction; yet the maiden who carries only *No* upon her tongue, and only refusal in her ways, shall never wake before dawn on the day of espousal, nor blush beneath her bridal veil, like Morning behind her clouds. This surface element, we must remember, is not income and resource, but an item of needful, and, so far as needful, graceful and economical expenditure. Excess of it is wasteful, by causing Life to pay for that which he does not need, by increase of social fiction, and by obstruction of social flow with the fructifications which this brings, not to be spared by any mortal. Nay, by extreme excess, it may so cut off and sequester a man, that no word or aspect of another soul can reach him; he shall see in mankind only himself, he shall hear in the voices of others only his own echoes. Many and many a man is there, so housed in his individuality, that it goes, like an impenetrable wall, over eye and ear; and even in the tramp of the centuries he can find hint of nothing save the sound of his own feet. It is a frequent tragedy,—but profound as frequent.

One great task, indeed *the* great task of good-breeding is, accordingly, to induce in this element a delicacy, a translucency, which, without robbing any action or sentiment of the hue it imparts, shall still allow the pure human quality perfectly and perpetually to shine through. The world has always been charmed with fine manners; and why should it not? For what are fine manners but this: to carry your soul on your lip, in your eye, in the palm of your hand, and yet to stand not naked, but clothed upon by your individual quality,—visible, yet inscrutable,—given to the hearts of others, yet contained in your own bosom,—nobly and humanly open, yet duly reticent and secured from invasion? *Polished* manners often disappoint us; *good* manners never.

The former may be taken on by indigent souls: the latter imply a noble and opulent nature. And wait you not for death, according to the counsel of Solon, to be named happy, if you are permitted fellowship with a man of rich mind, whose individual savor you always finely perceive, and never more than finely,—who yields you the perpetual sense of community, and never of confusion, with your own spirit. The happiness is all the greater, if the fellowship be accorded by a mind eminently

superior to one's own; for he, while yet more removed, comes yet nearer, seeming to be that which our own soul may become in some future life, and so yielding us the sense of our own being more deeply and powerfully than it is given by the consciousness in our own bosom. And going forward to the supreme point of this felicity, we may note that the worshipper, in the ecstasy of his adoration, feels the Highest to be also Nearest,—more remote than the borders of space and fringes of heaven, —more intimate with his own being than the air he breathes or the thought be thinks; and of this double sense is the rapture of his adoration, and the joy indeed of every angel, born.

Divineness appertains to the absolute nature of man; piquancy and charm to that which serves and modifies this. Infinitude and immortality are of the one; the strictest finiteness belongs to the other. In the first you can never be too deep and rich; in the second never too delicate and measured. Yet you will easily find a man in whom the latter so abounds as not only to shut him out from others, but to absorb all the vital resource generated in his own bosom, leaving to the pure personality nothing. The finite nature fares sumptuously every day; the other is a heavenly Lazarus sitting at the gate.

Of such individuals there are many classes; and the majority of eccentric men constitute one class. If a man have very peculiar ways, we readily attribute to him a certain depth and force, and think that the polished citizen wants character in comparison. Probably it is not so. Singularity may be as shallow as the shallowest conformity. There are numbers of such from whom if you deduct the eccentricity, it is like subtracting red from vermilion or six from half a dozen. They are grimaces of humanity,—no more. In particular, I make occasion to say, that those oddities, whose chief characteristic it is to slink away from the habitations of men, and claim companionship with musk-rats, are, despite Mr. Thoreau's pleasant patronage of them, no whit more manly or profound than the average citizen, who loves streets and parlors, and does not endure estrangement from the Post-Office. Mice lurk in holes and corners; could the cat speak, she would say that they have a genius *only* for lurking in holes. Bees and ants are, to say the least, quite as witty as beetles, proverbially blind; yet they build insect cities, and are as invincibly social and city-loving as Socrates himself.

Aside, however, from special eccentricity, there are men, like the Earl of Essex, Bacon's *soi-disant* friend, who possess a certain emphatic and imposing individuality, which, while commonly assumed to indicate character and force, is really but the *succedaneum* for these. They are like oysters, with extreme stress of shell, and only a blind, soft, acephalous body within. These are commonly great men so long as little men will serve; and are something less than little ever after. As an instance of this, I should select the late chief magistrate of this nation. His whole ability lay in putting a most imposing countenance upon commonplaces. He made a mere *air* seem solid as rock. Owing to this possibility of presenting all force on the outside, and so creating a false impression of resource, all great social emergencies are followed by a speedy breaking down of men to whom was generally attributed an able spirit; while others of less outward mark, and for this reason hitherto unnoticed, come forward, and prove to be indeed the large vessels of manhood accorded to that generation.

Our tendency to assume individual mark as the measure of personality is flattered by many of the books we read. It is, of course, easier to depict character, when it is accompanied by some striking individual hue; and therefore in romances and novels this is conferred upon all the forcible characters, merely to favor the author's hand: as microscopists feed minute creatures with colored food to make their circulations visible. It is only the great master who can represent a powerful personality in the purest state, that is, with the maximum of character and the minimum of individual distinction; while small artists, with a feeble hold upon character, habitually resort to extreme quaintnesses and singularities of circumstance, in order to confer upon their weak portraitures some vigor of outline. It takes a Giotto to draw readily a nearly perfect O; but a nearly perfect triangle any one can draw. Shakspeare is able to delineate a Gentleman,—one, that is, who, while nobly and profoundly a man, is so delicately individualized, that the impression of him, however vigorous and commanding, cannot be harsh: Shakspeare is equal to this task, but even so very able a painter as Fielding is not. His Squire Western and Parson Adams are exquisite, his Allworthy is vapid: deny him strong pigments of

individualism, and he is unable to portray strong character. Scott, among British novelists, is, perhaps, in this respect most Shakspearian, though the Colonel Esmond of Thackeray is not to be forgotten; but even Scott's Dandie Dinmonts, or gentlemen in the rough, sparkle better than his polished diamonds. Yet in this respect the Waverley Novels are singularly and admirably healthful, comparing to infinite advantage with the rank and file of novels, wherein the "characters" are but bundles of quaintnesses, and the action is impossible.

Written history has somewhat of the same infirmity with fictitious literature, though not always by the fault of the historian. Far too little can it tell us respecting those of whom we desire to know much; while, on the other hand, it is often extremely liberal of information concerning those of whom we desire to know nothing. The greatest of men approach a pure personality, a pure representation of man's imperishable nature; individual peculiarity they far less abound in; and what they do possess is held in transparent solution by their manhood, as a certain amount of vapor is always held by the air. The higher its temperature, the more moisture can the atmosphere thus absorb, exhibiting it not as cloud, but only as immortal azure of sky: and so the greater intensity there is of the pure quality of man, the more of individual peculiarity can it master and transform into a simple heavenliness of beauty, of which the world finds few words to say. Men, in general, have, perhaps, no more genius than novelists in general,—though it seems a hard speech to make,—and while profoundly *impressed* by any manifestation of the pure genius of man, can *observe* and *relate* only peculiarities and exceptional traits. Incongruities are noted; congruities are only felt. If a two-headed calf be born, the newspapers hasten to tell of it; but brave boys and beautiful girls by thousands grow to fulness of stature without mention. We know so little of Homer and Shakspeare partly because they were Homer and Shakspeare. Smaller men might afford more plentiful materials for biography, because their action and character would be more clouded with individualism. The biography of a supreme poet is the history of his kind. He transmits himself by pure vital impression. His remembrance is committed, not to any separable faculty, but to a memory identical with the total being of men. If you would learn his story, listen to the sprites that ride on crimson steeds along the arterial highways, singing of man's destiny as they go.

THE GERMAN BURNS

The extreme southwestern corner of Germany is an irregular right-angle, formed by the course of the Rhine. Within this angle and an hypothenuse drawn from the Lake of Constance to Carlsruhe lies a wild mountain-region—a lateral offshoot from the central chain which extends through Europe from west to east—known to all readers of robber-romances as the Black Forest. It is a cold, undulating upland, intersected with deep valleys which descend to the plains of the Rhine and the Danube, and covered with great tracts of fir-forest. Here and there a peak rises high above the general level, the Feldberg attaining a height of five thousand feet. The aspect of this region is stern and gloomy: the fir-woods appear darker than elsewhere; the frequent little lakes are as inky in hue as the pools of the High Alps; and the meadows of living emerald give but a partial brightness to the scenery. Here, however, the solitary traveller may adventure without fear. Robbers and robber-castles have long since passed away, and the people, rough and uncouth as they may at first seem, are as kindly-hearted as they are honest. Among them was born—and in their incomprehensible dialect wrote—Hebel, the German Burns.

We dislike the practice of using the name of one author as the characteristic designation of another. It is, at best, the sign of an imperfect fame, implying rather the imitation of a scholar than the independent position of a master. We can, nevertheless, in no other way indicate in advance the place which the subject of our sketch occupies in the literature of Germany. A contemporary of Burns, and ignorant of the English language, there is no evidence that he had ever even heard of the former; but Burns, being the first truly great poet who succeeded in making classic a local dialect, thereby constituted himself an illustrious standard, by which his successors in the same path must be measured. Thus, Bellman and Béranger have been inappropriately invested with his mantle, from the one fact of their being song-writers of a democratic stamp. The Gascon, Jasmin, better deserves the title; and Longfellow, in translating his "Blind Girl of Castèl-Cuillè," says,—

> "Only the lowland tongue of Scotland might
> Rehearse this little tragedy aright":—

a conviction which we have frequently shared, in translating our German author.

It is a matter of surprise to us, that, while Jasmin's poems have gone far beyond the bounds of France, the name of John Peter Hebel—who possesses more legitimate claims to the peculiar distinction which Burns achieved—is not only unknown outside of Germany, but not even familiarly known to the Germans themselves. The most probable explanation is, that the Alemannic dialect, in which he wrote, is spoken only by the inhabitants of the Black Forest and a portion of Suabia, and cannot be understood, without a glossary, by the great body of the North-Germans. The same cause would operate, with greater force, in preventing a translation into foreign languages. It is, in fact, only within the last twenty years that the Germans have become acquainted with Burns,—chiefly through the admirable translations of the poet Freiligrath.

To Hebel belongs the merit of having bent one of the harshest of German dialects to the uses of poetry. We doubt whether the lyre of Apollo was ever fashioned from a wood of rougher grain. Broad, crabbed, guttural, and unpleasant to the ear which is not thoroughly accustomed to its sound, the Alemannic *patois* was, in truth, a most unpromising material. The stranger, even though he were a good German scholar, would never suspect the racy humor, the *naïve*, childlike fancy, and the pure human tenderness of expression which a little culture has brought to bloom on such a soil. The contractions, elisions, and corruptions which German words undergo, with the multitude of terms in common use derived from the Gothic, Greek, Latin, and Italian, give it almost the character of

a different language. It was Hebel's mother-tongue, and his poetic faculty always returned to its use with a fresh delight which insured success. His *German* poems are inferior in all respects.

Let us first glance at the poet's life,—a life uneventful, perhaps, yet interesting from the course of its development. He was born in Basle, in May, 1760, in the house of Major Iselin, where both his father and mother were at service. The former, a weaver by trade, afterwards became a soldier, and accompanied the Major to Flanders, France, and Corsica. He had picked up a good deal of stray knowledge on his campaigns, and had a strong natural taste for poetry. The qualities of the son were inherited from him rather than from the mother, of whom we know nothing more than that she was a steady, industrious person. The parents lived during the winter in the little village of Hausen, in the Black Forest, but with the approach of spring returned to Basle for their summer service in Major Iselin's house.

The boy was but a year old when his father died, and the discipline of such a restless spirit as he exhibited in early childhood seems to have been a task almost beyond the poor widow's powers. An incorrigible spirit of mischief possessed him. He was an arrant scape-grace, plundering cupboards, gardens, and orchards, lifting the gates of mill-races by night, and playing a thousand other practical and not always innocent jokes. Neither counsel nor punishment availed, and the entire weight of his good qualities, as a counterbalance, barely sufficed to prevent him from losing the patrons whom his bright, eager, inquisitive mind attracted. Something of this was undoubtedly congenital, and there are indications that the strong natural impulse, held in check only by a powerful will and a watchful conscience, was the torment of his life. In his later years, when he filled the posts of Ecclesiastical Counsellor and Professor in the Gymnasium at Carlsruhe, the phrenologist Gall, in a scientific *séance*, made an examination of his head. "A most remarkable development of"–, said Gall, abruptly breaking off, nor could he be induced to complete the sentence. Hebel, however, frankly exclaimed,—"You certainly mean the thievish propensity. I know I have it by nature, for I continually feel its suggestions." What a picture is presented by this confession! A pure, honest, and honorable life, won by a battle with evil desires, which, commencing with birth, ceased their assaults only at the brink of the grave! A daily struggle, and a daily victory!

Hebel lost his mother in his thirteenth year, but was fortunate in possessing generous patrons, who contributed enough to the slender means he inherited to enable him to enter the Gymnasium at Carlsruhe. Leaving this institution with the reputation of a good classical scholar, he entered the University of Erlangen as a student of theology. Here his jovial, reckless temperament, finding a congenial atmosphere, so got the upperhand that he barely succeeded in passing the necessary examination, in 1780. At the end of two years, during which time he supported himself as a private tutor, he was ordained, and received a meagre situation as teacher in the Academy at Lörrach, with a salary of one hundred and forty dollars a year! Laboring patiently in this humble position for eight years, he was at last rewarded by being transferred to the Gymnasium at Carlsruhe, with the rank of Sub-Deacon. Hither, the Markgraf Frederick of Baden, attracted by the warmth, simplicity, and genial humor of the man, came habitually to listen to his sermons. He found himself, without seeking it, in the path of promotion, and his life thenceforth was a series of sure and moderate successes. His expectations, indeed, were so humble that they were always exceeded by his rewards. When Baden became a Grand Duchy, with a constitutional form of government, it required much persuasion to induce him to accept the rank of Prelate, with a seat in the Upper House. His friends were disappointed, that, with his readiness and fluent power of speech, he took so little part in the legislative proceedings. To one who reproached him for this timidity he naively wrote,—"Oh, you have a right to talk: you are the son of Pastor N. in X. Before you were twelve years old, you heard yourself called *Mr.*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.