VARIOUS

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ON THE VICISSITUDES OF KEATS'S FAME

[Joseph Severn, the author of the following paper, scarcely needs introduction to the readers of the "Atlantic Monthly"; but no one will object to reperusing, in connection with his valuable contribution, this extract from the Preface to "Adonais," which Shelley wrote in 1821:—

"He [Keats] was accompanied to Rome and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, 'almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect, to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend.' Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my full tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the

recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' His conduct is a noble augury of the success of his future career. May the unextinguished spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against oblivion for his name!"

Mr. Severn is residing in Rome at the present time, from which city he transmits this paper.]

I well remember being struck with the clear and independent manner which Washington Allston, in the year 1818, expressed his opinion of John Keats's verse, when the young poet's writings first appeared, amid the ridicule of most English readers, Mr. Allston was at that time the only discriminating judge among the strangers to Keats who were residing abroad, and he took occasion to emphasize in my hearing his opinion of the early effusions of the young poet in words like these:—"They are crude materials of real poetry, and Keats is sure to become a great poet."

It is a singular pleasure to the few in personal friends of Keats in England (who may still have to defend him against the old and worn-out slanders) that in America he has always had a solid fame, independent of the old English prejudices.

Here in Rome, as I write, I look back through forty years of worldly changes to behold Keats's dear image again in memory. It seems as if he should be living with me now, inasmuch as I never could understand his strange and contradictory death, his falling away so suddenly from health and strength. He had

that fine compactness of person which we regard as the promise of longevity, and no mind was ever more exultant in youthful feeling. I cannot summon a sufficient reason why in one short year he should have been thus cut off, "with all his imperfections on his head." Was it that he lived too soon,—that the world he sought was not ready for him?

For more than the year I am now dwelling on, he had fostered a tender and enduring love for a young girl nearly of his own age, and this love was reciprocal, not only in itself, but in all the worldly advantages arising from it of fortune on her part and fame on his. It was encouraged by the sole parent of the lady; and the fond mother was happy in seeing her daughter so betrothed, and pleased that her inheritance would fall to so worthy an object as Keats. This was all well settled in the minds and hearts of the mutual friends of both parties, when poor Keats, soon after the death of his younger brother, unaccountably showed signs of consumption; at least, he himself thought so, though the doctors were widely undecided about it. By degrees it began to be deemed needful that the young poet should go to Italy, even to preserve his life. This was at last accomplished, but too late; and now that I am reviewing all the progress of his illness from his first symptoms, I cannot but think his life might have been preserved by an Italian sojourn, if it had been adopted in time, and if circumstances had been improved as they presented themselves. And, further, if he had had the good fortune to go to America, which he partly contemplated before

the death of his younger brother, not only would his life and health have been preserved, but his early fame would have been insured. He would have lived independent of the London world, which was striving to drag him down in his poetic career, and adding to the sufferings which I consider the immediate cause of his early death.

In Italy he always shrank from speaking in direct terms of the actual things which were killing him. Certainly the "Blackwood" attack was one of the least of his miseries, for he never even mentioned it to me. The greater trouble which was ingulfing him he signified in a hundred ways. Was it to be wondered at, that at the time when the happiest life was presented to his view, when it was arranged that he was to marry a young person of beauty and fortune, when the little knot of friends who valued him saw such a future for the beloved poet, and he himself, with generous, unselfish feelings, looked forward to it more delighted on their account,—was it to be wondered at, that, on the appearance of consumption, his ardent mind should have sunk into despair? He seemed struck down from the highest happiness to the lowest misery. He felt crushed at the prospect of being cut off at the early age of twenty-four, when the cup was at his lips, and he was beginning to drink that draught of delight which was to last his mortal life through, which would have insured to him the happiness of home, (happiness he had never felt, for he was an orphan,) and which was to be a barrier for him against a cold and (to him) a malignant world.

He kept continually in his hand a polished, oval, white carnelian, the gift of his widowing love, and at times it seemed his only consolation, the only thing left him in this world clearly tangible. Many letters which he was unable to read came for him. Some he allowed me to read to him; others were too worldly, —for, as he said, he had "already journeyed far beyond them." There were two letters, I remember, for which he had no words, but he made me understand that I was to place them on his heart within his winding-sheet.

Those bright falcon eyes, which I had known only in joyous intercourse, while revelling in books and Nature, or while he was reciting his own poetry, now beamed an unearthly brightness and a penetrating steadfastness that could not be looked at. It was not the fear of death,—on the contrary, he earnestly wished to die,—but it was the fear of lingering on and on, that now distressed him; and this was wholly on my account. Amidst the world of emotions that were crowding and increasing as his end approached, I could always see that his generous concern for me in my isolated position at Rome was one of his greatest cares. In a little basket of medicines I had bought at Gravesend at his request there was a bottle of laudanum, and this I afterwards found was destined by him "to close his mortal career," when no hope was left, and to prevent a long, lingering death, for my poor sake. When the dismal time came, and Sir James Clark was unable to encounter Keats's penetrating look and eager demand, he insisted on having the bottle, which I had already put away.

Then came the most touching scenes. He now explained to me the exact procedure of his gradual dissolution, enumerated my deprivations and toils, and dwelt upon the danger to my life, and certainly to my fortunes, from my continued attendance upon him. One whole day was spent in earnest representations of this sort, to which, at the same time that they wrung my heart to hear and his to utter, I was obliged to oppose a firm resistance. On the second day, his tender appeal turned to despair, in all the power of his ardent imagination and bursting heart.

From day to day, after this time, he would always demand of Sir James Clark, "How long is this *posthumous* life of mine to last?" On finding me inflexible in my purpose of remaining with him, he became calm, and tranquilly said that he was sure why I held up so patiently was owing to my Christian faith, and that he was disgusted with himself for ever appearing before me in such savage guise; that he now felt convinced how much every human being required the support of religion, that he might die decently. "Here am I," said he, "with desperation in death that would disgrace the commonest fellow. Now, my dear Severn, I am sure, if you could get some of the works of Jeremy Taylor to read to me, I might become *really* a Christian, and leave this world in peace." Most fortunately, I was able to procure the "Holy Living and Dying." I read some passages to him, and prayed with him, and I could tell by the grasp of his dear hand that his mind was reviving. He was a great lover of Jeremy Taylor, and it did not seem to require much effort in him to embrace the Holy Spirit

in these comforting works.

Thus he gained strength of mind from day to day just in proportion as his poor body grew weaker and weaker. At last I had the consolation of finding him calm, trusting, and more prepared for his end than I was. He tranquilly rehearsed to me what would be the process of his dying, what I was to do, and how I was to *bear it*. He was even minute in his details, evidently rejoicing that his death was at hand. In all he then uttered he breathed a simple, Christian spirit; indeed, I always think that he died a Christian, that "Mercy" was trembling on his dying lips, and that his tortured soul was received by those Blessed Hands which could alone welcome it.[1]

After the death of Keats, my countrymen in Rome seemed to vie with one another in evincing the greatest kindness towards me. I found myself in the midst of persons who admired and encouraged my beautiful pursuit of painting, in which I was then indeed but a very poor student, but with my eyes opening and my soul awakening to a new region of Art, and beginning to feel

[1] Whilst this was passing at Rome, another scene of the tragedy was enacting in London. The violence of the Tory party in attacking Keats had increased after his leaving England, but he had found able defenders, and amongst them Mr. John Scott, the editor of the "Champion," who published a powerful vindication of Keats, with a denunciation of the party-spirit of his critics. This led to a challenge from Mr. Scott to Mr. Lockhart, who was then one of the editors of "Blackwood." The challenge was shifted over to a Mr. Christie, and he and Mr. Scott fought at Chalk Farm, with the tragic result of the death of Keats's defender,—and this within a few days of the poet's death at Rome. The deplorable catastrophe was not without its compensations, for ever after there was a more chastened feeling in both parties.

the wings growing for artistic flights I had always been dreaming about.

In all this, however, there was a solitary drawback: there were few Englishmen at Rome who knew Keats's works, and I could scarcely persuade any one to make the effort to read them, such was the prejudice against him as a poet; but when his gravestone was placed, with his own expressive line, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," then a host started up, not of admirers, but of scoffers, and a silly jest was often repeated in my hearing, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water, and *his works in milk and water*"; and this I was condemned to hear for years repeated, as though it had been a pasquinade; but I should explain that it was from those who were not aware that I was the friend of Keats.

At the first Easter after his death I had a singular encounter with the late venerable poet, Samuel Rogers, at the table of Sir George Beaumont, the distinguished amateur artist. Perhaps in compliment to my friendship for Keats, the subject of his death was mentioned by Sir George, and he asked Mr. Rogers if he had been acquainted with the young poet in England. Mr. Rogers replied, that he had had more acquaintance than he liked, for the poems were tedious enough, and the author had come upon him several times for money. This was an intolerable falsehood, and I could not restrain myself until I had corrected him, which I did with my utmost forbearance,—explaining that Sir. Rogers must have mistaken some other person for Keats,—that I was positive

my friend had never done such a thing in any shape, or even had occasion to do it,—that he possessed a small independence in money, and *a large one in mind*.

The old poet received the correction, with much kindness, and thanked me for so effectually setting him right. Indeed, this encounter was the groundwork of a long and to me advantageous friendship between us. I soon discovered that it was the principle of his sarcastic wit not only to sacrifice all truth to it, but even all his friends, and that he did not care to know any who would not allow themselves to be abused for the purpose of lighting up his breakfast with sparkling wit, though not quite, indeed, at the expense of the persons then present. I well remember, on one occasion afterwards, Mr. Rogers was entertaining us with a volley of sarcasms upon a disagreeable lawyer, who made pretensions to knowledge and standing not to be borne; on this occasion the old poet went on, not only to the end of the breakfast, but to the announcement of the very man himself on an accidental visit, and then, with a bland smile and a cordial shake of the hand, he said to him, "My dear fellow, we have all been talking about you up to this very minute,"—and looking at his company still at table, and with a significant wink, he, with extraordinary adroitness and experienced tact, repeated many of the good things, reversing the meaning of them, and giving us the enjoyment of the *double-entendre.* The visitor was charmed, nor even dreamed of the ugliness of his position. This incident gave me a painful and repugnant impression of Mr. Rogers, yet

no doubt it was after the manner of his time, and such as had been the fashion in Walpole's and Johnson's days.

I should be unjust to the venerable poet not to add, that notwithstanding what is here related of him, be oftentimes showed himself the generous and noble-hearted man. I think that in all my long acquaintance with him he evinced a kind of indirect regret that he had commenced with me in such an ugly attack on dear Keats, whose fame, when I went to England in 1838, was not only well established, but was increasing from day to day, and Mr. Rogers was often at the pains to tell me so, and to relate the many histories of poets who had been less fortunate than Keats.

It was in the year of the Reform Bill, 1830, that I first heard of the Paris edition (Galignani's) of Keats's works, and I confess that I was quite taken by surprise, nor could I really believe the report until I saw the book with the engraved portrait from my own drawing; for, after all the vicissitudes of Keats's fame which I had witnessed, I could not easily understand his becoming the poet of "the million." I had now the continued gratification in Rome of receiving frequent visits from the admirers of Keats and Shelley, who sought every way of showing kindness to me. One great cause of this change, no doubt, was the rise of all kinds of mysticism in religious opinions, which often associated themselves with Shelley's poetry, and I then for the first time heard him named as the only really religious poet of the age. To the growing fame of Keats I can attribute some of the

pleasantest and most valuable associations of my after-life, as it included almost the whole society of gifted young men at that time called "Young England." Here I may allude to the extraordinary change I now observed in the manners and morals of Englishmen generally: the foppish love of dress was in a great measure abandoned, and all intellectual pursuits were caught up with avidity, and even made fashionable.

The most remarkable example of the strange capriciousness of Keats's fame which fell under my personal observation occurred in my later Roman years, during the painful visit of Sir Walter Scott to Rome in the winding-up days of his eventful life, when he was broken down not only by incurable illness and premature old age, but also by the accumulated misfortunes of fatal speculations and the heavy responsibility of making up all with the pen then trembling in his failing hand.

I had been indirectly made known to him by his favorite ward and *protégée*, the late Lady Northampton, who, accustomed to write to him monthly, often made mention of me; for I was on terms of friendship with all her family, an intimacy which in great part arose from the delight she always had in Keats's poetry, being herself a poetess, and a most enlightened and liberal critic.

When Sir Walter arrived, he received me like an old and attached friend; indeed, he involuntarily tried to make me fill up the terrible void then recently created by the death of Lady Northampton at the age of thirty-seven years. I went at his request to breakfast with him every morning, when he

invariably commenced talking of his lost friend, of her beauty, her singularly varied accomplishments, of his growing delight in watching her from a child in the Island of Mull, and of his making her so often the model of his most successful female characters, the Lady of the Lake and Flora MacIvor particularly. Then he would stop short to lament her unlooked-for death with tears and groans of bitterness such as I had never before witnessed in any one,—his head sinking down on his heaving breast. When he revived, (and this agonizing scene took place every morning,) he implored me to pity him, and not heed his weakness,—that in his great misfortunes, in all their complications, he had looked forward to Rome and his dear Lady Northampton as his last and certain hope of repose; she was to be his comfort in the winding-up of life's pilgrimage: now, on his arrival, his life and fortune almost exhausted, she was gone! *gone!* After these pathetic outpourings, he would gradually recover his old cheerfulness, his expressive gray eye would sparkle even in tears, and soon that wonderful power he had for description would show itself, when he would often stand up to enact the incident of which he spoke, so ardent was he, and so earnest in the recital.

Each morning, at his request, I took for his examination some little picture or sketch that might interest him, and amongst the rest a picture of Keats, (now in the National Portrait Gallery of London,) but this I was surprised to find was the only production of mine that seemed not to interest him; he remained silent about it, but on all the others he was ready with interesting comments

and speculations. Observing this, and wondering within myself at his apathy with regard to the young lost poet, as I had reason to be proud of Keats's growing fame, I ventured to talk about him, and of the extraordinary caprices of that fame, which at last had found its resting-place in the hearts of *all real lovers of poetry.*

I soon perceived that I was touching on an embarrassing theme, and I became quite bewildered on seeing Miss Scott turn away her face, already crimsoned with emotion. Sir Walter then falteringly remarked, "Yes, yes, the world finds out these things *for itself at last,*" and taking my hand, closed the interview,—our last, for the following night he was taken seriously ill, and I never saw him again, as his physician immediately hurried him away from Rome.

The incomprehensibleness of this scene induced me to mention it on the same day to Mr. Woodhouse, the active and discriminating friend of Keats, who had collected every written record of the poet, and to whom we owe the preservation of many of the finest of his productions. He was astonished at my recital, and at my being ignorant of the fact that *Sir Walter Scott was a prominent contributor to the Review which through its false and malicious criticisms had always been considered to have caused the death of Keats.*

My surprise was as great as his at my having lived all those seventeen years in Rome and been so removed from the great world, that this, a fact so interesting to me to know, had never reached me. I had been unconsciously the painful means

of disturbing poor old Sir Walter with a subject so sore and unwelcome that I could only conclude it must have been the immediate cause of his sudden illness. Nothing could be farther from my nature than to have been guilty of such seemingly wanton inhumanity; but I had no opportunity afterwards of explaining the truth, or of justifying my conduct in any way.

This was the last striking incident connected with Keats's fame which fell within my own experience, and perhaps may have been the last, or one of the last, symptoms of that party-spirit which in the artificial times of George IV. was so common even among poets in their treatment of one another,—they assuming to be mere politicians, and striving to be oblivious of their heart-ennobling pursuit.

It only remains for me to speak of my return to Rome in 1861, after an absence of twenty years, and of the favorable change and the enlargement during that time of Keats's fame, —not as manifested by new editions of his works, or by the contests of publishers about him, or by the way in which most new works are illustrated with quotations from him, or by the fact that some favorite lines of his have passed into proverbs, but by the touching evidence of his *silent grave*. That grave, which I can remember as once the object of ridicule, has now become the poetic shrine of the world's pilgrims who care and strive to live in the happy and imaginative region of poetry. The head-stone, having twice sunk, owing to its faulty foundation, has been twice renewed by loving strangers, and each time, as I am informed,

these strangers were Americans. Here they do not strew flowers, as was the wont of olden times, but they pluck everything that is green and living on the grave of the poet. The *Custode* tells me, that, notwithstanding all his pains in sowing and planting, he cannot "meet the great consumption." Latterly an English lady, alarmed at the rapid disappearance of the verdure on and around the grave, actually left an annual sum to renew it. When the *Custode* complained to me of the continued thefts, and asked what he was to do, I replied, "Sow and plant twice as much; extend the poet's domain; for, as it was so scanty during his short life, surely it ought to be afforded to him twofold in his grave."

Here on my return to Rome, all kinds of happy associations with the poet surround me, but none so touching as my recent meeting with his sister. I had known her in her childhood, during my first acquaintance with Keats, but had never seen her since. I knew of her marriage to a distinguished Spanish patriot, Señor Llanos, and of her permanent residence in Spain; but it was reserved for me to have the felicity of thus accidentally meeting her, like a new-found sister, in Rome. This city has an additional sacredness for both of us as the closing scene of her illustrious brother's life, and I am held by her and her charming family in loving regard as the last faithful friend of the poet. That I may indulge the pleasures of memory and unite them with the sympathy of present incidents, I am now engaged on a picture of the poet's grave, and am treating it with all the picturesque advantages which the antique locality gives me, as

well as the elevated associations which this poetic shrine inspires. The classic story of Endymion being the subject of Keats's principal poem, I have introduced a young Roman shepherd sleeping against the head-stone with his flock about him, whilst the moon from behind the pyramid illuminates his figure and serves to realize the poet's favorite theme in the presence of his grave. This interesting incident is not fanciful, but is what I actually saw on an autumn evening at Monte Tertanio the year following the poet's death.

* * * * *

A SPASM OF SENSE

The conjunction of amiability and sense in the same individual renders that individual's position in a world like this very disagreeable. Amiability without sense, or sense without amiability, runs along smoothly enough. The former takes things as they are. It receives all glitter as pure gold, and does not see that it is custom alone which varnishes wrong with a shiny coat of respectability, and glorifies selfishness with the aureole of sacrifice. It sets down all collisions as foreordained, and never observes that they occur because people will not smooth off their angles, but sharpen them, and not only sharpen them, but run them into you. It forgets that the Lord made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions. It attributes all the confusion and inaptitude which it finds to the nature of things, and never suspects that the Devil goes around in the night, thrusting the square men into the round places, and the round men into the square places. It never notices that the reason why the rope does not unwind easily is because one strand is a world too large and another a world too small, and so it sticks where it ought to roll, and rolls where it ought to stick. It makes sweet, faint efforts with tender fingers and palpitating heart to oil the wheels and polish up the machine, and does not for a moment imagine that the hitch is owing to original incompatibility of parts and purposes, that the whole machine must be pulled to pieces and made over,

and that nothing will be done by standing patiently by, trying to soothe away the creaking and wheezing and groaning of the laboring, lumbering thing, by laying on a little drop of sweet-oil with a pin-feather. As it does not see any of these things that are happening before its eyes, of course it is shallowly happy. And on the other hand, he who does see them and is not amiable is grimly and Grendally happy. He likes to say disagreeable things, and all this dismay and disaster scatter disagreeable things broadcast along his path, so that all he has to do is to pick them up and say them. Therefore this world is his paradise. He would not know what to do with himself in a world where matters were sorted and folded and laid away ready for you when you wanted them. He likes to see human affairs mixing themselves up in irretrievable confusion. If he detects a symptom of straightening, it shall go hard but he will thrust in his own fingers and snarl a thread or two. He is delighted to find dogged duty and eager desire butting each other. All the irresistible forces crashing against all the immovable bodies give him no shock, only a pleasant titillation. He is never so happy as when men are taking hold of things by the blade, and cutting their hands, and losing blood. He tells them of it, but not in order to relieve so much as to "aggravate" them; and he does aggravate them, and is satisfied. Oh, but he is an aggravating person!

It is you, you who combine the heart of a seraph with the head of a cherub, who know what trouble is. You see where the shoe pinches, but your whole soul relucts from pointing out the tender

place. You see why things go wrong, and how they might be set right; but you have a mortal dread of being thought meddlesome and impertinent, or cold and cruel, or restless and arrogant, if you attempt to demolish the wrong or rebel against the custom. When you draw your bow at an abuse, people think you are trying to bring down religion and propriety and humanity. But your conscience will not let you see the abuse raving to and fro over the earth without taking aim; so, either way, you are cut to the heart.

I love men. I adore women. I value their good opinion. There is much in them to applaud and imitate. There is much in them to elicit faith and reverence. If, only, one could see their good qualities alone, or, seeing their vapid and vicious ones, could contemplate them with no touch of tenderness for the owner, life might indeed be lovely. As it is, while I am at one moment rapt in enthusiastic admiration of the strength and grace, the power and pathos, the hidden resources, the profound capabilities of my race, at another, I could wish, Nero-like, that all mankind were concentrated in one person and all womankind in another, that I might take them, after the fashion of rural schoolmasters, and shake their heads together. Condemnation and reproach are not in my line; but there is so much in the world that merits condemnation and reproach and receives indifference and even reward, there is so much acquiescence in wrong doing and wrong thinking, so much letting things jolt along in the same rut wherein we and they were born, without inquiring whether, lifted into

another groove, they might not run more easily, that, if one who does see the difficulty holds his peace, the very stones will cry out. However gladly one would lie on a bed of roses and glide silken-sailed down the stream of life, how exquisitely painful soever it may be to say what you fear and feel may give pain, it is only a Sybarite who sets ease above righteousness, only a coward who misses victory through dread of defeat.

There are many false ideas afloat regarding womanly duties. I do not design now to open anew any vulgar, worn-out, woman's-rightsy question. Every remark that could be made on that theme has been made—but one, and that I will take the liberty to make now in a single sentence and close the discussion. It is this: the man who gave rubber-boots to women did more to elevate woman than all the theorizers, male or female, that ever were born.

But without any suspicious lunges into that dubious region which lies outside of woman's universally acknowledged "sphere," (a blight rest upon the word!) there is within the pale, within the boundary-line which the most conservative never dreamed of questioning, room for a great divergence of ideas. Now divergence of ideas does not necessarily imply fighting at short range. People may adopt a course of conduct which you do not approve; yet you may feel it your duty to make no open animadversion. Circumstances may have suggested such a course to them, or forced it upon them; and perhaps, considering all things, it is the best they can do. But when,

encouraged by your silence, they publish it to the world, not only as relatively, but intrinsically, the best and most desirable, —when, not content with swallowing it themselves as medicine, they insist on ramming it down your throat as food,—it is time to buckle on your armor and have at them.

A little book, published by the Tract Society, called "The Mother and her Work," has been doing just this thing. It is a modest little book. It makes no pretensions to literary or other superiority. It has much excellent counsel, pious reflection, and comfortable suggestion. Being a little book, it costs but little, and it will console, refresh, and instruct weary, conscientious mothers, and so have a large circulation, a wide influence, and do an immense amount of mischief. For the Evil One in his senses never sends out poison labelled "POISON." He mixes it in with great quantities of innocent and nutritive flour and sugar. He shapes it in cunning shapes of pigs and lambs and hearts and birds and braids. He tints it with gay hues of green and pink and rose, and puts it in the confectioner's glass windows, where you buy—what? Poison? No, indeed! Candy, at prices to suit the purchasers. So this good and pious little book has such a preponderance of goodness and piety that the poison in it will not be detected, except by chemical analysis. It will go down sweetly, like grapes of Beulah. Nobody will suspect he is poisoned; but just so far as it reaches and touches, the social dyspepsia will be aggravated.

I submit a few atoms of the poison revealed by careful

examination.

"The mother's is a *most honorable* calling. 'What a pity that one so gifted should be so tied down!' remarks a superficial observer, as she looks upon the mother of a young and increasing family. The pale, thin face and feeble step, bespeaking the multiplied and wearying cares of domestic life, elicit an earnest sympathy from the many, thoughtlessly flitting across her pathway, and the remark passes from mouth to mouth, 'How I pity her! What a shame it is! She is completely worn down with so many children.' It may be, however, that this young mother is one who needs and asks no pity," etc.

"But the *true mother* yields herself uncomplainingly, yea, cheerfully, to the wholesome privation, solitude, and self-denial allotted her…..Was she fond of travelling, of visiting the wonderful in Nature and in Art, of mingling in new and often-varying scenes? Now she has found 'an abiding city,' and no allurements are strong enough to tempt her thence. Had society charms for her, and in the social circle and the festive throng were her chief delights? Now she stays at home, and the gorgeous saloon and brilliant assemblage give place to the nursery and the baby. Was she devoted to literary pursuits? Now the library is seldom visited, the cherished studies are neglected, the rattle and the doll are substituted for the pen. Her piano is silent, while she chants softly and sweetly the soothing lullaby. Her dress can last another season now, and the hat—oh, she does not care, if it is not in the latest mode, for she has a baby to look after, and has no

time for herself. Even the ride and the walk are given up, perhaps too often, with the excuse, 'Baby-tending is exercise enough for me.' Her whole life is reversed."

The assumption is that all this is just as it should be. The thoughtless person may fancy that it is a pity; but it is not a pity. This is a model mother and a model state of things. It is not simply to be submitted to, not simply to be patiently borne; it is to be aspired to as the noblest and holiest state.

That is the strychnine. You may counsel people to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and comfort, encourage, and strengthen them by so doing; but when you tell them that to be robbed and plundered is of itself a priceless blessing, the highest stage of human development, you do them harm; because, in general, falsehood is always harmful, and because, in particular, so far as you influence them at all, you prevent them from taking measures to stop the wrong-doing. You ought to counsel them to bear with Christian resignation what they cannot help; but you ought with equal fervor to counsel them to look around and see if there are not many things which they can help, and if there are, by all means to help them. What is inevitable comes to us from God, no matter how many hands it passes through; but submission to unnecessary evils is cowardice or laziness; and extolling of the evil as good is sheer ignorance, or perversity, or servility. Even the ills that must be borne should be borne under protest, lest patience degenerate into slavery. Christian character is never formed by acquiescence in or apotheosis of wrong.

The principle that underlies these extracts, and makes them ministrative of evil, is the principle that a woman can benefit her children by sacrificing herself. It teaches, that pale, thin faces and feeble steps are excellent things in young mothers,—provided they are gained by maternal duties. We infer that it is meet, right, and the bounden duty of such to give up society, reading, riding, music, and become indifferent to dress, cultivation, recreation, to everything, in short, except taking care of the children. It is all just as wrong as it can be. It is wrong morally; it is wrong socially; wrong in principle, wrong in practice. It is a blunder as well as a crime, for it works woe. It is a wrong means to accomplish an end; and it does not accomplish the end, after all, but demolishes it.

On the contrary, the duty and dignity of a mother require that she should never subordinate herself to her children. When she does so, she does it to their manifest injury and her own. Of course, if illness or accident demand unusual care, she does well to grow thin and pale in bestowing unusual care. But when a mother in the ordinary routine of life grows thin and pale, gives up riding, reading, and the amusements and occupations of life, there is a wrong somewhere, and her children shall reap the fruits of it. The father and mother are the head of the family, the most comely and the most honorable part. They cannot benefit their children by descending from their Heaven-appointed places, and becoming perpetual and exclusive feet and hands. This is the great fault of American mothers. They swamp

themselves in a slough of self-sacrifice. They are smothered in their own sweetness. They dash into domesticity with an impetus and abandonment that annihilate themselves. They sink into their families like a light in a poisonous well, and are extinguished.

One hears much complaint of the direction and character of female education. It is dolefully affirmed that young ladies learn how to sing operas, but not how to keep house,—that they can conjugate Greek verbs, but cannot make bread,—that they are good for pretty toying, but not for homely using. Doubtless there is foundation for this remark, or it would never have been made. But I have been in the East, and the West, and the North, and the South; I know that I have seen the best society, and I am sure I have seen very bad, if not the worst; and I never met a woman whose superior education, whose piano, whose pencil, whose German, or French, or any school-accomplishments, or even whose novels, clashed with her domestic duties. I have read of them in books; I did hear of one once; but I never met one,—not one. I have seen women, through love of gossip, through indolence, through sheer famine of mental *pabulum*, leave undone things that ought to be done, —rush to the assembly, the lecture-room, the sewing-circle, or vegetate in squalid, shabby, unwholesome homes; but I never saw education run to ruin. So it seems to me that we are needlessly alarmed in that direction.

But I have seen scores and scores of women leave school, leave their piano and drawing and fancy-work, and all manner

of pretty and pleasant things, and marry and bury themselves. You hear of them about six times in ten years, and there is a baby each time. They crawl out of the farther end of the ten years, sallow and wrinkled and lank,—teeth gone, hair gone, roses gone, plumpness gone,—freshness, and vivacity, and sparkle, everything that is dewy, and springing, and spontaneous, gone, gone, gone forever. This our Tract-Society book puts very prettily. "She wraps herself in the robes of infantile simplicity, and, burying her womanly nature in the tomb of childhood, patiently awaits the sure-coming resurrection in the form of a noble, high-minded, world-stirring son, or a virtuous, lovely daughter. The nursery is the mother's chrysalis. Let her abide for a little season, and she shall emerge triumphantly, with ethereal wings and a happy flight."

But the nursery has no business to be the mother's chrysalis. God never intended her to wind herself up into a cocoon. If He had, He would have made her a caterpillar. She has no right to bury her womanly nature in the tomb of childhood. It will surely be required at her hands. It was given her to sun itself in the broad, bright day, to root itself fast and firm in the earth, to spread itself wide to the sky, that her children in their infancy and youth and maturity, that her husband in his strength and his weakness, that her kinsfolk and neighbors and the poor of the land, the halt and the blind and all Christ's little ones, may sit under its shadow with great delight. No woman has a right to sacrifice her own soul to problematical, high-minded, world-

stirring sons, and virtuous, lovely daughters. To be the mother of such, one might perhaps pour out one's life in draughts so copious that the fountain should run dry; but world-stirring people are extremely rare. One in a century is a liberal allowance. The overwhelming probabilities are, that her sons will be lawyers and shoemakers and farmers and commission-merchants, her daughters nice, "smart," pretty girls, all good, honest, kind-hearted, commonplace people, not at all world-stirring, not at all the people one would glory to merge one's self in. If the mother is not satisfied with this, if she wants them otherwise, she must be otherwise. The surest way to have high-minded children is to be high-minded yourself. A man cannot burrow in his counting-room for ten or twenty of the best years of his life, and come out as much of a man and as little of a mole as he went in. But the twenty years should have ministered to his manhood, instead of trampling on it. Still less can a woman bury herself in her nursery, and come out without harm. But the years should have done her great good. This world is not made for a tomb, but a garden. You are to be a seed, not a death. Plant yourself, and you will sprout. Bury yourself, and you can only decay. For a dead opportunity there is no resurrection. The only enjoyment, the only use to be attained in this world, must be attained on the wing. Each day brings its own happiness, its own benefit; but it has none to spare. What escapes to-day is escaped forever. To-morrow has no overflow to atone for the lost yesterdays.

Few things are more painful to look upon than the self-

renunciation, the self-abnegation of mothers,—painful both for its testimony and its prophecy. Its testimony is of over-care, over-work, over-weariness, the abuse of capacities that were bestowed for most sacred uses, an utter waste of most pure and life-giving waters. Its prophecy is of early decline and decadence, forfeiture of position and power, and worst, perhaps, of all, irreparable loss and grievous wrong to the children for whom all is sacrificed.

God gives to the mother supremacy in her family. It belongs to her to maintain it. This cannot be done without exertion. The temptation to come down from her throne and become a mere hewer of wood, and drawer of water is very strong. It is so much easier to work with the hands than with the head. One can chop sticks all day serenely unperplexed. But to administer a government demands observation and knowledge and judgment and resolution and inexhaustible patience. Yet, however uneasy lies the head that wears the crown of womanhood, that crown cannot be bartered away for any baser wreath without infinite harm. In both cases there must be sacrifice; but in the one case it is unto death, in the other unto life. If the mother stands on high ground, she brings her children up to her own level; if she sinks, they sink with her.

To maintain her rank, no exertion is too great, no means too small. Dress is one of the most obvious things to a child. If the mother wears cheap or shabby or ill-assorted clothes, while the children's are fine and harmonious, it is impossible that they should not receive the impression that they are of more

consequence than their mother. Therefore, for her children's sake, if not for her own, the mother should always be well-dressed. Her baby, so far as it is concerned in the matter, instead of being an excuse for a faded bonnet, should be an inducement for a fresh one. It is not a question of riches or poverty; it is a thing of relations. It is simply that the mother's dress—her morning and evening and street and church dress—should be quite as good as, and if there is any difference, better than her child's. It is of no manner of consequence how a child is clad, provided only its health be not injured, its taste corrupted, or its self-respect wounded. Children look prettier in the cheapest and simplest materials than in the richest and most elaborate. But how common is it to see the children gayly caparisoned in silk and feathers and flounces, while the mother is enveloped in an atmosphere of cottony fadiness! One would take the child to be mistress and the mother a servant. "But," the mother says, "I do not care for dress, and Caroline does. She, poor child, would be mortified not to be dressed like the other children." Then do you teach her better. Plant in her mind a higher standard of self-respect. Don't tell her you cannot afford to do for her thus and thus; that will scatter premature thorns along her path; but say that you do not approve of it; it is proper for her to dress in such and such a way. And be so nobly and grandly a woman that she shall have faith in you.

It is essential also that the mother have sense, intelligence, comprehension.

As much as she can add of education and accomplishments will increase her stock in trade. Her reading and riding and music, instead of being neglected for her children's sake, should for their sake be scrupulously cultivated. Of the two things, it is a thousand times better that they should be attended by a nurserymaid in their infancy than by a feeble, timid, inefficient matron in their youth. The mother can oversee half a dozen children with a nurse; but she needs all her strength, all her mind, her own eyes, and ears, and quick perceptions, and delicate intuition, and calm self-possession, when her sturdy boys and wild young girls are leaping and bounding and careering into their lusty life. All manner of novel temptations beset them,—perils by night and perils by day,—perils in the house and by the way. Their fierce and hungry young souls, rioting in awakening consciousness, ravening for pleasure, strong and tumultuous, snatch eagerly at every bait. They want then a mother able to curb, and guide, and rule them; and only a mother who commands their respect can do this. Let them see her sought for her social worth,—let them see that she is familiar with all the conditions of their life,—that her vision is at once broader and keener than theirs,—that her feet have travelled along the paths they are just beginning to explore,—that she knows all the phases alike of their strength and their weakness,—and her influence over them is unbounded. Let them see her uncertain, uncomfortable, hesitating, fearful without discrimination, leaning where she ought to support, interfering

without power of suggesting, counselling, but not controlling, with no presence, no bearing, no experience, no prestige, and they will carry matters with a high hand. They will overrule her decisions, and their love will not be unmingled with contempt. It will be strong enough to prick them when they have done wrong, but not strong enough to keep them from doing wrong.

Nothing gives a young girl such vantage-ground in society and in life as a mother,—a sensible, amiable, brilliant, and commanding woman. Under the shelter of such a mother's wing, the neophyte is safe. This mother will attract to herself the wittiest and the wisest. The young girl can see society in its best phases, without being herself drawn out into its glare. She forms her own style on the purest models. She gains confidence, without losing modesty. Familiar with wisdom, she will not be dazed by folly. Having the opportunity to make observations before she begins to be observed, she does not become the prey of the weak and the wicked. Her taste is strengthened and refined, her standard elevates itself, her judgment acquires a firm basis. But cast upon her own resources, her own blank inexperience, at her first entrance into the world, with nothing to stand between her and what is openly vapid and covertly vicious, with no clear eye to detect for her the false and distinguish the true, no strong, firm, judicious hand to guide tenderly and undeviatingly, to repress without irritating and encourage without emboldening, what wonder that the peach-bloom loses its delicacy, deepening into *rouge* or hardening into brass, and

the happy young life is stranded on a cruel shore?

Hence it follows that our social gatherings consist, to so lamentable an extent, of pert youngsters or faded oldsters. Thence come those abominable "young people's parties," where a score or two or three of boys and girls meet and manage after their own hearts. Thence it happens that conversation seems to be taking its place among the Lost Arts, and the smallest of small talk reigns in its stead. Society, instead of giving its tone to the children, takes it from them, and since it cannot be juvenile, becomes insipid, and because it is too old to prattle, jabbers. Talkers are everywhere, but where are the men that say things? Where are the people that can be listened to and quoted? Where are the flinty people whose contact strikes fire? Where are the electric people who thrill a whole circle with sudden vitality? Where are the strong people who hedge themselves around with their individuality, and will be roused by no prince's kiss, but taken only by storm, yet, once captured, are sweeter than the dews of Hymettus? Where are the seers, the prophets, the Magi, who shall unfold for us the secrets of the sky and the seas, and the mystery of human hearts?

Yet fathers and mothers not only acquiesce in this state of things, they approve of it. They foster it. They are forward to annihilate themselves. They are careful to let their darlings go out alone, lest they be a restraint upon them,—as if that were not what parents were made for. If they were what they ought to be, the restraint would be not only wholesome, but impalpable.

The relation between parents and children should be such that pleasure shall not be quite perfect, unless shared by both. Parents ought to take such a tender, proud, intellectual interest in the pursuits and amusements of their children that the children shall feel the glory of the victory dimmed, unless their parents are there to witness it. If the presence of a sensible mother is felt as a restraint, it shows conclusively that restraint is needed.

A woman also needs self-cultivation, both physical and mental, in order to self-respect. Undoubtedly Diogenes glorified himself in his tub. But people in general, and women in universal, except the geniuses,—need the pomp of circumstance. A slouchy garb is both effect and cause of a slouchy mind. A woman who lets go her hold upon dress, literature, music, amusement, will almost inevitably slide down into a bog of muggy moral indolence. She will lose her spirit; and when the spirit is gone out of a woman, there is not much left of her. When she cheapens herself, she diminishes her value. Especially when the evanescent charms of mere youth are gone, when the responsibilities of life have left their mark upon her, is it indispensable that she attend to all the fitnesses of externals, and strengthen and polish all her mental and social qualities. By this I do not mean that women should allow themselves to lose their beauty as they increase in years. Men grow handsomer as they grow older. There is no reason, there ought to be no reason, why women should not. They will have a different kind of beauty, but it will be just as truly beauty and more impressive and attractive than the beauty of

sixteen. It is absurd to suppose that God has made women so that their glory passes away in half a dozen years. It is absurd to suppose that thought and feeling and passion and purpose, all holy instincts and impulses, can chisel away on a woman's face for thirty, forty, fifty years, and leave that face at the end worse than they found it. They found it a negative,—mere skin and bone, blood and muscle and fat. They can but leave their mark upon it, and the mark of good is good. Pity does not have the same finger-touch as revenge. Love does not hold the same brush as hatred. Sympathy and gratitude and benevolence have a different sign-manual from cruelty and carelessness and deceit. All these busy little sprites draw their fine lines, lay on their fine colors; the face lights up under their tiny hands; the prisoned soul shines clearer and clearer through, and there is the consecration and the poet's dream.

But such beauty is made, not born. Care and weariness and despondency come of themselves, and groove their own furrows. Hope and intelligence and interest and buoyancy must be wooed for their gentle and genial touch. A mother must battle against the tendencies that drag her downward. She must take pains to grow, or she will not grow. She must sedulously cultivate her mind and heart, or her old age will be ungraceful; and if she lose freshness without acquiring ripeness, she is indeed in an evil case. The first, the most important trust which God has given to any one is himself. To secure this trust, He has made us so that in no possible way can we benefit the world so much as by making the

most of ourselves. Indulging our whims, or, inordinately, our just tastes, is not developing ourselves; but neither is leaving our own fields to grow thorns and thistles, that we may plant somebody else's garden-plot, keeping our charge. Even were it possible for a mother to work well to her children in thus working ill to herself, I do not think she would be justified in doing it. Her account is not complete when she says, "Here are they whom thou hast given me." She must first say, "Here am I." But when it is seen that suicide is also child-murder, it must appear that she is under doubly heavy bonds for herself.

Husbands, moreover, have claims, though wives often ignore them. It is the commonest thing in the world to see parents tender of their children's feelings, alive to their wants, indulgent to their tastes, kind, considerate, and forbearing, but to each other hasty, careless, and cold. Conjugal love often seems to die out before parental love. It ought not so to be. Husband and wife should each stand first in the other's estimation. They have no right to forget each other's comfort, convenience, sensitiveness, tastes, or happiness in those of their children. Nothing can discharge them from the obligations which they are under to each other. But if a woman lets herself become shabby, drudgy, and commonplace as a wife, in her efforts to be perfect as a mother, can she expect to retain the consideration that is due to the wife? Not a man in the world but would rather see his wife tidy, neat, and elegant in her attire, easy and assured in her bearing, intelligent and vivacious in her talk, than the contrary; and if she neglect these

things, ought she to be surprised, if he turns to fresh woods and pastures new for the diversion and entertainment which he seeks in vain at home? This is quaky ground, but I know where I am, and I am not afraid. I don't expect men or women to say that they agree with me, but I am right for all that. Let us bring our common sense to bear on this point, and not be fooled by reiteration. Cause and effect obtain here as elsewhere. If you add two and two, the result is four, however much you may try to blink it. People do not always tell lies, when they are telling what is not the truth; but falsehood is still disastrous. Men and women think they believe a thousand things which they do not believe; but as long as they think so, it is just as bad as if it were so. Men talk—and women listen and echo—about the overpowering loveliness and charm of a young mother surrounded by her blooming family, ministering to their wants and absorbed in their welfare, self-denying and self-forgetful; and she is lovely and charming; but if this is all, it is little more than the charm and loveliness of a picture. It is not magnetic and irresistible. It has the semblance, but not the smell of life. It is pretty to look at, but it is not vigorous for command. Her husband will have a certain kind of admiration and love. Her wish will be law within a certain very limited sphere; but beyond that he will not take her into his counsels and confidence. A woman must make herself obvious to her husband, or he will drift out beyond her horizon. She will be to him very nearly what she wills and works to be. If she adapts herself to her children

and does not adapt herself to her husband, he will fall into the arrangement, and the two will fall apart. I do not mean that they will quarrel, but they will lead separate lives. They will be no longer husband and wife. There will be a domestic alliance, but no marriage. A predominant interest in the same objects binds them together after a fashion; but marriage is something beyond that. If a woman wishes and purposes to be the friend of her husband,—if she would be valuable to him, not simply as the nurse of his children and the directress of his household, but as a woman fresh and fair and fascinating, to him intrinsically lovely and attractive, she should make an effort for it. It is not by any means a thing that comes of itself, or that can be left to itself. She must read, and observe, and think, and rest up to it. Men, as a general thing, will not tell you so. They talk about having the slippers ready, and enjoin women to be domestic. But men are blockheads,—dear, and affectionate, and generous blockheads,—benevolent, large-hearted, and chivalrous,—kind, and patient, and hard-working,—but stupid where women are concerned. Indispensable and delightful as they are in real life, pleasant and comfortable as women actually find them, not one in ten thousand but makes a dunce of himself the moment he opens his mouth to theorize about women. Besides, they have an axe to grind. The pretty things they inculcate—slippers, and coffee, and care, and courtesy—ought indeed to be done, but the others ought not to be left undone. And to the former women seldom need to be exhorted. They take to them naturally. A great many

more women bore boorish husbands with fond little attentions than wound appreciative ones by neglect. Women domesticate themselves to death already. What they want is cultivation. They need to be stimulated to develop a large, comprehensive, catholic life, in which their domestic duties shall have an appropriate niche, and not dwindle down to a narrow and servile one, over which those duties shall spread and occupy the whole space.

This mistake is the foundation of a world of wretchedness and ruin. I can see Satan standing at the mother's elbow. He follows her around into the nursery and the kitchen. He tosses up the babies and the omelets, delivers dutiful harangues about the inappropriateness of the piano and the library, and grins fiendishly in his sleeve at the wreck he is making,—a wreck not necessarily of character, but of happiness; for I suppose Satan has so bad a disposition, that, if he cannot do all the harm he would wish, he will still do all he can. It is true that there are thousands of noble men married to fond and foolish women, and they are both happy. Well, the fond and foolish women are very fortunate. They have fallen into hands that will entreat them tenderly, and they will not perceive that anything is kept back. Nor are the noble men wholly unfortunate, in that they have not taken to their hearths shrews. But this is not marriage.

There are women less foolish. They see their husbands attracted in other directions more often and more easily than in theirs. They have too much sterling worth and profound faith to be vulgarly jealous. They fear nothing like shame or crime;

but they feel the fact that their own preoccupation with homely household duties precludes real companionship; the interchange of emotions, thoughts, sentiments, a living and palpable and vivid contact of mind with mind, of heart with heart. They see others whose leisure ministers to grace, accomplishments, piquancy, and attractiveness, and the moth flies towards the light by his own nature. Because he is a wise and virtuous and honorable moth, he does not dart into the flame. He does not even scorch his wings. He never thinks of such a thing. He merely circles around the pleasant light, sunning himself in it without much thought one way or another, only feeling that it is pleasant; but meanwhile Mrs. Moth sits at home in darkness, mending the children's clothes, which is not exhilarating. Many a woman who feels that she possesses her husband's affection misses something. She does not secure his fervor, his admiration. His love is honest and solid, but a little dormant, and therefore dull. It does not brace, and tone, and stimulate. She wants not the love only, but the keenness and edge and flavor of the love; and she suffers untold pangs. I know it, for I have seen it. It is not a thing to be uttered. Most women do not admit it even to themselves; but it is revealed by a lift of the eyelash, by a quiver of the eye, by a tone of the voice, by a trick of the finger.

But what is the good of saying all this, if a woman cannot help herself? The children must be seen to, and the work must be done, and after that she has no time left. The "mother of a young and increasing family," with her "pale, thin face and feeble

step," and her "multiplied and wearying cares," is "completely worn down with so many children." She has neither time nor spirit for self-culture, beyond what she may obtain in the nursery. What satisfaction is there in proving that she is far below where she ought to be, if inexorable circumstance prevent her from climbing higher? What use is there in telling her that she will alienate her husband and injure her children by her course, when there is no other course for her to pursue? What can she do about it?

There is one thing that she need not do. She need not sit down and write a book, affirming that it is the most glorious and desirable condition imaginable. She need not lift up her voice and declare that "she lives above the ills and disquietudes of her condition, in an atmosphere of love and peace and pleasure far beyond the storms and conflicts of this material life." Who ever heard of the mother of a young and increasing family living in an atmosphere of peace, not to say pleasure, above conflicts and storms? Who does not know that the private history of every family with the ordinary allowance of brains is a record of incessant internecine warfare? If she said less, we might believe her. When she says so much, we cannot help suspecting. To make the best of anything, it is not necessary to declare that it is the best thing. Children must be taken care of, but it is altogether probable that there are too many of them. Some people think that opinion several times more atrocious than murder in the first degree; but I see no atrocity in it, and there is none. I think there

is an immense quantity of nonsense about, regarding this thing. For my part, I don't credit half of it. I believe in Malthus,—a great deal more than Malthus did himself. The prosperity of a country is often measured by its population; but quite likely it should be taken in inverse ratio. I certainly do not see why the mere multiplication of the species is so indicative of prosperity. Mobs are not so altogether lovely that one should desire their indefinite increase. A village is honorable, not according to the number, but the character of its residents. The drunkards and the paupers and the thieves and the idiots rather diminish than increase its respectability. It seems to me that the world would be greatly benefited by thinning out. Most of the places that I have seen would be much improved by being decimated, not to say quinqueted or bisected. If people are stubborn and rebellious, stiff-necked and uncircumcised, in heart and ears, the fewer of them the better. A small population, trained to honor and virtue, to liberality of culture and breadth of view, to self-reliance and self-respect, is a thousand times better than an overcrowded one with everything at loose ends. As with the village, so with the family. There ought to be no more children than can be healthily and thoroughly reared, as regards the moral, physical, and intellectual nature both of themselves and their parents. All beyond this is wrong and disastrous. I know of no greater crime, than to give life to souls, and then degrade them, or suffer them to be degraded. Children are the poor man's blessing and Cornelia's jewels, just so long as Cornelia and the poor

man can make adequate provision for them. But the ragged, filthy, squalid, unearthly little wretches that wallow before the poor man's shanty-door are the poor man's shame and curse. The sickly, sallow, sorrowful little ones, shadowed too early by life's cares, are something other than a blessing. When Cornelia finds her children too many for her, when her step trembles and her cheek fades, when the sparkle flats out of her wine of life and her salt has lost its savor, her jewels are Tarpeian jewels. One child educated by healthy and happy parents is better than seven dragging their mother into the grave, notwithstanding the unmeasured reprobation of our little book. Of course, if they can stand seven, very well. Seven and seventy times seven, if you like, only let them be buds, not blights. If we obeyed the laws of God, children would be like spring blossoms. They would impart as much freshness and strength as they abstract. They are a natural institution, and Nature is eminently healthy. But when they "come crowding into the home-nest," as our book daintily says, they are a nuisance. God never meant the home-nest to be crowded. There is room enough and elbow-room enough in this world for everything that ought to be in it. The moment there is crowding, you may be sure something wrong is going on. Either a bad thing is happening, or too much of a good thing, which counts up just the same. The parents begin to repair the evil by a greater one. They attempt to patch their own rents by dilapidating their children. They recruit their own exhausted energies by laying hold of the young energies around them, and

older children are bored, and fretted, and deformed in figure and temper by the care of younger children. This is horrible. Some care and task and responsibility are good for a child's own development; but every care, every toil, every atom of labor that is laid upon children beyond what is solely the best for their own character is intolerable and inexcusable oppression. Parents have no right to lighten their own burdens by imposing them upon the children. The poor things had nothing to do with being born. They came into the world without any volition of their own. Their existence began only to serve the pleasure or the pride of others. It was a culpable cruelty, in the first place, to introduce them into a sphere where no adequate provision could be made for their comfort and culture; but to shoulder them, after they get here, with the load which belongs to their parents is outrageous. Earth is not a paradise at best, and at worst it is very near the other place. The least we can do is to make the way as smooth as possible for the new-comers. There is not the least danger that it will be too smooth. If you stagger under the weight which you have imprudently assumed, stagger. But don't be such an unutterable coward and brute as to illumine your own life by darkening the young lives which sprang from yours. I often wonder that children do not open their mouths and curse the father that begat and the mother that bore them. I often wonder that parents do not tremble lest the cry of the children whom they oppress go up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and bring down wrath upon their guilty heads. It was well that God

planted filial affection and reverence as an instinct in the human breast. If it depended upon reason, it would have but a precarious existence.

I wish women would have the sense and courage—I will not say, to say what they think, for that is not always desirable—but to think according to the facts. They have a strong desire to please men, which is quite right and natural; but in their eagerness to do this, they sometimes forget what is due to themselves. To think namby-pambyism for the sake of pleasing men is running benevolence into the ground. Not that women consciously do this, but they do it. They don't mean to pander to false masculine notions, but they do. They don't know that they are pandering to them, but they are. Men say silly things, partly because they don't know any better, and partly because they don't want any better. They are strong, and can generally make shift to bear their end of the pole without being crushed. So they are tolerably content. They are not very much to blame. People cannot be expected to start on a crusade against ills of which they have but a vague and cloudy conception. The edge does not cut them, and so they think it is not much of a sword after all. But women have, or ought to have, a more subtile and intimate acquaintance with realities. They ought to know what is fact and what is fol-de-rol. They ought to distinguish between the really noble and the simply physical, not to say faulty. If men do not, it is women's duty to help them. I think, if women would only not be quite so afraid of being thought unwomanly, they would be a great deal

more womanly than they are. To be brave, and single-minded, and discriminating, and judicious, and clear-sighted, and self-reliant, and decisive, that is pure womanly. To be womanish is not to be womanly. To be flabby, and plastic, and weak, and acquiescent, and insipid, is not womanly. And I could wish sometimes that women would not be quite so patient. They often exhibit a degree of long-suffering entirely unwarrantable. There is no use in suffering, unless you cannot help it; and a good, stout, resolute protest would often be a great deal more wise, and Christian, and beneficial on all sides, than so much patient endurance. A little spirit and "spunk" would go a great way towards setting the world right. It is not necessary to be a termagant. The firmest will and the stoutest heart may be combined with the gentlest delicacy. Tameness is not the stuff that the finest women are made of. Nobody can be more kind, considerate, or sympathizing towards weakness or weariness than men, if they only know it exists; and it is a wrong to them to go on bolstering them up in their bungling opinions, when a few sensible ideas, wisely administered, would do so much to enlighten them, and reveal the path which needs only to be revealed to secure their unhesitating entrance upon it. It is absurd to suppose that unvarying acquiescence is necessary to secure and retain their esteem, and that a frank avowal of differing opinions, even if they were wrong, would work its forfeiture. A respect held on so frail a tenure were little worth. But it is not so. I believe that manhood and womanhood are too truly

harmonious to need iron bands, too truly noble to require the props of falsehood. Truth, simple and sincere, without partiality and without hypocrisy, is the best food for both. If any are to be found on either side too weak to administer or digest it, the remedy is not to mix it with folly or falsehood, for they are poisons, but to strengthen the organisms with wholesome tonics, —not undiluted, perhaps, but certainly unadulterated.

O Edmund Sparkler, you builded better than you knew, when you reared eulogiums upon the woman with no nonsense about her!

MY SHIP

Mist on the shore, and dark on the sand,
  The chilly gulls swept over my head,
When a stately ship drew near the land,—
  Onward in silent grace she sped.

Lonely, I threw but a coward's glance
  Upon the brave ship tall and free,
Joyfully dancing her mystic dance,
  As if skies were blue and smooth the sea.

I breathed the forgotten odors of Spain,
  Remembered my castles so far removed,
For they brought the distant faith again
  That one who loves shall be beloved.

Then the goodly galleon suddenly
  Dropped anchor close to the barren strand,
And various cargoes, all for me,
  Laid on the bosom of my land.

O friend! her cargoes were thy love,
  The stately ship thy presence fair;
Her pointed sails, like wings above,
  Shall fill with praises and with prayer.

* * * * *

BETROTHAL BY PROXY: A ROMANCE OF GENEALOGY

CHAPTER I

Ye who listen with impatience to the Reports of Historical Societies and have hitherto neglected to subscribe to an Antiquarian Journal, ye who imagine that there can be no intelligent and practical reply to the *cui bono?* shake of the head which declines to supply the funds for a genealogical investigation, attend to the history of my adventure in Foxden.

There!—I like to begin with the Moral; for no sensible man will leave the point and purpose of his testimony to the languid curiosity of a spent reader. Dr. Johnson never did so; and who am I to question his literary infallibility? So if you do not take kindly to the solemn rumble of the Johnsonese mail-coach of a sentence in which we set out, receive the purport of it thus: It is of advantage to be on good terms with one's ancestors: Also; men absorbed in this practical present may be all the better for a little counter irritation with the driest twigs of the family-tree.

And now, *Why did I marry Miss Hurribattle?* I am sure I had no intention of doing so. In the first place, when about eighteen years of age, I had firmly determined never to marry anybody. Then there were so many nice *tea-ing* families in the

Atlantic city whose principal street was decorated by my modest counsellor's sign, that I really must excuse the rather unpleasant wonder of several friends at my out-of-the-way selection. That a somewhat experienced advocate, who had resisted for three years the fascinations of city belle-ship, should spend the legal vacation in a visit to an old gentleman he never saw before, and return affianced to a lady nobody had ever heard of,—I own there was something temptingly discussible in the circumstance; and knowing that fine relish for personal topics which distinguishes the American *conversazione*, how could I hope to escape? At first, it was a little awkward, when I went to a party, to see people who were talking together glance at me and murmur on with increased interest. Sometimes, when the wave of talk retreated a little, I would catch the prattle of some retiring rill to this effect: "But who are these Hurribattles? What an odd name! I wonder if that had anything to do with it."

The querist, whoever he or she might be, had unconsciously struck upon the explanation of the whole matter. Yes, it was the name: it had a great deal to do with it. And if you will allow me to step back a little into the past, and thence begin over again in good storyteller fashion, I will endeavor to make you understand how it all came about.

If I were obliged to designate in one word the profession and calling of Colonel Prowley of Foxden, I should say he was a *Correspondent*. Of course I do not mean a regular newspaper-correspondent, paid to concoct letters from Paris in the office of

the "Foxden Regulator"; nor yet the amateur ditto, who is never tired of making family-tours to the White Mountains. But rather was he a gentleman, with an immense epistolary acquaintance all over the country, whose main business in life consisted in writing letters to all sorts of persons in a great variety of places. And this he did as his particular contribution towards the solution of this question: What in the world—or rather, what in the United States—is a man to do who accumulates sufficient property to relieve him from the necessities of active business? The answers offered to this inquiry of the Democratic Sphinx are, as we all know, various enough. Some men, of ready assurance and fluent speech, go into politics; some doze in libraries; some get up trotting-matches and yacht-races; while others dodge the difficulty altogether by going to disport themselves among the arts and letters of a foreign land. Colonel Prowley, with considerable originality, was moved to find employment in *letter-writing*, pursuing it with the same daily relish which many people find for gossip or small-talk. And this is the way in which I came to be favored with the good gentleman's communications. About three years ago a friend in England procured for me a book that I had long coveted,—Morton's "New English Canaan," printed at Amsterdam in the year 1637. This little volume, after the novelty of a fresh perusal was past, I happened to lend to a young gentleman of our boarding-house, who prepared short notices of books for one of the evening papers. He, it would appear, thought that some account of my acquisition might supply the matter for

his diurnal paragraph. At all events, I received, some days after, a letter dated from Foxden, and bearing the signature of Elijah Prowley. It was couched in the old-fashioned style of compliment and excuses for the liberty taken,—which liberty consisted in requesting to have a fac-simile made of a certain page of a work that he had traced through a newspaper-article to my possession. The object, he said, was to supply the deficiency in a copy of the "Canaan" that had a place in his own library. Of course the request was complied with, and the correspondence begun.

The Colonel, to do him justice, wrote very entertaining letters, despite the somewhat antiquated phraseology in which his sentiments were clothed. Indeed, I soon found in his epistles all the variety of the *grab-bag* at a country-fair, in which the purchaser of the right of *grab* fumbles with pleasing uncertainty as to whether he is to draw forth a hymn-book or a shaving-brush, a packet of note-paper or a box of patent polish for stoves. At one time he would communicate the particulars of some antiquarian discovery at Foxden; at another he would copy for me the weekly bill of the town mortality, or journalize the parish quarrels about the repairs of the stove-funnel in Mr. Clifton's church.

I was well pleased to find that the little notes of acknowledgment which I despatched after the receipt of these leviathans seemed to be considered a sufficient representation of capital to justify the enormous rate of epistolary interest which the Colonel bestowed. I liked the style of my correspondent. It did me good to meet with the strong old expressions of our

ancestors that were turning up in unexpected places. If the dear old phrases were sometimes better or worse than the fact they expressed, they must have improved what was good, and gibbeted more effectually what to the times seemed evil. Who would now think of designating a parcel of serious savages "the praying Indians of Natick"? And yet there is a sound and a power about the words that would go far to convert the skeptical aborigines in their own despite. Why, there was something rich and nervous in the talk of the very lawmakers. "The accursed sect of the Quakers,"—what a fine spirit such an accusative case gives to the dry formula of a legal enactment! the beat of the drum by which the edict was proclaimed in the streets of Boston seems only an appropriate accompaniment to so stirring a denunciation. Then to invite a brother to "exercise prophecy,"—as Winthrop used to call the business of preaching,—there is really something soul-invigorating in the very sound. No wonder the people could stand a good two-hours' discourse under so satisfactory a title!

I suppose, then, that much of my original relish for the communications of my Foxden correspondent came from his mastery over the antique glossary, and perhaps the rather ancient style of thought that fitted well the method of conveyance. Indeed, a good course of Bishop Copleston's "magic-lanthorn school" made me peculiarly susceptible to the refreshment of changing the gorgeous haze of modern philosophers for the sharpness and vitality with which old-fashioned people clothe such ideas as are vouchsafed to them.

I soon found that my friend had that passion for what may be called petty antiquarian research which is so puzzling to those who escape its contagion. Also that a pride of family, that lingers persistently in some parts of New England, seemed to concentrate itself and envelop him as in a cloud. He had attained the age of sixty a bachelor,—perhaps from finding no person in Foxden of sufficiently clear lineage to be united with the Squire's family,—or perhaps because he had a sister, five years older than himself, who fulfilled the duties of companion and housekeeper.

How strange a sensation it is to feel a real friendship and familiarity with one we have never seen! Yet if people are drawn together by those mysterious affinities which, like the daughters of the horse-leech, are ever crying, "Give, give," a few bits of paper bridge over space well enough, and enable us to recognize abroad the scattered fragments that complete ourselves.

The Colonel studied up my ancestors, who, it appears, were once people of sufficient consideration in the land, and finally transferred the interest to myself. At one time he took the trouble to go down to Branton, about forty miles from Foxden, for the purpose of verifying inquiries about progenitors of mine who had originally settled in that place. He advised me, as a son, in my reading and business; and although I often dismissed his suggestions as the whims of an old-fashioned recluse, I was always touched by the simplicity and sincere interest that prompted them. He would mysteriously hint that something might one day occur to give tangible proof of the regard in which

he held me; but as I paid little heed to such warnings, I was totally unprepared for the plan developed in the letter of which an extract is here presented:—

"Concerning the propriety of your marrying, my dear young friend, my sister and myself have long known but one opinion; the only difficulty that has exercised us being, whom, among my divers correspondents, we could most heartily commend to your selection. Now it is known to you that I have striven for some time past to trace the descendants of the old family of Hurribattel, who seem to have disappeared from Branton about the year ten in the present century. The interest I have taken in the research comes from the fact that your great-great-uncle appears at one time to have been affianced to a lady of that family. For what reason an alliance which had everything to recommend it was broken off I have sorely puzzled myself to conjecture, but linger always in the labyrinths of doubt. Some months ago I received a catalogue from the Soggimarsh College in the Far West, to whose funds I had contributed a modest subscription. I was thrown into an ecstasy of astonishment, when, in glancing over the names of the honorable Faculty, my attention was arrested by words to this effect: *Miss Hurribattle, Professor of Calisthenics and Female Deportment*. Of course, I wrote to her immediately, and received right cordial replies to all inquiries. She seemed much interested in the union of the families that was formerly contemplated, and much desires to see you as the representative of your great-great-uncle. I need only add, that, so far as may be judged by the happy

vein of her correspondence, she has at present no ensnarement of the heart, and has agreed to pay me a visit at Foxden the first of August next, when, by reason of the vacation, she will be at liberty for five weeks. Your own visit to me, so often postponed, is, as I believe, definitively fixed for the same time. So I expect you both, and need not enlarge on the strange delight it would give me, if a family-engagement of seventy years' standing should be closed by a marriage beneath my roof."

There was something so preposterous in this desperate match-making between people whom they had never seen, that Colonel Prowley and his sister had taken into their hands, that it really made a greater impression upon me than if the parties had been less unlikely to come together. A Professor of Calisthenics! Could anything be more unpromising? Yet, when my friend copied for me some extracts from the lady's letters that were sensible and feminine, I thought how odd it would be, if something should come of it, after all. I often found myself skipping Colonel Prowley's accounts of old Doctor Dastick, Mrs. Hunesley, and other great people of his town, and pondering upon the notices of his Western correspondent. I began to have a mysterious presentiment—which, in view of the calisthenics, I could not explain—that we might be not unadapted to each other. In any case, the lady's fine family-name was a recommendation that I knew how to appreciate. They have very young professors out West, I thought, and this is merely a temporary position; besides, I had a friend who married a female physician, and the

match has turned out a very happy one. So I played with the idea, half in jest and half seriously, and looked forward with much interest to my visit to Foxden.

CHAPTER II

It was near noon, on an August day, when the train left me at the Foxden station. Upon casting my eyes about to see what was to be done next, I observed a very shabby and rickety carryall, with the legend "Railway-Omnibus" freshly painted upon its side.

"It is better than a mile and a half up to Colonel Prowley's; but I calculate I can take you there, after I've left this lady," responded the proprietor of this turnout, in reply to a question of mine.

"But I want to go to Colonel Prowley's, too," said a feminine voice at my side.

"Well, now that's _com_plete," acquiesced the driver. "I'll just go get the baggage, and put you both through right away."

Of course I turned to view my companion. She was a middle-aged lady, something disordered in dress and hair, with a sharply marked countenance, and that diffusive sort of eye that seems to take one in as a speck which breaks the view of more interesting objects lying on the verge of the horizon. Yet her face was dimpled by those indescribable changing lines which indicate that a cessation of impulse has not marked the wearer's retreat from youth, and make us feel anew how blessed a thing it is for

the character to keep our impulses strong within us, and to be strong ourselves in their restraint.

I was doubting whether to begin those little shivers and sidelings with which people who feel that they ought to be acquainted, but have nobody to introduce them, endeavor to supply the deficiency, when the lady abruptly pronounced my name, and inquired if I responded thereto.

"I thought it must be you," she said, on being satisfied regarding my identity, "for the Colonel wrote me that he expected you about this time. I feel we shall become friends. I am Miss Hurribattle."

Although I had a strong suspicion who it must be, yet a cold surprise seemed to run through me, when the dire certainty so suddenly declared itself. I dropped my carpet-bag, as if all my daintily built castles were in it, and it was best to crush them to pieces at once and have it over. I pondered, and helped tie a bandbox on behind the vehicle, and after some time found myself in the carryall staring at the felt hat of the driver an inch or two before my nose, and Miss Hurribattle established by my side. It occurred to me that it was my place to resume the conversation, and, in a sudden spasm of originality, I changed a remark respecting the beauty of the day into an observation on the steepness of the hill we began to ascend.

"It is very steep," assented the lady, "and I have a particular objection to riding up-hill: it always appears to me I am helping the horses draw. However, it may sometimes be pleasant; for I

remember paying a visit of a fortnight to Boston, when I was a girl, and there I really thought that hills could not have been placed more conveniently."

"How so?" inquired I.

"Why, I stayed with some friends who lived in Charles Street, just on the bay; consequently we always drove up-hill when we went to a party, and downhill when we came home."

"And you were always so much more content to return than to go, that the accelerated speed of a down-hill passage was agreeable," suggested I, after having cast about vaguely for an explanation.

"Oh, dear! no! It was all on account of my back-hair: for in going up-hill one naturally leans forward,—so, of course, it couldn't get tumbled; but when we were coming home, it was no matter."

I glanced slightly at Miss Hurribattle, and thought it strange that a lady of her present disorderly and straggly appearance could have ever felt so much interest in fashionable proprieties. She seemed to be conscious of what was passing in my mind, and suddenly said,—

"Did you ever see a lady throw a stone?"

"I probably have," I replied; "though I do not at present recall any particular instance."

"Very well, then,—you will remember that it always seems as if she was going to throw herself after it. Now I recognize in this a portion of the mystic instruction that natural phenomena

may give us, if we look at them earnestly; for is it not intended that woman should pursue with her whole being whatever she undertakes? The man throws his stone with a little jerk of the hand: he may be a legislator, a philanthropist, a father, and a merchant, each with distinct portions of himself, and be each with all the better effect to the others; but when a woman throws her stone, it is better for her to project herself along with it."

"But, surely, you cannot believe that she is entitled only to a single fling at the mark?"

"On the contrary, let her change her mark as often as she finds it too easy or too hard to hit. All I insist upon is a temporary concentration upon one pursuit. You wondered just now that I could ever have cared for display, or have thought much of my appearance; but at that time I knew no better, and followed the world with a devotion for which I have now, I trust, a better object."

I began to be quite interested in the sincerity and confidence with which my companion talked to me, and, after a few remarks expressing concurrence, I framed a question that would draw out the motives of her connection with the college, should she care to communicate them.

"It has been fortunate for me," answered Miss Hurribattle, "to have been born with an activity of temperament that has kept me from that *maladie des désabusés* which, when the freshness of youth has passed, frequently attacks ladies of some intellectual culture who do not marry. A strong principle of self-

assertion, that has long been characteristic of my family, has left us unbound by that common propriety of sacrificing our best happiness for the sake of appearing happy to the world. This induced my father to quit Branton in pretty much the same spirit of opposition with which Chatterton quitted Bristol. Disgusted with its local celebrities, and chafing under the petty exactions and petty gossip to which a sudden loss of fortune had exposed him, he left the town without communicating to the neighbors his future destination. But I will not poach upon our friend the Colonel's speciality, and give you a family-history. It is sufficient to say that a year or two ago I was led to interest myself in the Soggimarsh College as a ground unincumbered by the old incredulities of man's best inspirations which grow so thickly in what are called the highest civilizations,—incredulities, indeed, which, in the fine figure of Coleridge, are nothing but credulities after all, only seen from behind, as they bow and nod assent to the habitual and the fashionable. But I see you are wondering at the particular position in the Academy which our catalogue assigns me, and you shall have the explanation. I have for a long time been painfully impressed with the total neglect of physical education by the women of America. It seems to me that no very important moral advance can be achieved while the exquisite organism through which our impressions come, and through which they should go forth again in acts, is so perverted. I was very anxious that the Soggimarsh College should distinctly recognize a correct physical training as being at least as important

as any branch of mental discipline. Accordingly, when the titles of the professorships were under discussion, it seemed right not to take my designation from the classes I instruct in history and philosophy, but from the general gymnastic development of the female members of the college, which it is likewise my duty to oversee. I know, of course, that the prejudices of the public would hold me in greater esteem as a teacher of some ancient lore than in the capacity I assume before them; but you see I throw my stone in the womanish fashion, and do not leave enough of myself behind to be troubled about the matter."

I believe I have good Sir Thomas Browne's fancy of rejoicing to find people individual in something beside their proper names; and by this, as well as much more conversation not set down, I had the satisfaction to discover that Miss Hurribattle had something more than her bold patronymic to distinguish her from the Misses Smith and Robinson of my city-acquaintance. I could hardly believe that we had advanced so far to the footing of old friends, before we reached our destination. As our carryall turned into Colonel Prowley's avenue, however, a sudden recollection of the little romance the proprietor had arranged for his arriving guests came over me like a terrible dream. What a pity it is, I thought, that a friendly intercourse which I should highly prize must be disturbed by the awkward consciousness that this old letter-writer and his sister are watching and misinterpreting with all the zeal of match-makers who have baited their trap, and are ready to mistake anything for a nibble!

We drew up before a formal-looking, old-fashioned house, with piazzas to the two stories, each bordered with a good extent of unquestionably modern gutter. The staple growth of the place, in which the house was set, like the centre of an antique breastpin, seemed to lie in the shrub called box. This ornamental vegetable stretched down each side of the gravel walk, hedged in all sorts of ugly geometrical figures that contained flower-beds, and stood sentinel to the lower line of the piazza; farther on, you would see it allowed to grow to the height of three or four feet, to be curiously cut into cubes, pyramids, and miniature arches.

Colonel Prowley, who was soon at the door to receive us, was a much less imposing sort of man than I had imagined him. He appeared short and modest, and showed a kind face set about half-way up the chin in one of the old section-of-stove-pipe stocks that buckle up from behind; there was a little embarrassment in his manner, as if he found it hard to receive with proper cordiality two dear friends whose faces he had never before seen. We were taken to the parlor, stiffly neat in all its appurtenances, introduced to Miss Prowley, and soon after summoned to dinner.

There was much satisfaction in sitting down to such a repast as the Colonel knew how to give, only it made one shudder a little when he told us the names of great people long passed away who had ranged themselves about the same piece of mahogany during the days of his father and grandfather, for fourscore years into the past. However, if such reminiscences make us reflect upon the

mutable character of human affairs, and send grave speculations of the "fleeting show" and "man's illusion" concerning which the poet has told us, I find that the best way is to remember that it is well to make our humble department in the show as entertaining as we can, and our little fragment of the illusion as illusive as possible.

At the head of the table sat the sister of our host, arrayed in the lank bombazine skirt, tight sleeves, and muslin cravat, which constituted the old-lady uniform of the past generation, and which in rare instances yet survives in the country. Upon her right hand was placed the clergyman, Mr. Clifton, who came to dine every Monday,—it being a convenient arrangement on account of the washing; and on her left was one Deacon Reyner, who kept the parish records, and was the local antiquary of the town.

One of the pleasantest diversions with which I am acquainted is a dinner among elderly people of character and originality, who are content to toss about the ball of conversation among themselves, and allow me to watch the game. And in this way was I entertained on my arrival at Foxden; for Miss Hurribattle was directly at her ease, and had plenty to say; while the brother and sister were content to offer the best of everything, and did not attempt to draw me out of my silence. I perceived they were thinking what a pity it was that Miss Hurribattle and myself had not the equality of age and temper that they had fancied for us; for I observed how they would follow the streaks of

gray that straggled through the lady's locks, and then glance at the neatly turned moustache upon which in those days I prided myself, and realize that their agreeable plans might be destined to disappointment.

I remember the conversation first fell upon a certain general history of the Prowley family that its present masculine representative had in preparation.

"By the way," said Deacon Reyner, addressing the future historian on this head, "I have secured a correct copy of poor Prosody's epitaph, as you asked me the other day."

Miss Hurribattle, who looked as if she had some doubt whether poor Prosody was a man or an animal, returned a non-committal, "Indeed! I am very glad of it," but soon after added, "Was he a favorite dog?"

"A dog!" exclaimed the Colonel, whose family-history, dates and all, seemed to course his veins instead of blood, "he was my many times great uncle! I have surely told you how Noah Prowllie, who came to New England in 1642, and is supposed to have settled at Foxden some years later, married Desire, daughter of the Reverend Jabez Pluck. Being a rigid grammarian, —a character sufficiently rare at that period,—he named his three sons Orthography, Syntax, and Prosody,—a proceeding that is understood to have offended the Reverend Jabez, who was naturally partial to the Scriptural nomenclature then in vogue. His scruples, I regret to say, were more than justified in the conduct of his grandchildren. Poor Orthography Prowllie was an

idle fellow, who never got beyond making his mark upon paper, and consequently made none in the world; Syntax could never agree with anybody; while as for Prosody, poor fellow"–

"It is enough to say that neither his verses nor his life would bear scanning!" said the Deacon, desiring to keep the conversation off unpleasant topics.

"But you certainly had a poet in your family?" said Miss Hurribattle, determined to repair her blunder by suggesting a potent cause of congratulation.

"Indeed we had, Madam!" said the Colonel, with creditable emotion; "though unfortunately none of his productions have come down to us. But we have the highest contemporary testimony to his excellence in a copy of verses prefixed to his posthumous discourse entitled 'The New Snare of a Maypole, or Satan's own Trap for a Slippery Church.' The lines were written by his colleague, the Reverend Exaltation Brymm, and are certainly much to the purpose: I generally keep a copy of them in my pocket-book."

"Oh, do read them, brother!" said Miss Prowley, with strong interest.

Thus adjured, the Colonel produced a piece of paper, put on his spectacles, and read to this effect:—

> "New Englande! weep: Thy tuncfull Prowllie's gone,
> Who skillfully his Armour buckled on
> Agaynst Phyllystine Scorn and Revelrie:
> His Sword well-furbished was a Sight to see!

This littel Booke of his shall still be greene
While Sathan's Fangles lorden stand betweene:
Now Pet of Sinne boil up thy dolefull Skum!
Ye juggelling Quakers laugh: his Inkhorn's dumb.
He put XIII Pslames in verse for our Quire,
And with XXVII Pastorals witcht Apollo's Lyre."

"Do you recollect John Norton's funeral elegy on Ann Bradstreet, the Eve of our female minstrelsy?" interrogated Miss Hurribattle; "there are two lines in it which are still in my memory:—

'Could Maro's muse but hear her lively strain,
He would condemn his works to fire again.'

What a launch upon the sea of fame! and how sad it is that an actual freight of verses should be preserved in the ship's hold!"

"Well, well, my kinsman was perhaps wise in trusting none of his psalms or pastorals to the press, especially as that greatest of poets, Pope, has since been in the world. But I truly regret that he left no portrait, nor even so much as an outline in black from which something might be made up by an imaginative artist. I have judges, majors, and attorneys, all properly labelled, in the other room, who would be much improved by a slight dash of the aesthetic element; however, I suppose it can't be helped now!"

"Not unless you substitute Saint Josselyn for an ancestor, as Mrs.

Hunesley did the other day," said Miss Prowley.

"Ha, ha! it might not be a bad plan to follow out the lady's suggestion: but do tell the story of her strange mistake."

"Why, you must know that the other day old Doctor Dastick brought his New-York niece to call upon us. She began to talk to my brother, and when at last topics of conversation failed, turned to look at the picture of Saint Josselyn, which could be seen through the open folding-doors."

"The gentleman whose sole garment consists of some sort of skin thrown over his shoulders: you must all have observed it as we came in to dinner," said our host, in parenthesis.

"Well, immediately below the Saint hangs a small painting of Uncle Joshua, in white stockings, cocked hat, and coat of maroon velvet, the poor gentleman's favorite dress.

"'Ah!' said Mrs. Hunesley, with her eyes fixed upon the Saint, 'quite a fine portrait!'

"'Why, yes,' said my brother, naturally supposing she meant the small picture below, 'a very fine portrait, and a capital likeness of my Uncle Joshua.'

"'Indeed!' said the lady, with a well-bred effort to conceal her surprise; 'he was taken in a—a—fancy dress, I suppose.'

"'On the contrary, it was his ordinary costume,' insisted the Colonel. 'I can remember him walking up the broad-aisle at church, dressed just as you see him there.'

"'I should not have thought it would have been allowed! Did not the deacons turn him out?' exclaimed Mrs. Hunesley, in great

astonishment.

"'Turn him out! Why, Madam, he was a deacon himself, and the most popular man in the parish.'

"'Well, I had no idea that such things had ever been permitted in this country! I should have supposed that the fear of such an example on the young would have induced people to keep him in confinement.'

"'Good heavens, Madam!' remonstrated the Colonel, roused to a desperate vindication of the family-honor, 'let me tell you that his excellent influence on the young was the crowning virtue of his character. He used to go about town with his pockets filled with nuts and gingerbread to reward them when they were good.'

"'It is enough,' replied the lady; 'our views of propriety are so totally different that we will not pursue the subject. I will only say that—really—in that dress, *I don't see where he could have had any pockets!*'"

Deacon Reyner laughed heartily at these strictures upon the proprieties of his predecessor, and said,—

"Of course, the last remark must have brought about an explanation."

"Why, yes," said Colonel Prowley; "but when we see how slight an accident resolved the mystery, we should receive with doubt much of the personal scandal which is tossing about the world."

The clergyman assented very cordially to this proposition, and added, that it was a reflection that those of his flock then

present would do well to bear in mind that very evening at Doctor Dastick's bone-party.

I confess to being a little startled at the spectral name of this entertainment, and began to puzzle myself whether the Doctor gave a levee to rapping spirits, or moralized over the skulls in his collection, like Hamlet in the church-yard. Miss Hurribattle seemed wandering in the mazes of a similar perplexity, and finally said,—

"What is a bone-party? Is it given out of compliment to the dead or the living?"

"Nay," said the Deacon, "I don't see how it could be much of a compliment to the dead."

"Except upon the principle, *De mortuis nil, nisi bone 'em!*" suggested Miss Hurribattle, with such perfect gravity that neither Miss Prowley nor the clergyman suspected the jocular atrocity that was hidden in her speech.

"The bone-parties of old Doctor Dastick," explained the Colonel, "are entertainments peculiar to Foxden; and as there is to be one this evening to which we are all invited, any anticipation of the diversion seems likely to diminish whatever of satisfaction may be in prospect. I will, however, remark, that some of the Doctor's guests are grievously oppressed by somnolence during his scholastic expositions; as a protection against which infirmity of the flesh, I do commend an after-dinner nap. It has been the fashion of the house since the days of my grandfather; and as he lived to a ripe old age, I do not think it could have been

deleterious."

Soon after this, Colonel Prowley pushed back his chair from the table as a signal for the dispersal of the party. And I betook myself to my chamber, a sober apartment, with very uneven floor and very small windows, through one of which I peered out upon the box before the house, and thought over the people whose acquaintance I had just made. Once only were these musings interrupted by snatches of a conversation between my host and hostess as they passed across the piazza.

"When this comes about, sister, as I still believe it must, you shall adorn a page of my diary with one of your illustrative drawings. A pair of doves would be appropriate, or perhaps a vine clinging round an oak."

"And which of our guests is to be represented by the oak?" asked Miss Prowley, in a tone which betrayed a woman's perception of matrimonial incongruities.

"Nay, sister, our young friend has a steadiness of character which would be ill-mated with some giddy girl from the nursery. So make your vine a little woody, and the union will be all the firmer."

As there was no chance of taking a nap after this, I presently descended to walk in the garden. And there I encountered Miss Hurribattle, who did not seem to be one of the convenient visitors who can be put to sleep after dinner. The conversation which I had the honor of renewing with the lady, though it did not at all advance the whimsical project of Colonel Prowley, increased

my respect for the high instincts of Nature which prompted her concern in the elevation of woman. She showed me how a reform, presenting on its surface much that was meagre and partial, was sustained by those accomplished in the study of the question, no less from the rigorous necessities of logic than from the demonstrations of history and experiment.

And here, perchance, the reader observes that we make but slight progress towards a solution of the inquiry proposed some pages back. Yet let it be remembered that in real experience the novelist's art of foreshadowing the end from the beginning and aiming every petty incident at the final result is very seldom perceptible. "*Il ne faut pas voyager pour voir, mais pour ne pas voir*," says the proverb; and the journey of life is included in its application. We do our rarest deeds, we take our most important steps, by what seems accident. Instead of forming plans with remote designs, we find it our best policy to seize circumstances as they run past us,—knowing, that, if we have strength and quickness enough, we may take from them all that is required.

CHAPTER III

Doctor Dastick's bone-party was certainly an entertainment of unique description. A kind old gentleman was its originator, who thought to turn the enthusiasm for lectures, which the Lyceum had developed in Foxden, into a private and pleasant channel. Possessed with this praiseworthy design, the Doctor,

who had given up practice by reason of years and competence, remembered a certain cabinet containing fossils, crystals, fragments of Indian implements, small pieces of the skeletons of their proprietors, vertebrae of extinct animals, besides a great amount of miscellaneous rubbish that refused to come to terms and be classified. Thus it seemed good to the proprietor of this medical rag-bag to invite the citizens of Foxden to a series of explanatory lectures upon its varied contents. This would have done well enough, if the Doctor could only have persuaded himself to select his most interesting specimens, and read up upon them, so as to retail a little fluent information after the manner of the lyceum-philosophers. But, unfortunately, the professional pride of the lecturer induced him to speak without preparation or discrimination upon any osteological article which happened to come to hand: which fact, perhaps, accounted for the prevalent somnolence of the auditory, concerning which I had been forewarned.

It is barely possible that these midsummer-night diversions of Doctor Dastick were suggested by the fame of evenings which, during the previous winter, several city physicians (men of eminent scientific attainments) had devoted to the instruction of their friends. And rumor could scarcely have overestimated the privilege of listening to the discursive fireside talk of such accurate observers. Having vividly realized all that was to be known of their subjects of special investigation, these distinguished gentlemen would steam steadily athwart

the light winds of conversation and bring their company to a pleasant haven. The Foxden ex-practitioner, however, lacking the metropolitan attrition which keeps the intellectual engine in effective polish, drifted vaguely in a sea of fragmentary information; —occasionally, to be sure, bumping against some encyclopedic argosy, but, for the most part, making very leisurely progress, with much apparent waste in the machinery. A brief extract from my note-book may furnish an idea of these scientific discourses.

"Now, my friends," pursues the Doctor, "let us examine another curiosity,"—here he would take down something that looked like a mottled paving-stone in a very crumbling condition, —"let us examine it carefully through the glass,"—here a pause, during which he performed the operation in question. "What is it? Is it a fossil turtle? No," —with great deliberation,—"I should say it was *not* a fossil turtle. Is it a mass of twigs taken from the stomach of a mastodon? No, on the whole, it can't be a mass of twigs taken from the stomach of a mastodon. Is it a specimen of the top of Mount Sinai? No, it is not a specimen of the top of Mount Sinai. What is it, then? *I—don't—know— what—it—is!*"

Having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, the Doctor would pass on to the next specimen, which, having provoked a similar series of interrogations and negations, would be dismissed with no very different result.

There is sometimes an advantage in not being a notable person; at all events, I thought so, when I saw the Prowleys and

their guests of chief consideration, to wit, the clergyman, deacon, and Miss Hurribattle, accommodated on the first row of chairs, with their faces under grand illumination by two camphene-lamps upon the Doctor's table. There they sat, together with Mrs. Hunesley from New York, two or three distinguished visitors from the hotel, and the elders of Foxden, looking wistfully at the bones, as if in envy of their fleshless condition that sultry August evening.

It was with real satisfaction that I perceived I was considered worthy of no more worshipful company than that of the standing stragglers at the dark end of the parlor. And as the evening breeze came freshly through the window at the back of the room, I rejoiced heartily in my lack of title to the consideration of being snugly penned in a more honorable position. As I found it might be done without attracting attention, I obeyed a strong impulse that seized me to pass through the open window to the piazza. Thence I presently descended, and strolled about the precise gravel-walks, puzzling myself to conjecture how much of the rich light was owing to the red glow which lingered in the west, and how much to the full moon just breaking through the trees. My investigations were suddenly interrupted by the advent of a carryall, which drove-with great rapidity to the Doctor's gate. It was the very railway-omnibus that a few hours before had brought Miss Hurribattle and myself from the station.

"Hello, Cap'n," called out the driver, complimenting me with that military title, "can you give a hand to this trunk? I've got to

go right slap back after two more fares."

I was near the gate, and of course cheerfully acceded to this request. A heavy trunk was lifted out, and placed just behind the lilac-bushes at the edge of the lawn. The driver jumped into his omnibus and hurried away with all speed, lest his two fares should pay themselves to a rival conveyance. Behind him, however, he had left the proprietress of the trunk,—a lady of about five-and-twenty, in whose countenance I detected that strange sort of familiarity that entire strangers sometimes carry about them.

"This is Doctor Dastick's, is it not? Do you know whether Mrs. Hunesley expected me?" she asked, with a grace of manner that was quite irresistible.

I informed her that I was a stranger in the place, and was only at the Doctor's for a single evening; but that I could not think that Mrs. Hunesley expected anybody, as I had just seen that lady firmly fixed in the front row of chairs before the Doctor's table, —whence, owing to the crowd of sitters behind, she would have some difficulty in extricating herself.

"Oh, I would not have her called for the world!" gayly exclaimed my companion. "She has told me all about the dear old Doctor's lectures; and I would not disturb his learned explanations on any account."

"I do not think that the company in general would regret an interlude of modern life and interest," said I.

"Perhaps not; but nothing seems to me so rude and disagreeable as to interrupt people, or disturb their attention,

when assembled for a definite object."

We walked up the gravel-path, and softly entered the hall, where a shawl and bonnet were deposited. The Doctor's discourse was very audible, and the unexpected visitor seemed disposed to establish herself upon one of the hall-chairs, and wait till it was over. There was a graceful confidence in her movement, which is to me more captivating than a pretty face; and when I had opportunity to observe more closely, I was greatly attracted by the sensibility and refinement expressed through a countenance which otherwise would have been plain. As I seemed to be whimsically cast in the part of host, and as I perceived the lady was too well-bred to make my position at all awkward, I proposed the piazza as a pleasanter place of waiting than that she had chosen.

And here let me make one of those weighty observations, derived from a profound experience, which I trust will have a redeeming savor to the judicious, should this tale of mine fail to command that general popularity to which I have begun to suspect its title. I have found that all the fine passages that lighten and enlighten this life of ours seldom run into the traps we set for them, but seem to take a perverse satisfaction in descending upon us when we are least prepared for their reception. I have never been asked out to dine with a gentleman, devoted, we will say, to the same speciality in which I have a humble interest, without being sadly disappointed in the talk that my host had kindly promised me. And when I am going to another country,

and a dear friend gives me a letter to some one whom he tells me I shall be glad to meet, and from whom I shall gain great instruction, I accept the letter, knowing very well that the man I shall really be glad to meet, and from whom I shall truly gain instruction, will present himself on the top of a diligence, or take a seat at my table at some cheap *café* or chop-house. Thus it is, that, when there is every reason why people should break through the commonplace rubbish on the surface, and disclose a pure vein of thought and feeling, they rarely contrive to do it, but reserve their best things for the chances that touch them, when self-consciousness is asleep, and the unconstrained humanity within expands to absorb its like. Is it not in every one's experience that there are persons with whom chance has thrown us for a few hours, whom we know better, and who know us better, than the friends with whom we have babbled of green fields, thermometers, and dirty pavements for a score of years? As I confidently expect an affirmative reply to this question, I fear no censure in saying that the evening passed on Doctor Dastick's piazza made me feel there was a possibility of social intercourse resembling the extravagant spirituality of the mystics, when the soul bounds to the height of joyful knowledge, and without process or medium knows complete satisfaction.

How we came to talk of many things, I cannot remember; but we somehow found ourselves speaking of matters of near and deep experience without consciousness of singularity. We admitted those puzzling life-questions that present themselves,

on a still summer evening, when we long to escape from the conditions of finite being, and yet contemplate the necessity of working at our tasks shackled by a thousand iron circumstances.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.