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Содержание

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THE FRENCH CHARACTER

The American character is now generally acknowledged to be the most cosmopolitan of modern times; and a native of this country, all things being equal, is likely to form a less prescriptive idea of other nations than the inhabitants of countries whose neighborhood and history unite to bequeathe and perpetuate certain fixed notions. Before the frequent intercourse now existing between Europe and the United States, we derived our impressions of the French people, as well as of Italian skies, from English literature. The probability was that our earliest association with the Gallic race partook largely of the ridiculous. All the extravagant anecdotes of morbid self-love, miserly epicurism, strained courtesy, and frivolous absurdity current used to boast a Frenchman as their hero. It was so in novels, plays, and after-dinner stories. Our first personal acquaintance often confirmed this prejudice; for the chance was that the one specimen of the Grand Nation familiar to our childhood proved a poor *émigré* who gained a precarious livelihood as a dancing-master, cook, teacher, or barber, who was profuse of smiles, shrugs, bows, and compliments, prided himself on *la belle France*, played the fiddle, and took snuff. A more dignified view succeeded, when we read "Télémaque," so long an initiatory text-book in the study of the language, blended as its crystal style was in our imaginations with the pure and noble character of Fénelon. Perhaps the next link in the chain of our estimate was supplied by the bust of Voltaire, whose withered, sneering physiognomy embodies the wit and indifference, the soulless vagabondage that forms the worst side of the national mind. As patriotic sentiment awakened, the disinterested enthusiasm of Lafayette, woven, as it is, into the record of the struggle which gave birth to our republic, yielded another and more attractive element to the fancy portrait. Then, as our reading expanded, came the tragic chronicle of the first French Revolution and the brilliant and dazzling melodrama of Napoleon, the traditions so pathetic and sublime of gifted women, the *tableaux* so exciting to a youthful temper of military glory. And thus, by degrees, we found ourselves bewildered by the most vivid contrasts and apparently irreconcilable traits, until the original idea of a Frenchman expanded to the widest range of associations, from the ingenious devices of a mysterious *cuisine* to the brilliant manoeuvres of the battle-field; infinite female tact, rare philosophic hardihood, inimitable *bon-mots*, exquisite millinery, consummate generalship, holy fortitude, refined profligacy, and intoxicating sentiment,—Ude, Napoleon, Madame Récamier, Pascal, Ninon de I'Enclos, and Rousseau. Casual associations and desultory reading thus predispose us to recognize something half comical and half enchanting in French life; and it depends on accident, when we first visit Paris, which view is confirmed. The society of one of those benign *savans* who attract the sympathy and win the admiration of young students may yield a delightful and noble association to our future reminiscences; or an unmodified experience of cynical hearts joined to scenical manners may leave us nothing to regret, upon our departure, save the material advantages there enjoyed. But whoever knows life in Paris, unrelieved by some consistent and individual purpose, will find it a succession of excitements, temporary, yet varied,—full of the agreeable, yet barren of consecutive interest and satisfactory results,—admirable as a recreative hygiene, deplorable as a permanent resource; their inevitable consequence being a faith in the external, a dependence on the immediate, and a habit of vagrant

pleasure-seeking, which must at last cloy and harden the manly soul. For this very reason, however, the scenes, characters, and society there exhibited are prolific of suggestion to the philosophic mind.

In every phase of life, manners, and action, we see a characteristic excellence in detail and process, and an equally remarkable deficiency in grand practical idea and consistent moral sentiment. The French chemists have the art to extract quinine from Peruvian bark and conserve the juices of meats; but one of their most patriotic writers calls attention to the wholly diverse motives addressed by Napoleon and Nelson to their respective followers. "Soldiers," exclaimed the former, "from the summit of those Pyramids forty ages are looking down upon you." "England," said the latter, "expects every man to do his duty." In Paris, the science of dissection is perfect; in London, that of nutrition;—Dumas has reduced plagiarism to a fine art; Cobbett made common-sense a social lever;—a British merchant or statesman attaches his name to a document in characters of such individuality that the signature is known at a glance; a French official invents a flourish so intricate that the forger's ingenuity is baffled in the attempt to imitate it;—government, on one side of the Channel, employs a taster to detect adulteration in wine whose sensitive palate is a fortune; on the other, the hereditary fame of a brewery is the guaranty of the excellence of ale.

This minute observance of detail has made the French leaders in fashion; it directs invention to the minutiæ of dress, and confirms the sway of the conventional, so as to give la mode the force of social law to an extent unknown elsewhere. The tyranny and caprice of fashion were as characteristic in Montaigne's day as at present. "I find fault with their especial indiscretion," he says, "in suffering themselves to be so imposed upon and blinded by the authority of the present custom as every month to alter their opinion." "In this country," writes Yorick, "nothing must be spared for the back; and if you dine on an onion, and lie in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your clothes."

The superiority of the French in the minor philosophy of life was curiously exemplified during our Revolutionary War. The octogenarians of Rhode Island used to expatiate on the remarkable difference between the troops of France and those of England when quartered among them. The former speedily made a series of little arrangements, and fell naturally into a pleasant routine, making the best of everything, adapting themselves to the ways and prejudices of the inhabitants, and, in a word, becoming assimilated at once to a new mode of life and form of society; their wit, cheerfulness, and gallantry are yet proverbial in that region. The English, on the other hand, even when in full possession of the country, made but an awkward use of their privileges, were ill-at-ease, failed to recognize anything genial in the habits and manners even of the Tory families. While the French officers introduced the mysteries of their *cuisine*, and brightened many a rustic household with song, anecdote, dance, and conversation, the English complained of the simple viands, regretted London fogs and beer, and made themselves and their hosts, whether forced or voluntary, uncomfortable. They exhibited no tact or facility in improving the resources at hand, and relied only on brute force to win advantage. We beheld the same contrast recently in the Crimea; while exposure and impatience thinned the ranks of the brave islanders, their Gallic allies constructed roads, dug where they could not build a shelter, and ingeniously prepared various dishes from a meagre larder, fighting off, meantime, chagrin and *ennui* with as much alacrity as they did Cossacks.

Finesse characterizes servants not less than courtiers, the cab-driver as well as the notary, the composition of a dish as well as the drift of a comedy. This quality seems a result of the conflict of intelligences in a state of great, material civilization; nowhere is it more observable than in Paris life. What bullyism is to the English, shrewdness to the Yankee, and intrigue to the Italian, is *finesse*, which is a union of insight and address, to the French. This normal attribute is another proof how the economy of Gallic life is reduced to an art. It is the expression in manners of Rochefoucauld's maxims, of Richelieu's policy, of Talleyrand's cunning. It is favored by the tendency to minuteness of excellence and love of system before noted. To understand what superior range is afforded to such a principle in France, it is only requisite to consult the memoirs of a celebrated woman, or even an old Guide or Picture of Paris, such as in former days the provincial gentlemen used to study over

their breakfast, in order to learn the *savoir vivre* of the metropolis. Itineraries of other cities merely describe streets, public institutions, the fairs, the courts, and the places of fashionable amusement; one of these curiosities of literature now before us, published less than a century ago, describes, as available resources to the stranger, *Gouvernantes, Émeutes, Rêves Politiques, L'Art de Diner, Bureaux d'Esprit*, —corresponding to our modern blue-stocking coteries, *femmes de quarante ans*, with their "*deux ressources, la dévotion et le bel esprit"; Contre Poisons*,—indispensable in those days of jealousy and assassination; *Pots de Fleurs* form an item of the most limited establishment; emblems, such as *Rubans* and *Bonnets Rouges*, are described as essential to the intelligent conduct of the visitor; and a chapter is devoted to Gallantry, of which a modern author in the same department pensively remarks, "*Cette ancienne galanterie qui vivait d'esprit et d'infidélités est comptlètement dénaturée*."

It is curious how municipal, economical, and social life are thus simultaneously daguerreotyped and indicate their mutual and intricate association in the French capital. Its history involves that of churches, congresses, academies, prisons, cemeteries, and police, each of which represents domestic and royal vicissitudes. What other city furnishes such a work as the Duchess D'Abrantes' "Histoire des Salons de Paris"? The *salons* of Madame Necker, Polignac, De Beaumont, De Mazarin, Roland, De Genlis, of Condorcet, of Malmaison, of Talleyrand, and of the Hôtel Rambouillet, etc., embrace the career of statesmen and soldiers, the literary celebrities, the schools of philosophy, the revolutions, the court, the wars, diplomacy, and, in a word, the veritable annals of France. Society, according to this lively writer, in the proper acceptation of the term, was born in France in the reign of the Cardinal de Richelieu; and thenceforth, in its history, we trace that of the nation.

Throughout the most salient eras of this history, therefore, is visible female influence. Cousin has just revived the career of Madame de Longueville, which is identified with the cabals, financial expedients, and war of the Fronde; tournaments, which formed so striking a feature in the diversions of Louis XIV.'s court, owed their revival to the whim of one of his mistresses; Montespan fostered a brood of satirists, and Maintenon one of devotees, while that extraordinary religious controversy which initiated the sect of the Quietists had its origin in the example and agency of Madame Guyon. Even now, although, as a late writer has quaintly observed, "no lady brings her distaff to the council-chamber," the influence of the sex on political opinion, in its operation as a social principle, is recognized. A friend of mine, returning from a dinner-party, described the free and witty sarcasm with which a fair Legitimist assailed the Imperial rule; a week afterwards, meeting her at the same table, she related, that, a few days after her imprudent conversation, she received a courteous invitation from the chief of police. "When they were seated alone in his bureau,—Madame," said he, "you have position, conversational talent, and wield the pen effectively; are you disposed to exert this influence, henceforth, in behalf of, instead of against the government?" Before her indignant negative was fairly uttered, he opened a drawer that seemed full of Napoleons, and glanced at them and her significantly. Thus Montesquieu's observation continues true:—"The individual who would attempt to judge of the government by the men at the head of affairs, and not by the women who sway those men, would fall into the same error as he who judges of a machine by its outward-action, and not by its secret springs"; and the old base system of espionage is revived under the new despotism.

It has become proverbial in France, that the life of woman has three eras,—in youth a coquette, in middle-life a wit, and in age a *dévote*,—which is but another mode of expressing that economy of personal gifts, that shrewd use of the most available social power, which distinguishes the Gallic from the Saxon woman, the worldly from the domestic instincts. There only can we imagine a royal favorite admitting her indebtedness to a royal wife. "To her," wrote Madame de Maintenon of the Queen of Louis; "I owe the King's affection. Picture a sovereign worn out with state affairs, intrigues, and ceremonies, possessed of a *confidante* always the same, always calm, always rational, equally able to instruct and to soothe, with the intelligence of a confessor and the winning gentleness of a woman." It is peculiar to the sex there to escape outward soil, whatever may be their moral exposure; for one instinctively recognizes a Frenchwoman by her clean boots, even in the muddiest thoroughfare, her

spotless muslin cap, kerchief, and collar. She retains also her individuality after marriage better than the fair of other nations, not only in character, but in name, the maiden appellative being joined to her husband's, so that, although a Madame, she keeps the world informed that she was *née* of a family whose title, however modest, she will not drop. The maxims, so prevalent in France, which declare matrimony the tomb of love, are the legitimate result of a superficial theory of life and the mutual independence of the sexes thence arising; accordingly we are assured, "C'est surtout entre mari et femme que l'amour a le moins de chance de succès. Ils vieillirent ensemble comme deux portraits de famille, sans aucune intimité, aucun profit pour l'esprit, et arrivés au dernier relais de leur existence, le souvenir n'avait rien à faire entre eux."

It is a curious illustration at once of the mobility and the isolation of the French mind, that, while it assimilates elements within its sphere which in other nations are kept comparatively apart, it rejects the process in regard to foreign material. Thus, in no other capital are politics and literature so interwoven with society; the love-affairs of a minister directly influence his policy; the tone of the *salon* often inspires and moulds the author; the social history of an epoch necessarily includes the genius of its statesmanship and of its letters, because they are identified with the intrigues, *the bon-mots*, and the conversation of the period; more is to be learned at a lady's morning reception or evening *soirée* than in the writer's library or the official's cabinet. On the other hand, how few threads from abroad can be found in this mingled web of civic, literary, and social life! The vicinity of England and the influx of Englishmen have scarcely brought the ideas or the sentiment of that country into nearer recognition at Paris than was the case a century ago. Notwithstanding an occasional outbreak of Anglomania, the best French authors spell English proper names no better, the best French critics appreciate Shakspeare as little, and the majority of Parisians have no less partial and fixed a notion of the characteristics of their insular neighbors, than before the days of journalism and steam. The attempts to represent English manners and character are as gross caricatures now as in the time of Montaigne. However apt at fusion within, the national egotism is as repugnant to assimilation from without as ever. The stock seems incapable of vital grafting, as has been remarkably evidenced in all the colonial experiments of France.

The excellence of the French character, intellectually speaking, consists in routine and detail. How well their authors describe and their artists depict peculiarities! how exact the evolutions of a French regiment, and the statements of a French naturalist! how apt is a Parisian woman in raising gracefully her skirts, throwing on a shawl, or carrying a basket! In loyalty to a method they are unrivalled, in the triumph of individualities weak; their artisans can make a glove fit perfectly, but have yet to learn how to cut out a coat; their authors, like their soldiers, can be marshalled in groups; means are superior to ends; manners, the exponent of Nature in other lands, there color, modify, and characterize the development of intellect; the subordinate principle in government, in science, and in life, becomes paramount; drawing, the elemental language of Art, is mastered, while the standard of expression remains inadequate; the laws of disease are profoundly studied, while this knowledge bears no proportionate relation to the practical art of healing; the ancient rules of dramatic literature are pedantically followed, while the "pity and terror" they were made to illustrate are unawakened; the programme of republican government is lucidly announced, its watchwords adopted, its philosophy expounded, while its spirit and realization continue in abeyance: and thus everywhere we find a singular disproportion between formula and fact, profession and practice, specific knowledge and its application. The citizen of the world finds no armory like that which the institutions, the taste, and the genius of the French nation afford him, whether he aspire to be a courtier or a chemist, a soldier or a *savant*, a dancer or a doctor; and yet, for complete equipment, he must temper each weapon he there acquires, or it will break in his hand.

In every epoch a word rules or illustrates the dominant spirit: *citoyen* in the Revolution, *moustache* during the Consulate, *victoire* under the Empire, to-day *la Bourse*. "To a Frenchman," says Mrs. Jameson, "the words that express things seem the things themselves, and he pronounces the

words *amour, grâce, sensibilité*, etc., with a relish in his mouth as if he tasted them, as if he possessed them. They talk of "*le sentiment du métier*"; in travelling, Paris is the eternal theme. A sagacious observer has remarked in their language the "short, aphoristic phrase, the frequent absence of the copulative, avoidance of dependent phrases, and disdain of modifying adverbs. *Naiveté, abandon, ennui*, etc., are specific terms of the language, and designate national traits. When Beaumarchais ridiculed a provincial expression, the Dauphiness, we are told, composed a head-dress expressly to give it a local habitation and a name."

The mania for equality, in the first Revolution, De Tocqueville shows was not so much the result of political aspiration as the fierce protest against those exclusive rights once enjoyed by the nobility, (shown by Arthur Young to have been the primary impulse to revolution,) to hunt, keep pigeons, grind corn, press grapes, etc. For a long period, the man of letters was never combined with the statesman, as in England. In France, speculation in government ran wild, because the thinkers, suddenly raised to influence in affairs, had enjoyed no ordeal of public duty. Hence certain imaginary fruits of liberty were sought, and its absolute worth misunderstood. And now that experience, dearly bought, has modified visionary and moulded practical theories, how much of the normal interest of the French character has evaporated! Even the love of beauty and the love of glory, proverbially its distinctions, are eclipsed by the sullen orb of Imperialism; the Bourse is more attractive than the battle-field, material luxury than artistic distinction.

One of their own philosophers has summed up, with justice, the anomalous elements of the versatile national character:—

"Did there ever appear on the earth another nation so fertile in contrasts, so extreme in its acts,—more under the dominion of feeling, less ruled by principle; always better or worse than was anticipated,—now below the level of humanity, now far above; a people so unchangeable in its leading features that it may be recognized by portraits drawn two or three thousand years ago, and yet so fickle in its daily opinions and tastes that it becomes at last a mystery to itself, and is as much astonished as strangers at the sight of what it has done; naturally fond of home and routine, yet, when once driven forth and forced to adopt new customs, ready to carry principles to any lengths and to dare anything; indocile by disposition, but better pleased with the arbitrary and even violent rule of a sovereign than with a free and regular government under its chief citizens; now fixed in hostility to subjection of any kind, now so passionately wedded to servitude that nations made to serve cannot vie with it; led by a thread so long as no word of resistance is spoken, wholly ungovernable when the standard of revolt is raised,—thus always deceiving its masters, who fear it too much or too little; never so free that it cannot be subjugated, never so kept down that it cannot break the yoke; qualified for every pursuit, but excelling in nothing but war; more prone to worship chance, force, success, *éclat*, noise, than real glory; endowed with more heroism than virtue, more genius than common sense; better adapted for the conception of grand designs than the accomplishment of great enterprises; the most brilliant and the most dangerous nation of Europe, and the one that is surest to inspire admiration, hatred, terror, or pity, but never indifference?"[1]

What other social sphere could afford room for the vocation so aptly described in the following sketch of his "ways and means," given in a recent picture of life in Paris by a sycophant of millionnaires, at a period when interests, not rights, are the watchwords of the nation?—"Mon rôle de familier dans une véritable population d'enrichis me donnait du crédit dans les boudoirs, et mon crédit dans les boudoirs ajoutait à ma faveur près ces pauvres diables de millionaires, presque tous vieux et blasés, courant toujours en chancelant après un plaisir nouveau. Les marchands de vin me font la cour comme les jolies femmes, pour que je daigne leur indiqner des connaisseurs assez riches pour payer les bonnes choses le prix qu'elles valent. Mon métier est de tout savoir,—l'anecdote de la

[1] De Tocqueville.

cour, le scandale de la ville, le secret des coulisses." And this species of adventurer, we are told, has always the same commencement to his memoirs,—"*Il vint à Paris en sabots.*"

The numerous avocations of women in the French capital explain, in a measure, their superior tact, efficiency, and force of character. This is especially true of females of the middle class, who have been justly described as remarkable for good sense and appropriate costumes. The participation of women in so many departments of art and industry affects, also, the social tone and the manners. Sterne, long ago, remarked it of the fair shopkeepers. "The genius of a people," he says, "where nothing but the monarchy is *Salique*, having ceded this department totally to the women, by a continual higgling with customers of all ranks and sizes, from morning to night, like so many rough pebbles in a bag, by amicable collisions, they have worn down their asperities and sharp angles, and not only become round and smooth, but will receive, some of them, a polish like a brilliant."

How distinctly may be read the political vicissitudes of France in her literature,—classic, highly finished, keen, and formal, when a monarch was idolized and authors wrote only for courts and scholars: Bossuet, with his rhetorical graces; La Bruyère, with his gallery of characters, not one of which was moulded among the people; De la Rochefoucauld's maxims, drawn from the arcana of fashionable life; Racine, whose heroes die with an immaculate couplet and speak the faint echoes of Grecian or Roman sentiment! When politics became common property, and the walls of a prescriptive and conventional system fell, how wild ran speculation and sentiment in the copious and superficial Voltaire and the vague humanities of Rousseau! When an era of military despotism supervened upon the reign of license, how destitute of lettered genius seemed the nation, except when the pensive enthusiasm of Chateaubriand breathed music from American wilds or a London garret, and Madame de Staël gave utterance to her eloquent philosophy in exile at Geneva! "*Napoléon eût voulu faire manoeuvrer l'esprit humain comme il faisait manoeuvrer ses vieux bataillons.*" Yet more emphatic is the reaction of political conditions upon literary development after the Restoration. The tragic horrors and protracted fever of the Revolution, and the passion for military glory exaggerated by the victories of Napoleon, legitimately initiated the intense school, which during the present century has signalized French literature. The *prestige* of the scholar revived, and literary eclipsed warlike fame; but with the revival of letters came the revolutionary spirit before exhibited on the battle-field and in cabinets. For the artificial and elegant was substituted the melodramatic and effective; lyrics from the overwrought heart broke in dreamy sweetness from Lamartine and in simple energy from Béranger; fiction the most elaborate, incongruous, and exciting, here quaintly artistic, there morbidly scientific, revealed the chaos and the earthquakes that laid bare and upheaved life and society in the preceding epochs; the journal became an intellectual gymnasium and Olympic game, where the first minds of the nation sought exercise and glory; the *feuilleton* almost necessitated the novelist to concentrate upon each chapter the amount of interest once diffused through a volume; criticism, from tedious analysis, became a brilliant ordeal; egotism inspired a world of new confessions, political questions a new school of popular writing, the love of effect and the passion for excitement a multitude of dramatic, narrative, and biographical books, wherein the serenity of thought, the tranquil beauty of truth, and the healthful tone of nature were sacrificed, not without dazzling genius, to immediate fame, pecuniary reward, and the delight *d'éprouver une sensation*. Even in the history of the fine arts, we find the political element guiding the pencil and ruling the fortunes of genius. David was the government painter, and regarded Gros and Girodet as *suspects*. He effected a revolution in Art by going back to severe anatomical principles in design. There were conspiracies against him in the studios, and war was declared between color and design; the palette and the pencil were in conflict; David, the Napoleon of the former,—Prud'hon, Géricault, Delacroix, and others, leaders in the latter faction. Each party was surrounded by its respective corps of amateurs; and military terms were in vogue in the *atelier* and academy. "*S'il est permis*" says Delacroix, speaking of his Sardanapalus, "de comparer les petites choses aux grandes, ce fut mon Waterloo. Je devenais l'abomination de la peinture; il fallait me refuser l'eau et le sel." "If you wish to share the favors of the government," said

an official to another artist, "you must change your manner." From the tyranny of external influences have arisen the incongruities of the French schools of painting, and especially what has been well called "that meretricious breed which continue to depict the Magdalen with the united attractions of Palestine and the Palais Royal." The large pictures which Gros painted during the Empire were consigned to long obscurity at the Restoration. The lives, too, of many of these cultivators of the arts of peace had a tragic close. Haydon's fate made a deep impression in England, because it was an exceptional case; while, of the modern painters of France, whose career was far more harmonious and successful than his, Gros drowned himself, Robert cut his throat, Prud'hon died in misery, and Greuze was buried in Potter's Field. The side of life we naturally associate with tranquillity thus offers, in this dramatic realm, scenes of excitement and pity. It is the same in literature. Witness the fierce struggle between the Romantic and Classic schools,—the early victories of the *enfant sublime*, Victor Hugo. And we must acknowledge that "*les lettres et les arts ont aussi leurs émeutes et leurs révolutions*," and accept the inference of one of the *Parisian literati*,—that "*l'esprit a toujours quelque chose de satanique*." Every revolution is identified with some musical air: when Louis XVIII. first appeared at the theatre, after his long exile, he was greeted with the "Vive Henri IV.," and the new constitution of 1830 was ushered in by the "Marseillaise." The Vaudeville theatre, we are told, during the Revolution and under the Empire, was essentially political. An imaginary resemblance between *la chaste Suzanne* and Marie Antoinette caused the prohibition of that drama; and the interest which Cambacères took in an actress of this establishment led him to give it his official protection.

In the family of nations France is the child of illusions, and excites the sympathy of the magnanimous because her destinies have been marred through the errors of the imagination rather than of the heart. Government, religion, and society—the three great elements of civil life—have nowhere been so modified by the dominion of fancy over fact. Take the history of French republicanism, of Quietism, of court and literary circles; what perspicuity in the expression, and vagueness in the realization of ideas! In each a mania to fascinate, in none a thorough basis of truth; abundance of talent, but no faith; gayety, gallantry, wit, devotion, dreams, and epigrams in perfection, without the solid foundation of principles and the efficient development in practice, either of polity, a social system, or religious belief,—the theory and the sentiment of each being at the same time luxuriant, attractive, and prolific.

The popular writers are eloquent in abstractions, but each seems inspired by a thorough egotism. Descartes, their philosopher, drew all his inferences from consciousness; Madame de Sévigné, the epistolary queen, had for her central motive of all speculation and gossip the love of her daughter; Madame Guyon eliminated her tenets from the ecstasy of self-love; Rochefoucauld derived a set of philosophical maxims from the lessons of mere worldly disappointment; Calvin sought to reform society through the stern bigotry of a private creed; La Bruyère elaborated generic characters from the acute, but narrow observation of artificial society; Boileau established a classical standard of criticism suggested by personal taste, which ignored the progress of the human mind.

The redeeming grace of the nation is to be found in its wholesome sense of the enjoyable and the available in ordinary life, in its freedom from the discontent which elsewhere is born of avarice and unmitigated materialism. The love of pleasing, the influence of women, and a frivolous temper everywhere and on all occasions signalize them. "Why, people laugh at everything here!" naively exclaimed the young Duchess of Burgundy, on her arrival at the French court.

The amount of commodities taken by French people on a journey, and the cool self-satisfaction with which they are appropriated as occasion demands, give a stranger the most vivid idea of sensual egotism. The *pâté*, the long roll of bread, the sour wine, the lap-dog, the snuff, and the night-cap, which transform the car or carriage into a refectory and boudoir, with the chatter, snoring, and shifting of legs, make an interior scene for the novice, especially on a night-jaunt, compared to which the humblest of Dutch pictures are refined and elegant.

The intrinsic diversity and the national relations between the French and English are curiously illustrated by their respective history and literature. Compare, for instance, the plays of Shakspeare, which dramatize the long wars of the early kings, with the account given in the journals of the reception of Victoria at Paris and of Louis Napoleon in London; imagine the royal salutation and the official recognition of the once anathematized Napoleon dynasty; General Bonaparte becomes in his tomb Napoleon I. No wonder "Punch" affirmed that the statue of Pitt shook its bronze head and the bones of Castlereagh stirred in protest.

"The English," says a celebrated writer, "like ancient medals, kept more apart, preserve the first sharpness which the fair hand of Nature has given them; they are not so pleasant to feel, but, in return, the legend is so visible, that, at the first look, you can see whose image and superscription they bear." This is a delicate way of setting forth the superior honesty and bluntness and the inferior smoothness and assimilating instinct of the Anglo-Saxon,—a vital difference, which no alliance or intercourse with his Gallic neighbors can essentially change.

A century ago there were few better tests of popular sentiment in England than the plays in vogue. As indications of the state of the public mind, they were what the ballads are to earlier times, and the daily press is to our own,—generalized casual, but emphatic proofs of the opinions, prejudices, and fancies of the hour. Now a large English colony is domesticated in France; it is but a few hours' trip from London to Paris; newspapers and the telegraph in both capitals make almost simultaneous announcements of news; the soldiers of the two nations fight side by side; the French shopman declares on his sign that English is spoken within; the "Times," porter, and tea are obtainable commodities in Paris; and *fraternité* is the watchword at Dover and Calais. Yet the normal idea which obtains in the conservative brain of a genuine *Anglais*, though doubtless expanded and modified by intercourse and treaties, may be found still in that once popular drama, Foote's "Englishman in Paris." "A Frenchman," says one of the characters, "is a fop. Their taste is trifling, and their politeness pride. What the deuse brings you to Paris, then? Where's the use? It gives Englishmen a true relish for their own domestic happiness, a proper veneration for their national liberties, and an honor for the extended generous commerce of their country. The men there are all puppies, the women painted dolls." Monsieur Ragout and Monsieur Rosbif bandy words; the former is said to "look as if he had not had a piece of beef or pudding in his paunch for twenty years, and had lived wholly on frogs,"—and the latter pines to leap a five-barred gate, and is afraid of being entrapped by "a rich she-Papist." His fair countrywoman is invited by a French marquis to marry him, with this programme,—"A perpetual residence in this paradise of pleasures; to be the object of universal adoration; to say what you please,—go where you will,—do what you like,—form fashions,—hate your husband, and let him see it,—indulge your gallant,—run in debt, and oblige the poor devil to pay it."

As a pendant, take the description of one of the last French novels:—"À Paris tout s'oublie, tout se pardonne. Par convenance, par décence, quelquefois par crainte, on s'absente, ou fait un entr'acte: puis le rideau se rèleve pour le spectacle de nouvelles fautes et de nouvelles folies; toute la question est de savoir s'y prendre."

Comedy is native to French genius and appreciation; it follows the changes of social life with marvellous celerity; it is the best school of the French language; and is refined and subdivided, as an art, both in degree and kind, in France more than in any other country. The prolific authors in this department, and the variety and richness of invention they display, as well as the permanent attraction of the Comic Muse, are striking peculiarities of the French theatre. No capital affords the material and the audience requisite for such triumphs like Paris; and there is always a play of this kind in vogue there, wherein novelty of combination, significance of dialogue, and artistic felicities quite unrivalled elsewhere, are exhibited.

It is quite the reverse with the serious drama. In England this is a form of literature which goes nearest to the normal facts and conditions of human nature; it teaches the highest and deepest lessons, wins the most profound sympathy, and is remarkable and interesting through its subtile and

comprehensive truth to Nature: whereas in France the masters of tragic art are but skilful reproducers of the classical drama. French tragedy is essentially artificial, grafted on the conventionalities of a distant age. It gives scope either to mere elocutionary art or melodramatic invention,—not to the universal and existing passions. There is but a slender opportunity to identify our sympathies—those of modern civilization—with what is going on. Figures in Roman togas or Grecian mantles rehearse the sentiments of fatalism, the creed of ancient mythology, or Gallic rhetoric in a classic dress; and these disguises so envelope the love, ambition, despair, hate, or patriotism, that we are always conscious of the theatrical, and it requires the extraordinary gifts of a Rachel to enlist other than artistic interest.

The French have manuals for breathing and composing the features to secure artistic effects; they offer academic prizes for every conceivable achievement; their very lamp-posts are designed with taste; a huckster in the street will exhibit dramatic tact and wonderful mechanical dexterity. "Quand il paraît un homme de génie en France," says Madame de Staël, "dans quelque carrière que ce soit, il atteint presque toujours à un degré de perfection sans exemple; car il réunit l'audace qui fait sortir de la route commune au tact du bon goût." And yet in vast political interests they are victims,—in the more earnest developments of the soul, children. A new artificial lake in the Bois de Boulogne, a grand military reception, news of a victory in some distant corner of the globe, the distribution of eagles to brave survivors,—in a word, an appeal to the love of amusement, of display, and of glory,—quiets the murmur about to rise against interference with human rights or usurpation of the national will. Political interests of the gravest character are treated with flippancy: one writer calls the formation of a new government Talleyrand's table of whist; and another casually observes that "*tous les gouvernements nouveaux ont leur lune de miel*."

That great principle of the division of labor, which the English carry into mechanical and commercial affairs, the French also apply to the economy of life and to Art; but, as these latter interests are more spontaneous and unlimited, the result is often a perfection in detail, and a like deficiency in general effect. Thus, there are schools of painting in France more distinct and apart than exist elsewhere; usually the followers of such are distinguished for excellence in the mechanical aptitudes of their vocation; the figure is admirably drawn, the costume rightly disposed, and sometimes the degree of finish quite marvellous; but, usually, this superiority is attained at the expense of the sentiment of the picture. French historic Art, like French life, is apt to be extravagant and melodramatic, or over-refined in unimportant particulars; it often lacks moral harmony,—the grand, simple, true reflection of Nature in its nicety. Delaroche, who, of all French painters, rose most above the adventitious, and gave himself to the soul of Art, to pure expression, was, for this very reason, thought by his brother artists to be cold and unattractive. There is one sphere, however, where this exclusiveness of style and partition of labor are productive of the most felicitous results: namely, the minor drama. In England and America the same theatre exhibits opera, melodrama, tragedy, comedy, rope-dancing, and legerdemain; but in Paris, each branch and element of histrionic art has its separate temple, its special corps of actors and authors, nay, its particular class of subjects; hence their unrivalled perfection. Ingenuity, science, and Art are concentrated by thus assigning free and individual scope to the dramatic niceties and phases of life, of history, of genius, and of society. At the Opera Comique you find one kind of musical creation; at the Italiens the lyrical drama of Southern Europe alone; at the Variétés a unique order of comic dialogue; and at the Porte St. Martin yet another species of play. One theatre gives back the identical tone of existing society and current events; another deals with the classical ideas of the past. Satire and song, the horrible and the brilliant, the graceful and the highly artistic, pictorial, elocutionary, pantomimic, tragic, vocal, statuesque, the past and present, all the elements of Art and of life, find representation in the plot, the language, the sentiment, the costume, the music, and the scenery of the many Parisian theatres.

Yet how much of this superiority is fugitive! how little in the whole dramatic development takes permanent hold upon popular sympathy! Much of its significance is purely local, and of its interest

altogether temporary. Scholars and the higher classes can talk eloquently of Corneille and Racine; the beaux and *spirituelle* women of the day can repeat and enjoy the last hit of Scribe, or the new *bon-mot* of the theatre: but contrast these results with the national love and appreciation of Shakspeare,—with the permanent reflection of Spanish life in Lope de Vega,—the patriotic aspirations which the young Italian broods over in the tragedies of Alfieri. The grace of movement, the triumph of tact and ingenuity, the devotion to conventionalism, either pedantry or the genius of the hour, also rules the drama in Paris. With all its brilliancy, entertainment, grace, wit, and popularity,—there exists not a permanently vital and universally recognized type of this greatest department of literature, familiar and endeared alike to peasant and peer, a representative of humanity for all time,—like the bard around whose name and words cluster the Anglo-Saxon hearts and intelligence from generation to generation.

But nowhere do life and the drama so trench upon each other; nowhere is every incident of experience so dramatic. Miss H.M. Williams told the poet Rogers that she had seen "men and women, waiting for admission at the door of the theatre, suddenly leave their station, on the passing of a set of wretches going to be guillotined, and then, having ascertained that none of their relations or friends were among them, very unconcernedly return to the door of the theatre." A child is born at the Opera Comique during the performance, and it is instantly made an event of sympathy and effect by the audience; a subscription is raised, the child named for the dramatic heroine of the moment, and the fortunate mother sent home in a carriage, amid the plaudits of the crowd. You are listening to a play; and a copy of the "Entr'acte" is thrust into your hand, containing a minute account of the death of a statesman two squares off whose name fills pages of history, or a battle in the East, where some officer whom you met two months before on the Boulevard has won immortal fame by prodigies of valor. So do the actualities and the pastimes, the real and the imaginary drama, miraculously interfuse at Paris; the comedy of life is patent there, and often the spectator exclaims, "*Arlequin avait bien arrangé les choses, mais Colombine dérange tout!*"

The Parisian females are "unexceptionably shod,"—but the agricultural instruments now in use in the rural districts of France are of a form and mechanism which, to a Yankee farmer, would seem antediluvian; the cooks, gardeners, and other working-people, have annually the most graceful festivals,—but the traveller sees in the fields women so bronzed and wrinkled by toil and exposure that their sex is hardly to be recognized. When the Gothamite passes along Pearl or Broad Street, he beholds the daily spectacle of unemployed carmen reading newspapers;—there may be said to be no such thing as popular literature in France; mental recreation, such as the German and Scotch peasantry enjoy, is unknown there. The Art and letters of the kingdom flourished in her court and were cultivated as an aristocratic element for so long a period, that neither has become domesticated among the lower classes; we find in them the sentiment of military glory, of religion in its superstitious phase, of music perhaps, of rustic festivity,—but not the enjoyments which spring from or are associated with thought and poetic sympathies such as national writers like Burns inspired. An exception comparatively recent may be found in the popular appreciation of Béranger and Souvestre.

There is not a natural object too beautiful or an occasion too solemn to arrest the French tendency to the theatrical. Even one of their most ardent eulogists remarks,—"All that can be said against the French sublime is this,—that the grandeur is more in the word than in the thing; the French expression professes more than it performs"; and old Montaigne declares that "lying is not a vice among the French, *but a way of speaking*." Both observations admit too much; and indicate an habitual departure from Nature and simplicity as a national trait. Who but Frenchmen ever delighted in reducing to artificial shapes the graceful forms of vegetable life, or can so far lay aside the sentiment of grief as to engage in rhetorical panegyrics over the fresh graves of departed friends? Compare the high dead wall with its range of flower-pots, the porches undecked by woodbines or jessamine, the formal paths, the proximate kitchen, stables, and ungarnished *salon* of a French villa, with the hedges, meadows, woodlands, and trellised eglantine of an English country-house; and a glance assures us

that to the former nation the country is a *dernier ressort*, and not an endeared seclusion. Yet they romance, in their way, on rural subjects: "*À la campagne*," says one of their poets, "*où chaque feuille qui tombe est une élégie toute faite*." Through an avenue of scraggy poplars we approach a dilapidated *château*, whose owner is playing dominoes at the café of the nearest provincial town, or exhausting the sparse revenues of the estate at the theatres, roulette-tables, or balls of Paris. People leave these for a rural vicinage only to economize, to hide chagrin, or to die. So recognized is this indifference to Nature and inaptitude for rural life in France, that, when we desire to express the opposite of natural tastes, we habitually use the word "Frenchified." The idea which a Parisian has of a tree is that of a convenient appendage to a lamp. The traveller never sees artificial light reflected from green leaves, without thinking of his evening promenades in the French capital, or a dance in the groves of Montmorency. The old verbal tyranny of the French Academy, the painted wreaths sold at cemetery-gates, the colored plates of fashions, powdered hair, and rouged cheeks, typify and illustrate this irreverent ambition to pervert Nature and create artificial effects; they are but so many forms of the theatrical instinct, and proofs of the ascendency of meretricious taste. It is this want of loyalty to Nature, and insensibility to her unadulterated charms, which constitute the real barrier between the Gallic mind and that of England and Italy, and which explain the fervent protest of such men as Alfieri and Coleridge. Simplicity and earnestness are the normal traits of efficient character, whether developed in action or Art, in sentiment or reflection; and manufactured verse, vegetation, and complexions indicate a faith in appearances and a divorce from reality, which, in political interests, tend to compromise, to theory, and to acquiescence in a military *régime* and an embellished absolutism.

It is this incompleteness, this comparative untruth, that gives rise to the dissatisfaction we feel in the last analysis of French character. It is delusive. The promise of beauty held out by external taste is unfulfilled; the fascination of manner bears a vastly undue proportion to the substantial kindness and trust which that immediate charm suggests. "Just Heaven!" exclaims Yorick, "for what wise reasons hast thou ordered it, that beggary and urbanity, which are at such variance in other countries, should find a way to be at unity in this?" The bearing of an Englishman seldom awakens expectation of courtesy or entertainment; yet, if vouchsafed, how to be relied on is the friendship! how generous the hospitality! The urbane salutation with which a Frenchman greets the female passenger, as she enters a public conveyance, is not followed by the offer of his seat or a slice of his reeking *pâtè*,—while the roughest backwoodsman in America, who never touched his hat or inclined his body to a stranger, will guard a woman from insult, and incommode himself to promote her comfort, with respectful alacrity. It is so in literature. How often we eagerly follow the clear exposition of a subject in the pages of a French author, to reach an impotent conclusion! or suffer our sympathies to be enlisted by the admirable description of an interior or a character in one of their novels, to find the plot which embodies them an absurd melodrama! Evanescence is the law of Parisian felicities,—selfishness the background of French politeness,—sociability flourishes in an inverse ratio to attachment; we become skeptical almost in proportion as we are attracted. If we ask the way, we are graciously directed; but if we demand the least sacrifice, we must accept volubility for service. Thus the perpetual flowering in manners, in philosophy, in politics, and in economy, is rarely accompanied by fruit in either. To enjoy Paris, we must cease to be in earnest;—to pass the time, and not to wrest from it a blessing or a triumph, is the main object. The badges, the gardens, the smiles, the agreeable phrase, the keen repartee, the tempting dish, the ingenious *vaudeville*, the pretty foot, the elegant chair and becoming curtain, the extravagant gesture, the pointed epigram or alluring formula, must be taken as so many agreeabilities,—not for things performed, but imaginatively promised. The folly of war has been demonstrated to the entire sense of mankind; at best, it is now deemed a painful necessity; yet the most serious phase of life in France is military. Depth and refinement of feeling are lonely growths, and can no more spring up in a gregarious and festal life than trees in quicksands; citizenship is based on consistent acts, not on verbosity; and brilliant accompaniments never reconcile strong hearts to

the loss of independence, which some English author has acutely declared the first essential of a gentleman. The civilization of France is an artistic and scientific materialism; the spiritual element is wanting. Paris is the theatre of nations; we must regard it as a continuous spectacle, a boundless museum, a place of diversion, of study,—not of faith, the deepest want and most sacred birthright of humanity.

The want of directness, the absence of candor, the non-recognition of truth in its broad and deep sense, is, indeed, a characteristic phase of life, of expression, and of manners in France. A lover of his nation confesses that even in "*galantes aventures l'esprit prenait la place du coeur, la fantaisie celle du sentiment.*" Voltaire's creed was, that "*le mensonge n'est un vice que quand il fait du mal; c'est une grande vertu quand il fait du bien.*" "*L'exagération*" says De Maistre, "*est le mensonge des honnêtes gens.*"

In every aspect the histrionic prevails,—by facility of association and colloquial aptitude in the common intercourse of life,—by the inventive element in dress, furniture, and material arrangements, plastic to the caprice of taste and ingenuity,—by the habitudes of out-of-door life, giving greater variety and adaptation to manners,—and by a national temperament, susceptible and demonstrative. The current vocabulary suggests a perpetual recourse to the casual, a shifting of the life-scene, a recognition of the temporary and accidental. Such oft-recurring words as *flâneur*, *liaison*, *badinage*, etc., have no exact synonymes in other tongues. All that is done, thought, and felt takes a dramatic expression. Lamartine elaborates a "History of the Restoration" from two reports,—the one monarchical, the other republican,—and, by making the facts picturesque and sentimental, wins countless readers. Comte elaborates a masterly analysis of the sciences, proclaims a fascinating theory of eras or stages in human development; but the positive philosophy, of which all this is but the introduction, to be applied to the individual and society, eludes, at last, direct and complete application. A popular *savant* dies, and students drag the hearse and scatter flowers over the grave; a philosopher lectures, and immediately his disciples form a school, and advocate his system with the ardor of partisans; a disappointed soldier commits suicide by throwing himself from Napoleon's column, while a *grisette* and her lover make their exit through a last embrace and the fumes of charcoal; a wit seeks revenge with a clever repartee instead of his fists or cane. A lady is the centre of attraction at a reception, and, upon inquiry, we are gravely informed that the charm lies in the fact, that, though now fat and more than forty, as well as married to an old noble, in her youth she was the mistress of a celebrated poet. Notoriety, even when scandalous, is as good a social distinction as birth, fame, or beauty. Rousseau wrote a love-story, and sentiment became the rage. An artisan has a day to spare, and takes his family to a garden or a dance. Human existence, thus embellished, impulsive, and caricatured, becomes a continuous melodrama, with an occasional catastrophe induced by political revolutions. Louis XIV., the most characteristic king France ever had, is a genuine representative of this theatrical instinct and development.

Herein may we find a key to the riddle of governmental vicissitudes in France. People so easily satisfied with illusions, so fertile in superficial expedients, are like children and savages in their sense of what is novel and amusing, and their love of excitement,—and make no such demands upon reality as full-grown men and educated citizens instinctively crave. Their powers, in this regard, have not been disciplined,—their wants but vaguely realized. Accustomed to look out of themselves for a law of action, to consult authority upon every occasion, to defer to official sources for guidance in every detail of municipal and personal affairs,—the lesson of self-dependence, the courage and the knowledge needful for efficiency are wanting. "*Savez-vous*," asks an epicure, "*ce qui a chassé la gaîté? C'est la politique.*" They rally at the voice of command, submit to interference, and take for granted a prescribed formula, partly because it is troublesome to think, and partly on account of inexperience in assuming responsibility. De Tocqueville has remarked, that, in every instance of attempted colonization, they have adapted themselves to, instead of elevating savage tribes. They have never gone through the process of state-education by the inevitable claim of personal duty, like

the Anglo-Saxons. Hence their need of a master, and the feeling of stability realized among them only under legitimacy and despotism. Shallow reasoners argue from the mere acknowledgment of this state of things that it is an ultimate public blessing when the man appears with wit and will enough to regulate and keep from chaos a society thus destitute of political training. But those who look deeper know that this political inefficiency is but the external manifestation or the latent cause of more serious defects: by impeding healthful development in one way, it occasions a morbid development in another. If citizenship in its most free and active privilege were enjoyed, there would be less devotion to amusement, a more virile national character, and the sanctities of life would have observance. Public spirit and a political career are incentives to manly ambition,—to an employment of mind and feeling that wins men from trifling pursuits and vain diversion; they are the national basis of private usefulness; to thwart them is to condemn humanity to perpetual childhood,—to render members of a state machines.

The social evils and kinds of crime in France are referable in no small degree to the absence of great motives,—the limited spheres and hopeless routine involved in arbitrary government, unsustained by any elevated sentiment. Such a rule makes literature servile, enterprise mercenary, and manners profligate: all history proves this. It is not, therefore, rational to infer, from the apparent want of ability in the nation to take care of its own affairs, that a military despotism is justifiable; when the truth is equally demonstrated, that such a sway, by indefinitely postponing the chance to acquire the requisite training, keeps down and throws back the national impulse and destiny. The man who thus abuses power is none the less a traitor and a parricide.

THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE UNDER DIFFICULTIES; AND WHAT CAME OF IT

"Mr. Geer!"

Mr. Geer was unquestionably asleep.

This certainly did not indicate a sufficiently warm appreciation of Mrs. Geer's social charms; but the enormity of the offence will be greatly modified by a brief review of the attending circumstances. If you will but consider that the crackling of burning wood in a huge Franklin stove is strongly soporific in its tendencies,—that the cushion of a capacious arm-chair, constructed and adjusted as if with a single eye to a delicious dose, nay, to a long succession of doses, is a powerful temptation to a sleepy soul,—that the regular, and, it must be confessed, somewhat monotonous *click, click, click* of Mrs. Geer's knitting-needles only served to measure, without disturbing the silence, —and, lastly, that they had been husband and wife for thirty years,—you will not cease to wonder that Mr. Geer

> "was glorious,
> O'er all the ills of life victorious."

To most men, an interruption at such a time would have been particularly annoying; but when Mrs. Geer spoke in that way, Mr. Geer, asleep or awake, always made a point of hearing; so he roused himself, and turned his round, honest face and placid blue eyes on the partner of his bosom, who went on,—

"Mr. Geer, our Ivy will be seventeen, come fall."

"Possible?" replied Mr. Geer. "Who'd 'a' thunk it?"

Mr. Geer, as you may infer, was eminently a free-thinker, or rather, a free-actor, in respect of irregular verbs. In fact, he tyrannized over all parts of speech: wrested nouns and verbs from their original shape, till you could hardly recognize their distorted faces; and committed that next worst sin to murdering one's mother, namely,—murdering one's mother-tongue, with an *abandon* that was absolutely fascinating. Having delivered his opinion thus sententiously, he at once subsided, closed his placid eyes, and retired into his inner world of—thought, perhaps.

"*Mr. Geer!*"

This time he fairly jumped from his seat, and cast about him scared, blinking eyes.

"Mr. Geer, how can you sleep away your precious time so?"

"Sleep? I—I—am sure, I was never wider awake in my life."

"Well, then, tell me what I said."

"Said? Eh,—eh,—something about Ivy, wasn't it?"

And Mr. Geer nervously twitched up the skirts of his coat, and replaced his awry cushion, and began to think that perhaps, after all, he had been asleep. But Mrs. Geer was too much interested in the subject of her own cogitations to pursue her victory farther; so she answered,—

"Yes, and what is a-going to become of her?"

"Lud, lud! What's the matter?" asked Mr. Geer, wildly.

"Matter? Why, she'll be seventeen, come fall, and doesn't know a thing."

"O Lud! that all? That a'n't nothin'."

And Mr. Geer settled comfortably down into his arm-chair once more. He felt decidedly relieved. Visions of smallpox, cholera, and throat-distemper, the worst evils that he could think of and dread for his darling, had been conjured up by his wife's words; and when he found the real state of the case, a great burden, which had suddenly fallen on his heart, was as suddenly lifted.

"But I tell you it *is* something," continued Mrs. Geer, energetically. "Ivy is 'most a woman, and has never been ten miles from home in her life, and to no school but our little district"–

"And she's as pairk a gal," interrupted Mr. Geer, "as any you'll find in all the ten miles round, be the other who she will."

"She's well enough in her way," replied Mrs. Geer, in all the humility of motherly pride; "and so much the more reason why she shouldn't be let go so. There's Mr. Dingham sending his great logy girls to Miss Porter's seminary. (I wonder if he expects they'll ever turn out anything.) And here's our Ivy, bright as a button, and you full well able to maintain her like a lady, and have done nothing but turn her out to grass all her life, till she's fairly run wild. I declare it's a shame. She ought to be sent to school to-morrow."

"Nonsense, Sally! nonsense! I a'n't a-goin' lo have no such doin's. Sha'n't go off to school. What's the use havin' her, if she can't stay at home with us? Let Mr. Dingham send his gals to Chiny, if he wants to. All the book-larnin' in the world won't make 'em equal to our Ivy with only her own head. I don't want her to go to gettin' up high-falutin' notions. She's all gold now. She don't need no improvin'. Sha'n't budge an inch. Sha'n't stir a step."

"But do consider, Mr. Geer, the child has got to leave us some time. We can't have her always."

"Why can't we?" exclaimed Mr. Geer, almost fiercely.

"Sure enough! Why can't we? There a'n't nobody besides you and me, I suppose, that thinks she's pairk. What's John Herricks and Dan Norris hangin' round for all the time?"

"And they may hang round till the cows come home! Nary hair of Ivy's head shall they touch, —nary one on em!"

Just at this juncture of affairs, the damsel in question bounded into the room.

"Come here, Ivy," said the old man; "your mother's been a-slanderin' you; says you don't know nothin'."

Ivy knelt before him, rested her arms on his knees, and turned upon him a pair of palpably roguish eyes.

"Father, it *is* an awful slander. I do know a sight."

"Lud, child, yes! I knew you did. No more you don't want to marry John Herricks, do you?"

"Oh, Daddy Geer! O—h—h!"

"Nor Dan Norris? nor none of 'em?"

"Never a one, father."

"Nor don't you ever think of gettin' married and slavin' yourself out for nobody. I'm plenty well able to take care of you, as long as I live. You'll never live so happy as you do at home; and you'll break my heart to go away, Ivy."

"I'll never go, papa." (She pronounced it with the accent on the first syllable.) "Indeed, I never will. I'll never be married, as long as I live."

"No more you sha'n't, good child, good child!"

And again Farmer Geer betook himself to the depths of his arm-chair, with the complacent consciousness of having faithfully discharged his parental duties. "She should not go to school. She would not be married. She had said she would not, and of course she would not."

"Of course I shall not," mused Ivy, as she lay in her white bed. "What could put it into poor papa's head? Marry John Herricks, with his everlasting smirk, and his diddling walk, and take care of all the Herricks' sisters and mothers and aunts, and the Herricks' cows and horses and pigs—and —hens—and—and"–

But Ivy had kept her thoughts on her marriage longer than ever before in her life; and ere she had finished the inventory of John Herricks's personal property and real estate, the blue eyes were closed in the sweet, sound sleep of youth and health.

Mrs. Geer, in her estimate of her daughter's attainments, was partly right and partly wrong. Ivy had never been "finished" at Mrs. Porter's seminary, and was consequently in a highly unfinished

condition. "Small Latin and less Greek" jostled each other in her head. German and French, Italian and Spanish, were strange tongues to Ivy. She could not dance, nor play, nor draw, nor paint, nor work little dogs on footstools.

What, then, could she do?

Imprimis, she could climb a tree like a squirrel. *Secundo*, she could walk across the great beam in the barn like a year-old kitten. In the pursuit of hens' eggs she knew no obstacles; from scaffold to scaffold, from haymow to haymow, she leaped defiant. She pulled out the hay from under the very noses of the astonished cows, to see if, perchance, some inexperienced pullet might there have deposited her golden treasure. With all four-footed beasts she was on the best of terms. The matronly and lazy old sheep she unceremoniously hustled aside, to administer consolation and caresses to the timid, quaking lamb in the corner behind. Without saddle or bridle she could

> "Ride a black horse
> To Banbury Cross."

(N.B.—I don't say she actually did. I only say she could; and under sufficiently strong provocation, I have no doubt she would.) She knew where the purple violets and the white innocence first flecked the spring turf, and where the ground-sparrows hid their mottled eggs. All the little waddling, downy goslings, the feeble chickens, and faint-hearted, desponding turkeys, that broke the shell too soon, and shivered miserably because the spring sun was not high enough in the morning to warm them, she fed with pap, and cherished in cotton-wool, and nursed and watched with eager, happy eyes. O blessed Ivy Geer! True Sister of Charity! Thrice blessed stepmother of a brood whose name was Legion!

From the conjugal and filial conversation which I have faithfully reported, a casual observer, particularly if young and inexperienced, might infer that the question of Miss Ivy's education was definitively settled, and that she was henceforth to remain under the paternal roof. I should, myself, have fallen into the same error, had not a long and intimate acquaintance with the female sex generated and cherished a profound and mournful conviction of the truth of the maxim, that appearances are deceitful. E.g., a woman has set her heart on something, and is refused. She pouts and sulks: that is clouds, and will soon blow over. She scolds, storms, and raves (I speak in a figure; I mean she does something as much like that as a tender, delicate, angelic woman can): that is thunder, and only clears the air. She betakes herself to tears, sobs, and embroidered cambric: that's a shower, and everything will be greener and fresher after it. You may go your ways,—one to his farm, another to his merchandise; the world will not wind up its affairs just yet. But, put the case, she goes on the even tenor of her way unmoved:

> "Beware! beware!
> Trust her not; she is fooling thee."

Thus Mrs. Geer, who was a thorough tactician. Like Napoleon, she was never more elated than after a defeat. Before consulting her husband at all, she had contemplated the subject in all its bearings, and had deliberately decided that Ivy was to go to school. The consent of the senior partner of the firm was a secondary matter, which time and judicious management would infallibly secure. Consequently, notwithstanding the unpropitious result of their first colloquy, she the next day commenced preparations for Ivy's departure, as unhesitatingly, as calmly, as assiduously, as if the day of that departure had been fixed.

Mrs. Geer was right. She knew she was, all the time. She had a sublime faith in herself. She felt in her soul the divine afflatus, and pressed forward gloriously to her goal. Mr. Geer had as much firmness, not to say obstinacy, as falls to the lot of most men; but Mrs. Geer had more; and as

Launce Outram, hard beset, so pathetically moaned, "A woman in the very house has such deused opportunities!" so Farmer Geer grumbled, and squirmed, and remonstrated, and—yielded.

Mrs. Geer was *not* right. She had reckoned without her host. Her affairs were gliding down the very Appian Way of prosperity in a chariot-and-four, with footmen and outriders, when, presto! they turned a sharp and unexpected corner, and over went the whole establishment into a mirier mire than ever bespattered Dr. Slop.

To speak without a parable. When her expected Hegira was announced to Miss Mary Ives Geer, that young lady, to the ill-concealed vexation of her mother, and the not-attempted-to-be-concealed exultation of her father, expressed decided disapprobation of the whole scheme. As she was the chief *dramatis persona*, the very Hamlet of the play, this unlooked-for decision somewhat interfered with Mrs. Geer's plans. All the eloquence of that estimable woman was brought to bear on this one point; but this one point was invincible. Expostulation and entreaty were alike vain. Neither ambition nor pleasure could hold out any allurements to Ivy. Maternal authority was at length hinted at, only hinted at, and the spoiled child declared that she had not had her own will and way for sixteen years to give up quietly in her seventeenth. One last resort, one forlorn hope,—one expedient, which had never failed to overcome her childish stubbornness: "Would she grieve her parents so much as to oppose this their darling wish?" And Ivy burst into tears, and begged to know if she should show her love to her father and mother by going away from them. This drove the nail into her old father's heart, and then the little vixen clenched it by throwing herself into his arms, and sobbing, "Oh, papa! would you turn your Ivy out of doors and break her heart?"

Flimsiest of fallacies! Shallowest of sophists! But she was the only and beloved child of his old age; so the fallacy passed unchallenged; the strong arms closed around the naughty girl; and the soothing voice murmured, "There, there, Ivy! don't cry, child! Lud! lud! you sha'n't be bothered; no more you sha'n't, lovey!" and the *status quo* was restored.

> "It is not in the sea nor in the strife
> We feel benumbed and wish to be no more,
> But in the after silence on the shore,
> When all is lost, except a little life,"

said one who had breasted the stormiest sea and plunged into the fiercest strife. Ivy, who had never read Byron, and therefore could not be suspected of any Byronical affectations, felt it, when, having gained her point, she sat down alone in her own room. When her single self had been pitted against superior numbers, age, experience, and parental authority, all her heroism was roused, and she was adequate to the emergency; but her end gained, the excitement gone, the sense of disobedience alone remaining, and she was thoroughly uncomfortable, nay, miserable.

"Mamma is right; I know I am a little goose," sobbed she. (The words were mental, intangible, unspoken; the sobs physical, palpable, decided.) "I never did know anything, and I never shall,—and I don't care if I don't. I don't see any good in knowing so much. We don't have a great while to stay in the world any way, and I don't see why we can't be let alone and have a good time while we are here, and when we get to heaven we can take a fresh start. Oh, dear! I never shall go to heaven, if I am so bad and vex mamma. But then papa didn't care. But then he would have liked me to go to school. But there, I won't! I won't! I *will not!* I'll study at home. Oh, dear! I wish papa was a great man, and knew everything, and could teach me. Well, he is just as happy, and just as rich, and everybody likes him just as well, as if he knew the whole world full; and why can't I do so, too? Rebecca Dingham, indeed! Mercy! I hope I never shall be like her; I would rather not know my A B C! What *shall* I do? There's Mr. Brownslow might teach me; he knows enough. But, dear me! he is as busy as he can be, all day long; and Squire Merrill goes out of town every day; and there's Dr. Mix, to be sure, but he smells so strong of paregoric, and I don't believe he knows much, either; and there's nobody else in

town that knows any more than anybody else; and there's nothing for it but I must go to school, if I am ever to know anything." (A renewal of sobs, uninterrupted for several minutes.) "There's Mr. Clerron!" (A sudden cessation.) "I suppose he knows more than the whole town tumbled into one; and writes books, and—mercy! there's no end to his knowledge; and he's rich, and does everything he likes, all day long. Oh, if I only *did* know him! I would ask him straight off to teach me. I should be scared to death. I've a great mind to ask him, as it is. I can tell him who I am. He never will know any other way, for he isn't acquainted with anybody. They say he is as proud as Lucifer. If he were ten times prouder, I would rather ask him than go to school. He might just as well do something as not. I am sure, if God had made me him, and him me, I should be glad to help him. I'll go straight to him the first thing to-morrow morning."

Once seeing a possible way out of her difficulties, her sorrow vanished. Not quite so gayly as usual, it is true, did she sing about the house that night; for she was summoning all her powers to prepare an introductory speech to Felix Clerron, Esq., a gentleman and a scholar. Her elocutionary attempts were not quite satisfactory to herself, but she was not to be daunted; and when morning came, she took heart of grace, slung her broadbrimmed hat over her arm, and began her march "over the hills and far away," in search of her—fate.

"And did her mother really let her roam away, alone, on such an errand, to a perfect stranger?"

Humanly speaking, nothing was more unlikely than that Mrs. Geer, a prudent, modest, and sensible woman, should give her consent to such an—to use the mildest term—unusual undertaking. Nor did she. The fact is, her consent was not asked. She knew nothing whatever of the plan.

"Worse and worse! Did the wilful girl go off without leave? without even informing her parents?"

I am sorry to say she did. In writing a story of real life, one cannot take that liberty with facts which is quite proper, not to say indispensable, in history, science, and belles-lettres generally. Duty compels me to adhere closely to the truth; and for whatever of obloquy may be heaped upon me, or upon my Ivy, I shall find consolation in the words of the illustrious Harrison; or perhaps it was the illustrious Taylor; I am not quite sure, however, that it was not the illustrious Washington:—"Do right, and let the consequences take care of themselves." I am therefore obliged to say, that Ivy's departure in pursuit of knowledge was entirely unknown to her respected and beloved parents. But you must remember that she was an only child, and a spoiled child,—spoiled as only stern New England Puritan parents, somewhat advanced in years, can spoil their children. I do not defend Ivy. On the contrary, notwithstanding my regard for her, I hand her over to the reprobation of an enlightened community; and I hereby entreat all young persons into whose hands this memoir may fall to take warning by the fate of poor Ivy, and never enter upon any important undertaking, until they have, to say the least, consulted those who are their natural guides, their warmest friends, and their most experienced counsellors.

While I have been writing this, Ivy Geer, light of heart, fleet of foot, and firm of will, has passed over hill-side, through wood-path, and across meadow-land, and drawn near the domains of Felix Clerron, Esq. Light of heart perhaps I scarcely ought to say. Certainly, that enterprising organ had never before beat so furious a tattoo in Ivy's breast, as when she stood, hat in hand, on the steps of the somewhat stately dwelling. To do her justice, she had intended to do the penance of wearing her hat when she should have reached her destination; but in her excitement she quite forgot it. So, as I said, she stood on the door-step, as a royal maiden stood three hundred years before, (not in the same place,) with the "wind blowing her fair hair about her beautiful cheeks."

There had come to Ivy from the great, gay world a vague rumor, that, instead of knocking at a door, like a Christian, with your own good knuckles, for such case made and provided, modern fashion had introduced "the ringing and the dinging of the bells." This vague rumor found a local habitation, when Mr. Clerron came down upon the village and established himself, his men and women and horses and cattle; but as Ivy stood on his door-step, looking upward, downward, sidewise,

with earnest, peering gaze, no bell, and no sign of bell, was visible; nothing unusual, save a little door-knob at the right-hand side of the door,—a thing which could not be accounted for. After long and serious deliberation, she came to the conclusion that the bell must be inside, and that the knob was a screw attached to it. So she tried to twist it, first one way, then the other; but twist it would not. In despair she betook herself to her fingers and knocked. Nobody came. Twist again. No use. Knock again. Ditto. Then she went down to the gravelled path, selected one of the largest pebbles, took up her station before the door, and began to pound away. In a moment, a gentleman in dressing-gown and smoking-cap, with a cigar between his fingers, came round the corner. Seeing her, he threw away his cigar, lifted his velvet cap, bowed, and, with a polite "allow me," stepped to the door, pulled the bell, and again passed out of sight. Ivy was not so confused at being detected in her assault and battery on the door of a respectable, peaceable, private gentleman, as not to make the silent reflection, "Pulled the knob, instead of twisting it. How easy it is to do a thing, if you only know how!"

The summons was soon answered by a black gnome, and Ivy was ushered into a large room, which, to her dazzled, sun-weary eyes, seemed delightfully fresh and *green*-looking. Two minutes more of waiting,—then a step in the hall, a gently opening door, and Ivy felt rather than saw herself in the presence of the formidable Mr. Clerron. A single glance showed her that he was the person who had rung the bell for her, though the gay dressing-gown had been changed for a soberer suit. Mr. Clerron bowed. Ivy, hardly knowing what she did, faltered forth, "I am Ivy Geer." A half-curious, half-sarcastic smile glimmered behind the heavy beard, and gleamed beneath the heavy eyebrows, as he answered, "I am happy to make your acquaintance"; but another glance at the trembling form, the frightened, pale face, and quivering lips, changed the smile into one that was very good-natured, and even kind; and he added, playfully,—

"I am Felix Clerron, very much at your service."

"You write books and are a very learned man," pursued Ivy, hurriedly, never lifting her eyes from the floor, and never ceasing to twirl her hat-strings.

There was no possibility of supposing her guilty of committing a little diplomatic flattery in conveying this succinct bit of information. She made the assertion with the air of one who has a disagreeable piece of business on hand, and is determined to go through with it as soon as possible. He bowed and smiled again; quite unnecessarily,—since, as I have before remarked, Ivy's eyes were steadfastly fixed on the carpet. A slight pause for breath and she pitched ahead again.

"I am very ignorant, and I am growing old. I am almost seventeen. I don't know anything to speak of. Mamma wishes me to go to school. Papa did not, but now he does. I won't go. I would rather be stupid all my life long than leave home. But mamma is vexed, and I want to please her, and I thought,—Mr. Brownslow is so busy,—and you,—if you have nothing to do,—and know so much,—I thought"–

She stopped short, utterly unable to proceed. Wonderfully different did this affair seem from the one she had planned the preceding evening. My dear Sir, Madam,—have not we, too, sometimes found it an easier thing to fight the battle of life in our own chimney-corner, by the ruddy and genial firelight, than in broad day on the world's great battle-field?

Mr. Clerron, seeing Ivy's confusion, kindly came to her aid. "And you thought my superfluous time and wisdom might be transferred to you, thus making a more equal division of property?"

"If you would be so good,—I,—yes, Sir."

"May I inquire how you propose to effect such an exchange?"

He really did not intend to be anything but kind, but the whole matter presented itself to him in a very ludicrous light; and in endeavoring to preserve proper gravity, he became severe. Ivy, all-unused to the world, still had a secret feeling that he was laughing at her. Tears, that would not be repressed, glistened in her downcast eyes, gathered on the long lashes, dropped silently to the floor. He saw that she was entirely a child, ignorant, artless, and sincere. His better feelings were roused, and he exclaimed, with real earnestness,—

"My dear young lady, I should rejoice to serve you in any way, I beg you to believe."

His words only hastened the catastrophe which seems to be always impending over the weaker sex. Ivy sobbed outright,—a perfect tempest. Felix Clerron looked on with a bachelor's dismay. "What in thunder? Confound the girl!" were his first reflections; but her utter abandonment to sorrow melted his heart again,—not a very susceptible heart either; but men, especially bachelors, are so—*green!* (the word is found in Cowper.)

He sat down by her side, stroked the hair from her burning forehead, as if she had been six instead of sixteen, and again and again assured her of his willingness to assist her.

"I must go home," whispered Ivy, as soon as she could command, or rather coax her voice.

His hospitality was shocked.

"Indeed you must not, till we have at least had a consultation. Tell me how much you know. What have you studied?"

"Oh, nothing, Sir. I am very stupid."

"Ah! we must begin with the Alphabet, then. Blocks or a primer?"

Ivy smiled through her tears.

"Not quite so bad as that, Sir."

"You do know your letters? Perhaps you can even count, and spell your name; maybe write it. Pray, enlighten me."

Ivy grew calm as he became playful.

"I can cipher pretty well. I have been through Greenleaf's Large."

"House or meadow? And the exact dimensions, if you please."

"Sir?"

"I understood you to say you had traversed Greenleaf's large. You did not designate what."

He was laughing at her now, indeed, but it was open and genial, and she joined.

"My Arithmetic, of course. I supposed everybody knew that. Everybody calls it so."

"Time is short. Yes. We are an abbreviating nation. Do you like Arithmetic?"

"Pretty well, some parts of it. Fractions and Partial Payments. But I can't bear Duodecimals, Position, and such things."

"Positions are occasionally embarrassing. And Grammar?"

"I think it's horrid. It's all 'indicative mood, common noun, third person, singular number, and agrees with John.'"

"*Bravissima!* A comprehensive sketch! *A multum in parvo!* A bird's-eye view, as one may say,—and not entertaining, certainly. What other branches have you pursued? Drawing, for instance?"

"Oh, no, Sir!"

"Nor Music?"

"No, Sir."

"Good, my dear! excellent! An overruling Providence has saved you and your friends from many a pitfall. Shall we proceed to History? Be so good as to inform me who discovered America."

"I believe Columbus has the credit of it," replied Ivy, demurely.

"Non-committal, I see. Case goes strongly in his favor, but you reserve your judgment till further evidence."

"I think he was a wise and good and enterprising man."

"But are rather skeptical about that San Salvador story. A wise course. Never decide till both sides have been fairly presented. 'He that judgeth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him,' said the wise man. Occasionally his after-judgment is equally discreditable. That is a thousand times worse. Exit Clio. Enter—well!—Geographia. My young friend, what celebrated city has the honor of concentrating the laws, learning, and literature of Massachusetts, to wit, namely, is its capital?"

"Boston, Sir."

"My dear, your Geography has evidently been attended to. You have learned the basis fact. You have discovered the pivot on which the world turns. You have dug down to the ante-diluvian, ante-pyrean granite,—the primitive, unfused stratum of society. The force of learning can no farther go. Armed with that fact, you may march fearlessly forth to do battle with the world, the flesh, and—the —ahem—the King of Beasts! Do you think you should like me for a teacher?"

"I can't tell, Sir. I did not like you as anything awhile ago."

"But you like me better now? You think I improve on acquaintance? You detect signs of a moral reformation?"

"No, Sir, I don't like you now. I only don't dislike you so much as I did."

"Spoken like a major-general, or, better still, like a brave little Yankee girl, as you are. I am an enthusiastic admirer of truth. I foresee we shall get on famously. I was rather premature in sounding the state of your affections, it must be confessed,—but we shall be rare friends by-and-by. On the whole, you are not particularly fond of books?"

"I like some books well enough, but not studying-books," said Ivy, with a sigh, "and I don't see any good in them. If it wasn't for mamma, I never would open one,—never! I would just as soon be a dunce as not; I don't see anything very horrid in it."

"An opinion which obtains with a wonderfully large proportion of our population, and is applied in practice with surprising success. There is a distinction, however, my dear young lady, which you must immediately learn to make. The dunce subjective is a very inoffensive animal, contented, happy, and harmless; and, as you justly remark, inspires no horror, but rather an amiable and genial self-complacency. The dunce objective, on the contrary, is of an entirely different species. He is a bore of the first magnitude,—a poisoned arrow, that not only pierces, but inflames,—a dull knife, that not only cuts, but tears,—a cowardly little cur, that snaps occasionally, but snarls unceasingly; whom, which, and that, it becomes the duty of all good citizens to sweep from the face of the earth."

"What is the difference between them? How shall one know which is which?"

"The dunce subjective is the dunce from his own point of view,—the dunce with his eyes turned inward,—confining his duncehood to the bosom of his family. The dunce objective is the dunce butting against his neighbor's study-door,—intruding, obtruding, protruding his insipid folly and still more insipid wisdom at all times and seasons. He is a creature utterly devoid of shame. He is like Milton's angels, in one respect at least: you may thrust him through and through with the two-edged sword of your satire, and at the end he shall be as intact and integral as at the beginning. Am I sufficiently obvious?"

"It is very obvious that I am both, according to your definition."

"It is very obvious that you are neither, I beg to submit, but a sensible young girl,—with no great quantity of the manufactured article, perhaps, but plenty of raw material, capable of being wrought into fabric of the finest quality."

"Do you really think I can learn?" asked Ivy, with a bright blush of pleasure.

"Demonstrably certain."

"As much as if I went to school?"

"My dear miss, as the forest oak, 'cabined, cribbed, confined' with multitudes of its fellows, grows stunted, scrubby, and dwarfed, but, brought into the open fields alone, stretches out its arms to the blue heavens and its roots to the kindly earth, so that the birds of the air lodge in the branches thereof, and men sit under its shadow with great delight,—so, in a word, shall you, under my fostering care, flourish like a green bay-tree; that is, if I am to have the honor."

"Yes, Sir, I mean—I meant—I was thinking as if you were teaching me—I mean were going to teach me."

"Which I also mean, if time and the favoring gods allow, and your parents continue to wish it."

"Oh, they won't care!"

"Won't care?"

"No, Sir, they will be glad, I think. Papa, at least, will be glad to have me stay at home."

"Did not they direct you to come to me to-day?"

Ivy blushed deeply, and replied, in a low voice, "No, Sir; I knew mamma would not let me come, if I asked her."

"And to prevent any sudden temptation to disobedience, and a consequent forfeiture of your peace of mind, you took time by the forelock and came on your own responsibility?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Very ingenious, upon my word! An accomplished casuist! A born Jesuit! But, my dear Miss Geer, I must confess I have not this happy feminine knack of keeping out of the way of temptation. I should prefer to consult your friends, even at the risk of losing the pleasure of your society."

"Oh, yes, Sir! I don't care, now it is all settled."

And so, over hill-side, along wood-path, and through meadow-land, with light heart and smiling eyes, tripped Ivy back again. To Mrs. Geer shelling peas in the shady porch, and to Mr. Geer fanning himself with his straw hat on the steps beside her, Ivy recounted the story of her adventures. Mrs. Geer was thunderstruck at Ivy's temerity; Mr. Geer was lost in admiration of her pluck. Mrs. Geer termed it a wild-goose chase; Mr. Geer declared Ivy to be as smart as a steel trap. Mrs. Geer vetoed the whole plan; Mr. Geer didn't know. But when at sunset Mr. Clerron rode over, and admired Mr. Geer's orchard, and praised the points of his Durhams, and begged a root of Mrs. Geer's scarlet verbena, and assured them he should be very glad to refresh his own early studies, and also to form an acquaintance with the family,—he knew very few in the village,—and if Mrs. Geer would drive over when Ivy came to recite,—or perhaps they would rather he should come to their house. Oh, no! Mrs. Geer could not think of that. Just as they pleased. Mrs. Simm, the housekeeper, would be very glad of Mrs. Geer's company while Miss Ivy was reciting, in case Mrs. Geer should not wish to listen; and the house and grounds would be shown by Mrs. Simm with great pleasure. By the way, Mrs. Simm was a thrifty and sensible woman, and he was sure they would be mutually pleased.—When, in short, all this and much more had been said, it was decided that Ivy should be regularly installed pupil of Mr. Felix Clerron.

"*Eureka!*" cries the professional novel-reader, that far-sighted and keen-scented hound that snuffs a *dénouement* afar off; and anon there rises before his eyes the vision of poor little Stella drinking in love and learning, especially love, from the divine eyes of the anything but divine Swift,—of Shirley, the lioness, the pantheress, the leopardess, the beautiful, fierce creature, sitting, tamed, quiet, meek, by the side of Louis Moore, her tutor and master,—and of all the legends of all the ages wherein Beauty has sat at the feet of Wisdom, and Love has crept in unawares, and spoiled the lesson while as yet half-unlearnt;—so he cries, "She is going the way of all heroines. The man and the girl,—they will fall in love, marry, and live happily all the rest of their days."

Of course they will. Is there any reason why they should not? If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

I repeat it, of course they will. You surely cannot suppose I should, in cold blood, sit down to write a story in which nobody was to fall in love or be in love! Sir, scoff as you may, love is the one vital principle in all romance. Not only does your cheek flush and your eye sparkle, till "heart, brain, and soul are all on fire," over the burning words of some Brontean Pythoness, but when you open the last thrilling work of Maggie Marigold, and are immediately submerged "in a weak, washy, everlasting flood" of insipidity, twaddle, bosh, and heart-rending sorrow, you do not shut the book with a jerk. Why not? Because in the dismal distance you dimly descry two figures swimming, floating, struggling towards each other, and a languid *soupçon* of curiosity detains you till you have ascertained, that, after infinite distress, Adolphus and Miranda have made

"One of the very best matches,

Both well mated for life:
She's got a fool for her husband,
He's got a fool for his wife."

Sir, scoff as you may, love is the one sunbeam of poetry that gilds with a softened splendor the hard, bare outline of many a prosaic life. "Work, work, work, from weary chime to chime"; tramp behind the plough, hammer on the lapstone, beat the anvil, drive the plane, "from morn till dewy eve"; but when the dewy eve comes, ah! Hesperus gleams soft and golden over the far-off pinetrees, but

"The star that lightens your bosom most,
And gives to your weary feet their speed,
Abides in a cottage beyond the mead."

It is useless to assert that the subject is worn threadbare. Threadbare it may be to you, enervated and *blasé* man of pleasure, worn and hardened man of the world; but it is not for you I write. The fountain which leaps up fresh and living in every new life can never be exhausted till the springs of all life are dry. Tell me, O lover, gazing into those tender eyes uplifted to yours, twining the silken rings around your bronzed finger, pressing reverently the warm lips consecrated to you,—does it abate one jot or tittle of your happiness to know that eyes just as tender, curls just as silken, lips just as red, have stirred the hearts of men for a thousand years?

Love, then, is a *sine qua non* in stories; and if love, why not marriage? What pleasure can a humane and benevolent man find in separating two individuals whose chief, perhaps whose sole happiness, consists in being together? For certain inscrutable reasons, Divine Benevolence permits evil to exist in the world. All who have a taste for misery can find it there in exhaustless quantities. Johns are every day falling in love with Katys, but marrying Isabels, and Isabels the same, *mutatis mutandis*. We submit to it because there is no alternative; and we believe that good shall finally be wrought and wrested from evil. Don't, for heaven's sake, let us in mere wantonness introduce into our novel-world the work of our own hand, an abridged edition, a daguerreotype copy of the world without, of which we know so little and so much. I always do and always shall read the last page of a novel first; and if I perceive there any indications that matters are not coming out "shipshape," my reading invariably terminates with the last page.

For the rest, please to remember that I am not writing about a princess of the blood, nor of the days of the bold barons, but only the life of a quiet little girl in a quiet little town in the eastern part of Massachusetts; and so far as my experience and observation go, men and women in the eastern part of Massachusetts are not given to thrilling adventures, hairbreadth escapes, wonderful concatenations of circumstances, and blood and thunder generally,—but pursue the even tenor of their way, and of their love, with a sober and delightful equanimity. If you want a plot, go to the "Children of the Abbey," "Consuelo," and myriads of that kin, and help yourself. As for me, I must confess I hate plots. I see no pleasure in stumbling blindfolded through a story, unable to see a yard ahead, fancying every turn to be the last, and the road to go straight on to a glorious goal,—and, lo! we are in a more hopeless labyrinth than ever. I have a sense of restraint. I want to breathe freely, and can't. I want to have leisure to observe the style, the development of character, the author's tone of thought, and not be galloped through on the back of a breathless desire to know "how they are coming out."

But, my dear plot-loving friend, be easy. I will not leave you in the lurch. I am not going to marry my man and woman out of hand. An obstacle, of which I suppose you have never heard,—an obstacle entirely new, fresh, and unhackneyed, will arise; so, I pray you, let patience have her perfect work.

Wonderful was the new world opened to Ivy Geer. It was as if a corpse, cold, inert, lifeless, had suddenly sprung up, warm, invigorated, informed with a spirit which led her own spell-bound. Grammar,—Grammar, which had been a synonyme for all that was dry, irksome, useless,—a beating

of the wind, the crackling of thorns under a pot,—Grammar even assumed for her a charm, a wonder, a glory. She saw how the great and wise had shrined in fitting words their purity, and wisdom, and sorrow, and suffering, and penitence; and how, as this generation passed away, and another came forth which knew not God, the golden casket became dim, and the memory of its priceless gem faded away; but how, at the touch of a mighty wand, the obedient lid flew back, and the long-hidden thought "sprang full-statured in an hour." She saw how love and beauty and freedom lay floating vaguely and aimlessly in a million minds till the poet came and crystallized them into clear-cut, prismatic words, tinged for each with the color of his own fancy, and wrought into a perfect mosaic, not for an age, but for all time. Led by a strong hand, she trod with reverent awe down the dim aisles of the Past, and saw how the soul of man, bound in its prison-house, had ever struggled to voice itself in words. Roaming in the dense forest with the stern and bloody Druid,—bounding over the waves with the fierce pirates who supplanted them, and in whose blue eyes and beneath whose fair locks gleamed indeed the ferocity of the savage, but lurked also, though unseen and unknown, the tender chivalry of the English gentleman,—gazing admiringly on the barbaric splendor of the cloth-of-gold, whereon trod regally, to the sound of harp and viol, the beauty and bravery of the old Norman nobility, she delighted to see how the mother-tongue, our dear mother-tongue, had laid all the nations under contribution to enrich her treasury,—gathering from one its strength, from another its stateliness, from a third its harmony, till the harsh, crude, rugged dialect of a barbarous horde became worthy to embody, as it does, the love, the wisdom, and the faith of half a world.

So Grammar taught Ivy to reverence language.

History, in the light of a guiding mind, ceased to be a bare record of slaughter and crime. Before her eyes filed, in a statelier pageant than they knew, the long procession of "simple great ones gone for ever and ever by," and the countless lesser ones whose names are quenched in the darkness of a night that shall know no dawn. She saw the "great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change"; but amid all the change, the confusion, the chaos, she saw the finger of God ever pointing, and heard the sublime monotone of the Divine voice ever saying to the children of men, "This is the way, walk ye in it." And Ivy thought she saw, and rejoiced in the thought, that, even when this warning was unheeded,—when on the brow of the mournful Earth "Ichabod, Ichabod," was forever engraven,—when the First Man with his own hand put from him the cup of innocence, and went forth from the happy garden, sin-stained and fallen, the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint, —even then she saw within him the divine spark, the leaven of life, which had power to vitalize and vivify what Crime had smitten with death. Though sea and land teemed with strange perils, though night and day pursued him with mysterious terrors, though the now unfriendly elements combined to check his career, still, with unswerving purpose, undaunted courage, she saw him march constantly forward. Spirits of evil could not drive from his heart the prescience of greatness; and his soul dwelt calmly under the foreshadow of a mighty future.

And as Ivy looked, she saw how the children of men became a great nation, and possessed the land far and wide. They delved into the bosom of the pleased earth, and brought forth the piled-up treasures of uncounted cycles. They unfolded the book of the skies, and sought to read the records thereon. They plunged into the unknown and terrible ocean, and decked their own brows with the gems they plucked from hers. And when conquered Nature had laid her hoards at their feet, their restless longings would not be satisfied. Brave young spirits, with the dew of their youth fresh upon them, set out in quest of a land beyond their ken. Over the mountains, across the seas, through the forests, there came to the ear of the dreaming girl the measured tramp of marching men, the softer footfalls of loving women, the pattering of the feet of little children. Many a day and many a night she saw them wander on towards the setting sun, till the Unseen Hand led them to a fair and fruitful country that opened its bounteous arms in welcome. Broad rivers, green fields, laughing valleys wooed them to plant their household gods,—and the foundations of Europe were laid. Here were sown the seeds of those heroic virtues which have since leaped into luxuriant life,—seeds of that irresistible

power which fastened its grasp on Nature and forced her to unfold the secret of her creation,—seeds of that far-reaching wisdom which in the light of the unveiled past has read the story of the unseen future.

And still under Ivy's eye they grouped themselves. Some gathered on the pleasant hills of the sunny South, and the beauty of earth and sea and sky passed into their souls forever. They caught the evanescent gleam, the passing shadow, and on unseemly canvas limned it for all time in forms of unuttered and unutterable loveliness. They shaped into glowing life the phantoms of grace that were always flitting before their enchanted eyes, and poured into inanimate marble their rapt and passionate souls. They struck the lyre to wild and stirring songs whose tremulous echoes still linger along the corridors of Time. Some sought the icebound North, and grappled with dangers by field and flood. They hunted the wild dragon to his mountain-fastnesses, and fought him at bay, and never quailed. Death, in its most fearful forms, they met with grim delight, and chanted the glories of the Valhalla waiting for heroes who should forever quaff the "foaming, pure, and shining mead" from skulls of foes in battle slain. Some crossed the sea, and on

> "that pale, that white-faced shore, Whose foot spurns back tho ocean's swelling tide,"
> they reared a sinewy and stalwart race, whose "morning drum-beat encircles the world."

And History taught Ivy to reverence man.

But there was one respect in which Ivy was both pupil and teacher. Never a word of Botany had fallen upon her ears; but through all the unconscious bliss of infancy, childhood, and girlhood, for sixteen happy years, she had lived among the flowers, and she knew their dear faces and their wild-wood names. She loved them with an almost human love. They were to her companions and friends. She knew their likings and dislikings, their joys and sorrows,—who among them chose the darkest nooks of the old woods, and who bloomed only to the brightest sunlight,—who sent their roots deep down among the mosses by the brook, and who smiled only on the southern hill-side. Around each she wove a web of beautiful individuality, and more than one had received from her a new christening. It is true, that, when she came to study from a book, she made wry faces over the long, barbarous, Latin names which completely disguised her favorites, and in her heart deemed a great many of the definitions quite superfluous; but she had strong faith in her teacher, and when the technical was laid aside for the real, then, indeed, "her foot was on her native heath, and her name was MacGregor." A wild and merry chase she led her grave instructor. Morning, noon, or night, she was always ready. Under the blue sky, breathing the pure air, treading the green turf familiar from her infancy, she could not be otherwise than happy; but when was superadded to this the companionship of a mind vigorous, cultivated, and refined, she enjoyed it with a keen and intense delight. Nowhere else did her soul so entirely unfold to the genial light of this new sun which had suddenly mounted above her horizon. Nowhere else did the freshness and fulness and splendor of life dilate her whole being with a fine ecstasy.

And what was the end of all this? Just what you would have supposed. She had led a life of simple, unbounded love and trust,—a buoyant, elastic gladness,—a dream of sunshine. No gray cloud had ever lowered in her sky, no thunderbolt smitten her joys, no winter rain chilled her warmth. Only the white fleeciness of morning mist had flitted sometimes over her summer-sky, deepening the blue. Little cooling drops had fluttered down through the leafiness, only to span her with a rainbow in the glory of the setting sun. But the time had come. From the deep fountains of her heart the stone was to be rolled away. The secret chord was to be smitten by a master-hand,—a chord which, once stirred, may never cease to quiver.

At first Ivy worshipped very far off. Her friend was to her the embodiment of all knowledge and goodness and greatness. She marvelled to see him so at home in what was to her so strange. Every word that fell from his lips was an oracle. She secretly contrasted him with all the men she had ever met, to the utter discomfiture of the latter. Washington, the Apostle Paul, and Peter Parley were the only men of the past or present whom she considered at all worthy to be compared with him; and in fact, if these three men and Felix Clerron had all stood before her, and offered each a different opinion on any given subject, I have scarcely a doubt as to whose would have commended itself to her as combining the soundest practical wisdom and the highest Christian benevolence.

So the summer passed on, and her shyness wore off,—and their intimacy became less and less that of teacher and pupil, and more and more that of friend and friend. With the sudden awakening of her intellectual nature, there woke also another power, of whose existence she had never dreamed. It was natural, that, in ranging the fields of thought so lately opened to her, she should often revert to him whose hand had unbarred the gates; she was therefore not startled that the image of Felix Clerron was with her when she sat down and when she rose up, when she went out and when she came in. She ceased, indeed, to think *of* him. She thought *him*. She lived him. Her soul fed on his life. And so—and so—by a pleasant and flowery path, there came into Ivy's heart the old, old pain.

Now the thing was on this wise:—

One morning, when she went to recite, she did not find Mr. Clerron in the library, where he usually awaited her. After spending a few moments in looking over her lessons, she rose and was about to pass to the door to ring, when Mrs. Simm looked in, and, seeing Ivy, informed her that Mr. Clerron was in the garden, and desired her to come out. Ivy immediately followed Mrs. Simm into the garden. On the south side of the house was a piazza two stories high. Along the pillars which supported it a trellis-work had been constructed, reaching several feet above the roof of the piazza. About this climbed a vigorous grape-vine, which not only completely screened nearly the whole front of the piazza, but, reaching the top of the trellis, shot across, by the aid of a few pieces of fine wire, and overran a part of the roof of the house. Thus the roof of the piazza was the floor of a beautiful apartment, whose walls and ceiling were broad, rustling, green leaves, among which drooped now innumerable heavy clusters of rich purple grapes.

From behind this leafy wall a well-known voice cried, "Hail to thee, my twining vine!" Ivy turned and looked up, with the uncertain, inquiring smile we often wear when conscious that, though unseeing, we are not unseen; and presently two hands parted the leaves far enough for a very sunshiny smile to gleam down on the upturned face.

"Oh, I wish I could come up there!" cried Ivy, clasping her hands with childish eagerness.

"The wish is father to the deed."

"May I?"

"Be sure you may."

"But how shall I get in?"

"Are you afraid to come up the ladder?"

"No, I don't mean that; but how shall I get in where you are, after I am up?"

"Oh, never fear! I'll draw you in safely enough."

"Lorful heart! Miss Ivy, what are you going to do?" cried Mrs. Simm, in terror.

Ivy was already on the third round of the ladder, but she stopped and answered, hesitatingly, —"He said I might."

"He said you might, yes," continued Mrs. Simm,—talking *to* Ivy, but *at* Mr. Clerron, with whom she hardly dared to remonstrate in a more direct way. "And if he said you might throw yourself down Vineyard Cliff, it don't follow that you are bound to do it. He goes into all sorts of hap-hazard scrapes himself, but you can't follow him."

"But it looks so nice up there," pleaded Ivy, "and I have been twice as high at home. I don't mind it at all."

"If your father chooses to let you run the risk of your life, it's none of my look-out, but I a'n't going to have you breaking your neck right under my nose. If you want to get up there, I'll show you the way in the house, and you can step right out of the window. Just wait till I've told Ellen about the dinner."

As Mrs. Simm disappeared, Mr. Clerron said softly to Ivy, "Come!"—and in a moment Ivy bounded up the ladder and through an opening in the vine, and stood by his side.

"I'm ready now, Miss Ivy," said Mrs. Simm, reappearing. "Miss Ivy! Where is the child?"

A merry laugh greeted her.

"Oh, you good-for-nothing!" cried the good-natured old housekeeper, "you'll never die in your bed."

"Not for a good while, I hope," answered Mr. Clerron.

Then he made Ivy sit down by him, and took from the great basket the finest cluster of grapes.

"Is that reward enough for coming?"

"Coming into so beautiful a place as this is like what you read yesterday about poetry to Coleridge, 'its own exceeding great reward.'"

"And you don't want the grapes?"

"I don't know that I have any intrinsic objection to them as a free gift. It was only the principle that I opposed."

"Very well, we will go shares, then. You may have half for the free gift, and I will have half for the principle. Little tendril, you look as fresh as the morning."

"Don't I always?"

"I should say there was a *little* more dew than usual. Stand up and let me survey you, if perchance I may discover the cause."

Ivy rose, made a profound curtsy, and then turned slowly around, after the manner of the revolving fashion-figures in a milliner's window.

"I don't know," continued Mr. Clerron, when Ivy, after a couple of revolutions, resumed her seat. "You seem to be the same. I think it must be the frock."

"I don't wear a frock. I don't think it would improve my style of beauty, if I did. Papa wears one sometimes."

"And what kind of a frock, pray, does 'papa' wear?"

"Oh, a horrid blue thing. Comes about down to his knees. Made of some kind of woollen stuff. Horrid!"

"And what name do you give to that white thing with blue sprigs in it?"

"This?"

"Yes."

"This is a dress."

"No. This, and your collar, and hat, and shoes, and sash are your dress.

This is a frock."

Ivy shook her head doubtfully.

"You know a great deal, I know."

"So you informed me once before."

"Oh, don't mention that!" said Ivy, blushing, and quickly added, "Do you know I have discovered the reason why you like me this morning?"

"And every morning."

"Sir?"

"Go on. What is the reason?"

"It is because I clear-starched and ironed it myself with my owny-dony hands; and that, you know, is the reason it looks nicer than usual."

"Ah, me! I wish I wore dresses."

"You can, if you choose, I suppose. There is no one to hinder you."

"Simpleton! that is not what you were intended to say. You should have asked the cause of so singular a wish, and then I had a pretty little speech all ready for you,—a veritable compliment"

"It is well I did not ask, then. Mamma does not approve of compliments, and perhaps it would have made me vain."

"Incorrigible! Why did you not ask me what the speech was, and thus give me an opportunity to relieve myself. Why, a body might die of a plethora of flattery, if he had nobody but you to discharge it against."

"He must take care, then, that the supply does not exceed the demand."

"Political economy, upon my word! What shall we have next?"

"Domestic, I suppose you would like. Men generally, indeed, prefer it to the other, I am told."

"Ah, Ivy, Ivy! little you know about men, my child!"

He leaned back in his seat and was silent for some minutes. Ivy did not care to interrupt his thinking. Presently he said,—

"Ivy, how old are you?"

"I shall be seventeen the last day of this month."

A short pause.

"And then eighteen."

"And then nineteen."

"And then twenty. In three years you will be twenty."

"Horrid old, isn't it?"

He turned his head, and looked down upon her with what Ivy thought a curious kind of smile, but only said,—

"You must not say 'horrid' so much."

By-and-by Ivy grew rather tired of sitting silent and watching the rustle of the leaves, which hid every other prospect; she turned her face a little so that she could look at him. He sat with folded arms, looking straight ahead; and she thought his face wore a troubled expression. She felt as if she would like very much to smooth out the wrinkles in his forehead and run her fingers through his hair, as she sometimes did for her father. She had a great mind to ask him if she should; then she reflected that it might make him nervous. Then she wondered if he had forgotten her lessons, and how long they were to sit there. Determined, at length, to have a change of some kind, she said, softly,—

"Mr. Clerron!"

He roused himself suddenly, and stood up.

"I thought, perhaps, you had a headache."

"No, Ivy. But this is not climbing the hill of science, is it?"

"Not so much as it is climbing the piazza."

"Suppose we take a vacation to-day, and investigate the state of the atmosphere?"

"Yes, Sir, I am ready."

Ivy did not fully understand the nature of his proposition; but if he had proposed to "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," she would have said and acted, "Yes, Sir, I am ready," just the same.

He took up the basket of grapes which he had gathered, and led the way through the window, down-stairs. Ivy waited for him at the hall-door, while he carried the grapes to Mrs. Simm; then he joined her again and proposed to walk through the woods a little while, before Ivy went home.

"You must know, my docile pupil, that I am going to the city to-morrow, on business, to be gone a week or two. So, as you must perforce take a vacation then, why, we may as well begin to vacate today, and enjoy it."

"I am sorry you are going away."

"You are? That is almost enough to pay me for going. Why are you sorry?"

"Because I shall not see you for a week; and I have become so used to you, that somehow I don't seem to know what to do with a day without you; and then the cars may run off the track and kill you or hurt you, or you may get the smallpox, or a great many things may happen."

"And suppose some of these terrible things should happen,—the last, for instance,—what would you do?"

"I? I should advise you to send for the doctor at once."

Mr. Clerron laughed.

"So you would not come and nurse me, and take care of me, and get me well again?"

"No, because I should then be in danger of taking it myself and giving it to papa and mamma; besides, they would not let me, I am quite sure."

"So you love your papa and mamma better than"–

He stopped abruptly. Ivy finished for him.

"Better than words can tell. Papa particularly. Mamma, somehow, seems strong of herself, and don't depend upon me; but papa,—oh, you don't know how he is to me! I think, if I should die, he would die of grief. I have, I cannot help having, a kind of pity for him, he loves me so."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.