



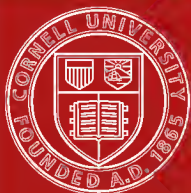
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THE DIVERSIONS
OF A BOOK-LOVER

by

ADRIAN H. JOLINE

AUTHOR OF

"MEDITATIONS OF AN AUTOGRAPH COLLECTOR"

*"Now having made thee, seelie book,
And brought thee to this frame,
Full loath am I to publish thee
Lest thou impair my name."*

—Philip Stubbes, "The Anatomie of Abuses," 1583



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PREFACE

A BOOK must have an index, a title-page, and a preface. Such is the unwritten law, but no one pays much attention to a preface unless it is short. Barry Cornwall said: "Always read the preface to a book. It places you on vantage-ground and enables you to survey more completely the book itself. You frequently also discern the character of the author from the preface."

More than a century ago the ingenious Mr. John Horne Tooke published the first volume of *The Diversions of Purley*, but he made his philology subordinate to his peculiar philosophy. "Diversions," I understand, are those things which turn or draw the mind from care, business, or study, and thus rest and amuse. In these discursive papers I have aimed to keep within the definition. They must not be regarded too seriously, and those who may feel disposed to read them will remember that they are meant to be taken up and to be laid aside at odd moments, the confidences of one who claims to share with

Preface

many thousands of his countrymen a love of books for their own sake.

The putting of trifles into type is surely not altogether reprehensible, considering the number of printed words produced every year. But I am making no apologies. They are usually odious. If anybody dislikes this sort of thing, he is welcome to say so; and while I may not agree with him in his disapproval, I will not argue the matter.

ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE.

NEW YORK, 1903.

**THE
DIVERSIONS OF A BOOK-LOVER**

THE DIVERSIONS OF A BOOK-LOVER

I

Of books about books; and incidentally of critics and of poetical quotations.

AT the outset let us concede, to avoid unnecessary discussion, that there is no occasion for another dissertation about books, for there are already too many of them. Expert bibliographers, bibliophiles, bibliomaniacs, and other things beginning with "bib" have given us all sorts and conditions of essays, treatises, and discourses, learned, profound, gossipy, historical, descriptive, and critical, some of them delightful to the enthusiast, and others so dull that even the ardent lover of books is compelled to lay them aside sadly. But the field is almost ilimitable. Every day a new book-fancier appears, and he differs in some respects from every other member of his enormous family. The business of buying books is steadily progressive. I am not referring to the sale of books over the

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counter, as one may express it, the purchasing and the vending of books at "department stores" and at the news-stands which abound in the busy places, but to the traffic which is carried on by the experts whose names are known all over the world, and who understand how to appeal to the hundreds occupying themselves in what is called "forming a library." These hundreds in our land are rapidly becoming thousands. They do not always imagine themselves to be collectors, but from their ranks collectors are recruited in the course of time, by a process of evolution.

There are technical books about books, full of information, but mostly dry and dreary, which book-lovers pretend to be fond of, but I am not certain whether this professed liking for them is wholly sincere. Most of these monologues about rare books are tiresome and depressing, although I have striven in vain to enjoy them and to fancy that I have derived great benefit from the study of their sawdusty contents. A book of logarithms, a treatise on engineering, or an essay on the Greek aorist, may be enchanting to a specialist, but they do not fascinate me. If anybody expects by reading these pages to gain any knowledge about the choice prizes of the book-world, he will find himself mistaken. Abundant materials may

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be found in the storehouses laboriously constructed by learned men, out of which a gloomy but stately building might be erected without very great labor; but I do not intend to appeal to any readers except to those casual and unscientific persons who belong to my own class and who believe, with Frederick Locker-Lampson, that "it is a good thing to read books, and it need not be a bad thing to write them, but it is a pious thing to preserve those that have been sometime written."

What has been written here will be scorned by the scholar, the man of overpowering book-wisdom, the personage who is always appallingly solemn in his attitude towards books, for it is absolutely devoid of utility. Things without utility relieve that strenuousness of life which is really a strain upon the vital forces. By this confession I am protecting myself, I hope, against hostile criticism; for mine adversary, whether or not he may write a book, can do no worse than to agree with me. I address myself only to people with a fairly good education, conscious of an affection for books, who have a secret, bashful fondness—often afraid to confess it—for the fruitless, nugatory, and unprofitable; who like to browse aimlessly about in libraries without the presence of a censor; who love a book merely because it is a book, the octavo or duodecimo

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expression of somebody's ideas, no matter how trifling or how feebly unimportant those ideas may be. There are people of that sort, and I am not ashamed to be one of their number; people who do not disdain what our just-quoted friend, Locker-Lampson, calls "a sneeze of the mind," or what might perhaps be more appropriately styled a yawn of the intellect. Few care to spend time over mental yawns or sternutations, and it is to the few that I offer, with ostentatious modesty, these random reflections. I do not assert, be it understood, that the few are pre-eminently important merely because they are not numerous, for the same might be said of men who have two thumbs on one hand, and of the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands.

Luckily, no one is obliged to read any book which does not please him, except, perhaps, the unfortunates who write book-notices for the newspapers. These patient workers have my sincere sympathy. They must, perforce, peruse and criticise a multitude of printed things, sensible and nonsensible, and their task is tedious. In the course of time it must grow to a magnificence of boredom comparable only to that of preparing the daily shipping reports or the obituary notices of departed worthies. If any of these much-enduring toilers take up this volume, some will say that it is slight and others will say

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that it is heavy, and that it contains nothing new. I grant all these things in advance, with only a gleam of hope that all will not find it heavy. I am sure that it is not replete with wisdom, and I believe there is not a single element of novelty in it from beginning to end. After toiling over some of the serious and erudite productions of our time, it may be a relief to a few kindred spirits to encounter something which does not pretend to be authoritative, erudite, or original.

An editor lately lamented the lack of deserving material for magazines, and with a slightly disparaging reference to the "leisurely" style of the writers who flourished half a century ago, intimated that this vigorous and practical age demanded something more clear, strong, concise, and spirited than that which pleased our fathers. It may be true, although it is doubtful whether the demand is as universal or as peremptory as the editor would have us believe. The old writers of the leisurely sort seem to retain much of their former popularity, but perhaps they are read because of their established fame. It is easy to admire what we have been told for generations is worthy of admiration; but no man, editor or publisher, critic or philosopher, is capable of announcing in advance, with any reasonable certainty, that any particular

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book or style will meet with no approval whatever. Even those patient beings who "read" for publishers the innumerable manuscripts which pour in upon the printing-houses like the floods of Pelée upon Saint-Pierre are not infallible, and there is in the anecdote department a capacious pigeon-hole filled with the records of their blunders. I fancy that, contrary to the rule, they are more prone to error as their experience increases, because their minds must surely grow dull with the surfeit. It is not surprising that they should cast aside the two hundredth novel with the cry of Jeffrey, "This will never do."

There is food for reflection in the study of book reviews. Laying aside those which are palpably advertisements in the guise of criticism, one will find this reviewer in ecstasies over that which his fellow-reviewer feels obliged to treat with contempt or with severity. It has never been otherwise in the history of literature. Reduced to a truism, it is all a matter of taste. I once saw a well-dressed man intently reading a small book on a railway-train. I was mean and petty enough to look over his shoulder, not from vulgar curiosity, but in order to find out something about his literary preferences. It was a work I had never before seen — to wit, a *Book of Conundrums*. He enjoyed it, and why

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should I be disturbed merely because I should not have enjoyed it myself? Lord Dundreary was anxious to learn from the object of his affections whether, if she had a brother, he would like cheese. She could not tell him, and I am equally unable to enlighten anybody regarding what my brother, if I had one, would care for in the matter of literary refreshment.

The instruction of our fellow-creatures about what they ought to like is a thankless business. Most of us prefer to discover it for ourselves. My favorite play, my favorite joke, and my favorite dish never seem to please my intimate friend when I direct his attention to them. He yawns through the play, sighs reflectively at the joke, and tells me how much better some wretched concoction of his own is than my pet *entrée*. It has been a matter of years, but I have learned my lesson. I recommend nothing, unless it may be to some one who is going to ask a favor, and who will lie cheerfully in order to propitiate me. I loathe and abominate caraway-seeds, but I once ate a whole cake containing those horrors because Governor Seward gave it to me at his house on New Year's Day, and I meant to ask him for his autograph — thoughtless lad that I was, unaware of the extent of my crime. I seldom tell an acquaintance that he ought to read a particular book. If I wish him to enjoy it, I

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leave it about casually where he may come upon it by accident, or I denounce it in unmeasured terms, which is a fairly sure method of enlisting his interest in it.

It is quite likely that some solemn person may say that my remarks are frequently lacking in good taste; which, correctly defined, is what some people think that every one else ought to think. Voltaire said that Shakespeare was natural and sublime, but had not so much as a single spark of good taste. I shall not presume upon this common attribute to regard myself as a modern Shakespeare, for I do not quite see how these diversions could be dramatized.

Mr. Zangwill says of some of his utterances, that they are "egoistic." "To be egoistic," he tells us, "is not to be egotistic. Egoism should be distinguished from egotism. The egoist offers his thought to his fellow-man, the egotist thinks it is the only thought worth their acceptance." I plead guilty to the most pronounced egoism. It is wholly immaterial to me whether anybody accepts my thoughts. If I am right, it is not my fault, but the reader's misfortune, that he refuses to accept them; if I am wrong, it is better for all that they should not be accepted. Moreover, to be entirely candid, most of my ideas are only the thoughts of other people, borrowed without blushes, and in all likelihood those people

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had borrowed them also. Macaulay found his famous New-Zealander in Mrs. Barbauld's poem; and more than half a century before the immortal traveller from the antipodes took his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge, Horace Walpole brought a "curious traveller from Lima" to visit England and give a description of "the ruins of St. Paul's." The great church of Sir Christopher Wren was, for the Englishman, the type of the indestructible, and it is significant that of late we have been hearing rumors about its instability following close upon the downfall of the Venetian Campanile.

It is only the great who are suffered to steal with impunity; and Shakespeare may plunder where he will, Dryden filch from Publius Syrus, Molière from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and Carlyle from Richter, without serious consequences. Doubtless, each one took his idea from the common source of ideas, without regard for the man who had said his good thing before him. "Oh, life! Oh, Menander! Which of you is the plagiarist?"

A reviewer once sneered at me because he found me, as he erroneously supposed, asserting that Robert Southey's half-witted uncle invented the ancient Arab saying which is the motto of *Kehama*, "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost." This is why I now take the

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liberty of explaining that I am not accusing Molière of robbing M. Rostand. I am only referring to what you all know but may have temporarily forgotten, that "what the devil did he want in that galley" may be found not only in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, but in the *Pédant Foué*. One error of judgment in explaining anything leads to another. I know that the phrase about the galley has another version; I have taken my choice. It would doubtless have been more prudent to quote the original French, but I am too indolent to rewrite the page.

It is amusing to note the puzzled air of surprise, mingled with a slight breath of irritation, with which the professional writer, and particularly the journalist, views the amateur who invades the field of authorship. The lawyer is pityingly indulgent towards the silly layman who essays the trial of his own cause; the doctor looks with ill-concealed glee upon the unwary person who experiments with prescriptions taken from *Every Man His Own Physician*; the haughty graduate of West Point merely despises the captain of militia and will not condescend even to criticise him. But the literary expert is uneasily resentful over the intrusion of the casual scribbler upon his own peculiar territory. He regards it as an unwarranted trespass, and it is difficult for him to hide his real feelings. Still,

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he has no sufficient reason to repel the amateur, for that worthy seldom takes much by his experiment. When he does not pay the publisher to print his production, he usually derives so little pecuniary profit from his performance that he cannot justly be accused of snatching the bread from any innocent mouth.

In college days, I often marvelled at the wisdom of the professional writers who seemed to have solved every perplexing problem, and who tossed off such easy references to old authors whose works we could not find in our rather exiguous library of that remote period. "What research! What memory!" I thought; and I sighed as I reflected that I could never hope to know a thousandth part as much as they knew. I have since discovered that with a fairly respectable encyclopædia, *Bartlett's Dictionary of Familiar Quotations*, and one or two compendiums, it is the simplest thing in the world to secure the appearance of learning.

One of these compendiums, now lying on the table, is the thick, uncut, crown-octavo volume, printed "for private distribution" in 1867, by "Henry G. Bohn, F.R.G.S., F.R.A.S., F.R.S.L., F.S.L., F.H.S., F.St.G., F.Eth.S., and Honorary Member of the Institute of Geneva," who must have been, as the irreverent might say, a devil

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of a fellow. It is called *A Dictionary of Quotations from the English Poets*, and prefixed to it is an ornamental philobiblon leaf, headed:

Whether old friend or new,
A shy friend or true,
Buff, orange, or blue,
This book is for you.

I am sure that these lines are wholly original, for their simplicity is remarkable. After them comes, "Presented to," and then the autographic inscription, "Francis Welford, Esqr., with the friendly comp^{ts}. of Henry G. Bohn, Oct. 14th, 1869."

"This volume," says Mr. Bohn, in the preface, "whatever its merits or demerits, will have cost me, independently of my personal labor, several hundred pounds; it is not printed for sale, but exclusively for presents to my friends and acquaintances, or persons of public esteem with whom I have had, or may hereafter have, social relations." It has become quite rare, and sells for a round sum; but it is a curious monument of misdirected industry. There cannot now be many persons who would deliberately search in it for appropriate verses. The fashion of "quoting poetry" has gone by, and so has the ostentatious display of learning. It is only once in a while that an occasion presents itself for a

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felicitous citation, such an occasion, for example, as that of the bar-meeting in New York on the withdrawal of the late Chief-Justice Charles P. Daly from the bench of the Common Pleas. After more than forty years of judicial service, he was the victim of that provision of the constitution of New York which retires a judge at the age of seventy; "God Almighty's statute of limitations," in the phrase of Elisha Williams, having run against him. Judge Daly was a member of the convention of 1867 which framed this very provision. William Allen Butler, in his address at the farewell gathering, referred to the fact with the remark that the venerable jurist, in thus decreeing his compulsory exile from the bench,

Viewed his own feather on the fatal dart,
And wing'd the shaft that quivered in his heart.

The Supreme Court of the United States is the most solemn tribunal known to man, and the preternatural dignity of its members, when in session, is suggestive of the Appellate Division of the lower world—Minos, Æacus, and Rhadamanthus. It is believed that the justices smiled one day when the author of "Nothing to Wear" had been endeavoring to convince them that a provision in an insurance policy was available for the company, but could not be invoked

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by the assured. His opponent slyly remarked: "The learned counsel reminds me of the words of an American poet, when he makes Miss Flora McFlimsey say to her affianced:

'This is the sort of engagement, you see,
Which is binding on you, but not binding on me.'

He then proceeded to contend that in a previous decision against him the court was wholly wrong. When a reply was in order, Mr. Butler observed that counsel had seen fit to allude to a minor poet, but that, in view of the line of argument adopted by his adversary, he was disposed to refer him to the great English poet who rejoiced in the same name, and who said, in "Hudibras":

He that complies against his will
Is of his own opinion still.

This legal divarication somehow reminds me of Counsellor Thomas Nolan, of the New York bar, who has had a little book devoted to his sayings. It is called *The Barrister*, and is adorned with a portrait which resembles Nolan about as much as it does George Washington. I regret to say that many of the stories about the giant counsellor are apocryphal, some of them having been told of lawyers ever since the Flood.

Nolan was what is called "a character," like George the Count Joannes, and Henry H. Mo-

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range, the ex-barber Whitlegge, old George Niles—who said that “he always tried to live within the *Revised Statutes*”—and others whom we elderly lawyers well remember. One of us was asked the other day, “What has become of the *characters* of our bar?” and my friend, a philosopher and a sage, replied, “I suppose *we* are the characters now.”

To my personal knowledge Tom Nolan once addressed a jury of his countrymen in these words: “Ay, gentlemen of the jury, and thereby hangs a tale. Every hair upon that tail bristles with significance.” I see him now, with his top-hat and his double-breasted frock-coat, stalking in stately fashion down Broadway, one of the few who kept the modern lawyer in an atmosphere of solemn dignity. Most of us are only capable of imitating the lofty air of *chauffeurs*.

While I am on the subject of lawyers, I am reminded of an incident which, perhaps, is founded on fact, although most bar anecdotes are of doubtful authenticity. You will find many of them in Mr. Willock's *Legal Facetiæ*, published in 1887, and they are reproduced with small additions as anecdotes of living lawyers. It is amusing to see, as in Nolan's case, the old stock stories revived from time to time and ascribed to jurists of the present day. It is said that a tall, raw-boned lawyer from the Pacific coast opened

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his argument before the Supreme Court in this way: "May it please the court, this is an appeal from an oral decision handed down by the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit." The keen eye of the late Mr. Justice Gray was upon him, and the well-known accents of the late Mr. Justice Gray's voice rang out with a "had-him-there" intonation. "Handed down? An *oral* decision handed down? How is that possible?" "Well, your honor," drawled the unabashed advocate, "you see, it was so weak they couldn't get it down any other way."

Mr. Butler, whose distinguished career ended in September, 1902, was probably the last survivor of those who saw John Marshall presiding in the Supreme Court. It was the last term in which the illustrious chief-justice took part. Mr. Butler, a lad of nine, accompanied his father, Benjamin F. Butler (Jackson's Attorney-General), and William Wirt to the court-room, and saw the justices take down their robes from the pegs, place them upon their august forms, and march in solemn procession to their seats on the bench. The room is now used as a library and consultation chamber, and the robing is accomplished in private instead of in the court-room itself.

There are certain conventional remarks which we are sure to find repeated whenever particular

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subjects are mentioned. For example, when Mr. Butler died, every journal in the land devoted considerable space to "Nothing to Wear," and one of them was moved to declare, with erroneous judgment, that the celebrated poem was the only thing which made him known to any except to his intimate associates; whereas his fame as a lawyer was, with those whose approval is of any value, of the highest order. Of course, the writer felt himself called upon to allude to "Single-Speech Hamilton" and to Philip James Bailey's "Festus." In like manner, the name of Aaron Burr invariably leads to reflections on duelling, and that of Thomas Dunn English to reminiscences of "Ben Bolt."

Of recent years it has become the fashion to parade a list of the clubs to which a man belongs. If he dies, or is married, or has anything happen to him of equal importance, the inevitable club schedule follows his name. Even when a water-main burst not long ago in front of the house of a wealthy person, the newspapers hastened to tell us that he was a member of the Century, the University, the Metropolitan, and all the rest of it. The pertinency of the information is not very apparent. Somebody once bought a share of stock in the Chemical Bank because he thought it would give an air of distinction to the inventory of his estate; and a similar motive

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must influence many citizens who join club after club to which they never go, in order to expand their obituary notices.

With all our complainings and dissatisfaction, we cling fondly to our newspapers, and our morning cup of coffee would be tasteless indeed without their cheerful companionship. They may not give us literature, but they aim to do it, and they try to be something better than it is possible to make them. They remind us of the saying of the grumbling Oxford don immortalized in one of the *Roundabout Papers*, that all claret would be port if it could. We must not look for the polished phrases of Addison or for the eloquent periods of Burke in the broad sheets of our favorite daily, which is wonderful enough in itself and would have seemed marvellous to both of those literary magnates. The press represents the taste and the intelligence of the people; not always marked by culture or refinement, but suited to the needs of the multitude of readers for whom the journals are manufactured. As to their general contents, it is the same now as it was when Charles Sprague, one of our almost-forgotten poets, wrote:

Turn to the press, its teeming sheets survey,
Big with the wonders of each passing day;
Births, deaths, and weddings, forgeries, fires, and wrecks,
Harangues and hail-stones, brawls and broken necks.

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As Professor Woodberry said, not long ago, in *Harper's Magazine*: "The effective literature of the city is, in reality, and has long been, its great dailies. In them are to be found all the elements of literature except the qualities that secure permanence." Despite the many mistakes, the annoying errors of the newspapers—we all know how difficult it is to report anything with absolute accuracy—we must wonder at the results they achieve, and marvel at the fact that, in the haste of their production, they ever approach the truth.

I have ascertained that it is not difficult for any person commanding a printing-press to master a certain sneering style of comment, which may easily be used upon any book however meritorious, and upon any author however great and powerful. Consider, for example, the Frenchman who said of "Evangeline": "What have I to do with that cow?" Consider also Max Nordau's words regarding what he calls the senseless phrases of Rossetti. Like most reading individuals, prone to echo the views of others, I am in awe of Rossetti, notwithstanding the fact that, according to Mr. F. W. H. Myers, much of his art in speech and color spends itself in the effort to communi-

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cate the incommunicable. Nordau quotes the lines:

The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

"It is stark nonsense," said the Apostle of Degeneration, "to qualify a plane surface such as a halo by the adjective 'hollow.'" That sort of criticism is cheap; mere verbal trifling, signifying nothing. It is of a piece with that amusing instance of literalism related not long ago, which censured John Hay for making Jim Bludso, an engineer, do the pilot's work, and amended "The Heathen Chinees" so as to read:

In his sleeves, which were long,
He had twenty-four Jacks,

on the ground that no sleeves would hold twenty-four *packs*, and that the Jacks were the only really valuable cards in the game of euchre.

The tendencies of men have changed but little since Pope said:

. . . Numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss.

We shall not go far astray if we follow his advice to

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Neglect the rule each verbal critic lays,
For not to know some trifles is a praise;
And men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
T'avoid great errors, must the less commit.

There are men, it is said, who would indict a metaphor and try a trope; they regard the use of poetic license as a punishable misdemeanor. Our beloved professor of French, General Joseph Kargé, thirty years ago had like views of poetic license, for I remember that every now and then, if he encountered an example of it, he would say, with a fine flashing of the eye, "Gentlemen, I cause you to remark the licentiousness of the poet."

II

Of gas-logs and the private library; with some facts about collectors and collecting.

ONCE on a time I rashly printed a modest booklet, and a good-natured reviewer, who amazed me by devoting two columns to the task, complained somewhat inconsistently that there was nothing in the book, and that I had tried to compress several volumes of sketches into three hundred pages. Falling into the common error of untrained minds, he arrived at a conclusion wholly unsupported by evidence—to wit, that I have a gas-log in my library-room. I never owned or possessed a gas-log in my life; and I never said that I did. I feel a peculiar sense of discomfort in the presence of a gas-log, for it is much more obtrusive than the plain, inoffensive register, or the ugly, self-assertive radiator. A gas-log is an imitation, and therefore a sham. It is really prettier than a radiator, but a radiator makes no pretences; it does not ask you to mistake it for a cannel-coal fire, and it does not pose as an open hearth with real wood. Yet,

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perhaps, the gas-log is more æsthetic than the ordinary stove, and my strongest objection to it is based upon the fundamental truth that it burns gaseously, and is therefore not only unpoetical but destructive. Nobody who cares for books will permit the burning of gas in his library if he can help it. "The book-collector," saith Mr. Lang, "must avoid gas, which deposits a filthy coat of oil that catches dust." Mr. Blades observed that three jets of gas in a small room reduced the leather on his book-shelves to a powder of the consistency of snuff, and made the backs of his books come away in his hand. Our American gas cannot be as virulent as the English article, for I never knew it to behave quite as wickedly as that; but it is bad enough. The peculiar quality of the heat seems to dry the bindings unduly. The great James Lenox felt the danger keenly, and, when he founded his Library, commanded that it should never be opened at night, because of the harm which comes from artificial light of the kind which was in vogue in his day. Since then the electric light, more merciful to bindings, has enabled the wise and skilful lawyers of the New York Public Library Board to find a way of evading the prohibition.

Almost as reprehensible as the gas-log habit is the tall book-case, which renders necessary a

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set of steps to afford a means of capturing the inhabitants of the upper regions. After a certain age, one hesitates to risk life and limb in perilous climbings of ladders. I want my books where I can lay my hand upon them without exertion. I have had trouble enough in getting them on the shelves to entitle me to get them off easily. According to the rule, the heavy dragoons, the ponderous artillery of quartos and folios, are always at the bottom, and the skirmishers, the light infantry, at the top; and I usually want the little ones. Unfortunately, we cannot all of us possess sufficient wall-space to allow the indulgence of our taste for long, low cases, and few can afford the luxury of mezzanine galleries like those of our book-loving friend Pauperius, of Gramercy Park.

There are certain "books about books" which provoke one to mild indignation, because they assume that the reader is ignorant of very elementary things. I am thinking at the moment of *The Private Library*, by Mr. Arthur L. Humphreys, a copy of the fourth edition whereof is before me. It is a pretty book, well printed, well bound, and well groomed, with that comfortable and dignified English air about it which our books do not usually possess. There is a vast deal of valuable information in its one hun-

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dred and fifty-two pages, but some of the advice reminds one of the treatises on etiquette in which we are told that we must not eat pease with our knives or partake of soup audibly. Richard Aungerville, called De Bury, hated "the dirty cleric who will eat fruit or cheese over a book, put in straws for marks, press flowers in it"; but it is almost insulting to the intelligence of a modern book-lover to inform him that "books are neither card-racks, crumb-baskets, or receptacles for dead leaves"; that they "were not meant as cushions, nor were they meant to be toasted before a fire"; or that we should write only on the blank fly-leaf and never upon a title-page or half-title. "Cigarette-ashes are very bad for books," some one says; "so is butter, also marmalade." Few will dispute these profound truths. If I am not mistaken, Southey was careful with his books, but Coleridge would cut the leaves with a butter-knife, and De Quincey was merciless towards them. My pet foe is the individual who turns the corners of the leaves, who drags the book from the shelf by the top, and who lays it open face downward.

It irritates me also to be assured by Mr. Humphreys that "magazines," when kept complete, should be bound up in their volumes, either yearly or half-yearly. That method of procedure would occur to most people, and the ordinary

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man, or a Grangerite, or a tawny-moroccoite, or a gilt-topper, or a marbled-insider, or an *editio princeps* man." This is a conspicuous example of what somebody called "the slang of the library." When the unique copy of Boccaccio, "that most notorious volume in existence," fetched £2260 at the Duke of Roxburghe's sale, it was bought by the Marquis of Blandford, afterwards Duke of Marlborough, in competition with Earl Spencer. Leigh Hunt was present at this "battle between the two Spencers," and he observes: "The Earl, who, I believe, was a genuine lover of books, could go home and reconcile himself to his defeat by reading the work in a cheaper edition." That is a pleasure which we humble mortals may surely be allowed to enjoy, albeit we are debarred by fate and a scanty income from entering the enchanted regions where, for a small fortune, one may discover and bear away the ornaments of libraries like those of the leaders in the parliament of New York bookmen.

In what I have been saying of the Boccaccio, I have relied on the testimony of Mr. William Younger Fletcher, in his interesting work about *English Book-Collectors*, as well as on the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Charles and Mary Elton's *Great Book-Collectors*, but I am mindful of the fact that Hunt, an eye-witness,

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gives the amount of the price as £1400, which is erroneous, of course, as is usual with the evidence of eye-witnesses. In May, 1842, *Blackwood* asserted that the price was £1250, adding that later on the book "fell into the hands of Earl Spencer, who probably values a print of a prize-cow more than all the strophes of *Æschylus*." But the magazine-writer says: "It was a clumsy, coarsely printed, and rude-looking little squat book; and if we wanted an example of the absurdity to which rival nonsense can urge the silliest of mankind, we should quote the sale of the *Decameron*"; and he says of the author of the novels, "a more corrupt ruffian never polluted any language." After that I would not believe the *Blackwood* man under oath. The allusion to a prize-cow seems uncalled for and impertinent, for Earl Spencer's fame rests largely upon his great library, said by Renouald to have been "the finest private library in Europe." Alas for collectors, the great White Knight's library was sold on behalf of the owner's creditors in 1819, and it was then that Earl Spencer, after seven years of patient waiting, possessed at last the coveted treasure, paying £918 for what a few years before had sold for £2260.

Much is said about collectors which it may be well to disregard, because each one who assumes

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to consider man as a collector, looks at the subject from his own point of view, commonly wrong. It is the Autocrat's John all over again. My collector may be a wholly different person from your collector; and John Doe, whom we all know to be an observant person, may have his own ideal which does not resemble ours in the slightest particular. I refer so often to Andrew Lang that I may justly be accused of Lango-mania, but at the risk of such a charge I am tempted to quote from his article on "Bibliomania," in the *Cornhill Magazine*: "There are collectors," he says, "who ought to be sent to penal servitude. Their idea of collecting is to buy a living author's books, send them to him, and ask him to write a verse or 'sentiment' in each. This costs them nothing, and, to their feeble minds, appears to add pecuniary value to their volumes. These caitiffs are usually bred on the other side of the Atlantic. They ought to be sternly suppressed. No notice should be taken of their communications."

This denunciation is needlessly ferocious, and I do not believe that Mr. Lang really means it to be taken in sober earnest. I am sure that so genial a person could never find it in his heart to indulge in serious vituperation about such a harmless performance. If a reader wishes his favorite author to impart a flavor of personality

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to a book by his autographic inscription, he is not thinking of the money-value of his treasure. I do not ask authors to write in my books, but I appreciate the spirit of fondness which sometimes impels one to express his affection and to beg a writer for a word or line from his own pen. It costs the writer nothing, the effort is trifling, and he is a churl who refuses; it is all a piece of silly affectation. Authors are seldom too busy to do these little acts of kindness. I pass by the sneering reference to benighted Americans as unworthy and gratuitous, for one who is familiar with the habits and customs of our English cousins may well afford to smile at the intimation that we are the only people who indulge in financial aspirations about our books. Mr. Lang is such a kindly, amiable person that he must have written this part of his essay in haste and without due reflection.

It is wise to be indulgent towards all collectors, for they are usually good fellows, although frequently tiresome. The autograph-collector cares little for the gatherer of first editions, and the accumulator of Caxtons has scant sympathy with the man of many manuscripts. "Tennyson would not give a dam (a very small Indian copper coin) for a letter in Adam's handwriting, except from curiosity to know in what characters

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Adam had expressed himself." ¹ As Lord Ten-nyson never had an Adam autograph offered to him, his indifference may have been only a part of the *pose* he generally affected, for he was above all other great men of his time a *poseur*. As most of us who have any sense of association and are not completely absorbed in the contemplation of our own greatness are collectors of something, we must not be unduly inconsiderate of our neighbor's infirmities. I can tolerate even the enthusiast who dotes on portraits of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, or of Napoleon the Great.

Rather oddly, King George III., whom we Americans are accustomed to think of only as an obstinate and tyrannical monarch, was a "collector of the first rank," and his library, preserved in the British Museum, is a proof of it. Moreover, he was well acquainted with his books. Dr. Johnson, on the contrary, was not a collector, although he was a great reader. Goldsmith possessed a goodly number of books, a working collection only. Gibbon was a collector who loved his books, and his library was bought by "Vathek" Beckford, who kept it buried where it was of no use to any one. Charles Burney spent nearly £25,000 on his library, which afterwards went to the British Museum for £13,500. Na-

¹ Locker-Lampson. *My Confidences*, 189.

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oleon was a true book-lover. "I will have fine editions and handsome binding," he said. "I am rich enough for that." Richard Heber was a famous collector. He left behind him over one hundred thousand volumes, stored in eight houses, four in England and four on the Continent. Scott immortalized him in *Marmion*:

Adieu, dear Heber, life and health,
And store of literary wealth—

All of these historical gatherers of books are described in Mr. Wheatley's pleasant little monograph on *How to Form a Library*.

Some very wise men have left upon record most disparaging comments concerning collectors. Seneca said: "Our idle book-hunters know nothing but titles and bindings; their chests of cedar and ivory, and the bookcases that fill the bathroom are nothing but fashionable furniture, and have nothing to do with learning." It may be true that one may love books without being a philosopher, but I cannot understand what there is about book-collecting which leads men to assail and to denounce the innocent bibliomaniac with such severity. From time to time angry persons burst forth in execrations, and abuse the harmless collector as if he were a dangerous enemy of society. I have an example at hand in a small, attractive volume entitled *Crazy Book-*

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Collecting. There was an odd Frenchman in the eighteenth century named Bollioud Mermet, secretary of the Academy of Lyons, who published, in 1761, an essay on "Bibliomania," full of solemn denunciation. This is a translation, printed in 1894 by Duprat, "for the perusal and delectation of the members of the Grolier Club of New York *et amicorum.*" Duprat tells us in the preface that Mermet was himself a collector, but that he turned Philistine because of the high cost of the books he coveted. "Imperceptibly," says M. Mermet, "one depth leads to another. He that would not listen to reason, nor abstain from what it condemns, very soon loses his regard for morality and even religion. Thus the ill-regulated love of books may lead to libertinism and infidelity."

By the irony of fate, fifty copies of the translation were printed on Japan paper, and my copy has been bound delightfully in full crimson levant by an amateur who is so modest that he would never forgive me if I disclosed his name.

The subject of book-collecting is one which tempts to diffuseness and perhaps to tedious prolixity. If you set a book-collector going you may never be sure when he will run down and cease to chatter. There is a goodly field for one who would write of the romance of book-collecting, but Mr. J. H. Slater has occupied so much of

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it in his attractive work¹ that many years must pass before any one else will have the courage to invade his territory.

Perhaps there is a worse disease than bibliomania, which may be called bibliophobia. It is developed chiefly from the microbe of envy, or from what may be called imperfect mental sanitation. There cannot be much serious harm in the collecting of books, provided it is done honestly. There are three ways of getting them—that is to say, by gift, by purchase, and by theft; although some add a fourth method—to wit, by borrowing, which is only a kind of theft. It is sad to reflect that the borrower almost always looks upon the book as if it were an umbrella, or *feræ naturæ*, something in which no right of property exists. If one is able to abstain from downright larceny, he may preserve his innocence; but if he yields to the temptation of borrowing, he is in danger of descending still lower into the depths of depravity. A kind friend once insisted upon my taking home with me a volume from a set of the works of Thomas Love Peacock. I ought to have repelled him sternly, and requested him to flee from me or to get behind me; but in a moment of weakness I gave way, and then—I lost that book. With the perverseness of in-

¹ *The Romance of Book-Collecting*, 1898.

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animate things, it concealed itself somewhere in a closet, or behind a row of plump octavos, or underneath a mass of pamphlets, I cannot tell where; and I never see my friend without a lurking suspicion that he regards me as fit for treason, stratagems, or the county jail, and I dare not cast a guilty glance at the vacant space in his Peacock series which seems to me to be a yawning chasm. Lend not; the thing you lend is lost. The only good thing I know about the word "borrow" is that it furnishes the sole legitimate English rhyme for "sorrow" and "to-morrow," and enabled General Dix to complete the first verse of the "Dies Iræ" translation:

Day of anger, without morrow,
Earth shall end in flame and sorrow,
As from saint and seer we borrow.

Even there it has a forced and clumsy air, and one feels that the translator resorted to it in sheer desperation.

Mr. Henry George Bohn, to whose book of *Poetical Quotations* I referred just now, and who retained his vigor and activity up to a day or two before he died, in his eighty-ninth year,¹ did wonderful work for book-lovers, and his useful "libraries" will always be a monument to his in-

¹ He died August 22, 1884.

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dustry and ability. Nothing which he accomplished will, however, be more valuable to the delver in English literature than his edition of Lowndes' *Bibliographer's Manual*, published in 1864. Lowndes was the son of a publisher, and he toiled over his task for full fourteen years. It is sad to remember that his long course of drudgery made of him a physical wreck, and that after spending the latter years of his life as a cataloguer in Bohn's service, he died at the early age of forty-five, his eyesight failing and his mind deranged. "In his own history," wrote Bohn, "he realized a fact of which he was always conscious, that bibliography has no recognized status in England." That may have been true when it was written in 1864, but since that time great changes have taken place, and we have had even a *Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature*.

III

Of back rows and the reading of books; with some reflections concerning Catalogitis and bindings.

IF a man has any affection for books, he has his own way about them. Like Montaigne, he seeks in the reading of books only to please himself by an honest diversion. Some buy books, some inherit them, and some have books thrust upon them. There are those who hunt for prizes with eager ambition, and others who are pursued by books, fairly driven into corners, eventually overwhelmed by them. He who hath a sufficiency, and may hide quietly among them without an itching greed to add to their number, deserves to be called happy; but I have never been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of such a person. As for myself, I have come to that deplorable state when there are double rows upon the shelves and one never knows where to look for the neglected warriors who have been relegated ignominiously to the rear rank. If books have feelings, and I am sure they have, how melancholy must be the lives of those un-

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fortunates who are doomed to the perpetual obscurity of the back row. I see now the disconsolate tops of Charles Lever's novels, peering wistfully over the smart, modern bindings of the "Outward Bound" edition of Kipling. Why it is called "Outward Bound," I cannot tell; I supposed that all books were bound that way.

Yet *Charles O'Malley* is a good story, full of animal spirits, and it delighted the artless youth of sixty years ago. The Irish dragoon was no mean ancestor of Mulvaney, and I am unable to account for the fact that he and his brothers, *Maurice Tiernay* and *Tom Burke* are elbowed out of the places of honor. To be sure, O'Malley was given to remarks such as "I remember no more," and "I lost every sense of consciousness," but there is in him "the salt of fun and the zest of life."

Of the thirty novels or more, only *Harry Lorrequer*, *Charles O'Malley*, and *Tom Burke* seem to have any endurance. Perhaps the genial Irishman produced too much copy. The bread-and-butter consideration has a depressing effect upon the artistic instinct. I am not sure, however, that the forty volumes of Lever may not reappear in the foreground as soon as I can boast of more shelves. Every library needs shelves; they are good things to have in a library.

Even with multitudes of shelves, it is not al-

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ways an easy task to find our books. Many careful and competent collectors have complained of the difficulty. Mr. Lenox "often bought duplicates for immediate use, or to lend, rather than grope for the copies he knew to be in the stacks in some of his store-rooms or chambers, notably Stirling's *Artists of Spain*, a high-priced book."¹ Mr. James Crossley, whose hundred thousand volumes were stowed away in heaps, piled up from the floors, was often unable to lay his hands upon books of which he had several copies. Reading of the manner in which he kept his books, I am not surprised at the statement of his biographer that "he never married." My wife says—but never mind, what she said may as well be suppressed, although her remarks were abundantly justified.

Thomas Rawlinson had a set of chambers at Gray's Inn which was so filled with books that "his bed had to be moved into the passage." Richard Heber, "the Magnificent," must have been sorely perplexed when he searched for a book in those above-mentioned eight houses overflowing with books. "No man," said he, "can comfortably do without three copies of a book. One he must have for his show copy, and he will probably keep it at his country-house.

¹ Stevens, 10.

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Another he will require for his own use and reference; and unless he is inclined to part with this, which is very inconvenient, or risk the injury of his best copy, he must needs have a third at the service of his friends." Of him, the Rev. Mr. Dyce said, significantly: "He was the most liberal of book-collectors: I never asked him for the loan of a volume, *which he could lay his hands on*, he did not immediately send me." The species of library dear to Heber and to Rawlinson is little in vogue in these modern times, but we have our own troubles.

These are days of profuse book-production, and the mind is bewildered by the vast fields which stretch out before the book-lover's vision. The enthusiast is compelled to limit himself in his quest of volumes, perplexed in discovering any rule of selection. It is easy to say that one should avoid the worthless and the ephemeral, and that the deserving books are comparatively few. Surely, there are not many great books. "It could never have been intended," said Hamerton, "that everybody should write great books," although I feel about the matter very much as the famous person felt about his cigars, when he said that some cigars are better than others, but that no cigars are bad.

I am always amused at the stolid igno-

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rance of the non-bookish individual who tells you that he wonders why you want so many books when you can never read them all, as if the chief thing about a book is the reading of it. We do not gather multitudes of books to read them, my Bœotian friend; the idea is a childish delusion. "In early life," says Walter Bagehot, "there is an opinion that the obvious thing to do with a horse is to ride it; with a cake, to eat it; with a sixpence, to spend it." A few boyish persons carry this further, and think that the natural thing to do with a book is to read it. The mere reading of a rare book is a puerility, an idiosyncrasy of adolescence; it is the ownership of the book which is the matter of distinction. The collector of coins does not accumulate his treasures for the purpose of ultimately expending them in the market-place. The lover of postage-stamps, small as his horizon may be, does not hoard his colored bits of paper with intent to employ them in the mailing of letters. Truly, the reading of a first folio of Shakespeare, or of a first edition of Izaak Walton, or of the Gutenberg Bible, would be almost a desecration. Old Thomas Dekker had a dawning of inspiration when he said that a wise man poor is like a sacred book that's never read. When some one complained to Bedford that a book which he had bound did not shut properly, he ex-

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claimed, "Why, bless me, sir, you've been *reading* it!" The notion that we should not possess all of the Kelmscotts, the Groliers, the first editions of this or that author, or the treasures of libraries like those which were of Lefferts and Irwin, without the intention of going over their contents page by page, would never occur to any one but the being who gains his knowledge of books from the pages of some of our literary newspapers, in whose columns appear the outgivings of those unaccountable people who ask the editor to print a list of Marion Crawford's novels, or who would be glad to exchange a set of *The Waverley Magazine* for Poe's *Tamerlane* (first edition) or an autograph letter of Daniel De Foe. There are, indeed, authors who are famous because they are never read. Lowell says of Klopstock that he "attained the immortality of unreadableness"; and Lessing says of the same seraphic fanatic:

Who will not mighty Klopstock praise,
Will everybody read him? Nay!

There are many other examples of the great unreadable. One of them is William Prynne, of whom Wood writes: "I verily believe that, if rightly computed, he wrote a sheet for every day of his life, reckoning from the time he came to the use of reason and the state of man." He

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lived to be sixty-nine, and if he came to reason at the age of twenty-one—an hypothesis which is, perhaps, over-sanguine, considering the ordinary “state of man”—this means that he produced upward of seventeen thousand five hundred and twenty sheets, between which any normal person might succumb to slumber. Aubrey, in his *Letters from the Bodleian Library*, says of Prynne that “about every three hours his man was to bring him a roll and a pot of ale to refocillate his wasted spirits.” Aubrey, whom Richard Garnett calls an “immature Boswell,” deserves a medal for that charming word “refocillate.” Every one would rejoice in the possession of a set of Prynne’s works, but no one would ever have the hardihood to read them. One might as well attempt the *Jesuit Relations* or the *Official Records of the Rebellion*.

There are delightful hours when we may lean back in our easy-chairs and allow our eyes to rove lovingly over the backs of the precious tenants of our shelves; not shut off from us by barriers of inhospitable glass, for glazed bookcases, Elia justly says, are heartless; resting here and there on a Dérome, or a Cobden-Sanderson, a Prideaux or a Lortic, a masterpiece of Tout or of Rivière, or of Zaehnsdorf, or of our own Matthews or Bradstreet. The binding appeals to

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the soul of the book-lover. Did not Pepys say (May 15, 1660), "After that to a bookseller's, and bought for the love of the binding three books—the French Psalms in four parts, Bacon's *Organon*, and *Farnab Rhetor*"? ¹ I shall say more about bindings hereafter. It is good to fondle a pretty binding, and it is delightful to take down a well-dressed book and caress it, but it would be very like a profanation actually to read it.

It pleases me to learn that my hostility to glass-doored bookcases is not a mere sentimentality, but rests upon a more solid foundation. The late Mr. Blades, in his *Enemies of Books*, said: "It is a mistake to imagine that keeping the best-bound volumes in a glass-doored bookcase is a preservative. The damp air will certainly penetrate, and as the absence of ventilation will assist formation of mould, the books will be worse off than if they had been placed in open shelves." But Andrew Lang insists that "the more precious and beautifully bound treasures will naturally be stored in a case with closely fitting glass doors." ² He adds, in a note: "And, with all deference to Mr. Blades, glass doors do seem to be useful in excluding dust." Do they? I am not so sure of that. A good, palpable dust

¹ *Index Rhetoricus*, by Thomas Farnaby.

² *The Library*, 35.

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settles upon the open shelves, but there is a finer, subtler, and more destructive dust which insinuates itself in some mysterious way behind the closed doors, and eats its way into the very body of the book. On the whole, I shall pin my faith to Mr. Blades.

I must admit that I have no valid title to the honored name of collector, for the appellation carries with it the suggestion of a wise and discriminating man who gathers the old and the rare, who selects only the best examples, and who knows precisely what he wants; whereas, I do not aspire to Caxtons, I never know exactly what I want, and, like most men, I have never adopted any system. It is only by rule, order, and the exercise of a cool, deliberate judgment that one may ever possess a true collection. Most of us are victims of the malady which Eugene Field appropriately called "Catalogitis." I can appreciate Macbeth's remark: "Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men." The catalogues come in such lavish profusion, they are so enticing, they arouse so skilfully the desire for possession, that the unwary person is unable to refrain from incautious investment. They give such alluring descriptions of the merchandise, they glow with such mellifluous praise of the quartos and octavos, they seduce so delicately and deliciously,

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that the credulous purchaser becomes a willing and, indeed, an enthusiastic victim. He yields to the insinuating comments "very rare," "curious," "almost impossible," "unique in this state"—it is all as fascinating as a lottery, and the order goes forth without an instant of hesitation. When anticipation becomes reality, and the parcels are opened with trembling alacrity, there is an exquisite moment of expectancy, and then commonly disappointment. It is a painful truth, for which I have no satisfactory explanation, but nothing in my experience ever quite comes up to the description in the catalogue. I do not believe that there is any intentional misrepresentation in most cases, and when, after a melancholy inspection, I have gone back to the catalogue, I have invariably found that there was not a word, line, or syllable which might fairly be called untrue. The fault was altogether in the imagination of the sanguine buyer.

The word "curious" is strangely beguiling, but its application is by no means a matter of certainty; for what one man may think curious another may regard as ordinary and uninteresting. I am not referring to a certain department of literature which is not to be mentioned in the presence of Mrs. Boffin, for that is a field into which it is prudent not to venture. I was once entrapped by the title "*Essay on Burns*, 12mo,

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old calf, *curious*”; and after purchase found myself the owner of an ancient *Essay on Burns and Scalds*, by some long-forgotten Æsculapius.¹ Frederic Harrison pertinently says: “There are curious and worthless creatures enough in any pot-house, all day long; and there is incessant talk in omnibus, train, or street, by we know not whom, about we care not what. Yet if a printer or a bookseller can be induced to make this gabble as immortal as print and publication can make it, then it straightway is literature, and in due time becomes ‘curious.’” I was impressed not long ago by a suggestion—I cannot recall its origin—that if any man should only make a book about his own personal recollections of the things he had himself seen and done, without reserve, telling the whole truth and the exact truth, it would be charming to any reader. Pepys may be cited as a brilliant instance.

There is another word which appears to be a stumbling-block to the unwary, and that is the word “uncut.” The casual purchaser is sometimes deceived by it, for he thinks that it means that the leaves have not been severed by the paper-knife. I have read with much glee divers indignant letters in the very interesting “Sat-

¹ Since this was printed, in a magazine, I have seen a similar story in a New York journal. But my story is true, and the newspaper story is a fiction.

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urday Review" of one of our best New York journals, in which the barbarian writers have denounced the uncut, and have assailed in vigorous but misguided phrases those who prefer to have their books in that condition. Henry Stevens tells us that even such a famous collector as James Lenox, founder of the splendid library into whose magnificent mysteries so few of us dare to penetrate, was misled by the word "uncut," and chided Stevens for buying an "uncut" book whose pages were all open. He says:

"Again, when his tastes had grown into the mysteries of *uncut* leaves, he returned a very rare, early New England tract, expensively bound, because it did not answer the description of 'uncut' in the invoice, for the leaves had manifestly been cut open and read." When it was explained to him that in England the term *uncut* signified only that the edges were not trimmed, he shelved the rarity with the remark that he "learned something every day." I cannot resist the temptation to quote from Stevens one more paragraph about Mr. Lenox: "He kept a great Spanish rarity with margins cut close, because a German youth who desired to practise writing English to me had described it as 'perfect, although very closely circumcised.'"

The word "uncut" recalls to me a small duodecimo of only one hundred and forty-two pages,

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which I picked up at a book-stall in London. It is a *Life of Andrew Jackson*, by William Cobbett, "M.P. for Oldham," with a portrait of the General and a view of the battle of New Orleans deserving of a place in the pages of *Punch*, supplemented by a touching representation of two individuals hanging upon palpable gallows—Arbuthnot and Ambrister, I should say, except that one of the hanged gentlemen is arrayed in a costume which suggests either an American Indian or a chorus-girl. It was printed in London in 1834, and on one of its fly-leaves there are inscribed these words: "Job Longley's Book, Hampstead Norris Berks, 1841. Like all Cobbett's works, interesting and well written." How Job knew this I cannot make out, for the leaves have never been subjected to the paper-knife, and are as absolutely uncut as a copy of the *Athenæum* fresh from the press. There is one remark in the preface which I have heard in other forms at St. Patrick's Day dinners: "I send this book forth amongst the people of this whole kingdom, to prove to them that this ill-treated Ireland, this trampled-upon Ireland, has produced the greatest soldier and the greatest statesman whose name has ever yet appeared upon the records of valor and of wisdom."

No lover of books should be without the *Recollections of Mr. James Lenox, of New York, and*

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the Formation of his Library, which Stevens published in 1886. My copy has in it an autograph presentation by the author, and a letter of Mr. Lenox to that celebrated bookseller of New York, William Gowans, of Nassau Street. Everybody knows now that a book is *uncut* when its sheets have not been trimmed by the binder and the margins are all of that delightful width which appeals to the genuine book - hunter. I am amazed when I read in the *Recollections* of the industrious and painstaking Percy Fitzgerald the grave statement that the uncut book is valuable because it lends itself to binding. That is in a certain sense undeniably true, but the uncut book has attractions far beyond the mere physical condition of "bindability," if that word is permissible. Perhaps the Caxton Club of Chicago is wise in describing its productions as "with edges untrimmed." Even a Philistine ought to be able to comprehend that description, although I once knew a man who supposed that a book "bound in boards" had sides composed of planking.

There are books of that sort, although they are not common. Some years ago I brought over from Denmark an illuminated musical manuscript of the fourteenth century which was literally bound in boards, the wooden covers fully half an inch thick and the back studded with iron nails. The intelligent custom-house person

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who greets us hospitably upon our return home, sagely classed it as "old furniture," imposing duties accordingly, the amount whereof I ultimately succeeded in recovering from our free and enlightened government, much to my astonishment. I have often wished that I could have studied the convolutions of the brain of that customs man, supposing him to have been possessed of that useful adjunct to the duty-collector. How wonderful must they have been, and how valuable to the student of the intellectual qualities of idiots! What sort of an article of furniture did he suppose my manuscript to be? No one will ever find out.

There are many sorts of bindings, and, no matter how high may be our confidence in our wisdom about books, we are none of us too rational or sedate not to be led into extravagance by a peculiarly beautiful calf or morocco or by an exquisite design. There is some pleasure in having one's books, like those of Emerson, described by M. Auguste Langel in his diary, "almost all in paper covers and showing marks of use." Very few books are worthy of full-crushed levant, and full-calf is apt to deteriorate in the warm precincts of our libraries. Nothing in the way of binding is, however, as odious as what is called "law-calf" or "law-sheep" of that wretched underdone pie-crust color familiar to the toiling

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attorney. Even if it is really a product of the harmless calf or the innocent sheep, it deserves severe censure. Modern irreverence for traditions is coming to our rescue, and we are now having our law-books bound in a durable way, so that they do not rot or besmear their ruins upon the lawyer's customary suit of solemn black. I do not despair of seeing the Reports and the Statutes clothed in substantial boards or in neat cloth, gilt, with ornamental designs, and printed on that light but durable paper which is coming into common use. There is no good reason why a professional book should be uncomfortable, hideous, and awkwardly oppressive. It is so stupid that it ought to be relieved of utter ugliness of aspect.

As most of us are not rich enough to indulge in the luxury of full morocco, which, indeed, is not appropriate to all books, we must be satisfied with half-bindings, and they may be both pretty and useful, although I often wonder why the binders persist in using such unattractive paper or cloth for the sides. In order to get a suitable color, one must stand over the binder "with a drawn sword," as the venerable General Aaron Ward, of Westchester County, used to say about the prudent man and his sixpences. Old Matthews, New York's famous bookbinder, was incorrigible in this respect, no doubt because he scorned half-

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bindings and considered them, as Mr. Lang's Oxford tutor did, pure *μικροπρέπεια*, or shabbiness. But with care we may make a half-bound book a thing of beauty and a cherished possession. I detest the custom of dressing books in what is known as "half-vellum," for the ghostly pallor is distasteful, and after a few months the exterior is soiled and faded, resembling a gentleman in a suit of white flannel too long withheld from the laundry. I always feel a desire to wash my large paper editions of Lowell and of Longfellow, and it will not be long before the alumni edition of Woodrow Wilson's *History of the American People*, with its fascinating text and its altogether astonishing and ill-assorted illustrations, will require a judicious application of the cleansing-sponge. As to color, my artist friend scorns the blue and the black, and greets with loud acclaim the olive, the brilliant green, and the assertive scarlet. We are instructed by M. Ambrose Firmin-Didot that the *Iliad* should be clothed in red and the *Odyssey* in blue, because the old Greek rhapsodists wore scarlet when they recited the "Wrath of Achilles," and blue when they chanted of the "Return of Odysseus;"¹ and he thinks that the writings of great churchmen should be bound in

¹ *The Library* (Lang), 68.

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violet, the works of philosophers in black morocco, and certain poets in rose color. To the man of moderate culture all this fanciful talk seems to be pure nonsense. It is like the euphuistic balderdash of John Lyly wherein Sidney found a reason for complaining of "the dainty wits enam'ling with py'd flowers their thoughts of gold," and of those who "with strange similes enrich each line." The colors of my books I choose because I like the effect, and I see no good reason why Bancroft should not be clad in scarlet, or Hawthorne in pale olive, or Dickens in solid blue.

A buckram binding is perhaps the most stolidly useful, and as satisfactory as any other sort considering the subject from a point of view purely utilitarian. It may be made neat and charming, and what is technically called a Roxburghe binding is comfortable as well as ornamental. I wish I could become enthusiastic over the Grolier Club bindings, but I am unable to admire them, much as I honor those who devise them.

Cloth, of course, is endurable if it be plain and solid, but it lends itself to atrocities in decoration, and it is only a conventional binding, fit for books of daily use—the proletariat of books—and is altogether unworthy of the nobility. The English cloth bindings are meant only to be discarded for better ones, if the books themselves turn out

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to be worth keeping. For any but reading purposes, a cloth-bound book might as well be unbound.

Many revere books chiefly because of their bindings. There is an interesting proof of it in *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, by Mr. Edward Edwards. Anne of Denmark gave to her son Charles a number of books bound in crimson and purple velvet. Abraham van der Dort, keeper of Charles's cabinet, made a catalogue of these treasures (Harleian MSS., 4718), and his skill as a cataloguer may be estimated by these examples:

“Im’pris 19 books in Crimson velvet, whereof 18 are bound 4to and ye 19th in folio, adorned with some silver guilt plate, and ye two claspes wanting. Given to ye King by Queen Ann of famous memory. Item, more 15 books, 13 thereof being in long 4to and ye 2 lesser cover’d over also with purple velvet. Given also to ye King by ye said Queen Ann.”

It is said that “a well-bound book mocks at time,” but experience shows that Russia leather is by no means enduring. On the whole, I am faithful to morocco, the favorite of the Arabs, who, according to Mr. Du Bois, were the original artistic bookbinders. “Copies of their *Moal-lakat*,” he tells us, “were covered with various-colored morocco, elaborately tooled and stamped in exquisite patterns, long ere the pillagers of the

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library of the Caliphs at Cairo transformed—*horresco referens*—into shoes the most valuable bindings of that library.” We may be thankful that about the sixteenth century the fashion of leather supplanted the fashion of gold and silver and baser metals, which, however beautiful, must have been hard, clumsy, and expensive.

IV

Concerning some books of small importance.

THE intelligent reader may treat this chapter as suppressed: like the famous Chapter LXXXVIII. of the third volume of James Bryce's masterpiece, *The American Commonwealth*, which dealt with "The Tweed Ring in New York City." It was written by Mr. Frank J. Goodnow, and it contained some breezy but sadly inaccurate remarks, based upon an imperfect knowledge of the facts, and characterized by the blunders of an honest writer who gets his information from purely ephemeral sources. Among other things, it made a serious accusation against an honored relative of mine, the late John Thompson Hoffman, by accusing him of being blinded by ambition to the acts of his political friends and dissuaded from opposing the "Ring" by the promise of election as Governor of the State, although it was conceded that "he was personally honest." Mr. Goodnow meant to tell the exact truth, but I happen to know a good deal about the facts, and do not derive my knowl-

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edge from that most untrustworthy source, the popular impressions of the time; wherefore, I am able to say that the insinuations against Governor Hoffman were without foundation, and those who knew the man will testify that while he may have been deceived by his political friends, no one could have tempted him successfully to condone a dishonest act. I will not discuss it further. There were also accusations against my old friend, in whose office I studied the rudiments of the law, Mayor A. Oakey Hall. My impression is that the writer thought that the gay and versatile Oakey was dead; but Oakey was very much alive, and he sued Mr. Bryce for libel. Mr. Bryce acted in a most dignified and honorable manner, and cancelled the chapter, paying the expenses of the litigation, which, in England, are always heavy, and demonstrating his manly fairness and his earnest desire to rectify any wrong which might have been done inadvertently.

The intelligent reader aforesaid may deal with this chapter as he usually does with the descriptions of scenery which the novelist often gives us just before the crucial point in the plot; in other words, he may skip it. Hamerton thought that the art of reading was "to skip judiciously." Another writer tells us oracularly that "the art of skipping is, in a word, the art of noting and

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shunning that which is bad or frivolous or misleading or unsuitable for one's individual needs." That is a sort of comical commonplace, which we are apt to find in books of the *Book-lover* and *Literary Educator* kind. Why not say that the science of skipping—it is not an art—lies in omitting to read that which you find dreary and uninteresting, and let it go at that? Almost every one skips wisely, except, perhaps, one excellent lawyer of German descent who read the Revised Statutes of New York from beginning to end, including the descriptions of the boundaries of the counties and all the rules and regulations of the highways. When he entered an office as a student he was asked by the senior what he had read, and he thundered, in those unmistakable accents so well known to New York lawyers, "I have read de *Revised Statoots*—all of 'em—read 'em all!" We who are acquainted with his efficient work on the bench appreciate the sincere and earnest devotion of this conscientious jurist to his chosen task, and we are able to understand the love of his profession which led him to spend time over even the tedious details of the law.

This chapter should be read only by a kindly disposed friend whom I take into my confidence; all others will please to abstain from perusing it. I have already disclaimed any right to be

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regarded as a book-collector, for among my possessions I can muster only a few volumes of moderate distinction. There have been men who contented themselves with exactly a hundred books, all of them entitled to the blue ribbon. I have not envied them, for I much prefer a thousand volumes of less importance. I have no sympathy with the scribbler who says: "I have a library of fifty or of a hundred volumes, all relating to my chosen line of thought, and not a single inferior or worthless volume among them." He must be a narrow and conceited person—talking about his chosen line of thought, as if it had any serious importance. If he could read a few hundred volumes relating to some other line of thought and quite "inferior," he would surely become a broader and a better man. The person who thinks he is right in confining himself to a hundred books of a particular sort is scarcely worthy to be called a lover of books, and his capacity must be exceedingly small.

"Mr. Disraeli," said a discriminating writer, a few years ago, "was not a bibliophile—that is, he never collected a hundred rare books at a fabulous price, locked them up, looked at them now and then, and never read them." I am not assenting to the description of a bibliophile, but I concur heartily in denouncing that especial kind of bibliophile who, in my judgment, is not

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deserving of the name. One can scarcely become intimate or familiar with one of those portentous prizes whose titles are always printed in capital letters in the catalogue; but you can be very chummy with even an ordinary edition of *Elia* or with a modest, brown-covered copy of the poems of Oliver Wendell Holmes. I am rather sorry to see a first edition of the *Autocrat* dressed smartly by the Club Bindery, for it seems to put a barrier between us.

Almost every man feels the need of owning at least one copy of *The Compleat Angler*. Mine is only the fourth edition, printed for R. Marriot, and advertised "to be sold by Charles Harper at his shop, the next door to the Crown near Sergeant's Inn in Chancery-Lane, 1668," with engraved title and cuts by Lombart. It is a book to be cherished affectionately, but I know of no especial merit about the fourth edition, unless it be the spelling, which may not be peculiar to that edition. The dear old "Milkmaid's Song" appears in this guise:

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, or hills, or fields,
Or woods, and steepy mountains yeilds,
Where we will sit upon the Rocks,
And see the Shepherds feed our flocks,
By shallow Rivers, to whose falls
Mellodious birds sing Madrigals.

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There is also the first folio of Beaumont and Fletcher (1647), with the Marshall portrait of Fletcher, none the less precious because of Charles Lamb's delight over "that folio Beaumont and Fletcher which he dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden." I wish that I could persuade myself that my copy was the veritable one which was thus dragged home.

Even if we are compelled to stand afar off, gazing reverently upon the four hundred of the collectors, the aristocracy of book-gatherers, we may nevertheless cherish devotedly the books which line the walls of our modest library; poor things they may be, but our own.

Somewhere in the miscellany scattered on the upper shelves of the cases in my bedroom (I have not yet reached the bathroom stage referred to by Seneca) we may find a small book entitled *The Right Way to Heaven, and a Good Precedent for Lawyers and All Other Good Christians*, compiled by "Richard Vennard of Lincoln's Inn, Gent," and when we have recovered from the shock at finding lawyers classified with Christians, a most unpopular performance, we may observe that it is really quite an interesting work, printed "at London," in 1602. It contains a fearful and wonderful representation of "Saint George for England," trampling upon a

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dragon as ineffective as the "Wurmb" in the Metropolitan Opera-House on Siegfried nights, and leading as to disparage the prowess of England's far-famed champion. McKee had it bound sweetly in blue levant, and his book-plate reminds me of a very kind, amiable, and lovable lawyer who will be remembered fondly by all New York book-fanciers.

Now and then one hears of a true first edition of that early poem, *The Embargo*, which William Cullen Bryant presented to the world at the tender age of thirteen, but most of us have to be content with the second edition, "printed for the author, by E. G. House, 1809." The title is "The Embargo; or, Sketches of the Times, a Satire: the second edition, corrected and enlarged; together with the Spanish Revolution and other poems; by William Cullen Bryant." In the "advertisement" prefixed to the poems some one seems interested in convincing readers that the author was really as young as he was represented. "A doubt having been intimated," says the prefatory person, "in the *Monthly Anthology* of June last, whether a youth of thirteen years could have been the author of this poem, in justice to his merits the friends of the writer feel obliged to certify the fact from their personal knowledge of himself and his family, as well as his literary improvement and

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extraordinary talents. . . . Mr. Bryant, the author, is a native of Cummington, in the county of Hampshire, and in the month of November last arrived at the age of fourteen years." It is amusing to read in the preface of the poem, prepared by the precocious lad, the characterization of the " *terapin* policy " of the administration in imposing the embargo. Certainly the poem is surprisingly good, considering the youth of its author, and this second edition is well worth the neat binding which it has received from Bradstreet's. One may have a slight shock of astonishment at reading this lad's remarks on Jefferson, which, however, are quite familiar to students of American political history :

Go, wretch, resign the Presidential chair,
Disclose thy secret measures, foul or fair;
Go, search with curious eye for horned frogs,
Mid the wild wastes of Louisianian bogs;
Or, where Ohio rolls his turbid stream,
Dig for huge bones, thy glory and thy theme.
Go, scan, Philosophist, thy * * * * * charms
And sink supinely in her sable arms.

The "stars" are replaced in a later version by "Sally's."¹ Mr. Parke Godwin, in his *Life of Bryant*, asserts that the only copy of the second edition of *The Embargo* which he was able to

¹ Godwin's *Bryant*, 71.

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find was in the New York Historical Library. Mr. Godwin once asked Bryant if he had a copy of *The Embargo*. "No," he answered, testily; "why should I keep such stuff as that?" Later on, Godwin told him that he had succeeded in borrowing a copy from a friend; his reply was: "Well, you have taken a great deal of trouble for a very foolish thing." It adds to my sense of advancing years to recall my single meeting with the venerable editor of the *Evening Post*, and it is difficult for me to imagine the personage I then beheld, as a boy of thirteen, thundering in stately verse against the unconscious Jefferson, who may have gone to his grave wholly unaware of the existence of the Massachusetts poet.

People who have only a second-hand knowledge of books are apt to talk, with an air of conscious wisdom, about Elzevirs, but they seldom know much about the merits of the famous duodecimos, which Burton speaks of as "a sort of literary bantams."¹ In or about the year 1583 the Elzevirs began to produce their pretty little volumes, and from time to time their editions have been eagerly sought

¹ "Dapper Elzevirs, like fairy elves, show their light forms amidst the well-gilt Twelves," sings John Ferriar, in his poem on "Bibliomania."

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for and then suffered to lapse into neglect. In 1880 M. Willems published *Les Elzevier*, which is the definite authority on Elzevirs. There is much to be learned about them, and we may not rest tranquilly merely because we possess a book which is an Elzevir on its face. "In Elzevirs," says Mr. Lang, "a line's breadth of margin is often worth a hundred pounds, and a misprint is quoted at no less a sum," and he adds that no Elzevir is valuable unless it is clean and large in the margins. My favorite Elzevir is the ten-volume edition of Cicero—*M. Tullii Ciceronis Opera cum optimis exemplaribus accurate collata, Lugduni, Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1642*. It is a fairly clean copy, including the genuine ninth volume, bound in old polished calf, with gilt borders and back; and I am told that copies of the Elzevir Cicero in fine condition are rare; but the type is too small for my eyes, and I have reason to believe that the text is not remarkable for accuracy. Mr. William Loring Andrews is an authority on Elzevirs, and he says "there are Aldines, Elzevirs, and Plantins of great price, and others that are valueless." The dainty volumes are not as popular as they used to be, but the name is always deeply impressive in the imagination of the commencing collector. Richard Grant White says, in a note on page 57

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of his edition of *The Book-Hunter*: "The inexperienced collector of books, and especially of the ancient classics, should not be tempted into paying high prices for Elzevir editions, unless in a case where there is something particularly attractive to his taste in the individual copy, and he pays for his whim—for which, alas! we are all too ready. The Elzevirs have fallen much in estimation and value of late years. Their accuracy has been found to have been too much vaunted; and the page is a bad one for the eye—not on account of its smallness, or poor press-work, but because of the shape of the letter." I do not agree entirely with this sweeping condemnation. My copy of this edition of *The Book-Hunter* (New York, 1863) has a manuscript note made by a former owner: "See a review of this book and the editor in *The Philobiblon*, vol. 2, p. 60. It can't be said the reviewer spared the editor, but it can be said that the editor gets what he deserves."

All Americans must feel an interest in whatever relates to the tragic story of John André. The literature of that episode in our history is increasing in volume with every year. I am happy in owning a small 16mo book entitled *An Authentic Narrative of the Causes which led to the death of Major André, Adjutant General*

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of his Majesty's Forces in North America, by Joshua Hett Smith, Esq., printed in New York for Evert Duyckinck in 1809. There are two leaves missing, which makes the little volume less valuable than a complete copy, but it has an intrinsic interest as well as a bibliographical one. There are few incidents in our history more fascinating than the André incident, and the student may well devote a portion of his time to the perusal of Mr. William Abbatt's *Crisis of the Revolution*, which is, or ought to be a delight to any reader.

I am rather fond of an extra-illustrated copy of *The Poetical Register; or, the Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets, with an Account of Their Writings*, published in London (printed for E. Carll), in Fleet Street, 1719. It bears the autograph of its former owner, J. Lefanu, and the charming book-plate of that well-known member of the Grolier Club, Edward Hale Bierstadt. The two volumes have a dignified, old-fashioned, calf binding, with a painfully modern gilt back, and with that back I would gladly dispense. I have an added affection for the book because of Bierstadt's pencilled collation:

A 8 leaves
A 4 leaves
B 24 in eights
Aa 6 leaves

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Many friends of mine who like books and are actually given to reading them have owned to me that they do not know exactly what is meant by "collating." Without affecting undue learning on the subject—I am not now attempting the useless task of imparting information to the youth who does the newspaper criticisms—I may for the benefit of these good friends be allowed to say that its technical sense is the verification of the arrangement of the sheets of a book, which is usually done by counting and inspecting the signatures at the foot of the first page of each sheet. It is only an expert "collationer" who is capable of judging wisely about the value of any ancient book, because the old binders seem to have been careless and to have been sadly indifferent about getting together all the sheets of a book. Even the modern binders will bear watching. Skill in collating is rare, and yet no one may presume to consider himself to be an authority on books if he is not well trained in the art. It cannot be acquired except by study, and I envy those who understand it, for I can never hope to array myself in their ranks.

This little volume, called *Poems by S. T. Coleridge, second edition, to which are added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd*, was published by Joseph Cottle, at Bristol, in 1797. Its old-fashioned duodecimo sheets nestle snugly

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in the binding of smooth, old calf, and, while it is not phenomenally rare, it is scarce according to Talfourd. It is valuable chiefly because the twenty-eight pages devoted to Lamb contain all of his writings up to that time which he considered worth preserving. Had he written nothing else, he would now be the most obscure of the multitude of minor poets scattered along the path of English literature, specimens whereof we discover in the many anthologies and collections which overcrowd our libraries. The lover of Lamb must be proud of this book when he thinks of the author's happiness in beholding the dedication prepared so affectionately "with all a brother's fondness, to Mary Ann Lamb, the author's best friend and sister," and of the pride and delight, commemorated by Talfourd, with which she received this fraternal expression of affection. The motto prefixed to the book was a mystery to classical experts. "*Duplex nobis vinculum, et amicitiae et similium junctarumque Camoenarum; quod utinam neque mors solvat, neque temporis longinquitas.*" It was ascribed to "Groscoll. Epist. ad Car. Utenhov. et Ptol. Lux. Tast.," but Coleridge laughingly admitted to Cottle that "it was all a hoax." They were given to that sort of fooling in those days. It is a pleasant thing to remember that Coleridge wished to place Lamb's poems before

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Lloyd's, but Lamb requested that Lloyd's should be placed first. In Coleridge's first edition he had included some of Lamb's sonnets, so that, after all, my volume is not quite a first edition of Lamb.

To me, the books which were produced in the early part of the seventeenth century are passing dull, although they may mean very much to the serious collector. I am looking at what is styled a "very fine, tall copy" of a book entitled *The True and Royall Historie of the famous Empresse Elizabeth, Queene of England, France and Ireland &c, true faith's defendresse of divine renoune and happy memory*, translated from the French by one Abraham Darcie, containing a portrait of the Virgin Queen, "with Fan of ostrich plumes," printed in 1625. My record tells me that it has an added value because there is in it a cheerless sort of portrait of Darcie, or Darssie, as his name is sometimes given, which does not belong to the book, but is sometimes inserted in it. It is dedicated "To the Most august, most sacred and most excellent Majesty of James the First, Emperour of Great Britanne, King of France, Ireland and Virginia, defender of the Faith. The Translator of these Annalls wisheth to His Imperiall Majestie blessednesse, perpetuall health, with all happinesse, prosperitie, and felicitie, in both worlds." These

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men were redundant in spelling as well as in style, and their productions are characterized by a solemn and portentous tediousness which may be rivalled only by a Patent Office report or by a chapter of Alison's History. The solicitude of the author about the King's health in "both worlds" recalls the toast-master who, at a dinner in New York, proposed "the health of our old friend, Governor Flower," that sturdy personage having departed this life a short time before. The only charm about these "Annalls" of all the most remarkable things that happened "during Elizabeth's blessed Raigne" is that the book came from the collection of that kindly and enthusiastic collector, the late Henry Sewall.

Much more to my liking is a stately quarto, the first edition of *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope*, printed by W. Bowyer for Bernard Lintot, between the Temple Gates, 1717; bound by Blackwell decently enough, if it were not for the hideous paper of the sides, of which even the best binders are so unaccountably fond. Of course, it is not the true first edition of many of the poems which are included in it, but only the first edition of that collection of poems. Pope was twenty-nine when it appeared. There is a gravity and a dignity about the type which is not to be met with in the books of our day.

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It might easily be read even by my friend who told me that there was nothing wrong about his eyes, but that his arms were not long enough. We can all acquiesce in the solemn sentence with which the preface begins: "I am inclined to think that both the writers of books, and the readers of them, are generally not a little unreasonable in their expectations." It was just before the publishing of this edition that Pope left the old house at No. 9 Berkeley Street, Piccadilly, opposite Devonshire House, and now probably absorbed in the enlarged hotel which Americans know so pleasantly as "The Berkeley." About that time Pope removed to Twickenham, to dwell in his famous villa—or villakin, as Swift called it.

We had but few poets in America in the eighteenth century, and when I read their writings I am disposed to wonder that they were allowed to live. One of the best of them was the belligerent Democrat, Philip Freneau, almost forgotten to-day, but in his time greatly esteemed by his countrymen, particularly by the disciples of Thomas Jefferson. He was an editor, a literary man, when literary men and editors were rare birds. He was a Princeton graduate, of the class of 1771, and James Madison was his room-mate. I enjoy some of

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his "Poems written between the years 1768 and 1794, printed at the press of the author, at Mount Pleasant near Middletown Point," which is in New Jersey, in 1795. The poems are of unequal merit, but as the writer was only sixteen when the first one, "The Political History of the Prophet Jonah," was written, he may be pardoned for everything except the printing of such absurd balderdash. Later on he did far better work. The mechanical execution of the book is sadly crude and imperfect, but it is a specimen of the work of that early period of our history as an independent community.¹

Down in the quiet neighborhood of West Twenty-first Street and Ninth Avenue the casual passenger on the elevated railway may, if he can withdraw his attention long enough from the delectable pages of the *World* and the *Journal*, gaze upon a pleasant array of collegiate buildings, a relief to the eye, bringing into the busy metropolis a gentle atmosphere of scholastic repose. This charming oasis in the desert of business and tall, desolate-looking apartment houses, was created by the benefactions of Charles Clement Moore, supplemented generously in later years by the munificence of Dean Eugene Augustus Hoffman. Moore, son of Bish-

¹ A bibliography of his works, by Victor Hugo Paltsits, has recently been printed by Dodd, Mead & Company.

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op Benjamin Moore, lived from the days of the Revolution to the days of the Rebellion, for he was born two years before Yorktown and died six days after Gettysburg, at the ripe age of eighty - four. He was the pioneer of Hebrew lexicography in this country, and was for many years a professor in Columbia in the department of Biblical Learning and of Oriental and Greek Literature. I well remember his slight and venerable figure as he strolled about the grounds which surrounded his son's pretty country home on the banks of the Hudson. What he will always be known for, sad as it may seem, is not his erudition in Greek and in Hebrew, but that much-loved set of verses called "The Night Before Christmas," which struck the chord of popular affection. The volume which I prize, called *Poems by Clement C. Moore, LL.D.*—the honorary degree might have been omitted—was printed by Bartlett & Welford, New York, 1844. Characteristically it bears a Latin motto, "Et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe jocosus"—and it is offered in a pleasant preface addressed to the author's children. I like one sentence of this preface, because it is candid and free from the usual mock-modesty. "I do not pay my readers so ill a compliment as to offer the contents of this volume to their view as the mere amusements of my idle hours,

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effusions thrown off without care or meditation, as though the refuse of my thoughts were good enough for them. On the contrary, some of the pieces have cost me much time and thought; and I have composed them all as carefully and correctly as I could." The fifty-six lines which make up "A Visit from St. Nicholas" have stirred men's hearts for over sixty years, and they deserve to rank with the Christmas stories of Charles Dickens, making the holiday season delightful to every one who has in him a spark of imagination or a gleam of love for his fellow-men.

It may be questioned whether a law-book is a book at all; but it has some of the features of a book, in that it is printed and it is bound. I exclude works on medicine and theology from my own shelves, but I may "own up" to the possession of two legal dissertations, one of them by a lawyer whose friendship I value and of whom I may say that his treatise has been a feature of our "mutual life." The other is called *An Essay on the Learning of Contingent Remainders and Executory Devises: by Charles Fearne, Esq., Barrister at Law, of the Inner Temple*. It is the fifth edition, "revised, corrected and greatly enlarged by the author," and it was published in Dublin in the year 1794. I preserve it not only for its fame, but because

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it was the gift of a venerable lawyer who led the bar of his county until at eighty-two the inexorable decree was entered which closed the record of his honorable life.

It is within the bounds of possibility that a more deadly and sodden specimen of abstruse and incomprehensible reasoning may have been inflicted upon mankind, but I am doubtful. Compared with Fearne's essay, a treatise on the differential calculus and a study of the evidences of a rudimentary tail in trilobites would be insanely hilarious. Fearne was at one time "an obscure law-man, in Breame's Buildings, Chancery Lane," and he had "invented a musket"—a smooth-bore, of course—which his editor, Butler, regarded as "defective." Fearne's dissipations were the writing of a treatise on the Greek accent and another on the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand." It has been said of "Contingent Remainders" that "no work, perhaps, on any branch of science affords a more beautiful instance of analysis." Few lawyers to-day are acquainted with anything beyond the title.

Specimens of the style of this airy trifle might be multiplied, but one may suffice. "If we are to infer (as is said in the arguments in Chudleigh's case) a *scintilla juris* in the feoffers, that may enable them to enter and restore their possibility of a seisin (or if the contingency has

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happened, their *actual seisin*) to serve the contingent uses; what is it that confines us to such narrow and insufficient limits in regard to the measure of this *scintilla juris*? Why not extend the influence one degree further, and suppose such a *scintilla juris* as may be competent to serve the contingent uses, without the necessary circuitry of an actual entry?" Why not, indeed? Let the modern attorney, with his Code in one hand and *Abbott's Forms* in the other, answer if he can. This little gem of Fearne's might be used as an after-dinner story if it were not for the parentheses; too many of them really spoil an after-dinner story. I have seldom encountered anything more entertaining, unless it be Judge Keener's work on *Quasi-Contracts*. A great English advocate once said that whenever he heard a man say "Quasi" he always buttoned up his pockets. But nobody will appreciate that quip except a jurist, and we have no jurists in this country except the pupils in the Harvard and Columbia law-schools. The "remainder" of us, who merely practise law, admit our helpless inferiority.

V

Of the buying of books; with remarks about novels
and about literary association.

IF there is anything more deceptive than the catalogue, it is the auction and its record of prices. These prices are always absurdly low when we are not bidders, and unspeakably high whenever we venture to compete, for reasons which the professionals might explain if they wished to take the world into their confidence. I have my opinion of the man who depends upon the volumes of *Book Prices Current*, but I will not express it; it might be misinterpreted. I would not disparage the value of the compilation, for the history of the book-market is of interest and the work is done with admirable accuracy. I am referring only to the deductions which the unwary may easily draw therefrom, and most of us are often misled because we are careless. The man who relies upon these reports in the regulation of his investments, and who gives his simple faith to any literature of that sort, is sailing upon an uncharted sea.

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The market value of stocks in Wall Street seldom has any correct relation to the intrinsic worth, and in the book-exchange one may never judge accurately about the pecuniary value of a book by the sum which the professionals made an enthusiast pay for it at an auction sale. So much depends upon circumstances, to use a trite and banal phrase, that the auctioneer's price is very far from being conclusive evidence.

When a great library comes under the hammer and the sale is well "advertised," as the newspapers say, the buyers flock in numbers and the orders are generous. Then it is that the record teems with "big prices," and the soul of the dealer expands with joy as he contemplates his list of unlimited orders. I have always thought that it was an odd arrangement by which the purchaser pays to his agent a fixed percentage on the price paid, so that the man whose duty it is to buy for you as cheaply as he can receives more remuneration the more he pays for the property! I should amend by having the commission scaled down if the price ran above a fixed amount. But perhaps the commissions are really not considerable enough to influence any one.

An element of attraction about the large sales is the advantage of possessing a book which comes from the library of a well-known collec-

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tor, because it bears the hall-mark of distinction. The book has a borrowed fame, a sort of guarantee of authenticity and rarity. The ordinary buyer loves to think that what he has bought had an interest for one whom he has revered and admired afar off. McKee I knew as a careful, well-equipped lawyer, but to the world he was better known as an ardent collector, and I cherish a McKee book more than one picked up at a Nassau Street book-counter. Let no one remind me that there are practically no Nassau Street book-counters in these times; once on a time there were many. They were the nearest approaches we ever had to the book-stalls celebrated by the poet:

The book-stall old and gray,
There are precious gems of thought
That were quarried long ago,
Some in vellum bound, and wrought
With letters and lines of gold.
There are curious rows of 'calf,'
And perchance an Elzevir;
There are countless 'mos' of chaff
And a pleasant folio,
Like leaves that are cracked with cold,
All puckered and brown and sear.

Somehow, while Clinton Scollard meant well, these lines indicate that his acquaintance with the mysteries of book-lore is rather limited.

The records of the sales, compiled by that

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competent expert, Mr. Livingston, show the marvellous uncertainties of the market. The catalogues of the library of Frederick W. French, sold in Boston in April, 1901, were well made and wisely distributed, falling into the possession of the ambitious and attracting the plutocrat eager to own a notable library. Hence the Caxton Club books, then exposed for competition, brought, in many instances, more than double the amount paid for them in the preceding November. They had not really increased in value to that extent, but there was a gathering of the clans in Boston, and the lambs tumbled over one another in their wild struggle. With regard to old and famous books, we must, of course, bear in mind that condition counts greatly in the matter of the price. The amateur is apt to lose sight of the fact that wide margins and unstained pages command a premium. The catalogue is not always clear or adequate on these points.

Thinking of prices, we may recall the fact that John Eliot's Indian Bible (New Testament, 1661; Old Testament, 1663) sold in 1882 for \$2900. It contained some Indian words which were so long that Cotton Mather thought they must have been stretching themselves ever since the confusion of tongues at Babel. Many years ago (perhaps not many, but a good many) that

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well-beloved lawyer, Hamilton Cole, dear to all University Club men, paid something like \$10,000 for a certain famous Bible. The purchase was heralded all over the land, and Cole's name was emblazoned in the roll of valiant and ambitious book-buyers. Soon afterwards there appeared the revision of the Bible, which promised so much and had so little true success, in which the word commonly used to designate the future abode of the wicked was softened to the rather ineffective expression, "sheol." Judge John R. Brady, whose genial memory still lives in the minds of lawyers of the latter half of the last century, was moved to say of this phenomenal purchase: "Poor Cole; he bought a Bible for ten thousand dollars and then the revisers came along and knocked hell out of it."

Having been accustomed, during these many years, to reverence the utterances of that distinguished journal sacred to the memory of William Coleman, William Cullen Bryant, and Edwin Lawrence Godkin, I was shocked a few months ago at an extraordinary editorial on "Book Collectors and Others," for I have been in the habit of translating *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* as "whatever the *Post* says, goes." No doubt there is a fallacy lurking somewhere, but when the *Post* fails me, I am indeed a hap-

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less wanderer without the aid of a discriminating lantern. The sentiments expressed in this editorial effusion are in many respects abhorrent and repulsive, but they are those of the Philistine. Referring to prices, it says: "What is really paid for in every instance is simple rarity." This is sadly untrue, as every intelligent book-buyer knows. Rarity is only one element, and many rare books are comparatively cheap. I object, also, to the assertion that "it must be said that very little collecting is free from the taint of commercialism. The books in a private library are usually too valuable to be used, even if the collector, which rarely happens, is a reader also. His prints are of a kind too precious to be framed, his china too good for household use."¹ The man who could pen such unjustifiable thoughts is hopeless; he has not learned the alphabet of collecting; he appreciates the truth about as much as did the person who said in my hearing, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, regarding a picture of Perseus and Andromeda: "That, my son, is the devil chained to a rock."²

¹ An old calumny. "He (Mermet) would no more think of taking his Aldine *Virgil*, bound for Grolier, to the country for summer reading, than the collector of Palissy would think of using his precious dishes on the daily breakfast-table." Duprat, preface to *Mermet's Essay*.

² It may seem that my intimation that a collector may

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The learned editor remarks further upon the "fact that Thackeray's first editions, neatly bound, may be had for a song, while the same volume in its original serial parts, with the advertising pages and the ugly newspaper covers, may be worth a missionary's ransom." Let us see. In the year 1900 the first edition of the *Newcomes*, original paper covers, and with all the "ads," sold at auction for sixteen dollars. In April, 1901, it sold for thirteen dollars, and at the same sale the cloth copy brought six dollars. *Pendennis*, first edition, original numbers, covers and "ads," sold in 1900 for thirty dollars, and the cloth copy in 1901 for seven dollars and a half. The *Virginians*, original paper covers, brought fifteen dollars and a half in April, 1901, and the cloth copy six dollars. I paid twenty-five dollars for my copy of the *Virginians*, in paper covers, but I always pay too much, because I am always in a hurry, and I wanted that first edition because I wished to insert in it a precious autograph manuscript of part of Chapter xxviii. of the novel, as well as a characteristic letter from Thackeray to George William Curtis: "Who can be the friend who asks for the signature of the unhappy W. M.

be a reader is inconsistent with some previous remarks ; but I am not given to consistency, which is an over-estimated virtue.

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Thackeray?" While there is a difference, I should regard six dollars and seven dollars and a half as rather protracted songs, and I doubt if Miss Stone could have been rescued from the clutches of the Bulgarian bandits for so small a sum as thirty dollars.

The millionaires of our modern civilization, awakened to the idea of book-ownership as a badge of culture, no longer buy their books by the square yard, according to the ancient witticism, but they exercise a wise discretion of their own or choose skilful experts, upon whose trained judgment they may safely rely. The hopelessness of contending with the wealthy is not a new experience. Long years ago the Rev. Thomas Baker lamented thus: "I begin to complain of the men of quality, who lay out so much for books, and give such prices that there is nothing to be had for poor scholars, whereof I have felt the effects; when I bid a fair price for an old book, I am answered: 'The quality will give twice as much,' and so I have done." In these times the situation is worse than ever. We poor *bourgeois* collectors, as William Carew Hazlitt calls us, find ourselves hopelessly left at the post, and our humble bid is swept out of sight by the bid of Croesus. We are forced to lie in ambush, swooping out now

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and then whenever an unsuspecting and unexpected "find" comes in our way, or we betake ourselves to the secluded shop on the side street, or to the *quais* of Paris, where we indulge in the delusion that we may discover those bargains which long since have been mere dreams, not to be realized in this incarnation. I have explored those *quais* diligently, but with little result, because, no doubt, I was merely groping and was not sufficiently equipped for successful exploration. One delicious being, in black whiskers which were almost improbable, I encountered in a den on the Quai Voltaire, where he was peacefully partaking of something closely resembling absinthe at eleven in the forenoon. From him I procured divers volumes of an uncommon sort, and I intrusted to him the task of forwarding to America, in the same consignment, a miscellaneous assortment of books which had encumbered the baggage from London to Stockholm and thence to Hamburg and Paris. Later on, as I was trying my restaurant French upon the abnormally stupid dining-car attendant who infests the railway-train to Calais, it flashed across my mind that I had been somewhat rash in giving over my treasures as well as my good francs to a Parisian gentleman who appeared like a consolidation of Alfred de Musset and Paul Verlaine, with a dash

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of Mallarmé thrown in. It gives me the greatest pleasure to record that everything was duly delivered in New York promptly, without even the friction of the customs, and it is a solitary instance, for nothing else ever came to me from the other side without giving more trouble than can well be described. I doff my *chapeau* to my conscientious, painstaking quaffer of the green beverage, and I apologize to him for my temporary distrust.

With much anxiety and sore tribulation one may, after a long experience, boast of possessing a "library" if he is lucky enough to find a place in which to house it suitably, a difficult task, as those who have tried it well know.

Mr. Wilfer, in *Our Mutual Friend*, had a noble ambition to be once arrayed in a complete suit of new garments, from hat to shoes; and I have always had a similar desire to be able, for a single moment, to see all my books at once, the humble and the precious, the commissioned officers and the private soldiers, in a comprehensive dress-parade, passing in review. One thing is certain: such a result is not to be had in a New York apartment-house. The only way to accomplish it, at least for a book-man who has neither poverty nor riches, is to fly to the country and build for himself a house for books,

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like one which you will find in the pleasant hills of Somerset County, New Jersey, where a famous jurist of our time enjoys his treasures and finds the well-earned pleasure which is the just reward of a laborious professional life.

There are fewer helps, comforts, and consolations than our precious books. "The world may be kind or hostile; it may seem to us to be hastening on the wings of enlightenment and progress to an imminent millennium, or it may weigh us down with the sense of insoluble difficulty and irremediable wrong; but whatever else it may be, so long as we have good health and a library, it can never be dull." Thus saith Arthur James Balfour, and "if I were an Englishman as I am an American," that one saying would compel me always to give him my vote. As I write, he is assuming the rulership of the mighty English empire—the real ruler, the head of the ministry, the worthy successor of his distinguished uncle. In our land the leader of the political forces is seldom as eminent in the quiet realm of literature as he is in the troubled dominion of statesmanship. But I am glad that the Premier of England and the Premier of the United States of America—if you will pardon the imperfect analogy—are both men of letters as well as of politics and of diplomacy.

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Robert Southey is said to have been the writer most deserving of the title "man of letters." I doubt if many readers of to-day trouble themselves to take from the shelves one of the six volumes of his *Life and Correspondence*, edited by his son, the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey, published over half a century ago, and modestly retiring in its sober, brown-cloth binding; yet it is a fascinating hunting-ground for any man of leisure who loves something better than the stock-market reports, the records of the golf games, and the latest historical romances. The time for producing such things has gone by, and it will never return; but the world will go on, unmindful of what it has lost. It is strange to recall that Southey, who seems old-fashioned now, was derided in his time as an innovator. In the *Edinburgh Review* of a century ago—it is in that first number, of October, 1802—the stately reviewer thus stalks solemnly along the path: "Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question. . . . The author (Southey), who is now before us, belongs to a *sect* of poets that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years; . . . they are *dissenters* from the established systems

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in poetry and criticism." It is a lesson which we never really learn, that the fashion of this world passeth away and that only the old-fashioned vices are forever new-fashioned. What has become of those standards whose authority could not be questioned? To one who lived in the time when the wonderful Macaulay was the rising star in the historical firmament it is quite astonishing to read of him as an example of the obsolete school of history. Even Bancroft is to-day "rather the companion of the scholar than of the patriot reader," and "is now neglected by readers," while "his example is avoided by writers."¹ Yet he was still systematically engaged in his task as late as 1883.

Southey was a student who dwelt with his books and loved them sincerely for what they were and not for what the dealer thought of them. In those days the collector was *rara avis*—usually a wealthy nobleman. The scholarly poet writes of his beloved companions:

My days among the dead are passed,
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old.
My never-failing friends are they
With whom I converse day by day.

¹ Albert Bushnell Hart, *International Monthly*, 1900.

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My hopes are with the dead; anon,
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
To all futurity,
Yet bearing here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

It is somewhat out of date, as I have said, to "quote poetry," but there are some old fashions which do no harm, and I am willing to endure the slings and arrows of the outrageous scoffers who laugh at the customs of our forefathers. We who are in sympathy with the kindly Southey cannot help having a sense of sadness in reading these lines, but it is a sadness more sweet than painful.

The vast majority of the readers of this generation occupy themselves principally with what are called "novels." These sweets have always appealed to the palate of mankind from the days of Boccaccio and of Marguerite de Navarre to those of Hall Caine and of Sir Gilbert Parker. I do not wish to be understood as giving to Boccaccio the title of the first of the novelists or to Parker the distinction of being the last of them, although the lively M.P. has apparently acquired a right of way to the seats of the mighty. Prehistoric men, no doubt, found novels in stones, as Shakespeare discovered sermons in them. I forget what

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Scotchman it was who revised the Duke's speech so as to read: "Stones in the running brooks, sermons in books, and good in everything." One publishing house receives, on an average, one hundred and five manuscript stories each month. Almost every one who can procure pen, paper, and ink seems eager to unfold a tale. There was a certain Pollok who wrote something which he called *The Course of Time*, sacred to parsing in our younger days. In this grave production he delivered himself of the following observations:

. . . A novel was a book
Three-volumed and once read, and oft cramm'd full
Of poisonous error, blackening every page;
And oftener still of trifling, second-hand
Remark and old, diseased, and putrid thought
And miserable incident; at war
With nature; with itself and truth at war;
Yet charming still the greedy reader on.

Pollok was needlessly savage. No wonder that he died before he was twenty-nine, and in the course of time was consigned to oblivion. He must have selected his novels with very poor judgment. Men may come and men may go, but novels flow on forever.

We remember that no less personages than Dr. Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke sat

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up all night to finish Miss Burney's *Evelina*, and Warton made a like sacrifice of what Miss Repplier might call the sleepy hours (which follow the dozy ones) to read Mrs. Radcliffe's terrific and sensational *Mysteries of Udolpho*, which is vastly more exciting than *Evelina*. Parenthetically, it is somewhat surprising to find Leigh Hunt mentioning Miss Burney's stories as "entertaining but somewhat vulgar novels"; we should hardly call them vulgar now. I suppose that the word "vulgar" is used in a conventional sense, as characterizing that which is not fashionable. Macaulay said of Miss Burney that "she first showed that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force and with broad, comic humor, and which yet should not contain a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy." Walter Minto said of *Evelina* that "it was the vulgar characters that were particularly commented on and admired."¹ So the word must have been employed to designate that which belongs to the great masses and not that which is meanly and offensively low. It is amusing to Americans to be informed of some of the reasons why Miss Burney was able to

¹ *Literature of the Georgian Era* (Minto), 106.

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depict "vulgar" or ordinary persons. Her father, Dr. Charles Burney, "the most fashionable music-master of his generation," was, it appears, "not a proud man," and "he allowed his children to play with the children of a wigmaker in the adjoining house. And among these humbler acquaintances Miss Burney picked up that acquaintance with life in a different plane of society which made the fortune of her first novel." I know, of course, that Dr. Burney belonged to the Johnson-Reynolds circle, but yet it seems to me that the barriers of society which separated the fashionable music-master's household from the wigmaker's brood were amusingly artificial, reminding one of the old order of things in Washington City before the war, when the \$1600 clerks, who were scorned by the \$2000 variety, would not permit their families to associate with those of the \$1200 clerks. I belonged to a \$1600 clerk, and I wonder now whether the daughter of the \$2000 man with whom I used to play childish games considered me vulgar.

People may not permit their novel reading to interfere with their customary slumbers, but they buy and presumably read an enormous quantity of fiction without pausing to consider whether or not it is true that the novel is an intellectual, artistic luxury, as Marion Crawford

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has it, or "history that didn't happen," as it is styled by that admirable man, John Richard Green. The writers of these days, whose books sell by the tens of thousands, certainly act upon what Wilkie Collins called the opinion that the primary object of a work of fiction should be to tell a story. All the world loves a good story.

As the vogue of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett has gone by, and some of our nineteenth-century favorites, George Eliot among the number, are slipping quietly into the category of the classical, shall we say that Thackeray and Dickens are passing out of the category of the popular? Perish the thought! They come first to our minds when we reflect about novelists; and when we compare them—but I am weary of the comparing. What does it profit us to draw parallels? Let us rather consider what editions are the best for us to have, and to give up comparisons which are proverbially odious. I say proverbially, because the phrase seems to have been used by at least eight famous writers of olden times, including John Fortescue (1395-1485), Kit Marlowe, Dr. Donne, Lyly, Burton, Heywood, Herbert, and Grange—perhaps, also, by Cervantes, but I am not sure. When Shakespeare said "comparisons are odorous," Dogberry was quoting, as he

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thought, a familiar saying. I will wager that nine-tenths of the reading public ascribe the perversion to Mrs. Malaprop.

Recurring to our novelists, we are having new editions given to us from day to day; but if we discard first editions, which constitute a class by themselves, I think I prefer as books to be read, although perhaps not the prizes of the auction sales, the Riverside Press Thackeray and the Chapman & Hall Illustrated Library Edition of Dickens; but the Smith & Elder Thackeray is by no means to be despised. They are so easy to handle, a great boon to the reader. They belong to the "books that you can carry in your hand," which Dr. Johnson says are the most useful. There are, to be sure, much more splendid editions of Thackeray than those I have mentioned, and as a rule the English publishers give us better type than our own beloved printers, or they used to do so, I humbly confess; but that is not the point. I love comfortable books; large-paper volumes are attractive but unwieldy — fit for the bookcases, but clumsy for all other purposes. Richard Heber disliked them because they occupied so much room on his shelves. They are appropriate to history, but not to biography, fiction, or literary gossip. As for the St. Dunstan Dickens, \$130,000 a set, it is simply unspeakable.

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Many of us are incompetent to express opinions in regard to first editions, because of insane infatuation with them. Yet any one must admit that a Dickens Christmas story, in the original binding, is by no means to be despised, such a one as the copy of the *Christmas Carol*, which was sold with Thackeray's library and contained the inscription, "W. M. Thackeray, from Charles Dickens (whom he made very happy once a long way from home)." It is pleasant to remember that it was eagerly competed for, and that it finally became the property of Queen Victoria for the sum of £25 10s. But consider the familiar instance of Poe's *Tamerlane*, which in the original paper cover sold for \$1850 in 1893; bound by Lortic at great expense, the same copy was sold in the Maxwell sale in 1895 for \$1450, and in 1900 it was again sold in the McKee collection for \$2050. The variations in price are instructive. The poems contained in the book would be called mediocre by any competent critic, although Mr. Woodberry says that there is some autobiographic interest in certain passages. The book is rare, of course, but there are others which are just as rare which do not command half the money. Mr. McKee's Shakespeare, eight volumes, Edinburgh edition of 1771 — Robert Burns's copy, with his autograph on the title-page of volume

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I.—brought \$888 only. I am not going to explain it, for the simple reason that I do not know how to do it.

The permanency of literary association far surpasses that of merely historical association. The interest which every one has in the supposititious "Old Curiosity Shop," the house of Mr. Dombey, and the mansion occupied by Mr. Boffin—"a corner house not far from Cavendish Square"—supposed to have been at one time the abode of Miss Elizabeth, Master George, Aunt Jane, and Uncle Parker, is proverbial, and altogether human and natural. Every one loves to look upon No. 1 Devonshire Terrace, where the great man wrote the *Carol*, *Copperfield*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Chuzzlewit*, and *Dombey and Son*, however indifferent he may be to the Temple Church, the Fire Monument, or the queer old palace of St. James. We are fond of identifying places with the inventions of novelists. In Rome, Hilda's tower is pointed out to the worshippers of Hawthorne, admiring enthusiasts who would be bored by the Tower of London; and the council chamber where Richard II. abdicated the throne is tame in comparison with Queen Anne's Tavern, near St. Paul's, where Johnson was a regular visitor, if the gossipers can be believed. At lovely Sans

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Souci there is far more of Voltaire than of the great Frederick. In Skansen, at Stockholm, we visit the transplanted summer cottage of Swedenborg with respectful admiration. We Americans are wont to gaze with proud satisfaction upon Sunnyside, made immortal by Irving's gentle, playful fancy, and we even make pilgrimages to Walden in honor of Thoreau, the man of whom John Burroughs said, "He is almost as local as a woodchuck." Poe's Fordham cottage has, I fear, been moved in the march of suburban improvement, and I sorrow at the unfortunate destruction of Cooper's "Otsego Hall." Arthur Bartlett Maurice has given us an entertaining monograph about *New York in Fiction*, adorned with the reproductions which the marvellous development of photography has made possible, and it is welcome to every one who has in his being a spark of the bookman's fire. It was no easy task, and, although it is remarkably well done, I fear that New York can never hope to possess associations like those which Laurence Hutton so gracefully preserves for us in his series of "Literary Landmarks." It is difficult to impart a tinge of romance to a house on Washington Square or to a grim dwelling on the corner of Ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, wanting, as they are, in actual antiquity; while the Grand Central Sta-

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tion defies even Howells's power of investing the commonplace with interest. The few buildings we had begun to cherish for their literary associations have been swept away by the remorseless hand of utilitarian improvement. The old University in Washington Square, which had a sort of picturesqueness in its architecture, sacred to Cecil Dreeme and our early war-martyr, Theodore Winthrop, and Colonel Carter's curious abiding-place, destroyed in the inevitable alteration of No. 58 West Tenth Street, have left behind them only a fleeting memory. The unattractive house on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, which the great shop-keeper thought to be destined to remain as a palace and a show, took on its slight literary atmosphere when, as the Manhattan Club, it figured in poor Ford's *Peter Stirling*, but it has been pulled to pieces to make way for a modern structure, which is more sightly than its tasteless predecessor. I remember that Mayor Hoffman suggested to Mr. Stewart that the big Thirty-fourth Street pile of marble should be devoted to the purpose of a residence for the municipal chief-magistrate, but the idea was not received with enthusiasm. The only marks which distinguish the abode of a mayor are the two lamps which adorn the entrance, the city, as Mr. Evarts said in the Weed-

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Opdyke trial, being wiser than Diogenes and using *two* lanterns to discover an honest man. The old Colonnade Row on Lafayette Place, where, in *The Ralstons*, Marion Crawford made the Crowdies dwell, and where, a generation ago, the kindly, persuasive Dwight taught to us incipient attorneys the principles of the law, will be gone before these pages shall have attained the dignity of print. The iconoclast, however, dwells in other climes and pursues his destructive occupation in other towns than ours. Already the annihilating touch of the reformer is busy in the heart of London, and the widening of the Strand will almost rival the Great Fire as a consumer of monuments. Fortunately we may still find, hiding in its spacious grounds, Holland House, where Addison lived and Macaulay talked; the Albany, scarcely ancient as yet, where Monk Lewis, Canning, and Byron sojourned; and Staple Inn only partially restored, and therefore practically intact, where Johnson wrote *Rasselas*. In Paris, despite the ravages of the third Napoleon and the later work of civic improvement, we may view the home of Victor Hugo, and, in the monotonous circle of the Place Vendôme, the house where Chopin died.

George Augustus Sala used to say that he knew a worthy citizen of Edinburgh who

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settled his quarterly accounts with unfailing punctuality, but always deducted fifteen per cent. on the ground that he had been intimate with Sir Walter Scott. Perhaps this was carrying the power of literary association a little too far.

VI

Of American novelists and of Robert Louis Stevenson;
with some remarks about criticism.

IF the book-lover cares to devote a little time to the study of good, old English, he may perhaps glance over the pages of *Areopagitica*, in the neat edition published by the Grolier Club in 1890, with Lowell's graceful introduction. "Bookes," said the great poet, "demeane themselves as well as men. . . . Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are: nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. . . . Unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason itselfe, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life."

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The dignity of books, as thus announced by the famous creator of *Paradise Lost*, is not as manifest in these days as it was in the olden time. Novels have done much to impair their distinction; and yet novels are not always trifles, and the study of them is the study of contemporaneous life, although few novel readers are much concerned about the taste or the utility of what they are reading. Some of our old American novelists may be worth a moment's kindly thought.

It is possible that some living men or women — women are the most voracious consumers of fiction — have read all of the works of Charles Brockden Brown, the so-called pioneer of American letters, but I am disposed to be incredulous about it. Until Cooper invaded the field, Brown was the most eminent story-writer in this promising country, as any one may learn by consulting the *Cyclopædia of Biography*, to whose enticing pages the student is referred. Brown was only thirty-nine when he died, but he wrote voluminously, and he should be famous for his efforts to establish a real literary magazine which should not be a mere annex to a publishing house. Donald Grant Mitchell conceded that Brown was an interesting figure in the history of American literary development, but he says that he "could never bring himself

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into a state of enjoyment in reading one of his books—not even for a dozen consecutive pages.”¹

In this twentieth century few readers know anything of *Wieland* or of *Arthur Mervyn*, and yet the vivid description of the yellow-fever scourge in Philadelphia is said almost to rank with De Foe's story of the London Plague. “*Wieland* is a grewsome story,” says Mitchell. *Arthur Mervyn* “might stop a hundred pages before it ends.” I have seen a goodly number of books in my time, but I have never encountered a complete set of Brown's. American though he was, he was destined to fall into oblivion here until his novels began to be read and praised in England. Not long after Brown's untimely death his *Memoirs* were produced by William Dunlap, historian of the American stage and godfather of the Dunlap Society which has given us so many interesting reprints and essays in dramatic literature. I believe that the American edition was published in 1815; my own copy is the English edition, entitled “*Memoirs of Charles Brockden Brown, the American Novelist, author of 'Wieland, Ormond, Arthur Mervyn, etc., with selections from his original letters and miscellaneous writings,*” and printed for Henry Colburn & Co.,

¹ *American Lands and Letters*, vol. i., 181.

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by J. Green, Leicester Square, 1822. On the whole, it is a poor thing, but there is much in the faded, wide-margined, slightly foxed pages which has a certain interest. "Books are too often insipid"; "I hate a lecturer"; "Few labour whose wealth allows them to dispense with it"; "A female cannot evince a more egregious negligence of reputation than by personating a man." Perhaps these remarks are not strikingly new, but they are as true to-day as they were when Brown uttered them; and it required long years of patient endurance to bring mankind to the point of confessing a hatred for lecturers and their "arid dogmatism." Brown once had an odd mishap, owing to the vagaries of the printer. He wrote for an Edentown newspaper a poetic address to Dr. Franklin, praising the sage and setting forth how Philosophy "turns with horror and disgust from those who have won the laurel of victory in the field of battle to this her favorite candidate, who had never participated in such bloody glory." With a fine sense of the fitness of things, Typo substituted the name of Washington for that of Franklin, indulging in a malicious ingenuity peculiar to his tribe.

Brown was probably searching for an excuse to avoid uncongenial work when he refused to be a lawyer, professing "that he could not

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reconcile it with his ideas of morality to become indiscriminately the defender of right or wrong." Dunlap says that in order to support himself against the persuasions of his friends "he resorted to all the sophisms and paradoxes with which ignorance and ingenious prejudice has assailed the science of the practice of the law." It is amusing, however, to note that the uninformed person who thinks lawyers more devoid of conscience than other men flourished as luxuriantly a century ago as he does in modern times. It is a shallow and ill-nourished mind which supposes that in all controversies one side is entirely right and the other side entirely wrong; that any human being may in advance decide the merits of every dispute without full investigation, and that every lawyer is willing to espouse any cause without regard to its moral aspect.

But it is an old heresy, and Ben Jonson anticipated Brockden Brown when he said:

The lawyer
Gives forked counsel; takes provoking gold,
On either hand, and puts it up
So wise, so grave, of so perplex'd a tongue,
And loud withal, that would not wag, nor scarce
Lie still without a fee.

Gay was equally unmerciful when he scored the long-robed tribe:

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I know you lawyers can, with ease,
Twist words and meanings as you please;
That language by your skill made pliant,
Will tend to favor every client;
That 'tis the fee directs the sense
To make out either side's pretence.¹

Thomson adds his slur:

These
Insnare the wretched in the toils of law,
Fomenting discord, and perplexing right;
An iron-race.²

All this comes from the natural disposition of men to be humorous and sarcastic at the expense of the so-called "learned professions." I have often thought seriously of this tendency to jest at the men who are the trusted advisers of their fellow-men with regard to their business, their health, and their religion. Irving Browne says in *Lawyers and Literature*: "To call a clergyman a hypocrite, a physician a murderer, and a lawyer a liar, has long been one of the favorite amusements of a numerically considerable part of mankind." We find the mechanic who cannot comprehend how a man can be of use unless he toils with his hands, the merchant who does not scruple to get the better of a customer in the barter and trade which

¹ Gay, *Fables*, part i., 2.

² Thomson, *Autumn*.

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make up his life, and the stockbroker who derives his princely revenues from a pursuit not wholly disassociated from that of the gambler, all disposed to sneer at the man who, they say, will advocate any cause if he is paid to do it, and impoverishes his clients in his insatiate greed for what they term "fat fees." But the man who studies the methods of the mechanic, the merchant, and the stockbroker will find that they are not much better than their professional neighbors. The men who think it decent and proper to decry the lawyer are usually devotedly trustful towards their own particular legal advisers, just as they are towards the doctor who attends to their precious health and towards the minister who looks after the welfare of their immortal souls. On the whole, I think they rely more on their attorneys than upon their clergymen, for they take a greater interest in their property than in their future state. The people, who are usually right, seem to choose for their rulers the men of the law. I venture to say that wherever we find the forces of civilization at their highest, wherever we find freedom, sound government, true manhood triumphant, we shall find the lawyers predominant.

Having thus relieved my mind and injudiciously disclosed my sensitive nature, I may now

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attempt to recover the lost thread of my discourse concerning early American fiction.

The novelist's fame must needs be transitory, and the day is not far distant when even Hall Caine, Crockett, Sir Gilbert Parker, Barrie, and Laura Jean Libbey (if that is her name) will be as obsolete as our Quaker pioneer, Brockden Brown. I am glad, however, to observe that the first edition of *Arthur Mervyn* (1799) brought \$6.50, and one of *Wieland* (1798) sold for \$7 at the McKee sale, which proves that an early novelist has a value to the collector if not to the person who reads as he runs.

I doubt whether obscurity will ever overtake Brown's immediate and notable successor, James Fenimore Cooper. I am inclined to pity the American who cannot enjoy his novels. It is true that they are out of date, and it may be that the present generation regards them as stiff, antiquated, and verbose; but every library should possess the thirty-two-volume edition with the Darley engravings. Was it not a delightfully simple time when Morris and Willis were our poets, and nothing was really complete without engravings by Felix O. C. Darley? Nobody in these days possesses such a monopoly as Darley had in the fifties of the nineteenth century.

Any discriminating person who reads for

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something beyond mere amusement must be fond of Cooper, not perhaps of the books which deal, somewhat tediously, with certain social conditions in his native land, long since stale and obsolete, but of the sea-tales and the Indian stories, all of them full of charm. It is interesting to know that while Cooper's experience in the navy presumably qualified him for the writing of sea-romances, he had little or no personal knowledge of American Indians. I think he never saw one of them unless it was a dignified person in a top-hat, like the one pointed out to me when I was a boy in Washington, *tempore* Buchanan — a worthy brave who was visiting the capital for reasons not wholly unconnected with finance, and who disappointed me greatly because he had no feathers, paint, or tomahawk. I may be wrong about Cooper's unfamiliarity with the living Indian. I seldom dare to say anything positively, because I am convinced that the man who dogmatically asserts anything is usually mistaken.

Jupiter nods sometimes, and Cooper nodded often, but numerous and manifest as his faults may be, we cannot resist the sweep and power of his best work. There are tiresome pages in *The Pioneers*, and even in *The Last of the Mohicans*, but there is a mellow, natural glow in one, and plenty of stirring adventure and

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healthy, out-of-door life in the other. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that Bret Harte was justified in his imitation of the style of *The Pioneers*. In one of the "Condensed Novels," "the Judge" says: "Genevra, the logs which compose yonder fire seem to have been incautiously chosen. The sibilation produced by the sap, which exudes copiously therefrom, is not conducive to composition." "I see, father," Genevra replies, "but I thought it would be preferable to the constant crepitation which is apt to attend the combustion of more seasoned ligneous fragments."

This is a legitimate burlesque of Cooper's conversations, for it must be admitted that he does not shine in that branch of the art. But he is not much worse than most of the writers of his day. We are apt to forget that fashions of speech change with the times. I was reminded of this when a few days ago I undertook to read a collection of the later writings of Charles Farrar Browne, the beloved Artemus Ward, and his facetious slang was almost as antiquated as the humor of Ralph Roister Doister, but it was only forty years old. The same idea must occur to any one who tries to enjoy the preadamite jocosity of Mortimer Thompson, who considered it comical to call himself "Q. K. Philander Doesticks, P.B.," the last two letters standing

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for "Perfect Brick." Yet there were those who thought that sort of thing laughable when Plancus was Consul, and tolerated such travesties as "Nothing to Do," "Nothing to Say," and "Nothing to Eat," supposed to be side-splitting imitations of William Allen Butler's "Nothing to Wear," then world-famous and even now not forgotten.

We may smile at Cooper's mannerisms and regard with wondering but amused eyes the dull, insipid, doll-like heroines who infest his pages and who express their proper and innocuous sentiments in the choicest copy-book fashion. But Dickens and even Walter Scott are open to a like objection. We judge of Dickens by Wilkins Micawber and Sam Weller rather than by the colorless maidens and uninteresting *ingénues* who merely supply a background for the flesh-and-blood creations of the great *bourgeois* novelist. We may venture to doubt whether there were actually such eloquent, high-minded, and ingenuous savages as Uncas and Chingachgook, or whether any such remarkable sailor as Tom Coffin ever trod a deck; but the charm is there, say what you will, and there was a man who stood behind the pen which wrote the Cooper tales. Faults of style count but little if the thought is strong and manly. A page of Cooper is worth volumes of

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such triflers as Le Gallienne, Oscar Wilde, and the others of that ilk. The stalwart American has the vigor of the pure, open air, and the others have the sickly steam-heat of artificial modernity. I, for one, am not ashamed to surrender myself to the fascinations of Fenimore. We may discard that first, rather timid venture, *Precaution*, for no living person, except possibly Professor Lounsbury, ever read it, but we must yield to the attractions of *The Spy*, if we have concealed about us the smallest atom of patriotism. Prosy as *Lionel Lincoln* may be, the account of the battle of Bunker Hill is brilliant; and I am ashamed of any countryman of mine who does not thrill in the reading of it; and *The Deerslayer*, with all its insignificant imperfections, must appeal to the lover of adventure and of the beautiful in nature, the healthy, sound-minded man who has good, rich blood in his veins.

Mr. Samuel L. Clemens, more commonly known to fame and to the booksellers' stalls as Mark Twain, has seen fit to ridicule Cooper elaborately and unmercifully in an article which might well have been suffered to perish with the ephemeral periodical in which it originally made its appearance. It has, however, been reproduced in an expensive edition of the author's works, at the robber price of \$10 a

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volume, and I am a sad and impoverished subscriber. The bitter, sarcastic, vitriolic criticism is to be preserved for posterity, and I cannot refrain from making my indignant if ineffective protest.

I admire Mark and I love Cooper. Mark, having attained popularity by the judicious use of a sort of humor which is liked by most men, has no hesitation in expressing opinions concerning literature, politics, and all other important things of life, and he sometimes errs, as he did in his famous speech at the banquet in honor of Whittier's seventieth birthday. We do not think the less of him for these escapades, nor do we deny that his views are worthy of respect, but one may be permitted to suggest that they are not so absolutely conclusive as to be binding and unquestionable. We are not compelled to accept Mark Twain as our supreme arbiter in literature, however heartily we may enjoy his many original and entertaining books.

The irrepressible author of that polished idyl, "The Jumping Frog," does not agree with the distinguished American poet who, according to Julian Hawthorne, declared Cooper to be a greater poet than Hesiod or Theocritus, nor with a certain William Makepeace Thackeray, not unknown to fame, who thought *La Longue Carabine* perhaps the greatest character

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in fiction and "better than any one in Scott's lot." This is his exact language: "Perhaps Leather - Stocking is better than any one in Scott's lot. *La Longue Carabine* is one of the great prize men of fiction. He ranks with your Uncle Toby, Sir Roger de Coverley, Falstaff—heroic figures all."¹ The views of the poet and of the novelist may be regarded as at least as worthy of acceptance as those of Mr. Clemens. At all events, Clemens, or Twain, has scored Cooper roundly, and has demonstrated, to his own satisfaction at least, the absurdity of the woodland tales and the impossibility of some of the feats attributed to our beloved Natty Bumpo. He gloats over some little flaws, and deluges us with diffuse comments upon the alleged contradictions and inconsistencies which he finds in *The Deerslayer*. He seems to consider it amusing to refer to Chingachgook as "Chicago," which is certainly not excruciatingly funny. No one could laugh very much at it, and it makes one feel sorry, because it shows America's leading funny man when he is not at his best.

He exaggerates the importance of a few trivialities. For example, he criticises severely the account of the escape of Hutter and the Ark as related in chapter iv. of *The Deerslayer*,

¹ *Roundabout Papers*, On a Peal of Bells.

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but his fault-finding is built up chiefly upon a foundation of falsehood—to wit, a misstatement as to the dimensions of the Ark. Cooper described it as “little more than a modern canal-boat,” and Mr. Clemens at once calls it “one hundred and forty feet long.” In 1841, when *The Deerslayer* was published, our canal-boats were not of that size; the length of the locks in the Erie Canal was only ninety feet. But it is not worth while to treat the matter seriously; any one but a professional humorist would know that Cooper was referring to the style rather than to the dimensions of the boat. Mr. Clemens’s sneers regarding the description of the river are just as unwarranted. One who has visited the pretty spot where the Susquehanna emerges from lovely Otsego Lake—a spot as familiar to Cooper as a Mississippi River steamboat’s pilot-house is to Mark Twain—will readily understand the vivid narrative and comprehend the futility of Mr. Clemens’s verbose and labored denunciation. It brings to my mind old Dr. Stephen Alexander’s remark to us college lads when we were particularly offensive: “Young gentlemen, you *think* it is funny, but it isn’t funny.” Mr. Twain may think that his Cooper jocosity is funny, but it is not; and when Mark is not funny—well, he is not Mark Twain.

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Novels are to be read at odd times, not as literature, but in the way of diversion. There are appropriate hours for several sorts of reading. As Miss Repplier points out in her attractive way, there are some books which should be sacred to the bedroom, and she quotes Thackeray's *dictum*, "Montaigne and *Howell's Letters* are my bedside books. . . . I read them in the dozy hours and only half-remember them." Macaulay said: "Some books which I would never dream of opening at dinner, please me at breakfast, and *vice versa*." I think that I should prefer Montaigne and the *Epistolæ Ho-elianæ* at some more wide-awake time. Elia at bedtime, Thackeray in the afternoon, with an instalment of Dickens in the bright, clear morning, and, perhaps, DeQuincey, Holmes, or Lowell at noon, would be more in accord with my personal feelings. If one is fond of Balzac or of Scott, two dissimilar beings, one might wedge them in somewhere. I do not know when I could contrive to appropriate time for Henry James or Mrs. Humphry Ward, but they might be reserved for a season of insomnia. That wise and incisive writer, Walter Bagehot, whose works have been given to us Americans by a wonderfully sagacious and enterprising insurance company of Hartford, says that people take their literature in morsels, as

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they take sandwiches on a journey. Some may admire Maria Edgeworth, who, as Madame De Staël said, was lost in dreary utility; or one may prefer the much-vaunted productions of Robert Louis Stevenson.

It may be rank heresy to say so, but we are on confidential terms, you who may be reading these wise outgivings of mine and I who am bestowing upon you so much gratuitous information. The Stevenson worship has always puzzled me as much as the worship of the golden calf. I do not understand why a calf should have been selected as an object of reverence, and I have had the secret assurance of many rational readers who confided to me that they also were puzzled to know why there was so much ado about the peculiar personage who wrote so much and whose praises have been sounded so persistently in two continents. Stevenson is a writer of distinction, but is he a marvel? Has his fame been built up by puffing? Has it not endured by reason of a literary superstition? We cannot disagree with Edmond Schérer when he says: "A cult once established, a dogma once accepted—no more freedom of analysis, no more independent criticism, no more permissible dissent; the order is 'to admire like a beast.'" It is thus with Goethe in German and with Molière in French; no one dares

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to dispute their authority. There is a disease of admiration, according to Macaulay. I refuse to succumb to the malady, and venture to predict that the popularity of Stevenson, already on the wane, will not be enduring. It is amusing to note what a tumult was created in the literary circles of England by the late Mr. Henley's frank and outspoken review of Balfour's *Life* of the sage of Samoa. That *Life* is a stupendous bore, and what does any one care for a portrait of "Mrs. Stevenson at the age of thirty," prefixed to volume ii.? Even if one may admire the writings of an author, must one be compelled to admire his whole family?

I do not care to have anybody suppose that these diversions are to be dignified with the title of criticism, for that is a grave and important affair. To criticise is to assume a function which implies a confident opinion of the writer respecting his own competency, and, despite my apparent self-satisfaction, I am conscious of the fact that, in the words of an objecting lawyer, I am not only incompetent, but frequently irrelevant and persistently immaterial. This is not grovelling in the dust; I know that my judgment about books is as good as that of most people and better than that of many people. As a consumer and not a producer of books, I think that I know almost

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as much of their merits as the professional critics who write for the newspapers and for the magazines, and who usually mean to be just and fair, although they often fall short of the mark. I do not agree with Disraeli in his famous and well-worn saying that the critics are the men who have failed in literature and in art. That was a Beaconsfieldian phrase, pure and simple, although it was borrowed from Coleridge, who said: "Reviewers are usually people who would have been poets, historians, biographers, if they could; they have tried their talents at one or the other, and have failed; therefore, they turn critics." The statesman-novelist condensed all this in a fashion which made the judgment immortal. Shelley, who said some foolish things, has added his sting: "Reviewers, with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race. As a bankrupt thief turns thief-taker in despair, so an unsuccessful author turns critic."

Such observations deserve little respect. Many men who are incapable of original production are qualified to judge of the work of others. If I cannot write trilogies, I may tell what I think of the music of Richard Wagner. I may not be able to paint like Sargent, but I am capable of denouncing, as I do here and now, his atrocious portrait of the eminent lawyer and ambassador Joseph H. Choate as the represen-

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tation of a silly old man, and Mr. Choate was not and never will be either old or silly. It is strange that such an artist should fail so utterly in the portrait of a remarkably handsome man, while he succeeds admirably in a portrait of James C. Carter, who has a strong but not a pretty countenance.

Lessing says that criticism is like a crutch; it helps the cripple move from place to place, but can never make a racer of him. Sir Henry Wotton said that critics are like brushers of noblemen's clothes. I do not care to help cripples or to brush clothes, as regular occupations, and yet I assert my right to announce my own opinions regarding all sorts and conditions of books. "My glass is not large," said Alfred de Musset, "but I drink from my own glass."

This somehow recalls Locker-Lampson's candid confession: "There is nothing more agreeable than talking about one's self; of all luxuries it is the most enticing and the cheapest." Willis said to George William Curtis that people always read eagerly two things—stories of themselves and of other people. This is only another manifestation of that quality of human nature which causes men to read aloud to others their own productions; men like Southey, who enticed Shelley into the library, and, after locking

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the door, read verses to him until the listener fell asleep under the table; men like Tennyson, who must have been a great bore, and never knew when to stop. But I have forgiven Tennyson, because he once read aloud to Charles Sumner the whole of *The Princess* at one sitting, and Sumner, who was something of a bore himself, never dared to pay him another visit.

VII

Of old magazines, and some thoughts concerning the "Star-Spangled Banner" and the omniscience of writers.

THERE is much in the ordinary review which causes weariness to the spirit. We are often reminded of Lockhart's remark that when the reviewer sits down to criticise, his first question is not "is the book good or bad?" but "is the writer a ministerialist or an oppositionist?" It is doubtful whether there is any profit in the "slatings" which our English cousins are so fond of inflicting upon the luckless author who happens to disagree with their accepted notions. The writer who begins with preconceived hostility to the reviewed or to the subject is seldom capable of expressing sound judgments. It always seemed to me that it was injudicious on the part of the editors of that valuable series of books, *American Statesmen*, to select Professor Sumner, accomplished and learned as he is, to be the biographer of Andrew Jackson, and Henry Adams to treat of John

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Randolph. One might as well choose Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to write the life of Joseph Chamberlain, or General Miles to sketch the career of Theodore Roosevelt. These accounts of men are quasi-reviews, and the work must necessarily be colored by the personal prepossessions of the writers. The only justification for having them done by unsympathetic persons is that the world enjoys severe criticism. Jean Paul Richter expressed the truth when he said that the public is fond of reading reviews, because it likes to see authors, and, I may add, famous men, as the English used to like to see bears, not only made to dance, but also goaded and baited.

You may buy a good three-page autograph letter of Keats for £37 10s., and in the light of these financial statistics it is gratifying to remember the fact, so familiar to everybody, that almost "within the memory of men now living," to borrow a Macaulayism, he was despised and rejected of reviewers. While all men recollect that circumstance, but few ever take from the shelf the *Quarterly* for April, 1818,¹ to glance at the bitter *critique* of "Endymion," written by John Wilson Croker and containing such gems as these: "There is hardly a complete couplet

¹ It was the April number, but not published until September.

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enclosing a complete idea in the whole book." "This nonsense is quite gratuitous." "He writes it for its own sake, and being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry." These jewels of literary perspicacity may well console the beginner writhing under the lash of contemptuous criticism. John Wilson Croker's autograph letters are dear at three dollars.¹ I always read the Saturday Review of the *New York Times*, and I could scarcely bring myself to a proper Sabbatical frame of mind if I were deprived of it for any considerable period. I was gratified not long ago to observe on its editorial page these innocent remarks of mine about Keats and Croker figuring as a text for a pleasant little essay concerning reviewers and the reviewed. The writer of this essay intimated a doubt whether the comparative merits of the two authors should be tested by the value of their respective autographs long after their decease. On reflection I admit that his doubt is justified; but I cannot agree with him in his defence of that slashing article. As Sir Theodore Martin said, it is "an instructive specimen of the worst

¹ There is no proof that Croker wrote the *Blackwood* article (August, 1818), but he was the author of the article in the *Quarterly Review*. (*Memoir of John Murray*, vol. i., 481.)

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style of so-called criticism which starts with the assumption that because the writer does not like the work it is therefore bad." Really politics were at the bottom of the business, and those who try to mix politics and poetry are apt to involve themselves in serious difficulties.

Perhaps Croker would have smiled at the old story of the Oxford undergraduate who was told by a fellow-student that he was engaged upon an essay on Keats, and who is said to have remarked: "Oh, are you, old man? But what *are* Keats?"

The old English reviews are rather too ponderous and long-winded for the reader of to-day, and I know of no more somnolent occupation than the perusal of the interminable pages of the ancient volumes of the *Quarterly* and of the *Edinburgh*, the latter having just closed the first century of its existence, for it was established in October, 1802. The only American compeer of those venerable periodicals, the *North American*, has passed through many changes, from the dull and solemn to the dull and sensational, and in these later days it has become frankly contemporaneous, serious without being stupid. Harvey having discovered the secret of circulation and done for the *Review* what his namesake did for the blood, the *North*

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American has ceased to be the sepulchre of the sedate, stilted, and formal essays of Bostonian pundits. Its wise managers recognize the truth that monthly magazines are intended to produce revenue, and that few citizens of this republic care to occupy themselves with elaborate and prosy dissertations concerning literature or politics. There was, however, a time, about the middle of the last century, when Americans endeavored to copy English styles, and supported, after a fashion, not only the *North American*, but others of a semi-political, semi-literary character intended to correspond with the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. Like most imitations, they were feeble and inane, although occasionally they contained some articles worthy of permanent fame.

I am looking over the rather antiquated pages of the magazine in which "The Raven" originally appeared, the veritable first edition of that strangely interesting poem, the authorship whereof is attributed to "—— Quarles." The preface is curious, and it reads partly thus: "The following lines from a correspondent—besides the deep, quaint strain of the sentiment, and the curious introduction of some ludicrous touches amid the serious and impressive, as was doubtless intended by the author—appear to us as one of the most felicitous specimens of

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unique rhyming which has for some time met our eye." I am told by precise persons that the poem was printed in the *New York Mirror* a few days before it appeared in the magazine; but it was copied from advance sheets of the February number by permission of the editors of the *Review*,¹ and a newspaper publication of that character is hardly worth considering as a first edition. Moreover, the advance sheets were *printed* first.

The magazine thus distinguished is called *The American Review: a Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science*, and "The Raven" is in the second number of volume i., published in February, 1845. The number consists of one hundred and seventeen double-columned pages, printed in small, close-set type, by the old house of Wiley & Putnam. We cannot help being sorry for our ancestors who were obliged to read such stately common-places as those which fill this somewhat melancholy volume. There is a dreary lamentation over "the result of the election" of 1844, for the *Review* was sturdily Whig, begun in opposition to O'Sullivan's equally melancholy *Democratic Review*, valuable to-day mainly for its interesting portraits. *The American Review*

¹ Donald G. Mitchell, *American Lands and Letters*, vol. ii., 387.

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mourns over the defeat of Henry Clay, with "serious alarm for the national welfare"; charges gross misconduct on the part of the opposition, and alleges that the successful candidate was elected by "downright and violent frauds of illegal, false, and spurious votes." It closes with the grandiloquent announcement that "the altar on which the fire of our enthusiasm is kindled is the altar of Principle — its flames are fed with the pure oil of Patriotism." The writer is manifestly proud of his capital P's and the pomposity of his phrases. We have grown so familiar with the destruction of our "national prosperity" every four years that we have learned not to take too seriously the laments of professional politicians who weep over the lost offices. Then there is an enlivening essay on "Patent Property," followed by a ponderous treatise on "Literary Prospects of 1845," which seemed to have been very dismal, according to Mr. Duyckinck, although he extols Bryant, Dana, and Brainard as the American poets of distinction. Brainard! I fear that I remember nothing about him, but I am consoled by the thought that nobody except the compiler of the *Biographical Dictionary* recollects him any better than I do. He may have been a poetical giant, but I challenge any one to tell me his first name without previous searching of

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the cyclopædia.¹ There is also a caustic review of Alison's *History of Europe*, breaking forth properly in italics when it reproves the historian for some rather harmless remarks about Americans. It was a day of sensitive, conceited patriotism, but it was not worth while to become excited about Alison, whose dulness is greater than that of a warm June afternoon in a country-house. We have a wordy disquisition on "Words" by E. P. Whipple, a writer who never rose very far above the level of mediocrity; a screed on that burning topic, "Post-office Reform," and a few other things of a kindred nature, all saturated with tediousness. Then, only a little more than fifty years ago, we were striving to be like our over-sea relatives, afraid to walk in other paths than those which they marked out, and suppressing all originality, except in a few instances like that of "The Raven," which flashes across the sombre sheets and lights up the tiresome stretches of elaborate posing and absurd affectation. I wonder whether in the twenty-first century the count-

¹ Mr. Oscar Wegelin, in a courteous letter to the *Literary Collector*, takes me to task for this assertion. He gives the name, "John Gardiner Calkins Brainard," but even he does not seem to be entirely sure of it. Donald Mitchell calls the poet "that tender versifier." Whittier wrote the introduction to his *Literary Remains*, in 1832. A mortuary title! Mr. Wegelin's *Early American Fiction* is a valuable essay in bibliography.

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less volumes of *Harper's*, the *Century*, the *Atlantic*; and *Scribner's* will seem so flat and unprofitable? Surely not, for they are the ultimate development of what Dr. Guyot used to call the "primordial types." They are far and away the superiors of the English monthlies, which seem to run to the merest drivel, maunderings about trivial matters, descriptions of noblemen's houses, interviews with nobodies, accounts of freaks, and the inevitable story of the girl who is locked in a railway carriage with an impossible lunatic, and is rescued by a handsome young man who knows her cousins in Ipswich. If it were not for that blessed compartment in a railway coach I verily believe that the English short story would disappear wholly from the face of the earth.

However feeble we may have been in the matter of magazines in those old days, we were undeniably patriotic. We were sublimely conscious of ourselves and of our superiority over all creation. They were the times when Basil Hall, Mrs. Trollope, and Charles Dickens recorded their impressions of us, and they spared us not. They were middle-class English people (Hall, perhaps, was a shade above the middle class), thoroughly imbued with an insular pride and self-satisfaction, which came into direct conflict with our own continental conceit. We

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were a bit raw, somewhat crude, exhibiting the peculiarities of a people hampered by the burdens which attend the beginner, and striving to force our way onward and upward. The process of striving is always unpleasant to the lookers-on who have finished their struggles and are at peace. They do not thoroughly comprehend it, and, unless they are built on broader lines than most men, they are amazed and disgusted and they cry aloud. The English writers were no more disgusted with us than we were with them, and the storm of rage which greeted the books as they successively appeared was so furious that it savors of the ridiculous.

With all this patriotism, it is strange that the United States of America have never been able to produce a true and effective national hymn—some people would say “The United States *has*,” but the Constitution is with me on this point, and as a loyal citizen I stand by the Constitution. Much has been written on the subject, and it is not worth while to seek for the reasons. I am led to refer to it by looking at a copy of the *Analectic Magazine* for November, 1814, containing a poem called “Defence of Fort McHenry.” This periodical was published in Philadelphia, founded in 1809, and was originally called *Select Reviews and Spirit of the Foreign Magazines*. The name was

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changed in 1812 for obvious reasons; no train-boy could remember it. Washington Irving was the editor in 1813-14. All these facts you may find for yourselves in McMaster's entertaining *History of the People of the United States*, which I hope will be completed in my lifetime. I began the first volume when I was comparatively young, and now that I am wearing the white badge of senectitude, I am only at volume v., which brings us to Andrew Jackson and 1830.

I came very near forgetting about the "Defence of Fort McHenry." Of course it is what we know as "The Star-Spangled Banner." There is an introduction beginning: "These lines have already been published in several of our newspapers. They may still, however, be new to many of our readers. Besides, we think that their merit entitles them to preservation in some more permanent form than the columns of a daily paper." We then read the old story of the circumstances under which the poem was written, and we are informed that the tune is "Anacreon in Heaven."

If Francis Scott Key could have had a premonition of the fact that his words would eventually be used by many millions of people of limited vocal capacity as their nearest approach to a national anthem he would surely

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have paused before selecting such a tune as that which, at the outset, he imposed on the record of his commendable emotions. It is not easy singing, as most of us can testify. It requires a compass of voice and a degree of musical skill which few possess. If you begin it in a high key (no pun is intended), you invariably "squawk" on the upper notes; if you commence it in a low key, you are sure—unlike Topper in the *Christmas Carol*—to swell the large veins in your forehead and get red in the face over it. Even then you have to scream out that very questionable proposition, "Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just." I have heard that wood-lark Parepa-Rosa try it, and I was mournful; and I have also heard a worthy and dignified gentleman deliver it as a solo, after dinner, without experiencing any sensation of musical rapture. At one time the theatre orchestras played it as the audience was retiring, doubtless with the purpose of accelerating the departure, but the tune remains as awful and as discouraging as ever.

I think that when Key was lying there, under the guns of the British frigate, chafing at his detention by "the foe's haughty host," gazing at the flag on the fort all day long and finding it still floating at dawn, the air of "Anacreon" was running through his head, as tunes will beset us

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now and then. He may have sung it at some jollification a night or two before, when the Maryland canvas-back and terrapin and the Maryland Club whiskey were much in evidence, for the melody is redolent of Bacchus and good living. The verses to which it originally belonged are a proof of its character. I quote the first stanza from page 53 of the *Musical Olio*:

To Anacreon in heav'n, where he sat in full glee,
A few sons of harmony sent a petition,
That he their inspirer and patron would be,
When their answer arrived from the jolly old Grecian:
 "Voice, fiddle, and flute,
 No longer be mute.
I'll lend you my name, and inspire you to boot,
And besides I'll instruct you, like me, to entwine
The myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine.

"And besides I'll instruct you," etc.

If it were not undignified, I should say that these clumsy, awkward lines "inspire me to boot" the heavy-witted author. Could there be anything more stupidly puerile? Yet it is written in the book of fate that enthusiastic Americans must go on forever entwining the myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine and the land of the free and the home of the brave! Imagine Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes joining in such a chorus!

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It is recorded that when the unfortunate William Collins, the man who wrote, "When Music, heavenly maid, was young," dear to all the declaimers of my boyhood, was taken by his sister to Chichester, "he who had loved music so passionately hated the cathedral organ in his madness, and when he heard it howled in his distress." I do not know what he would have done if he had heard "The Star-Spangled Banner" sung in Tammany Hall on the Fourth of July.

While we are on the subject of music, it is at this day amusing to read what Prosper Mérimée said in his *Lettres à une Inconnue* about the stupendous Wagner. "The latest, but a colossal bore, has been 'Tannhäuser.' . . . The fact is, it is prodigious. I am convinced that I could write something similar if inspired by the scampering of my cat over the piano keys."

When I begin to reflect about the shortness of time and the length of eternity, I wonder what it is about books which makes us so fond of them, which impels us to study them, write about them, and regard them as things of transcendent importance, when after a few years we must leave them behind us. Then I remember the epitaph on the grave of Henry Thomas Buckle, taken from the Arabic:

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The written word remains long after the writer.
The writer is resting under the earth, but his works endure.

Buckle's work endures in only a limited sense. He was a book-lover, and we are told that he had during his rather brief life twenty-two thousand volumes, but he had the courage, which so few of us possess, to part with them when he no longer required them. When he died at forty his library contained only eleven thousand. Justin McCarthy says that the unfinished *History of Civilization* is a monument of courage, energy, and labor, but that it might not inaptly be described as a ruin. Despite the epitaph, it is the name of Buckle which remains, while his books have passed into comparative oblivion.

It is something to have written a book, even if it is not a very good one. Some day somebody may read it, and that is a consoling thought, although even that consolation may fail us if Mr. William Loring Andrews is right in his melancholy prophecy that because of the perishable paper now in use the books of the present are destined after a while to dissolve in dust. "Every man who has written a book," says Frederic Harrison, "even the diligent Mr. Whitaker, is in one sense an author—'a book's a book, although there's nothing in 't'—and

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every man who can decipher a penny journal is in one sense a reader."

It is an easy thing, with a little practice, to enunciate opinions which have the appearance of profundity. Carlyle illustrates it when he remarks in his *Note-Book*: "It is really curious to think how little *knowledge* there is actually contained in these unaccountable mountains of books that men have written." He seems to forget that his own standard of what knowledge is may not be the true one. His oracular declaration is suggestive of the well-known verse about Jowett, of Balliol, which runs after this fashion, although I plead ignorance of the precise phraseology:

I am the great Professor Jowett.
Whatever there is known, I know it.
I am the head of Balliol College.
What I don't know isn't knowledge.

Carlyle's calm assumption that he, of all men in the world, is solely capable of deciding what true knowledge is, marks the colossal egotism of his character; but he merely set it down in his *Note-Book*, and a man may, I suppose, be as vain as he pleases in his own private memoranda. Like Buckle, the Sage of Chelsea had "a power of self-will and self-complacency which

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enabled him to accept as certain and settled every dogma on which he had personally made up his mind." I am not surprised that Margaret Ogilvy (the mother of Barrie), an admirer of Carlyle, said that she would rather have been his mother than his wife. Tennyson remarked, with much good sense, that "it was well that the Carlyles married each other, for, had they married differently, there would have been four unhappy persons instead of two."

Comte went even beyond Carlyle when he selected one hundred books to constitute the library of every Positivist, recommending the destruction of all other books. We do not wonder that it was said of this self-satisfied French gentleman that "his absolute faith in himself passes belief." The trait is not uncommon with his countrymen. Perhaps that is why they have, every now and then, a revolution—the one real luxury of the Frenchman, according to L'Abbé Constantin.

VIII

Of truthful books; and also of humor, American and otherwise.

BOOKS which bear upon their face the impress of absolute truth have an indescribable charm. Books are generally truth-tellers, but some are more palpably veracious than others. "It was truly said: *optimi consilarii mortui*; books will speak plain when counsellors blanch. Therefore it is good to be conversant in them; specially the books of such as themselves have been actors upon the stage."¹ To be sure, Burns said that "some are lies frae end to end," but they are not of the sort which endures. A friend was enthusiastic recently about a pleasant volume called *The End of an Era*, by the eloquent and accomplished John Sergeant Wise, who is the delight of our dinner-tables, and who has not suffered his literary labors to interfere with his notable efficiency as a lawyer. He was certainly an "actor upon

¹ Bacon, *Of Counsel*.

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the stage." The book is a graphic account of the author's personal experience of the days of the war between the North and the South and of the time which immediately preceded that memorable conflict. The son of Virginia's famous fire-eating governor, Henry Alexander Wise, had opportunities of observation which were not vouchsafed to many, and those of us who have an interest in that period of our history can do nothing more agreeable than to read this fascinating chronicle, which is an admirable example of the art of true narrative. Charles Francis Adams, in *Lee at Appomattox, and Other Papers*, testifies to the value of this book as "reliable historical material," and quotes from it with evident appreciation of its merits. I wish that he had not called the author "John Sargent Wise," because it indicates a forgetfulness of the famous Whig statesman of Philadelphia, the eminent lawyer John Sergeant. "You can generally distinguish between the real story and the invented," Wise said to me not long ago, and he is right, although it is not easy to explain the reason of it. One can tell about it, but cannot tell how to do it. A man sees color or he does not; if he does not, he is color blind, and no demonstration or argument can make it plain to him. There are other things which may be gained by intuition.

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I always had a feeling of dissatisfaction with the pretentious humor, if it may be called humor, of Haliburton, otherwise known to preceding generations of readers as "Sam Slick." He never appeared to me to be genuine, possibly because he was Nova-Scotian and not truly Yankee. He savors of the humbug, and he is by no means spontaneous. It delighted me to discover that there was a judicious critic whose opinion is substantially the same, for Professor Felton says: "We can distinguish the real from the counterfeit Yankee at the first sound of the voice and by the turn of a single sentence; and we have no hesitation in declaring that Sam Slick is not what he pretends to be; that there is no organic life in him; that he is an impostor, an impossibility, a nonentity."

If anybody cares to encounter a real Yankee, although we may not understand why he should desire such an experience, he will be likely to find him in the *Biglow Papers*, the books of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and even in the pages of Artemus Ward, who was transplanted from Maine to Ohio, but who kept the New England essence to the last. He will not find him in the works of Major Jack Downing, who is hardly more convincing than Sam Slick, and who was a pseudo-humorist of the callow age of American literature.

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There are sundry illusions, cherished for generations, regarding certain nations and races. The roast-beef of old England may long ago have been worthy of glorification in song and story, but in modern times it is usually transported from Chicago across the ocean, and it is by no means as good as English mutton. The politeness of the Frenchman is a delusive shadow of a vanished past, as one who has been rudely thrust into a Parisian gutter by a swaggering officer in a soiled uniform is ready to testify, and as the unhappy person who braves the perils of the lumbering Parisian omnibus knows to his sorrow. The Swedes seem to have taken to themselves the famous French courtesy when they borrowed Bernadotte in order to place the marshal of Napoleon upon the throne of Gustavus Adolphus. The corpulent German, with his huge pipe, his towering stein of beer, and his elongated dachshund, I have encountered more frequently in the many-colored pages of *Puck* and *Fudge* than in the domains of the War-Lord. Is the celebrated American humor another departed dream?

It will, of course, be considered a presumptuous thing to ask whether we Americans may justly be called a humorous people. We hear and read a great deal of American humor, and are inclined to brag a little about it, and to set

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ourselves up as the only possessors of the genuine article. John Phoenix, Artemus Ward, Leland, Irving, Lowell, Holmes, and a few others are constantly cited to us, as well as Mark Twain (who is cosmopolitan) and Dooley (who is Irish). There is room, however, for doubt whether there is a dominant note of humor in us, or, at all events, in us of modern days. I intend to disarm my critic by drawing a line between the citizen of the United States of this decade and his fellow-citizen of forty years ago. The wonderful material prosperity of recent years, the increasing influence of our country as a world-power, no longer hemmed in and confined to a fractional part of a continent, and the absorption of men in the pursuit of wealth,¹ have necessarily made us a serious people. We may laugh at the dubious fun of the professionally comic papers, which is sometimes depressing; we may be amused at the unspeakable jocosity of our dailies; the flatness and emptiness of some of our weekly fashion-plate cartoons may arouse a feeble interest; but we must realize the truth that we are dangerously near to being decadent in humor. If any other proof of this state of things is necessary, con-

¹ In the magazine wherein these lucubrations first appeared the genial printer made me say, "the pursuit of *health*." Another instance of typographic wisdom.

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sider the stories in some of our Sunday newspapers. No such awful examples of vulgarity, such dilapidated relics of bygone times, such puerile specimens of playful idiocy, could ever be palmed off successfully upon a people capable of appreciating true and original wit. Yet prizes are shamelessly awarded to the most inane and feeble of anecdotes, many of them tottering with the decrepitude of age. Truly the perpetrators of these imbecilities know not what they do. They afford an instance of the madness of print let loose. Let no one misunderstand me; I know that the humorous is not necessarily the funny. It may be serious, but there must be something amusing about it. It must not consist merely of popular slang, of distorted dialect, or of abusive personality, nor must it depend for its effect upon the aid of so-called comic illustrations.

Why Haliburton and Jack Downing have become almost classical I am at a loss to explain. Who can comprehend the secret of popularity? I often wonder why Josh Billings was famous, while such men as Robert Newell and George Lanigan are practically forgotten except by aged persons who used to read newspapers diligently. Shaw was a philosopher, but he chose to adopt the clown's disguise and to resort to the expedient of misspelling, manifestly

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moved by the success of Artemus Ward in mangling English orthography. It is interesting to remember that Ward's perversions of spelling are amusing in themselves, while Mr. Shaw's are not funny in the least and add nothing to the text. For example, Mr. Shaw says: "It strains a man's philosophee the wust kind to laff when he gits beat." Turn the sentence into ordinary English and it expresses a truth which gains nothing from its affectation of jocosity. But what excuse can be offered for such a saying as "tha tell us that 'munny is the rute of all evil' and then tell us 'ter rute hog or die'"? This is merely coarse and common fooling; the spelling is impossible, not devised to deceive the most indifferent reader, and I defy the acutest observer to detect in the remark the remotest glimmering of thought.

Was Abraham Lincoln in any ordinary sense a humorist? He was essentially a grave and serious man, like all great men. He told stories not so much because he enjoyed their wit as because he meant to produce an effect. He knew that many mortals are unable to absorb an idea unless it is presented to them in an illustrative way, as parents find when they teach children their letters by means of blocks, and as the wise and observant editors of our

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newspapers have learned that the way to reach the minds of a majority of readers is to give them pictures. His shrewd knowledge of human nature was never more strikingly exemplified than in his appreciation of the receptiveness of the ordinary man, needing concrete things and strong analogies in order to lay the foundation for his opinions. The cartoons of Nast did more to overthrow the "Ring" than Tilden's tables of figures. As the years go by the story-telling phase of Lincoln's character is less conspicuous in the public mind than it was during his lifetime. The man who thought Nasby especially amusing had limitations in the direction of humor, and took his pleasure rather sadly.

It is due to a certain antagonism between literary men and what we may call "men of affairs" that the word "politician" has about it a suggestion of disparagement which is not justified by its true definition. I am using it in its real sense when I say that Edwin M. Stanton and Salmon P. Chase were politicians, both of them possessed of a burning desire to be President, but "Old Abe" was a better politician than either of them, and he vanquished them with signal success, fortunately for the country. I remember that some one was indignant when I said this to him, and

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expressed the opinion that I was almost fit for the asylum. But if you will study the life of Lincoln you will see that I am right. There were hosts of men, eloquent too, who were just as much opposed to slavery and to its extension as Lincoln was; indeed, Lincoln was for years denounced by them as too lenient, not radical enough—nay, bitterly assailed by the abolitionists. Now, as opposing slavery was about all that Lincoln had publicly done up to 1861, why should he have been made the Republican candidate in 1860? Simply because he was the most adroit politician of his time. His re-nomination, about which there was at one time no little doubt, was brought about by the most shrewd and unobtrusive methods, all justifiable and honorable. This is apart from books, unless I record my protest against the ten-volume *Life of Lincoln* by Nicolay and Hay, a work of great merit, but it might well have been compressed into two if the accomplished authors had not wished to write a history of a great war and to miscall it a biography.

When George Augustus Sala, some years ago, compiled for English consumption two volumes of so-called *Yankee Drolleries*, he included these examples, which I give because the list has a certain significance:

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Artemus Ward: His Book.
Major Jack Downing.
The Nasby Papers.
Orpheus C. Kerr.
The Biglow Papers.
Artemus Ward: Travels.
Hans Breitmann.
Professor at the Breakfast Table.
Josh Billings.

This is a veritable salad of incongruities, an omelette composed of eggs of varying degrees of merit and freshness; but I am glad that Orpheus C. Kerr was not omitted.

Newell died within a few years past, under circumstances of peculiar sadness. Decidedly a man of genius, he struggled, erred, and failed. It is pitiful to think of his wasted life and of his ignominious end. All that fine brain-capacity, that knowledge of literature, that originality of intellect were swallowed up in oblivion because he was heedless of opportunities and yielded to the temptations which beset the man without moral sense. Much that he wrote is feeble and ineffective; he often failed to reach the level of ordinary merit; he was careless, wilful, and perverse; but he had a clear literary perception, a keen eye for the weaknesses of man, and a wit which shone brightly through the dull mask which he commonly assumed. I am often wrong, and I may be woefully in

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error in this instance, but I believe that his *Rejected National Hymns*, printed *tempore* the Rebellion, are as good, although limited in scope, as the famous *Rejected Addresses* of James and Horace Smith, charming imitations, deservedly admired but perhaps unduly spun out and too diffuse for perfect parodies. I am almost afraid to choose an example of Newell, for it may not do justice to his work. I am tempted to quote, because the meagre and perfunctory newspaper obituaries gave evidence of the fact that Newell was, to this generation, practically unknown. I am confident that there was never much more worthy and legitimate burlesque than his sketch of a "National Anthem" by "William Cullen B——":

The sun sinks slowly to his evening post,
The sun swells grandly to his morning crown;
Yet not a star our flag of heav'n has lost,
And not a sunset stripe with him goes down.

So thrones may fall; and from the dust of them
New thrones may rise, to totter like the last,
But still our country's nobler planet glows
While the eternal stars of heaven are fast.

We who are to-day fond of Thomas Bailey Aldrich can surely not be offended at this version of his style of a generation ago:

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The little brown squirrel hops in the corn,
The cricket quaintly sings:
The emerald pigeon nods his head,
And the shad in the river springs.
The dainty sunflower hangs its head
On the shore of the summer sea;
And better far that I were dead
If Maud did not love me.

I love the squirrel that hops in the corn,
And the cricket that quaintly sings:
And the emerald pigeon that nods his head,
And the shad that gayly springs;
I love the dainty sunflower, too,
And Maud with her snowy breast;
I love them all; but I love—I love—
I love my country best.

It is tempting to dwell on these delicious parodies, or, rather, reproductions, and I cannot help quoting one more, which condenses N. P. Willis and gives us in eight lines the substance of his poetical work:

One hue of our flag is taken
From the cheeks of my blushing pet,
And its stars beat time and sparkle
Like the studs on her chemisette.

In blue is the ocean shadow
That hides in her dreamy eyes,
It conquers all men, like her,
And still for a Union flies.

Newell maliciously suggests that the Bryant hymn was declined partly by reason of "a sus-

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pcion that the poet has crowded an advertisement of a paper which he edits into the first line." I really believe that Bryant himself, although he was of sober and solemn mind, would not have objected to this imitation, for it is in good taste and is amusing at the same time. But one may never tell what a man will think of a burlesque of himself or of his style. A friend told me the other day of an entertainment at a well-known club where Sir Henry Irving was present and saw Henry Dixey give one of his admirable imitations of the great tragedian. "Do you like it, Mr. Irving?"—he was not then a "Sir"—whispered my friend. "Ha! ha!" grunted the famous actor, in his most pronounced Irvingesque, "I—I *pretend* to—but—I *don't*."

We may judge of what Newell was, personally, when we recall that he was married to Adah Isaacs Menken, the actress and writer, who was at the time the wife of John C. Heenan, from whom she was divorced a year later. He was number three, and there were others. Some may remember her *Infelicia*, dedicated to Dickens, by permission, and she was a friend of Charles Reade, Swinburne, and many other eminent persons. She was celebrated as Mazeppa in the play of that name, wherein she appeared lashed to a prancing steed, in the full costume of the character.

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My copy of *Infelicia*, a small volume of one hundred and twenty-four pages (16mo), has a facsimile letter of Dickens prefixed to it, with a portrait of the Menken—not the one taken with Swinburne looking down at her nor the one where she is leaning upon the ample form of the elder Dumas. The verse is in form sometimes touched with what I hope I may be permitted to call “Whitmania.” In her scorn of metre, she even outdoes Whitman, as this example testifies:

Oh, this life, after all, is but a promise—a poor promise, that is too heavy to bear—heavy with blood, reeking, human blood. The atmosphere is laden with it. When I shut my eyes it presses so close to their lids that I must gasp and struggle to open them.

It must be plain that this is prose of the prosiest description. But this is what she evidently meant to be verse:

Visions of Beauty, of Light, and of Love
Born in the soul of a Dream,
Lost, like the phantom-bird under the dove,
When she flies over a stream.

It partakes of the stage and sawdust of “Ma-zeppa”; but I find a pathetic note in the first verse of her “Infelix” which gives us a brief glimpse of the soul of one who might, under

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favorable conditions, have been numbered among those whom the world remembers:

Where is the promise of my years,
Once written on my brow?
Ere errors, agonies, and fears
Brought with them all that speaks in tears—
Ere I had sunk beneath my peers.
Where sleeps that promise now?

In the matter of facetious literature—and I use the term “facetious” in its better sense—we are really no worse off than our cousins of Albion. The humor of *Punch* needs no comment, for it is proverbially sad, dignified, grave, and oppressive. It is suggestive of the Egyptian Pyramids and of the sedate Sphinx. Burnand, the “Happy Thought” man, is still the editor, and his quality is fairly indicated by a *bon mot* which I encountered a few days ago in Frith’s *Autobiography and Reminiscences*, and which is cited, not for its merit, but as an example of his “humor.” Frith says:

Mr. Burnand is also eminently distinguished as a humourist. . . . On one occasion I described to him a dinner-party at the Langham Hotel, given by that bright genius “Ouida.” . . . The dinner and the company were delightful. One charm of it, to me (being, I regret to say, an inveterate smoker), was the introduction of cigarettes during the course of the dinner, beginning, I think, after the fish. I had heard of the fashion in

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foreign countries, but it surprised me as occurring in England.

"Why were you surprised?" asked Burnand—"you were dining with a *Weeda*."

A man might have said that thing in the "woozy hours" after dinner, over the Scotch-and-soda or the pony of brandy, the cigars, and the débris of the feast, while the feminine guests were gossiping in the drawing-room, but it is almost a crime to perpetuate such a monstrosity of paranomasia in a real book destined to occupy space in a collector's library.

Despite our English neighbors' habitual seriousness, we occasionally encounter something in their books which is actually amusing. In rambling through the *Life and Letters* of Tom Moore I was interested in the record of calmness and self-possession of a nobleman, Lord Coleraine, the boon-companion of George IV. when that royal personage was Prince Regent. Coleraine went one night to his bedroom at an inn, and found it occupied, although he had reserved it. On his coming to the side of the bed, an angry Irishman put his head out and said: "What the devil do you want here, sir? I shall have satisfaction for this affront. My name is Johnson." At the same moment a little wizen-faced woman popped her head from

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under the clothes. "Mrs. Johnson, I presume?" said Lord Coleraine, calmly.

There is an instance of self-possession under awkward circumstances which nearly equals the one recorded of Lord Coleraine, but it is more familiar. Almost every extra-illustrator is well acquainted with the *Memoirs of Count Grammont*, edited by Anthony Hamilton. It is a famous treasury in which one may store the portraits and autographs of the period of Charles II. The Count was engaged to the sister of Anthony, the lady known as "*la belle Hamilton*," and it is related that he left for France unmindful of the bond. At Dover he was overtaken by the young lady's brothers, who asked him: "Chevalier! Chevalier! haven't you forgotten something?" "I beg your pardon, gentlemen," responded the noble fugitive, "I have forgotten to marry your sister." The incident is said to have given to Molière the idea of *Le Mariage Forcé*, but that is probably an invention. Grammont married "*la belle Hamilton*."

Mr. Alexander Pope, a person of much perspicacity, gravely says:

Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,
Tenets with books, and principles with times.

It may seem strange to readers of the twentieth century that men should have admired

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the scribblings which the genial and kindly wine-merchant, Frederick Swartwout Cozzens, gave to our fathers under the title of *The Sparrowgrass Papers*. Few remember them now; they have faded away into the oblivion which overwhelms the ephemeral; yet the biographical encyclopædias tell us that "when published in a volume in 1856 they obtained a wide circulation," and "gained for the author a reputation as one of the first of American humorists." As I write, the duodecimo volume, published by Derby & Jackson, is before me, with its illustrations—by Darley, of course—and its dedication to my old acquaintance, long since dead, "one of the gentlest of humorists, the Rev. Frederick W. Shelton." This generation knows not *Sparrowgrass*, and it is doubtful if his "humor" would be appreciated highly in these days. I believe that the *Papers* appeared in 1854 in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, and they had the flavor of all the *Knickerbocker* contributions, but they are not mentioned in Barrett Wendell's *Literary History of America*, although he devotes many pages to the *Knickerbocker* school. Wendell's book has been denounced and ridiculed in England, without just reason; for while he may have made mistakes, as most men may, his work is deserving of sincere admiration.

To me, however, a praiser of past times, it is

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always a pleasure to recur to the *Papers*, possibly because I remember well the pleasant personality of Mr. Cozzens, who chose to dwell in Yonkers, a town which also attracted William Allen Butler and John Kendrick Bangs. There must be something about Yonkers which appeals to the literary. Cozzens died at the early age of fifty-one, and, while his works were not conspicuous for artistic merit, he was an entertaining man, with a mild and harmless facetiousness, appropriate to his day, and he deserves our affection. More assertive and in his peculiar and avuncular sphere more eminent, was his uncle, William B. Cozzens, the famous hotel-keeper, who died at seventy-seven, at West Point, with which historic place his name is closely and convivially associated. An American proverb implies that the "man who can keep a hotel" is among the most distinguished Captains of Industry, the expression *Chevalier d'Industrie*, so well known "in this connection," to use an abominable phrase, being discarded as disrespectful. It was at lovely, old "Cozzens's Hotel," beautifully situated on the bold hill at Highland Falls, a few miles below West Point, a house which went away in flames as hotels are wont to do, that the grand and enormous soldier Winfield Scott was accustomed to take his ease and to play whist with

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the favored friends who usually allowed him to win in order to keep the peace and to preserve amicable relations. The General regularly attended the services at the pretty chapel near by, built by Professor Weir and called "The Church of the Holy Innocents," where a sincere, simple-minded, and devoted rector for many years read the service, day in and day out, often when no one listened except his faithful spouse, whom, after the fashion of Dean Swift, he addressed as "dearly beloved Emma." On one occasion, after General Scott had been the only man present in company with a devout cohort of pious females, he remarked to one of his fellow whist-players, "Sir, if it were not for the women of America our country would go to hell!"

We may pardon the profanity, for the old gentleman was not far wrong.

IX

De Omnibus Rebus et Quibusdam Aliis.

IT sometimes occurs to me that it is a dangerous thing for any one to intrust to paper or to perpetuate in print his real opinions on any subject—books, authors, or the events of life. There is much which may be said over the walnuts and the wine which may not always be written down and sent to the publisher. De Quincey made himself odious to some of his distinguished friends by injudicious frankness concerning their private lives, and Froude was abused for revealing much about the Carlyles which, true or untrue, ought to have been suppressed. A few years ago a certain bright and interesting essayist gave an illustration of incautious candor by hinting publicly at the existence of unpleasant facts, known in literary circles but not to the world at large, concerning Thackeray, Carlyle, and George Eliot, which aroused curiosity without gratifying it, and ever since that unwise deliverance men have gossiped 'about those three personages,

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stirred up to inquiry by the presumably careless allusion. It calls to mind Schopenhauer's remark that in regard to reading it is a very important thing to be able to refrain, and so it is in regard to writing.

When the gropings of the mind are embalmed in cold type they take on a seriousness to which they are not entitled on their merits. Nevertheless, I like to know what men actually think, even if their thoughts are hardly important enough to deserve preservation. The writer may subject himself to ridicule, but he is usually the only sufferer. Wherefore I shall proceed to make myself a target by uttering opinions which may not always be acceptable. It was recently my misfortune to arouse to indignation an undoubtedly respectable gentleman in Canada by some uncomplimentary assertions about the personal attributes of William Hazlitt. My critic trampled upon me ruthlessly and called me a fool, a method of argument crude in its construction and lacking the Barbara, Celarent, and Darii of the formal logic taught in the schools, but having about it a dash and vigor which sometimes convinces. It is simple, withal, with a distinct element of truth in it. I hold with Touchstone that "the fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool." In this particular instance, however,

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I chanced to be supported by the authority of Sir Leslie Stephen as well as of Patmore the elder, so that I was in good company. I was wrong only in repeating disagreeable truths. It would have been much better to have said only pleasant things of Hazlitt. One never regrets the speaking of kindly words.

The honest opinions of the ordinary man are often more valuable than the swarm of common-places which some of our didactic writers inflict upon their readers, with the air of giving us precious, solemn, and original truth. I have in mind an essayist of the day, conscientious, sincere, and scholarly, whose "works" have what is called "a wide circulation," and who reels out page upon page of smooth English, with never a gleam of humor and ever an affectation of condescension as the platitudes pour forth, seemingly timid about suggesting an idea rising above the level of the conventional. It reminds me of Orpheus C. Kerr's imitation of Tupper, with its sage announcement of unquestionable propositions, such as:

. . . 'Tis good to know
That babes who walk too soon, too soon begin
To walk in this dark vale of life below.

I cannot quite explain it to myself, but I feel towards this cultivated and exasperating

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literary magnate as Carlyle did towards the political economists. "Is it true," he says in his *Note-Book*, "that of all quacks that ever quacked (boasting themselves to be somebody) in any age of the world, the Political Economists of this age are, for their intrinsic size, the loudest? Mercy on us, what a quack-quacking; and their egg (even if not a wind one) is of value simply one half-penny."

It is a temptation, with the two *Note-Books* before us, to ramble on a little further in the records of the gruff and emphatic Thomas, and to read what he thought of the economic philosophers. "The question of money-making," he says, "even of national money-making, is not a high but a low one—as they treat it, among the lowest. Could they tell us how wealth is and should be *distributed*, it were something; but they do not." I do not apologize for quotations, because the Grolier Club printed only three hundred and ninety copies of the *Note-Books*, and they cannot be very well known to the public. Portions of them were used by Froude in his *Life of Carlyle*, but, as was generally the case with his transcripts from manuscripts, with many inaccuracies.¹ The historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner said of Froude: "Whenever I find myself particularly perplexed on any point, I

¹ Charles Eliot Norton's Preface.

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look to see what Froude has to say about it. I always find his help invaluable, for I can trust implicitly in his unfailing instinct for arriving at false conclusions; and the more positive he becomes, the safer I feel in adopting a diametrically opposite view." When Carlyle was belaboring the economists in disrespectful fashion he was very poor indeed, indulging, to use the trite phrase, in plain living and high thinking. It is odd that men's notions about the dignity of money-making and the appropriate distribution of wealth vary according to their personal circumstances. When the treasury is full, the world assumes an aspect altogether different from that which it wears when one is not confronted by a surplus. I have always believed that if an anarchist could be seated upon the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States he would soon become as conservative as his brethren, which, perhaps, is not saying much for him.

Carlyle was modest in his requirements. We know from him that in 1830 Francis Jeffrey offered him £100 a year, "having learned that this sum met my yearly wants." It seems a small stipend when we remember that in 1807 Constable paid Sir Walter Scott one thousand guineas for *Marmion*, and the next year £1500 for his edition of Swift's *Life and Works*. Yet

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Johnson sold *Rasselas* for £100, and thought that he was doing a grand thing for his friend when he disposed of the copyright of the *Vicar of Wakefield* for £60, while Goldsmith himself did scarcely as much for his own account when he parted with "The Traveller" for £21. Gray received only £40 for all of his poems, but Crabbe, whom Horace Smith called "Pope in worsted stockings,"¹ obtained from Murray £3000 for *Tales of the Hall* and the copyright of his other poetic works. Robertson received, some say, £3800, and others £4500, for his *History of Charles the Fifth*, while Carlyle, "after twenty years of such labors as Robertson never dreamed of, had not been able, with all his copyrights and his current earnings, to stretch his average yearly income beyond £150."² We are told that if his *French Revolution* failed "he had resolved to abandon literature, buy spade and rifle, and make for the backwoods of America."³ When he was thus despairing he had reached his fortieth year. Thomas Carlyle, standing upon the banks of the Missouri, a rifle in one hand and a spade in the other, with Jane Welsh Carlyle by his side, would surely have been a

¹ When I said this to Mr. Howells one evening last winter he gave me a look of pitying scorn and declined further conversation.

² George Birkbeck Hill, *Writers and Readers*, 32.

³ Froude's *Life of Carlyle*.

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curious object to behold. But Mrs. Carlyle had too much common-sense to suffer herself or her spouse ever to be in such a predicament. If well advised, I fancy Carlyle would have discarded the spade and substituted in its place a good, serviceable axe. I cannot refrain from observing that I have felt a strange and novel affection for the man since I have read Jennie's scolding of him for feeding the cat at the table.

The truth may as well be told here and now: almost all famous literary persons are actors, and in this respect they differ not from great lawyers, great preachers, and great statesmen. In his way Carlyle was as much of a Thespian as Garrick or Kemble, Booth or Jefferson. In Mr. Hague's interesting little sketch of a visit to No. 5 Cheyne Row,¹ we read how the accomplished geologist, then a youth, replied to Carlyle's inquiry touching his occupation, that he was a practical geologist, especially concerned in mining pursuits. "What do you mine for?" asked Carlyle. "Gold and silver," responded Mr. Hague. "Gold!" exclaimed the Sage of Chelsea. "You mine for gold! That's a good-for-nothing pursuit. The biggest gold nugget ever found was never half so useful to the world as one good, mealy potato."

¹ *The Century*, July, 1902.

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That observation was a childish piece of affectation, wholly unworthy of a philosopher, purely a gallery-play—as the boys call it, with the sententiousness of slang. One might say that the *Life of Frederick the Great* and the *History of the French Revolution* were not as useful to the world as a cook-book or a dictionary. The man who knows the world knows that Carlyle was merely saying something which he thought was odd, bright, and peculiar; something to startle the young American, who would treasure it in his memory and repeat it to other Americans. It is all of a piece with Tennyson's hiding his face in a cloak when visitors intruded, and with the performances of the born actor, Charles Dickens, whose daily life had always about it the aroma of the footlights. The writers of the present time advertise themselves with much more delicacy and good judgment, having a pretence of shrinking modesty, tempered with newspaper paragraphs, casual portraits in magazines, and unsolicited "interviews."

We were reflecting about the egotistical utterances of those who frankly proclaim their real opinions, seeming to think them important; like myself, for example, often rushing in where angels fear to tread. I do it because it pleases me and harms nobody, and I am not afraid of

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that one little capital "I" which scares so many, but which is dearer to every human being than any other letter in the alphabet. "There is no single vowel which men's mouths can pronounce with such difference of effect," said Lowell; "that which one shall hide away, as it were, behind the substance of his discourse, or, if he bring it to the front, shall use merely to give an agreeable account of individuality to what he says, another shall make an offensive challenge to the self-satisfaction of all his hearers, and an unwarranted intrusion upon each man's sense of personal importance, irritating every pore of his vanity, like a dry, northwest wind to a goose-flesh of opposition and hostility."¹ I fear that I am not in the first-mentioned class, and I shall humbly endeavor not to stray into offensiveness.

One who thoroughly revealed himself in what he wrote was our old friend who loved to be called "The Boswell"; and I am thinking not so much of the perennial "Samuel Johnson" as of the elaborately entitled volume *An Account of Corsica: Memoir of Pascal Paoli, and a Journal of a Tour to the Island*, which Gray called "a dialogue between a green-geese and a hero." I have heard of a green-geese, but I do

¹ *My Study Windows*, 175.

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not know wherein it is differentiated from any other species of goose, and it must resemble the purple cow. Yet Boswell's *Journal* has its value because the man whom Gray honored by the verdant-anserine title was so vain that he laid bare his own soul and told us what others would have hidden.

When we recall the fact that Gray, living to the age of fifty-five, left but about fourteen hundred lines, we must wonder at the magnitude of his reputation; but surely he gave forth nothing unless it was the mature result of laborious effort. When Nicholas Biddle, of United States Bank notoriety, was asked for a copy of his address before the Literary Societies of Princeton College, in order that it might be published, he sent it with a letter expressing his regret that he had not "had leisure to make it shorter."¹ It is good to condense and to revise, but perhaps revision may be carried too far, and one may by infinite pains succeed in refining and polishing all the life out of a book. Some one said of Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, remodelled in 1757, that he had "stuffed it with intellectual horse-hair." Jerdan

¹ I am sorry to confess that he borrowed it from Pascal's sixteenth *Lettre Provinciale*: "Je n'ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n'ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte."

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says that Campbell often weakened his first poetical idea by overpolish, as Scott often left his with blots.

I like to take down the copy of *The Poems of Mr. Gray*, with notes by "Gilbert Wakefield, late Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge," printed by G. Kearsley in 1786, bound by Charles Murton, and extra-illustrated by some affectionate owner with portraits and engravings appealing strongly to the lover of good books. But some one lately said to me: "What did Gray ever write except the 'Elegy?'" This was a person of refinement, moderately well read, according to the standard of the day, but he had wholly forgotten "ye distant spires, ye antique towers," of the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," and even "ruin seize thee, ruthless King," and "weave the warp and weave the woof, the winding sheet of Edward's race," which used to be examples of alliteration for us school-boys of forty years ago.

Gray deserves an added fame for what he wrote to Walpole about that personage's gout: "The pain in your feet, *I* can bear." It was a concise expression of a truth which all men must acknowledge with a blush of shame. I have observed that my friends endure patiently mine own physical infirmities. It is not unkindness, but that utter want of interest in the health

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of our fellow-beings which saddens the souls of those who have a belief in the brotherhood of man.

While Gray limited himself to a meagre output of verse, he was a delightful writer of letters, although he does not appear to belong to the order of famous letter-writers. The roamer in the library may now and then take from the shelf one of those neat and attractive duodecimos of the Pickering edition of Gray's works, published in 1835, bearing the well-known anchor and wonderfully contorted fish, with the motto, "*Aldi Discip. Anglus*"—the edition revised by the Rev. John Mitford; and if he has any fondness for what is worthy, he cannot help strolling about in the well-trimmed fields opened to his trespassing excursions. "Love does not live at the Custom House," Gray writes to Walpole in 1738. We of this day and generation may surely echo that sentiment after our experiences upon the wharves of this free country.

It seems to be rather a silly and vulgar thing to lay a tax upon him who is guilty of bringing home from other lands an object of art or a relic of antiquity, but I suppose that it is presumptuous for any one to possess himself of anything which every one else has not. For it is a land of equality, in theory at least, although I have observed that, where every one is the

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equal of every one else, some are much more uncomfortable than others. My idea of equality is what Tocqueville said was that of a French politician—"No one shall be in a better position than mine." It may be questioned whether one is worse off under the rule of a single despot than he is under the dominion of a plural one. I heard a sarcastic millionaire say some years ago that he would rather deal with a boss than with a reform administration, because under boss-rule you had to pay only one man, while you had to buy at least a dozen reformers. Some American who visited Russia was asked on his return what most impressed him during his sojourn in the land of the Czar, and he replied, in substance, "One hundred and thirty millions of people ground under the iron heel of the worst tyranny in the world, and all profoundly unconscious of it." I am thinking at the moment not so much of my experience with the illuminated manuscript as of the fate of my little figure of Buddha, which was classed and taxed as "a manufacture of metal." It seemed so disrespectful to the Oriental divinity.

"Rousseau's Letters," writes Gray to Walpole (1764), "I am reading heavily, heavily! He justifies himself, till he convinces me that he deserved to be burnt, at least that his book did." It is refreshing to scent such an honest whiff of

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pure air. How we get at the truth of things in familiar letters! For my part, I love Gray for that sane, sincere comment on a magnificent literary person whose fame is to me utterly unaccountable. A sentimental scribbler, with tiresome and stupid social and political theories, he was always redolent of the gutter. A man who lived with a coarse cook and sent his five children by her to a foundling hospital! In these days he is known chiefly by the famous *Confessions*, which appear to me to be both dull and dirty. No wonder that the calm, clear, and honorable mind of Gray found no point of contact with the mind of the morbid Rousseau.¹

There does not appear to be any perceptible diminution in the supply of historical works. Every year brings to us a new crop of histories, and one who loves such things needs more than twenty-four hours in the day to keep up with the endless procession. If history is philosophy teaching by examples, as Bolingbroke said, misquoting Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who in turn quoted from Thucydides, we shall never be at a loss for examples. It is always tempting, this telling of a nation's story, the narrative

¹ Mr. Bodley, in his admirable *France*, refers to "the crude philosophy of Rousseau, with its bad method and its false and precipitate solutions."

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of the events of a period, the consideration of an epoch of the world's life. History and her sister, biography, will always endure, while perhaps, as the Petersburg *Nowoje Wremja* predicted not long ago, science and the stern reality of life are bound to destroy the novel. One who takes his pen in hand, according to the phrase of the old-fashioned letter-writer, must needs be attracted to the field of historical research.

We have had a real revolution in history-writing since the days of Gibbon and his pompous but wonderful *Decline and Fall*, which remains a monument of artistic skill and of industrious research. When he gave one of his volumes to the Duke of Gloucester, who possessed the gigantic intellect of his family, that wise personage said, affably: "Another damned thick book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble! Eh, Mr. Gibbon?" I am sorry that the eminent Panjandrum of literature, Mr. Andrew Lang, has seen fit to mutilate, disfigure, and spoil that story in his otherwise charming introduction to an exceedingly attractive little book, *The Pleasures of Literature and the Solace of Books*, compiled by Joseph Shaylor. I cannot understand why Mr. Lang, who is *facile princeps* as a humorous narrator, should make the Duke say: "What, another damned great volume! Always

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writing, writing, Mr. Gibbon." To my mind, he loses the subtle fun of the ducal deliverance, and I do not think that he has the words as they were spoken. Mr. Lang writes so many things, and usually writes so well, that he is to be pardoned for this trifling slip; but I think I may be excused for correcting him, as I do on the authority of Best's *Memorials* and of the accurate Sir Leslie Stephen.

What an absurd performance it was when Thomas Bowdler, that precious prince of prudence, brought forth an edition of Gibbon "for families and young persons"! Bowdler's nephew, a chip of the avuncular block, says, in a note to the edition of 1826, which is a delicious foreshadowing of Podsnap, "It was the peculiar happiness of the writer" to have so purified Shakespeare and Gibbon that they could no longer "raise a blush on the cheek of modest innocence nor plant a pang in the breast of the devout Christian." Bowdler, who was a premonition of Charles Reade's "prurient prude," does not seem to have tried his hand upon the Old Testament, which surely needed his chastening touch, if Shakespeare did. We all know the word "bowdlerize," but every one does not know that it was first used in print, as nearly as I can tell, by General Peronet Thompson in 1836, in his *Letters of a Representative to his Constit-*

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uents during the Session of 1836, where he says that there are certain classical names in the writings of the apostles which modern ultra-Christians would probably have "Bowdler-ized." Perhaps the wonderful man, whether his name be William Shakespeare or Francis Bacon, who wrote *As You Like It* may have been having a prophetic vision of Bowdler and nephew when he said: "Here comes a pair of very strange beasts, which in all tongues are called fools."

We may pause a moment to lament the fact that while Duruy's *Rome* has an index, Merivale's history and Gibbon's are neither of them equipped with that necessary article. Were I the czar of literature (and I think I am fully competent to exercise supreme sovereignty in that realm), I would refuse a copyright to any book which had no index, although Goldsmith sneers at this useful adjunct when he says that "one writer, for instance, excels at a plan or a title-page, another works away the body of the book, and a third is a dab at an index." If an author is too great or too lazy to do the work himself, he must surely be able to hire somebody to do the dabbing.

Neither Grote, the banker-historian of Greece, nor Gibbon owed anything to academic training. Gibbon spent fourteen months at Oxford, and he said that they were the most idle and un-

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profitable of his whole life. But at that time, as Sir Leslie Stephen observes, "the university was plunged in port and prejudice." Moreover, we must not take all that Gibbon said as literally true. Every one remembers his assertion that his idea of the *Decline and Fall* came as he "sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter." It may have been so, but, like Lord Eldon in most of the causes which came before him, I am inclined to say, "I doubt."

It would be silly to infer from Gibbon's experience that a real college life would not have been a benefit to him, as his service as "the Captain of Hampshire Grenadiers" was "not useless to the historian of the Roman empire." In these modern days we hear presidents of large corporations and millionaires who have accumulated enormous fortunes by means of their capacity for what is termed "business" send out their sneers at college men, and echo the sentiment ascribed to Horace Greeley—"of all horned cattle, deliver me from a college graduate." Yet these men are not altogether to be censured; they are hopelessly fettered by their own limitations. Having attained "success" in the material sense and the wealth which is measured by the dollar standard, they

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are wholly unable to peer beyond their narrow horizon. The man who has not been fortunate enough to have had a college life may be a valuable member of society, but he does not know and he can never know what he has lost. He thinks that it was merely a question of studying text-books, or of athletic sports, or of pranks and lawless boyishness, and he is ignorant. Hence, when he unloads upon us the slag of his mind he presents a spectacle which may well cause "laughter for a month." So might the street-boy, deriving his ideas of music from the outgivings of the peripatetic organ-grinder, venture to express opinions of Bach and Beethoven; so might the sign-painter tell us his views of Rembrandt and of Raphael; and so might the ragged child who shrieks the names of the saffron journals of our imperial city attempt to enlighten us upon "the divine Milton, that mighty orb of song," or "the marvellous boy, the sleepless soul that perished in his pride." I know that hundreds are graduated who have absorbed very little knowledge of the course of study, but they are in a minority. Their existence tells no more against the university than the existence of backsliders tells against the Church. The person who has struggled to "get his education" by himself has many excellent qualities, and he is deserving

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of our admiration for his bravery and persistence, but he usually has one characteristic—he rejoices loudly over some supposed discovery which comes to him as a new thing, whereas it is not new, and the trained men learned it so long before him that they have almost forgotten it. The self-made individual commonly takes himself too seriously; as Kipling has it, there is “too much ego in his cosmos.” He is usually devoid of that sense of humor which is a saving grace to mankind. He seldom realizes how amusing he is, and all his doings are of vast moment to him. At college he would have learned that much-needed lesson of human equality. Still, Washington and Lincoln were not college men, and the notable possessors of wealth have attained international notoriety without having enjoyed the advantage of a degree; but we cannot all of us be Washingtons or Lincolns, Schwabs or Carnegies, leaders of men or lords of finance, and perhaps we are not anxious to take upon ourselves their appalling responsibilities. The obscure book-lover will not presume to aspire to such a rank, but he may be very happy in his own. Most of the barons of the money-world are estimable gentlemen, whose good deeds are known to many; but I wish that they would not put up the prices of books and autographs so high that I am fair-

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ly driven out of the market. We ought not, however, to complain. While our betters have "Rhenish wine to drink," we humbler mortals

. . . At junket or at jink
Must be content with toddy.

Mr. Gilbert may have had, when he wrote these lines, a perception of the fact that there are some advantages about toddy, and Rhenish wine does not agree with everybody.

Coleridge accused Gibbon of having reduced history to a mere collection of splendid anecdotes; and his readers cannot help observing what has been called his "deficient insight into the great social forces." But men in those days did not write history in the fashion of John Richard Green, with whom the social development is the principal feature. Dean Stanley said to him: "I see you are in danger of becoming picturesque. Beware of it. I have suffered from it." Surely he did not carry the picturesque feature beyond proper limits. Goethe said to Crabbe Robinson about Byron, "There is no padding in his poetry"; and there is no padding in Green's historical work. It is said of him that if he had carried out his purpose of writing his history of the Angevin kings he might have been known as a great historian instead of a popular historian. But "he was not ashamed

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to write the history of the English people for the instruction of the English people," and therefore his value to the world is perhaps greater than that of Stubbs and of Freeman.

Minto, speaking of the popularity of *Pamela*, says: "Books must be new in form as in substance before they create such a furor. . . . There has been nothing like it in my time. The nearest approach I recollect is J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*. Fashionable ladies carried it about with them on their visits to country-houses."

The time may not be ripe for it, but we are still awaiting the appearance of a great and comprehensive history of the United States. We have excellent views of periods by such competent men as James Ford Rhodes and the late John Fiske, but no philosophic survey of the entire field. It was rather a brutal remark of Walter Bagehot that the reason why so few good books are written is that so few people that can write know anything. We might well change the form of the proposition and say that the reason is that so few persons who know anything can write. Bagehot thinks that the difficulty comes from the fact that the author is apt to live in and among his books instead of going forth into the world and seeing what men

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are instead of reading what Bergersdicius and Ænesidemus said men were.

Talking of Bagehot, and of his somewhat supercilious sneers at the author who lives among his books instead of going out into the streets and observing that interesting creature, the average man, doing a variety of things which are of not the least concern to any one but the doer, we cannot help thinking that if that energetic and pleasant writer, who, despite his appalling blunders in reference and in quotation, is a mine of information, unaccountably neglected by the world, had not delved into books, he could never have written the five thick volumes which The Travelers Insurance Company printed some ten years ago or more. I can imagine his horror at being used as an advertisement of a life-insurance corporation.

What he says of my beloved Southey arouses my resentment. "Southey," he writes, "had no events, no experiences. His wife kept house and allowed him pocket-money, just as if he had been a German professor devoted to accents, tobacco, and the dates of Horace's amours." No doubt if Southey had kept house, as Bagehot seems to think he should have done, he would not have written the *Life of Nelson* or the *Life of Wesley*, Coleridge's "favorite among favorite books." According to my observation, those

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persons who keep house while their wives write the books have not been conspicuous for valuable services to mankind.

Events are all very well, but surely it comes back to the fundamental truth heretofore enunciated that few people who know anything can write. He who spends his days in the turmoil of events has no time for extended or comprehensive literary production. Gladstone accomplished wonders, but he never could have given us Green's *History*. Bancroft was a politician and a cabinet officer, but his work is a stilted, lifeless, and wordy example of the obsolete method of historical composition. Lord Mahon was diligent, industrious, and impartial, and he had the opportunity of using unpublished manuscripts, but his style is dull and unattractive. When the world commends a writer as industrious, it damns him with faint praise, and soon forgets him. The best work of the men of events is usually of the order known as *mémoires pour servir*, by no means to be despised, but yet mere storehouses for the historian to plunder. On the whole, I think that he must know good books who makes good books.

Bagehot himself admits that the historian needs imagination in conceiving of the events of a long history and in putting them forward in skilful narration. He must not be deficient in

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ideality; he must have what Walter Pater calls a certain curiosity; and as "history is, at bottom, a problem in psychology," he must be something of a psychologist. This list of requirements brings to my mind the instance of a friend who wished to retain counsel in an important litigation in Boston, and who wrote to a lawyer there giving details and specifications of all the commanding traits and qualities which his adviser must possess in order to meet the exigencies of the situation. "The man does not exist," answered the Bostonian; "go to the grave of Rufus Choate!"

We must patiently await the advent of our national historian. Some day he will be born and we will welcome him with loud acclaims. When he comes I hope that he will not tell us as much about the particulars of those weary and interminable controversies with England and France over commercial matters, or the congressional squabbles concerning affairs no longer of interest to man, as he will of the people and of their institutions, of the real political issues of moment, and of the constitutional development of the republic, with its written law adapting itself so wonderfully to the conditions arising from time to time. McMaster has aimed at it, but he does not seem to be able to discriminate accurately among a mass of authorities. Von

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Holst presents an example of the German professor attempting to evolve a camel out of his own consciousness, and he is blinded to everything but the one burning problem of slavery. He, also, like McMaster, pays too much attention to the contemporaneous expressions of politicians and newspapers, and does not deal sufficiently with the forces behind them. The current translation of Von Holst is enough to discourage any reader. One or two blunders may suffice as illustrations of the translator's incapacity. The learned German, with his customary contempt for all who did not agree with his views, saw fit to refer to Chief-Justice Thompson, of Pennsylvania, as "this obscure worthy," and the translator's version is, "This dark, worthy man!"¹ One would infer that the distinguished lawyer (who was "obscure" because Mr. Von Holst, far away in his distant university, had never heard of him) was what was known in the pre-Rebellion days as a "Black Republican," whereas he was a violent Democrat. The reference to "the war of the revolution of Louis XIV." (volume ii., p. 272) is distinctly nonsensical. If some judicious person, with leisure, good taste, and an accurate knowledge of the German tongue, would take the time and the trouble to eliminate

¹ Von Holst, ii., 560.

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about three-fifths of Von Holst's tedious details, and to concentrate into two volumes the valuable residuum of truth, the result would be worthy of preservation.

If Alexander Johnston had not been driven to an early grave by the grinding of poverty and the struggle for a meagre livelihood, drilling unsympathetic lads in the elements of history, he might have put forth a complete work which would surely have surpassed all its predecessors. There is another, but as he is alive, I am thankful to say, toiling in the field of education and deservedly honored as a teacher and as a man of letters, I will not name him. Perhaps he is even better fitted for the task than Johnston was, for he has the charm of style which makes even the dry details interesting to the ordinary reader. He has given us a history, but the scheme of it compelled him to condense it so closely that it is popular rather than scholarly. How he ever did it at all, with all his manifold occupations, I cannot comprehend. Were I a plutocrat, instead of establishing libraries to supply casual books for indifferent readers in ungrateful hamlets, I would organize my favorite historical writer into a corporation, unlimited, and endow him in perpetuity, so that he might be free to do historical work and nothing else.

X

Of Grangerizing, or extra-illustration.

A LOVELY woman, in a becoming gown, said to me one day when she was scanning the bookshelves, while the maid was arranging the tea-table, "What is that fat book?" "It is an extra-illustrated book," I replied, sententiously. "And what *is* an extra-illustrated book?" she sweetly inquired. I gathered up such remnants of my mind as were accessible after this naïve deliverance, and answered, with hesitation, "It is a book—which is extra-illustrated."

No doubt I might well have told her that it was a charming thing of uncertain worth, something strangely attractive, generally clad in a pretty dress, an object of fond pursuit, not always worth pursuing; but then she might have thought—yet, as I did not say it, there was no harm done. She seemed to be entirely satisfied, and turned the conversation to the subject of the cultivation of roses, about which I have no knowledge whatsoever.

I suppose I might have said that it was a

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“privately illustrated book,” for that is what Mr. Daniel M. Tredwell calls it in his *Monograph*. “What I mean by privately illustrated books,” he says, “is books in which prints are inserted which do not belong to the book, but which are pertinent to the subject treated.” I understand what he means, although he does not include autographs and autograph letters, which often count for as much as the portraits. The *Monograph* has much pleasant information scattered through its pages, but it was written carelessly, and it contains some strange confessions as well as some remarkable assertions. For example, it tells us that “the first book ever illustrated was by James Granger,” which is startling at first blush, but which we know was a slip of the pen. I enjoy my copy greatly, as well as the supplemental articles in the *Book-Lover*.

Almost everybody remembers that James Granger, the vicar of Shiplake, is the father and patron saint of all extra-illustrators or private illustrators, whichever phrase may be preferred. He has been eulogized and execrated, admired and abused, but I think that the abuse and the execration are unjust. The principal cause of complaint against the practice of Grangerization, or Grangerizing, so - called, is that its victims habitually destroy valuable books in order to

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extract the prints and the portraits.¹ It may have been necessary to resort to this horrible method of collection in the early days, but I doubt whether any one but a novice would now be guilty of such atrocious book-murder. There are so many print-sellers who will supply the demand adequately that it is only a question of money; and it costs more to buy books with fine prints in them than to purchase the prints themselves from the dealers. I found a delightful mine of portraits in Stockholm, and I dare not disclose what I discovered in London. We often encounter books with a stupid text but excellent engravings; to despoil and mutilate such worthless volumes is surely praiseworthy. On the whole, the Grangerite of this century is a respectable person and no piratical purloiner of portraits.

There is much careless talk about books of this class, and most of it is based upon a lack of knowledge. I was astonished to read in a recent volume of essays this declaration:

“It is not so very many years since it was true that several of the highest prices paid in the country were secured for what are called extra-illustrated books, in which hundreds of plates, many of them rare and cost-

¹ *Vide* Locker-Lampson concerning James Gibbs: “Uncompromising book-collectors have branded my poor friend as a book-ghoul, a reptile who regards title-page and colophon as his natural prey.”

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ly, had been inserted. But this sort of book-embellishment has gone into deserved decline. It is a fashion true book-lovers are glad to see go out. In order to make these books, it was necessary to mutilate, or destroy altogether, many other books. It was a barbarous custom, unworthy of any one who truly loved books. For a copy of Irving's *Washington*, extended in this manner to ten volumes, with one thousand one hundred plates, the sum of \$2000 was paid in 1886. The same work would now sell for less. Francis's *Old New York* once sold for even more; but this book had two thousand five hundred plates inserted. In the auction-room to-day it would awaken moderate interest. Collectors who brought these books together were, in truth, vandals, or, rather, they were like the early popes and princes of Italy by whom, and not by the vandals, were destroyed the architectural monuments of Rome."

This is a mistaken and superficial view, and it would be difficult to compress more error in so small a compass. It is perhaps sufficient to join issue with this essayist by interposing a specific denial of each and every allegation. One of our excellent magazines has gently but effectively demonstrated his inaccuracies and mistakes.¹

The fashion is not going out, and the custom is not barbarous when followed by persons of reasonable intelligence, possessing a little more judgment than that of a child tearing pictures

¹ *The Critic*, July, 1902.

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out of picture-books. Prices are not decreasing, although much depends on the kind of book, the taste and experience of the illustrator, and the rarity of the prints and autographs. We shall have a word about prices later on. I regretted very much to find Mr. J. H. Slater indulging in remarks almost as unjustifiable as those which I have quoted, for he surely ought to know better.

It is, of course, a delightful thing to inlay the plates to size, but I believe that the task of collecting them and arranging them is the chief pleasure, and that one may do well to send them to the skilled workmen for the mechanical part of the business; otherwise time is wasted which might better be devoted to other purposes.

It may have been different in Granger's day, which was not so very long ago, for he died in 1776. I admire the title of his first and most conspicuous work, for it is charmingly diffuse and voluminous. They had so much leisure in the eighteenth century that they elaborated their title-pages. I can imagine Harvey of Harper & Brothers' slashing such a title as that of Granger's first work: "*Biographical History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution, consisting of Characters dispersed in different Classes, and adapted to a Methodical Catalogue of Engraved British Heads. Intended as an Essay*

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towards reducing our Biography to a System, and a help to the knowledge of Portraits; with a variety of Anecdotes and Memoirs of a great number of persons not to be found in any other Biographical Work. With a preface, showing the utility of a collection of Engraved Portraits to supply the defect, and answer the various purposes of Medals." This much be-titled affair originally appeared in 1769, and later (1775) in two quarto volumes, but we usually encounter the four-volume octavo or the six-volume octavo edition of later years. We read with a sigh of regret that before Granger's book came out in 1769 "five shillings was considered a liberal price by collectors for any English portrait." Oh, for the days of "auld lang syne"!

We who humbly follow Granger must give him our cordial regard. He had his vein of humor, as we may discern by the perusal of the dedication of his sermon on *The Nature and Extent of Industry*, preached before the Archbishop of Canterbury in the parish of Shiplake, July 4, 1775—a sort of anticipatory Fourth-of-July oration—which reads: "To the inhabitants of the parish of Shiplake, who neglect the service of the Church, and spend the Sabbath in the worst kind of idleness, this plain sermon which they never heard, and probably will never read, is inscribed by their sincere well-wisher and faithful

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minister, J. G." I am indebted for this reference to the brief but pleasant sketch of the founder of extra-illustration contributed by Mr. Thompson Cooper to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

We were speaking a little while ago about prices. It is true that they are advancing, yet they seldom equal the cost of actual production. Accursed be the man who, after he has had a year or more of happiness in gathering the materials for his book, his portraits, his autographs, his choice engravings, and has had it dressed in delightful garb by his favorite binder, pauses to reckon up the cost and to wonder what it will bring when it is knocked down by Bangs & Co.¹ at one of their oft-recurring sales. If he can devote himself to such a sordid occupation as counting the items of expenditure, he may as well make up his mind that his financial profit will be insignificant. He may be reasonably certain that he will never receive any sum approaching what he paid out. He must, however, be an unworthy and poor-spirited collector who spends his time in mercenary reflections about prices. It is pleasant, nevertheless, to know that our libeller of extra-illustrated books is wrong about them. In

¹ It is not easy to realize that there will be no more "Bangs Sales."

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1856 Lilly's copy of Granger's *History*, including Noble's continuation, with more than thirteen hundred portraits, bound in twenty-seven volumes, imperial quarto, brought only £42, and Joseph Willis's copy, with more than three thousand portraits, bound in nineteen folio volumes, brought £38 10s. The last-mentioned set cost its former owner over £300. To-day it would undoubtedly bring—but it would be useless to guess at the figures. Any dealer of experience—Sotheran or Wheeler, of London, or Smith or Richmond, of New York—will tell you that the auction price would run into the thousands, although neither of these books would be as attractive in this country as the *Washington* or the *Francis*. If any one wishes to know more about the matter of prices, let him consult the English catalogues. One is before me, issued a few months ago by Denham. Here is a copy of Gray's poems, with memoirs—one volume, George Daniel's copy—at £215; and one of Horace Walpole's books, *Letters and Memoirs of the Chevalier d'Eon* (seven portraits and autograph letters of the epicene Chevalier), £37. The books of Augustin Daly, which were mostly made up for him by others, commanded high figures at the auction only three or four years ago, but the sale was not well advertised and the catalogue was deficient; they are being now

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resold at an advance. If that copy of *Old New York* which sold in 1879 for \$2070 should be offered now, it would not only awaken more than "moderate interest," but would probably command double that sum, because it appeals to the growing class of wealthy men who take a keen interest in local history and eagerly gather all that relates to their favorite subject. At the same time I do not advise any one to go into the business of extra-illustration for the sake of possible pecuniary gain. The man who would thus degrade an innocent hobby-chase deserves to fall into the clutches of the assignee in bankruptcy.

There is nothing new in the assertion that the purchased book can never be as precious to the owner as the one which he himself constructed, if we may use that word. The proposition needs no argument to support it; we admit it. When Robert Ingersoll said that a certain personage was the greatest lawyer who ever lived, some one said, "You will have trouble in proving that," and the colonel replied, "I do not have to prove it; he admits it himself." There is an individuality about our own books, and a pleasant association with every letter and with every print. It is strange that the private illustrator, toiling for his own amusement and instruction, will almost invariably thrust in

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among the goodly company of rare engravings and choice etchings some wretched little newspaper portrait or clipping which is as much out of place as one of our street-sweepers would be in a brilliant drawing-room. Yet I have done the deed myself, and do not know why I did it; probably from sheer wilfulness.

There are on the library table two privately illustrated copies of Edmund Clarence Stedman's *Poets of America*, to which I beg leave to refer because they are examples. One copy was the property of the late Irving Browne, the accomplished editor and writer, who was an enthusiastic disciple of the Shiplake parson. In 1874 he printed *An Account of Some Books Containing Extra Illustrations in a Private Library*, limited to twenty-five copies, some containing illustrations, the inlaying by Trent, whose work is superior to that of the most vaunted Englishman. It deals with some eighty titles, all but five of them being books illustrated by Browne himself. He must have been wonderfully industrious, but his copy of Stedman is curiously made up, the portraits and other illustrations having been taken from all sorts and conditions of newspapers, magazines, and even publishers' catalogues, pasted upon inserted sheets, or on margins, or at the ends of chapters, with only two or three items of any appreciable value.

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Yet Browne evidently enjoyed it, and he had the volume bound at the Club Bindery in "half crushed blue levant, gilt top," as the sales-catalogues describe such things. I am almost ashamed to confess that I like it, but it speaks to me of the loving labor of a charming author and a brilliant man. I can see him, in my mind's eye, "fussing" with it, as my friend the Chief-Justice of Arizona would say.

Browne was an enthusiast, and we who share in his enthusiasm can appreciate his verse on "The Shy Portraits: by a despised Grangerite," particularly those I venture to quote:

Oh, why do you elude me so,
Ye portraits, whom so long I've sought;
That somewhere ye exist, I know,
Indifferent, good, and good for naught.

This country's overrun with "Grangers"—
I'm ignorant of their Christian names—
But my afflicted eyes are strangers
To one I want whom men call James.

The other copy of Stedman was, I believe, arranged by a man of some literary distinction. He has a singular mania for building up books and, after having them handsomely bound, selling them through professional dealers. I hope that he does it at a profit, and, judging by what I have paid for some of them, I feel quite confi-

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dent that he is not a loser; but one can never tell. It contains sixty-one portraits and plates, almost all of them steel engravings, and it is as dignified as Browne's is the reverse. Yet, with all its scrappy little cuts, I am much fonder of the Browne book.

One commanding error which is commonly committed by the extra-illustrator is the overdoing of it. He is seldom able to limit himself to the addition of matters which belong naturally to the text. If in a *Life of Andrew Jackson* the author makes casual reference to Oliver Cromwell, in goes a portrait of the Protector; or if there is an allusion to George III., there is a representation of the plump countenance of that monarch. I recall that I utterly spoiled a good edition of Edward Everett's *Washington* by overloading it with two hundred and sixty portraits, plates, and facsimiles, to say nothing of valuable autographs which might much better have been suffered to possess an independence of their own; and a harmless copy of *Authors at Home* was overburdened with three hundred and fifty-nine portraits and views and three hundred and seventy-five autograph letters. I mention this with regret, as an instructive warning to the innocent and unwary. There is significance in what the experienced bibliographer and collector John H. V. Ar-

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nold wrote to me concerning one of my monstrosities: "If you can succeed in making up your mind at some future time that you have gathered enough materials to satisfy you and bind up your bantling, you will be possessed of courage enough to do almost anything. To one who really becomes interested in the 'business,' it is the most fascinating of occupations to 'extend' a good book, but it is hard to say, 'Hold, enough!'"

I have elsewhere recorded my impressions in regard to autograph letters in extra-illustration, and I repeat that they should be used sparingly. If one merely employs a text to accompany an autographic collection, a complete "set" of some class of distinguished persons, the case is different. Taking, for example, the extraordinary books which the New York Public Library, through the liberality of Mr. John S. Kennedy, acquired some time ago from Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, and particularly the volumes devoted to the Signers to the Declaration of Independence, we must observe that they are really not *Sanderson's Lives* illustrated, but a pre-eminent collection of the autographic records of the signers, of portraits, views, and incidental illustrations, to which the interwoven pages of the biographies are a comparatively unimportant incident. The trustees of the library have

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wisely printed a detailed catalogue of the Emmet Collection, limited, I regret to say, to one hundred copies, although, perhaps, I should be selfishly glad because, through the kindness of one of the board, I am fortunate enough to own a copy. In sadness and despair, after gloating over the astonishing list of treasures described in the concise fashion of the expert, I am forced to exclaim to myself and to my fellow-lovers of choice Americana, in the words of Joey Ladle, reported in *No Thoroughfare*, "Arter that, ye may all on ye go to bed."

Enthusiasts are not to be discouraged, for we may have our own beloved possessions, dear to us, although perhaps not to be compared with the stores which our superiors have gathered. We are not despondent.

XI

Of authors at work; their blunders and their confidences; with some reflections about style.

THE habits of authors at their work seem to possess an interest for readers, and many chapters of literary gossip have been devoted to describing the methods and customs of the makers of books. Sometimes the details appear to be trivial, but there is a fascination in observing the human animal performing his little tasks akin to that which leads the bird-lover to study patiently the genesis of the blue-jay brood or of the robin family, and the Thompson-Setons to dwell affectionately with the sand-hill stag and the grizzly bear. Authors are usually more communicative about themselves than the Wahbs and Kootenay rams of the Wild West, and the natural history of the race may easily be investigated in the comfortable corners of the library.

Should a writer mature his thoughts before committing them to paper? It is doubtless a question of temperament. Schopenhauer says:

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“There are three kinds of authors—those who write without thinking; they write from a full memory, from reminiscences; it may be straight out of other people’s books. Then come those who do their thinking while they are writing; last of all, those authors who think before they begin to write. They are rare.” Comte, we are told, thought everything out fully before writing, while Darwin was accustomed to dash off page after page hurriedly, even abbreviating his words, and he trusted to later revision. In poor Prescott’s case, that hard piece of bread thrown by a careless Harvard undergraduate compelled him to run over the whole of an intended chapter in his mind before putting his pen, or, to be precise, his agate or ivory stylus, upon the sheets of carbonated paper which he was obliged to use. The writing, he says, “was an effort of memory rather than of composition.” It does not matter so much how it is done if it is done well; but in certain fields of literary labor it is wise to formulate the expression of thought before inscribing it on paper. Whatever may be the shortcomings of Prescott as a historian, judged by the standards of to-day, he had an attractive style, and he wisely rejected the advice of Thierry to resort to dictation. It may be that the Gallic nature of the blind historian of the Norman Conquest was too impatient

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to endure the toil which Prescott was willing to undergo in order to achieve his results. We suffer in these days from the tempting plague of the stenographer and the typewriter. Little that is deserving of preservation is produced except by the author's own hand, which corrects the staggerings of the mind and is a foe to fatal diffuseness. When the dictator rambles along conversationally, deluging his scribe with slush, he loses the concentration which is a mark of wisdom. In the haste of modern days the innate laziness of the author naturally leads him to avail of the easy method of talking to a sort of machine, and relying upon his own judgment in the revision of the notes when they are put before him. He does not, however, correct, excise, or prune as he should, because he is indolent and is disposed to accept the first efforts of his mind as final and conclusive.

Wordsworth never wrote down as he composed, but composed walking, riding, or lying in bed, and, after he had completed his work, wrote it out with his own hand. Southey, on the contrary, true literary man as he was, sat at his desk and penned his thoughts as they shaped themselves in his mind. Every man has his own humor about such matters. A dear friend used to excite his faculties by copious libations of hot tea, preferable to more potent

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potations as a stimulant to the sluggish brain. Tobacco is for some an encourager of composition — “sublime tobacco, which, from east to west, cheers the tar’s labor or the Turkman’s rest.” Carlyle’s pipe is a proverb. We find it hard to forgive Cowper for saying of the stimulating plant:

Pernicious weed, whose scent the fair annoys,
Unfriendly to society’s chief joys,
Thy worst effect is banishing for hours
The sex whose presence civilizes ours;
Thou art, indeed, the drug the gardener wants
To poison vermin that infest his plants.¹

In these more enlightened days, when the cigarette is not distained by attractive damsels, and even the cigar is sometimes accepted by “the sex whose presence civilizes ours,” notably in the case of a lady of my acquaintance of charming manners and cultivated literary taste, we can afford to smile at such remarks concerning that magic plant whereof Charles Lamb said:

For thy sake, tobacco, I
Would do anything but die.²

Dickens has been presented to us by his chosen biographer, John Forster, in an inadequate and unsatisfactory way. It is not prof-

¹ Cowper, *Conv.*, 251

² “Farewell to Tobacco.”

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itable to reflect much about the mistakes of that *Life* which ought to have been so precious to Dickens-lovers. I am discontented with even my extra-illustrated copy, and in the privacy of the library I sometimes shake my fist at it. It is possibly true that an intimate acquaintance with the subject is a drawback to a biographer, and that the records of a great man should be written by one who never knew him and never saw him; the friend is not always capable of occupying a proper point of view. Forster tells us that the beloved novelist carried with him his accompaniments of work in the shape of "certain quaint little bronze figures that stood upon his desk and were as much needed for the easy flow of his writing as blue ink or quill pens," which he much affected. There was a group representing a duel between a couple of very fat toads, and the figure of a dog-fancier with a profusion of little dogs stuck under his arms and into his pockets and everywhere where little dogs could possibly be insinuated. Sometimes when he was toiling very hard over a book he would plough through snow half a foot deep for two hours, because he had a theory that he must spend the same amount of time in walking as he did in writing. He wrote usually between breakfast and luncheon. Contrary to the popular impression, he did not

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write rapidly, and his manuscripts show that he made countless corrections. I have always had a sincere affection for Charles Reade because "he held Charles Dickens to be the greatest Englishman of the century," and never hesitated to express his indignation at "a system which has choked the peerage with third-rate lawyers and tenth-rate politicians, while it has almost without exception excluded genius." I am not convinced that Dickens would have gained anything by being dubbed a lord, and I doubt if his fame would have been more lasting if he had been handed down to posterity with the title of Baron Chuzzlewit or Viscount Copperfield. If it be true that Kipling has refused a title, I congratulate him on the good sense which has enrolled him with such distinguished personages as William Wordsworth, John Stuart Mill, and William Ewart Gladstone.

I doubt if many people at this day, unless it may be a few of quite mature years, spend any time over the works of that earnest and strenuous person, Charles Reade; yet they might do worse, for he was a manly and impressive gentleman, thoroughly in earnest, and possessed of sound training. He had a vigorous way of expressing his opinions. He said of Mark Twain: "An American humorist, and really has much humor.

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But oh! his speech! Knock a macaw's head on an iron rail!" One may not concur entirely with his remarks concerning a distinguished personage of the stage: "Ellen Terry is a very charming actress. I see through and through her. Yet she pleases me, all the same. Little duck!" One would scarcely dare to call Miss Terry a "little duck" in these days. She seems to deserve more dignified commendation.

Reade breakfasted at nine, began writing at ten, paused at two, threw his large sheets of drab-colored paper on the floor as fast as they were filled, had his maid-servant gather them up, and then sent them to a copyist. He took no luncheon, dined late, and usually spent his evening at the theatre. His novels seem always to have been written with the stage in view. His famous scrap - books, industriously filled with all sorts of newspaper clippings, which he used freely, afforded a never-ending supply of facts.

Sir Walter Scott wrote in a delightful library, and had his books of reference close at hand. When Tom Moore said to him that the manual labor alone of copying out his works seemed enough to have occupied all the time he had taken in producing them, Scott replied: "I write very quick; that comes of being brought up under an attorney." But everybody knows

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that he dictated a considerable part of the novels. Scott wrote chiefly in the morning, from five or six o'clock until breakfast-time. When he was pressed with work he would breakfast at nine, idle until about eleven, and then write energetically until two in the afternoon.

Not long ago some newspaper writer asserted that Carlyle is no longer read, and that there is little or no demand for his published works. I cannot believe that it is true, but on the whole it might reasonably be anticipated; for there is little about his creed or his philosophy which should give them immortality. His history, in the words of the *North American Review*, is mostly "ground-and-lofty tumbling." His intellectual processes seemed to operate in a difficult, clumsy fashion; his mental hinges creaked as he worked, and he struggled hard to give the impression of power by the device of a rugged and graceless method of expression. That rough and bumpy style was an affectation; he did not begin in that way, as his early essays show. It was as much assumed as Sam Slick's dialect or the spelling of Ward, Nasby, and Billings, or the slang of Chimmie Fadden.

I hope that I may be pardoned for my profound dislike of Carlyle's style—which has been the subject of so much debate—because one who loved him much has said: "If we were to judge

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him by one of his own summary processes, and deny him the benefit of his notions of what is expedient and advisable, how would he exculpate this style, in which he denounces so many 'shams,' of being itself a sham?—of being affected, unnecessary, and ostentatious?—a jargon got up to confound pretension with performance and reproduce endless German talk under the guise of novelty.”¹

Yet Leigh Hunt said also, and I quote at length partly because of his remarks on hobbies: “It has been well said that, love money as people may, there is generally something which they love better; some whim or hobby-horse; some enjoyment or recreation; some personal or political or poetical predilection; some good opinion of this or that class of men; some club of one's fellows, or of one's own, with a thousand other *somes* and probabilities. I believe that what Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering and loving and sincere; and I believe, further, that if the fellow-creature were suffering only, and neither loving nor sincere, but had come to a pass of agony in this life which put him at the mercies of some good man for some last help and con-

¹ Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*, 417.

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solution towards his grave, even at the risk of loss to repute, and a sure amount of pain and vexation, that man, if the groan reached him in its forlornness, would be Thomas Carlyle.”¹

After that I do not wonder that “Jennie kissed him”; perhaps she kissed him before he said it; it is immaterial. Whether it is all true or not, it shows what Hunt thought of Jennie’s ursine husband; but I should be glad to have cited to me an instance where Carlyle ever put himself to the least inconvenience to relieve a suffering fellow-creature who was neither loving nor sincere.

Hunt’s reference to “some club of one’s own” reminds me of those two delightful books by Mr. Russell — *A Club of One*, and *In a Club Corner*. Why have they not become famous? Because, I suppose, they do not appeal to the average man; I am sorry, because I have a high regard for that average man, and consider him worthy of profound respect. I shall always look back with delight to the day when these volumes came within my book-horizon. I pity the reader who does not enjoy the quaint and chatty gossip of Mr. Russell.

Carlyle annoyed his printers dreadfully. He wrote a hand as crabbed as his style, and he

¹ *Autobiography*, 417, 418.

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corrected with a magnificent disregard of the unfortunate typesetter. It is said that he revised his proofs to such an extent that it was easier to reset the matter than to alter it. This indicates an indecision, a variableness of disposition, quite uncharacteristic of the ideal Thomas. Miss Martineau tells this anecdote of him: "One day while in my study I heard a prodigious sound of laughter on the stairs, and in came Carlyle, laughing aloud. He had been laughing in that manner all the way from the printing-office in Charing Cross. He had been to the office to urge the printer, and the man said: 'Why, sir, you really are so very hard upon us with your corrections; they take so much time, you see.' After some remonstrance, Carlyle observed that he had been accustomed to do this sort of thing; that he had got works printed in Scotland, and—'Yes, indeed, sir,' interrupted the printer; 'we are aware of that. We have a man here from Edinburgh, and when he took up a bit of your copy he dropped it as if he had burned his fingers, and cried out, "Lord have mercy! Have you got that man to print for? Lord knows when we shall get done all his corrections."'"¹

There can be no sufficient excuse for such

¹ Andrews' *Literary By-ways*, 16.

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utter disregard of others; but Carlyle seldom considered others in comparison with himself; his alleged tenderness for human kind in distress was not exclusive of a more vigorous tenderness regarding himself. He would not have laughed so heartily at the printer's tale of woe if it had concerned any one but Thomas Carlyle. He always appeared to me to be the most selfish literary person of his century, with the possible exception of William Hazlitt.

Speaking of Carlyle, the Right Honorable Leonard Courtney, M.P., in his address to the committee for the purchase of Carlyle's house at Chelsea, thus expressed his views: "As a husband he showed something too much of the arrogance and isolation of genius. In his want of sensibility to the wife, and in the proud silences of the wife's life, you see something more interesting, something more attractive, than is to be found in any novel." I do not; I fail to see anything interesting or attractive in it; I see that which makes me long to arise and cry aloud that the man was a barbarian. Ruskin said to Froude: "What can you say of Carlyle but that he was born in the clouds and struck by the lightning." A man born in the clouds and struck by lightning, who is persistently brutal to a devoted wife, is not a pleasant object to

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contemplate.¹ If he was really the victim of an electric bolt, he may be excused, on the ground of insanity, for some eccentricities; but if he himself had been confronted by such a self-sufficient snarler about trifles, he would have been as lavish with his vocabulary of denunciation as he was in abuse of most of his contemporaries. In brief, he was a rough, unpleasant, peasant-born individual, with great capacity for scolding about the things of the world and no capacity for suggesting any adequate remedy for the evils of which he complained so loudly. There is one story about Carlyle, told by George Eliot in a letter to Sara Hennell, in November, 1851, which goes far to reconcile me to him. He was dissatisfied with Emerson because the American did not believe in a devil, and, to convince the transcendental philosopher of his error, he took the amiable Ralph through all the horrors of London, the gin-shops, *et quibusdam aliis*, and finally to the House of Commons, plying him at every turn with the question, "Do you believe in a devil *noo?*" I am indebted to Mr. J. Rogers Rees² for another anecdote of Carlyle, and I hope it is true. Meeting Browning, and

¹ "He found a remembrance in her Diary of the blue marks which, in a fit of passion, he had once inflicted on her arms."—*My Relations with Carlyle* (Froude), 11.

² *The Brotherhood of Letters*, New York, 1889.

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wishing to say something pleasant about *The Ring and the Book*, which had recently appeared, he said: "It is a wonderful book, one of the most wonderful books ever written. I reread it all through; all made out of an Old Bailey story that might have been told in ten lines, and only wants forgetting."

This is an illustration of the truth of what Froude said, writing of his first meeting with Carlyle: "I saw then what I saw soon after—that no one need look for conventional politeness from Carlyle; *he would hear the exact truth from him and nothing else.*"

This matter of "telling the exact truth" has always interested me greatly. I have known conscientious men, and women also, who prided themselves upon always telling every one "the truth," assuming it as a virtue, pluming themselves about it, and congratulating themselves that they are not as others are. These good people do not even pause to inquire, with Pilate, "What is truth?" nor do they heed the words of Montaigne, "for truth itself has not the privilege to be spoken at all times and in all sorts."¹

They do not need to inquire, I suppose, because they are endowed by Providence with an innate capacity for discerning truth. I have

¹ Book iii., chapter xiii., of *Experience*.

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often wished that I possessed that divine attribute which would enable me to tell my neighbor, under all circumstances, exactly what he should do or say or think, and how wrong he was about everything which he did or said or thought. When Thales was asked what was difficult, he said, "To know one's self"; and what was easy, "To advise another."¹ It is an amusing and familiar fact that nothing is given as profusely as advice.² Does it ever dawn upon these complacent creatures that perhaps their convictions may not be better founded than mine? Do they ever pause to consider that there is room for difference of opinion about "the truth"? Their horizon of truth is limited by their own powers of vision; beyond that there is little worthy of a thought.

It is in such conditions that what is contemptuously termed by the Froudes of life "conventional politeness" may be invoked as a protecting force. The phrase merely describes that method of speech and attitude of mind which tolerates one's fellow-beings and grants to them the indulgence of the belief that perhaps the truth as they see it may be as true as that which we, in our wisdom, may believe that we alone are capable of discerning. The person

¹ Diogenes Laertius, *Thales*, ix.

² La Rochefoucauld.

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who derides "conventional politeness" is only arrogant, vain, saturated with unconscious conceit, unable to perceive the beam in his own eye, and destined, as was Carlyle, to repent bitterly his consummate absorption in self, which made him oblivious to the feelings of others and shrouded his declining years in a dark shadow of well-deserved remorse.

It is worthy of note that the young people of this period are notably the advisers of mankind. No doubt that fact has been observed by the "old fogies" of many centuries; but every one must recognize the enormous growth of the young person in importance, particularly the young person of social eminence. The newspaper is responsible for it, devoting columns to the doings of the young persons—their games, their dances, their receptions, their weddings. It is all confusing to the mind of the commencing veteran, who is bewildered when he encounters a half-page given to the marriage of two adolescents, with portraits of the victims, while one of the most serious political questions of the day obtains but half a column, grudgingly bestowed. *Eheu, Eheu, Postume, labuntur anni!*

If a man cannot put his thoughts in tolerably decent shape before he sends them to the printer he must be extremely uncertain in his mental operations. Dickens corrected his manuscript

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profusely, but he did not over-amend his proofs. De Quincey was particular and precise, but my copy of the proofs of a volume of his essays does not show any evidence of needless alteration; it may be that it is a second or third revise. Campbell,¹ we are told, was so fastidious that he once took a six-mile walk to his printer (and six back again) to see a comma changed into a semi-colon. I am always disposed to be indulgent to the printer, even to the one who turned a college-day quotation, "Captive Greece led Rome captive," into the astonishing statement that "Captain Green led Rome captive." This brings to my mind the fact that in an earlier chapter of these solemn disquisitions the kind artist of the type made me cite Hamerton as saying that "it could never have been intended that *anybody* should write great books." My friend the Bear-Hunter, protesting against any correction, insisted that the printer was a genius; that any one might say that everybody cannot write great books, and that only a heaven-born spirit could see and announce that *nobody* can.

Writers generally take pains to be accurate

¹As an instance of modern disdain of English literature, I must own, to my sorrow, that having been silly enough to quote a line from *Hohenlinden* to a clever young lawyer of New York, I found that he had never heard of either the poem or of Thomas Campbell!

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when they are dealing with technical matters and are not familiar with the subject, but not infrequently they are guilty of ludicrous blunders. Novelists, for example, are fond of introducing legal complications in their plots, but they are likely to suffer shipwreck unless they submit their work to the judgment of an expert. They are particularly enamoured of the lost will, of all matters connected with the laws of descent and of distribution, and especially of marriage and divorce. In a pleasant paper, read at a recent Harvard commencement, Mr. Allan R. Campbell deals with some of their failures.¹ He even goes so far as to assail the law of *Ten Thousand a Year*, so carefully done by Samuel Warren, physician and barrister. Almost everybody knows that the story turns upon the recovery by an ignorant fellow, Tittlebat Titmouse, of a large estate in the possession of his cousins, the Aubreys, which he afterwards lost owing to an accident in his pedigree. He had won his case on the trial because of an apparent descent from an elder branch and the invalidity of a certain deed arising from an erasure. I always thought that the deed was erroneously excluded, but let it pass. It appeared that Titmouse's great-grandfather had

¹ *The Green Bag*, August, 1902.

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been put out of possession seventy years before the suit was begun, but he was then beyond seas, and the statute of limitations did not begin to run against him. The successive heirs were all under like disabilities until Mr. Titmouse appeared. Mr. Campbell announces, rather hastily I think, that "a plain reason appears . . . why Tittlebat Titmouse should not have won," because "a claim to land becomes unenforceable if not asserted within twenty years after it first arose," and the exceptions exist only for claimants who were disabled when the claim first arose. Mr. Campbell apparently ignores Warren's note in which he shows that the period of twenty years was fixed by statute in 1833, and that at the time mentioned in the story "a far longer period than twenty years was required to constitute adverse possession." These, however, are rather fine points for the unprofessional reader, and when there is room for difference of opinion among lawyers, the author should have the benefit of the doubt.

In the instance of a novel of great popularity in its day, *Her Dearest Foe*, by Mrs. Alexander, there was no good excuse for a serious blunder of the author. Travers, a wealthy man, seized of real estate as well as possessed of personal property, leaves a will in which he does not mention his young wife, and gives all his es-

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tate to one Galbraith. Of course, Galbraith ultimately marries the poor widow, who is described as being in absolute beggary. Her legal advisers seem to have utterly forgotten her dower right.

Wilkie Collins, in *No Name* and *Man and Wife*, and George Eliot, in *Felix Holt*, were more careful, and their law is unimpeachable. Dickens had sufficient experience in Mr. Edward Blackmore's office, Gray's Inn, as well as some instruction in reporting trials and arguments, to avoid pitfalls, but he did not usually go very deeply into legal perplexities. It is difficult to find flaws in his lawyers or in his law.

I have often wished to ask Mr. Howells whether he had any professional assistance when he created that strong and impressive trial scene in *A Modern Instance*. I call it a trial scene; to be accurate, it was really a motion to set aside a decree obtained by default. As a description of a day in court I know of nothing more vivid or realistic in fiction. The ever-famous *Bardell vs. Pickwick* is funnier, but rather extravagant. The long-drawn-out account of the trial of *Doe ex dem. Titmouse vs. Jolter*, in Warren's story, is more minute and technical, but it is tedious to any one who is not a lawyer. Howells's picture of the Western court-room, the dull formalities observed even in the unconventional region

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where the scene is laid, the every-day routine, and the sudden arrival of the old Squire, with his vigorous and dramatic appeal to the court, is absolutely the best work of its kind. The Squire, a fine old character drawn with almost photographic truth, is deeply solicitous for his unhappy daughter, whose case he is conducting, but his momentary satisfaction as a lawyer with the situation, wholly disassociated from his parental feeling, is deliciously brought out. There are critics who think that Mr. Howells is monotonous and minute, that he is unable to rise to serious things, and that his realism degenerates into commonplace. I differ from them, or with them, just as you please; but surely in this book he has given us a genuine tragedy and has established his title to a seat in the academy of immortals.

Miss Murfree has produced some excellent descriptions of trials on the criminal side of the court. I am not so well satisfied with Sir Gilbert Parker's experiment in *The Right of Way*. It is not easy work, for the writer who attempts⁴ to be strictly accurate is in danger of becoming tiresome.

Music is another field full of danger for the novelist. Almost every man, it is said, believes that he knows all that is worth knowing about politics and religion, and he is almost equally

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confident that he is competent to deal with musical matters, even though he may not be able to distinguish between a sonata and a symphony. Charles Reade was at home in the legal department of his work, but in *Peg Woffington* he talks about "a sparkling *adagio*."¹ Ouida's men and women are always wonderful, but she has one eminent creation who played "the grand old masses of Mendelssohn!" I am told by a friend who is himself a successful novelist that even so careful and versatile a man as F. Hopkinson Smith refers to "Beethoven's symphonies arranged for the 'cello," but, as I cannot cite chapter and verse, I will not be responsible for the truth of the accusation.

It has always been rather a puzzle to me why writers—and the novelists are usually the culprits—are so willing to spread upon paper for the edification of mankind descriptions of their system of work. It must be an outcropping of that vanity which lurks in the souls of most men and women. I can understand why, in answer to civil questions, an author of distinction might say that he usually wrote when he was in the humor, that he habitually used black ink and white paper, that he sometimes burned the

¹ Grolier Club edition, vol. i., 31.

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midnight electric bulb and occasionally courted the rays of the rising sun, the result depending somewhat on the condition of his digestion and the urgency of the printer. But why all the details? On my table is a charming bit of frankness in the shape of an autograph letter of Georgiana Maria Craik, who is not overwhelmingly famous, although she has published some moderately deserving volumes. She appears to regard herself and her efforts quite seriously, and somebody evidently took enough interest in her productions to inquire about the method which she adopted in order to bring them safely into the world. The letter is dated August 15, 1884, and the dame gravely says:

“In reply to your inquiries:

“First. I never, except on rarest occasions, write at night.

“Second. I have not always made an outline beforehand of my books, but of late years I have generally done so.

“Third. I never use stimulants of any sort.

“Fourth. I have no particular habits while I am at work, so far as I am aware.

“Fifth. I write from 9 A.M. until 2 P.M. in winter, and in summer I seldom write at all.

“Sixth. When I have once begun a book I work at it steadily every day during three hours, without any regard to inclination.”

These particulars are evidently of importance to the person who bestows them upon us, and in-

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dicating that placid self-satisfaction so characteristic of writers.

Another woman author who has achieved a certain fame has recorded her confidences respecting the book which first gave her notoriety, and her autographic notes are before me. "I started," says John Strange Winter, "to draw Bootles from a man that I knew, and worked in the story of another man who was killed at Abu Klea. But my Bootles got idealized as I sketched him, so much so that I really don't think he is very like the original model. I feel this is rather a lame answer to your question, but one thing is certain, that there are plenty of Bootles in the British Army."

The lover of autographs finds it difficult to keep off of his chosen ground. They will persist in cropping up like the head of Charles I. in Mr. Dick's manuscript. Now that I am wandering among novelists and autograph letters, I may perhaps be allowed to quote from a letter in my possession, written in the small, precise, and pretty chirography of the noted Manxman, who is severely assailed by the critics, but who seems to have won popular approval. Some do not admire Mr. Caine, but, luckily for him, there are many thousands who devour his works hungrily and have crowned him as one of the kings of modern fiction. I do not know to whom he was

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writing, as the address is not given, but this is what he says:

“I mean that the art of composition—that is, the way to knead words into sentences—is easy to acquire, and may be learned by nearly any one. Hence the race of authors is so great, and hence so many thousands of persons can write skilfully. But *style* is a thing apart, and comes largely of natural gift, and can rarely be acquired at all. You know that the French say that the *style* is the man, and the *dictum* is true in the limited sense that a man’s style comes of his nature, his character, his genius, if that exists. I have noticed that an uneducated man of genius will speak and write in a manner altogether his own—that is to say, in style. In all great effort there seems to be a force outside as well as a force inside the worker. Hence a contemporary writer says that whatever can be done well can be done easily (though I think he used the phrase in another sense), and hence Charlotte Brontë found that there was something ‘not herself’ laboring with her at her best.”

There is surely a mystery about what is called “style.” I have found that the uncultivated, unliterary, unread person in these days is the greatest stickler for the formal and the conventional. I have in mind an active man, whose concerns are chiefly with sports and money-making, who severely criticises me because I do not write *secundum artem*. He resents anything which does not conform to the rules of rhetoric as taught in the schools. When I tell him that genius declines such fetters, he

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says that there must be genius to dispense with the bonds of regularity. His own personal literary talents are mainly devoted to the preparation of briefs, and he jealously respects the orderly sequence of introduction, proposition, discussion, and peroration. He has learned that, and it affords him his standard; whatever does not conform to it is wrong. But that is a characteristic of the man who has no interest in the subject and, having no time for original reflection, accepts what he supposes to be the proper judgment about it, and objects to any variations.

We were speaking just now about Carlyle's style, which is proverbially uncouth, and arouses wrathful feelings because it is needlessly fantastic. If Buffon was right when he said "the style is the man," Carlyle must have been even worse than Froude's description. So much has been written about Macaulay and his coruscating, picturesque methods of expression that one almost hesitates to refer to him or to discuss him. I always loved him because he delighted in gorgeous waistcoats, never learned to tie his neckcloth, and used his razor with only moderate skill. He was "utterly destitute of bodily accomplishments," and "viewed his deficiencies with supreme indifference. He could neither swim, nor row, nor drive, nor skate, nor

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shoot.”¹ When he was at Windsor, while a cabinet minister, he was told that a horse was at his disposal. “If her Majesty wishes to see me ride,” he said, “she must order out an elephant.”

Macaulay said of a contemporary: “He is, I see, an imitator of me. But I am a very unsafe model. My manner is, I think, and the world thinks, on the whole, a good one; but it is very near to a very bad manner indeed, and those characteristics of my style which are most easily copied are the most questionable.”² The scholarly George Birkbeck Hill, who tells us that Macaulay could not relish Carlyle’s descriptive writings, was inclined to think that, in the long run, Carlyle’s pages had caused him more misery than pleasure. He says that the art of Carlyle and of Ruskin seems easy, and that for this reason a host of servile imitators spring up like mushrooms in a September night.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton, quoting Sir Joshua Reynolds, says that “style is a power over materials, whether words or colors, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed.” It is, he says, the result of culture. “It can only be attained by gifted persons, but the most gifted persons cannot attain it in isolation.”

¹ Trevelyan’s *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, vol. i., 118.

² *Id.* vol. ii., 381

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One may add that the style which pleases Caius may be a torment to Balbus; and in these days we find readers who are foolhardy enough to dissent from the well-known dictum of Doctor Johnson: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

XII

Of Walter Pater, book-shops, Wordsworth, Gilbert and Sullivan, Marie Corelli, and kindred topics.

WHILE we are reflecting about style we naturally think of Walter Pater, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, whom many living persons honor as an arbiter from whose decision no appeal lies.

Macmillan & Company have given us a beautiful edition of Walter Pater's works (limited to seven hundred and seventy-five copies, and published in 1901), with fascinating type, restful to the eye, and boasting of a binding of the provoking English sort, intended to be supplanted later by something serious and durable. I fell in love with it at first sight in an enticing shop on the Strand, recently established by a firm which, after long delay, removed thither from a secluded den in the remote regions of Paddington Green, where for many years they had hidden themselves for reasons of characteristic English conservatism hard for us to understand. Our own bookdealers move about

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without the slightest concern, save only to be among the buyers. I have followed one of them from Broadway and Eighth Street to Forty-second Street, thence southerly in a devious line to the financial precincts of New Street, and thence—I may be obliged to pursue him to Fort Washington or perhaps to Yonkers. Thus far can I go, but no farther.

It is unfortunate that we New-Yorkers cannot have such delectable shops as those which we encounter in so many of the London streets. To rove, ramble, and revel in the alcoves and about the shelves of those snug and seductive little storehouses is a delight, although it is likewise a torture to the covetous bibliophile who is obliged to count his assets with care and to reckon how far his modest letter of credit will carry him. The proprietors never *bore* a visitor. The chance caller may wander and browse among the treasures without let or hinderance, and without even the shadow of solicitation, for the vendors are passing wise in their knowledge of the book-buyer's nature. That individual loves to make his own selections, and he resents the suggestions of the salesman, usually unwelcome. Many a time and oft one rejects a book with disdain because of an attempt to force its purchase. Our English friends have learned the art of skilful innuendo. When you take from its rest-

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ing - place on the shelf some precious volume which causes the heart to palpitate, and timidly inquire the price, they almost apologize for even mentioning such a thing. Experiences like these brighten the life of the book-lover.

I must not be understood as intimating that there is any disagreeable quality in our great "book-stores" or any lack of courtesy exhibited by the persons in charge of them. The contrary is the truth. The point of the matter is that the "stores" are, in a way, too stately, too imposing; they are not real "shops." But I know of one or two not far away, and I shall not tell you where they are, for several obvious reasons.

The portrait of Walter Horatio Pater prefixed to volume vii. of this collected edition of his works gives the impression that he may have been the manager of a baseball nine or of a dime museum. The head is good, but the mustache is incomprehensible, of a fashion once popular in the Bowery. We should not be asked to accept views of style uttered by any one wearing such an unlovely mustache. Despite the possession of this atrocious deformity, Pater is no doubt one of the commanding authorities before whom we are expected to abase ourselves and to whom we must give unquestioning obedience. But with the calm, unblushing confidence of the simple American, I venture to object to his

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calling some of his essays about authors "Appreciations." In one sense an appreciation of a person is only "a just estimate" of him; the phrase, however, seems to be affected and artificial, although it appears to have been adopted in late years by authors who are careful about their English.

Will it be regarded as presumptuous to dissent from some of the *dicta* of this literary autocrat? "Any writer," he says, "worth translating at all has winnowed and searched through his vocabulary, is conscious of the words he would select in systematic reading of a dictionary, and still more of the words he would reject were the dictionary other than Johnson's; and doing this, with his peculiar sense of the world ever in view, in search of an instrument for the adequate expression of that, he begets a vocabulary faithful to the coloring of his own spirit and in the strictest sense original."

To an unsophisticated intelligence this utterance is obscure at the first reading, but it may be elucidated after a little study. One may doubt whether a man who writes from a full mind and with a strong impulse would trouble himself greatly about a dictionary, whether it be Johnson's or one of those modern encyclopædias masquerading as a dictionary. If his thoughts are worth expressing at all, he must send them forth

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in his own natural way, without pausing to consult Johnson, or the Century, or even that convenient *Thesaurus* which the good old Doctor Roget devised for the aid of those who are wanting in verbal inspiration. He should leave such things to the school-boy struggling with his weekly composition.

The difficulty about Pater and his kind is that they lose the natural in their devotion to the formal. They become mere dispensers of literary millinery. They seem always to be thinking not of what they are saying but of how they are saying it. As Edmund Gosse well says, it means the loss of the simplicity and freshness of the real style worth cultivating. It is almost unnecessary to assert that it is not of as much importance how one says a thing as whether it is worth saying at all. One may take infinite pains about the manner, but men look chiefly for the substance of things rather than the method of presenting them. I have always thought that Mr. Cleveland's official style was cumbrous and that it was saturated with an awkward formality, no doubt a relic of the elaborate Presbyterian sermons of his worthy sire; but his utterances tell, because he usually has something strong and sensible to say. When he is really aroused he drops his forms and speaks with a force and dignity rarely equalled. Few

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who heard him will forget the impression which on the eve of the national election of 1896 he made upon his hearers, in his Princeton address, as he said, earnestly, "When the attempt is made to delude the people into the belief that their suffrages can change the operation of natural laws, I would have our universities and colleges proclaim that those laws are inexorable and far removed from political control." On that occasion he surely attained the purest and most convincing eloquence, an eloquence like that of Lincoln at Gettysburg, which has survived the polished phrases of Everett, although it is said that the famous Gettysburg speech was by no means effective in its delivery. Both Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley were more fluent and facile speakers than Grover Cleveland is, but neither of them was more eloquent in the true sense

It is a long ramble from American Presidents to Oxford Fellows. Returning to Pater, we find him saying: "Racy Saxon monosyllables, close to us as touch and sight, he will intermix readily with those long, savorsome Latin words, rich in 'second intention.'" But the misfortune of it is that when a man pauses to bethink himself of his Saxon monosyllables and his savorsome Latin words he may as well put

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up his shutters and close his little shop. He has lost his spontaneous life, he has become a mere juggler of words, and he is no better than Antonio de Guerrara or John Lyly of Euphuistic fame; he is a specimen of affectation, devoid of soul and animation. The best way to write is to write honestly, simply, and directly, after the fashion in which men talk to their fellows. If you wish to tell somebody anything worthy of the telling, you say it to him in such a way that he may readily comprehend your meaning, and that, I conceive, is the secret of style.

Pater eulogizes Flaubert, as might be expected, and Flaubert is a master of form, lacking genuine strength, heartiness, and vitality. Perhaps Pater's own language may illustrate my meaning when I say that the melodious combination of words into sentences is not the only thing which a writer, intent on giving a message to mankind, must aim to accomplish.

"Style," said Pater, "in all its varieties, reserved or opulent, terse, abundant, musical, stimulant, academic, so long as each is really characteristic or expressive, finds thus its justification, the sumptuous good taste of Cicero being as truly the man himself, and not another, justified, yet insured inalienably to him, thereby, as would have been his portrait by Rafaele in full consular splendor, in his ivory chair." This

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seems to be the deadly decadence of what we may style the dictionary school, dull and depressing, a perplexing Pater-song—style gone mad. We cannot imagine Shakespeare or Milton or Sir Thomas Browne mincing in like fashion.

Mr. Gosse, whose taste is unquestionable, has uttered a more cautious opinion, and perhaps his mild criticism is sufficiently severe. He says of Pater: "He exhausted himself in the research after absolute perfection of expression, noting with extreme refinement fine shades of feeling and delicate distinctions of thought and sentiment. His fault was to overburden his sentences, to annex to them too many parenthetical clauses and adjectival glosses. He was the most studied of the English prose-writers of his time, and his long-drawn style was lacking in simplicity and freshness."

Andrew Lang, with his light and airy touch, has mildly ridiculed the Pater cult in his graceful essay on *How to Fail in Literature*. He quotes thus from the solemn dictator: "The otiose, the facile surplusage; why are these abhorrent to the true literary artist, except because, in literary as in all other art, structure is all-important, felt or painfully missed, everywhere—that architectural conception of work which foresees the end in the beginning, and never

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loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigor, unfold and justify the first—a condition of literary art which, in contradistinction to another quality of the artist himself, to be spoken of later, I shall call the necessity of *mind* in style.” Mr. Lang gently suggests that in certain kinds of literary work one must “often have to forget Mr. Pater,” and he tells us wisely that Montaigne would be ruled out on any such theory, and that the “concentrated and structural style” occupies a province by itself, while the allusive style has another place. It is wrong to use either style inappropriately. My own belief is that Mr. Pater is a melancholy monument of mistaken mannerism. He has no hold upon men, and he is destined to attain the immortality of those who are the examples of degeneracy in their age.

“To divert at any time a troublesome fancy, run to thy books; they presently fix thee to them, and drive the other out of thy thoughts. They always receive thee with the same kindness.” Such are the familiar words of Thomas Fuller, and I am citing them, not from the original (which I own I never saw), but from the pretty book already mentioned, *The Pleasures of Literature*. I do not care much where I

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find things if they are worth finding. I may even recall what Wordsworth said: "Books we know are a substantial world, both pure and good"; and also the saying of Bacon that "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." These are stock quotations, but they are none the less significant. We may all of us be fond of what Longfellow calls, in his stately poem, "Morituri Salutamus," "all the sweet serenity of books"—that is, "the books, the arts, the academes, that show, contain and nourish all the world." We love

. . . that place that does contain my books, the best companions.

Wordsworth often wrote with a slate-pencil on a smooth piece of stone, and he said his poems aloud, much to the astonishment of the common people who listened to him. Some one tells us that a man lost his way in an attempt to discover Rydal Mount, and, meeting an old woman in a scarlet cloak, he asked her the way. She did not know. "What! Not know," said the American, "the house of the great Wordsworth?" "No." "What! Not the house of the man whose fame brings people here from all parts of the world?" "No," she insisted; "but what was he great in? Was he a preacher or a doctor?"

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“Greater than a preacher or a doctor; he was a poet.” “Oh! poet,” she replied; “and why did you not tell me that before? I know who you mean now. I often met him in the woods, jabbering his pottery to himself. But I am not afraid of him. He’s quite harmless, and almost as sensible as you and me.” I do not believe that story; it sounds like those we read in the Sunday newspapers.

Nobody can deny that William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, a noble pair of brothers, added greatly to the public stock of harmless pleasure. Before their day Planché and his painful puns represented English comic operetta, and really Planché was often tedious. Gilbert lives, having reached his acme of production, and we owe to him a debt of gratitude. He took the infinite pains which are said to be the characteristic of genius. He first wrote out the plot of his play as if it were an anecdote; then he expanded the anecdote to the length of an ordinary magazine article. When this had been carefully corrected it was ready to be broken up into acts, and the scenes, entrances, and exits were arranged. Not until its fifth appearance in manuscript was the play illustrated by dialogue. At this stage Sullivan was called in, and all began over again. In this way the great *collaborateurs* built up the charming operas which the world

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will never willingly let die. But it will repay a reader to study the verses of Gilbert as mere literature, to use the phrase of Woodrow Wilson, disassociated from music and the stage.

Coming back to autograph letters of novelists, I find one of Marie Corelli, addressed to Ireland (I suppose it is the *Book-Lover's Enchiridion* man), which has an interest for those who read the lady's screeds, and there are many who admire her. She writes:

"I have written many studies for the organ, and six voluntaries which I composed for the Queen of Italy (who has graciously made me a sort of *protégée* of hers as far as my musical compositions are concerned) have also had a great success in Italy. Of my literary efforts I do not desire to speak; when I have written something worthy of *your* reading I will let you know. Two trifling poems of mine on Shakesperian subjects are to appear (I believe) in the February number of *The Theatre*, but they are not worth your looking at. Regarding Emerson's letters, I could send them to you with pleasure, but I have lent them to a Greek friend who is occupying himself with translating extracts from Emerson into Greek, 'to see how they sound,' she says; but of course they will sound well in any language. . . . I am staying on a visit here at the house of Charles Mackay, LL.D., F.S.A., the English poet. He told me last night that you knew him in former days, but that a misunderstanding had arisen between you concerning the side he had taken during the American civil war. Could not this difference *now*, at this distance of time, be cleared away? Mackay speaks of you with the greatest regard—and, indeed, it is to him I owe my first knowledge of Emerson's writings. He is a most

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noble-hearted man, and, though in straightened (*sic*) circumstances and failing health, he is so patient, high-minded, and sweet-tempered that he wins the affection of all with whom he comes in contact."

It is strange that men of literature should allow themselves to become personally hostile for any mere political reasons. Mackay, who was a prolific producer of books, mostly of no serious value, wrote some good songs, for love, and dribbled off a lot of prose, for money. He was the special correspondent of the *London Times* in New York during the War of the Rebellion, and wrote much "to order." It may be doubted whether he had any grave or well-founded judgments concerning the troubles between North and South. Correspondents seldom have the opportunity to form such judgments. I remember an instance of a young college graduate who was trying to earn his living while studying law in New York, and who was engaged, much to his delight, to write New York letters for a Southern newspaper at five dollars a column. Instructed to denounce the Democrats, he produced a column which he considered to be altogether worthy — of five dollars. Unfortunately, between the date of mailing and the day of receipt the journal changed its politics, and he had the peculiar pleasure of finding his article transformed into a fiery denunciation of

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the Republican party in Georgia. Strangely enough, the alterations were few. Thereafter he tuned his harp to suit the reversed situation, and it was not difficult, because his convictions were in that direction all along.

XIII

County histories; the binding of old books; Lamb and De Quincey.

ENUMERATING the various species of the genus collector, Mr. Lang observes that, "being a person of large fortune and landed estate, you may collect county histories." The late Lord Braybrooke was an enthusiastic collector of county histories, and his collection is said to have been valuable and interesting. Years ago I encountered in New York a jovial and generous-hearted Englishman, a solicitor, on his first visit to "the States," who had the same hobby, and he asserted vigorously that it was both useful and profitable. I did not comprehend it at the time, but I learned afterwards that the pursuit was fascinating and by no means without justification.

The English county histories are elaborate affairs, and the prices are large enough to account for Mr. Lang's intimation that a long purse is needed to qualify one for the struggle. Naturally our American county histories are more familiar to us. They are full of facts, genealogical, bio-

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graphical, and historical, and of portraits and views, some of which are important and others amusing. Even the gilded subscription volumes of quarto size, palpably "gotten up" to entice the local magnates, are not without interest and value, and they often give us pleasant glimpses of what is commonly called "human nature." One can imagine the pride of Reuben Jones, wealthy farmer, when he beholds his personal story set forth in print, with his bucolic countenance perpetuated in a steel-engraving, while his wife's plain and honest visage is displayed in a modest wood-cut. There also he may see the representation of his smart mansion, white and boxlike, with columns in front and a cupola, approached by a perfectly straight "avenue" upon which is seen the inevitable spanking team of trotters and a neat road-wagon, supposed to be the indispensable adjunct of a "place" in Podunk County. Yet while we sneer flippantly at Reuben Jones — he cares nothing for first editions and is hopelessly ignorant of Grolier, or Bussy Rabutin, or Books of Hours, or *incunabula* of any sort—he is one of the potent factors in our prosperity; he has helped to build the nation, and he has been a producer of material wealth. Although he may not possess even that which sufficed for the library of Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford—

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A twenty bokes, clothed in black and red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie—

he is no mean citizen of a great republic which has gained its greatness by the toil and industry of just such sturdy workers.

All of the local histories are not, however, of the subscription-book order. There is the *History of Westchester County, New York*, by Robert Bolton, whose two volumes are replete with interesting details, a treasure house of valuable lore. The *History of Herkimer County*, by Nathaniel S. Benton, ranks among the best and is deemed worthy of mention in the *Literature of American History*, published under the auspices of the American Library Association. The author, an old politician of the pre-Rebellion days, was a long-time resident of the region, and while he freely used the records of the neighborhood, he relied much upon his personal knowledge and recollections. Judge Campbell's *Annals of Tryon County*, published in 1831, is recognized as authoritative, and, although written by a lawyer who years later occupied a seat upon the bench of the Supreme Court of New York, it is clever in style and entertaining. James Riker's *Harlem* is not by any means amusing or enlivening to the spirit, but it is a repository of information, and was at one time almost indispensable to the industrious ex-

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aminers of land-titles in the upper portion of the Borough of Manhattan.

For some years to come there will be an especial interest in a small duodecimo volume whose title-page reads: "*History of Delaware County, and Border Wars of New York; containing a Sketch of the Early Settlements in the County and a History of the late Anti-Rent Difficulties in Delaware; with other Historical and Miscellaneous Matter never before published: by Jay Gould: Roxbury, 1856.*" During Mr. Gould's life the newspapers were accustomed to favor us from time to time with tales about this work and the supposed attempts of the successful financier to suppress it. There was no reason why he should have wished to suppress it, for it is a good history, written with some literary skill, and relating the story of Delaware County with unpretentious dignity. Doubtless the accounts of his efforts to destroy the current copies had their foundations in the lively imaginations of the reporters or the covetousness of the dealers in second-hand books. At all events, the book is only moderately rare, its scarceness arising from the fact that owners keep their copies because of the distinction which the author attained in other fields. My own copy furnishes a melancholy instance of the tyro's folly. When I found it described in a casual

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catalogue, I hastened to possess it, and forthwith committed the crime of sending it to the binder in order to have it clothed in half levant, destroying the original cloth covers. By this idiotic proceeding I reduced its pecuniary value at least one-half; but I will never do so any more.

The foolishness of rebinding a rare, old volume does not lie chiefly in the destruction of the margins, because that may be avoided easily, and our great modern binders are artists who respect the volume, and are not given to needless ploughing and clipping. The error is in overlooking the fact that the original binding, paper, cloth, or boards, is a part of the book itself, and if we lose it we no longer possess the exact thing as it came into the world; we do not have the book *in full measure*, to borrow the phrase of Mr. Humphreys. These considerations always arouse the wonder of the wayfaring person who thinks that a book is worthy merely because of its contents, and is as well satisfied with a cheap reprint of the *Vicar of Wakefield* as he would be with the two-volume (imperfect) copy of 1766, which brought £82 at Sotheby's sale of the library of the gentleman with an inappropriate name, Mr. William Twopenny, of Woodstock Park, Sittingbourne. It was well said in an English magazine: "It is the continual widening

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of the gulf that separates distinctions which causes one to wonder when the operators will have dug enough, and these operators are the *dilettanti* themselves, who will perhaps never cease from their labors, for they work by the book of arithmetic, with great nicety of precision. Whoever would have imagined, for instance, that the rule relating to 'condition' would have been carried so far as it has been? This is the very precise rule that exists once and for all, and, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, remains always the same. It is the rule that forbids the owner of a valuable book to tamper with it in any way, even though he should think and can prove to his own satisfaction that he has greatly improved its appearance by the process. Hence the stripping off of an old card-board binding to make way for a 'dream' by Zaehnsdorf or some other master of the craft may end in a bookish disaster."

It may be remarked, parenthetically, that even the best binders need specific directions not only as to margins but as to the lettering on the back. It is an old story among bibliophiles that a man who had a valuable and uncut set of Brantôme, and who intrusted it to an artistic but somewhat ignorant binder, received it with the leaves carefully cut and the volumes inscribed: Bran *Tome* I., Bran *Tome* II.,

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Bran *Tome* III., and so on to the ninth volume!¹

The owner of a certain book described in a catalogue which has just been opened was wise in his generation. The book is *Poetry for Children*, by Charles and Mary Lamb, in two volumes, "original gray boards, with red roan backs lettered 'Leicester's Poetry,'" printed for M. J. Godwin, at the Juvenile Library, London, 1809. The cataloguer swells with pride over the fact that it is "a very beautiful, clean copy, and the only one known in its original condition." The modest price is—three thousand dollars.

When we consider the comparatively small attention paid to Lamb in his lifetime by any except devoted personal friends, his humble surroundings, his poverty, it seems strange that a copy of one of his least important works should now command such an extraordinary price. The remarkable interest which the world of to-day feels in his personality cannot be ascribed only to the charm of his writings; it is due to the humanity of the man, even more enduring than his mere literary quality. Recall the number of volumes which have been written *about* him, about the individual and his friends. They are always Lamb's friends, and we seldom find him grouped

¹ *Essay on the Art of Bookbinding*, Du Bois, 36.

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among the friends of some other person. And it is of him that Carlyle wrote, cruelly and harshly: "Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree *insane*. A more pitiful, rickety, gasping, staggering, stammering tomfool I do not know. He is witty by denying truisms and abjuring good manners. His speech wriggles hither and thither with an incessant painful fluctuation; not an opinion in it, or a fact, or even a phrase, that you can thank him for; more like a convulsion fit than natural systole and diastole. Besides, he is now a confirmed, shameless drunkard; *asks* vehemently for gin-and-water in strangers' houses, tipples till he is utterly mad, and is only not thrown out-of-doors because he is too much despised for taking such trouble with him."¹ There is no excuse for this abusiveness, yet Carlyle did not modify his opinion even in his *Reminiscences*, but he added, "yet something, too, of humane, ingenuous, pathetic, sportfully much-enduring." Of course no one at this time needs to be told that the stories of Lamb's supposed intemperance were gross exaggerations.²

I have before me now an interesting relic of the Lambs. It is a letter from Mary Lamb to Hazlitt's wife, written from the Temple, October

¹ *Two Note-Books*, Grolier Club edition, 217.

² *Vide Procter's Memoirs*, De Quincey, P. G. Patmore.

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2, 1811, to congratulate "dear Sarah" on the birth of a son who afterwards became well known as an author and editor. "Charles sends his love," she says, "perhaps, though, he will write a scrap to Hazlitt at the end. He is now looking over me. He is always in my way, for he has had a month's holydays at home, but I am happy to say they end on Monday." It was her gentle bit of fun about the brother who loved her and teased her so. The "scrap" to Hazlitt is written on the same sheet. He says:

"DEAR HAZLITT,—I cannot help accompanying my sister's congratulations to Sarah with some of my own to you on this happy occasion of a man-child being born. Delighted Fancy already sees him some future rich Alderman or opulent merchant, painting, perhaps, a little in his leisure hours for amusement, like the late H. Bunbury, Esq. Pray, are the Winterslow Estates entailed? I am afraid lest the young dog when he grows up should cut down the woods and leave no groves for widows to take their lonesome solace in. The Wern Estate, of course, can only devolve on him in case of your brother leaving no male issue. Well, my blessing & heaven's be upon him & make him like his father, with something a better temper and a smoother head of hair, and then all the men & women must love him. Martin & the Card-boys join in congratulations. Love to Sarah. Sorry we are not within caudle-shot.

"C. LAMB."

A quaint and attractive figure must he have been according to the testimony of all who have recorded their impressions of him. Patmore,

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Carlyle, and Mr. Le Grice all refer to his Jewish look. Patmore calls it a *Rabbinical* look, due, no doubt, to his sallow complexion, his black, crispy hair, and his large, slightly hooked nose. "The leanest of mankind," having what Tom Hood called "immaterial legs," walking slowly with a plantigrade step, he must have drawn to himself the attention of the most careless of wayfarers in Russell Street as he wended his way cityward. What would we not give to listen for a few moments to a fragment of his talk; but the phonograph was then unknown, and if there had been such a thing in the room he would never have talked to it. De Quincey records that in miscellaneous gatherings he said little unless an opening arose for a pun. The fastidious taste of the present day is scornful of puns; I believe that such childish things are altogether unpopular. Would we now tolerate Charles Lamb's parano-masia?

I can never quite make out whether or not the opium-eater really liked Lamb. With all his innocent *pose* as a disinterested and eccentric man of letters (I believe that his eccentricity was not wholly unaffected), De Quincey had a spice of maliciousness about him, and while he had much that was pleasant to say about Elia, his remarks concerning Lamb's "eclipse of sleep" after the wine of the dinner had a tinge of sarcastic in-

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dulgence. The man who drank laudanum from a decanter was rejoiced to find a compatriot who absorbed other dangerous fluids. One would hardly care to have his post-prandial slumber given to posterity in this fashion: "It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person, laden with superfluous flesh, and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas, wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aerial gossamer than of earthly cobweb—more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upward from the flesh." It is poetic, but after all it means that the subject of this dainty sketch drank more than was good for him at dinner, and went to sleep after it. But De Quincey was prone to indulge in exaggerations and to the giving of sly stabs to his luckless acquaintances. Wonderful master of English speech that he was, with all his faults we love him. He was a charming old rascal, a curiosity of literature, a "wee intellectual wizard," as Masson calls him; like "the phantom in 'Hamlet,'" according to Hood; and of him saith Thomas Carlyle, our bitter critic of Lamb: "When he sate, you would have taken him by candle-light for the beautifullest little child, blue-eyed, sparkling face, had there not

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been a something, too, which said, 'Eccovi'—this child has been in hell."

In the cabinet by the north window are a few letters, all in the delicate chirography and bluish ink of the wizard of the laudanum-flask, and I am fond of them. One is enclosed in a faded envelope, with a postage-stamp of half a century ago, addressed to Raymond Yates. I have a sense of guilt in reproducing it, but I cannot refrain from giving it, for it has some literary interest, and almost everything connected with this charming man of letters appeals to lovers of books.

"EDINBURGH, Monday, *June 9, 1845.*

"SIR,—I have this moment received your note, dated June 5, by a messenger from the Messrs. Blackwood. You do me too much honor in thinking it worth your while to inquire after a *Life of Milton* on the ground (which you courteously assign) that it was written by myself. It is true that I wrote such a Life; but it could not have made more than a pamphlet in point of bulk; and I fear much that this slender size, so incommensurate to the grandeur of the subject, will turn out to be the most distinguished of its merits. It was written in 1831, and, if I remember rightly, for some General Biographical Series then issuing under the auspices of the Society (I know not whether now defunct or whether in fact it ever had a real existence) 'for diffusing useful knowledge.' But in whatever body or shadow or fiction of a shadow the property of the work might finally have vested—my own communication with that dim Abstraction (doubtful then to my mind, and more so through a cloud of years) lay through Mr. Charles Knight, the publisher, at that time living in

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Pall Mall East. In treating so lightly a sketch, which (considering its theme) *ought* to have been worth a graver notice, I assure you that I speak most unaffectedly; it may happen to be better than I suspect; but the truth is that I have never seen it in print. Nor should I feel sure that it *was* in print were it not that some years ago I observed four or five times in newspapers a sentence or two quoted as from some recent *Life of Milton* which I recognized as my own both in respect to the thought and to the expression. If by its subject it ought to have been good, on the other hand, by the circumstances of its composition it ought to be intolerably bad. For it was written, as too often what I write *is* written, without any books for reference; under sufferings which would now be indescribable—having faded even to my own memory through their own intensity, and under so humble an inspiration as that furnished by certain owners of gold. The sketch of Shakespeare in the *Enc. Brit.*, which you mention in terms too flattering, was also mine. But it stands in *all* respects on the same level, I imagine, with the *Milton*, and also (as at the moment I recollect) with a *Pope* published in the same vast Miscellany. It was written with even more want of books for reference; it was written in the intervals of suffering greater if possible; and it was written upon a motive not at all more elevated, unless Scotch bank-notes have any precedence in point of dignity over English sovereigns. I remain, sir, with thanks for the interest you express in anything I have written,

“Your obedient humble servant,

“THOMAS DE QUINCEY.”

In a moment of carelessness I once spoke of De Quincey as an “opium-swiller,” for which I was censured by judicious friends who thought the epithet vulgar. The word “swiller” is not ele-

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gant, I confess, but it was used by Sir Walter Scott and other well-recognized masters of English, and I think that it accurately describes the methods of the strange creature who dealt with words as well as with opium in an Oriental fashion. In 1841, his biographer tells us, he "reached something like five thousand drops of laudanum per day." James Payn relates an incident at luncheon, when he was about to pour out a glass from a decanter which stood next to him, and Miss De Quincey whispered: "You must not take that; it is not port wine, as you think." It was, in fact, laudanum, to which De Quincey presently helped himself with the greatest *sang-froid*.¹

"A strangely fragile, unsubstantial, and puerile figure, wherein, however, resided one of the most potent and original spirits that ever frequented a tenement of clay." Thus saith John Hill Burton, and with this concise characterization of him we may say farewell to him for a season.

¹ Payn's Recollections, *Cornhill Magazine*, April, 1884.

XIV

Theatrical literature.

ALMOST all men are fond of reading about actors and actresses, dramatists and plays. The love of the mimic world is common to prince and peasant, to noblemen and to nobodies. Hazlitt reminds us of the saying of Rochefoucauld, that the reason why lovers were so fond of each other's company was that they were always talking about themselves, and adds that the same reason almost might be given for the interest we feel in talking about plays and players; plays are the "brief chronicles of the time," the epitome of human life and manners. It is interesting to observe the abundance of the literature which has grown up about the stage, the number of columns which have been written about matters theatrical—gossip, criticism, and history. We buy and we read these books with avidity, and many of us are thereby led into gross extravagance in the acquisition of "dramatic portraits" wherewith to adorn and to "extra-illustrate" them.

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One form of theatrical literature seems to have become obsolete; we do not now publish collections of plays like those of Dolby, Bell, and Mrs. Inchbald, so common a century or so ago. Somehow one of these collections is as dreary a thing as one would care to encounter on a rainy day in a country-house. It is strange that one never finds anything of interest in such circumstances. A young lady once told me that she was compelled to spend a stormy Sunday in an English inn, whose library consisted of *Wright's Farriery* and *The Lives of Coxwell and Glaister*, the aëronauts, since which memorable day she has been an encyclopædia of useful information about horses and balloons.

I have often tried to enjoy these collections of plays, but the effort has been fruitless. Some students may read them, but not many, I am sure. In our time the judicious have decided that few plays are worth collecting—acting-plays at least. My experience is that good acting-plays make poor literature, and good reading-plays very poor things to listen to or to behold; but I am not prepared to copyright this profound observation, as I have an impression that it has been made by large numbers of people who were confident that it was original with them.

I cannot believe that many can now take pleasure in the comedies of Congreve, for ex-

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ample, unless they happen to be students of the life and literature of his period. One of his most faithful admirers admits that "his plots hang fire, are difficult to follow, and are not worth remembering." Mr. Henley speaks of his "deliberate and unmitigable baseness of morality," and Thackeray refers to "his tawdry playhouse taper." His grossness of speech may be forgiven, because it was common in his time; but I complain chiefly of the utter worthlessness of his compositions—worthlessness when viewed in the spirit of this comparatively decent age. It revolts me to hear or to read the talk of some men about his "sparkling dialogue" and his "delicate raillery"; his sparkle is that of the proverbial rotten mackerel, which stinks and shines. Yet Mr. G. S. Street rather implies that Congreve's work was much better than Sheridan's in the "School for Scandal," and he sneers at Tom Robertson's "Caste," which he calls "an even river of sloppy sentiment, where the acme of chivalrous delicacy is to refrain from lighting a cigarette in a woman's presence, and where the triumph of humor is for a guardsman to take a kettle off the fire." He may be right about "Caste," which does not seem to me as delightful as it did a generation ago; but to put Sheridan's great comedy after Congreve's! Perhaps it is only the

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clever fooling of a whimsical writer who, like the Major-General in the *Pirates of Penzance*, has "a pretty taste for paradox," and who asserts and maintains a doubtful proposition merely for the sport of it.

Most of these dramas of the so-called Restoration, the works of Van Brugh, Wycherley, Congreve, and their contemporaries, have animation enough, but there is nothing real about them; they teach nothing; there is no heart in them; they are harsh, unpleasant, with an "under-current of tartness." As M. Taine says, "There streams up from all these scenes a smell of cooking, the noise of riot, the odor of a dung-hill."¹

Lamb tried hard to defend Congreve in that pleasant essay *On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century*, but it was an unsuccessful effort. "The great art of Congreve," says the delightful Elia, "is especially shown in this, that he has entirely excluded from his scenes (some little generousities in the part of Angelica perhaps excepted) not only anything like a faultless character, but any pretensions to goodness or good feelings whatsoever." Upon this I move for judgment.

We may find material for a due compre-

¹ *History of English Literature*, vol. ii., 417.

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hension of the tastes of our ancestors—our English ancestors, from whom we inherit our language, if not our lives—in turning over the pages of the third edition of *Plays Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs. Behn*, published in 1724, “printed for Mary Poulson, and sold by A. Bettesworth in Pater-noster Row, and F. Clay without Temple-Bar.” They used that word “ingenious” in those days rather more freely than we do, and I suppose it meant witty and clever. My copy of the book has the old calf binding and the elaborate book-plate of one “George Raper, Gent,” but it lacks the portrait, and is therefore only a specimen of the *dissecta membra* of collectors. Afra, Aphra, Aphara, or Ayfara Behn, whose Christian name was spelled in divers ways, has long been celebrated in an unpleasant way; but, although she was certainly without delicacy, she was really ingenious in the sense of her own time—and she was “the first female writer who lived by her pen in England.”¹ I am not positive that her fame ought not to rest more surely upon the fact that she introduced milk-punch into England. Mr. Gosse admits that her plays are coarse, and he does not attempt “to defend her manners as correct or her attitude to the world as delicate.”

¹ Edmund Gosse, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

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He calls her the George Sand of the Restoration, the *chère maîtresse* to such men as Dryden, Otway, and Southerne, who all honored her with their friendship. Her novels, included in the same edition, are perhaps worse than her dramatic effusions. It is not easy for us to comprehend how such things could ever have attracted the favorable notice of decent people or could ever have been regarded as ornaments of literature.

The records of the stage in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries are filled rather too generously with the accounts of actresses and their relations to royalty. Among them is the *Public and Private Life of that Celebrated Actress, Miss Bland, otherwise Mrs. Lord, or Mrs. Jordan*, which purports to have been written "by a confidential friend of the departed," and was published by J. Dunscombe, 19 Little Queen Street, London, about 1830. Mr. Joseph Knight says that it is somewhat scandalous and exceedingly rare. My own copy has in it an autograph letter of the fair Dora, Dorothea, or Dorothy—for she had almost as many Christian names as surnames—and it has been "extended" to two volumes by the insertion of many portraits, views, and old play-bills of her day. As is usual with portraits of that period, no one of Mrs. Jordan's portraits bears any resemblance to any of the others. Sometimes one is inclined

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to believe that the fabricators of these curious pictures of noted people may have fallen into the habit of doing what some genius did for my first edition of Ford's *True George Washington*, where you may discover a portrait labelled "Nelly Custis," which is only a familiar representation of that tragic muse, the great Sarah Siddons. All of the portraits of the fascinating Dora, whose person, said Hazlitt, "was large, soft, and generous, like her soul,"¹ are the likenesses of a pretty woman, and it can easily be understood why the chuckle-headed Duke of Clarence, later his Majesty King William IV., found her irresistible, and their ten Fitzclarence children, including Lord Adolphus, Rear Admiral, and George Augustus Frederick, Earl of Munster, became ornaments of the proudly born nobility of Great Britain. The Duke allowed her £1000 a year, but, at the suggestion of George III., is said to have written to her proposing a reduction to £500. Her answer consisted of the bottom part of a play-bill bearing these words: "No money returned after the rising of the curtain." With all her faults and frailties, she must have been far better worth knowing than the royal noodle, yclept in common parlance "Silly Billy," who honored her

¹ *Dramatic Essays*, 49-50. Edition of 1851.

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with what he was pleased to call his affections.

In the same book there is a colored portrait of a woman whose beauty is striking and undeniable, a saucy sort of beauty, and she became the occasion of one of those national scandals which from time to time have adorned the annals of the British army. I do not mean to assert that such scandals are peculiar to the political history of our cousins over-sea, for there is a man still living, honored as a soldier and as a lawyer, who could tell, if he would, a story of one of our administrations and of the fall of a certain cabinet officer which would be as interesting as any romance ever written. He told it once to me, in the leisure hours of a long railway journey, and I am sorely tempted to betray the confidence of that chat over the perpetual cigars of a Pullman private compartment, but I sternly resist. Comedy and tragedy, with the ruin of a Presidential candidacy, were strangely mingled in that graphic narrative; the passions, the jealousies, the rivalries of politics were all depicted vividly upon that canvas which he unrolled before me as we smoked and talked in the delightful unreserve of a friendly communion. But there are living persons who might suffer if the truth were told, and I respect the confidences of my friend, who will, I

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hope, leave some record of that curious episode in our political history. Returning to the portrait, it is one of the many counterfeit presentiments of the notorious Mary Anne Clarke, actress, who died as late as 1852, at the respectable age of seventy-four. Who can imagine that pretty person at seventy-four? She enjoyed the protection, if one may call it so, of that renowned warrior-son of King George III., the illustrious Frederick Augustus, Duke of York and Albany, who became Bishop of Osnaburg at the age of six months (fairly young for a church dignitary) and commander-in-chief of the army, without a victory to his credit, at thirty-five, after a career in the field which makes the memory of James Wilkinson respectable.

Somewhere in the mass of miscellaneous matter relegated to the dark corners of the hall I might find Mary Anne's *Authentic Memoirs*, a shabby old volume, with an autograph letter of hers inserted therein, if I had the patience to search for it. It is quite a delight now and then to burrow in the purlieus and to discover forgotten prizes. In a newspaper I saw recently an atrocious cut representing a house on fire, the firemen heroically struggling with the problem, and the owner calmly reading a small volume, saying, "Why, this fire is a good thing; I have found a book I lost ten years ago." At all

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events, Mary Anne had a brief career, almost unrecorded, upon what are called "the boards," and suddenly she bloomed as the possessor of a great house in Gloucester Place, keeping ten horses and twenty servants, "including three professed men-cooks," whatever that may mean. She received large sums of money for her influence in obtaining appointments in the army, and somehow the Duke of York made the appointments, although he was acquitted by Parliament of the charge of corruption preferred against him. Perhaps the Duke was only an easy-going dupe, misguided by his fondness for the fair Clarke, and I do not propose to try his case over again at this late day, for I am glad that he escaped conviction, because he did much for the comfort of the soldiers and for the general improvement of the service, despite his inefficiency as a military commander. As for Mary Anne, her acceptance of £7000 and a pension of £400 a year for suppressing her edition of the royal lover's letters makes me think that she was not as much entitled to our admiration as poor Dora Jordan, the mistress of William IV, who, as far as I can find out, never did harm to any one.

There is a distinction between theatrical literature and dramatic literature, as Mr. Robert Lowe points out in his *Bibliographical Account*.

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Dramatic literature deals with the plays and theatrical literature with the players and not the plays themselves. I confess that I am weary of the dramatic, of the interminable controversies concerning Shakespeare - Bacon, and of the innumerable essays on the playwrights of the olden time. As Lord Beaconsfield advised a young man seeking his counsel never to ask who wrote the "Letters of Junius," I would urge a friend never to suggest a doubt about the fact that Shakespeare wrote his own plays. One might as well discuss the tariff or the currency; deadly boredom lies in all such topics.

I prefer to recur to modern days, and to take down from the shelf just behind the writing-desk the volume of Lester Wallack's *Memories of Fifty Years*. How delightful it is for a fairly old New-Yorker to recall the days when the handsome Lester was our object of sincere adoration, the *preux chevalier* of the stage, the one actor who attracted the love and the admiration of all of us adolescents. No one can now rival him in our middle-aged affections. I am not one of those who are always prating about the superiority of the actors of by-gone days, for I find many who carry forward the ancient traditions, but Lester Wallack was unapproachable in his peculiar sphere; he was always a gentleman on the stage, and unaffectedly so, relying on no

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tricks of costume or affectations of speech. For this reason we boys who used to save our quarters to buy an occasional seat in the old theatre at Broadway and Thirteenth Street learned how to behave ourselves, although we did not have the chance of doing all those delightful things which Wallack did so gracefully, because, somehow, we never found ourselves in such delightful situations. Had we been able to encounter the simple problems presented in the Wallack plays we were confident that we could have borne off the laurels just as easily and as jauntily as Lester Wallack bore them. I used to dream of his side-whiskers, so contemporaneous and convincing; and his legs were almost poetic. Who that ever saw him in "Rosedale," or in "The Veteran," or in any of the standard plays which are never produced in these degenerate times, can ever forget him!

It is probable that play-goers of this generation would stare in dissatisfied astonishment at the plays and players of forty years ago and call them stupid and prosy. That is the experience of all times, and the luxurious Roman who sat in bored silence through the "Heauton-Timoroumenos" of the popular Publius Terentius Afer may have regretted "The Frogs" of Aristophanes. Our revered fathers used to shake their heads even at Wallack, and thought that all the dra-

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matic performances of the sixties were degenerate. So we have with us even now the praisers of past times who sneer at Ternina, Nordica, and Melba, and tell us how much better Jenny Lind was, and how infinitely superior the piping tones of Mario were to the manly notes of Jean de Reszke. We gray-bearded devotees of reminiscence easily recall the alleged wickedness of a certain play called "The Black Crook," wherein the loveliness of the female form divine was displayed in a liberal, gorgeous, and spectacular fashion, but when we compare it with the present-day productions of burlesques and operettas, the light artillery of the drama, the old show seems almost Diana-like in its modesty. Whither are we tending? When I dream of what may come three decadès hence I am inclined to hide myself in the retired precincts of the Century Club and blush furiously. It is all a matter of custom, but I cannot help feeling a sense of sorrow at the decline of good taste when I put in parallel columns the coarse and common crudities of Weber and Fields and the sweet dignity of the plays which used to fill the old Wallack Theatre with crowds of cultured people. Yet I go to Weber & Fields', and I laugh at their ridiculous antics, while at home I sigh over the decline of the theatre and mourn over the departed glories of the legitimate drama.

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I find in my copy of Lester Wallack's *Memories* a fairly curious document signed with the name of Colley Cibber in his own autograph, which I picked up at an auction sale, and which, with some fifty others, has been inlaid by Mr. Moore, of Bradstreet's, and bound up in company with many portraits. It reads:

"Property Bill, Saturday, Nov. ye 12th, Friday. Lan-	
cashire Witches—	
24 Bunches of Laurell for ye Tree	0:3:0
For a large Earthen Pan and Two Basons	0:1:0
For Resons and Almons As Usual	0:0:9
Pack Thread for ye Flying	0:0:4
Gun Powder for Mr. Johnson	0:0:3
Lightning	0:0:6
Blood	0:0:2
<hr/>	
Six Shillings	0:6:0
B. BOOTH, ROB. WILKS, C. CIBBER."	

Here is also the programme of that performance of "Hamlet" given in Wallack's honor on the evening of May 21, 1888, when, with Booth and Barrett, Frank Mayo and John Gilbert, in the company, Joseph Jefferson appeared as First Grave-digger and Florence as Second Grave-digger. It bears the pencilled inscription, "John Gilbert; Lester Wallack, with best wishes," bringing back the memory of one of the most sterling men and accomplished actors of his day.

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John Gilbert gave a dignity to his calling and made men understand that the actor could be an artist as surely and as truly as a great painter or a sculptor is an artist. We who are familiar with his best impersonations will always carry with us a feeling of satisfaction that we were permitted to enjoy the charm of his personality and the delightful work of a master of his art.

There was old George Holland, too, whose skip and snuffle used to seem so irresistibly comic, and whose fame was queerly perpetuated in connection with the popular name of one of New York's churches — "The Little Church Around the Corner." The story is too familiar for repetition. Holland's *Memorial*, published in 1871, enlarged by Augustin Daly by added portraits, play-bills, pictures of theatres, and autographs, so that it comprises two quarto volumes, fell into my hands when Daly's treasures were dispersed, and it is like going back to boyhood to glance over its pages. But if I tried to give an idea of its contents I would exhaust the patience of the "gentle reader," and I forbear. For all details of New York's theatres in those remote days I refer you to Laurence Hutton and his delightful books.

XV

Of *éditions de luxe*, old booksellers, quotations, and indexes.

DURING the past few years we have been persecuted continually by publishers with what are styled *éditions de luxe*—a phrase which ought to be banished from our language. It should never have been admitted to the pages of the *Century Dictionary*, a ponderous but useful compilation about which I feel, as Bill Nye said he did: "I like it immensely. It is quite thrilling in places, and although somewhat jerky in style and verbose, perhaps, its word-painting is accurate and delightful." The *Century* adds to its definition the truthful and significant remark that "*éditions de luxe* are usually sold by subscription."

We who have suffered the assaults of the subscription agent, that insidious product of modern civilization, his unwarranted invasions of our privacy, his shameless intrusions upon us at our places of business, and his stubborn refusals to take himself off with his delusive

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specimen pages, have good reason to admit the fact alleged by the *Century*, with a sense of mortification at having often pusillanimously surrendered to his arts in sheer weariness of spirit. It is pitiful to read of the methods which these sharks employed in the case of Mr. Peter Marié, who was made to buy books at ten times their value by a series of bunco-like operations which would make a Bulgarian bandit blush for envy.

When the copyright of some famous series of books has expired, the astute publisher finds it convenient to put forth a new edition, printed upon some pretentiously named paper, with "deckle edges," containing some indifferent pictures made easily and inexpensively by the modern methods of photography, binding it in an imitation half-morocco scarcely to be distinguished from the genuine, and announcing it as "limited to 1000 copies." If some scraps of the author's handwriting can be obtained, a fragment is inserted in each "set," and we have an "Autograph Edition." The unwary purchaser may, if he choose, have his name printed on the back of the title-page, where it is falsely asserted that the book was printed by Jones & Co. for "John Doe" or "Richard Roe," as the case may be. Then an exorbitant price is paid, the "set" reposes upon the book-shelves of the

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buyer, who never looks at it again, and when, after his richly deserved bankruptcy, the library is sent to the auction-room, the second-hand book-dealer carries it off for an insignificant fraction of its cost to the original victim.

Men have begun to learn the truth about such matters and to beware of the book-agent. I have found a sure way to rid myself of the pests. I have made a valid and subsisting contract with a certain man to buy subscription editions only through him, and I never buy any through him. Of course, I cannot constitutionally do any act tending to impair the obligation of a contract.

There is another favorite method of involving a book-lover in trouble and perplexity—the bringing forth in an author's lifetime of a "complete edition" of his works. It ought to be obvious to an ordinary intelligence that such a thing as a complete edition can never be produced as long as the writer retains his mind and his power of tongue or of pen, unless for a valuable consideration he shall have promised, covenanted, and agreed that he will compose no more. As I have already confessed, I paid a silly price for twenty-two volumes of Mark Twain, and as Mark fortunately survived and has ever since continued—long may he continue!—to turn out page upon page of fiction, humor, and philosophy, I must needs go on

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squandering money, or my set will be worthless when it is passed over to Bangs's—or, more accurately, to Anderson's, for the old house, dear to all New York book-fanciers, seems to be vanishing. I have also a tale of woe about Bret Harte and Kipling.

The true collector, as we know, does not occupy his mind about the prospective value of his accumulations, and we know, also, that the inheritors of his stores seldom care for anything except the money-worth of the volumes which he cherishes so fondly. A collector's wife, proud as she may be of the books which her spouse has gathered, is usually impatient with the collection, however much she may appreciate its importance. She is disturbed, and I do not blame her, because of its unruly interference with the neatness of the *ménage*, and its capacity for absorbing all that tiresome dust which is her chief enemy. I am inclined to give her my sympathy. She has ample justification for her objections to the litter of books which makes the whole house seem like the bewildering lofts of our old friend Bukowski of Arsenalsgaten, in Stockholm, and I know of nothing more dusty and disorderly than they are, with their appalling but attractive mixture of books, prints, old furniture, and antiquities of every description. I have just found a newspaper clipping con-

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taining some truth. The writer, who lets his pen wander playfully on, says: "It is not often that a book-collector's wife and children share in his peculiar tastes. The good woman who has groaned for years at the increasing clutter, and who has asked ironically where she is to put the latest purchase, has now her mild revenge. She sends for an auctioneer; he makes a catalogue; he carries off all the property by the cart-load; there is a sale, and there is a mournful scattering." The same pleasant writer reminds us that circulation is the condition of collecting, and that the breaking-up of libraries is the life of that charming dissipation. We must not mourn, he says, too much at the dispersion of collections. "But for this, we should be without the generous guild of second-hand booksellers, those paragons of honorable tradesmen, who were never known to charge sixpence more for a book than its worth."

This is what Artemus Ward would call "intense sukkasm"; but dealers in second-hand books are surely entitled to some return for their labors and troubles, as well as for their knowledge and experience. Their prices, I know, are curiously elastic, but there is no standard about old books, and a regular customer may well receive more consideration than a casual buyer. The reference to the

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“second-hand” men reminds me that not only in Nassau Street, but even in Centre Street, we used to have book-stalls. There they were crowded in among brass and copper workers, paper manufacturers, type-founders, and Tombs lawyers. There were some of these dens in Eighth, Sixth, Fourth, and Second avenues. Like most New-Yorkers, I know very little about my own city outside of the beaten tracks which we traverse from home to office and on the various social errands we are all obliged to perform. Wherefore I am unable to say whether or not there are any of these odd stalls remaining at this day. I do not find them now. They seem to have vanished with the advent of that iconoclast, the electric - railway car. The writer quoted above wondered how the old men who kept them—it was always an old man—could possibly earn a living. He relates that a curious inquirer once asked one of these ancient mysteries how he managed it. His answer contained a volume of domestic and political economy condensed in a single sentence. “I make a living,” said he, “by selling my books for more than I pay for them, and save money by living on half what I make.”

Those who care for such things, and I trust that there are not a few of them, will derive much enjoyment from the reading of Mr.

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William Loring Andrews's interesting little *brochure* called *The Old Booksellers of New York, and Other Papers*, printed in 1895; and I am pleased with my ownership of one of the one hundred and forty-two copies, although mine is on ordinary, hand-made paper. I bought it for the contents, and the merely fanciful incident of Japan paper was of no moment to me, much as I admire all that is Japanese, so dear to Howard Mansfield and to a certain lady whom I regard most highly. Mansfield is well known as an enthusiastic expert in all that appertains to the art of the Yankees of the Orient, and enjoys the distinction of having at least three distinct fads, which must make him *terque beatus*—three times as happy as any other man can be.

In the dainty little book Mr. Andrews discourses delightfully of William Gowans, of Joseph Sabin, of John Bradburn, and of Francis Lawlor, *et id omne genus*; and he says, with a slightly plaintive accent: "Indulgence in fond recollections of by-gone days is considered a sign of approaching senility, and we are assured that the present days are a vast improvement upon any that have preceded them." Doubtless they are—with exceptions; for the book-hunter with a slender purse, beyond all question, has seen his best days in this or any other land.

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Alike from the Quai Voltaire, Piccadilly, and
Nassau Street,

“ . . . the fabled treasure flees,
Grown rarer with the fleeting years;
In rich men's shelves they take their ease.”

I am grieved, however, that he should speak of “the wolf's wild howl on Onalaska's shore,” for if he had only turned aside to take from the shelf his copy of the *Pleasures of Hope* he would have discovered that the thing which, according to the poet, was “wafted across the wave's tumultuous roar,” was “the wolf's long howl from *Oonalaska's* shore.” I am taking my quotation from the fifth edition of Campbell's poem, the copy which he gave to his sister Mary.

I do not pretend to set myself up as a miracle of accuracy; unfortunately, I have been caught in many blunders, and I have covered myself with sackcloth and ashes whenever I have been detected in misquoting. I admit the wisdom of *Notes and Queries* in the edict “Be accurate” and “always verify quotations if possible,” as well as the soundness of the advice that one should “on discovering a misquotation or an erroneous reference in one of your own books correct it without delay.” But no one cares much about my mistake in making Emerson say, “If the red slayer *thinks* he slays,” when the great New England transcendentalist said “*think*

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he slays." I believe that the world will continue to revolve even if I did attempt to improve upon Emerson.

Almost as unimportant are some of the trifling errors which we find in the pages of some of our favorite historians. In the first edition of Volume I. of John Bach McMaster's entertaining *History of the People of the United States* he gives a graphic account of the troubles of the settlers in the Wyoming Valley, and, referring to John Armstrong, commander of the militia in the strife and turmoil which beset those settlers, he says: "He had served with distinction in the war, had risen to be a major in the Continental Army, and is still remembered as the author of the famous Newburg Addresses."¹ This John Armstrong was, in fact, a brigadier-general in the army of the Revolution, and the John Armstrong who "rose to be a major," who was Secretary of War under Madison, and an inefficient one, and who was the person responsible for the Newburg Addresses, was the youngest son of the man McMaster meant to talk about. A good deal of this trouble is due to the folly of naming a man of distinction after his father; parents should know better.

Woodrow Wilson, the skilful master of style, made a similar error in his *History of the Ameri-*

¹ McMaster, vol. i., 214.

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can People, an error amusing by reason of its insignificance, and yet noteworthy as an instance of the fallibility of the best historians. In mentioning General William Henry Harrison, that colorless and unimportant American President of one month's service, he said: "General Harrison was the hero of a well remembered battle in which the redoubtable Tippecanoe, the 'Prophet' of the Indians who hung upon the northwestern frontiers, had been routed, in 1811, and the western country quieted and made safe." Of course, Dr. Wilson knew that the prophet's name was Ellskwatawa, and that Tippecanoe was the river or creek on whose banks was fought the little battle which thirty years later was no mean factor in a great political campaign, and did much to bring the victorious general into the Chief Magistracy. The blunder which Wilson made in the heat and hurry of composition is of no consequence, but we are all of us secretly pleased to detect a university president in a trifling mistake. "That's all."

McMaster might have said, as a Princeton professor, seventy-odd years ago, foreign in birth and education, said when he called a lady, at an evening party, by the name which did not belong to her: "Ah, I see I have ze wrong sow by ze ear!" He had imprudently trusted to an undergraduate for instruction in English idiom.

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It was of the same "Benedictus Jaeger, A.M., Ger. et Ital. Ling. et ab 1836 Ling. Recen. Prof." — I quote from an old Triennial Catalogue — it is told that, tutored by his mischievous mentor, he began his first lecture in these words: "It is damn pleasant to go out in the morning and hear the cussed little birds sing." In these days our enlightened collegians would say that Professor Jaeger was an easy mark.

The reference to William Henry Harrison naturally leads us to think of his grandson Benjamin, a sound and successful lawyer, with a power of speech and a strength of mind rare in his generation. He was never a popular man, and his limitations as a politician and as a statesman were manifest. He won his fame by his mental vigor, and as an advocate before the courts he had few equals, uniting a comprehensive knowledge of the law with the ability to express his views in clear, forcible, and eloquent English. But he was personally somewhat repellent, and he did not disclose to men those generous impulses which made Clay, Douglas, and Blaine the idols of their supporters—men who failed to reach the goal of American political ambition.

It is an obvious reflection that most men, if allowed their choice, would prefer the places of Clay and Douglas in history to those of Polk and Buchanan.

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The younger Harrison furnished a friend of mine with an example of the danger which besets the experimental genealogist and of the perils which attend too confident a reliance on the assertions of the encyclopædias. Biographical dictionaries informed a certain man that Benjamin Harrison was the son of John Scott Harrison, who was the son of William Henry and of Anna, the daughter of John Cleves Symmes. Symmes was a New Jersey judge, and his son of the same name was the author of what was known as "Symmes's Hole," based upon his theory that the earth is a hollow sphere, open at the poles for the admission of light, and containing within it six or seven concentric hollow spheres, also open at the poles. The *Cyclopædia of American Biography* (vol. vi., 16) told him concerning the elder Symmes: "His wife was a daughter of Governor William Livingston, and his daughter Anna became the wife of William H. Harrison." The amateur fell into the trap. As one of his ancestors was a sister of Governor Livingston, he wrote to General Benjamin Harrison, with whom he was associated in some legal business, referring to their remote relationship, and received this courteous reply:

"I wish I could confirm your genealogical record, for, I assure you, it would be pleasant to know that we were of kin. The fact is, however, that my grandmother,

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Mrs. William Henry Harrison, was the daughter of the first wife of Judge John Cleves Symmes, a Miss Tuthill, of Long Island. Judge Symmes, I think, was married three times—first to Miss Tuthill, then to Miss Livingston, and then to Miss Halsey, of New Jersey, though I am not sure as to the order of the last two events.”

A Triennial Catalogue, particularly if it is in pseudo-Latin, as Princeton's used to be, is not a very delightful literary companion. It is very like an index, but even such prosy, wearisome, and necessary things as indexes — or indices, if you must be prim and precise—may sometimes be amusing; witness the ancient tale of the entry, “Best, Mr. Justice: his great mind.” Everybody knows the humor of the index of the *Autocrat*, and, indeed, of the indexes of all the immortal Breakfast-Table Series. Some years ago an observing student called attention to a pamphlet in the Boston Athenæum Library called *The Beauties of Fox, North, and Burke*, compiled by George Chalmers, and published in 1784, whose ten-page index contains such gems as these:

“*Accursed obstinacy*, Lord North charged with it.

“*Impudently*, Lord North accused of it.

“*North, Lord*, has been suckled with the milk of the Treasury.

“*Puppet*, Lord North called one.

“*Threshold*, Mr. Fox cannot have the idea of approaching Lord North's.”

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An index of this kind has charms which surpass those of the book itself.

The late Doctor Franklin Benjamin Hough, Ph.D., M.D., an industrious compiler, who became involved in an unpleasant dispute with the Rivington Club, one of the numerous book-clubs of the sixties, was dubbed "Index Hough" because of his proclivities for indexes, the books which he edited having more pages of index than they contained of text.¹ I am not inclined to censure him.

" . . . Index learning turns no student pale,
Yet holds the eel of science by the tail."

It is true that Glanvill, in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, said: "Methinks 'tis a pitiful piece of knowledge that can be learnt from an index, and a poor ambition to be rich in the inventory of another's treasures"; but I cannot agree altogether with Glanvill, even if he did have some premonition of the telegraph when he wrote, as early as 1661, "To confer at the distance of the Indies by sympathetick contrivances may be as natural to future times as to us is a litterary correspondence." I love a good index, for in these days of stress and hurry it is an excellent aid to those who love books for what is in them rather than for their rarity or their antiquity.

¹ Growoll's *American Book Clubs*, 198.

XVI

Of changes in fashion; privately printed books; Dibdin; the honor of books.

IT is not a profoundly original reflection, but it is nevertheless true, that changes in literary fashions are as frequent as changes in the fashions of dress. One seldom finds any originality in discourses about books, old books at least, and most of the sage outgivings of modern commentators are merely old things clothed in a new garment. The man who demolished Southey's *Thalaba* in the *Edinburgh Review* of October, 1802, justly proclaimed, in the awful and overpowering style which reviewers then were wont to adopt, that "originality, we are persuaded, is rarer than mere alteration." I have long since given up the idea that anybody can possibly say anything absolutely new about any book more than a month old, unless it be something false and absurd; wherefore I shall not make any fruitless attempts. Huxley had a friend who, he said, was one of the most original thinkers

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in the world; but he never emitted an original thought, as, never having read anything, he was unaware that others had come to identical conclusions.¹

Revolutions in literary taste are as common as revolutions used to be in South American republics. It is not unprofitable to call to mind some of the books which were once thought to be destined for immortality, but which in the course of time were cast away among the flotsam and jetsam of literature. Our messages to the world are often lost in the transmission. Porson wrote to Archdeacon Travis: "Mr. Travis and I may address our letters to posterity, but they will never be delivered according to the direction." Dr. Johnson, in his *Lives of the Poets*, gives the biographies of such men as Walsh, Sprat, Fenton, Hammond, Broome, and Pomfret. "Why is Pomfret the most popular of English poets?" asked Southey. "The fact is certain and the solution would be useful."² "It might have been demanded with equal propriety why London Bridge is built of Parian marble," sneered Campbell.³ Johnson says: "Pomfret's *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations;

¹ Bodley's *France*, 112.

² Southey's *Specimens*, vol. i., 91.

³ Campbell's *Specimens*, 314.

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such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*." How soon his fame departed! There is quaint vigor in the lines from his poem on "Reason":

How do we know that what we know is true?
How shall we falsehood fly, and truth pursue?
Let none then here his certain knowledge boast;
'Tis all but probability at most;
This is the easy purchase of the mind,
The vulgar's treasure, which we soon may find!
But truth lies hid, and ere we can explore
The glittering gem, our fleeting life is o'er.

But *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* has only two extracts from Pomfret, neither of them familiar, and neither of them taken from his most conspicuous work. Pomfret's name is not to be found in Johnson's *New Universal Cyclopædia*—one of the most useful works of its kind—and he has but seven brief lines devoted to him in the dear, shabby old *Encyclopædia Americana*, edited by that grave and omniscient scholar, Francis Lieber. Let no one infer that these are my only encyclopædias; I cite them because, if Pomfret deserved remembrance by readers of to-day, he would surely have been mentioned with praise in those compendiums.

Abraham Cowley, said by Milton to have been

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third in the list of England's greatest poets—Spenser and Shakespeare his leaders—was once more popular than Milton himself, but only about eighty years after Cowley's death Pope asked, "Who now reads Cowley?" Who, indeed, but the few—the men whom at the club and at the dinner-table we speak of as scholarly, with a slight accent of condescension—read Cowley, or Waller, or John Donne? "It may be safely affirmed," said Campbell of Cowley, "that of fourteen hundred pages of verse which he has left, not a hundred are worth reading." Donne was the "best good-natured man with the worst-natured Muse."

A very kindly critic who lives in a prosperous New England city questioned an assertion of mine to the effect that Cowper is practically unread, and says, with quiet and pitying smile—I can see the smile—"there are many persons who still read and enjoy his poetry." He wonders how I can say "calmly and condescendingly that 'John Gilpin' may possibly boast some readers even at this day." I did not mean to say it condescendingly, but I did say it calmly, and after mature reflection, some inquiry among men of cultivation, and an observation of a good many years. With all respect to my amiable lover of Cowper, and I do not yield to him in my admiration of the poet's simplicity

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and strength, I say it again because it is true. I say further that of the millions who now peruse the printed pages of popular volumes, only the select, the chosen ones, read the *Task*. I am not talking of scholars and students in New England, but of the people of the time, the people who purchase and devour the multitudinous story-books which pour from the presses and make fortunes for authors and publishers. They certainly do not read eighteenth-century poetry, or, for the matter of that, twentieth century poetry, if there is any. It is an age of prose fiction, because it is an age of vast material prosperity and of widely diffused intellectual mediocrity. Consider our greatly advertised possessors of wealth, in their palatial cottages and in their stately mansions; reflect on their occupations and their interests. What do they think about? Upon what do they lavish their brains? On Cowper? I think not. And upon what do our middle classes feed? On Cowper? I am sure they do not. If we eliminate the millionaires and the middle classes there is not much left for purposes of poetry-consumption. Moreover, poetry has ceased to have attractions for the average man, and poets of distinction are not appearing in the world. Swinburne is silent, and Watson, Lewis Morris, and Stephen Phillips rank with the men who in the closing years of the

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eighteenth century immediately preceded the giants of the early nineteenth. When the King distributes coronation honors we find no poets receiving titles or decorations. A critic, a humorist, and two novelists seem to represent the realm of literature. I am not finding fault with the situation; it is due to the change in fashion. Nobody now writes plays like the "School for Scandal" or "She Stoops to Conquer." Nobody writes poems like "Endymion," or "The Excursion," or "In Memoriam."

Not long ago a philosophical Englishman, in an admirable book on modern France, referred to Switzerland as an example of "the inglorious prosperity" of federations, and prophesied that there are "worse fates awaiting democracies. "The United States" he tells us, "are as prosperous as Switzerland, and have with affluence become almost as barren in art and in letters, after an early season of wondrous literary promise." We may be excused, I think, for believing that our form of government has not much to do with the decline of excellence in literature or in art. Is it not due to the prosperity of which he speaks? England too is prosperous, and I doubt if a comparison between her art and literature of to-day with that of a time not very long distant should make us

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ashamed of our own descent from greatness to mediocrity.

We were just now speaking of the eighteenth century. The conditions of the years preceding the coming of Wordsworth were almost the same as those which now prevail. After Pope came such weaklings as Hayley and Mason, Mickle and Hoole, and — may we add? — Darwin, with his “Loves of the Plants.” The world was busy then with politics, with the stage, with the novels, the *Pamelas*, the *Evelinas*, and with the romances *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. “Tis an age most unpoetical,” wrote Horace Walpole to his friend Sir Horace Mann. We may echo his words. The world is not concerning itself now so much about politics or the drama, but the newspapers and the craze for sports have more than taken their place as discouragers of poetic creation. It is not poetry alone which has gone down before the spear of the victorious teller of tales. The day of the essay, of the short and discursive “paper,” has also passed away. They find, perhaps, now and then a precarious and transitory lodging in the newspaper or in the magazine, but they are seldom deemed worthy of preservation in book form. The essays of Macaulay, of Carlyle, of Brougham, of Emerson, and of Lowell, as well as the grace-

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ful sketches of Irving and of Paulding, of N. P. Willis and of Donald G. Mitchell, have become obsolete and old-fashioned.¹ If any imitative successors should arise, they might please a small company of veterans who were readers in the distant fifties, but not the young and impatient readers of nineteen hundred and three. When the busy man can spare the time from the office, the golf-links, or the tennis court to pick up a volume for casual perusal, he wishes to get either amusement or instruction—usually amusement. He finds one in the novel and the other in science, biography, or lighter history. Books are made to sell, and the collection of essays sells but indifferently in comparison with what are called successful books; wherefore there is little inducement for anybody to print it. If it gets into the market, it is by reason of some considerations of past usefulness of the author or of personal friendship between him and the head of the publishing house.

It is not at all strange that it should be so. The man who toils in the counting-house or in the shop has but little to stimulate his imagination; he dwells in a land of commonplace. The

¹ Perhaps we may as well forget Willis; yet he had a certain interest, and was an attractive person, despite his dandyism and some harmless affectations.

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novelist supplies his romance for him and creates for him a picturesque environment. For the moment he lives in fairyland and is transported from sordid trade to ethereal regions where the ordinary cares of life are unknown. It is a good thing to take him away from money-gathering and labor; it helps him and relieves the strain of daily drudgery. He could not gain half as much of pleasure from anything aside from the fictitious world where the invented characters disport themselves in an atmosphere of seductive unreality. He is bored by essays and reviews, wearied by poetry, and discouraged by ponderous studies in history.

Some one will say, perhaps, that this does not account for women novel-readers, and that if a modern Macaulay should appear his essays would not be neglected. I am not to be drawn into discussion; this is a monologue, not a debate.

The impatience of the day with anything in the nature of a gossiping series of sketches is illustrated by a profound newspaper notice which I found recently in a New York journal. A certain American writer was delivering judgment upon what had seemed to me to be an amusing collection of observations, anecdotes, and reminiscences, well worthy of the approval of an intelligent person possessing a mind ca-

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pable of appreciating something better than swashbuckling stories and pot-boiling *critiques*. He complained of the book in manner following, the style sufficiently disclosing the writer's mental condition: "It isn't a book at all, just a collection of more or less scrappy papers. It brings to my mind something that Lowell said about the book of a really great essayist, than whom there have been few better. I refer to Emerson.¹ In his 'Fable for Critics,' the poet thus speaks—I quote from memory, in the absence of my library—

““Roots, leaves, and branches, singly, perfect may be,
But clapped hodge-podge together, they don't make
a tree.””²

According to this commentator, a collection of chapters on divers subjects, however pleasant and useful, is not a book. He sweeps out of the category of literature *Macaulay's Essays*, *Montaigne*, *The Autocrat*, *Noctes Ambrosianae*, *The Doctor*, the *Roundabout Papers*, and even *Elia*, with the cruel hand of authority, relying upon a playful figure used by a great man who

¹ Cf. "I allude, Sir, to the British Lion." Cyrus Choke, General, U. S. M., reported in I. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 546, Macmillan edition.

² He misquotes the lines—"Roots, wood, bark, and leaves," etc. Moreover, Lowell was speaking of Emerson's poems, and not of his essays.

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gave to the world many such collections of his own. He forgets that a nosegay has its value as distinctive as that of a tree. One who wishes to have a basketful of lovely flowers will not be satisfied with any tree, however perfect. The spectacle of a romancing writer proclaiming loudly that he will not have flowers and that no one shall have flowers, but that he must have a tree, and every one else must and shall have trees, willy-nilly, is amusing if not profitable or instructive.

It is always a melancholy thing to discover that one is no longer young, but it is a discovery we all make, and it astonishes us as much as if no one else had ever made it. Forty years hence some enthusiast who now revels in Kipling and Sir Gilbert Parker, in the historical romance of the prevailing fashion, or in the bizarre creations of Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and D'Annunzio (forgive the collocation), will find himself among the back numbers of life, as I have found myself with my antiquated affection for the bygone in literature. The sudden revelation was a shock to my sensibilities. I felt much as did the person who was discovered, by a sympathetic acquaintance, almost in tears over his luncheon at the club, and who confessed that his depression was the result of

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the remark of one of a number of loud-howling, mightily contending cabmen at the railway station: "Oh, let the old man alone!" Still, after one has made up his mind to be really venerable and to talk about "my time of life," it is not so bad; it gives one considerable latitude in the way of fault-finding and general disparagement of existing things; one has seats offered to him in the cars; one is permitted to occupy the good places in the commencement halls, and in due course one becomes a sage and writes about "the pleasures of old age."

It may be that, after a prolonged struggle with the vigorous literature of the day, some may be disposed to let their oars rest, as they loiter in a quiet bay and amuse themselves with the unconnected and the discursive; rambling from subject to subject and dwelling briefly on any one topic for fear of boredom. More than a generation ago that delightful old gentleman Stephen Alexander, whose attenuated form was customarily arrayed in a threadbare swallow-tailed coat of a remote vintage, used to instruct us in "natural philosophy and astronomy," and I recall with pleasure how, after dwelling lovingly awhile on the beauties of the rope machine and the entrancing principle of virtual velocity, he would suddenly switch off of the main track, and exclaim in his quaint,

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inimitable way, "Now let us talk a little about the moon." We shall not forget that he began our course of lectures with the startling announcement, "There is a region of the knowable." My classmate "Dickey," who had equipped himself with a ponderous note-book and had resolved to turn over a new leaf and be good, gravely wrote down, "There is a region of the noble," and thereafter, through junior and senior years, never wrote more. I think that it is good sometimes to stray from the paths of philosophy, natural or unnatural, and to talk a little about the moon.

If the writer of essays is really ambitious to have his productions valued highly in the book market and eagerly sought for by collectors, let him give up the hope of a widespread popularity, and write about books, engravings, first editions, broadsides, or book-plates, and have the result privately printed by some eminent master of typography. The "privately printed book" seems to have reached the pinnacle of its glory. When we are turning the leaves of the catalogue of our favorite bookseller and learn that Mr. Andrews's entertaining *Gossip About Book-Collecting*, of whose two octavo, vellum-wrapped volumes only two hundred and fifty-seven sets were printed, is not to be had for less than \$90, and his later *Paul Revere and His En-*

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gravings (one hundred and seventy copies, boards, vellum back) for less than \$60, we may understand why the accomplished author of these pretty rarities sometimes modestly protests against the inflated prices and says "They are not worth it." But if men are willing to pay such prices, it must be because the books are deserving and valuable. Of course, they are not, in the strict sense, privately printed, but they go only to chosen subscribers.

The mania has extended to books produced from quasi-private presses. The sums paid for these volumes seem to the ordinary observer foolishly extravagant. No doubt the Kelmscott Press, under William Morris, did work of a high order, but it is not miraculously perfect, and it is doubtful whether a complete set in the original bindings is really worth \$4500, which is the amount demanded by a New York dealer within the past year. Andrew Lang expresses my own sentiments when he says, "As they are not very easily read, one feels no ardent desire to possess them." My opinion is that their vogue will not be enduring. The Vale Press and the Essex House Press appear to have appreciative admirers, although they are still far in the rear of the Kelmscotts, in selling value at least. Not to be left behind in the race, we find America coming forward with

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the Elston Press, and we will probably observe its books soaring to dizzy heights. There is one of the Elstons on the table, the *Endymion*. At the end of the book, in palpable imitation of the English models, the publishers say: "Here ends *Endymion*, by John Keats. The text is that of the first edition of 1818. One hundred and sixty-two copies have been printed, with title-pages and initials by H. M. O'Kane. Printed and sold by Clarke Conwell at the Elston Press, Pelham Road, New Rochelle, New York. Finished this May-day, MDCCLXII." Pelham Road is very British indeed, but the whole postscript has a savor of affectation. As for the book itself, the paper is moderately good, the typography reasonably attractive, and the edges very much untrimmed; yet I perceive no very good reason for its existence. There may be cause for the making of reprints of old and scarce books, but *Endymion* does not belong to those orders. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which is in the same category, was done by the Essex House, and sells for \$45. The first edition of the three poems *Lamia*, *Isabella*, and *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1820), the type whereof is admirable, is held at \$180. A first edition of *Endymion*, in the original boards, edges uncut (1818), "with the four pages of advertisement at end," I can have if I am willing to pay a London book-

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seller the rather generous consideration of £78 10s. Perhaps he might be persuaded to throw off the ten shillings, but the Englishman has a habit of clinging to those extra shillings with a determined grip. That familiar price which one meets at every turn—£1 1s—always excites my angriest passions, but they would much rather part with their boasted unwritten constitution than give up the exasperating twelvenpence which marks the difference between the real sovereign and the fictitious guinea.

Some ingenuous individuals who think that it denotes superior intelligence to decry what they cannot comprehend affect to wonder why it is that the collector prizes those "advertisements at the end." They seem to think that a genuine Thackeray or Dickens original number or edition, ornamented by the extra leaves whereon the advertiser disported himself, is like some copy of the *Century Magazine*, or of *McClure's*, from which every right-minded person tears away about half the bulk in order to have a comfortable pamphlet. I sometimes wonder if anybody buys any of the wares described in those advertising pages or proclaimed on the hideous bill-boards which disfigure the fields adjacent to our popular lines of railway. There must be credulous creatures who are influenced by these things, for they must be expensive.

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The ignorant will actually engage in argument about the value of "added ads" appended to a book; but it does not admit of argument. All that one need say is that the advertising pages annexed to the first edition are "merely corroborative detail intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative," a phrase of Gilbert's which has passed into the law reports in a learned opinion by Mr. Justice Woodward of the Supreme Court of New York.

Dr. Luard, in his brief but interesting sketch of Thomas Frognall Dibdin, written for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, gives an account of the forming of the Roxburghe Club in 1812. John Ker, third Duke of Roxburghe, who died in 1804, had a splendid collection in his residence in St. James's Square, London, and the sale of his books, continuing for forty-five days between May 18 and July 8, 1812, is still famous. It is said that the books cost him about £5000, but they sold for £23,341, a result which makes the sordid person's mouth water. According to Burnet, it was the highest point reached by the thermometer of bibliomania. The Valdarfer edition of Boccaccio, which had cost the second Duke of Roxburghe one hundred guineas, brought, as we have seen, the handsome price of £2260. In honor of this supreme triumph the chief bibliophiles of that

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time dined together at St. Alban's Tavern and organized the Roxburghe Club, consisting at first of twenty-four members, with Lord Spencer at the head, and the pedantic Dibdin as vice-president. "Each member was expected to produce a reprint of some rare volume of English literature," and some of the earlier publications were so worthless that it was said of them, "When they were unique, there was already one copy too many in existence." Still, the club was the ancestor of the numerous clubs of to-day, and it did much to preserve the records of English history and antiquities. Dibdin himself, despite his interest in the matter, was strangely ignorant; but inaccurate as he was, he accomplished many things. Dyce said of him that he was "an ignorant pretender, without the learning of a school-boy, who published a quantity of books swarming with errors of every description." It is sad to recall that his latter days were troubled by illness and poverty.

Mr. William Loring Andrews has with the true spirit of the bookman, and (pardon the expression) of the old-fashioned bookman, uplifted his voice in defence of poor Dibdin, whom he calls "the Boswell of his generation of bibliophiles." Rather severe, I think, on Boswell. Mr. Andrews, who must be listened to for reasons which we all recognize, insists that Dibdin's

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books are neglected because men are ignorant of their beauty of form and of the important niche they occupy in the history of English book-collecting. I doubt, however, whether we are to have a renewal of their former popularity. Few persons can discern in them anything but a dry and occasionally fanciful account of ancient books, not grave enough to be convincing.

Mr. Growoll has given us such a complete account of American book-clubs that we may consider the subject exhausted for the present. He traces the history of book-clubs in America, in the restricted sense—that is to say, “of one or more persons printing, or causing to be printed, manuscripts or books for distribution among a limited circle of subscribers”—to the time when John Eliot, “teacher of Roxbury,” issued at the press of Marmaduke Johnson, in Cambridge, 1665, his *Communion of Churches*. Roxburghe and Roxbury are names alike enough to arouse curiosity. Of the older clubs in this country, the Bradford Club (1859–1867), which devoted itself mainly to American history, appears to have been the most useful; and the Dunlap Society, with its two series of works connected with the stage, is entitled to appreciative remembrance. It may be questioned, however, whether the work of these associations is of much-enduring value. The personality

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of the members is often much more interesting than the result of their labors.

I cannot express any opinions about the books of the Grolier Club and of the Caxton Club, because there is a solemn cloak which covers the hallowed precincts of such institutions—a law of reticence which must not be broken. Only death or dire poverty is a sufficient excuse for bringing into the market the publications of these associations of book-lovers, and it must be acknowledged that many covet the Grolier volumes with exceeding strong desire, for much money is expended to acquire them. Even the yearly club-books have their exalted value and are catalogued with the star-items of the collections, although their contents must be dull to any reader, except, perhaps, some of the pleasant addresses of the presidents which are inserted between the treasurers' reports and the long lists of resident and non-resident members.

One gets tired of talking about books all the time, says George Brandes. Victor Hugo said that they are cold companions; but he must have been referring to French books. One may not, however, grow weary of reading them. Carlyle was talking insincerely when he said that "no man without Themistocles' gift of forget-

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ting can possibly spend his days in reading." It is time to bring these desultory diversions to an end. As I lay aside the pen and go back to the friendly denizens of the shelves, I find them, not cold or unkind, but "the best companions," as John Fletcher called them; and I think of the sonnet "Concerning the Honor of Books," which some ascribe to John Florio and some to Samuel Daniel; but what care I who wrote it!

"Since honor from the honorer proceeds,
How well do they deserve that memorize
And leave in Books for all posterities
The names of worthies and their virtuous deeds.

"When all their glory else, like water-weeds
Without their element, presently dies,
And all their greatness quite forgotten lies,
And when and how they flourished no man heeds.

"How poor remembrances are statues, tombs,
And other monuments that men erect
To princes, which remain in closed rooms
Where but a few behold them, in respect
Of Books, that to the universal eye
Show how they lived; the other where they lie."

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