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A VISIT TO THE OLD HOUSE.

I had not revisited the home of my boyhood for forty years. It was moonlight, when I alighted from the stage-coach, within sight of the house in which I was born; and though I had determined to postpone my visit until the next day, there were some distant glimpses of towering elms and piles of building, which brought a world of recollections back upon me, and sent me to bed to dream all night of broken scenes from my boyish history. Ah! how deep are those impressions which are made in the child's soul while he is thinking only of his present sports and passing troubles!

Business of a more common-place and sordid character occupied me, among papers and receipt-books, till noon. I then prepared myself for a solitary visit to the home of my fathers; and I chose to approach it by the rear. Between the old garden and the river was a meadow. I had rolled in it, among the dandelions and buttercups, a thousand times: but the old nurse, who had been to me a mother, was long since dead. The cool clear spring was in the place where I left it; and the rill which wandered from it into the river was marked by an edging of greener grass. The fragrant mint along its borders came to my sense with associations of

HAM AND EGGS.

A PLEA FOR SILENT LEGISLATION.

“Ham and eggs!” said a friend, not long since, in a paroxysm of philosophy, engendered by the sight and smell of that incomparable relish, “why should those two things always go together? The only effect is to spoil them both.” Without undertaking to defend the orthodoxy of this judgment, as a canon in gastronomy, we can plainly see that the principle admits of an extensive application, or in other words, that human society is fairly stuffed with “ham and eggs.” But we do not mean to make the reader taste more than one of these mixed dishes. Why should voting and speech-making always hunt in couples? The two things are practically unconnected, and are held together only by an old traditional association, such as still leads thousands of American and British cooks to serve up ham and eggs in combination. The most brazen of our public men would blush to be suspected of making up his mind upon a question by the help of other people’s speeches. The greenest of young orators would die of laughter, not his own but that of others, if he entertained the hope of changing any man’s opinion by his logic or his eloquence. In short, it is a settled and notorious matter, that all votes in legislative bodies are determined by considerations of a general nature, such as party attachments, personal prejudices, local interests, or at best by abstract principles, but never by reasons presented for the first time in debate upon the point at issue. This being the case—and no one who knows anything will venture to deny it—what is the meaning of this endless “fresh” (to use an elegant expression) of superfluous talk at Washington, from year’s end to year’s end? Do the people pay their representatives sixty-four shillings a day for talking to no purpose? We protest against it as a villainous abuse and shameless waste of time and money. Is the national treasury to be exhausted

in the purchase of school-boy declamation? For such the finest speech becomes, if it tends to no practical result whatever. It may be invaluable in its proper place; but we maintain that our legislative halls are not its proper place. The members might as well recite Shakspeare, which indeed would be far better than to read news and novels under the pretence of making laws. But what is the remedy for this great evil? How may the waste of time and money be avoided, without suppressing all discussion of important public measures? The answer is a plain one. The practice of oral discussion had its origin when books were rare, and the accomplishment of reading saved a felon from the gallows. Why should it be still kept up, as a part of legislation, or an indispensable preliminary to it, in a day when hackney-coachmen read upon their boxes, and a beggar will not beg till he has seen the morning paper? We might as well have link-boys with our gas-light, or hot bricks with our furnaces. Does a man take his night-cap and dressing-gown along with him, when he goes by railroad from New York to Philadelphia for an hour's business, as he did when he went by the old line of stages, and spent a night or two at way-side taverns? It is shameful that while all things else have gone ahead till they are nearly out of sight, our legislation should be just where it was in the days of the Wittenagemote, when the Saxon nobles franked public documents with the sign of the cross, and scored appropriation-bills upon the wall with chalk or charcoal. Let us have no more of this exploded and explosive nonsense. Let the constitution be amended so as to forbid all talking, except so far as may be absolutely necessary, for the purpose of passing bills and resolutions, and making formal motions for the conduct of the public business. To suppress all clamour about voting blindly, in the dark, and what not, let no legislative act be passed until ten days after it is introduced, and in the mean time let the press groan with arguments, appeals, and explanations upon both sides. More will read them than will now listen to the endless twaddle of

our conscript fathers and brethren. No man will then be at the mercy of reporters, but will speak for himself to all who read him. And many a man who cannot speak, at least in the Temple of the Winds, can write intelligibly on an interesting subject. Such is our device for the cure of this inveterate disease of the tongue, or rather of the lungs, for we believe that after all, the chief ingredient of our legislative eloquence is wind. To avert the criticisms of physicians, druggists, and apothecaries, we make haste to add, that this form of phtisis is entirely *sui generis*, arising from excessive strength of lungs, and ending in consumption of the public money, time, and patience.

NOS.

ZACHARIAH JOHNSTON.

Among the distinguished Virginians brought out by the American revolution was Zachariah Johnston, a plain farmer of Augusta, who had received no other education than what a common English school could afford. When "Committees of Safety" were appointed in every district, he was by the recommendation of his neighbours, made a member of the committee for his native county. In this office he discovered so much good sense, and such ability to express his opinions with clearness and force, that he was persuaded to become a candidate for a seat in the Virginia legislature. When he entered that body, no one expected that a plain, uneducated farmer would undertake to make speeches on the same floor with many of the greatest men whom the state ever produced; but Johnston, conscious of his own power, was not long a member before he astonished the whole house by delivering on an important occasion, a speech without embarrassment, in which he exhibited his views with the utmost perspicuity and energy. No man in the Assembly was more