

HOURS AT HOME;

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BOOKS AND READING;

OR, WHAT BOOKS SHALL I READ, AND HOW SHALL I READ THEM?

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

WERE a South-sea Islander or a South African to be suddenly taken up from his savage home and the next instant to be set down in one of the great cities of Europe, of the many strange objects which he should see, one of the most incomprehensible would be a *public library*.

A *cathedral* he would at once understand. Its vast area would suggest its counterpart in the leveled platform—exalted upon a terrace or inclosed with palisades—which from his childhood onward, he had known and feared as a place of worship. The clustered pillars and lofty arches, up which his bewildered eye would creep with increasing wonder, would bring to mind the sacred grove of old and stately trees, "with sounding walks between"; the dreaded dwelling of some cruel deity or the fit arena for some "abhorred rite." The altar, the priests, the reverent worshippers, each and all, would speak to his mind their own meaning.

A *military parade*, he would need no interpreter, in order to understand. The measured tread of gathered legions, would, indeed, differ not a little from the wild rush of his own barbarous clan; the inspiring call of trumpet and horn, of life and drum, blending with all those nameless instruments which make the music of war so splendid and so spirit-stirring,

would be unlike that horrid dissonance of sounds, with which the savage, in fitter taste, sounds out his bloody errand; but the object and purpose of the show would be seen at a glance, and would wake up all the warrior in his bosom.

A *festive gathering of lords and ladies*, gay, on some occasion of state, or in honor of some distinguished personage, would be quite an intelligible affair, and the more closely he should look into the particulars of the transaction, the more numerous, it is possible, might be the points of resemblance between the barbaric and the fashionable gathering.

A *gallery of paintings*, adorned with the proudest trophies of genius, would not be altogether without meaning; for though the savage would look upon the creations of Raphael or Titian with somewhat such an eye as that with which Caliban looked upon Miranda, yet the uses of a collection which the price of his own kingdom could not buy, would not be an absolute enigma to him.

But a *public library*, as that in the British Museum, would be too much for him. It would prove a mystery, an enigma, a problem quite beyond his reach. Its design and its utility would be alike incomprehensible. The front of the edifice within which the library was placed, might indeed command his admiration; and

are not far distant. A second time the grain of sand must follow a master, who holds it in his strong grasp, in a fearful leap over a precipice, and down in the abyss the poor wanderer is again whirled round and round in the seething maelstrom, till, sadly shorn of its proportions, it is at last pushed forward, a tiny grain in truth, into the wide plains where the waters are quiet and flow on in peace.

The adventures of the little wanderer are over now. For the rest of its life the grain of sand is to be gently pushed along—who can tell how much or how little every year?—by the waters of the mighty river. It has been freed from its bondage to the fire-burnt tile, and lies now,

the high-born son of a lofty Alpine peak, on the dark bottom of the river. A fresh et may now and then throw it for a time on the sunny bank; and accident may bury it for years under some great rock but, after all, it moves on steadily, though slowly, on its heaven-appointed way to the sea, and whatever may befall it, whether it be ground to dust or dissolved by acids, so much is certain—it will never be lost! For there is nothing lost in the great household of nature; and the glory of the Most High is not more strikingly displayed in the rising and setting of the great orb on high than in the varied fate and the unseen adventures of a little grain of sand.

HOBBIES.

WE all ride something. It is folly to expect us always to be walking. The cheapest thing to ride is a hobby: it eats no oats, it demands no groom, it breaks no traces, it requires no shoeing. Moreover, it is safest: the boisterous outbreak of children's fun does not startle it; three babies astride it at once do not make it skittish. If, perchance, on some brisk morning it throw its rider, it will stand still till he climbs the saddle. For eight years we have had one tramping the nursery, and yet no accident; though meanwhile his eye has been knocked out and his tail dislocated.

When we get old enough to leave the nursery we jump astride some philosophic, metaphysical, literary, political, or theological hobby. Parson Brownlow's hobby is the hanging of rebels; John C. Calhoun's, South Carolina; Wendell Phillips's, the rights of the negro; Daniel Webster's, the Constitution; Wheeler's, the sewing machine; Doctor Windship's, gymnastics. For saddle, a book; for spur, a pen; for whip, the lash of public opinion; for race-course, platform, pulpit, newspaper-office, and senate chamber. Goodyear's hobby is made out of India-rubber, Peter Cooper's out of glue, Townsend's out of sarsaparilla bottles, Heenan's out of battered noses. De Witt Clinton

rode his up the ditch of the Erie Canal, Cyrus Field under the sea, John P. Jackson down the railroad from Amboy to Camden; indeed, the men of mark and the men of worth have all had their hobby, great or small. The philosophy is plain. Men think a great while upon one topic, and its importance increases till it absorbs everything else, and, impelled by this high appreciation of their theory, they go on to words and deeds that make themselves thoroughly felt. We have no objections to hobbies, but we contend that there are times and places when and where they should not be ridden. A few specifications.

We have friends who are allopathists, homœopathsists, Thompsonians, and eclectics. We have no more prejudices against one school than the other. Let them each set up their claims. One of our friends about five years ago became a homœopathist. All right! But since then she has been able to talk of nothing else. She insists on our taking the pellets. We say, "We feel somewhat tired to-night;" she exclaims, "cinchona or cocculus!" We sneeze quite violently, and she cries "belladonna!" We suggest that the apple-dumpling did not agree with us, and she proposes "chamomilla." When she walks I seem to hear the rat-

ding of pellets. Discovering my prejudice against pills, she insists on my taking it in powder. I tell her that ever since my chaplaincy in the army I have been afraid of powder. She says I will rue it when too late. Perhaps I may, but I cannot stand these large doses of homœopathy. I had rather be bled at once and have done with it, than be everlastingly shot with pellets. She talks it day and night. Her Sabbath is only a sanctified homœopathy. She prefers theology in very small doses. Her hope of the reformation of society is in the fact that ministers themselves are sinners—" *Similia similibus curantur*." She thinks it easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for old-school doctors to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Alas! how much calomel and jalap they will have to answer for! How will they dare to meet on the other shore the multitudes that they let slip before their time, when they might with a few pellets have bribed Charon to keep them this side of Acheron and Styx. She reads to us 2 Chron. xvi. 12, 13, "Asa sought to the physicians, and slept with his fathers." You see they killed him! She considers herself a missionary to go out into the highways and hedges of allopathy and eclecticism to compel them to come in. She is an estimable lady. We always like to have her come to our house. She is more interested in your health than any one you would find in all the hard-hearted crew of allopathy. But five years ago she got a side-saddle, threw it on the back of a hobby, and has been riding ever since—tramp, tramp, tramp—round the parlor, through the hall, up the stairs, down the cellar, along the street, through the church; and I fear that in her last "will and testament" she will have nothing to leave the world but a medicine-chest, well-worn copies of "Hahnemann's Chronic Diseases," and "Jahr's Manual," and directions as to how many powders are to be put in the tumblers, with the specific charge to have the spoons clean and not mix the medicines.

We notice that many have a mania for talking of their ailments. One ques-

tion about their health will tilt over on you the great reservoir of their complaints. They have told the story so often that they can slide through the whole scale from C above to C below. For thirty years their spine has been at a discount, and they never were any better of neuralgia till they took the rheumatism. At first you feel sympathy for the invalid; but after awhile the story touches the ludicrous. They tell you that they feel so faint in the morning, and have such poor appetite at noon, and cannot sleep nights, and have twitches in their side, and lumbago in their back, and swellings in their feet, and ringing in their ears, and little dots floating before their eyes; and have taken ammoniacum, tincture of cantharides, hydragogue julep, anthelmintic powder, golden syrup of antimony, leaves of scordium, and, indeed, all hepatics, carminatives, antifebriles, antiscorbutics, splenetics, anthritics, stomachics, ophthalmics; they have gargled their throat with sal ammoniac, and bathed their back with saponaceous liniment, and worn discutient cataplasma. That very moment they are chewing chamomile flowers to settle their stomachs, and excuse themselves for a moment to take off a mustard plaster that begins to blister. They come back to express the fear that the swelling on their arm will be an abscess, or their headache turn to brain fever. They shake out from their handkerchief delicate odors of valerian and assafœtida. They are the harvest of druggists and the amazement of physicians, who no sooner clear the pain from one spot than it appears in another. If one joint loses the pang another joint gets it, and, the patient having long ago resolved never again to be well, it is only a question between membrane and midriff.

At times we should talk over our distresses and seek sympathy, but perpetual discourse on such themes wears out the patience of our friends. You always see the young people run from the groaning valetudinarian; and the minister fails in his condolence, for why speak of the patience of Job to one who says that boils are nothing to his distresses. The hobby he

rides is wounded and scabbed and torn with all the diseases mentioned in farriery, glanders, botts, foot-rot, spavin, ring-bone, and "king's evil." Incurable nags are taken out on the commons and killed, but this poor hobby jogs on with no hope on the other side of the Red Sea of joining Pharaoh's horses. The more it limps, and the harder it breathes, the faster they ride it.

Now, Aunt Mary's sick room was the brightest room in the house. She had enough aches and pains to confound *Materia Medica*. Her shelf was crystallized with bottles, and the stand was black with plasters. She could not lay down more than five minutes. Her appetite was denied all savory morsels. It was always soup, or toast, or gruel, or penada. She had not walked into the sunlight for fifteen years. Weddings came, for which with her thin, blue-veined hands she had knit beautiful presents, but she could not mingle in the congratulations, nor see how the bride looked at the altar. She never again expected to hear a sermon, or sit at the sacrament, or join in the doxology of worshippers. The blithe days of her girlhood would never come back, when she could range the fields in spring-time in flushed excitement, plucking handfuls of wild-roses from the thicket till hands and cheeks looked like different blooms on the same trellis.

While quite young she had been sent to a first-class boarding-school. When she had finished her education, she was herself finished. Instead of the romp of the fields, she took the exhausting exercise at five o'clock of the school procession, madame ahead; madame behind; step to step, waterfall to waterfall; eyes right; chins down; noses out; their hearts like muffled drums beating funeral marches. Stop the side glances of those hazel eyes! Quit the tossing of those flaxen curls! Cease that graceful swing of the balmoral across the street gutter! Wishing to be liturgical, we exclaim, from such salutary discipline, as well as "from famine, earthquake, and pestilence, good Lord deliver us!"

She was the only one of the family for-
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tunate enough to get a first-class education. The other females grew up so stout, and well they might have been considered, vulgarly speaking, *healthy*, and went out into life to make happy homes and help the poor; only once, and that in the presence of a wound they were dressing, having attempted to faint away, but failed in the undertaking, as their constitution would not allow it. Thus they always had to acknowledge the disadvantage of not having had the first-class education of Aunt Mary. What if her nerves were worn out, she could read *Les Aventures de Telemaque* to pay for it. She had sharp pains, but she could understand the Latin phrases in which Dr. Pancoast described them. Her temples throbbed, but then it was a satisfaction to know that it came from being struck on the head with a Greek lexicon. The plasters were uncomfortable, but oh! the delights of knowing their geometrical shape: the one a pentagon, the other a hexagon. At school in anatomical class she had come to believe that she had a liver, but it had been only a speculative theory; now she had practical demonstration.

Enough to say, Aunt Mary was a life-long invalid, and yet her room was more attractive than any other. The children had to be punished for going up stairs and interrupting Auntie's napping hours. The kitten would purr at the invalid's door seeking admittance. At day-break, the baby would crawl out of the crib and tap its tiny knuckles against the door, waiting for Aunt Mary to open it. If Charlie got from a school-fellow a handful of peaches the ripest was saved for Auntie. At night-fall, a little procession of frisky night-gowns went up to say their prayers in Auntie's room, until three years of age, supposing that she was the divinity to be worshipped: one hand on their foot, and the other over their eyes that would peep through into Auntie's face during the solemnities, the "forever and ever, amen" dashed into Auntie's neck with a shower of good-night kisses.

When a young maiden of the neighborhood had a great secret to keep, she was apt to get Aunt Mary to help her

keep it. Auntie could sympathize with any young miss who at the picnic had nice things said to her. Auntie's face had not always been so wrinkled. She had a tiny key to a little box hid away in the back part of the top-drawer, that could have revealed a romance worth telling. In that box a pack of letters in bold hand directed to Miss Mary Tyndale. Also a locket that contained a curl of brown hair that had been cut from the brow of the college student in whose death her brightest hopes were blasted. Also two or three pressed flowers, which the last time she was out she brought from the cemetery. When in conversation with a young heart in tender mood she opened that box, she would say nothing for some moments after. Then she would look very earnestly into the eyes of the maiden, and say, "God bless you, my dear child! I hope you will be very happy!"

Everybody knew her by name, and people who had never seen her face, the black and white, the clean and filthy, those who rode in coaches and those who trudged the tow-path, would cry out when one of the family passed, "How is Aunt Mary to-day?" On Monday morning the minister would go in, and read more theology in the bright face of the Christian invalid than he had yesterday preached in two sermons, and her voice was as strengthening to him as the long-metre Doxology sung to the tune of "Old Hundred." When people with a heart-ache could get no relief elsewhere, they came to that sick-room and were comforted. Auntie had another key that did not open the box in the back part of the top-drawer of the bureau: it was a golden key that opened the casket of the Divine promises. Beside the bottles that stood on Auntie's shelf, was God's bottle in which He gathers all our tears. God had given to that thin hand the power to unloose the captive. And they who went in wailing came out singing. John Bunyan's pilgrim carried his burden a great while: he never knew Auntie.

Yes! yes! the brightest room in the house was hers. Not the less so on the

day when we were told she must leave us. That one small room could not keep her. She heard a voice bidding her away. The children broke forth into a tumult of weeping. The place got brighter. There must have been angels in the room. The feet of the celestial ladder were on both sides of that pillow. Little Mary (named after her aunt) said, "Who will hear me say my prayers now?" George said, "Who now will take my part?" Katie cried, "Who will tell us sweet stories about heaven?" Brighter and brighter grew the place. ANGELS IN THE ROOM! Sound no dirge. Toll no bells. Wear no black. But form a procession of chants, anthems, chorals, and hallelujahs! Put white blossoms in her hand! A white robe on her body! White garlands about her brow! And he, from whose tomb she plucked the flowers the last time she was out, came down to claim his bride. And so let the procession mount the hill, chants, anthems, chorals, and hallelujahs: *Forward!* the line of march reaching from enchanted sick-room to "house of many mansions."

So Auntie lived and died. Always sick, but always patient. Her cheerfulness unhorsed black-mailed Gloom. A perpetual reproof she was to all who make sicknesses their hobby.

We next refer to *reformatory* hobbies. We believe in the doctrines of teetotalism. In a glass of ice-water, our only beverage, we drink to the success of that cause. We advocate the Maine-law. In all appropriate times and places we are ready to fight drunkenness. It has dug its trench across the land and filled it with the best blood of the nation. But some of our friends have been turned into temperance monomaniacs. They would have temperance cars, and temperance stages, and temperance steamboats, none to ride in them but teetotalers. They have actually proposed milk to take the place of wine at the sacrament. They would make the taking of the pledge a pre-requisite of church-membership. They have no mercy for the man who has champagne on his table. They would let a man die of typhoid, before they would give him

a drop of Burgundy. They have dwelt upon the one evil till all others are submerged and forgotten. They have horrid nightmares of demijohn and decanter. They talk as though, if a man cleared the whiskey cask, he was safe for heaven; forgetful of the fact that the only decent thing about thousands of men is that they do not drink. They would do that if they were not too stingy. We knew a man who, to save expense, wheeled his wife to the grave on a wheel-barrow. He never drank. We caught a man stealing watermelons from our patch. He was a teetotaler. It would have been well for us if he had disliked melons as much as he did whiskey. We have found strong advocates for abstinence in Moyamensing prison. We believe a man may be consistent in all his professions of temperance, and yet not be worthy to untie the latchet of some who always have wine on their table.

The temperance cause is mightily hindered by such reformatory monomaniacs. In every path you stumble over their hobby.

So we find anti-tobaccoists on their hobby. They can tell you how many miles of pig-tail have been chewed in the last century, and how many navies would be borne up by the saliva if the Atlantic ocean, emptied of its water, could become the spittoon of the nation. We admit that it is not pleasant to sit in a coach or car with a chewer between us and the wind, the wind blowing toward us. It is as disagreeable as preaching with a cold in your head and no pocket-handkerchief.

We neither smoke nor chew. The only odor of the weed in our house is from the cigars of our friends who come to see us. And yet we know of two or three men who went to heaven, we think, notwithstanding they were smokers. In their last sickness, whenever they could sit up they took a chew of tobacco. We have no sympathy with those who cannot unwrinkle their upper lip for a half hour after they have caught the breath of a smoker. There are ladies so shocked by the smoking odors which their hus-

bands bring from the club-room that it needs very careful treatment to avoid hysterics; as sensitive as the lady, married in mature years, who persisted in setting her husband's boots outside the door, because she could not stand the smell of leather. We would rather have our nose outraged with a whiff from an old pipe than our ear deafened with the clatter of a crazy reformer. We would not have even the man who snuffs, and chews, and smokes, all in the same minute, kicked to death by the heels of our hobby. William H. Seward snuffs. Rufus Choate took opium. George W. Bethune smoked. Good Abraham Van Nest had wine on his table. Presidents of colleges have chewed tobacco. And I expect that after we have been gone so long that our resting-place shall be as completely unknown as that of Moses, many will get to heaven who have not thought just as we do. We will never turn people into the right way by riding over them with our hobby.

We take a step farther, and look at some of our *theological* hobbies. This is the only kind of horse that ministers can afford to own, and you ought not to be surprised if sometimes in this way they take an airing. We have had some troubles of late in the fact that in these days of brotherhood, Old School and New School got astride of the same hobby, and one fell off before, and the other fell off behind. There was not room enough for so many between mane and tail. It is well to remember that hobbies sometimes kick, and that theologians, like other people, are vulnerable.

How apt we are to get a religious theory, and ride it up hill and down, and expect that all the armed cavalry of the church shall make way for our hobby! There are theologians who spend their time in trying to drown Baptists, thinking it a great waste to have so much water and not use it for some decisive purpose. Others would like to upset the anxious bench of the Methodists, and throw them on their faces, so that they would make less noise. Others would like nothing better than to rip a hole in

the surplus of Episcopacy. Others take the doctrine of "election" for their favorite theory, and ride, and ride, till they find themselves elected to leave the settlement. Others harp on the "perseverance of the saints," till they are unhorsed by the perseverance of sinners. And this good man devotes himself to proving that in Adam all fell, till his hearers wish that he had fallen clear out of their acquaintanceship.

This ecclesiastic gives his time to controversy, and his matin and vesper are, "Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Such persons were sound asleep that Christmas night when the angel song fell to the hills, "Peace on earth, good will to men." We have been watching for the horns to come out on their forehead. They are the rams and the he-goats. They feel that they were appointed from eternity to stick somebody, and they beat Samson in the number of Philistines they slay with the same weapon. They go to the Bible as foemen to Springfield Armory or Troy Arsenal, demanding so many swords, rifles, and columbiads. They were made in the same mould as Morrissey, the pugilist, and should long ago have been sent to Congress. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they have claws, and, like him, ought to go to grass. In the day when the lamb and the lion lie down together, we fear these men will be out with a pole trying to stir up the animals.

Here are brethren who devote themselves to the explaining of the unexplainable parts of the Scripture. Jonah's whale comes just in time to yield them whole barrels of blubber. They can explain why it was that Jonah was not digested by the whale. The gastric juice having no power to act upon a living body, it did not dissolve the fibrine or coagulated albumen into chyme, and consequently it could not pass the pyloric orifice of the stomach. Beside, this was an intelligent whale, and probably knew that he had swallowed a minister who had a call to Nineveh, and never had any intention of turning him into whale, but rather to prepare him for that class of ministers who

are lachrymose, and on all occasions disposed to blubber. We have heard men explain this miracle by natural laws until we felt ourselves attacked by the same sickness that disturbed the leviathan of the Mediterranean when he suddenly graduated the prophet; and we felt sure that if, in an unguarded moment, we had swallowed a Jonah, he would have had good prospects of speedy deliverance.

Our expounder must also explain the ass that spake to Balaam. The probability is that the animal had originally been endowed with powers of vocalization, but, being of a lethargic temperament, had never until that day found sufficient inducement to express himself; the probability being that this animal always retained the faculty of speech, and was married, and that he has a long line of descendants, who still, like the one of the Scriptures, are disposed to criticize ministers.

Here is another brother who devotes forty Sundays of the year to the Apocalypse. He has put his lip to all the trumpets and examined all the vials. He understands them all. He reads the history of the present day in Revelation, and finds there Louis Napoleon, Bismark, Abraham Lincoln, and Gen. Grant.

Now, all Scripture is to be expounded as far as possible; but one part is not to absorb attention to the neglect of others. Let us not be so pleased with the lily that Christ points out in his sermon that we cannot see the raven that flies past; nor while we examine the salt to find if it has lost its savor, forget to take the candle from under the bushel. The song of the morning stars at the creation must have response in the Doxology of the hundred and forty and four thousand. David's harp, and the resurrection-trumpet are accordant. The pennon swung from the cedar mast of ships of Tarshish must be answered by the sail of fishing boat on Genesareth. Into this great battle for God we are to take Gideon's sword, and David's sling, and the white horse of Victory on which Immanuel triumphs. Hiddekel and Jordan must be confluent. Pisgah and Moriah, Sinai

and Calvary, must all stand in the great Scriptural ranges. No solo or quartette in this Bible music, but the battle chorus of all the patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, and apostles. In the wall of heaven are beautifully blended jasper and emerald, beryl and sardonyx, amethyst and chrysolite. No one doctrine, however excellent, must be ridden constantly. The pulpit is the most unfit place in all the world for a hobby.

Let us glance at our Literary hobbies. There is no grander field than that of just criticism. Through *Edinburgh Review* Noon Talfourd pours the sunlight of his genius upon William Hazlitt and Mackenzie, so that we know not which to be most thankful for, essayist, novelist, or critic. Christopher North breaks in like a new summer upon Thomson's "Seasons." Archibald Alison lifted up the works of magnificent Chateaubriand from comparative obscurity into the admiration of all nations. Walter Scott, hieing away from Abbotsford with the sheriff after him, may have had his nerves soothed by what Francis Jeffrey kindly wrote about "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

But harsh criticism is the only mood of some literati. They never add anything to the world's literature, but have an endless pique against those who do. They take up the poem that cost five years of application, and run their pen across the cantos, and throw it aside, saying, "I have finished that fellow: hand us another!" They are provoked because Thiers and Disraeli will not lay still after being by them assassinated. Long ago these literary skull-breakers demolished George Eliot for writing "Adam Bede," and yet she dares to attempt "The Spanish Gipsy." They spend their life in hunting for something to chew up: goats browsing on morning glories. They sit in the southwest corner of magazines like spiders waiting for flies. After a while they sting themselves to death with their own poison. They act as though some Herod had sent them forth to massacre all literary productions of two years and under. They seem to have

adopted the sentiment of a Scotch Review: "There is nothing of which nature has been more bountiful than poets. They swarm like the spawn of the codfish with a vicious fecundity that requires destruction."

There were literary men who begrudged John Mitford the piece of old carpet under which he slept. Marwax had nothing but denunciation for Moliere. Cowley found great satisfaction in rasping Chaucer. Pope flew in a rage at Colley Cibber. Fielding saw no power in Richardson. Johnson said that he "would hang a dog that read the Lycidas of Milton twice." The accomplished *Edinburgh Review* impales on one ramrod Fenimore Cooper, Walter Scott, and Washington Irving as dunces. Montesquieu died from the stab of a critic's pen. Berkeley, Reid, Goldsmith, Jeremy Taylor, and Chillingworth had the hounds after them. Some of the grandest men and women that ever lived have been crushed under the critic's hobby.

We have found people in parlor and street on a *conversational* hobby. Weddings, and funerals, and harvest homes, it was reconstruction, or the follies of the administration, or the dishonesty of officials, or the degeneration of society, or the wonderful exploits of their canary bird, or the sagacity of their gray-hound which at the first whistle comes frisking and bounding, his muddy paws on your white suit, attesting his powers of discrimination. We knew a man who would occupy your time in describing his herd of swine. Indeed some of them were genuine Suffolks. Other gentlemen took you to the cabinet of curiosities brought from foreign travel; he invited you to the piggery. We could get him on no other topic. Once we thought we had him cornered for a religious interview, but he turned upon us with irresistible emphasis, and said "Dominie! I will send you half a hog!" The bristling porkers of Gadar were possessed by Satanic influence, but this man was possessed by the porkers. That one of the herd which had been most neglectful of its ablutions, and least particular about its style of diet,

was beautiful to him. "Just look at that fellow!" he would say. "What an eye—eh? See him crouch that pumpkin!" An animal with legs so short, and jaws so long, and bristles so sharp, and toilet so imperfect, is not fit for a hobby.

With others the continuous theme is *ventilation*. We have wrecked too many sermons and lectures on ill-ventilated audience-rooms not to understand the value of pure air. We have more veneration for every other antiquity than for stale air. Atmosphere that has been bottled up for weeks is not quite equal to "Balm of Thousand Flowers." Give us an old log across the stream to sit on, rather than an arm-chair in the parlor that is opened chiefly on Christmas and Thanksgiving days. While waiting for this year's turkey to get browned, we do not want to smell last year's. There are church-basements so foul that we think some of those who frequent them for devotion get sooner to the end of their earthly troubles than they would if there were less dampness in the walls; some of them suffering from what they suppose to be too much religion, when it is nothing but wind-colic. Still we may put too long a stress upon ventilation. Here is a man who sits with the doors open, and while your teeth are chattering with cold, descants on the bracing weather. He sleeps with all his windows up with the thermometer below zero. His prescription for all the world's diseases is fresh air. And if the case be chronic, and stubborn, and yields not to the first course of treatment, then—more fresh air. If the patient die under the process, the adviser will say, "This confirms my theory! Don't you see the difficulty? His only want was capacity to take in the air!"

Witticism is the hobby of another. We admire those who have power to amuse. We cannot always have the corners of our mouth drawn down. Those despise puns who cannot make them. We should like to have been with Douglas Jerrold when his friend said to him, "I had a curious dinner—*calves' tails*." And Jerrold instantly replied, "*Extremes meet!*"

But we cannot always have the corners of our mouth drawn up. We can all of us stand humor longer than wit. Humor is pervasive; wit explosive. The one smiles; the other laughs. Wit leaps out from ambush; humor melts out of a summer sky. Wit hath reactions of sadness; humor dies into perpetual calm. Humor is an atmosphere full of electricity; wit is zigzag lightning. They both have their mission, but how tedious the society of the merry-andrew and professed epigrammatist! The muscles of your face weary in attempts to look pleased. You giggle, and simper, and titter, and chuckle, and scream, and slap your hand on the table, but you do not laugh. You want information, facts, realities, as well as fun. Theodore Hook and Charles Lamb grinned themselves into melancholy. Clowns are apt to be hypochondriac. The company of two or three so-called witty chaps is as gloomy to us as the furnishing-room of an undertaker. It is the earnest man, with an earnest work to do, who in unexpected moment puts the pry of his witticism under your soul, and sends you roaring with a laughter that shuts your eyes, and rends your side, and makes you thankful for stout waistcoat, which seems to be the only thing that keeps you from explosion into ten thousand quips, quirks, epigrams, repartees, and conundrums. Working men have a right to be facetious. We have no objection to a hen's cackle, if it has first laid a large round egg for the breakfast table. But we had on our farm a hen that never did anything but cackle. The most rousing wit ever uttered was by stalwart men like Robert South and Jean Paul Richter. With them wit was only the foaming flake on the wave that carried into port a magnificent cargo. It was only the bell that rang you to a banquet of stalled ox and muscovy. But lackaday! if when at the ringing of the bell we went to find nothing but a cold slice of chuckle, a hash of drollery, jokes stewed, and jokes stuffed, and jokes pan-ned, and jokes roasted, and jokes with gravy, and jokes without gravy. Professor Wilson, the peerless essayist, could afford to put on "Sporting Jacket," and

mould the snow-ball for the "Bicker of Pedmount," and go a picnicing at Windermere, and shake up into rollicking glee Lockhart, Hamilton, Gillies, and his other *Blackwood* cronies, if, in that way refreshed for toil, he could come into the University of Edinburgh to mould and shape the heart and intellect of Scotland, with a magic touch that will be felt a thousand years. He is the most entertaining man who mixes in proper proportions work and play. We prefer a solid horse, spirited and full of fire, but always ready to pull: somewhat skittish on a December morning, but still answering to the bit: while capable of taking you out of the dust of the man who does not want you to pass, yet willing to draw ship-timber; in preference to a frisky nag that comes from the stall sideways, and backwards, getting up into the stirrups of his own saddle, and throwing you off before you get on. The first is a useful man's facetiousness; the last is a joker's hobby.

Pride of ancestry is with others the chief mania. Now we believe in royal blood. It is a grand thing to have the right kind of kindred. There is but little chance for one badly born. If we belonged to some families that we know of, we would be tempted at once to give ourselves up to the police. But while far from despising family blood, we deplore the fact that so many depend entirely upon heraldry. They have not been in your company a minute before they begin to tell you who their father was and their mother. The greatest honor that ever happened to them was that of having been born. It is a congratulation that there was but one mechanic in their line, and he helped build the first steam-boat. They were no possible relation to one Simon, a tanner. The only disgraceful thing in their line, as far back as they can trace it, was that their first parents in Paradise were gardeners. There was a big pile of money somewhere back, a coat of arms, and several fine carriages. They feel sorry for Adam, because he had no grandfather. To hear them talk you would suppose that the past was crowded with their great progenitors, who were

lords, and dukes, comrades of Wellington, accustomed to slapping George Washington on the shoulder, calling him by the first name; "hail fellow well met" with Thomas Jefferson. As if it had taken ten generations of great folks to produce one such Smythe. He is no relation to Smith. That family spell their name differently. But you find that in the last seventeen hundred years there were several breaks in the broadcloth. Do not say anything about their Uncle George. Confound the fellow! He was a blacksmith. Nor ask about Cousin Rachel. Miserable thing! She is in the poor-house. Nor inquire about his grandfather's politics. He was a Tory. Nor ask what became of his oldest brother. He was shot in a hen-roost. Several of the family practised in the High Courts of the United States and England—as criminals. One of their kindred was a martyr to chirography, having written the name of John Rathbone & Co. under a promissory note, and written it so well that John Rathbone & Co. were jealous, and seriously objected. But all this is nothing so long as they spell Smith with a *y* in the middle and an *e* at the end. They have always moved in the circle of the Ritten-houses, and the Minturns, and the Grinnells, and the Vanderbelts. They talk much of their silver plate to everybody save the assessor. In the year 1700 they had an ancestor that rode in the carriage with the Lord Mayor of London. Yet a boy one day had the audacity, with a piece of chalk, to erase the armorial bearings from the side of their coach, and, in allusion to the industrial pursuits charged on certain members of that high family, sketched in place thereof, as coat of arms, a bar of soap and a shoe-last. Oh! this awful age of homespun and big knuckles! We would all have gone back farther than we have in the search of ancestral stars and garters, crest and scutcheon, but we are so afraid of falling into kettles of tried tallow, and beds of mortar, and pans of dish-water.

But we are all proud. We slept one night at the West in the rustic house of President Fillmore's father, in the very

bed occupied the week before by Daniel Webster and the President. We felt that we must carry off from that room a memento. Not able to get anything more significant, we brought away from the peg in the room one of old Mrs. Fillmore's cap-strings. It was with no ordinary emotions that, after coming down among the common people, we displayed the trophy.

Still how distasteful is the companionship of one who is always on the subject of his high associations and honored ancestry. We get vexed, and almost wish that their ancestors had been childless. At proper times and to proper degree let such theme be discussed, but what a folly to be on all occasions displaying Mrs. Fillmore's cap-strings! It is an outrageous case of cruelty to animals when a man persists in having all his progenitors join him in riding the ancestral hobby.

Now it so happened that on one occasion all these hobbyists met on one field. What a time! Ten hobbies riding against each other in cavalry charge! Each rider was determined to carbine all the others. The allopathist loaded his gun with blue pills; the homœopathist loaded his with pulsatilla and stramonium. The hypochondriac unsheathed his sharpest pains for the onset. The temperance monomaniac struck right and left with an ale-pitcher. The tobacco fanatic threw snuff into the eyes of those who could not see as he did. The controversialist and critic hung across the saddle a long string of scalps they had taken. The buffoon bespattered the whole regiment with a volley of poor jokes. And the man of distinguished ancestry attempted to frighten the combatants from the field by riding up with a hobby that had on its back the resurrected skeletons of all his forefathers.

Too much hobby-riding belittles the mind, distorts the truth, and cripples influence. All our faculties were made for use. He who is always on one theme cannot give full play to judgment, imagination, fancy, reason, wit, and humor. We want a harmony of intellect—all the parts carried, treble, alto, tenor, and base,

accompanied by full orchestra, sackbut, violoncello, cornet, drum, flute, and cymbals. He who goes through life using one faculty, hops on one foot, instead of taking the strong, smooth gait of a healthy walker. He who, finding within him powers of satire, gives himself up to that, might as well turn into a wasp and go to stinging the bare feet of children. He who is neglectful of all but his imaginative faculty, becomes a butterfly flitting idly about till the first "black frost" of criticism kills it. He who devotes himself to fun-making, will find the better parts of his soul decaying, and his temporary attractiveness will be found to be the phosphorescence of rotten wood. He who disports himself in nothing but dialectics and mathematics, will get badly hooked by the horns of a dilemma, and after awhile turn into trapezoids and parallelograms: his head a blackboard for diagrams in spherical geometry: and while the nations are dying, and myriad voices are crying for help, will find their highest satisfaction in demonstrating that if two angles on equal spheres are mutually *equilateral*, they are mutually *equiangular*: the flying missiles in a South American earthquake to him only brilliant examples in conic sections; the one describing a parabola, that an ellipse, the other a hyperbola.

When God has given us so many faculties to use, why use only one of them? With fifty white palfreys to ride, why go tilting a hobby?

He who yields to this propensity never sees the whole of anything. There is no sin in all the earth but slavery, or intemperance, or municipal dishonesty. All the sicknesses would be healed if they would take our medicine. The only thing needed to make the world what it ought to be, is a new pavement on our sidewalk. If Ulysses gets into the White House we shall have the millennium. The nations are safe as soon as we can bring to an end the expectations of tobacco juice. All that we can see of anything is between the leather pricked-up ears of our hobby.

This frantic urging on of our pet notion will come to naught. Our prancing

charger will sink down with lathered flanks and we be passed on the road by some Scotch Presbyterian, astride a plain draft horse that has been pasturing in the field next to the kirk, jogging along at an easy pace, knowing it has been elected that he is to reach the kingdom.

Brethren! let us take a palm-leaf and cool off! Let your hobby rest. If it will not otherwise stop, tie it for a few days to the white-washed stump of modern conservatism. Do not hurry things too much. If this world should be saved next week, it would spoil some of our

professions. Do not let us do up things too quick. This world is too big a ship for us to guide. I know from the way she swings from larboard to starboard that there is a strong Hand at the helm. Be patient. God's clock strikes but once or twice in a thousand years; but the wheels all the while keep turning. Over the caravanserie of Bethlehem, with silver tongue, it struck ONE. Over the University of Erfurt, Luther heard it strike NINE. In the rockings of the present century it has sounded ELEVEN. Thank God! It will strike TWELVE!

OUR COLLEGIATE MINSTRELSY.

It must be the college "poets" that produce the college songs. For—so far as we can tell after having gone through four years of undergraduate life, and, more recently, through three good-sized collections of undergraduate verses—we should say that the college song is never poetry. Now, to write what is not poetry is the true function of the typical college poet; it is almost a proverb that he is, *ex officio*, a person who would like to write poetry and can't; a person who, as Mr. G. H. Lewes says, in a dead and gone novel of his, has aspiration and mistakes it for inspiration. It is a mistake very easily made if one has half acquired an education and wholly acquired a knack of stringing rhymes; and we have been somewhat amused—though the thing is not without a certain pathos either—to see how common a characteristic it is of the minor bards whose works we have just been looking over, to make this mistake and to give it expression in verse.

It is a sure ear-mark by which to distinguish the man of aspiration without inspiration, that just as he reaches what he is apt to call "the threshold of the Future" he is filled full of an ardent desire to "do"; precisely what it is that he wants to do he doesn't know; in fact he usually has somewhat vague notions on all subjects; but in general—and in verse—he is constantly impelled to urge it on himself and others to "be up and doing"—as Mr. Longfellow sang when he was

a college poet at Bowdoin; to "be up and doing with a heart for any fate," to "take the weapons up and for glorious strife prepare," and so on. In the songs before us we find him everywhere, from Maine to Michigan, uttering this same gallant but rather indefinite cry:

"The time for toil and conquest, boys,
Is drawing on apace;
We've yet to strive for many a goal!"—
says an odist of Dartmouth. Yale says in her turn:

"Whisper thou o'er our doubts, 'Duty calls
you, be brave,'
Truth's soldiers are fainting, go, succor and
save;"

and Amherst answers:

"Then boldly gird your armor on
And bear a helping hand,
Prepared to fight the foes of Right
Who dare the Truth withstand."

Thus they all sing, with great unanimity, and with such fervor as naturally comes from the employment of lines with words of similar sound at the ends of them, and with capital letters at the beginning of them. Yes, and we may say that they sing it with some fervor that is genuine and sincere. Probably that friend of ours whose ardor against Error in general we have set before our readers in one of the passages just quoted (and who has since been under arrest for embezzlement,) may have as fully meant the noble sentiments above presented as he afterwards meant to defraud his employers. But as a rule, the vague, general enthusiasm against