

the imponderables that move the world, — heat, electricity, love. — *Habet?*]

This is the piece that Benjamin Franklin made into boarding-school French, such as you see here; don't expect too much; — the mistakes give a relish to it, I think.

#### LES SOCIÉTÉS POLYPHYSIOPHILOSOPHIQUES.

CES Sociétés là sont une Institution pour suppléer aux besoins d'esprit et de cœur de ces individus qui ont survécu à leurs émotions à l'égard du beau sexe, et qui n'ont pas la distraction de l'habitude de boire.

Pour devenir membre d'une de ces Sociétés, on doit avoir le moins de cheveux possible. S'il y en reste plusieurs qui résistent aux dépilatoires naturelles et autres, on doit avoir quelques connaissances, n'importe dans quel genre. Dès le moment qu'on ouvre la porte de la Société, on a un grand intérêt dans toutes les choses dont on ne sait rien. Ainsi, un microscopiste démontre un nouveau *flexor* du tarse d'un *melolontha vulgaris*. Douze savans improvisés, portans des besicles, et qui ne connaissent rien des insectes, si ce n'est les morsures du *culex*, se précipitent sur l'instrument, et voient, — une grande bulle d'air, dont ils s'émerveillent avec effusion. Ce qui est un spectacle plein d'instruction, — pour ceux qui ne sont pas de ladite Société. Tous les membres regardent les chimistes en particulier avec un air d'intelligence parfaite pendant qu'ils prouvent dans un discours d'une demieheure que  $O^6 N^8 H^5 C^6$  etc. font quelque chose qui n'est bonne à rien, mais qui probablement a une odeur très désagréable, selon l'habitude des produits chimiques. Après cela vient un mathématicien qui vous bourre avec des  $a + b$  et vous rapporte enfin un  $x + y$ , dont vous n'avez pas besoin et qui ne change nullement vos relations avec la vie. Un naturaliste vous parle des formations spéciales des animaux excessivement inconnus, dont vous n'avez jamais soupçonné l'existence. Ainsi il vous décrit les *follicules* de l'*appendix vermiformis* d'un *dziguetai*. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un *follicule*. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un *appendix vermiformis*. Vous n'avez jamais entendu parler du *dziguetai*. Ainsi vous gagnez toutes ces connaissances à la fois, qui s'attachent à votre esprit

comme l'eau adhère aux plumes d'un canard. On connaît toutes les langues *ex officio* en devenant membre d'une de ces Sociétés. Ainsi quand on entend lire un Essai sur les dialectes Tchutchiens, on comprend tout cela de suite, et s'instruit énormément.

Il y a deux espèces d'individus qu'on trouve toujours à ces Sociétés : 1° Le membre à questions; 2° Le membre à "By-laws."

La question est une spécialité. Celui qui en fait métier ne fait jamais des réponses. La question est une manière très commode de dire les choses suivantes: "Me voilà! Je ne suis pas fossil, moi, — je respire encore! J'ai des idées, — voyez mon intelligence! Vous ne croyiez pas, vous autres, que je savais quelque chose de cela! Ah, nous avons un peu de sagacité, voyez vous! Nous ne sommes nullement la bête qu'on pense!" — *Le faiseur de questions donne peu d'attention aux réponses qu'on fait; ce n'est pas là dans sa spécialité.*

Le membre à "Bylaws" est le bouchon de toutes les émotions moussieuses et généreuses qui se montrent dans la Société. C'est un empereur manqué, — un tyran à la troisième trituration. C'est un esprit dur, borné, exact, grand dans les petites choses, petit dans les grandeurs, selon le mot du grand Jefferson. On ne l'aime pas dans la Société, mais on le respecte et on le craint. Il n'y a qu'un mot pour ce membre audessus de "Bylaws." Ce mot est pour lui ce que l'Om est aux Hindous. C'est sa religion; il n'y a rien audelà. Ce mot là c'est la CONSTITUTION!

Lesdites Sociétés publient des feuilletons de tems en tems. On les trouve abandonnés à sa porte, nus comme des enfans nouveaunés, faute de membrane cutanée, ou même papyracée. Si on aime la botanique, on y trouve une mémoire sur les coquilles; si on fait des études zoologiques, on trouve un grand tas de  $q' \surd - 1$ , ce qui doit être infiniment plus commode que les encyclopédies. Ainsi il est clair comme la métaphysique qu'on doit devenir membre d'une Société telle que nous décrivons.

#### Recette pour le Dépilatoire Physiophilosophique.

Chaux vive lb. ss. Eau bouillante Oj.

Dépiliez avec. Polissez ensuite.

— I told the boy that his translation into French

was creditable to him; and some of the company wishing to hear what there was in the piece that made me smile, I turned it into English for them, as well as I could, on the spot.

The landlady's daughter seemed to be much amused by the idea that a depilatory could take the place of literary and scientific accomplishments; she wanted me to print the piece, so that she might send a copy of it to her cousin in Mizzourah; she did n't think he'd have to do anything to the outside of his head to get into any of the societies; he had to wear a wig once, when he played a part in a tabullo.

No, — said I, — I should n't think of printing that in English. I'll tell you why. As soon as you get a few thousand people together in a town, there is somebody that every sharp thing you say is sure to hit. What if a thing was written in Paris or in Pekin? — that makes no difference. Everybody in those cities, or almost everybody, has his counterpart here, and in all large places. — You never studied *averages*, as I have had occasion to.

I'll tell you how I came to know so much about averages. There was one season when I was lecturing, commonly, five evenings in the week, through most of the lecturing period. I soon found, as most speakers do, that it was pleasanter to work one lecture than to keep several in hand.

— Don't you get sick to death of one lecture? — said the landlady's daughter, — who had a new dress on that day, and was in spirits for conversation.

I was going to talk about averages, — I said, — but I have no objection to telling you about lectures, to begin with.

A new lecture always has a certain excitement con-

nected with its delivery. One thinks well of it, as of most things fresh from his mind. After a few deliveries of it, one gets tired and then disgusted with its repetition. Go on delivering it, and the disgust passes off, until, after one has repeated it a hundred or a hundred and fifty times, he rather enjoys the hundred and first or hundred and fifty-first time, before a new audience. But this is on one condition, — that he never lays the lecture down and lets it cool. If he does, there comes on a loathing for it which is intense, so that the sight of the old battered manuscript is as bad as sea-sickness.

A new lecture is just like any other new tool. We use it for a while with pleasure. Then it blisters our hands, and we hate to touch it. By and by our hands get callous, and then we have no longer any sensitiveness about it. But if we give it up, the calluses disappear; and if we meddle with it again, we miss the novelty and get the blisters. — The story is often quoted of Whitefield, that he said a sermon was good for nothing until it had been preached forty times. A lecture does n't begin to be old until it has passed its hundredth delivery; and some, I think, have doubled, if not quadrupled, that number. These old lectures are a man's best, commonly; they improve by age, also, — like the pipes, fiddles, and poems I told you of the other day. One learns to make the most of their strong points and to carry off their weak ones, — to take out the really good things which don't tell on the audience, and put in cheaper things that do. All this degrades him, of course, but it improves the lecture for general delivery. A thoroughly popular lecture ought to have nothing in it which five hundred people cannot all take in a flash, just as it is uttered.

— No, indeed, — I should be very sorry to say anything disrespectful of audiences. I have been kindly treated by a great many, and may occasionally face one hereafter. But I tell you the *average* intellect of five hundred persons, taken as they come, is not very high. It may be sound and safe, so far as it goes, but it is not very rapid or profound. A lecture ought to be something which all can understand, about something which interests everybody. I think, that, if any experienced lecturer gives you a different account from this, it will probably be one of those eloquent or forcible speakers who hold an audience by the charm of their manner, whatever they talk about, — even when they don't talk very well.

But an *average*, which was what I meant to speak about, is one of the most extraordinary subjects of observation and study. It is awful in its uniformity, in its automatic necessity of action. Two communities of ants or bees are exactly alike in all their actions, so far as we can see. Two lyceum assemblies, of five hundred each, are so nearly alike, that they are absolutely undistinguishable in many cases by any definite mark, and there is nothing but the place and time by which one can tell the "remarkably intelligent audience" of a town in New York or Ohio from one in any New England town of similar size. Of course, if any principle of selection has come in, as in those special associations of young men which are common in cities, it deranges the uniformity of the assemblage. But let there be no such interfering circumstances, and one knows pretty well even the look the audience will have, before he goes in. Front seats: a few old folks, — shiny-headed, — slant up best ear towards the speaker, — drop off asleep after a while, when the

air begins to get a little narcotic with carbonic acid. Bright women's faces, young and middle-aged, a little behind these, but toward the front, — (pick out the best, and lecture mainly to that.) Here and there a countenance, sharp and scholarlike, and a dozen pretty female ones sprinkled about. An indefinite number of pairs of young people, — happy, but not always very attentive. Boys, in the background, more or less quiet. Dull faces, here, there, — in how many places! I don't say dull *people*, but faces without a ray of sympathy or a movement of expression. They are what kill the lecturer. These negative faces with their vacuous eyes and stony lineaments pump and suck the warm soul out of him; — that is the chief reason why lecturers grow so pale before the season is over. They render *latent* any amount of vital caloric; they act on our minds as those cold-blooded creatures I was talking about act on our hearts.

Out of all these inevitable elements the audience is generated, — a great compound vertebrate, as much like fifty others you have seen as any two mammals of the same species are like each other. Each audience laughs, and each cries, in just the same places of your lecture; that is, if you make one laugh or cry, you make all. Even those little, indescribable movements which a lecturer takes cognizance of, just as a driver notices his horse's cocking his ears, are sure to come in exactly the same place of your lecture always. I declare to you, that as the monk said about the picture in the convent, — that he sometimes thought the living tenants were the shadows, and the painted figures the realities, — I have sometimes felt as if I were a wandering spirit, and this great unchanging multi-vertebrate which I faced night after night was one

ever-listening animal, which writhed along after me wherever I fled, and coiled at my feet every evening, turning up to me the same sleepless eyes which I thought I had closed with my last drowsy incantation!

— Oh yes! A thousand kindly and courteous acts, — a thousand faces that melted individually out of my recollection as the April snow melts, but only to steal away and find the beds of flowers whose roots are memory, but which blossom in poetry and dreams. I am not ungrateful, nor unconscious of all the good feeling and intelligence everywhere to be met with through the vast parish to which the lecturer ministers. But when I set forth, leading a string of my mind's daughters to market, as the country-folk fetch in their strings of horses — Pardon me, that was a coarse fellow who sneered at the sympathy wasted on an unhappy lecturer, as if, because he was decently paid for his services, he had therefore sold his sensibilities. — Family men get dreadfully homesick. In the remote and bleak village the heart returns to the red blaze of the logs in one's fireplace at home.

“There are his young barbarians all at play,” —

if he owns any youthful savages. — No, the world has a million roosts for a man, but only one nest.

— It is a fine thing to be an oracle to which an appeal is always made in all discussions. The men of facts wait their turn in grim silence, with that slight tension about the nostrils which the consciousness of carrying a “settler” in the form of a fact or a revolver gives the individual thus armed. When a person is really full of information, and does not abuse it to crush conversation, his part is to that of the real talkers what the instrumental accompaniment is in a trio or quartette of vocalists.

— What do I mean by the real talkers? — Why, the people with fresh ideas, of course, and plenty of good warm words to dress them in. Facts always yield the place of honor in conversation, to thoughts about facts; but if a false note is uttered, down comes the finger on the key and the man of facts asserts his true dignity. I have known three of these men of facts, at least, who were always formidable, — and one of them was tyrannical.

— Yes, a man sometimes makes a grand appearance on a particular occasion; but these men knew something about almost everything, and never made mistakes. — He? *Veneers* in first-rate style. The mahogany scales off now and then in spots, and then you see the cheap light stuff. — I found — very fine in conversational information, the other day when we were in company. The talk ran upon mountains. He was wonderfully well acquainted with the leading facts about the Andes, the Apennines, and the Appalachians; he had nothing in particular to say about Ararat, Ben Nevis, and various other mountains that were mentioned. By and by some Revolutionary anecdote came up, and he showed singular familiarity with the lives of the Adamses, and gave many details relating to Major André. A point of Natural History being suggested, he gave an excellent account of the air-bladder of fishes. He was very full upon the subject of agriculture, but retired from the conversation when horticulture was introduced in the discussion. So he seemed well acquainted with the geology of anthracite, but did not pretend to know anything of other kinds of coal. There was something so odd about the extent and limitations of his knowledge, that I suspected all at once what might be the meaning of it,

and waited till I got an opportunity. — Have you seen the “New American Cyclopædia?” said I. — I have, he replied; I received an early copy. — How far does it go? — He turned red, and answered, — To Araguay. — Oh, said I to myself, — not quite so far as Ararat; — that is the reason he knew nothing about it; but he must have read all the rest straight through, and, if he can remember what is in this volume until he has read all those which are to come, he will know more than I ever thought he would.

Since I had this experience, I hear that somebody else has related a similar story. I did n't borrow it for all that. — I made a comparison at table some time since, which has often been quoted and received many compliments. It was that of the mind of a bigot to the pupil of the eye; the more light you pour on it, the more it contracts. The simile is a very obvious, and, I suppose I may now say, a happy one; for it has just been shown me that it occurs in a Preface to certain Political Poems of Thomas Moore's, published long before my remark was repeated. When a person of fair character for literary honesty uses an image such as another has employed before him, the presumption is, that he has struck upon it independently, or unconsciously recalled it, supposing it his own.

It is impossible to tell, in a great many cases, whether a comparison which suddenly suggests itself is a new conception or a recollection. I told you the other day that I never wrote a line of verse that seemed to me comparatively good, but it appeared old at once, and often as if it had been borrowed. But I confess I never suspected the above comparison of being old, except from the fact of its obviousness. It is proper, however, that I proceed by a formal instrument to re-

linquish all claim to any property in an idea given to the world at about the time when I had just joined the class in which Master Thomas Moore was then a somewhat advanced scholar.

I, therefore, in full possession of my native honesty, but knowing the liability of all men to be elected to public office, and for that reason feeling uncertain how soon I may be in danger of losing it, do hereby renounce all claim to being considered the *first* person who gave utterance to a certain simile or comparison referred to in the accompanying documents, and relating to the pupil of the eye on the one part and the mind of the bigot on the other. I hereby relinquish all glory and profit, and especially all claims to letters from autograph collectors, founded upon my supposed property in the above comparison, — knowing well, that, according to the laws of literature, they who speak first hold the fee of the thing said. I do also agree that all Editors of Cyclopædias and Biographical Dictionaries, all Publishers of Reviews and Papers, and all Critics writing therein, shall be at liberty to retract or qualify any opinion predicated on the supposition that I was the sole and undisputed author of the above comparison. But, inasmuch as I do affirm that the comparison aforesaid was uttered by me in the firm belief that it was new and wholly my own, and as I have good reason to think that I had never seen or heard it when first expressed by me, and as it is well known that different persons may independently utter the same idea, — as is evinced by that familiar line from Donatus,

“Pereant illi qui ante nos nostra dixerunt,” —

now, therefore, I do request by this instrument that

all well-disposed persons will abstain from asserting or implying that I am open to any accusation whatsoever touching the said comparison, and, if they have so asserted or implied, that they will have the manliness forthwith to retract the same assertion or insinuation.

I think few persons have a greater disgust for plagiarism than myself. If I had even suspected that the idea in question was borrowed, I should have disclaimed originality, or mentioned the coincidence, as I once did in a case where I had happened to hit on an idea of Swift's. — But what shall I do about these verses I was going to read you? I am afraid that half mankind would accuse me of stealing their thoughts, if I printed them. I am convinced that several of you, especially if you are getting a little on in life, will recognize some of these sentiments as having passed through your consciousness at some time. I can't help it, — it is too late now. The verses are written, and you must have them. Listen, then, and you shall hear

## WHAT WE ALL THINK.

That age was older once than now  
In spite of locks untimely shed,  
Or silvered on the youthful brow;  
That babes make love and children wed.

That sunshine had a heavenly glow,  
Which faded with those "good old days,"  
When winters came with deeper snow,  
And autumns with a softer haze.

That — mother, sister, wife, or child —  
The "best of women" each has known.  
Were school-boys ever half so wild?  
How young the grandpapas have grown!

That *but for this* our souls were free,  
And *but for that* our lives were blest;  
That in some season yet to be  
Our cares will leave us time to rest.

Whene'er we groan with ache or pain,  
Some common ailment of the race, —  
Though doctors think the matter plain, —  
That ours is "a peculiar case."

That when like babes with fingers burned  
We count one bitter maxim more,  
Our lesson all the world has learned,  
And men are wiser than before.

That when we sob o'er fancied woes,  
The angels hovering overhead  
Count every pitying drop that flows  
And love us for the tears we shed.

That when we stand with tearless eye  
And turn the beggar from our door,  
They still approve us when we sigh  
"Ah, had I but *one thousand more!*"

That weakness smoothed the path of sin,  
In half the slips our youth has known;  
And whatsoe'er its blame has been,  
That Mercy flowers on faults outgrown.

Though temples crowd the crumbled brink  
O'erhanging truth's eternal flow,  
Their tablets bold with *what we think*,  
Their echoes dumb to *what we know*;

That one unquestioned text we read,  
All doubt beyond, all fear above,  
Nor crackling pile nor cursing creed  
Can burn or blot it: GOD IS LOVE!

## VII.

[THIS particular record is noteworthy principally for containing a paper by my friend, the Professor, with a poem or two annexed or intercalated. I would suggest to young persons that they should pass over it for the present, and read, instead of it, that story about the young man who was in love with the young lady, and in great trouble for something like nine pages, but happily married on the tenth page or thereabouts, which, I take it for granted, will be contained in the periodical where this is found, unless it differ from all other publications of the kind. Perhaps, if such young people will lay the number aside, and take it up ten years, or a little more, from the present time, they may find something in it for their advantage. They can't possibly understand it all now.]

My friend, the Professor, began talking with me one day in a dreary sort of way. I could n't get at the difficulty for a good while, but at last it turned out that somebody had been calling him an old man. — He did n't mind his students calling him *the* old man, he said. That was a technical expression, and he thought that he remembered hearing it applied to himself when he was about twenty-five. It may be considered as a familiar and sometimes endearing appellation. An Irishwoman calls her husband "the old man," and he returns the caressing expression by speaking of her as "the old woman." But now, said he, just suppose a case like one of these. A young stranger is overheard talking of you as a very nice old gentleman. A friendly and genial critic speaks of your green old age as illustrating the truth of some

axiom you had uttered with reference to that period of life. What *I* call an old man is a person with a smooth, shining crown and a fringe of scattered white hairs, seen in the streets on sunshiny days, stooping as he walks, bearing a cane, moving cautiously and slowly; telling old stories, smiling at present follies, living in a narrow world of dry habits; one that remains waking when others have dropped asleep, and keeps a little night-lamp-flame of life burning year after year, if the lamp is not upset, and there is only a careful hand held round it to prevent the puffs of wind from blowing the flame out. That's what I call an old man.

Now, said the Professor, you don't mean to tell me that I have got to that yet? Why, bless you, I am several years short of the time when — [I knew what was coming, and could hardly keep from laughing; twenty years ago he used to quote it as one of those absurd speeches men of genius will make, and now he is going to argue from it] — several years short of the time when Balzac says that men are — most — you know — dangerous to — the hearts of — in short, most to be dreaded by duennas that have charge of susceptible females. — What age is that? said I, statistically. — Fifty-two years, answered the Professor. — Balzac ought to know, said I, if it is true that Goethe said of him that each of his stories must have been dug out of a woman's heart. But fifty-two is a high figure.

Stand in the light of the window, Professor, said I. — The Professor took up the desired position. — You have white hairs, I said. — Had 'em any time these twenty years, said the Professor. — And the crow's-foot, — *pes anserinus*, rather. — The Professor smiled, as I wanted him to, and the folds radiated like the ridges