

There was some sport in this, but Dulness is not commonly a game fish, and only sulks after he is struck. You may set it down as a truth which admits of few exceptions, that those who ask your *opinion* really want your *praise*, and will be contented with nothing less.

There is another kind of application to which editors, or those supposed to have access to them, are liable, and which often proves trying and painful. One is appealed to in behalf of some person in needy circumstances who wishes to make a living by the pen. A manuscript accompanying the letter is offered for publication. It is not commonly brilliant, too often it is lamentably deficient. If Rachel's saying is true, that "fortune is the measure of intelligence," then poverty is evidence of limited capacity, which it too frequently proves to be, notwithstanding a noble exception here and there. Now an editor is a person under a contract with the public to furnish them with the best things he can afford for his money. Charity shown by the publication of an inferior article would be like the generosity of Claude Duval and the other gentlemen highwaymen, who pitied the poor so much they robbed the rich to have the means of relieving them.

Though I am not and never was an editor, I know something of the trials to which they are submitted. They have nothing to do but to develop enormous calluses at every point of contact with authorship. Their business is not a matter of sympathy, but of intellect. They must reject the unfit productions of those whom they long to befriend, because it would be a profligate charity to accept them. One cannot burn his house down to warm the hands even of the fatherless and the widow.

THE PROFESSOR UNDER CHLOROFORM.

— You haven't heard about my friend the Professor's first experiment in the use of anæsthetics, have you?

He was mightily pleased with the reception of that poem of his about the chaise. He spoke to me once or twice about another poem of similar character, he wanted to read me, which I told him I would listen to and criticise.

One day, after dinner, he came in with his face tied up, looking very red in the cheeks and heavy about the eyes. — Hy'r'ye? — he said, and made for an arm-chair, in which he placed first his hat and then his person, going smack through the crown of the former as neatly as they do the trick at the circus. The Professor jumped at the explosion as if he had sat down on one of those small *caltrops* our grandfathers used to sow round in the grass when there were Indians about, — iron stars, each ray a rusty thorn an inch and a half long, — stick through moccasins into feet, — cripple 'em on the spot, and give 'em lockjaw in a day or two.

At the same time he let off one of those big words which lie at the bottom of the best man's vocabulary, but perhaps never turn up in his life, — just as every man's hair *may* stand on end, but in most men it never does.

After he had got calm, he pulled out a sheet or two of manuscript, together with a smaller scrap, on which, as he said, he had just been writing an introduction or prelude to the main performance. A certain suspicion had come into my mind that the Professor was not quite right, which was confirmed by the way he talked; but I let him begin. This is the way he read it: —

Prelude.

I'm the fellah that tole one day
 The tale of the won'erful one-hoss-shay.
 Wan' to hear another? Say.
 — Funny, was n' it? Made *me* laugh, —
 I'm too modest, I am, by half, —
 Made me laugh 's *though I sh'd splüt*, —
 Cahn' a fellah like fellah's own wit?
 — Fellahs keep sayin', — "Well, now that's nice;
 Did it once, but cahn' do it twice." —
 Dön' you b'lieve the'z no more fat;
 Lots in the kitch'n 'z good 'z that.
 Fus'-rate throw, 'n' no mistake, —
 Han' us the props for another shake; —
 Know I'll try, 'n' guess I'll win;
 Here sh' goes for hit 'm ag'in!

Here I thought it necessary to interpose. — Professor, — I said, — you are inebriated. The style of what you call your "Prelude" shows that it was written under cerebral excitement. Your articulation is confused. You have told me three times in succession, in exactly the same words, that I was the only true friend you had in the world that you would unbutton your heart to. You smell distinctly and decidedly of spirits. — I spoke, and paused; tender, but firm.

Two large tears orbed themselves beneath the Professor's lids, — in obedience to the principle of gravitation celebrated in that delicious bit of bladdery bathos, "The very law that moulds a tear," with which the "Edinburgh Review" attempted to put down Master George Gordon when that young man was foolishly trying to make himself conspicuous.

One of these tears peeped over the edge of the lid

until it lost its balance, — slid an inch and waited for reinforcements, — swelled again, — rolled down a little further, — stopped, — moved on, — and at last fell on the back of the Professor's hand. He held it up for me to look at, and lifted his eyes, brimful, till they met mine.

I could n't stand it, — I always break down when folks cry in my face, — so I hugged him, and said he was a dear old boy, and asked him kindly what was the matter with him, and what made him smell so dreadfully strong of spirits.

Upset his alcohol lamp, — he said, — and spilt the alcohol on his legs. That was it. — But what had he been doing to get his head into such a state? — had he really committed an excess? What was the matter? — Then it came out that he had been taking chloroform to have a tooth out, which had left him in a very queer state, in which he had written the "Prelude" given above, and under the influence of which he evidently was still.

I took the manuscript from his hands and read the following continuation of the lines he had begun to read me, while he made up for two or three nights' lost sleep as he best might.

PARSON TURELL'S LEGACY:

OR, THE PRESIDENT'S OLD ARM-CHAIR.

A MATHEMATICAL STORY.

Facts respecting an old arm-chair.
 At Cambridge. Is kept in the College there.
 Seems but little the worse for wear.
 That's remarkable when I say
 It was old in President Holyoke's day.

(One of his boys, perhaps you know,
Died, *at one hundred*, years ago.)
He took lodging for rain or shine
Under green bed-clothes in '69.

Know old Cambridge? Hope you do. —
Born there? Don't say so! I was, too.
(Born in a house with a gambrel-roof, —
Standing still, if you must have proof. —
"Gambrel? — Gambrel?" — Let me beg
You'll look at a horse's hinder leg, —
First great angle above the hoof, —
That 's the gambrel; hence gambrel-roof.)
— Nicest place that ever was seen, —
Colleges red and Common green,
Sidewalks brownish with trees between.
Sweetest spot beneath the skies
When the canker-worms don't rise, —
When the dust, that sometimes flies
Into your mouth and ears and eyes,
In a quiet slumber lies,
Not in the shape of unbaked pies
Such as barefoot children prize.

A kind of harbor it seems to be,
Facing the flow of a boundless sea.
Rows of gray old Tutors stand
Ranged like rocks above the sand;
Rolling beneath them, soft and green,
Breaks the tide of bright sixteen, —
One wave, two waves, three waves, four,
Sliding up the sparkling floor;
Then it ebbs to flow no more,
Wandering off from shore to shore
With its freight of golden ore!
— Pleasant place for boys to play; —
Better keep your girls away;
Hearts get rolled as pebbles do
Which countless fingering waves pursue,
And every classic beach is strown
With heart-shaped pebbles of blood-red stone.

But this is neither here nor there; —
I 'm talking about an old arm-chair.
You 've heard, no doubt, of PARSON TURELL?
Over at Medford he used to dwell;
Married one of the Mathers' folk;
Got with his wife a chair of oak, —
Funny old chair, with seat like wedge,
Sharp behind and broad front edge, —
One of the oddest of human things,
Turned all over with knobs and rings, —
But heavy, and wide, and deep, and grand, —
Fit for the worthies of the land, —
Chief-Justice Sewall a cause to try in,
Or Cotton Mather to sit, — and lie, — in.
— Parson Turell bequeathed the same
To a certain student, — SMITH by name;
These were the terms, as we are told:
" Saide Smith saide Chaire to have and holde;
When he doth graduate, then to passe
To y^e oldest Youth in y^e Senior Classe.
On Payment of " — (naming a certain sum) —
" By him to whom y^e Chaire shall come;
He to y^e oldest Senior next,
And soe forever," — (thus runs the text,) —
" But one Crown lesse then he gave to claime,
That being his Debte for use of same."

Smith transferred it to one of the BROWNS,
And took his money, — five silver crowns.
Brown delivered it up to MOORE,
Who paid, it is plain, not five, but four.
Moore made over the chair to LEE,
Who gave him crowns of silver three.
Lee conveyed it unto DREW,
And now the payment, of course, was two.
Drew gave up the chair to DUNN, —
All he got, as you see, was one.
Dunn released the chair to HALL,
And got by the bargain no crown at all.
— And now it passed to a second BROWN,

Who took it, and likewise *claimed a crown*.
 When *Brown* conveyed it unto *WARE*,
 Having had one crown, to make it fair,
 He paid him two crowns to take the chair;
 And *Ware*, being honest, (as all *Wares* be,)
 He paid one *POTTER*, who took it, three.
 Four got *ROBINSON*; five got *DIX*;
JOHNSON primus demanded six;
 And so the sum kept gathering still
 Till after the battle of Bunker's Hill
 — When paper money became so cheap,
 Folks would n't count it, but said "a heap,"
 A certain *RICHARDS*, the books declare,
 (A. M. in '90? I've looked with care
 Through the Triennial, — *name not there*.)
 This person, *Richards*, was offered then
 Eight score pounds, but would have ten;
 Nine, I think, was the sum he took, —
 Not quite certain, — but see the book.
 — By and by the wars were still,
 But nothing had altered the Parson's will.
 The old arm-chair was solid yet,
 But saddled with such a monstrous debt!
 Things grew quite too bad to bear,
 Paying such sums to get rid of the chair!
 But dead men's fingers hold awful tight,
 And there was the will in black and white,
 Plain enough for a child to spell.
 What should be done no man could tell,
 For the chair was a kind of nightmare curse,
 And every season but made it worse.

As a last resort, to clear the doubt,
 They got old *GOVERNOR HANCOCK* out.
 The Governor came, with his Light-horse Troop
 And his mounted truckmen, all cock-a-hoop;
 Halberds glittered and colors flew,
 French horns whinnied and trumpets blew,
 The yellow fifes whistled between their teeth
 And the bumble-bee bass-drums boomed beneath;

So he rode with all his band,
 Till the President met him, cap in hand.
 — The Governor "hefted" the crowns, and said, —
 "A will is a will, and the Parson's dead."
 The Governor hefted the crowns. Said he, —
 "There is your p'int. And here's my fee.
 These are the terms you must fulfil, —
 On such conditions I *BREAK THE WILL!*"
 The Governor mentioned what these should be.
 (Just wait a minute and then you'll see.)
 The President prayed. Then all was still,
 And the Governor rose and *BROKE THE WILL!*
 — "About those conditions?" Well, now you go
 And do as I tell you, and then you'll know.
 Once a year, on Commencement-day,
 If you'll only take the pains to stay,
 You'll see the President in the *CHAIR*,
 Likewise the Governor sitting there.
 The President rises; both old and young
 May hear his speech in a foreign tongue,
 The meaning whereof, as lawyers swear,
 Is this: Can I keep this old arm-chair?
 And then his Excellency bows,
 As much as to say that he allows.
 The Vice-Gub. next is called by name;
 He bows like t'other, which means the same.
 And all the officers round 'em bow,
 As much as to say that *they* allow.
 And a lot of parchments about the chair
 Are handed to witnesses then and there,
 And then the lawyers hold it clear
 That the chair is safe for another year.

God bless you, Gentlemen! Learn to give
 Money to colleges while you live.
 Don't be silly and think you'll try
 To bother the colleges, when you die,
 With codicil this, and codicil that,
 That Knowledge may starve while Law grows fat?
 For there never was pitcher that would n't spill,
 And there's always a flaw in a donkey's will!

— Hospitality is a good deal a matter of latitude, I suspect. The shade of a palm-tree serves an African for a hut; his dwelling is all door and no walls; everybody can come in. To make a morning call on an Esquimaux acquaintance, one must creep through a long tunnel; his house is all walls and no door, except such a one as an apple with a worm-hole has. One might, very probably, trace a regular gradation between these two extremes. In cities where the evenings are generally hot, the people have porches at their doors, where they sit, and this is, of course, a provocative to the interchange of civilities. A good deal, which in colder regions is ascribed to mean dispositions, belongs really to mean temperature.

Once in a while, even in our Northern cities, at noon, in a very hot summer's day, one may realize, by a sudden extension in his sphere of consciousness, how closely he is shut up for the most part. — Do you not remember something like this? July, between 1 and 2 P. M., Fahrenheit 96°, or thereabout. Windows all gaping, like the mouths of panting dogs. Long, stinging cry of a locust comes in from a tree, half a mile off; had forgotten there was such a tree. Baby's screams from a house several blocks distant; — never knew there were any babies in the neighborhood before. Tinman pounding something that clatters dreadfully, — very distinct but don't remember any tinman's shop near by. Horses stamping on pavement to get off flies. When you hear these four sounds, you may set it down as a warm day. Then it is that one would like to imitate the mode of life of the native at Sierra Leone, as somebody has described it: stroll into the market in natural costume, — buy a water-melon for a halfpenny, —

split it, and scoop out the middle, — sit down in one half of the empty rind, clap the other on one's head, and feast upon the pulp.

— I see some of the London journals have been attacking some of their literary people for lecturing, on the ground of its being a public exhibition of themselves for money. A popular author can print his lecture; if he deliver it, it is a case of *quæstum corpore*, or making profit of his person. None but "snobs" do that. *Ergo*, etc. To this I reply, — *Negatur minor*. Her most Gracious Majesty, the Queen, exhibits herself to the public as a part of the service for which she is paid. We do not consider it low-bred in her to pronounce her own speech, and should prefer it so to hearing it from any other person, or reading it. His Grace and his Lordship exhibit themselves very often for popularity, and their houses every day for money. — No, if a man shows himself other than he is, if he belittles himself before an audience for hire, then he acts unworthily. But a true word, fresh from the lips of a true man, is worth paying for, at the rate of eight dollars a day, or even of fifty dollars a lecture. The taunt must be an outbreak of jealousy against the renowned authors who have the audacity to be also orators. The sub-lieutenants (of the press) stick a too popular writer and speaker with an epithet in England, instead of with a rapier, as in France. — Poh! All England is one great menagerie, and, all at once, the jackal, who admires the gilded cage of the royal beast, must protest against the vulgarity of the talking-bird's and the nightingale's being willing to become a part of the exhibition!

THE LONG PATH.

(Last of the Parentheses.)

Yes, that was my last walk with the *schoolmistress*. It happened to be the end of a term; and before the next began, a very nice young woman, who had been her assistant, was announced as her successor, and she was provided for elsewhere. So it was no longer the schoolmistress that I walked with, but — Let us not be in unseemly haste. I shall call her the schoolmistress still; some of you love her under that name.

— When it became known among the boarders that two of their number had joined hands to walk down the long path of life side by side, there was, as you may suppose, no small sensation. I confess I pitied our landlady. It took her all of a suddin, — she said. Had not known that we was keepin' company, and never mistrusted anything partic'lar. Ma'am was right to better herself. Did n't look very rugged to take care of a femily, but could get hired haalp, she calc'lated. — The great maternal instinct came crowding up in her soul just then, and her eyes wandered until they settled on her daughter.

— No, poor, dear woman, — that could not have been. But I am dropping one of my internal tears for you, with this pleasant smile on my face all the time.

The great mystery of God's providence is the permitted crushing out of flowering instincts. Life is maintained by the respiration of oxygen and of sentiments. In the long catalogue of scientific cruelties there is hardly anything quite so painful to think of as that experiment of putting an animal under the

bell of an air-pump and exhausting the air from it. [I never saw the accursed trick performed. *Laus Deo!*] There comes a time when the souls of human beings, women, perhaps, more even than men, begin to faint for the atmosphere of the affections they were made to breathe. Then it is that Society places its transparent bell-glass over the young woman who is to be the subject of one of its fatal experiments. The element by which only the heart lives is sucked out of her crystalline prison. Watch her through its transparent walls; — her bosom is heaving; but it is in a vacuum. Death is no riddle, compared to this. I remember a poor girl's story in the "Book of Martyrs." The "dry-pan and the gradual fire" were the images that frightened her most. How many have withered and wasted under as slow a torment in the walls of that larger Inquisition which we call Civilization!

Yes, my surface-thought laughs at you, you foolish, plain, overdressed, mincing, cheaply-organized, self-saturated young person, whoever you may be, now reading this, — little thinking you are what I describe, and in blissful unconsciousness that you are destined to the lingering asphyxia of soul which is the lot of such multitudes worthier than yourself. But it is only my surface-thought which laughs. For that great procession of the UNLOVED, who not only wear the crown of thorns, but must hide it under the locks of brown or gray, — under the snowy cap, under the chilling turban, — hide it even from themselves, — perhaps never know they wear it, though it kills them, — there is no depth of tenderness in my nature that Pity has not sounded. Somewhere, — somewhere, — love is in store for them, — the universe must not be allowed to

fool them so cruelly. What infinite pathos in the small, half-unconscious artifices by which unattractive young persons seek to recommend themselves to the favor of those towards whom our dear sisters, the unloved, like the rest, are impelled by their God-given instincts!

Read what the singing-women — one to ten thousand of the suffering women — tell us, and think of the griefs that die unspoken! Nature is in earnest when she makes a woman; and there are women enough lying in the next churchyard with very commonplace blue slate-stones at their head and feet, for whom it was just as true that “all sounds of life assumed one tone of love,” as for Letitia Landon, of whom Elizabeth Browning said it; but she could give words to her grief, and they could not. — Will you hear a few stanzas of mine?

THE VOICELESS.

We count the broken lyres that rest
Where the sweet wailing singers slumber, —
But o'er their silent sister's breast
The wild flowers who will stoop to number?
A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy Fame is proud to win them; —
Alas for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them!

Nay, grieve not for the dead alone
Whose song has told their hearts' sad story, —
Weep for the voiceless, who have known
The cross without the crown of glory!
Not where Leucadian breezes sweep
O'er Sappho's memory-haunted billow,
But where the glistening night-dews weep
On nameless sorrow's churchyard pillow.

O hearts that break and give no sign
Save whitening lip and fading tresses,
Till Death pours out his cordial wine
Slow-dropped from Misery's crushing presses, —
If singing breath or echoing chord
To every hidden pang were given,
What endless melodies were poured,
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!

I hope that our landlady's daughter is not so badly off, after all. That young man from another city, who made the remark which you remember about Boston State-house and Boston folks, has appeared at our table repeatedly of late, and has seemed to me rather attentive to this young lady. Only last evening I saw him leaning over her while she was playing the accordion, — indeed, I undertook to join them in a song, and got as far as “Come rest in this boo-oo,” when, my voice getting tremulous, I turned off, as one steps out of a procession, and left the basso and soprano to finish it. I see no reason why this young woman should not be a very proper match for a man who laughs about Boston State-house. He can't be very particular.

The young fellow whom I have so often mentioned was a little free in his remarks, but very good-natured. — Sorry to have you go, — he said. — Schoolma'am made a mistake not to wait for me. Have n't taken anything but mournin' fruit at breakfast since I heard of it. — *Mourning fruit*, — said I, — what's that? — Huckleberries and blackberries, — said he; — could n't eat in colors, raspberries, currants, and such, after a solemn thing like this happening. — The conceit seemed to please the young fellow. If you will believe it, when we came down to breakfast the next

morning, he had carried it out as follows. You know those odious little "saäs-plates" that figure so largely at boarding-houses, and especially at taverns, into which a strenuous attendant female trowels little dabs, sombre of tint and heterogeneous of composition, which it makes you feel homesick to look at, and into which you poke the elastic coppery teaspoon with the air of a cat dipping her foot into a wash-tub, — (not that I mean to say anything against them, for, when they are of tinted porcelain or starry many-faceted crystal, and hold clean bright berries, or pale virgin honey, or "lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon," and the teaspoon is of white silver, with the Hall-mark, solid, but not brutally heavy, — as people in the green stage of millionism will have them, — I can dally with their amber semi-fluids or glossy spherules without a shiver), — you know these small, deep dishes, I say. When we came down the next morning, each of these (two only excepted) was covered with a broad leaf. On lifting this, each boarder found a small heap of solemn black huckleberries. But one of those plates held red currants, and was covered with a red rose: the other held white currants, and was covered with a white rose. There was a laugh at this at first, and then a short silence, and I noticed that her lip trembled, and the old gentleman opposite was in trouble to get at his bandanna handkerchief.

—"What was the use in waiting? We should be too late for Switzerland, that season, if we waited much longer." — The hand I held trembled in mine, and the eyes fell meekly, as Esther bowed herself before the feet of Ahasuerus. — She had been reading that chapter, for she looked up, — if there was a film of moisture over her eyes there was also the faintest

shadow of a distant smile skirting her lips, but not enough to accent the dimples, — and said, in her pretty, still way, — "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes" —

I don't remember what King Ahasuerus did or said when Esther got just to that point of her soft, humble words, — but I know what I did. That quotation from Scripture was cut short, anyhow. We came to a compromise on the great question, and the time was settled for the last day of summer.

In the mean time, I talked on with our boarders, much as usual, as you may see by what I have reported. I must say, I was pleased with a certain tenderness they all showed toward us, after the first excitement of the news was over. It came out in trivial matters, — but each one, in his or her way, manifested kindness. Our landlady, for instance, when we had chickens, sent the *liver* instead of the *gizzard*, with the wing, for the schoolmistress. This was not an accident; the two are *never* mistaken, though some landladies *appear* as if they did not know the difference. The whole of the company were even more respectfully attentive to my remarks than usual. There was no idle punning, and very little winking on the part of that lively young gentleman who, as the reader may remember, occasionally interposed some playful question or remark, which could hardly be considered relevant, — except when the least allusion was made to matrimony, when he would look at the landlady's daughter, and wink with both sides of his face, until she would ask what he was pokin' his fun at her for, and if he was n't ashamed of him-

self. In fact, they all behaved very handsomely, so that I really felt sorry at the thought of leaving my boarding-house.

I suppose you think, that, because I lived at a plain widow-woman's plain table, I was of course more or less infirm in point of worldly fortune. You may not be sorry to learn, that, though not what *great merchants* call very rich, I was comfortable, — comfortable, — so that most of those moderate luxuries I described in my verses on *Contentment* — most of them, I say — were within our reach, if we chose to have them. But I found out that the schoolmistress had a vein of charity about her, which had hitherto been worked on a small silver and copper basis, which made her think less, perhaps, of luxuries than even I did, — modestly as I have expressed my wishes.

It is a rather pleasant thing to tell a poor young woman, whom one has contrived to win without showing his rent-roll, that she has found what the world values so highly, in following the lead of her affections. That was an enjoyment I was now ready for.

I began abruptly: — Do you know that you are a rich young person?

I know that I am very rich, — she said. — Heaven has given me more than I ever asked; for I had not thought love was ever meant for me.

It was a woman's confession, and her voice fell to a whisper as it threaded the last words.

I don't mean that, — I said, — you blessed little saint and seraph! — if there's an angel missing in the New Jerusalem, inquire for her at this boarding-house! — I don't mean that! I mean that I — that is, you — am — are — confound it! — I mean that you'll be what most people call a lady of fortune. — And I

looked full in her eyes for the effect of the announcement.

There was n't any. She said she was thankful that I had what would save me from drudgery, and that some other time I should tell her about it. — I never made a greater failure in an attempt to produce a sensation.

So the last day of summer came. It was our choice to go to the church, but we had a kind of reception at the boarding-house. The presents were all arranged, and among them none gave more pleasure than the modest tributes of our fellow-boarders, — for there was not one, I believe, who did not send something. The landlady would insist on making an elegant bride-cake, with her own hands; to which Master Benjamin Franklin wished to add certain embellishments out of his private funds, — namely, a Cupid in a mouse-trap, done in white sugar, and two miniature flags with the stars and stripes, which had a very pleasing effect, I assure you. The landlady's daughter sent a richly bound copy of Tupper's Poems. On a blank leaf was the following, written in a very delicate and careful hand: —

Presented to . . . by . . .

On the eve ere her union in holy matrimony.
May sunshine ever beam o'er her!

Even the poor relative thought she must do something, and sent a copy of "The Whole Duty of Man," bound in very attractive variegated sheepskin, the edges nicely marbled. From the divinity-student came the loveliest English edition of "Keble's Christian Year." I opened it, when it came, to the *Fourth Sunday in Lent*, and read that angelic poem, sweeter than anything I can remember since Xavier's "My God, I love Thee." — I am not a Churchman, — I