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THE AUTOCRAT
OF THE
BREAKFAST TABLE.

EVERY MAN HIS OWN BOSWELL.

I was just going to say, when I was interrupted, that one of the many ways of classifying minds is under the heads of arithmetical and algebraical intellects. All economical and practical wisdom is an extension or variation of the following arithmetical formula: $2+2=4$. Every philosophical proposition has the more general character of the expression $a+b=c$. We are mere operatives, empirics, and egotists, until we learn to think in letters instead of figures.

They all stared. There is a divinity student lately come among us to whom I commonly address remarks like the above, allowing him to take a certain share in the conversation, so far as assent to pertinent questions are involved. He abused his liberty on this occasion by presuming to say that Leibnitz had the same observation. No, sir, I replied, he has not. But he said a mighty good thing about mathematics, that sounds something like it, and you

found it, *not in the original*, but quoted by Dr. Thomas Rid. I will tell the company what he did say, one of these days.

If I belong to a Society of Mutual Admiration, I blush to say that I do not at this present moment; I once did, however. It was the first association to which I ever heard the term applied; a body of scientific young men in a great foreign city who admired their teacher, and to some extent each other. Many of them deserved it; they have become famous since. It amuses me to hear the talk of one of those beings described by Thackery—

“Letters four do form his name—”

about a social development which belongs to the very noblest stage of civilization. All generous companies of artists, authors, philanthropists, men of science, are, or ought to be, Societies of Mutual Admiration. A man of genius, or any kind of superiority, is not debarred from admiring the same quality in another, nor the other from returning his admiration. They may even associate together and continue to think highly of each other. And so of a dozen such men, if any one place is fortunate enough to hold so many. The being referred to above assumes several false premises. First, that men of talent necessarily hate each other. Secondly, that intimate knowledge or habitual association destroys our admiration of persons whom we esteemed highly at a distance. Thirdly, that a circle of clever fellows, who meet together to dine and have a good time, have signed a constitutional compact to

glorify themselves and put down him and the fraction of the human race not belonging to their number. Fourthly, that it is an outrage that he is not asked to join them.

Here the company laughed a good deal, and the old gentleman who sits opposite said, “That’s it! that’s it!”

I continued, for I was in the talking vein. As to clever people’s hating each other, I think *a little* extra talent does sometimes make people jealous. They become irritated by perpetual attempts and failures, and it hurts their tempers and dispositions. Unpretending mediocrity is good, and genius is glorious; but a weak flower of genius in an essentially common person is detestable. It spoils the grand neutrality of a commonplace character, as the rinsings of an unwashed wineglass spoil a draught of fair water. No wonder the poor fellow we spoke of, who always belongs to this class of slightly flavored mediocrities, is puzzled and vexed by the strange sight of a dozen men of capacity working and playing together in harmony. He and his fellows are always fighting. With them familiarity naturally breeds contempt. If they ever praise each other’s bad drawings, or broken-winded novels, or spavined verses, nobody ever supposed it was from admiration; it was simply a contract between themselves and a publisher or dealer.

If the Mutuals have really nothing among them worth admiring, that alters the question. But if they are men with noble powers and qualities, let me tell you, that, next to youthful love and family affections, there is no human senti-

ment better than that which unites the Societies of Mutual Admiration. And what would literature or art be without such associations? Who can tell what we owe to the Mutual Admiration Society of which Shakspeare, and Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher were members? Or to that of which Addison and Steele formed the center, and which gave us the Spectator? Or to that where Jonson, and Goldsmith, and Burke, and Reynolds, and Beauclerk, and Boswell, most admiring among all admirers, met together? Was there any great harm in the fact that the Irvings and Paulding wrote in company? or any unpardonable cabal in the literary union of Verplanck and Bryant and Sands, and as many more as they chose to associate with them?

The poor creature does not know what he is talking about when he abuses this noblest of institutions. Let him inspect its mysteries through the knot-hole he has secured, but not use that office as a medium for his popgun. Such a society is the crown of a literary metropolis; if a town has no material for it, and spirit and good feeling enough to organize it, it is a mere caravansary, fit for a man of genius to lodge in, but not to live in. Foolish people hate and dread and envy such an association of men of varied powers and influences, because it is lofty, serene, impregnable, and by the necessity of the case, exclusive. Wise ones are prouder of the little M. S. M. A. than of all their other honors put together.

All generous minds have a horror of what are commonly called "facts." They are the brute

beasts of the intellectual domain. Who does not know fellows that always have an ill-conditioned fact or two that they lead after them into decent company like so many bull-dogs, ready to let them slip at every ingenious suggestion, or convenient generalization, or pleasant fancy? I allow no "facts" at this table. What! Because bread is good and wholesome shall you thrust a crumb into my windpipe while I am talking? Do not these muscles of mine represent a hundred loaves of bread? and is not my thought the abstract of ten thousand of these crumbs of truth with which you would choke off my speech?

(The above remark must be conditioned and qualified for the vulgar mind. The reader will of course understand the precise amount of seasoning which must be added to it before he adopts it as one of the axioms of his life. The speaker disclaims all responsibility for its abuse in incompetent hands.)

This business of conversation is a very serious matter. There are men that it weakens one to talk with an hour more than a day's fasting would do. Mark this that I am going to say, for it is as good as a working professional man's advice, and costs you nothing: It is better to lose a pint of blood from your veins than to have a nerve tapper. Nobody measures your nervous force as it runs away, nor bandages your brain and marrow after the operation.

There are men of *esprit* who are excessively exhausting to some people. They are the talkers that have what may be called *jerky* minds. Their thoughts do not run in the natural order of sequence. They say bright things on all

possible subjects, but their zigzags rack you to death. After a jolting half-hour with one of these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief. It is like taking the cat in your lap after holding a squirrel.

What a comfort a dull but kindly person is, to be sure, at times! A ground glass shade over a gas-lamp does not bring more solace to our dazzled eyes than such a one to our minds.

"Do not dull people bore you?" said one of the lady-boarders--the same that sent me her autograph-book last week with a request for a few original stanzas, not remembering that "The Pactolian" pays me five dollars a line for everything I write in its columns.

"Madam," said I (she and the century were in their teens together), "all men are bores, except when we want them. There never was but one man that I would trust with my latch-key."

"Who might that favored person be?"

"Zimmermann."

The men of genius that I fancy most have erectile heads like the cobra-di-capello. You remember what they tell of William Pinckney, the great pleader; how in his eloquent paroxysms the veins of his neck would swell and his face flush and his eyes glitter until he seemed on the verge of apoplexy. The hydraulic arrangements for supplying the brain with blood are only second in importance to its own organization. The bulbous-headed fellows that steam well when they are at work are the men that draw big audiences and give us marrowy books and pictures. It is a good sign to have one's feet grow cold when he is writing. A great

writer and speaker once told me that he often wrote with his feet in hot water; but for this, all his blood would have run into his head, as the mercury sometimes withdraws into the ball of a thermometer.

You don't suppose that my remarks made at this table are like so many postage-stamps, do you--each to be only once uttered? If you do, you are mistaken. He must be a poor creature that does not often repeat himself. Imagine the author of the excellent piece of advice, "Know thyself," never alluding to that sentiment again during the course of a protracted existence! Why, the truths a man carries about with him are his tools; and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once to smooth a knotty board with, or to hang up his hammer after it has driven its first nail? I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea, often. I shall use the same types when I like, but not commonly the same stereotypes. A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, by a new and express train of associations.

Sometimes, but rarely, one may be caught making the same speech twice over, and yet be held blameless. Thus a certain lecturer, after performing in an inland city, where dwells a *litteratrice* of note, was invited to meet her and others over the social teacup. She pleasantly referred to his many wanderings in his own occupation. "Yes," he replied, "I am like the huma, the bird that never lights, being always in the cars, as he is always on the wing." Years

elapsed. The lecturer visited the same place once more for the same purpose. Another social cup after the lecture, and a second meeting with the distinguished lady. "You are constantly going from place to place," she said. "Yes," he answered, "I am like the huma,"—and finished the sentence as before.

What horrors, when it flashed over him that he had made this fine speech, word for word, twice over! Yet it was not true, as the lady might perhaps have fairly inferred, that he had embellished his conversation with the humasally during the whole interval of years. On the contrary, he had never once thought of the odious fowl until the recurrence of precisely the same circumstances brought up precisely the same idea. He ought to have been proud of the accuracy of his mental adjustments. Given certain factors, and a sound brain should always evolve the same fixed product with the certainty of Babbage's calculating machine.

What, a satire, by the way, is that machine on the mere mathematician! A Frankenstein-monster, a thing without brains and without heart, too stupid to make a blunder; that turns out formulæ like a corn-sheller, and never grows any wiser or better, though it grind a thousand bushels of them!

I have an immense respect of a man of talents *plus* "the mathematics." But the calculating power alone should seem to be the least human of qualities, and to have the smallest amount of reason in it; since a machine can be made to do the work of three or four calculators, and better than any of them. Sometimes I have been

troubled that I had not a deeper intuitive apprehension of the relations of numbers. But the triumph of the ciphering hand-organ has consoled me. I always fancy I can hear the wheels clicking in a calculator's brain. The power of dealing with numbers is a kind of "detached lever" arrangement which may be put into a mighty poor watch. I suppose it is about as common as the power of moving the ears voluntarily, which is a moderately rare endowment.

Little localized powers, and little narrow streaks of specialized knowledge, are things men are very apt to be conceited about. Nature is very wise; but for this encouraging principle, how many small talents and little accomplishments would be neglected! Talk about conceit as much as you like, it is to human character what salt is to the ocean; it keeps it sweet and renders it endurable. Say rather is it like the natural unguent of the sea fowl's plumage, which enables him to shed the rain that falls on him and the waves in which he dips. When one has had all his conceit taken out of him, when he has lost all his illusions, his feathers will soon soak through, and he will fly no more.

So you admire conceited people do you? said the young lady who had come to the city to be finished off for—the duties of life.

I am afraid you do not study logic at your school, my dear. It does not follow that I wish to be pickled in brine because I like a salt-water plunge at Nahant. I say that conceit is just as natural a thing to human minds as a centre is to a circle. But little minded people's thoughts

move in such small circles that five minutes' conversation gives you an arc long enough to determine their whole curve. An arc in the movement of a large intellect does not sensibly differ from a straight line. Even if it have the third vowel as its center, it does not soon betray it. The highest thought that is, is the most seemingly impersonal; it does not obviously employ an individual centre.

Audacious self-esteem, with good ground for it, is always imposing. What resplendent beauty there must have been which could have authorized Phryne to "peel" in the way she did! What fine speeches are those two: "*Non omnis moriar*," and "I have taken all knowledge to be my province"! Even in common people, conceit has the virtue of making them cheerful; the man who thinks his wife, his baby, his house, his horse, his dog and himself severally unequalled, is almost sure to be a good humored person, though liable to be tedious at times.

What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners, are the principal ones, I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else; long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles on which these points depend. No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain *ultima* of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source. In short, just as a written con-

stitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop a vibration as in twanging them to bring out their music.

Do you mean to say the pun question is not clearly settled in your minds? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and *verbicide*—that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life—are alike forbidden. Man slaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as man's laughter, which is the end of the other. A pun is *prima facie* an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious. I speak of total depravity, and one says all that is written on the subject is deep-raving. I have committed my self-respect by talking with such a person. I should like to commit him, but cannot, because he is a nuisance. Or I speak of geological convulsions and he asks me what was the cuisine of Noah's Ark; also whether the Deluge was not a deal huger than any modern inundation.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if a blow were given for such cause and death ensued, the jury would be the judges both of the fact and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided before Miller, J.

Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, "When charity was like a top?" It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then, and not until then struck Roe, and his head happening to strike a bound volume of the monthly ragbag and stolen miscellany, intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down the notions of the law to his brother Justices, who unanimously replied, "Jest so." The chief rejoined that no man should jest so, without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the sheriff. The bond was formed as a dead-end, but not claimed.

People that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks. They amuse themselves and other children but their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

I will thank you, B. F., to bring down two books, of which I will mark the places on this slip of paper. (While he is gone I may say that his boy, our landlady's youngest, is called Benjamin Franklin, after the celebrated philosopher of that name. A highly merited compliment.)

I wished to refer to two eminent authorities. Now, be so good as to listen. The great moralist says: "To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctity of his mother tongue would invade the recesses of the paternal till

without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn without an indigestion."

And, once more listen to the historian. "The Puritans hated puns. The Bishops were notoriously addicted to them. The Lords Temporal carried them to the verge of license. Majesty itself must have its Royal quibble. 'Ye be Burley, of my Lord of Burley,' said Queen Elizabeth, 'but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester.' The gravest wisdom and the highest breeding lent their sanction to the practice. Lord Bacon playfully declared himself a descendent of Og, the King of Bashan. Sir Philip Sidney, with his last breath, reproached the soldier who brought him water, for wasting a casqueful upon a dying man. A courtier, who saw Othello performed at the Globe Theatre, remarked, that the blackamoor was a bruit and not a man. 'Thou hast reason,' replied a great lord, 'according to Plato his saying; for this be a two-legged animal with feathers.' The fatal habit became universal. The language was corrupted. The infection spread to the national conscience. Political double-dealings naturally grew out of verbal double-meanings. The teeth of the new dragon were sown by the Cadmus who introduced the alphabet of equivocation. What was levity in the time of the Tudors grew to regicide and revolution in the time of the Stewarts."

Who was that boarder that just whispered something about the Macaulay—flowers of literature?—There was a dead silence.—I said calmly, I shall henceforth consider any interruption by a pun as a hint to change my boarding house.

Do not plead my example. If *I* have used any such, it has only been as a Spartan father would show up a drunken Helot. We have done with them.

If a logical mind ever found out anything with its logic?—I should say that its most frequent work was to build a *pons asinorium* over chasms that shrewd people can bestride without such a structure. You can hire logic, in the shape of a lawyer, to prove anything that you want to prove. You can buy treatises to show that Napoleon never lived, and that no battle of Bunker Hill was ever fought. The great minds are those with a wide span, that couple truths related to, but far removed from each other. Logicians carry the surveyor's chain over the track of which these are the true explorers. I value a man mainly for his primary relations with truth, as I understand truth,—not for any secondary artifice in handling his ideas. Some of the sharpest men in argument are notoriously unsound in judgment. I should not trust the counsel of a smart debater, any more than that of a good chess-player. Either may of course advise wisely, but not necessarily because he wrangles or plays well.

The old gentleman who sits opposite got his hand up, as a pointer lifts his fore foot, at the expression, "His relations with truth as I understand truth," and when I had done, sniffed audibly, and said I talked like a transcendentalist. For his part, common sense was good enough for him.

Precisely so, my dear sir, I replied; common sense, *as you understand it*. We all have to

assume a standard of judgment in our own minds, whether of things or persons. A man who is willing to take another's opinion has to exercise his judgment in the choice of whom to follow, which is often as nice a matter as to judge of things for one's self. On the whole, I had rather judge men's minds by comparing their thoughts with my own than judge of thoughts by knowing who utter them. I must do one or the other. It does not follow, of course, that I may not recognize another man's thoughts as broader and deeper than my own; but that does not necessarily change my opinion, otherwise this would be at the mercy of every superior mind that held a different one. How many of our most cherished beliefs are like those drinking-glasses of the ancient pattern, that serve us well so long as we keep them in our hand, but spill all if we attempt to set them down. I have sometimes compared conversations to the Italian game of *Mora*, in which one player lifts his hand with so many fingers extended, and the other matches or misses the number, as the case may be, with his own. I show my thought, another his; if they agree, well; if they differ, we find the largest common factor, if we can, but at any rate avoid disputing about remainders and fractions, which is to real talk what tuning an instrument is to playing on it.

What if, instead of talking this morning, I should read you a copy of verses, with critical remarks by the author? Any of the company can retire that like.

When Eve had led her Lord away,
 And Cain had killed his brother,
 The stars and flowers, the poets say,
 Agreed with one another.

To cheat the cunning tempter's art,
 And teach the race its duty,
 By keeping on its wicked heart,
 Their eyes of light and beauty.

A million sleepless lids, they say,
 Will be at least a warning;
 And so the flowers would watch by day,
 The stars from eve to morning.

On hill and prairie, field and lawn,
 Their dewy eyes are turning.
 The flowers still watch from reddening dawn
 Till western skies are burning.

Alas! each hour of daylight tells
 A tale of shame so crushing,
 That some turn as white as sea-bleached shells,
 And some are always blushing.

But when the patient stars look down
 On all their light discovers,
 The traitors smile, the murders frown,
 The lips of lying lovers.

They try to shut their saddening eyes,
 And in the vain endeavor
 We see them twinkling in in the skies,
 And so they wink forever.

What do *you* think of these verses, my friends?
 —Is that piece an impromptue? said my land-
 lady's daughter. (Act. 19. Tender-eyed blond.
 Long ringlets. Cameo pin. Gold pencil-case,
 on a chain. Locket, Bracelet, Album. Auto-
 graph book. Accordion. Reads Byron, Tup-
 per, and Sylvanus Cobb, junior, while her
 mother makes the puddings. Says, "yes"

when you tell her anything. —*Oui et non, ma petite*,—Yes and no, my child. Five of the seven verses were written off-hand; the other two took a week,—that is, were hanging around the desk in a ragged, forlorn, unrhymed condition as long as that. All poets will tell you just such stories. *C'est le dernier pas qui coute*. Don't you know how hard it is for some people to get out of a room after their visit is really over? They want to be off, and you want to have them off, but they don't know how to manage it. One would think they had been built in your parlor or study, and were waiting to be launched. I have contrived a sort of ceremonial inclined plane for such visitors, which being lubricated with certain smooth phrases, I back them down metaphorically speaking, stern-foremost, into their "native element," the great ocean of out-doors. Well, now, there are poems as hard to get rid of as these rural visitors. They come in glibly, use up all the servicable rhymes, day, ray, beauty, duty, skies, eyes, other, brother, mountain, fountain, and the like; and so they go on until you think it time for the wind-up, and the wind-up won't come on any terms. So they lie about until you get sick of the sight of them and end by thrusting some cold scrap of a final couplet on them, and turning them out of doors. I suspect a good many "impromptues" could tell just such a story as the above. Here turning to our landlady, I used an illustration which pleased the company much at the time, and has since been highly commended. "Madam," I said, "You can pour three gills and three quar-

ters of honey from that pint jug if it is full, in less than one minute, but, Madam, you could not empty that last quarter of a gill, though you were turned into a marble Hebe, and held the vessel upside down for a thousand years."

One gets tired to death of the old, old rhymes, such as you see in that copy of verses—which I don't mean to abuse or to praise either. I always feel as if I were a cobbler, putting new top-leathers to an old pair of boot-soles, and bodies, when I am fitting sentiments to these venerable jingles.

.	.	.	.	youth
.	.	.	.	morning
.	.	.	.	truth
.	.	.	.	warning.

Nine-tenths of the "juvenile poems" written spring out of the above musical and suggestive coincidences.

"Yes," said our landlady's daughter.

I did not address the following remark to her, and I trust from her limited range of reading, she will never see it; I said it softly to my next neighbor.

When a young female wears a flat circular side curl, gummed on each temple—when she walks a male, not arm in arm, but his arm against the back of hers, and when she says "yes?" with the note of interrogation, you are generally safe in asking her what wages she gets, and who the "feller" was you saw her with.

"What were you whispering?" said the daughter of the house, moistening her lips as she spoke, in a very engaging manner.

"I was only giving some hints on the fine arts."

"Yes?"

—It is curious to see how the same wants and tastes find the same implements and modes of expression in all times and places. The young ladies of Otaheite, as you see in Cook's voyages, had a sort of crinoline arrangement fully equal in radius to the largest spread of our own lady-baskets. When I fling a Bay State shawl over my shoulders, I am only taking a lesson from the climate that the Indian had learned before me. A blanket-shawl we call it, and not a plaid; and wear it like the aborigines and not like the Highlanders.

We are Romans of the modern world—the great assimilating people. Conflicts and conquests are of course necessary accidents with us, as with our prototypes. And so we come to their style of weapon. Our army sword is the short, stiff pointed *gladius* of the Romans; and the American bowie-knife is the same tool, modified to meet the daily wants of civil society. I announce at this table an axiom not to be found in Montesquieu or the journals of Congress:

The race that shortens its weapons lengthens its boundaries.

Corollary. It was the Polish *lance* that left Poland at last with nothing of her own to bound.

"Dropped from her nerveless grasp the shattered spear."

What business had Sarmatia to be fighting for liberty with a fifteen foot pole between her and the breasts of her enemies? If she had but touched the old Roman and young American

weapon and come to close quarters, there might have been a chance for her; but it would have spoiled the best passages in "The Pleasures of Hope."

Self-made men? well yes. Of course everybody likes and respects self-made men. It is a great deal better to be made in that way than not to be made at all. Are any of you younger people old enough to remember that Irishman's house on the marsh at Cambridgeport, which house he built from drain to chimney-top with his own hands? It took him a good many years to build it, and one could see that it was a little out of plumb, and a little waivy in outline, and a little queer and uncertain in general aspect. A regular hand could certainly have built a better house; but it was a very good house for a "self-made" carpenter's house, and people praised it, and said how remarkably well the Irishman had succeeded. They never thought of praising the fine blocks of houses a little farther on.

Your self-made man whittled into shape with his own jack-knife, deserves more credit, if that is all, than the regular engine-turned article, shaped by the most approved pattern and French-polished by society and travel. But as so saying that one is every way the equal of the other, that is another matter. The right of strict, social discrimination of all things and persons, according to their merits, native or acquired, is one of the most precious republican privileges. I take the liberty to exercise it when I say that, *other things being equal*, in most relations of life I prefer a man of family.

What do I mean by a man of family?

O, I'll give you a general idea of what I mean. Let us give him a first-rate fit out; it costs us nothing.

Four or five generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen; among them a member of His Majesty's Council for the province, a Governor or so, one or two doctors of divinity, a member of Congress—not later than the time of top-foots with tassels.

Family portraits. The members of the Council, by Smibert. The great merchant-uncle, by Copley, full-lengthened, sitting in his armchair, in a velvet cap and flowered robe, with a globe by him, to show the range of his commercial transactions, and letters with large red seals lying round, one directed conspicuously to The Honorable, etc., etc. Great-grandmother, by the same artist; brown satin, lace very fine, hands superlative; grand old lady, stiffish but imposing. Her mother, artist unknown; flat, angular, hanging sleeves, parrot on fist. A pair of Stewarts, viz. 1. A superb full-blown, medeiaeval gentleman, with a fiery dash of Tory blood in his veins, tempered down with that of a fine old rebel grand-mother, and warmed up with the best of old Maderia; his face is one flame of ruddy sunshine; his ruffled shirt rushes out of his bosom with an impetuous generosity, as if it would drag his heart after it; and his smile is good for twenty thousand dollars to the Hospital, besides ample bequests to all relatives and dependants. 2. Lady of the same; remarkable cap; high waist, as in time of Empire; bust a la *Josephine*, wisps of curls, like celery tips, at

sides of forehead; complexion clear and warm, like rose-cordial. As for the miniatures by Malbone, we don't count them in the gallery.

Books, too, with the names of old college students in them—family names; you will find them at the head of their respective classes in the days when students took rank on the catalogue from their parents' position. Elzevirs, with the latinized appellations of youthful progenitors, and *hic leiber est meus* on the title page. A set of Hogarth's original plates. Pope, original edition, 15 volumes, London, 1717. Barrow on the lower shelves in folio. Tillotson on the upper, in a little dark platoon of octo-decimos.

Some family silver; a string of wedding and funeral rings, the arms of the family curiously blazoned; the same in worsted by a maiden aunt.

If the man of family has an old place to keep these things in, furnished with claw-foot chair and black mahogany tables, and tall beveled-edged mirrors, and stately upright cabinets, his outfit is complete.

No, my friends, I go (always other things being equal) for the man that inherits family traditions and accumulative humanities of at least four or five generations. Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books, that have not handled them from infancy. Do you suppose our Dear Professor over there ever read Poli Synopsis, or consulted Castelli Lexicon, while he was growing up to their stature? Not he; but virtue passed through the hem of their parchments and leather garments whenever he

touched them, as the precious drugs sweated through the bat's handle in the Arabian story. I tell you, he is at home whenever he smells the invigorating fragrance of Russia leather. No self-made man feels so. One may, it is true, have all the antecedents I have spoken of, and yet be a poor or a shabby fellow. One may have none of them and yet be first for councils and courts. Then let them change places. Our social arrangement has this great beauty, that its strata shift up and down as they change specific gravity, without being clogged by layers of prescription. But I still insist on my democratic liberty of choice, and I go for the man with the gallery of family portraits against the one with the twenty-five-cent daguerreotype, unless I find out that the last is the better of the two.

I should have felt more nervous about the late comet if I had thought the world was ripe. But it is very green yet, if I am not mistaken; and besides, there is a great deal of coal, to use up, which I cannot bring myself to think was made for nothing. If certain things which seem to me essential to a millenium had come to pass, I should have been frightened; but they haven't. Perhaps you would like to hear my

When legislators keep the law,
When banks dispense with bolts and locks,
When berries—hurtle, rasp, and straw—
Grow bigger downwards through the box—

When he that selles house or land
Shows leak in roof or flaw in light,
When haberdashers choose the stand
Whose window hath the broadest light.