matic colors,—but never the object as it is in fair daylight. A pun, which is kind of wit, is a different and much shallower trick in mental optics; throwing the *shadows* of two objects so that one overlies the other. Poetry uses the rainbow tints for special effects, but always keeps its essential objects in the purest white light of truth. Will you allow me to pursue this subject a little further?

(They didn't allow me at that time, for somebody happened to scrape the floor with his chair just then; which accidental sound, as all must have noticed, has the instantaneous effect that Proserpina cutting the yellow hair had upon infelix Dido. It broke the charm, and that breakfast was over.)

Don't flatter yourself that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. On the contrary, the nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become. Except in cases of necessity, which are rare, leave your friend to learn unpleasant truths from his enemies; they are ready enough to tell them. Good-breeding *never* forgets that *amour-propre* is universal. When you read the story of the Archbishop and Gil Blas, you may laugh, if you will, at the poor old man's delusion; but don't forget that the youth was the greater fool of the two, and that his master served such a booby rightly in turning him out of doors.

You need not get up a rebellion against what I say if you find everything in my sayings is not exactly new. You can't possibly mistake a man who means to be honest for a literary pickpocket.

I once read an introductory lecture that looked to me too learned for its latitude. On examination, I found all its erudition was taken ready-made from D'Israeli. If I had been ill-natured I should have shown up the Professor, who had once belabored me in his feeble way. But one can generally tell these wholesale thieves easily enough, and they are not worth the trouble of putting them in the pillory. I doubt the entire novelty of my remarks just made on telling unpleasant truths, yet I am not conscious of any larceny.

Neither make too much of flaws and occasional overstatements. Some persons seem to think that absolute truth, in the form of rigidly stated propositions, is all that conversations admit. This is precisely as if a musician should insist on having nothing but perfect chords and simple melodies, no diminished fifths, no flat sevenths, no flourishes, on any account. Now it is fair to say, that, just as music must have all of these, so conversation must have its partial truths, its enbellished truths, its exaggerated truths. It is in its higher forms an artistic product, and admits the ideal element as much as pictures or statues. One man who is a little too literal can spoil the talk of a whole tableful of men of *esprit*. "Yes," you say, "but who wants to hear fanciful people's nonsense? Put the facts to it, and then we see where it is!" Certainly, if a man is too fond of paradox, if he is flighty and empty, if, instead of striking those fifths and sevenths, those harmonious discords, often so much better than the twinned octaves, in the music of thought, if, instead of striking these,

he jangles the chords, stick a fact into him like a stiletto. But remember that talking is one of the fine arts, the noblest, the most important, and the most difficult, and that its fluent harmonies may be spoiled by the intrusion of a single harsh note. Therefore conversation which is suggestive rather than argumentative, which lets out the most of each talker's results of thought, is commonly the pleasantest and the most profitable. It is not easy, at the best, for two persons talking together to make the most of each other's thoughts, there are so many of them.

(The company looked as if they wanted an explanation.)

When John and Thomas, for instance, are talking together, it is natural enough that among the six there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension.

(Our landlady turned pale;—no doubt she thought there was a screw loose in my intellect,—and that involved the probable loss of a boarder. A severe-looking person, who wears a Spanish cloak and a sad cheek, fluted by the passions of the melodrama, whom I understand to be the professional ruffian of the neighboring theater, alluded, with a certain lifting of the brow, drawing down of the corners of the mouth, and somewhat rasping *voce di petto*, to Falstaff's nine men in buckram. Everybody looked up. I believe the old gentleman opposite was afraid I should seize the carving-knife; at any rate, he slid it to one side, as it were, carelessly.)

I think, I said, I can make it plain to Benjamin Franklin here, that there are at least six personalities distinctly to be be recognized as taking part in that dialogue between John and Thomas

Three Johns.
1. The real John; known only to his Maker.
2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him.
3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.

Three Thomases.
1. The real Thomas.
2. Thomas's ideal Thomas.
3. John's ideal Thomas.

Only one of the three Johns is taxed; only one can be weighed on a platform balance; but the other two are just as important in the conversation. Let us suppose the real John to be old, dull, and ill-looking. But as the Higher Powers have not conferred on men the gift of seeing themselves in the true light, John very possibly conceives himself to be youthful, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue, we will say; therefore he *is*, as far as Thomas's attitude in the conversation is concerned, an artful rogue, though really simple and stupid. The same conditions apply to the three Thomases. It follows, that, until a man can be found who knows himself as his Maker knows him, or who sees himself as others see him, there must be at least six persons engaged in every dialogue between two. Of these, the least important, philosophically speaking, is the

one that we have called the real person. No wonder two disputants often get angry, when there are six of them talking and listening all at the same time.

(A very unphilosophical application of the above remarks was made by a young fellow answering to the name of John, who sits near me at table. A certain basket of peaches, a rare vegetable, little known to boarding-houses, was on its way to me *via* this unlettered Johannes. He appropriated the three that remained in the basket, remarking that there was just one apiece for him. I convinced him that his practical inference was hasty and illogical, but in the mean time he had eaten the peaches.)

The opinions of relatives as to a man's powers are very commonly of little value; not merely because they overrate their own flesh and blood as some may suppose; on the contrary, they are quite as likely to underrate those whom they have grown into the habit of considering like themselves. The advent of genius is like what florists style the *breaking* of a seedling tulip into what we may call high-caste colors,—ten thousand dingy flowers, then one with the divine streak; or, if you prefer it, like the coming up in old Jacob's garden of that most gentlemanly little fruit, the Seckel pear, which I have sometimes seen in shop-windows. It is a surprise, —there is nothing to account for it. All at once we find that twice two make five. Nature is fond of what are called "gift-enterprises." This little book of life which she has given into the hands of its joint possessors is commonly one of the old story-books bound over again. Only once

in a great while there is a stately poem in it, or its leaves are illuminated with the glories of art, or they enfold a draft for untold values signed by the millionfold millionaire old mother herself. But strangers are commonly the first to find the "gift" that came with the little book.

It may be questioned whether anything can be conscious of its own flavor. Whether the musk-deer, or the civet-cat, or even a still more eloquently silent animal that might be mentioned, is aware of any personal peculiarity, may well be doubted. No man knows his own voice; many men do not know their own profiles. Every one remembers Carlyle's famous "Characteristics" article; allow for exaggerations, and there is a great deal in his doctrine of the self-unconsciousness of genius. It comes under the great law just stated. This incapacity of knowing its own traits is often found in the family as well as in the individual. So never mind what your cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and the rest, say about that fine poem you have written, but send it (postage paid) to the editors, if there are any, of the "Atlantic"—which, by the way, is not so called because it is *a notion*, as some dull wits wish they had said, but they are too late.

—Scientific knowledge, even in the most modest persons, has mingled with it a something which partakes of insolence. Absolute, peremptory facts are bullies, and those who kep company with them are apt to get a bullying habit of mind;—not of manners, perhaps; they may be soft and smooth, but the smile they carry has a quiet assertion in it, such as the Cham-

pion of the Heavy Weights, commonly the best-natured. but not the most diffident of men, wears upon what he very inelegantly calls his "mug." Take the man, for instance, who deals in the mathematical sciences. There is no elasticity in a mathematical fact; if you bring up against it, it never yield's a hair's breath; everything must go to pieces that comes in collision with it. What the mathematician knows being absolute, unconditional, incapable of suffering question, it should tend, in the nature of things, to breed a despotic way of thinking. So of those who deal with the palpable and often unmistakable facts of external nature; only in a less degree. Every probability—and most of our *common*, working beliefs are probabilities—is provided with *buffers* at both ends, which break the force of opposite opinions clashing against it; but scientific certainty has no spring in it, no courtesy, no possibility of yielding. All this must react on the minds that handle these forms of truth.

Oh, you need not tell me that Messrs. A. and B. are the most gracious, unassuming people in the world, and yet preëminent in the ranges of science I am referring to. I know that as well as you. But mark this which I am going to say once for all. If I had not force enough to project a principle full in the face of the half dozen most obvious facts which seem to contradict it, I would think only in single file from this day forward. A rash man, once visiting a certain noted institution at South Boston, ventured to express the sentiment, that man is a rational being. An old woman who was an

attendant at the Idiot School contradicted the statement, and appealed to the facts before the speaker to disprove it. The rash man stuck to his hasty generalization, notwithstanding.

(—It is my desire to be useful to those with whom I am associated in my daily relations. I not unfrequently practice the divine art of music in company with our landlady's daughter, who, as I mentioned before, is the owner of an accordion. Having myself a well-marked baritone voice of more than half an octave in compass, I sometimes add my vocal powers to her execution of

"Thou, thou reign'st in this bosom,"—

not, however, unless her mother or some other discreet female is present, to prevent misinterpretation or remark. I have also taken a good deal of interest in Benjamin Franklin, before referred to, sometimes called B. F., or more frequently Frank, in imitation of that felicitous abbreviation, combining dignity and convenience, adopted by some of his betters. My acquaintance with the French language is very imperfect, I have studied it anywhere but in Paris, which is awkward, as B. F. devotes himself to it with the peculiar advantage of an Alsacian teacher. The boy, I think, is doing well, between us, notwithstanding. The following is an *uncorrected* French exercise, written by this young gentleman. His mother thinks it very creditable to his abilities; though, being unacquainted with the French language, her judgment cannot be considered final.