

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 Alsatian 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.

## LE RAT DES SALONS, A LECTURE.

Ce rat ci est un animal fort singulier. Il a deux pattes de derrière sur lesquelles il marche, et deux pattes de devant dont il fait usage pour tenir les journaux. Cet animal a la peau noir pour la plupart, et porte un cercle blanchâtre autour de son cou. On le trouve tous les jours aux dits salons, ou il demeure, digere, s'il y a de quoi dans son interieur, respire, tousse, eternue, dort, et ronfle quelquefois, ayant toujours le semblance de lire. On ne sait pas s'il a une autre gîte que celà. Il a l'air d'une bête très stupide, mais il est d'une sagacité et d'une vitesse extraordinaire quand il s'agit de saisir un journal nouveau. On ne sait pas pourquoi il lit, parcequ'il ne parait pas avoir des idées. Il vocalise rarement, mais en ravanche, il fait des bruits nasaux divers. Il porte un crayon dans une de ses poches pectorales, avec lequel il fait des marques sur les bords des journaux et des livres, semblable aux suivans: !!!—Bah! Pooh! Il ne faut pas cependant les prendre pour des signes d'intelligence. Il ne vole pas, ordinairement; il fait rarement même des échanges de parapluie, et jamais de chapeau, parceque son chapeau a toujours un caractère spécifique. On ne sait pas au juste ce dont il se nourrit. Feu Cuvier était d'avis que c'était de l'odeur du cuir des reliures; ce qu'on lit d'être une nourriture animale fort saine, et peu chère. Il vit bien longtems. Enfin il meure, en laissant à ses héritiers une carte du Salon à Lecture ou il avait existé pendant sa vie. On pretend qu'il revient toutes les nuits, après la mort, visiter le Salon. On peut le voir, dit on, à minuit, dans

sa place habituelle, tenant le journal du soir, et ayant à sa main un crayon de charbon. Le lendemain on trouve des caractères inconnus sur les bords du journal. Ce qui prouve que le spiritualisme est vrai, et que Messieurs les Professeurs de Cambridge sont des imbeciles qui ne savent rien du tout

I think this exercise, which I have not corrected, or allowed to be touched in any way, is very creditable to B. F. You observe that he is acquiring a knowledge of zoölogy at the same time that he is learning French. Fathers of families who take this periodical will find it profitable to their children, and an economical mode of instruction, to set them to revising and amending this boy's exercise. The passage was originally taken from the "Histoire Naturelle des Bêtes Ruminans et Rongeurs, Bipèdes et Autres," lately published in Paris. This was translated into English and published in London. It was re-published at Great Pedlington, with notes and additions by the American editor. The notes consist of an interrogation-mark on page 53, and a reference (p. 127th) to another book "edited" by the same hand. The additions consist of the editor's name on the title-page and back, with a complete and authentic list of said editor's honorary titles in the first of these localities. Our boy translated the translation back into French. This may be compared with the original, to be found on Shelf 13, Division X, of the Public Library of this metropolis.)

Some of you boarders ask me from time to time why I don't write a story, or a novel, or

something of that kind. Instead of answering each one of you separately, I will thank you to step up into the wholesale department for a few moments, where I deal in answers by the piece and by the bale.

That every articulately-speaking human being has in him stuff for *one* novel in three volumes duo decimo has long been with me a cherished belief. It has been maintained, on the other hand, that many persons cannot write more than one novel,—that all after that are likely to be failures. Life is so much more tremendous a thing in its heights and depths than any transcript of it can be, that all records of human experience are as so many bound *herbaria* to the innumerable glowing, glittering, rustling, breathing, fragrance-laden, poison-sucking, life-giving, death-distilling leaves and flowers of the forest and the prairies. All we can do with books of human experience is to make them alive again with something borrowed from our own lives. We can make a book alive for us just in proportion to its resemblance in essence or in form to our own experience. Now an author's first novel is naturally drawn, to a great extent, from his personal experiences; that is, is a literal copy of nature under various slight disguises. But the moment the author gets out of his personality, he must have the creative power, as well as the narrative art and the sentiment, in order to tell a living story; and this is rare.

Besides, there is great danger that a man's first life-story shall clean him out, so to speak, of his best thoughts. Most lives, though their stream is loaded with sand and turbid with allu-

vial waste, drop a few golden grains of wisdom, as they flow along. Oftentimes a single *cradling* gets them all, and after that the poor man's labor is only rewarded by mud and worn pebbles. All which proves that I, as an individual of the human family, could write one novel or story at any rate, if I would.

Why don't I, then? Well, there are several reasons against it. In the first place, I should tell all my secrets, and I maintain that verse is the proper medium for such revelations. Rhythm and rhyme and the harmonies of musical language, the play of fancy, the fire of imagination, the flashes of passion, so hide the nakedness of a heart laid open, that hardly any confession, transfigured in the luminous halo of poetry, is reproached as self-exposure. A beauty shows herself under the chandeliers, protected by the glitter of her diamonds, with such a broad snow-drift of white arms and shoulders laid bare, that, were she unadorned and in plain calico, she would be unendurable—in the opinion of the ladies.

Again, I am terribly afraid I should show up all my friends. I should like to know if all story-tellers do not do this? Now I am afraid all my friends would not bear showing up very well; for they have an average share of the common weakness of humanity which I am pretty certain would come out. Of all that have told stories among us there is hardly one I can recall that has not drawn too faithfully some living portrait that might better have been spared.

Once more, I have sometimes thought it possible I might be too dull to write such a story as I should wish to write.

And finally, I think it very likely I *shall* write a story one of these days. Don't be surprised at any time, if you see me coming out with "The Schoolmistress," or "The Old Gentleman Opposite." (*Our* schoolmistress and our *old* gentleman that sits opposite had left the table before I said this.) I want my glory for writing the same discounted now, on the spot, if you please. I will write when I get ready. How many people live on the reputation of the reputation they might have made.

I saw you smiled when I spoke about the possibility of my being too dull to write a good story. I don't pretend to know what you meant by it, but I take occasion to make a remark that may hereafter prove of value to some among you. When one of us who has been led by native vanity or senseless flattery to think himself or herself possessed of talent, arrives at the full and final conclusion that he or she is really dull, it is one of the most tranquillizing and blessed convictions that can enter a mortal's mind. All our failures, our short-comings, our strange disappointments in the effect of our efforts are lifted from our bruised shoulders, and fall, like Christian's pack, at the feet of that Omnipotence which has seen fit to deny us the pleasant gift of high intelligence,—with which one look may overflow us in some wider sphere of being.

How sweetly and honestly one said to me the other day, "I hate books!" A gentleman,—singularly free from affectations,—not learned, of course, but of perfect breeding, which is often so much better than learning,—by no means dull, in the sense of knowledge of the

world and society, but certainly not clever either in the arts or sciences,—his company is pleasing to all who know him. I did not recognize in him inferiority of literary taste half so distinctly as I did simplicity of character and fearless acknowledgment of his inaptitude for scholarship. In fact, I think there are a great many gentlemen and others, who read with a mark to keep their place, that really "hate books," but never had the wit to find it out, or the manliness to own it. (*Entre nous*, I always read with a mark.)

We get into a way of thinking as if what we call an "intellectual man" was, as a matter of course, made up of nine-tenths, or thereabouts, of book-learning, and one-tenth himself. But even if he is actually so compounded, he need not read much. Society is a strong solution of books. It draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of tea-leaves. If I were a prince, I would hire or buy a private literary tea-pot, in which I would steep all the leaves of new books that promised well. The infusion would do for me without the vegetable fibre. You understand me; I would have a person whose sole business should be to read day and night, and talk to me whenever I wanted him to. I know the man I would have: a quick-witted, outspoken, incisive fellow; knows history, or at any rate has a shelf full of books about it, which he can use handily, and the same of all useful arts and sciences; knows all the common plots of plays and novels, and the stock company of characters that are continually coming on in new costume; can give you a criticism of an

octavo in an epithet and a wink, and you can depend on it; cares for nobody except for the virtue there is in what he says; delights in taking off big wigs and professional gowns, and in the disembalming and unbandaging of all literary mummies. Yet he is as tender and reverential to all that bears the mark of genius,—that is, of a new influx of truth or beauty,—as a nun over her missal. In short, he is one of those men that know everything except how to make a living. Him would I keep on the square next my own royal compartment on life's chessboard. To him I would push up another pawn, in the shape of a comely and wise young woman, whom he would of course take—to wife. For all contingencies I would liberally provide. In a word, I would, in the plebeian, but expressive phrase, "put him through" all the material part of life; see him sheltered, warmed, fed, button-mended, and all that, just to be able to lay on his talk when I liked, with the privilege of shutting it off at will.

A club is the next best thing to this, strung like a harp, with about a dozen ringing intelligences, each answering to some chord of the macrocosm. They do well to dine together once in a while. A dinner-party made up of such elements is the last triumph of civilization over barbarism. Nature and art combine to charm the senses; the equatorial zone of the system is soothed by well-studied artifices; the faculties are off duty, and fall into their natural attitudes; you see wisdom in slippers and science in a short jacket.

The whole force of conversation depends on

how much you can take for granted. Vulgar chess-players have to play their game out; nothing short of the brutality of an actual checkmate satisfies their dull apprehensions. But look at two masters of that noble game! White stands well enough so far as you can see, but Red says, "Mate in six moves." White looks, nods;—the game is over. Just so in talking with first-rate men; especially when they are good-natured and expansive, as they are apt to be at table. That blessed clairvoyance which sees into things without opening them,—that glorious license, which, having shut the door and driven the reporter from its keyhole, calls upon truth, majestic virgin! To get off from her pedestal and drop her academic poses, and take a festive garland and the vacant place on the *medius lectus*—that carnival-shower of questions and replies and comments, large axioms bowled over the mahogany like bombshells from professional mortars, and explosive wit dropping its trains of many-colored fire, and the mischief-making rain of bon-bons pelting everybody that shows himself—the picture of a truly intellectual banquet is one that the old Divinities might well have attempted to reproduce in their—

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried the young fellow whom they called John, "that is from one of your lectures!"

I know it, I replied,—I concede it, I confess it, I proclaim it.

"The trail of the serpent is over them all!" All lecturers, all professors, all school-masters, have ruts and grooves in their minds into which

their conversation is perpetually sliding. Did you never, in riding through the woods of a still June evening, suddenly feel that you had passed into a warm stratum of air, and in a minute or two strike the chill layer of atmosphere beyond? Did you never, in cleaving the green waters of the Back Bay,—where the provincial blue-noses are in the habit of beating the "Metropolitan" boat-clubs,—find yourself in a tepid streak, a narrow, local gulf-stream, a gratuitous warm bath a little underdone, through which your glistening shoulders soon flashed, to bring you back to the cold realities of full-sea temperature? Just so, in talking to any of the characters above referred to, one not unfrequently finds a sudden change in the style of the conversation. The lack-lustre eye, rayless as a Beacon-street door-plate in August, all at once fills with light; the face flings itself wide open like the church-portals when the bride and bridegroom enter; the little man grows in stature before your eyes, like the small prisoner with hair on end, beloved yet dreaded of early childhood; you were talking with a dwarf and an imbecile,—you have a giant and a trumpet-tongued angel before you!—Nothing but a streak out of a fifty-dollar lecture.

As when, at some unlooked-for moment, the mighty fountain-column springs into the air, before the astonished passer-by,—silver-footed diamond-crowned, rainbow-scarfed,—from the bosom of that fair sheet, sacred to the hymns of quiet batrachians at home, the epigrams of a less amiable and less elevated order of *reptilia* in other latitudes.

Who was that person who was so abused some

time since for saying that in the conflict of two races our sympathies naturally go with the higher? No matter who he was. Now look at what is going on in India,—a white, superior "Caucasian" race, against a dark-skinned, inferior, but still "Caucasian" race,—and where are English and American sympathies? We can't stop to settle all the doubtful questions; all we know is, that the brute nature is sure to come out most strongly in the lower race, and it is the general law that the human side of humanity should treat the brutal side as it does the same nature in the inferior animals,—tame it or crush it. The Indian mail brings stories of women and children outraged and murdered; the royal stronghold is in the hands of the babe-killers. England takes down the Map of the World, which she has girdled with empire, and makes a correction thus: *Delhi. Dele.* The civilized world says, Amen.

Do not think, because I talk to you of many subjects briefly, that I should not find it much lazier work to take each one of them and dilute it down to an essay. Borrow some of my old college themes and water my remarks to suit yourselves, as the Homeric heroes did with their *melas oinos*, that black, sweet, syrupy wine (?) which they used to alloy with three parts or more of the flowing stream. (Could it have been *me-lasses*, as Webster and his provincials spell it, or *Molossa's*, as dear old smattering, chattering, would-be college-president, Cotton Mather, has it in the "Magnalia?") Ponder thereon, ye small antiquaries, who make barn-door-fowl flights of learning in "Notes and Queries!"—ye Histori-

cal Societies, in one of whose venerable triremes I, too, ascend the stream of Time while other hands tug at the oars!—ye Amines of parasitical literature, who pick up your grains of native-grown food with a bodkin, having gorged upon less honest fare until, like the great minds Goethe speaks of, you have "made a Golgotha" of your pages! Ponder thereon!

Before you go, this morning, I want to read you a copy of verses. You will understand by the title that they are written in an imaginary character. I don't doubt they will fit some family-man well enough. I send it forth as "Oak Hall" projects a coat, on *a priori* grounds of conviction that it will suit somebody. There is no loftier illustration of faith than this. It believes that a soul has been clad in flesh; that tender parents have fed and nurtured it; that its mysterious *compages* or frame-work has survived its myriad exposures and reached the stature of maturity; that the Man, now self-determining, has given in his adhesion to the traditions and habits of the race in favor of artificial clothing; that he will, having all the world to choose from, select the very locality where this audacious generalization has been acted upon. It builds a garment cut to the pattern of an Idea, and trusts that Nature will model a material shape to fit it. There is a prophecy in every seam, and its pockets are full of inspiration.—Now hear the verses.

THE OLD MAN DREAMS.

O for one hour of youthful joy!  
Give back my twentieth spring!  
I'd rather laugh a bright-haired boy  
Than reign a gray-beard king!

Off with the wrinkled spoils of age!  
Away with learning's crown!  
Tear out life's wisdom written page,  
And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream  
From boyhood's fount of flame!  
Give me one giddy, reeling dream  
Of life all love and fame!

My listening angel heard the prayer,  
And calmly smiling said,  
"If I but touch thy silvered hair,  
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track  
To bid thee fondly stay,  
While the swift seasons hurry back  
To find the wished-for day?"

Ah, truest soul of womankind!  
Without thee, what were life?  
One bliss I cannot leave behind:  
I'll take—my—precious—wife!

The angel took a sapphire pen  
And wrote in rainbow dew,  
"The man would be a boy again,  
And be a husband too!"

"And is there nothing yet unsaid  
Before the change appears?  
Remember, all their gifts have fled  
With those dissolving years!"

Why, yes; for memory would recall  
My fond paternal joys;  
I could not bear to leave them all:  
I'll take—my—girl—and—boys!

The smiling angel dropped his pen,  
"Why this will never do;  
The man would be a boy again,  
And be a father too!"