

still bore upon him the scars of his early sorrows and struggles. He was by nature strong and robust, and his experience, made him unaccommodating and self-asserting. When he was once asked why he was not invited to dine out as Garrick was, he answered, "Because great lords and ladies did not like to have their mouths stopped;" and Johnson was a notorious mouth-stopper, though what he said was always worth listening to.

Johnson's companions spoke of him as "Ursa Major;" but, as Goldsmith generously said of him, "No man alive has a more tender heart; he has nothing of the bear about him but his skin." The kindness of Johnson's nature was shown on one occasion by the manner in which he assisted a supposed lady in crossing Fleet Street. He gave her his arm and led her across, not observing that she was in liquor at the time. But the spirit of the act was not the less kind on that account. On the other hand, the conduct of the book-seller on whom Johnson once called to solicit employment, and who, regarding his athletic but uncouth person, told him he had better "go buy a porter's knot and carry trunks," in howsoever bland tones the advice might have been communicated, was simply brutal.

While captiousness of manner, and the habit of disputing and contradicting every thing said, is chilling and repulsive, the opposite habit of assenting to, and sympathizing with, every statement made, or emotion expressed, is almost equally disagreeable. It is unmanly, and is felt to be dishonest. "It may seem difficult," says Richard Sharp, "to steer always between bluntness and plain-dealing, between giving merited praise and lavishing indiscriminate flattery; but it is very easy—good-humor, kind-heartedness, and per-

fect simplicity, being all that are requisite to do what is right in the right way."*

At the same time many are unpolite, not because they mean to be so, but because they are awkward, and perhaps know no better. Thus, when Gibbon had published the second and third volumes of his "Decline and Fall," the Duke of Cumberland met him one day, and accosted him with, "How do you do, Mr. Gibbon? I see you are always *at it* in the old way—*scribble, scribble, scribble!*" The duke probably intended to pay the author a compliment, but did not know how better to do it than in this blunt and apparently rude way.

Again, many persons are thought to be stiff, reserved, and proud, when they are only shy. Shyness is characteristic of most people of Teutonic race. It has been styled "the English mania," but it pervades, to a greater or less degree, all the Northern nations. The ordinary Englishman, when he travels abroad, carries his shyness with him. He is stiff, awkward, ungraceful, undemonstrative, and apparently unsympathetic; and though he may assume a brusqueness of manner, the shyness is there, and can not be wholly concealed. The naturally graceful and intensely social French can not understand such a character; and the Englishman is their standing joke—the subject of their most ludicrous caricatures. George Sand attributes the rigidity of the natives of Albion to a stock of *fluide Britannique* which they carry about with them, that renders them impassive under all circumstances, and "as impervious to the

* "Letters and Essays," p. 59.

atmosphere of the regions they traverse as a mouse in the centre of an exhausted receiver.”*

The average Frenchman or Irishman excels the average Englishman, German, or American in courtesy and ease of manner, simply because it is his nature. They are more social and less self-dependent than men of Teutonic origin, more demonstrative and less reticent; they are more communicative, conversational, and freer in their intercourse with each other in all respects; while men of German race are comparatively stiff, reserved, shy, and awkward. At the same time, a people may exhibit ease, gayety, and sprightliness of character, and yet possess no deeper qualities calculated to inspire respect. They may have every grace of manner, and yet be heartless, frivolous, selfish. The character may be on the surface only, and without any solid qualities for a foundation.

There can be no doubt as to which of the two sorts of people—the easy and graceful, or the stiff and awkward—it is most agreeable to meet either in business, in society, or in the casual intercourse of life. Which make the fastest friends, the truest men of their word, the most conscientious performers of their duty, is an entirely different matter.

The dry, *gauche* Englishman—to use the French phrase, *l'Anglais empêtre*—is certainly a somewhat disagreeable person to meet at first. He looks as if he had swallowed a poker. He is shy himself, and the cause of shyness in others. He is stiff, not because he is proud, but because he is shy; and he can not shake it off even if he would. Indeed, we should not be surprised to find that even the clever writer who describes the English Philistine in all his enormity of

* “Lettres d'un Voyageur.”

awkward manner and absence of grace were himself as shy as a bat.

When two shy men meet, they seem like a couple of icicles. They sidle away and turn their backs on each other in a room, or, when travelling, creep into the opposite corners of a railway-carriage. When shy Englishmen are about to start on a journey by railway, they walk along the train, to discover an empty compartment in which to bestow themselves; and, when once ensconced, they inwardly hate the next man who comes in. So, on entering the dining-room of their club, each shy man looks out for an unoccupied table, until sometimes all the tables in the room are occupied by single diners. All this apparent unsociableness is merely shyness—the national characteristic of the Englishman.

“The disciples of Confucius,” observes Mr. Arthur Helps, “say that, when in the presence of the prince, his manner displayed *respectful uneasiness*. There could hardly be given any two words which more fitly describe the manner of most Englishmen when in society.” Perhaps it is due to this feeling that Sir Henry Taylor, in his “Statesman,” recommends that, in the management of interviews, the minister should be as “near to the door” as possible; and, instead of bowing his visitor out, that he should take refuge, at the end of an interview, in the adjoining room. “Timid and embarrassed men,” he says, “will sit as if they were rooted to the spot, when they are conscious that they have to traverse the length of a room in their retreat. In every case, an interview will find a more easy and pleasant termination *when the door is at hand* as the last words are spoken.”*

* Sir Henry Taylor's “Statesman,” p. 59.

The late Prince Albert, one of the gentlest and most amiable, was also one of the most retiring of men. He struggled much against his sense of shyness, but was never able either to conquer or conceal it. His biographer, in explaining its causes, says: "It was the shyness of a very delicate nature, that is not sure it will please, and is without the confidence and the vanity which often go to form characters that are outwardly more genial."*

But the Prince shared this defect with some of the greatest of Englishmen. Sir Isaac Newton was probably the shyest man of his age. He kept secret for a time some of his greatest discoveries, for fear of the notoriety they might bring him. His discovery of the Binomial Theorem and its most important applications, as well as his still greater discovery of the Law of Gravitation, were not published for years after they were made; and when he communicated to Collins his solution of the theory of the moon's rotation round the earth, he forbade him to insert his name in connection with it in the "Philosophical Transactions," saying, "It would, perhaps, increase my acquaintance—the thing which I chiefly study to decline."

From all that can be learned of Shakspeare, it is to be inferred that he was an exceedingly shy man. The manner in which his plays were sent into the world—for it is not known that he edited or authorized the publication of a single one of them — and the dates at which they respectively appeared, are mere matters of conjecture. His appearance in his own plays in second and even third-rate parts—his indifference to reputation, and even his apparent aversion to be held in repute by his contemporaries—his disappearance

* Introduction to the "Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort," 1862.

from London (the seat and centre of English histrionic art) so soon as he had realized a moderate competency—and his retirement about the age of forty, for the remainder of his days, to a life of obscurity in a small town in the midland counties—all seem to unite in proving the shrinking nature of the man, and his unconquerable shyness.

It is also probable that, besides being shy — and his shyness may, like that of Byron, have been increased by his limp—Shakspeare did not possess in any high degree the gift of Hope. It is a remarkable circumstance that, while the great dramatist has, in the course of his writings, copiously illustrated all other gifts, affections, and virtues, the passages are very rare in which Hope is mentioned, and then it is usually in a desponding and despairing tone, as when he says:

"The miserable hath no other medicine,
But only Hope."

Many of his sonnets breathe the spirit of despair and hopelessness.* He laments his lameness;† apologizes for his pro-

* "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone between my outcast state,
And troubled deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate;
Wishing me like to one more rich in Hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,

Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy, contented least;
Yet in these thoughts, *myself almost despising,*
Haply I think on thee," etc.—*Sonnet xxix.*

"So I, *made lame* by sorrow's dearest spite," etc.—*Sonnet xxxvi.*

† "And strength, by *limping* sway disabled," etc.—*Sonnet lxvi.*

"Speak of *my lameness*, and I straight will halt."—*Sonnet lxxxix.*

fession as an actor;* expresses his "fear of trust" in himself, and his hopeless, perhaps misplaced, affection;† anticipates a "confined doom;" and utters his profoundly pathetic cry "for restful death."

It might naturally be supposed that Shakspeare's profession of an actor, and his repeated appearances in public, would speedily overcome his shyness, did such exist. But inborn shyness, when strong, is not so easily conquered.‡ Who could have believed that the late Charles Mathews,

* "Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offenses of affections new," etc.—*Sonnet cx.*

"Oh, for my sake do you with fortune chide!
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means, which public manners breed;
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued,
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand," etc.
Sonnet cxi.

"In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our loves a separable spite,
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight,
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame."
Sonnet xxxvi.

‡ It is related of Garrick that, when subpœnaed on Baret's trial, and required to give his evidence before the court—though he had been accustomed for thirty years to act with the greatest self-possession in the presence of thousands—he became so perplexed and confused that he was actually sent from the witness-box by the judge as a man from whom no evidence could be obtained.

who entertained crowded houses night after night, was naturally one of the shyest of men? He would even make long circuits (lame though he was) along the by-lanes of London to avoid recognition. His wife says of him that he looked "sheepish" and confused if recognized; and that his eyes would fall, and his color would mount, if he heard his name even whispered in passing along the streets.*

Nor would it at first sight have been supposed that Lord Byron was affected with shyness, and yet he was a victim to it—his biographer relating that, while on a visit to Mrs. Pigot, at Southwell, when he saw strangers approaching, he would instantly jump out of the window, and escape on to the lawn to avoid them.

But a still more recent and striking incident is that of the late Archbishop Whately, who, in the early part of his life, was painfully oppressed by the sense of shyness. When at Oxford, his white, rough coat and white hat obtained for him the sobriquet of "The White Bear;" and his manners, according to his own account of himself, corresponded with the appellation. He was directed, by way of remedy, to copy the example of the best-mannered men he met in society; but the attempt to do this only increased his shyness, and he failed. He found that he was all the while thinking of himself, rather than of others; whereas thinking of others, rather than of one's self, is of the true essence of politeness.

Finding that he was making no progress, Whately was driven to utter despair; and then he said to himself, "Why should I endure this torture all my life to no purpose? I

* Mrs. Mathews's "Life and Correspondence of Charles Mathews" (ed. 1860), p. 232.

would bear it still if there was any success to be hoped for; but since there is not, I will die quietly, without taking any more doses. I have tried my very utmost, and find that I must be as awkward as a bear all my life, in spite of it. I will endeavor to think as little about it as a bear, and make up my mind to endure what can't be cured." From this time forth he struggled to shake off all consciousness as to manner, and to disregard censure as much as possible. In adopting this course, he says: "I succeeded beyond my expectations; for I not only got rid of the personal suffering of shyness, but also of most of those faults of manner which consciousness produces; and acquired at once an easy and natural manner—careless, indeed, in the extreme, from its originating in a stern defiance of opinion, which I had convinced myself must be ever against me; rough and awkward, for smoothness and grace are quite out of my way, and, of course, tutorially pedantic; but unconscious, and therefore giving expression to that good-will towards men which I really feel; and these, I believe, are the main points."*

Washington, who was an Englishman in his lineage, was also one in his shyness. He is described incidentally by Mr. Josiah Quincy as "a little stiff in his person, not a little formal in his manner, and not particularly at ease in the presence of strangers. He had the air of a country gentleman not accustomed to mix much in society, perfectly polite, but not easy in his address and conversation, and not graceful in his movements."

Although we are not accustomed to think of modern Americans as shy, the most distinguished American author

* Archbishop Whately's "Commonplace Book."

of our time was probably the shyest of men. Nathaniel Hawthorne was shy to the extent of morbidity. We have observed him, when a stranger entered the room where he was, turn his back for the purpose of avoiding recognition. And yet, when the crust of his shyness was broken, no man could be more cordial and genial than Hawthorne.

We observe a remark in one of Hawthorne's lately published "Note-books,"* that on one occasion he met Mr. Helps in society and found him "cold." And doubtless Mr. Helps thought the same of him. It was only the case of two shy men meeting, each thinking the other stiff and reserved, and parting before their mutual film of shyness had been removed by a little friendly intercourse. Before pronouncing a hasty judgment in such cases, it would be well to bear in mind the motto of Helvetius, which Bentham says proved such a real treasure to him: "*Pour aimer les hommes, il faut attendre peu.*"

We have thus far spoken of shyness as a defect. But there is another way of looking at it; for even shyness has its bright side, and contains an element of good. Shy men

* Emerson is said to have had Nathaniel Hawthorne in his mind when writing the following passage in his "Society and Solitude:" "The most agreeable compliment you could pay him was to imply that you had not observed him in a house or a street where you had met him. While he suffered at being seen where he was, he consoled himself with the delicious thought of the inconceivable number of places where he was not. All he wished of his tailor was to provide that sober mean of color and cut which would never detain the eye for a moment. . . . He had a remorse, running to despair, of his social *gaucheries*, and walked miles and miles to get the twitchings out of his face, and the starts and shrugs out of his arms and shoulders. 'God may forgive sins,' he said, 'but awkwardness has no forgiveness in heaven or earth.'"

and shy races are ungraceful and undemonstrative, because, as regards society at large, they are comparatively unsociable. They do not possess those elegances of manner, acquired by free intercourse, which distinguish the social races, because their tendency is to shun society rather than to seek it. They are shy in the presence of strangers, and shy even in their own families. They hide their affections under a robe of reserve; and when they do give way to their feelings, it is only in some very hidden inner chamber. And yet the feelings *are* there, and not the less healthy and genuine that they are not made the subject of exhibition to others.

It was not a little characteristic of the ancient Germans that the more social and demonstrative peoples by whom they were surrounded should have characterized them as the NIEMIC, or Dumb men. And the same designation might equally apply to the modern English, as compared, for example, with their nimbler, more communicative and vocal, and in all respects, more social neighbors, the modern French and Irish.

But there is one characteristic which marks the English people, as it did the races from which they have mainly sprung, and that is their intense love of Home. Give the Englishman a home, and he is comparatively indifferent to society. For the sake of a holding which he can call his own, he will cross the seas, plant himself on the prairie or amidst the primeval forest, and make for himself a home. The solitude of the wilderness has no fears for him; the society of his wife and family is sufficient, and he cares for no other. Hence it is that the people of Germanic origin, from whom the English and Americans have alike sprung, make the best of colonizers, and are now rapidly extending them-

selves as emigrants and settlers in all parts of the habitable globe.

The French have never made any progress as colonizers, mainly because of their intense social instincts—the secret of their graces of manner—and because they can never forget that they are Frenchmen.* It seemed at one time within the limits of probability that the French would occupy the greater part of the North American continent. From Lower Canada their line of forts extended up the St. Lawrence, and from Fond du Lac, on Lake Superior, along the River St. Croix, all down the Mississippi, to its mouth at New Orleans. But the great, self-reliant, industrious

* In a series of clever articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, entitled, "Six mille Lieues à toute Vapeur," giving a description of his travels in North America, Maurice Sand keenly observed the comparatively anti-social proclivities of the American compared with the Frenchman. The one, he says, is inspired by the spirit of individuality, the other by the spirit of society. In America he sees the individual absorbing society, as in France he sees society absorbing the individual. "Ce peuple Anglo-Saxon," he says, "qui trouvait devant lui la terre, l'instrument de travail, sinon inépuisable, du moins inépuisé, s'est mis à l'exploiter sous l'inspiration de l'égoïsme; et nous autres Français, nous n'avons rien su en faire, parceque nous ne pouvons rien dans l'isolement. . . . L'Américain supporte la solitude avec un stoïcisme admirable, mais effrayant; il ne l'aime pas, il ne songe qu'à la détruire. . . . Le Français est tout autre. Il aime son parent, son ami, son compagnon, et jusqu'à son voisin d'omnibus ou de théâtre, si sa figure lui est sympathique. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il le regarde et cherche son âme, parce qu'il vit dans son semblable autant qu'en lui-même. Quand il est longtemps seul, il dépérit, et quand il est toujours seul, il meurt." All this is perfectly true, and it explains why the comparatively unsociable Germans, English and Americans are spreading over the earth, while the intensely sociable Frenchmen, unable to enjoy life without each other's society, prefer to stay at home, and France fails to extend itself beyond France.