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The
Land of Contrasts
A Briton's View of his American Kin

By

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To
The Land
That has given me
What makes Life most worth living

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Author's Note

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My first visit to the United States of America—a short one—was paid in 1888. The observations on which this book is mainly based were, however, made in 1890-93, when I spent nearly three years in the country, engaged in the preparation of "Baedeker's Handbook to the United States." My work led me into almost every State and Territory in the Union, and brought me into direct contact with representatives of practically every class. The book was almost wholly written in what leisure I could find for it in 1895 and 1896. The foot-notes, added on my third visit to the country (1898), while I was seeing the chapters through the press, have at least this significance, that they show how rapidly things change in the Land of Contrasts.

No part of the book has been previously published, except some ten pages or so, which appeared in the *Arena* for July, 1892. Most of the matter in this article has been incorporated in Chapter II. of the present volume.

So far as the book has any general intention, my aim has been, while not ignoring the defects of American civilisation, to dwell rather on those features in which, as it [Pg viii] seems to me, John Bull may learn from Brother Jonathan. I certainly have not had so much trouble in finding these features as seems to have been the case with many other British critics of America. My sojourn in the United States has been full of benefit and stimulus to myself; and I should like to believe that my American readers will see that this book is substantially a tribute of admiration and gratitude.

J.F.M.

I

[Pg 1]

Introductory

It is not everyone's business, nor would it be everyone's pleasure, to visit the United States of America. More, perhaps, than in any other country that I know of will what the traveller finds there depend on what he brings with him. Preconception will easily fatten into a perfect mammoth of realisation; but the open mind will add immeasurably to its garner of interests and experiences. It may be "but a colourless crowd of barren life to the dilettante—a poisonous field of clover to the cynic" (Martin Morris); but he to whom man is more than art will easily find his account in a visit to the American Republic. The man whose bent of mind is distinctly conservative, to whom innovation always suggests a presumption of deterioration, will probably be much more irritated than interested by a peregrination of the Union. The Englishman who is wedded to his own ideas, and whose conception of comfort and pleasure is bounded by the way they do things at home, may be goaded almost to

madness by the gnat-stings of American readjustments—and all the more because he cannot adopt the explanation that they are the natural outcome of an alien blood and a foreign tongue. If he expects the same servility from his "inferiors" that he has been accustomed to at home, his relations with them will be a series of electric shocks; nay, his very expectation of it will exasperate the American and make him show his very worst side. The stately English dame must let her amusement outweigh [Pg 2] her resentment if she is addressed as "grandma" by some genial railway conductor of the West; she may feel assured that no impertinence is intended.

The lover of scenery who expects to see a Jungfrau float into his ken before he has lost sight of a Mte. Rosa; the architect who expects to find the railway time-table punctuated at hourly intervals by a venerable monument of his art; the connoisseur who hopes to visit a Pitti Palace or a Dresden Picture Gallery in every large city; the student who counts on finding almost every foot of ground soaked with historic gore and every building hallowed by immemorial association; the sociologist who looks for different customs, costumes, and language at every stage of his journey;—each and all of these will do well to refrain his foot from the soil of the United States. On the other hand, the man who is interested in the workings of civilisation under totally new conditions; who can make allowances, and quickly and easily readjust his mental attitude; who has learned to let the new comforts of a new country make up, temporarily at least, for the loss of the old; who finds nothing alien to him that is human, and has a genuine love for mankind; who can appreciate the growth of general comfort at the expense of caste; who delights in promising experiments in politics, sociology, and education; who is not thrown off his balance by the shifting of the centre of gravity of honour and distinction; who, in a word, is not congealed by conventionality, but is ready to accept novelties on their merits,—he, unless I am very grievously mistaken, will find compensations in the United States that will go far to make up for Swiss Alp and Italian lake, for Gothic cathedral and Palladian palace, [Pg 3] for historic charters and time-honoured tombs, for paintings by Raphael and statues by Phidias.

Perhaps, in the last analysis, our appreciation of America will depend on whether we are optimistic or pessimistic in regard to the great social problem which is formed of so many smaller problems. If we think that the best we can do is to preserve what we have, America will be but a series of disappointments. If, however, we believe that man's sympathies for others will grow deeper, that his ingenuity will ultimately be equal to at least a partial solution of the social question, we shall watch the seething of the American crucible with intensest interest. The solution of the social problem, speaking broadly, must imply that each man must in some direction, simple or complex, work for his own livelihood. Equality will always be a word for fools and doctrinaires to conjure with, but those who believe in man's sympathy for man must have faith that some day relative human justice will be done, which will be as far beyond the justice of to-day as light is from dark.[1] And it would be hard to say where we are to look for this consummation if not in the United States of America, which "has been the home of the poor and the eccentric from all parts of the world, and has carried their poverty and passions on its stalwart young shoulders." We may visit the United States, like M. Bourget, *pour reprendre un peu de foi dans le lendemain de civilisation*.

The paragraph on a previous page is not meant to imply that the United States are destitute of scenic, artistic, picturesque, and historic interest. The worst that can be [Pg 4] said of American scenery is that its best points are separated by long intervals; the best can hardly be put too strongly. Places like the Yosemite Valley (of which Mr. Emerson said that it was the only scenery he ever saw where "the reality came up to the brag"), the Yellowstone Park, Niagara, and the stupendous Cañon of the Colorado River amply make good their worldwide reputation; but there are innumerable other places less known in Europe, such as the primeval woods and countless lakes of the Adirondacks, the softer beauties of the Berkshire Hills, the Hudson (that grander American Rhine), the Swiss-like White Mountains, the Catskills, the mystic Ocklawaha of Florida, and the Black Mountains of Carolina that would amply repay

the easy trouble of an Atlantic passage under modern conditions. The historic student, too, will find much that is worthy of his attention, especially in the older Eastern States; and will, perhaps, be surprised to realise how relative a term antiquity is. In a short time he will find himself looking at an American building of the seventeenth century with as much reverence as if it had been a contemporary of the Plantagenets; and, indeed, if antiquity is to be determined by change and development rather than by mere flight of time, the two centuries of New York will hold their own with a cycle of Cathay. It is, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes remarked to the present writer, like the different thermometrical scales; it does not take very long to realise that twenty-five degrees of Réaumur mean as great a heat as ninety degrees of Fahrenheit. Such a city as Boston amply justifies its inclusion in a "Historic Towns" series, along with London and Oxford; and it is by no means a [Pg 5] singular instance. Even the lover of art will not find America an absolute Sahara. To say nothing of the many masterpieces of European painters that have found a resting-place in America, where there is at least one public picture gallery and several private ones of the first class, the best efforts of American painters, and perhaps still more those of American sculptors, are full of suggestion and charm; while I cannot believe that the student of modern architecture will anywhere find a more interesting field than among the enterprising and original works of the American school of architecture.

This book will be grievously misunderstood if it is supposed to be in any way an attempt to cover, even sketchily, the whole ground of American civilisation, or to give anything like a coherent appreciation of it. In the main it is merely a record of personal impressions, a series of notes upon matters which happened to come under my personal observation and to excite my personal interest. Not only the conditions under which I visited the country, but also my own disqualifications of taste and knowledge, have prevented me from more than touching on countless topics, such as the phenomena of politics, religion, commerce, and industry, which would naturally find a place in any complete account of America. I have also tried to avoid, so far as possible, describing well-known scenery, or in other ways going over the tracks of my predecessors. The phenomena of the United States are so momentous in themselves that the observation of them from any new standpoint cannot be wholly destitute of value; while they change so rapidly that he would be unobservant indeed who could not find something new to chronicle. [Pg 6]

It is important, also, to remember that the generalisations of this book apply in very few cases to the whole extent of the United States. I shall be quite contented if any one section of the country thinks that I cannot mean *it* in such-and-such an assertion, provided it allows that the cap fits some other portion of the great community. As a rule, however, it may be assumed that unqualified references to American civilisation relate to it as crystallised in such older communities as New York or Philadelphia, not to the fermenting process of life-in-the-making on the frontier.

In the comparisons between Great Britain and the United States I have tried to oppose only those classes which substantially correspond to each other. Thus, in contrasting the Lowell manufacturer, the Hampshire squire, the Virginian planter, and the Manchester man, it must not be forgotten that the first and the last have many points of difference from the second and third which are not due to their geographical position. Many of the instances on which my remarks are based may undoubtedly be called *extreme*; but even extreme cases are suggestive, if not exactly typical. There is a breed of poultry in Japan, in which, by careful cultivation, the tail-feathers of the cock sometimes reach a length of ten or even fifteen feet. This is not precisely typical of the gallinaceous species; but it is none the less a phenomenon which might be mentioned in a comparison with the apteryx.

Finally, I ought perhaps to say, with Mr. E.A. Freeman, that I sometimes find it almost impossible to believe that the whole nation can be so good as the people who have been so good to me.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] I have some suspicion that this ought to be in quotation marks, but cannot now trace the passage.

II

[Pg 7]

The Land of Contrasts

When I first thought of writing about the United States at all, I soon came to the conclusion that no title could better than the above express the general impression left on my mind by my experiences in the Great Republic. It may well be that a long list of inconsistencies might be made out for any country, just as for any individual; but so far as my knowledge goes the United States stands out as preëminently the "Land of Contrasts"—the land of stark, staring, and stimulating inconsistency; at once the home of enlightenment and the happy hunting ground of the charlatan and the quack; a land in which nothing happens but the unexpected; the home of Hyperion, but no less the haunt of the satyr; always the land of promise, but not invariably the land of performance; a land which may be bounded by the aurora borealis, but which has also undeniable acquaintance with the flames of the bottomless pit; a land which is laved at once by the rivers of Paradise and the leaden waters of Acheron.

If I proceed to enumerate a few of the actual contrasts that struck me, in matters both weighty and trivial, it is not merely as an exercise in antithesis, but because I hope it will show how easy it would be to pass an entirely and even ridiculously untrue judgment upon the United States by having an eye only for one series of the [Pg 8] startling opposites. It should show in a very concrete way one of the most fertile sources of those unfair international judgments which led the French Academician Joüy to the statement: "Plus on réfléchit et plus on observe, plus on se convainct de la fausseté de la plupart de ces jugements portés sur un nation entière par quelques ecrivains et adoptés sans examen par les autres." The Americans themselves can hardly take umbrage at the label, if Mr. Howells truly represents them when he makes one of the characters in "A Traveller from Altruria" assert that they pride themselves even on the size of their inconsistencies. The extraordinary clashes that occur in the United States are doubtless largely due to the extraordinary mixture of youth and age in the character of the country. If ever an old head was set upon young shoulders, it was in this case of the United States—this "Strange New World, thet yit was never young." While it is easy, in a study of the United States, to see the essential truth of the analogy between the youth of an individual and the youth of a State, we must also remember that America was in many respects born full-grown, like Athena from the brain of Zeus, and coördinates in the most extraordinary way the shrewdness of the sage with the naïveté of the child. Those who criticise the United States because, with the experience of all the ages behind her, she is in some points vastly defective as compared with the nations of Europe are as much mistaken as those who look to her for the fresh ingenuousness of youth unmarred by any trace of age's weakness. It is simply inevitable that she should share the vices as well as the virtues of both. Mr. Freeman has well pointed out how natural it is that a colony [Pg 9] should rush ahead of the mother country in some things and lag behind it in others; and that just as you have to go to French Canada if you want to see Old France, so, for many things, if you wish to see Old England you must go to New England.

Thus America may easily be abreast or ahead of us in such matters as the latest applications of electricity, while retaining in its legal uses certain cumbersome devices that we have long since discarded. Americans still have "Courts of Oyer and Terminer" and still insist on the unanimity of the jury, though their judges wear no robes and their counsel apply to the cuspidor as often as to the code. So, too, the extension of municipal powers accomplished in Great Britain still seems a formidable innovation in the United States.

The general feeling of power and scope is probably another fruitful source of the

inconsistencies of American life. Emerson has well said that consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds; and no doubt the largeness, the illimitable outlook, of the national mind of the United States makes it disregard surface discrepancies that would grate horribly on a more conventional community. The confident belief that all will come out right in the end, and that harmony can be attained when time is taken to consider it, carries one triumphantly over the roughest places of inconsistency. It is easy to drink our champagne from tin cans, when we know that it is merely a sense of hurry that prevents us fetching the chased silver goblets waiting for our use.

This, I fancy, is the explanation of one series of contrasts which strikes an Englishman at once. America claims to be the land of liberty *par excellence*, and in a [Pg 10] wholesale way this may be true in spite of the gap between the noble sentiments of the Declaration of Independence and the actual treatment of the negro and the Chinaman. But in what may be called the retail traffic of life the American puts up with innumerable restrictions of his personal liberty. Max O'Rell has expatiated with scarcely an exaggeration on the wondrous sight of a powerful millionaire standing meekly at the door of a hotel dining-room until the consequential head-waiter (very possibly a coloured gentleman) condescends to point out to him the seat he may occupy. So, too, such petty officials as policemen and railway conductors are generally treated rather as the masters than as the servants of the public. The ordinary American citizen accepts a long delay on the railway or an interminable "wait" at the theatre as a direct visitation of Providence, against which it would be useless folly to direct cat-calls, grumbles, or letters to the *Times*. Americans invented the slang word "kicker," but so far as I could see their vocabulary is here miles ahead of their practice; they dream noble deeds, but do not do them; Englishmen "kick" much better, without having a name for it. The right of the individual to do as he will is respected to such an extent that an entire company will put up with inconvenience rather than infringe it. A coal-carter will calmly keep a tramway-car waiting several minutes until he finishes his unloading. The conduct of the train-boy, as described in Chapter XII., would infallibly lead to assault and battery in England, but hardly elicits an objurgation in America, where the right of one sinner to bang a door outweighs the desire of twenty just persons for a quiet nap. On the other hand, the old Puritan [Pg 11] spirit of interference with individual liberty sometimes crops out in America in a way that would be impossible in this country. An inscription in one of the large mills at Lawrence, Mass., informs the employees (or did so some years ago) that "regular attendance at some place of worship and a proper observance of the Sabbath will be expected of every person employed." So, too, the young women of certain districts impose on their admirers such restrictions in the use of liquor and tobacco that any less patient animal than the native American would infallibly kick over the traces.

In spite of their acknowledged nervous energy and excitability, Americans often show a good deal of a quality that rivals the phlegm of the Dutch. Their above-mentioned patience during railway or other delays is an instance of this. So, in the incident related in Chapter XII. the passengers in the inside coach retained their seats throughout the whole experiment. Their resemblance in such cases as this to placid domestic kine is enhanced—out West—by the inevitable champing of tobacco or chewing-gum, than which nothing I know of so robs the human countenance of the divine spark of intelligence. Boston men of business, after being whisked by the electric car from their suburban residences to the city at the rate of twelve miles an hour, sit stoically still while the congested traffic makes the car take twenty minutes to pass the most crowded section of Washington street,—a walk of barely five minutes.[2]

Even in the matter of what Mr. Ambassador Bayard has styled "that form of [Pg 12] Socialism, Protection," it seems to me that we can find traces of this contradictory tendency. Americans consider their country as emphatically the land of protection, and attribute most of their prosperity to their inhospitable customs barriers. This may be so; but where else in the world will you find such a volume and expanse of free trade as in these same United States? We find here a huge section of the world's surface, 3,000 miles long and 1,500 miles wide, occupied by about fifty practically

independent States, containing seventy millions of inhabitants, producing a very large proportion of all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life, and all enjoying the freest of free trade with each other. Few of these States are as small as Great Britain, and many of them are immensely larger. Collectively they contain nearly half the railway mileage of the globe, besides an incomparable series of inland waterways. Over all these is continually passing an immense amount of goods. The San Francisco *News Letter*, a well-known weekly journal, points out that of the 1,400,000,000 tons of goods carried for 100 miles or upwards on the railways of the world in 1895, no less than 800,000,000 were carried in the United States. Even if we add the 140,000,000 carried by sea-going ships, there remains a balance of 60,000,000 tons in favor of the United States as against the rest of the world. It is, perhaps, impossible to ascertain whether or not the actual value of the goods carried would be in the same proportion; but it seems probable that the value of the 800,000,000 tons of the home trade of America must considerably exceed that of the *free* portion of the trade of the British Empire, *i.e.*, practically the whole of its import [Pg 13] trade and that portion of its export trade carried on with free-trade countries or colonies. The internal commerce of the United States makes it the most wonderful market on the globe; and Brother Jonathan, the rampant Protectionist, stands convicted as the greatest Cobdenite of them all!

We are all, it is said, apt to "slip up" on our strongest points. Perhaps this is why one of the leading writers of the American democracy is able to assert that "there is no country in the world where the separation of the classes is so absolute as ours," and to quote a Russian revolutionist, who lived in exile all over Europe and nowhere found such want of sympathy between the rich and poor as in America. If this were true it would certainly form a startling contrast to the general kind-heartedness of the American. But I fancy it rather points to the condition of greater relative equality. Our Russian friend was accustomed to the patronising kindness of the superior to the inferior, of the master to the servant. It is easy, on an empyrean rock, to be "kind" to the mortals toiling helplessly down below. It costs little, to use Mr. Bellamy's parable, for those securely seated on the top of the coach to subscribe for salve to alleviate the chafed wounds of those who drag it. In America there is less need and less use of this patronising kindness; there is less kindness from class to class simply because the conscious realisation of "class" is non-existent in thousands of cases where it would be to the fore in Europe. As for the first statement quoted at the head of this paragraph, I find it very hard of belief. It is true that there are exclusive *circles*, to which, for instance, Buffalo Bill would not have the entrée, but the principle of [Pg 14] exclusion is on the whole analogous to that by which we select our intimate personal friends. No man in America, who is personally fitted to adorn it, need feel that he is *automatically* shut out (as he might well be in England) from a really congenial social sphere.

Another of America's strong points is its sense of practical comfort and convenience. It is scarcely open to denial that the laying of too great stress on material comfort is one of the rocks ahead which the American vessel will need careful steering to avoid; and it is certain that Americans lead us in countless little points of household comfort and labour-saving ingenuity. But here, too, the exception that proves the rule is not too coy for our discovery. The terrible roads and the atrociously kept streets are amongst the most vociferous instances of this. It is one of the inexplicable mysteries of American civilisation that a young municipality,—or even, sometimes, an old one,—with a million dollars to spend, will choose to spend it in erecting a most unnecessarily gorgeous town-hall rather than in making the street in front of it passable for the ordinarily shod pedestrian. In New York itself the hilarious stockbroker returning at night to his palace often finds the pavement between his house and his carriage more difficult to negotiate than even the hole for his latch-key; and I have more than once been absolutely compelled to make a détour from Broadway in order to find a crossing where the icy slush would not come over the tops of my boots.[3] The American taste for luxury sometimes insists on gratification even at the expense of the ordinary decencies of life. It was an American who said, [Pg 15] "Give me the luxuries of life and I will not ask for the necessities;" and there is more

truth in this epigram, as characteristic of the American point of view, than its author intended or would, perhaps, allow. In private life this is seen in the preference shown for diamond earrings and Paris toilettes over neat and effective household service. The contrast between the slatternly, unkempt maid-servant who opens the door to you and the general luxury of the house itself is sometimes of the most startling, not to say appalling, description. It is not a sufficient answer to say that good servants are not so easily obtained in America as in England. This is true; but a slight rearrangement of expenditure would secure much better service than is now seen. To the English eye the cart in this matter often seems put before the horse; and the combination of excellent waiting with a modest table equipage is frequent enough in the United States to prove its perfect feasibility.

In American hotels we are often overwhelmed with "all the discomforts that money can procure," while unable to obtain some of those things which we have been brought up to believe among the prime necessaries of existence. It is significant that in the printed directions governing the use of the electric bell in one's bedroom, I never found an instance in which the harmless necessary bath could be ordered with fewer than nine pressures of the button, while the fragrant cocktail or some other equally fascinating but dangerous luxury might often be summoned by three or four. The most elaborate dinner, served in the most gorgeous china, is sometimes spoiled by the Draconian regulation that it must be devoured between the unholy hours of [Pg 16] twelve and two, or have all its courses brought on the table at once. Though the Americans invent the most delicate forms of machinery, their hoop-iron knives, silver plated for facility in cleaning, are hardly calculated to tackle anything harder than butter, and compel the beef-eater to return to the tearing methods of his remotest ancestors. The waiter sometimes rivals the hotel clerk himself in the splendour of his attire, but this does not render more appetising the spectacle of his thumb in the soup. The furniture of your bedroom would not have disgraced the Tuileries in their palmiest days, but, alas, you are parboiled by a diabolic chevaux-de-frise of steam-pipes which refuse to be turned off, and insist on accompanying your troubled slumbers by an intermittent series of bubbles, squeaks, and hisses. The mirror opposite which you brush your hair is enshrined in the heaviest of gilt frames and is large enough for a Brobdignagian, but the basin in which you wash your hands is little larger than a sugar-bowl; and when you emerge from your nine-times-summoned bath you find you have to dry your sacred person with six little towels, none larger than a snuff-taker's handkerchief. There is no carafe of water in the room; and after countless experiments you are reduced to the blood-curdling belief that the American tourist brushes his teeth with ice-water, the musical tinkling of which in the corridors is the most characteristic sound of the American caravanserai.

If there is anything the Americans pride themselves on—and justly—it is their handsome treatment of woman. You will not meet five Americans without hearing ten times that a lone woman can traverse the length and breadth of the United States [Pg 17] without fear of insult; every traveller reports that the United States is the Paradise of women. Special entrances are reserved for them at hotels, so that they need not risk contamination with the tobacco-defiled floors of the public office; they are not expected to join the patient file of room-seekers before the hotel clerk's desk, but wait comfortably in the reception-room while an employee secures their number and key. There is no recorded instance of the justifiable homicide of an American girl in her theatre hat. Man meekly submits to be the hewer of wood, the drawer of water, and the beast of burden for the superior sex. But even this gorgeous medal has its reverse side. Few things provided for a class well able to pay for comfort are more uncomfortable and indecent than the arrangements for ladies on board the sleeping cars. Their dressing accommodation is of the most limited description; their berths are not segregated at one end of the car, but are scattered above and below those of the male passengers; it is considered *tolerable* that they should lie with the legs of a strange, disrobing man dangling within a foot of their noses.

Another curious contrast to the practical, material, matter-of-fact side of the American is his intense interest in the supernatural, the spiritualistic, the

superstitious. Boston, of all places in the world, is, perhaps, the happiest hunting-ground for the spiritualist medium, the faith healer, and the mind curer. You will find there the most advanced emancipation from theological superstition combined in the most extraordinary way with a more than half belief in the incoherences of a spiritualistic séance. The Boston Christian Scientists have just erected a handsome [Pg 18] stone church, with chime of bells, organ, and choir of the most approved ecclesiastical cut; and, greatest marvel of all, have actually had to return a surplus of $50,000 (£10,000) that was subscribed for its building. There are two pulpits, one occupied by a man who expounds the Bible, while in the other a woman responds with the grandiloquent platitudes of Mrs. Eddy. In other parts of the country this desire to pry into the Book of Fate assumes grosser forms. Mr. Bryce tells us that Western newspapers devote a special column to the advertisements of astrologers and soothsayers, and assures us that this profession is as much recognised in the California of to-day as in the Greece of Homer.

It seems to me that I have met in America the nearest approaches to my ideals of a *Bayard sans peur et sans reproche*; and it is in this same America that I have met flagrant examples of the being wittily described as *sans père et sans proche*—utterly without the responsibility of background and entirely unacquainted with the obligation of *noblesse*. The superficial observer in the United States might conceivably imagine the characteristic national trait to be self-sufficiency or vanity (this mistake *has*, I believe, been made), and his opinion might be strengthened should he find, as I did, in an arithmetic published at Richmond during the late Civil War, such a modest example as the following: "If one Confederate soldier can whip seven Yankees, how many Confederate soldiers will it take to whip forty-nine Yankees?" America has been likened to a self-made man, hugging her conditions because she has made them, and considering them divine because they have grown [Pg 19] up with the country. Another observer might quite as easily come to the conclusion that diffidence and self-distrust are the true American characteristics. Certainly Americans often show a saving consciousness of their faults, and lash themselves with biting satire. There are even Americans whose very attitude is an apology—wholly unnecessary—for the Great Republic, and who seem to despise any native product until it has received the hall-mark of London or of Paris. In the new world that has produced the new book, of the exquisite delicacy and insight of which Mr. Henry James and Mr. Howells may be taken as typical exponents, it seems to me that there are more than the usual proportion of critics who prefer to it what Colonel Higginson has well called "the brutalities of Haggard and the garlic-flavors of Kipling." While, perhaps, the characteristic charm of the American girl is her thorough-going individuality and the undaunted courage of her opinions, which leads her to say frankly, if she think so, that Martin Tupper is a greater poet than Shakespeare, yet I have, on the other hand, met a young American matron who confessed to me with bated breath that she and her sister, for the first time in their lives, had gone unescorted to a concert the night before last, and, *mirabile dictu*, no harm had come of it! It is in America that I have over and over again heard language to which the calling a spade a spade would seem the most delicate allusiveness; but it is also in America that I have summoned a blush to the cheek of conscious sixty-six by an incautious though innocent reference to the temperature of my morning tub. In that country I have seen the devotion of Sir Walter Raleigh to his queen rivalled [Pg 20] again and again by the ordinary American man to the ordinary American woman (if there be an *ordinary* American woman), and in the same country I have myself been scoffed at and made game of because I opened the window of a railway carriage for a girl in whose delicate veins flowed a few drops of coloured blood. In Washington I met Miss Susan B. Anthony, and realised, to some extent at least, all she stands for. In Boston and other places I find there is actually an organised opposition on the part of the ladies themselves to the extension of the franchise to women. I have hailed with delight the democratic spirit displayed in the greeting of my friend and myself by the porter of a hotel as "You fellows," and then had the cup of pleasure dashed from my lips by being told by the same porter that "the other *gentleman* would attend to my baggage!" I have been parboiled with salamanders who seemed to find

no inconvenience in a room-temperature of eighty degrees, and have been nigh frozen to death in open-air drives in which the same individuals seemed perfectly comfortable. Men appear at the theatre in orthodox evening dress, while the tall and exasperating hats of the ladies who accompany them would seem to indicate a theory of street toilette. From New York to Buffalo I am whisked through the air at the rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour; in California I travelled on a train on which the engineer shot rabbits from the locomotive, and the fireman picked them up in time to jump on the baggage-car at the rear end of the train. At Santa Barbara I visited an old mission church and convent which vied in quaint picturesqueness with anything in Europe; but, alas! the old monk who showed us round, though wearing the [Pg 21] regulation gown and knotted cord, had replaced his sandals by elastic-sided boots and covered his tonsure with a common chummy.[4]

Few things in the United States are more pleasing than the widespread habits of kindness to animals (most American whips are, as far as punishment to the horse is concerned, a mere farce). Yet no American seems to have any scruple about adding an extra hundred weight or two to an already villainously overloaded horse-car; and I have seen a score of American ladies sit serenely watching the frantic straining of two poor animals to get a derailed car on to the track again, when I knew that in "brutal" Old England every one of them would have been out on the sidewalk to lighten the load.

In England that admirable body of men popularly known as Quakers are indissolubly associated in the public mind with a pristine simplicity of life and conversation. My amazement, therefore, may easily be imagined, when I found that an entertainment given by a young member of the Society of Friends in one of the great cities of the Eastern States turned out to be the most elaborate and beautiful private ball I ever attended, with about eight hundred guests dressed in the height of fashion, while the daily papers (if I remember rightly) estimated its expense as reaching a total of some thousands of pounds. Here the natural expansive liberality of the American man proved stronger than the traditional limitations of a religious society. But the opposite art of cheese-paring is by no means unknown in the United States. Perhaps [Pg 22] not even canny Scotland can parallel the record of certain districts in New England, which actually elected their parish paupers to the State Legislature to keep them off the rates. Let the opponents of paid members of the House of Commons take notice!

Amid the little band of tourists in whose company I happened to enter the Yosemite Valley was a San Francisco youth with a delightful baritone voice, who entertained the guests in the hotel parlour at Wawona by a good-natured series of songs. No one in the room except myself seemed to find it in the least incongruous or funny that he sandwiched "Nearer, my God, to thee" between "The man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo" and "Her golden hair was hanging down her back," or that he jumped at once from the pathetic solemnity of "I know that my Redeemer liveth" to the jingle of "Little Annie Rooney." The name Wawona reminds me how American weather plays its part in the game of contrasts. When we visited the Grove of Big Trees near Wawona on May 21, it was in the midst of a driving snow-storm, with the thermometer standing at 36 degrees Fahrenheit. Next day, as we drove into Raymond, less than forty miles to the west, the sun was beating down on our backs, and the thermometer marked 80 degrees in the shade.

There is probably no country in the world where, at times, letters of introduction are more fully honoured than in the United States. The recipient does not content himself with inviting you to call or even to dinner. He invites you to make his house your home; he invites all his friends to meet you; he leaves his business to show you the lions of the town or to drive you about the country; he puts you up at his club; he [Pg 23] sends you off provided with letters to ten other men like himself, only more so. On the other hand, there is probably no country in the world where a letter of introduction from a man quite entitled to give it could be wholly ignored as it sometimes is in the United States. The writer has had experience of both results. No more fundamental contrast can well be imagined than that between the noisy, rough, crude, and callous street-life of some Western towns and the quiet, reticence,

delicacy, spirituality, and refinement of many of the adjacent interiors.

The table manners of the less-educated American classes are hardly of the best, but where but in America will you find eleven hundred charity-school boys sit down daily to dinner, each with his own table napkin, as they do at Girard College, Philadelphia? And where except at that same institute will you find a man leaving millions for a charity, with the stipulation that no parson of any creed shall ever be allowed to enter its precincts?

In concluding this chapter, let me say that its object, as indeed the object of this whole book, will have been achieved if it convinces a few Britons of the futility of generalising on the complex organism of American society from inductions that would not justify an opinion about the habits of a piece of protoplasm.[5]

FOOTNOTES:

[2] The Boston Subway, opened in 1898, has impaired the truth of this sentence.

[3] It is only fair to say that this was originally written in 1893, and that matters have been greatly improved since then.

[4] This may be paralleled in Europe: "The Franciscan monks of Bosnia wear long black robes, with rope, black 'bowler hats,' and long and heavy military moustachios (by special permission of the Pope)."—*Daily Chronicle*, Oct 5, 1895.

[5] In the just-ended war with Spain, the United States did not fail to justify its character as the Land of Contrasts. From the wealthy and enlightened United States we should certainly have expected all that money and science could afford in the shape of superior weapons and efficiency of commissariat and medical service, while we could have easily pardoned a little unsteadiness in civilians suddenly turned into soldiers. As a matter of fact, the poverty-stricken Spaniards had better rifles than the Americans; the Commissariat and Medical Departments are alleged to have broken down in the most disgraceful way; the citizen-soldiers behaved like veterans.

III

[Pg 24]

Lights and Shadows of American Society

By "society" I do not mean that limited body which, whether as the Upper Ten Thousand of London or as the Four Hundred of New York, usually arrogates the title. Such narrowness of definition seems peculiarly out of place in the vigorous democracy of the West. By society I understand the great body of fairly well-educated and fairly well-mannered people, whose means and inclinations lead them to associate with each other on terms of equality for the ordinary purposes of good fellowship. Such people, not being fenced in by conventional barriers and owning no special or obtrusive privileges, represent much more fully and naturally the characteristic national traits of their country; and their ways and customs are the most fruitful field for a comparative study of national character. The daughters of dukes and princes can hardly be taken as typical English girls, since the conditions of their life are so vastly different from those of the huge majority of the species—conditions which deny a really natural or normal development to all but the choicest and strongest souls. So the daughter of a New York multimillionaire, who has been brought up to regard a British duke or an Italian prince as her natural partner for life, does not look out on the world through genuinely American spectacles, but is biassed by a point of view which may be somewhat paradoxically termed the "cosmopolitan-exclusive." As Mr. Henry James puts it: "After all, what one sees on a Newport piazza is not America; it is the back of Europe."

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There are, however, reasons special to the United States why we should not regard the "Newport set" as typical of American society. Illustrious foreign visitors fall not unnaturally into this mistake; even so keen a critic as M. Bourget leans this way, though Mr. Bryce gives another proof of his eminent sanity and good sense by his avoidance of the tempting error. But, as Walt Whitman says, "The pulse-beats of the nation are never to be found in the sure-to-be-put-forward-on-such-occasions citizens." European fashionable society, however unworthy many of its members may be, and however relaxed its rules of admission have become, has its roots in an honourable past; its theory is fine; not *all* the big names of the British aristocracy can be traced back to strong ales or weak (Lucy) Waters. Even those who desire the abolition of the House of Peers, or look on it, with Bagehot, as "a vapid accumulation of torpid comfort," cannot deny that it is an institution that has grown up naturally with the country, and that it is only now (if even now) that it is felt with anything like universality to be an anomaly. The American society which is typified by the four hundred of New York, the society which marries its daughters to English peers, is in a very different position. It is of mushroom growth even according to American standards; it has theoretically no right to exist; it is entirely at variance with the spirit of the country and contradictory of its political system; it is almost solely [Pg 26] conditioned by wealth;[6] it is disregarded if not despised by nine-tenths of the population; it does not really count. However seriously the little cliques of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia may take themselves, they are not regarded seriously by the rest of the country in any degree comparable to the attitude of the British Philistine towards the British Barbarian. Without the appropriate background of king and nobility, the whole system is ridiculous; it has no *national* basis. The source of its honour is ineradicably tainted. It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea of aristocratic society. It is divorced from the real body of democracy. It sets no authoritative standard of taste. If anything could reconcile the British Radical to his House of Lords, it would be the rankness of taste, the irresponsible freaks of individual caprice, that rule in a country where there is no carefully polished noblesse to set the pattern. George William Curtis puts the case well: "Fine society is no exotic, does not avoid, but all that does not belong to it drops away like water from a smooth statue. We are still peasants and parvenues, although we call each other princes and build palaces. Before we are three centuries old we are endeavouring to surpass, by imitating, the results of all art and civilisation and social genius beyond the sea. By elevating the standard of expense we hope to secure select society, but have only aggravated the necessity of a labour integrally fatal to the kind of society we seek."

It would, of course, be a serious mistake to assume that, because there are no titles [Pg 27] and no theory of caste in the United States, there are no social distinctions worth the trouble of recognition. Besides the crudely obvious elevation of wealth and "smartness" already referred to, there are inner circles of good birth, of culture, and so on, which are none the less practically recognised because they are theoretically ignored. Of such are the old Dutch clans of New York, which still, I am informed, regard families like the Vanderbilts as upstarts and parvenues. In Chicago there is said to be an inner circle of forty or fifty families which is recognised as the "best society," though by no means composed of the richest citizens. In Boston, though the Almighty Dollar now plays a much more important rôle than before, it is still a combination of culture and ancestry that sets the most highly prized hall-mark on the social items. And indeed the heredity of such families as the Quincys, the Lowells, the Winthrops, and the Adamses, which have maintained their superior position for generations, through sheer force of ability and character, without the external buttresses of primogeniture and entail, may safely measure itself against the stained lineage of many European families of high title. The very absence of titular distinction often causes the lines to be more clearly drawn; as Mr. Charles Dudley Warner says: "Popular commingling in pleasure resorts is safe enough in aristocratic countries, but it will not answer in a republic." There is, however, no universal theory that holds good from New York to California; and hence the generalising foreigner is apt to see nothing but practical as well as theoretical equality. [Pg 28]

In spite of anything in the foregoing that may seem incompatible, the fact remains that the distinguishing feature of American society, as contrasted with the societies of Europe, is the greater approach to equality that it has made. It is in this sphere, and not in those of industry, law, or politics, that the British observer must feel that the American breathes a distinctly more liberal and democratic air than he. The processes of endosmose and exosmose go on under much freer conditions; the individual particle is much more ready to filtrate up or down to its proper level. Mr. W.D. Howells writes that "once good society contained only persons of noble or gentle birth; then persons of genteel or sacred callings were admitted; now it welcomes to its level everyone of agreeable manners or cultivated mind;" and this, which may be true of modern society in general, is infinitely more true in America than elsewhere. It might almost be asserted that everyone in America ultimately finds his proper social niche; that while many are excluded from the circles for which they *think* themselves adapted, practically none are shut off from their really harmonious *milieu*. The process of segregation is deprived to a large extent of the disagreeableness consequent upon a rigid table of precedence. Nothing surprises an American more in London society than the uneasy sense of inferiority that many a distinguished man of letters will show in the presence of a noble lord. No amount of philosophy enables one to rise entirely superior to the trammels of early training and hoary association. Even when the great novelist feels himself as at least on a level with his ducal interlocutor, he cannot ignore the fact that his fellow-guests do not share his opinion. Now, without going the length of asserting that there is absolutely [Pg 29] nothing of this kind in the intercourse of the American author with the American railroad magnate, it may be safely stated that the general tone of society in America makes such an attitude rare and unlikely. There social equality has become an instinct, and the ruling note of good society is of pleasant cameraderie, without condescension on the one hand or fawning on the other. "The democratic system deprives people of weapons that everyone does not equally possess. No one is formidable; no one is on stilts; no one has great pretensions or any recognised right to be arrogant." (Henry James.) The spirit of goodwill, of a desire to make others happy (especially when it does not incommode you to do so), swings through a much larger arc in American society than in English. One can be surer of one's self, without either an overweening self-conceit or the assumption of brassy self-assertion.

The main rock of offence in American society is, perhaps, its tendency to attach undue importance to materialistic effects. Plain living with high thinking is not so much of an American formula as one would wish. In the smart set of New York, and in other places *mutatis mutandis*, this shows itself in an appallingly vulgar and ostentatious display of mere purchase power. We are expected to find something grand in the fact that an entertainment costs so much; there is little recognition of the truth that a man who spends $100 where $10 would meet all the demands of good taste is not only a bad economist, but essentially bourgeois and *torné* in soul. Even roses are vulgarised, if that be possible, by production in the almost obtrusively [Pg 30] handsome variety known as the "American Beauty," and by being heaped up like hay-stacks in the reception rooms. At a recent fashionable marriage in New York no fewer than 20,000 sprays of lily of the valley are reported to have been used. A short time ago a wedding party travelled from Chicago to Burlington (Iowa) on a specially constructed train which cost £100,000 to build; the fortunes of the heads of the few families represented aggregated £100,000,000. The private drawing-room cars of millionaires are *too* handsome; they do not indicate so much a necessity of taste as a craving to spend. Many of the best hotels are characterised by a tasteless magnificence which annoys rather than attracts the artistic sense. At one hotel I stayed at in a fashionable watering-place the cheapest bedroom cost £1 a night; but I did not find that its costly tapestry hangings, huge Japanese vases, and elaborately carved furniture helped me to woo sweet slumber any more successfully than the simple equipments of an English village inn. Indeed, they rather suggested insomnia, just as the ominous name of "Macbeth," affixed to one of the bedrooms in the Shakespeare Hotel at Stratford-on-Avon, immediately suggested the line "Macbeth doth murder sleep."

This materialistic tendency, however, which its defenders call a higher standard of comfort, is not confined to the circles of the millionaires; it crops out more or less at all the different levels. Americans seem a *little* more dependent on bodily comforts than Englishmen, a *little* more apt to coddle themselves, a *little* less hardy. They are more susceptible to variations of temperature, and hence the prevalent over-heating [Pg 31] of their houses, hotels, and railway-cars. A very slight shower will send an American into his overshoes.[7] There is more of a self-conscious effort in the encouragement of manly sports. Americans seldom walk when they can ride. The girls are apt to be annoyed if a pleasure-party be not carried out so as to provide in the fullest way for their personal comfort.

This last sentence suggests a social practice of the United States which, perhaps, may come under the topic we are at present discussing. I mean the custom by which girls allow their young men friends to incur expense in their behalf. I am aware that this custom is on the wane in the older cities, that the most refined girls in all parts of the Union dislike it, that it is "bad form" in many circles. In the bowling-club to which I had the pleasure to belong the ladies paid their subscriptions "like a man;" when I drove out on sleigh-parties, the girls insisted on paying their share of the expense. The fact, however, remains that, speaking generally and taking class for class, the American girl allows her admirers to spend their money on her much more freely than the English girl. A man is considered mean if he does not pay the car-fare of his girl companion; a girl will allow a man who is merely a "friend" to take her to the theatre, fetching her and taking her home in a carriage hired at exorbitant rates. The *Illustrated American* (Jan. 19, 1895) writes:

> The advanced ideas prevalent in this country regarding the relations of the opposite sexes make it not only proper, but necessary, that a young [Pg 32] man with serious intentions shall take his sweetheart out, give her presents, send her flowers, go driving with her, and in numberless little ways incur expense. This is all very delightful for her, but to him it means ruin. And at the end he may find that she was only flirting with him.

In fact, whenever a young man and a young woman are associated in any enterprise, it is quite usual for the young man to pay for both. On the whole, this custom seems an undesirable one. It is so much a matter of habit that the American girl usually plays her part in the matter with absolute innocence and unconsciousness; she feels no more obligation than an English girl would for the opening of a door. The young man also takes it as a matter of course, and does not in the least presume on his services. But still, I think, it has a slight tendency to rub the bloom off what ought to be the most delicate and ethereal form of social intercourse. It favours the well-to-do youth by an additional handicap. It throws another obstacle in the track of poverty and thrift. It is contrary to the spirit of democratic equality; the woman who accepts such attentions is tacitly allowing that she is not on the same footing as man. On reflection it must grate a little on the finest feelings. There seems to me little doubt that it will gradually die out in circles to which it would be strange in Europe.

On the whole, however, even with such drawbacks as the above, the social relationship of the sexes in the United States is one of the many points in which the new surpasses the old. The American girl is thrown into such free and ample [Pg 33] relations with the American boy from her earliest youth up that she is very apt to look upon him simply as a girl of a stronger growth. Some such word as the German *Geschwister* is needed to embrace the "young creatures" who, in petticoats or trousers, form the genuine democracy of American youth. Up to the doors of college, and often even beyond them, the boy and girl have been "co-educated;" at the high school the boy has probably had a woman for his teacher, at least in some branches, up to his sixteenth or seventeenth year. The hours of recreation are often spent in pastimes in which girls may share. In some of the most characteristic of American amusements, such as the "coasting" of winter, girls take a prominent place. There is no effort on the part of elders to play the spy on the meetings of boy or girl, or to place obstacles in their way. They are not thought of as opposite sexes; it is "just all

the young people together." The result is a spirit of absolute good comradeship. There is little atmosphere of the unknown or the mysterious about the opposite sex. The love that leads to marriage is thus apt to be the product of a wider experience, and to be based on a more intimate knowledge. The sentimental may cry fie on so clear-sighted a Cupid, but the sensible cannot but rejoice over anything that tends to the undoing of the phrase "lottery of marriage."

That the ideal attitude towards and in marriage has been attained in average American society I should be the last to assert. The way in which American wives leave their husbands toiling in the sweltering city while they themselves fleet the time in Europe would alone give me pause. But I am here concerned with the relative and not the absolute; and my contention is that the average marriage in America is [Pg 34] apt to be made under conditions which, compared with those of other nations, increase the chances of happiness. A great deal has been said and written about the inconsistency of the marriage laws of the different States, and much cheap wit has been fired off at the fatal facility of divorce in the United States; but I could not ascertain from my own observation that these defects touched any very great proportion of the population, or played any larger part in American society, as I have defined it, than the differences between the marriage laws of England and Scotland do in our own island. M. Bourget, quite arbitrarily and (I think) with a trace of the proverbial Gallic way of looking at the relations of the sexes, has attributed the admitted moral purity of the atmosphere of American society to the coldness of the American temperament and the *sera juvenum Venus*. It seems to me, however, that there is no call to disparage American virtue by the suggestion of a constitutional want of liability to temptation, and that Mark Twain, in his somewhat irreverent rejoinder, is much nearer the mark when he attributes the prevalent sanctity of the marriage tie to the fact that the husbands and wives have generally married each other for love. This is undoubtedly the true note of America in this particular, though it may not be unreservedly characteristic of the smart set of New York. If the sacred flame of Cupid could be exposed to the alembic of statistics, I should be surprised to hear that the love matches of the United States did not reach a higher percentage than those of any other nation. One certainly meets more husbands and wives of [Pg 35] mature age who seem thoroughly to enjoy each other's society.

There is a certain "snap" to American society that is not due merely to a sense of novelty, and does not wholly wear off through familiarity. The sense of enjoyment is more obvious and more evenly distributed; there is a general willingness to be amused, a general absence of the *blasé*. Even Matthew Arnold could not help noticing the "buoyancy, enjoyment, and freedom from restraint which are everywhere in America," and which he accounted for by the absence of the aristocratic incubus. The nervous fluid so characteristic of America in general flows briskly in the veins of its social organism; the feeling is abroad that what is worth doing is worth doing well. There is a more general ability than we possess to talk brightly on the topics of the moment; there is less lingering over one subject; there is a constant savour of the humorous view of life. The more even distribution of comfort in the United States (becoming, alas! daily less characteristic) adds largely to the pleasantness of society by minimising the semi-conscious feeling of remorse in playing while the "other half" starves. The inherent inability of the American to understand that there is any "higher" social order than his own minimises the feeling of envy of those "above" him. "How dreadful," says the Englishman to the American girl, "to be governed by men to whom you would not speak!" "Yes," is the rejoinder, "and how delightful to be governed by men who won't speak to you!" From this latter form of delight American society is free. Henry James strikes a true note when he makes Miranda Hope (in "A Bundle of Letters") describe the fashionable girl she met [Pg 36] at a Paris pension as "like the people they call 'haughty' in books," and then go on to say, "I have never seen anyone like that before—anyone that wanted to make a difference." And her feeling of impersonal interest in the phenomenon is equally characteristic. "She seemed to me so like a proud young lady in a novel. I kept saying to myself all day, 'haughty, haughty,' and I wished she would keep on so." Too much stress cannot easily be laid on this feeling of equality in the air as a potent enhancer

of the pleasure of society. To feel yourself patronised—even, perhaps especially, when you know yourself to be in all respects the superior of the patroniser—may tickle your sense of humour for a while, but in the long run it is distinctly dispiriting. The philosopher, no doubt, is or should be able to disregard the petty annoyances arising from an ever-present consciousness of social limitation, but society is not entirely composed of philosophers, even in America; and the sense of freedom and space is unqualifiedly welcome to its members. It is not easy for a European to the manner born to realise the sort of extravagant, nightmare effect that many of our social customs have in the eyes of our untutored American cousins. The inherent absurdities that are second nature to us exhale for them the full flavour of their grotesqueness. The idea of an insignificant boy peer taking precedence of Mr. John Morley! The idea of *having* to appear before royalty in a state of partial nudity on a cold winter day! The necessity of backing out of the royal presence! The idea of a freeborn Briton having to get out of an engagement long previously formed on the score that "he has been *commanded* to dine with H.R.H." The horrible capillary [Pg 37] plaster necessary before a man can serve decently as an opener of carriage-doors! The horsehair envelopes without which our legal brains cannot work! The unwritten law by which a man has to nurse his hat and stick throughout a call unless his hostess specially asks him to lay them aside!

Mr. Bryce commits himself to the assertion that "Scotchmen and Irishmen are more unlike Englishmen, the native of Normandy more unlike the native of Provence, the Pomeranian more unlike the Wurtemberger, the Piedmontese more unlike the Neapolitan, the Basque more unlike the Andalusian, than the American from any part of the country is to the American from any other." Max O'Rell, on the other hand, writes: "L'habitant du Nord-est des Etats Unis, le Yankee, diffère autant de l'Americain de l'Ouest et du Midi que l'Anglais diffère de l'Allemand ou de l'Espagnol." On this point I find myself far more in accord with the French than with the British observer, though, perhaps, M. Blouët rather overstates his case. Wider differences among civilised men can hardly be imagined than those which subsist between the creole of New Orleans and the Yankee of Maine, the Kentucky farmer and the Michigan lumberer. It is, however, true that there is a distinct tendency for the stamp of the Eastern States to be applied to the inhabitants of the cities, at least, of the West. The founders of these cities are so largely men of Eastern birth, the means of their expansion are so largely advanced by Eastern capitalists, that this tendency is easily explicable. [So far as my observation went it was to Boston rather than to New York or Philadelphia that the educated classes of the Western cities [Pg 38] looked as the cynosure of their eyes. Boston seemed to stand for something less material than these other cities, and the subtler nature of its influence seemed to magnify its pervasive force.] None the less do the people of the United States, compared with those of any one European country, seem to me to have their due share of variety and even of picturesqueness. This latter quality is indeed denied to the United States not only by European visitors, but also by many Americans. This denial, however, rests on a limited and traditional use of the word picturesque. America has not the European picturesqueness of costume, of relics of the past, of the constant presence of the potential foeman at the gate. But apart altogether from the almost theatrical romance of frontier life and the now obsolescent conflict with the aborigines, is there not some element of the picturesque in the processes of readjustment by which the emigrants of European stock have adapted themselves and are adapting themselves to the conditions of the New World? In some ways the nineteenth century is the most romantic of all; and the United States embody and express it as no other country. Is there not a picturesque side to the triumph of civilisation over barbarism? Is there nothing of the picturesque in the long thin lines of gleaming steel, thrown across the countless miles of desert sand and alkali plain, and in the mighty mass of metal with its glare of cyclopean eye and its banner of fire-illumined smoke, that bears the conquerors of stubborn nature from side to side of the great continent? Is there not an element of the picturesque in the struggles of the Western farmer? Can anything be finer in its way than a night view of Pittsburg—that [Pg 39] "Hell with its lid off," where the cold gleam of electricity vies with the lurid glare of

the furnaces and smelting works? I say nothing of the Californian Missions; of the sallow creoles of New Orleans with their gorgeous processions of Mardi-Gras; or of the almost equally fantastic fête of the Veiled Prophet of St. Louis; or of the lumberers of Michigan; or of the Mexicans of Arizona; or of the German beer-gardens of Chicago; or of the swinging lanterns and banners of Chinatown in San Francisco and Mott street in New York; or of the Italians of Mulberry Bend in the latter city; or of the alternating stretches on a long railway journey of forest and prairie, yellow corn-fields and sandy desert; or of many other classes and conditions which are by no means void of material for the artist in pen or brush. All these lend hues that are anything but prosaic to my kaleidoscopic recollections of the United States; but more than all these, *the* characteristically picturesque feature of American life, stands out the omnipresent negro. It was a thrill to have one's boots blackened by a coloured "professor" in an alley-way of Boston, and to hear his richly intoned "as shoh's you're bawn." It was a delight to see the negro couples in the Public Garden, conducting themselves and their courting, as Mr. Howells has well remarked, with infinitely more restraint and refinement than their Milesian compeers, or to see them passing out of the Charles-street Church in all the Sunday bravery of broadcloth coats, shiny hats, wonderfully laundered skirts of snowy whiteness, and bodices of all the hues of the rainbow. And all through the Union their glossy black faces and gleaming white teeth shed a kind of dusky radiance over the traveller's path. Who but can recall with [Pg 40] gratitude the expansive geniality and reassuring smile of the white-coated negro waiter, as compared with the supercilious indifference, if not positive rudeness, of his pale colleague? And what will ever efface the mental kodak of George (not Sambo any more) shuffling rapidly into the dining-room, with his huge flat palm inverted high over his head and bearing a colossal tray heaped up with good things for the guest under his charge? And shall I ever forget the grotesque gravity of the negro brakeman in Louisiana, with his tall silk hat? or the pair of gloves pathetically shared between two neatly dressed negro youths in a railway carriage in Georgia? or the pickaninnies slumbering sweetly in old packing-cases in a hut at Jacksonville, while their father thrummed the soft guitar with friendly grin? It has always seemed to me a reproach to American artists that they fill the air with sighs over the absence of the picturesque in the United States, while almost totally overlooking the fine flesh-tones and gay dressing of the coloured brother at their elbow.

The most conventional society of America is apt to be more or less shrouded by the pall of monotony that attends convention elsewhere, but typical American society—the society of the great mass of Americans—shows distinctly more variety than that of England. In social meetings, as in business, the American is ever on the alert for some new thing: and the brain of every pretty girl is cudgelled in order to provide some novelty for her next party. Hence the progressive euchre, the "library" parties, the "shadow" dances, the conversation parties, and the long series of ingenious games, the adoption of which, for some of us at least, has done much to lighten the [Pg 41] deadly dulness of English "small and earlies." Even the sacro-sanctity of whist has not been respected, and the astonished shade of Hoyle has to look on at his favourite game in the form of "drive" and "duplicate." The way in which whist has been taken up in the United States is a good example of the national unwillingness to remain in the ruts of one's ancestors. Possibly the best club-players of England are at least as good as the best Americans, but the general average of play and the general interest in the game are distinctly higher in the United States. Every English whist-player with any pretension to science knows what he has to expect when he finds an unknown lady as his partner, especially if she is below thirty; but in America he will often find himself "put to his trumps" by a bright girl in her teens. The girls in Boston and other large cities have organised afternoon whist-clubs, at which all the "rigour of the game" is observed. Many of them take regular lessons from whist experts; and among the latter themselves are not a few ladies, who find the teaching of their favourite game a more lucrative employment than governessing or journalism. Even so small a matter as the eating of ice-cream may illustrate the progressive nature of American society. Elderly Americans still remember the time when it was usual to eat this refreshing delicacy out of economical wine-glasses such as we have still to be

content with in England. But now-a-days no American expects or receives less than a heaping saucer of ice-cream at a time.

Americans are born dancers; they have far more quicksilver in their feet than their [Pg 42]
English cousins. Perhaps the very best waltzers I have ever danced with were English girls, who understood the poetry of the art and knew how to reflect not merely the time of the music, but its *nuances* of rhythm and tone. But dancers such as these are like fairies' visits, that come but once or twice in a lifetime; and a large proportion of English girls dance very badly. In America one seldom or never finds a girl who cannot dance fairly, and most of them can claim much warmer adverbs than that. The American invention of "reversing" is admirable in its unexaggerated form, but requires both study and practice; and the reason that it was voted "bad form" in England was simply that the indolence of the gilded youth prevented him ever taking the trouble to master it. Our genial satirist *Punch* hit the nail on the head: "Shall we —eh—reverse, Miss Lilian?" "Reverse, indeed; it's as much as you can do to keep on your legs as it is."

One custom at American dances struck me as singularly stupid and un-American in its inelasticity. I know not how widespread it is, or how fashionable, but it reigned in circles which seemed to my unsophisticated eyes quite *comme il faut*. The custom is that by which a man having once asked a lady to dance becomes responsible for her until someone else offers himself as her partner. It probably arose from the chivalrous desire not to leave any girl partnerless, but in practice it works out quite the other way. When a man realises that he *may* have to retain the same partner for several dances, or even for the greater part of the evening, he will, unless he is a Bayard absolutely *sans peur et sans reproche*, naturally think twice of engaging a lady from whom his release is problematical. Hence the tendency is to increase the [Pg 43]
triumphs of the belle, and decrease the chances of the less popular maiden. It is also extremely uncomfortable for a girl to feel that a man has (to use the ugly slang of the occasion) "got stuck" with her; and it takes more adroitness and self-possession than any young girl can be expected to possess to extricate herself neatly from the awkward position. Another funny custom at subscription balls of a very respectable character is that many of the matrons wear their bonnets throughout the evening. But this, perhaps, is not stranger than the fact that ladies wear hats in the theatre, while the men who accompany them are in evening dress—a curious habit which to the uninitiated observer would suggest that the nymphs belonged to a less fashionable stratum than their attendant swains. A parallel instance is that of afternoon receptions, where the hostess and her myrmidons appear in ball costume, while the visitors are naturally in the toilette of the street. The contrast thus evolved of low necks and heavy furs is often very comical. The British convention by which the hostess always dresses as plainly as possible so as to avoid the chance of eclipsing any of her guests, and so chooses to *briller par sa simplicité*, is in other cases also more honoured in the breach than in the observance in America.

A very characteristic little piece of the social democracy of America is seen at its best in Chicago, though not unknown in other large cities. On the evening of a hot summer day cushions and rugs are spread on the front steps of the houses, and the occupants take possession of these, the men to enjoy their after-dinner cigars, the [Pg 44]
women to talk and scan the passers-by. The general effect is very genial and picturesque, and decidedly suggestive of democratic sociability. The same American indifference to the exaggerated British love of privacy which leads John Bull to enclose his fifty-foot-square garden by a ten-foot wall is shown in the way in which the gardens of city houses are left unfenced. Nothing can be more attractive in its way than such a street as Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, where the pretty villas stand in unenclosed gardens, and the verdant lawns melt imperceptibly into each other without advertisement of where one leaves off and the other begins, while the fronts towards the street are equally exposed. The general effect is that of a large and beautiful park dotted with houses. The American is essentially gregarious in his instinct, and the possession of a vast feudal domain, with a high wall round it, can never make up to him for the excitement of near neighbours. It may seriously be

doubted whether the American millionaire who buys a lordly demesne in England is not doing violence to his natural and national tastes every day that he inhabits it.

FOOTNOTES:

[6] Mrs. Burton Harrison reports that a young New York matron said to her, "Really, now that society in New York is getting so large, one must draw the line somewhere; after this I shall visit and invite only those who have more than five millions."

[7] I have seen a brakeman on a passenger train wear overshoes on a showery day, though his duties hardly ever compelled him to leave the covered cars.

IV

[Pg 45]

An Appreciation of the American Woman

Compared to the appearance of the American girl in books written about the United States, that of Charles I.'s head in Mr. Dick's memorial might perhaps be almost called casual. All down the literary ladder, from the weighty tomes of a Professor Bryce to the witty persiflage of a Max O'Rell, we find a considerable part of every rung occupied by the skirts appropriated to the gentler sex; and—what is, perhaps, stranger still—she holds her own even in books written by women. It need not be asserted that all the references to her are equally agreeable. That amiable critic, Sir Lepel Griffin, alludes to her only to assure us that "he had never met anyone who had lived long or travelled much in America who did not hold that female beauty in the States is extremely rare, while the average of ordinary good looks is unusually low," and even visitors of an infinitely more subtle and discriminating type, such as M. Bourget, mingle not a little vinegar with their syrup of appreciation. But the fact remains that almost every book on the United States contains a chapter devoted explicitly to the female citizen; and the inevitableness of the record must have some solid ground of reason behind or below it. It indicates a vein of unusual significance, or at the very least of unusual conspicuousness, in the phenomenon thus treated of.

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Observers have usually found it possible to write books on the social and economical traits of other countries without a parade of petticoats in the head-lines. This is not to say that one can ignore one-half of society in writing of it; but if you search the table of contents of such books as Mr. Philip Hamerton's charming "French and English," or Mr. T.H.S. Escott's "England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits," you will not find the words "woman" or "girl," or any equivalent for them. But the writer on the United States seems irresistibly compelled to give woman all that coördinate importance which is implied by the prominence of capital letters and separate chapters.

This predominance of woman in books on America is not by any means a phase of the "woman question," technically so called. It has no direct reference to the woman as voter, as doctor, as lawyer, as the competitor of man; the subject of interest is woman as woman, the *Ding an sich* of German philosophical slang. No doubt the writer may have occasion to allude to Dr. Mary Walker, to the female mayors of Wyoming, to the presidential ambitions of Mrs. Belva Lockwood; but these are mere adjuncts, not explanations, of the question under consideration. The European visitor to the United States *has* to write about American women because they bulk so largely in his view, because they seem essentially so prominent a feature of American life; because their *relative* importance and interest impress him as greater than those of women in the lands of the Old World, because they seem to him to embody in so eminent a measure that intangible quality of Americanism, the existence, or indeed the possibility, of which is so hotly denied by some Americans.

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Indeed, those who look upon the prominent rôle of the American woman merely as

one phase of the "new woman" question—merely as the inevitable conspicuousness of woman intruding on what has hitherto been exclusively the sphere of man—are many degrees beside the point. The American note is as obvious in the girl who has never taken the slightest interest in polities, the professions, or even the bicycle, as in Dr. Mary Walker or Mrs. Lockwood. The prevalent English idea of the actual interference of the American woman in public life is largely exaggerated. There are, for instance, in Massachusetts 625,000 women entitled to vote for members of the school committees; and the largest actual vote recorded is 20,140. Of 175,000 women of voting age in Connecticut the numbers who used their vote in the last three years were 3,806, 3,241, and 1,906. These, if any, are typical American States; and there is not the shadow of a doubt that the 600,000 women who stayed at home are quite as "American" as the 20,000 who went to the poll. The sphere of the American woman's influence and the reason of her importance lie behind politics and publicity.

It seems a reasonable assumption that the formation of the American girl is due to the same large elemental causes that account for American phenomena generally; and her *relative* strikingness may be explained by the reflection that there was more room for these great forces to work in the case of woman than in the case of man. The Englishman, for instance, through his contact with public life and affairs, through his wider experience, through his rubbing shoulders with more varied types, had already been prepared for the working of American conditions in a way that his [Pg 48] more sheltered womankind had not been. In the bleaching of the black and the grey, the change will be the more striking in the former; the recovery of health will be conspicuous in proportion to the gravity of the disease. America has meant opportunity for women even more in some ways than for men. The gap between them has been lessened in proportion as the gap between the American and the European has widened. The average American woman is distinctly more different from her average English sister than is the case with their respective brothers. The training of the English girl starts from the very beginning on a different basis from that of the boy; she is taught to restrain her impulses, while his are allowed much freer scope; the sister is expected to defer to the brother from the time she can walk or talk. In America this difference of training is constantly tending to the vanishing point. The American woman has never learned to play second fiddle. The American girl, as Mr. Henry James says, is rarely negative; she is either (and usually) a most charming success or (and exceptionally) a most disastrous failure. The pathetic army of ineffective spinsters clinging apologetically to the skirts of gentility is conspicuous by its absence in America. The conditions of life there encourage a girl to undertake what she can do best, with a comparatively healthy disregard of its fancied "respectability." Her consciousness of efficiency reacts in a thousand ways; her feet are planted on so solid a foundation that she inevitably seems an important constructive part of society. The contrast between the American woman and the English woman in this respect may be illustrated by the two Caryatides in the [Pg 49] Braccio Nuovo at the Vatican. The first of these, a copy of one of the figures of the Erechtheum, seems to bear the superincumbent architrave easily and securely, with her feet planted squarely and the main lines running vertically. In the other, of a later period, the fact that the feet are placed close together gives an air of insecurity to the attitude, an effect heightened by the prevalence of curved lines in the folds of the drapery.

The American woman, too, has had more time than the American man to cultivate the more amiable—if you will, the more showy—qualities of American civilisation. The leisured class of England consists of both sexes, that of America practically of one only. The problem of the American man so far has mainly been to subdue a new continent to human uses, while the woman has been sacrificing on the altar of the Graces. Hence the wider culture and the more liberal views are often found in the sex from which the European does not expect them; hence the woman of New York and other American cities is often conspicuously superior to her husband in looks, manners, and general intelligence. This has been denied by champions of the American man; but the observation of the writer, whatever it may be worth, would

deny the denial.

The way in which an expression such as "Ladies' Cabin" is understood in the United States has always seemed to me very typical of the position of the gentler sex in that country. In England, when we see an inscription of that kind, we assume that the enclosure referred to is for ladies *only*. In America, unless the "only" is emphasized, the "Ladies' Drawing Room" or the "Ladies' Waiting Room" extends its hospitality to [Pg 50] all those of the male sex who are ready to behave as gentlemen and temporarily forego the delights of tobacco. Thus half of the male passengers of the United States journey, as it were, under the ægis of woman, and think it no shame to be enclosed in a box labelled with her name.

Put roughly, what chiefly strikes the stranger in the American woman is her candour, her frankness, her hail-fellow-well-met-edness, her apparent absence of consciousness of self or of sex, her spontaneity, her vivacity, her fearlessness. If the observer himself is not of a specially refined or delicate type, he is apt at first to misunderstand the cameraderie of an American girl, to see in it suggestions of a possible coarseness of fibre. If a vain man, he may take it as a tribute to his personal charms, or at least to the superior claims of a representative of old-world civilisation. But even to the obtuse stranger of this character it will ultimately become obvious—as to the more refined observer *ab initio*—that he can no more (if as much) dare to take a liberty with the American girl than with his own countrywoman. The plum may appear to be more easily handled, but its bloom will be found to be as intact and as ethereal as in the jealously guarded hothouse fruit of Europe. He will find that her frank and charming companionability is as far removed from masculinity as from coarseness; that the points in which she differs from the European lady do not bring her nearer either to a man on the one hand, or to a common woman on the other. He will find that he has to readjust his standards, to see that divergence from the best [Pg 51] type of woman hitherto known to him does not necessarily mean deterioration; if he is of an open and susceptible mind, he may even come to the conclusion that he prefers the transatlantic type!

Unless his lines in England have lain in *very* pleasant places, the intelligent Englishman in enjoying his first experience of transatlantic society will assuredly be struck by the sprightliness, the variety, the fearless individuality of the American girl, by her power of repartee, by the quaint appositeness of her expressions, by the variety of her interests, by the absence of undue deference to his masculine dignity. If in his newly landed innocence he ventures to compliment the girl he talks with on the purity of her English, and assumes that she differs in that respect from her companions, she will patriotically repel the suggested accusation of her countrywomen by assuring him, without the ghost of a smile, "that she has had special advantages, inasmuch as an English missionary had been stationed near her tribe." If she prefers Martin Tupper to Shakespeare, or Strauss to Beethoven, she will say so without a tremor. Why should she hypocritically subordinate her personal instincts to a general theory of taste? Her independence is visible in her very dress; she wears what she thinks suits her (and her taste is seldom at fault), not merely what happens to be the fashionable freak of the moment. What Englishman does not shudder when he remembers how each of his womankind—the comely and the homely, the short and the long, the stout and the lean—at once assumed the latest form of hat, apparently utterly oblivious to the question of whether it suited her special style of beauty or not? Now, an American girl is not built that way. She [Pg 52] wishes to be in the fashion just as much as she can; but if a special item of fashion does not set her off to advantage, she gracefully and courageously resigns it to those who can wear it with profit. But honour where honour is due! The English girl generally shows more sense of fitness in the dress for walking and travelling; she, consciously or unconsciously, realises that adaptability for its practical purpose is essential in such a case.

The American girl, as above said, strikes one as individual, as varied. In England when we meet a girl in a ball-room we can generally—not always—"place" her after a few minutes' talk; she belongs to a set of which you remember to have already met a

volume or two. In some continental countries the patterns in common use seem reduced to three or four. In the United States every new girl is a new sensation. Society consists of a series of surprises. Expectation is continually piqued. A and B and C do not help you to induce D; when you reach Z you *may* imagine you find a slight trace of reincarnation. Not that the surprises are invariably pleasant. The very force and self-confidence of the American girl doubly and trebly underline the undesirable. Vulgarity that would be stolid and stodgy in Middlesex becomes blatant and aggressive in New York.

The American girl is not hampered by the feeling of class distinction, which has for her neither religious nor historical sanction. The English girl is first the squire's daughter, second a good churchwoman, third an English subject, and fourthly a woman. Even the best of them cannot rise wholly superior to the all-pervading, and, [Pg 53] in its essence, vulgarising, superstition that some of her fellow-creatures are not fit to come between the wind and her nobility. Those who reject the theory do so by a self-conscious effort which in itself is crude and a strain. The American girl is, however, born into an atmosphere of unconsciousness of all this, and, unless she belongs to a very narrow coterie, does not reach this point of view either as believer or antagonist. This endues her, at her best, with a sweet and subtle fragrance of humanity that is, perhaps, unique. Free from any sense of inherited or conventional superiority or inferiority, as devoid of the brutality of condescension as of the meanness of toadyism, she combines in a strangely attractive way the charm of eternal womanliness with the latest aroma of a progressive century. It is, doubtless, this quality that M. Bourget has in view when he speaks of the incomparable delicacy of the American girl, or M. Paul Blouët when he asserts that "you find in the American woman a quality which, I fear, is beginning to disappear in Paris and is almost unknown in London—a kind of spiritualised politeness, a tender solicitude for other people, combined with strong individuality."

There is one type of girl, with whom even the most modest and most moderately eligible of bachelors must be familiar in England, who is seldom in evidence in the United States—she whom the American aborigines might call the "Girl-Anxious-to-be-Married." What right-minded man in any circle of British society has not shuddered at the open pursuit of young Croesus? Have not our novelists and satirists reaped the most ample harvest from the pitiable spectacle and all its results? A large part of the [Pg 54] advantage that American society has over English rests in the comparative absence of this phenomenon. Man there does not and cannot bear himself as the cynosure of the female eye; the art of throwing the handkerchief has not been included in his early curriculum. The American dancing man does not dare to arrive just in time for supper or to lounge in the doorway while dozens of girls line the walls in faded expectation of a waltz. The English girl herself can hardly be blamed for this state of things. She has been brought up to think that marriage is the be-all and end-all of her existence. "For my part," writes the author of "Cecil, the Coxcomb," "I never blame them when I see them capering and showing off their little monkey-tricks, for conquest. The fault is none of theirs. It is part of an erroneous system." Lady Jeune expresses the orthodox English position when she asserts flatly that "to deny that marriage is the object of woman's existence is absurd." The anachronistic survival of the laws of primogeniture and entail practically makes the marriage of the daughter the only alternative for a descent to a lower sphere of society. In the United States the proportion of girls who strike one as obvious candidates for marriage is remarkably small. This *may* be owing to the art with which the American woman conceals her lures, but all the evidence points to its being in the main an entirely natural and unconscious attitude. The American girl has all along been so accustomed to associate on equal terms with the other sex that she naturally and inevitably regards him more in the light of a comrade than of a possible husband. [Pg 55] She has so many resources, and is so independent, that marriage does not bound her horizon.

Her position, however, is not one of antagonism to marriage. If it were, I should be the last to commend it. It rather rests on an assurance of equality, on the assumption

that marriage is an honourable estate—a rounding and completing of existence—for man as much as for woman. Nor does it mean, I think, any lack of passion and the deepest instincts of womanhood. All these are present and can be wakened by the right man at the right time. Indeed, the very fact that marriage (with or without love) is not incessantly in the foreground of an American girl's consciousness probably makes the awakening all the more deep and tender because comparatively unanticipated and unforeseen.

The marriages between American heiresses and European peers do not militate seriously against the above view of American marriage. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that the doings of a few wealthy people in New York are not characteristic of American civilisation. The New York *Times* was entirely right when it said, in commenting upon the frank statement of the bridegroom in a recent alliance of this kind that it had been *arranged* by friends of both parties: "A few years ago this frankness would have cost him his bride, if his 'friends' had chosen an American girl for that distinction, and even now it would be resented to the point of a rupture of the engagement by most American girls."

The American girl may not be in reality better educated than her British sister, nor a more profound thinker; but her mind is indisputably more agile and elastic. In fact, a slow-going Britisher has to go through a regular course of training before he can [Pg 56] follow the rapid transitions of her train of associations. She has the happiest faculty in getting at another's point of view and in putting herself in his place. Her imagination is more likely to be over-active than too sluggish. One of the most popular classes of the "Society for the Encouragement of Study at Home" is that devoted to imaginary travels in Europe. She is wonderfully adaptable, and makes herself at ease in an entirely strange *milieu* almost before the transition is complete. Both M. Blouët and M. Bourget notice this, and claim that it is a quality she shares with the Frenchwoman. The wife of a recent President is a stock illustration of it—a girl who was transferred in a moment from what we should call a quiet "middle-class" existence to the apex of publicity, and comported herself in the most trying situations with the ease, dignity, unconsciousness, taste, and graciousness of a born princess.

The innocence of the American girl is neither an affectation, nor a prejudiced fable, nor a piece of stupidity. The German woman, quoted by Mr. Bryce, found her American compeer *furchtbar frei*, but she had at once to add *und furchtbar fromm*. "The innocence of the American girl passes abysses of obscenity without stain or knowledge." She may be perfectly able to hold her own under any circumstances, but she has little of that detestable quality which we call "knowing." The immortal Daisy Miller is a charming illustration of this. I used sometimes to get into trouble with American ladies, who "hoped I did not take Daisy Miller as a type of the average American girl," by assuring them that "I did not—that I thought her much too good for that." And in truth there seemed to me a lack of subtlety in the current [Pg 57] appreciation of the charming young lady from Schenectady, who is much *finer* than many readers give her credit for. And on this point I think I may cite Mr. Henry James himself as a witness on my side, since, in a dramatic version of the tale published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Vol. 51, 1883), he makes his immaculate Bostonian, Mr. Winterbourne, marry Daisy with a full consciousness of all she was and had been. As I understand her, Miss Daisy Miller, in spite of her somewhat unpropitious early surroundings, was a young woman entirely able to appreciate the very best when she met it. She at once recognised the superiority of Winterbourne to the men she had hitherto known, and she also recognised that her "style" was not the "style" of him or of his associates. But she was very young, and had all the unreasonable pride of extreme youth; and so she determined not to alter her behaviour one jot or tittle in order to attract him—nay, with a sort of bravado, she exaggerated those very traits which she knew he disliked. Yet all the time she had the highest appreciation of his most delicate refinements, while she felt also that he ought to see that at bottom she was just as refined as he, though her outward mask was not so elegant. I have no doubt whatever that, as Mrs. Winterbourne, she

adapted herself to her new *milieu* with absolute success, and yet without loss of her own most fascinating individuality.[8]

The whole atmosphere of the country tends to preserve the spirit of unsuspecting innocence in the American maiden. The function of a chaperon is very differently interpreted in the United States and in England. On one occasion I met in a Pullman car a young lady travelling in charge of her governess. A chance conversation elicited the fact that she was the daughter of a well-known New York banker; and the fact that we had some mutual acquaintances was accepted as all-sufficing credentials for my respectability. We had happened to fix on the same hotel at our destination; and in the evening, after dinner, I met in the corridor the staid and severe-looking *gouvernante*, who saluted me with "Oh, Mr. Muirhead, I have such a headache! Would you mind going out with my little girl while she makes some purchases?" I was a little taken aback at first; but a moment's reflection convinced me that I had just experienced a most striking tribute to the honour of the American man and the social atmosphere of the United States. [Pg 58]

The psychological method of suggestive criticism has, perhaps, never been applied with more delicacy of intelligence than in M. Bourget's chapter on the American woman. Each stroke of the pen, or rather each turn of the scalpel, amazes us by its keen penetration. As we at last close the book and meditate on what we have read, it is little by little borne in upon us that though due tribute is paid to the charming traits of the American woman, yet the general outcome of M. Bourget's analysis is truly damnatory. If this sprightly, fascinating, somewhat hard and calculating young woman be a true picture of the transatlantic maiden, we may sigh indeed for her lack of the *Ewig Weibliche*. I do not pretend to say where M. Bourget's appreciation is at fault, but that it is false—unaccountably false—in the general impression it leaves, I have no manner of doubt. Perhaps his attention has been fixed too exclusively on the Newport girl, who, it must again be insisted on, is too much impregnated with cosmopolitan *fin de siècle-ism* to be taken as the American type. Botanise a flower, use the strongest glasses you will, tear apart and name and analyse,—the result is a catalogue, the flower with its beauty and perfume is not there. So M. Bourget has catalogued the separate qualities of the American woman; as a whole she has eluded his analysis. Perhaps this chapter of his may be taken as an eminent illustration of the limitations of the critical method, which is at times so illuminating, while at times it so utterly fails to touch the heart of things, or, better, the wholeness of things. [Pg 59]

Among the most searching tests of the state of civilisation reached by any country are the character of its roads, its minimising of noise, and the position of its women. If the United States does not stand very high on the application of the first two tests, its name assuredly leads all the rest in the third. In no other country is the legal status of women so high or so well secured, or their right to follow an independent career so fully recognised by society at large. In no other country is so much done to provide for their convenience and comfort. All the professions are open to them, and the opportunity has widely been made use of. Teaching, lecturing, journalism, preaching, and the practice of medicine have long been recognised as within woman's sphere, and she is by no means unknown at the bar. There are eighty qualified lady doctors in Boston alone, and twenty-five lady lawyers in Chicago. A business card before me as I write reads, "Mesdames Foster & Steuart, Members of the Cotton Exchange and Board of Trade, Real Estate and Stock Brokers, 143 Main Street, Houston, Texas." The American woman, however, is often found in still more unexpected occupations. There are numbers of women dentists, barbers, and livery-stable keepers. Miss Emily Faithful saw a railway pointswoman in Georgia; and one of the regular steamers on Lake Champlain, when I was there, was successfully steered by a pilot in petticoats. There is one profession that is closed to women in the United States—that of barmaid. That professional association of woman with man when he is apt to be in his most animal moods is firmly tabooed in America—all honour to it! [Pg 60]

The career of a lady whose acquaintance I made in New York, and whom I shall call Miss Undereast, illustrates the possibilities open to the American girl. Born in Iowa,

Miss Undereast lost her mother when she was three years old, and spent her early childhood in company with her father, who was a travelling geologist and mining prospector. She could ride almost before she could walk, and soon became an expert shot. Once, when only ten years of age, she shot down an Indian who was in the act of killing a white woman with his tomahawk; and on another occasion, when her father's camp was surrounded by hostile Indians, she galloped out upon her pony and brought relief. "She was so much at home with the shy, wild creatures of the woods that she learned their calls, and they would come to her like so many domestic birds [Pg 61] and animals. She would come into camp with wild birds and squirrels on her shoulder. She could lasso a steer with the best of them. When, at last, she went to graduate at the State University of Colorado, she paid for her last year's tuition with the proceeds of her own herd of cattle." After graduating at Colorado State University, she took a full course in a commercial college, and then taught school for some time at Denver. Later she studied and taught music, for which she had a marked gift. The next important step brought her to New York, where she gained in a competitive examination the position of secretary in the office of the Street Cleaning Department. Her linguistic accomplishments (for she had studied several foreign languages) stood her in good stead, and during the illness of her chief she practically managed the department and "bossed" fifteen hundred Italian labourers in their own tongue. Miss Undereast carried on her musical studies far enough to be offered a position in an operatic company, while her linguistic studies qualified her for the post of United States Custom House Inspectress. Latterly she has devoted her time mainly to journalism and literature, producing, *inter alia*, a guidebook to New York, a novel, and a volume of essays on social topics. It is a little difficult to realise when talking with the accomplished and womanly *littérateur* that she has been in her day a slayer of Indians and "a mighty huntress before the Lord;" but both the facts and the opportunities underlying them testify in the most striking manner to the largeness of the sphere of action open to the *puella Americana*. [Pg 62]

If American women have been well treated by their men-folk, they have nobly discharged their debt. It is trite to refer to the numerous schemes of philanthropy in which American women have played so prominent a part, to allude to the fact that they have as a body used their leisure to cultivate those arts and graces of life which the preoccupation of man has led him too often to neglect. This chapter may well close with the words of Professor Bryce: "No country seems to owe more to its women than America does, nor to owe to them so much of what is best in its social institutions and in the beliefs that govern conduct."

FOOTNOTES:

[8] Since writing the above I have learned that Mr. W.D. Howells has written of "Daisy Miller" in a similar vein, speaking of her "indestructible innocence and her invulnerable new-worldliness." "It was so plain that Mr. James disliked her vulgar conditions that the very people to whom he revealed her essential sweetness and light were furious that he should have seemed not to see what existed through him."

V [Pg 63]

The American Child

The United States has sometimes been called the "Paradise of Women;" from the child's point of view it might equally well he termed the "Paradise of Children," though the thoughtful observer might be inclined to qualify the title by the prefix "Fool's." Nowhere is the child so constantly in evidence; nowhere are his wishes so carefully consulted; nowhere is he allowed to make his mark so strongly on society in general. The difference begins at the very moment of his birth, or indeed even

sooner. As much fuss is made over each young republican as if he were the heir to a long line of kings; his swaddling clothes might make a ducal infant jealous; the family physician thinks $100 or $150 a moderate fee for ushering him into the light of day. Ordinary milk is not good enough for him; *sterilised* milk will hardly do; "*modified*" milk alone is considered fit for this democratic suckling. Even the father is expected to spend hours in patient consultation over his food, his dress, his teething-rings, and his outgoing. He is weighed daily, and his nourishment is changed at once if he is a fraction either behind or ahead of what is deemed a normal and healthy rate of growth. American writers on the care of children give directions for the use of the most complex and time-devouring devices for the proper preparation of their food, [Pg 64] and seem really to expect that mamma and nurse will go through with the prescribed juggling with pots and pans, cylinders and lamps.

A little later the importance of the American child is just as evident, though it takes on different forms. The small American seems to consider himself the father of the man in a way never contemplated by the poet. He interrupts the conversation of his elders, he has a voice in every matter, he eats and drinks what seems good to him, he (or at any rate *she*) wears finger-rings of price, he has no shyness or even modesty. The theory of the equality of man is rampant in the nursery (though I use this word only in its conventional and figurative sense, for American children do not confine themselves to their nurseries). You will actually hear an American mother say of a child of two or three years of age: "I can't *induce* him to do this;" "She *won't* go to bed when I tell her;" "She *will* eat that lemon pie, though I *know* it is bad for her." Even the public authorities seem to recognise the inherent right of the American child to have his own way, as the following paragraph from the New York *Herald* of April 8, 1896, will testify:

> WASHINGTON, April 7.—The lawn in front of the White House this morning was littered with paper bags, the dyed shells of eggs, and the remains of Easter luncheon baskets. It is said that a large part of the lawn must be resodded. The children, shut out from their usual romp in the grounds at the back of the mansion, made their way into the front when the sun came out in the afternoon, and gambolled about at will, to the great injury of the rain-soaked turf.
>
> The police stationed in the grounds *vainly endeavored to persuade the youngsters to go away*, and were finally successful only through [Pg 65] pretending to be about to close all the gates for the night.

It is, perhaps, superfluous to say that this kind of bringing up hardly tends to make the American child an attractive object to the stranger from without. On the contrary, it is very apt to make the said stranger long strenuously to spank these budding citizens of a free republic, and to send them to bed *instanter*. So much of what I want to say on this topic has been well said by my brother Findlay Muirhead in an article on "The American Small Boy," contributed to the *St. James's Gazette*, that I venture to quote the bulk of that article below.

The American Small Boy

> The American small boy is represented in history by the youthful George Washington, who suffered through his inability to invent a plausible fiction, and by Benjamin Franklin, whose abnormal simplicity in the purchase of musical instruments has become proverbial. But history is not taken down in shorthand as it occurs, and it sometimes lags a little. The modern American small boy is a vastly different being from either of these transatlantic worthies; at all events his most prominent characteristics, as they strike a stranger, are not illustrated in the earlier period of their career.
>
> The peculiarities of young America would, indeed, matter but little to the stranger if young America stayed at home. But young America does not stay at home. It is not necessary to track the American small boy to

his native haunts in order to see what he is like. He is very much in evidence even on this side the Atlantic. At certain seasons he circulates in Europe with the facility of the British sovereign; for the American [Pg 66] nation cherishes the true nomadic habit of travelling in families, and the small boy is not left behind. He abounds in Paris; he is common in Italy; and he is a drug in Switzerland. He is an element to be allowed for by all who make the Grand Tour, for his voice is heard in every land. On the Continent, during the season, no first-class hotel can be said to be complete without its American family, including the small boy. He does not, indeed, appear to "come off" to his full extent in this country, but in all Continental resorts he is a small boy that may be felt, as probably our fellow-countrymen all over Europe are now discovering.

There is little use in attempting to disguise the fact that the subject of the present paper is distinctly disagreeable. There is little beauty in him that we should desire him. He is not only restless himself, but he is the cause of restlessness in others. He has no respect even for the quiescent evening hour, devoted to cigarettes on the terrace after *table d'hôte*, and he is not to be overawed by a look. It is a constant source of wonder to the thoughtfully inclined how the American man is evolved from the American boy; it is a problem much more knotty than the difficulty concerning apple-dumplings which so perplexed "Farmer George." No one need desire a pleasanter travelling companion than the American man; it is impossible to imagine a more disagreeable one than the American boy.

The American small boy is precocious; but it is not with the erudite precocity of the German Heinecken, who at three years of age was intimately acquainted with history and geography ancient and modern, sacred and profane, besides being able to converse fluently in Latin, French, and German. We know, of course, that each of the twenty-two Presidents of the United States gave such lively promise in his youth [Pg 67] that twenty-two aged friends of the twenty-two families, without any collusion, placed their hands upon the youthful heads, prophesying their future eminence. But even this remarkable coincidence does not affect the fact that the precocity of the average transatlantic boy is not generally in the most useful branches of knowledge, but rather in the direction of habits, tastes, and opinion. He is not, however, evenly precocious. He unites a taste for jewelry with a passion for candy. He combines a penetration into the motives of others with an infantile indifference to exposing them at inconvenient times. He has an adult decision in his wishes, but he has a youthful shamelessness in seeking their fulfilment. One of his most exasperating peculiarities is the manner in which he querulously harps upon the single string of his wants. He sits down before the refusal of his mother and shrilly besieges it. He does not desist for company. He does not wish to behave well before strangers. He desires to have his wish granted; and he knows he will probably be allowed to succeed if he insists before strangers. He is distinguished by a brutal frankness, combined with a cynical disregard for all feminine ruses. He not seldom calls up the blush of shame to the cheek of scheming innocence; and he frequently crucifies his female relatives. He is generally an adept in discovering what will most annoy his family circle; and he is perfectly unscrupulous in avenging himself for all injuries, of which he receives, in his own opinion, a large number. He has an accurate memory for all promises made to his advantage, and he is relentless in exacting payment to the uttermost farthing. He not seldom displays a singular ingenuity in interpreting ambiguous terms for his own behoof. A youth of this kind is reported to have demanded (and received) eight apples from his mother, who had bribed him to [Pg 68] temporary stillness by the promise of a few of that fruit, his ground

being that the Scriptures contained the sentence, "Wherein few, that is, eight, souls were saved by water."

The American small boy is possessed, moreover, of a well-nigh invincible *aplomb*. He is not impertinent, for it never enters into his head to take up the position of protesting inferiority which impertinence implies. He merely takes things as they come, and does not hesitate to express his opinion of them. An American young gentleman of the mature age of ten was one day overtaken by a fault. His father, more in sorrow than in anger, expressed his displeasure. "What am I to do with you, Tommy? What am I to do with you?" "I have no suggestions to offer, sir," was the response of Tommy, thus appealed to. Even in trying circumstances, even when serious misfortune overtakes the youthful American, his *aplomb*, his confidence in his own opinion, does not wholly forsake him. Such a one was found weeping in the street. On being asked the cause of his tears, he sobbed out in mingled alarm and indignation: "I'm lost; mammy's lost me; I *told* the darned thing she'd lose me." The recognition of his own liability to be lost, and at the same time the recognition of his own superior wisdom, are exquisitely characteristic. They would be quite incongruous in the son of any other soil. In his intercourse with strangers this feeling exhibits itself in the complete self-possession and *sang-froid* of the youthful citizen of the Western Republic. He scorns to own a curiosity which he dare not openly seek to satisfy by direct questions, and he puts his questions accordingly on all subjects, even the most private and even in the case of the most reverend strangers. He is perfectly free in his remarks upon all that strikes him as strange or reprehensible in any one's personal [Pg 69] appearance or behaviour; and he never dreams that his victims might prefer not to be criticised in public. But he is quick to resent criticism on himself, and he shows the most perverted ingenuity in embroiling with his family any outsider who may rashly attempt to restrain his ebullitions. He is, in fact, like the Scottish thistle: no one may meddle with him with impunity. It is better to "never mind him," as one of the evils under the sun for which there is no remedy.

Probably this development of the American small boys is due in great measure to the absorption of their fathers in business, which necessarily surrenders the former to a too undiluted "regiment of women." For though Thackeray is unquestionably right in estimating highly the influence of refined feminine society upon youths and young men, there is no doubt that a small boy is all the better for contact with some one whose physical prowess commands his respect. Some allowance must also be made for the peevishness of boys condemned to prolonged railway journeys, and to the confinement of hotel life in cities and scenes in which they are not old enough to take an interest. They would, doubtless, be more genial if they were left behind at school.

The American boy has no monopoly of the characteristics under consideration. His little sister is often his equal in all departments. Miss Marryat tells of a little girl of five who appeared alone in the *table d'hôte* room of a large and fashionable hotel, ordered a copious and variegated breakfast, and silenced the timorous misgivings of the waiter with "I guess I pay my way." At another hotel I heard a similar little minx, in a fit of infantile rage, address her mother as "You nasty, mean, old crosspatch;" [Pg 70] and the latter, who in other respects seemed a very sensible and intelligent woman, yielded to the storm, and had no words of rebuke. I am afraid it was a little boy who in the same way called his father a "black-eyed old skunk;" but it might just as well have been a girl.

While not asserting that all American children are of this brand, I do maintain that the sketch is fairly typical of a very large class—perhaps of all except those of exceptionally firm and sensible parents. The strangest thing about the matter is,

however, that the fruit does not by any means correspond to the seed; the wind is sown, but the whirlwind is not reaped. The unendurable child does not necessarily become an intolerable man. By some mysterious chemistry of the American atmosphere, social or otherwise, the horrid little minx blossoms out into a charming and womanly girl, with just enough of independence to make her piquant; the cross and dyspeptic little boy becomes a courteous and amiable man. Some sort of a moral miracle seems to take place about the age of fourteen or fifteen; a violent dislocation interrupts the natural continuity of progress; and, presto! out springs a new creature from the modern cauldron of Medea.

The reason—or at any rate one reason—of the normal attitude of the American parent towards his child is not far to seek. It is almost undoubtedly one of the direct consequences of the circumambient spirit of democracy. The American is so accustomed to recognise the essential equality of others that he sometimes carries a good thing to excess. This spirit is seen in his dealings with underlings of all kinds, who are rarely addressed with the bluntness and brusqueness of the older [Pg 71] civilisations. Hence the father and mother are apt to lay almost too much stress on the separate and individual entity of their child, to shun too scrupulously anything approaching the violent coercion of another's will. That the results are not more disastrous seems owing to a saving quality in the child himself. The characteristic American shrewdness and common sense do their work. A badly brought up American child introduced into a really well-regulated family soon takes his cue from his surroundings, adapts himself to his new conditions, and sheds his faults as a snake its skin. The whole process may tend to increase the individuality of the child; but the cost is often great, the consequences hard for the child itself. American parents are doubtless more familiar than others with the plaintive remonstrance: "Why did you not bring me up more strictly? Why did you give me so much of my own way?" The present type of the American child may be described as one of the experiments of democracy; that he is not a necessary type is proved by the by no means insignificant number of excellently trained children in the United States, of whom it has never been asserted that they make any less truly democratic citizens than their more pampered playmates.

The idea of establishing summer camps for schoolchildren may not have originated in the United States—it was certainly put into operation in Switzerland and France several years ago; but the most characteristic and highly organised institution of the kind is the George Junior Republic at Freeville, near Ithaca, in the State of New York, and some account of this attempt to recognise the "rights of children," and develop [Pg 72] the political capacity of boys and girls, may form an appropriate ending to this chapter. The republic was established by Mr. William R. George, in 1895. It occupies a large tent and several wooden buildings on a farm forty-eight acres in extent. In summer it accommodates about two hundred boys and girls between the ages of twelve and seventeen; and about forty of these remain in residence throughout the year. The republic is self-governing, and its economic basis is one of honest industry. Every citizen has to earn his living, and his work is paid for with the tin currency of the republic. Half of the day is devoted to work, the other half to recreation. The boys are employed in farming and carpentry; the girls sew, cook, and so on. The rates of wages vary from 50 cents to 90 cents a day according to the grade of work. Ordinary meals cost about 10 cents, and a night's lodging the same; but those who have the means and the inclination may have more sumptuous meals for 25 cents, or board at the "Waldorf" for about $4 (16s.) a week. As the regular work offered to all is paid for at rates amply sufficient to cover the expenses of board and lodging, the idle and improvident have either to go without or make up for their neglect by overtime work. Those who save money receive its full value on leaving the republic, in clothes and provisions to take back to their homes in the slums of New York. Some boys have been known to save $50 (£10) in the two months of summer work. The republic has its own legislature, court-house, jail, schools, and the like. The legislature has two branches. The members of the lower house are elected by ballot weekly, those of the senate fortnightly. Each grade of labour elects one member and one senator for [Pg 73] every twelve constituents. Offences against the laws of the republic are stringently

dealt with, and the jail, with its bread-and-water diet, is a by no means pleasant experience. The police force consists of thirteen boys and two girls; the office of "cop," with its wages of 90 cents a day, is eagerly coveted, but cannot be obtained without the passing of a stiff civil service examination.

So far this interesting experiment is said by good authorities to have worked well. It is not a socialistic or Utopian scheme, but frankly accepts existing conditions and tries to make the best of them. It is not by any means merely "playing at house." The children have to do genuine work, and learn habits of real industry, thrift, self-restraint, and independence. The measures discussed by the legislature are not of the debating society order, but actually affect the personal welfare of the two hundred citizens. It has, for example, been found necessary to impose a duty of twenty-five per cent. "on all stuff brought in to be sold," so as to protect the native farmer. Female suffrage has been tried, but did not work well, and was discarded, largely through the votes of the girls themselves.

The possible disadvantages connected with an experiment of this kind easily suggest themselves; but since the "precocity" of the American child is a recognised fact, it is perhaps well that it should be turned into such unobjectionable channels.

VI

[Pg 74]

International Misapprehensions and National Differences

Some years ago I was visiting the cyclorama of Niagara Falls in London and listening to the intelligent description of the scene given by the "lecturer." In the course of this he pointed out Goat Island, the wooded islet that parts the headlong waters of the Niagara like a coulter and shears them into the separate falls of the American and Canadian shores. Behind me stood an English lady who did not quite catch what the lecturer said, and turned to her husband in surprise. "Rhode Island? Well, I knew Rhode Island was one of the smallest States, but I had no idea it was so small as that!" On another occasion an Englishman, invited to smile at the idea of a fellow-countryman that the Rocky Mountains flanked the west bank of the Hudson, exclaimed: "How absurd! The Rocky Mountains must be at least two hundred miles from the Hudson." Even so intelligent a traveller and so friendly a critic as Miss Florence Marryat (Mrs. Francis Lean), in her desire to do justice to the amplitude of the American continent, gravely asserts that "Pennsylvania covers a tract of land larger than England, France, Spain, and Germany all put together," the real fact being that even the smallest of the countries named is much larger than the State, while the combined area of the four is more than fourteen times as great. Texas, the largest State in the Union, is not so very much more extensive than either Germany or France.

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An analogous want of acquaintance with the mental geography of America was shown by the English lady whom Mr. Freeman heard explaining to a cultivated American friend who Sir Walter Scott was, and what were the titles of his chief works.

It is to such international ignorance as this that much, if not most, of the British want of appreciation of the United States may be traced; just as the acute critic may see in the complacent and persistent misspelling of English names by the leading journals of Paris an index of that French attitude of indifference towards foreigners that involved the possibility of a Sedan. It is not, perhaps, easy to adduce exactly parallel instances of American ignorance of Great Britain, though Mr. Henry James, who probably knows his England better than nine out of ten Englishmen, describes Lord Lambeth, the eldest son of a duke, as himself a member of the House of Lords ("An International Episode"). It was amusing to find when *meine Wenigkeit* was made the object of a lesson in a Massachusetts school, that many of the children knew the name England only in connection with their own New England home. Nor, I fear, can

it be denied that much of the historical teaching in the primary schools of the United States gives a somewhat one-sided view of the past relations between the mother country and her revolted daughter. The American child is not taught as much as he ought to be that the English people of to-day repudiate the attitude of the aristocratic British government of 1770 as strongly as Americans themselves. [Pg 76]

The American, however, must not plume himself too much on his superior knowledge. Shameful as the British ignorance of America often is, a corresponding American ignorance of Great Britain would be vastly more shameful. An American cannot understand himself unless he knows something of his origins beyond the seas; the geography and history of an American child must perforce include the history and geography of the British Isles. For a Briton, however, knowledge of America is rather one of the highly desirable things than one of the absolutely indispensable. It would certainly betoken a certain want of humanity in me if I failed to take any interest in the welfare of my sons and daughters who had emigrated to New Zealand; but it is evident that for the conduct of my own life a knowledge of their doings is not so essential for me as a knowledge of what my father was and did. The American of Anglo-Saxon stock visiting Westminster Abbey seems paralleled alone by the Greek of Syracuse or Magna Græcia visiting the Acropolis of Athens; and the experience of either is one that less favoured mortals may unfeignedly envy. But the American and the Syracusan alike would be wrong were he to feel either scorn or elation at the superiority of the guest's knowledge of the host over the host's knowledge of the guest.

However that may be, and whatever latitude we allow to the proverbial connection of familiarity and contempt, there seems little reason to doubt that closer knowledge of one another will but increase the mutual sympathy and esteem of the Briton and the American. The former will find that Brother Jonathan is not so exuberantly and perpetually starred-and-striped as the comic cartoonist would have us believe; and [Pg 77] the American will find that John Bull does not always wear top-boots or invariably wield a whip. Things that from a distance seem preposterous and even revolting will often assume a very different guise when seen in their native environment and judged by their inevitable conditions. It is not always true that "*cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*" that is, if we allow ourselves to translate "*animum*" in its Ciceronian sense of "opinion."[12] To hold this view does not make any excessive demand on our optimism. There seems absolutely no reason why in this particular case the line of cleavage between one's likes and one's dislikes should coincide with that of foreign and native birth. The very word "foreign" rings false in this connection. It is often easier to recognise a brother in a New Yorker than in a Yorkshireman, while, alas! it is only theoretically and in a mood of long-drawn-out aspiration that we can love our alien-tongued European neighbour as ourselves.

The man who wishes to form a sound judgment of another is bound to attain as great a measure as possible of accurate self-knowledge, not merely to understand the reaction of the foreign character when brought into relation with his own, but also to make allowance for fundamental differences of taste and temperament. The golden rule of judging others by ourselves can easily become a dull and leaden despotism if we insist that what *we* should think and feel on a given occasion ought also to be the thoughts and actions of the Frenchman, the German, or the American. There are, perhaps, no more pregnant sentences in Mr. Bryce's valuable book than those in [Pg 78] which he warns his British readers against the assumption that the same phenomena in two different countries must imply the same sort of causes. Thus, an equal amount of corruption among British politicians, or an equal amount of vulgarity in the British press, would argue a much greater degree of rottenness in the general social system than the same phenomena in the United States. So, too, some of the characteristic British vices are, so to say, of a spontaneous, involuntary, semi-unconscious growth, and the American observer would commit a grievous error if he ascribed them to as deliberate an intent to do evil as the same tendencies would betoken in his own land. Neither Briton nor American can do full justice to the other unless each recognises that the other is fashioned of a somewhat different clay.

The strong reasons, material and otherwise, why Great Britain and the United States should be friends need not be enumerated here. In spite of some recent and highly unexpected shocks, the tendencies that make for amity seem to me to be steadily increasing in strength and volume.[10] It is the American in the making rather than the matured native product that, as a rule, is guilty of blatant denunciation of Great Britain; and it is usually the untravelled and preëminently insular Briton alone that is utterly devoid of sympathy for his American cousins. The American, as has often been pointed out, has become vastly more pleasant to deal with since his country has won an undeniable place among the foremost nations of the globe. The epidermis of Brother Jonathan has toughened as he has grown in stature, and now that he can [Pg 79] look over the heads of most of his compeers he regards the sting of a gnat as little as the best of them. Perhaps not *quite* so little as John Bull, whose indifference to criticism and silent assurance of superiority are possibly as far wrong in the one direction as a too irritable skin is in the other.

Of the books written about the United States in the last score of years by European writers of any weight, there are few which have not helped to dissipate the grotesquely one-sided view of America formerly held in the Old World. Preëminent among such books is, of course, the "American Commonwealth" of Mr. James Bryce; but such writers as Mr. Freeman, M. Paul Bourget, Sir George Campbell, Mr. William Sanders, Miss Catherine Bates, Mme. Blanc, Miss Emily Faithful, M. Paul de Rousiers, Max O'Rell, and Mr. Stevens have all, in their several degrees and to their several audiences, worked to the same end. It may, however, be worth while mentioning one or two literary performances of a somewhat different character, merely to remind my British readers of the sort of thing we have done to exasperate our American cousins in quite recent times, and so help them to understand the why and wherefore of certain traces of resentment still lingering beyond the Atlantic. In 1884 Sir Lepel Griffin, a distinguished Indian official, published a record of his visit to the United States, under the title of "The Great Republic." Perhaps this volume might have been left to the obscurity which has befallen it, were it not that Mr. Matthew Arnold lent it a fictitious importance by taking as the text for some of his own remarks on America Sir Lepel's assertion that he knew of no civilised country, [Pg 80] Russia possibly excepted, where he should less like to live than the United States. To me it seems a book most admirably adapted to infuriate even a less sensitive folk than the Americans. I do not in the least desire to ascribe to Sir Lepel Griffin a deliberate design to be offensive; but it is just his calm, supercilious Philistinism, aggravated no doubt by his many years' experience as a ruler of submissive Orientals, that makes it no less a pleasure than a duty for a free and intelligent republican to resent and defy his criticisms.

Can, for instance, anything more wantonly and pointlessly insulting be imagined than his assertion that an intelligent and well-informed American would probably name the pork-packing of Chicago as the thing *best worth seeing* in the United States? After that it is not surprising that he considers American scenery singularly tame and unattractive, and that he finds female beauty (can his standard for this have been Orientalised?) very rare. He predicts that it would be impossible to maintain the Yellowstone National Park as such, and asserts that it was only a characteristic spirit of swagger and braggadocio that prompted this attempt at an impossible ideal. He also seems to think lynching an any-day possibility in the streets of New York. The value of his forecasts may, however, be discounted by his prophecy in the same book that the London County Council would be merely a glorified vestry, utterly indifferent to the public interest, and unlikely to attract any candidates of distinction!

An almost equal display of Philistinism—perhaps greater in proportion to its length—is exhibited by an article entitled "Twelve Hours of New York," published by Count [Pg 81] Gleichen in *Murray's Magazine* (February, 1890). This energetic young man succeeded (in his own belief) in seeing all the sights of New York in the time indicated by the title of his article, and apparently met nothing to his taste except the Hoffman House bar and the large rugs with which the cab-horses were swathed. He found his hotel a den of incivility and his dinner "a squashy, sloppy meal." He wishes

he had spent the day in Canada instead. He is great in his scorn for the "glue kettle" helmets of the New York police, and for the ferry-boats in the harbour, to which he vastly prefers what he wittily and originally styles the "common or garden steamer." His feet, in his own elegant phrase, felt "like a jelly" after four hours of New York pavement. What are the Americans to think of us when they find one of our innermost and most aristocratic circle writing stuff like this under the ægis of, perhaps, the foremost of British publishers?

As a third instance of the ingratiating manner in which Englishmen write of Americans, we may take the following paragraph from "Travel and Talk," an interesting record of much journeying by that well-known London clergyman, the Rev. H.R. Haweis: "Among the numerous kind attentions I was favoured with and somewhat embarrassed by was the assiduous hospitality of another singular lady, *also since dead*. I allude to Mrs. Barnard, the wife of the venerable principal of Columbia College, a well-known and admirably appointed educational institution in New York. This good lady was bent upon our staying at the college, and hunted us from house to house until we took up our abode with her, and, I confess, I found her [Pg 82] rather amusing at first, and I am sure she meant most kindly. But there was an inconceivable fidgetiness about her, and an incapacity to let people alone, or even listen to anything they said in answer to her questions, which poured as from a quick-firing gun, that became at last intolerable." Comment on this passage would be entirely superfluous; but I cannot help drawing attention to the supreme touch of gracefulness added by the three words I have italicised.

There is one English critic of American life whose opinion cannot be treated cavalierly—least of all by those who feel, as I do, how inestimable is our debt to him as a leader in the paths of sweetness and light. But even in the presence of Matthew Arnold I desire to preserve the attitude of "*nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*," and I cannot but believe that his estimate of America, while including much that is subtle, clear-sighted, and tonic, is in certain respects inadequate and misleading. He unfortunately committed the mistake of writing on the United States before visiting the country, and had made up his mind in advance that it was almost exclusively peopled by, and entirely run in the interests of, the British dissenting Philistine with a difference.

It is the more to be regretted that he adopted this attitude of premature judgment of American characteristics because it is only too prevalent among his less distinguished fellow-countrymen. From this position of *parti pris*, maintained with all his own inimitable suavity and grace, it seems to me that he was never wholly able to advance (or retire), though he candidly admitted that he found the difference [Pg 83] between the British and American Philistine vastly greater than he anticipated. The members of his preconceived syllogism seem to be somewhat as follows: the money-making and comfort-loving classes in England are essentially Philistine; the United States as a nation is given over to money-making; *ergo*, its inhabitants must all be Philistines. Furthermore, the British Philistines are to a very large extent dissenters: the United States has no established church; *ergo*, it must be the Paradise of the dissenter.

This line of argument ignores the fact that the stolid self-satisfaction in materialistic comfort, which he defines as the essence of Philistinism, is *not* a predominant trait in the American class in which our English experience would lead us to look for it. The American man of business, with his restless discontent and nervous, over-strained pursuit of wealth, may not be a more inspiring object than his British brother, but he has little of the smugness which Mr. Arnold has taught us to associate with the label of Philistinism. And his womankind is perhaps even less open to this particular reproach. Mr. Arnold ignores a whole far-reaching series of American social phenomena which have practically nothing in common with British nonconformity, and lets a similarity of nomenclature blind him too much to the differentiation of entirely novel conditions. The Methodist "Moonshiner" of Tennessee is hardly cast in the same mould as the deacon of a London Little Bethel; and even the most legitimate children of the Puritans have not descended from the common stock in

parallel lines in England and America.

Mr. Arnold admitted that the political clothes of Brother Jonathan fitted him admirably, and allowed that he can and does think straighter (*c'est le bonheur des hommes quand ils pensent juste*) than we can in the maze of our unnatural and antiquated complications; he wholly admired the natural, unselfconscious manner of the American woman; he saw that the wage-earner lived more comfortably than in Europe; he noted that wealthy Americans were not dogged by envy in the same way as in England, partly because wealth was felt to be more within the range of all, and partly because it was much less often used for the gratification of vile and selfish appetites; he admitted that America was none the worse for the lack of a materialised aristocracy such as ours; he praises the spirit which levels false and conventional distinctions, and waives the use of such invidious discriminations as our "Mr." and "Esquire." Admissions such as these, coming from such a man as he, are of untold value in promoting the growth of a proper sentiment towards our transatlantic kinsmen. When he points out that the dangers of such a community as the United States include a tendency to rely too much on the machinery of institutions; an absence of the discipline of respect; a proneness to hardness, materialism, exaggeration, and boastfulness; a false smartness and a false audacity,—the wise American will do well to ponder his sayings, hard though they may sound. When, however, he goes on to point out the "prime necessity of civilisation being interesting," and to assert that American civilisation is lacking in interest, we may well doubt whether on the one hand the quality of interest is not too highly exalted, and, on the other, whether the denial of interest to American life does not indicate an [Pg 84] [Pg 85] almost insular narrowness in the conception of what is interesting. When he finds a want of soul and delicacy in the American as compared with John Bull, some of us must feel that if he is right the latitude of interpretation of these terms must indeed be oceanic. When he gravely cites the shrewd and ingenious Benjamin Franklin as the most considerable man whom America has yet produced, we must respectfully but firmly take exception to his standard of measurement. When he declares that Abraham Lincoln has no claim to distinction, we feel that the writer must have in mind distinction of a singularly conventional and superficial nature; and we are not reassured by the *quasi* brutality of the remark in one of his letters, to the effect that Lincoln's assassination brought into American history a dash of the tragic and romantic in which it had hitherto been so sadly lacking ("*sic semper tyrannis* is so unlike anything Yankee or English middle class"). When he asserts that from Maine to Florida and back again all America Hebraises, we reflect with some bewilderment that hitherto we had believed the New Orleans creole (*e.g.*) to be as far removed from Hebraising as any type we knew of. It is strikingly characteristic of the weak side of Mr. Arnold's outlook on America that he went to stay with Mr. P.T. Barnum, the celebrated showman, without the least idea that his American friends might think the choice of hosts a peculiar one. To him, to a very large extent, Americans were all alike middle-class, dissenting Philistines; and so far as appears on the surface, Mr. Barnum's desire to "belong to the minority" pleased him as much as any other sign of approval conferred upon him in America. [Pg 86]

A native of the British Isles is sometimes apt to be a little nettled when he finds a native of the United States regarding him as a "foreigner" and talking of him accordingly. An Englishman never means the natives of the United States when he speaks of "foreigners;" he reserves that epithet for non-English-speaking races. In this respect it would seem as if the Briton, for once, took the wider, the more genial and human, point of view; as if he had the keener appreciation of the ties of race and language. It is as if he cherished continually a sub-dominant consciousness of the fact that the occupation of the North American continent by the Anglo-Saxons is one of the greatest events in English history—that America is peopled by Englishmen. When he thinks of the events of 1776 he feels, to use Mr. Hall Caine's illustration, like Dr. Johnson, who dreamed that he had been worsted in conversation, but reflected when he awoke that the conversation of his adversary must also have been his own. As opposed to this there may be a grain of self-assertion in the American use of the term as applied to the British; it is as if they would emphasise the fact that

they are no mere offshoot of England, that the Colonial days have long since gone by, and that the United States is an independent nation with a right to have its own "foreigners." An American friend suggests that the different usage of the two lands may be partly owing to the fact that the cordial, frank demeanour of the American, coupled with his use of the same tongue, makes an Englishman absolutely forget that he is not a fellow-countryman, while the subtler American is keenly conscious of differences which escape the obtuser Englishman. Another partial explanation is that [Pg 87] the first step across our frontier brings us to a land where an unknown tongue is spoken, and that we have consequently welded into one the two ideas of foreignhood and unintelligibility; while the American, on the other hand, identifies himself with his continent and regards all as foreigners who are not natives of it.

The point would hardly be worth dwelling upon, were it not that the different attitude it denotes really leads in some instances to actual misunderstanding. The Englishman, with his somewhat unsensitive feelers, is apt, in all good faith and unconsciousness, to criticise American ways to the American with much more freedom than he would criticise French ways to a Frenchman. It is as if he should say, "You and I are brothers, or at least cousins; we are a much better sort than all those foreign Johnnies; and so there's no harm in my pointing out to you that you're wrong here and ought to change there." But, alas, who is quicker to resent our criticism than they of our own household? And so the American, overlooking the sort of clumsy compliment that is implied in the assurance of kinship involved in the very frankness of our fault-finding criticism, resents most keenly the criticisms that are couched in his own language, and sees nothing but impertinent hostility in the attitude of John Bull. And who is to convince him that it is, as in a Scottish wooing, because we love him that we tease him, and in so doing put him (in our eyes) on a vastly higher pedestal than the "blasted foreigner" whose case we consider past praying for? And who is to teach us that Brother Jonathan is able now to give us at least as many hints as we can give him, and that we must realise that the same sauce [Pg 88] must be served with both birds? Thus each resiles from the encounter infinitely more pained than if the antagonist had been a German or a Frenchman. The very fact that we speak the same tongue often leads to false assumptions of mutual knowledge, and so to offences of unguarded ignorance.

One of the most conspicuous differences between the American and the Briton is that the former, take him for all in all, is distinctly the more articulate animal of the two. The Englishman seems to have learned, through countless generations, that he can express himself better and more surely in deeds than in words, and has come to distrust in others a fatal fluency of expressiveness which he feels would be exaggerated and even false in himself. A man often has to wait for his own death to find out what his English friend thinks of him; and

> "Wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as others see us,"

we might often be surprised to discover what a wealth of real affection and esteem lies hid under the glacier of Anglican indifference. The American poet who found his song in the heart of a friend could have done so, were the friend English, only by the aid of a post-mortem examination. The American, on the other hand, has the most open and genial way of expressing his interest in you; and when you have readjusted the scale of the moral thermometer so as to allow for the change of temperament, you will find this frankness most delightfully stimulating. It requires, however, an intimate knowledge of both countries to understand that when an Englishman congratulates you on a success by exclaiming, "Hallo, old chap, I didn't know you had [Pg 89] it in you," he means just as much as your American friend, whose phrase is: "Bravo, Billy, I always *knew* you could do something fine."

That the superior powers of articulation possessed by the American sometimes takes the form of profuse and even extreme volubility will hardly be denied by those conversant with the facts. The American may not be more profound than his English cousin or even more fertile in ideas, but as a rule he is much more ready and easy in

the discussion of the moment; whatever the state of his "gold reserve" may be, he has no lack of the small counters of conversation. In its proper place this faculty is undoubtedly most agreeable; in the fleeting interviews which compose so much of social intercourse, he is distinctly at an advantage who has the power of coming to the front at once without wasting precious time in preliminaries and reconnaissances. Other things being equal, the chances of agreeable conversation at dinner, at the club, or in the pauses of the dance are better in the United States than in England. The "next man" of the new world is apt to talk better and to be wider in his sympathies than the "next man" of the old. On the other hand, it seems to me equally true that the Americans possess the defects of their qualities in this as in other respects; they are often apt to talk too much, they are afraid of a conversational lull, and do not sufficiently appreciate the charm of "flashes of brilliant silence." It seemed to me that they often carried a most unnecessary amount of volubility into their business life; and I sometimes wondered whether the greater [Pg 90] energy and rush that they apparently put into their conduct of affairs were not due to the necessity of making up time lost in superfluous chatter. If an Englishman has a mile to go to an appointment he will take his leisurely twenty minutes to do the distance, and then settle his business in two or three dozen sentences; an American is much more likely to devour the ground in five minutes, and then spend an hour or more in lively conversation not wholly pertinent to the matter in hand. The American mind is discursive, open, wide in its interests, alive to suggestion, pliant, emotional, imaginative; the English mind is concentrated, substantial, indifferent to the merely relative, matter-of-fact, stiff, and inflexible.

The English have reduced to a fine art the practice of a stony impassivity, which on its highest plane is not devoid of a certain impressiveness. On ordinary occasions it is apt to excite either the ire or the amusement of the representatives of a more animated race. I suppose it is almost impossible for an untravelled Englishman to realise the ridiculous side of the Church Parade in Hyde Park—as it would appear, say, to a lively girl from Baltimore. The parade is a collection of human beings, presumably brought together for the sake of seeing and being seen. Yet the obvious aim of each English item in the crowd is to deprive his features of all expression, and to look as if he were absolutely unconscious that his own party were not the only one on the ground. Such vulgarity as the exhibition of the slightest interest in a being to whom he has not been introduced would be treason to his dearest traditions. In an American function of the same kind, the actors take an undisguised interest in each [Pg 91] other, while a French or Italian assembly would be still more demonstrative. On the surface the English attitude is distinctly inhuman; it reminds one that England is still the stronghold of the obsolescent institution of caste, that it frankly and even brutally asserts the essential inequality of man. Nowhere, perhaps, will you see a bigger and handsomer, healthier, better-groomed, more efficient set of human animals; but their straight-ahead, phlegmatic, expressionless gaze, the want of animated talk, the absence of any show of intelligence, emphasises our feeling that they are *animals*.

The Briton's indifference to criticism is at once his strength and his weakness. It makes him invincible in a cause which has dominated his conscience; it hinders him in the attainment of a luminous discrimination between cause and cause. His profound self-confidence, his sheer good sense, his dogged persistence, his bulldog courage, his essential honesty of purpose, bring him to the goal in spite of the unnecessary obstacles that have been heaped on his path by his own *ὑβρις* and contempt of others. He chooses what is physically the shortest line in preference to the line of least resistance. He makes up for his want of light by his superiority in weight. Social adaptability is not his foible. He accepts the conventionality of his class and wears it as an impenetrable armour. Out of his own class he may sometimes appear less conventional than the American, simply because the latter is quick to adopt the manners of a new *milieu*, while John Bull clings doggedly or unconsciously to his old conventions. If an American and an English shop-girl were simultaneously married to peers of the realm, the odds would be a hundred to one in [Pg 92] favour of the former in the race for self-identification with her new environment.

The American facility of expression, if I do not err, springs largely from an amiable difference in temperament. The American is, on the whole, more genially disposed to all and sundry. I do not say that he is capable of truer friendships or of greater sacrifices for a friend than the Englishman; but the window through which he looks out on humanity at large has panes of a ruddier hue, he cultivates a mildness of tone, which a Briton is apt to despise as weakness. His desire to oblige sometimes impels him to uncharacteristic actions, which lead to fallacious generalisations on the part of his British critic. He shrinks from any assumption of superiority; he is apt to think twice of the feelings of his inferiors. The American tends to consider each stranger he meets—at any rate within his own social sphere—as a good fellow until he proves himself the contrary; with the Englishman the presumption is rather the other way. An Englishman usually excuses this national trait as really due to modesty and shyness; but I fear there is in it a very large element of sheer bad manners, and of a cowardly fear of compromising one's self with undesirable acquaintances. Englishmen are apt to take *omne ignotum pro horribile*, and their translation of the Latin phrase varies from the lifting of the aristocratic eyebrow over the unwarranted address of the casual companion at *table d'hôte* down to the "'ere's a stranger, let's 'eave 'arf a brick at 'im" of the Black Country. In England I am apt to feel painfully what a lame dog I am; in America I feel, well, if I am a lame dog I am being helped [Pg 93] most delightfully over the conversational stile. An Englishman says, "Would you *mind* doing so-and-so for me?" showing by the very form of the question that he thinks kindness likely to be troublesome. An American says, "Wouldn't you *like* to do this for me?" assuming the superior attitude of one who feels that to give an opportunity to do a kindness is itself to confer a favour. The Continental European shares with the American the merit of having manners on the self-regarding pattern of *noblesse oblige*, while the Englishman wants to know who *you* are, so as to put on his best manners only if the *force majeure* of your social standing compels him. No one wishes the Englishman to express more than he really feels or to increase the already overwhelming mass of conventional insincerity; but it might undoubtedly be well for him to consider whether it is not his positive duty to drop a little more of the oil of human kindness on the wheels of the social machinery, and to understand that it is perfectly possible for two strangers to speak with and look at each other pleasantly without thereby contracting the obligation of eternal friendship. Why should an English traveller deem it worthy of special record that when calling at a Boston club, he found his friend and host not yet arrived, other members of the club, unknown to him, had put themselves about to entertain him? An American gentleman would find this too natural to call for remark.

Whether we like it or not, we have to acknowledge the fact that our brutal frankness, our brusqueness, and our extreme fondness for calling a spade a spade are often extremely disagreeable to our American cousins, and make them (temporarily at any rate) feel themselves to be our superiors in the matter of gentle breeding. As Col. [Pg 94] T.W. Higginson has phrased it, they think that "the English nation has truthfulness enough for a whole continent, and almost too much for an island." They think that a line might be drawn somewhere between dissembling our love and kicking them downstairs. They also object to our use of such terms as "beastly," "stinking," and "rot;" and we must admit that they do so with justice, while we cannot assoil them altogether of the opposite tendency of a prim prudishness in the avoidance of certain natural and necessary words. For myself I unfeignedly admire the delicacy which leads to a certain parsimony in the use of words like "perspiration," "cleaning one's self," and so on. And, however much we may laugh at the class that insists upon the name of "help" instead of "servant," we cannot but respect the class which yields to the demand and looks with horror on the English slang word "slavey."

On the other hand there are certain little personal habits, such as the public use of the toothpick, and what Mr. Morley Roberts calls the modern form of *κόττβος*, which I think often find themselves in better company in America than in England. Still I desire to speak here with all due diffidence. I remember when I pointed out to a Boston girl that an American actor in a piece before us, representing high life in London, was committing a gross solecism in moistening his pencil in his mouth

before adding his address to his visiting card, she trumped my criticism at once by the information that a distinguished English journalist, with a handle to his name, who recently made a successful lecturing tour in the United States, openly and [Pg 95] deliberately moistened his thumb in the same ingenuous fashion to aid him in turning over the leaves of his manuscript.

A feature of the average middle-class Englishman which the American cannot easily understand is his tacit recognition of the fact that somebody else (the aristocrat) is his superior. In fact, this is sometimes a fertile source of misunderstanding, and it is apt to beget in the American an entirely false idea of what he thinks the innate servility of the Englishman. He must remember that the aristocratic prestige is a growth of centuries, that it has come to form part of the atmosphere, that it is often accepted as unconsciously as the law of gravitation. This is a case where the same attitude in an American mind (and, alas, we occasionally see it in American residents in London) would betoken an infinitely lower moral and mental plane than it does in the Englishman. No true American could accept the proposition that "Lord Tom Noddy might do so-and-so, but it would be a very different thing for a man in my position;" and yet an Englishman (I regret to say) might speak thus and still be a very decent fellow, whom it would be unjust cruelty to call a snob. No doubt the English aristocracy (as I think Mr. Henry James has said) now occupies a heroic position without heroism; but the glamour of the past still shines on their faded escutcheons, and "the love of freedom itself is hardly stronger in England than the love of aristocracy."

Matthew Arnold has pointed out to us how the aristocracy acts like an incubus on the middle classes of Great Britain, and he has put it on record that he was struck with the buoyancy, enjoyment of life, and freedom of constraint of the corresponding [Pg 96] classes in America. In England, he says, a man feels that it is the *upper class* which represents him; in the United States he feels that it is the *State*, *i.e.*, himself. In England it is the Barbarian alone that dares be indifferent to the opinion of his fellows; in America everyone expresses his opinion and "voices" his idiosyncrasies with perfect freedom. This position has, however, its seamy side. There is in America a certain anarchy in questions of taste and manners which the long possession of a leisured, a cultivated class tends to save us from in England. I never felt so kindly a feeling towards our so-called "upper class" as when travelling in the United States and noting some effects of its absence. This class has an accepted position in the social hierarchy; its dicta are taken as authoritative on points of etiquette, just as the clergy are looked on as the official guardians of religious and ecclesiastical standards. I do not here pretend to discuss the value of the moral example of our *jeunesse dorée*, filtering down through the successive strata of society; but their influence in setting the fashion on such points as scrupulous personal cleanliness, the avoidance of the *outré* in costume, and the maintenance of an honourable and generous standard in their money dealings with each other, is distinctly on the side of the humanities. In America—at least, "Out West"—everyone practically is his own guide, and the *nouveau riche* spends his money strictly in accordance with his own standard of taste. The result is often as appalling in its hideousness as it is startling in its costliness. On the other hand I am bound to state that I have known American men of great wealth whose simplicity of type could hardly be paralleled in England [Pg 97] (except, perchance, within the Society of Friends). They do not feel any social pressure to imitate the establishment of My Lord or His Grace; and spend their money for what really interests them without reference to the demands of society.

It is rather interesting to observe the different forms which vulgarity is apt to take in the two countries. In England vulgarity is stolid; in America it is smart and aggressive. We are apt, I think, to overestimate the amount in the latter country because it is so much more in voluble evidence. An English vulgarian is often hushed into silence by the presence of his social superior; an American vulgarian either recognises none such or tries to prove himself as good as you by being unnecessarily *grob*. This has, at any rate, a manlier air than the vulgar obsequiousness of England towards the superior on the one hand or its cynical insolence to the inferior on the

other. The feeling which made a French lady of fashion in the seventeenth century dress herself in the presence of a footman with as much unconcern as if he were a piece of furniture still finds its modified analogy in England, but scarcely in America. Almost the only field in which the Americans struck me as showing anything like servility was in their treatment of such mighty potentates as railway conductors, hotel clerks, and policemen. Whether, until a millenial golden mean is attained, this is better than our English bullying tone in the same sphere might be an interesting question for casuists.

Americans can rarely understand the amount of social recognition given by English duchesses to such American visitors as Col. William Cody, generally known as [Pg 98] "Buffalo Bill." They do not reflect that it is just because the social gap between the two is so irretrievably vast and so universally recognised that the duchesses can afford to amuse themselves cursorily with any eccentricity that offers itself. As Pomona's husband put it, people in England are like types with letters at one end and can easily be sorted out of a state of "pi," while Americans are theoretically all alike, like carpet-tacks. Thus Americans of the best class often shun the free mixing that takes place in England, because they know that the process of redistribution will be neither easy nor popular. The intangible sieve thus placed between the best and the not-so-good is of a fine discrimination, beside which our conventional net-works seem coarse and ineffective.

Since returning from the United States I have occasionally been asked how the general tone of morality in that country compared with that in our own. To answer such a question with anything approaching to an air of finality or absoluteness would be an act of extreme presumption. The opinions which one holds depend so obviously on a number of contingent and accidental circumstances, and must so inevitably be tinged by one's personal experiences, that their validity can at best have but an approximate and tentative character. In making this comparison, too, it is only right to disregard the phenomena of mining camps and other phases of life on the fringes of American civilisation, which can be fairly compared only with pioneer life on the extreme frontiers of the British Empire. From a similar cause we may omit from the comparison a great part of the Southern States, where we do not find a homogeneous mass of white civilisation, but a state of society inexpressibly [Pg 99] complicated by the presence of an inferior race. To compare the Southerner with the Englishman we should need to observe the latter as he exists in, say, one of our African colonies. Speaking, then, with these reservations, I should feel inclined to say that in domestic and social morality the Americans are ahead of us, in commercial morality rather behind than before, and in political morality distinctly behind.

Thus, in the first of these fields we find the American more good-tempered and good-natured than the Englishman. Women, children, and animals are treated with considerably more kindness. The American translation of paterfamilias is not domestic tyrant. Horses are driven by the voice rather than by the whip. The superior does not thrust his superiority on his inferior so brutally as we are apt to do. There is a general intention to make things pleasant—at any rate so long as it does not involve the doer in loss. There is less *gratuitous* insolence. Servility, with its attendant hypocrisy and deceit, is conspicuously absent; and the general spirit of independence, if sometimes needlessly boorish in its manifestations, is at least sturdy and manly. In England we are rude to those weaker than ourselves; in America the rudeness is apt to be directed against those whom we suspect to be in some way our superior. Man is regarded by man rather as an object of interest than as an object of suspicion. Charity is very widespread; and the idea of a fellow-creature actually suffering from want of food or shelter is, perhaps, more repugnant to the average American than to the average Englishman, and more apt to act immediately on his [Pg 100] purse-strings. In that which popular language usually means when it speaks of immorality, all outward indications point to the greater purity of the American. The conversation of the smoking-room is a little less apt to be *risqué*; the possibility of masculine continence is more often taken for granted; solicitation on the streets is rare; few American publishers of repute dare to issue the semi-prurient style of novel

at present so rife in England; the columns of the leading magazines are almost prudishly closed to anything suggesting the improper. The tone of the stage is distinctly healthier, and adaptations of hectic French plays are by no means so popular, in spite of the general sympathy of American taste with French. The statistics of illegitimacy point in the same direction, though I admit that this is not necessarily a sign of unsophisticated morality. In a word, when an Englishman goes to France he feels that the moral tone in this respect is more lax than in England; when he goes to America he feels that it is more firm. And he will hardly find adequate the French explanation, *viz.*, that there is not less vice but more hypocrisy in the Anglo-Saxon community.

There is another very important sphere of morality in which the general attitude of the United States seems to me very appreciably superior to that of England. It is that to which St. Paul refers when he says, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." American public sentiment is distinctly ahead of ours in recognising that a life of idleness is wrong in itself, and that the possibility of leading such a life acts most prejudicially on character. The American answer to the Englishman trying to define what he meant by "gentlemen of leisure" "Ah, we call them *tramps* in America"—is [Pg 101] not merely a jest, but enshrines a deep ethnical and ethical principle. Most Americans would, I think, agree strongly with Mr. Bosanquet's philosophical if somewhat cumbersomely worded definition of legitimate private property, "that things should not come miraculously and be unaffected by your dealings with them, but that you should be in contact with something which in the external world is the definite material representative of yourself" ("Aspects of the Social Problem," p. 313). The British gentleman, aware that his dinner does not agree with him unless he has put forth a certain amount of physical energy, reverts to one of the earliest and most primitive forms of work, *viz.*, hunting. There is a small—a very small—class in the United States in the same predicament; but as a rule the worker there is not only more honoured, but also works more in accordance with the spirit of the age.

The general attitude of Americans towards militarism seems to me also superior to ours; and one of the keenest dreads of the best American citizens during a recent wave of jingoism was that of "the reflex influence of militarism upon the national character, the transformation of a peace-loving people into a nation of swaggerers ever ready to take offence, prone to create difficulties, eager to shed blood, and taking all sorts of occasions to bring the Christian religion to shame under pretence of vindicating the rights of humanity in some other country." The spectacle of a section in the United States apparently ready to step down from its pedestal of honourable neutrality, and run its head into the ignoble web of European complications, was indeed one to make both gods and mortals weep. But I do not [Pg 102] believe it expressed the true attitude of the real American people. Perhaps the personal element enters too largely into my ascription of superior morality to the Americans in this matter, because I can never thoroughly enjoy a military pageant, no matter how brilliant, for thinking of the brutal, animal, inhuman element in our nature of which it is, after all, the expression: military pomp is to me merely the surface iridescence of a malarious pool, and the honour paid to our life destroyers would, from my point of view, be infinitely better bestowed on life preservers, such as the noble and intrepid corps of firemen. Sympathisers with this view seem much more numerous in the United States than in England.[11]

The judgment of an uncommercial traveller on commercial morality may well be held as a feather-weight in the balance. Such as mine is, it is gathered mainly from the tone of casual conversation, from which I should conclude that a considerable proportion of Americans read a well-known proverb as "All's fair in love or business." Men—I will not say of a high character and standing, but men of a standing and character who would not have done it in England—told me instances of their sharp practices in business, with an evident expectation of my admiration for their shrewdness, and with no apparent sense of the slightest moral delinquency. Possibly, when the "rules of the game" are universally understood, there is less moral obliquity in taking advantage of them than an outsider imagines. The prevalent belief that

America is more sedulous in the worship of the Golden Calf than any other country [Pg 103]
arises largely, I believe, from the fact that the chances of acquiring wealth are more frequent and easy there than elsewhere. Opportunity makes the thief. Anyhow, the reproach comes with a bad grace from the natives of a country which has in its annals the outbreak of the South Sea Bubble, the railway mania of the Hudson era, and the revelations of Mr. Hooley.

Politics enter so slightly into the scope of this book that a very few words on the question of political morality must suffice. That political corruption exists more commonly in the United States than in Great Britain—especially in municipal government—may be taken as admitted by the most eminent American publicists themselves. A very limited degree of intercourse with "professional politicians" yields ample confirmatory evidence. Thus, to give but one instance, a wealthy citizen of one of the largest Eastern towns told me, with absolute ingenuousness, how he had "dished" the (say) Republican party in a municipal contest, not in the least because he had changed his political sympathies, but simply because the candidates had refused to accede to certain personal demands of his own. He spoke throughout the conversation as if it must be perfectly apparent to me, as to any intelligent person, that the only possible reason for working and voting for a political party must be personal interest. I confess this seemed to me a very significant straw. On the other hand the conclusions usually drawn by stay-at-home English people on these admissions is ludicrously in excess of what is warranted by the facts. "To imagine for a moment that 60,000,000 of people—better educated than any other nation in the [Pg 104]
world—are openly tolerating universal corruption in all Federal, State, and municipal government is simply assuming that these 60,000,000 are either criminals or fools." Now, "you can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." A more competent judge[12] than the present writer estimates the morals of the American political "wire-puller" as about on a level with those of our company directors. And before my English readers make their final decision on the American political system let them study Chapter XLVI. of that very fascinating novel, "The Honorable Peter Stirling," by Paul Leicester Ford. It may give them some new light on the subject of "a government of the average," and show them what is meant by the saying, "The boss who does the most things that the people want can do the most things that the people don't want."

We must remember, too, that nothing is hidden from general knowledge in America: every job comes sooner or later into the merciless glare of publicity. And if our political sins are not the same as theirs, they are perhaps equally heinous. Was not the British landlord who voted against the repeal of the corn laws, so that land might continue to bring in a high rent at the expense of the poor man, really acting from just as corrupt a motive of self-interest as the American legislator who accepts a bribe? It does not do to be too superior on this question.

We may end this chapter by a typical instance of the way in which British opinion of America is apt to be formed that comes under my notice at the very moment I write [Pg 105]
these lines. The *Daily Chronicle* of March 24, 1896, published a leading article on "Family Life in America," in which it quotes with approval Mme. Blanc's assertion that "the single woman in the United States is infinitely superior to her European sister." In the same issue of the paper is a letter from Mrs. Fawcett relating to a recent very deplorable occurrence in Washington, where the daughter of a well-known resident shot a coloured boy who was robbing her father's orchard. In the *Chronicle* of March 25th appears a triumphant British letter from "Old-Fashioned," asking satirically whether the habit of using loaded revolvers is a proof of the "infinite superiority" of the American girl. Now this estimable gentleman is making the mistake that nine out of ten of his countrymen constantly make in swooping down on a single *outré* instance as *characteristic* of American life. If "Old-Fashioned" has not time to pay a visit to America or to read Mr. Bryce's book, let him at least accept my assurance that the above-mentioned incident seems to the full as extraordinary to the Bostonian as to the Londoner, and that it is just as typical of the habits of the

American society girl as the action of Miss Madeleine Smith was of English girls.

"Of all the sarse thet I can call to mind,
England doos make the most onpleasant kind.
It's you're the sinner ollers, she's the saint;
Whot's good's all English, all thet isn't, ain't.
She is all thet's honest, honnable, an' fair.
An' when the vartoos died they made her heir."

FOOTNOTES:

[9] See, *e.g.*, "Ad Familiares," 5, 18.

[10] This was written just after President Cleveland's pronunciamento in regard to Venezuela, and thus long before the outbreak of the war with Spain.

[11] This paragraph was written before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war; but the events of that struggle do not seem to me to call for serious modification of the opinion expressed above.

[12] Sir George Campbell, in "Black and White in America."

VII

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Sports and Amusements

In face of the immense sums of money spent on all kinds of sport, the size and wealth of the athletic associations, the swollen salaries of baseball players, the prominence afforded to sporting events in the newspapers, the number of "world's records" made in the United States, and the tremendous excitement over inter-university football matches and international yacht-races, it may seem wanton to assert that the love of sport is not by any means so genuine or so universal in the United States as in Great Britain; and yet I am not at all sure that such a statement would not be absolutely true. By true "love of sport" I understand the enjoyment that arises from either practising or seeing others practise some form of skill-demanding amusement for its own sake, without question of pecuniary profit; and the true sport lover is not satisfied unless the best man wins, whether he be friend or foe. Sport ceases to be sport as soon as it is carried on as if it were war, where "all" is proverbially "fair." The excitement of gambling does not seem to me to be fairly covered by the phrase "love of sport," and no more does the mere desire to see one's university, state, or nation triumph over someone else's university, state, or nation. There are thousands of people who rejoice over or bewail the result of the Derby without thereby proving their possession of any right to the title of sportsman; there is no difference of quality [Pg 107] between the speculator in grain and the speculator in horseflesh and jockeys' nerves. So, too, there are many thousands who yell for Yale in a football match who have no real sporting instinct whatever. Sport, to be sport, must jealously shun all attempts to make it a business; the more there is of the spirit of professionalism in any game or athletic exercise the less it deserves to be called a sport. A sport in the true sense of the word must be practised for fun or glory, not for dollars and cents; and the desire to win must be very strictly subordinated to the sense of honour and fair play. The book-making spirit has undoubtedly entered far too largely into many of the most characteristic of British sports, and I have no desire to palliate or excuse our national shortcomings in this or other respects. But the hard commercial spirit to which I have alluded seems to me to pervade American sport much more universally than it does the sport of England, and to form almost always a much larger factor in the interest excited by any contest.

This is very clearly shown by the way in which games are carried on at the universities of the two countries. Most members of an English college are members

of some one or other of the various athletic associations connected with it, and it cannot be denied that the general interest in sport is both wide and keen. But it does not assume so "business-like" an air as it does in such a university as Yale or Princeton. Not nearly so much money is spent in the paraphernalia of the sport or in the process of training. The operation of turning a pleasure into a toil is not so consistently carried on. The members of the intercollegiate team do not obtain leave [Pg 108] of absence from their college duties to train and practise in some remote corner of England as if they were prize-fighters or yearlings. "Gate-money" does not bulk so largely in the view; in fact, admission to many of the chief encounters is free. The atmosphere of mystery about the doings of the crew or team is not so sedulously cultivated. The men do not take defeat so hardly, or regard the loss of a match as a serious calamity in life. I have the authority of Mr. Caspar W. Whitney, the editor of *Forest and Stream*, and perhaps the foremost living writer on sport in the United States, for the statement that members of a defeated football team in America will sometimes throw themselves on their faces on the turf and weep (see his "Sporting Pilgrimage," Chapter IV., pp. 94, 95).[13] It was an American orator who proposed the toast: "My country—right or wrong, my country;" and there is some reason to fear that American college athletes are tempted to adapt this in the form "Let us *win*, by fair means or foul." I should hesitate to suggest this were it not that the evidence on which I do so was supplied from American sources. Thus, one American friend of mine told me he heard a member of a leading university football team say to one of his colleagues: "You try to knock out A.B. this bout; I've been warned once." Tactics of this kind are freely alleged against our professional players of association football; but it may safely be asserted that no such sentence could issue from the lips of a member of the Oxford or Cambridge university teams. [Pg 109]

Mr. E.J. Brown, Track Captain of the University of California, asserted, on his return from a visit to the Eastern States, that Harvard was the only Eastern university in which the members of the athletic teams were all *bonâ fide* students. This is doubtless a very exaggerated statement, but it would seem to indicate which way the wind blows. The entire American tendency is to take amusement too seriously, too strenuously. They do not allow sport to take care of itself. "It runs to rhetoric and interviews." All good contestants become "representatives of the American people." One serious effect of the way in which the necessity of winning or "making records" is constantly held up as the *raison d'être* of athletic sports is that it suggests to the ordinary student, who has no hopes of brilliant success in athletics, that moderate exercise is contemptible, and that he need do nothing to keep up his bodily vigour. Thus, Dr. Birkbeck Hill found that the proportion of students who took part in some athletic sport was distinctly less at Harvard than at Oxford. Nor could I ascertain that nearly so large a proportion of the adult population themselves played games or followed athletics of any kind as in England. I should say, speaking roughly, that the end of his university career or his first year in responsible business corresponded practically for the ordinary American to the forty-fifth year of the ordinary Englishman, *i.e.*, after this time he would either entirely or partially give up his own active participation in outdoor exercises. Of course there are thousands of exceptions on both sides; but the general rule remains true. The average American professional or business man does not play baseball as his English cousin does cricket. He goes in [Pg 110] his thousands to see baseball matches, and takes a very keen and vociferous interest in their progress; but he himself has probably not handled a club since he left college. No doubt this contrast is gradually diminishing, and such games as lawn tennis and golf have made it practically a vanishing quantity in the North-eastern States; but as one goes West one cannot but feel that baseball and other sports, like dancing in China, are almost wholly in the hands of paid performers.

The national games of cricket and baseball serve very well to illustrate this, as well as other contrasts in the pastimes of the two nations. In cricket the line between the amateur and the professional has hitherto been very clearly drawn; and Englishmen are apt to believe that there is something elevating in the very nature of the game which makes it shed scandals as a duck's back sheds water. The American view is, perhaps, rather that cricket is so slow a game that there is little scope for betting,

with all its attendant excitement and evils. They point to the fact that the staid city of Philadelphia is the only part of the United States in which cricket flourishes; and, if in a boasting mood, they may claim with justice that it has been cultivated there in a way that shows that it is not lack of ability to shine in it that makes most Americans indifferent to the game. A first-class match takes three days to play, and even a match between two teams of small boys requires a long half-holiday. Hence the game is largely practised by the members of the leisure class. The grounds on which it is played are covered with the greenest and best-kept of turf, and are often amid the most lovely surroundings. The season at which the game is played is summer, so that [Pg 111] looking on is warm and comfortable. There is comparatively little chance of serious accident; and the absence of personal contact of player with player removes the prime cause of quarrelling and ill-feeling. Hence ladies feel that they may frequent cricket matches in their daintiest summer frocks and without dread of witnessing any painful accident or unseemly scuffle. The costumes of the players are varied, appropriate, and tasteful, and the arrangement of the fielders is very picturesque.

Baseball, on the other hand (which, *pace*, my American friends, is simply glorified rounders), with the exception of school and college teams, is almost wholly practised by professional players; and the place of the county cricket matches is taken by the games between the various cities represented in the National League, in which the amateur is severely absent. The dress, with a long-sleeved semmet appearing below a short-sleeved jersey, is very ugly, and gives a sort of ruffianly look to a "nine" which it might be free from in another costume. The ground is theoretically grass, but practically (often, at least) hard-trodden earth or mud. A match is finished in about one hour and a half. In running for base a player has often to throw himself on his face, and thereby covers himself with dust or mud. The spectators have each paid a sum varying from 1s. or 2s. to 8s. or even 10s. for admission, and are keenly excited in the contest; while their yells, and hoots, and slangy chaff are very different to the decorous applause of the cricket field, and rather recall an association football crowd in the Midlands. As a rule not much sympathy or courtesy is extended to the visiting team, and the duties of an umpire are sometimes accompanied by real danger.[14] [Pg 112] Several features of the play seem distinctly unsportsmanlike. Thus, it is the regular duty of one of the batting team, when not in himself, to try to "rattle" the pitcher or fielder by yells and shouts just as he is about to "pitch" or "catch" or "touch." It is not considered dishonourable for one of the waiting strikers to pretend to be the player really at a base and run from base to base just outside the real line so as to confuse the fielders. On the other hand the game is rapid, full of excitement and variety, and susceptible of infinite development of skill. The accuracy with which a long field will throw to base might turn an English long-leg green with envy; and the way in which an expert pitcher will make a ball deflect *in the air*, either up or down, to the right or left, must be seen to be believed. A really skilful pitcher is said to be able to throw a ball in such a way that it will go straight to within a foot of a tree, *turn out for the tree*, and resume its original course on the other side of it!

The football match between Yale and Princeton on Thanksgiving Day (last Thursday in November) may, perhaps, be said to hold the place in public estimation in America that the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race does in England. In spite of the inclement season, spectators of either sex turn out in their thousands; and the scene, except that furs are substituted for summer frocks, easily stands comparison with the Eton and Harrow day at Lord's. The field is surrounded in the same way with carriages and drags, on which the colours of the rival teams are profusely displayed; and there [Pg 113] are the same merry coach-top luncheons, the same serried files of noisy partisans, and the same general air of festivity, while the final touch is given by the fact that a brilliant sun is not rarer in America in November than it is in England in June. The American game of football is a developed form of the Rugby game; but is, perhaps, not nearer it than baseball is to rounders. It is played by eleven a side. American judges think that neither Rugby nor Association football approaches the American game either in skill or in demand on the player's physical endurance. This may be so: in fact, so far as my very inexpert point of view goes I should say that it is so. Undoubtedly the American teams go through a much more prolonged and rigid

system of training, and their scheme of tactics, codes of signals, and sharp devices of all kinds are much more complicated. "Tackling" is probably reduced to a finer art than in England. Mr. Whitney, a most competent and impartial observer, does not think that our system of "passing" would be possible with American tacklers. Whether all this makes a better *game* is a very different question, and one that I should be disposed to answer in the negative. It is a more serious business, just as a duel *à outrance* is a more serious business than a fencing match; but it is not so interesting to look at and does not seem to afford the players so much *fun*. There is little running with the ball, almost no dropping or punting, and few free kicks. The game between Princeton and Yale which I, shivering, saw from the top of a drag in 1891, seemed like one prolonged, though rather loose, scrimmage; and the spectators fairly yelled for joy when they saw the ball, which happened on an average about once every ten or fifteen minutes. Americans have to gain five yards for every three "downs" or else lose possession of the ball; and hence the field is marked off by five-yard lines all the way from goal to goal. American writers acknowledge that the English Rugby men are much better kickers than the American players, and that it is now seldom that the punter in America gets a fair chance to show his skill. There are many tiresome waits in the American game; and the practice of "interference," though certainly managed with wonderful skill, can never seem quite fair to one brought upon the English notions of "off-side." The concerted cheering of the students of each university, led by a regular fugle-man, marking time with voice and arms, seems odd to the spectator accustomed to the sparse, spontaneous, and independent applause of an English crowd.

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An American football player in full armour resembles a deep-sea diver or a Roman retiarius more than anything else. The dress itself consists of thickly padded knickerbockers, jersey, canvas jacket, very heavy boots, and very thick stockings. The player then farther protects himself by shin guards, shoulder caps, ankle and knee supporters, and wristbands. The apparatus on his head is fearful and wonderful to behold, including a rubber mouthpiece, a nose mask, padded ear guards, and a curious headpiece made of steel springs, leather straps, and India rubber. It is obvious that a man in this cumbersome attire cannot move so quickly as an English player clad simply in jersey, short breeches, boots, and stockings; and I question very much whether—slugging apart—the American assumption that the science of Yale would simply overwhelm the more elementary play of an English university is entirely justified. Anyone who has seen an American team in this curious paraphernalia can well understand the shudder of apprehension that shakes an American spectator the first time he sees an English team take the field with bare knees.

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Certainly the spirit and temper with which football is played in the United States would seem to indicate that the over-elaborate way in which it has been handled has not been favourable to a true ideal of manly sport. On this point I shall not rely on my own observation, but on the statements of Americans themselves, beginning with the semi-jocular assertion, which largely belongs to the order of true words spoken in jest, that "in old English football you kicked the ball; in modern English football you kick the man when you can't kick the ball; in American football you kick the ball when you can't kick the man." In Georgia, Indiana, Nebraska, and possibly some other States, bills to prohibit football have actually been introduced in the State Legislatures within the past few years. The following sentences are taken from an article in the *Nation* (New York), referring to the Harvard and Yale game of 1894:

> The game on Saturday at Springfield between the two great teams of Harvard and Yale was by the testimony—unanimous, as far as our knowledge goes—of spectators and newspapers the most brutal ever witnessed in the United States. There are few members of either university—we trust there are none—who have not hung their heads for shame in talking over it, or thinking of it.
>
> In the first place, we respectfully ask the governing body of all colleges what they have to say for a game between youths presumably engaged

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> in the cultivation of the liberal arts which needs among its preliminaries a supply on the field of litters and surgeons? Such preparations are not only brutal, but brutalising. How any spectator, especially any woman, can witness them without a shudder, so distinctly do they recall the duelling field and the prize ring, we are unable to understand. But that they are necessary and proper under the circumstances the result showed. There were actually seven casualties among twenty-two men who began the game. This is nearly 33 per cent. of the combatants—a larger proportion than among the Federals at Cold Harbor (the bloodiest battle of modern times), and much larger than at Waterloo or at Gravelotte. What has American culture and civilisation to say to this mode of training youth? "Brewer was so badly injured that he had to be taken off the field crying with mortification." Wright, captain of the Yale men, jumped on him with both knees, breaking his collar bone. Beard was next turned over to the doctors. Hallowell had his nose broken. Murphy was soon badly injured and taken off the field on a stretcher unconscious, with concussion of the brain. Butterworth, who is said nearly to have lost an eye, soon followed. Add that there was a great deal of "slugging"—that is, striking with the fist and kicking—which was not punished by the umpires, though two men were ruled out for it.

> It may be laid down as a sound rule among civilised people that games which may be won by disabling your adversary, or wearing out his strength, or killing him, ought to be prohibited, at all events among its youth. Swiftness of foot, skill and agility, quickness of sight, and cunning of hands, are things to be encouraged in education. The use of brute [Pg 117] force against an unequally matched antagonist, on the other hand, is one of the most debauching influences to which a young man can be exposed. The hurling of masses of highly trained athletes against one another with intent to overcome by mere weight or kicking or cuffing, without the possibility of the rigid superintendence which the referee exercises in the prize ring, cannot fail to blunt the sensibilities of young men, stimulate their bad passions, and drown their sense of fairness. When this is done in the sight of thousands, under the stimulation of their frantic cheers and encouragement, and in full view of the stretchers which carry their fellows from the field, for aught they know disabled for life, how, in the name of common sense, does it differ in moral influence from the Roman arena?

Now, the point in the above notice is that it is written of "gentlemen"—of university men. It is to be feared that very similar charges might be brought against some of the professionals of our association teams: but our amateurs are practically exempt from any such accusation. The climax of the whole thing is the statement by a professor of a well-known university, that a captain of one of the great football teams declared in a class prayer-meeting "that the great success of the team the previous season was in his opinion due to the fact that among the team and substitutes there were so many praying men." The true friends of sport in the United States must wish that the football mania may soon disappear in its present form; and the Harvard authorities are to be warmly congratulated on the manly stand they have taken against the evil. And it is to be devoutly hoped that no president of a college in the [Pg 118] future will ever, as one did in 1894, congratulate his students on the fact "that their progress and success in study during the term just finished had been *fully equal* to their success in intercollegiate athletics and football!".[15]

I have, however, no desire to pose as the British Pharisee, and I am aware that, though we make the better showing in this instance, there are others in which our record is at least as bad. The following paragraph is taken from the *Field* (December 7th, 1895):

> HIGHCLERE.—As various incorrect reports have been published of the shooting at Highclere last week, Lord Carnarvon has desired me to forward the enclosed particulars of the game shot on three days: November 26, 27, and 29, James McCraw (13, Berkeley-square, w.). November 26, Grotto (Brooks) Beat, 5 partridges, 1,160 pheasants, 42 hares, 2,362 rabbits, 7 various; total, 3,576. November 27, Highclere Wood (Cross) Beat, 5 partridges, 1,700 pheasants, 1 hare, 1,702 rabbits, 4 woodcock, 16 various; total, 3,428. November 29, Beeches (Cross) Beat, 6 partridges, 2,811 pheasants, 969 rabbits, 2 wild fowl, 15 various; total, 3,803. Grand total: 16 partridges, 5,671 pheasants, 43 hares, 5,033 rabbits, 4 woodcock, 2 wild fowl, 38 various; total, 10,807. The shooters on the first two days were Prince Victor Duleep Singh, Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, Lord de Grey, Lord Ashburton, Lord Carnarvon, and Mr. Chaplin. On November 29 Mr. Rutherford took the place of Mr. Chaplin.

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A little calculation will show that each of the six gentlemen mentioned in the paragraph must have killed one head of game every minute or two. This makes it impossible that there could have been many misses. This in turn makes it certain that the pheasants in the bag must have been nearly as tame as barndoor fowl. The shooting, then, must have been one long drawn-out massacre of semi-tame animals, with hardly a breathing interval. I confess such a record seems to me as absolutely devoid of sport and as full of brutality as the worst slugging match between Princeton and Yale; and it, moreover, lacks the element of physical courage which is certainly necessary in the football match. Besides, the English sinners are grown men and members of the class which is supposed to set the pattern for the rest of the nation; the university footballers, in spite of their own sense of importance, are after all raw youths, to whom reason does not altogether forbid us to hope that riper years may bring more sense and more true manliness.

Two of the most popular outdoor amusements in the United States are driving and sailing. I do not know how far statistics would bear me out, but one certainly gets the impression that more people keep horses for pleasure in America than in England. Horses are comparatively cheap, and their keep is often lower than with us. The light buggies must cost less than the more substantial carriages of England. Hence, if a man is so fond of driving as to be willing to be his own coachman and groom, the keeping of a horse and shay is not very ruinous, especially in the country or smaller towns. As soon as the element of wages enters into the question the result is very different: carriage-hire is usually twice as high as in England and often more. However that may be, it is certainly very striking to see the immense number of one-horse "teams" that turn out for an afternoon or evening spin in the parks and suburban roads of places like New York, Boston, and Chicago. Many of these teams are of a plainness, not to say shabbiness, which would make an English owner too shamefaced to exhibit them in public. The fact that the owner is his own stableman is often indicated by the ungroomed coat of his horse, and by the month-old mud on his wheels. The horse, however, can generally do a bit of smart trotting, and his owner evidently enjoys his speed and grit. The buggies, unsubstantial as they look, are comfortable enough when one is seated; but the access, between, through, and over the wheels, is unpleasantly suggestive for the nervous. So fond are the Americans of driving that they evidently look upon it as a form of active exercise for themselves as well as for their nags. One man said to me: "I am really getting too stout; I must start a buggy."

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I am almost ashamed to avow that I spent five years in the United States without seeing a trotting-race, though this was owing to no lack of desire. The only remark that I shall, therefore, venture to make about this form of sport is that the American claim that it has a more practical bearing than the English form of horse-racing seems justified. It is alleged indeed that the English "running" races are of immense importance in keeping up the breed of horses; but it may well be open to question whether the same end could not be better attained by very different means. What is

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generally wanted in a horse is draught power and ability to trot well and far. It is not clear to the layman that a flying machine that can do a mile in a minute and a half is the ideal parent for this form of horse. On the other hand, the famous trotting-horses of America are just the kind of animal that is wanted for the ordinary uses of life. Moreover, the trot is the civilised or artificial gait as opposed to the wild and natural gallop. There are 1,500 trotting-tracks in the United States, owned by as many associations, besides those at all county and State fairs as well as many private tracks at brood-farms and elsewhere. Stakes, purses, and added moneys amount to more than $3,000,000 annually; and the capital invested in horses, tracks, stables, farms, etc., is enormous. The tracks are level, with start and finish directly in front of the grand stand, and are either one mile or one-half mile in length. They are always of earth, and are usually elliptical in shape, though the "kite-shaped track" was for a time popular on account of its increased speed. In this there is one straight stretch of one-third mile, then a wide turn of one-third mile, and then a straight run of one-third mile back to the start and finish. The horses are driven in two-wheeled "sulkies" of little weight, and the handicapping is exclusively by time-classes. Records of every race are kept by two national associations. Horses that have never trotted a mile in less than two minutes and forty seconds are in one class; those that have never [Pg 122] beaten 2.35 in another; those that have never beaten 2.30 in a third; and so on down to 2.05, which has been beaten but a dozen times. Races are always run in heats, and the winner must win three heats. With a dozen entries (or even six or eight, the more usual number) a race may thus occupy an entire afternoon, and require many heats before a decision is reached. Betting is common at every meeting, but is not so prominent as at running tracks.

The record for fast trotting is held at present by Mr. Morris Jones' mare "Alix," which trotted a mile in two minutes three and three-quarters seconds at Galesburg in 1894. Turfmen confidently expect that a mile will soon be trotted in two minutes. The two-minute mark was attained in 1897 by a *pacing* horse.

Sailing is tremendously popular at all American seaside resorts; and lolling over the ropes of a "cat-boat" is another form of active exercise that finds innumerable votaries. Rowing is probably practised in the older States with as much zest as in Great Britain, and the fresh-water facilities are perhaps better. Except as a means to an end, however, this mechanical form of sport has never appealed to me. The more nearly a man can approximate to a triple-expansion engine the better oarsman he is; no machine can be imagined that could play cricket, golf, or tennis.

The recent development of golf—perhaps the finest of all games—both in England and America might give rise to a whole series of reflections on the curious vicissitudes of games and the mysterious reasons of their development. Golf has been played universally in Scotland for hundreds of years, right under the noses of [Pg 123] Englishmen; yet it is just about thirty years ago that (except Blackheath) the first golf-club was established south of the Tweed, and the present craze for it is of the most recent origin (1885 or so). Yet of the eight hundred golf-clubs of the United Kingdom about four hundred are in England. The Scots of Canada have played golf for many years, but the practice of the game in the United States may be dated from the establishment of the St. Andrew's Club at Yonkers in 1888. Since then the game has been taken up with considerable enthusiasm at many centres, and it is estimated that there are now at least forty thousand American golfers. There is, perhaps, no game that requires more patience to acquire satisfactorily than golf, and the preliminary steps cannot be gobbled. It is therefore doubtful whether the game will ever become extensively popular in a country with so much nervous electricity in the air. I heartily wish that this half-prophecy may prove utterly mistaken, for no better relief to overcharged nerves and wearied brains has ever been devised than a well-matched "twosome" or the more social "foursome;" and the fact that golf gently exercises *all* the muscles of the body and can be played at *all* ages from eight to eighty gives it a unique place among outdoor games. The skill already attained by the best American players is simply marvellous; and it seems by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that the open champion of (say) the year 1902 may not have

been trained on American soil. The natural impatience of the active-minded American makes him at present very apt to neglect the etiquette of the game. The chance of being "driven into" is much larger on the west side of the Atlantic than on the [Pg 124] conservative greens of Scotland; and it seems almost impossible to make Brother Jonathan "replace that divot." I have seen three different parties holing out at the same time on the same putting green. In one open handicap tournament I took part in near Boston the scanty supply of caddies was monopolized by the members of the club holding the tournament, and strangers, who had never seen the course, were allowed to go round alone and carrying their own clubs. On another occasion a friend and myself played in a foursome handicap tournament and were informed afterwards that the handicaps were yet to be arranged! As the match was decided in our favour it would be ungracious to complain of this irregularity. Those little infringements of etiquette are, after all, mere details, and will undoubtedly become less and less frequent before the growing knowledge and love of the game.

Lacrosse, perhaps the most perspicuous and fascinating of all games to the impartial spectator, is, of course, chiefly played in Canada, but there is a Lacrosse League in the Atlantic cities of the United States. The visitor to Canada should certainly make a point of seeing a good exposition of this most agile and graceful game, which is seen at its best in Montreal, Toronto, or Ottawa. Unfortunately it seems to be most trying to the temper, and I have more than once seen players in representative matches neglect the game to indulge in a bout of angry quarter-staff with their opponents until forcibly stopped by the umpires, while the spectators also interfere occasionally in the most disgraceful manner. Another drawback is the interval of ten minutes [Pg 125] between each game of the match, even when the game has taken only two minutes to play. This absurd rule has been promptly discarded by the English Lacrosse Clubs, and should certainly be modified in Canada also.

Lawn tennis is now played almost everywhere in the United States, and its best exponents, such as Larned and Wrenn, have attained all but—if not quite—English championship form. The annual contest for the championship of America, held at Newport in August, is one of the prettiest sporting scenes on the continent. Polo and court tennis also have their headquarters at Newport. Hunting, shooting, and fishing are, of course, immensely popular (at least the last two) in the United States, but lie practically beyond the pale of my experience.

Bowling or ten-pins is a favourite winter amusement of both sexes, and occupies a far more exalted position than the English skittles. The alleys, attached to most gymnasia and athletic-club buildings, are often fitted up with great neatness and comfort; and even the fashionable belle does not disdain her "bowling-club" evening, where she meets a dozen or two of the young men and maidens of her acquaintance. Regular meetings take place between the teams of various athletic associations, records are made and chronicled, and championships decided. If the game could be naturalised in England under the same conditions as in America, our young people would find it a most admirable opportunity for healthy exercise in the long dark evenings of winter.

Track athletics (running, jumping, etc.) occupy very much the same position in the [Pg 126] United States as in England; and outside the university sphere the same abuses of the word "amateur" and the same instances of selling prizes and betting prevail. Mr. Caspar Whitney says that "amateur athletics are absolutely in danger of being exterminated in the United States if something is not done to cleanse them." The evils are said to be greatest in the middle and far West. There are about a score of important athletic clubs in fifteen of the largest cities of the United States, with a membership of nearly 25,000; and many of these possess handsome clubhouses, combining the social accommodations of the Carlton or Reform with the sporting facilities of Queen's. The Country Club is another American institution which may be mentioned in this connection. It consists of a comfortably and elegantly fitted-up clubhouse, within easy driving distance of a large city, and surrounded by facilities for tennis, racquets, golf, polo, baseball, racing, etc. So far it has kept clear of the degrading sport of pigeon shooting.

Training is carried out more thoroughly and consistently than in England, and many if not most of the "records" are held in America. The visits paid to the United States by athletic teams of the L.A.C. and Cambridge University opened the eyes of Englishmen to what Americans could do, the latter winning seventeen out of twenty events and making several world's records. Indeed, there is almost too much of a craze to make records, whereas the real sport is to beat a competitor, not to hang round a course till the weather or other conditions make "record-making" probable. A feature of American athletic meetings with which we are unfamiliar in England is the short sprinting-races, sometimes for as small a distance as fifteen yards. [Pg 127]

Bicycling also is exposed, as a public sport, to the same reproaches on both sides of the Atlantic. The bad roads of America prevented the spread of wheeling so long as the old high bicycle was the type, but the practice has assumed enormous proportions since the invention of the pneumatic-tired "safety." The League of American Wheelmen has done much to improve the country roads. The lady's bicycle was invented in the United States, and there are, perhaps, more lady riders in proportion in that country than in any other. As evidence of the rapidity with which things move in America it may be mentioned that when I quitted Boston in 1893 not a single "society" lady so far as I could hear had deigned to touch the wheel; now (1898) I understand that even a house in Beacon Street and a lot in Mt. Auburn Cemetery are not enough to give the guinea-stamp of rank unless at least one member of the family is an expert wheelwoman. An amazing instance of the receptivity and adaptability of the American attitude is seen in the fact that the outsides of the tramway-cars in at least one Western city are fitted with hooks for bicycles, so that the cyclist is saved the unpleasant, jolting ride over stone pavements before reaching suburban joys.

FOOTNOTES:

[13] I wish to confess my obligation to this interesting book for much help in writing the present chapter.

[14] A match played in no less aristocratic a place than Newport on Sept. 2, 1897, between the local team and a club from Brockton, ended in a general scrimmage, in which even women joined in the cry of "Kill the umpire!"

[15] It is, perhaps, only fair to quote on the other side the opinion of Mr. Rudolf Lehmann, the well-known English rowing coach, who witnessed the match between Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania in 1897. He writes in the London *News*: "I have never seen a finer game played with a manlier spirit. The quickness and the precision of the players were marvellous.... The game as I saw it, though it was violent and rough, was never brutal. Indeed, I cannot hope to see a finer exhibition of courage, strength, and manly endurance, without a trace of meanness."

And to Mr. Lehmann's voice may be added that of a "Mother of Nine Sons," who wrote to the Boston *Evening Transcript* in 1897, speaking warmly of the advantages of football in the formation of habits of self-control and submission to authority.

VIII

[Pg 128]

The Humour of the "Man on the Cars"

"A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the affections." So wrote George Eliot in "Daniel Deronda." And the truth of the apothegm may account for much of the friction in the intercourse of John Bull and Brother Jonathan. For, undoubtedly, there is a wide difference between the humour of the Englishman and the humour of the American. John Bull's downrightness appears in his jests also. His jokes must be

unmistakable; he wants none of your quips masquerading as serious observations. A mere twinkle of the eye is not for him a sufficient illumination between the serious and the comic. "Those animals are horses," Artemus Ward used to say in showing his panorama. "I know they are—because my artist says so. I had the picture two years before I discovered the fact. The artist came to me about six months ago and said, 'It is useless to disguise it from you any longer—they are horses.'"[16] This is the form of introduction that John Bull prefers for his witticisms. He will welcome a joke as hospitably as a visitor, if only the credentials of the one as of the other are unimpeachable. [Pg 129]

Now the American does not wish his joke underlined like an urgent parliamentary whip. He wants something left to his imagination; he wants to be tickled by the feeling that it requires a keen eye to see the point; he may, in a word, like his champagne sweet, but he wants his humour dry. His telephone girls halloo, but his jokes don't. In this he resembles the Scotsman much more than the Englishman; and both European foreigners and the Americans themselves seem aware of this. Thus, Max O'Rell writes:

> De tous les citoyens du *Royaume* plus ou moins *Uni* l'ami Donald est le plus fini, le plus solide, le plus positif, le plus persévérant, le plus laborieux, et le plus spirituel.
>
> Le plus spirituel! voilà un grand mot de lâché. Oui, le plus spirituel, n'en déplaise a l'ombre de Sydney Smith.... J'espère bien prouver, par quelques anecdotes, que Donald a de l'esprit, de l'esprit de bon aloi, d'humour surtout, de cet humour fin subtil, qui passerait à travers la tête *d'un Cockney* sans y laisser la moindre trace, sans y faire la moindre impression.

The testimony of the American is equally explicit.

The following dialogue, quoted from memory, appeared some time since in one of the best American comic journals:

> *Tomkyns* (of London).—I say, Vanarsdale, I told such a good joke, don't you know, to MacPherson, and he didn't laugh a bit! I suppose that's because he's a Scotsman?
>
> *Vanarsdale* (of New York).—I don't know; I think it's more likely that it's because you are an Englishman!

An English audience is usually much slower than an American or Scottish one to take up a joke that is anything less than obvious. I heard Max O'Rell deliver one of his witty orations in London. The audience was good humored, entirely with the lecturer, and only too ready to laugh. But if his joke was the least bit subtle, the least bit less apparent than usual, it was extraordinary how the laughter hung fire. There would be an appreciable interval of silence; then, perhaps, a solitary laugh in a corner of the gallery; then a sort of platoon fire in different parts of the house; and, finally, a simultaneous roar. So, when Mr. John Morley, in his admirable lecture on the Carlyle centenary celebration (Dec. 5, 1895), quoted Carlyle's saying about Sterling: "We talked about this thing and that—except in opinion not disagreeing," there was a lapse of half-a-minute before the audience realised that the saying had a humorous turn. In an American audience, and I believe also in a Scottish one, the report would have been simultaneous with the flash. [Pg 130]

Perhaps the Americans themselves are just a little too sure of their superiority to the English in point of humour, and indeed they often carry their witticisms on the supposed English "obtuseness" to a point at which exaggeration ceases to be funny. It is certainly not every American who scoffs at English wit that is entitled to do so. There are dullards in the United States as well as elsewhere; and nothing can well be more ghastly than American humour run into the ground. On the other hand their sense of loyalty to humour makes them much more free in using it at their own expense; and some of their stories show themselves up in the light usually reserved

for John Bull. I remember, unpatriotically, telling a stock story (to illustrate the English slowness to take a joke) to an American writer whose pictures of New England life are as full of a delicate sense of humour as they are of real and simple pathos. It was, perhaps, the tale of the London bookseller who referred to his own coiffure the American's remark apropos of the two-volume English edition of a well-known series of "Walks in London"—"Ah, I see you part your *Hare* in the middle." Whatever it was, my hearer at once capped it by the reply of a Boston girl to her narration of the following anecdote: A railway conductor, on his way through the cars to collect and check the tickets, noticed a small hair-trunk lying in the forbidden central gangway, and told the old farmer to whom it apparently belonged that it must be moved from there at once. On a second round he found the trunk still in the passage, reiterated his instructions more emphatically, and passed on without listening to the attempted explanations of the farmer. On his third round he cried: "Now, I gave you fair warning; here goes;" and tipped the trunk overboard. Then, at last, the slow-moving farmer found utterance and exclaimed: "All right! the trunk is none o' mine!" To which the Boston girl: "Well, whose trunk was it?" We agreed, *nem. con.*, that this was indeed *Anglis ipsis Anglior*. [Pg 131]

These remarks as to the comparative merits of English and American humour must be understood as referring to the average man in each case—the "Man on the Cars," as our cousins have it. It would be a very different position, and one hardly tenable, to maintain that the land of Mark Twain has produced greater literary humorists than the land of Charles Lamb. In the matter of comic papers it may also be doubted, even by those who most appreciate American humour, whether England has altogether the worst of it. It is the fashion in the States to speak of "poor old *Punch*," and to affect astonishment at seeing in its "senile pages" anything that they have to admit to be funny. Doubtless a great deal of very laborious and vapid jesting goes on in the pages of the *doyen* of English comic weeklies; but at its best *Punch* is hard to beat, and its humours have often a literary quality such as is seldom met with in an American journal of the same kind. No American paper can even remotely claim to have added so much to the gaiety of nations as the pages that can number names like Leech and Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold and Tom Hood, Burnand and Charles Keene, Du Maurier and Tenniel, Linley Sambourne and the author of "Vice Versâ," among its contributors past and present. And besides—and the claim is a proud one—*Punch* still remains the only comic paper of importance that is always a perfect gentleman—a gentleman who knows how to behave both in the smoking-room and the drawing-room, who knows when a jest oversteps the boundary line of coarseness, who realises that a laugh can sometimes be too dearly won. *Punch* is certainly a comic journal of which the English have every reason to be proud; but if we had to name the paper most typical of the English taste in humour we should, perhaps, be shamefacedly compelled to turn to *Ally Sloper*. [Pg 132]

The best American comic paper is *Life*, which is modelled on the lines of the *Münchener Fliegende Blätter*, perhaps the funniest and most mirth-provoking of all professedly humorous weeklies. Among the most attractive features are the graceful and dignified drawings of Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, who has in its pages done for American society what Mr. Du Maurier has done for England by his scenes in *Punch*; the sketches of F.G. Attwood and S.W. Van Schaick; and the clever verses of M.E.W. The dryness, the smart exaggeration, the point, the unexpectedness of American humour are all often admirably represented in its pages; and the faults and foibles of contemporary society are touched off with an inimitable delicacy of satire both in pencil and pen work. *Life*, like *Punch*, has also its more serious side; and, if it has never produced a "Song of the Shirt," it earns our warm admiration for its steadfast championing of worthy causes, its severe and trenchant attacks on rampant evils, and its eloquent tributes to men who have deserved well of the country. On the other hand, it not unfrequently publishes jokes the birth of which considerably antedates that of the United States itself; and it sometimes descends to a level of trifling flatness and vapidity which no English paper of the kind can hope to equal. It is hard—for a British critic at any rate—to see any perennial interest in the long series of highly exaggerated drawings and jests referring to the gutter children of New York, a [Pg 133]

series in which the same threadbare *motifs* are constantly recurring under the thinnest of disguises. And occasionally—very occasionally—there is a touch of coarseness in the drawings of *Life* which suggests the worst features of its German prototype rather than anything it has borrowed from England.

Among the political comic journals of America mention may be made of *Puck*, the [Pg 134] rough and gaudy cartoons of which have often what the Germans would call a *packende Derbheit* of their own that is by no means ineffective. Of the other American—as, indeed, of the other British—comic papers I prefer to say nothing, except that I have often seen them in houses and in hands to which they seemed but ill adapted.

Among the characteristics of American humour—the humour of the average man, the average newspaper, the average play—are its utter irreverence, its droll extravagance, its dry suggestiveness, its *naïveté* (real or apparent), its affectation of seriousness, its fondness for antithesis and anti-climax. Mark Twain may stand as the high priest of irreverence in American humour, as witnessed in his "Innocents Abroad" and his "Yankee at the Court of King Arthur." In this regard the humour of our transatlantic cousins cannot wholly escape a charge of debasing the moral currency by buffoonery. It has no reverence for the awful mystery of death and the Great Beyond. An undertaker will place in his window a card bearing the words: "You kick the bucket; we do the rest." A paper will head an account of the hanging of three mulattoes with "Three Chocolate Drops." It has no reverence for the names and phrases associated with our deepest religious feelings. Buckeye's patent filter is advertised as thoroughly reliable—"being what it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." Mr. Boyesen tells of meeting a venerable clergyman, whose longevity, according to his introducer, was due to the fact that "he was waiting for a vacancy in the Trinity." One of the daily bulletins of the captain of the large excursion steamer on which I visited Alaska read as follows: "The Lord only knows when it will clear; [Pg 135] and *he* won't tell." And none of the two hundred passengers seemed to find anything unseemly in this official freedom with the name of their Creator. On a British steamer there would almost certainly have been some sturdy Puritan to pull down the notice. One of the best newspaper accounts of the Republican convention that nominated Mr. J.G. Blaine for President in 1884 began as follows: "Now a man of God, with a bald head, calls the Deity down into the *mêlée* and bids him make the candidate the right one and induce the people to elect him in November." If I here mention the newspaper head-line (apropos of a hanging) "Jerked to Jesus," it is mainly to note that M. Blouët saw it in 1888 and M. Bourget also purports to have seen it in 1894. Surely the American journalist has a fatal facility of repetition or—?

American humour has no reverence for those in high position or authority. An American will say of his chief executive, "Yes, the President has a great deal of taste —and all of it bad." A current piece of doggerel when I was in Washington ran thus:

> "Benny runs the White House,
> Levi keeps a bar,
> Johnny runs a Sunday School—
> And, damme, there you are!"

The gentlemen named are the then President, Mr. Harrison; the Vice-President, Mr. Morton, who was owner or part owner of one of the large Washington hotels; and Mr. Wanamaker, Postmaster General, well known as "an earnest Christian worker." [Pg 136]

I have seen even the sacred Declaration of Independence imitated, both in wording and in external form, as the advertisement of a hotel.

A story current in Philadelphia refers to Mr. Richard Vaux, an eminent citizen and member of a highly respected old Quaker family, who in his youth had been an *attaché* of the American Legation in London. One of his letters home narrated with pardonable pride that he had danced with the Princess Victoria at a royal ball and had found her a very charming partner. His mother replied: "It pleaseth me much, Richard, to hear of thy success at the ball in Buckingham Palace; but thee must

remember it would be a great blow to thy father to have thee marry out of meeting."

Philosophy, art, and letters receive no greater deference at the hands of the American humorist. Even an Oliver Wendell Holmes will say of metaphysics that it is like "splitting a log; when you have done, you have two more to split." A poster long used by the comedians Crane and Robson represented these popular favourites in the guise of the two lowermost cherubs in the Sistine Madonna. Bill Nye's assertion that "the peculiarity of classical music is that it is so much better than it sounds" is typical of a whole battalion of quips. Scenery, even when associated with poetry, fares no better. The advertising fiend who defaces the most picturesque rocks with his atrocious announcements is, perhaps, hardly entitled to the name of humorist; but the man who affixed the name of Minniegiggle to a small fall near the famous Minnehaha evidently thought himself one. So, doubtless, did one of my predecessors in a dressing-cabin at Niagara, who had inscribed on its walls: [Pg 137]

"Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered!
But the man who descends
Through the Cave of the Winds
Can give points to the noble six hundred."

Of the extravagant exaggeration of American humour it is hardly necessary to give examples. This, to the ordinary observer, has perhaps been always its salient feature; and stock examples will occur to everyone. It is easy to see how readily this form of humour can be abused, and as a matter of fact it is abused daily and hourly. Many would-be American humorists fail entirely to see that exaggeration *alone* is not necessarily funny.

To illustrate: the story of the woman who described the suddenness of the American cyclone by saying that, as she looked up from her gardening, "she saw the air black with her intimate friends," seems to me a thoroughly humorous application of the exaggeration principle. So, too, is the description of a man so terribly thin that he never could tell whether he had the stomach-ache or the lumbago. But the jester who expects you to laugh at the tale of the fish that was so large that the water of the lake subsided two feet when it was drawn ashore simply does not know where humour ends and drivelling idiocy begins.

The dry suggestiveness of American humour is also a well-known feature. In its crudest phase it assumes such forms as the following: "Mrs. William Hankins lighted her fire with coal oil on February 23. Her clothes fit the present Mrs. Hankins to a T." The ordinary Englishman will see the point of a jest like this (though his mind will not fly to it with the electric rapidity of the American's), but the more delicate forms of this allusive style of wit will often escape him altogether. Or, if he now begins to "jump" with an almost American agility it is because the cleverest witticisms of the Detroit *Free Press* are now constantly served up to him in the comic columns of his evening paper. We have got the length of being consumers if not producers of this style of jest. [Pg 138]

In its higher developments this quality of humour melts imperceptibly into irony. This has been cultivated by the Americans with great success—perhaps never better than in the columns of that admirable weekly journal the *Nation*. Anyone who cares to search the files of about eight or ten years back will find a number of ironical leaders, which by their subtlety and wit delighted those who "caught on," while, on the other hand, they often deceived even the elect Americans themselves and provoked a shower of innocently approving or depreciatory letters.

Apart altogether from the specific difference between American and English humour we cannot help noticing how humour penetrates and gives savour to the *whole* of American life. There is almost no business too important to be smoothed over with a jest; and serio-comic allusions may crop up amongst the most barren-looking reefs of

scrip and bargaining. It is almost impossible to imagine a governor of the Bank of England making a joke in his official capacity, but wit is perfected in the mouth of similar sucklings in New York. Of recent prominent speakers in America all except [Pg 139] Carl Schurz and George William Curtis are professed humorists.

When Professor Boyesen, at an examination in Columbia College, set as one of the questions, "Write an account of your life," he found that seventeen out of thirty-two responses were in a jocular vein. Fifteen of the seventeen students bore names that indicated American parentage, while all but three of the non-jokers had foreign names. Abraham Lincoln is, of course, the great example of this tendency to introduce the element of humour into the graver concerns of life; and his biography narrates many instances of its most happy effect. *All* the newspapers, including the religious weeklies, have a comic column.

The tremendous seriousness with which the Englishman takes himself and everything else is practically unknown in America; and the ponderous machinery of commercial and political life is undoubtedly facilitated in its running by the presence of the oil of a sub-conscious humorous intention. The American attitude, when not carried too far, seems, perhaps, to suggest a truer view of the comparative importance of things; the American seems to say: "This matter is of importance to you and for me, but after all it does not concern the orbit of a planet and there is no use talking and acting as if it did." This sense of humour often saves the American in a situation in which the Englishman would have recourse to downright brutality; it unties the Gordian knot instead of cutting it. A too strong conviction of being in the right often leads to conflicts that would be avoided by a more humorous appreciation of the relative importance of phenomena. To look on life as a jest is no doubt a deep [Pg 140] of cynicism which is not and cannot lead to good, but to recognise the humorous side, the humorous possibilities running through most of our practical existence, often works as a saving grace. To his lack of this grace the Englishman owes much of his unpopularity with foreigners, much of the difficulty he experiences in inducing others to take his point of view, even when that point of view is right. You may as well hang a dog as give him a bad name; and a sense of humour which would prevent John Bull from calling a thing "un-English," when he means bad or unpractical, would often help him smoothly towards his goal. To his possession of a keen sense of humour the Yankee owes much of his success; it leads him, with a shrug of his shoulders, to cease fighting over names when the real thing is granted; it may sometimes lean to a calculating selfishness rather than spontaneous generosity, but on the whole it softens, enriches, and facilitates the problems of existence. It may, however, be here noted that some observers, such as Professor Boyesen, think that there is altogether too much jocularity in American life, and claim that the constant presence of the jest and the comic anecdote have done much to destroy conversation and eloquence.

Humour also acts as a great safety-valve for the excitement of political contests. When I was in New York, just before the election of President Harrison in 1888, two great political processions took place on the same day. In the afternoon some thirty thousand Republicans paraded the streets between lines of amused spectators, mostly Democrats. In the evening as many Democrats carried their torches through the same thoroughfares. No collisions of any kind took place; no ill humour was [Pg 141] visible. The Republicans seemed to enjoy the jokes and squibs and flaunting mottoes of the Democrats; and when a Republican banner appeared with the legend, "No frigid North, no torrid South, no temperate East, no *Sackville West*," nobody appeared to relish it more than the hard-hit Democrat. The Cleveland cry of "Four, four, four years more" was met forcibly and effectively with the simple adaptation, "Four, four, four *months* more," which proved the more prophetic of that gentleman's then stay at the White House. At midnight, three days later, I was jammed in the midst of a yelling crowd in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, watching the electoral returns thrown by a stereopticon light, as they arrived, on large white sheets. Keener or more interested partisans I never saw; but at the same time I never saw a more good-humored crowd. If I encountered one policeman that night that was all I did

see; and the police reports next morning, in a city of a million inhabitants let loose in the streets on a public holiday, reported the arrest of five drunk men and one pickpocket!

Election bets are often made payable in practical jokes instead of in current coin. Thus, after election day you will meet a defeated Republican wheeling his Democratic friend through the chuckling crowd in a wheelbarrow, or walking down the Bond Street of his native town with a coal-black African laundress on his arm. But in such forms of jesting as in "White Hat Day," at the Stock Exchange of New York, Americans come perilously near the Londoner's standard of the truly funny. [Pg 142]

In comparing American humour with English we must take care that we take class for class. Those of us who find it difficult to get up a laugh at *Judge*, or Bill Nye, or Josh Billings, have at least to admit that they are not quite so feeble as *Ally Sloper* and other cognate English humorists. When we reach the level of Artemus Ward, Ik Marvel, H.C. Bunner, Frank Stockton, and Mark Twain, we may find that we have no equally popular contemporary humorists of equal excellence; and these are emphatically humorists of a pure American type. If humour of a finer point be demanded it seems to me that there are few, if any, living English writers who can rival the delicate satiric powers of a Henry James or the subtle suggestiveness of Mr. W.D. Howells' farces, for an analogy to which we have to look to the best French work of the kind. But this takes us beyond the scope of this chapter, which deals merely with the humour of the "Man on the Cars."

FOOTNOTES:

[16] In an English issue of Artemus Ward, apparently edited by Mr. John Camden Hotten (Chatto and Windus), this passage is accompanied with the following gloss: "Here again Artemus called in the aid of pleasant banter as the most fitting apology for the atrocious badness of the painting."

This note is an excellent illustration of English obtuseness—if needed, on the part of the reading public; if needless, on the part of the editor.

IX

[Pg 143]

American Journalism—A Mixed Blessing

The average British daily newspaper is, perhaps, slightly in advance of its average reader; if we could imagine an issue of the *Standard*, or the *Daily Chronicle*, or the *Scotsman* metamorphosed into human form, we should probably have to admit that the being thus created was rather above the average man in taste, intelligence, and good feeling. Speaking roughly, and making allowances for all obvious exceptions, I should be inclined to say that a similar statement would not be as universally true of the American paper and the American public, particularly if the female citizen were included under the latter head. If the intelligent foreigner were to regard the British citizen as practically an incarnation of his daily press, whether metropolitan or provincial, he would be doing him more than justice; if he were to apply the same standard to the American press and the American citizen, it would not be the latter who would profit by the assumption. The American paper represents a distinctly lower level of life than the English one; it would often seem as if the one catered for the least intelligent class of its readers, while the other assumed a standard higher than most of its readers could reach. The cultivated American is certainly not so slangy as the paper he reads; he is certainly not keenly interested in the extremely [Pg 144] silly social items of which it contains several columns. Such journals as the New York *Evening Post* and the Springfield *Republican* are undoubtedly worthy of mention alongside of our most reputable dailies; but journals of their admirably high standard are comparatively rare, and no cultivated English visitor to the United States can

have been spared a shock at the contrast between his fastidious and gentlemanly host and the general tone of the sheet served up with the matutinal hot cakes, or read by him on the cars and at the club.

Various causes may be suggested for this state of affairs. For one thing, the mass of half-educated people in the United States—people intelligent enough to take a lively interest in all that pertains to humanity, but not trained enough to insist on literary *form*—is so immense as practically to swamp the cultivated class and render it a comparatively unimportant object for the business-like editor. In England a standard of taste has been gradually evolved, which is insisted on by the educated class and largely taken on authority by others. In America practically no such standard is recognised; no one there would continue to take in a paper he found dull because the squire and the parson subscribed for it. The American reader—even when himself of high education and refinement—is a much less responsible being than the Englishman, and will content himself with a shrug of his shoulders where the latter would write a letter of indignant protest to the editor. I have more than once asked an American friend how he could endure such a daily repast of pointless vulgarity, slipshod English, and general second-rateness; but elicited no better answer than that one had to see the news, that the editorial part of the paper was well done, and [Pg 145] that a man had to make the best of what existed. This is a national trait; it has simply to be recognised as such. Perhaps the fact that there is no metropolitan press in America to give tone to the rest of the country may also count for something in this connection. The press of Washington, the political capital, is distinctly provincial; and the New York papers, though practically representative of the United States for the outside world, can hardly be said to play a genuinely metropolitan rôle within the country itself.

The principal characteristics of American journalism may be summed up in the word "enterprise." No one on earth is more fertile in expedients than an American editor, kept constantly to the collar by a sense of competing energies all around him. No trouble, or expense, or contrivance is spared in the collection of news; scarcely any item of interest is overlooked by the army of alert reporters day and night in the field. The old-world papers do not compete with those of the new in the matter of *quantity* of news. But just here comes in one of the chief faults of the American journal, one of the besetting sins of the American people,—their well-known love of "bigness," their tendency to ask "How much?" rather than "Of what kind?" There is a lack of discrimination in the daily bill of fare served up by the American press that cannot but disgust the refined and tutored palate. It is only the boor who demands a savoury and a roast of equal bulk; it is only the vulgarian who wishes as much of his paper occupied by brutal prize-fights or vapid "personals" as by important political information or literary criticism. There is undoubtedly a modicum of truth in [Pg 146] Matthew Arnold's sneer that American journals certainly supply news enough—but it is the news of the servants' hall. It is as if the helm were held rather by the active reporter than by the able editor. It is said that while there are eight editors to one reporter in Denmark, the proportion is exactly reversed in the United States. The net of the ordinary American editor is at least as indiscriminating as that of the German historiographer: every detail is swept in, irrespective of its intrinsic value. The very end for which the newspaper avowedly exists is often defeated by the impossibility of finding out what is the important news of the day. The reporter prides himself on being able to "write up" the most intrinsically uninteresting and unimportant matter. The best American critics themselves agree on this point. Mr. Howells writes: "There are too many things brought together in which the reader can and should have no interest. The thousand and one petty incidents of the various casualties of life that are grouped together in newspaper columns are profitless expenditure of money and energy."

The culminating point of this aimless congeries of reading matter, good, bad, and indifferent, is attained in the Sunday editions of the larger papers. Nothing comes amiss to their endless columns: scandal, politics, crochet-patterns, bogus interviews, puerile hoaxes, highly seasoned police reports, exaggerations of every kind, records

of miraculous cures, funny stories with comic cuts, society paragraphs, gossip about foreign royalties, personalities of every description. In fact, they form the very ragbag of journalism. An unreasonable pride is taken in their very bulk—as if forty pages *per se* were better than one; as if the tons of garbage in the Sunday issue of [Pg 147] the Gotham *Gasometer* outweighed in any valuable sense the ten or twelve small pages of the Parisian *Temps*. Not but that there is a great deal of good matter in the Sunday papers. *Wer vieles bringt wird manchem etwas bringen*; and he who knows where to look for it will generally find some edible morsel in the hog-trough. It has been claimed that the Sunday papers of America correspond with the cheaper English magazines; and doubtless there is some truth in the assertion. The pretty little tale, the interesting note of popular science, or the able sketch of some contemporary political condition is, however, so hidden away amid a mass of feebly illustrated and vulgarly written notes on sport, society, criminal reports, and personal interviews with the most evanescent of celebrities that one cannot but stand aghast at this terrible misuse of the powerful engine of the press. It is idle to contend that the newspaper, as a business undertaking, must supply this sort of thing to meet the demand for it. It is (or ought to be) the proud boast of the press that it leads and moulds public opinion, and undoubtedly journalism (like the theatre) is at least as much the cause as the effect of the depravity of public taste. Enterprising stage-managers have before now proved that Shakespeare does *not* spell ruin, and there are admirable journals in the United States which have shown themselves to be valuable properties without undue pandering to the frivolous or vicious side of the public instinct.[17]

A straw shows how the wind blows; let one item show the unfathomable gulf in [Pg 148] questions of tone and taste that can subsist between a great American daily and its English counterparts. In the summer of 1895 an issue of one of the richest and most influential of American journals—a paper that such men as Mr. Cleveland and Mr. McKinley have to take account of—published under the heading "A Fortunate Find" a picture of two girls in bathing dress, talking by the edge of the sea. One says to the other: "How did you manage your father? I thought he wouldn't let you come?" The answer is: "I caught him kissing the typewriter." It is, of course, perfectly inconceivable that any reputable British daily could descend to this depth of purposeless and odious vulgarity. If this be the style of humour desiderated, the Thunderer may take as a well-earned compliment the American sneer that "no joke appears in the London *Times*, save by accident." If another instance be wanted, take this: Major Calef, of Boston, officiated as marshal at the funeral of his friend, Gen. Francis Walker. In so doing he caught a cold, of which he died. An evening paper hereupon published a cartoon showing Major Calef walking arm in arm with Death at General Walker's funeral.

Americans are also apt to be proud of the number of their journals, and will tell you, with evident appreciation of the fact, that "nearly two thousand daily papers and fourteen thousand weeklies are published in the United States." Unfortunately the character of their local journals does not altogether warrant the inference as to American intelligence that you are expected to draw. Many of them consist largely of [Pg 149] paragraphs such as the following, copied verbatim from an issue of the Plattsburg *Sentinel* (September, 1888):

> George Blanshard, of Champlain, an experienced prescription clerk and a graduate of the Albany School of Pharmacy, has accepted a position in Breed's drug-store at Malone.
>
> Clerk Whitcomb, of the steamer "Maquam," has finished his season's work in the boat, and has resumed his studies at Burlington.

I admit that the interest of the readers of the *Sentinel* in the doings of their friends Mr. Blanshard and Mr. Whitcomb is, perhaps, saner and healthier than that of the British snob in the fact that "Prince and Princess Christian walked in the gardens of Windsor Castle and afterwards drove out for an airing." But that is the utmost that can be said for the propagation of such utter vapidities; and the man who pays his

five cents for the privilege of reading them can scarcely be said to produce a certificate of intelligence in so doing. If the exhibition of such intellectual feebleness were the worst charge that could be brought against the American newspaper, there would be little more to say; but, alas, "there are some among the so-called leading newspapers of which the influence is wholly pernicious because of the perverted intellectual ability with which they are conducted." (Prof. Chas. E. Norton, in the *Forum*, February, 1896.)

The levity with which many—perhaps most—American journals treat subjects of serious importance is another unpleasant feature. They will talk of divorces as "matrimonial smash-ups," or enumerate them under the caption "Divorce Mill." [Pg 150] Murders and fatal accidents are recorded with the same jocosity. Questions of international importance are handled as if the main purpose of the article was to show the writer's power of humour. Serious speeches and even sermons are reported in a vein of flippant jocularity. The same trait often obtrudes into the review of books of the first importance. The traditional "No case—abuse the plaintiff's attorney" is translated into "Can't understand or appreciate this—let's make fun of it."

By the best papers—and these are steadily multiplying—the "interview" is looked upon as a serious opportunity to obtain in a concise form the views of a person of greater or less eminence on subjects of which he is entitled to speak with authority. By the majority of journals, however, the interview is abused to an inordinate extent, both as regards the individual and the public. It is used as a vehicle for the cheapest forms of wit and the most personal attack or laudation. My own experience was that the interviewer put a series of pre-arranged questions to me, published those of my answers which met his own preconceptions, and invented appropriate substitutes for those he did not honour with his approval. A Chicago reporter made me say that English ignorance of America was so dense that "a gentleman of considerable attainments asked me if Connecticut was not the capital of Pittsburgh and notable for its great Mormon temple,"—an elaborate combination due solely to his own active brain. The same ingenuous (and ingenious) youth caused me to invent "an erratic young Londoner, who packed his bag and started at once for any out-of-the-way country for which a new guide-book was published." [Pg 151] Another, with equal lack of ground, committed me to the unpatriotic assertion that neither in Great Britain nor in any other part of Europe was there any scenery to compare with that of the United States. But perhaps the unkindest cut of all was that of the reporter at Washington who made me introduce my remarks by the fatuous expression "Methought"! Mr. E.A. Freeman was much amused by a reporter who said of him: "When he don't know a thing, he says he don't. When he does, he speaks as if he were certain of it." Mr. Freeman adds: "To the interviewer this way of action seemed a little strange, though he clearly approved of the eccentricity." This gentleman's mental attitude, like his superiority to grammar, is, unfortunately, characteristic of hundreds of his colleagues on the American press.

The distinction between the editorial and reportorial functions of a newspaper are apt to be much less clearly defined in the United States than in England. The English reporter, as a rule, confines himself strictly to his report, which is made without bias. A Conservative speech is as accurately (though perhaps not as lengthily) reported in a Liberal paper as in one of its own colour. All comment or criticism is reserved for the editorial columns. This is by no means the case in America. Such an authority as the *Atlantic Monthly* admits that wilful distortion is not infrequent: the reporter seems to consider it as part of his duty to amend the record in the interest of his own paper or party. The American reporter, in a word, may be more active-minded, more original, more amusing, than his English colleague; but he is seldom so accurate. This want of impartiality is another of the patent defects of the American daily press. [Pg 152] It is a too unscrupulous partisan; it represents the ethics of the ward politician rather than the seeker after truth.

If restraint be a sign of power, then the American press is weak indeed. There is no reticence about it. Nothing is sacred to an American reporter; everything that can be in any sense regarded as an item of news is exposed to the full glare of publicity. It

has come to be so widely taken for granted that one likes to see his name in the papers, that it is often difficult to make a lady or gentleman of the American press understand that you really prefer to have your family affairs left in the dusk of private life. The touching little story entitled "A Thanksgiving Breakfast," in *Harper's Magazine* for November, 1895, records an experience that is almost a commonplace except as regards the unusually thin skin of the victim and the unusual delicacy and good feeling of the operator. The writer of an interesting article in the *Outlook* (April 25, 1896), an admirable weekly paper published in New York, sums it up in a sentence: "It is no exaggeration to say that the wanton and unrestricted invasion of privacy by the modern press constitutes in certain respects the most offensive form of tyranny which the world has ever known." The writer then narrates the following incident to illustrate the length to which this invasion of domestic privacy is carried:

> A cultivated and refined woman living in a boarding-house was so unfortunate as to awaken the admiration of a young man of unbalanced mind who was living under the same roof. He paid her attentions which were courteously but firmly declined. He wrote her letters which were [Pg 153] at first acknowledged in the most formal way, and finally ignored. No woman could have been more circumspect and dignified. The young man preserved copies of his own letters, introduced the two or three brief and formal notes which he had received in reply, made a story of the incident, stole the photograph of the woman, enclosed his own photograph, mailed the whole matter to a New York newspaper, and committed suicide. The result was a two or three column report of the incident, with portraits of the unfortunate woman and the suicide, and an elaborate and startling exaggeration of the few inconspicuous, insignificant, and colorless facts from which the narrative was elaborated. That a refined woman in American society should be exposed to such a brutal invasion of her privacy as that which was committed in this case reflects upon every gentleman in the country.

No doubt, as the *Outlook* goes on to show, the American people are themselves largely responsible for this attitude of the press. They have as a whole not only less reverence than Europeans for the privacy of others, but also less resentment for the violation of their own privacy. The new democracy has resigned itself to the custom of living in glass houses and regards the desire to shroud one's personal life in mystery as one of the survivals of the dark ages. The newspaper personalities are largely "the result of the desperate desire of the new classes, to whom democratic institutions have given their first chance, to discover the way to *live*, in the wide social meaning of the word."

One regrettable result of the way in which the American papers turn liberty into license is that it actually deters many people from taking their share in public life. [Pg 154] The fact that any public action is sure to bring down upon one's head a torrent of abuse or adulation, together with a microscopic investigation of one's most intimate affairs, is enough to give pause to all but the most resolute. Leading journals go incredible lengths in the way they speak of public men. One of the best New York dailies dismissed Mr. Bryan as "a wretched, rattle-pated boy." Others constantly alluded to Mr. Cleveland as "His Corpulency." For weeks the New York *Sun* published a portrait of President Hayes with the word FRAUD printed across the forehead.

Such competent observers as Mr. George W. Smalley (*Harper's Magazine*, July, 1898) bear testimony to the fact that the irresponsibility of the press has seriously diminished its influence for good. Thus he points out that "the combined and active support given by the American press to the Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty weighed as nothing with the Senate." In recent mayoralty contests in New York and in Boston, almost the whole of the local press carried on vigorous but futile campaigns against the successful candidates. Several public libraries and reading-rooms have actually put some of the leading journals in an Index Expurgatorius.[18]

The moral and intellectual defects of the American newspaper are reflected in its outward dress. Neither the paper nor the printing of a New York or Boston daily [Pg 155] paper is so good as that of the great English dailies. American editors are apt to claim a good deal of credit for the illustrations with which the pages of their journals are sprinkled; but a less justifiable claim for approbation was surely never filed. In nine cases out of ten the wood-cuts in an American paper are an insult to one's good taste and sense of propriety, and, indeed, form one of the chief reasons for classing the American daily press as distinctly lower than that of England. The reason of this physical inferiority I do not pretend to explain. It is, however, a strange phenomenon in a country which produces the most beautiful monthly magazines in the world, and also holds its own in the paper, printing, and binding of its books. But, as Mr. Freeman remarks, the magazines and books of England and America are merely varieties of the same species, while the daily journals of the two countries belong to totally different orders. Many of the better papers are now beginning to give up illustrations. A bill to prevent the insertion in newspapers of portraits without the consent of the portrayed was even brought before the New York Legislature. An exasperating feature of American newspapers, which seems to me to come also under the head of physical inferiority, is the practice of scattering an article over the whole of an issue. Thus, on reaching the foot of a column on page 1 we are more likely than not to be directed for its continuation on page 7 or 8. The reason of this is presumably the desire to have all the best goods in the window; *i.e.*, all the most important head-lines on the front page; but the custom is a most annoying one to the reader. [Pg 156]

It is frequently asserted by Americans that their press is very largely controlled by capitalists, and that its columns are often venal. On such points as these I venture to make no assertion. To prove them would require either a special knowledge of the back-lobbies of journalism or so intimate an understanding of the working of American institutions and the evolution of American character as to be able to decide definitely that no other explanation can be given of the source of such-and-such newspaper actions and attitude. I confine myself to criticism on matters such as he who runs may read. It is, however, true that, contrary to the general spirit of the country, such questions as socialism and the labour movement seldom receive so fair and sympathetic treatment as in the English press.

So many of the journalists I met in the United States were men of high character, intelligence, and breeding that it may seem ungracious and exaggerated to say that American newspaper men as a class seem to me distinctly inferior to the pressmen of Great Britain. But I believe this to be the case; and indeed a study of the journals of the two countries would alone warrant the inference. The trail of the reporter is over them all. Not that I, mindful of the implied practicability of the passage of a needle's eye by a camel, believe it impossible for reporters to be gentlemen; but I do say that it is difficult for a reporter on the American system to preserve to the full that delicacy of respect for the mental privacy of others which we associate with the idea of true gentlemanliness. Mr. Smalley, in a passage controverting the general opinion that a journalist should always begin at the lowest rung of the ladder, admits that a [Pg 157] modern reporter has often to approach people in a way that he will find it hard to reconcile with his own self-respect or the dignity of his profession. The representative of the press whom one meets in English society and clubs is very apt to be a university graduate, distinguished from his academic colleagues, if at all, by his superior ability and address. This is also true of many of the editorial writers of large American journals; but side by side with these will be found a large number of men who have worked their way up from the pettiest kind of reporting, and who have not had the advantage, at the most impressionable period of their career, of associating with the best-mannered men of the time. It is, of course, highly honourable to American society and to themselves that they have and take the opportunity of advancement, but the fact remains patent in their slipshod style and the faulty grammar of their writings, and in their vulgar familiarity of manner. It has been asserted that journalism in America is not a profession, and is "subject to none of the conditions that would entitle it to the name. There are no recognised rules of

conduct for its members, and no tribunal to enforce them if there were."

The startling contrasts in America which suggested the title of the present volume are, of course, well in evidence in the American press. Not only are there many papers which are eminently unobnoxious to the charges brought against the American press generally, but different parts of the same paper often seem as if they were products of totally different spheres (or, at any rate, hemispheres). The "editorials," or leaders, are sometimes couched in a form of which the scholarly [Pg 158] restraint, chasteness of style, moral dignity, and intellectual force would do honour to the best possible of papers in the best possible of worlds, while several columns on the front page of the same issue are occupied by an illustrated account of a prize-fight, in which the most pointless and disgusting slang, such as "tapping his claret" and "bunging his peepers," is used with blood-curdling frequency.

In a paper that lies before me as I write, something like a dozen columns are devoted to a detailed account of the great contest between John L. Sullivan and Jim Corbett (Sept. 7, 1892), while the principal place on the editorial page (but only *one* column) is occupied by a well-written and most appreciative article on the Quaker poet Whittier, who had gone to his long home just about the time the pugilists were battering each other at New Orleans.[19]

It would give a false impression of American journalism as a whole if we left the question here. While American newspapers certainly exemplify many of the worst sides of democracy and much of the rawness of a new country, it would be folly to deny that they also participate in the attendant virtues of both the one and the other. The same inspiring sense of largeness and freedom that we meet in other American institutions is also represented in the press: the same absence of slavish deference to effete authority, the same openness of opportunity, the same freshness of outlook, the same spontaneity of expression, the same readiness in windbag-piercing, the [Pg 159] same admiration for talent in whatever field displayed. The time-honoured alliance of dulness and respectability has had its decree *nisi* from the American press. Several of our own journalists have had the wit to see and the energy to adopt the best feature of the American style; and the result has been a distinct advance in the raciness and readableness of some of our best-known journals. The "Americanisation of the British press" is no bugbear to stand in awe of, if only it be carried on with good sense and discrimination. We can most advantageously exchange lessons of sobriety and restraint for suggestions of candour, humour, and point; and America's share in the form of the ideal English reading journal of the future will possibly not be the smaller.

The *Nation*, a political and literary weekly, and the religious or semi-religious weekly journals like the *Outlook* and the *Independent*, are superior to anything we have in the same *genre*; and the high-water mark even of the daily political press, though not very often attained, is perhaps almost on a level with the best in Europe. Richard Grant White found a richness in the English papers, due to the far-reaching interests of the British empire, which made all other journalism seem tame and narrow; but perhaps he would now-a-days hesitate to attach this stigma to the best journals of New York. And, in conclusion, we must not forget that American papers have often lent all their energies to the championship of noble causes, ranging from the enthusiastic anti-slavery agitation of the New York *Tribune*, under Horace Greeley, down to the crusade against body-snatching, successfully carried on by the *Press* of Philadelphia, and to the agitation in favour of the horses of the Fifth-avenue stages [Pg 160] so pertinaciously fomented by the humorous journal *Life*.

I cannot resist the temptation of printing part of a notice of "Baedeker's Handbook to the United States," which will show the almost incredible lengths to which the less cultured scribes of the American press carry their "spread-eagleism" even now. It is from a journal published in a city of nearly 100,000 inhabitants, the capital (though not the largest city) of one of the most important States in the Union. It is headed "A

Blind Guide:"

> It is simply incomprehensible that an author of so much literary merit in his preparation of guides to European countries should make the absolute failure that he has in the building of a guide to the United States intended for European travellers. As a guide, it is a monstrosity, fully as deceptive and misleading in its aims as it is ridiculous and unworthy in its criticisms of our people, our customs and habitations. It is not a guide in any sense, but a general tirade of abuse of Americans and their country; a compilation of mean, unfair statements; of presumed facts that are a tissue of transparent falsehoods; of comparisons with Europe and Europeans that are odius (*sic*). Baedeker sees very little to commend in America, but a great deal to criticise, and warns Europeans coming to this country that they must use discretion if they expect to escape the machinations of our people and the snares with which they will be surrounded. Any person who has ever travelled in Europe and America will concede that in the United States the tourist enjoys better advantages in every way than he can in Europe. Our hotels possess by far better accommodations, and none of that "flunkeyism" which causes Americans to smile as they witness it on arrival. Our railway service is superior in every respect to that of Europe. As regards civility to strangers the Americans are unequalled on the face of the globe. In antiquity Europe excels; but in natural picturesque scenery the majestic grandeur of our West is so far ahead of anything to be seen in Europe, even in beautiful Switzerland, that the alien beholder cannot but express wonder and admiration. Baedeker has made a mistake in his attempt to underrate America and Americans, its institutions and their customs. True, our nation is in a crude state as compared with the old monarchies of Europe, but in enterprise, business qualifications, politeness, literary and scientific attainments, and in fact all the essential qualities that tend to constitute a people and a country, America is away in the advance of staid, old foggy (*sic*) Europe, and Baedeker will find much difficulty to eradicate that all-important fact.

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I hasten to assure my English readers that this is no fair sample of transatlantic journalism, and that nine out of ten of my American acquaintances would deem it as unique a literary specimen as they would. At the same time I may remind my American readers that the scutcheon of American journalism is not so bright as it might be while blots of this kind occur on it, and that it is the blatancy of Americans of this type that tends to give currency to the distorted opinion of Uncle Sam that prevails so widely in Europe.

Perhaps I shall not be misunderstood if I say that this review is by no means typical of the notice taken by American journals of "Baedeker's Handbook to the United States." Whatever other defects were found in it, reviewers were almost unanimous in pronouncing it fair and free from prejudice. Indeed, the reception of the Handbook by the American press was so much more friendly than I had any right to expect that it has made me feel some qualms in writing this chapter of criticism, while it must certainly relieve me of any possible charge of a wish to retaliate.

FOOTNOTES:

[17] Writing of theatrical managers, the *Century* (November, 1895) says: "One of the greatest obstacles in the way of reform is the inability of these same men to discern the trend of intelligent, to say nothing of cultivated, public opinion, or to inform themselves of the existence of the widespread craving for higher and better entertainment."

[18] The so-called "Yellow Press" has reached such an extreme of extravagance during the progress of the Spanish-American war that it may be hoped that it has at last dug its own grave. On the other hand, many journals were

perceptibly steadied by having so vital an issue to occupy their columns, and the tone of a large section of the press was distinctly creditable.

[19] It may be doubted, however, whether any American author of similar standing would devote a chapter to the loathsome details of the prize-ring, as Mr. George Meredith does in his novel "The Amazing Marriage."

X

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Some Literary Straws

By far the most popular novel of the London season of 1894 was "The Manxman," by Mr. Hall Caine. Its sale is said to have reached a fabulous number of thousands of copies, and the testimony of the public press and the circulating library is unanimous as to the supremacy of its vogue. In the United States the favourite book of the year was Mr. George Du Maurier's "Trilby." To the practical and prosaic evidence of the eager purchase of half a million copies we have to add the more romantic homage of the new Western towns (Trilbyville!) and patent bug exterminators named after the heroine. It may, possibly, be worth while examining the predominant qualities of the two books with a view to ascertain what light their similarities and differences may throw upon the respective literary tastes of the Englishman and the American.

There has, I believe, been no important critical denial of the right of "The Manxman" to rank as a "strong" book. The plot is drawn with consummate skill—not in the sense of a Gaborian-like unravelment of mystery, but in its organic, natural, inevitable development, and in the abiding interest of its evolution. The details are worked in with the most scrupulous care. Rarely, in modern fiction, have certain elemental [Pg 163] features of the human being been displayed with more determination and pathos.

The central *motif* of the story—the corrosion of a predominantly righteous soul by a repented but hidden sin culminating in an overwhelming necessity of confession—is so powerfully presented to us that we forget all question of originality until our memory of the fascinating pages has cooled down. Then we may recall the resemblance of theme in the recent novel entitled "The Silence of Dean Maitland," while we find the prototype of both these books in "The Scarlet Letter" of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who has handled the problem with a subtlety and haunting weirdness to which neither of the English works can lay any claim. As our first interest in the story farther cools, it may occur to us that the very perfection of plot in "The Manxman" gives it the effect of a "set piece;" its association with Mr. Wilson Barrett and the boards seems foreordained. It may seem to us that there is a little forcing of the pathos, that a certain artificiality pervades the scene. In a word, we may set down "The Manxman" as melodrama—melodrama at its best, but still melodrama. Its effects are vivid, positive, sensational; its analysis of character is keen, but hardly subtle; it appeals to the British public's love of the obvious, the full-blooded, the thorough-going; it runs on well-tried lines; it is admirable, but it is not new.

"Trilby" is a very different book, and it would be a catholic palate indeed that would relish equally the story of the Paris grisette and the story of the Manx deemster. In "Trilby" the blending of the novel and the romance, of the real and the fantastic, is as [Pg 164] much of a stumbling-block to John Bull as it is, for example, in Ibsen's "Lady from the Sea." "The central idea," he might exclaim, "is utterly extravagant; the transformation by hypnotism of the absolutely tone-deaf girl into the unutterably peerless singer is unthinkable and absurd." The admirers of "Trilby" may very well grant this, and yet feel that their withers are unwrung. It is not in the hypnotic device and its working out that they find the charm of the story; it is not the plot that they are mainly interested in; it is not even the slightly sentimental love-story of Trilby and Little Billee. They are willing to let the whole framework, as it were, of the book go by the board; it is not the thread of the narrative, but the sketches and incidents strung on it, that appeals to them. They revel in the fascinating novelty and

ingenuousness of the Du Maurier vein, the art that is superficially so artless, the exquisitely simple delicacy of touch, the inimitable fineness of characterisation, the constant suggestion of the tender and true, the keen sense of the pathetic in life and the humour that makes it tolerable, the lovable drollery that corrects the tendency to the sentimental, the subtle blending of the strength of a man with the *naïveté* of the child, the ambidextrous familiarity with English and French life, the kindliness of the satire, the absence of all straining for effect, the deep humanity that pervades the book from cover to cover.

If, therefore, we take "The Manxman" and "Trilby" as types of what specially appeals to the reading public of England and America, we should conclude that the Englishman calls for strength and directness, the American for delicacy and [Pg 165] suggestiveness. The former does not insist so much on originality of theme, if the handling be but new and clever; there are certain elementary passions and dramatic situations of which the British public never wearies. The American does not clamour for telling "curtains," if the character-drawing be keen, the conversations fresh, sparkling, and humorous. John Bull likes vividness and solidity of impasto; Jonathan's eye is often more pleasantly affected by a delicate gradation of half-tones. The one desires the downright, the concrete, the real; the other is titillated by the subtle, the allusive, the half-spoken. The antithesis is between *force* and *finesse*, between the palpable and the impalpable.[20]

If anybody but George Du Maurier could have written "Trilby," it seems to me it would have been an American rather than a full-blooded Englishman. The keenness of the American appreciation of the book corresponds to elements in the American nature. The Anglo-French blend of Mr. Du Maurier's literary genius finds nearer analogues in American literature than in either English or French. [Pg 166]

The best writing of our American cousins has, of course, much that it shares with our own, much that is purely English in source and inspiration. Longfellow, for instance, might almost have been an Englishman, and his great popularity in England probably owed nothing to the attraction exercised by the unfamiliar. The English traits, moreover, are often readily discernible even in those works that smack most of the soil. When, however, we seek the differentiating marks of American literature, we find that many of them are also characteristics of the writings of Mr. Du Maurier, while they are much less conspicuous in those of Mr. Hall Caine. Among such marks are its freshness and spontaneity, untrammelled by authority or tradition; its courage in tackling problems elsewhere tabooed; its breezy intrepidity, rooted half in conscious will and half in *naïve* ignorance. Besides these, we find features that we should hardly have expected on *a priori* grounds. A wideness of sweep and elemental greatness in proportion to the natural majesty of the huge new continent are hardly present; Walt Whitman remains an isolated phenomenon. Instead, we meet in the best American literature an almost aristocratic daintiness and feeling for the refined and select. As compared with the British school, the leading American school is marked by an increased delicacy of *finesse*, a tendency to refine and refine, a perhaps exaggerated dread of the platitude and the commonplace, a fondness for analysis, a preference for character over event, an avoidance of absolutely untempered seriousness and solidity. Mr. Bryce notes that the verdicts of the best literary circles of the United States often seem to "proceed from a more delicate and sympathetic insight" than ours. [Pg 167]

This fastidiousness of the best writers and critics of America is by no means inconsistent with the existence of an enormous class of half-educated readers, who devour the kind of "literature" provided for them, and batten in their various degrees on the productions of Mr. E.P. Roe, Miss Laura Jean Libbey, or the *Sunday War-Whoop*. The evolution of democracy in the literary sphere is exactly analogous to its course in the political sphere. In both there is the same tendency to go too far, to overturn the good and legitimate authority as well as the bad and oppressive; both are apt, to use the homely German proverb, "to throw the baby out of the bath along with the dirty water." This lack of discrimination leads to the rushing in of fools where angels might well fear to tread. All sorts of men try to write books, and all

sorts of men think they are able to judge them. The old standard of authority is overthrown, and for a time no other takes its place with the great mass of the reading public. This state of affairs is, however, by no means one that need make us despair of the literary future of America. It reminds me of the mental condition of a kindly American tourist who once called at our office in Leipsic to give us the benefit of the corrections he had made on "Baedeker's Handbooks" during his peregrination of Europe. "Here," he said, "is one error which I am absolutely sure of: you call this a statue of Minerva; but I know that's wrong, because I saw *Pallas* carved on the pedestal!" When I told this tale to English friends, they saw in it nothing but a proof of the colossal ignorance of the travelling American. To my mind, however, it redounded more to the credit of America than to its discredit. It showed that [Pg 168] Americans of defective education felt the need of culture and spared no pains to procure it. A London tradesman with the education of my American friend would probably never extend his ideas of travelling beyond Margate, or at most a week's excursion to "Parry." But this indefatigable tourist had visited all the chief galleries of Europe, and had doubtless greatly improved his taste in art and educated his sense of the refined and beautiful, even though his book-learning had not taught him that the same goddess might have two different names.

The application of this anecdote to the present condition of American literature is obvious. The great fact is that there is an enormous crowd of readers, and the great hope is that they will eventually work their way up through Miss Laura Jean Libbey to heights of purer air. America has not so much degraded a previously existing literary palate as given a taste of some sort to those who under old-world conditions might never have come to it. In American literature as in American life we find all the phenomena of a transition period—all the symptoms that might be expected from the extraordinary mixture of the old and the new, the childlike and the knowing, the past and the present, in this Land of Contrasts. The startling difference between the best and the worst writers is often reflected in different works by the same author; or a real and strong natural talent for writing will be found conjoined with an extraordinary lack of education and training. An excellent piece of English—pithy, forcible, and even elegant—will often shatter on some simple grammatical reef, such as the use of "as" for "that" ("he did not know as he could"), or of the plural for the [Pg 169] singular ("a long ways off"). Mr. James Lane Allen, the author of a series of refined and delicately worded romances, can write such phrases as "In a voice neither could scarce hear" and "Shake hands with me and *tell* me good-by." ("The Choir Invisible," pp. 222, 297.)

I know not whether the phrase "was graduated," applied not to a vernier, but to a student, be legitimate or not; it is certainly so used by the best American writers. Another common American idiom that sounds queer to British ears is, "The minutes were ordered printed" (for "to be printed"). Misquotations and misuse of foreign phrases are terribly rife; and even so spirited and entertaining a writer as Miss F.C. Baylor will write: "This Jenny, with the *esprit de l'escalier* of her sex, had at once divined and resented" ("On Both Sides," p. 26). In the same way one is constantly appalled in conversation by hearing college graduates say "acrost" for "across" and making other "bad breaks" which in England could not be conjoined with an equal amount of culture and education.

The extreme fastidiousness and delicacy of the leading American writers, as above referred to, may be to a large extent accounted for by an inevitable reaction against the general tendency to the careless and the slipshod, and is thus in its way as significant and natural a result of existing conditions as any other feature of American literature. Perhaps a secondary cause of this type of writing may be looked for in the fact that so far the spirit of New England has dominated American literature. Even those writers of the South and West who are freshest in their material and vehicle are still permeated by the tone, the temper, the method, the [Pg 170] ideals, of the New England school. And certainly Allibone's dictionary of authors shows that an enormous proportion of American writers are to this day of New England origin or descent.

Among living American writers the two whose names occur most spontaneously to the mind as typical examples are, perhaps, Henry James and W.D. Howells. Of these the former has identified himself so much with European life and has devoted himself so largely to European subjects that we, perhaps, miss to some extent the American atmosphere in his works, though he undoubtedly possesses the American quality of workmanship in a very high degree. Or, to put it in another way, his touch is indisputably American, while his accessories, his *staffage*, are cosmopolitan. His American hand has become dyed to that it works in. This, however, is more true of his later than of his earlier works. That imperishable little classic "Daisy Miller" is a very exquisite and typical specimen of the American suggestiveness of style; indeed, as I have hinted (Chapter IV.), its suggestiveness almost overshot the mark and required the explanation of a dramatic key. His dislike of the obvious and the commonplace sometimes leads Mr. James to become artificial and even obscure,[21] but at its best his style is as perspicuous as it is distinguished, dainty, and subtle; there is, perhaps, no other living artist in words who can give his admirers so rare a literary pleasure in mere exquisiteness of workmanship. [Pg 171]

Mr. Howells, unlike Mr. James, is purely and exclusively American, in his style as in his subject, in his main themes as in his incidental illustrations, in his spirit, his temperament, his point of view. No one has written more pleasantly of Venice; but just as surely there is a something in his Venetian sketches which no one but an American could have put there. Mr. James may be as patriotic a citizen of the Great Republic, but there is not so much tangible evidence of the fact in his writings; Mr. Howells may be as cosmopolitan in his sympathies as Mr. James, but his writings alone would hardly justify the inference. Mr. Howells also possesses a *bonhomie*, a geniality, a good-nature veiled by a slight mask of cynicism, that may be personal, but which strikes one as also a characteristic American trait. Mr. James is not, I hasten to say, the reverse of this, but he shows a coolness in his treatment, a lordly indifference to the fate of his creations, an almost pitiless keenness of analysis, which savour a little more of an end-of-the-century European than of a young and genial democracy.

Mr. Howells is, perhaps, not always so well appreciated in his own country as he deserves—and this in spite of the facts that his novels are widely read and his name is in all the magazines. What I mean is, that in the conversation of the cultured circles of Boston or New York too much stress is apt to be laid on the prosaic and commonplace character of his materials. There are, perhaps, unusually good reasons for this point of view. Cromwell's wife and daughters would probably prefer to have him painted wartless, but posterity wants him warts and all. So those to whom the [Pg 172] average—the *very* average—American is an every-day and all-day occurrence cannot abide him in their literature; while we who are removed by the ocean of space can enjoy these pictures of common life, as enabling us, better than any idealistic romance or study of the rare and extraordinary, to realise the life of our American cousins. To those who can read between the lines with any discretion, I should say that novels like "Silas Lapham" and "A Modern Instance" will give a clearer idea of American character and tendencies than any other contemporary works of fiction; to those who can read between the lines—for it is obvious that the commonplace and the slightly vulgar no more exhaust the field of society in the United States than elsewhere. But to me Mr. Howells, even when in his most realistic and sordid vein, always *suggests* the ideal and the noble; the reverse of the medal proclaims loudly that it *is* the reverse, and that there is an obverse of a very different kind to be seen by those who will turn the coin. It seems to me that no very great palæontological skill is necessary to reconstruct the whole frame of the animal from the portion that Mr. Howells sets up for us. His novels remind me of those maps of a limited area which indicate very clearly what lies beyond, by arrows on their margins. In nothing does Mr. Howells more clearly show his "Americanism" than in his almost divinely sympathetic and tolerant attitude towards commonplace, erring, vulgar humanity. "Ah, poor real life, which I love!" he writes somewhere; "can I make others share the delight I find in thy foolish and insipid face!" We must remember in reading him his own theory of the duty of the novelist. "I am extremely opposed to what we call ideal [Pg 173]

characters. I think their portrayal is mischievous; it is altogether offensive to me as an artist, and, as far as the morality goes, I believe that when an artist tries to create an ideal he mixes some truth up with a vast deal of sentimentality, and produces something that is extremely noxious as well as nauseous. I think that no man can consistently portray a probable type of human character without being useful to his readers. When he endeavors to create something higher than that, he plays the fool himself and tempts his readers to folly. He tempts young men and women to try to form themselves upon models that would be detestable in life, if they were ever found there."

Perhaps the delicacy of Mr. Howells' touch and the gentle subtlety of his satire are nowhere better illustrated than in the little drawing-room "farces" of which he frequently publishes one in an American magazine about Christmas time. I call them farces because he himself applies that name to them; but these dainty little comediettas contain none of the rollicking qualities which the word usually connotes to English ears. They have all the *finesse* of the best French work of the kind, combined with a purity of atmosphere and of intent that we are apt to claim as Anglo-Saxon, and which, perhaps, is especially characteristic of America. One is tired of hearing, in this connection, of the blush that rises to the innocent girl's cheek; but why should even those who are supposed to be past the age of blushing not also enjoy humour unspiced by even a suggestion of lubricity? The "Mikado" and "Pinafore" have done yeoman's service in displacing the meretricious delights of Offenbach and Lecocq; and Howells' little pieces yield an exquisite, though innocent, [Pg 174] enjoyment to those whose taste in farces has not been fashioned and spoiled by clumsy English adaptations or imitations of intriguing *levers-de-rideau*, and to those who do not associate the name of farce with horse-play and practical joking. They form the best illustration of what has been described as Mr. Howells' "method of occasionally opening up to the reader through the bewilderingly intricate mazes of his dialogue clear perceptions of the true values of his characters, imitating thus the actual trick of life, which can safely be depended on to now and then expose meanings that words have cleverly served the purpose of concealing." If I hesitate to call them comediettas "in porcelain," it is because the suggested analogy falls short, owing to the greater reconditeness, the purer intellectual quality, of Mr. Howells' humour as compared with Mr. Austin Dobson's. So intensely American in quality are these scenes from the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Willis Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, and their friends, that it sometimes seems to me that they might almost be used as touchstones for the advisability of a visit to the United States. If you can appreciate and enjoy these farces, go to America by all means; you will have a "good time." If you cannot, better stay at home, unless your motive is merely one of base mechanic necessity; you will find the American atmosphere a little too rare.

A recent phase of Mr. Howells' activity—that, namely, in which, like Mr. William Morris, he has boldly risked his reputation as a literary artist in order to espouse unpopular social causes of whose justice he is convinced—will interest all who have hearts to feel as well as brains to think. He made his fame by consummately artistic [Pg 175] work, addressed to the daintiest of literacy palates; and yet in such books as "A Hazard of New Fortunes" and "A Traveller from Altruria" he has conscientiously taken up the defence and propagation of a form of socialism, without blanching before the epicure who demands his literature "neat" or the Philistine householder who brands all socialistic writings as dangerous. Mr. Howells, however, knows his public; and the reforming element in him cannot but rejoice at the hearing he has won through its artistic counterpart. No one of his literary brethren of any importance has, so far as I know, emulated his courage in this particular. Some, like Mr. Bellamy, have made a reputation by their socialistic writings; none has risked so magnificent a structure already built up on a purely artistic foundation. It is mainly on account of this phase of his work, in which he has not forsaken his art, but makes it "the expression of his whole life and the thought and feeling mature life has brought to him," that Mr. Howells has been claimed as *the* American novelist, the best delineator of American life.[22]

Mr. Howells the poet is not nearly so well known as Mr. Howells the novelist; and there are doubtless many European students of American literature who are unaware of the extremely characteristic work he has done in verse. The accomplished critic, Mr. R.H. Stoddard, writes thus of a volume of poems published by Mr. Howells about [Pg 176] three years ago:[23] "There is something here which, if not new in American poetry, has never before made itself so manifest there, never before declared itself with such vivacity and force, the process by which it emerged from emotion and clothed itself in speech being so undiscoverable by critical analysis that it seems, as Matthew Arnold said of some of Wordsworth's poetry, as if Nature took the pen from his hand and wrote in his stead." These poems are all short, and their titles (such as "What Shall It Profit?" "The Sphinx," "If," "To-morrow," "Good Society," "Equality," "Heredity," and so forth) sufficiently indicate that they do not rank among the lighter triflings with the muse. Their abiding sense of an awful and inevitable fate, their keen realisation of the startling contrasts between wealth and poverty, their symbolical grasp on the great realities of life and death, and the consummate skill of the artistic setting are all pervaded with something that recalls the paintings of Mr. G.F. Watts or the visions of Miss Olive Schreiner. One specimen can alone be given here:

"The Bewildered Guest

"I was not asked if I should like to come.
I have not seen my host here since I came,
Or had a word of welcome in his name.
Some say that we shall never see him, and some
That we shall see him elsewhere, and then know
Why we were bid. How long I am to stay
I have not the least notion. None, they say,
Was ever told when he should come or go.
But every now and then there bursts upon [Pg 177]
The song and mirth a lamentable noise,
A sound of shrieks and sobs, that strikes our joys
Dumb in our breasts; and then, someone is gone.
They say we meet him. None knows where or when.
We know we shall not meet him here again."

Mr. Howells has, naturally enough, the defects of his qualities; and if it were my purpose here to present an exhaustive study of his writings, rather than merely to touch lightly upon his "American" characteristics, it would be desirable to consider some of these in this place. In his desire to avoid the merely pompous he sometimes falls into the really trifling. His love of analysis runs away with him at times; and parts of such books as "A World of Chance" must weary all but his most undiscriminating admirers. His self-restraint sometimes disappoints us of a vivid colour or a passionate throb which we feel to be our due. His humour and his satire occasionally pass from the fine to the thin.

It is, however, with Mr. Howells in his capacity of literary critic alone that my disappointment is too great to allow of silence. For the exquisiteness of a writer like Mr. Henry James he has the keenest insight, the warmest appreciation. His thorough-going conviction in the prime necessity of realism even leads him out of his way to commend Gabriele d'Annunzio, in whom some of us can detect little but a more than Zolaesque coarseness with a total lack of Zola's genius, insight, purpose, or philosophy. But when he comes to speak of a Thackeray or a Scott, his attitude is one that, to put it in the most complimentary form that I can think of, reminds us strongly of Homeric drowsiness. The virtue of James is one thing and the virtue of Scott is [Pg 178] another; but surely admiration for both does not make too unreasonable a demand on catholicity of palate? Mr. Howells could never write himself down an ass, but surely in his criticism of the "Wizard of the North" he has written himself down as one whose literary creed is narrower than his human heart. The school of which Mr. Henry James is a most accomplished member has added more than one exquisite new

flavour to the banquet of letters; but it may well be questioned whether a taste for these may not be acquired at too dear a cost if it necessitates a loss of relish for the steady good sense, the power of historic realisation, the rich humanity, and the marvellously fertile imagination of Walter Scott. It is not, I hope, a merely national prejudice that makes me oppose Mr. Howells in this point, though, perhaps, there is a touch of remonstrance in the reflection that that great novelist seems to have no use for the Briton in his works except as a foil or a butt for his American characters.

In considering Mr. Howells as an exponent of Americanism in literature, we have left him in an attitude almost of *Americanus contra mundum*—at any rate in the posture of one who is so entirely absorbed by his delight in the contemporary and national existence around him as to be partially blind to claims separated from him by tracts of time and space. My next example of the American in literature is, I think, to the full as national a type as Mr. Howells, though her Americanism is shown rather in subjective character than in objective theme. Miss Emily Dickinson is still a name so unfamiliar to English readers that I may be pardoned a few lines of biographical [Pg 179] explanation. She was born in 1830, the daughter of the leading lawyer of Amherst, a small and quiet town of New England, delightfully situated on a hill, looking out over the undulating woods of the Connecticut valley. It is a little larger than the English Marlborough, and like it owes its distinctive tone to the presence of an important educational institute, Amherst College being one of the best-known and worthiest of the smaller American colleges. In this quiet little spot Miss Dickinson spent the whole of her life, and even to its limited society she was almost as invisible as a cloistered nun except for her appearances at an annual reception given by her father to the dignitaries of the town and college. There was no definite reason either in her physical or mental health for this life of extraordinary seclusion; it seems to have been simply the natural outcome of a singularly introspective temperament. She rarely showed or spoke of her poems to any but one or two intimate friends; only three or four were published during her lifetime; and it was with considerable surprise that her relatives found, on her death in 1886, a large mass of poetical remains, finished and unfinished. A considerable selection from them has been published in three little volumes, edited with tender appreciation by two of her friends, Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd and Col. T.W. Higginson.

Her poems are all in lyrical form—if the word form may be applied to her utter disregard of all metrical conventions. Her lines are rugged and her expressions wayward to an extraordinary degree, but "her verses all show a strange cadence of inner rhythmical music," and the "thought-rhymes" which she often substitutes for [Pg 180] the more regular assonances appeal "to an unrecognised sense more elusive than hearing" (Mrs. Todd). In this curious divergence from established rules of verse Miss Dickinson may be likened to Walt Whitman, whom she differs from in every other particular, and notably in her pithiness as opposed to his diffuseness; but with her we feel in the strongest way that her mode is natural and unsought, utterly free from affectation, posing, or self-consciousness.

Colonel Higginson rightly finds her nearest analogue in William Blake; but this "nearest" is far from identity. While tenderly feminine in her sympathy for suffering, her love of nature, her loyalty to her friends, she is in expression the most unfeminine of poets. The usual feminine impulsiveness and full expression of emotion is replaced in her by an extraordinary condensation of phrase and feeling. In her letters we find the eternal womanly in her yearning love for her friends, her brooding anxiety and sympathy for the few lives closely intertwined with her own. In her poems, however, one is rather impressed with the deep well of poetic insight and feeling from which she draws, but never unreservedly. In spite of frequent strange exaggeration of phrase one is always conscious of a fund of reserve force. The subjects of her poems are few, but the piercing delicacy and depth of vision with which she turned from death and eternity to nature and to love make us feel the presence of that rare thing, genius. Hers is a wonderful instance of the way in which genius can dispense with experience; she sees more by pure intuition than others distil from the serried facts of an eventful life. Perhaps, in one of her own phrases,

she is "too intrinsic for renown," but she has appealed strongly to a surprisingly large band of readers in the United States, and it seems to me will always hold her audience. Those who admit Miss Dickinson's talent, but deny it to be poetry, may be referred to Thoreau's saying that no definition of poetry can be given which the true poet will not somewhere sometime brush aside. It is a new departure, and the writer in the *Nation* (Oct. 10, 1895) is probably right when he says: "So marked a new departure rarely leads to further growth. Neither Whitman nor Miss Dickinson ever stepped beyond the circle they first drew." [Pg 181]

It is difficult to select quite adequate samples of Miss Dickinson's art, but perhaps the following little poems will give some idea of her naked simplicity, terseness, oddness,—of her method, in short, if we can apply that word to anything so spontaneous and unconscious:

"I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us. Don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

"How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog,
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!"

"I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

"Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days, [Pg 182]
From inns of molten blue.

"When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

"Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!"

"But how he set I know not.
There seemed a purple stile
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while,

"Till when they reached the other side,
A dominie in grey
Put gently up the evening bars,
And led the flock away."

"He preached upon 'breadth' till it argued him narrow—
The broad are too broad to define;

And of 'truth' until it proclaimed him a liar—
The truth never flaunted a sign.
Simplicity fled from his counterfeit presence
As gold the pyrites would shun.
What confusion would cover the innocent Jesus
To meet so enabled a man!"

The "so *enabled* a man" is a very characteristic Dickinsonian phrase. So, too, are these:

"He put the belt around my life—
I heard the buckle snap."
"Unfitted by an instant's grace [Pg 183]
For the contented beggar's face
I wore an hour ago."

"Just his sigh, accented,
Had been legible to me."

"The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth—
The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity."

Her interest in all the familiar sights and sounds of a village garden is evident through all her verses. Her illustrations are not recondite, literary, or conventional; she finds them at her own door. The robin, the buttercup, the maple, furnish what she needs. The bee, in particular, seems to have had a peculiar fascination for her, and hums through all her poems. She had even a kindly word for that "neglected son of genius," the spider. Her love of children is equally evident, and no one has ever better caught the spirit of

"Saturday Afternoon

"From all the jails the boys and girls
  Ecstatically leap,
Beloved, only afternoon
  That prison doesn't keep.

"They storm the earth and stun the air,
  A mob of solid bliss.
Alas! that frowns could lie in wait [Pg 184]
  For such a foe as this!"

The bold extravagance of her diction (which is not, however, *mere* extravagance) and her ultra-American familiarity with the forces of nature may be illustrated by such stanzas as:

"What if the poles should frisk about
  And stand upon their heads!
I hope I'm ready for the worst,
  Whatever prank betides."

"If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers
Until their time befalls.

"If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity."

For her the lightnings "skip like mice," the thunder "crumbles like a stuff." What a critic has called her "Emersonian self-possession" towards God may be seen in the little poem on the last page of her first volume, where she addresses the Deity as "burglar, banker, father." There is, however, no flippancy in this, no conscious irreverence; Miss Dickinson is not "orthodox," but she is genuinely spiritual and religious. Inspired by its truly American and "*actuel*" freedom, her muse does not fear to sing of such modern and mechanical phenomena as the railway train, which she loves to see "lap the miles and lick the valleys up," while she is fascinated by the [Pg 185]
contrast between its prodigious force and the way in which it stops, "docile and omnipotent, at its own stable door." But even she can hardly bring the smoking locomotive into such pathetic relations with nature as the "little brig," whose "white foot tripped, then dropped from sight," leaving "the ocean's heart too smooth, too blue, to break for you."

Her poems on death and the beyond, on time and eternity, are full of her peculiar note. Death is the "one dignity" that "delays for all;" the meanest brow is so ennobled by the majesty of death that "almost a powdered footman might dare to touch it now," and yet no beggar would accept "the *éclat* of death, had he the power to spurn." "The quiet nonchalance of death" is a resting-place which has no terrors for her; death "abashed" her no more than "the porter of her father's lodge." Death's chariot also holds Immortality. The setting sail for "deep eternity" brings a "divine intoxication" such as the "inland soul" feels on its "first league out from land." Though she "never spoke with God, nor visited in heaven," she is "as certain of the spot as if the chart were given." "In heaven somehow, it will be even, some new equation given." "Christ will explain each separate anguish in the fair schoolroom of the sky."

"A death-blow is a life-blow to some
Who, till they died, did not alive become;
Who, had they lived, had died, but when
They died, vitality begun."

The reader who has had the patience to accompany me through these pages devoted to Miss Dickinson will surely own, whether in scoff or praise, the essentially [Pg 186]
American nature of her muse. Her defects are easily paralleled in the annals of English literature; but only in the liberal atmosphere of the New World, comparatively unshadowed by trammels of authority and standards of taste, could they have co-existed with so much of the highest quality.

A prominent phenomenon in the development of American literature—so prominent as to call for comment even in a fragmentary and haphazard sketch like the present—is the influence exercised by the monthly magazine. The editors of the leading literary periodicals have been practically able to wield a censorship to which there is no parallel in England. The magazine has been the recognised gateway to the literary public; the sweep of the editorial net has been so wide that it has gathered in nearly all the best literary work of the past few decades, at any rate in the department of *belles lettres*. It is not easy to name many important works of pure literature, as distinct from the scientific, the philosophical, and the instructive, that have not made their bow to the public through the pages of the *Century*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, or some one or other of their leading competitors. And probably the proportion of works by new authors that have appeared in the same way is still greater. There are,

possibly, two sides as to the value of this supremacy of the magazine, though to most observers the advantages seem to outweigh the disadvantages. Among the former may be reckoned the general encouragement of reading, the opportunities afforded to young writers, the raising of the rate of authors' pay, the dissemination of a vast quantity of useful and salutary information in a popular form. Perhaps of more [Pg 187] importance than any of these has been the maintenance of that purity of moral tone in which modern American literature is superior to all its contemporaries. Malcontents may rail at "grandmotherly legislation in letters," at the undue deference paid to the maiden's blush, at the encouragement of the mealy-mouthed and hypocritical; but it is a ground of very solid satisfaction, be the cause what it may, that recent American literature has been so free from the emasculate *fin-de-siècle-ism*, the nauseating pseudo-realism, the epigrammatic hysteria, that has of late been so rife in certain British circles. Moreover, it is impossible to believe that any really strong talent could have been stifled by the frown of the magazine editor. Walt Whitman made his mark without that potentate's assistance; and if America had produced a Zola, he would certainly have come to the front, even if his genius had been hampered with a burden of more than Zolaesque filth.

It is undoubtedly to the predominance of the magazine, among other causes, that are due the prevalence and perfection of the American short story. It has often been remarked that French literature alone is superior in this *genre*; and many of the best American productions of the kind can scarcely be called second even to the French in daintiness of phrase, sureness of touch, sense of proportion, and skilful condensation of interest. Excellent examples of the short story have been common in American literature from the times of Hawthorne, Irving, and Poe down to the present day. Mr. Henry James, perhaps, stands at the head of living writers in this branch. Miss Mary E. Wilkins is inimitable in her sketches of New England, the pathos, as well as the [Pg 188] humour of which she touches with a master hand. It is interesting to note that, foreign as her subject would seem to be to the French taste, her literary skill has been duly recognised by the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Bret Harte and Frank Stockton are so eminently short-story writers that the longer their stories become, the nearer do they approach the brink of failure. Other names that suggest themselves in a list that might be indefinitely extended are those of Miss Jewett, Mrs. Elizabeth Phelps Ward, Mr. Richard Harding Davis, Mr. T.B. Aldrich, Mr. Thos. Nelson Page, Mr. Owen Wister, Mr. Hamlin Garland, Mr. G.W. Cable, and (in a lighter vein) Mr. H.C. Bunner.

This chapter may fitly close with a straw of startling literary contrast, that seems to me alone almost enough to bring American literature under the rubric of this volume's title. If a critic familiar only with the work chiefly associated with the author's name were asked to indicate the source of the following quotations, I should be surprised if he were to guess correctly in his first hundred efforts. Indeed, I should not be astonished if some of his shots missed the mark by centuries of time as well as oceans of space. One hesitates to use lightly the word Elizabethan; but at present I do not recall any other modern work that suggests it more strongly than some of the lines I quote below:

> "So wanton are all emblems that the cloak
> Which folds a king will kiss a crooked nail
> As quickly as a beggar's gabardine
> Will do like office."

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> "Thou art so like to substance that I'd think
> Myself a shadow ere thyself a dream."

> "Not so much beauty, sire,
> As would make full the pocket of thine eye."

"A vein
That spilt its tender blue upon her eyelid,
As though the cunning hand that dyed her eyes
Had slipped for joy of its own work."

"What am I who doth rail against the fate
That binds mankind? The atom of an atom,
Particle of this particle the earth,
That with its million kindred worlds doth spin
Like motes within the universal light.
What if I sin—am lost—do crack my life
Against the gateless walls of Fate's decree?
Is the world fouler for a gnat's corpse? Nay,
The ocean, is it shallower for the drop
It leaves upon a blade of grass?"

"There is a boy in Essex, they do say,
Can crack an ox's ribs in one arm-crotch."

All these passages are taken from the tragedy of "Athelwold," written by Miss Amelie Rives, the author of a novel entitled "The Quick and the Dead."

FOOTNOTES:

[20] I confess I should have felt myself on still firmer ground in making the above comparison if I had been able to select "Peter Ibbetson" instead of "Trilby" as the American favourite. It is distinctly the finest, the most characteristic, and the most convincing of Mr. Du Maurier's novels, though it is easy to see why it did not enjoy such a "boom" as its successor. In "Peter Ibbetson" our moral sense does not feel outraged by the fact of the sympathy we have to extend to a man-slayer; we are made to feel that a man may kill his fellow in a moment of ungovernable and not unrighteous wrath without losing his fundamental goodness. On the other hand, it seems to me, Mr. Du Maurier fails to convert us to belief in the possibility of such a character as Trilby, and fails to make us wholly sympathise with his pæans in her praise. It seems psychologically impossible for a woman to sin so repeatedly as Trilby, and so apparently without any overwhelming temptation, and yet at the same time to retain her essential purity. It is a prostitution of the word "love" to excuse Trilby's temporary amourettes with a "*quia multum amavit*."

[21] His extraordinary article on George Du Maurier in *Harper's Magazine* for September, 1897, is, perhaps, so far as style is concerned, as glaring an example of how not to do it as can be found in the range of American letters.

[22] Perhaps Mr. George W. Cable is entitled to rank with Mr. Howells in this respect as a man who refused to disguise his moral convictions behind his literary art, and thus infallibly and with full consciousness imperilled his popularity among his own people.

[23] "Stops of Various Quills," by W.D. Howells (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1895).

XI

Certain Features of Certain Cities

One of the dicta in M. Bourget's "Outre Mer" to which I cannot but take exception is that which insists on the essential similarity and monotony of all the cities of the United States. Passing over the question of the right of a Parisian to quarrel with monotony of street architecture, I should simply ask what single country possesses cities more widely divergent than New York and New Orleans, Philadelphia and San Francisco, Chicago and San Antonio, Washington and Pittsburg? If M. Bourget merely means that there is a tendency to homogeneity in the case of modern cities which was not compatible with the picturesque though uncomfortable reasons for variety in more ancient foundations, his remark amounts to a truism. For his implied comparison with European cities to have any point, he should be able to assert that the recent architecture of the different cities of Europe is more varied than the contemporary architecture of the United States. This seems to me emphatically not the case. Modern Paris resembles modern Rome more closely than any two of the above-named cities resemble each other; and it is simply the universal tendency to note similarity first and then unlikeness that makes the brief visitor to the United States fail to find characteristic individuality in the various great cities of the [Pg 191] country. We are also too prone to forget that the United States, though continental in its proportions, is after all but a single nation, enjoying the same institutions and speaking practically one tongue; and this of necessity introduces an element of sameness that must be absent from the continent of Europe with which we are apt to compare it. If we oppose to the United States that one European country which approaches it most nearly in size, we shall, I think, find the balance of uniformity does not incline to the American side. When all is said, however, it cannot be denied that there *is* a great deal of similarity in the smaller and newer towns and cities of the West, and Mr. W.S. Caine's likening them to "international exhibitions a week before their opening" will strike many visitors as very apposite. It is only to the indiscriminate and unhedged form of M. Bourget's statement that objection need be made.

Architecture struck me as, perhaps, the one art in which America, so far as modern times are concerned, could reasonably claim to be on a par with, if not ahead of, any European country whatsoever. I say this with a full realisation of the many artistic nightmares that oppress the soil from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a perfect recollection of the acres of petty, monotonous, and mean structures in almost every great city of the Union, with a keen appreciation of the witty saying that the American architect often "shows no more self-restraint than a bunch of fire-crackers." It is, however, distinctly true, as Mr. Montgomery Schuyler well puts it, that "no progress can result from the labour of architects whose training has made them so fastidious that they are more revolted by the crudity of the forms that result [Pg 192] from the attempt to express a new meaning than by the failure to make the attempt;" and it is in his freedom from this fastidious lack of courage that the American architect is strong. His earlier efforts at independence were, perhaps, hardly fortunate; but he is now entering a phase in which adequate professional knowledge coöperates with good taste to define the limits within which his imagination may legitimately work. I know not where to look, within the last quarter of a century or so, for more tasteful designs, greater sincerity of purpose, or happier adaptations to environment than the best creations of men like Mr. H.H. Richardson, Mr. R.M. Hunt, Mr. J.W. Root, Mr. G.B. Post, and Messrs. McKim, Mead, and White. Some of the new residential streets of places as recent as Chicago or St. Paul more than hold their own, as it seems to me, with any contemporaneous thoroughfares of their own class in Europe. To my own opinion let me add the valuable testimony of Mr. E.A. Freeman, in his "Impressions of the United States" (pp. 246, 247):

> I found the modern churches, of various denominations, certainly better, as works of architecture, than I had expected. They may quite stand beside the average of modern churches in England, setting aside a few of the very best.... But I thought the churches, whose style is most commonly Gothic of one kind or another, decidedly less successful than

some of the civil buildings. In some of these, I hardly know how far by choice, how far by happy accident, a style has been hit upon which seemed to me far more at home than any of the reproductions of Gothic. Much of the street architecture of several cities has very successfully caught the leading idea of the true Italian style.

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New York, the gateway to America for, perhaps, nine out of ten visitors, is described by Mr. Richard Grant White, the American writer, as "the dashing, dirty, demi-rep of cities." Mr. Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras, calls it "an iron-fronted, iron-footed, and iron-hearted town." Miss Florence Marryat asserts that New York is "*without any exception* the most charming city she has ever been in." Miss Emily Faithful admits that at first it seems rough and new, but says that when one returns to it from the West, one recognises that it has everything essential in common with his European experiences. In my own note-book I find that New York impressed me as being "like a lady in ball costume, with diamonds in her ears, and her toes out at her boots."

Here, then, is evidence that New York makes a pretty strong impression on her guests, and that this impression is not by any means the same in every case. New York is evidently a person of character, and of a character with many facets. To most European visitors it must, on the *whole*, be somewhat of a disappointment; and it is not really an advantageous or even a characteristic portal to the American continent. For one thing, it is too overwhelmingly cosmopolitan in the composition of its population to strike the distinctive American note. It is not alone that New York society imitates that of France and England in a more pronounced way than I found anywhere else in America, but the names one sees over the shops seem predominantly German and Jewish, accents we are familiar with at home resound in our ears, the quarters we are first introduced to recall the dinginess and shabbiness of the waterside quarters of cities like London and Glasgow. More intimate acquaintance finds much that is strongly American in New York; but this is not the first impression, and first impressions count for so much that it seems to me a pity that New York is for most travellers the prologue to their American experiences.

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The contrasts between the poverty and wealth of New York are so extreme as sometimes to suggest even London, where misery and prosperity rub shoulders in a more heartrending way than, perhaps, anywhere else in the wide world. But the contrasts that strike even the most unobservant visitor to the so-called American "metropolis" are of a different nature. When I was asked by American friends what had most struck me in America, I sometimes answered, if in malicious mood, "The fact that the principal street of the largest and richest city in the Union is so miserably paved;" and, indeed, my recollections of the holes in Broadway, and of the fact that in wintry weather I had sometimes to diverge into University Place in order to avoid a mid-shin crossing of liquid mud in Broadway, seem as strange as if they related to a dream.[24] New York, again, possesses some of the most sumptuous private residences in the world, often adorned in particular with exquisite carvings in stone, such as Europeans have sometimes furnished for a cathedral or minster, but which it has been reserved for republican simplicity to apply to the residence of a private citizen.[25] Yet it is by no means *ausgeschlossen*, as the Germans say, that the pavement in front of this abode of luxury may not be seamed by huge cracks and rents that make walking after nightfall positively dangerous.

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Fifth Avenue is not, to my mind, one of the most attractive city streets in the United States, but it is, perhaps, the one that makes the greatest impression of prosperity. It is eminently solid and substantial; it reeks with respectability and possibly dulness. It is a very alderman among streets. The shops at its lower end, and gradually creeping up higher like the modest guest of the parable, make no appeal to the lightly pursed, but are as aristocratic-looking as those of Hanover Square. Its hotels and clubs are equally suggestive of well-lined pockets. Its churches more than hint at golden offertories; and the visitor is not surprised to be assured (as he infallibly will be) that the pastor of one of them preaches every Sunday to "two hundred and fifty million dollars." Even the beautiful Roman Catholic cathedral lends its aid to this impression,

and encourages the faithful by a charge of fifteen to twenty-five cents for a seat. The "stoops" of the lugubrious brown sandstone houses seem to retain something more of their Dutch origin than the mere name. The Sunday Parade here is better dressed than that of Hyde Park, but candour compels me to admit, at the expense of my present point, considerably less stiff and non-committal. Indeed, were it not for the [Pg 196] miserable horses of the "stage lines" Fifth Avenue might present a clean bill of unimpeachable affluence.

Madison Avenue, hitherto uninvaded by shops, rivals Fifth Avenue in its suggestions of extreme well-to-do-ness, and should be visited, if for no other reason, to see the Tiffany house, one of the most daring and withal most captivating experiments known to me in city residences.

Unlike those of many other American cities, the best houses of New York are ranged side by side without the interposition of the tiniest bit of garden or greenery; it is only in the striking but unfinished Riverside Drive, with its grand views of the Hudson, that architecture derives any aid whatsoever from natural formations or scenic conditions. The student of architecture should not fail to note the success with which the problem of giving expression to a town house of comparatively simple outline has often been tackled, and he will find many charming single features, such as doors, or balconies, or windows. Good examples of these are the exquisite oriel and other decorative features of the house of Mr. W.K. Vanderbilt, by Mr. Hunt, in Fifth Avenue, at the corner of 52d Street, and specimens will also be found in 34th, 36th, 37th, 43d, 52d, 56th, and 57th Streets, near their junction with Fifth Avenue. The W.H. Vanderbilt houses (Fifth Avenue, between 50th and 51st Streets) have been described as "brown-stone boxes with architecture appliqué;" but the applied carving, though meaningless enough as far as its position goes, is so exquisite in itself as to deserve more than a passing glance. The iron railings which surround the houses are beautiful specimens of metal-work. The house of Mr. Cornelius [Pg 197] Vanderbilt, a little farther up the avenue, with its red brick and slates, and its articulations and dormers of grey limestone, is a good example of an effective use of colour in domestic architecture—an effect which the clear, dry climate of New York admits and perpetuates.[26] The row of quiet oldtime houses on the north side of Washington Square will interest at least the historical student of architecture, so characteristic are they of times of restfulness and peace to which New York has long been a stranger. Down towards the point of the island, in the "city" proper, the visitor will find many happy creations for modern mercantile purposes, besides such older objects of architectural interest as Trinity Church and the City Hall, praised by Professor Freeman and many other connoisseurs of both continents. Among these business structures may be named the "Post Building," the building of the Union Trust Company (No. 80 Broadway), and the Guernsey Building (also in Broadway). At the extreme apex of Manhattan Island lie the historic Bowling Green and Battery Park, the charm of which has not been wholly annihilated by the intrusion of the elevated railway. Here rises the huge rotunda of Castle Garden, through which till lately all the immigrants to New York made their entry into the New World. Surely this has a pathetic interest of its own when we consider what this landing meant to so many thousands of the poor and needy. A suitable motto for its hospitable portals would have been, "Imbibe new hope, all ye who enter here." [Pg 198]

As I have said, there is no lack of good Americanism in New York. Let the Englishman who does not believe in an American school of sculpture look at St. Gaudens' statue of Admiral Farragut in Madison Square, and say where we have a better or as good a single figure in any of our streets. Let him who thinks that fine public picture galleries are confined to Europe go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art,[27] with its treasures by Rembrandt and Rubens, Holbein and Van Dyck, Frans Hals and Teniers, Reynolds and Hogarth, Meissonier and Detaille, Rosa Bonheur and Troyon, Corot and Breton. Let the admirer of engineering marvels, after he has sufficiently appreciated the elastic strength of the Brooklyn Suspension Bridge, betake himself to the other end of the island and enjoy the more solid, but in their way no less imposing, proportions of the Washington Bridge over the Harlem, and let

him choose his route by the Ninth-avenue Elevated Railroad with its dizzy curve at 110th street. And, finally, let not the lover of the picturesque fail to enjoy the views from the already named Riverside Drive, the cleverly created beauties of Central Park, and the district known as Washington Heights.

The Englishman in New York will probably here make his first acquaintance with the American system of street nomenclature; and if he at once masters its few simple principles, it will be strange if he does not find it of great utility and convenience. The objection usually made to it is that the numbering of streets, instead of naming [Pg 199] them, is painfully arithmetical, bald, and uninteresting; but if a man stays long enough to be really familiar with the streets, he will find that the bare numbers soon clothe themselves with association, and Fifth Avenue will come to have as distinct an individuality as Broadway, while 23d Street will call up as definite a picture of shopping activity as Bond Street or Piccadilly. The chief trouble is the facility of confusing such an address as No. 44 East 45th Street with No. 45 East 44th Street; and so natural is an inversion of the kind that one is sometimes heedless enough to make it in writing one's own address.

The transition from New York to Boston in a chapter like this is as inevitable as the tax-collector, though perhaps less ingenuity is now spent in the invention of anecdotes typical of the contrasts between these two cities since Chicago, by the capture of the World's Fair, drew upon herself the full fire of the satire-shotted guns of New York's rivalry. It seems to me, however, that in many ways there is much more similarity between New York and Chicago than between New York and Boston, and that it is easier to use the latter couple than the former to point a moral or adorn a tale. In both New York and Chicago the prevailing note is that of wealth and commerce, the dominant social impression is one of boundless material luxury, the atmosphere is thick with the emanations of those who hurry to be rich. I hasten to add that of course this is largely tempered by other tendencies and features; it would be especially unpardonable of me to forget the eminently intellectual, artistic, and refined aspects of New York life of which I was privileged to enjoy glimpses. In [Pg 200] Boston, however, there is something different. Mere wealth, even in these degenerate days, does not seem to play so important a part in her society. The names one constantly hears or sees in New York are names like Astor, Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, and Bradley-Martin, names which, whatever other qualities they connote, stand first and foremost for mere crude wealth. In Boston the prominent public names—the names that naturally occur to my mind as I think of Boston as I saw it—are Oliver Wendell Holmes, the poet and novelist; Eliot, the college president; Francis Walker, the political economist; Higginson, the generous cultivator of classical music; Robert Treat Paine, the philanthropist; Edward Everett Hale; and others of a more or less similar class. Again, in New York and in Chicago (Pullman, Marshall Field, Armour) the prominent names are emphatically men of to-day and seem to change with each generation. In Boston we have the names of the first governor and other leaders of the early settlers still shining in their descendants with almost undiminished lustre. The present mayor of Boston, for example, is a member of a family the name of which has been illustrious in the city's annals for two hundred years. He is the fifth of his name in the direct line to gain fame in the public service, and the third to occupy the mayor's chair. No less than sixteen immediate members of the family are recorded in the standard biographical dictionaries of America.

While doubtless the Attic tales of Bœotian dulness were at least as often well invented as true, it is perhaps the case that there is generally some ground for the popular caricatures of any given community. I duly discounted the humorous and [Pg 201] would-be humorous stories of Boston's pedantry that I heard in New York, and found that as a rule I had done right so to do. Blue spectacles are not more prominent in Boston than elsewhere; its theatres do not make a specialty of Greek plays; the little boys do not petition the Legislature for an increase in the hours of school. There yet remains, however, a basis of truth quite large enough to show the observer how the reputation was acquired. It is a solemn fact that what would appear in England as "No spitting allowed in this car" is translated in the electric cars of Boston into: "The

Board of Health hereby adjudges that the deposit of sputum in street-cars is a public nuisance."[28] The framer of this announcement would undoubtedly speak of the limbs of a piano and allude to a spade as an agricultural implement. And in social intercourse I have often noticed needless celerity in skating over ice that seemed to my ruder British sense quite well able to bear any ordinary weight, as well as a certain subtlety of allusiveness that appeared to exalt ingenuity of phrase at the expense of common sense and common candour. Too high praise cannot easily be given to the Boston Symphony Concerts; but it is difficult to avoid a suspicion of affectation in the severe criticism one hears of the conductor whenever he allows a little music of a lighter class than usual to appear on the programme.

Boston is, in its way, as prolific of contrasts as any part of the United States. There is certainly no more cultivated centre in the country, and yet the letter *r* is as badly maltreated by the Boston scholar as by the veriest cockney. To the ear of Boston *centre* has precisely the same sound as the name of the heroine of Wagner's "Flying [Pg 202] Dutchman," and its most cultivated graduates speak of Herbert Spenc*ah*'s Data*r* of Ethics. The critical programmes of the Symphony Concerts are prepared by one of the ablest of living musical critics, and are scholarly almost to excess; yet, as the observant Swiss critic, M. Wagnière, has pointed out, their refined and subtle text has to endure the immediate juxtaposition of the advertisements of tea-rooms and glove-sellers. Boston has the deserved reputation of being one of the best-governed cities in America, yet some of its important streets seldom see a municipal watering-cart, dust flies in clouds both summer and winter, and myriads of life-endangering bicycles shoot through its thoroughfares at night without lamps. The Boston matron holds up her hands in sanctified horror at the freedom of Western manners, and yet it is a local saying, founded on a solid basis of fact, that Kenney & Clark (a well-known firm of livery-stable keepers) are the only chaperon that a Boston girl needs in going to or from a ball. The Bostonians are not the least intelligent of mortals, and yet I know no other city in America which is content with such an anomalous system of hack hire, where no reduction in rate is made for the number of persons. One person may drive in a comfortable two-horse brougham to any point within Boston proper for 50 cents; two persons pay $1, three persons $1.50, and so on. My advice to a quartette of travellers visiting Boston is to hire *four* carriages at once and *go in a procession*, until they find a liveryman who sees the point.

One acute observer has pointed out that it is the men of New York who grow haggard, wrinkled, anxious-looking, and prematurely old in their desperate efforts to [Pg 203] provide diamonds and balls and Worth costumes and trips to Europe for their debonair, handsome, easy-going, and well-nourished spouses and daughters; while the men of Boston are "jolly dogs, who make money by legitimate trade instead of wild speculation, and show it in their countenances, illumined with the light of good cigars and champagne and other little luxuries," while their womankind are constantly worried by the New England conscience, and constantly creating anxieties for themselves where none exist. There is indeed a large amount of truth in this description, if allowance be made for pardonable exaggeration. It is among the women of Boston that one finds its traditional mantle of intellectuality worn most universally, and it is among the women of New York that one finds the most characteristic displays of love of pleasure and social triumphs. It is, perhaps, not a mere accident that the daughters of Boston's millionaires seem to marry their fellow-citizens rather than foreign noblemen. "None of *their* money goes to gild rococo coronets."

I have a good deal of sympathy with a Canadian friend who exclaimed: "Oh, Boston! I don't include *Boston* when I speak of the United States." Max O'Rell has similarly noted that if you wish to hear severe criticism of America you have only to go to Boston. "*Là on loue Boston et Angleterre, et l'on débine l'Amérique à dire d'experts.*" It would be a mistake, however, to infer that Boston is not truly American, or that it devotes itself to any voluntary imitation of England. In a very deep sense Boston is one of the most intensely American cities in the Union; it represents, perhaps, the finest development of many of the most characteristic ideals of Americanism. Its [Pg 204]

resemblances to England seem to be due to the simple fact that like causes produce like results. The original English stock by which Boston was founded has remained less mixed here than, perhaps, in any other city of America; and the differences between the descendants of the Puritans who emigrated and the descendants of those of them who remained at home are not complicated by a material infusion of alien blood in either case. The independence of the original settlers, their hatred of coercion and tyranny, have naturally grown with two centuries and a half of democracy; even the municipal administration has not been wholly captured by the Irish voter. The Bostonian has, to a very appreciable extent, solved the problem of combining the virtues of democracy with the manners of aristocracy; and I know not where you will find a better type of the American than the Boston gentleman: patriotic with enlightened patriotism; finely mannered even to the class immediately below his own; energetic, but not a slave to the pursuit of wealth; liberal in his religion, but with something of the Puritan conscience still lying *perdu* beneath his universalism; distributing his leisure between art, literature, and outdoor occupations; a little cool in his initial manner to strangers, but warmly hospitable when his confidence in your merit is satisfied. We, in England, may well feel proud that the blood which flows in the veins of the ideal Bostonian is as distinctly and as truly English as that of our own Gladstones and Morleys, our Brownings and our Tennysons.

Prof. Hugo Münsterberg, of Berlin, writes thus of Boston and Chicago: "*Ja, Boston ist die Hauptstadt jenes jungen, liebenswerthen, idealistischen Amerikas* und wird es [Pg 205] bleiben; Chicago dagegen ist die *Hochburg der alten protzigen amerikanischen Dollarsucht, und die Weltausstellung schliesslich ist überhaupt nicht Amerika, sondern chicagosirtes Europa.*" Whatever may be thought of the first part of this judgment, the second member of it seems to me rather unfair to Chicago and emphatically so as regards the Chicago exhibition.

Since 1893 Chicago ought never to be mentioned as Porkopolis without a simultaneous reference to the fact that it was also the creator of the White City, with its Court of Honour, perhaps the most flawless and fairy-like creation, on a large scale, of man's invention. We expected that America would produce the largest, most costly, and most gorgeous of all international exhibitions; but who expected that she would produce anything so inexpressibly poetic, chaste, and restrained, such an absolutely refined and soul-satisfying picture, as the Court of Honour, with its lagoon and gondolas, its white marble steps and balustrades, its varied yet harmonious buildings, its colonnaded vista of the great lake, its impressive fountain, its fairy-like outlining after dark by the gems of electricity, its spacious and well-modulated proportions which made the largest crowd in it but an unobtrusive detail, its air of spontaneity and inevitableness which suggested nature itself, rather than art? No other scene of man's creation seemed to me so perfect as this Court of Honour. Venice, Naples, Rome, Florence, Edinburgh, Athens, Constantinople, each in its way is lovely indeed; but in each view of each of these there is some jarring feature, something that we have to *ignore* in order to thoroughly lose ourselves in the beauty of the scene. The Court of Honour was practically blameless; the æsthetic sense of [Pg 206] the beholder was as fully and unreservedly satisfied as in looking at a masterpiece of painting or sculpture, and at the same time was soothed and elevated by a sense of amplitude and grandeur such as no single work of art could produce. The glamour of old association that illumines Athens or Venice was in a way compensated by our deep impression of the pathetic transitoriness of the dream of beauty before us, and by the revelation it afforded of the soul of a great nation. For it will to all time remain impossibly ridiculous to speak of a country or a city as wholly given over to the worship of Mammon which almost involuntarily gave birth to this ethereal emanation of pure and uneconomic beauty.

Undoubtedly there are few things more dismal than the sunless cañons which in Chicago are called streets; and the luckless being who is concerned there with retail trade is condemned to pass the greater part of his life in unrelieved ugliness. Things, however, are rather better in the "office" quarter; and he who is ready to admit that

exigency of site gives some excuse for "elevator architecture" will find a good deal to interest him in its practice at Chicago. Indeed, no one can fail to wonder at the marvellous skill of architectural engineering which can run up a building of twenty stories, the walls of which are merely a veneer or curtain. Few will cavil at the handsome and comfortable equipment of the best interiors; but, given the necessity of their existence, the wide-minded lover of art will find something to reward his attention even in their exteriors. In many instances their architects have succeeded admirably in steering a middle course between the ornate style of a palace on the [Pg 207] one hand and the packing case with windows on the other; and the observer might unreservedly admire the general effect were it not for the crick in his neck that reminds him most forcibly that he cannot get far enough away for a proper estimate of the proportions. Any city might feel proud to count amid its commercial architecture such features as the entrance of the Phenix Building, the office of the American Express Company, and the monumental Field Building, by Richardson, with what Mr. Schuyler calls its grim utilitarianism of expression; and the same praise might, perhaps, be extended to the Auditorium, the Owings Building, the Rookery, and some others. In non-commercial architecture Chicago may point with some pride to its City Hall, its University, its libraries, the admirable Chicago Club (the old Art Institute), and the new Art Institute on the verge of Lake Michigan. Of its churches the less said the better; their architecture, regarded as a studied insult to religion, would go far to justify the highly uncomplimentary epithet Mr. Stead applied to Chicago.

In some respects Chicago deserves the name City of Contrasts, just as the United States is the Land of Contrasts; and in no way is this more marked than in the difference between its business and its residential quarters. In the one—height, narrowness, noise, monotony, dirt, sordid squalor, pretentiousness; in the other—light, space, moderation, homelikeness. The houses in the Lake Shore Drive, the Michigan Boulevard, or the Drexel Boulevard are as varied in style as the brown-stone mansions of New York are monotonous; they face on parks or are surrounded with gardens of their own; they are seldom ostentatiously large; they suggest [Pg 208] comfort, but not offensive affluence; they make credible the possession of some individuality of taste on the part of their owners. The number of massive round openings, the strong rusticated masonry, the open loggie, the absence of mouldings, and the red-tiled roofs suggest to the cognoscenti that Mr. H.H. Richardson's spirit was the one which brooded most efficaciously over the domestic architecture of Chicago. The two houses I saw that were designed by Mr. Richardson himself are undoubtedly not so satisfactory as some of his public buildings, but they had at least the merit of interest and originality; some of the numerous imitations were by no means successful.

The parks of Chicago are both large and beautiful. They contain not a few very creditable pieces of sculpture, among which Mr. St. Gaudens' statue of Lincoln is conspicuous as a wonderful triumph of artistic genius over unpromising material. The show of flowers in the parks is not easily paralleled in public domains elsewhere. Of these, rather than of its stockyards and its lightning rapidity in pig-sticking, will the visitor who wishes to think well of Chicago carry off a mental picture.

The man who has stood on Inspiration Point above Oakland and has watched the lights of San Francisco gleaming across its noble bay, or who has gazed down on the Golden Gate from the heights of the Presidio, must have an exceptionally rich gallery of memory if he does not feel that he has added to its treasures one of the most entrancing city views he has ever witnessed. The situation of San Francisco is indeed that of an empress among cities. Piled tier above tier on the hilly knob at the north [Pg 209] end of a long peninsula, it looks down on the one side over the roomy waters of San Francisco Bay (fifty miles long and ten miles wide), backed by the ridge of the Coast Range, while in the other direction it is reaching out across the peninsula, here six miles wide, to the placid expanse of the Pacific Ocean. On the north the peninsula ends abruptly in precipitous cliffs some hundreds of feet high, while a similar peninsula, stretching southwards, faces it in a similar massive promontory, separated

by a scant mile of water. This is the famous Golden Gate, the superb gateway leading from the ocean to the shelters of the bay. To the south the eye loses itself among the fertile valleys of corn and fruit stretching away toward the Mexican frontier.

When we have once sated ourselves with the general effect, there still remains a number of details, picturesque, interesting, or quaint. There is the Golden Gate Park, the cypresses and eucalypti at one end of which testify to the balminess of the climate, while the sand-dunes at its other end show the original condition of the whole surface of the peninsula, and add to our admiration of nature a sense of respectful awe for the transforming energy of man. Beyond Golden Gate Park we reach Sutro Heights, another desert that has been made to blossom like the rose. Here we look out over the Pacific to the musically named Farralone Islands, thirty miles to the west. Then we descend for luncheon to the Cliff House below, and watch the uncouth gambols of hundreds of fat sea-lions (Spanish *lobos marinos*), which, strictly protected from the rifle or harpoon, swim, and plunge, and bark unconcernedly within a stone's throw of the observer. The largest of these animals are fifteen feet long and weigh about a ton; and it is said that certain individuals, [Pg 210] recognisable by some peculiarity, are known to have frequented the rocks for many years. On our way back to the lower part of the city we use one of the cable-cars crawling up and down the steep inclines like flies on a window-pane; and we find, if the long polished seat of the car be otherwise unoccupied, that we have positive difficulty in preventing ourselves slipping down from one end of the car to the other. By this time the strong afternoon wind[29] has set in from the sea, and we notice with surprise that the seasoned Friscans, still clad in the muslins and linens that seemed suitable enough at high noon, seek by preference the open seats of the locomotive car, while we, puny visitors, turn up our coat-collars and flee to the shelter of the "trailer" or covered car. As we come over "Nob Hill" we take in the size of the houses of the Californian millionaires, note that they are of wood (on account of the earthquakes?), and bemoan the misdirected efforts of their architects, who, instead of availing themselves of the unique chance of producing monuments of characteristically developed timber architecture, have known no better than to slavishly imitate the incongruous features of stone houses in the style of the [Pg 211] Renaissance. Indeed, we shall feel that San Francisco is badly off for fine buildings of all and every kind. If daylight still allows we may visit the Mission Dolores, one of the interesting old Spanish foundations that form the origin of so many places in California, and if we are historically inclined we may inspect the old Spanish grants in the Surveyor-General's office. Those of us whose tastes are modern and literary may find our account in identifying some of the places in R.L. Stevenson's "Ebb Tide," and it will go hard with us if we do not also meet a few of his characters amid the cosmopolitan crowd in the streets or on the wharves. At night we may visit China without the trouble of a voyage, and perambulate a city of 25,000 Celestials under the safe guidance of an Irish-accented detective. So often have the features of Chinatown been described—its incense-scented joss-houses, its interminable stage-plays, its opium-joints, its drug-stores with their extraordinary remedies, its curiosity shops, and its restaurants—that no repetition need be attempted here. We leave it with a sense of the curious incongruity which allows this colony of Orientals to live in the most wide-awake of western countries with an apparently almost total neglect of such sanitary observances as are held indispensable in all other modern municipalities. It is certain that no more horrible sight could be seen in the extreme East than the so-called "Hermit of Chinatown," an insane devotee who has lived for years crouched in a miserable little outhouse, subsisting on the offerings of the charitable, and degraded almost beyond the pale of humanity by his unbroken silence, his blank immobility, and his neglect of all the decencies of life. And this is [Pg 212] an American resident, if not an American citizen! If the reader is as lucky as the writer, he may wind up the day with a smart shock of earthquake; and if he is equally sleepy and unintelligent (which Heaven forefend!), he may miss its keen relish by drowsily wondering what on earth they mean by moving that *very* heavy grand piano overhead at that time of night.

"Two-thirds of them come here to die, and they can't do it." This was said by the

famous Mr. Barnum about Colorado Springs; and the active life and cheerful manners of the condemned invalids who flourish in this charming little city go far to confirm the truth concealed beneath the jest. The land has insensibly sloped upwards since the traveller left the Mississippi behind him, and he now finds himself in a flowery prairie 6,000 feet above the sea level, while close by one of the finest sections of the Rocky Mountains rears its snowy peaks to a height of 6,000 to 8,000 feet more. The climate resembles that of Davos, and like it is preëminently suited for all predisposed to or already affected with consumption; but Colorado enjoys more sunshine than its Swiss rival, and has no disagreeable period of melting snow. The town is sheltered by the foothills, except to the southeast, where it lies open to the great plains; and, being situated where they meet the mountains, it enjoys the openness and free supply of fresh air of the seashore, without its dampness. The name is somewhat of a misnomer, as the nearest springs are those of Manitou, about five miles to the north.

Colorado Springs may be summed up as an oasis of Eastern civilisation and finish in an environment of Western rawness and enterprise. It has been described as "a [Pg 213] charming big village, like the well-laid-out suburb of some large Eastern city." Its wide, tree-shaded streets are kept in excellent order. There is a refreshing absence of those "loose ends" of a new civilisation which even the largest of the Western cities are too apt to show. No manufactures are carried on, and no "saloons" are permitted. The inhabitants consist very largely of educated and refined people from the Eastern States and England, whose health does not allow them to live in their damper native climes. The tone of the place is a refreshing blend of the civilisation of the East and the unconventionalism of the West. Perhaps there is no pleasanter example of extreme social democracy. The young man of the East, unprovided with a private income, finds no scope here for his specially trained capacities, and is glad to turn an honest penny and occupy his time with anything he can get. Thus there are gentlemen in the conventional sense of the word among many of the so-called humbler callings, and one may rub shoulders at the charming little clubs with an Oxford-bred livery-stable keeper or a Harvard graduate who has turned his energies toward the selling of milk. Few visitors to Colorado Springs will fail to carry away a grateful and pleasant impression of the English doctor who has found vigorous life and a prosperous career in the place of exile to which his health condemned him in early manhood, and who has repaid the place for its gift of vitality by the most intelligent and effective championship of its advantages. These latter include an excellent hotel and a flourishing college for delicate girls and boys.

Denver, a near neighbour of Colorado Springs (if we speak *more Americano*), is an excellent example, both in theory and practice, of the confident expectation of [Pg 214] growth with which new American cities are founded. The necessary public buildings are not huddled together as a nucleus from which the municipal infant may grow outwards; but a large and generous view is taken of the possibilities of expansion. Events do not always justify this sanguine spirit of forethought. The capitol at Washington still turns its back on the city of which it was to be the centre as well as the crown. In a great number of cases, however, hope and fact eventually meet together. The capitol of Bismarck, chief town of North Dakota, was founded in 1883, nearly a mile from the city, on a rising site in the midst of the prairie. It has already been reached by the advancing tide of houses, and will doubtless, in no long time, occupy a conveniently central situation. Denver is an equally conspicuous instance of the same tendency. The changes that took place in that city between the date of my visit to it and the reading of the proof-sheets of "Baedeker's United States" a year or so later demanded an almost entire rewriting of the description. Doubtless it has altered at least as much since then, and very likely the one or two slightly critical remarks of the handbook of 1893 are already grossly libellous. Denver quadrupled its population between 1880 and 1890. The value of its manufactures and of the precious ores smelted here reaches a fabulous amount of millions of dollars. The usual proportion of "million" and "two million dollar buildings" have been erected. Many of the principal streets are (most wonderful of all!) excellently paved and kept reasonably clean. But the crowning glory of Denver for every intelligent traveller is

its magnificent view of the Rocky Mountains, which are seen to the West in an unbroken line of at least one hundred and fifty miles. Though forty miles distant, they look, owing to the purity of the atmosphere, as if they were within a walk of two or three hours. Denver is fond of calling herself the "Queen City of the Plains," and few will grudge the epithet queenly if it is applied to the possession of this matchless outlook on the grandest manifestations of nature. If the Denver citizen brags more of his State Capitol, his Metropole Hotel (no accent, please!), and his smelting works than of his snow-piled mountains and abysmal cañons, he only follows a natural human instinct in estimating most highly that which has cost him most trouble.

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Mr. James Bryce has an interesting chapter on the absence of a capital in the United States. By capital he means "a city which is not only the seat of political government, but is also by the size, wealth, and character of its population the head and centre of the country, a leading seat of commerce and industry, a reservoir of financial resources, the favoured residence of the great and powerful, the spot in which the chiefs of the learned professions are to be found, where the most potent and widely read journals are published, whither men of literary and scientific capacity are drawn." New York journalists, with a happy disregard of the historical connotation of language, are prone to speak of their city as a metropolis; but it is very evident that the most liberal interpretation of the word cannot elevate New York to the relative position of such European metropolitan cities as Paris or London. Washington, the nominal capital of the United States, is perhaps still farther from satisfying Mr. Bryce's definition. It certainly is a relatively small city, and it is not a leading seat of trade, manufacture, or finance. It is also true that its journals do not rank among the leading papers of the land; but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that every important American journal has its Washington correspondent, and that in critical times the letters of these gentlemen are of very great weight. As the seat of the Supreme Judicial Bench of the United States, it has as good a claim as any other American city to be the residence of the "chiefs of the learned professions;" and it is quite remarkable how, owing to the great national collections and departments, it has come to the front as the main focus of the scientific interests of the country. The Cosmos Club's list of members is alone sufficient to illustrate this. Its attraction to men of letters has proved less cogent; but the life of an eminent literary man of (say) New Orleans or Boston is much more likely to include a prolonged visit to Washington than to any other American city not his own. The Library of Congress alone, now magnificently housed in an elaborately decorated new building, is a strong magnet. In the same way there is a growing tendency for all who can afford it to spend at least one season in Washington. The belle of Kalamazoo or Little Rock is not satisfied till she has made her bow in Washington under the wing of her State representative, and the senator is no-wise loath to see his wife's tea-parties brightened by a bevy of the prettiest girls from his native wilds. University men throughout the Union, leaders of provincial bars, and a host of others have often occasion to visit Washington. When we add to all this the army of government employees and the cosmopolitan element of the diplomatic corps, we can easily see that, so far as "society" is concerned, Washington is more like a European capital than any other American city. Nothing is more amusing—for a short time, at least—than a round of the teas, dinners, receptions, and balls of Washington, where the American girl is seen in all her glory, with captives of every clime, from the almond-eyed Chinaman to the most faultlessly correct Piccadilly exquisite, at her dainty feet. I never saw a bevy of more beautiful women than officiated at one senatorial afternoon tea I visited; so beautiful were they as to make me entirely forget what seemed to my untutored European taste the absurdity of their wearing low-necked evening gowns while their guests sported hat and jacket and fur. The whole tone of Washington society from the President downward is one of the greatest hospitality and geniality towards strangers. The city is beautifully laid out, and its plan may be described as that of a wheel laid on a gridiron, the rectangular arrangement of the streets having superimposed on it a system of radiating avenues, lined with trees and named for the different States of the Union. The city is governed and kept admirably in order by a board of commissioners appointed by the President. The sobriquet of

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"City of Magnificent Distances," applied to Washington when its framework seemed unnecessarily large for its growth, is still deserved, perhaps, for the width of its streets and the spaciousness of its parks and squares. The floating white dome of the Capitol dominates the entire city, and almost every street-vista ends in an imposing public building, a mass of luxuriant greenery, or at the least a memorial statue. The little wooden houses of the coloured squatters that used to alternate freely with the [Pg 218] statelier mansions of officialdom are now rapidly disappearing; and some, perhaps, will regret the obliteration of the element of picturesqueness suggested in the quaint contrast. The absence of the wealth-suggesting but artistically somewhat sordid accompaniments of a busy industrialism also contributes to Washington's position as one of the most singularly handsome cities on the globe. Among the other striking features of the American capital is the Washington Memorial, a huge obelisk raising its metal-tipped apex to a height of five hundred and fifty-five feet. There are those who consider this a meaningless pile of masonry; but the writer sympathises rather with the critics who find it, in its massive and heaven-reaching simplicity, a fit counterpart to the Capitol and one of the noblest monuments ever raised to mortal man. When gleaming in the westering sun, like a slender, tapering, sky-pointing finger of gold, no finer index can be imagined to direct the gazer to the record of a glorious history. Near the monument is the White House, a building which, in its modest yet adequate dimensions, embodies the democratic ideal more fitly, it may be feared, than certain other phases of the Great Republic. Without cataloguing the other public buildings of Washington, we may quit it with a glow of patriotic fervour over the fact that the Smithsonian Institute here, one of the most important scientific institutions in the world, was founded by an Englishman, who, so far as is known, never even visited the United States, but left his large fortune for "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men," to the care of that country with whose generous and popular principles he was most in sympathy.

FOOTNOTES:

[24] This refers to 1893; things are much better now.

[25] This suggestion of topsy-turvydom in the relations of God and Mammon is much intensified when we find an apartment house like the "Osborne" towering high above the church-spire on the opposite side of the way, or see Trinity Church simply smothered by the contiguous office buildings.

[26] Compare Montgomery Schuyler's "American Architecture," an excellent though brief account and appreciation of modern American building.

[27] The position of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is so assured that in 1896 its trustees declined a bequest of 90 paintings (claiming to include specimens of Velazquez, Titian, Rubens, and other great artists), because it was hampered with the condition that it had to be accepted and exhibited *en bloc*.

[28] This was changed to simple English in 1898.

[29] It is to this wind, the temperature of which varies little all the year round, that San Francisco owes her wonderfully equable climate, which is never either too hot or too cold for comfortable work or play. The mean annual temperature is about 57° Fahr., or rather higher than that of New York; but while the difference between the mean of the months is 40° at the latter city, it is about 10° only at the Golden Gate. The mean of July is about 60°, that of January about 50°. September is a shade warmer than July. Observations extending over 30 years show that the freezing point on the one hand and 80° Fahr. on the other are reached on an average only about half a dozen times a year. The hottest day of the year is more likely to occur in September than any other month.

XII

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Baedekeriana

This chapter deals with subjects related to the tourist and the guidebook, and with certain points of a more personal nature connected with the preparation of "Baedeker's Handbook to the United States." Readers uninterested in topics of so practical and commonplace a character will do well to skip it altogether.

When the scheme of publishing a "Baedeker" to the United States was originally entertained, the first thought was to invite an American to write the book for us. On more mature deliberation it was, however, decided that a member of our regular staff would, perhaps, do the work equally well, inasmuch as he would combine, with actual experience in the art of guidebook making, the stranger's point of view, and thus the more acutely realise, by experiment in his own *corpus vile*, the points on which the ignorant European would require advice, warning, or assistance. So far as my own voice had aught to do with this decision, I have to confess that I severely grudged the interesting task to an outsider. The opportunity of making a somewhat extensive survey of the country that stood preëminently for the modern ideas of democracy and progress was a peculiarly grateful one; and I even contrived to infuse (for my own consumption) a spice of the ideal into the homely brew of the guidebook [Pg 220] by reflecting that it would contribute (so far as it went) to that mutual knowledge, intimacy of which is perhaps all that is necessary to ensure true friendship between the two great Anglo-Saxon powers.

While thus reserving the editing of the book for one of our own household, we realised thoroughly that no approach to completeness would be attainable without the coöperation of the Americans themselves; and I welcome this opportunity to reiterate my keen appreciation of the open-handed and open-minded way in which this was accorded. Besides the signed articles by men of letters and science in the introductory part of the handbook, I have to acknowledge thousands of other kindly offices and useful hints, many of which hardly allow themselves to be classified or defined, but all of which had their share in producing aught of good that the volume may contain. So many Americans have used their Baedekers in Europe that I found troops of ready-made sympathisers, who, half-interested, half-amused, at the attempt to Baedekerise their own continent, knew pretty well what was wanted, and were able to put me on the right track for procuring information. Indeed, the book could hardly have been written but for these innumerable streams of disinterested assistance, which enabled the writer so to economise his time as to finish his task before the part first written was entirely obsolete.

The process of change in the United States goes on so rapidly that the attempt of a guidebook to keep abreast of the times (not easy in any country) becomes almost futile. The speed with which Denver metamorphosed her outward appearance has already been commented on at page 214; and this is but one instance in a thousand. [Pg 221] Towns spring up literally in a night. McGregor in Texas, at the junction of two new railways, had twelve houses the day after it was fixed upon as a town site, and in two months contained five hundred souls. Towns may also disappear in a night, as Johnstown (Penn.) was swept away by the bursting of a dam on May 31, 1889, or as Chicago was destroyed by the great fire of 1871. These are simply exaggerated examples of what is happening less obtrusively all the time. The means of access to points of interest are constantly changing; the rough horse-trail of to-day becomes the stage-road of to-morrow and the railway of the day after. The conservative clinging to the old, so common in Europe, has no place in the New World; an apparently infinitesimal advantage will occasion a *bouleversement* that is by no means infinitesimal.

Next to the interest and beauty of the places to be visited, perhaps the two things in which a visitor to a new country has most concern are the means of moving from point to point and the accommodation provided for him at his nightly stopping-places —in brief, its conveyances and its inns. During the year or more I spent in almost

continuous travelling in the United States I had abundant opportunity of testing both of these. In all I must have slept in over two hundred different beds, ranging from one in a hotel-chamber so gorgeous that it seemed almost as indelicate to go to bed in it as to undress in the drawing-room, down through the berths of Pullman cars and river steamboats, to an open-air couch of balsam boughs in the Adirondack forests. My means of locomotion included a safety bicycle, an Adirondack canoe, the back of [Pg 222] a horse, the omnipresent buggy, a bob-sleigh, a "cutter," a "booby," four-horse "stages," river, lake, and sea-going steamers, horse-cars, cable-cars, electric cars, mountain elevators, narrow-gauge railways, and the Vestibuled Limited Express from New York to Chicago.

Perhaps it is significant of the amount of truth in many of the assertions made about travelling in the United States that I traversed about 35,000 miles in the various ways indicated above without a scratch and almost without serious detention or delay. Once we were nearly swamped in a sudden squall in a mountain lake, and once we had a minute or two's pleasant experience of the iron-shod heels of our horse *inside* the buggy, the unfortunate animal having hitched his hind-legs over the dash-board and nearly kicking out our brains in his frantic efforts to get free. These, however, were accidents that might have happened anywhere, and if my experiences by road and rail in America prove anything, they prove that travelling in the United States is just as safe as in Europe.[30] Some varieties of it are rougher than anything of the kind I know in the Old World; but on the other hand much of it is far pleasanter. The European system of small railway compartments, in spite of its advantage of privacy and quiet, would be simply unendurable in the long journeys that have to be made in the western hemisphere. The journey of twenty-four to thirty [Pg 223] hours from New York to Chicago, if made by the Vestibuled Limited, is probably less fatiguing than the day-journey of half the time from London to Edinburgh. The comforts of this superb train include those of the drawing-room, the dining-room, the smoking-room, and the library. These apartments are perfectly ventilated by compressed air and lighted by movable electric lights, while in winter they are warmed to an agreeable temperature by steam-pipes. Card-tables and a selection of the daily papers minister to the traveller's amusement, while bulletin boards give the latest Stock Exchange quotations and the reports of the Government Weather Bureau. Those who desire it may enjoy a bath *en route*, or avail themselves of the services of a lady's maid, a barber, a stenographer, and a type-writer. There is even a small and carefully selected medicine chest within reach; and the way in which the minor delicacies of life are consulted may be illustrated by the fact that powdered soap is provided in the lavatories, so that no one may have to use the same cake of soap as his neighbour.

No one who has not tried both can appreciate the immense difference in comfort given by the opportunity to move about in the train. No matter how pleasant one's companions are in an English first-class compartment, their *enforced* proximity makes one heartily sick of them before many hours have elapsed; while a conversation with Daisy Miller in the American parlour car is rendered doubly delightful by the consciousness that you may at any moment transfer yourself and your *bons mots* to Lydia Blood at the other end of the car, or retire with Gilead P. Beck to the snug little smoking-room. The great size and weight of the American cars [Pg 224] make them very steady on well-laid tracks like those of the Pennsylvania Railway, and thus letter-writing need not be a lost art on a railway journey. Even when the permanent way is inferior, the same cause often makes the vibration less than on the admirable road-beds of England.

Theoretically, there is no distinction of classes on an American railway; practically, there is whenever the line is important enough or the journey long enough to make it worth while. The parlour car corresponds to our first class; and its use has this advantage (rather curious in a democratic country), that the increased fare for its admirable comforts is relatively very low, usually (in my experience) not exceeding $^1/_2$ *d.* a mile. The ordinary fare from New York to Boston (220 to 250 miles) is $5 (£1); a seat in a parlour car costs $1 (4*s.*), and a sleeping-berth $1.50 (6*s.*). Thus the

ordinary passenger pays at the rate of about $1^1/_4$ *d.* per mile, while the luxury of the Pullman may be obtained for an additional expenditure of just about $^1/_2$ *d.* a mile. The extra fare on even the Chicago Vestibuled Limited is only $8 (32*s.*) for 912 miles, or considerably less than $^1/_2$ *d.* a mile. These rates are not only less than the difference between first-class and third-class fares in Europe, but also compare very advantageously with the rates for sleeping-berths on European lines, being usually 50 to 75 per cent. lower. The parlour-car rates, however, increase considerably as we go on towards the West and get into regions where competition is less active. A good instance of this is afforded by the parlour-car fares of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which I select because it spans the continent with its own rails from the Atlantic to the Pacific; the principle on the United States lines is similar. The price of a "sleeper" ticket from Montreal to Fort William (998 miles) is $6, or about $^3/_5$ *d.* per mile; that from Banff to Vancouver (560 miles) is the same, or at the rate of about $^{14}/_{15}$ *d.* per mile. The rate for the whole journey from Halifax to Vancouver (3,362 miles) is about $^2/_3$ *d.* per mile.

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Travellers who prefer the privacy of the European system may combine it with the liberty of the American system by hiring, at a small extra rate, the so-called "drawing-room" or "state-room," a small compartment containing four seats or berths, divided by partitions from the rest of the parlour car. The ordinary carriage or "day coach" corresponds to the English second-class carriage, or, rather, to the excellent third-class carriages on such railways as the Midland. It does not, I think, excel them in comfort except in the greater size, the greater liberty of motion, and the element of variety afforded by the greater number of fellow-passengers. The seats are disposed on each side of a narrow central aisle, and are so arranged that the occupants can ride forward or backward as they prefer. Each seat holds two persons, but with some difficulty if either has any amplitude of bulk. The space for the legs is also very limited. The chief discomfort, however, is the fact that there is no support for the head and shoulders, though this disability might be easily remedied by a movable head-rest. Very little provision is made for hand luggage, the American custom being to "check" anything checkable and have it put in the "baggage car." Rugs are entirely superfluous, as the cars are far more likely to be too warm than too cold. The windows are usually another weak point. They move vertically as ours do, but up instead of down; and they are frequently made so that they cannot be opened more than a few inches. The handles by which they are lifted are very small, and afford very little purchase; and the windows are frequently so stiff that it requires a strong man to move them. I have often seen half a dozen passengers struggle in vain with a refractory glass, and finally have to call in the help of the brawny brakeman. This difficulty, however, is of less consequence from the fact that even if you can open your window, there is sure to be some one among your forty or fifty fellow-passengers who objects to the draught. Or if *you* object to the draught of a window in front of you, you have either to grin and bear it or do violence to your British diffidence in requesting its closure. The windows are all furnished with small slatted blinds, which can be arranged in hot weather so as to exclude the sun and let in the air. The conductor communicates with the engine-driver by a bell-cord suspended from the roof of the carriages and running throughout the entire length of the train. It is well to remember that this tempting clothes-rope is not meant for hanging up one's overcoat. Whatever be the reason, the plague of cinders from the locomotive smoke is often much worse in America than in England. As we proceed, they patter on the roof like hailstones, in a way that is often very trying to the nerves, and they not unfrequently make open windows a doubtful blessing, even on immoderately warm days. At intervals the brakeman carries round a pitcher of iced water, which he serves gratis to all who want it; and it is a pleasant sight on sultry summer days to see how the children welcome his coming. In some cases there is a permanent filter of ice-water with a tap in a corner of the car. At each end of the car is a lavatory, one for men and one for women. In spite, then, of the discomforts noted above, it may be asserted that the poor man is more comfortable on a long

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journey than in Europe; and that on a short journey the American system affords more entertainment than the European. When Richard Grant White announced his preference for the English system because it preserves the traveller's individuality, looks after his personal comfort, and carries all his baggage, he must have forgotten that it is practically first-class passengers only who reap the benefit of those advantages.

One most unpleasantly suggestive equipment of an American railway carriage is the axe and crowbar suspended on the wall for use in an accident. This makes one reflect that there are only two doors in an American car containing sixty people, whereas the same number of passengers in Europe would have six, eight, or even ten. This is extremely inconvenient in crowded trains (*e.g.*, in the New York Elevated), and might conceivably add immensely to the horrors of an accident. The latter reflection is emphasised by the fact that there are practically no soft places to fall on, sharp angles presenting themselves on every side, and the very arm-rests of the seats being made of polished iron.

There is always a smoking-car attached to the train, generally immediately after the locomotive or luggage van. Labourers in their working clothes and the shabbily clad in general are apt to select this car, which thus practically takes the place of third-class carriages on European railways. On the long-distance trains running to the [Pg 228] West there are emigrant cars which also represent our third-class cars, while the same function is performed in the South by the cars reserved for coloured passengers. In a few instances the trains are made up of first-class and second-class carriages actually so named. A "first-class ticket," however, in ordinary language means one for the universal day-coach as above described.

The ticket system differs somewhat from that in vogue in Europe, and rather curious developments have been the result. For short journeys the ticket often resembles the small oblong of pasteboard with which we are all familiar. For longer journeys it consists of a narrow strip of coupons, sometimes nearly two feet in length. If this is "unlimited" it is available at any time until used, and the holder may "stop over" at any intermediate station. The "limited" and cheaper ticket is available for a continuous passage only, and does not allow of any stoppages *en route*. The coupons are collected in the cars by the conductors in charge of the various sections of the line. The skill shown by these officials, passing through a long and crowded train after a stoppage, in recognising the newcomers and asking for their tickets, is often very remarkable. Sometimes the conductor gives a coloured counter-check to enable him to recognise the sheep whom he has already shorn. These checks are generally placed in the hat-band or stuck in the back of the seat. The conductor collects them just before he hands over the train to the charge of his successor. As many complaints are made by English travellers of the incivility of American conductors, I [Pg 229] may say that the first conductor I met found me, when he was on his rounds to collect his counter-checks, lolling back on my seat, with my hat high above me in the rack. I made a motion as if to get up for it, when he said, "Pray don't disturb yourself, sir; I'll reach up for it." Not all the conductors I met afterwards were as polite as this, but he has as good a right to pose as the type of American conductor as the overbearing ruffians who stalk through the books of sundry British tourists. In judging him it should be remembered that he democratically feels himself on a level with his passengers, that he would be insulted by the offer of a tip, that he is harassed all day long by hundreds of foolish questions from foolish travellers, that he has a great deal to do in a limited time, and that however "short" he may be with a male passenger he is almost invariably courteous and considerate to the unprotected female. Though his address may sometimes sound rather familiar, he means no disrespect; and if he takes a fancy to you and offers you a cigar, you need not feel insulted, and will probably find he smokes a better brand than your own.

A feature connected with the American railway system that should not be overlooked is the mass of literature prepared by the railway companies and distributed gratis to their passengers. The illustrated pamphlets issued by the larger companies are marvels of paper and typography, with really charming illustrations and a text that is

often clever and witty enough to suggest that authors of repute are sometimes tempted to lend their anonymous pens for this kind of work. But even the tiniest little "one-horse" railway distributes neat little "folders," showing conclusively that its [Pg 230] tracks lead through the Elysian Fields and end at the Garden of Eden. A conspicuous feature in all hotel offices is a large rack containing packages of these gaily coloured folders, contributed by perhaps fifty different railways for the use of the hotel guests.

Owing to the unlimited time for which tickets are available, and to other causes, a race of dealers in railway tickets has sprung up, who rejoice in the euphonious name of "scalpers," and often do a roaring trade in selling tickets at less than regular fares. Thus, if the fare from A to B be $10 and the return fare $15, it is often possible to obtain the half of a return ticket from a scalper for about $8. Or a man setting out for a journey of 100 miles buys a through ticket to the terminus of the line, which may be 400 miles distant. On this through ticket he pays a proportionally lower rate for the distance he actually travels, and sells the balance of his ticket to a scalper. Or if a man wishes to go from A to B and finds that a special excursion ticket there and back is being sold at a single fare ($10), he may use the half of this ticket and sell the other half to a scalper in B. It is obvious that anything he can get for it will be a gain to him, while the scalper *could* afford to give up to about $7 for it, though he probably will not give more than $4. The profession of scalper may, however, very probably prove an evanescent one, as vigorous efforts are being made to suppress him by legislative enactment.

Americans often claim that the ordinary railway-fare in the United States is less than in England, amounting only to 2 cents (1*d.*) per mile. My experience, however, leads [Pg 231] me to say that this assertion cannot be accepted without considerable deduction. It is true that in many States (including all the Eastern ones) there is a statutory fare of 2 cents per mile, but this (so far as I know) is not always granted for ordinary single or double tickets, but only on season, "commutation," or mileage tickets. The "commutation" tickets are good for a certain number of trips. The mileage tickets are books of small coupons, each of which represents a mile; the conductor tears out as many coupons as the passenger has travelled miles. This mileage system is an extremely convenient one for (say) a family, as the books are good until exhausted, and the coupons are available on any train (with possibly one or two exceptions) on any part of the system of the company issuing the ticket. Which of our enlightened British companies is going to be the first to win the hearts of its patrons by the adoption of this neat and easy device? Out West and down South the fares for ordinary tickets purchased at the station are often much higher than 2 cents a mile; on one short and very inferior line I traversed the rate was 7 cents ($3^1/_2$ *d.*) per mile. I find that Mr. W.M. Acworth calculates the average fare in the United States as $1^1/_4$ *d.* per mile as against $1^1/_6$ *d.* in Great Britain. Professor Hadley, an American authority, gives the rates as 2.35 cents and 2 cents respectively.

British critics would, perhaps, be more lenient in their animadversions on American railways, if they would more persistently bear in mind the great difference in the conditions under which railways have been constructed in the Old and the New World. In England, for example, the railway came *after* the thick settlement of a [Pg 232] district, and has naturally had to pay dearly for its privileges, and to submit to stringent conditions in regard to construction and maintenance. In the United States, on the other hand, the railways were often the first *roads* (hence rail*road* is the American name for them) in a new district, the inhabitants of which were glad to get them on almost any terms. Hence the cheap and provisional nature of many of the lines, and the numerous deadly level crossings. The land grants and other privileges accorded to the railway companies may be fairly compared to the road tax which we willingly submit to in England as the just price of an invaluable boon. This reflection, however, need not be carried so far as to cover with a mantle of justice *all* the railway concessions of America!

Two things in the American parlour-car system struck me as evils that were not only unnecessary, but easily avoidable. The first of these is that most illiberal regulation

which compels the porter to let down the upper berth even when it is not occupied. The object of this is apparently to induce the occupant of the lower berth to hire the whole "section" of two berths, so as to have more ventilation and more room for dressing and undressing. Presumably the parlour-car companies know their own business best; but it would seem to the average "Britisher" that such a petty spirit of annoyance would be likely to do more harm than good, even in a financial way. The custom would be more excusable if it were confined to those cases in which two people shared the lower berth. The custom is so unlike the usual spirit of the United States, where the practice is to charge a liberal round sum and then relieve you of all minor annoyances and exactions, that its persistence is somewhat of a mystery. [Pg 233]

The continuance of the other evil I allude to is still less comprehensible. The United States is proverbially the paradise of what it is, perhaps, now behind the times to term the gentler sex. The path of woman, old or new, in America is made smooth in all directions, and as a rule she has the best of the accommodation and the lion's share of the attention wherever she goes. But this is emphatically not the case on the parlour car. No attempt is made there to divide the sexes or to respect the privacy of a lady. If there are twelve men and four women on the car, the latter are not grouped by themselves, but are scattered among the men, either in lower or upper berths, as the number of their tickets or the courtesy of the men dictates. The lavatory and dressing-room for men at one end of the car has two or more "set bowls" (fixed in basins), and can be used by several dressers at once. The parallel accommodation for ladies barely holds one, and its door is provided with a lock, which enables a selfish bang-frizzler and rouge-layer to occupy it for an hour while a queue of her unhappy sisters remains outside. It is difficult to see why a small portion at one end of the car should not be reserved for ladies, and separated at night from the rest of the car by a curtain across the central aisle. Of course the passage of the railway officials could not be hindered, but the masculine passengers might very well be confined for the night to entrance and egress at their own end of the car. An improvement in the toilette accommodation for ladies also seems a not unreasonable demand. [Pg 234]

Miss Catherine Bates, in her "Year in the Great Republic," narrates the case of a man who was nearly suffocated by the fact that a slight collision jarred the lid of the top berth in which he was sleeping and snapped it to! This story *may* be true; but in the only top berths which I know the occupant *lies* upon the lid, which, to close, would have to spring *upwards* against his weight!

A third nuisance, or combination of benefit and nuisance, or benefit with a very strong dash of avoidable nuisance, is the train boy. This young gentleman, whose age varies from fifteen to fifty, though usually nearer the former than the latter, is one of the most conspicuous of the embryo forms of the great American speculator or merchant. He occupies with his stock in trade a corner in the baggage car or end carriage of the train, and makes periodical rounds throughout the cars, offering his wares for sale. These are of the most various description, ranging from the daily papers and current periodicals through detective stories and tales of the Wild West, to chewing-gum, pencils, candy, bananas, skull-caps, fans, tobacco, and cigars. His pleasing way is to perambulate the cars, leaving samples of his wares on all the seats and afterwards calling for orders. He does this with supreme indifference to the occupation of the passenger. Thus, you settle yourself comfortably for a nap, and are just succumbing to the drowsy god, when you feel yourself "taken in the abdomen," not (fortunately) by "a chunk of old red sandstone," but by the latest number of the *Illustrated American* or *Scribner's Monthly*. The rounds are so frequent that the door of the car never seems to cease banging or the cold draughts to cease blowing in on your bald head. Mr. Phil Robinson makes the very sensible suggestion that the train boy should have a little printed list of his wares which he could distribute throughout the train, whereupon the traveller could send for him when wanted. Another suggestion that I venture to present to this independent young trader is that he should provide himself with copies of the novels treating of the districts which the railway traverses. Thus, when I tried to procure from him "Ramona" in California, or "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains" in Tennessee, or "The Hoosier [Pg 235]

Schoolmaster" in Ohio, or "The Grandissimes" near New Orleans, the nearest he could come to my modest demand was "The Kreutzer Sonata" or the last effort of Miss Laura Jean Libbey, a popular American novelist, who describes in glowing colours how two aristocratic Englishmen, fighting a duel near London somewhere in the seventies, were interrupted by the heroine, who drove between them in a hansom *and pair* and received the shots in its panels! Out West, too, he could probably put more money in his pocket if he were disposed to put his pride there too. One pert youth in Arizona preferred to lose my order for cigars rather than bring the box to me for selection; he said "he'd be darned if he'd sling boxes around for me; I could come and choose for myself." However, when criticism has been exhausted it is an undeniable fact that the American Pullman cars are more comfortable and considerably cheaper than the so-called *compartiments de luxe* of European railways.

It is, perhaps, worth noting that the comfort of the engine-driver, or engineer as he is called *linguâ Americanâ*, is much better catered for in the United States than in [Pg 236] England. His cab is protected both overhead and at the sides, while his bull's-eye window permits him to look ahead without receiving the wind, dust, and snow in his eyes. The curious English conservatism which, apparently, believes that a driver will do his work better because exposed to almost the full violence of the elements always excites a very natural surprise in the American visitor to our shores.

The speed of American trains is as a rule slower than that of English ones, though there are some brilliant exceptions to this rule. I never remember dawdling along in so slow and apparently purposeless a manner as in crossing the arid deserts of Arizona—unless, indeed, it was in travelling by the Manchester and Milford line in Wales. The train on the branch between Raymond (a starting-point for the Yosemite) and the main line went so cannily that the engine-driver (an excellent marksman) shot rabbits from the engine, while the fireman jumped down, picked them up, and clambered on again at the end of the train. The only time the train had to be stopped for him was when the engineer had a successful right and left, the victims of which expired at some distance from each other. It should be said that there was absolutely no reason to hurry on this trip, as we had "lashins" of time to spare for our connection at the junction, and the passengers were all much interested in the sport.

At the other end of the scale are the trains which run from New York to Philadelphia (90 miles) in two hours, the train of the Reading Railway that makes the run of 55 miles from Camden to Atlantic City in 52 minutes, and the Empire State Express [Pg 237] which runs from New York to Buffalo ($436^1/_2$ miles) at the rate of over 50 miles an hour, including stops. These, however, are exceptional, and the traveller may find that trains known as the "Greased Lightning," "Cannon Ball," or "G-Whizz" do not exceed (if they even attain) 40 miles an hour. The possibility of speed on an American railway is shown by the record run of $436^1/_2$ miles in $6^3/_4$ hours, made on the New York Central Railroad in 1895 (= 64.22 miles per hour, exclusive of stops), and by the run of 148.8 miles in 137 minutes, made on the same railway in 1897. The longest unbroken runs of regular trains are one of 146 miles on the Chicago Limited train on the Pennsylvania route, and one of 143 miles by the New York Central Railway running up the Hudson to Albany. As experts will at once recognise, these are feats which compare well with anything done on this side of the Atlantic.

In the matter of accidents the comparison with Great Britain is not so overwhelmingly unfavourable as is sometimes supposed. If, indeed, we accept the figures given by Mullhall in his "Dictionary of Statistics," we have to admit that the proportion of accidents is five times greater in the United States than in the United Kingdom. The statistics collected by the Railroad Commissioners of Massachusetts, however, reduce this ratio to five to four. The safety of railway travelling differs hugely in different parts of the country. Thus Mr. E.B. Dorsey shows ("English and American Railways Compared") that the average number of miles a passenger can travel in Massachusetts without being killed is 503,568,188, while in the United Kingdom the number is only 172,965,362, leaving a very comfortable margin of over [Pg 238] 300,000,000 miles. On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that there are more

accidents in American railway travelling than in European, and very many of them from easily preventable causes. The whole spirit of the American continent in such matters is more "casual" than that of Europe; the American is more willing to "chance it;" the patriarchal régime is replaced by the every-man-for-himself-and-devil-take-the-hindmost system. When I hired a horse to ride up a somewhat giddy path to the top of a mountain, I was supplied (without warning) with a young animal that had just arrived from the breeding farm and had never even seen a mountain. Many and curious, when I regained my hotel, were the enquiries as to how he had behaved himself; and it was no thanks to them that I could report that, though rather frisky on the road, he had sobered down in the most sagacious manner when we struck the narrow upward trail. In America the railway passenger has to look out for himself. There is no checking of tickets before starting to obviate the risk of being in the wrong train. There is no porter to carry the traveller's hand-baggage and see him comfortably ensconced in the right carriage. When the train does start, it glides away silently without any warning bell, and it is easy for an inadvertent traveller to be left behind. Even in large and important stations there is often no clear demarcation between the platforms and the permanent way. The whole floor of the station is on one level, and the rails are flush with the spot from which you climb into the car. Overhead bridges or subways are practically unknown; and the arriving passenger has often to cross several lines of rails before reaching shore. The level crossing is, perhaps, inevitable at the present stage of railroad development in the United States, but its annual butcher's bill is so huge that one cannot help feeling it might be better safeguarded. Richard Grant White tells how he said to the station-master at a small wayside station in England, *à propos* of an overhead footbridge: "Ah, I suppose you had an accident through someone crossing the line, and then erected that?" "Oh, no," was the reply, "we don't wait for an accident." Mr. White makes the comment, "The trouble in America is that we *do* wait for the accident."

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When I left England in September, 1888, we sailed down the Mersey on one of those absolutely perfect autumn days, the very memory of which is a continual joy. I remarked on the beauty of the weather to an American fellow-passenger. He replied, half in fun, "Yes, this is good enough for England; but wait till you see our American weather!" As luck would have it, it was raining heavily when we steamed up New York harbour, and the fog was so dense that we could not see the statue of Liberty Enlightening the World, though we passed close under it. The same American passenger had expatiated to me during the voyage on the merits of the American express service. "You have no trouble with porters and cabs, as in the Old World; you simply point out your trunks to an express agent, give him your address, take his receipt, and you will probably find your trunks at the house when you arrive." We reached New York on a Saturday; I confidently handed over my trunk to a representative of the Transfer Company about 9 A.M., hied to my friend's house in Brooklyn, and saw and heard nothing more of my trunk till Monday morning!

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Such was the way in which two of my most cherished beliefs about America were dissipated almost before I set foot upon her free and sacred soil! It is, however, only fair to say that if I had assumed these experiences to be really characteristic, I should have made a grievous mistake. It is true that I afterwards experienced a good many stormy days in the United States, and found that the predominant weather in all parts of the country was, to judge from my apologetic hosts, the "exceptional;" but none the less I revelled in the bright blue, clear, sunny days with which America is so abundantly blessed, and came to sympathise very deeply with the depression that sometimes overtakes the American exile during his sojourn on our fog-bound coasts. So, too, I found the express system on the whole what our friend Artemus Ward calls "a sweet boon." Certainly it is as a rule necessary, in starting from a private house, to have one's luggage ready an hour or so before one starts one's self, and this is hardly so convenient as a hansom with you inside and your portmanteau on top; and it is also true that there is sometimes (especially in New York) a certain delay in the delivery of one's belongings. In nine cases out of ten, however, it was a great relief to get rid of the trouble of taking your luggage to or from the station, and feel yourself free to meet it at your own time and will. It was not often that I was reduced to such

straits as on one occasion in Brooklyn, when, at the last moment, I had to charter a green-grocer's van and drive down to the station in it, triumphantly seated on my portmanteau. [Pg 241]

The check system on the railway itself deserves almost unmitigated praise, and only needs to be understood to be appreciated. On arrival at the station the traveller hands over his impedimenta to the baggage master, who fastens a small metal disk, bearing the destination and a number, to each package, and gives the owner a duplicate check. The railway company then becomes responsible for the luggage, and holds it until reclaimed by presentation of the duplicate check. This system avoids on the one hand the chance of loss and trouble in claiming characteristic of the British system, and on the other the waste of time and expense of the Continental system of printed paper tickets. On arrival at his destination the traveller may hurry to his hotel without a moment's delay, after handing his check either to the hotel porter or to the so-called transfer agent, who usually passes through the train as it reaches an important station, undertaking the delivery of trunks and giving receipts in exchange for checks.

Besides the city express or transfer companies, the chief duty of which is to convey luggage from the traveller's residence to the railway station or *vice versa*, there are also the large general express companies or carriers, which send articles all over the United States. One of the most characteristic of these is the Adams Express Company, the widely known name of which has originated a popular conundrum with the query, "Why was Eve created?" This company began in 1840 with two men, a boy, and a wheelbarrow; now it employs 8,000 men and 2,000 wagons, and carries parcels over 25,000 miles of railway. The Wells, Fargo & Company Express operates over 40,000 miles of railway. [Pg 242]

Coaching in America is, as a rule, anything but a pleasure. It is true that the chance of being held up by "road agents" is to-day practically non-existent, and that the spectacle of a crowd of yelling Apaches making a stage-coach the pin-cushion for their arrows is now to be seen nowhere but in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. But the roads! No European who has done much driving in the United States can doubt for one moment that the required Man of the Hour is General Wade.[31] Even in the State of New York I have been in a stage that was temporarily checked by a hole two feet deep in the centre of the road, and that had to be emptied *and held up* while passing another part of the same road. In Virginia I drove over a road, leading to one of the most frequented resorts of the State, which it is simple truth to state offered worse going than any ordinary ploughed field. The wheels were often almost entirely submerged in liquid mud, and it is still a mystery to me how the tackle held together. To be jolted off one's seat so violently as to strike the top of the carriage was not a unique experience. Nor was the spending of ten hours in making thirty miles with four horses. In the Yellowstone one of the coaches of our party settled down in the midst of a slough of despond on the highway, from which it was finally extricated *backwards* by the combined efforts of twelve horses borrowed from the other coaches. Misery makes strange bedfellows, and the ingredients of a Christmas pudding are not more thoroughly shaken together or more inextricably mingled than stage-coach passengers in America are apt to be. The difficulties of the roads have developed the skill, courage, and readiness of the stage-coach men to an extraordinary degree, and I have never seen bolder or more dexterous driving than when California Bill or Colorado Jack rushed his team of four young horses down the breakneck slopes of these terrible highways. After one particularly hair-raising descent the driver condescended to explain that he was afraid to come down more slowly, lest the hind wheels should skid on the smooth rocky outcrop in the road and swing the vehicle sideways into the abyss. In coming out of the Yosemite, owing to some disturbance of the ordinary traffic arrangements our coach met the incoming stage at a part of the road so narrow that it seemed absolutely impossible for the two to pass each other. On the one side was a yawning precipice, on the other the mountain rose steeply from the roadside. The off-wheels of the incoming coach were tilted up on the hillside as far as they could be without an upset. In vain; our hubs [Pg 243]

still locked. We were then allowed to dismount. Our coach was backed down for fifty yards or so. Small heaps of stones were piled opposite the hubs of the stationary coach. Our driver whipped his horses to a gallop, ran his near-wheels over these stones so that their hubs were raised *above* those of the near-wheels of the other coach, and successfully made the dare-devil passage, in which he had not more than a couple of inches' margin to save him from precipitation into eternity. I hardly knew which to admire most—the ingenuity which thus made good in altitude what it lacked in latitude, or the phlegm with which the occupants of the other coach retained their seats throughout the entire episode. [Pg 244]

The Englishman arriving in Boston, say in the middle of the lovely autumnal weather of November, will be surprised to find a host of workmen in the Common and Public Garden busily engaged in laying down miles of portable "plank paths" or "board walks," elevated three or four inches above the level of the ground. A little later, when the snowy season has well set in, he will discover the usefulness of these apparently superfluous planks; and he will hardly be astonished to learn that the whole of the Northern States are covered in winter with a network of similar paths. These gangways are made in sections and numbered, so that when they are withdrawn from their summer seclusion they can be laid down with great precision and expedition. No statistician, so far as I know, has calculated the total length of the plank paths of an American winter; but I have not the least doubt that they would reach from the earth to the moon, if not to one of the planets.

The river and lake steamboats of the United States are on the average distinctly better than any I am acquainted with elsewhere. The much-vaunted splendours of such Scottish boats as the "Iona" and "Columba" sink into insignificance when compared with the wonderful vessels of the line plying from New York to Fall River. These steamers deserve the name of floating hotel or palace much more than even the finest ocean-liner, because to their sumptuous appointments they add the fact that they are, except under very occasional circumstances, *floating* palaces and not *reeling* or *tossing* ones. The only hotel to which I can honestly compare the "Campania" is the one at San Francisco in which I experienced my first earthquake. But even the veriest landsman of them all can enjoy the passage of Long Island Sound in one of these stately and stable vessels, whether sitting indoors listening to the excellent band in one of the spacious drawing-rooms in which there is absolutely no rude reminder of the sea, or on deck on a cool summer night watching the lights of New York gradually vanish in the black wake, or the moon riding triumphantly as queen of the heavenly host, and the innumerable twinkling beacons that safeguard our course. And when he retires to his cabin, pleasantly wearied by the glamour of the night and soothed by the supple stability of his floating home, he will find his bed and his bedroom twice as large as he enjoyed on the Atlantic, and may let the breeze enter, undeterred by fear of intruding wave or breach of regulation. If he takes a meal on board he will find the viands as well cooked and as dexterously served as in a fashionable restaurant on shore; he may have, should he desire it, all the elbow-room of a separate table, and nothing will suggest to him the confined limits of the cook's galley or the rough-and-ready ways of marine cookery. [Pg 245]

Little inferior to the Fall River boats are those which ascend the Hudson from New York to Albany, one of the finest river voyages in the world; and worthy to be compared with these are the Lake Superior steamers of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Among the special advantages of these last are the device by which meals are served in the fresh atmosphere of what is practically the upper deck, the excellent service of the neat lads who officiate as waiters and are said to be often college students turning an honest summer penny, and the frequent presence in the bill of fare of the *Coregonus clupeiformis*, or Lake Superior whitefish, one of the most toothsome morsels of the deep. Most of the other steamboat lines by which I travelled in the United States and Canada seemed to me as good as could be expected under the circumstances. There is, however, certainly room for improvement in some of the boats which ply on the St. Lawrence, and the Alaska service will probably grow steadily better with the growing rush of tourists. [Pg 246]

Another wonderful instance of British conservatism is the way in which we have stuck to the horrors of our own ferry-boat system long after America has shown us the way to cross a ferry comfortably. It is true that the American steam ferry-boats are not so graceful as ours, looking as they do like Noah's arks or floating houses, and being propelled by the grotesque daddy-long-leg-like arrangement of the walking-beam engine. They are, however, far more suitable for their purpose. The steamer as originally developed was, I take it, intended for long (or at any rate longish) voyages, and was built as far as possible on the lines of a sailing-vessel. The conservative John Bull never thought of modifying this shape, even when he adopted the steamboat for ferries such as that across the Mersey from Liverpool to Birkenhead. He still retained the sea-going form, and passengers had either to remain on a lofty deck, exposed to the full fury of the elements, or dive down into the stuffy depths of an unattractive cabin. As soon, however, as Brother Jonathan's keen brain had to concern itself with the problem, he saw the topsy-turvyness of this [Pg 247] arrangement. Hence in his ferry-boats there are no "underground" cabins, no exasperating flights of steps. We enter the ferry-house and wait comfortably under shelter till the boat approaches its "slip," which it does end on. The disembarking passengers depart by one passage, and as soon as they have all left the boat we enter by another. A roadway and two side-walks correspond to these divisions on the boat, which we enter on the level we are to retain for the passage. In the middle is the gangway for vehicles, to the right and left are the cabins for "ladies" and "gentlemen," each running almost the whole length of the boat. There is a small piece of open deck at each end, and those who wish may ascend to an upper deck. These long-drawn-out cabins are simply but suitably furnished with seats like those in a tramway-car or American railway-carriage. The boat retraces its course without turning round, as it is a "double-ender." On reaching the other side of the river we simply walk out of the boat as we should out of a house on the street-level. The tidal difficulty is met by making the landing-stage a floating one, and of such length that the angle it forms with terra firma is never inconvenient.

A Swiss friend of mine, whose ocean steamer landed him on the New Jersey shore of the North River, actually entered the cabin of the ferry-boat under the impression that it was a waiting-room on shore. The boat slipped away so quietly that he did not discover his mistake until he had reached the New York side of the river; and then there was no more astonished man on the whole continent! [Pg 248]

The transition from travelling facilities to the telegraphic and postal services is natural. The telegraphs of the United States are not in the hands of the government, but are controlled by private companies, of which the Western Union, with its headquarters in New York, is *facile princeps*. This company possesses the largest telegraph system in the world, having 21,000 offices and 750,000 miles of wire. It also leases or uses seven Atlantic cables. In this, however, as in many other cases, size does not necessarily connote quality. My experiences *may* (like the weather) have been exceptional, and the attempt to judge of this Hercules by the foot I saw may be wide of the mark; but here are three instances which are at any rate suspicious:

I was living at Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, and left one day about 2 P.M. for the city, intending to return for dinner. On the way, however, I made up my mind to dine in town and go to the theatre, and immediately on my arrival at Broad-street station (about 2.15 P.M.) telegraphed back to this effect. When I reached the house again near midnight, I found the messenger with my telegram ringing the bell! Again, a friend of mine in Philadelphia sent a telegram to me one afternoon about a meeting in the evening; it reached me in Germantown, at a distance of about five miles, at 8 o'clock the following morning. Again, I left Salisbury (N.C.) one morning about 9 A.M. for Asheville, having previously telegraphed to the baggage-master at the latter place about a trunk of mine in his care. My train reached Asheville about 5 or 6 P.M. I went to the baggage-master, but found he had not received my wire. While I was talking to him, one of the train-men entered and handed it to him. *It had, apparently, been sent by hand on the train by which I had travelled!* This telegraphic [Pg 249]

giant may, of course, have accidentally and exceptionally put his wrong foot foremost on those occasions; but such are the facts.

The postal service also struck me as on the whole less prompt and accurate than that of Great Britain. The comparative infrequency of fully equipped post-offices is certainly an inconvenience. There are letter-boxes enough, and the commonest stamps may be procured in every drug-store (and of these there is no lack!) or even from the postmen; but to have a parcel weighed, to register a letter, to procure a money-order, or sometimes even to buy a foreign stamp or post-card, the New Yorker or Philadelphian has to go a distance which a Londoner or Glasgowegian would think distinctly excessive. It appears from an official table prepared in 1898 that about half the population of the United States live outside the free delivery service, and have to call at the post-office for their letters. On the other hand, the arrangements at the chief post-offices are very complete, and the subdivisions are numerous enough to prevent the tedious delays of the offices on the continent of Europe. The registration fee (eight cents) is double that of England. The convenient "special delivery stamp" (ten cents) entitles a letter to immediate delivery by special messenger. The tendency for the establishment of slight divergency in language between England and America is seen in the terms of the post-office as in those of the railway. A letter is "mailed," not "posted;" the "postman" gives way to the "letter-carrier;" a "post-card" is expanded into a "postal-card." The stranger on arrival at New York will be [Pg 250] amused to see the confiding way in which newspaper or book packets, too large for the orifice, are placed on the top of the street letter-boxes (affixed to lamp-posts), and will doubtless be led to speculate on the different ways and instincts of the street Arabs of England and America. A second reflection will suggest to him the superior stability of the New York climate. On what day in England could we leave a postal packet of printed matter in the open air with any certainty that it would not be reduced to pulp in half an hour by a deluge of rain?

No remarks on the possible inferiority of the American telegraph and postal systems would be fair if unaccompanied by a tribute to the wonderful development of the use of the telephone. New York has (or had very recently) more than twice as many subscribers to the telephonic exchanges as London, and some American towns possess one telephone for every twenty inhabitants, while the ratio in the British metropolis is 1:3,000. In 1891 the United States contained 240,000 miles of telephone wires, used by over 200,000 regular subscribers. In 1895 the United Kingdom had about 100,000 miles of wire. The Metropolitan telephone in New York alone has 30,000 miles of subterranean wire and about 9,000 stations. The great switch-board at its headquarters is 250 feet long, and accommodates the lines of 6,000 subscribers. Some subscribers call for connection over a hundred times a day, and about one hundred and fifty girls are required to answer the calls.

The generalisations made in travellers' books about the hotels of America seem to me as fallacious as most of the generalisations about this chameleon among nations. [Pg 251] Some of the American hotels I stayed at were about the best of their kind in the world, others about the worst, others again about half-way between these extremes. On the whole, I liked the so-called "American system" of an inclusive price by the day, covering everything except such purely voluntary extras as wine; and it seems to me that an ideal hotel on this system would leave very little to wish for. The large American way of looking at things makes a man prefer to give twenty shillings per day for all he needs and consumes rather than be bothered with a bill for sixteen to seventeen shillings, including such items (not disdained even by the swellest European hotels) as one penny for stationery or a shilling for lights. The weak points of the system as at present carried on are its needless expense owing to the wasteful profusion of the management, the tendency to have cast-iron rules for the hours within which a guest is permitted to be hungry, the refusal to make any allowance for absence from meals, and the general preference for quantity over quality. It is also a pity that baths are looked upon as a luxury of the rich and figure as an expensive extra; it is seldom that a hotel bath can be obtained for less than two shillings. There would seem, however, to be no reason why the continental *table d'hôte* system

should not be combined with the American plan. The bills of fare at present offered by large American hotels, with lists of fifty to one hundred different dishes to choose from, are simply silly, and mark, as compared with the *table d'hôte* of, say, a good Parisian hotel, a barbaric failure to understand the kind of meal a lady or gentleman should want. To prepare five times the quantity that will be called for or consumed is [Pg 252] to confess a lack of all artistic perception of the relations of means and end. The man who gloats over a list of fifty possible dishes is not at all the kind of customer who deserves encouragement. The service would also be improved if the waiters had not to carry in their heads the heterogeneous orders of six or eight people, each selecting a dozen different meats, vegetables, and condiments. The European or *à la carte* system is becoming more and more common in the larger cities, and many houses offer their patrons a choice of the two plans; but the fixed-price system is almost universal in the smaller towns and country districts. In houses on the American system the price generally varies according to the style of room selected; but most of the inconvenience of a bedchamber near the top of the house is obviated by the universal service of easy-running "elevators" or lifts. (By the way, the persistent manner in which the elevators are used on all occasions is often amusing. An American lady who has some twenty shallow steps to descend to the ground floor will rather wait patiently five minutes for the elevator than walk downstairs.)

Many of the large American hotels have defects similar to those with which we are familiar in their European prototypes. They have the same, if not an exaggerated, gorgeousness of bad taste, the same plethora of ostentatious "luxuries" that add nothing to the real comfort of the man of refinement, the same pier glasses in heavy gilt frames, the same marble consoles, the same heavy hangings and absurdly soft carpets. On the other hand, they are apt to lack some of the unobtrusive decencies of [Pg 253] life, which so often mark the distinction between the modest home of a private gentleman and the palace of the travelling public. Indeed, it might truthfully be said that, *on the whole*, the passion for show is more rampant among American hotel-keepers than elsewhere. They are apt to be more anxious to have all the latest "improvements" and inventions than to ensure the smooth and easy running of what they already have. You will find a huge "teleseme" or indicator in your bedroom, on the rim of which are inscribed about one hundred different objects that a traveller may conceivably be supposed to want; but you may set the pointer in vain for your modest lemonade or wait half an hour before the waiter answers his complicated electric call. The service is sometimes very poor, even in the most pretentious establishments. On the other hand, I never saw better service in my life than that of the neat and refined white-clad maidens in the summer hotels of the White Mountains, who would take the orders of half-a-dozen persons for half a dozen different dishes each, and execute them without a mistake. It is said that many of these waitresses are college-girls or even school-mistresses, and certainly their ladylike appearance and demeanour and the intelligent look behind their not infrequent spectacles would support the assertion. It gave one a positive thrill to see the margin of one's soup-plate embraced by a delicate little pink-and-white thumb that might have belonged to Hebe herself, instead of the rawly red or clumsily gloved intruder that we are all too familiar with. The waiting of the coloured gentleman is also pleasant in its way to all who do not demand the episcopal bearing of the best [Pg 254] English butler. The smiling darkey takes a personal interest in your comfort, may possibly enquire whether you have dined to your liking, is indefatigable in ministering to your wants, slides and shuffles around with a never-failing *bonhomie*, does everything with a characteristic flourish, and in his neat little white jacket often presents a most refreshing cleanliness of aspect as compared with the greasy second-hand dress coats of the European waiter.

As a matter of fact, so much latitude is usually allowed for each meal (breakfast from 8 to 11, dinner from 12 to 8, and so on) that it is seldom really difficult to get something to eat at an American hotel when one is hungry. At some hotels, however, the rules are very strict, and nothing is served out of meal hours. At Newport I came in one Sunday evening about 8 o'clock, and found that supper was over. The manager actually allowed me to leave his hotel at once (which I did) rather than give me

anything to eat. The case is still more absurd when one arrives by train, having had no chance of a square meal all day, and is coolly expected to go to bed hungry! The genuine democrat, however, may take what comfort he can from the thought that this state of affairs is due to the independence of the American servants, who have their regular hours and refuse to work beyond them.

The lack of smoking-rooms is a distinct weak point in American hotels. One may smoke in the large public office, often crowded with loungers not resident in the hotel, or may retire with his cigar to the bar-room; but there is no pleasant little snuggery provided with arm-chairs and smokers' tables, where friends may sit in [Pg 255] pleasant, nicotine-wreathed chat, ringing, when they want it, for a whiskey-and-soda or a cup of coffee.

American hotels, even when otherwise good, are apt to be noisier than European ones. The servants have little idea of silence over their work, and the early morning chambermaids crow to one another in a way that is very destructive of one's matutinal slumbers. Then somebody or other seems to crave ice-water at every hour of the day or night, and the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle of the ice-pitcher in the corridors becomes positively nauseous when one wants to go to sleep. The innumerable electric bells, always more or less on the go, are another auditory nuisance.

While we are on the question of defects in American hotels, it should be noticed that the comfortable little second-class inns of Great Britain are practically unknown in the United States. The second-class inns there are run on the same lines as the best ones; but in an inferior manner at every point. The food is usually as abundant, but it is of poorer quality and worse cooked; the beds are good enough, but not so clean; the table linen is soiled; the sugar bowls are left exposed to the flies from week-end to week-end; the service is poor and apt to be forward; and (last, but not least) the manners of the other guests are apt to include a most superfluous proportion of tobacco-chewing, expectorating, an open and unashamed use of the toothpick, and other little amenities that probably inflict more torture on those who are not used to them than would decorous breaches of the Decalogue.

In criticising American hotels, it must not be forgotten that the rapid process of change that is so characteristic of America operates in this sphere with especial [Pg 256] force. This is at work a distinct tendency to substitute the subdued for the gaudy, the refined for the meretricious, the quiet for the loud; and even now the cultured American who knows his *monde* may spend a great part of his time in hotels without conspicuously lowering the tone of his environment.

The prevalent idea that the American hotel clerk is a mannerless despot is, *me judice*, rather too severe. He is certainly apt to be rather curt in his replies and ungenial in his manner; but this is not to be wondered at when one reflects under what a fire of questions he stands all day long and from week to week; and, besides, he does generally give the information that is wanted. That he should wear diamond studs and dress gorgeously is not unnatural when one considers the social stratum from which he is drawn. Do not our very cooks the same as far as they can? That he should somewhat magnify the importance of his office is likewise explicable; and, after all, how many human beings have greater power over the actual personal comforts of the fraction of the world they come into contact with? I can, however, truthfully boast that I met hotel clerks who, in moments of relief from pressure, treated me almost as an equal, and one or two who seemed actually disposed to look on me as a friend. I certainly never encountered any actual rudeness from the American hotel clerk such as I have experienced from the pert young ladies who sometimes fill his place in England; and in the less frequented resorts he sometimes took a good deal of trouble to put the stranger in the way to do his business speedily and comfortably. His omniscience is great, but not so phenomenal as I expected; I [Pg 257] posed him more than once with questions about his abode which, it seemed to me, every intelligent citizen should have been able to answer easily. In his most characteristic development the American hotel clerk is an urbane living encyclopædia, as passionless as the gods, as unbiassed as the multiplication table,

and as tireless as a Corliss engine.

Traveller's tales as to the system of "tipping" in American hotels differ widely. The truth is probably as far from the indignant Briton's assertion, based probably upon one flagrant instance in New York, that "it is ten times worse than in England and tantamount to robbery with violence," as from the patriotic American's assurance that "The thing, sir, is absolutely unknown in our free and enlightened country; no American citizen would demean himself to accept a gratuity." To judge from my own experience, I should say that the practice was quite as common in such cities as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia as in Europe, and more onerous because the amounts expected are larger. A dollar goes no farther than a shilling. Moreover, the gratuity is usually given in the form of "refreshers" from day to day, so that the vengeance of the disappointed is less easily evaded. Miss Bates, a very friendly writer on America, reports various unpleasantnesses that she received from untipped waiters, and tells of an American who found that his gratuities for two months at a Long Branch hotel (for three persons and their horses) amounted to £40. In certain other walks of life the habit of tipping is carried to more extremes in New York than in any European city I know of. Thus the charge for a shave (already sufficiently high) is $7^1/_2$ *d.*, but the operator expects $2^1/_2$ *d.* more for himself. One barber with [Pg 258] whom I talked on the subject openly avowed that he considered himself wronged if he did not get his fee, and recounted the various devices he and his fellows practised to extract gratuities from the unwilling. As one goes West or South the system of tipping seems to fall more and more into abeyance, though it will always be found a useful smoother of the way. In California, so far as I could judge, it was almost entirely unknown, and the Californian hotels are among the best in the Union.

Among the lessons which English and other European hotels might learn from American hotels may be named the following:

1. The combination of the present *à la carte* system with the inclusive or American system, by which those who don't want the trouble of ordering their repasts may be sure of finding meals, with a reasonable latitude of choice in time and fare, ready when desired. It is a sensible comfort to know beforehand exactly, or almost exactly, what one's hotel expenses will amount to.

2. The abolition of the charge for attendance.

3. A greater variety of dishes than is usually offered in any except our very largest hotels. This is especially to be desired at breakfast. Without going to the American extreme of fifty or a hundred dishes to choose from, some intermediate point short of the Scylla of sole and the Charybdis of ham and eggs might surely be found. There is probably more pig-headed conservatism than justified fear of expense in the reluctance to follow this most excellent "American lead." The British tourist in the United States takes so kindly to the preliminary fruit and cereal dishes of America that he would probably show no objection to them on his native heath. [Pg 259]

4. An extension of the system of ringing once for the boots, twice for the chambermaid, and so on. The ordinary American table of calls goes up to nine.

5. The provision of writing materials free for the guests of the hotels. The charge for stationery is one of the pettiest and most exasperating cheese-parings of the English Boniface's system of account-keeping. If, however, he imitates the liberality of his American brother, it is to be hoped that he will "go him one better" in the matter of blotting-paper. Nothing in the youthful country across the seas has a more venerable appearance than the strips of blotting-paper supplied in the writing-rooms of its hotels.

Nothing in its way could be more inviting or seem more appropriate than the cool and airy architecture of the summer hotels in such districts as the White Mountains, with their wide and shady verandas, their overhanging eaves, their balconies, their spacious corridors and vestibules, their simple yet tasteful wood-panelling, their creepers outside and their growing plants within. Mr. Howells has somewhere reversed the threadbare comparison of an Atlantic liner to a floating hotel, by

likening a hostelry of this kind to a saloon steamer; and indeed the comparison is an apt one, so light and buoyant does the construction seem, with its gaily painted wooden sides, its glass-covered veranda decks, and its streaming flags. Perhaps the nearest analogue that we have to the life of an American summer hotel is seen in our large hydropathic establishments, such as those at Peebles or Crieff, where the [Pg 260] therapeutic appliances play but a subdued obbligato to the daily round of amusements. The same spirit of camaraderie generally rules at both; both have the same regular meal-hours, at which almost as little drinking is seen at the one as the other; both have their evening entertainments got up (*gotten* up, our American cousins say, with a delightfully old fashioned flavour) by the enterprise of the most active guests. The hydropathists have to go to bed a little sooner, and must walk to the neighbouring village if they wish a bar-room; but on the whole their scheme of life is much the same. Whether it is due to the American temperament or the American weather, the palm for brightness, vivacity, variety, and picturesqueness must be adjudged to the hotel. For those who are young enough to "stand the racket," no form of social gaiety can he found more amusing than a short sojourn at a popular summer hotel among the mountains or by the sea, with its constant round of drives, rides, tennis and golf matches, picnics, "germans," bathing, boating, and loafing, all permeated by flirtation of the most audacious and innocent description. The focus of the whole carnival is found in the "piazza" or veranda, and no prettier sight in its way can be imagined than the groups and rows of "rockers" and wicker chairs, each occupied by a lithe young girl in a summer frock, or her athletic admirer in his tennis flannels.

The enormous extent of the summer exodus to the mountains and the seas in America is overwhelming; and a population of sixty-five millions does not seem a bit too much to account for it. I used to think that about all the Americans who could afford to travel came to Europe. But the American tourists in Europe are, after all, [Pg 261] but a drop in the bucket compared with the oceans of summer and winter visitors to the Adirondacks and Florida, Manitoba Springs and the coast of Maine, the Catskills and Long Branch, Newport and Lenox, Bar Harbor and California, White Sulphur Springs and the Minnesota Lakes, Saratoga and Richfield, The Thousand Isles and Martha's Vineyard, Niagara and Trenton Falls, Old Point Comfort and Asheville, the Yellowstone and the Yosemite, Alaska and the Hot Springs of Arkansas. And everywhere that the season's visitor is expected he will find hotels awaiting him that range all the way from reasonable comfort to outrageous magnificence; while a simpler taste will find a plain boarding-house by almost every mountain pool or practicable beach in the whole wide expanse of the United States. The Briton may not have yet abdicated his post as the champion traveller or explorer of unknown lands, but the American is certainly the most restless mover from one resort of civilisation to another.

Perhaps the most beautiful hotel in the world is the Ponce de Leon at St. Augustine, Florida, named after the Spanish voyager who discovered the flowery[32] State in 1512, and explored its streams on his romantic search for the fountain of eternal youth. And when I say beautiful I use the word in no auctioneering sense of mere size, and height, and evidence of expenditure, but as meaning a truly artistic creation, fine in itself and appropriate to its environment. The hotel is built of "coquina," or shell concrete, in a Spanish renaissance style with Moorish features, [Pg 262] which harmonises admirably with the sunny sky of Florida and the historic associations of St. Augustine. Its colour scheme, with the creamy white of the concrete, the overhanging roofs of red tile, and the brick and terra-cotta details, is very effective, and contrasts well with the deep-blue overhead and the luxuriant verdancy of the orange-trees, magnolias, palmettos, oleanders, bananas, and date-palms that surround it. The building encloses a large open court, and is lined by columned verandas, while the minaret-like towers dominate the expanse of dark-red roof. The interior is richly adorned with wall and ceiling paintings of historical or allegorical import, skilfully avoiding crudity or garishness; and the marble and oak decorations of the four-galleried rotunda are worthy of the rest of the structure. The general effect is one of luxurious and artistic ease, with suggestions of an Oriental

dolce far niente in excellent keeping with the idea of the winter idler's home. The Ponce de Leon and the adjoining and more or less similar structures of the Alcazar, the Cordova, and the Villa Zorayda form indeed an architectural group which, taken along with the semi-tropical vegetation and atmosphere, alone repays a long journey to see. But let the strictly economical traveller take up his quarters in one of the more modest hostelries of the little town, unless he is willing to pay dearly (and yet not perhaps too dearly) for the privilege of living in the most artistic hotel in the world.

It is a long cry from Florida to California, where stands another hotel which suggests mention for its almost unique perfections. The little town of Monterey, with its balmy air, its beautiful sandy beach, its adobe buildings, and its charming surroundings, is, [Pg 263] like St. Augustine, full of interesting Spanish associations, dating back to 1602. The Hotel del Monte, or "Hotel of the Forest," one of the most comfortable, best-kept, and moderate-priced hotels of America, lies amid bluegrass lawns and exquisite grounds, in some ways recalling the parks of England's gentry, though including among its noble trees such un-English specimens as the sprawling and moss-draped live-oaks and the curious Monterey pines and cypresses. Its gardens offer a continual feast of colour, with their solid acres of roses, violets, calla lilies, heliotrope, narcissus, tulips, and crocuses; and one part of them, known as "Arizona," contains a wonderful collection of cacti. The hotel itself has no pretension to rival the Ponce de Leon in its architecture or appointments, and is, I think, built of wood. It is, however, very large, encloses a spacious garden-court, and makes a pleasant enough impression, with its turrets, balconies, and verandas, its many sharp gables, dormers, and window-hoods. The economy of the interior reminded me more strongly of the amenities and decencies of the house of a refined, well-to-do, and yet not extravagantly wealthy family than of the usual hotel atmosphere. There were none of the blue satin hangings, ormolu vases, and other entirely superfluous luxuries for which we have to pay in the bills of certain hotels at Paris and elsewhere; but on the other hand nothing was lacking that a fastidious but reasonable taste could demand. The rooms and corridors are spacious and airy; everything was as clean and fresh as white paint and floor polish could make them; the beds were comfortable and fragrant; the linen was spotless; there was lots of "hanging room;" each pair of bedrooms shared a [Pg 264] bathroom; the *cuisine* was good and sufficiently varied; the waiters were attentive; flowers were abundant without and within. The price of all this real luxury was $3 to $3.50 (12*s.* to 14*s.*) a day. Possibly the absolute perfection of the bright and soft Californian spring when I visited Monterey, and the exquisite beauty of its environment, may have lulled my critical faculties into a state of unusual somnolence; but when I quitted the Del Monte Hotel I felt that I was leaving one of the most charming homes I had ever had the good fortune to live in.

The only hotel that to my mind contests with the Del Monte the position of the best hotel in the North American continent is the Canadian Pacific Hotel at Banff, in the National Rocky Mountains Park of Canada. Here also magnificent scenery, splendid weather, and moderate charges combined to bias my judgment; but the residuum, after all due allowance made for these factors, still, after five years, assures me of most unusual excellence. Two things in particular I remember in connection with this hotel. The one is the almost absolute perfection of the waiting, carried on by gentlemanly youths of about eighteen or twenty, who must, I think, have formed the *corps d'élite* of the thousands of waiters in the service of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The marvellous speed and dexterity with which they ministered to my wants, the absolutely neat and even dainty manner in which everything was done by them, and their modest readiness to make suggestions and help one's choice (always to the point!) make one of the pleasantest pictures of hotel life lurking in my memory. The other dominant recollection of the Banff Hotel is the wonderfully [Pg 265] beautiful view from the summer-house at its northeast corner. Just below the bold bluff on which this hotel stands the piercingly blue Bow River throws itself down in a string of foaming white cataracts to mate with the amber and rapid-rushing Spray. The level valley through which the united and now placid stream flows is carpeted with the vivid-red painter's brush, white and yellow marguerites, asters, fireweed,

golden-rod, and blue-bells; to the left rise the perpendicular cliffs of Tunnel Mountain, while to the right Mt. Rundle lifts its weirdly sloping, snow-flecked peaks into the azure.

In the dense green woods of the Adirondacks, five miles from the nearest high road on the one side and on the other lapped by an ocean of virgin forest which to the novice seems almost as pathless as the realms of Neptune, stands the Adirondack Lodge, probably one of the most quaint, picturesque little hotels in the world. It is tastefully built in the style of a rustic log-hut, its timber being merely rough-hewn by the axe and not reduced to monotonous symmetry by the saw-mill. It is roofed with bark, and its wide-eaved verandas are borne by tree-trunks with the bark still on. The same idea is carried out in the internal equipment, and the bark is left intact on much of the furniture. The wood retains its natural colours, and there are no carpets or paint. This charming little hotel is due to the taste or whim of a New York electrical engineer (the inventor, I believe, of the well-known "ticker"), who acts the landlord in such a way as to make the sixty or seventy inmates feel like the guests of a private host. The clerk is a medical student, the very bell-boy ("Eddy") a candidate [Pg 266] for Harvard, and both mix on equal terms with the genial circle that collects round the bonfire lighted in front of the house every summer's evening. As one lazily lay there, watching the wavering play of the ruddy blaze on the dark-green pines, listening to the educated chatter of the boy who cleaned the boots, realising that a deer, a bear, or perchance even a catamount might possibly be lurking in the dark woods around, and knowing that all the material comforts of civilised life awaited one inside the house, one felt very keenly the genuine Americanism of this Arcadia, and thought how hard it would be to reproduce the effect even in the imagination of the European.

It was in this same Adirondack Wilderness that I stayed in the only hotel that, so far as I know, caught on to the fact that I was a "chiel amang them takin' notes" for a guidebook. With true American enterprise I was informed, when I called for my bill, that that was all right; and I still recall with amusement the incredulous and obstinate resistance of the clerk to my insistence on paying my way. I hope that the genial proprietors do not attribute the asterisk that I gave the hotel to their well-meant efforts to give me *quid pro quo*, but credit me with a totally unbiassed admiration for their good management and comfortable quarters.

Mention has already been made (p. 30) of a hotel at a frequented watering-place, at which the lowest purchasable quantity of sleep cost one pound sterling. It is, perhaps, superfluous to say that the rest procured at this cost was certainly not four or five times better than that easily procurable for four or five shillings; and that the luxury of this hotel appealed, not in its taste perhaps, but certainly in its effect, to the [Pg 267] shoddy rather than to the refined demands of the traveller. Shenstone certainly never associated the ease of his inn with any such hyperbolical sumptuousness as this; and it probably could not arise in any community that did not include a large class of individuals with literally more money than they knew what to do with, and desirous of any means of indicating their powers of expenditure. It has been said of another hotel at Bar Harbor that "Anyone can stay there who is worth two millions of dollars, or can produce a certificate from the Recorder of New York that he is a direct descendant of Hendrik Hudson or Diedrich Knickerbocker."

Many other American hotels suggest themselves to me as sufficiently individual in character to discriminate them from the ruck. Such are the Hygieia at Old Point Comfort, with its Southern guests in summer and its Northern guests in winter; looking out from its carefully enclosed and glazed piazzas over the waste of Hampton Roads, where the "Merrimac" wrought devastation to the vessels of the Union until itself vanquished by the turret-ship "Monitor;" the enormous caravansaries of Saratoga, one of which alone accommodates two thousand visitors, or the population of a small town, while the three largest have together room for five thousand people; the hotel at the White Sulphur Springs of Virginia, for nearly a century the typical resort of the wealth and aristocracy of the South, and still furnishing the eligible stranger with a most attractive picture of Southern beauty, grace, warm-

heartedness, and manners; the Stockbridge Inn in the Berkshire Hills, long a striking exception to the statement that no country inns of the best English type can be found [Pg 268] in the United States, but unfortunately burned down a year or two ago; the Catskill Mountain House, situated on an escarpment rising so abruptly from the plain of the Hudson that the view from it has almost the same effect as if we were leaning out of the car of a balloon or over the battlements of a castle two thousand feet high; the colossal Auditorium of Chicago, with its banquet hall and kitchen on the tenth floor; and the Palace Hotel of San Francisco, with its twelve hundred beds and its covered and resonant central court. Enough has, however, been said to show that all American hotels are not the immense and featureless barracks that many Europeans believe, but that they also run through a full gamut of variety and character.

The restaurant is by no means such an institution in the United States as in the continental part of Europe; in this matter the American habit is more on all fours with English usage. The café of Europe is, perhaps, best represented by the piazza. Of course there are numerous restaurants in all the larger cities; but elsewhere the traveller will do well to stick to the meals at his hotel. The best restaurants are often in the hands of Germans, Italians, or Frenchmen. This is conspicuously so at New York. Delmonico's has a worldwide reputation, and is undoubtedly a good restaurant; but it may well be questioned whether the New York estimate of its merits is not somewhat excessive. If price be the criterion, it has certainly few superiors. The *à la carte* restaurants are, indeed, all apt to be expensive for the single traveller, who will find that he can easily spend eight to twelve shillings on a by no means sumptuous [Pg 269] meal. The French system of supplying one portion for two persons or two portions for three is, however, in vogue, and this diminishes the cost materially. The *table d'hôte* restaurants, on the other hand, often give excellent value for their charges. The Italians have especially devoted themselves to this form of the art, and in New York and Boston furnish one with a very fair dinner indeed, including a flask of drinkable Chianti, for four or five shillings. At some of the simple German restaurants one gets excellent German fare and beer, but these are seldom available for ladies. The fair sex, however, takes care to be provided with more elegant establishments for its own use, to which it sometimes admits its husbands and brothers. The sign of a large restaurant in New York reads: "Women's Coöperative Restaurant; tables reserved for gentlemen," in which I knew not whether more to admire the uncompromising antithesis between the plain word "women" and the complimentary term "gentlemen" or the considerateness that supplies separate accommodation for the shrinking creatures denoted by the latter. Perhaps this is as good a place as any to note that it is usually as unwise to patronise a restaurant which professedly caters for "gents" as to buy one's leg-coverings of a tailor who knows them only as "pants." Probably the "adult gents' bible-class," which Professor Freeman encountered, was equally unsatisfactory.

Soup, poultry, game, and sweet dishes are generally as good as and often better than in English restaurants. Beef and mutton, on the other hand, are frequently inferior, though the American porterhouse and other steaks sometimes recall English glories that seem largely to have vanished. The list of American fish is by no means identical [Pg 270] with that of Europe, and some of the varieties (such as salmon) seem scarcely as savoury. The stranger, however, will find some of his new fishy acquaintances decided acquisitions, and it takes no long time to acquire a very decided liking for the bass, the pompano, and the bluefish, while even the shad is discounted only by his innumerable bones. The praises of the American oyster should be sung by an abler and more poetic pen than mine! He may not possess the full oceanic flavour (coppery, the Americans call it) of our best "natives," but he is large, and juicy, and cool, and succulent, and fresh, and (above all) cheap and abundant. The variety of ways in which he is served is a striking index of the fertile ingenuity of the American mind; and the man who knows the oyster only on the half-shell or *en escalope* is a mere culinary suckling compared with him who has been brought face to face with the bivalve in stews, plain roasts, fancy roasts, fries, broils, and fricassées, to say nothing of the form "pigs in blankets," or as parboiled in its own liquor, creamed, sautéd, or pickled.

Wine or beer is much less frequently drunk at meals than in Europe, though the amount of alcoholic liquor seen on the tables of a hotel would be a very misleading measure of the amount consumed. The men have a curious habit of flocking to the bar-room immediately after dinner to imbibe the stimulant that preference, or custom, or the fear of their wives has deprived them of during the meal. Wine is generally poor and dear. The mixed drinks at the bar are fascinating and probably very indigestible. Their names are not so bizarre as it is an article of the European's [Pg 271] creed to believe. America possesses the largest brewery in the world, that of Pabst at Milwaukee, producing more than a million of gallons a year; and there are also large breweries at St. Louis, Rochester, and many other places. The beer made resembles the German lager, and is often excellent. Its use is apparently spreading rapidly from the German Americans to Americans of other nationalities. The native wine of California is still fighting against the unfavourable reputation it acquired from the ignorance and impatience of its early manufacturers. The art of wine-growing, however, is now followed with more brains, more experience, and more capital, and the result is in many instances excellent. The *vin ordinaire* of California, largely made from the Zinfandel grape, has been described as a "peasant's wine," but when drunk on the spot compares fairly with the cheaper wines of Europe. Some of the finest brands of Californian red wine (such as that known as Las Palmas), generally to be had from the producers only, are sound and well-flavoured wines, which will probably improve steadily. It is a thousand pities that the hotels and restaurants of the United States do not do more to push the sale of these native wines, which are at least better than most of the foreign wine sold in America at extravagant charges. It is also alleged that the Californian and other American wines are often sold under French labels and at French prices, thus doing a double injustice to their native soil. Coffee or tea is always included in the price of an American meal, and these comforting beverages (particularly coffee) appear at luncheon and dinner in the huge cups that we associate with breakfast exclusively. Nor do they follow the meal, as [Pg 272] with us, but accompany it. This practice, of course, does not hold in the really first-class hotels and restaurants.

The real national beverage is, however, ice-water. Of this I have little more to say than to warn the British visitor to suspend his judgment until he has been some time in the country. I certainly was not prejudiced in favour of this chilly draught when I started for the United States, but I soon came to find it natural and even necessary, and as much so from the dry hot air of the stove-heated room in winter as from the natural ambition of the mercury in summer. The habit so easily formed was as easily unlearned when I returned to civilisation. On the whole, it may be philosophic to conclude that a universal habit in any country has some solid if cryptic reason for its existence, and to surmise that the drinking of ice-water is not so deadly in the States as it might be elsewhere. It certainly is universal enough. When you ring a bell or look at a waiter, ice-water is immediately brought to you. Each meal is started with a full tumbler of that fluid, and the observant darkey rarely allows the tide to ebb until the meal is concluded. Ice-water is provided gratuitously and copiously on trains, in waiting-rooms, even sometimes in the public fountains. If, finally, I were asked to name the characteristic sound of the United States, which would tell you of your whereabouts if transported to America in an instant of time, it would be the musical tinkle of the ice in the small white pitchers that the bell-boys in hotels seem perennially carrying along all the corridors, day and night, year in and year out.

FOOTNOTES:

[30] Lady Theodora Guest, sister of the Duke of Westminster, in her book, "A Round Trip in North America," bears the same testimony: "Over eleven thousand miles of railway travelling and miles untold of driving besides, without an accident or a semblance of one. No *contretemps* of any kind, except the little delay at Hope from the 'washout,' which did not matter the least; lovely weather, and universal kindness and courtesy from man, woman, and child."

[31] "Had you seen but those roads before they were made,
You would hold up your hands and bless General Wade."

[32] This epithet must not confirm the usual erroneous belief that Florida means "the flowery State." It is so called because discovered on Easter Day (Spanish *Pascua Florida*).

XIII

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The American Note

Those who have done me the honour to read through the earlier pages of this volume will probably find nothing in the present chapter that has not already been implied in them, if not expressed. Indeed, I should not consider these pages written to any purpose if they did not give some indication of what I believe to be the dominant trend of American civilisation. A certain amount of condensed explication and recapitulation may not, however, be out of place.

In spite of the heterogeneous elements of which American civilisation consists, and in spite of the ever-ready pitfalls of spurious generalisation, it seems to me that there is very distinctly an American note, different in pitch and tone from any note in the European concert. The scale to which it belongs is not, indeed, one out of all relation to that of the older hemisphere, in the way, for example, in which the laws governing Chinese music seem to stand apart from all relations to those on which the Sonata Appassionata is constructed. "The American," as Emerson said, "is only the continuation of the English genius into new conditions, more or less propitious;" and the American note, as I understand it, is, with allowance for modifications by other nationalities, after all merely the New World incarnation of a British potentiality.

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To sum it up in one word is hardly practicable; even a Carlylean epithet could scarcely focus the content of this idea. It includes a sense of illimitable expansion and possibility; an almost childlike confidence in human ability and fearlessness of both the present and the future; a wider realisation of human brotherhood than has yet existed; a greater theoretical willingness to judge by the individual rather than by the class; a breezy indifference to authority and a positive predilection for innovation; a marked alertness of mind and a manifold variety of interest; above all, an inextinguishable hopefulness and courage. It is easy to lay one's finger in America upon almost every one of the great defects of civilisation—even those defects which are specially characteristic of the civilisation of the Old World. The United States cannot claim to be exempt from manifestations of economic slavery, of grinding the faces of the poor, of exploitation of the weak, of unfair distribution of wealth, of unjust monopoly, of unequal laws, of industrial and commercial chicanery, of disgraceful ignorance, of economic fallacies, of public corruption, of interested legislation, of want of public spirit, of vulgar boasting and chauvinism, of snobbery, of class prejudice, of respect of persons, of a preference of the material over the spiritual. In a word, America has not attained, or nearly attained, perfection. But below and behind and beyond all its weaknesses and evils, there is the grand fact of a noble national theory, founded on reason and conscience. Those may scoff who will at the idea of anything so intangible being allowed to count seriously in the estimation of a nation's or an individual's happiness but the man of any imagination can surely conceive the stimulus of the constantly abiding sense of a fine national ideal. The vagaries of the Congress at Washington may sometimes cause a man more personal inconvenience than the doings of the Parliament at Westminster, but they cannot wound his self-respect or insult his reason in the same way as the idea of being ruled by a group of individuals who have merely taken the trouble to be born. The hauteur and insolence of those "above" us are always unpleasant, but they are much easier to bear when we feel that they are entirely at variance with the theory of the society in which they appear, and are at worst merely sporadic manifestations. Even the tyranny of trusts is not to be compared to the tyranny of landlordism; for

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the one is felt to be merely an unhappy and (it is hoped) temporary aberration of well-meant social machinery, while the other seems bred in the very bone of the national existence. It is the old story of freedom and hardship being preferable to chains and luxury. The material environment of the American may often be far less interesting and suggestive than that of the European, but his mind is freer, his mental attitude more elastic. Every American carries a marshal's baton in his knapsack in a way that has hardly ever been true in Europe. It may not assume a more tangible shape than a feeling of self-respect that has never been wounded by the thought of personal inferiority for merely conventional reasons; but he must be a materialist indeed who undervalues this priceless possession. It is something for a country to have reached the stage of passing "resolutions," even if their conversion [Pg 276] into "acts" lags a little; it is bootless to sneer at a real "land of promise" because it is not at once and in every way a "land of performance."

There is something wonderfully rare and delicate in the finest blossoms of American civilisation—something that can hardly be paralleled in Europe. The mind that has been brought up in an atmosphere theoretically free from all false standards and conventional distinctions acquires a singularly unbiassed, detached, absolute, purely human way of viewing life. In Matthew Arnold's phrase, "it sees life steadily and sees it whole." Just this attitude seems unattainable in England; neither in my reading nor my personal experience have I encountered what I mean elsewhere than in America. We may feel ourselves, for example, the equal of a marquis, but does he? And even if he does, do A, and B, and C? No profoundness of belief in our own superiority or the superiority of a humble friend to the aristocrat can make us ignore the circumambient feeling on the subject in the same way that the man brought up in the American vacuum does.

The true-born American is absolutely incapable of comprehending the sense of difference between a lord and a plebeian that is forced on the most philosophical among ourselves by the mere pressure of the social atmosphere. It is for him a fourth dimension of space; it may be talked about, but practically it has no existence. It is entirely within the bounds of possibility for an American to attempt graciously to put royalty at its ease, and to try politely to make it forget its anomalous position. The British radical philosopher may attain the height of saying, "With a great sum [Pg 277] obtained I this 'freedom';" the American may honestly reply, "But I was free-born."

It is necessary to take long views of American civilisation; not to fix our gaze upon small evils in the foreground, not to mistake an attack of moral measles for a scorbutic taint. It is quite conceivable that a philosophic observer of a century ago might almost have predicted the moral and social course of events in the United States, if he had only been informed of the coming material conditions, such as the overwhelmingly rapid growth of the country in wealth and population, coupled with a democratic form of government. Even if assured that the ultimate state of the nation would be satisfactory, he would still have foreseen the difficulties hemming its progress toward the ideal: the inevitable delays, disappointments, and set-backs; the struggle between the gross and the spiritual; the troubles arising from the constant accession of new raw material before the old was welded into shape. There is nothing in the present evils of America to lead us to despair of the Republic, if only we let a legitimate imagination place us on a view-point sufficiently distant and sufficiently high to enable us to look backwards and forwards over long stretches of time, and lose the effect of small roughnesses in the foreground. Even M. de Tocqueville exaggerated the evils existing when he wrote his famous work, and forecast catastrophes that have never arisen and seem daily less and less likely ever to arise. Let it be enough for the present that America has worked out "a rough average happiness for the million," that the great masses of the people have attained a by no means despicable amount of independence and comfort. Those who are apt to think [Pg 278] that the comfort of the crowd must mean the *ennui* of the cultured may safely be reminded of Obermann's saying, that no individual life can (or ought to) be happy *passée au milieu des génerations qui souffrent*. *This* source of unhappiness, at any rate, is less potent in the United States than elsewhere. It is only natural that

material prosperity should come more quickly than emancipation from ignorance, as Professor Norton has noted in a masterly, though perhaps characteristically pessimistic, article in the *Forum* for February, 1896. It may, too, be true, as the same writer remarks, that the common school system of America does little "to quicken the imagination, to refine and elevate the moral intelligence;" and the remark is valuable as a note of warning. But it may well be asked whether the American school system is in this respect unfavourably distinguished from that of any other country; and it must not be forgotten that even instruction in ordinary topics stimulates the soil for more valuable growths. The methods of the Salvation Army do not appeal to the dilettante; but it is more than possible that the grandchildren of the man whose imagination has been touched, if ever so slightly, by the crude appeal of trombones out of tune and the sight of poke-bonnets and backward-striding maidens, will be more intelligent and susceptible human beings than the grandchildren of the chawbacon whose mental horizon has been bounded by the bottom of his pewter mug.

Those who think for themselves will naturally make more mistakes than those who carefully follow the dictates of a competent authority; but there are other [Pg 279] counterbalancing advantages which bring the enterprising mistake-maker more speedily to the goal than his impeccable rival. The poet might almost have sung "'Tis better to have erred and learned than never to have erred at all." The *intellectual* monopoly of England is, perhaps, even more dangerous than the material. The monastic societies of Oxford and Cambridge are too apt to insist on certain *forms* of knowledge, and to think that real wisdom is the prerogative of the few. And we undoubtedly owe many of the healthy breezes of rebellion and scepticism in such matters to the example of America. The keen-eyed Yankees distinguish more clearly than we do between the essential conditions of existence and the "stupid and vulgar accidents of human contrivance," and are consequently readier to lay irreverent hands on time-honoured abuses. If a balance could be struck between the influence of Europe on America and that of America on Europe, it is not by any means clear that the scale would descend in favour of the older world.

There is a long list of influential witnesses in favour of the theory that the development of the democratic spirit is bound inevitably to hamper individuality and encourage mediocrity. De Tocqueville, Scherer, Renan, Maine, Bourget, Matthew Arnold, all lend the weight of their names to this conclusion. It does not seem to me that this theory is supported by the social facts of the United States. When we have made allowance for the absence of a number of picturesque phenomena which are due to temporal and physical conditions, and would be equally lacking if the country were an autocracy or oligarchy, there remains in the United States greater room for [Pg 280] the development of idiosyncrasy than, perhaps, in any other country. It has been paradoxically argued by an English writer that individualism could not reach its highest point except in a socialistic community; *i.e.*, that the unbridled competition of the present day drives square pegs into round holes and thus forces the individual, for the sake of bread and butter, to do that which is foreign to his nature; whereas in an ideal socialism each individual would be encouraged to follow his own bent and develop his own special talent for the good of the community. To a certain extent this seems true of the United States. The career there is more open to the talents; the world is an oyster which the individual can open with many kinds of knives; what the Germans call "*umsatteln*", or changing one's profession as one changes one's horse, is much more feasible in the New World than in the Old. The freedom and largeness of opportunity is a stimulus to all strong minds. Lincoln, as Professor Dowden remarks, would in the Middle Ages have probably continued to split rails all his life.

> The fact is that if the predominant power of a few great minds is diminished in a democracy, it is because, together with such minds, a thousand others are at work contributing to the total result.... It is surely for the advantage of the most eminent minds that they should be surrounded by men of energy and intellect, who belong neither to the class of hero-worshippers nor to the class of *valets de chambre*.

> The truth seems to be that with an increased population and the multiplicity of interests and influences at play on men, we may expect a greater diversity of mental types in the future than could be found at any period in the past. The supposed uniformity of society in a democratic age is apparent, not real; artificial distinctions are replaced by natural differences; and within the one great community exists a vast number of smaller communities, each having its special intellectual and moral characteristics. In the few essentials of social order the majority rightly has its way, but within certain broad bounds, which are fixed, there remains ample scope for the action of a multitude of various minorities.—*"New Studies in Literature," by Prof. E. Dowden.*

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The so-called uniformity and monotony of American life struck me as existing in appearance much more than in reality. If all my ten neighbours have pretty much the same income and enjoy pretty much the same comforts, their little social circle is certainly in a sense much more uniform than if their incomes ranged down from £10,000 to £300 and their household state from several powdered footmen to a little maid-of-all-work; but surely in all that really matters—in thoughts, ideas, personal habits and tastes, internal storms and calms, the elements of tragedy and comedy, talents and ambitions, loves and fears—the former circle might be infinitely more varied than the latter. Many critics of American life seem to have been led away by merely external similarities, and to have jumped at once to the conclusion that one Philadelphian must be as much like another as each little red-brick, white-stooped house of the Quaker City is like its neighbours. A single glance at the enormous number of *intelligent* faces one sees in American society, or even in an American street, is enough to dissipate the idea that this can be a country of greater monotony than, say, England, where expressionless faces are by no means uncommon, even in the best circles. America is more monotonous than England, if a more equitable distribution of material comforts be monotony; it is not so, if the question be of originality of character and susceptibility to ideas.

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