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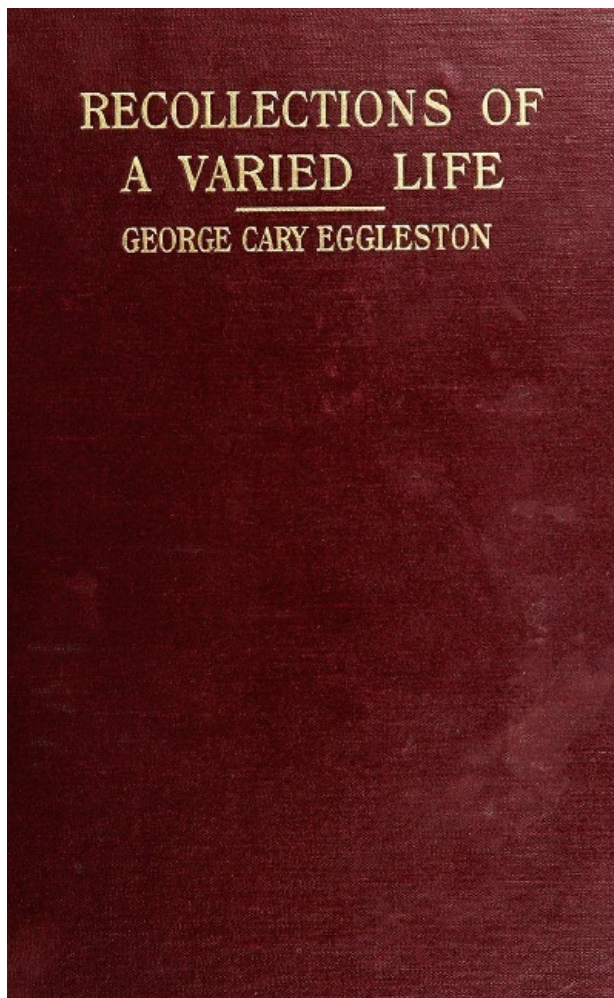
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George Cary Eggleston

George Cary Eggleston

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RECOLLECTIONS OF A VARIED LIFE

BY GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON



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TO
MARION MY WIFE
I DEDICATE THESE RECOLLECTIONS

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[1]

RECOLLECTIONS OF A VARIED LIFE

I

Mr. Howells once said to me: "Every man's life is interesting—to himself."

I suppose that is true, though in the cases of some men it seems a difficult thing to understand.

At any rate it is not because of personal interest in my own life that I am writing this book. I was perfectly sincere in wanting to call these chapters "The Autobiography of an Unimportant Man," but on reflection I remembered Franklin's wise saying that whenever he saw the phrase "without vanity I may say," some peculiarly vain thing was sure to follow.

I am seventy years old. My life has been one of unusually varied activity. It has covered half the period embraced in the republic's existence. It has afforded me opportunity to see and share that development of physical, intellectual, and moral life conditions, which has been perhaps the most marvelous recorded in the history of mankind.

Incidentally to the varied activities and accidents of my life, I have been brought into contact with many interesting men, and into relation with many interesting events. It is of these chiefly that I wish to write, and if I were minded to offer an excuse for this book's existence, this would be the marrow of it. But a book that needs excuse is inexcusable. I make no apology. I am writing of the men and things I remember, because I wish to do so, because my publisher wishes it, and because he and I think that others will be interested in the result. We shall see, later, how that is.

[2]

This will be altogether a good-humored book. I have no grudges to gratify, no revenges to wreak, no debts of wrath to repay in cowardly ways; and if I had I should put them all aside as unworthy. I have found my fellow-men in the main kindly, just, and generous. The chief pleasure I have had in living has been derived from my association with them in good-fellowship and all kindness. The very few of them who have wronged me, I have forgiven. The few who have been offensive to me, I have forgotten, with conscientiously diligent care. There has seemed to me no

better thing to do with them.

II

It is difficult for any one belonging to this modern time to realize the conditions of life in this country in the eighteen-forties, the period at which my recollection begins.

The country at that time was all American. The great tides of immigration which have since made it the most cosmopolitan of countries, had not set in. Foreigners among us were so few that they were regarded with a great deal of curiosity, some contempt, and not a little pity. Even in places like my native town of Vevay, Indiana, which had been settled by a company of Swiss immigrants at the beginning of the century, the feeling was strong that to be foreign was to be inferior. Those who survived of the original Swiss settlers were generously tolerated as unfortunates grown old, and on that account entitled to a certain measure of respectful deference in spite of their taint.

[3] To us in the West, at least, all foreigners whose mother tongue was other than English were "Dutchmen." There is reason to believe that this careless and inattentive grouping prevailed in other parts of the country as well as in the West. Why, otherwise, were the German speaking people of Pennsylvania and the mountain regions south universally known as "Pennsylvania Dutch?" *The Lure of New Orleans*

And yet, in spite of the prevailing conviction that everything foreign was inferior, the people of the Ohio valley—who constituted the most considerable group of Western Americans—looked with unapproving but ardent admiration upon foreign life, manners, and ways of thinking as these were exemplified in New Orleans.

[4] In that early time, when the absence of bridges, the badness of roads, and the primitive character of vehicular devices so greatly emphasized overland distances, New Orleans was the one great outlet and inlet of travel and traffic for all the region beyond the mountain barrier that made the East seem as remote as far Cathay. Thither the people of the West sent the produce of their orchards and their fields to find a market; thence came the goods sold in the "stores," and the very money—Spanish and French silver coins—that served as a circulating medium. The men who annually voyaged thither on flat-boats, brought back wondering tales of the strange things seen there, and especially of the enormous wickedness encountered among a people who had scarcely heard of the religious views accepted among ourselves as unquestioned and unquestionable truth. I remember hearing a whole sermon on the subject once. The preacher had taken alarm over the eagerness young men showed to secure employment as "hands" on flat-boats for the sake of seeing the wonderful city where buying and selling on the Sabbath excited no comment. He feared contamination of the youth of the land, and with a zeal that perhaps outran discretion, he urged God-fearing merchants to abandon the business of shipping the country's produce to market, declaring that he had rather see all of it go to waste than risk the loss of a single young man's soul by sending him to a city so unspeakably wicked that he confidently expected early news of its destruction after the manner of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The "power of preaching" was well-nigh measureless in that time and region, but so were the impulses of "business," and I believe the usual number of flat-boats were sent out from the little town that year. The merchants seemed to "take chances" of the loss of souls when certain gain was the stake on the other side, a fact which strongly suggests that human nature in that time and country was very much the same in its essentials as human nature in all other times and countries.

III

[5] The remoteness of the different parts of the country from each other in those days is difficult to understand, or even fairly to imagine nowadays. For all purposes of civilization remoteness is properly measured, not by miles, but by the difficulty of travel and intercourse. It was in recognition of this that the founders of the Republic gave to Congress authority to establish "post offices and post roads," and that their successors lavished money upon endeavor to render human intercourse easier, speedier, and cheaper by the construction of the national road, by the digging of canals, and by efforts to improve the postal service. In my early boyhood none of these things had come upon us. There were no railroads crossing the Appalachian chain of mountains, and no wagon roads that were better than tracks over ungraded hills and quagmire trails through swamps and morasses. Measured by ease of access, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore were at a greater distance from the dwellers in the West than Hong Kong or Singapore is now, while *A Travel Center*

Boston was remoter than the mountains of the moon.

There were no telegraphs available to us; the mails were irregular, uncertain, and unsafe. The wagons, called stagecoaches, that carried them, were subject to capture and looting at the hands of robber bands who infested many parts of the country, having their headquarters usually at some town where roads converged and lawlessness reigned supreme.

One such town was Napoleon, Indiana. In illustration of its character an anecdote was related in my boyhood. A man from the East made inquiry in Cincinnati concerning routes to various points in the Hoosier State, and beyond.

"If I want to go to Indianapolis, what road do I take?" he asked.

"Why, you go to Napoleon, and take the road northwest."

"If I want to go to Madison?"

"Go to Napoleon, and take the road southwest."

"Suppose I want to go to St. Louis?"

"Why, you go to Napoleon, and take the national road west."

And so on, through a long list, with Napoleon as the starting point of each reply. At last the man asked in despair:

"Well now, stranger, suppose I wanted to go to Hell?"

The stranger answered without a moment's hesitation, "Oh, in that case, just go to Napoleon, and stay there."

[6] That is an episode, as the reader has probably discovered. To return to the mails. It was not until 1845, and after long agitation, that the rate on letters was reduced to five cents for distances less than three hundred miles, and ten cents for greater distances. Newspaper postage was relatively even higher.

The result of these conditions was that each quarter of the country was shut out from everything like free communication with the other quarters. Each section was isolated. Each was left to work out its own salvation as best it might, without aid, without consultation, without the chastening or the stimulation of contact and attrition. Each region cherished its own prejudices, its own dialect, its own ways of living, its own overweening self-consciousness of superiority to all the rest, its own narrow bigotries, and its own suspicious contempt of everything foreign to itself.

In brief, we had no national life in the eighteen-forties, or for long afterwards,—no community of thought, or custom, or attitude of mind. The several parts of the country were a loose bundle of segregated and, in many ways, antagonistic communities, bound together only by a common loyalty to the conviction that this was the greatest, most glorious, most invincible country in the world, God-endowed with a mental, moral, and physical superiority that put all the rest of earth's nations completely out of the reckoning. We were all of us Americans—intense, self-satisfied, self-glorifying Americans—but we had little else in common. We did not know each other. We had been bred in radically different ways. We had different ideals, different conceptions of life, different standards of conduct, different ways of living, different traditions, and different aspirations. The country was provincial to the rest of the world, and still more narrowly provincial each region to the others.

[7]

IV

I think, however, that the West was less provincial, probably, and less narrow in its views and sympathies than were New England, the Middle States, and the South at that time, and this for a very sufficient reason.

*The Composite
West*

The people in New England rarely came into contact with those of the Middle and Southern States, and never with those of the West. The people of the Middle States and those of the South were similarly shut within themselves, having scarcely more than an imaginary acquaintance with the dwellers in other parts of the country. The West was a common meeting ground where men from New England, the Middle States, and the South Atlantic region constituted a varied population, representative of all the rest of the country, and dwelling together in so close a unity that each group adopted many of the ways and ideas of the other groups, and correspondingly modified its own. These were first steps taken toward homogeneity in the West, such as were taken in no other part of the country in that time of little travel and scanty intercourse among men. The Virginians, Carolinians, and New Englanders who had migrated to the West learned to make and appreciate the apple butter and the sauerkraut of the Pennsylvanians; the pie of New England found favor with Southerners in return for their hoecake, hominy, chine, and spareribs. And as with material things, so also with things of the mind. Customs were blended, usages were borrowed and modified, opinions were fused together

into new forms, and speech was wrought into something different from that which any one group had known—a blend, better, richer, and more forcible than any of its constituent parts had been.

[8] In numbers the Virginians, Kentuckians, and Carolinians were a strong majority in the West, and the so-called "Hoosier dialect," which prevailed there, was nearly identical with that of the Virginian mountains, Kentucky, and the rural parts of Carolina. But it was enriched with many terms and forms of speech belonging to other sections. Better still, it was chastened by the influence of the small but very influential company of educated men and women who had come from Virginia and Kentucky, and by the strenuous labors in behalf of good English of the Yankee school-ma'ams, who taught us by precept to make our verbs agree with their nominatives, and, per contra, by unconscious example to say "doo," "noo," and the like, for "dew," "new," etc.

The prevalence of the dialect among the uneducated classes was indeed, though indirectly, a ministry to the cause of good English. The educated few, fearing contamination of their children's speech through daily contact with the ignorant, were more than usually strict in exacting correct usage at the hands of their youngsters. I very well remember how grievously it afflicted my own young soul that I was forbidden, under penalty, to say "chimbly" and "flanner" for "chimney" and "flannel," to call inferior things "ornery," to use the compromise term "'low"—abbreviation of "allow,"—which very generally took the place of the Yankee "guess" and the Southern "reckon," and above all to call tomatoes "tomatices."

[9] It is of interest to recall the fact that this influential class of educated men and women, included some really scholarly persons, as well as a good many others who, without being scholarly, were educated and accustomed to read. Among the scholarly ones, within the purview of my memory, were such as Judge Algernon S. Stevens, Judge Algernon S. Sullivan, Judge Miles Cary Eggleston, the Hendrickses, the Stapps, the Rev. Hiram Wason, my own father, and Mrs. Julia L. Dumont, a very brilliant woman, who taught school for love of it and wrote books that in our time would have given her something more than the provincial reputation she shared with Alice and Phœbe Cary, and some others.

V

Of still greater consequence, perhaps, so far as influence upon their time and country was concerned, were the better class of Kentuckians who had crossed the Ohio to become sharers in the future of the great Northwest.

*The Sturdy
Kentuckians*

These were mostly men of extraordinary energy—physical and mental—who had mastered what the Kentucky schoolmasters could teach them, and had made of their schooling the foundation of a broader education the dominant characteristic of which was an enlightenment of mind quite independent of scholarly acquisition.

These men were thinkers accustomed, by habit and inheritance, to look facts straight in the face, to form their own opinions untrammelled by tradition, unbiased by fine-spun equivocation, and wholly unrestrained in their search for truth by conventional hobbles of any kind. Most of them had more or less Scotch-Irish blood in their veins, and were consequently wholesome optimists, full of courage, disposed to righteousness of life for its own sake, and resolutely bent upon the betterment of life by means of their own living.

[10] Most of them numbered one or more Baptist or Methodist preachers among their ancestry—men of healthy minds and open ones, men to whom religion was far less a matter of emotion than of conduct, men who did the duty that lay next to them—be it plowing or praying, preaching or fighting Indians or Englishmen—with an equal mind.

Men of such descent were educated by environment in better ways than any that schools can furnish. From infancy they had lived in an atmosphere of backwoods culture,—culture drawn in part from such books as were accessible to them, and in greater part from association with the strong men who had migrated in early days to conquer the West and make of it a princely possession of the Republic.

The books they had were few, but they were the very best that English literature afforded, and they read them over and over again with diligence and intelligence until they had made their own every fecundative thought the books suggested. Then they went away, and thought for themselves, with untrammelled freedom, of the things thus presented to their minds. I have sometimes wondered if their method of education, chiefly by independent thinking, and with comparatively little reverence for mere "authority," might not have been better, in its character-building results at least, than our modern, more bookish process.

That question does not concern us now. What I wish to point out is the fact that the country owes much to the influence of these strong men of affairs and action, whose conviction that every man owes it to his fellow-men so to live that this may be a better world for other men to live in because of his having lived in it, gave that impulse to education which later made Indiana a marvel and a model to the other states in all that concerns education. Those men believed

themselves and their children entitled to the best in schooling as in everything else, and from the very beginning they set out to secure it.

[11] If a wandering schoolmaster came within call, they gave him a schoolhouse and a place to live in, and bade him "keep school." When he had canvassed the region round about for "scholars," and was ready—with his ox gads—to open his educational institution, the three or four of these men whose influence pervaded and dominated the region round about, said a word or two to each other, and made themselves responsible for the tuition fees of all the boys and girls in the neighborhood whose parents were too poor to pay.

*Early
Educational
Impulses*

In the same spirit, years later, when an effort was made to establish colleges in the state, these men or their children who had inherited their impulse, were prompt to furnish the money needed, however hard pressed they might be for money themselves. I remember that my mother—the daughter of one of the most conspicuous of the Kentuckians—when she was a young widow with four children to bring up on an income of about \$250 a year, subscribed \$100 to the foundation of Indiana Asbury University, becoming, in return, the possessor of a perpetual scholarship, entitling her for all time to maintain a student there free of tuition. It was with money drawn from such sources that the colleges of Indiana were founded.

[12] Under the influence of these Kentuckians, Virginians, and men of character who in smaller numbers had come out from New England and the Middle States, there was from the first an impulse of betterment in the very atmosphere of the West. Even the "poor whites" of the South who had migrated to the Northwest in pursuit of their traditional dream of finding a land where one might catch "two 'possums up one 'simmon tree," were distinctly uplifted by the influence of such men, not as a class, perhaps, but in a sufficient number of individual cases to raise the average level of their being. The greater number of these poor whites continued to be the good-natured, indolent, unthrifty people that their ancestors had always been. They remained content to be renters in a region where the acquisition of land in independent ownership was easy. They continued to content themselves with an inadequate cultivation of their crops, and a meager living, consequent upon their neglect. They continued to give to shooting, fishing, and rude social indulgences the time they ought to have given to work. But their children were learning to read and write, and, better still, were learning by observation the advantages of a more industrious living, and when the golden age of steamboating came, they sought and found profitable employment either upon the river or about the wharves. The majority of these were content to remain laborers, as deckhands and the like, but in some of them at least ambition was born, and they became steamboat mates, pilots, and, in some cases, the captains and even the owners of steamboats. On the whole, I think the proportion of the class of people who thus achieved a higher status, bettering themselves in enduring ways was quite as large as it ever is in the history of an unfortunate or inferior class of men. In the generations that have followed some at least of the descendants of that "poor white" class, whose case had always been accounted hopeless, have risen to distinction in intellectual ways. One distinguished judge of our time, a man now of national reputation, is the grandson of a poor white who negligently cultivated land rented from a relative of my own. His father was my schoolmate for a season, and was accounted inferior by those of us who were more fortunately descended. So much for free institutions in a land of hope, opportunity, and liberty, where the "pursuit of happiness" and betterment was accounted an "unalienable right."

[13]

VI

In another case that comes home to me for reasons, the betterment was more immediate. My maternal grandfather, the old Kentuckian, George Craig, whose name is preserved in many ways in the geographical nomenclature of Southern Indiana, had an abundantly large family of children. But with generously helpful intent it was his habit to adopt bright boys and girls whose parents were poverty-stricken, in order to give them such education as was available in that time and country, or, in his favorite phrase, to "give them a show in the world." One of these adopted boys was the child of parents incredibly poor. When he came to my grandfather the boy had never seen a tablecloth or slept in a bed. He knew nothing of the uses of a knife and fork. A glass tumbler was to him a wonder thing. He could neither read nor write, though he was eleven years of age. The towel given to him for use on his first introduction to the family was an inscrutable mystery until one of the negro servants explained its uses to him.

*A Poor Boy's
Career*

Less than a score of years later that boy was a lawyer of distinction, a man of wide influence, a state senator of unusual standing, and chairman of the committee that investigated and exposed the frauds perpetrated upon the state in the building of the Madison and Indianapolis railroad—the first highway of its kind constructed within the state. In one sense, he owed all this to George Craig. In a truer sense he owed it to his own native ability, which George Craig was shrewd enough to discover in the uncouth and ignorant boy, and wise enough to give its opportunity.

[14]

VII

It was a common practice of the thrifty and well-to-do of that time, thus to adopt the children of their poorer neighbors and bring them up as members of their own families. Still more common was the practice of taking destitute orphans as "bound boys" or "bound girls." These were legally bound to service, instead of being sent to the poorhouse, but in practical effect they became members of the families to whose heads they were "bound," and shared in all respects the privileges, the schooling, and everything else that the children of the family enjoyed. They were expected to work, when there was work to be done, but so was every other member of the family, and there was never the least suggestion of servile obligation involved or implied. I remember well the affection in which my mother's "bound girls" held her and us children, and the way in which, when they came to be married, their weddings were provided for precisely as if they had been veritable daughters of the house.

On one of those occasions it was rumored in the village, that a "shiveree"—Hoosier for charivari—was to mark the event. My father, whose Virginian reverence for womanhood and marriage and personal dignity, was prompt to resent that sort of insult, went to a neighbor and borrowed two shotguns. As he carried them homeward through the main street of the village, on the morning before the wedding, he encountered the ruffian who had planned the "shiveree," and was arranging to carry it out. The man asked him, in surprise, for my father was a studious recluse in his habits, if he were going out after game.

[15] "No," my father replied. "It is only that a very worthy young woman, a member of my family, is to be married at my house to-night. I hear that certain 'lewd fellows of the baser sort' are planning to insult her and me and my family with what they call a 'shiveree.' If they do anything of the kind, *I am going to fire four charges of buckshot into the crowd.*" *"Shooting Stock"* . . .

As my father was known to be a man who inflexibly kept his word, there was no "shiveree" that night.

That father of mine was a man of the gentlest spirit imaginable, but at the same time a man of resolute character, who scrupulously respected the rights and the dignity of others, and insistently demanded a like respect for his own. Quite episodically, but in illustration of the manners of the time, I may here intrude an incident, related to me many years afterwards by Judge Taylor, a venerable jurist of Madison. My father was looking about him for a place in which to settle himself in the practice of law. He was temporarily staying in Madison when a client came to him. The man had been inveigled into a game of cards with some sharpers, and they had worked off some counterfeit money upon him. He purposed to sue them. My father explained that the law did not recognize the obligation of gambling debts, and the man replied that he knew that very well, but that he wanted to expose the rascals, and was willing to spend money to that end. The case came before Judge Taylor. My father made an eloquently bitter speech in exposition of the meanness of men who—the reader can imagine the rest. It was to make that speech that the client had employed the young lawyer, and, in Judge Taylor's opinion he "got his money's worth of gall and vitriol." But while the speech was in progress, the three rascals became excited and blustering under the castigation, and he, the judge, overheard talk of "shooting the fellow"—to wit my father. Just as the judge was meditating measures of restraint that might be effective at a time when most men were walking arsenals, he heard one of them hurriedly warn his fellows in this wise:

[16] "Say—you'd better not talk too much about shooting—they tell me that young lawyer comes from Virginia, and he *may be of shooting stock.*"

The Virginians had a reputation for quickness on trigger in that region. The warning was sufficient. The three gamblers took their punishment and slunk away, and there was no assassination.

VIII

The readiness with which the well-to-do men of that region adopted or otherwise made themselves responsible for the bringing up of destitute children, was largely due to the conditions of life that prevailed in that time and country. There was no considerable expense involved in such adoption. The thrifty farmer, with more land than he could possibly cultivate, produced, easily, all the food that even a multitudinous family could consume. He produced also the wool, the flax, and the cotton necessary for clothing, and these were carded, spun, woven, and converted into garments for both sexes by the women folk of the home. Little, if anything, was bought with actual money, and in the midst of such abundance an extra mouth to feed and an extra back to clothe counted for next to nothing, while at that time, when work, on everybody's part, was regarded quite as a matter of course, the boy or girl taken into a family

was easily able to "earn his keep," as the phrase was.

[17]

Nevertheless, there was a great-hearted generosity inspiring it all—a broadly democratic conviction that everybody should have a chance in life, and that he who had should share with his brother who had not, freely and without thought of conferring favor.

It was upon that principle, also, that the hospitality of that time rested. There was always an abundance to eat, and there was always a bed to spare for the stranger within the gates; or if the beds fell short, it was always easy to spread a pallet before the fire, or, in extreme circumstances, to make the stranger comfortable among a lot of quilts in a corn-house or hay-mow.

*A Limitless
Hospitality*

It was my grandfather's rule and that of other men like him, to provide work of some sort for every one who asked for it. An extra hoe in summer was always of use, while in winter there was corn to be shelled, there were apples to be "sorted," tools to be ground, ditches to be dug, stone fences to be built, wood to be chopped, and a score of other things to be done, that might employ an extra "hand" profitably. Only once in all his life did George Craig refuse employment to a man asking for it. On that occasion he gave supper, lodging, and breakfast to the wayfarer; but during the evening the man complained that he had been walking all day with a grain of corn in his shoe, and, as he sat before the fire, he removed it, to his great relief but also to his undoing as an applicant for permanent employment. For the energetic old Kentuckian could conceive of no ground of patience with a man who would walk all day in pain rather than take the small trouble of sitting down by the roadside and removing the offending grain of corn from his shoe.

"I have no use," he said, "for a man as lazy as that."

Then his conscience came to the rescue.

[18]

"I can't hire a lazy fellow like you for wages," he said; "but I have a ditch to be dug. There will be fifteen hundred running feet of it, and if you choose, I'll let you work at it, at so much a foot. Then if you work you'll make wages, while if you don't there'll be nothing for me to lose on you but your keep, and I'll give you that."

The man decided to move on.

IX

The life of that early time differed in every way from American life as men of the present day know it.

The isolation in which every community existed, compelled a degree of local self-dependence the like of which the modern world knows nothing of. The farmers did most things for themselves, and what they could not conveniently do for themselves, was done for them in the villages by independent craftsmen, each cunningly skilled in his trade and dependent upon factories for nothing. In my native village, Vevay, which was in nowise different from other Western villages upon which the region round about depended for supplies, practically everything wanted was made. There were two tinsmiths, who, with an assistant or two each, in the persons of boys learning the trade, made every utensil of tin, sheet-iron, or copper that was needed for twenty-odd miles around. There were two saddlers and harnessmakers; two or three plasterers; several brick masons; several carpenters, who knew their trade as no carpenter does in our time when the planing mill furnishes everything already shaped to his hand, so that the carpenter need know nothing but how to drive nails or screws. There was a boot- and shoe-maker who made all the shoes worn by men, women, and children in all that country, out of leather bought of the local tanner, to whom all hides were sold by their producers. There was a hatter who did all his own work, whose vats yielded all the headgear needed, from the finest to the commonest, and whose materials were the furs of animals caught or killed by the farmers' boys and brought to town for sale. There was even a wireworker, who provided sieves, strainers, and screenings of every kind, and there was a rope walk where the cordage wanted was made.

[19]

In most households the women folk fashioned all the clothes worn by persons of either sex, but to meet the demand for "Sunday bests" and that of preachers who must wear broadcloth every day in the week, and of extravagant young men who wished to dazzle all eyes with "store clothes," there was a tailor who year after year fashioned garments upon models learned in his youth and never departed from. No such thing as ready-made clothing or boots or shoes—except women's slippers—was known at the time of which I now write. Even socks and stockings were never sold in the shops, except upon wedding and other infrequent occasions. For ordinary wear they were knitted at home of home-spun yarn. The statement made above is scarcely accurate. Both socks and stockings were occasionally sold in the country stores, but they were almost exclusively the surplus products of the industry of women on the farms round about. So were the saddle blankets, and most of the bed blankets used.

*Industrial
Independence*

Local self-dependence was well-nigh perfect. The town depended on the country and the

country on the town, for nearly everything that was eaten or woven or otherwise consumed. The day of dependence upon factories had not yet dawned. The man who knew how to fashion any article of human use, made his living by doing the work he knew how to do, and was an independent, self-respecting man, usually owning his comfortable home, and destined by middle age to possess a satisfactory competence.

[20]

Whether all that was economically or socially better than the system which has converted the independent, home-owning worker into a factory hand, living in a tenement and carrying a dinner pail, while tariff tribute from the consumer makes his employer at once a millionaire and the more or less despotic master of a multitude of men—is a question too large and too serious to be discussed in a book of random recollections such as this. But every "strike" raises that question in the minds of men who remember the more primitive conditions as lovingly as I do.

As a matter of curious historical interest, too, it is worth while to recall the fact that Henry Clay—before his desire to win the votes of the Kentucky hemp-growers led him to become the leading advocate of tariff protection—used to make eloquent speeches in behalf of free trade, in which he drew horrifying pictures of life conditions in the English manufacturing centers, and invoked the mercy of heaven to spare this country from like conditions in which economic considerations should ride down social ones, trample the life out of personal independence, and convert the home-owning American workman into a mere "hand" employed by a company of capitalists for their own enrichment at cost of his manhood except in so far as the fiat of a trades union might interpose to save him from slavery to the employing class.

Those were interesting speeches of Henry Clay's, made before he sacrificed his convictions and his manhood to his vain desire to become President.

X

[21]

At the time of my earliest recollections there was not a mile of railroad in Indiana or anywhere else west of Ohio, while even in Ohio there were only the crudest beginnings of track construction, on isolated lines that began nowhere and led no whither, connecting with nothing, and usually failing to make even that connection.

*The Early
Railroad*

He who would journey from the East to the West, soon came to the end of the rails, and after that he must toilsomely make his way by stagecoach across the mountains, walking for the most part in mud half-leg deep, and carrying a fence rail on his shoulder with which to help the stalled stagecoach out of frequent mires.

Nevertheless, we heard much of the railroad and its wonders. It was our mystery story, our marvel, our current Arabian Nights' Entertainment. We were told, and devoutly believed, that the "railcars" ran at the rate of "a mile a minute." How or why the liars of that early period, when lying must have been in its infancy as an art, happened to hit upon sixty miles an hour as the uniform speed of railroad trains, I am puzzled to imagine. But so it was. There was probably not in all the world at that time a single mile of railroad track over which a train could have been run at such a speed. As for the railroads in the Western part of this country, they were chiefly primitive constructions, with tracks consisting of strap iron—wagon tires in effect—loosely spiked down to timber string pieces, over which it would have been reckless to the verge of insanity to run a train at more than twelve miles an hour under the most favorable circumstances. But we were told, over and over again, till we devoutly believed it—as human creatures always believe what they have been ceaselessly told without contradiction—that the "railcars" always ran at the rate of a mile a minute.

[22]

The first railroad in Indiana was opened in 1847. A year or two later, my brother Edward and I, made our first journey over it, from Madison to Dupont, a distance of thirteen miles. Edward was at that time a victim of the faith habit; I was beginning to manifest a skeptical, inquiring tendency of mind which distressed those responsible for me. When Edward reminded me that we were to enjoy our first experience of traveling at the rate of a mile a minute, I borrowed his bull's-eye watch and set myself to test the thing by timing it. When we reached Dupont, alter the lapse of ninety-six minutes, in a journey of thirteen miles, I frankly declared my unbelief in the "mile a minute" tradition. There was no great harm in that, perhaps, but the skeptical spirit of inquiry that had prompted me to subject the matter to a time test, very seriously troubled my elders, who feared that I was destined to become a "free thinker," as my father had been before me, though I was not permitted to know that. I was alarmed about my skeptical tendencies myself, because I believed the theology and demonology taught me at church, having no means of subjecting them to scientific tests of any kind. I no longer believed in the "mile a minute" tradition, as everybody around me continued to do, but I still believed in the existence and malign activity of a personal devil, and I accepted the assurance given me that he was always at my side whispering doubts into my ears by way of securing the damnation of my soul under the doctrine of salvation by faith. The tortures I suffered on this account were well-nigh incredible, for in spite of all I might do or say or think, the doubts continued to arise in my mind, until at last I awoke to the fact that I was beginning to doubt the doctrine of salvation by faith itself, as a thing stultifying to the mind,

unreasonable in itself, and utterly unjust in its application to persons like myself, who found it impossible to believe things which they had every reason to believe were not true.

[23] Fortunately I was young and perfectly healthy, and so, after a deal of psychological suffering I found peace by reconciling myself to the conviction that I was foreordained to be damned in any case, and that there was no use in making myself unhappy about it. In support of that comforting assurance I secretly decided to accept the Presbyterian doctrine of predestination instead of the Methodist theory of free will in which I had been bred. I had to make this change of doctrinal allegiance secretly, because its open avowal would have involved a sound thrashing behind the smoke-house, with perhaps a season of fasting and prayer, designed to make the castigation "take."

*A Precocious
Skeptic*

I remember that when I had finally made up my mind that the doctrine of predestination was true, and that I was clearly one of those who were foreordained to be damned for incapacity to believe the incredible, I became for a time thoroughly comfortable in my mind, very much as I suppose a man of business is when he receives his discharge in bankruptcy. I felt myself emancipated from many restraints that had sat heavily on my boyish soul. Having decided, with the mature wisdom of ten or a dozen years of age, that I was to be damned in any case, I saw no reason why I should not read the fascinating books that had been forbidden to me by the discipline of the Methodist Church, to which I perforce belonged.

[24] In that early day of strenuous theological requirement, the Methodist Church disapproved of literature as such, and approved it only in so far as it was made the instrument of a propaganda. Its discipline required that each person upon being "received into full membership"—the Methodist equivalent of confirmation—should take a vow not "to read such books or sing such songs as do not pertain to the glory of God." I quote the phrase from memory, but accurately I think. That prohibition, as interpreted by clerical authority at the time, had completely closed to me the treasures of the library my scholarly father had collected, and to which, under his dying instructions, my mother had added many scores of volumes of the finest English literature, purchased with the money for which his law books had been sold after his death.

I had read a little here and there in those books, and had been fascinated with the new world they opened to my vision, when, at the ripe age of ten or twelve years, I was compelled by an ill-directed clerical authority to submit myself to the process of being "received into full membership," under the assumption that I had "reached the age of responsibility."

After that the books I so longed to read were forbidden to me—especially a set entitled "The British Drama," in which appeared the works of Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, and a long list of other classics, filling five thick volumes. By no ingenuity of construction could such books be regarded as homilies in disguise, and so they were Anathema. So was Shakespeare, and so even was Thiers' "French Revolution," of which I had devoured the first volume in delight, before the inhibition fell upon me, blasting my blind but eager aspiration for culture and a larger knowledge of the world and of human nature.

XI

[25] After I made up my mind to accept damnation as my appointed portion, I felt myself entirely free to revel at will in the reading that so appealed to my hungry mind; free, that is to say, so far as my own conscience was concerned, but no freer than before so far as the restraints of authority could determine the matter. I had no hesitation in reading the books when I could do so without being caught at it, but to be caught at it was to be punished for it and, worse still, it was to have the books placed beyond my reach, a thing I dreaded far more than mere punishment. Punishment, indeed, seemed to me nothing more than a small advance upon the damnation I must ultimately suffer in any case. The thing to be avoided was discovery, because discovery must lead to the confiscation of my books, the loss of that liberty which my acceptance of damnation had given to me.

*Culture by
Stealth*

To that end I practised many deceits and resorted to many subterfuges. I read late at night when I was supposed to be asleep. I smuggled books out into the woods and hid them there under the friendly roots of trees, so that I might go out and read them when I was supposed to be engaged in a search for ginseng, or in a hunt for the vagrant cow, to whose unpunctuality in returning to be milked I feel that I owe an appreciable part of such culture as I have acquired.

The clerical hostility to literature endured long after the period of which I have been writing, long after the railroad and other means of freer intercourse had redeemed the West from its narrow provincialism. Even in my high school days, when our part of the country had reached that stage of civilization that hangs lace curtains at its windows, wears store clothes of week days, and paints garden fences green instead of white, we who were under Methodist dominance were rigidly forbidden to read fiction or anything that resembled fiction, with certain exceptions. The grown folk of our creed permitted themselves to read the inane novels of the Philadelphia tailor, T. S. Arthur; the few young men who "went to college," were presumed to be immune to

the virus of the Greek and Latin fictions they must read there—probably because they never learned enough of Greek or Latin to read them understandingly—and finally there were certain polemic novels that were generally permitted.

[26]

Among these last the most conspicuous example I remember was a violently anti-Roman Catholic novel called "Danger in the Dark," which had a vogue that the "best-sellers" of our later time might envy. It was not only permitted to us to read that—it was regarded as our religious duty in order that we might learn to hate the Catholics with increased fervor.

The religious animosities of that period, with their relentless intolerance, their unreason, their matchless malevolence, and their eagerness to believe evil, ought to form an interesting and instructive chapter in some history of civilization in America, whenever a scholar of adequate learning and the gift of interpretation shall undertake that work. But that is a task for some Buckle or Lecky. It does not belong to a volume of random reminiscences such as this is.

XII

Though the railroads, when at last they came to us, failed utterly in their promise of transportation at the rate of "a mile a minute," they did something else, presently, that was quite as remarkable and far worthier in its way. They ran down and ran over, and crushed out of existence a provincialism that had much of evil promise and very little of present good in it. With their coming, and in some degree in advance of their coming, a great wave of population poured into the West from all quarters of the country. The newcomers brought with them their ideas, their points of view, their convictions, their customs, and their standards of living. Mingling together in the most intimate ways, socially and in business pursuits, each lost something of his prejudices and provincialism, and gained much by contact with men of other ways of thinking and living. Attrition sharpened the perceptions of all and smoothed away angles of offense. A spirit of tolerance was awakened such as had never been known in the Western country before, and as the West became populous and prosperous, it became also more broadly and generously American, more truly national in character, and more accurately representative of all that is best in American thought and life than any part of the country had ever been. It represented the whole country and all its parts.

*Civilization on
Wheels*

[27]

The New Englanders, the Virginians, the Pennsylvanians, the Carolinians, the Kentuckians, who were thus brought together into composite communities with now and then an Irish, a French, a Dutch, or a German family, a group of Switzers, and a good many Scotchmen for neighbors and friends, learned much and quickly each from all the others. Better still, each unlearned the prejudices, the bigotries, and the narrownesses in which he had been bred, and life in the great West took on a liberality of mind, a breadth of tolerance and sympathy, a generous humanity such as had never been known in any of the narrowly provincial regions that furnished the materials of this composite population. It seems to me scarcely too much to say that real Americanism, in the broad sense of the term, had its birth in that new "winning of the West," which the railroads achieved about the middle of the nineteenth century.

With the coming of easier and quicker communication, not only was the West brought into closer relations with the East, but the West itself became quickly more homogeneous. There was a constant shifting of population from one place to another, much traveling about, and a free interchange of thought among a people who were eagerly alert to adopt new ideas that seemed in any way to be better than the old. As I recall the rapid changes of that time it seems to me that the betterments came with a rapidity rarely if ever equaled in human history. A year or two at that time was sufficient to work a revolution even in the most conservative centers of activity. Changes of the most radical kind and involving the most vital affairs, were made over-night, as it were, and with so little shock to men's minds that they ceased, almost immediately, to be topics of conversation. The old had scarcely passed away before it was forgotten, and the new as quickly became the usual, the ordinary, the familiar order of things.

[28]

XIII

I do not mean to suggest that the West, or indeed any other part of the country, at once put aside all its crudities of custom and adopted the ways of living that we are familiar with in this later time. All that has been a thing of gradual accomplishment, far slower in its coming than most people realize.

I remember that when Indianapolis became a great railroad center and a city of enormous proportions—population from 15,000 to 20,000, according to the creative capacity of the imagination making the estimate—a wonderful hotel was built there, and called the Bates House.

Its splendors were the subject of wondering comment throughout the West. It had washstands, with decorated pottery on them, in all its more expensive rooms, so that a guest sojourning there need not go down to the common washroom for his morning ablution, and dry his hands and face on a jack-towel. There were combs and brushes in the rooms, too, so that if one wanted to smooth his hair he was not obliged to resort to the appliances of that sort that were hung by chains to the washroom walls.

[29] Moreover, if a man going to the Bates House for a sojourn, chose to pay a trifle extra he might have a room all to himself, without the prospect of being waked up in the middle of the night to admit some stranger, assigned by the hotel authorities to share his room and bed.

*A Breakfast
Revolution*

All these things were marvels of pretentious luxury, borrowed from the more "advanced" hostelries of the Eastern cities, and as such they became topics of admiring comment everywhere, as illustrations of the wonderful progress of civilization that was taking place among us.

But all these subjects of wonderment shrank to nothingness by comparison, when the proprietors of the Bates House printed on their breakfast bills of fare, an announcement that thereafter each guest's breakfast would be cooked after his order for it was given, together with an appeal for patience on the part of the breakfasters—a patience that the proprietors promised to reward with hot and freshly prepared dishes.

This innovation was so radical that it excited discussion hotter even than the Bates House breakfasts. Opinions differed as to the right of a hotel keeper to make his guests wait for the cooking of their breakfasts. To some minds the thing presented itself as an invasion of personal liberty and therefore of the constitutional rights of the citizen. To others it seemed an intolerable nuisance, while by those who were ambitious of reputation as persons who had traveled and were familiar with good usage, it was held to be a welcome advance in civilization. In approving it, they were able to exploit themselves as persons who had not only traveled as far as the state capital, but while there had paid the two dollars a day, which the Bates House charged for entertainment, instead of going to less pretentious taverns where the customary charge of a dollar or a dollar and a half a day still prevailed, and where breakfast was put upon the table before the gong invited guests to rush into the dining room and madly scramble for what they could get of it.

[30]

In the same way I remember how we all wondered over the manifestation of luxury made by the owners of a newly built steamboat of the Louisville and Cincinnati Mail Line, when we heard that the several staterooms were provided with wash-basins. That was in the fifties. Before that time, two common washrooms—one for men and the other for women—had served all the passengers on each steamboat, and, as those washrooms had set-bowls with running water, they were regarded as marvels of sumptuousness in travel facilities. It was partly because of such luxury, I suppose, that we called the steamboats of that time "floating palaces." They seemed so then. They would not impress us in that way now. Perhaps fifty years hence the great ocean liners of the present, over whose perfection of equipment we are accustomed to wonder, will seem equally unworthy. Such things are comparative and the world moves fast.

XIV

The crudities here referred to, however, are not properly to be reckoned as belonging exclusively to the West, or as specially indicative of the provincialism of the West. At that time and for long afterward, it was usual, even in good hotels throughout the country, to assign two

*A Bathroom
Episode*

men, wholly unacquainted with each other, to occupy a room in common. It was expected that the hotel would provide a comb and brush for the use of guests in each room, as the practice of carrying one's own toilet appliances of that kind had not yet become general. Hotel rooms with private bathrooms adjoining, were wholly unknown before the Civil War, and the practice of taking a daily bath was very uncommon indeed. A hotel guest asking for such a thing would have been pointed out to bystanders as a curiosity of effete dandyism. Parenthetically, I may say that as late as 1886 I engaged for my wife and myself a room with private bath on the first floor of the Nadeau House, then the best hotel in Los Angeles, California. The man at the desk explained that the bathroom did not open directly into the room, but adjoined it and was accessible from the dead end of the hallway without. We got on very well with this arrangement until Saturday night came, when, as I estimated the number, all the unmarried men of the city took turns in bathing in my private bathroom. When I entered complaint at the desk next morning, the clerk evidently regarded me as a monster of arrogant selfishness. He explained that as I had free use of the bathroom every day and night of the week, I ought not to feel aggrieved at its invasion by other cleanly disposed persons on "the usual night for taking a bath."

[31]

The experience brought two facts to my attention: first, that in the opinion of the great majority of my fellow American citizens one bath a week was quite sufficient, and, second, that the fixed bathtub, with hot and cold water running directly into it, is a thing of comparatively modern use.

I suppose that in the eighteen-fifties, and quite certainly in the first half of that decade, there were no such appliances of luxurious living in any but the very wealthiest houses, if even there. Persons who wanted an "all-over bath," went to a barber shop for it, if they lived in a city, and, if they lived elsewhere, went without it, or pressed a family washtub into friendly service.

So, too, as late as 1870, in looking for a house in Brooklyn, I found it difficult to get one of moderate rent cost, that had other water supply than such as a hydrant in the back yard afforded.

[32]

XV

To return to the changes wrought in the West by the construction of railroads and the influx of immigration from all parts of the country. In nothing else was the improvement more rapid or more pronounced than in education. Until the early fifties, and even well into them, educational endeavors and educational methods were crude, unorganized, wasteful of effort, and utterly uncertain of result. From the very beginning the desire for education had been alert and eager in the West, and the readiness to spend money and effort in that behalf had been unstinted. But the means were lacking and system was lacking. More important still there was lack of any well-considered or fairly uniform conception of what education ought to aim at or achieve.

In the rural districts schools were sporadic and uncertain. When a "master" was available "school kept," and its chief activity was to teach the spelling of the English language. Incidentally it taught pupils to read and the more advanced ones—ten per cent. of all, perhaps, to write. As a matter of higher education rudimentary arithmetic had a place in the curriculum. Now and then a schoolmaster appeared who essayed other things in a desultory way but without results of any consequence. In the villages and towns the schools were usually better, but even there the lack of any well-ordered system was a blight.

The schoolmasters were frequently changed, for one thing, each newcoming one bringing his own notions to bear upon problems that he was not destined to remain long enough to solve. Even in the more permanent schools, kept by very young or superannuated preachers, or by Irish schoolmasters who conducted them on the "knock down and drag out" system, there was no attempt to frame a scheme of education that should aim at well conceived results. In every such school there were two or three boys taking "the classical course," by which was meant that without the least question or consideration of their fitness to do so, they had dropped all ordinary school studies and were slowly plodding along in rudimentary Latin, in obedience to some inherited belief on the part of their parents that education consists in studying Latin, that there is a benediction in a paradigm, and that fitness for life's struggle is most certainly achieved by the reading of "Historia Sacra," "Cornelius Nepos," and the early chapters of "Cæsar's Commentaries on the Gallic War."

School Methods

[33]

Other pupils, under the impression that they were taking a "scientific course," were drilled in Comstock's Physiology and Natural Philosophy, and somebody's "Geography of the Heavens." The rest of the school—plebeians all—contented themselves with reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and a vain attempt to master the mysteries and mists of Kirkham's Grammar.

The railroads quickly changed all this. They brought into the West men and women who knew who Horace Mann was, and whose conceptions of education in its aims and methods were definite, well ordered, and aggressive.

These set to work to organize graded school systems in the larger towns, and the thing was contagious, in a region where every little town was confidently ambitious of presently becoming the most important city in the state, and did not intend in the meantime to permit any other to outdo it in the frills and furbelows of largeness.

With preparatory education thus organized and systematized, and with easy communication daily becoming easier, the ambition of young men to attend colleges and universities was more and more gratified, so that within a very few years the higher education—so far as it is represented by college courses—became common throughout the country, while for those who could not achieve that, or were not minded to do so, the teaching of the schools was adapted, as it never had been before, to the purpose of real, even if meager education.

[34]

Even in the remotest country districts a new impetus was given to education, and the subjection of the schools there to the supervision of school boards and professional superintendents worked wonders of reformation. For one thing the school boards required those who wished to serve as teachers to pass rigid examinations in test of their fitness, so that it was no longer the privilege of any ignoramus who happened to be out of a job to "keep school." In addition to this the school boards prescribed and regulated the courses of study, the classification of pupils, and the choice of text-books, even in country districts where graded schools were not to be thought of, and this supervision gave a new and larger meaning to school training in the country.

XVI

It was my fortune to be the first certified teacher under this system in a certain rural district where the old haphazard system had before prevailed, and my experience there connects itself interestingly, I think, with a bit of literary history. It was the instigation of my brother, Edward Eggleston's, most widely popular story, "The Hoosier Schoolmaster," which in its turn was the instigation of all the fascinating literature that has followed it with Hoosier life conditions for its theme.

[35] My school district lay not many miles from the little town in which my family lived, and as I had a good pair of legs, well used to walking, I went home every Friday night, returning on Monday morning after a four o'clock breakfast. On these week-end visits it was my delight to tell of the queer experiences of the week, and Edward's delight to listen to them while he fought against the maladies that were then threatening his brave young life with early extinction.

*"The Hoosier
Schoolmaster"*

Years afterwards he and I were together engaged in an effort to resuscitate the weekly illustrated newspaper *Hearth and Home*, which had calamitously failed to win a place for itself, under a number of highly distinguished editors, whose abilities seemed to compass almost everything except the art of making a newspaper that people wanted and would pay for. Of that effort I shall perhaps have more to say in a future chapter. It is enough now to say that the periodical had a weekly stagnation—it will not do to call it a circulation—of only five or six thousand copies, nearly half of them gratuitous, and it had netted an aggregate loss of many thousands of dollars to the several publishers who had successively made themselves its sponsors. It was our task—Edward's and mine—to make the thing "pay," and to that end both of us were cudgeling our brains by day and by night to devise means.

One evening a happy thought came to Edward and he hurriedly quitted whatever he was doing to come to my house and submit it.

"I have a mind, Geordie," he said, "to write a three number story, called 'The Hoosier Schoolmaster,' and to found it upon your experience at Riker's Ridge."

[36] We talked the matter over. He wrote and published the first of the three numbers, and its popularity was instant. The publishers pleaded with him, and so did I, to abandon the three number limitation, and he yielded. Before the serial publication of the story ended, the subscription list of *Hearth and Home* had been many times multiplied and Edward Eggleston was famous.

He was far too original a man, and one possessed of an imagination too fertilely creative to follow at all closely my experiences, which had first suggested the story to him. He made one or two personages among my pupils the models from which he drew certain of his characters, but beyond that the experiences which suggested the story in no way entered into its construction. Yet in view of the facts it seems to me worth while to relate something of those suggestive experiences.

I was sixteen years old when I took the school. Circumstances had compelled me for the time to quit college, where, despite my youthfulness, I was in my second year. The Riker's Ridge district had just been brought under supervision of the school authorities at Madison. A new schoolhouse had been built and a teacher was wanted to inaugurate the new system. I applied for the place, stood the examinations, secured my certificate, and was appointed.

[37] On my first appearance in the neighborhood, the elders there seemed distinctly disappointed in the selection made. They knew the school history of the district. They remembered that the last three masters had been "licked" by stalwart and unruly boys, the last one so badly that he had abandoned the school in the middle of the term. They strongly felt the need, therefore, of a master of mature years, strong arms, and ponderous fists as the person chosen to inaugurate the new system. When a beardless boy of sixteen presented himself instead, they shook their heads in apprehension. But the appointment had been made by higher authority, and they had no choice but to accept it. Appreciating the nature of their fears, I told the grave and reverend seigniors that my schoolboy experience had shown my arms to be stronger, my fists heavier, and my nimbleness greater perhaps than they imagined, but that in the conduct of the school I should depend far more upon the diplomatic nimbleness of my wits than upon physical prowess, and that I thought I should manage to get on.

*The Riker's
Ridge District*

There was silence for a time. Then one wise old patriarch said:

"Well, may be so. But there's Charley Grebe. You wouldn't make a mouthful for him. Anyhow, we'll see, we'll see."

Charley Grebe was the youth who had thrashed the last master so disastrously.

Thus encouraged, I went to my task.

The neighborhood was in no sense a bad one. There were none of the elements in it that gave character to "Flat Creek" as depicted in "The Hoosier Schoolmaster." The people were all quiet,

orderly, entirely reputable folk, most of them devotedly pious. They were mainly of "Pennsylvania Dutch" extraction, stolid on the surface but singularly emotional within. But the school traditions of the region were those of the old time, when the master was regarded as the common enemy, who must be thwarted in every possible way, resisted at every point where resistance was possible, and "thrashed" by the biggest boy in school if the biggest boy could manage that.

There was really some justification for this attitude of the young Americans in every such district. For under the old system, as I very well remember it, the government of schools was brutal, cruel, inhuman in a degree that might in many cases have excused if it did not justify a homicidal impulse on the part of its victims. The boys of the early time would never have grown into the stalwart Americans who fought the Civil War if they had submitted to such injustice and so cruel a tyranny without making the utmost resistance they could.

[38]

XVII

I began my work with a little friendly address to the forty or fifty boys and girls who presented themselves as pupils. I explained to them that my idea of a school was quite different from that which had before that time prevailed in that region; that I was employed by the authorities to teach them all I could, by way of fitting them for life, and that I was anxious to do that in the case of every boy and girl present. I expressed the hope that they in their turn were anxious to learn all I could teach them, and that if any of them found their studies too difficult, I would gladly give my time out of school hours to the task of discovering the cause of the difficulty and remedying it. I explained that in my view government in a school should have no object beyond that of giving every pupil opportunity to learn all he could, and the teacher opportunity to teach all he could. I frankly abolished the arbitrary rule that had before made of whispering a grave moral offense, and substituted for it a request that every pupil should be careful not to disturb the work of others in any way, so that we might all make the most of our time and opportunity.

It was a new gospel, and in the main it fell upon deaf ears. A few of the pupils were impressed by its reasonableness and disposed to meet the new teacher half way. The opinion of the majority was expressed by one boy whom I overheard at recess when he said to one of his fellows:

[39] "He's skeered o' Charley Grebe, an' he's a-tryin' to soft-sawder us."

The Biggest Boy . . .

The first day or two of school were given to the rather perplexing work of classifying pupils whose previous instruction had been completely at haphazard. During that process I minutely observed the one foe against whom I had received more than one warning—Charley Grebe. He was a young man of nearly twenty-one, six feet, one or two inches high, broad-shouldered, muscular, and with a jaw that suggested all the relentless determination that one young man can hold.

When I questioned him with a view to his classification, he was polite enough in his uninstructed way, but exceedingly reserved. On the whole he impressed me as a young man of good natural ability, who had been discouraged by bad and incapable instruction. After he had told me, rather grudgingly I thought, what ground his studies had covered, he suddenly changed places with me and became the questioner.

"Say," he broke out, interrupting some formal question of mine, "Say, do you know anything in fact? Do you know Arithmetic an' Algebra an' Geometry and can you really teach me? or are you just pretending, like the rest?"

I thought I understood him and I guessed what his experience had been. I assured him that there was nothing in Arithmetic that I could not teach him, that I knew my Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry, and could help him to learn them, if he really desired to do so. Then adopting something of his own manner I asked:

"What is it you want me to do, Charley? Say what you have to say, like a man, and don't go beating about the bush."

For reply, he said:

[40] "I want to talk with you. It'll be a long talk. I want you to go home with me to-night. Father said I might invite you. Will you come?"

There was eager earnestness in his questions, but there was also a note of discouragement, if not quite of despair in his tone. I agreed at once to go with him for the night, and, taking the hand he had not thought of offering, I added:

"If there is any way in which I can help you, Charley, I'll do it gladly."

Whether it was the unaccustomed courtesy, or the awakening of a new hope, or something else, I know not, but the awkward, overgrown boy seemed at once to assume the dignity of manhood, and while he had never been taught to say "thank you" or to use any other conventionally polite form of speech, he managed to make me understand by his manner that he appreciated my offer, and a few minutes later, school having been dismissed, he and I set out for his home.

There he explained his case to me. He wanted to become a shipwright—a trade which, in that time of multitudinous steamboat building on the Western rivers, was the most inviting occupation open to a young man of energy. He had discovered that a man who wished to rise to anything like a mastery in that trade must have a good working knowledge of Arithmetic, elementary Algebra, Geometry, and at least the rudiments of Trigonometry. He had wanted to learn these things and some of his previous schoolmasters had undertaken to teach them, with no result except presently to reveal to him their own ignorance. His father permitted him six months more of schooling. He had "sized me up," he said, and he believed I could teach him what he wanted to learn. But could he learn it within six months? That was what he wanted me to tell him. I put him through a close examination in Arithmetic that night—consuming most of the night—and before morning I had satisfied myself that he was an apt pupil who, with diligence and such earnest determination as he manifested, could learn what he really needed of mathematics within the time named.

[41]

"You can do it, Charley, if you work hard, and I'll help you, in school hours and out," was my final verdict.

*A Vigorous
Volunteer
Monitor*

"It's a bargain," he said, and that was all he said. But a day or two later a boy in school—a great, hulking fellow whose ugliness of disposition I had early discerned—made a nerve-racking noise by dragging his pencil over his slate in a way that disturbed the whole school. I bade him cease, but he presently repeated the offense. Again I rebuked him, but five minutes or so later he defiantly did the thing again, "just to see if the master dared," he afterward explained. Thereupon Charley Grebe arose, seized the fellow by the ear, twisted that member until its owner howled with pain, and then, hurling him back into his seat, said:

"You heard the master! You'll mind him after this or I'll make you."

The event fairly appalled the school. The thought that Charley Grebe was on the master's side, and actively helping him to maintain discipline, seemed beyond belief. But events soon confirmed it. There was a little fellow in the school whom everybody loved, and whose quaint, childish ways afterwards suggested the character of "Shocky" in "The Hoosier Schoolmaster." There was also a cowardly brute there whose delight it was to persecute the little fellow on the playground in intolerable ways. I sought to stop the thing. To that end I devised and inflicted every punishment I could think of, short of flogging, but all to no purpose. At last I laid aside my convictions with my patience, and gave the big bully such a flogging as must have impressed his mind if he had had anything of the kind about his person.

[42]

That day, at the noon recess, the big bully set to work to beat the little boy unmercifully in revenge for what I had done for his protection. I was looking out through a Venetian blind, with intent to go to the rescue, when suddenly Charley Grebe, who was playing town ball threw down the bat, seized the fellow, threw him across his knees, pinioned his legs with one of his own, and literally wore out a dozen or more thick blue ash shingles over that part of his victim's body which was made for spanking.

When at last he released the blubbering object of his wrath he slapped his jaws soundly and said:

"Don't you go a-whining to the master about this. If you do it'll be a good deal wuss for you. I'm a-takin' this here job off the master's hands."

I gave no hint that I had seen or heard. But from that hour forth no boy in the school ever gave me the smallest trouble by misbehavior. The school perfectly understood that Charley Grebe was "a-takin' this here job off the master's hands," and the knowledge was sufficient.

After that only the big girls—most of them older than I was—gave me trouble. I met it with the explanation that I could never think of punishing a young woman, and that I must trust to their honor and courtesy, as girls who expected presently to be ladies, for their behavior. The appeal was a trifle slow in eliciting a response, but in the end it answered its purpose.

XVIII

While I was enrolling and classifying the pupils, I encountered a peculiarly puzzling case. There were five John Riddels in the school, and I found that all of them were sons of the same man, whose name also was John Riddel. No one of them had a middle name or any other sort of name by which he might be distinguished from his brothers. On the playground they were severally known as "Big John Riddel," "John Riddel," "Johnny Riddel," "Little John Riddel," and "Little Johnny Riddel," while their father was everywhere known as "Old John Riddel," though he was a man under fifty, I should say. He lived near, in a stone house, with stone barns and out-houses, an ingeniously devised milk-house, and a still more ingeniously constructed device for bringing water from the spring under the hill into his dwelling.

[43]

*What's in a
Name?*

In brief his thrift was altogether admirable, and the mechanical devices by which he made the

most of every opportunity, suggested a fertile inventive mind on the part of a man whose general demeanor was stolid to the verge of stupidity. When I was taking supper at his house one night by special invitation, I asked him why he had named all his sons John. For reply he said:

"John is a very good name," and that was all the explanation I ever got out of him.

XIX

[44] One pupil I had at Riker's Ridge, was Johnny G. His people had some money and Johnny had always dressed better than the rest of us could afford to do, when several years before, he and I had been classmates in the second or third grade of the Grammar School in Madison. Johnny had never got out of that grade, and even when I was in my second year in college, he gave no promise of ever making a scholastic step forward. But he had relatives on Riker's Ridge, and when he heard that I was to be the teacher there he promised his people that he would really make an effort if they would let him live with his relatives there and become my pupil. It was so arranged, and Johnny came to me, with all his dazzling waistcoats and trousers with the latest style of pockets, and all the rest of the upholstery with which he delighted to decorate his person.

I think he really did make an effort to master the rudimentary school studies, and I conscientiously endeavored to help him, not only in school but of evenings. For a time there seemed to be a reasonable promise of success in lifting Johnny to that level of scholastic attainment which would permit him to return to Madison and enter the High School. But presently all this was brought to naught. Johnny was seized by a literary ambition that completely absorbed what mind he had, and made his school studies seem to him impertinent intrusions upon the attention of one absorbed in higher things.

He told me all about it one afternoon as I walked homeward with him, intent upon finding out why he had suddenly ceased to get his lessons.

"I'm going to write a song," he told me, "and it's going to make me famous. I'm writing it now, and I tell you it's fine."

"Tell me about it, Johnny," I replied. "What is its theme? And how much of it have you written?"

"I don't know what it's to be about," he answered, "if that's what you mean by its theme. But it's going to be great, and I'm going to make the tune to it myself."

"Very well," I replied encouragingly. "Would you mind reciting to me so much of it as you've written? I'd like to hear it."

"Why, of course. I tell you it's going to be great, but I haven't got much of it done yet—only one line, in fact."

[45] Observing a certain discouragement in his tone I responded:

"Oh, well, even one line is a good deal, if it's good. Many a poem's fortune has been made by a single line. Tell me what it is."

*A Buttermilk
Poet*

"Well, the line runs: 'With a pitcher of buttermilk under her arm.' Don't you see how it sort o' sings? 'With a pitcher of buttermilk under her arm'—why, it's great, I tell you. Confound the school books! What's the use of drudging when a fellow has got it in him to write poetry like that? 'With a pit-cher of but-termilk un-der her arm'—don't it sing? 'With a *pit*-cher of but-termilk under her arm.' 'With a *pit*-cher of *but*-termilk—un-der her arm.' Whoopee, but it's great!"

I lost sight of Johnny soon after that, and I have never heard what became of that buttermilk pitcher, or the fascinating rhythm in which it presented itself. But in later years I have come into contact with many literary ambitions that were scarcely better based than this. Indeed, if I were minded to be cynical—as I am not—I might mention a few magazine poets whose pitchers of buttermilk seem to me—but all that is foreign to the purpose of this book.

Before quitting this chapter and the period and region to which it relates, I wish to record that Charley Grebe mastered the mathematics he needed, and entered hopefully upon his apprenticeship to a ship carpenter. I hope he rose to the top in the trade, but I know nothing about it.

XX

[46] Not many months after my school-teaching experience came to an end, circumstances decreed that my life should be changed in the most radical way possible in this country. I quitted the rapidly developing, cosmopolitan, kaleidoscopic West, and became a dweller upon the old family

plantation in Virginia, where my race had been bred and nurtured ever since 1635 when the first man of my name to cross the seas established himself there and possessed himself of lavishly abundant acres which subsequent divisions among his descendants had converted into two adjoining plantations—the ancestral homes of all the Egglestons, so far, at least, as I knew them or knew of them.

I suppose I was an imaginative youth at seventeen, and I had read enough of poetry, romance, and still more romantic history, to develop that side of my nature somewhat unduly. At any rate it was strongly dominant, and the contrast between the seething, sordid, aggressive, and ceaselessly eager life of the West, in which I had been bred and the picturesquely placid, well-bred, self-possessed, and leisurely life into which the transfer ushered me, impressed me as nothing else has ever done. It was like escaping from the turmoil of battle to the green pastures, and still waters of the Twenty-third Psalm. It was like passing from the clamor of a stock exchange into the repose of a library.

I have written much about that restful, refined, picturesque old Virginia life in essays and romances, but I must write something more of it in this place at risk of offending that one of my critics who not long ago discovered that I had created it all out of my own imagination for the entertainment of New England readers. He was not born, I have reason to believe, until long after that old life had passed into history, but his conviction that it never existed, that it was *a priori* impossible, was strong enough to bear down the testimony of any eye-witness's recollection.

[47]

It has often been a matter of chastening wonder and instruction to me to observe how much more critics and historians can learn from the intuitions of their "inner consciousness" than was ever known to the unfortunates who have had only facts of personal observation and familiar knowledge to guide them. It was only the other day that a distinguished historian of the modern introspective, self-illuminating school upset the traditions of many centuries by assuring us that the romantic story of Antony and Cleopatra is a baseless myth; that there never was any love affair between the Roman who has been supposed to have "madly flung a world away" for worship of a woman, and the "Sorceress of the Nile"—the "star-eyed Egyptian" who has been accused of tempting him to his destruction; that Cleopatra merely hired of Antony the services of certain legions that she needed for her defense, and paid him for them in the current money of the time and country.

*Creative
Incredulity*

Thus does the incredulous but infallible intuition of the present correct the recorded memory of the past. I have no doubt that some day the country will learn from that sort of superior consciousness that in the Virginia campaign of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor, where men are now believed to have fought and marched so heroically with empty bellies and often with unshod feet, there were in fact no such discomforts incident to the discussion; that Grant and Lee like the courteous commanders they were, suspended the argument of arms at the dinner hour each day in order that their men might don evening clothes and patent leather shoes and sit down to banquets of eleven courses, with *pousse cafés* and cigars at the end. Nevertheless, I shall write of the old Virginia life as I remember it, and let the record stand at that until such time as it shall be shown by skilled historical criticism that the story of the Civil War is a sun myth and that the old life which is pictured as having preceded it was the invention of the romance writers.

[48]

XXI

The first thing that impressed me in that old life, when I was thrust into it, was its repose, the absence of stress or strain or anxious anticipation, the appreciation of to-morrow as the equal of to-day for the doing of things and the getting of things done. My trunks had missed connection somewhere on the journey, and I thought of telegraphing about the matter. My uncle, the master of the plantation and head of the family, discouraged that, and suggested that I should go fishing in a neighboring creek instead. The telegraph office was six miles away. He had never sent a telegram in his life. He had no doubt the trunks would come along to-morrow or next day, and the fish in the creek were just then biting in encouraging fashion.

That was my first lesson, and it impressed me strongly. Where I had come from nobody would have thought of resting under the uncertainty or calmly contemplating the unwarranted delay. Here nobody thought of doing anything else, and as the trunks did in fact come the next day without any telegraphing or hurry or worry, I learned that it was just as well to go fishing as to go fussing.

The restful leisureliness of the life in Virginia was borne in upon me on every hand, I suppose my nerves had really been upon a strain during all the seventeen years that I had lived, and the relief I found in my new surroundings doubtless had much to do with my appreciation of it all. I had been used to see hurry in everything and everybody; here there was no such thing as hurry. Nobody had a "business engagement" that need interfere with anything else he was

*The Virginian
Way*

mind to do. "Business," indeed, was regarded as something to be attended to on the next court day, when all men having affairs to arrange with each other were sure to meet at the Court-House—as the county seat village was usually called. Till then it could wait. Nobody was going to move away. Everybody was "able to owe his debts." Why bother, then, to make a journey for the settlement of a matter of business which could wait as well as not for next court day to come round? It was so much pleasanter to stay at home, to entertain one's friends, to ride over the plantation, inspecting and directing crop work, to take a gun and go after squirrels or birds or turkeys, to play backgammon or chess or dominoes in the porch, to read the new books that everybody was talking about, or the old ones that Virginians loved more—in brief, there was no occasion for hurry, and the Virginians wasted none of their vital force in that way.

The very houses suggested repose. They had sat still upon their foundations for generations past, and would go on doing so for generations to come. The lawns were the growth of long years, with no touch of recent gardeners' work about them. The trees about the house grounds had been in undisputed possession there long before the grandfathers of the present generation were born. There was nowhere any suggestion of newness, or rawness, of change actual or likely to come. There were no new people—except the babies—and nobody ever dreamed of changing his residence.

XXII

Another thing that peculiarly impressed me, coming as I did from a region where the mart was the center about which all life's activities circled, was the utter absence of talk about money or the things that relate to money. Practically there was no money in use among the planter folk, except when a journey to distant points required the lining of a purse. Except in the very smallest way the planters never used money in their daily lives. They rarely bought anything directly, and they never thought of selling anything except in planter fashion through accredited agencies. Once a year they shipped the tobacco and the wheat their fields had produced, to the city, for a commission merchant to sell. The commission merchant held a considerable part of the proceeds to the planter's credit, and when the planter wanted anything of consequence he simply wrote to the commission merchant to buy it for him. The rest of the money from the sale of the plantation products was deposited in bank to the planter's account. If the women folk went to town on a shopping expedition, they bought whatever they wanted in the stores and had it "charged," for every planter's credit was limitless in the shops. When the bill was rendered, which was never in a hurry, the planter drew a check in discharge of it. He had no "blank check" book. No such thing was known in that community. He simply wrote his check at top of a sheet of foolscap, stating in it what it was for, and courteously asking the bank "please" to pay the amount. Then he carefully cut off the remainder of the sheet and put it away as an economy of paper. The next time he drew a check or anything of the sort, he took a fresh sheet of paper for the purpose and carefully laid away all that was not used of it. Thus was his instinct of economy gratified, while his lordly sense of liberality in the use of material things was not offended. When he died, the drawers filled with large and small fragments of foolscap sheets were cleared out and left for his successor to fill in his turn.

This custom of paying by check so strongly commended itself to a certain unworldly parson of my time, that he resorted to it on one occasion in entire ignorance and innocence of the necessity of having a bank deposit as a preliminary to the drawing of checks. He went to Richmond and bought a year's supplies for his little place—it was too small to be called a plantation—and for each purchase he drew a particularly polite check. When the banks threw these out, on the ground that their author had no account, the poor old parson found the situation a difficult one to understand. He had thought that the very purpose of a bank's being was to cash checks for persons who happened to be short of money.

*Parson J—'s
Checks*

"Why, if I'd had the money in the bank," he explained, "I shouldn't have written the checks at all; I should have got the money and paid the bills."

Fortunately the matter came to the knowledge of a well-to-do and generous planter who knew parson J. and who happened to be in Richmond at the time. His indorsement made the checks good, and saved the unworldly old parson a deal of trouble.

The planters were not all of them rich by any means. Hardly one of those in Virginia had possessions that would to-day rank him even among moderately rich men. But they were scrupulously honorable men, they were men of reasonable property, and their credit rested firmly upon the fact that they were able to pay and the equally important fact that they meant to pay. They lived lavishly, but the plantation itself furnished most of the materials of the lavishness, so that there was no extravagance in such living. For the rest they had a sufficient regard for those who were to come after them to keep the total volume of the debt upon the estate within such limits as the estate could easily stand.

What I wish to emphasize here is that the methods of their monetary transactions were such as to make of money a very infrequent subject of consideration in their lives and conversations.

Economically it would have been better for them if things had been otherwise, but socially, the utter absence of pecuniary flavor from their intercourse, lent a peculiar charm to it, especially in the eyes and mind of a youth brought up as I had been in an atmosphere positively grimy with the soot of monetary considerations.

There was hardly one of those plantations whose utterly waste products were not worth more in the markets near at hand than were the tobacco and wheat which alone the planters sold. When I came into the practice of law a few years later, and had charge of the affairs of a number of estates, I brought this matter of waste to the attention of my clients, with all the earnestness I could put into my pleading. I showed them prices current to prove that if they chose to market their surplus apples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, lambs, pigs, poultry, and dairy products, all of which they gave away or suffered to go to waste, they might discharge their hereditary debts at once and build up balances in bank. They had sagacity enough to understand the facts, but not one of them would ever consent to apply them practically. It would be "Yankee farming," was the ready reply, and that was conclusive. It was not the custom of the planters to sell any but staple products, and they were planters, not farmers.

All these things helped, when I first came into relations with them, to impress my young mind with the poise, the picturesqueness, the restful leisureliness of the Virginian life, and the utter absence from it of strenuousness, and still more of sordidness. For the first time in my life

*The Charm of
Leisureliness*

[53]

I was living with people who thought of money only on those annual or other occasions when they were settling their affairs and paying their debts by giving notes for their sum; people who regarded time not as something to be economized and diligently utilized for the sake of its money value, but as a means of grace, if I may so speak without irreverence; as an opportunity of enjoyment, for themselves and for others; as a thing to be spent with the utmost lavishness in the doing of things agreeable, in the reading of books that pleased, in the riding of horses that put the rider upon his metal to match their tameless spirit, in the cultivation of flowers, in the improvement of trees by grafting and budding, and even in the idler pleasures of tossing grace hoops, or hotly maintaining an indoor contest at battledore and shuttlecock when it rained heavily. These and a score of other pastimes seemed good in the eyes of the Virginian men and women. The men went shooting or fox hunting or hare coursing, or fishing, each in its season. The women embroidered and knitted nubias, and made fancy work, and they walked long miles when not riding with escorts, and dug much in the ground in propagation of the flowers they loved. They kept house, too, with a vigilance born of the fact that in keeping house they were also keeping plantation. For they must not only supervise the daily dispensation of foodstuffs to all the negroes, but they must visit and personally care for the sick, the aged, the infirm, and the infantile among the black people. They must put up fruits and jams and pickles and ketchups and jellies and shrubs and cordials enough to stock a warehouse, in anticipation of the plantation needs. They must personally cut out and direct the making of all the clothing to be worn by the blacks on the plantation, for the reason that the colored maids, seamstresses and dressmakers who were proud to fashion the gowns of their young mistresses, simply would not "work for de field hands,"—meaning the negroes of the plantation.

[54]

Yet with it all these women were never hurried, never scant of time in which to do anything that might give pleasure to another. I never knew one of them to plead preoccupation as a reason for not going riding or walking, or rendering some music, or joining in a game, or doing anything else that others wanted her to do.

The reason for all this was simple enough. The young women who kept house—and it was usually the young women who did so—were up and at it before the dawn. By the time that the eight-thirty or nine o'clock breakfast was served, all their necessary work was done for the day; often it was done in time to let them take a ride before breakfast if the young man suggesting it happened to be an agreeable fellow. After all was done upon which that day's conduct of the house and the plantation depended, the gentlewomen concerned adopted the views of their masculine mentors and exemplars. They accepted to-morrow as a good enough stalking horse for to-day, and, having laid out their work well in advance, they exacted of their servitors that the morrow's morning should begin with a demonstration of to-day's work well done.

So they, too, had leisure, just as the meal hours had. I had been brought up on five or six o'clock breakfasts, eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock dinners, and early suppers. Here the breakfast hour was eight thirty at the earliest and nine usually; "snack" was served about one to those who chose to come to it, dinner at three or four, with no hurry about it, and supper came at nine—the hour at which most people in the West habitually went to bed.

[55]

The thing suited me, personally, for I had great ambitions as a student and habitually dug at my mathematics, Latin, and Greek until two in the morning. I was always up by daylight, and after a plunge into the cold water provided for me in a molasses barrel out under the eaves, I usually took a ride in company with the most agreeable young woman who happened to be staying in the house at the time.

Sometimes I had two to escort, but that was rare. Usually there was another young man in the house, and usually, under such circumstances, I saw to it that he did not lie long abed. And even when there was no such recourse, the "other girl" was apt to conjure up some excuse for not wishing to ride that morning.

XXIII

Indeed, one of the things that most deeply impressed me among the Virginians was the delicacy and alert thoughtfulness of their courtesy. The people of the West were not ill-mannered boors by any means, but gentle, kindly folk. But they were not versed in those little momentary courtesies of life which create a roseate atmosphere of active good will. In all that pertained to courtesy in the larger and more formal affairs of social life, the people of the West were even more scrupulously attentive to the requirements of good social usage than these easy-going Virginians were, with their well-defined social status and their habit of taking themselves and each other for granted. But in the little things of life, in their alertness to say the right word or do the trifling thing that might give pleasure, and their still greater alertness to avoid the word or act that might offend or incommode, the Virginians presented to my mind a new and altogether pleasing example of courtesy.

The Courtesy of the Virginians

[56] In later years I have found something like this agreeably impressed upon me when I go for a time from New York to Boston. Courtesy could not be finer or more considerate among people of gentle breeding who know each other than it is in New York. But in their considerate treatment of strangers, casually encountered in public places, the Boston people give a finer, gentler, more delicate flavor to their courtesy, and it is a delightful thing to encounter.

In Virginia this quality of courtesy was especially marked in the intercourse of men and women with each other. The attitude of both was distinctly chivalrous. To the woman—be she a child of two, a maiden of twenty, or a gentlewoman so well advanced in years that her age was unmentionable—the man assumed an attitude of gentle consideration, of deference due to sex, of willingness to render any service at any cost, and of a gently protective guardianship that stopped at nothing in the discharge of its duty. To the man, be he old or young, the woman yielded that glad obedience that she deemed due to her protector and champion.

[57] I had never seen anything like this before. In the West I had gone to school with all the young women I knew. I had competed with them upon brutally equal terms, in examinations and in struggles for class honors, and the like. They and we boys had been perfectly good friends and comrades, of course, and we liked each other in that half-masculine way. But the association was destructive of romance, of fineness, of delicate attractiveness. There was no glamor left in the relations of young men and young women, no sentiment except such as might exist among young men themselves. The girls were only boys of another sort. Our attitude toward them was comradely but not chivalric. It was impossible to feel the roseate glow of romance in association with a young woman who had studied in the same classes with one, who had stood as a challenge in the matter of examination marks, and who met one at any hour of the day on equal terms, with a cheery "good-morning" or "good-evening" that had no more of sentiment in it than the clatter of a cotton mill.

In my judgment, that is the conclusive objection to co-education, except perhaps among the youngest children. It robs the relations of the sexes of sentiment, of softness, of delicacy. It makes of girls an inferior sort of boys, and of boys an inferior sort of girls. It cannot completely negative sex, but it can and does sufficiently negative it to rob life of one of its tenderest charms.

Sex and Education

In Virginia for the first time I encountered something different. There the boys were sent to old field schools where in rough and tumble fashion, they learned Latin and robust manliness, Greek and a certain graciousness of demeanor toward others, the absence of which would have involved them in numberless fights on the playgrounds. The girls were tenderly dame-nurtured at home, with a gentlewoman for governess, with tutors to supplement the instruction of the governess, and with a year or two, perhaps, for finishing, at Le Febre's or Dr. Hoge's, or some other good school for young women.

Both the young men and the young women read voluminously—the young men in part, perhaps, to equip themselves for conversational intercourse with the young women. They both read polite literature, but they read history also with a diligence that equipped them with independent convictions of their own, with regard to such matters as the conduct of Charlotte Corday, the characters of Mirabeau, Danton, and Robespierre, the ungentlemanly treatment given by John Knox to Mary, Queen of Scots, and all that sort of thing. Indeed, among the Virginia women, young and old, the romantic episodes of history, ancient, mediæval, and modern, completely took the place, as subjects of conversation, of those gossiping personalities that make up the staple of conversation among women generally.

[58] Let me not be misunderstood. These women did not assume to be "learned ladies." It was only that they knew their history and loved it and were fond of talking about it, quite as some other women are fond of talking about the interesting scandal in the domestic relations of the reigning *matinée hero*.

The intercourse between men and women thus educated was always easy, gracious, and friendly, but it was always deferential, chivalric, and imbued with that recognition of sex which, without loss of dignity on either side, holds man to be the generously willing protector, and

woman the proudly loyal recipient of a protection to which her sex entitles her, and in return for which she gladly yields a submission that has nothing of surrender in it.

There was a fascination to me in all this, that I find it impossible to describe and exceedingly difficult even to suggest.

I may add that I think the young women of that time in Virginia were altogether the best educated young women I have ever encountered in any time or country. And, best of all, they were thoroughly, uncompromisingly feminine.

Of the men I need only say that they were masculine, and fit mates for such women. I do not at all think they were personally superior to men of other parts of the country in those things that pertain to character and conduct, but at least they had the advantage of living in a community where public opinion was all-dominant, and where that resistless force insisted upon truth, integrity, and personal courage as qualities that every man must possess if he expected to live in that community at all. It was *noblesse oblige*, and it inexorably controlled the conduct of all men who hoped for recognition as gentlemen.

[59] The sentiment took quixotic forms at times, perhaps, but no jesting over these manifestations can obscure the fact that it compelled men to good behavior in every relation of life and made life sweeter, wholesomer, and more fruitful of good than it otherwise would have been.

I must add a word with respect to that most fascinating of all things, the Virginia girl's voice. This was music of so entrancing a sort that I have known young men from other parts of the country to fall in love with a voice before they had seen its possessor and to remain in love with the owner of it in spite of her distinct lack of beauty when revealed in person.

*The Voices of
Virginia Women*

Those girls all dropped the "g"s at the end of their participles; they habitually used double negatives, and, quite defiantly of dictionaries, used Virginian locutions not sanctioned by authority. If challenged on the subject their reply would have been that which John Esten Cooke gave to an editor who wanted to strike a phrase out of one of his Virginia romances, on the ground that it was not good English. "It's good Virginian," he answered, "and for my purpose that is more important."

But all such defects of speech—due not to ignorance but to a charming wilfulness—were forgotten in the music of the voices that gave them utterance.

There are no such voices now, even in Virginia, I regret to say. Not of their own fault, but because of contact with strangely altered conditions, the altogether charming Virginia girls I sometimes meet nowadays, have voices and intonations not unlike those of women in other parts of the country, except that they preserve enough of the old lack of emphasis upon the stronger syllables to render their speech often difficult to understand. There is compensation for that in the gentle, laughing readiness with which they repeat utterances not understood on their first hearing.

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XXIV

It was during the roseate years of the old Virginia life not long before the war that I had my first and only serious experience of what is variously and loosely called the "occult" and the "supernatural."

It is only in answer to solicitation that I tell the story here as it has been only in response to like solicitation that I have orally told it before.

In order that I may not be misunderstood, in order that I may not be unjustly suspected of a credulity that does not belong to me, I wish to say at the outset that I am by nature and by lifelong habit of mind a skeptic. I believe in the natural order, in cause and effect, in the material basis of psychological phenomena. I have no patience with the mystical or the mysterious. I do not believe in the miraculous, the supernatural, the occult—call it what you will.

And yet the experience I am about to relate is literally true, and the story of it a slavishly faithful record of facts. I make no attempt to reconcile those facts with my beliefs or unbeliefs. I venture upon no effort at explanation. I have set forth above my intellectual attitude toward all such matters; I shall set forth the facts of this experience with equal candor. If the reader finds the facts irreconcilable with my intellectual convictions, I must leave him to judge as he may between the two, without aid of mine. The facts are these:

I was one of a house party, staying at one of the most hospitable of Virginia mansions. I was by courtesy of Virginia clannishness "cousin" to the mistress of the house, and when no house party was in entertainment I was an intimate there, accustomed to go and come at will and to reckon myself a member of the family by brevet.

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At the time now considered, the house was unusually full, when a letter came announcing the immediate coming of still other guests. In

The Story of the

my close intimacy with the mistress of the plantation I became aware of her perplexity. She didn't know where and how to bestow the presently coming guests. I suggested that I and some others should take ourselves away, a suggestion which her hospitable soul rejected, the more particularly in my case, perhaps, because I was actively planning certain entertainments in which she was deeply interested. Suddenly it occurred to me that during my long intimacy in the house I had never known anybody to occupy the room or rooms which constituted the second story of the west wing of the building. I asked why not bring that part of the spacious mansion into use in this emergency, thinking that its idleness during all the period of my intimacy there had been due only to the lack of need in a house so large.

"Cousin Mary," with a startled look of inquiry upon her face, glanced at her husband, who sat with us alone on a piazza.

"You may as well tell him the facts," he said in reply to the look. "He won't talk."

Then she told me the history of the room, explaining that she objected to any talk about it because she dreaded the suspicion of superstition. Briefly the story was that several generations earlier, an old man almost blind, had died there; that during his last illness he had had his lawyer prepare his will there; that he was too feeble, when the lawyer finished, even to sign the document; that he placed it under his pillow; that during the night his daughter abstracted and copied it, changing only one clause in such fashion as to defeat the long cherished purpose of the dying man; that she placed her new draft under the pillow where the old one had been and that in the morning the nearly blind old man executed that instead of the other.

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"Now I'm not superstitious, you know," said Cousin Mary very earnestly, "but it is a fact that from that day to this there has been something the matter with that room. During the time of my great uncle, who brought me up, you know, and from whom I inherited the plantation, many persons tried to sleep in it but none ever stayed there more than an hour or two. They always fled in terror from the chamber, until at last my uncle forbade any further attempt to occupy the room lest this should come to be called a haunted house. Since I became mistress here three persons have tried the thing, all of them with the same result."

"It's stuff and nonsense," I interposed, "but what yarns did they tell?"

"They one and all related the same singular experience," she answered, "though neither of them knew what the experience of the others had been."

"What was it?" I asked with resolute incredulity.

"Why, each of them went to the room in full confidence that nothing would happen. Each went to bed and to sleep. After a while he waked to find the whole room pervaded by a dim, yellowish gray or grayish yellow light. Some of them used one combination of words and some the other, but all agreed that the light had no apparent source, that it was all-pervasive, that it was very dim at first, but that it steadily increased until they fled in panic from its nameless terror. For ten years we permitted no repetition of the experiment, but a year ago my brother—he's an army officer, you know—insisted upon sleeping in the room. He remained there longer than anybody else ever had done, but between two and three o'clock in the morning he came down the stairs with barely enough strength to cling to the balustrades, and in such an ague fit as I never saw any one else endure in all my life. He had served in the Florida swamps and was subject to agues, but for several months before that he had been free from them. I suppose the terror attacked his weakest point and brought the chills on again."

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"Did he have the same experience the rest had had?" I asked.

"Yes, except that he had stayed longer than any of them and suffered more."

"Cousin Mary," I said, "I am going to sleep in that room to-night, with your permission."

"You can't have it," she answered. "I've seen too much of the terror to permit a further trifling with it."

"Then I'll sleep there without your permission," I answered. "I'll break in if necessary, and I'll prove by a demonstration that nobody can question, what nonsense all these imaginings have been."

Cousin Mary was determined, but so was I, and at last she consented to let me make the attempt. She and I decided to keep the matter to ourselves, but of course it leaked out and spread among all the guests in the house. I suppose the negro servants who were sent to make up the bed and supply bath water told. At any rate my coming adventure was the sole topic of conversation at the supper table that night.

I seized upon the occasion to give a warning.

"I have borrowed a six-shooter from our host," I announced, "and if I see anything to shoot at to-night I shall shoot without challenging. So I strongly advise you fellows not to attempt any practical jokes."

The response convinced me that nothing of the kind was contemplated, but to make sure, our host, who perhaps feared tragedy, exacted and secured from each member of the company, old

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and young, male and female, a pledge of honor that there should be no interference with my experiment, no trespass upon my privacy.

"With that pledge secured," I said, perhaps a trifle boastfully, "I shall stay in that room all night no matter what efforts the spooks may make to drive me out."

It was about midnight, or nearly that, when I entered the room. It was raining heavily without, and the wind was rattling the stout shutters of the eight great windows of the room.

I went to each of those windows and minutely examined it. They were hung with heavy curtains of deep red, I remember, for I observed every detail. Four of them were in the north and four in the south wall of the wing. The eastern wall of the room was pierced only by the broad doorway which opened at the head of the great stairs. The door was stoutly built of oak, and provided with a heavy lock of iron with brass knobs.

The western side of the room held a great open fireplace, from which a paneled oaken wainscot extended entirely across the room and up to the ceiling. Behind the wainscot on either side was a spacious closet which I carefully explored with two lighted bedroom candles to show me that the closets were entirely empty.

Having completed my explorations I disrobed, double-locked the door, and went to bed, first placing the six-shooter handily under my pillow. I do not think I was excited even in the smallest degree. My pulses were calm, my imagination no more active than a young man's must be, and my brain distinctly sleepy. The great, four-poster bed was inexpressibly comfortable, and the splash and patter of the rain as it beat upon the window blinds was as soothing as a lullaby. I forgot all about the experiment in which I was engaged, all about ghosts and their ways, and went to sleep.

[65] After a time I suddenly waked to find the room dimly pervaded by that yellowish-gray or grayish-yellow light that had so disturbed the slumbers of others in that apartment. My awakening was so complete that all my faculties were alert at once. I felt under my pillow and found my weapon there. I looked to its chambers and found the charges undisturbed. The caps were in place, and I felt myself armed for any encounter.

*The Yellow-Gray
Light*

But I had resolved in advance, to be deliberate, self-possessed, and calm, whatever might happen, and I kept faith with myself. Instead of hastily springing from the bed I lay there for a time watching the weird light as it slowly, almost imperceptibly, increased in intensity, and trying to decide whether they were right who had described as "yellowish gray" or they who had called it "grayish yellow." I decided that the gray distinctly predominated, but in the meanwhile the steady increase in the light and in its pervasiveness warned me, and I slipped out of bed, taking my pistol with me, to the dressing case on the other side of the room—the side on which the great oaken door opened.

The rain was still beating heavily against the window blinds, and the strange, yellowish gray light was still slowly but steadily increasing. I was resolute, however, in my determination not to be disturbed or hurried by any manifestation. In response to that determination I glanced at the mirror and decided that the mysterious light was sufficient for the purpose, and I resolved I would shave.

[66] Having done so, I bathed—a little hurriedly, perhaps, because of the rapidly increasing light. I was deliberate, however, in donning my clothing, and not until I was fully dressed did I turn to leave the room. Glancing at every object in it—all now clearly visible, though somewhat shadowy in outline—I decided at last upon my retreat. I turned the key, and the bolt in the lock shot back with sound enough to startle calmer nerves than mine.

I turned the knob, but the door refused to open!

For a moment I was puzzled. Then I remembered that it was a double lock. A second later I was out of that chamber, and the oaken door of it was securely shut behind me.

I went down the great stairway, slowly, deliberately, in pursuance of my resolution; I entered the large hallway below, and thence passed into the oak-wainscoted dining-room, where I sat down to breakfast with the rest of the company.

It was nine o'clock of a dark, rainy morning.

XXV

In Virginia at the time of which I am writing, everybody, men, women, and children, read books and talked about them. The annual output of the publishers was trifling then, as compared with the present flood of new books, and as a consequence everybody read all the new books and magazines, and everybody talked about them as earnestly as of politics or religion. Still more diligently they read old books, the classics of the language. Literature was regarded as a vital force in human affairs, and books which in our time might relieve the tedium of a railway journey

and be forgotten at its end, were read with minute attention and discussed as earnestly as if vital interests had depended upon an accurate estimation of their quality.

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As a consequence, authorship was held in strangely glamorous esteem. I beg pardon of the English language for making that word "glamorous"; it expresses my thought, as no other term does, and it carries its meaning on its face.

I remember that in my student days in Richmond there came a visitor who had written one little book—about Rufus Choate, I think, though I can find no trace of it in bibliographies. I suspect that he was a very small author, indeed, in Boston, whence he came, but he was an AUTHOR—we always thought that word in capital letters—and so he was dined and wined, and entertained, and not permitted to pay his own hotel bills or cab charges, or anything else.

*The "Solitary
Horseman"*

Naturally a people so disposed made much of their own men of letters, of whom there was quite a group—if we reckon their qualifications as generously as the Virginians did. Among them were three at least whose claim to be regarded as authors was beyond dispute. These were John Esten Cooke, John R. Thompson, and the English novelist, G. P. R. James, who at that time was serving as British consul at Richmond. And there was Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie, who played the part of literary queen right royally.

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Mr. James was a conspicuous figure in Richmond. He was a robust Englishman in his late fifties, rather short and rather stout. The latter impression was aided by the fact that in his afternoon saunterings about the town, he usually wore a sort of roundabout, a coat that ended at his waist and had no tails to it. To the ribald and the jocular he was known as "the Solitary Horseman" because of his habit of introducing novels or chapters with a lonely landscape in which a "solitary horseman" was the chief or only figure. To those of us who were disposed to be deferential he was known as "the Prince Regent," in memory of the jest perpetrated by one of the wits of the town. Mr. James's three initials, which prompted John G. Saxe to say that he "got at the font his strongest claims to be reckoned a man of letters"—stood for "George Payne Rainsford," but he rarely used anything more than the initials—G. P. R. When a certain voluble gentlewoman asked Tom August what the initials stood for he promptly replied:

"Why, George Prince Regent, of course. And his extraordinary courtesy fully justifies his sponsors in baptism for having given him the name."

The lady lost no time in telling everybody of the interesting fact—and the novelist became "Prince Regent James" to all his Richmond friends from that hour forth.

John R. Thompson was the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Scholar, poet, and man of most gentle mind, it is not surprising that in later years, when the old life was war-wrecked, Mr. William Cullen Bryant made him his intimate friend and appointed him to the office of literary editor of the *Evening Post*, which Mr. Bryant always held to be the supreme distinction possible to an American man of letters. I being scarcely more than a boy studying law in the late fifties, knew him only slightly, but my impression of him at that time was, that with very good gifts and a certain charm of literary manner, he was not yet fully grown up in mind. He sought to model himself, I think, upon his impressions of N. P. Willis, and his aspiration to be recognized as a brilliant man of society was quite as marked as his literary ambition. He was sensitive to slights and quite morbidly apprehensive that those about him might think the less of him because his father was a hatter. Socially at that time and in that country men in trade of any kind were regarded as rather inferior to those of the planter class.

When I knew Thompson better in after years in New York he had outgrown that sort of nonsense, and was a far more agreeable companion because of the fact.

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Chief among the literary men of Richmond was John Esten Cooke. His novel "The Virginia Comedians" had made him famous in his native state, and about the time I write of—1858-9—he supplemented it with another story of like kind, "Henry St. John, Gentleman." As I remember them these were rather immature creations, depending more upon a certain grace of manner for their attractiveness than upon any more substantial merit. Certainly they did not compare in vigor or originality with "Surrey of Eagle's Nest" or any other of the novels their author wrote after his mind had been matured by strenuous war experience. But at the time of which I write they gave him a literary status such as no other Virginian of the time could boast, and for a living he wrote ceaselessly for magazines and the like.

*John Esten
Cooke—
Gentleman*

The matter of getting a living was a difficult one to him then, for the reason that with a pride of race which some might think quixotic, he had burdened his young life with heavy obligations not his own. His father had died leaving debts that his estate could not pay. As the younger man got nothing by inheritance, except the traditions of honor that belonged to his race, he was under no kind of obligation with respect to those debts. But with a chivalric loyalty such as few men have ever shown, John Esten Cooke made his dead father's debts his own and little by little discharged them with the earnings of a toilsome literary activity.

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His pride was so sensitive that he would accept no help in this, though friends earnestly pressed loans upon him when he had a payment to meet and his purse was well-nigh empty. At such times he sometimes made his dinner on crackers and tea for many days together, although he knew he would be a more than welcome guest at the lavish tables of his many friends in Richmond. It was a point of honor with him never to accept a dinner or other invitation when he

was financially unable to dine abundantly at his own expense.

The reviewer of one of my own stories of the old Virginia life, not long ago informed his readers that of course there never were men so sensitively and self-sacrificingly honorable as those I had described in the book, though my story presented no such extreme example of the man of honor as that illustrated in Mr. Cooke's person and career.

I knew him intimately at that time, his immediate friends being my own kindred. Indeed, I passed one entire summer in the same hospitable house with him.

Some years after the war our acquaintance was renewed, and from that time until his death he made my house his abiding place whenever he had occasion to be in New York. Time had wrought no change in his nature. He remained to the end the high-spirited, duty-loving man of honor that I had known in my youth; he remained also the gentle, affectionate, and unfailingly courteous gentleman he had always been.

He went into the war as an enlisted man in a Richmond battery, but was soon afterward appointed an officer on the staff of the great cavalier, J. E. B. Stuart.

"I wasn't born to be a soldier," he said to me in after years. "Of course I can stand bullets and shells and all that, without flinching, just as any man must if he has any manhood in him, and as for hardship and starvation, why, a man who has self-control can endure them when duty demands it, but I never liked the business of war. Gold lace on my coat always made me feel as if I were a child tricked out in red and yellow calico with turkey feathers in my headgear to add to the gorgeousness. There is nothing intellectual about fighting. It is the fit work of brutes and brutish men. And in modern war, where men are organized in masses and converted into insensate machines, there is really nothing heroic or romantic or in any way calculated to appeal to the imagination. As an old soldier, you know how small a part personal gallantry plays in the machine work of war nowadays."

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Nevertheless, John Esten Cooke was a good soldier and a gallant one. At Manassas I happened to see him at a gun which he was helping to work and which we of the cavalry were supporting. He was powder-blackened and he had lost both his coat and his hat in the eagerness of his service at the piece; but during a brief pause in the firing he greeted me with a rammer in his hand and all the old cheeriness in his face and voice.

*How Jeb Stuart
Made a Major*

On Stuart's staff he distinguished himself by a certain laughing nonchalance under fire, and by his eager readiness to undertake Stuart's most perilous missions. It was in recognition of some specially daring service of that kind that Stuart gave him his promotion, and Cooke used to tell with delight of the way in which the great boyish cavalier did it.

"You're about my size, Cooke," Stuart said, "but you're not so broad in the chest."

"Yes, I am," answered Cooke.

"Let's see if you are," said Stuart, taking off his coat as if stripping for a boxing match. "Try that on."

Cooke donned the coat with its three stars on the collar, and found it a fit.

"Cut off two of the stars," commanded Stuart, "and wear the coat to Richmond. Tell the people in the War Department to make you a major and send you back to me in a hurry. I'll need you tomorrow."

When I visited him years afterwards at The Briars, his home in the Shenandoah Valley, that coat which had once been Stuart's, hung upon the wall, as the centerpiece of a collection of war relics, cherished with pride of sentiment but without a single memory that savored of animosity. The gentle, courteous, kindly man of letters who cherished these things as mementoes of a terrible epoch had as little in his bearing to suggest the temper of the war time as had his old charger who grazed upon the lawn, exempt from all work as one who had done his duty in life and was entitled to ease and comfort as his reward.

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XXVI

The old life of the Old Dominion is a thing of the dead past, a memory merely, and one so different from anything that exists anywhere on earth now, that every reflection of it seems the fabric of a dream. But its glamor holds possession of my mind even after the lapse of half a century of years, and the greatest joy I have known in life has come from my efforts to depict it in romances that are only a veiled record of facts.

It was not a life that our modern notions of economics can approve, but it ministered to human happiness, to refinement of mind, to culture, and to the maintenance of high ideals of manhood and womanhood. It bred a race of men who spoke the truth, lived uprightly, and met every duty without a shadow of flinching from personal consequences. It reared a race of women fit to be

the wives and mothers of such men. Under its spell culture was deemed of more account than mere education; living was held in higher regard than getting a living; refinement meant more than display; comfort more than costliness, and kindness in every word and act more than all else.

[73] I know an old plantation where for generations a family of brave men and fair women dwelt in peace and ministered in gracious, hospitable ways to the joy of others. Under their governance there was never any thought of exploiting the resources of the plantation for the sake of a potential wealth that seemed superfluous to people of contented mind who had enough. The plantation supported itself and all who dwelt upon it—black and white. It educated its sons and daughters and enabled them to maintain a generous hospitality. More than this they did not want or dream of wanting.

*A Plantation
Modernized*

There are twenty-two families living on that plantation now, most of them growing rich or well-to-do by the cultivation of the little truck farms into which the broad acres have been parceled out. The woodlands that used to shelter the wild flowers and furnish fuel for the great open fireplaces, have been stripped to furnish kindling wood for kitchen ranges in Northern cities. Even the stately locust trees that had shaded the lawns about the old mansion have been converted into policemen's clubs and the like, and potatoes grow in the soil where greensward used to carpet the house grounds.

Economically the change means progress and prosperity, of course, but to me the price paid for it seems out of proportion to the goods secured. But then I am old-fashioned, and perhaps, in spite of the strenuous life I have led, I am a sentimentalist,—and sentiment is scorned as silly in these days.

There is another aspect of the matter that deserves a word, and I have a mind to write that word even at risk of anathema from all the altars of sociology. At seventy years of age one is less sensitive to criticism than at thirty.

[74] All the children of the twenty-two truck farming families on that old plantation go to school. They are taught enough to make out bills, add up columns of figures, and write business letters to their commission merchants. That is what education means now on that plantation and on hundreds of others that have undergone a like metamorphosis. No thought or dream of culture enters into the scheme. Under the old system rudimentary instruction was merely a stepping stone by which to climb up to the education of culture. Under the theories of economics it is a great gain thus to substitute rudimentary instruction for all in the place of real education and culture for a class. But is it gain? Is the world better off with ten factory hands who can read, write, and cipher, than with one Thomas Jefferson or George Wythe or Samuel Adams or Chancellor Livingston who knows how to think? Are ten factory girls or farmers' wives the full equivalent of one cultured gentlewoman presiding gracefully and graciously over a household in which the amenities of life are more considered than its economics?

Meanwhile the education of the race of men and women who once dwelt there has correspondingly lost its culture aspect. The young men of that old family are now bred to be accountants, clerks, men of business, who have no time to read books and no training that leads to the habit of thinking; the young women are stenographers, telegraph operators, and the like. They are estimable young persons, and in their way charming. But is the world richer or poorer for the change?

It is not for me to answer; I am prejudiced, perhaps.

[75] However it may be, the old life is a thing completely dead and done for, and the only compensation is such as the new affords. Everything that was distinctive in that old life was burned out by the gunpowder of the Civil War. Even the voices of the Virginia women—once admired throughout the land—are changed. They still say "right" for "very," and "reckon" for "think," and their enunciation is still marked by a certain lack of emphasis, but it is the voice of the peacock in which they speak, not that of the dove.

Whenever I ask myself the questions set down above, I find it necessary to the chastening of my mind to recite my creed:

*An Old Foggy's
Questionings*

I believe that every human being born into this world has a right to do as he pleases, so long as in doing as he pleases he does not interfere with the equal right of any other human being to do as he pleases;

I believe in the unalienable right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;

I believe that it is the sole legitimate function of government to maintain the conditions of liberty and to let men alone.

Nevertheless, I cannot escape a tender regret when I reflect upon what we have sacrificed to the god Progress. I suppose it is for the good of all that we have factories now to do the work that in my boyhood was done by the village carpenter, tanner, shoemaker, hatter, tailor, tin-smith, and the rest; but I do not think a group of factory "hands," dwelling in repulsively ugly tenement buildings and dependent upon servitude to the trade union as a means of escaping enslavement by an employing corporation, mean as much of human happiness or signify as much of helpful citizenship as did the home-owning, independent village workmen of the past. In the same way I

do not think the substitution of a utilitarian smattering for all for the education and culture of a class has been altogether a gain. As I see young men flocking by thousands to our universities, where in earlier times there were scant hundreds in attendance, I cannot avoid the thought that most of these thousands have just enough education of the drill sort to pass the entrance examinations and that they go to the universities, not for education of the kind that brings enlargement of mind, but for technical training in arts that promise money as the reward of their practice. And I cannot help wondering if the change which relegates the Arts course to a subordinate place in the university scheme is altogether a change for the better. Economically it is so, of course. But economics, it seems to me, ought not to be all of human life. Surely men and women were made for something more than mere earning capacity.

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But all this is blasphemy against the great god Progress and heresy to the gospel of Success. Its voice should be hushed in a land where fame is awarded not to those who think but to those who organize and exploit; where men of great intellect feel that they cannot afford to serve the country when the corporations offer them so much higher salaries; and where it is easier to control legislation and administration by purchase than by pleading.

The old order changed, both at the North and at the South when the war came, and if the change is more marked in the South than at the North it is only because the South lost in the struggle for supremacy and suffered desolation in its progress.

XXVII

I have elsewhere pointed out in print that Virginia did not want war, or favor secession. Her people, who had already elected the avowed emancipationist, John Letcher, to be their governor, voted by heavy majorities against withdrawal from the Union. In her constitutional convention, called to consider what the old mother state should do after the Cotton States had set up a Southern Confederacy, the dominant force was wielded by such uncompromising opponents of secession as Jubal A. Early, Williams C. Wickham, Henry A. Wise, and others, who when war came were among the most conspicuous fighters on the Southern side. It is important to remember that, as Farragut said, Virginia was "dragooned out of the Union," in spite of the abiding unwillingness of her people.

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I was a young lawyer then, barely twenty-one years of age. I spoke and voted—my first vote—against the contemplated madness. But in common with the Virginians generally, I enlisted as soon as war became inevitable, and from the 9th of April, 1861, to the 9th of April, 1865—the date of Lee's surrender—I was a soldier in active service.

*Under Jeb
Stuart's
Command*

I was intensely in earnest in the work of the soldier. As I look back over my seventy years of life, I find that I have been intensely in earnest in whatever I have had to do. Such things are temperamental, and one has no more control over his temperament than over the color of his eyes and hair.

Being intensely in earnest in the soldier's work, I enjoyed doing it, just as I have keenly enjoyed doing every other kind of work that has fallen to me during a life of unusually varied activity.

I went out in a company of horse, which after brief instruction at Ashland, was assigned to Stuart's First Regiment of Virginia Cavalry.

The regiment was composed entirely of young Virginians who, if not actually "born in the saddle," had climbed into it so early and lived in it so constantly that it had become the only home they knew. I suppose there was never gathered together anywhere on earth a body of horsemen more perfectly masters of their art than were the men of that First Regiment, the men whom Stuart knew by their names and faces then, and whose names and faces he never afterward forgot, for the reason, as he often said to us, that "You First Regiment fellows made me a Major-General." Even after he rose to higher rank and had scores of thousands of cavaliers under his command, his habit was, when he wanted something done of a specially difficult and dangerous sort, to order a detail from his old First Regiment to do it for him.

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The horsemanship of that regiment remained till the end a model for emulation by all the other cavalry, and, in view of the demonstrations of it in the campaign preceding Manassas (Bull Run) it is no wonder that when the insensate panic seized upon McDowell's army in that battle the cry went up from the disintegrated mob of fugitives that they could not be expected to stand against "thirty thousand of the best horsemen since the days of the Mamelukes." The "thirty thousand" estimate was a gross exaggeration, Stuart's command numbering in fact only six or seven hundred, but the likening of its horsemanship to that of the Mamelukes was justified by the fact.

As a robust young man who had never known a headache I keenly enjoyed the life we cavalrymen led that summer. It was ceaselessly active—for Stuart's vocabulary knew not the word "rest"—and it was all out of doors in about as perfect a summer climate as the world anywhere affords.

We had some tents, in camp, in which to sleep after we got tired of playing poker for grains of

corn; but we were so rarely in camp that after a little while we forgot that we owned canvas dwellings, and I cannot remember, if I ever knew, what became of them at last. For the greater part of the time we slept on the ground out somewhere within musket shot of the enemy's lines, and our waking hours were passed in playing "tag" with the enemy's scouting parties, encountered in our own impertinent intrusions into the lines of our foeman. A saddle was emptied now and then, but that was only a forfeit of the game, and the game went on.

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It must have been a healthy life that we led. I well remember that during that summer my company never had a man on the sick list. When the extraordinary imbecility of the Confederate commissary department managed to get rations of flour to us, we wetted it with water from any stream or brook that might be at hand, added a little salt, if we happened to have any, to the putty-like mass, fried the paste in bacon fat, and ate it as bread. According to all the teachings of culinary science the thing ought to have sent all of us to grass with indigestions of a violent sort; but in fact we enjoyed it, and went on our scouting ways utterly unconscious of the fact that we were possessed of stomachs, until the tempting succulence of half-ripened corn in somebody's field set appetite a-going again and we feasted upon the grain without the bother of cooking it at all.

*The Life of the
Cavaliers*

Of course, we carried no baggage with us during the days and weeks when we were absent from camp. We had a blanket apiece, somewhere, we didn't know where. When our shirts were soiled we took them off and washed them in the nearest brook, and if orders of activity came before they were dried, we put them on wet and rode away in full confidence that they would dry on our persons as easily as on a clothesline.

One advantage that I found in this neglect of impedimenta was that I could always carry a book or two inside my flannel shirt, and I feel now that I owe an appreciable part of such culture as I have acquired to the reading done by bivouac fires at night and in the recesses of friendly cornfields by day.

There were many stories current among the good women at home in those days of men's lives being saved by Bibles carried in their clothes and opportunely serving as shields against bullets aimed at their wearers' hearts. I do not know how much truth there may have been in these interesting narratives, nor have I any trustworthy information upon which to base an estimate of the comparative armorplate efficacy of Bibles and other books. But one day, as I well remember, the impact of a bullet nearly knocked me off my horse, and I found afterward that the missile had deeply imbedded itself in a copy of "Tristram Shandy" which lay in the region of my transverse colon. A Bible of equal thickness would doubtless have served as well, but it was the ribald romance of Laurence Sterne that stopped a bullet and saved my life that day.

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It may be worth while to add that the young woman from whom I had borrowed the book never would accept the new copy I offered to provide in exchange for the wounded one.

This cavalry service abounded in adventures, most of them of no great consequence, but all of them interesting at the time to those who shared in them. It was an exciting game and a fascinating one to a vigorous young man with enough imagination to appreciate it as I did. I enjoyed it intensely at the time and, as the memory of it comes back to me now, I find warmth enough still in my blood to make me wish it were all to do over again, with youth and health and high spirits as an accompaniment.

War is "all hell," as General Sherman said, and as a writer during many years of peace, I have endeavored to do my part in making an end of it. I have printed much in illustration of the fact that war is a cruel, barbarous, inhuman device for settling controversies that should be settled and could be settled by more civilized means; I have shown forth its excessive costliness and its unspeakable cruelty to the women and children involved as its victims. I have no word of that to take back. But, as I remember the delights of the war game, I cannot altogether regret them. I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that war, with all its inhuman cruelty, its devastation, and its slaughter, calls forth some of the noblest qualities of human nature, and breeds among men chivalric sentiments that it is well worth while to cherish.

*Delights of the
War Game*

[81]

And the inspiration of it is something that is never lost to the soul that has felt it. When the Spanish-American troubles came, and we all thought they portended a real war instead of the ridiculous "muss" that followed, the old spirit was so strong upon me that I enlisted a company of a hundred and twenty-four men and appealed to both the state and the national governments for the privilege of sharing in the fighting.

So much for psychology.

XXVIII

Among my experiences in the cavalry service was one which had a sequel that interested me.

Stuart had been promoted and Fitzhugh Lee, or "Fitz Lee" as we called him, had succeeded to

the command of the First Regiment.

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One day he led a party of us on a scouting expedition into the enemy's lines. In the course of it we charged through a strong infantry picket numbering forty or fifty men. As our half company dashed through, my horse was shot through the head and sank under me. My comrades rode on and I was left alone in the midst of the disturbed but still belligerent picket men. I had from the first made up my mind that I would never become a prisoner of war. I had stomach for fighting; I was ready to endure hardship; I had no shrinking from fatigue, privation, exposure, or anything else that falls to the lot of the soldier. But I was resolute in my determination that I would never "go to jail"—a phrase which fitly represented my conception of capture by the enemy.

So, when my horse dropped me there in the middle of a strong picket force, I drew both my pistols, took to a friendly tree, and set to work firing at every head or body I could see, with intent to sell my life for the very largest price I could make it command.

This had lasted for less than two minutes when my comrades, pursued by a strong body of Federal cavalry, dashed back again through the picket post.

As they came on at a full run Fitz Lee saw me, and, slackening speed slightly, he thrust out his foot and held out his hand—a cavalry trick in which all of us had been trained. Responding, I seized his hand, placed my foot upon his and swung to his crupper. A minute later a supporting company came to our assistance and the pursuing cavalymen in blue retired.

The incident was not at all an unusual one, but the memory of it came back to me years afterwards under rather peculiar circumstances. In 1889 there was held in New York a spectacular celebration of the centennial of Washington's inauguration as president. A little company of us who had organized ourselves into a society known as "The Virginians," gave a banquet to the commissioners appointed to represent Virginia on that occasion. It so fell out that I was called upon to preside at the banquet, and General Fitzhugh Lee, then Governor of Virginia, sat, of course, at my right.

Somewhere between the oysters and the entrée I turned to him and said:

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"It seemed a trifle odd to me, General, and distinctly un-Virginian, to greet you as a stranger when we were presented to each other a little while ago. Of course, to you I mean nothing except a name heard in introduction; but you saved my life once and to me this meeting means a good deal."

In answer to his inquiries I began to tell the story. Suddenly he interrupted in his impetuous way, asking:

Fitz Lee :

"Are you the man I took on my crupper that day down there by Dranesville?"

And with that he pushed back his plate and rising nearly crushed my hand in friendly grasp. Then he told me stories of other meetings with his old troopers,—stories dramatic, pathetic, humorous,—until I had need of General Pryor's reminder that I was presiding and that there were duties for me to do, however interesting I might find Fitzhugh Lee's conversation to be.

From that time until his death I saw much of General Lee, and learned much of his character and impulses, which I imagine are wholly undreamed of by those who encountered him only in his official capacities. He had the instincts of the scholar, without the scholar's opportunity to indulge them. "It is a matter of regret," he said to me in Washington one day, "that family tradition has decreed that all Lees shall be soldiers. I have often regretted that I was sent to West Point instead of being educated in a more scholarly way. You know I have Carter blood and Mason blood in my veins, and the Carters and Masons have had intellects worth cultivating."

I replied by quoting from Byron's "Mazeppa" the lines:

"Ill betide
The school wherein I learned to ride.'
Quoth Charles: 'Old Hetman, wherefore so,
Since thou hast learned the art so well?'"

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Instantly he responded by continuing the quotation:

""'Twere long to tell,
And we have many a league to go
With every now and then a blow;'

That is to say, I'm still Consul-General at Havana, and I have an appointment to see the President on official business this morning."

As we were sitting in my rooms at the Arlington and not in his quarters at the Shoreham, this was not a hint of dismissal, but an apology for leaving.

The conversation awakened surprise in my mind, and ever since I have wondered how many of the world's great men of action have regretted that they were not men of thought instead, and how far the regret was justified. If Fitz Lee had been educated at Yale or Harvard, what place would he have occupied in the world? Would he have become a Virginian lawyer and perhaps a judge? or what else? Conjecture in such a case is futile. "If" is a word of very uncertain

significance.

The story told in the foregoing paragraphs reminds me of another experience.

When the war ended it became very necessary that I should go to Indiana with the least possible delay. But at Richmond I was stopped by a peremptory military order that forbade ex-Confederates to go North. The order had been issued in consequence of Mr. Lincoln's assassination, and the disposition to enforce it rigidly was very strong.

In my perplexity I made my way into the office of the Federal chief of staff of that department. There I encountered a stalwart and impressive officer, six feet, four or five inches high—or perhaps even an inch or two more than that—who listened with surprising patience while I explained my necessity to him. When I had done, he placed his hand upon my shoulder in comradely fashion and said:

"You didn't have anything to do with Mr. Lincoln's assassination. I'll give you a special pass to go North as soon as you please."

I thanked him and took my leave.

In 1907—forty-two years later—some one in the Authors Club introduced me to "our newest member, Mr. Curtis."

*A Friendly Old
Foe*

I glanced at the towering form, and recognized it instantly.

"*Mr. Curtis* be hanged," I answered, "I know General Newton Martin Curtis, and I have good reason to remember him. He is the man who let me out of Richmond."

Since that time I have learned to know General Curtis well, and to cherish him as a friend and club comrade as heartily as I honored him before for his gallantry in war and for his ceaseless and most fruitful efforts since the war in behalf of reconciliation and brotherhood between the men who once confronted each other with steel between. Senator Daniel of Virginia has written of him that no other man has done so much as he in that behalf, and I have reason to know that the statement is not an exaggerated one. The kindness he showed to me in Richmond when we were utter strangers and had only recently been foemen, inspired all his relations with the Virginians during all the years that followed, and there is no man whose name to-day awakens a readier response of good will among Virginians than does his.

XXIX

Late in the autumn of that first year of war there was reason to believe that the armies in Virginia were about to retire into the dull lethargy of winter-quarters' life, and that the scene of active war was to be transferred to the coast of South Carolina. The Federals had concentrated heavy forces there and in a preparatory campaign had seized upon the Sea Islands and their defensive works at Beaufort and elsewhere. General Lee had already been sent thither to command and defend the coast, and there seemed no doubt that an active winter campaign was to occur in that region. I wanted to have a part in it, and to that end I sought and secured a transfer to a battery of field artillery which was under orders for the South.

As a matter of fact, the active campaign never came, and for many moons we led the very idlest life down there that soldiers in time of war ever led anywhere.

But the service, idle as it was, played greater havoc in our ranks than the most ceaseless battling could have done.

For example, we were sent one day from Charleston across the Ashley river, to defend a bridge over Wappoo Cut. We had a hundred and eight men on duty—all well and vigorous. One week later eight of them were dead, eight barely able to answer to roll call, and all the rest in hospital. In the meanwhile we had not fired a gun or caught sight of an enemy.

On another occasion we encamped in a delightful but pestilential spot, and for ten days afterward our men died at the rate of from two to six every twenty-four hours.

During the term of our service on that coast we were only once engaged in what could be called a battle. That was at Pocotaligo on the 22nd of October, 1862. In point of numbers engaged it was a very small battle, indeed, but it was the very hottest fight I was ever in, not excepting any of the tremendous struggles in the campaign of 1864 in Virginia. My battery went into that fight with fifty-four men and forty-five horses. We fought at pistol-shot range all day, and came out of the struggle with a tally of thirty-three men killed and wounded, and with only eighteen horses alive—all of them wounded but one.

General Beauregard with his own hand presented the battery a battle flag and authorized an inscription on it in memory of the event. In all that we rejoiced with as much enthusiasm as a company of ague-smitten wretches could command, but it is no wonder that our Virginia mountaineers took on a new lease of life when at last we were ordered to rejoin the Army of

XXX

At the end of the campaign of 1863 we found ourselves unhorsed. We had guns that we knew how to use, and caissons full of ammunition, but we had no horses to draw either the guns or the caissons. So when Longstreet was ordered south to bear a part in the campaign of Chickamauga, we were left behind. After a time, during which we were like the dog in the express car who had "chawed up his tag," we were assigned for the winter to General Lindsay Walker's command—the artillery of A. P. Hill's corps. *Left Behind*

[88] We belonged to none of the battalions there, and therefore had no field officers through whom to apply for decent treatment. For thirteen wintry days we lay at Lindsay's Turnout, with no rations except a meager dole of cornmeal. Then one day a yoke of commissary oxen, starved into a condition of hopeless anemia, became stalled in the mud near our camp. By some hook or crook we managed to buy those wrecks of what had once been oxen. We butchered them, and after twenty-four or thirty-six hours of continual stewing, we had meat again.

Belonging to no battalion in the corps to which we were attached, we were a battery "with no rights that anybody was bound to respect," and presently the fact was emphasized. We were appointed to be the provost company of the corps. That is to say, we had to build guardhouses and do all the duties incident to the care of military prisoners.

The arrangement brought welcome occupation to me. As Sergeant-Major I had the executive management of the military prisons and of everything pertaining to them. As a lawyer who could charge no fees without a breach of military etiquette, I was called upon to defend, before the courts-martial, all the more desperate criminals under our care. These included murderers, malingerers, robbers, deserters, and men guilty of all the other crimes possible in that time and country. They included no assailants of women. I would not have defended such in any case, and had there been such our sentinels would have made quick work of their disposal.

[89] The rest, as I was convinced, were guilty, every man of them. But equally I was convinced that a court-martial, if left to deal with them in its own way, would condemn them whether guilty or not. To a court-martial, as a rule, the accusation—in the case of a private soldier—is conclusive and final. If not, then a very little evidence—admissible or not—is sufficient to confirm it. It is the sole function of counsel before a court-martial to do the very little he can to secure a reasonably fair trial, to persuade the officers constituting the court that there is a difference between admissible evidence and testimony that should not be received at all, and finally, to put in a written plea at the end which may direct the attention of the reviewing officers higher up to any unfairness or injustice done in the course of the trial. Theoretically a court-martial is bound by the accepted rules of evidence and by all other laws relating to the conduct of criminal trials; but practically the court-martial, in time of war at least, is bound by nothing. It is a tribunal organized to convict, and its proceedings closely resemble those of a vigilance committee. *A Gratuitous Law Practice*

But the proceedings of every court-martial must be reduced to writing and approved or disapproved by authorities "higher up." Sometimes those authorities higher up have some glimmering notion of law and justice, and it is in reliance upon that chance that lawyers chiefly depend in defending men before courts-martial.

But no man is entitled to counsel before a court-martial. It is only on sufferance that the counsel can appear at all, and he is liable to peremptory dismissal at any moment during the trial.

It was under these conditions that I undertook the defense of

TOM COLLINS

Tom was an old jailbird. He had been pardoned out of the Virginia penitentiary on condition that he would enlist—for his age was one year greater, according to his account of it, than that at which the conscription law lost its force. Tom had been a trifle less than two months in service when he was caught trying to desert to the enemy. Conviction on such a charge at that period of the war meant death.

[90] In response to a humble request I was permitted to appear before the court-martial as Tom Collins's counsel. My intrusion was somewhat resented as a thing that tended to delay in a perfectly clear case, when the court had a world of business before it, and my request was very grudgingly granted.

I managed, unluckily, to antagonize the court still further at the very outset. I found that Tom Collins's captain—who had preferred the charges against him—was a member of the court that was to try him. Against that indecency I protested, and in doing so perhaps I used stronger language than was advisable. The officer concerned, flushed and angry, asked me if I meant to

impugn his honor and integrity. I answered, in hot blood:

"That depends upon whether you continue to sit as judge in a case in which you are the accuser, or whether you have the decency to retire from the court until the hearing in this case is ended."

"Are you a man responsible for his words?" he flashed back in reply.

"Entirely so," I answered. "When this thing is over I will afford you any opportunity you like, captain, to avenge your honor and to wreak satisfaction. At present I have a duty to do toward my client, and a part of that duty is to insist that you shall withdraw from the court during his trial and not sit as a judge in a case in which you are the accuser. After that my captain or any other officer of the battery to which I belong will act for me and receive any communication you may choose to send."

At this point the presiding officer of the court ordered the room cleared "while the court deliberates."

Half an hour later I was admitted again to the courtroom to hear the deliberate judgment of the court that it was entirely legitimate and proper for Tom's captain to sit in his case.

[91] Then we proceeded with the trial. The proof was positive that Tom Collins had been caught ten miles in front, endeavoring to make his way into the enemy's lines.

*Court Martial
Evidence*

In answer, I called the court's attention to the absence of any proof that Tom Collins was a soldier. There are only three ways in which a man can become a soldier, namely, by voluntary enlistment, by conscription, or by receiving pay. Tom Collins was above the conscription age and therefore not a conscript. He had not been two months in service, and by his captain's admission, had not received soldier's pay. There remained only voluntary enlistment, and, I pointed out, there was no proof of that before the court.

Thereupon the room was cleared again for consultation, and a little later the court adjourned till the next morning.

When it reassembled the judge advocate triumphantly presented a telegram from Governor Letcher, in answer to one sent to him. It read:

"Yes. I pardoned Collins out of penitentiary on condition of enlistment."

Instantly I objected to the reception of the despatch as evidence. There was no proof that it had in fact come from Governor Letcher; it was not made under oath; and finally, the accused man was not confronted by his accuser and permitted to cross-examine him. Clearly that piece of paper was utterly inadmissible as testimony.

The court made short work of these "lawyer's quibbles." It found Tom Collins guilty and condemned him to death.

[92] I secured leave of the court to set forth my contentions in writing so that they might go to the reviewing officers as a part of the proceedings, but I had very little hope of the result. I frankly told Tom that he was to be shot on the next Saturday but one, and that he must make up his mind to his fate.

The good clergyman who acted as chaplain to the military prison then took Tom in hand and endeavored to "prepare him to meet his God." After a while the reverend gentleman came to me with tears of joy in his eyes, to tell me that Tom Collins was "converted"; that never in the course of his ministry had he encountered "a case in which the repentance was completer or more sincere, or a case more clearly showing the acceptance of the sinner by his merciful Saviour."

My theological convictions were distinctly more hazy than those of the clerical gentleman, and my ability to think of Tom Collins as a person saturated with sanctity, was less than his. But I accepted the clergyman's expert opinion as unquestioningly as I could, and Tom Collins confirmed it. When I visited him in the guard-house I found him positively ecstatic in the sunlight of Divine acceptance which illuminated the Valley of the Shadow of Death. When I mentioned the possibility that my plea in his behalf might even yet prove effective, and that the sentence which condemned him to death the next morning might still be revoked, he replied, with apparent sincerity:

"Oh, I hope not! For then I must wait before entering into joy! But the Lord's will be done!"

The next morning was the one appointed for Tom Collins's death. His coffin was ready and a shallow grave had been dug to receive his body.

The chaplain and I mounted with him to the cart, and rode with him to the place of execution, where three other men were to die that day. Tom's mood was placidly exultant. And the chaplain alone shed tears in his behalf.

[93] When the place of execution was reached, an adjutant came forward and read three death warrants. Then he held up another paper and read it. It was a formal document from the War Department, sustaining the legal points submitted in Tom Collins's case, disapproving the finding and sentence, and ordering the man formally enlisted and returned to duty.

*"Death Bed
Repentance"*

The chaplain fell into a collapse of uncontrollable weeping. Tom Collins came to his relief with the injunction: "Oh, come, now, old snuffy, cheer up! I'll bet you even money I beat you to Hell yet."

That clergyman afterward confided to me his doubts of "deathbed repentances," at least in the case of habitual criminals.

XXXI

In the spring of 1864, the battery to which I belonged mutinied—in an entirely proper and soldierlike way. Longstreet had returned, and the Army of Northern Virginia was about to encounter Grant in the most stupendous campaign of the war. We were old soldiers, and we knew what was coming. But as we had no horses to draw our guns, and as the quartermaster's department seemed unable to find horses for us, we were omitted from the orders for the advance into the region of the Wilderness, where the fighting was obviously to begin. We were ordered to Cobham Station, a charming region of verdure-clad hills and brawling streams, where there was no soldiers' work to do and no prospect of anything less ignoble than provost duty.

Against this we revolted, respectfully and loyally. We sent in a protest and petition asking that if horses could not be furnished for our guns, we should be armed with Enfield rifles and permitted to march with our battalion as a sharpshooting support.

[94]

The request was granted and from the Wilderness to Petersburg we marched and fought and starved right gallantly, usually managing to have a place between the guns at the points of hottest contest in every action of the campaign.

At Petersburg we found artillery work of a new kind to do. No sooner were the conditions of siege established than our battery, because of its irregularly armed condition, was chosen to work the mortars which then for the first time became a part of the offensive and defensive equipment of the Army of Northern Virginia.

All the fragments of batteries whose ranks had been broken up and whose officers had been killed, wounded, or captured during that campaign of tremendous fighting, were assigned to us for mortar service, so that our numbers were swelled to 250 or 300 men. The number was fluctuating from day to day, as the monotonous murder of siege operations daily depleted our ranks on the one hand while almost daily there were additions made of men from disintegrated commands.

I have no purpose here to write a history of that eight months of siege, during which we were never for one moment out of fire by night or by day, but there is one story that arose out of it which I have a mind to tell.

I had been placed in command of an independent mortar fort, taking my orders directly from General E. P. Alexander—Longstreet's chief of artillery—and reporting to nobody else.

[95]

Infantry officers from the lines in front—colonels and such—used sometimes to come to my little row of gun-pits and give me orders in utter ignorance of the conditions and limitations of mortar firing. The orders were not binding upon me and, under General Alexander's instructions, I paid no heed to them, wherefore I was often in a state of friction with the intermeddlers. After a little I discovered a short and easy method of dealing with them. There was a Federal fort known to us as the Railroad Iron Battery, whose commanding officer seemed a person very fond of using his guns in an offensive way. He had both mortars and rifled field guns, and with all of them he soon got my range so accurately that all his rifle shells cut my parapet at the moment of exploding, and all his mortar shells fell among my pits with extraordinary precision. In order to preserve the lives of my men I had to take my stand on top of the mound over my magazine whenever he began bombarding me. From that point I watched the course of his mortar shells, and when one of them seemed destined to fall into one of my little gun-pits, I called out the number of the pit and the men in it ran into their bomb-proof till the explosion was over.

In dealing with the annoyance of intruding infantry officers, I took advantage of the Railroad Iron Battery's extraordinary readiness to respond to the smallest attention at my hands. A shell or two hurled in that direction always brought on a condition of things which prompted all visitors to my pits to retreat to a covered way and hasten to keep suddenly remembered engagements on their own lines.

Once my little ruse did not produce the intended effect. It was after sunset of a day late in August. Two officers came out of the gloaming and saluted me politely. They were in fatigue uniforms. That is to say, they wore the light blue trousers that were common to both armies, and white duck fatigue jackets that bore no insignia of rank upon their collars.

*Gloaming
Visitors*

At the moment I was slowly bombarding something—I forget what or why—but I remember that I was getting no response. Presently one of my visitors said:

"You seem to be having the shelling all to yourself."

[96]

I resented the remark, thinking it a criticism.

"We'll see," I said. Then turning to my brother, who was my second in command, I quietly gave the order:

"Touch up the Railroad Iron Battery, Joe."

Thirty seconds later the storm was in full fury about us, but my visitors did not seem to mind it. Instead of retiring to the covered way, they nonchalantly stood there by my side on the mound of the magazine. Every now and then, between explosions, one of them would ask a question as to the geography of the lines to our right and left.

"What battery is that over there?"

"What is the Federal work that lies in front of it?"

"What is the lay of the land," etc., etc.

Obviously they were officers new to this part of our line and as they offered no criticism upon the work of my guns, and gave me no orders, I put aside the antagonism I had felt, and in all good-fellowship explained the military geography of the region round about.

Meanwhile, Joe had quietly stopped the fire on the Railroad Iron Battery, and little by little that work ceased its activity. Finally my visitors politely bade me good evening and took their leave.

I asked Joe who they were, but he did not know. I inquired of others, but nobody knew. Next morning I asked at General Gracie's headquarters what new troops had been brought to that part of the line, and learned that there had been no changes. There and at General Bushrod Johnson's headquarters I minutely described my visitors, but nobody knew anything about them, and after a few days of futile conjecture I ceased to think of them or their visit.

[97]

In July, 1865, the war being over, I took passage on the steamer "Lady Gay," bound from Cairo to New Orleans. There were no women on board, but there was a passenger list of thirty men or so. Some of us were ex-Confederates and some had been Federal soldiers.

The two groups did not mingle. The members of each were polite upon accidental occasion to the members of the other, but they did not fraternize, at least for a time—till something happened.

*The Outcome of
a Strange Story*

I was talking one morning with some of my party when suddenly a man from the other group approached as if listening to my voice. Presently he asked:

"Didn't you command a mortar fort at Petersburg?"

I answered that I did, whereupon he asked:

"Do you remember——" and proceeded to outline the incident related above.

"Yes," I answered in astonishment, "but how do you happen to know anything about it?"

"I was one of your visitors on that occasion. I thought I couldn't be mistaken in the voice that commanded, "Touch up the Railroad Iron Battery, Joe."

"But I don't understand. You were a Federal officer, were you not?"

"Yes."

"Then what were you doing there?"

"That is precisely what my friend and I were trying to find out, while you kept us for two hours under a fire of hell from our own batteries."

Then he explained:

"You remember that to the left of your position, half a mile or so away, there lay a swamp. It was utterly impassable when the lines were drawn, and both sides neglected it in throwing up the breastworks. Well, that swamp slowly dried up during the summer, and it left something like a gap in both lines, but the gap was so well covered by the batteries on both sides that neither bothered to extend earthworks across it. My friend and I were in charge of pickets and rifle-pits that day, and we went out to inspect them. Somehow—I don't know how—we got lost on the swamplands, and, losing our bearings, we found ourselves presently within the Confederate lines. To say that we were embarrassed is to put it mildly. We were scared. We didn't know how to get back, and we couldn't even surrender for the reason that we were not in uniform but in fatigue dress, and therefore technically, at least, in disguise. There was nothing about us to show to which army we belonged. As an old soldier, you know what that meant. If we had given ourselves up we should have been hanged as spies caught in disguise within your lines. In our desperate strait we went to you and stood there for an hour or two under the worst fire we ever endured, while we extracted from you the geographical information that enabled us to make our way back to our own lines under cover of darkness."

[98]

At that point he grasped my hand warmly and said:

"Tell me, how is Joe? I hope he is 'touching up' something that responds as readily as the Railroad Iron Battery did that evening."

From that hour until we reached New Orleans, four days later, there was no barrier between the two groups of passengers. We fraternized completely. We told stories of our several war experiences that had no touch or trace of antagonism in them.

Incidentally, we exhausted the steamer "Lady Gay's" supplies of champagne and cigars, and when we reached New Orleans we had a dinner together at the St. Charles hotel, no observer of which would have suspected that a few months before we had been doing our best to slaughter each other.

[99]

XXXII

Let me pass hurriedly over the years that immediately followed the end of the war. I went West in search of a living. In Cairo, Illinois, I became counsel and attorney "at law and in fact," for a great banking, mining, steamboating, and mercantile firm, whose widely extending interests covered the whole West and South.

*The Beginning of
Newspaper Life*

The work was uncongenial and by way of escaping from it, after I had married, I removed to Mississippi and undertook the practice of law there.

That work proved still less to my liking and in the summer of 1870 I abandoned it in the profoundest disgust.

With a wife, one child, a little household furniture, and no money at all, I removed to New York and secured work as a reporter on the Brooklyn *Union*, an afternoon newspaper.

I knew nothing of the business, art, or mystery of newspaper making, and I knew nothing of the city. I find it difficult to imagine a man less well equipped for my new undertaking than I was. But I had an abounding confidence in my ability to learn anything I wanted to learn, and I thought I knew how to express myself lucidly in writing. For the rest I had tireless energy and a good deal of courage of the kind that is sometimes slangily called "cheek." This was made manifest on the first day of my service by the fact that while waiting for a petty news assignment I wrote an editorial article and sent it in to Theodore Tilton, the editor, for use. I had an impulse of general helpfulness which was left unrestrained by my utter ignorance of the distinctions and dignities of a newspaper office. I had a thought which seemed to me to deserve editorial utterance, and with the mistaken idea that I was expected to render all the aid I could in the making of the newspaper, I wrote what I had to say.

[100]

Theodore Tilton was a man of very hospitable mind, and he cared little for traditions. He read my article, approved it, and printed it as a leader. Better still, he sent for me and asked me what experience I had had as a newspaper man. I told him I had had none, whereupon he said encouragingly:

"Oh well, it doesn't matter much. I'll have you on the editorial staff soon. In the meantime, learn all you can about the city, and especially about the shams and falsities of its 'Society' with a big 'S.' Study state politics, and equip yourself to comment critically upon such things. And whenever you have an editorial in your mind write it and send it to me."

The *Union* had been purchased by Mr. Henry C. Bowen, the owner of the New York *Independent*, then the most widely influential periodical of its class in America. Theodore Tilton was the editor of both.

Theodore Tilton was at the crest of the wave of success at that time, and he took himself and his genius very seriously. Concerning him I shall write more fully a little later on. At present I wish to say only that with all his self-appreciation he had a keen appreciation of other men's

*An Old School
Man of Letters*

abilities, and he sought in every way he could to make them tributary to his own success in whatever he undertook. To that end he had engaged some strong men and women as members of his staff on the *Union*, and among these the most interesting to me was Charles F. Briggs, the "Harry Franco" of an earlier literary time, the associate and partner of Edgar Allan Poe on the *Broadway Journal*, the personal friend or enemy of every literary man of consequence in his time, the associate of George William Curtis and Parke Godwin in the conduct of *Putnam's Monthly*; the coadjutor of Henry J. Raymond on the *Times*, the novelist to whom Lowell dedicated "The Fable for Critics," and whose personal and literary characteristics Lowell set forth with singular aptitude in that poem. In brief, he was in his own person a representative and embodiment of the literary life of what I had always regarded as the golden age of American letters. He talked familiarly of writers who had been to me cloud-haloed demigods, and made men of them to my apprehension.

[101]

Let me add that though the literary life of which he had been a part was a turbulent one, beset by jealousies and vexed by quarrels of a bitter personal character, such as would be impossible

among men of letters in our time of more gracious manners, I never knew him to say an unjust thing about any of the men he had known, or to withhold a just measure of appreciation from the work of those with whom he had most bitterly quarreled.

Perhaps no man among Poe's contemporaries had juster reason to feel bitterness toward the poet's memory than had Mr. Briggs. Yet during my intimacy with him, extending over many years, I never heard him say an unkind word of Poe. On the other hand, I never knew him to fail to contradict upon occasion and in his dogmatic fashion—which was somehow very convincing—any of the prevalent misapprehensions as to Poe's character and life which might be mentioned in his presence.

It was not that he was a meekly forgiving person, for he was, on the contrary, pugnacious in an unusual degree. But the dominant quality of his character was a love of truth and justice. Concerning Poe and the supposed immorality of his life, he once said to me, in words that I am sure I remember accurately because of the impression they made on my mind:

[102] "He was not immoral at all in his personal life or in his work. He was merely *unmoral*. He had no perception of the difference between right and wrong in the moral sense of those words. His conscience was altogether artistic. If you had told him you had killed a man who stood annoyingly in the way of your purposes, he would have thought none the worse of you for it. He would have reflected that the man ought not to have put himself in your way. But if you had been guilty of putting forth a false quantity in verse, he would have held you to be a monster for whom no conceivable punishment could be adequate."

Often Mr. Briggs's brusquerie and pugnacity were exaggerated, or even altogether assumed by way of hiding a sentiment too tender to be exhibited. Still more frequently the harshest things he said to his friends—and they were sometimes very bitter—were prompted, not by his displeasure with those who were their victims, but by some other cause of "disgruntlement." On such occasions he would repent him of his fault, and would make amends, but never in any ordinary way or after a fashion that anybody else would have chosen.

[103] One morning he came into the editorial room which he and I jointly occupied. I bade him good-morning as usual, but he made no reply. After a little while he turned upon me with some bitter, stinging utterance which, if it had come from a younger man, I should have hotly resented. Coming from a man of his age and distinction, I resented it only by turning to my desk and maintaining silence during the entire morning. When his work was done, he left the office without a word, leaving me to feel that he meant the break between us—the cause of which I did not at all understand—to be permanent, as I certainly intended that it should. But when he entered the room next morning he stood still in the middle of the floor, facing my back, for I had not turned my face away from my desk.

"Good-morning!" he said. "Are you ready to apologize to me?"

I turned toward him with an involuntary smile at the absurdity of the suggestion, and answered:

*Mr. Briggs
Explains*

"I don't know what I should apologize for, Mr. Briggs."

"Neither do I," he answered. "My question was prompted by curiosity. It usually happens that apologies come from the person offended, you know. Are you going to write on this affair in the Senate, or shall I take it up?"

From that moment his manner was what it always had been during our association. Beyond what he had said he made no reference to the matter, but after our work was finished he, in fact, explained his temper of the day before, while carefully avoiding every suggestion that he meant to explain it or that there was any connection between the explanation and the thing explained.

"What do you think of servants?" he asked abruptly. I made some answer, though I did not understand the reason for his question or its occasion.

[104] "When I was in the Custom House," he resumed, "I had an opportunity to buy, far below the usual price, some of the finest wines and brandies ever imported. I bought some Madeira, some sherry, and some brandy—ten gallons of each, in five-gallon demijohns—and laid them away in my cellar, thinking the stock sufficient to last me as long as I lived. I rejoiced in the certainty that however poor I might become, I should always be able to offer a friend a glass of something really worthy of a gentleman's attention. Night before last I asked my daughter to replenish a decanter of sherry which had run low. She went to the cellar and presently returned with a look on her face that made me think she had seen a burglar. She reported that there wasn't a drop of anything left in any of the demijohns. I sent for some detectives, and before morning they solved the riddle. A servant girl who had resigned from our service a week or two before had carried all the wine and brandy—two bottlefuls at a time—to a miserable, disreputable gin mill, and sold it for what the thievish proprietor saw fit to give. When I learned the facts I lost my temper, which was a very unprofitable thing to do. I'm late," looking at his watch, "and must be off."

Mr. Briggs had a keen sense of humor, which he tried hard to disguise with a shaggy seeming of dogmatic positiveness. He would say his most humorous things in the tone and with the manner of a man determined to make himself as disagreeable as possible.

I sat with him at a public dinner one evening. He took the wines with the successive courses, but when later some one, on the other side of the table, lifted his glass of champagne and asked

Mr. Briggs to drink with him, he excused himself for taking carbonic water instead of the wine, by saying:

"I'm a rigid 'temperance' man."

When we all smiled and glanced at the red and white wine glasses he had emptied in the course of the meal, he turned upon us savagely, saying:

"You smile derisively, but I repeat my assertion that I'm a strict 'temperance' man; I never take a drink unless I want it."

He paused, and then added:

"Temperance consists solely in never taking a drink unless you want it. Intemperance consists in taking drinks when some other fellow wants them."

[105]

He was peculiarly generous of encouragement to younger men, when he thought they deserved it. I may add that he was equally generous of rebuke under circumstances of an opposite kind. I had entered journalism without knowing the least thing about the profession, or trade—if that be the fitter name for it, as I sometimes think it is—and I had not been engaged in the work long enough to get over my modesty, when one day I wrote a paragraph of a score or two lines to correct an error into which the *New York Tribune* had that morning fallen. Not long before that time a certain swashbuckler, E. M. Yerger, of Jackson, Mississippi, had committed a homicide in the nature of a political assassination. The crime and the assassin's acquittal by reason of political influence had greatly excited the indignation of the entire North.

Mr. Briggs's
Generosity

There lived at the same time in Memphis another and a very different E. M. Yerger, a judge whose learning, uprightness, and high personal character had made him deservedly one of the best loved and most honored jurists in the Southwest. At the time of which I now write, this Judge E. M. Yerger had died, and his funeral had been an extraordinary manifestation of popular esteem, affection, and profound sorrow.

The *Tribune*, misled by the identity of their names, had confounded the two men, and had that morning "improved the occasion" to hurl a deal of editorial thunder at the Southern people for thus honoring a fire-eating assassin.

By way of correcting the error I wrote and printed an editorial paragraph, setting forth the facts simply, and making no comments.

When Mr. Briggs next entered the office he took my hand warmly in both his own, and said:

"I congratulate you. That paragraph of yours was the best editorial the *Union* has printed since I've been on the paper."

[106]

"Why, Mr. Briggs," I protested, "it was only a paragraph——"

"What of that?" he demanded in his most quarrelsome tone. "The Lord's Prayer is only a paragraph in comparison with some of the 'graces' I've heard distinguished clergymen get off at banquets by way of impressing their eloquence upon the oysters that were growing warm under the gaslights, while they solemnly prated."

"But there was nothing in the paragraph," I argued; "it only corrected an error."

"Why, sir, do you presume to tell me what is and what isn't in an article that I've read for myself? You're a novice, a greenhorn in this business. Don't undertake to instruct my judgment, sir. That paragraph was excellent editorial writing, because it corrected an error that did a great injustice; because it gave important and interesting information; because it set forth facts of public import not known to our readers generally, and finally, because you put that final period just where it belonged. Don't contradict me. Don't presume to argue the matter. I won't stand it."

With that he left the room as abruptly as he had entered it, and with the manner of a man who has quarreled and has put his antagonist down. I smilingly recalled the lines in which Lowell so aptly described and characterized him in "A Fable for Critics":

"There comes Harry Franco, and as he draws near,
You find that's a smile which you took for a sneer;
One half of him contradicts t'other; his wont
Is to say very sharp things and do very blunt;
His manner's as hard as his feelings are tender,
And a *sortie* he'll make when he means to surrender;
He's in joke half the time when he seems to be sternest,
When he seems to be joking be sure he's in earnest;

He has common sense in a way that's uncommon,
Hates humbug and cant, loves his friends like a woman,
Builds his dislikes of cards and his friendships of oak,
Loves a prejudice better than aught but a joke;
Is half upright Quaker, half downright Come-Outer,
Loves Freedom too well to go stark mad about her;
Quite artless himself, is a lover of Art,

Shuts you out of his secrets and into his heart,
And though not a poet, yet all must admire
In his letters of Pinto his skill on the liar."

XXXIII

When I first knew Theodore Tilton as my editor-in-chief, on the *Union*, he was in his thirty-fifth year. His extraordinary gifts as an effective writer and speaker had won for him, even at that early age, a country-wide reputation. He was a recognized force in the thought and life of the time, and he had full possession of the tools he needed for his work. The *Independent* exercised an influence upon the thought and life of the American people such as no periodical publication of its class exercises in this later time of cheap paper, cheap illustrations, and multitudinous magazines. Its circulation of more than three hundred thousand exceeded that of all the other publications of its class combined, and, more important still, it was spread all over the country, from Maine to California. The utterances of the *Independent* were determinative of popular thought and conviction in an extraordinary degree.

Theodore Tilton

Theodore Tilton had absolute control of that great engine of influence, with an editorial staff of unusually able men for his assistants, and with a corps of contributors that included practically all the most desirable men and women writers of the time.

[108] In addition to all this, it was the golden age of the lecture system, and next to Mr. Beecher, Tilton was perhaps the most widely popular of the lecturers.

In the midst of such a career, and possessed of such influence over the minds of men, at the age of thirty-five, it is no wonder that he had a good conceit of himself, and it was to his credit that he manifested that conceit only in inoffensive ways. He was never arrogant, dogmatic, or overbearing in conversation. His courtesy was unflinching, except in strenuous personal controversy, and even there his manner was polite almost to deference, however deadly the thrusts of his sarcastic wit might be. He fought with a rapier always, never with a bludgeon. His refinement of mind determined that.

It was an era of "gush," of phrase making, of superlatives, and in such arts Tilton was peculiarly gifted. In his thinking he was bold to the limit of audacity, and his aptness in clothing his thought in captivating forms of speech added greatly to its effectiveness and his influence.

Radicalism was rampant at that time when the passions aroused by the recent Civil War had not yet begun to cool, and Tilton was a radical of radicals. So extreme was he in his views that during and after the orgies of the Commune and the petroleuses in Paris, he openly espoused their cause, justified their resistance to everything like orderly government, and glorified those of them who suffered death for their crimes, as martyrs to human liberty.

He and I were talking of these things one day, when something that was said prompted me to ask him his views of the great French revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. He quickly replied:

[109] "It was a notable movement in behalf of human liberty; it was overborne by military force at last only because the French people were unworthy of it. Robespierre was an irresolute weakling who didn't cut off heads enough."

Added to his other gifts, Tilton had an impressive and attractive personality. Tall, well formed, graceful in every motion, he had a head and face so handsome and so unlike the common as to make him a man to be looked at more than once in every company. His manner accorded with his appearance and emphasized it. It was a gracious combination of deference for others with an exalted self-esteem. There was a certain joyousness in it that was very winning, combined with an insistent but unobtrusive self-assertion which impressed without offending.

Tilton's
Characteristics

His wit was always at his command, for offense or for defense, or for mere entertainment. I remember that in my first association with him I had a sort of fear at each moment that he would knock me down the next with an epigram. I have seen him do that repeatedly with men with whom he was at the time in deadly controversy, but in my own case the fear of it was soon banished by the uniform kindness with which he treated me, and the personal affection with which he seemed to regard me.

I have often wondered over his attitude toward me. I was an ex-rebel soldier, and in 1870 he was still mercilessly at war with Southern men and Southern ideas. My opinions on many subjects were the exact opposite of his own, and I was young enough then to be insistent in the expression of my opinions, especially in conversation with one to whom I knew my views to be *Anathema Maranatha*.

Yet from the first hour of our meeting Theodore Tilton was always courteous and genial toward me, and after our acquaintance had ripened a bit, he became cordial and even enthusiastic in his

friendship.

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It was his habit to rise very early, drink a small cup of coffee and, without other breakfast, walk down to the office of the *Union*. There he wrote his editorials, marked out the day's work for his subordinates, and received such callers as might come, after which he would walk home and take his breakfast at noon. His afternoons were spent in the doing of another day's work in the *Independent* office. After our acquaintance ripened into friendship, he used to insist upon my going with him to his midday breakfast, whenever my own work in any wise permitted. As I also was apt to be early at the office, I was usually able to accept his breakfast invitations, so that we had an hour's uninterrupted intercourse almost every day. And unlike other editorial chiefs with whom I have had intimate social relations in their own homes, Mr. Tilton never thrust editorial or other business matters into the conversation on these occasions. Indeed, he did not permit the smallest reference to such subjects. If by accident such things obtruded, he put them aside as impertinent to the time and place. It was not that he thought less or cared less for matters of such import than other great editors do, but rather that he had a well-ordered mind that instinctively shrank from confusion. When engaged with editorial problems, he gave his whole attention to their careful consideration and wise solution. When engaged in social intercourse he put all else utterly out of his mind.

I cannot help thinking that his method as to that was a wiser one than that of some others I have known, who carried the problems and perplexities of their editorial work with them into their parlors, to their dinner tables, and even to bed. Certainly it was a method more agreeable to his associates and guests.

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XXXIV

At that time Tilton was "swimming on a sea of glory." His popularity was at its height, with an apparently assured prospect of lasting fame to follow. His work so far had necessarily been of an ephemeral sort—dealing with passing subjects in a passing way—but he had all the while been planning work of a more permanent character, and diligently preparing himself for its doing. One day, in more confidential mood than usual, he spoke to me of this and briefly outlined a part at least of what he had planned to do. But there was a note of the past tense in what he said, as if the hope and purpose he had cherished were passing away. It was the first intimation I had of the fact that those troubles were upon him which later made an end of his career and sent him into a saddened exile which endured till the end of his ruined life.

*The Swarm of
Gadflies*

At that time I knew nothing and he told me nothing of the nature of his great trouble, and I regarded his despondency as nothing more than weariness over the petty annoyances inflicted upon him by some who were jealous of his success and popularity.

With some of these things I was familiar. His growing liberality of thought in religious matters, and the absence of asceticism from his life, had brought a swarm of gadflies round his head, whose stings annoyed him, even if they inflicted no serious hurt. He was constantly quizzed and criticised, orally, by personal letter, and in print, as to his beliefs, his conduct, his tastes, his habits, and even his employment of terms, quite as if he had been a woman or a clergyman responsible to his critics and subject to their censure. He maintained an appearance of good temper under all this carping—most of which was clearly inspired by "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness"—but, as I had reason to know, it stung him sorely. He said to me one day:

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"It isn't the criticism that annoys me so much as the fact that I am supposed to be answerable in such small ways to the bellowsings of Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart. I seem not to be regarded as a free man, as other men are."

I reminded him that something of that kind was the penalty that genius and popularity were usually required to pay for their privileges. I illustrated my thought by adding:

"If Byron had not waked up one morning and found himself famous, he would never have been hounded out of his native land by what Macaulay calls British morality in one of its periodic spasms of virtue, and if Poe had never written 'The Raven,' 'The Bells,' and 'Annabel Lee,' nobody would ever have bothered to inquire about his drinking habits."

I strongly urged him to ignore the criticism which was only encouraged by his replies to it. But in that he was not amenable to counsel, partly because his over-sensitive nature was more severely stung by such criticism than that of a better balanced man would have been, but still more, I think, because his passion for epigrammatic reply could not resist the temptation of opportunity which these things presented. Often his replies were effective for the moment, by reason of their wit or their sparkling audacity, but incidentally they enlarged the circle of persons offended.

Thus on one occasion, when he was challenged in print by an adversary, to say that he did not drink wine, he replied in print:

"Mr. Tilton does drink wine upon sacramental and other proper occasions."

His readers smiled at the smartness of the utterance, but many of the more sensitive among them were deeply aggrieved by what they regarded as its well-nigh blasphemous character.

I was myself present at one of his most perplexing conferences concerning these matters, not as a participant in the discussion, but as a friendly witness.

*The Fulton
Controversy*

The quarrel—for it had developed into the proportions of a quarrel—was with the Rev. Dr. Fulton, who at that time occupied a large place in public attention—as a preacher of great eloquence, his friends said, as a reckless sensationalist and self-advertiser, his enemies contended.

He had accused Tilton of drinking wine, and had publicly criticised him for it, with great severity. Tilton had replied in an equally public way, with the statement that on a certain occasion which he named, he and Dr. Fulton had walked up street together after a public meeting; that at Dr. Fulton's suggestion they had gone into a saloon where between them they had drunk a considerable number of glasses of beer (he gave the number, but I forget what it was), adding: "Of which I did not drink the major part."

Dr. Fulton was furiously angry, of course, and demanded an interview. Tilton calmly invited him to call at his editorial room in the *Union* office. He came at the appointed time, bringing with him the Rev. Dr. Armitage and two other persons of prominence. I do not now remember who they were. Tilton at once sent me a message asking me to come to his room. When I entered he introduced me to his visitors and then said:

"Mr. Eggleston, Dr. Fulton has called to discuss with me certain matters of personal import. The discussion may result in some issues of veracity—discussions with Dr. Fulton often do. It is in view of that possibility, I suppose," smiling and bowing to Dr. Fulton, who sat stiff in his chair making no response by word or act, "that Dr. Fulton has brought with him Dr. Armitage and these other gentlemen, as witnesses to whatever may be said between us. I have the profoundest respect, and even reverence for those gentlemen, but it seems to me proper that I should have at least one witness of my own selection present also. I have therefore sent for you."

Instantly Dr. Fulton was on his feet protesting. In a loud voice and with excited gesticulations, he declared that he would not be drawn into a trap—that he would abandon the purpose of his visit rather than discuss the matters at issue with one of Tilton's reporters present to misrepresent and ridicule him in print.

Tilton, who never lost his self-possession, waited calmly till the protest was fully made. Then he said:

"I have no reporter present. Mr. Eggleston was promoted a week ago to the editorial writing staff of the paper. He will report nothing. You, Dr. Fulton, have brought with you three friends who are of your own selection, to hear the discussion between us. I claim the right to have one friend of my own present also. It is solely in that capacity that I have asked Mr. Eggleston to be present."

"But I will not discuss confidential matters in the presence of any newspaper man," protested Dr. Fulton.

"Then in my turn," said Tilton, "I must decline to discuss the questions between us, in the presence of any clergyman."

At that point Dr. Armitage and his companions remonstrated with Dr. Fulton, declaring his position to be unreasonable and unfair, and telling him that if he persisted in it, they would at once withdraw.

Fulton yielded, and after an hour's angry sparring on his part and placidly self-possessed sword play of intellect on Tilton's side, Dr. Fulton submitted a proposal of arbitration, to which Tilton assented, with one qualification, namely, that if the finding of the arbitrators was to be published, in print, from the pulpit, or otherwise, he, Tilton, should be privileged to publish also a verbatim report of the *testimony* upon which it was founded.

Dr. Fulton rejected this absolutely, on the ground that he did not want his name to figure in "a newspaper sensation."

Still cool, self-possessed, and sarcastic, Tilton asked:

"Do I correctly understand you to mean, Dr. Fulton, that you shrink from sensationalism?"

"Yes, sir, that is exactly what I mean."

"Quite a new attitude of mind to you, isn't it, Doctor? I fear it will rob your preaching of much of its 'drawing' quality."

Dr. Fulton's advisers urged him to assent to Tilton's proposal as an entirely reasonable one, but he persistently refused, and the conference ended with nothing accomplished.

I know nothing to this day of the merits of the controversy. I have given this account of the meeting called to settle it solely because it serves the purpose of illustrating the methods of the two men.

XXXV

About a year later, or a little less, my editorial connection with the *Union* ceased, and with it my official association with Mr. Tilton. But he and I lived not far apart in Brooklyn and from then until the great trouble broke—two or three years—I saw much of him, at his home and mine, on the street, and at many places in New York. With the first open manifestation of the great trouble he began consulting with me about it. I gave him a deal of good advice in response to his eager demands for counsel. He seemed to appreciate and value it, but as he never acted upon it in the smallest degree, I gradually ceased to give it even when requested.

*Later
Acquaintance
with Tilton*

I have every reason to believe that in the course of these consultations I learned, from him and from all the others directly connected with the terrible affair, the inner and true story of the events that culminated in the great and widely demoralizing scandal. It is a story that has never been told. At the time of the trial both sides were careful to prevent its revelation, and there were certainly most imperative reasons why they should.

I have no purpose to tell that story in these pages. I mention it only because otherwise the abrupt termination of my reminiscences of Mr. Tilton at this point might seem to lack explanation.

XXXVI

When I joined the staff of the *Union*, in the summer of 1870, I had had no newspaper experience whatever. I had written for newspapers occasionally, but only as an amateur. I had published one or two small things in magazines, but I knew absolutely nothing of professional newspaper work. Mr. Tilton and his managing editor, Kenward Philp, were good enough to find in my earliest work as a reporter some capacity for lucid expression, and a simple and direct narrative habit which pleased them, so that in spite of my inexperience they were disposed to give me a share in the best assignments. I may say incidentally that among the reporters I was very generally pitied as a poor fellow foredoomed to failure as a newspaper man for the reason that I was what we call educated. At that time, though not for long afterwards, education and a tolerable regularity of life were regarded as serious handicaps in the newsrooms of most newspapers.

Among my earliest assignments was one which brought me my first experience of newspaper libel suits, designed not for prosecution but as a means of intimidating the newspaper concerned. The extent to which the news of the suit appalled me was a measure of my inexperience, and the way in which it was met was a lesson to me that has served me well upon many later occasions of the kind.

*My First Libel
Suit*

A man whom I will call Amour, as the use of his real name might give pain to innocent persons even after the lapse of forty years, was express agent at a railway station in the outskirts of Brooklyn. His reputation was high in the community and in the church as a man of exemplary conduct and a public-spirited citizen, notably active in all endeavors for the betterment of life.

It was a matter of sensational, popular interest, therefore, when his wife instituted divorce proceedings, alleging the most scandalous conduct on his part.

The *Union* was alert to make the most of such things and Kenward Philp set me to explore this case and exploit it. He told me frankly that he did so because he thought I could "write it up" in an effective way, but he thought it necessary to caution my inexperience that I must confine my report rigidly to the matter in hand, and not concern myself with side issues of any kind.

In the course of my inquiry, I learned much about Amour that was far more important than the divorce complications. Two or three business men of high repute in Brooklyn told me without reserve that he had abstracted money from express packages addressed to them and passing through his hands. When detected by them he had made good the losses, and in answer to his pleadings in behalf of his wife and children, they had kept silence. But now that he had himself brought ruin and disgrace upon his family they had no further reason for reserve. I secured written and signed statements of the facts from each of them, with permission to publish if need be. But all this was aside from the divorce matter I had been set to investigate, and, mindful of the instructions given me, I made no mention of it in the article.

When I reached the office on the morning after that article was published, I met Kenward Philp at the entrance door of the building, manifestly waiting for me in some anxiety. Almost forgetting

to say "good-morning," he eagerly asked:

"Are you sure of your facts in that Amour story—can they be proved?"

"Yes, absolutely," I replied. "But why do you ask?"

"Oh, only because Amour has served papers on us in a libel suit for fifty thousand dollars damages."

My heart sank at this, as it had never done before, and has never done since. I regarded it as certain that my career in the new profession I had adopted was hopelessly ended at its very beginning, and I thought, heart-heavily, of the wife and baby for whom I saw no way to provide.

"Why, yes," I falteringly repeated, "every statement I made can be supported by unimpeachable testimony. But, believe me, Mr. Philp, I am sorry I have got the paper into trouble."

"Oh, that's nothing," he replied, "so long as you're sure of your facts. One libel suit more or less is a matter of no moment."

Then, by way of emphasizing the unworthiness of the man I had "libeled" I briefly outlined the worse things I had learned about him. Philp fairly shouted with delight:

"Keno!" he exclaimed. "Hurry upstairs and *libel him some more!* Make it strong. Skin him and dress the wound with *aqua fortis*—I say—and rub it in!"

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I obeyed with a will, and the next morning Amour was missing, and the express company was sending descriptions of him to the police of every city in the country. It is a fixed rule with the great express companies to prosecute relentlessly every agent of their own who tampers with express packages. It is a thing necessary to their own protection. So ended my first libel suit.

XXXVII

During the many years that I passed in active newspaper work after that time, observation and experience taught me much, with regard to newspaper libel suits, which is not generally known. It may be of interest to suggest some things on the subject here.

Later Libel Suit Observations

I have never known anybody to get rich by suing newspapers for libel. The nearest approach to that result that has come within my knowledge was when Kenward Philp got a verdict for five thousand dollars damages against a newspaper that had accused him of complicity in the forging of the celebrated Morey letter which was used to General Garfield's hurt in his campaign for the Presidency. There have been larger verdicts secured in a few other cases, but I suspect that none of them seemed so much like enrichment to those who secured them, as that one did to Philp. It was not Mr. Philp's habit to have a considerable sum of money in possession at any time. His temperament strongly militated against that, and I think all men who knew him well will agree with me in doubting that he ever had one-half or one-fourth the sum this verdict brought him, in his possession at any one time in his life, except upon that occasion.

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In suing newspapers for libel it is the custom of suitors to name large sums as the measure of the damages claimed, but this is a thing inspired mainly by vanity and a spirit of ostentation. It emphasizes the value of the reputation alleged to have been damaged; it is in itself a boastful threat of the punishment the suitor means to inflict, and is akin to the vaporings with which men of rougher ways talk of the fights they contemplate. It is an assurance to the friends of the suitor of his determined purpose to secure adequate redress and of his confidence in his ability to do so. Finally, it is a "don't-tread-on-me" warning to everybody concerned.

Inspired by such motives men often sue for fifty thousand dollars for damages done to a fifty-cent reputation. It costs no more to institute a suit for fifty thousand dollars than to bring one for one or two thousand.

In many cases libel suits are instituted without the smallest intention of bringing them to trial. They are "bluffs," pure and simple. They are meant to intimidate, and sometimes they accomplish that purpose, but not often.

I remember one case with which I had personally to deal. I was in charge of the editorial page of the New York *World* at the time, and with a secure body of facts behind me I wrote a severe editorial concerning the malefactions of one John Y. McKane, a Coney Island political boss. I specifically charged him with the crimes he had committed, cataloguing them and calling each of them by its right name.

The man promptly served papers in a libel suit against the newspaper. A timid business manager hurriedly came to me with the news, asking if I couldn't write another article "softening" the severity of the former utterance. I showed him the folly of any such attempt in a case where the libel, if there was any libel, had already been published.

"But even if the case were otherwise," I added, "the *World* will do nothing of that cowardly

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kind. The man has committed the crimes we have charged. Otherwise we should not have made the charges. I shall indite and publish another article specifically reiterating our accusations, as our reply to his attempt at intimidation."

I did so at once. I repeated each charge made and emphasized it. I ended the article by saying that the man had impudently sued the paper for libel in publishing these truths concerning him, and adding that "it is not as plaintiff in a libel suit that he will have to meet these accusations, but as defendant in a criminal prosecution, and long before his suit for libel can be brought to trial, he will be doing time in prison stripes with no reputation left for anybody to injure."

The prediction was fulfilled. The man was prosecuted and sentenced to a long term in state's prison. So ended that libel suit.

The queerest libel proceeding of which I ever had personal knowledge, was that of Judge Henry Hilton against certain members of the staff of the New York *World*. It was unusual in its inception, in its character, and in its outcome.

The Queerest of Libel Suits

The *World* published a series of articles with regard to Judge Hilton's relations with the late A. T. Stewart, and with the fortune left by Mr. Stewart at his death. I remember nothing of the merits of the matter, and they need not concern us here. The *World* wanted Judge Hilton to bring a libel suit against it, in the hope that at the trial he might take the witness-stand and submit himself to cross-examination. To that end the paper published many things which were clearly libelous if they were not true.

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But Judge Hilton was not to be drawn into the snare. He instituted no libel suit in his own behalf; he asked no redress for statements made about himself, but he made complaint to the District Attorney, Colonel John R. Fellows, that the *World* had criminally libeled the *memory of A. T. Stewart*, and for that offense Col. Fellows instituted criminal proceedings against John A. Cockerill and several other members of the *World's* staff, who thus learned for the first time that under New York's queer libel law it is a crime to say defamatory things of Benedict Arnold, Guy Fawkes, or the late Judas Iscariot himself unless you can prove the truth of your charges.

The editors involved in this case were held in bail, but as no effort of their attorneys to secure their trial could accomplish that purpose, it seems fair to suppose that the proceedings against them were never intended to be seriously pressed.

Finally, when the official term of Colonel Fellows drew near its end, Mr. De Lancy Nicoll was elected to be his successor as District Attorney. As Mr. Nicoll had been the attorney of the *World* and of its accused editors, the presence of these long dormant cases in the District Attorney's office threatened him with a peculiarly sore embarrassment. Should he find them on his calendar upon taking office, he must either become the prosecutor in cases in which he had been defendants' counsel, or he must dismiss them at risk of seeming to use his official authority to shield his own former clients from due responsibility under the criminal law.

It was not until the very day before Mr. Nicoll took office that the embarrassing situation was relieved by Colonel Fellows, who at the end of his term went into court and asked for the dismissal of the cases.

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One other thing should be said on this subject. There are cases, of course, in which newspapers of the baser sort do wantonly assail reputation and should be made to smart for the wrong done. But these cases are rare. The first and most earnest concern of every reputable newspaper is to secure truth and accuracy in its news reports, and every newspaper writer knows that there is no surer way of losing his employment and with it his chance of securing another than by falsifying in his reports. The conditions in which newspapers are made render mistakes and misapprehensions sometimes unavoidable; but every reputable newspaper holds itself ready to correct and repair such mistakes when they injure or annoy innocent persons. Usually a printed retraction with apology in fact repairs the injury. But I have known cases in which vindictiveness, or the hope of money gain, has prompted the aggrieved person to persist in suing for damages and rejecting the offer of other reparation. In such cases the suitors usually secure a verdict carrying six cents damages. In one case that I remember the jury estimated the damages at one cent—leaving the plaintiff to pay the costs of the proceeding.

XXXVIII

During the early days of my newspaper service there came to me an unusual opportunity, involving a somewhat dramatic experience.

Early Newspaper Experiences

The internal revenue tax on distilled spirits was then so high as to make of illicit distilling an enormously profitable species of crime. The business had grown to such proportions in Brooklyn that its flourishing existence there, practically without interference by the authorities, gave rise to a very damaging political scandal.

In the region round the Navy Yard there were illicit stills by scores, producing spirits by

thousands of gallons daily. They were owned by influential men of standing, but operated by men of desperate criminal character to whom homicide itself seemed a matter of indifference so long as its perpetration could conceal crime or secure protection from punishment by means of the terror the "gang" held over the heads of all who might interfere with its members or their nefarious business.

It was a dangerous thing to meddle with, and the officers of the law—after some of them had been killed and others severely beaten—were in fact afraid to meddle with it. There were warrants in the United States Marshal's office for the arrest of nearly a score of the offenders, but the papers were not served and there was scarcely a pretense made of effort to serve them.

It was made my duty to deal with this matter both in the news columns and editorially. Every day we published a detailed list of the stills that had been in operation during the preceding night, together with the names of the men operating each and detailed information as to the exact locality of each. Every day we printed editorial articles calling upon the officers of the law to act, and severely criticising their cowardice in neglecting to act. At first these editorial utterances were admonitory and critical. With each day's added demonstration of official weakness they grew severer and more denunciatory of the official cowardice or corruption that alone could have inspired the inactivity. Presently the officer chiefly responsible, whom the newspaper singled out by name as the subject of its criticism, and daily denounced or ridiculed, instituted the usual libel suit for purposes of intimidation only.

It had no such effect. The newspaper continued its crusade, and the scandal of official neglect grew daily in the public mind, until presently it threatened alarming political results.

I do not know that political corruption was more prevalent then than now, but it was more open and shameless, and as a consequence men of upright minds were readier to suspect its existence in high places. At this time such men began rather insistently to ask why the authorities at Washington did not interfere to break up the illicit stills and why the administration retained in office the men whose neglect of that duty had become so great a scandal. It was freely suggested that somebody at Washington must be winking at the lawlessness in aid of political purposes in Brooklyn.

It was then that Theodore Tilton, with his constitutional audacity, decided to send me to Washington to interview President Grant on the subject. I was provided with letters from Tilton, as the editor of the Republican newspaper of Brooklyn, from the Republican Postmaster Booth, and from Silas B. Dutcher and other recognized leaders of the Republican party in Brooklyn. These letters asked the President, in behalf of Republicanism in Brooklyn, to give me the desired interview, assuring him of my integrity, etc.

*An Interview
with President
Grant*

So armed I had no difficulty in securing audience. I found General Grant to be a man of simple, upright mind, unspoiled by fame, careless of formalities and the frills of official place, in no way nervous about his dignity—just a plain, honest American citizen, accustomed to go straight to the marrow of every subject discussed, without equivocation or reserve and apparently without concern for anything except truth and justice.

He received me cordially and dismissed everybody else from the room while we talked. He offered me a cigar and we had our conference without formality.

In presenting my credentials, I was moved by his own frankness of manner to tell him that I was an ex-Confederate soldier and not a Republican in politics. I was anxious not to sail under false colors, and he expressed himself approvingly of my sentiment, assuring me that my personal views in politics could make no difference in my status on this occasion.

After I had asked him a good many questions about the matter in hand, he smilingly asked:

"Why don't you put the suggestions so vaguely mentioned in these letters, into a direct question, so that I may answer it?"

It had seemed to me an impossible impudence to ask the President of the United States whether or not his administration was deliberately protecting crime for the sake of political advantage, but at his suggestion I formulated the question, hurriedly putting it in writing for the sake of accuracy in reporting it afterwards. He answered it promptly and directly, adding:

"I wish you would come to me again a week from today. I may then have a more conclusive answer to give you. Come at any rate."

When the interview was published, my good friend, Dr. St. Clair McKelway, then young in the service on the Brooklyn *Eagle* which has since brought fame to him and extraordinary influence to the newspaper which he still conducts, said to me at a chance meeting: "I think your putting of that question to General Grant was the coolest and most colossal piece of impudence I ever heard of."

So it would have been, if I had done the thing of my own motion or otherwise without General Grant's suggestion, a thing of which, of course, no hint was given in the published interview.

When I saw the President again a week later, he needed no questioning on my part. He had fully informed himself concerning matters in Brooklyn, and knew what he wanted to say. Among other things he mentioned that he had had a meeting with the derelict official whom we had so

severely criticised and who had responded with a libel suit. All that the President thought it necessary to say concerning him was:

[127] "He must go. You may say so from me. Say it in print and positively."

Grant's Method . . .

The publication of that sentence alone would have made the fortune of my interview, even without the other utterances of interest that I was authorized to publish as an assurance that the administration intended to break up the illicit distilling in Brooklyn even if it required the whole power of the government to do it.

In relation to that matter the President said to me:

"Now for your own reassurance, and not for publication, I may tell you that as soon as proper preparations can be made, the distilling district will be suddenly surrounded by a cordon of troops issuing from the Navy Yard, and revenue officers, under command of Jerome B. Wass, whom you know, I believe, will break up every distillery, carry away every still and every piece of machinery, empty every mash-tub into the gutters, and arrest everybody engaged in the business."

I gave my promise not to refer to this raid in any way in advance of its making, but asked that I might be permitted to be present with the revenue officers when it should be made. General Grant immediately sent for Mr. Wass, who was in the White House at the time, and directed him to inform me when he should be ready to make the raid, and to let me accompany him. To this he added: "Don't let any other newspaper man know of the thing."

[128] The raid was made not long after that. In the darkness of the end of a night—a darkness increased by the practice of the distillers of extinguishing all the street lamps in that region—a strong military force silently slipped out of a remote gate in the Navy Yard inclosure, and before the movement was suspected, it had completely surrounded the district, under orders to allow no human being to pass in or out through the lines. I had with me an assistant, whom I had found the night before at a ball that he had been assigned to report, and under the strict rule laid down for the military, he and I were the only newspaper men within the lines, or in any wise able to secure news of what was going on—a matter that was exciting the utmost curiosity throughout the city. On the other hand, the rigidity of the military cordon threatened to render our presence within the lines of no newspaper use to us. Ours was an afternoon newspaper and our "copy," of which we soon made many columns, must be in the office not very long after midday if it was to be of any avail. But we were not permitted to pass the lines with it, either in person or by messenger. At last we secured permission of the Navy Yard authorities to go down to the water front of the Yard and hail a passing tug. With our pockets stuffed full of copy, we passed in that way to the Manhattan shore and made our way thence by Fulton ferry to the office, where we were greeted as heroes and victors who had secured for the paper the most important "beat" that had been known in years.

There are victories, however, that are more disastrous to those who win them than defeat itself. For a time this one threatened to serve me in that way. Mr. Bowen, the owner of the paper, whom I had never before seen at the *Union* office, presented himself there the next morning, full of enthusiasm. He was particularly impressed by the way in which I had secured advance information of the raid and with it the privilege of being present to report the affair. Unfortunately for me, he said in his enthusiasm, "that's the sort of man we make a general and not a private of, in journalism."

[129] Newspaper employments of the better sort were not easy to get in those days, and my immediate superiors in the office interpreted Mr. Bowen's utterance to mean that he contemplated the removal of some one or other of them, to make a commanding place for me. He had even suggested, in plain words, that he would like to see me made managing editor.

In that suggestion he was utterly wrong. I knew myself to be unfit for the place for the reason that I knew little of the city and almost nothing of journalism, in which I had been engaged for no more than a few weeks. Nevertheless, Mr. Bowen's suggestion aroused the jealousy of my immediate superiors, and they at once began a series of persecutions intended to drive me off the paper, a thing that would have been calamitous to a man rather inexperienced and wholly unknown in other newspaper offices.

Theodore Tilton solved the problem by removing me from the news department and promoting me to the editorial writing staff.

XXXIX

After somewhat more than a year's service on the Brooklyn newspaper my connection with it was severed, and for a time I was a "free lance," writing editorials and literary articles of various kinds for the New York *Evening Post* in the forenoons, and devoting the afternoons to newswork on the *Tribune*—writing "on space" for both.

A Free Lance . . .

At that time Mr. William Cullen Bryant was traveling somewhere in the South, I think, so that I did not then become acquainted with him. That came later.

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The *Evening Post* was in charge of the late Charlton T. Lewis, with whom, during many later years, I enjoyed an intimate acquaintance. Mr. Lewis was one of the ripest scholars and most diligent students I have ever known, but he was also a man of broad human sympathies, intensely interested in public affairs and in all else that involved human progress. His knowledge of facts and his grasp of principles in the case of everything that interested him seemed to me not less than extraordinary, and they seem so still, as I remember the readiness with which he would turn from consideration of some nice question of Greek or Latin usage to write of a problem of statesmanship under discussion at Washington, or of some iniquity in municipal misgovernment which occupied the popular mind. His eyes were often red after the scholarly vigils of the midnight, but they were wide open and clear-sighted in their survey of all human affairs, from the Old Catholic movement to police abuses. His scholarship in ancient literatures in no way interfered with his alert interest in the literature of his own language, his own country, and his own time, or with his comprehensive acquaintance with it.

He was as much at home on the rostrum as at the desk, and his readiness and force in speaking were as marked as the effectiveness of his written words. More remarkable still, perhaps, was the fact that his oral utterances, however unexpectedly and extemporaneously he might be called upon to speak, were as smoothly phrased, as polished, and as perfectly wrought in every way as if they had been carefully written out and laboriously committed to memory.

Personally he was genial, kindly, and courteous, not with the courtesy of courtliness, which has considerations of self for its impulse, but with that of good-fellowship, inspired by concern for the happiness of those with whom he came in contact.

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The service on the *Evening Post* interested me particularly. My impulse was strongly toward the literary side of newspaper work, and it was on that side chiefly that the *Evening Post* gave me opportunity. But I was working there only on space and devoting the greater part of my time to less congenial tasks. In a little while I gave up both these employments to accept the position of managing editor of a weekly illustrated publication called *Hearth and Home*. The paper had been very ambitious in its projection, very distinguished in the persons of its editors and contributors, and a financial failure from the beginning.

*Hearth and
Home*

There were several reasons for this. The mere making of an illustrated periodical in those days was excessively expensive. There were no photographic processes for the reproduction of pictures at that time. Every illustration must be drawn on wood and engraved by hand at a cost ten or twenty times as great as that now involved in the production of a similar result.

A second difficulty was that *Hearth and Home* was originally designed to meet a demand that did not exist. It was meant to be a country gentleman's newspaper at a time when there were scarcely any country gentlemen—in the sense intended—in America. Its appeals were largely to a leisure-class of well-to-do people, pottering with amateur horticulture and interested in literature and art.

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It had for its first editors Donald G. Mitchell (Ik Marvel), Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge. Mrs. Dodge was the only one of the company who had the least capacity as an editor, and her work was confined to the children's pages. The others were brilliant and distinguished literary folk, but wholly without either experience or capacity as editors.

The publication had lost a fortune to its proprietors, when it was bought by Orange Judd & Company, the publishers of the *American Agriculturist*. They had changed its character somewhat, but not enough to make it successful. Its circulation—never large—had shrunk to a few thousands weekly. Its advertisements were few and unremunerative; and its total income was insufficient to cover one-half the cost of making it.

My brother, Edward, and I were employed to take control of the paper and, if possible, resuscitate it. We found a number of "Tite Barnacles" there drawing extravagant salaries for which their services made no adequate return. To rid the paper of these was Edward's first concern. We found the pigeonholes stuffed with accepted manuscripts, not one in ten of which was worth printing. They were the work of amateurs who had nothing to say and didn't at all know how to say it. These must be paid for, as they had been accepted, but to print them would have been to invite continued failure. By my brother's order they were dumped into capacious waste baskets and better materials secured from writers of capacity—among them such persons as Dr. Edward Everett Hale, Asa Gray, George E. Waring, Jr., Charles Barnard, Mrs. Runkle, Helen Hunt, Rebecca Harding Davis, Sara Orne Jewett, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Rose Terry, and others of like ability.

Mrs. Dodge continued her well-nigh matchless work as editor of the children's pages, until a

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year or so later, when she left *Hearth and Home* to create the new children's magazine, *St. Nicholas*. She was a woman of real genius—a greatly overworked word, but one fitly applied in her case. Her editorial instincts were alert and unflinching. Her gift of discovering kernels of value in masses of chaff was astonishing, and her skill in revising and reconstructing so as to save the grain and rid it of the chaff was such as I have never known in any other editor.

Her industry was at times almost appalling in its tireless energy, yet it seemed to make no draughts upon her vitality that her singularly buoyant nature could not meet without apparent strain.

She had also a rare gift of recognizing ability in others, judging it accurately, and setting it to do its proper work. One of the greatest services she rendered *Hearth and Home* was in suggesting Frank R. Stockton for employment on the staff when we found ourselves in need of an assistant. He had not begun to make his reputation then. Such newspaper work as he had found to do had afforded his peculiar gifts no adequate opportunity and outside a narrow circle he was wholly unknown. But Mrs. Dodge was right in her reckoning when she advised his employment, and equally right in her perception of the kind of opportunity he needed.

The friendship between Stockton and myself, which was begun during the time of our association on *Hearth and Home*, endured and increased to the end of his life. The fame that those later years brought to him is a matter of familiar knowledge to all who are likely to read this book. It is not of that that I wish to write here, or of the character of the work by which that fame was won. It is only of Stockton the man that I need set down anything in these pages.

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He was the best of good company always, as I found out early in our association, in those days when we went out together for our luncheon every day and enjoyed an hour of relaxation between the long morning's work and that of the longer afternoon. He never failed to be ready to go when the luncheon hour came. His work was always in shape and he carried no care for it with him when we quitted the office together. He never talked shop. I cannot remember that he ever mentioned anything respecting his work or asked a question concerning it between the time of our leaving the office and that of our return.

Not that he was indifferent to it, for on the contrary I never knew a more conscientious worker, or one who more faithfully attended to every detail. When his "copy" was laid on my desk I knew perfectly that every sentence was as he had intended it to be, that every paragraph break was made at the point he desired it to be, and that every comma was marked in its proper place. While engaged in doing his work he gave his undivided attention to it, but when he went with me to the Crooked Stoop house in Trinity Alley for his luncheon, he gave equal attention to the mutton and potatoes, while his conversation was of things light, airy, and not strenuous.

I spoke of this to him one day many years after the time of our editorial association, and for answer he said:

"I suppose there are men who can part their hair and polish their boots at the same time, but I am not gifted in that way."

I never saw Stockton angry. I doubt that he ever was so. I never knew him to be in the least degree hurried, or to manifest impatience in any way. On the other hand, I never knew him to manifest enthusiasm of any kind or to indulge in any but the most moderate and placid rejoicing over anything. Good or ill fortune seemed to have no effect whatever upon his spirits or his manner, so far as those who were intimately acquainted with him were able to discover. Perhaps it was only that his philosophy taught him the injustice of asking others to share his sorrows or his rejoicings over events that were indifferent to them.

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He was always frail in health, but during all the years of my acquaintance with him I never once heard him mention the fact, or discovered any complaint of it in his tone or manner. At one time his weakness and emaciation were so great that he walked with two crutches, not because of lameness for he had none, but because of sheer physical weakness. Yet even at that time his face was a smiling one and in answer to all inquiries concerning his health he declared himself perfectly well.

Frank R.
Stockton

His self-possessed repression of enthusiasm is clearly manifest in his writings. In none of his stories is there a suggestion of anything but philosophic calm on the part of the man who wrote them. There is humor, a fascinating fancy, and an abounding tenderness of human sympathy of a placidly impersonal character, but there is no passion, no strenuousness, nothing to suggest that the author is anywhere stirred to enthusiasm by the events related or the situations in which his imaginary personages are placed.

He one day said to me that he had never regarded what is called "love interest" as necessary to a novel, and in fact he never made any very earnest use of that interest. In "The Late Mrs. Null" he presented the love story with more of amusement than of warmth in his manner, while in "Kate Bonnet" the love affair is scarcely more than a casual adjunct to the pirate story. In "The Hundredth Man" he manifested somewhat greater sympathy, but even there his tone is gently humorous rather than passionate.

Many of the whimsical conceits that Stockton afterward made the foundations of his books were first used in the more ephemeral writings of the *Hearth and Home* period. It has often

interested me in reading the later books to recall my first acquaintance with their germinal ideas. It has been like meeting interesting men and women whom one remembers as uncouth boys or as girls in pantalettes. For *Hearth and Home* he wrote several playful articles about the character of eating houses as revealed in what I may call their physiognomies. The subject seemed to interest and amuse him, as it certainly interested and amused his readers, but at that time he probably did not dream of making it a considerable part of the structure of a novel, as he afterwards did in "The Hundredth Man."

In the same way in a series of half serious, half humorous articles for the paper, he wrote of the picturesque features of piracy on the Spanish Main and along our own Atlantic coast. He gave humor to the historical facts by looking at them askance—with an intellectual squint as it were—and attributing to Blackbeard and the rest emotions and sentiments that would not have been out of place in a Sunday School. These things he justified in his humorously solemn way, by challenging anybody to show that the freebooters were not so inspired in fact, and insisting that men's occupations in life constitute no safe index to their characters.

"We do not denounce the novelists and story writers," he one day said, "and call them untruthful persons merely because they gain their living by writing things that are not so. In their private lives many of the fiction writers are really estimable persons who go to church, wear clean linen, and pay their debts if they succeed in borrowing money enough for that purpose."

Here clearly was the thought that afterward grew into the novel of "Kate Bonnet."

About that time he wrote a little manual for Putnam's Handy Book Series, in which he undertook to show how to furnish a home at very small cost. All his readers remember what fun he made of that performance when he came to write "Rudder Grange."

I do not think this sort of thing is peculiar to Stockton's work. I find traces of it in the writings of others, especially of those humorous writers who have the gift of inventing amusingly whimsical conceits. It seems easily possible, for example, to find in "The Bab Ballads" the essential whimsicalities which afterward made the fortunes of Mr. W. S. Gilbert's most famous comic operas.

*A Whimsical
View of Plagiarism*

Stockton's whimsical logic was brought to bear upon everything; so much so that I have often wondered how he would have regarded a "hold up" of his person for the sake of his purse if such a thing had happened to him.

One day a man submitted a manuscript to me for sale. It was an article on Alice and Phœbe Cary. The subject was interesting and the article was pleasingly brief, so that I thought it promising. When I began to read it, the sentences seemed strangely familiar. As I read on I recognized the thing as an editorial I had myself written for the *Evening Post* on the day of Phœbe Cary's funeral. To verify my impression I went at once to the office of the *Evening Post*, compared the manuscript with the printed article, and found it to be a verbatim copy.

I was perhaps a little severe in my judgments of such things in those days, and when the plagiarist came back to learn the fate of his manuscript my language was of a kind that might have been regarded as severe. After the fellow had left, breathing threats of dire legal things that he meant to do to me for keeping his manuscript without paying for it, Stockton remonstrated with me for having lost my temper.

"It seems to me," he said, "that you do not sufficiently consider the circumstances of the case. That man has his living to make as a writer, and nature has denied him the ability to create literature that he can sell. What is more reasonable, then, than that he should select marketable things that other people have written and sell them? His creative ability failing him, what can he do but use his critical ability in its stead? If he is not equal to the task of producing salable stuff, he at least knows such stuff when he sees it, and in the utilization of that knowledge he finds a means of earning an honest living."

"Besides in selecting an article of yours to 'convey,' he has paid you a distinct compliment. He might have taken one of mine instead, but that his critical judgment saw the superiority of yours. You should recognize the tribute he has paid you as a writer."

"Still again what harm would have been done if he had succeeded in selling the article? It had completely served its purpose as an editorial in the *Evening Post*, why should it not serve a larger purpose and entertain a greater company of readers?"

"Finally I am impressed with the illustration the case affords of the vagaries of chance as a factor in human happenings. There are thousands of editors in this country to whom that man might have offered the article. You were the only one of them who could by any possibility have recognized it as a plagiarism. According to the doctrine of chances he was perfectly safe in offering the manuscript for sale. The chances were thousands to one against its recognition. It was his ill-luck to encounter the one evil chance in the thousands. The moral of that is that it is unsafe to gamble. Still, now that he knows the one editor who can recognize it, he will no doubt make another copy of the article and sell it in safety to some one else."

This prediction was fulfilled. The article appeared not long afterward as a contribution to another periodical. In the meanwhile Stockton's whimsical view of the matter had so amused me as to smooth my temper, and I did not think it necessary to expose the petty theft.

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The view taken by Stockton's perverse humor was much the same as that entertained by Benjamin Franklin with greater seriousness. He tells us in his Autobiography that at one time he regularly attended a certain church whose minister preached able sermons that interested him. When it was discovered that the sermons were borrowed, without credit, from some one else, the church dismissed the preacher and put in his place another whose sermons, all his own, did not interest Franklin, who thereupon ceased to attend the church, protesting that he preferred good sermons, plagiarized, to poor ones of the preacher's own.

*Some Plagiarists
I Have Known*

I have since learned what I did not know at the time of the incident related, that there is a considerable company of minor writers hanging as it were on the skirts of literature and journalism, who make the better part of their meager incomes by copying the writings of others and selling them at opportune times. Sometimes these clever pilferers copy matter as they find it, particularly when its source is one not likely to be discovered. Sometimes they make slight alterations in it for the sake of disguise, and sometimes they borrow the substance of what they want and change its form somewhat by rewriting it. Their technical name for this last performance is "skinning" an article.

I have since had a good deal of experience with persons of this sort. When Horace Greeley died one of them—a woman—sold me a copy of the text of a very interesting letter from him which she assured me had never been seen by any one outside the little group that cherished the original. I learned later that she had simply copied the thing from the *Home Journal*, where it had been printed many months before.

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One day some years later I had a revelation made to me of the ethics of plagiarism accepted by a certain class of writers for the minor periodicals. I found in an obscure magazine a signed article on the heroism of women, or something of that sort, the first paragraphs of which were copied verbatim from a book of my own, in which I had written it as a personal recollection. When the writer of the article was questioned as to his trespass upon my copyright, he wrote me an exceedingly gracious letter of apology, saying, by way of explanation, that he had found the passage in an old scrapbook of his own, with no memorandum of its authorship attached. He had thought it no harm, he said, to make the thing his own, a thing, he assured me, he would not have done had he known whose the passage was. This explanation seemed to satisfy his conscience completely. I wonder what he would have thought himself privileged to do with a horse or a cow found wandering along a lane without the escort of its owner.

Sometimes the plagiarist is far more daring in his thefts, taking as his own much greater things and more easily recognized ones than scrapbooks are apt to hold. The boldest thing of the sort with which I ever came into personal contact happened in this wise. As literary editor of the *Evening Post* during the late seventies it was a part of my duty to look out for interesting correspondence. One day there came to me a particularly good thing of the kind—two or three columns of fascinating description of certain phases of life in the Canadian Northwest. The writer proposed to furnish us a series of letters of like kind, dealing with the trading posts of the Hudson Bay Company, life among the trappers, Indians, and half-breeds, and the like. The letter submitted was so unusually good, both in its substance and in its literary quality, that I agreed to take the series on the terms proposed. A number of the letters followed, and the series attracted the pleased attention of readers. Presently, in addition to his usual letter our correspondent sent us a paper relating to the interesting career of a quaint personage who flourished in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois in their territorial days. He was known as "Johnny Appleseed," because of his habit of carrying a bag of apple seeds in his wanderings and distributing them among the pioneers by way of inducing them to plant orchards.

*A Peculiar Case
of Plagiarism*

Unfortunately that article had been written by some one other than our correspondent and published long before in *Harper's Magazine*. When my suspicion was thus aroused with regard to the integrity of the correspondent, I instituted an inquiry which revealed the fact that the letters we had so highly valued were plagiarized from a book which had been published in England but not reprinted here.

The daring of the man appalled me, but the limit of his assurance had not yet been revealed. When I wrote to him telling him of my discovery of the fraud and declining to send a check for such of the letters as had been printed and not yet paid for, he responded by sending me a number of testimonials to the excellence of his character, furnished by the clergymen, bankers, and leading men generally of the town in which he lived. Having thus rehabilitated his character, he argued that as the letters had proved interesting to the readers of the paper, we had got our money's worth, and that it made no difference in the quality of the literature furnished whether he had written it himself or had transcribed it from a book written by another person. Curiously enough there was a tone of assured sincerity in all this which was baffling to the understanding. I can explain it only by thinking that he plagiarized that tone also.

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It was about that time that my work as literary editor of the *Evening Post* brought to my attention two cases of what I may call more distinguished plagiarism. Mrs. Wister, a gifted scholar and writer, was at that time rendering a marked service to literature by her exceedingly judicious adaptations of German fiction to the use of American readers. She took German novels that were utterly too long and in other ways unfit for American publication, translated them freely, shortened them, and otherwise saved to American readers all that was attractive in novels which, if directly translated, would have had no acceptability at all in this country. The results were quite as much her own as those of the German authors of the books thus treated.

I had recently read and reviewed one of the cleverest of these books of hers, when there came to me for review an English translation of the same German novel, under another title. That translation was presented as the work of an English clergyman, well known as one of the most prolific writers of his time. As I looked over the book I discovered that with the exception of a few initiatory chapters, it was simply a copy of Mrs. Wister's work. In answer to the charge of plagiarism the reverend gentleman explained that he had set out to translate the book, but that when he had rendered a few chapters of it into English Mrs. Wister's work fell into his hands and he found her version so good that he thought it best to adopt it instead of making one of his own. He omitted, however, to explain the ethical conceptions that had restrained him from practising common honesty in a matter involving both reputation and revenue. That was at a time when English complaints of "American piracy" were loudest.

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The other case was a more subtle one, and incidentally more interesting to me. As literary editor of the *Evening Post*, under the editorship of Mr. Bryant, who held the literary side of the paper's work to be of more consequence than all the rest of it put together, I had to read everything of literary significance that appeared either in England or in America. One day I found in an English magazine an elaborate article which in effect charged Tennyson with wholesale plagiary from Theocritus. The magazinist was disposed to exploit himself as a literary discoverer, and he presented his discoveries with very little of that delicacy and moderation which a considerate critic would regard as the due of so distinguished a poet as Tennyson. I confess that his tone aroused something like antagonism in my mind, and I rather rejoiced when, upon a careful reading of his article, I found that he was no discoverer at all. Practically all that he had to say had been much better said already by Edmund C. Stedman first in a magazine essay and afterwards in a chapter of the "Victorian Poets." The chief difference was that Stedman had written with the impulse and in the tone and manner of a scholarly gentleman, while the other had exploited himself like a prosecuting attorney.

*A Borrower from
Stedman*

The obvious thing to do was to get Stedman, if that were possible, to write a signed article on the subject for the *Evening Post*. With that end in view I went at once to his office in Broad Street.

I knew him well, in literary and social ways, but I had never before trespassed upon his banker existence, and the visit mightily interested me, as one which furnished a view of an unfamiliar side of the "maniest-sided man"—that phrase I had learned from Mr. Whitelaw Reid—whom I ever knew.

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It was during Stock Exchange hours that I made my call, and I intended to remain only long enough to secure an appointment for some other and less occupied time. But the moment I indicated the matter I wished to consult with him about, Stedman linked his arm in mine and led me to his "den," a little room off the banking offices, and utterly unlike them in every detail. Here were books—not ledgers; here were all the furnishings of the haunt of a man of letters, without a thing to suggest that the man of letters knew or cared for anything relating to stocks, bonds, securities, loans, discounts, dividends, margins, or any other of the things that are alone considered of any account in Wall Street.

"This is the daytime home of the literary side of me," he explained. "When I'm out there"—pointing, "I think of financial things; when I enter here I forget what a dollar mark looks like."

"I see," I said. "Minerva in Wall Street—Athene, if you prefer the older Greek name."

"Say Apollo instead—for if there is anything I pride myself upon it is my masculinity. 'Male and female created he them, and God saw that it was good,' but the garments of one sex do not become the other, and neither do the qualities and attributes."

He had a copy of "The Victorian Poets" in the den and together we made a minute comparison of his study of Tennyson's indebtedness to Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus with the magazinist's article. For result we found that beyond a doubt the magazinist had "skinned" his article out of Stedman's chapter—in other words, that he had in effect plagiarized his charge of plagiary and the proofs of it.

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Stedman refused to write anything on the subject, deeming it not worth while, a judgment which I am bound to say was sound, though I did not like to accept it because my news instinct scented game and I wanted that article from Stedman's pen. His scholarly criticism was literature of lasting importance and interest. The magazine assault upon Tennyson's fame is utterly forgotten of those who read it.

It was early in our effort to achieve a circulation for *Hearth and Home* that my brother decided to write for it his novel, "The Hoosier Schoolmaster." I have elsewhere related the story of the genesis of that work, and I shall not repeat it here. Its success was immediate and astonishing. It quickly multiplied the circulation of *Hearth and Home* many times over. It was reprinted serially in a dozen or more weekly newspapers in the West and elsewhere, and yet when it was published in a peculiarly unworthy and unattractive book form, its sales exceeded fifty thousand copies during the first month, at a time when the sale of ten thousand copies all told of any novel was deemed an unusual success. The popularity of the story did not end even there. Year after year it continued to sell better than most new novels, and now nearly forty years later, the demand for it amounts to several thousand copies per annum. It was translated into several foreign languages—in spite of the difficulty the translators must have encountered in rendering an uncouth dialect into languages having no such dialect. It was republished in England, and the French version of it appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

*"The Hoosier
Schoolmaster's"
Influence*

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But great as its popularity was and still is, I am disposed to regard that as a matter of less significance and less consequence than the influence it exercised in stimulating and guiding the literary endeavors of others. If I may quote a sentence from a book of my own, "The First of the Hoosiers," Edward Eggleston was "the very first to perceive and utilize in literature the picturesqueness of the Hoosier life and character, the first to appreciate the poetic and romantic possibilities of that life and to invite others to share with him his enjoyment of its humor and his admiration for its sturdy manliness."

While Edward was absorbed in the writing of "The Hoosier Schoolmaster" and its quickly following successor, "The End of the World," he more and more left the editorial conduct of the paper to me, and presently he resigned his editorial place, leaving me as his successor.

The work was of a kind that awakened all my enthusiasm. My tastes were literary rather than journalistic, whatever may have been the case as to my capacities, and in the conduct of *Hearth and Home* my work was far more literary in character than any that had fallen to me up to that time in my service on daily newspapers. More important still, it brought me into contact, both personally and by correspondence, with practically all the active literary men and women of that time, with many of whom I formed friendships that have endured to this time in the case of those who still live, and that ended only with the death of those who are gone. The experiences and the associations of that time were both delightful and educative, and I look back upon them after all these years with a joy that few memories can give me. I was a mere apprentice to the literary craft, of course, but I was young enough to enjoy and, I think, not too conceited to feel the need of learning all that such associations could teach.

It was during this *Hearth and Home* period that my first books were written and published. They were the results of suggestions from others rather than of my own self-confidence, as indeed most of the thirty-odd books I have written have been.

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Mr. George P. Putnam, the Nestor of American book publishing, the friend of Washington Irving and the discoverer of his quality, returned to the work of publishing about that time. In partnership with his son, George Haven Putnam, then a young man and now the head of a great house, he had set up a publishing firm with a meager "list" but with ambition to increase it to a larger one.

In that behalf the younger member of the firm planned a series of useful manuals to be called "Putnam's Handy Book Series," and to be sold at seventy-five cents each. With more of hopefulness than of discretion, perhaps, he came to me asking if I could not and would not write one or two of the little volumes. The immediate result was a little book entitled "How to Educate Yourself."

My First Book

In writing it I had the advantage of comparative youth and of that self-confident omniscience which only youth can have. I knew everything then better than I know anything now, so much better indeed that for a score of years past I have not dared open the little book, lest it rebuke my present ignorance beyond my capacity to endure.

Crude as the thing was, it was successful, and it seems to have satisfied a genuine need, if I may judge by the numberless letters sent to me by persons who felt that it had helped them. Even now, after the lapse of more than thirty-eight years, such letters come to me occasionally from men in middle life who say they were encouraged and helped by it in their youth. I once thought of rewriting it with more of modesty than I possessed when it had birth, but as that would be to bring to bear upon it a later-acquired consciousness of ignorance rather than an enlarged knowledge of the subject, I refrained, lest the new version should be less helpful than the old.

The Rev. Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler once said to me:

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"If one gets printer's ink on his fingers when he is young, he can never get it off while he lives." The thought that suggested that utterance had prompt illustration in this case. Not long after this poor little first book was published, I went to Boston to secure literary contributions for *Hearth and Home*. In those days one had to go to Boston for such things. Literary activity had not yet

transferred its dwelling place to New York, nor had Indiana developed its "school."

While I was in Boston Mr. Howells called on me, and in his gentle way suggested that I should write my reminiscences of Southern army life in a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, of which he was then the editor.

The suggestion, coming from such a source, almost made me dizzy. I had vaguely and timidly cherished a secret hope that some day—after years of preparatory practice in smaller ways—I might have the honor and the joy of seeing some article of mine in one or other of the great magazines. But that hope was by no means a confident one, and it looked to a more or less remote future for its fulfilment. Especially it had never been bold enough to include the *Atlantic Monthly* in the list of its possibilities. That was the magazine of Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, Longfellow, Charles Eliot Norton, and their kind—the mouthpiece of the supremely great in our literature. The thought of ever being numbered among the humblest contributors to that magazine lay far beyond the utmost daring of my dreams. And the supremacy of the *Atlantic*, in all that related to literary quality, was at that time very real, so that I am in nowise astonished even now that I was well-nigh stunned when Mr. Howells suggested that I should write seven papers for publication there, and afterward embody them in a book together with two others reserved from magazine publication for the sake of giving freshness to the volume.

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I did not accept the suggestion at once. I was too greatly appalled by it. I had need to go home and cultivate my self-conceit before I could believe myself capable of writing anything on the high level suggested. In the end I did the thing with great misgiving, but with results that were more than satisfactory, both to Mr. Howells and to me.

The passions aroused by the war of which I wrote had scarcely begun to cool at that time and there was a good deal of not very friendly surprise felt when the *Atlantic's* constituency learned that the great exponent of New England's best thought was to publish the war memories of a Confederate under the seemingly self-assertive title of "A Rebel's Recollections."

*"A Rebel's
Recollections"*

That feeling seems to have been alert in protest. Soon after the first paper was published Mr. Howells wrote me that it had "brought a hornets' nest about his ears," but that he was determined to go on with the series. After the second paper appeared he wrote me that the hornets had "begun to sing psalms in his ears" because of the spirit and temper in which the sensitive subject was handled. On the evening of the day on which the "Recollections" appeared in book form, there was a banquet at the Parker House in Boston, given in celebration of the *Atlantic's* fifteenth birthday. Without a moment's warning I was toasted as the author of the latest book from the Riverside Press, and things were said by the toast-master about the spirit in which the book was written—things that overwhelmed me with embarrassment, by reason of the fact that it was my first experience of the kind and I was wholly unused to the extravagantly complimentary eloquence of presiding officers at banquets.

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I had never been made the subject of a toast before. I had never before attempted to make an after-dinner speech, and I was as self-conscious as a schoolboy on the occasion of his first declamation before an outside audience. But one always does stumble through such things. I have known even an Englishman to stammer out his appreciation and sit down without upsetting more than one or two of his wine glasses. In the same way I uttered some sort of response in spite of the embarrassing fact that George Parsons Lathrop, who had been designated as the "historian of the evening and chronicler of its events," sat immediately opposite me, manifestly studying me, I thought, as a bugologist might study a new species of beetle. I didn't know Lathrop then, as I afterward learned to know him, in all the friendly warmth and good-fellowship of his nature.

When the brief ordeal was over and I sat down in full conviction that I had forever put myself to shame by my oratorical failure, Mr. Howells left his seat and came to say something congratulatory—something that I attributed to his kindly disposition to help a man up when he is down—and when he turned away Mark Twain was there waiting to say something on his own account.

"When you were called on to speak," he said, "I braced myself up to come to your rescue and make your speech for you. I thought of half a dozen good things to say, and now they are all left on my hands, and I don't know what on earth to do with them."

Then came Mr. Frank B. Sanborn to tell me of a plan he and some others had hurriedly formed to give me a little dinner at Swampscott, at which there should be nobody present but "original abolitionists" and my rebel self.

I was unable to accept this attention, but it ended all doubt in my mind that I had written my "Recollections" in a spirit likely to be helpful in the cultivation of good feeling between North and South. The reviews of the book, especially in the New England newspapers, confirmed this conviction, and I had every reason to be satisfied.

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Before "A Rebel's Recollections" appeared, I had written and published my first novel, "A Man of Honor."

*A Novelist by
Accident*

That book, like the others, was the result of accident and not of deliberate purpose. The serial story had become a necessary feature of *Hearth and Home*, and we had made a contract with a popular novelist to furnish us with such a story to follow the one that was drawing to a close. Almost at the last moment the novelist failed us, and I hurriedly visited or wrote to all the rest of the available writers in search of a suitable manuscript. There were not so many novelists then as there are now. The search proved futile, and the editorial council was called together in something like panic to consider the alarming situation. The story then running was within a single instalment of its end, and no other was to be had. It was the unanimous opinion of the council—which included a member of the publishing firm as its presiding officer—that it would be disastrous to send out a single number of the paper without an instalment of a serial in it, and worse still, if it should contain no announcement of a story to come. The council, in its wisdom, was fully agreed that "something must be done," but no member of it could offer any helpful suggestion as to what that "something" should be. The list of available story writers had been completely exhausted, and it was hopeless to seek further in that direction. Even my old-time friend, John Esten Cooke, whose fertility of fiction was supposed to be limitless, had replied to my earnest entreaties, saying that he was already under contract for two stories, both of which were then in course of serial publication, and neither of which he had finished writing as yet. "Two sets of clamorous printers are at my heels," he wrote, "and I am less than a week ahead of them in the race between copy and proof slips."

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As we sat in council, staring at each other in blank despair, I said, without really meaning it:

"If worse comes to worst, I'll write the story myself."

Instantly the member of the publishing firm who presided over the meeting answered:

"That settles the whole matter. Mr. Eggleston will write the story. The council stands adjourned," and without waiting for my remonstrance, everybody hurried out of the room.

I had never written a story, long or short. I hadn't the remotest idea what I should or could write about. I had in my mind neither plot nor personages, neither scene nor suggestion—nothing whatever out of which to construct a story. And yet the thing must be done, and the printers must have the copy of my first instalment within three days.

I turned the key in my desk and fled from the office. I boarded one of the steamers that then ran from Fulton Ferry to Harlem. I wanted to think. I wanted quietude. When the steamer brought me back, I had in my mind at least a shadowy notion—not of the story as a whole, but of its first chapter, and I had decided upon a title.

Hurrying home I set to work to write. About nine o'clock the artist who had been engaged to illustrate the story called upon me and insisted upon it that he must decide at once what he should draw as the first illustration. He reminded me that the drawing must be made on wood, and that it would take two or three days to engrave it after his work upon it should be finished.

I pushed toward him the sheets I had written and bade him read them while I went on writing. Before he left a telegram came from the office asking what the title of the story was to be, in order that the paper, going to press that night, might carry with it a flaming announcement of its beginning in the next number.

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From beginning to end the story was written in that hurried way, each instalment going into type before the next was written. Meanwhile, I had the editorial conduct of the paper to look after and the greater part of the editorial page to write each week.

*"A Man of
Honor"*

The necessary result was a crude, ill-considered piece of work, amateurish in parts, and wholly lacking in finish throughout. Yet it proved acceptable as a serial, and when it came out in book form ten thousand copies were sold on advance orders. The publishers were satisfied; the public seemed satisfied, and as for the author, he had no choice but to rest content with results for which he could in no way account then, and cannot account now.

The nearest approach to an explanation I have ever been able to imagine is that the title—"A Man of Honor"—was a happy one. Of that there were many proofs then and afterwards. The story had been scarcely more than begun as a serial, when Edgar Fawcett brought out a two or three number story with the same title, in *Appletons' Journal*, I think. Then Dion Boucicault cribbed the title, attached it to a play he had "borrowed" from some French dramatist, and presented the whole as his own.

Finally, about a dozen years later, a curious thing happened. I was acting at the time as a literary adviser of Harper & Brothers. There was no international copyright law then, but when a publisher bought advance sheets of an English book and published it here simultaneously or nearly so with its issue in England, a certain courtesy of the trade forbade other reputable publishing houses to trespass. The Harpers kept two agents in London, one of them to send over advance sheets for purchase, and the other to send books as they were published.

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One day among the advance sheets sent to me for judgment I found a novel by Mrs. Stannard, the lady who wrote under the pen name of John Strange Winter. It was a rather interesting piece of work, but it bore my title, "A Man of Honor." In advising its purchase I entered my protest

against the use of that title in the proposed American edition. Of course the protest had no legal force, as our American copyright law affords no protection to titles, but with an honorable house like the Harpers the moral aspect of the matter was sufficient.

The situation was a perplexing one. The Harpers had in effect already bought the story from Mrs. Stannard for American publication. They must publish simultaneously with the English appearance of the novel or lose all claim to the protection of the trade courtesy. There was not time enough before publication day for them to communicate with the author and secure a change of title.

In this perplexity Mr. Joseph W. Harper, then the head of the house and a personal friend of my own, asked me if I would consent to the use of the title if he should print a footnote on the first page of the book, setting forth the fact of my prior claim to it and saying that the firm was indebted to my courtesy for the privilege of using it.

[155] I readily consented to this and the book appeared in that way. A little later, in a letter, Mrs. Stannard sent me some pleasant messages, saying especially that she had found among her compatriots no such courteous reasonableness in matters of the kind as I had shown. By way of illustration she said that some years before, when she published "Houp-la," she had been compelled to pay heavy damages to an obscure writer who had previously used the title in some insignificant provincial publication, never widely known and long ago forgotten.

In the case of "A Man of Honor" the end was not yet. Mrs. Stannard's novel with that title and the footnote was still in its early months of American circulation when one day I found among the recently published English novels sent to me for examination one by John Strange Winter (Mrs. Stannard) entitled, "On March." Upon examining it I found it to be the same that the Harpers had issued with the "Man of Honor" title. I suppose that after the correspondence above referred to, Mrs. Stannard had decided to give the English edition of her work this new title, but had omitted to notify the Harpers of the change.

Mention of this matter of trouble with titles reminds me of a rather curious case which amused me at the time of its occurrence and may amuse the reader. In the year 1903 I published a novel entitled "The Master of Warlock." During the summer of that year I one day received a registered letter from a man named Warlock, who wrote from somewhere in Brooklyn. The missive was brief and peremptory. Its writer ordered me to withdraw the book from circulation instantly, and warned me that no more copies of it were to be sold. He offered no reason for his commands and suggested no explanation of his authority to give them. I wrote asking him upon what ground he assumed to interfere, and for reply he said briefly: "My grounds are personal and legal." Beyond that he did not explain.

*A "Warlock" on
the Warpath*

He had written in the same way to the publishers of the book, who answered him precisely as I had done.

[156] A month later there came another registered letter from him. In it he said that a month had passed since his demand was made and that as I had paid no heed to it, he now repeated it. He said he was armed with adequate proof that many copies of the book had been sold during that month—a statement which I am glad to say was true. There must now be a prompt and complete withdrawal of the novel from the market, he said.

This time the peremptory gentleman graciously gave me at least a hint of the ground upon which he claimed a right to order the suppression of the novel. He said I ought to know that I had no right to make use of any man's surname in fiction, especially when it was a unique name like his own.

As I was passing the summer at my Lake George cottage, I sent him a note saying that I should continue in my course, and giving him the address of a lawyer in New York who would accept service for me in any action he might bring.

[157] For a time thereafter I waited anxiously for the institution of his suit. I foresaw a great demand for the book as a consequence of it, and I planned to aid in that. I arranged with some of my newspaper friends in New York to send their cleverest reporters to write of the trial. Charles Henry Webb—"John Paul," who wrote the burlesques, "St. Twelvemo" and "Liffith Lank"—proposed to take up on his own account Mr. Warlock's contention that the novelist has no right to use any man's surname in a novel, and make breezy fun of it by writing a novelette upon those lines. In his preface he purposed to set forth the fact that there is scarcely any conceivable name that is not to be found in the New York City directory, and that even a name omitted from that widely comprehensive work, was pretty sure to belong to somebody somewhere, so that under the Warlock doctrine its use must involve danger. He would show that the novelist must therefore designate his personages as "Thomas Ex Square," "Tabitha Twenty Three," and so on with a long list of mathematical impersonalities. Then he planned to give a sample novel written in that way, in which the dashing young cavalier, Charles Augustus + should make his passionate addresses to the fascinating Lydia =, only to learn from her tremulous lips that she was already betrothed to the French nobleman, Compte [**Symbol: cube root"]y.

Unhappily Mr. Warlock never instituted his suit; John Paul lost an opportunity, and the public lost a lot of fun.

By way of completing the story of this absurdity, it is worth while to record that the novel

complained of had no personage in it bearing the name of Warlock. In the book that name was merely the designation by which a certain Virginia plantation was known.

XLIV

During our early struggles to secure a place for *Hearth and Home* in popular favor, I was seized with a peculiarly vaulting ambition. John Hay's "Pike County Ballads" were under discussion everywhere. Phrases from them were the current coin of conversation. Critics were curiously studying them as a new and effective form of literature, and many pious souls were in grave alarm over what they regarded as blasphemy in Mr. Hay's work, especially the phrase "a durned sight better business than loafin' round the throne," at the end of "Little Breeches."

*"Pike County
Ballads"*

I knew Mr. Hay slightly. Having ceased for a time to hold diplomatic place, he was a working writer then, with his pen as his one source of income. I made up my mind to secure a Pike County Ballad for *Hearth and Home* even though the cost of it should cause our publishers the loss of some sleep. Knowing that his market was a good one for anything he might choose to write, I went to him with an offer such as few writers, if any at that time, had ever received, thinking to outbid all others who might have designs upon his genius.

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It was of no use. He said that the price offered "fairly took his breath away," but told me with the emphasis of serious assurance, that he "could not write a Pike County Ballad to save his life." "That was what they call a 'pocket mine,'" he added, "and it is completely worked out."

He went on to tell me the story of the Ballads and the circumstances in which they were written. As he told me the same thing more in detail many years later, adding to it a good many little reminiscences, I shall draw upon the later rather than the earlier memory in writing of the matter here.

It was in April, 1902, when he was at the height of his brilliant career as Secretary of State that I visited him by invitation. In the course of a conversation I reminded him of what he had told me about thirty years before, concerning the genesis of the ballads, and said:

"I wonder if you would let me print that story? It seems to me something the public is entitled to share."

He responded without hesitation:

"Certainly. Print it by all means if you wish, and in order that you may get it right after all these years, I'll tell it to you again. It came about in this way: I was staying for a time at a hospitable country house, and on a hot summer Sunday I went with the rest to church where I sleepily listened to a sermon. In the course of it the good old parson—who hadn't a trace of humorous perception in his make-up, droned out a story substantially the same as that in 'Little Breeches.'

"As I sat there in the sleepy sultriness of the summer Sunday, in an atmosphere that seemed redolent of roasting pine pews and scorching cushion covers, I fell to thinking of Pike County methods of thought, of what humor a Pike County dialect telling of that story would have, and of what impression the story itself, as solemnly related by the preacher, would make upon the Pike County mind. There are two Pike Counties, you know—one in Illinois and the other confronting it across the river, in Missouri. But the people of the two Pike Counties are very much alike—isomeric, as the chemists say—and they have a dialect speech, a point of view, and an intellectual attitude in common, and all their own. I have encountered nothing else like it anywhere.

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"When I left the church that Sunday, I was full to the lips of an imaginary Pike County version of the preacher's story, and on the train as I journeyed to New York, I entertained myself by writing 'Little Breeches.' The thing was done merely for my own amusement, without the smallest thought of print. But when I showed it to Whitelaw Reid he seized upon the manuscript and published it in the *Tribune*.

*John Hay's Own
Story of the
Ballads*

"By that time the lilt and swing of the Pike County Ballad had taken possession of me. I was filled with the Pike County spirit, as it were, and the humorous side of my mind was entertained by its rich possibilities. Within a week after the appearance of 'Little Breeches' in print all the Pike County Ballads were written. After that the impulse was completely gone from me. There was absolutely no possibility of another thing of the kind. When you asked me for something of that kind for *Hearth and Home*, I told you truly that I simply could not produce it. There were no more Pike County Ballads in me, and there never have been any since.

"Let me tell you a queer thing about that. From the hour when the last of the ballads was written until now, I have never been able to feel that they were mine, that my mind had had anything to do with their creation, or that they bore any trace of kinship to my thought or my intellectual impulses. They seem utterly foreign to me—as foreign as if I had first encountered them in print, as the work of somebody else. It is a strange feeling. Of course every creative writer feels something of the sort with regard to much of his work, but I, at least, have never had

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the feeling one-tenth so strongly with regard to anything else I ever did.

"Now, let me tell you," Mr. Hay continued, "of some rather interesting experiences I have had with respect to the ballads. One day at the Gilsey House, in New York, I received the card of a gentleman, and when he came to my room he said:

"I am the son of the man whom you celebrated in one of your ballads as Jim Bludso, the engineer who stuck to his duty and declared he would "hold her nozzle agin the bank till the last galoot's ashore.""

Mr. Hay added:

"This gave me an opportunity. Mark Twain had criticised the ballad, saying that Jim Bludso must have been a pilot, and not an engineer, for the reason that an engineer, having once set his engines going, could have no need to stay by them. In view of this criticism, I asked my visitor concerning it, telling him of what Mark Twain had said. For answer the caller assured me that the original Jim Bludso was in fact an engineer. He explained that as a Mississippi River steamboat has two engines, each turning an independent wheel, and as the current of the river is enormously swift, it was necessary for the engineer to remain at his post, working one engine and then the other, backing on one sometimes and going ahead on the other, if her nozzle was to be held 'agin the bank till the last galoot's ashore.'"

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For reply to this I told Mr. Hay that I had seen in a Memphis cemetery a tombstone erected to a pilot, and inscribed with the story of his heroic death in precisely Jim Bludso's spirit. At the time that I read the inscription on it, "Jim Bludso" had not been written, but the matter interested me and I made inquiry for the exact facts. The story as I heard it was this: The boat being afire the pilot landed her, head-on against a bank that offered no facilities for making her fast with cables. The only way to get the "galoots ashore" was for the pilot to remain at his post and ring his engine bells for going ahead and backing, so as to "hold her nozzle agin the bank." But the flames were by that time licking the rear of the pilot house, and the captain frantically entreated the pilot to leap from the forward part of the structure to the deck below. This the heroic fellow refused to do so long as the safety of the passengers required his presence at his post. He stood there, calmly smoking his cigar and coolly ringing his bells as occasion required till at last every other human being on board had been saved. By that time the flames had completely enveloped the pilot-house, and there was left no possible way of escape. Then relinquishing his hold upon the wheel, the pilot folded his arms and stood like a statue until the floor beneath him gave way and he sank to a cruel death in the furnace-like fire below.

*Some Anecdotes
from John Hay*

The details of the story were related to me by Captain John Cannon, of the steamer "Robert E. Lee," and the weather-beaten old navigator was not ashamed of the tears that trickled down his cheeks as he told the tale.

When I had finished, Mr. Hay said:

"That only means that we have two heroes to revere instead of one. Jim Bludso was an engineer."

Continuing his talk of coincidences, Mr. Hay said:

"I once went up to my native village, and as I walked along the street I accidentally jostled a man. When I apologized, he turned to me and said:

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"I ought to know you and you ought to know me, for your name's John Hay and mine's Jim Bludso. But I'm not the fellow you wrote that poetry about. He's very dead and you see I'm very much alive."

Then Mr. Hay told me of another curious encounter that connected itself with the Pike County Ballads.

"You remember," he said, "that it was from the sermon of an old minister that I got the story told in 'Little Breeches.' Well, when I was in California in company with President McKinley, I was one day visited by a venerable man who proved to be none other than the preacher from whose lips I had heard the original and authoritative prosaic version of that miracle story. It is curious how these coincidences occur."

The substance of this conversation with Mr. Hay was embodied in an article of mine in the New York *Herald* for April 27, 1902. Proofs of the interview were sent to Mr. Hay in advance of publication, with my request that he should make such corrections in them as he saw fit. He returned the slips to me without an alteration and with a note saying; "I have no suggestions to make. Your report of our conversation is altogether accurate. I only wish I might have said something better worth printing."

That was the last time I saw John Hay. It was the end of an acquaintance which had been cordial, though not intimate, and which had extended over a period of thirty years. As I was leaving he stopped me. He took up a copy of the pamphlet containing his splendid tribute to the memory of President McKinley, inscribed it with his autograph, and handed it to me, saying, with a touch of sadness which was not quite melancholy:

"You care for my literary work. Perhaps in the coming years you will care to have, from my own

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hand, this copy of my latest and probably my last essay in that department of human endeavor."

The event verified his prophecy. He soon afterward fell ill, and in the year 1905 he died, affectionately regretted by every one who had ever known him personally and by scores of thousands who had known him only through his work.

John Hay's personal character was the foundation upon which all his successes, whether in journalism, literature, or statecraft were built. He was utterly sincere, as instinctively truthful as a child, and as gentle of spirit as any woman ever was. Those who knew him personally were never at a loss to account for the ease with which, in diplomatic matters, he won men to his wish and persuaded them to his point of view. Every one who came into contact with him was constrained by his gentle reasonableness to agree with him. His whole nature was winning in an extraordinary degree. Strong as he was in his own convictions, his assertion of them never took the form of antagonism. I really suppose that John Hay never said a thing in his life which aroused resentment—and that not because of any hesitation on his part to utter his thought but because of the transparent justice of the thought, and of his gently persuasive way of uttering it. His convictions were strong and there was enough of apostleship in his nature to prompt him to urge them on all proper occasions: but he urged them soothingly, convincingly, never by arrogant assertion or with obnoxious insistence.

Mr. Hay's
Personality

Feeling no disposition to quarrel with anybody on his own account, he was always alert to make an end of other people's quarrels when opportunity of pacification came to him.

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I remember an instance of this that fell under my own notice. During a prolonged absence of Mr. Whitelaw Reid from the country, Mr. Hay was left in control of the *Tribune*. I was not connected with any newspaper at the time, but was "running a literary shop" of my own, as Mr. Hay expressed it—writing books of my own, editing other people's books, advising a publishing firm, and writing for various newspapers and magazines. Now and then, when some occurrence suggested it, I wrote an editorial article for the *Tribune*, as I had done occasionally for a good many years before.

One day Mr. Hay asked me to call upon him with reference to some work he wanted me to do. After we had arranged all the rest of it, he picked up Jefferson Davis's "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," which had just been published.

"That is a subject," Mr. Hay said, "on which you can write as an expert. I want you, if you will, to review the book for the *Tribune*."

I objected that my estimate of Mr. Davis was by no means a flattering one, and that in a cursory examination which I had already given to his book, I had discovered some misrepresentations of fact so extraordinary that they could not be passed over in charitable silence. I cited, as one of these misrepresentations, Mr. Davis's minute account—expunged from later editions of the book, I believe—of the final evacuation of Fort Sumter and the city of Charleston—in which he gave an account of certain theatrical performances that never occurred, and of impassioned speeches made by an officer who was not there and had not been there for eight months before the time of the evacuation.

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"So far as that is concerned," said Mr. Hay, "it makes no difference. As a reviewer you will know what to say of such things. Mr. Davis has put forward a book. It is subject to criticism at the hands of any capable and honest reviewer. Write of it conscientiously, and with as much of good temper as you can. That is all I desire."

I then suggested another difficulty. For a considerable time past there had been some ill feeling between the editor of the *Tribune* and the publishers of Mr. Davis's book. The *Tribune* did not review or in any way mention books published by that firm. On one occasion, when I had been asked to review a number of books for the paper, one of them was withdrawn on that account. I suggested to Mr. Hay that perhaps a review of Mr. Davis's book by one who had been thus warned of the situation might be a displeasing impertinence. He replied:

"I have had no instructions on that head. I know nothing about the ill feeling. Perhaps you and I may make an end of the trouble by ignoring it. Write your review and I will publish it."

One other thing I may mention here as perhaps of interest. When the anonymous novel, "The Breadwinners," appeared, it excited a good deal of comment because of the freedom with which the author presented prominent persons under a disguise too thin to conceal identity. The novel was commonly and confidently attributed to Mr. Hay, and some of the critics ventured to censure him for certain features of it. One night at the Authors Club, at a time when talk of the matter was in everybody's mouth, and when Mr. Hay's authorship of the work had well-nigh ceased to be in doubt, he and I were talking of other things, when suddenly he said to me:

Mr. Hay and
"The
Breadwinners"

"I suppose you share the general conviction with regard to the authorship of 'The Breadwinners.' Let me tell you that I did not write that book, though I confess that some things in it seem to justify the popular belief that I did."

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The peculiar form of words in which he couched his denial left me in doubt as to its exact significance, and to this day that doubt has never been resolved. Of course I could not subject

him to a cross-examination on the subject.

XLV

I have wandered somewhat from the chronology of my recollections, but this record is not a statistical table, and so it matters not if I wander farther still in pursuit of vagrant memories.

The mention of Mr. Hay's old preacher who had no sense of humor in his composition reminds me of another of like kind, who was seized with an ardent desire to contribute—for compensation—a series of instructive moral essays to *Hearth and Home*.

When asked by a member of the publishing firm to let him do so, I replied that I did not think the paper was just then in pressing need of instructive moral essays, but that the reverend gentlemen might send one as a sample. He sent it. It began thus:

"Some philosopher has wisely observed that 'every ugly young woman has the comforting assurance that she will be a pretty old woman if she lives long enough.' Doubtless the philosopher meant that a young woman destitute of physical beauty, with all its temptations, is sure to cultivate those spiritual qualities which give beauty and more than beauty to the countenance in later years."

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And so the dear, innocent old gentleman went on for a column or so, utterly oblivious of the joke he had accepted as profound philosophy. I had half a mind to print his solemn paper in the humorous column entitled, "That Reminds Me," but, in deference to his age and dignity, I forbore. As is often the case in such matters, my forbearance awakened no gratitude in him. In answer to his earnest request to know why I thought his essay unworthy, I was foolish enough to point out and explain the jocular character of his "philosopher's" utterance, whereupon he wrote to my publishers, strongly urging them to employ a new editor, for that "the young man you now have is obviously a person of frivolous mind who sees only jests in utterances of the most solemn and instructive import."

As the publishers did not ask for my resignation, I found it easy to forgive my adversary.

In view of the multitude of cases in which the writers of rejected contributions and the victims of adverse criticism are at pains to advise publishers to change their editors, I have sometimes wondered that the editorial fraternity is not continually a company of literary nomads, looking for employment. In one case, I remember, a distinguished critic reviewing a rather pretentious book, pointed out the fact that the author had confounded rare old Ben Jonson with Dr. Samuel Johnson in a way likely to be misleading to careless or imperfectly informed readers, whereupon not only the author but all his friends sent letters clamoring for the dismissal of a reviewer so lacking in sympathetic appreciation of sincere literary endeavor. When I told Mr. George Ripley of the matter he replied:

*The
Disappointed
Author*

"Oh, that is the usual thing. I am keeping a collection of letters sent to Mr. Greeley demanding my discharge. I think of bequeathing it to the Astor Library as historical material, reflecting the literary conditions of our time."

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In one case of the kind that fell to my share there was a rather dramatic outcome. I was acting as a literary adviser for Harper & Brothers, when there came to me for judgment the manuscript of a novel in which I found more of virility and strong human interest than most novels possess, together with a well constructed plot, a pleasing literary style, and some unusually well conceived and well portrayed characters. The work was so good indeed that it was with very sincere regret that I found myself obliged to condemn it. I had to do so because it included, as an inseparable part of its structure, a severe and even a bitter assault upon the work and the methods of Mr. Moody and all the other "irregular troops" in the army of religion, not sparing even the "revival" methods of the Methodists and Baptists. It was a rigid rule of the Harpers not to publish books of that kind, and I might with propriety have reported simply that the novel included matters which rendered it unavailable for the Harper list. But I was so interested in it and so impressed with its superior quality as a work of fiction that instead of a brief recommendation of rejection, I sent in an elaborate critical analysis of it, including a pretty full synopsis of its plot. The "opinion" filled many pages of manuscript—more than I had ever before written in that way concerning any book submitted to me.

A week or so later I happened to call at the Harper establishment, as it was my custom to do occasionally. Seeing me, Mr. Joseph W. Harper, Jr.—"Brooklyn Joe" we called him—beckoned to me, and, with a labored assumption of solemnity which a mirthful twinkle in his eye completely spoiled, said:

"I have a matter which I must bring to your attention, greatly to my regret. Read that."

With that he handed me a letter from the author of the novel, an Episcopalian clergyman of some distinction.

The writer explained that his vanity was in no way offended by the rejection of his work. That, he said, was to be expected in the case of an unknown author (a flattering unctiousness with which unsuccessful authorship always consoles itself), but that he felt it to be his duty as a clergyman, a moralist, and a good citizen, to report to the house that their reader was robbing them to the extent of his salary. He had incontrovertible proof, he said, that the reader had not read a single page or line of his manuscript before rejecting it.

"There," said Joe Harper when I had finished the letter. "I really didn't think you that sort of a person."

"What did you say to him by way of reply?" I asked.

"I'll show you," he said, taking up his letter-book. "I inclosed a copy of that intolerably long opinion of yours and wrote this." Then he let me read the letter. In it he thanked the gentleman for having brought the dereliction of the reader to the attention of the house, but suggested that before proceeding to extreme measures in such a case, he thought it well to be perfectly sure of the facts. To that end, he wrote, he inclosed an exact copy of the "opinion" on which the novel had been declined, and asked the author to read it and report whether or not he still felt certain that the writer of the opinion had condemned the work unread.

*Joe Harper's
Masterpiece*

The entire letter was written in a tone of submissive acceptance of the rejected author's judgment in the case. As a whole it seemed to me as withering a piece of sarcasm as I ever read, and in spite of the injustice he had sought to do me. I was distinctly sorry for the man to whom it was addressed. I suppose Mr. Harper felt in the same way, but all that he said, as he put the letter-book upon his desk, was:

"I hope he prepares his sermon early in the week, for that letter of mine must have reached him about Friday morning, and it may have created a greater or less disturbance in his mind."

A few days later there came a reply. The author said that an examination of the "opinion" left no room for doubt that the work had been read with care throughout, but that he had confidently believed otherwise when he wrote his first letter. He explained that before sending the manuscript he had tied a peculiar cord around it, inside the wrapper, and that when it came back to him with the same cord tied about it, he thought it certain that the package had never been opened. He was sorry he had made a mistake, of course, but he had been entirely sincere, etc., etc.

Mr. Harper indulged himself in an answer to all this. If I had not been permitted to read it, I should never have believed that anything so caustic could have been uttered by a man so genially good-tempered as I knew Mr. Harper to be. It was all the more effective because from beginning to end there was no trace of excitement, no touch of anger, no word or phrase in it that could be criticised as harsh or intemperate.

Beneath the complaint made by the clerical author in that case there was a mistaken assumption with which every publisher and every editor is familiar—the assumption, namely, that the publisher or editor to whom unsolicited manuscripts are sent is under some sort of moral obligation to read them or have them read. Of course no such obligation exists. When the publisher or editor is satisfied that he does not wish to purchase a manuscript, it makes no manner of difference by what process he has arrived at that conclusion. The subject of the book or article may be one that he does not care to handle; the author's manner, as revealed in the early pages of his manuscript, may justify rejection without further reading. Any one of a score of reasons may be conclusive without the necessity of examining the manuscript in whole or even in part. I once advised the rejection of a book without reading it, on the ground that the woman who wrote it used a cambric needle and milk instead of a pen and ink, so that it would be a gross immorality to put her manuscript into the hands of printers whose earnings depended upon the number of ems they could set in a day.

But the conviction is general among the amateur authors of unsolicited manuscripts that the editors or publishers to whom they send their literary wares are morally bound not only to examine them, but to read them carefully from beginning to end. They sometimes resort to ingenious devices by way of detecting the rascally editors in neglect of this duty. They slenderly stick the corners of two sheets together; or they turn up the lower corner of a sheet here and there as if by accident but so carefully as to cover a word or two from sight; or they place a sheet upside down, or in some other way set a trap that makes the editor smile if he happens to be in good temper, and causes him to reject the thing in resentment of the impertinence if his breakfast has not agreed with him that day.

*Manuscripts and
Their Authors*

I was speaking of these things one day, to Mr. George P. Putnam, Irving's friend and the most sympathetically literary of publishers then living, when he suddenly asked me:

"Do you know the minimum value of a lost manuscript?"

I professed ignorance, whereupon he said:

"It is five hundred dollars." Presently, in answer to a question, he explained:

"In the old days of *Putnam's Monthly*, one of the multitude of unsolicited manuscripts sent in would now and then be mislaid. I never knew a case of the kind in which the author failed to

value the manuscript at five hundred dollars or more, no matter what its subject or its length or even its worthlessness might be. In one case, when I refused to pay the price fixed upon by the author, he instituted suit, and very earnestly protested that his manuscript was worth far more than the five hundred dollars demanded for it. He even wrote me that he had a definite offer of more than that sum for it. To his discomfiture somebody in the office found the manuscript about that time and we returned it to the author. He sent it back, asking us to accept it. I declined. He then offered it for two hundred and fifty dollars, then for two hundred, and finally for seventy-five. I wrote to him that he needn't trouble to reduce his price further, as the editors did not care to accept the paper at any price. I have often wondered why he didn't sell it to the person who, as he asserted, had offered him more than five hundred dollars for it; but he never did, as the thing has never yet been published, and that was many years ago."

XLVI

It was during my connection with *Hearth and Home* that I first met two men who greatly interested me. One of them was the newest of celebrities in American literature; the other was old enough to have been lampooned by Poe in his series of papers called "The Literati."

The one was Joaquin Miller, the other Thomas Dunn English.

Joaquin Miller had recently returned in a blaze of glory from his conquest of London society and British literary recognition. He brought me a note of introduction from Mr. Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century* or *Scribner's Monthly* as I think the magazine was still called at that time. He wore a broad-brimmed hat of most picturesque type. His trousers—London made and obviously costly—were tucked into the most superior looking pair of high top boots I ever saw, and in his general make-up he was an interesting cross or combination of the "untutored child of nature" fresh from the plains, and the tailor-made man of fashion. More accurately, he seemed a carefully costumed stage representation of the wild Westerner that he professed to be in fact. I do not know that all this, or any of it, was affectation in the invidious sense of the term. I took it to be nothing more than a clever bit of advertising. He was a genuine poet—as who can doubt who has read him? He had sagacity and a keen perception both of the weakness and the strength of human nature. He wanted a hearing, and he knew the shortest, simplest, surest way to get it. Instead of publishing his poems and leaving it to his publisher to bring them to attention by the slow processes of newspaper advertising, he went to London, and made himself his own advertisement by adopting a picturesque pose, which was not altogether a pose, though it was altogether picturesque, and trusting the poems, to which he thus directed attention, to win favor for themselves.

Joaquin Miller

In saying that his assumption of the rôle of untutored child of nature was not altogether an assumption, I mean that although his boyhood was passed in Indiana schools, and he was for a time a college student there, he had nevertheless passed the greater part of his young manhood in the wilds and among the men of the wilderness. If he was not in fact "untutored," he nevertheless owed very little to the schools, and scarcely anything to the systematic study of literature. His work was marked by crudenesses that were not assumed or in any wise fictitious, while the genuineness of poetic feeling and poetic perception that inspired it was unquestionably the spontaneous product of his own soul and mind.

In my editorial den he seated himself on my desk, though there was a comfortable chair at hand. Was that a bit of theatrical "business"? I think not, for the reason that Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the least affected of men, used nearly always to bestride a reversed chair with his hands resting upon its back, when he visited me in my office, as he sometimes did, to smoke a pipe in peace for half an hour and entertain me with his surprising way of "putting things," before "going off to suffer and be good by invitation," as he once said with reference to some reception engagement.

London had accepted Joaquin Miller's pose without qualification. Even the London comic journals, in satirizing it, seemed never to doubt its genuineness. But on this side of the water we had begun to hear rumors that this son of the plains and the mountains, this dweller in solitudes whose limitless silence he himself suggested in the lines:

"A land so lone that you wonder whether
The God would know it should you fall dead,"

was after all a man bred in civilization and acquainted with lands so far from lone that the coroner would be certain to hear of it promptly if death came to one without the intervention of a physician.

As he addressed me by my first name from the beginning, and in other ways manifested a disposition to put conventionalities completely aside, I ventured to ask him about one of these rumors, which particularly interested me.

"I hear, Mr. Miller," I said, "that you are my compatriot—that you are a Hoosier by birth, as I am—is it true?"

He sat in meditation for a time; then he said:

[175] "George, I've told so many lies about my birth and all that, that there may be inconsistencies in them. I think I'd better not add to the inconsistencies."

I did not press the question. I asked him, instead, to let me have a poem for *Hearth and Home*.

"I can't," he replied, "I haven't a line of unsold manuscript anywhere on earth, and just now I am devoting myself to horseback riding in Central Park. I've got a seven hundred dollar saddle and I must use it, and you, as an old cavalryman, know how utterly uninspiring a thing it is to amble around Central Park on a horse trained to regard a policeman as a person to be respected, not to say feared, in the matter of speed limits and the proper side of the trail, and all that sort of thing. But that saddle and these boots must be put to the use for which they were built, so I must go on riding in the park till they grow shabby, and I can't think in meter till I get away somewhere where the trees don't stand in rows like sentinels in front of a string of tents, and where the people don't all dress alike. Do you know that is the worst tomfoolery this idiotic world ever gave birth to? It is all right for British soldiers, because there must be some way in which the officers can tell in a crowd who is a soldier and who is not, and besides, regular soldiers aren't men anyhow. They're only ten-pins, to be set up in regular order by one man and bowled over by another.

Joaquin Miller's
Notions of Dress

[176] "But what sense is there in men dressing in that way? You and I are tall and slender, but our complexions are different. We are free American citizens. Why should anybody who invites us both to dinner, expect that we shall wear the same sort of clothes? And not only that, why should they expect us to put on precisely the same sort of garments that the big-bellied banker, who is to be our fellow-guest, is sure to wear? It's all nonsense, I tell you. It is an idea born of the uninventive genius of an inane society whose constituent members are as badly scared at any suggestion of originality or individuality as a woman is at the apparition of a mouse in her bedchamber."

I told him I did not agree with him.

"The social rule in that respect seems to me a peculiarly sensible and convenient one," I said. "When a man is invited to anything, he knows exactly what to wear. If it be a daytime affair he has only to put on a frock coat with trousers of a lighter color; if it be an evening function a sparrowtailed coat, black trousers, a low cut vest, and a white tie equip him as perfectly as a dozen tailors could. In either case he need not give a thought to his clothes in order to be sure that his costume will be not only correct but so exactly like everybody's else that nobody present will think of it at all. It is a great saving of gray matter, and of money, too, and more important still, it sets men free. The great majority of us couldn't afford to go to any sort of function, however interesting, if we had to dress individually and competitively for it, as women do."

"Oh, of course," he answered, "the thing has its advantages, but it is dreadfully monotonous—what the children call 'samey, samey.'"

"By which you mean that it deprives one of all excuse for making himself conspicuous by his dress—and that is precisely what most of us do not want to do in any case. Besides, one needn't submit himself to the custom if he objects to it."

"That is so," he answered; "at any rate I don't."

[177] His practice in the matter was extreme, of course. Even ten years after that he visited the Authors Club with his trousers in his boots, but at the time of my first meeting with him the rule of the "dress coat" was by no means confirmed. It was still a matter of choice with men whether they should wear it or not at evening functions, and its use at other times of day was still possible without provoking ridicule. At almost every banquet, dinner, or other evening function in those days there were sure to be a number of frock coats worn, and I remember that at the memorable breakfast given in Boston in celebration of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes's seventieth birthday in 1879, there were a few guests who wore evening dress, although we sat down to the breakfast at one o'clock and separated before the sun went down. I observed the same thing at two of the breakfasts given to Mr. Edmund Gosse in New York in the early eighties. It was not until near the middle of that decade that the late William Henry Hurlbut authoritatively laid down the law that "a gentleman must never appear without evening dress after six o'clock P.M., and never, *never* wear it before that hour, even at a wedding—even at his own wedding."

I remember an incident that grew out of this once vexed question, which is perhaps worth recalling. When the Authors Club was founded in 1882, our chief concern was to make it and keep it an informal, brotherly organization of literary men by excluding from its rules and its practices everything that might impose restraint upon social liberty. We aimed at the better kind of Bohemianism—the Bohemianism of liberty, not license; the Bohemianism which disregards all meaningless formalities but respects the decencies and courtesies of social intercourse.

*Dress Reform à
la Stedman*

Edmund Clarence Stedman was an enthusiastic advocate of this policy. He was beset, he told me at the time, by a great fear that the club might go the way of other organizations with which he was connected; that it might lose its character as an association of authors in sympathy with each other's work and aspirations, and become merely an agency of fashion, a giver of banquets

and receptions at which men should be always on dress parade. By way of averting that degeneracy he proposed for one thing that the members of the club should address each other always by their first names, as schoolboys do. This proved to be impracticable in a club which included such men as Dr. Drisler, Dr. Youmans, President Noah Porter, Bishop Hurst, Parke Godwin, James Russell Lowell, and others of like dignity—together with a lot of younger men who made their first acquaintance with these in the club itself. But another of Stedman's suggestions met with ready acceptance. He proposed that we should taboo evening dress at our meetings. In playful humor he suggested that if any member should appear at a meeting of the club in that conventional garb, he should be required to stand up before all the company, explain himself, and apologize.

We laughingly adopted the rule, and the first person who fell a victim to it was Stedman himself. About ten o'clock one night he entered the club in full dinner dress. Instantly he was arraigned and, standing in the midst of what he called "the clamorous mob," entered upon his explanation. He had come, he said, directly from a philistine dinner at which the garb he wore was as inexorably necessary as combed hair or polished boots or washed hands; his home was far away, and he had been forced to choose between coming to the club in evening dress and not coming at all. Of the two calamities he had chosen the former as the primrose path—a path he had always followed instead of the stormy and thorny one, he said, whenever liberty of choice had been his. Then by way of "fruits meet for repentance," he drew from his pocket a black cravat and in the presence of the club substituted it for the white one he had been wearing. At that time no other than a white cravat was permitted with evening dress, so that by this substitution of a black one, he took himself out of the category of the condemned and became again a companion in good-fellowship over the punch and pipes.

XLVII

It was during the early seventies that the inevitable happened, or at least began to happen, with regard to newspaper illustration. The excessive cost of illustrating periodicals by wood engraving, and the time required for its slow accomplishment, together with the growing eagerness of the people for pictures, set a multitude of men of clever wits at work to devise some cheaper and speedier process of reproducing drawings and photographic pictures. I myself invented a very crude and imperfect process of that kind, which I thought susceptible of satisfactory development. I engaged a certain journalist of irregular habits and large pretensions, who was clever with his pencil, to join me in the development and exploitation of the process, he to furnish such drawings of various kinds as I needed, and I to experiment in reproduction. Of course I had to explain my process to him, and he, being a shrewd young man whose moral character was far less admirable than his always perfect costume, mastered my secret and sold it for a trifling sum to a man who promptly patented it and, with a few changes which I had not the cleverness to make, brought it into use as his own.

Beginnings of Newspaper Illustration

I said some ugly things to my dishonest coadjutor, whose manner of receiving them convinced me that he was well used to hear himself characterized in that way. Then I laughed at myself, went home and read about Moses and the green spectacles, in "The Vicar of Wakefield," and so calmed my spirit.

But mine was an extremely unsatisfactory process, even after the inventor who had bought it from my rascally associate had improved it to the limit of his capacity, and there were far cleverer men at work upon the same problem. By 1874 one of them had so far succeeded that an enterprising firm, owning his patents, decided to set up in New York a daily illustrated newspaper, the *Graphic*.

The failure of the enterprise was freely predicted from the beginning, and in the end failure came to it, but not for the reasons given by the prophets. The *Graphic* failed chiefly because it never had an editor or manager who knew how to make a newspaper. An additional cause of its failure was its inability to get itself into that great news-gathering trust, the Associated Press, whose agents, local and general, covered the whole country and the whole world with a minuteness that no single newspaper could hope to approach.

But while the projectors of the *Graphic* enterprise were full of their first hopefulness, they bought the good will and the subscription list of *Hearth and Home*, in order to make of that periodical the weekly edition of their illustrated daily newspaper.

This left me "out of a job," but altogether happy. I was very tired. I had had but one week's vacation during my arduous service on *Hearth and Home*. I had removed to an old Dutch farmhouse in New Jersey because of the impaired health of one dear to me. I had become a contributor to all the great magazines of that time, and a writer of successful books. I was pleased, therefore, to be freed from the Sisyphean labors of the editorial office. I decided to give up newspaper work in all its forms and to devote my future years to literature alone. I retired to my library, the windows of which were overhung by sweet-scented lilacs and climbing roses, beyond which lay an orchard of varied fruits surrounding the old farmhouse. There, I thought I

would pass the remainder of my days—that phrase felt good in the mind of a work-weary man of thirty-four or about that—in quiet literary work, unvexed by intruding exigencies of any kind. Of course I would write editorials for those great metropolitan dailies for which I was accustomed to do that sort of work from time to time as impulse and opportunity permitted, but I was resolved never again to undertake editorial responsibility of any kind.

As illustrative of the part that accident or unforeseen circumstance plays in determining the career of a working man-of-letters, I may relate the story of how I became at that time a writer of boys' fiction as a part of my employment. I was writing at the time for the *Atlantic*, the *Galaxy*, *Appleton's Journal*, and other magazines, and my time was fully occupied, when there came to me a letter asking me upon what terms I would furnish a serial story of adventure for a magazine that made its appeal to boys and girls. Why the editor had thought of me in that connection I cannot imagine. I had never written a boys' story—long or short. I had never written a story of adventure of any sort. I said so in my reply declining to consider the suggestion. A second letter came promptly, urging me to reconsider and asking that I should at any rate name the terms on which I would do the work. Thinking that this opened an easy and certain road of escape, I decided to name terms that I was confident my editor-correspondent would regard as wholly beyond consideration. I wrote him that I would do the story if he would pay me, for serial rights alone, the same price per thousand words that the great magazines were paying me, I to retain the right of book publication, and to have, without charge, the plates of any illustrations the magazine might make for use with my text.

*Accident's Part
in Literary Life*

Having thus "settled the matter," as I supposed, I dismissed the subject from my mind as a thing done for. Twenty-four hours later there came a telegram from the editor, saying:

"Terms accepted. Write story. Contracts go by mail for execution."

Those ten telegraphic words determined my career in an important particular. Also they appalled me. They put me under a contract that I had never thought of making. They placed me under obligation to do a species of literary work which I had never dreamed even of trying to do, and for which I felt myself utterly unfit. It was not only that I had never written a boys' story or thought of writing one; I had never acquainted myself with that sort of literature; I "knew not the trick of it," as the poor fellow in "Hamlet" says when urged to play upon a pipe. Nevertheless, I must do the thing and that immediately, for the correspondence had named a date only three weeks off for the delivery of the first instalment of the manuscript.

There was no way of escape. I must set to work upon the story. But what should it be about? Where should its scene be laid? What should be its plot and who its personages? I had not so much as the shadowy ghost of an idea, and during the next twenty-four sleepless hours all my efforts to summon one from the vasty deep or elsewhere brought no result.

While I was thus searching a mind vacant of suggestion, my two little boys climbed upon my knees and besought me to tell them "an Injun story." I was in the habit of entertaining their very juvenile minds with exceedingly juvenile fictions manufactured on the spur of the moment, fictions without plot, without beginning or ending of any recognizable sort. Sometimes these "stories" were wholly imaginary; sometimes I drew upon some boyish experience of my own for a subject. This time the specific demand of my exigent little masters for "an Injun story" led me to think of the Creek War in Alabama and Mississippi. It so happened that some years before the time of this story telling, I had lived for a good many weeks among the Cherokees, Muscogeas, and Choctaws in the Indian Territory, hunting with them by day and sleeping with them around a camp-fire by night. I had in that way become interested in their very dramatic history, and on my return to civilization I had read all the literature I could find on the subject of the war in which their power in our Southern states was overthrown, and they themselves, taken by the neck and heels, as it were, out of the very hopefully advancing civilisation they had in part borrowed but in greater part wrought out for themselves, and thrown back into the half-savage life from which they had struggled to escape.

*My First Boys'
Book*

As I told my little fellows the story they wanted, it occurred to me that here was my subject and inspiration for the larger story I had agreed to write. Within a week or two "The Big Brother" was done and its manuscript delivered.

Its serial publication was never completed. When about half the chapters had been printed, the new and ambitious juvenile magazine, *St. Nicholas*, bought and suppressed the periodical that was publishing it. The Putnams brought my story out in book form, and its success prompted them to ask me for further boys' books, and as the subject of the Creek War was by no means exhausted, I drew upon it for the materials of "Captain Sam" and "The Signal Boys," thus making a trilogy that covered the entire period between the massacre at Fort Mims and the battle of New Orleans.

Then I decided that my wholly unintended incursion into the field of youths' fiction should end there. I had never intended to write literature of that kind, and now that I had exhausted the subject of the Creek War, I had no impulse to hunt for other themes for such use. Besides, I had by that time become absorbed in newspaper work again, and had no time for the writing of books of any sort.

It was not until the eighties that I wrote another book of juvenile fiction, and that also came

about by accident rather than intention. I had again given up newspaper work, again meaning never to return to it. I was conducting a literary shop of my own in Brooklyn, writing for the magazines, reading for the Harpers, editing the books of other people whose work needed that sort of attention, and doing other things of the kind.

One night I was entertaining the younger of the two boys who had suggested the subject of my first work in juvenile fiction. I was telling him of some adventures of my own and others' on the Carolina coast, when suddenly he asked: "Why can't we put all that into a story book?" That evening I received a letter from Mr. George Haven Putnam, saying that while my three "Big Brother" books were still selling pretty well, it would stimulate them helpfully if I could add a new one to the series. In brief, he wanted me to write a new boys' story, and the proposal fitted in so nicely with the suggestion of my little boy that I called the child to me and said:

"I think we'll write that story book, if you'll help me."

He enthusiastically agreed. I can best tell the rest of that book's story by quoting here from the brief prefatory dedication I wrote for it when it was published in 1882, under the title of "The Wreck of the Redbird":

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"I intended to dedicate this book to my son, Guilford Dudley Eggleston, to whom it belonged in a peculiar sense. He was only nine years old, but he was my tenderly loved companion, and was in no small degree the creator of this story. He gave it the title it bears; he discussed with me every incident in it; and every page was written with reference to his wishes and his pleasure. There is not a paragraph here which does not hold for me some reminder of the noblest, manliest, most unselfish boy I have ever known. Ah, woe is me! He who was my companion is my dear dead boy now, and I am sure that I only act for him as he would wish, in inscribing the story that was so peculiarly his to the boy whom he loved best, and who loved him as a brother might have done."

It was eighteen years after that that I next wrote a work of fiction for youth, and again the event was the result of suggestion from without. "The Wreck of the Redbird" seems to have made a strong impression upon Elbridge S. Brooks, at that time the literary editor of the Lothrop Publishing Company of Boston, and in the year 1900 he wrote to me asking on what terms I would write for that firm "a boys' story as good as 'The Wreck of the Redbird.'" I had no story in mind at the time. For eighteen years my attention had been absorbed by newspaper work and by literary activities of a sort far removed from this. Moreover, I was at the time working night and day as an editorial writer on the staff of the New York *World*, with a good deal of executive duty and responsibility added. But the thought of calling a company of boy readers around me again and telling them a story appealed to my imagination, and, as the terms I suggested were accepted, I employed such odd moments as I could find between other tasks in writing "The Last of the Flatboats." Its success led to other books of the kind, so that since this accidental return to activities of that sort, I have produced six books of juvenile fiction in the intervals of other and more strenuous work.

*One Thing Leads
to Another*

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Perhaps an apology is needed for this setting forth of affairs purely personal. If so, it is found in the fact that the illustration given of the part that accident and external suggestion play in determining the course and character of a professional writer's work, seems to me likely to interest readers who have never been brought into close contact with such things. I have thought it of interest to show visitors through the literary factory and to explain somewhat its processes.

XLVIII

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After a year and a half of leisurely work in the old orchard-framed, New Jersey farmhouse, I was suddenly jostled out of the comfortable rut in which I had been traveling. A peculiarly plausible and smooth-tongued publisher, a gifted liar, and about the most companionable man I ever knew, had swindled me out of every dollar I had in the world and had made me responsible for a part at least of his debts to others. I held his notes and acceptances for what were to me large sums, and I hold them yet. I held his written assurances, oft-repeated, that whatever might happen to his business affairs, his debt to me was amply and effectually secured. I hold those assurances yet—more than thirty-five years later—and I hold also the showing made by his receiver, to the effect that he had all the while been using my money to secure a secret partner of his own, a highly respectable gentleman who in the course of the settlement proceedings was indicted, convicted, and sent to prison for fraud. But the conviction did not uncover any money with which the debt to me might be liquidated in whole or in part, and the man who had robbed me of all I had in the world had so shrewdly managed matters as to escape all penalties. The last I heard of him he was conducting one of the best-known religious newspapers in the country, and winning laurels as a lecturer on moral and religious subjects, and especially as a Sunday School worker, gifted in inspiring youth of both sexes with high ethical principles and aspirations.

When this calamity befel I had no ready money in possession or within call, and no property of any kind that I could quickly convert into money. I was "stripped to the buff" financially, but I knew my trade as a writer and newspaper man. It was necessary that I should get back to the city

at once, and I had no money with which to make the transfer. In this strait I sat down and wrote four magazine articles, writing night and day, and scarcely sleeping at all. The situation was not conducive to sleep. I sent off the articles as fast as they were written, in each case asking the editors for an immediate remittance. They were my personal friends, and I suppose all of them had had experiences not unlike my own. At any rate they responded promptly, and within a week I was settling myself in town and doing such immediate work as I could find to do, while looking for better and more permanent employment.

Almost immediately I was summoned to the office of the *Evening Post*, where I accepted an appointment on the editorial staff. Thus I found myself again engaged in newspaper work, but it was newspaper work of a kind that appealed to my tastes and tendencies. Under Mr. Bryant the *Evening Post* was an old-fashioned newspaper of uncondescending, uncompromising dignity. It loathed "sensation" and treated the most sensational news—when it was obliged to treat it at all—in a dignified manner, never forgetting its own self-respect or offending that of its readers. It resolutely adhered to its traditional selling price of five cents a copy, and I am persuaded that the greater number of its constituents would have resented any reduction, especially one involving them in the necessity of giving or taking "pennies" in change.

The Evening Post
under Mr.
Bryant

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It did not at all engage in the scramble for "news." It belonged to the Associated Press; it had two or three reporters of its own, educated men and good writers, who could be sent to investigate and report upon matters of public import. It had a Washington correspondent and such other news-getting agents as were deemed necessary under its rule of conduct, which was to regard nothing as published until it was published in the *Evening Post*. It was the completest realization I have ever seen of the ideal upon which the *Pall Mall Gazette* professed to conduct itself—that of "a newspaper conducted by gentlemen, for gentlemen."

It could be trenchant in utterance upon occasion, and when it was so its voice was effective—the more so because of its habitual moderation and reserve. Sometimes, when the subject to be discussed was one that appealed strongly to Mr. Bryant's convictions and feelings, he would write of it himself. He was an old man and one accustomed to self-control, but when his convictions were stirred, there was not only fire but white-hot lava in his utterance. The lava streams flowed calmly and without rage or turbulence, but they scorched and burned and consumed whatever they touched. More frequently great questions were discussed by some one or other of that outer staff of strong men who, without direct and daily contact with the newspaper, and without salary or pay of any kind, were still regarded by themselves and by the public as parts of the great intellectual and scholarly force in conduct and control of the *Evening Post*—such men, I mean, as Parke Godwin and John Bigelow—men once members of that newspaper's staff and still having free access to its columns when they had aught that they wished to say on matters of public concern.

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Best of all, so far as my tastes and inclinations were concerned, the *Evening Post*, under Mr. Bryant's and later Mr. Parke Godwin's control, regarded and treated literature and scholarship as among the chief forces of civilized life and the chief concerns of a newspaper addressing itself to the educated class in the community. Whatsoever concerned literature or scholarship, whatsoever was in any wise related to those things, whatever concerned education, culture, human advancement, commanded the *Evening Post's* earnest attention and sympathy. It discussed grave measures of state pending at Washington or Albany or elsewhere, but it was at no pains to record the gossip of great capitals. Personalities had not then completely usurped the place of principles and policies in the attention of newspapers, and the *Evening Post* gave even less attention to such things than most of its contemporaries did. The time had not yet come among newspapers when circulation seemed of greater importance than character, when the details of a divorce scandal or a murder trial seemed of more consequence than the decisions of the Supreme Court, or when a brutal slugging match between two low-browed beasts in human form was regarded as worthy of greater newspaper space than a discussion of the tariff on art or the appearance of an epoch-making book by Tennyson or Huxley or Haeckel.

Old-Time
Newspaper
Standards

In brief, the newspapers of that time had not learned the baleful lesson that human society is a cone, broadest at bottom, and that the lower a newspaper cuts into it the broader its surface of circulation is. They had not yet reconciled themselves to the thought of appealing to low tastes and degraded impulses because that was the short road to multitudinous "circulation," with its consequent increase in "advertising patronage."

Most of the newspapers of that time held high standards, and the *Evening Post*, under Mr. Bryant's control, was the most exigent of all in that respect.

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Another thing. The "book notice" had not yet taken the place of the capable and conscientious review. It had not yet occurred to editors generally that the purpose of the literary columns was to induce advertisements from publishers, and that anybody on a newspaper staff who happened to have nothing else to do, or whose capacities were small, might be set to reviewing books, whether he happened to know anything about literature or not.

It was the custom of the better newspapers then, both in New York and elsewhere, to employ as their reviewers men eminent for literary scholarship and eminently capable of literary appreciation. Among the men so employed at that time—to mention only a few by way of example

—were George Ripley, Richard Henry Stoddard, E. P. Whipple, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Charles Dudley Warner, R. R. Bowker, W. C. Wilkinson, Charles F. Briggs, and others of like gifts and accomplishments.

Mr. Bryant himself had exercised this function through long years that won distinction from his work for his newspaper. As advancing years compelled him to relinquish that toil, he surrendered it cautiously into other hands, but in whatever hands it might be, Mr. Bryant followed it more minutely and with a more solicitous interest than he gave to any other part of the newspaper.

[191] At the time when I joined the staff there was a sort of interregnum in the literary department. John R. Thompson, who had held the place of literary editor for some years, was dead, and nobody had been found who could fill the place to Mr. Bryant's satisfaction. There were men who wrote with grace and discretion, and whose familiarity with current literature was adequate, but Mr. Bryant objected that they were altogether men of the present, that they knew little or nothing of the older literature of our language, and hence, as he contended, had no adequate standards of comparison in their minds. Of one who essayed the work he said that his attitude of mind was too flippant, that he cared more for what he himself wrote about books under review than for what the authors of those books had written. Another, he said, lacked generosity of sympathy with halting but sincere literary endeavor, and so on with others.

My own editorial work was exigent at the time and there was added to it the task of finding a satisfactory person to become literary editor. I knew Mr. Bryant very slightly at the time, and I doubt that he knew me at all, in person, but he knew how wide my acquaintance among literary men had become in the course of my experience on *Hearth and Home*, and he bade the managing editor, Mr. Watson R. Sperry, make use of it in the search. In common with most other men in the newspaper business, I regarded the position of literary editor of the *Evening Post* as the most desirable one in American journalism. I frankly told Mr. Sperry that I should myself like the appointment if Mr. Bryant could in any wise be satisfied of my fitness. I was at the time writing all the more important book reviews by way of helping in the emergency.

Mr. Sperry replied that Mr. Bryant had already suggested my appointment, as he was pleased with my work, but that he, Mr. Sperry, did not want to spare me from certain other things that I was doing for him, and further, that he thought the literary editor of the *Evening Post* should be a man whose reputation and position as a recognized man of letters were well established, as mine were not.

[192] I agreed with him in that opinion and went on with my quest. Among those to whom I wrote was Thomas Bailey Aldrich. I set forth to him as attractively as I could, the duties of the place, the dignity attaching to it, the salary it carried, and everything else of a persuasive sort that I could call to mind.

*Aldrich's View of
New York*

For reply Mr. Aldrich wrote that the position was one in every way to be coveted, and added:

"But, my dear Eggleston, what can the paper offer to compensate one for having to live in New York?"

Years afterward I tried to extract from him some apology to New York for that fling, but without success.

One day, while I was still engaged in this fruitless search, Mr. Bryant entered the library—off which my little den opened—and began climbing about on a ladder and turning over books, apparently in search of something.

I volunteered the suggestion that perhaps I could assist him if he would tell me what it was he was trying to find.

"I think not," he answered, taking down another volume from the shelves. Then, as if conscious that his reply might have seemed ungraciously curt, he turned toward me and said:

"I'm looking for a line that I ought to know where to find, but do not."

He gave me the substance of what he sought and fortunately I recognized it as a part of a half-remembered passage in one of Abraham Cowley's poems. I told Mr. Bryant so, and while he sat I found what he wanted. Apparently his concern for it was gone. Instead of looking at the book which I had placed in his hands open at the desired page, he turned upon me and asked:

"How do you happen to know anything about Cowley?"

[193] I explained that as a youth, while idling time away on an old Virginia plantation, where there was a library of old books, as there was on every other ancestral plantation round about, I had fallen to reading all I could find at home or in neighboring houses of the old English literature, of which I had had a maddening taste even as a little boy; that I had read during those plantation summers every old book I could find in any of the neglected libraries round about.

My work for the day lay unfinished on my desk, but Mr. Bryant gave no heed to it. He questioned me concerning my views of this and that in literature, my likes and dislikes, my estimates of classic English works, and of the men who had produced them. Now and then he challenged my opinions and set me to defend them. After a while he took his leave in his usual

*By Order of Mr.
Bryant*

undemonstrative fashion.

"Good-afternoon," was absolutely his only word of parting, and after he had gone I wondered if I had presumed too much in the fearless expression of my opinions or in combating his own, or whether I had offended him in some other way. For I knew him very slightly then and misinterpreted a reticence that was habitual with him—even constitutional, I think. Still less did I understand that during that talk of two hours' duration he had been subjecting me to a rigid examination in English literature.

The *Evening Post* of that afternoon published my review of an important book, which I had tried to treat with the care it deserved. I learned afterwards that the article pleased Mr. Bryant, but whether or not it had any influence upon what followed I do not know. What followed was this: the next day a little before noon, Mr. Sperry came into my den with a laugh and a frown playing tag on his face.

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"Mr. Bryant has just been in," he said. "He walked into my room and said to me: 'Mr. Sperry, I have appointed Mr. Eggleston literary editor. Good-morning, Mr. Sperry.' And with that he left again, giving me no time to say a word. In a way, I'm glad, but I shall miss you from your other work."

I reassured him, telling him I could easily do those parts of that other work for which he most needed me, and so the matter was "arranged to the satisfaction of everybody concerned," as the dueling people used to say when two blustering cowards had apologized instead of shooting each other.

XLIX

Thus began an acquaintance with Mr. Bryant that quickly became as intimate as I suppose any acquaintance with him ever did—or at any rate any acquaintance begun after the midyears of his life. Once in a while I passed a Sunday with him at his Roslyn home, but chiefly such converse as I enjoyed with him was held in the office of the *Evening Post*, and of course it was always of his seeking, as I scrupulously avoided intruding myself upon his attention. Our interviews usually occurred in this way: he would enter the library, which communicated with my little writing room by an open doorway, and after looking over some books, would enter my room and settle himself in a chair, with some remark or question. The conversation thus began would continue for such time as he chose, ten minutes, half an hour, two hours, as his leisure and inclination might determine.

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It was always gentle, always kindly, always that of two persons interested in literature and in all that pertains to what in the culture-slang of this later time is somewhat tiresomely called "uplift." It was always inspiring and clarifying to my mind, always encouraging to me, always richly suggestive on his part, and often quietly humorous in a fashion that is nowhere suggested in any of Mr. Bryant's writings. I have searched them in vain for the smallest trace of the humor he used to inject into his talks with me, and I think I discover in its absence, and in some other peculiarities of his, an explanation of certain misjudgments of him which prevailed during his life and which endure still in popular conception.

The reader may perhaps recall Lowell's criticism of him in "A Fable for Critics." The substance of it was that Mr. Bryant was intensely cold of nature and unappreciative of human things. I wish to bear emphatic witness that nothing could be further from the truth, though Lowell's judgment is the one everywhere accepted.

*Mr. Bryant's
Reserve—Not
Coldness*

The lack of warmth usually attributed to Mr. Bryant, I found to be nothing more than the personal reserve common to New Englanders of culture and refinement, plus an excessive personal modesty and a shyness of self-revelation, and self-intrusion, which is usually found only in young girls just budding into womanhood.

Mr. Bryant shrank from self-assertion even of the most impersonal sort, as I never knew any other human being to do. He cherished his own opinions strongly, but he thrust them upon nobody. His dignity was precious to him, but his only way of asserting it was by withdrawal from any conversation or company that trespassed upon it.

Above all, emotion, to him, was a sacred thing, not to be exploited or even revealed. In ordinary intercourse with his fellow-men he hid it away as one instinctively hides the privacies of the toilet. He could no more lay his feelings bare to common scrutiny than he could have taken his bath in the presence of company.

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In the intimate talks he and I had together during the last half dozen years of his life, he laid aside his reserve, so far as it was possible for a man of his sensitive nature to do, and I found him not only warm in his human sympathies, but even passionate. If we find little of this in his writings, it is only because in what he wrote he was addressing the public, and shyly withholding himself from revelation. Yet there is passion and there is hot blood, even there, as who can deny who has read "The Song of Marion's Men," or his superb interpretation of Homer?

There is a bit of literary history connected with "The Song of Marion's Men," which may be mentioned here as well as anywhere else. The venerable poet one day told me the facts concerning it.

When Mr. Bryant issued the first collected edition of his poems, English publication was very necessary to the success of such a work in America, which was still provincial. Accordingly Mr. Bryant desired English publication. Washington Irving was then living in England, and Mr. Bryant had a slight but friendly acquaintance with him. It was sufficient to justify the poet in asking the great story teller's friendly offices. He sent a copy of his poems to Irving, asking him to secure a London publisher. This Irving did, with no little trouble, and in the face of many obstacles of prejudice, indifference, and the like.

When half the book was in type the publisher sent for Irving in consternation. He had discovered, in "The Song of Marion's Men," the lines:

"The British soldier trembles
When Marion's name is told."

It would never, never do, he explained, for him to publish a book with even the smallest suggestion in it that the British soldier was a man to "tremble" at any danger. It would simply ruin him to publish this direct charge of cowardice against Tommy Atkins.

For the time Irving was at a loss to know what to do. Mr. Bryant was three thousand miles away and the only way of communicating with him was by ocean mails, carried by sailing craft at long intervals, low speed, and uncertain times of arrival. To write to him and get a reply would require a waste of many weeks—perhaps of several months. In his perplexed anxiety to serve his friend, Irving decided to take the liberty of making an entirety innocent alteration in the words, curing them of their offensiveness to British sensitiveness, without in the least altering their significance. Instead of:

*The Irving
Incident*

"The British soldier trembles
When Marion's name is told,"

he made the lines read:

"The foeman trembles in his tent
When Marion's name is told."

"So far as I was concerned," said Mr. Bryant in telling me of the matter, "what Irving did seemed altogether an act of friendly intervention, the more so because the acquaintance between him and me was very slight at that time. He was a warm-hearted man, who in doing a thing of that kind, reckoned upon a slight friendship for justification, as confidently as men of natures less generous might reckon upon a better established acquaintance. He always took comradeship for granted, and where his intentions were friendly and helpful, he troubled himself very little with formal explanations that seemed to him wholly unnecessary. I had asked him to secure the publication of my poems in England, a thing that only his great influence there could have accomplished at that time. He had been at great pains and no little trouble to accomplish my desire. Incidentally, it had become necessary for him either to accept defeat in that purpose or to make that utterly insignificant alteration in my poem. I was grateful to him for doing so, but I did not understand his careless neglect to write to me promptly on the subject. I did not know him then as I afterwards learned to do. The matter troubled me very little or not at all; but possibly I mentioned his inattention in some conversation with Coleman, of the *Evening Post*. I cannot now remember whether I did so or not, but at any rate, Coleman, who was both quick and hot of temper, and often a trifle intemperate in criticism, took the matter up and dealt severely with Irving for having taken the liberty of altering lines of mine without my authority.

"The affair gave rise to the report, which you have perhaps heard—for it persists—that Irving and I quarreled and became enemies. Nothing could be further from the truth. We were friends to the day of his death."

Inasmuch as different versions of the Irving-Bryant affair are extant, it seems proper to say that immediately after the conversation ended I put into writing all that I have here directly quoted from Mr. Bryant. I did not show the record of it to him for verification, for the reason that I knew him to be sensitive on the subject of what he once referred to as "the eagerness of a good many persons to become my literary executors before I am dead." That was said with reference to the irksome attempts a certain distinguished literary hack was making to draw from Mr. Bryant the materials for articles that would sell well whenever the aged poet should die.

After a séance with that distinguished toady one day, Mr. Bryant came to me, in some disturbance of mind, to ask for a volume of verse that I had just reviewed—to soothe his spirit, he said. Then he told me of the visitation he had had, and said:

"I tried to be patient, but I fear I was rude to him at the last. There seemed to be no other way of getting rid of him."

Alas, even rudeness had not baffled the bore; for when Mr. Bryant died the pestilent person published a report of that very interview, putting into the poet's mouth many utterances directly

contrary to Mr. Bryant's oft-expressed opinions.

L

Exigent and solicitous as he was with reference to every utterance in the *Evening Post* concerning literature, Mr. Bryant never interfered with my perfect liberty as literary editor, except in the one matter of the treatment of poets and poetry.

*Mr. Bryant's
Tenderness of
Poets*

"Deal gently—very gently, with the poets," he said to me at the time of my assumption of that office. "Remember always, that the very sensitiveness of soul which makes a man a poet, makes him also peculiarly and painfully susceptible to wounds of the spirit."

I promised to bear his admonition in mind, and I did so, sometimes perhaps to the peril of my soul—certainly at risk of my reputation for critical acumen and perhaps for veracity. One day, however, I encountered a volume of verse so ridiculously false in sentiment, extravagant in utterance, and inane in character, that I could not refrain from poking a little fun at its absurdity. The next day Mr. Bryant came to see me. After passing the time of day, he said:

"Mr. Eggleston, I hope you will not forget my desire that you shall deal gently with the poets."

I replied that I had borne it constantly in mind.

"I don't know," he answered, shaking his head; "what you said yesterday about X. Y. Z.'s volume did not seem to me very gentle."

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"Considered absolutely," I replied, "perhaps it wasn't. But considered in the light of the temptation I was under to say immeasurably severer things, it was mild and gentle in an extreme degree. The man is not a poet, but a fool. He not only hasn't the smallest appreciation of what poetry is or means, but he hasn't the ability to entertain a thought of any kind worthy of presentation in print or in any other way. I should have stultified myself and the *Evening Post* if I had written more favorably of his work than I did. I should never have thought of writing of it at all, but for the *Evening Post's* rule that every book offered here for review must be mentioned in some way in the literary columns. Here is the book. I wish you would glance at the alleged poems and tell me how I could have said anything concerning them of a more considerably favorable character than what in fact I printed."

He took the book from my hand and looked it over. Then he laid it on my desk, saying:

"It is indeed pretty bad. Still, I have always found that it is possible to find something good to say about a poet's work."

A little later a still worse case came to my lot. It was a volume of "verse," with no sense at all in it, without even rhythm to redeem it, and with an abundance of "rhymes" that were not easily recognizable even as assonances. It was clumsily printed and "published" at some rural newspaper office, and doubtless at the expense of the author. Finally the cover attempt at decoration had resulted in a grotesque combination of incompatible colors and inconsequent forms. In brief, the thing was execrably, hopelessly, irredeemably bad all over and clear through.

I was puzzling over the thing, trying to "find something good to say" of it, when Mr. Bryant came into my den. I handed him the volume, saying:

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"I wish you would help me with a suggestion, Mr. Bryant. I'm trying to find something good that I can say of that thing, and I can't—for of course you do not want me to write lies."

"Lies? Of course not. But you can always find something good in every volume of poems, something that can be truthfully commended."

"In this case I can't regard the sprawlings of ill-directed aspiration as poems," I replied, "and it seems to me a legitimate function of criticism to say that they are not poems but idiotic drivel—to discriminate between poetry in its unworthiest form and things like that. However, the man calls his stuff poetry. I wish you would help me find something good that I may say of it without lying."

He took the book and looked through it. Finally he said:

*Commending a
Cover*

"It is pretty sorry stuff, to be sure. It is even idiotic, and it doesn't suggest poetic appreciation or poetic impulse or poetic perception on the part of its author. Still, the man aspires to recognition as a poet, and he is doubtless sensitively conscious of his own shortcomings. Let us deal gently with him."

"But what can I say, Mr. Bryant?"

"Well, of course, there is nothing *inside* the book that you can praise," he answered, "but you might commend the cover—no, that is an affront to taste and intelligence,"—looking it over with an expression of disgust—"but at any rate you can commend the publishers for *putting it on well*."

With that—apparently dreading further questioning—he left the room. I proceeded to review the book by saying simply that the cover was put on so strongly that even the most persistent and long continued enjoyment or critical study of the text was not likely to detach or loosen it.

[202] I am disposed to think that Mr. Bryant's excessive tenderness toward poets was lavished chiefly upon the weaklings of that order. For a little while later a poet of genuine inspiration, who afterwards did notable work, put forward his first volume of verse. I found an abundance of good things to say about it, but there was one line in one of his poems that was so ridiculously inconsequent and absurd, that I could not refrain from poking fun at it. I am convinced that the poet in question, with his larger experience and the development that afterward came to his critical faculties, would not have permitted that line to stand if it had occurred in a poem of a later period. It appealed to him then by its musical quality, which was distinctly marked, but when subjected to the simplest analysis it was obvious and arrant nonsense.

Mr. Bryant was interested in the review I wrote of the volume, and in talking with me about it, he distinctly chuckled over my destructive analysis of the offending line. There was no suggestion in what he said, that he regarded the criticism as in the least a transgression of his injunction to "deal gently with the poets."

Unfortunately, the poet criticised seemed less tolerant of the criticism. He was a personal friend of my own, but when next I saw him his mood was that of one cruelly injured, and for many years thereafter he manifested this sense of injury whenever he and I met. I think he afterward forgave me, for we later became the best of friends, and I am glad to believe there was no rancor in his heart toward me when he died a little while ago.

In these cases I was at a peculiar disadvantage—though I think it not at all an unjust one—in every indulgence in anything like adverse criticism. I may best explain this, perhaps, by telling of an incident that happened soon after I assumed my position. I had been lucky enough to

*Anonymous
Criticism*

[203] secure from Richard Henry Stoddard a very brilliant review of a certain book which he was peculiarly the fittest man in all the land to write about. I had the review in type, when I mentioned to Mr. Bryant my good fortune in securing it.

"Is it signed?" he asked in his gentlest manner.

I answered that it was not, for the reason that Stoddard was under a certain assertion of obligation which he refused to recognize but which I could not ask him to repudiate, not to write things of that character for other than a particular publication.

"Then I request that you shall not use it," said Mr. Bryant.

"But really, Mr. Bryant, there is not the smallest obligation upon him in the matter. He is perfectly free——"

"It is not of that that I was thinking," he interrupted. "That is a matter between him and his own conscience, and you and I have nothing whatever to do with it. My objection to your use of the article is that *I regard an anonymous literary criticism as a thing quite as despicable, unmanly, and cowardly as an anonymous letter*. It is something that no honorable man should write, and no honorably conducted newspaper should publish."

"But my own reviews in the *Evening Post* are all of them anonymous," I suggested.

[204] "Not at all," he answered. "When you were appointed literary editor the fact was communicated to every publisher in the country. I directed that and saw that it was done, so that every publisher and, through the publishers, every author, should know that every literary criticism in the *Evening Post* was your utterance. In veritable effect, therefore, everything you print in our literary columns is signed, just as every critical article in the great British reviews is. When Jeffrey ridiculed 'Hours of Idleness,' and later, when he seriously criticised 'Cain,' Byron had no need to inquire who his critic was. The work was responsibly done, as such work should be in every case. The reasons seem to me obvious enough. In the first place, anonymous literary criticism may easily become a cowardly stabbing in the back under cover of darkness. In the second place, the reader of such criticism has no means of knowing what value to place upon it. He cannot know whether the critic is a person competent or incompetent, one to whose opinions he should defer or one whose known incapacity would prompt him to dismiss them as unworthy of consideration because of their source. In the third place, anonymous literary criticism opens wide the door of malice on the one hand, and of undue favoritism on the other. It is altogether despicable, and it is dangerous besides. I will have none of it on the *Evening Post*."

I suggested that I had myself read the book that Stoddard had reviewed, and that I was ready to accept his criticism as my own and to hold myself responsible for it.

"Very well," he replied. "In that case you may print it as your own, but I had much rather you had written it yourself."

I have often meditated upon these things since, and I have found abundant reason to adopt Mr. Bryant's view that an anonymous literary criticism is as despicable as an anonymous letter. About a year ago I was startled by the utterance of precisely the same thought in nearly identical words, by Professor Brander Matthews. I was sitting between him and Mr. Howells at a banquet given by Colonel William C. Church to the surviving writers for that best and most literary of American magazines, *The Galaxy*, and when Matthews uttered the thought I turned to Mr.

Howells and asked him what his opinion was.

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"I have never formulated my thought on that question, even in my own mind," he replied. "I don't know how far it would be just to judge others in the matter, but for myself, I think I never wrote a literary criticism that was not avowedly or ascertainably my own. Without having thought of the ethical question involved, my own impulse is to shrink from the idea of striking in the dark or from behind a mask."

LI

On one occasion Mr. Bryant's desire to "deal gently with the poets" led to an amusing embarrassment. Concerning a certain volume of verse "made in Ohio" and published by its author, I had written that "this is the work of a man who seems to have an alert appreciation of the poetic side of things, but whose gift of poetic interpretation and literary expression is distinctly a minus quantity."

*A Thrifty Poet's
Plan*

Soon afterward Mr. Bryant entered my den with an open letter in his hand and a look of pained perplexity on his face.

"What am I to do with that?" he asked, handing me the letter to read.

I read it. The poet, knowing Mr. Bryant to be the editor of the *Evening Post*, evidently supposed that he wrote everything that appeared in the columns of that newspaper. Assuming that Mr. Bryant had written the review of his book, he wrote asking that he might be permitted to use the first half of my sentence as an advertisement, with Mr. Bryant's name signed to it. To facilitate matters he had prepared, on a separate sheet, a transcript of the words:

"This is the work of a man who seems to have an alert appreciation of the poetic side of things."

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This he asked Mr. Bryant to sign and return to him for use as an advertisement, explaining that "Your great name will help me to sell my book, and I need the money. It cost me nearly two hundred dollars to get the book out, and so far I haven't been able to sell more than twenty-seven copies of it, though I have canvassed three counties at considerable expense for food, lodging, and horse-feed."

I saw how seriously distressed Mr. Bryant was by this appeal, and volunteered to answer the letter myself, by way of relieving him. I answered it, but I did not report the nature of my answer to Mr. Bryant, for the reason that in my personal letter I dealt by no means "gently" with this particular poet.

For the further distraction of Mr. Bryant's mind from a matter that distressed him sorely, I told him of the case in which a thrifty and shifty London publisher turned to good advertising account one of the *Saturday Review's* most murderous criticisms. The *Review* had written:

"There is much that is good in this book, and much that is new. But that which is good is not new, and that which is new is not good."

The publisher, in his advertisements, made display of the sentence: "There is much that is good in this book, and much that is new.—*Saturday Review.*"

One thing leads to another in conversation and I went on—by way of the further diversion of Mr. Bryant's mind—to illustrate the way in which the *Saturday Review*, like many other publications, sometimes ruined its richest utterances by dilution. I cited a case in which that periodical had begun a column review of a wishy-washy book by saying:

"This is milk for babes, with water superadded. The milk is pure and the water is pure, but the diet is not invigorating."

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As a bit of destructive criticism, this was complete and perfect. But the writer spoiled it by going on to write a column of less trenchant matter, trampling, as it were, and quite needlessly, upon the corpse of the already slain offender.

The habit of assuming that the distinguished editor of a newspaper writes everything of consequence that appears in its columns, is not confined to rural poets in Ohio, as three occurrences during my service on the *Evening Post* revealed to me.

When a great Poe celebration was to be held in Baltimore, on the occasion of the unveiling of a monument or something of that kind, Mr. Bryant was earnestly urged to send something to be read on the occasion and published as a part of the proceedings. He had no stomach for the undertaking. It was said among those who knew him best that his personal feelings toward Poe's memory were of a bitterly antagonistic kind. However that may be—and I do not know whether it was true or not—he was resolute in his determination to have no part or lot in this Poe celebration. In reply to the urgent invitations sent him, he wrote a carefully

*Mr. Bryant and
My Poe Article*

colorless note, excusing himself on the plea of "advancing age."

When the day of the celebration came, however, I wrote a long, critical appreciation of Poe, with an analysis of his character, borrowed mainly from what Charles F. Briggs had said to me. My article was published as an editorial in the *Evening Post*, and straightway half a dozen prominent newspapers in different cities reprinted it under the headline of "William Cullen Bryant's Estimate of Poe."

Fearing that Mr. Bryant might be seriously annoyed at being thus made responsible for an "estimate of Poe" which he had been at pains not to write, I went to his room to speak with him about the matter.

[208] "Don't let it trouble you, my dear boy," he said in his most patient manner. "We are both paying the penalty of journalistic anonymity. I am held responsible for utterances not my own, and you are robbed of the credit due you for a very carefully written article."

Again, on the occasion of Longfellow's seventieth birthday, Mr. Bryant resisted all entreaties for any utterance—even the briefest—from him. I was assigned to write the necessary editorial article, and when it appeared, one of the foremost newspapers in the country reprinted it as "One Great Poet's Tribute to Another," and in an introductory paragraph explained that, while the article was not signed, it was obviously from Mr. Bryant's pen.

During the brief time that I remained on the *Evening Post's* staff after Mr. Carl Schurz became its editor, I wrote a rather elaborate review of Colonel Theodore Dodge's book, "The Campaign of Chancellorsville." The *Springfield Republican* reprinted it prominently, saying that it had special importance as "the comment of General Schurz on a campaign in which he had borne a conspicuous part."

When it was given out that Martin Farquhar Tupper intended to visit America during the Centennial Exposition of 1876, I wrote a playful article about the "Proverbial Philosophy" man and handed it to the managing editor for publication as a humorous editorial. Mr. Sperry was amused by the article, but distressingly perplexed by apprehensions concerning it. He told me of the difficulty. It seems that some years before that time, during a visit to England, Mr. Bryant had been very hospitably entertained by Tupper, wherefore Sperry feared that Mr. Bryant might dislike the publication of the article. At the same time he was reluctant to lose the fun of it.

*A Tupper
Trepidation*

[209] "Why not submit the question to Mr. Bryant himself?" I suggested, and as Mr. Bryant entered at that moment Sperry acted upon the suggestion.

Mr. Bryant read the article with many manifestations of amusement, but when he had finished he said:

"I heartily wish, Mr. Sperry, you had printed this without saying a word to me about it, for then, when Mr. Tupper becomes my guest, as he will if he comes to America, I could have explained to him that the thing was done without my knowledge by one of the flippant young men of my staff. Now that you have brought the matter to my attention, I can make no excuse."

Sperry pleaded that Tupper's coming was not at all a certainty, adding:

"And at any rate, he will not be here for several months to come, and he'll never know that the article was published or written."

"Oh, yes he will," responded Mr. Bryant. "Some damned, good-natured friend will be sure to bring it to his attention."

As Mr. Bryant never swore, the phrase was of course a quotation.

LII

There has been a deal of nonsense written and published with respect to Mr. Bryant's *Index Expurgatorius*, a deal of arrogance, and much cheap and ill-informed wit of a certain "superior" sort expended upon it. So far as I have seen these comments, they have all been founded upon ignorance of the facts and misconception of Mr. Bryant's purpose.

[210] In the first place, Mr. Bryant never published the index and never intended it to be an expression of his views with respect to linguistic usage. He prepared it solely for office use, and it was meant only to check certain tendencies of the time so far as the *Evening Post* was concerned. The reporters on more sensational newspapers had come to call every big fire a "carnival of flame," every formal dinner a "banquet," and to indulge in other verbal exaggerations and extravagances of like sort. Mr. Bryant catalogued these atrocities in his *Index* and forbade their use on the *Evening Post*.

He was an intense conservative as to the English language, and his conscience was exceedingly alert to preserve it in its purity, so far as it was within his power to do so. Accordingly he ruled

out of *Evening Post* usage a number of things that were creeping into the language to its corruption, as he thought. Among these were the use of "numerous" where "many" was meant, the use of "people" for "persons," "monthly" for "monthly magazine," "paper" for "newspaper," and the like. He objected to the phrase "those who," meaning "those persons who," and above all his soul revolted against the use of "such" as an adverb—as in the phrase "such ripe strawberries" which, he contended, should be "so ripe strawberries" or "strawberries so ripe." The fact that Webster's and Worcester's dictionaries recognized many of the condemned usages, made not the smallest impression on his mind.

"He must be a poor scholar," he once said in my hearing, "who cannot go behind the dictionaries for his authority."

We had a copy of Johnson's dictionary in the office, and it was the only authority of that kind I ever knew Mr. Bryant to consult. Even in consulting that he gave small attention to the formal definitions. He searched at once the passages quoted from classic English literature as illustrations of usage, and if these did not justify the particular locution under consideration, he rejected and condemned it.

[211] For another thing, the *Index* as it has been quoted for purposes of cheap ridicule, held much that Mr. Bryant did not put into it, and for which he was in no way responsible. The staff of the *Evening Post* was composed mainly of educated men, and each of them was free to add to the *Index* such prohibitions as seemed to him desirable. Some of these represented mere crotchets, but they were all intended to aid in that conservation of English undefiled which was so dear a purpose to Mr. Bryant.

Mr. Bryant's
"Index"

In the main the usages condemned by the *Index* were deserving of condemnation, but in some respects the prohibitions were too strait-laced, too negligent of the fact that a living language grows and that usages unknown to one generation may become altogether good in another. Again some of the prohibitions were founded upon a too strict regard for etymology, in forgetfulness of the fact that words often change or modify and sometimes even reverse their original significance. As an example, Shakespeare uses the expression "fearful adversaries," meaning badly scared adversaries, and that is, of course, the etymological significance of the word. Yet we now universally use it in a precisely opposite sense, meaning that the things called "fearful" are such as fill us with fear.

Finally, it is to be said that Mr. Bryant neither intended nor attempted to enforce the *Index* arbitrarily, or even to impose its restrictions upon any but the least educated and least experienced of the writers who served his newspaper. I used to violate it freely, and one day I mentioned the fact to Mr. Bryant. He replied:

"My dear Mr. Eggleston, the *Index* was never intended to interfere with scholarly men who know how to write good English. It is meant only to restrain the inconsiderate youngsters and start them in right paths."

[212] His subordinates were less liberal in their interpretation of the matter. The man whose duty it was to make clippings from other newspapers to be reprinted in the *Evening Post*, was expected so to edit and alter them as to bring them within *Index* requirements, and sometimes the alterations were so considerable as to make of the extracts positive misquotations. I have often wondered that none of the newspapers whose utterances were thus "edited" out of their original forms and still credited to them ever complained of the liberties taken with the text. But so far as I know none of them ever did.

When Mr. Bryant and I were talking of the *Index* and of the license I had to violate it judiciously, he smilingly said to me:

"After all a misuse of words is sometimes strangely effective. In the old days when I wrote more for the editorial columns than I do now, I had a friend who was deeply interested in all matters of public concern, and whose counsel I valued very highly because of the abounding common sense that always inspired it. His knowledge of our language was defective, but he was unconscious of the fact, and he boldly used words as he understood them, without the smallest fear of criticism before his eyes. Once when some subject of unusual public importance was under popular consideration, I wrote a long and very careful article concerning it. I did my best to set forth every consideration that in any wise bore upon it, and to make clear and emphatic what I regarded as the marrow of the matter. My friend was deeply interested, and came to talk with me on the subject.

[213] "'That is a superb article of yours, Mr. Bryant,' he said, 'but it will do no manner of good.' I asked him why, and he answered: 'Because you have exhausted the subject, and won't come back to it. That never accomplishes anything. If you want to produce an effect you must keep hammering at the thing. I tell you, Mr. Bryant, it is *reirritation* that does the business.'

An Effective
Blunder in
English

"I thought the matter over and saw that he was right, not only in his idea but still more in the word he had mistakenly chosen for its expression. In such cases it is not only reiteration, but *reirritation* that is effective."

There are other indexes in other newspaper offices. Those of them that I have seen represent

crass ignorance quite as often as scholarship. One of them absolutely forbids the use of the pronoun "which." Another which I saw some years ago, put a ban on the conjunctions "and" and "but." This prohibition, I am informed, was designed to compel the use of short sentences—a very desirable thing, of course, but one which may easily be pushed to extremes. Imagine a reporter having to state that "X and Y were caught in the act of firing a tenement house, and arrested by two policemen, officers A and B, but that X escaped on the way to the station-house after knocking policeman B down and seriously if not fatally injuring him." If the reader will try to make that simple statement without the use of the four "ands" and the one "but" in the sentence, he will have a realizing sense of the difficulty the writers on that newspaper must have had in their efforts to comply with the requirements of the index.

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In still another case the unscholarly maker of the index, having learned that it is incorrect to say "on to-day," "on yesterday," and "on to-morrow," has made a blanket application of what he has mistaken for a principle, and has decreed that his writers shall not say "on the fourth of March" or "on Wednesday of next week," or anything else of the kind. The ignorance shown in that case is not merely a manifestation of a deficient scholarship; it means that the maker of the index knew so little of grammar as not to know the difference between an adverb and a noun. Yet every one of the newspapers enforcing these ignorant index requirements has made fun of Mr. Bryant's scholarly prohibitions.

Reserved, dignified, self-conscious as he was, Mr. Bryant was always a democrat of the proud old conservative sort. He never descended to undue familiarity with anybody. He patted nobody on the back, and I have never been able to imagine what would have happened if anybody had taken familiar liberties of that kind with him. Certainly nobody ever ventured to find out by practical experiment. He never called even the youngest man on his staff by his given name or by his surname without the prefix "Mr."

In that respect he differed radically and, to my mind, pleasingly from another distinguished democrat.

When Mr. Cleveland was for the third time a candidate for the Presidency, I called on him by Mr. Pulitzer's request just before sailing for Paris, where Mr. Pulitzer was then living. I entered the reception room at his hotel quarters and sent in my card. Mr. Cleveland came out promptly and greeted me with the exclamation:

"Why, hello, Eggleston! How are you? I'm glad to see you."

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There was no harm in it, I suppose, but it disagreeably impressed me as the greeting of a politician rather than that of a distinguished statesman who had been President of the United States and hoped to be so again. Had I been an intimate personal friend who could say "Hello, Cleveland!" in response, I should have accepted his greeting as a manifestation of cordiality and good-fellowship. I was in fact only slightly acquainted with him, and in view of all the circumstances his familiarity of address impressed me as boorish. Years afterwards I learned how easy it was for him to do boorish things—how much restraint, indeed, he found it necessary to impose upon himself in order to avoid the doing of boorish things.

But while Mr. Bryant never indulged in undue familiarity with anybody, he never lost sight of the dignity of those with whom he conversed, and above all, he never suffered shams to obscure his perception of realities. One Sunday at his home in Roslyn he told me the story of his abrupt leaving of England during a journey to Europe. I will tell it here as nearly as possible in his own words.

*Mr. Bryant on
British
Snobbishness*

"English society," he said, "is founded upon shams, falsehoods, and arrogant pretenses, and the falsehoods are in many ways insulting not only to the persons whom they directly affect, but to the intelligence and manhood of the casual observer who happens to have an honest and sincere mind. When I was over there I was for a time the guest of a wealthy manufacturer, a man of education, refinement, and culture, whose house in the country was an altogether delightful place to visit and whose personality I found unusually pleasing. One day as he and I were walking through his grounds a man came up on horseback and my host introduced us. It seems he was the head of one of the great 'county families,' as they call themselves and are called by others. He explained that he was on his way to my host's house to call upon me, wherefore we turned back in his company. During the call he asked me to be his guest at dinner on a day named, and I accepted, he saying that he would have a number of 'the best county people' to meet me. As the evening of the dinner day approached, I asked my host: 'When shall we dress for the dinner?' He looked at his watch and replied: 'It is time for *you* to begin dressing now.' I observed the stress he laid upon the word 'you' and asked: 'Isn't it time for you, also?'

"'Oh, I am not invited,' he replied.

"'Not invited? Why, what can you mean?' I asked.

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"'Why, of course I'm not invited. Those are county people and I am only a manufacturer—a man in trade. They would never think of inviting me to dinner.'

"I was surprised and shocked.

"'Do you mean to tell me,' I asked, 'that that man came into your house where I am a guest, and invited me to dinner, to meet his friends, without including you, my host, in the invitation?'

"Why, yes, of course,' he replied. 'You must remember that they are county families, aristocrats, while I am a man in trade. They would not think of inviting me, and I should never expect it.'

"I was full of disgust and indignation. I asked my host to let one of his servants carry a note for me to the great man's house.

"But why?' he asked. 'You will be going over there yourself within the hour.'

"I am not going,' I replied. 'I will not be a party to so gross an affront to my host. I shall send a note, not of apology but of unexplained declination.'

"I did so, and as soon thereafter as I could arrange it, I quitted England in disgust with a social system so false, so arbitrary, and so arrogant that one may not even behave like a gentleman without transgressing its most insistent rules of social exclusiveness.

"The worst of the matter was the meek submissiveness of my host to the affront put upon him. He was shocked and distressed that I should decline to go to the dinner. He could not understand that the smallest slight had been put upon him, and I could not make him understand it. That showed how completely saturated the English mind is with the virus of arbitrary caste. I am told that there has been some amelioration of all this during recent years. I do not know how much it amounts to. But did you ever hear an English *grande dame* crush the life out of a sweet and innocent young girl by calling her 'that young person'? If not, you cannot imagine what measureless contempt can be put into a phrase, or how much of cruelty and injustice may be wrought by the utterance of three words."

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LIII

During my service as a literary editor, I held firmly to the conviction that the function of the newspaper book reviewer is essentially a news function; that it is not his business to instruct other people as to how they should write, or to tell them how they ought to have written, but rather to tell readers what they have written and how; to show forth the character of each book reviewed in such fashion that the reader shall be able to decide for himself whether or not he wishes to buy and read it, and that in the main this should be done in a helpful and generously appreciative spirit, and never carpingly, with intent to show the smartness of the reviewer—a cheap thing at best. The space allotted to book reviews in any newspaper is at best wholly insufficient for anything like adequate criticism, and very generally the reviewer is a person imperfectly equipped for the writing of such criticism.

*The Newspaper
Critic's Function*

In accordance with this conception of my functions, I always held the news idea in mind. I was alert to secure advance sheets of important books, in order that the *Evening Post* might be the first of newspapers to tell readers about them.

Usually the publishers were ready and eager to give the *Evening Post* these opportunities, though the literary editors of some morning newspapers bitterly complained of what they regarded as favoritism when I was able to anticipate them. On one very notable occasion, however, great pains were taken by the publishers to avoid all grounds of complaint. When Tennyson's "Harold" was published in 1876, there had been no previous announcement of its coming. The greatest secrecy, indeed, had been maintained. Neither in England nor in America had any hint been given that any poem by Tennyson was presently forthcoming. On the day of publication, precisely at noon, copies of "Harold" were laid upon the desks of all the literary editors in England and America.

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My book reviews for that day were already in type and in the forms. One hour later the first edition of the paper—the latest into which book reviews could go—must go to press. I knew that my good friends, the literary editors of the morning newspapers, would exploit this great literary news the next morning, and that the evening papers would have it in the afternoon following. I resolved to be ahead of all of them.

I hurriedly sent for the foreman of the composing room and enlisted his coöperation. With the aid of my scissors I got two columns of matter ready, consisting mainly of quotations hastily clipped from the book, with a connective tissue of comment, and with an introductory paragraph or two giving the first news of the publication of an important and very ambitious dramatic poem by Tennyson.

At one o'clock the *Evening Post* went to press with this literary "beat" displayed upon its first page. It proved to be the first announcement of the poem's publication either in England or in America, and it appeared twelve or fifteen hours in advance of any other publication either by advertisement or otherwise.

On that occasion I tried to draw from Mr. Bryant some expression of opinion regarding Tennyson's work and the place he would probably occupy among English poets when the last word should be said

*Mr. Bryant and
His*

concerning him. I thought to use the new poem and a certain coincidence connected with it—presently to be mentioned—as a means of drawing some utterance of opinion from him. It was of no avail. In reply to my questioning, Mr. Bryant said:

"It is too soon to assign Tennyson to his permanent place in literature. He may yet do things greater than any that he has done. And besides, we are too near to judge his work, except tentatively. You remember Solon's dictum—'Call no man happy until death.' It is especially unsafe to attempt a final judgment upon the works of a poet while the glamor of them is still upon us. Moreover, I have never been a critic. I should distrust any critical judgment of my own."

That reminded me that I had never heard Mr. Bryant express his opinion with regard to the work of any modern poet, living or dead. The nearest approach to anything of the kind that I can recall was in a little talk I had with him when I was about leaving for Boston to attend the breakfast given in celebration of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes's seventieth year. The subject of Holmes's work arose naturally, and in talking of it Mr. Bryant said:

"After all, it is as a novelist chiefly that I think of him."

"You are thinking of 'Elsie Venner'?" I asked.

"No,—of 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,'" he answered. "Few persons care for anything in that except the witty wisdom of it, and I suppose Dr. Holmes wrote it for the sake of that. But there is a sweet love story in the book—hidden like a bird in a clump of obtrusively flowering bushes. It is a sweet, wholesome story, and the heroine of it is a very natural and very lovable young woman."

The coincidence referred to above was this. Almost exactly at the time of the publication of Tennyson's "Harold," some American whose name I have forgotten, to my regret, brought out a dramatic poem on the same subject, with the same hero, and in a closely similar form. It was entitled "The Son of Godwin," and, unless my memory plays me a trick, it was a work of no little merit. It was completely overshadowed, of course, by Tennyson's greater performance, but it had enough of virility and poetic quality in it to tempt me to write a carefully studied comparison of the two works.

While Mr. Bryant shrank from the delivery of opinions concerning the moderns, his judgments of the older writers of English literature were fully formed and very positive. He knew the classic literature of our language—and especially its poetic literature—more minutely, more critically, and more appreciatively than any other person I have ever known, and he often talked instructively and inspiringly on the subject.

On one of those periodically recurring occasions when the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare's works is clamorously contended for by ill-balanced enthusiasts, Mr. Bryant asked me if I had it in mind to write anything about the controversy. I told him I had not, unless he particularly wished me to do so.

"On the contrary," he answered; "I particularly wish otherwise. It is a sheer waste of good brain tissue to argue with persons who, having read anything avowedly written by Bacon, are still able to persuade themselves that the least poetical and most undramatic of writers could have written the most poetical and most dramatic works that exist in any language."

"It seems to me," I answered, "that the trouble with such persons is that they are futilely bothering their brains in an attempt to account for the unaccountable. Shakespeare was a genius, and genius is a thing that can in nowise be measured, or weighed, or accounted for, while genius itself accounts for anything and everything it may do. It is subject to no restrictions, amenable to no law, and restrained by no limitations whatsoever."

"That is an excellent way of putting an obvious truth," he answered. "I wish you would write it down precisely as you have uttered it orally, and print it as the *Evening Post's* sole comment upon the controversy."

Then he sat musing for a time, and after a while added:

"Genius exists in varying degrees in different men. In Shakespeare it was supreme, all-inspiring, all-controlling. In lesser men it manifests itself less conspicuously and less constantly, but not less positively. No other poet who ever lived could have written Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' yet Coleridge could no more have written 'Hamlet' or 'Macbeth' or 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' than any child in pinafores could. When poetry is genuine, it is inspired, as truly as any sacred Scripture ever was. Without inspiration there may be cleverness, beauty, and grandeur in metrical composition, but genuine poetry is the result of inspiration always, and inspiration is genius."

"Whence comes the inspiration?" I ventured to ask, hoping to draw something further from him.

"I do not know," he answered. "Whence comes the color of the rose or the violet or the dandelion? I am not a theologian, to dogmatize about things that are beyond the ken of human intelligence. I only know that the inspiration is there, just as I know that the colors of the flowers are there—in both cases because the thing perceived is obvious."

One day I asked Mr. Bryant about "Thanatopsis." When I made my first acquaintance with that poem in a school reader, it was printed with some introductory lines in smaller type, and I had never been able to discover the relation of those lines to the poem or to the thought that inspired it.

*Genius and
"Thanatopsis"*

[222] In answer to my questions Mr. Bryant explained that the lines in question really had no relation to the poem and no possible connection with it.

"I was a mere boy," he said, "when 'Thanatopsis' was written. It bore no title in my manuscript—that was supplied by an editor who knew Greek, a language of which I did not then know even the alphabet. My father got possession of the poem, took it to Boston, and had it published, all without my knowledge. With the manuscript of it he found some other lines of mine and assumed that they belonged to the poem, as they did not. The editor printed them at top in smaller type, and they got into the schoolbooks in that way. That is the whole story."

LIV

During my service on the *Evening Post*, I made a curious blunder which circumstances rendered it necessary for others to exploit. The thing grievously annoyed me at the time, but later it only amused me as an illustration of a psychological principle.

Mr. Richard Grant White, writing in some newspaper or magazine in opposition to the proposed adoption of the metric system of weights and measures, had made an amusing blunder. He wrote that the old system was so fixed in men's minds as to admit of no possible mistake. He added something like this:

"Nobody has any difficulty in remembering that two gills make one pint, two pints one quart, four quarts one gallon, etc."

[223] I cannot pretend to quote his utterance exactly, but that is the substance of it, the marrow of the matter being that in the very act of showing that nobody could have the least trouble in remembering the table of liquid measure, he himself got it wrong.

The derisive comments of all the newspapers upon his blunder may be easily imagined. For reply he invented a word of Greek derivation, "heterophemy." He contended that it was a common thing for one to speak or write one thing when quite another thing was in his mind, and when the speaker or writer perfectly knew the thing he sought to say. He explained that when the mind has once slipped into an error of that kind it is usually unable, or at least unlikely, to detect it in the revision of proofs, or in any other survey of the utterance. His exposition was very learned, very ingenious, and very interesting, but it had no effect in silencing the newspaper wags, who at once adopted his newly-coined word, "heterophemy," and made it the butt of many jests.

*A Case of
Heterophemy*

About that time Mr. Alexander H. Stephens published in one of the more dignified periodicals of the time—the *North American Review*, perhaps—a very learned essay in which he sought to fix the authorship of the letters of Junius upon Sir Philip Francis. Mr. Stephens brought to the discussion a ripe scholarship and a deal of fresh and original thought that gave importance to his paper, and I reviewed it in the *Evening Post* as carefully and as fully as if it had been a book.

I was deeply concerned to have my review of so important a paper in all respects the best I could make it, and to that end I read my proofs twice, with minute attention, as I thought, to every detail.

[224] The next day, if I remember correctly, was Sunday. At any rate, it was a day on which I remained at home. When I opened my morning newspapers, the first thing that attracted my attention was a letter in one of them from Richard Grant White, of which my article was the subject. Here, he said, was a conspicuous and unmistakable example of heterophemy, which could not be attributed to ignorance or inattention or anything else, except precisely that tendency of the human mind which he had set forth as the source of mistakes otherwise unaccountable. He went on to say that mine was an article founded upon adequate scholarship and evidently written with unusual care; that its writer obviously knew his subject and had written of it with the utmost attention to accuracy of statement in every detail; that he had evidently read his proofs carefully as not a slip appeared in the printed copy of the article, not even so much as a typographical error; and yet that in two or three instances this careful critic had written "Sir Philip Sidney" instead of "Sir Philip Francis." He pointed out that these slips could not have been due to any possible confusion in my mind of two Sir Philips who lived two hundred years apart, chronologically, and whose careers were as wholly unlike as it was possible to conceive; for, he pointed out, my article itself bore ample witness to my familiarity with Sir Philip Francis's history. Here, Mr. White insisted, was the clearest possible case of heterophemy, untainted by even a possible suspicion of ignorance or confusion of mind. Further, he urged, the case illustrated and confirmed his contention that, having written a word or name or phrase not intended, the writer is extremely unlikely to discover the slip even in the most careful reading of

proofs. For in this case every appearance indicated a careful proofreading on the part of the author of the article.

[225] When I read Mr. White's letter I simply could not believe that I had made the slips he attributed to me. Certainly there was no confusion in my mind of Sir Philip Francis with Sir Philip Sidney. I was familiar with the very different histories of the two altogether dissimilar men, and it seemed inconceivable to me that I had written the name of the one for that of the other even once in an article in which the right name was written perhaps a dozen times.

It was a troubled and unhappy "day off" for me. I had no copy of the *Evening Post* of the preceding day in the house, and a diligent inquiry at all the news-stands in the remote quarter of Brooklyn in which I then lived, failed to discover one. But as I thought of the matter in troubled fashion, I became more and more convinced that Mr. White had misread what I had written, in which case I anticipated a good deal of fun in exposing and exploiting his error. As the day waned I became positively certain in my mind that no such mistake had been made, that no mention of Sir Philip Sidney could by any possibility have crept into my article concerning Sir Philip Francis.

*Richard Grant
White's Triumph*

But when I arrived at the office of the *Evening Post* next morning, I found the facts to be as Mr. White had represented them. I had written "Sir Philip Francis" throughout the article, except in two or three places, where the name appeared as "Sir Philip Sidney." I was so incredulous of the blunder that I went to the composing room and secured my manuscript. The error was there in the written copy. I asked the chief proofreader why he had not observed and queried it in view of the fact that my use of the name had been correct in most instances, but he was unable to offer any explanation except that his mind had accepted the one name for the other. The foreman of the composing room, a man of education and large literary knowledge, had read the proofs merely as a matter of interest, but he had not observed the error. I had no choice but to accept Mr. Richard Grant White's interpretation of the matter and call it a case of heterophemy.

[226] There are blunders made that are not so easily accounted for. A leading New York newspaper once complained of Mr. Cleveland's veto messages as tiresome and impertinent, and asked why he persisted in setting forth his reasons for disapproving acts of Congress, instead of sending them back disapproved without reasons.

The *Evening Post* found it necessary to direct the newspaper's attention to the fact that the Constitution of the United States expressly requires the President, in vetoing a measure, to set forth his reasons for doing so. In a like forgetfulness of Constitutional provisions for safeguarding the citizen, the same newspaper complained of the police, when Tweed escaped and went into hiding, for not searching every house in New York till the malefactor should be found. It was Parke Godwin who cited the Constitution in answer to that manifestation of ignorance, and he did it with the strong hand of a master to whom forgetfulness of the fundamental law seemed not only inexcusable, on the part of a newspaper writer, but dangerous to liberty as well.

Perhaps the worst case I ever knew of ignorance assuming the critical functions of expert knowledge, was one which occurred some years later. William Hamilton Gibson published a superbly illustrated work, which won commendation everywhere for the exquisite perfection of the drawings, both in gross and in minute detail. A certain art critic who had made a good deal of noise in the world by his assaults upon the integrity of art treasures in the Metropolitan Museum, assailed Gibson's work in print. Finding nothing in the illustrations that he could criticise, he accused Gibson of sailing under false colors and claiming credit for results that were not of his creation. He said that nearly everything of value in the illustrations of Gibson's book was the work not of the artist but of the engraver who, he declared, had "added increment after increment of value" to the crude original drawings.

[227] In a brief letter to the newspaper which had printed this destructive criticism without its writer's name appended to it, Mr. Gibson had only to direct attention to the fact that the pictures in question were not engravings at all, but slavish photographic reproductions of his original drawings, and that no engraver had had anything whatever to do with them.

*The Demolition
of a Critic*

The criticism to which so conclusive a reply was possible was anonymous, and its author never acknowledged or in any way sought to atone for the wanton wrong he had sought to inflict under cover of anonymity. But his agency in the matter was known to persons "on the inside" of literature, art, and journalism, and the shame of his deed rankled in the minds of honest men. He wrote little if anything after that, and the reputation he had made faded out of men's memory.

LV

When Mr. Bryant died, Mr. Parke Godwin assumed editorial control of the *Evening Post*, and his attention promptly wrought something like a miracle in the increased vigor and aggressiveness of its editorial conduct. Mr. Godwin was well advanced in middle life at that time; he was comfortably provided with this world's goods, and he was not anxious to take up again the strenuous journalistic work in which he had already achieved all there was to achieve of

reputation. But in his own interest and in the interest of Mr. Bryant's heirs, it seemed necessary for him to step into this breach. Moreover, he had abated none of his interest in public affairs or in those things that make for culture, enlightenment, and human betterment. He had never ceased to write for the *Evening Post* upon matters of such kind when occasion called for strong, virile utterance.

In his declining years Mr. Bryant had not lost interest in these things, but he had abated somewhat his activity with reference to them. He had more and more left the conduct of the newspaper to his subordinates, trusting to what he used to call his "volunteer staff"—Parke Godwin, John Bigelow, Samuel J. Tilden, and other strong men, to furnish voluntarily all that was needed of strenuosity in the discussion of matters closely concerning the public weal. I do not know that Mr. Tilden was ever known to the public even as an occasional writer for the *Evening Post*. He was a man of singularly secretive temperament, and when he wrote anything for the *Evening Post* its anonymity was guarded with a jealousy such as I have never known any other person to exercise. What he wrote—on the infrequent occasions of his writing at all—was given to Mr. Bryant and by him handed in with instructions for its publication and without a hint to anybody concerning its authorship. It was only by accident that I learned whence certain articles came, and I think that knowledge was not usually shared with any other member of Mr. Bryant's staff.

Mr. Godwin pursued a different course. These occasional contributions did not satisfy his ideas of what the *Evening Post* should be in its editorial utterances. He set to work to stimulate a greater aggressiveness on the part of the staff writers, and he himself brought a strong hand to bear upon the work.

When Mr. Godwin died, a few years ago, Dr. Titus Munson Coan, in an obituary sketch read before the Authors Club, said with reference to this part of his career that in the *Evening Post* office "he was a lion in a den of Daniels," and the figure of speech was altogether apt.

"A Lion in a Den
of Daniels"

He had gifts of an uncommon sort. He knew how to say strong things in a strong way. He could wield the rapier of subtle sarcasm, and the bludgeon of denunciation with an equally skilled hand. Sometimes he brought even a trip-hammer into play with startling effect.

I remember one conspicuous case of the kind. Sara Bernhardt was playing one of her earliest and most brilliant engagements in New York. Mr. Godwin's alert interest in every form of high art led him not only to employ critics of specially expert quality to write of her work, but himself now and then to write something of more than ordinary appreciation of the great Frenchwoman's genius as illustrated in her performance.

Presently a certain clergyman of the "sensational" school, who had denounced the theater as "the door of hell and the open gateway of damnation," sent to the *Evening Post* an intemperate protest against the large space it was giving to Sara Bernhardt and her art. The letter was entitled "Quite Enough of Sara Bernhardt," and in the course of it the writer declared the great actress to be a woman of immoral character and dissolute life, whom it was a shame, a disgrace, and a public calamity for the *Evening Post* even to name in its columns.

Mr. Godwin wrote an answer to the tirade. He entitled it "Quite Enough of X"—the "X" standing here for the clergyman's name, which he used in full. It was one of the most effective bits of criticism and destructive analysis I ever saw in print, and it left the critic of Sara Bernhardt with not a leg to stand upon, and with no possibility of reply. Mr. Godwin pointed out that Sara Bernhardt had asked American attention, not as a woman, but solely as an artist; that it was of her art alone, and not of her personality that the *Evening Post* had written; that she had neither asked admission to American society nor accepted it when pressed upon her; and that her personal character and mode of life had no more to do with the duty of considering her art than had the sins of any old master when one viewed his paintings and sought to interpret the genius that inspired them.

So far Mr. Godwin was argumentative and placative. But he had other arrows in his quiver. He challenged the clergyman to say how he knew that the actress was a person of immoral character and dissolute life, and to explain what right he had to make charges of that kind against a woman without the smallest evidence of their truth. And so on to the end of a chapter that must have been very bitter reading to the offender if he had been a person of normal sensitiveness, as he was not.

I have cited this occurrence merely by way of explaining the fact that Mr. Godwin had many critics and many enemies. A man of sincere mind and aggressive temper upon proper occasion, and especially one possessed of his gift of vigorous expression, must needs make enemies in plenty, if he edits a newspaper or otherwise writes for publication. But on the other hand, those who knew him best were all and always his devoted friends—those who knew his sturdy character, his unflinching honesty of mind, and his sincere devotion to the right as he saw it.

My acquaintance with him, before his assumption of control on the *Evening Post*, was comparatively slight, and in all that I here write of his character and mind, I am drawing upon my recollection of him during a later intimacy which, beginning on the *Evening Post*, was drawn closer during my service on another newspaper, and endured until his death.

After a brief period of editorship Mr. Godwin sold a controlling interest in the *Evening Post* to a company of men represented by Messrs. Horace White, E. L. Godkin, and Carl Schurz—Mr.

Schurz becoming the titular editor for a time. When Mr. Godwin learned, after the sale was agreed upon, that Mr. Godkin was one of the incoming group, he sought to buy Mr. Godkin's weekly newspaper, *The Nation*, and as the negotiation seemed for a time to promise well, he arranged to make me editor of that periodical. This opened to me a prospect of congenial work, more agreeable to me than any that a daily newspaper could offer. But in the end Mr. Godkin declined to sell the *Nation* at any price that Mr. Godwin thought fair, and made it instead the weekly edition of the *Evening Post*.

Accordingly, I again quitted the newspaper life, fully intending to enter it no more. Literary work of many kinds was open to me, and it was my purpose to devote myself exclusively to it, maintaining a literary workshop in my own home. I became an adviser of the Harper publishing house, with no office attendance required of me, no working time fixed, and no interference of any kind with my entire liberty. I was writing now and then for the editorial pages of the great newspapers, regularly for a number of magazines, and occasionally writing a book, though that was infrequent for the reason that in the absence of international copyright, there was no encouragement to American authors to write books in competition with reprints that cost their publishers nothing.

*The Literary
Shop Again*

In mentioning this matter of so-called "piracy," I do not mean to accuse the reputable American publishers of English books of any wrong, for they were guilty of none. They were victims of the lack of law as truly as the authors on either side were. They were as eager as the authors—English or American—could be, for an international copyright law. For lack of it their profits were cut short and their business enterprises set awry. The reputable publishing houses in this country actually purchased the American publishing rights of many English books with no other protection of what they had purchased than such as was afforded by the "courtesy of the trade"—a certain gentlemen's agreement under which no reputable American publisher would reprint a book of which another publisher had bought the advance sheets. This protection was uncertain, meager, and often ineffective for the reason that there were disreputable publishers in plenty who paid no heed to the "courtesy of the trade" but reprinted whatsoever they thought would sell.

In the case of such works as those of Herbert Spencer and some others, I believe I am correctly informed that the American publishers paid larger royalties to the authors—larger in gross amount, at least—than those authors received from their English publishers. In the same way American publishers of the better class paid liberally for advance sheets of the best foreign fiction, often at heavy loss to themselves because the books they had bought were promptly reprinted in very cheap form by their less scrupulous competitors. In the case of fiction of a less distinguished kind, of which no advance sheets were offered, they had no choice but to make cheap reprints on their own account.

It is proper to say also that if this was "piracy," the American publishers were by no means the worst pirates or the most conspicuous ones, though the complaints made were chiefly of English origin and were all directed against the Americans.

I shall never forget the way in which my brother, Edward Eggleston—himself an active worker for international copyright—met the complaints of one English critic who was more lavish and less discriminative in his criticism in a company of Americans than Edward thought good manners justified. The critic was the son of an English poet, whose father's chief work had won considerable popularity in America. The young man was a guest at one of the receptions of the Authors Club, every member of which was directly or indirectly a sufferer by reason of the lack of international copyright. He seized upon the occasion for the delivery of a tirade against the American dishonesty which, he said, threatened to cut short his travel year by depriving his father of the money justly due him as royalty on the American reprints of his books.

*Piracy—British
and American*

My brother listened in silence for a time. Then that pinch of gunpowder that lies somewhere in every human make-up "went off."

"The American publishers of your father's poem," he said, "have paid him all they could afford to pay in the present state of the law, I believe?"

"Yes—but what is it? A mere fraction of what they justly owe him," the young man answered.

"Now listen," said Edward. "You call that American piracy, and you overlook the piracy on the other side. Your father's book has sold so many thousand copies in America"—giving the figures. "The English reprint of my 'Hoosier Schoolmaster' has sold nearly ten times that number, according to the figures of the English 'pirates' who reprinted it and who graciously sent me a 'tip,' as I call it, of one hundred dollars—less than a fraction, if I may so call it, of what American publishers have voluntarily paid your father. But dropping that smaller side of the matter, let me tell you that every man in this company is a far greater sufferer from the barbaric state of the law than your father or any other English author ever was. We are denied the opportunity to practise our profession, except under a paralyzing competition with stolen goods. What chance has an American novel, published at a dollar or more, in competition with English fiction even of an inferior sort published at ten cents? We cannot expect the reader who reads only for amusement to pay a dollar or a dollar and a half for an American novel when he can fill his satchel with reprints of English novels at ten cents apiece. But that is the very smallest part of our loss. The whole American people are inestimably losers because of this thing. They are deprived of all

chance of a national literature, reflecting the life of our country, its ideas, its inspirations, and its aspirations. You Englishmen are petty losers in comparison with us. Your losses are measurable in pounds, shillings, and pence. Ours involve things of immeasurably greater value."

I have quoted here, as accurately as memory permits, an utterance that met the approval of every author present, because I think that in our appeals to Congress for international copyright only the smaller, lower, and less worthy commercial aspects of the matter have been presented, and that as a consequence the American people have been themselves seriously and hurtfully misled as to the higher importance of a question involving popular interests of far more consequence than the financial returns of authorship can ever be.

LVI

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In connection with my work for the Harpers it fell to my lot to revise and edit a good many books. Among these were such books of reference as Hayden's Dictionary of Dates, which I twice edited for American readers, putting in the dates of important American affairs, and, more importantly, correcting English misinterpretations of American happenings. For example, under the title "New York" I found an entry, "Fall of O'Kelly," with a date assigned. The thing probably referred to John Kelly, but the event recorded, with its date, had never occurred within the knowledge of any American. There were many other such things to cut out and many important matters to put in, and the Harpers paid me liberally—after their fashion in dealing with men of letters—for doing the work. In the course of it I had to spend a considerable amount of their money in securing the exact information desired. In one case I applied by letter to one of the executive departments at Washington for exact information concerning a certain document. For answer I received a letter, written by a clerk, doubtless, but signed by a chief of bureau, embodying a copy of the document. In that copy I found a line thrice repeated, and I was unable to make out whether the repetition was in the original or was the work of a copying clerk asleep at his post. I wrote to inquire, but the chief of bureau replied that he had no authority to find out, wherefore I had to make a journey to Washington at the expense of Harper and Brothers, to ascertain the facts. I came out of that expedition with the conviction, which still lingers in my mind, that the system that gives civil service employees a tenure of office with which their chiefs have no power to interfere by peremptory discharge for inefficiency or misconduct, as the managing men of every successful business enterprise may do, is vicious in principle and bad in outcome.

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That and other experiences in dealing with executive departments at Washington have made an old foggy of me, I suppose. At any rate they have convinced me that the government's business could and would be better done by half the force now employed, if that half force worked under a consciousness of direct responsibility, each man to an immediate chief who could discharge him for incompetency or inattention. Furthermore, my experience with clerks in the departments at Washington convinces me that the method of selection and promotion by competitive examination, results almost uniformly in the appointment and in the promotion of inferior and often incompetent men. Certainly no great bank, no great business enterprise of any kind would ever consent to such a method of selecting or promoting its employees—a method which excludes from consideration the knowledge every chief of bureau or department must necessarily have of the qualifications of his subordinates. The clerk who repeated that line three times in making an official transcript of an official document had been for several years in the public service, and I suppose he is there yet, if he isn't dead. How long would a bookkeeper in a bank hold his place after making a similar blunder? But then, banks are charged with an obligation to remain solvent, and must appoint and discharge employees with due reference to that necessity. The government is not subject to that requirement, and it recognizes a certain obligation to heed the vagaries of the theorists who regard themselves as commissioned—divinely or otherwise—to reform the world in accordance with the suggestions of their own inner consciousness and altogether without regard to the practical experience of humankind.

*The Way at
Washington*

Mainly, however, the books I was employed to edit were those written by men whose connection with affairs of consequence rendered their utterances important, but whose literary qualifications were small. When such works were presented to the Harpers, it was their practice to accept the books on condition that the authors of them should pay for such editing as was necessary, by some person of literary experience to be selected by the Harpers themselves.

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In every such case, where I was asked to be the editor and see the book through the press, I stipulated that I was to make no effort to improve literary style, but was to confine myself to seeing that the English was correct—whether elegant or otherwise—and that the book as it came from the hands of its author should be presented with as little editorial alteration as was possible. I assumed the function of correcting errors and offering advice, not of writing the books anew or otherwise putting them into the literary form I thought they should have. Even with this limitation of function, I found plenty of work to do in every case.

It was under a contract of this kind that I undertook to see through the press the volumes published under the title of "The Military

A Historical

The work bore the name of Colonel Alfred Roman, as its author, but on every page of it there was conclusive evidence of its direct and minute inspiration by General Beauregard himself. It was with him rather than with Colonel Roman that negotiations were had respecting my editorial work on the book. He was excessively nervous lest I should make alterations of substance, a point on which I was the better able to reassure him because of the fact that my compensation was a sum certain and in no way dependent upon the amount of time or labor I should give to the work. I succeeded in convincing him that I was exceedingly unlikely to undertake more of revision than the contract called for, and as one man with another, I assured him that I would make no alteration of substantial consequence in the work without his approval.

In editing the book I made a discovery which, I think, is of some historical interest. Throughout the war there was something like a standing quarrel between General Beauregard and Mr. Jefferson Davis, emphasized by the antagonism of Mr. Davis's chief adviser, Judah P. Benjamin to General Beauregard. Into the merits of that quarrel I have no intention here to inquire. It does not come within the purview of this volume of reminiscences. But in editing General Beauregard's book I discovered an easy and certainly correct explanation of the bitterest phase of it—that phase upon which General Beauregard laid special stress.

Sometime after the battle of Shiloh, General Beauregard, whose health was seriously impaired, decided to take a little furlough for purposes of recuperation. There was neither prospect nor possibility of active military operations in that quarter for a considerable time to come, so that he felt himself free to go away for a few weeks in search of health, leaving General Bragg in temporary command but himself keeping in touch with his army and in readiness to return to it immediately in case of need.

He notified Mr. Davis of his intended course, by telegraph. Mr. Davis almost immediately removed him from command and ordered General Bragg to assume permanent control in that quarter. Mr. Davis's explanation, when his act was challenged, was that General Beauregard had announced his purpose to be absent himself "for four months," and that he, Mr. Davis, could not regard that as anything else than an abandonment of his command. General Beauregard insisted that he had made no such announcement and had cherished no such purpose. The thing ultimately resolved itself into a question of veracity between the two, concerning which each had bitter things to say of the other in public ways.

In editing General Beauregard's book, I discovered that there was really no question of veracity involved, but merely an error of punctuation in a telegraphic despatch, a thing very easy at all times and particularly easy in days of military telegraphing when incompetent operators were the rule rather than the exception.

*A Period Out of
Place*

The case was this: General Beauregard telegraphed:

"I am leaving for a while on surgeon's certificate. For four months I have delayed obeying their urgent recommendations," etc.

As the despatch reached Mr. Davis it read:

"I am leaving for a while on surgeon's certificate for four months. I have delayed," etc.

The misplacing of a punctuation mark gave the statement, as received by Mr. Davis, a totally different meaning from that which General Beauregard had intended. In explaining his action in removing Beauregard from command, Mr. Davis stated that the General had announced his purpose to absent himself for four months. General Beauregard denied that he had done anything of the kind. Hence the issue of veracity, in which the text of the despatch as sent, sustained General Beauregard's contention, while the same text as received, with its error of punctuation, equally sustained the assertions of Mr. Davis.

With the beatitude of the peacemakers in mind, I brought my discovery to the attention of both parties to the controversy, in the hope at least of convincing each that the other had not consciously lied. The attempt proved futile. When I pointed out to General Beauregard the obvious origin of the misapprehension, he flushed with suppressed anger and declared himself unwilling to discuss a matter so exclusively personal. He did discuss it, however, to the extent of pointing out that his use of the phrase "for a while" should have enabled Mr. Davis to correct the telegraph operator's error of punctuation, "if there really was any such error made—which I am not prepared to believe."

In answer to my letter to Mr. Davis, some one wrote for him that in his advancing years he did not care to take up again any of the matters of controversy that had perplexed his active life.

I have never since that time made the smallest attempt to reconcile the quarrels of men who have been engaged in the making of history. I have learned better.

So far as Mr. Davis was concerned there was probably another reason for unwillingness to consider any matter that I might lay before him. He and I had had a little controversy of our own some years before.

In one of those chapters of "A Rebel's Recollections," which were first published in the *Atlantic*

Monthly, I made certain statements with regard to Mr. Davis's conduct at a critical moment. Mr. Davis sent his secretary to me—or at any rate some one calling himself his secretary came to me—to assure me that the statements I and others had made concerning the matter were without foundation in fact, and to ask me not to include them in the forthcoming book.

I replied that I had not made the statements thoughtlessly or without satisfying myself of the correctness of my information; that I could not, therefore, consent to omit them from the book; but that if Mr. Davis would send me a categorical denial of them over his own signature, I would publish it as a part of my text.

This proposal was rejected, and I let the matter stand as originally written. I had in my possession at that time a letter from General Robert E. Lee to John Esten Cooke. It was written in answer to a direct question of Mr. Cooke's, and in it General Lee stated unequivocally that the facts were as Mr. Cooke understood them and as I had reported them. But General Lee forbade the publication of his letter unless Mr. Davis should at any time publicly deny the reports made. In that case he authorized the publication "in the interest of truthful history."

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Mr. Cooke had placed that letter in my hands, and had Mr. Davis furnished me with the suggested denial, it was my purpose to print that and General Lee's letter in facsimile, leaving it for every reader to choose between them. To my regret Mr. Davis declined to put his denial into writing, so that General Lee's letter, which I returned to Mr. Cooke, has never been published, and now never can be.

On another point I found General Beauregard more amenable to editorial suggestion, though reluctantly so. In discussing his defense of Charleston with utterly inadequate means—a defense everywhere recognized as the sufficient foundation of a military fame—his book included a chapter or so of masterly military criticism, intended to show that if the commanders on the other side at Charleston had been as alert and capable as they should have been, there was no time when they could not have taken Charleston with ease and certainty.

*A Futile Effort to
Make Peace*

I pointed out to him that all this was a discrediting of himself; that it attributed to the enemy's weakness a success which military criticism attributed to his own military and engineering strength, thus stripping him of credit at the very point at which his credit was least open to dispute or question. I advised the elimination or material alteration of this part of the book, and after due consideration he consented, though with sore reluctance, for the reason that the modification made involved the sacrifice of a very brilliant essay in military criticism, of which any writer might well have been proud, and which I should have advised any other writer to publish as a distinguished feature of his work.

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To descend from large things to small ones, it was in seeing this work through the press that I encountered the most extreme case I have ever known of dangerous interference with copy on the part of the "intelligent compositor," passed by the "alert proofreader." The printing department of the Harpers was as nearly perfect, in its organization and in the supervision given to it by the two highly-skilled superintendents of its rival composing rooms, as any printing department well can be. And yet it was there that the error occurred.

Of course I could not read the revised proofs of the book "by copy,"—that is to say with a helper to read the copy aloud while I followed him with the revises. That would have required the employment of an additional helper and a considerably increased payment to me. Moreover, all that was supposed to be attended to in the composing rooms so that revised proofs should come to me in exact conformity with the "copy" as I had handed it in. In reading them I was not expected to look out for errors of the type, but solely for errors in the text.

In reading a batch of proofs one night—for the man of letters who would keep his butcher and grocer on good terms with him must work by night as well as by day—although I was in nowise on the alert to discover errors of type, my eye fell upon an error which, if it had escaped me, would forever have ruined my reputation as an editor. Certain of General Beauregard's official despatches, quoted in the book, were dated "Fiddle Pond, near Barnwell C. H., South Carolina," the letters "C. H." standing, of course, for "Court House"—the name given to rural county seats in the South. The intelligent compositor, instead of "following copy," had undertaken to interpret and translate the letters out of the depths of his own intuitions. Instead of "Fiddle Pond, near Barnwell C. H.," he had set "Fiddle Pond, near Barnwell, Charleston Harbor," thus playing havoc at once with geography and the text.

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The case was so extreme, and the liberty taken with the text without notice of any kind, involved so much danger to the accuracy of the work that I had no choice but to report the matter to the house with a notification that unless I could be assured that no further liberties of any kind would be taken with the text, I must decline to go further with the undertaking.

This cost a proofreader and a printer or two their employments, and I regretted that, but they deserved their punishment, and the matter was one that demanded drastic measures. Without such measures it would have been dangerous to publish the book at all.

One other ex-Confederate general with whom this sort of editorial work brought me into association was Loring Pacha—otherwise General W. W. Loring, a man of extraordinarily varied experiences in life, a man of the gentlest temper and most genial impulses, who had been, nevertheless, a fighter all his life, from boyhood up. His fighting, however, had all been done in the field and professionally,

Loring Pacha

and he carried none of its animosities into private life. I remember his saying to me once:

"Of course the war ended as it ought to have done. It was best for everybody concerned that the Union should be restored. The only thing is that I don't like the other fellows to 'have the say' on us."

Loring became a private soldier in the United States Army while yet a boy. He so far distinguished himself for gallantry in the Florida War that he was offered a Presidential appointment to West Point, which he declined. He was appointed to a lieutenancy in the regular army, where he won rapid promotion and gained a deal of experience, chiefly in fighting Indians and leading troops on difficult expeditions across the plains of the far West. In the Mexican War he was several times promoted and brevetted for conspicuous gallantry, and he lost an arm at one of the gates of the City of Mexico, as he was leading his regiment as the head of the column into the town, seizing an opportunity without orders. On that occasion General Scott visited him in hospital and said to him:

[244] "Loring, I suppose I ought to court-martial you for rushing into that breach without orders; but I think I'll recommend you for promotion instead."

In the Confederate Army Loring became a Major-General, and a few years after the close of that struggle he was invited by the Khedive of Egypt to become his chief of staff. After a military service there which extended over a number of years, he returned to America and wrote a book founded upon his experience there and the studies he had made in Egyptian manners, history, archæology, and the like. I was employed to edit that book, which was published by Dodd, Mead & Co., I think, and in the course of my work upon it Loring became not only a valued personal friend, but an easy-going intimate in my household. At first he came to see me only for purposes of consultation concerning the work. Later he used to come "just because he wanted to," he said. His visits were made, in Southern fashion, at whatever hour he chose, and he took with us whatever meals were served while he was there.

In conversation one day I happened to ask Loring something about the strained relations that frequently exist between commanding officers in the field and the newspaper war correspondents sent out to report news of military operations. I think my question was prompted by some reference to William Swinton's criticisms of General Grant, and General Grant's peremptory dealing with him.

"I don't know much about such things," Loring answered. "You see, at the time of the Mexican War and of all my Indian campaigns, the newspapers hadn't yet invented the war correspondent. Then in the Confederacy everybody was a soldier, as you know, and the war correspondents carried muskets and answered to roll calls. Their newspaper work was an avocation, not a vocation. You see I am learning English under your tuition."

[245] This little jest referred to the fact that a few days before, in running through the manuscript of a lecture he was preparing, I had changed the word "avocation" to "vocation," explaining to him the difference in meaning.

"Then in Egypt we were not much troubled with war correspondents—perhaps they had the bowstring and sack in mind—but I have an abiding grudge against another type of correspondent whom I encountered there. I mean the tourist who has made an arrangement with some newspaper to pay the expenses of his trip or a part of them in return for letters to be sent from the places visited. He is always an objectionable person, particularly when he happens to be a parson out of a job, and I always fought shy of him so far as possible, usually by turning him over to my dragoman, to be shown about and 'stuffed' as only a dragoman can 'stuff' anybody. You see the dragoman has learned that every Western tourist in the East is hungry for information of a startling sort, and the dragoman holds himself ready to furnish it without the smallest regard for truth or any respect at all for facts. On one occasion one of these scribbling tourists from England visited me. One of the Khedive's unoccupied palaces had been assigned to me for my headquarters, and I was exceedingly busy with preparations for a campaign then in contemplation. Stone Pacha and I were both up to our eyes in work, trying to mobilize an army that had no mobility in it. Accordingly I turned the tourist over to my dragoman with orders to show him everything and give him all the information he wanted.

*Concerning War
Correspondents*

"The palace was divided as usual. There was a public part and a part called the harem—which simply means the home or the family apartments. During my occupancy of the place that part of it was empty and closed, as I am a bachelor. But as the dragoman showed him about the tourist asked to see that part of the palace, whereupon the dragoman replied:

[246] "'That is the harem. You cannot gain entrance there.'

"'The harem? But I thought Loring was an American and a Christian,' was the astonished reply.

"'He was—but he is a pacha, now,' answered the dragoman with that air of mysterious reserve which is a part of his stock in trade. Then the rascal went on to tell the tourist that I now had forty wives—which would have been a shot with the long bow even if I had been a born Mohammedan of the highest rank and greatest wealth.

"When I heard of the affair I asked the dragoman why he had lied so outrageously and he calmly replied:

"Oh, I thought it polite to give the gentleman what he wanted.'

Sidenote: A Scribbling Tourist's Mischief-Making]

[247] "I dismissed the matter and thought no more of it until a month or so later, when somebody sent me marked copies of the *Manchester Guardian*, or whatever the religious newspaper concerned was called. The tourist had told the story of my 'downfall' with all the horrifying particulars, setting forth in very complimentary phrases my simple, exemplary life as an American soldier and lamenting the ease with which I and other Western men, 'nurtured in the purity of Christian family life,' had fallen victims to the lustful luxury of the East. I didn't give the matter any attention. I was too busy to bother—too busy with plans and estimates and commissary problems, and the puzzles of transportation and all the rest of the things that required attention in preparation for a campaign in a difficult, inaccessible, and little known country. I wasn't thinking of myself or of what wandering scribes might be writing about me in English newspapers. But presently this thing assumed a new and very serious aspect. Some obscure American religious newspaper, published down South somewhere, copied the thing, and my good sisters, who live down that way, read it. It isn't much to say they were horrified; they were well-nigh killed by the revelation of my infamy and they suffered almost inconceivable tortures of the spirit on my account. For it never entered their trustful minds to doubt anything printed in a great English religious paper over the signature of a dissenting minister and copied into the American religious journal which to them seemed an authoritative weekly supplement to the holy scriptures.

"I managed to straighten the thing out in the minds of my good sisters, but I have never ceased to regret that that correspondent never turned up at my headquarters again. If he had I should have made him think he had fallen in with a herd of the wild jackasses of Abyssinia."

LVII

Mention of Loring's experience reminds me of an amusing one of my own that occurred a little later. In the autumn of 1886 I made a leisurely journey with my wife across the continent to California, Oregon, Mexico, and all parts of the golden West. On an equally leisurely return journey we took a train at Marshall, Texas, for New Orleans, over the ruins of the Texas and Pacific Railroad, which Jay Gould had recently "looted to the limit," as a banker described it. Besides myself, my wife, and our child, the only passengers on the solitary buffet sleeping car were Mr. Ziegenfust of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, and a young lady who put herself under my wife's chaperonage. If Mr. Ziegenfust had not been there to bear out my statements I should never have told the story of what happened.

[248] There was no conductor for the sleeping car—only a negro porter who acted as factotum. When I undertook to arrange with him for my sleeping car accommodations, I offered him a gold piece, for in drawing money from a San Francisco bank for use on the return journey, I had received only gold.

The negro seemed startled as I held out the coin.

"I can't take dat, boss," he said. "'Taint worf nuffin."

I made an effort to explain to him that American gold coin was not only the supreme standard by which all values were measured in this country, but that as mere metal it was worth the sum stamped upon it in any part of the earth. Mr. Ziegenfust supported me in these statements, but our combined assurances made no impression upon the porter's mind. He perfectly knew that gold coin was as worthless as dead forest leaves, and he simply would not take the twenty-dollar piece offered him.

We decided that the poor fellow was a fool, and after a search through all the pockets on the car we managed to get together the necessary number of dollars in greenbacks with which to pay for my accommodations. As for what we might want to eat from the buffet—for there were no dining cars in those days—the porter assured me he would "trust me" till we should get to New Orleans, and call upon me at my hotel to receive his pay.

[249] Next morning we found ourselves stranded at Plaquemine, by reason of a train wreck a few miles ahead. Plaquemine is the center of the district to which the banished Acadians of Longfellow's story fled for refuge, and most of the people there claim descent from Evangeline, in jaunty disregard of the fact that that young lady of the long ago was never married. But Plaquemine is a thriving provincial town, and when I learned that we must lie there, wreck-bound, for at least six hours, I thought I saw my opportunity. I went out into the town to get some of my gold pieces converted into greenbacks.

To my astonishment I found everybody there like-minded with the negro porter of my sleeping car. They were all convinced that American gold coin was a thing of no value, and for reason they told me that "the government has went back on it." It was in vain for me to protest that the government had nothing to do with determining the value of a gold piece except to certify its

"A Stranded Gold
Bug"

weight and fineness; that the piece of gold was intrinsically worth its face as mere metal, and all the rest of the obvious facts of the case. These people knew that "the government has went back on gold"—that was the phrase all of them used—and they would have none of it.

In recognition of the superior liberality of mind concerning financial matters that distinguishes the barkeeper from all other small tradesmen, I went into the saloon of the principal hotel of the town, and said to the man of multitudinous bottles:

"It's rather early in the morning, but some of these gentlemen," waving my hand toward the loafers on the benches, "may be thirsty. I'll be glad to 'set 'em up' for the company if you'll take your pay out of a twenty-dollar gold piece and give me change for it."

There was an alert and instant response from the "gentlemen" of the benches, who promptly aligned themselves before the bar and stood ready to "name their drinks," but the barkeeper shook his head.

"Stranger," he said, "if you must have a drink you can have it and welcome. But I can't take gold money. 'Taint worth nothin'. You see the government has went back on it."

I declined the gratuitous drink he so generously offered, and took my departure, leaving the "gentlemen" of the benches thirsty.

[250] Finally, I went to the principal merchant of the place, feeling certain that he at least knew the fundamental facts of money values. I explained my embarrassment and asked him to give me greenbacks for one or more of my gold pieces.

He was an exceedingly courteous and kindly person. He said to me in better English than I had heard that morning:

"Well, you may not know it, but the government has gone back on gold, so that we don't know what value it may have. But I can't let a stranger leave our town under such embarrassment as yours seems to be, particularly as you have your wife and child with you. I'll give you currency for one of your gold pieces, and *take my chances of getting something for the coin.*"

I tried to explain finance to him, and particularly the insignificance of the government's relation to the intrinsic value of gold coin, but my words made no impression upon his mind. I could only say, therefore, that I would accept his hospitable offer to convert one of my coins into greenbacks, with the assurance that I should not think of doing so if I did not perfectly know that he took no risk whatever in making the exchange.

[251] In New Orleans I got an explanation of this curious scare. When the Civil War broke out there was a good deal of gold coin in circulation in the Plaquemine region. During and after the war the coins passed freely and frequently from hand to hand, particularly in cotton buying transactions. Not long before the time of my visit, some merchants in Plaquemine had sent a lot of this badly worn gold to New Orleans in payment of duties on imported goods—a species of payment which was then, foolishly, required to be made in gold alone. The customs officers had rejected this Plaquemine gold, because it was worn to light weight. Hence the conviction in Plaquemine that the government had "went back" on gold.

At that time the principal subject of discussion in Congress and the newspapers was the question of free silver coinage, the exclusive gold standard of values, or a double standard, and all the rest of it, and those who contended for an exclusive gold standard were stigmatized as "gold bugs."

*Results of a Bit
of Humor*

I was then editor-in-chief of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, and in my absence my brilliant young friend, Henry Marquand, was in charge of the paper. Thinking to amuse our readers I sent him a playful letter recounting these Plaquemine experiences, and he published it under the title of "A Stranded Goldbug."

The humor of the situation described was so obvious and so timely that my letter was widely copied throughout the country, and a copy of it fell into the hands of a good but too serious-minded kinswoman of mine, an active worker in the W. C. T. U. She was not interested in the humor of my embarrassment, but she wrote me a grieved and distressed letter, asking how I could ever have gone into the saloon of that Plaquemine hotel, or any other place where alcoholic beverages were sold, and much else to the like effect. I was reminded of Loring's experience, and was left to wonder how large a proportion of those who had read my letter had missed the humor of the matter in their shocked distress over the fact that by entering a hotel café I had lent my countenance to the sale of beer and the like.

[252] I had not then learned, as I have since done, how exceedingly and even exigently sensitive consciences of a certain class are as to such matters. Not many years ago I published a boys' book about a flat-boat voyage down the Mississippi. At New Orleans a commission merchant, anxious to give the country boys as much as he could of enjoyment in the city, furnished tickets and bade them "go to the opera to-night and hear some good music." Soon after the book came out my publishers wrote me that they had a Sunday School Association's order for a thousand copies of the book, but that it was conditioned upon our willingness to change the word "opera" to "concert" in the sentence quoted.

LVIII

As a literary adviser of the Harpers, I very earnestly urged them to publish Mrs. Custer's "Boots and Saddles." In my "opinion" recommending its acceptance, I said that their other readers would probably be unanimous in advising its rejection, and would offer excellent reasons in support of that advice. I added that those very reasons were the promptings of my advice to the contrary.

When all the opinions were in—all but mine being adverse—Mr. Joe Harper sent copies of them to me, asking me to read them carefully and, after consideration, to report whether or not I still adhered to my opinion in favor of the book. I promptly replied that I did, giving my reasons, which were based mainly on the very considerations urged by the other readers in behalf of rejection. In my earnestness I ventured, as I had never done before, upon a prediction. I said that in my opinion the book would reach a sale of twenty thousand copies—a figure then considered very great for the sale of any current book.

A month after "Boots and Saddles" was published, I happened to be in the Harper offices, and Mr. Joe Harper beckoned me to him. With a very solemn countenance, which did not hide the twinkle in his eye, he said:

*"Boots and
Saddles"*

[253] "Of course, when you make a cock-sure prediction as to the sale of a book, and we accept it on the strength of your enthusiastic advice, we expect you to make the failure good."

"To what book do you refer?" I asked.

"Mrs. Custer's. You predicted a sale of twenty thousand for it, and it has now been out a full month and——"

"What are the figures for the first month, Mr. Harper?" I interrupted.

"Well, what do you think? It is the first month that sets the pace, you know. What's your guess?"

"Ten thousand," I ventured.

"What? Of that book? In its first month? Are you a rainbow chaser?"

I had caught the glint in his eye, and so I responded:

"Oh, well, if that guess is so badly out I'll double it, and say twenty thousand."

"Do you mean that—seriously?" he asked.

"Yes, quite seriously. So seriously that I'll agree to pay the royalties on all copies short of twenty thousand, if you'll agree to give me a sum equal to the royalties on all copies sold in excess of that number."

He chuckled inwardly but audibly. Then, picking up a paper from his desk, he passed it to me, saying;

"Look. There are the figures."

The sales had amounted to some hundred more than the twenty thousand I had guessed, and there were no indications of any early falling off of the orders that were daily and hourly coming in.

[254] I mention this case of successful prediction because it gives me a text for saying that ordinarily there is nothing so utterly impossible as foresight, of any trustworthy sort, concerning the sale of a book. In this case the fact that "Boots and Saddles" was the very unliterary, and altogether winning tribute of a loving wife to her dead hero husband, afforded a secure ground of prediction. The book appealed to sentiments with which every human heart—coarse or refined, high, low, or middle class—is in eternal sympathy. Ordinarily there is no such secure ground upon which to base a prediction of success for any book. The plate-room of every publisher is the graveyard of a multitude of books that promised well but died young, and the plates are their headstones. Every publisher has had experiences that convince him of the impossibility of discovering beforehand what books will sell well and what will "die a-borning." Every publisher has had books of his publishing succeed far beyond his expectations, and other books fail, on the success of which he had confidently reckoned. And the worst of it is that the quality of a book seems to have little or nothing to do with the matter, one way or the other.

One night at the Authors Club, I sat with a group of prolific and successful authors, and as a matter of curious interest I asked each of them to say how far their own and their publishers' anticipations with respect to the comparative success of their several books had been borne out by the actual sales. Almost every one of them had a story to tell of disappointment with the books that were most confidently expected to succeed, and of the success of other books that had been regarded as least promising.

The experience is as old as literature itself, doubtless. Thomas Campbell came even to hate his "Pleasures of Hope," because its fame completely overshadowed that of "Gertrude of Wyoming" and some other poems of his which he regarded as immeasurably superior to that work. He resented the fact that in introducing him or otherwise mentioning him everybody added to his name the phrase "Author of the 'Pleasures of Hope,'" and he bitterly predicted that when he died somebody would carve that detested legend upon his tombstone. In the event, somebody did.

A lifelong intimate of George Eliot once told me that bitterness was mingled with the wine of applause in her cup, because, as she said: "A stupid public persists in neglecting my poems, which are far superior to anything I ever wrote in prose."

In the same way such fame as Thomas Dunn English won, rested mainly upon the song of "Ben Bolt." Yet one day during his later years I heard him angrily say in response to some mention of that song: "Oh, damn 'Ben Bolt.' It rides me like an incubus."

LIX

While I was conducting my literary shop at home, there came to me many persons bearing letters of introduction which I was in courtesy bound to honor. Some of these brought literary work of an acceptable sort for me to do. Through them a number—perhaps a dozen or so—of books were brought to me to edit, and in the course of the work upon such books I made a few familiar friends, whose intimacy in my household was a pleasure to me and my family while the friends in question lived. They are all dead now—or nearly all.

*Letters of
Introduction*

But mainly the bearers of letters of introduction who came to me at that time were very worthy persons who wanted to do literary work, but had not the smallest qualification for it. Some of them had rejected manuscripts which they were sure that I, "with my influence," could easily market to the replenishment of their emaciated purses. For the conviction that the acceptance of manuscripts goes chiefly by favor is ineradicable from the amateur literary mind. I have found it quite useless to explain to such persons that favor has nothing to do with the matter, that every editor and every publisher is always and eagerly alert to discern new writers of promise and to exploit them. The persons to whom these truths are told, simply do not believe them. They *know* that their own stories or essays or what not, are far superior to those accepted and published. Every one of their friends has assured them of that, and their own consciousness confirms the judgment. Scores of them have left my library in full assurance that I was a member of some "literary ring," that was organized to exclude from publication the writings of all but the members of the ring. It was idle to point out to them the introduction of Saxe Holm, of Constance Fenimore Woolson, of Mrs. Custer, of Charles Egbert Craddock, or of any other of a dozen or more new writers who had recently come to the front. They were assured that each of these had enjoyed the benefits of "pull" of some sort.

One charming young lady of the "Society" sort brought me half a dozen letters of introduction from persons of social prominence, urging her upon my attention. She had written a "Society novel," she told me, and she wanted to get it published. She was altogether too well informed as to publishing conditions, to send her manuscript to any publisher without first securing "influence" in its behalf. She was perfectly well aware that I was a person possessed of influence, and so she had come to me. Wouldn't I, for a consideration, secure the acceptance of her novel by some reputable house?

I told her that "for a consideration"—namely, fifty dollars—I would read her manuscript and give her a judgment upon its merits, after which she might offer it to any publisher she saw fit, and that that was all I could do for her.

"But you are 'on the inside' at Harpers'," she replied, "and of course your verdict is conclusive with them."

*The
Disappointment
of Lily
Browneyes*

"In some cases it is," I answered. "It has proved to be so in one peculiar case. I recently sold the Harpers a serial story of my own for their *Young People*. Afterwards a story of Captain Kirk Munroe's came to me for judgment. It covered so nearly the same ground that mine did, that both could not be used. But his story seemed to me so much better than my own, for the use proposed, that I advised the Harpers to accept it and return to me my own already accepted manuscript. They have acted upon my advice and I am a good many hundreds of dollars out of pocket in consequence. Now, my dear Miss Browneyes," I added, "you see upon what my influence with the Harpers rests. In so far as they accept literary productions upon my advice, they do so simply because they know that my advice is honest and represents my real judgment of the merits of things offered for publication. If I should base my recommendations upon any other foundation than that of integrity and an absolutely sincere critical judgment, I should soon have no more influence with the Harpers than any truckman in the streets can command. I will read your manuscript and give you my honest opinion of it, for fifty dollars, if you wish me to do so. But I do not advise you to do that. Judging of it in advance, from what I have seen of you, and from what I know of the limitations of the Society life you have led, I strongly advise you not to

waste fifty dollars of your father's money in that way. It is scarcely conceivable that with your very limited knowledge of life, and your carefully restricted outlook, you can have written a novel of any value whatever. You had better save your fifty dollars to help pay for your next love of a bonnet."

[258] "I'm awfully disappointed," she said. "You see it would be so nice to have all my Society friends talking about 'Lily Browneyes's book,' and perhaps that ought to be considered. You see almost every one of my Society friends would buy the book 'just to see what that little chatterbox, Lily Browneyes, has found to write about.' I should think, that would make the fortune of the book."

"How many Society friends have you, Miss Browneyes?" I asked.

"Oh, heaps of them—scores—dead oodles and scads of 'em, as we girls say."

"But really, how many?" I persisted. "Suppose your book were published, how many of your Society friends could you confidently reckon upon as probable purchasers? Here's paper and a pencil. Suppose you set down their names and tot them up."

She eagerly undertook the task, and after half an hour she had a list of forty-odd persons who would pretty surely buy the book—"if they couldn't borrow it," she added.

I explained the matter to her somewhat—dwelling upon the fact that a sale of two thousand copies would barely reimburse the publisher's outlay.

She said I had been "very nice" to her, but on the whole she decided to accept my advice and not pay me fifty dollars for a futile reading of the manuscript. I was glad of that. For it seemed like breaking a butterfly to disappoint so charming a young girl.

The letters Lily Browneyes brought me had at least the merit of sincerity. They were meant to help her accomplish her purpose, and not as so many letters of the kind are, to get rid of importunity by shifting it to the shoulders of some one else. I remember something that illustrates my meaning.

[259] I presided, many years ago, at a banquet given by the Authors Club to Mr. William Dean Howells. Nothing was prearranged. There was no schedule of toasts in my hand, no list of speakers primed to respond to them. With so brilliant a company to draw upon I had no fear as to the results of calling up the man I wanted, without warning.

In the course of the haphazard performance, it occurred to me that we ought to have a speech from some publisher, and accordingly I called upon Mr. J. Henry Harper—"Harry Harper," we who knew and loved him called him.

His embarrassment was positively painful to behold. He made no attempt whatever to respond but appealed to me to excuse him.

At that point Mark Twain came to the rescue by offering to make Mr. Harper's speech for him. "I'm a publisher myself," he explained, "and I'll speak for the publishers."

Mark Twain's
Method

A roar of applause welcomed the suggestion, and Mr. Clemens proceeded to make the speech. In the course of it he spoke of the multitude of young authors who beset every publisher and beseech him for advice after he has explained that their manuscripts are "not available" for publication by his own firm, with its peculiar limitations. Most publishers cruelly refuse, he said, to do anything for these innocents. "I never do that," he added. "I always give them good advice, and more than that, I always do something for them—I give them notes of introduction to Gilder."

I am persuaded that many scores of the notes of introduction brought to me have been written in precisely that spirit of helpless helpfulness.

[260] Sometimes, however, letters of introduction, given thoughtlessly, are productive of trouble far more serious than the mere waste of a busy man's time. It is a curious fact that most persons stand ready to give letters of introduction upon acquaintance so slender that they would never think of personally introducing the two concerned, or personally vouching for the one to whom the letter is given.

When I was editing *Hearth and Home* Theodore Tilton gave a young Indiana woman a letter of introduction to me. He afterwards admitted to me that he knew nothing whatever about the young woman.

"But what can one do in such a case?" he asked. "She was charming and she wanted to know you; she was interested in you as a Hoosier writer"—the Indiana school of literature had not established itself at that early day—"and when she learned that I knew you well she asked for a letter of introduction. What could I do? Could I say to her, 'My dear young lady, I know very little about you, and my friend, George Cary Eggleston, is so innocent and unsophisticated a person that I dare not introduce you to him without some certificate of character?' No. I could only give her the letter she wanted, trusting you to discount any commendatory phrases it might contain, in the light of your acquaintance with the ways of a world in which letters of introduction are taken with grains of salt. Really, if I mean to commend one person to another, I always send a private letter to indorse my formal letter of introduction, and to assure my friend that there are no polite lies in it."

In this case the young woman did nothing very dreadful. Her character was doubtless above reproach and her reformatory impulses were no more offensive than reformatory impulses that concern others usually are. My only complaint of her was that she condemned me without a hearing, giving me no opportunity to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon me.

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In her interview, she was altogether charming. She was fairly well acquainted with literature, and was keenly appreciative of it. We talked for an hour on such subjects, and then she went away. A week or so later she sent me a copy of the Indiana newspaper for which she was a correspondent. In it was a page interview with me in which all that I had said and a great deal that I had not said was set forth in detail. There was also a graphic description of my office surroundings. Among these surroundings was my pipe, which lay "naked and not ashamed" on my desk. Referring to it, the young woman wrote that one saddening thing in her visit to me was the discovery that "this gifted young man is a victim of the tobacco habit."

Worse still, she emphasized that lamentable discovery in her headlines, and made so much of her compassionate regret that if I had been an inmate of a lunatic asylum, demented by the use of absinthe or morphine, her pity could hardly have been more active.

I do not know that this exhibition of reformatory ill manners did me any serious harm, but it annoyed me somewhat.

When I was serving as literary editor of the *Evening Post*, a very presentable person came to me bearing a note of introduction from Richard Henry Stoddard. Mr. Stoddard introduced the gentleman as James R. Randall, author of "My Maryland" and at that time editor of a newspaper in Augusta, Georgia. Mr. Randall was a person whom I very greatly wanted to know, but it was late on a Saturday afternoon, and I had an absolutely peremptory engagement that compelled me to quit the office immediately. Accordingly, I invited the visitor to dine with me at my house the next day, Sunday, and he accepted.

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Sunday came and the dinner was served, but Mr. Randall was not there. Next morning I learned that on the plea of Saturday afternoon and closed banks he had borrowed thirty-five dollars from one of my fellow-editors before leaving. This, taken in connection with his failure to keep his dinner engagement with me, aroused suspicion. I telegraphed to Augusta, asking the newspaper with which Mr. Randall was editorially connected whether or not Mr. Randall was in New York. Mr. Randall himself replied saying that he was not in New York and requesting me to secure the arrest of any person trying to borrow money or get checks cashed in his name. He added: "When I travel I make my financial arrangements in advance and don't borrow money of friends or strangers."

When I notified Stoddard of the situation, so that he might not commend his friend, "Mr. Randall," to others, I expressed the hope that he had not himself lent the man any money. In reply he said:

"Lent him money? Why, my dear George Cary Eggleston, what a creative imagination you must have! 'You'd orter 'a been a poet.' Still, if I had had any money, as of course I hadn't, I should have lent it to him freely. As he didn't ask for it—probably he knew my chronic impecuniosity too well to do that—I didn't know he was 'on the borrow.' Anyhow, I'm going to run him to earth."

And he did. It appeared in the outcome that the man had called upon Edmund Clarence Stedman, bearing a letter from Sidney Lanier—forged, of course. Stedman had taken him out to lunch and then, as he expressed a wish to meet the literary men of the town, had given him a note of introduction to Stoddard together with several other such notes to men of letters, which were never delivered. The man proved to be the "carpetbag" ex-Governor Moses, who had looted the state of South Carolina to an extent that threatened the bankruptcy of that commonwealth. He had saved little if anything out of his plunderings, and, returning to the North, had entered upon a successful career as a "confidence man." He was peculiarly well-equipped for the part. Sagacious, well-informed, educated, and possessed of altogether pleasing manners, he succeeded in imposing himself upon the unsuspecting for many years. At last, some years after my first encounter with him, he was "caught in the act" of swindling, and sent for a term to the Massachusetts state prison.

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On his release, at the end of his sentence, he resumed his old business of victimizing the unsuspecting—among whom I was one. It was only a few years ago when he rang my door bell and introduced himself as a confidential employee of the Lothrop Publishing Company of Boston, who were my publishers. He had seen me, he said, during the only visit I had ever made to the offices of the company, but had not had the pleasure of an introduction. Being in New York he had given himself the pleasure of calling, the more because he wished to consult me concerning the artistic make-up of a book I then had in preparation at the Lothrops'.

His face seemed familiar to me, a fact which I easily accounted for on the theory that I must have seen him during my visit to the publishing house. For the rest he was a peculiarly agreeable person, educated, refined, and possessed of definite ideas. We smoked together, and as an outcome of the talk about cigars, I gave him something unusual. An indiscreetly lavish friend of mine had given me a box of gigantic cigars, each of which was encased in a glass tube, and each of which had cost a dollar. I was so pleased with my visitor that I gave him one of these, saying

that it didn't often happen to a man who had anything to do with literature to smoke a dollar cigar.

[264] At the end of his visit he somewhat casually mentioned the fact that he and his wife were staying at the Astor House, adding:

"We were anxious to leave for Boston by a late train to-night but I find it impracticable to do so. I've suffered myself to run short of money and my wife has made the matter worse by indulging in an indiscreet shopping tour to-day. I have telegraphed to Boston for a remittance and must wait over till it comes to-morrow. It is a very great annoyance, as I am needed in Boston to-morrow, but there is no help for it."

I asked him how much money was absolutely necessary to enable him to leave by the late train, which there was still time to catch, and after a moment of mental figuring, he fixed upon the sum of sixteen dollars and fifty cents as sufficient.

It was Sunday night and I had only a dollar or so in my pocket, but with a keenly realizing sense of his embarrassment, I drew upon my wife's little store of household change, and made up the sum required. He seemed very grateful for the accommodation, but before leaving he asked me to let him take one of those dollar cigars, to show to a friend in Boston.

About half an hour after he had left, I suddenly remembered him and identified him as Moses—ex-carpetbag governor of South Carolina, ex-convict, and *never* ex-swindler. A few calls over the telephone confirmed my conviction and my memory fully sustained my recollection of the man. A day or two later he was arrested in connection with an attempted swindle, but I did not bother to follow him up. I acted upon the dictum of one of the most successful men I ever knew, that "it's tomfoolery to send good money after bad."

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LX

It was during the period of my withdrawal from newspaper work that Mr. Edmund Gosse made his first visit to this country. At that time he had not yet made the reputation he has since achieved for scholarship and literary accomplishment. As a scholar he was young and promising rather than a man of established reputation. As a writer he was only beginning to be known. But he was an Englishman of letters and an agreeable gentleman, wherefore we proceeded to dine him and wine him and make much of him—all of which helped the success of his lecture course.

*English Literary
Visitors*

I interrupt myself at this point to say that we do these things more generously and more lavishly than our kin beyond sea ever think of doing them. With the exception of Mark Twain, no living American author visiting England is ever received with one-half, or one-quarter, or one-tenth the attention that Americans have lavished upon British writers of no greater consequence than our own. If Irving Bacheller, or Charles Egbert Craddock, or Post Wheeler, or R. W. Chambers, or Miss Johnston, or Will Harben, or Thomas Nelson Page, or James Whitcomb Riley, or any other of a score that might be easily named should visit London, does anybody imagine that he or she would receive even a small fraction of the attention we have given to Sarah Grand, Mr. Yeats, Max O'Rell, B. L. Farjeon, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mr. Locke, and others? Would even Mr. Howells be made to feel that he was appreciated there as much as many far inferior English writers have been in New York? Are we helplessly provincial or hopelessly snobbish? Or is it that our English literary visitors make more skilful use of the press agent's peculiar gifts? Or is it, perhaps, that we are more generous and hospitable than the English?

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Mr. Gosse, at any rate, was worthy of all the attention he received, and his later work has fully justified it, so that nothing in the vagrant paragraph above is in any way applicable to him.

Mr. Gosse had himself carefully "coached" before he visited America. When he came to us he knew what every man of us had done in literature, art, science, or what not, and so far he made no mistakes either of ignorance or of misunderstanding.

"Bless my soul!" said James R. Osgood to me at one of the breakfasts, luncheons or banquets given to the visitor, "he has committed every American publishers' catalogue to memory, and knows precisely where each of you fellows stands."

Upon one point, however, Mr. Gosse's conceptions were badly awry. He bore the Civil War in mind, and was convinced that its bitternesses were still an active force in our social life. One night at the Authors Club I was talking with him when my brother Edward came up to us and joined in the conversation. Mr. Gosse seemed surprised and even embarrassed. Presently he said:

"It's extremely gratifying, you know, but this is a surprise to me. I understand that you two gentlemen held opposite views during the war, and one of the things my mentors in England most strongly insisted upon was that I should never mention either of you in talking with the other. It is very gratifying to find that you are on terms with each other."

"On terms?" said Edward. "Why, Geordie and I have always been twins. I was born two years

earlier than he was, but we've been twin brothers nevertheless, all our lives. You see, we were born almost exactly on the line between the North and the South, and one fell over to one side and the other to the other. But there was never anything but affection between us."

On another occasion Mr. Joe Harper gave a breakfast to Mr. Gosse at the University Club. There were seventy or eighty guests—too many for anything like intimate converse. To remedy this Mr. Harper asked about a dozen of us to remain after the function was over, gather around him at the head of the table—tell all the stories we could remember, and "give Mr. Gosse a real insight into our ways of thinking," he said.

*An Amusing
Misconception*

Gordon McCabe and I were in the group, and Mr. Gosse, knowing perfectly what each of us had written, knew, of course, that McCabe and I had fought on the Southern side during the Civil War. If he had not known the fact in that way he must have discovered it from the stories we told of humorous happenings in the Confederate service. Yet here we were, on the most cordial terms with men who had been on the other side. It was all a bewildering mystery to Mr. Gosse, and presently he ventured to ask about it.

"Pardon me," he said to Mr. Harper, "it is all very gratifying, I'm sure, but I don't quite understand. I think Mr. Eggleston and Mr. McCabe were in active service on the Southern side during the war?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Harper, "and they have told us all about it in their books."

"And the rest of you gentlemen sided with the North?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's very gratifying, of course, but it is astonishing to a stranger to find you all on such terms of friendship again."

"Isn't it?" broke in Mr. Harper. "Here we are, having champagne together quite like old friends, while we all know that only a dozen years or so ago, McCabe and Eggleston were down there at Petersburg trying with all their might to *kill our substitutes*."

The company laughed heartily at the witticism. Mr. Gosse smiled and a little later, in an aside, he asked me to explain just what Mr. Harper had meant by "substitutes."

Mr. Gosse left a sweet taste in our mouths when he sailed for home. The attentions he had received here had in no way spoiled him. From beginning to end of his stay he never once manifested the least feeling of superiority, and never once did his manner suggest that British condescension, which is at once so amusing and so insulting to Americans. The same thing was true of Matthew Arnold, who, I remember, made himself a most agreeable guest at a reception the Authors Club gave him in the days of its extreme poverty. But not all English men of letters whom I have met have been like-minded with these. A certain fourth- or fifth-rate English novelist, who was made the guest of honor at a dinner at the Lotus Club, said to me, as I very well remember: "Of course you have no literature of your own and you must depend for your reading matter upon us at home." The use of "at home" meaning "in England," was always peculiarly offensive in my ears, but my interlocutor did not recognize its offensiveness. "But really, you know, your people ought to pay for it."

He was offering this argument to me in behalf of international copyright, my interest in which was far greater than his own. For because of the competition of ten-cent reprints of English books, I was forbidden to make a living by literature and compelled to serve as a hired man on a newspaper instead.

A few of our English literary visitors have come to us with the modest purposes of the tourist, interested in what our country is and means. The greater number have come to exploit the country "for what there is in it," by lecturing. Their lecture managers have been alert and exceedingly successful in making advertising agencies of our clubs, our social organizations, and even our private parlors, by way of drawing money into the purses of their clients.

Did anybody ever hear of an American author of equal rank with these going to England on a lecture or reading tour, and getting himself advertised by London clubs and in London drawing-rooms in the like fashion? And if any American author—even one of the highest rank—should try to do anything of the sort, would his bank account swell in consequence as those of our British literary visitors do? Are we, after all, provincial? Have we not yet achieved our intellectual and social independence?

*A Question of
Provincialism*

I am persuaded that some of us have, though not many. One night at a club I asked Brander Matthews if I should introduce him to a second-rate English man of letters who had been made a guest of the evening. He answered:

"No—unless you particularly wish it, I'd rather talk to you and the other good fellows here. He hasn't anything to say that would interest me, unless it is something he has put into the lectures he's going to deliver, and he can't afford to waste on us any of that small stock of interesting things."

But as a people, have we outgrown our provincialism? Have we achieved our intellectual

independence? Have we learned to value our own judgments, our own thinking, our own convictions independently of English approval or disapproval? I fear we have not, even in criticism. When the novel "Democracy" appeared I wrote a column or two about it in the *Evening Post*, treating it as a noteworthy reflection of our own life, political and social—not very great but worthy of attention. The impulse of my article was that the literature of a country should be a showing forth of its life, its thought, its inspirations, its aspirations, its character, its strength, and its weaknesses. That anonymous novel seemed to me to be a reflection of all these things in some degree and I said so in print. All the other newspapers of the country dismissed the book in brief paragraphs, quite as if it had had no distinctive literary quality of its own. But a year or so later the English critics got hold of the novel and wrote of it as a thing of significance and consequence. Thereupon, the American newspapers that had before given it a paragraph or so of insignificant reference, took it up again and reviewed it as a book that meant something, evidently forgetting that they had ever seen it before.

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This is only one of many incidents of criticism that I might relate in illustration of the hurtful, crippling, paralyzing provincialism that afflicts and obstructs our literary development.

A few years ago the principal of a great and very ambitious preparatory school whose function it was to fit young men for college, sent me his curriculum "for criticism," he said,—for approval, I interpreted. He set forth quite an elaborate course in what he called "The Literature of the English Language." Upon looking it over I found that not one American book was mentioned in the whole course of it, either as a required study or as "collateral reading"—a title under which a multitude of second- or third-rate English works were set down.

For criticism I suggested that to the American boy who was expected to become an American man of culture, some slight acquaintance with Irving, Hawthorne, Emerson, Motley, Prescott, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Poe, Parkman, Lowell, Mark Twain, Mr. Howells, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Paul Hayne, Sidney Lanier, James Whitcomb Riley, Bret Harte, John Hay, and some other American writers might really be of greater advantage than familiarity with many of the English authors named.

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His answer was conclusive and profoundly discouraging. It was his function, he said, to prepare boys for their entrance examinations in our great colleges and universities, "and not one of these," he added, "names an American author in its requirement list."

I believe the colleges have since that time recognized American literature in some small degree, at least, though meagerly and with no adequate recognition of the fact that a nation's literature is the voice with which it speaks not only to other countries and to posterity but to its own people in its own time, and that acquaintance with it ministers, as no other scholarship does, to good, helpful, patriotic citizenship.

One of the English writers who came to this country possibly for his own country's good, gave me some trouble. I was editing *Hearth and Home* at the time, and he brought me for sale a number of unusually good things, mainly referring to matters French and Italian. He was absolute master of the languages of both those countries, and his acquaintance with their literature, classical, medieval, and modern, was so minute that he knew precisely where to find any literary matter that seemed salable. With a thrift admirable in itself, though misdirected, it was his practice to go to the Astor Library, find what he wanted in rare books or precious foreign newspaper files, translate it, and then tear out and destroy the pages he had plundered. In that irregular fashion he made quite a literary reputation for himself, though after detection he had to retire to Philadelphia, under the orders of Mr. Saunders, Librarian of the Astor Library, who decreed banishment for him as the alternative of prosecution for the mutilation of books.

A Library Vandal . . .

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He carried the thing so far, at last, that I regarded it as my duty to expose him, and I did so in my capacity as literary editor of the *Evening Post*. I was instantly threatened with a libel suit, but the man who was to bring it left at once on a yachting trip to the West Indies, and so far as I can learn has never reappeared either in America or in Literature. It is one of the abiding regrets of my life that the papers in that libel suit were never served upon me.

LXI

In the autumn of 1882 a little group of literary men, assembled around Richard Watson Gilder's fireside, decided to organize an Authors Club in New York. They arranged for the drafting of a tentative constitution and issued invitations for twenty-five of us to meet a little later at Lawrence Hutton's house in Thirty-fourth Street to organize the club.

We met there on the 13th of November and, clause by clause, adopted a constitution.

It was obvious in that little assemblage itself, that some such organization of authors was badly needed in New York. For, though there were only twenty-five of us there, all selected by the originating company, every man of us had to be introduced to some at least of the others present. The men of letters in New York did not know each other. They were beset by unacquaintance,

prejudices, senseless antagonisms, jealousies, amounting in some cases to hatreds. They had need to be drawn together in a friendly organization, in which they could learn to know and like and appreciate each other.

[273] So great were the jealousies and ambitions to which I have referred that early in the meeting Mr. Gilder—I think it was he—called three or four of us into a corner and suggested that there was likely to be a fight for the presidency of the club, and that it might result in the defeat of the entire enterprise. At Mr. Gilder's suggestion, or that of some one else—I cannot be sure because all of us in that corner were in accord—it was decided that there should be no president of the club, that the government should be vested in an executive council, and that at each of its meetings the council should choose its own chairman. In later and more harmonious years, since the men of the club have become an affectionate brotherhood, it has been the custom for the council to elect its chairman for a year, and usually to reelect him for another year. But at the beginning we had conditions to guard against that no longer exist—now that the literary men of New York know and mightily like each other.

*The Founding of
the Authors Club*

The eligibility clause of the constitution as experimentally drawn up by the committee, prescribed that in order to be eligible a man must be the author of "at least one book proper to literature," or—and there followed a clause covering the case of magazine editors and the like.

As a reader for a publishing house, I scented danger here. Half in play, but in earnest also, I suggested that the authorship of at least one book proper to literature would render pretty nearly the entire adult male population of the United States eligible to membership in the club, unless some requirement of publication were added. My manuscript reading had seemed to me at least to suggest that, and, as a necessary safeguard, I moved to insert the word "published" before the word "book," and the motion was carried with the laughter of the knowing for its accompaniment.

[274] The club was very modest in its beginnings. As its constituent members were mainly persons possessed of no money, so the club had none. For a time our meetings were held at the houses of members—Lawrence Hutton's, Dr. Youmans's, Richard Grant White's, and so on. But as not all of us were possessed of homes that lent themselves to such entertainment, we presently began meeting at Sieghortner's and other restaurants. Then came a most hospitable invitation from the Tile Club, offering us the use of their quarters for our meetings. Their quarters consisted, in fact, of a kitchen in the interior of a block far down town—I forget the number of the street. The building served Edwin A. Abbey as a studio—he had not made his reputation as an artist then—and the good old Irishwoman who cared for the rooms lived above stairs with her daughter for her sole companion. This daughter was Abbey's model, and a portrait of her, painted by his hand, hung in the studio, with a presentation legend attached. The portrait represented one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen. It was positively ravishing in its perfection. One day I had occasion to visit the place to make some club arrangement, and while there I met the young lady of the portrait. She was of sandy complexion, freckled, and otherwise commonplace in an extreme degree. Yet that exquisitely beautiful portrait that hung there in its frame was an admirably faithful likeness of the girl, when one studied the two faces closely. Abbey had not painted in the freckles; he had chosen flesh tints of a more attractive sort than the sandiness of the girl's complexion; he had put a touch of warmth into the indeterminate color of her pale red hair; and above all, he had painted intelligence and soul into her vacuous countenance. Yet the girl and the portrait were absolutely alike in every physical detail.

[275] I have not wondered since to learn that the husbands of high-born English dames, and the fathers of English maidens have been glad to pay Abbey kings' ransoms for portraits of their womankind. Abbey has the gift of interpretation, and I do not know of any greater gift.

The rear building in which we met by virtue of the Tile Club's hospitality was approached through an alleyway, or covered gallery rather, concerning which there was a tradition that two suicides and a murder had been committed within its confines.

Dime Novels

"How inspiring all that is!" said John Hay one night after the traditions had been reported in a peculiarly prosaic fashion by a writer of learned essays in psychology and the like, who had no more imagination than an oyster brings to bear upon the tray on which it is served. "It makes one long to write romantic tragedies, and lurid dramas, and all that sort of thing," Mr. Hay went on. "I'm sorely tempted to enter upon the career of the dime novelist."

This set us talking of the dime novel, a little group of us assembled in front of the fire. Some one started the talk by saying that the dime novel was an entirely innocent and a very necessary form of literature. There John Hay broke in, and Edwin Booth, who was also present, sustained him.

"The dime novel," Mr. Hay said, "is only a rude form of the story of adventure. If Scott's novels had been sufficiently condensed to be sold at the price, they would have been dime novels of the most successful sort. Your boy wants thrill, heroics, tall talk, and deeds of derring-do, and these are what the dime novelist gives him in abundance, and even in lavish superabundance. I remember that the favorite book of my own boyhood was J. B. Jones's 'Wild Western Scenes.' His 'Sneak' was to me a hero of romance with whom Ivanhoe could in no way compare."

"But dime novels corrupt the morals of boys," suggested some one of the company.

[276] "Do they?" asked Mr. Hay. Then a moment later he asked: "Did you ever read one of them?"

The interrupter admitted that he had not.

"Till you do," said Mr. Hay, "you should hesitate to pass judgment. The moral standards of the dime novel are always of the highest. They are even heroic in their insistence upon honor and self-sacrifice in behalf of the right. They are as chivalric as the code of honor itself. There is never anything unclean in the dime novel, never anything that even squints at toleration of immorality. The man beset by foes is always gallantly supported by resolute fellows with pistols in their hands which they are ready to use in behalf of righteousness. The maiden in trouble has champions galore, whose language may not always square itself with Sunday School standards, but whose devotion to the task of protecting innocence is altogether inspiring."

"What about their literary quality?" asked some one in the group.

"It is very bad, I suppose," answered Edwin Booth, "but that isn't the quality they put to the front. I have read dozens, scores, hundreds of them, and I have never challenged their literary quality, because that is something to which they lay no claim. Their strength lies in dramatic situations, and they abound in these. I must say that some of them are far better, stronger, and more appealing than are many of those that have made the fortune of successful plays."

"Do you read them for the sake of the dramatic situations, Mr. Booth?" some one asked.

"No. I read them for the sake of sleep," he replied. "I read them just as I play solitaire—to divert my mind and to bring repose to me."

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LXII

It was not long after that that the Authors Club secured quarters of its own in Twenty-fourth Street, and became an established social organization. For it was never a literary club, but always strictly a social one, having a literary basis of eligibility to membership. From the beginning we refused to read papers at each other, or in any other way to "improve our minds" on club evenings by any form of literary exercise. As the carpenter, who dresses lumber and drives nails and miters joints for his daily bread does not seek his evening recreation by doing those things for amusement, so we who were all hard-working men of letters, earning our living with the pen, had no mind to do as amateurs that which we were daily and hourly doing as professionals.

*The Authors
Club*

In the same way we decided at the outset to eschew every form of propagandism. The club has had no cause to advocate, no doctrine to promulgate, no "movement" to help or hinder. It has been and still is strictly a social club composed of men of letters, and having for its guests interesting men of all other professions. Hence it has prospered and its members have become intimates with no trace or suggestion of friction between them. I think I am safe in saying that no other organization has done so much for the amelioration of the literary life, the removal of prejudices and bitternesses and spites and jealousies, and for the upbuilding of cordial friendship among writers. I think there is no man in the club who doesn't count every other man there his friend.

The point emphasized above—that the club is a social, not a literary organization—is important. Neglect of it has led to a good deal of ill-informed and misdirected criticism. At the very beginning, on the night of the club's organization, we made up a list of somewhat more than a score of literary men who should be made members upon the invitation of our Executive Council without the formality of proposal and election. From that list we excluded—by unanimous vote—one man whose literary work abundantly qualified him for membership, but whose cantankerous self-satisfaction rendered him, in the general opinion, a man not "clubbable." The trouble with him was not so much that he regarded himself, as he once avowed in company that he did, as "a greater than Shakespeare," but that he was disposed to quarrel with everybody who failed to recognize the assumption as a fact.

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If ours had been a literary club, he must have been admitted to membership without question. As it was a social club, we didn't want him, and three several efforts that he afterwards made to secure admission failed. The like has happened in the cases of two or three other men whose literary work rendered them eligible, but whose personal peculiarities did not commend them.

Chiefly, however, the club has been criticised for its failure to admit women to membership. Paul Leicester Ford said to me on that subject one day:

"I'll have nothing to do with your club. You arrogantly refuse to admit women, though women are doing quite as much as men in American literature."

I explained several things to him. I reminded him that the Authors Club set up no pretension to be completely representative of American literary activity; that it was merely a club formed by gentlemen who felt the need of it, for the purpose of bringing literary men together for social intercourse over their pipes and sandwiches; that the admission of women would of

*Why Women Are
Not Eligible*

necessity defeat this solitary purpose, and that their exclusion was no more a slight than that which he put upon his nearest friends whenever he gave a dinner or a theater party to which he could not invite everybody on his eligible list. Then I pointed out another difficulty and a supreme one. If we should admit women on the same terms of eligibility that we insisted upon in the case of men, a host of writing women would become eligible, while our own wives and daughters would in most cases be ineligible. If, in order to cover that difficulty we should admit the wives and daughters of male members, we should be obliged to admit also the husbands, sons, and fathers of our female members, so that presently we should become a mob of men and women, half or more of whom were ineligible under our original conception of the club and its reason for being. There is also the consideration that every club must and does exclude more than it includes; that in requiring New England birth or descent for membership, the New England Society excludes perhaps nine-tenths of the people of New York, while without that requirement the Society would lose its distinctive character and be no New England Society at all.

Mr. Ford was so far convinced that he authorized me to propose his name for membership, but before I had opportunity to do so, the tragedy that ended his life had befallen.

The club has found ways of marking its appreciation of the literary equality of women without destroying its own essential being. In February and March of each year it gives four afternoon receptions to women. In so far as it can find them out, the club's Executive Council invites to all of these receptions, besides the wives and daughters of its own members, every woman in the land whose literary work would render her eligible to membership if she were a man. In addition to this, every member of the club has the privilege of inviting any other women he pleases.

I do not think the club is deficient in gallantry, nor do I find any such thought prevalent among the pleasing throng of gentlewomen who honor us by accepting our invitations.

Our first quarters were meagerly furnished, of course. It took every dollar we had to furnish them even in the plainest way. There was neither a sofa nor an upholstered chair in our rooms. Cheap, straight-backed, cane-seated chairs alone were there. One night when General Sherman was a guest, some one apologized for our inability to offer him a more comfortable seat. The sturdy old soldier always had an opinion ready made to suit every emergency.

"Comfortable?" he responded. "Why, what do you call these chairs if they are not comfortable? I don't believe in cushions. They are unnatural; they are devices of self-indulgence and luxury. The law ought to forbid their existence. They make men limp and flabby when they ought to be strong and vigorous and virile. The best chair in the world is one with a raw bull's hide for a seat, and with leathern thongs to tighten it with when it stretches. Next best is the old-fashioned, wooden-bottomed kitchen chair that cost forty cents when I was a boy. I don't suppose they make 'em now. People are too luxurious to know when they are well off."

Presently some one spoke to him of his "March to the Sea," and he instantly replied:

"It's all romantic nonsense to call it that. The thing was nothing more nor less than a military change of base—a thing familiar to every student of tactics; but a poet got hold of it, nicknamed it the 'March to the Sea,' and that's what everybody will call it, I suppose, till the crack of doom, unless it is forgotten before that time."

Perhaps the hard-fighting veteran's appreciation of the romantic aspect of great achievements was less keen than that of a company of creative writers. Perhaps his modesty got the better of him.

It happened early in the history of the Authors Club that the regular meeting night fell one year on the thirty-first of December. At first it was suggested that the date be changed, but some one remembered the old custom of the Methodists who held "Watch Night" meetings, seeing the old year out and the new year in with rejoicing and fervent singing. Why shouldn't we have a "Watch Night" after our own fashion? The suggestion was eagerly accepted. No programme was arranged, no order of exercises planned. Nothing was prearranged except that with friendship and jollity and the telling of stories we should give a farewell to the old year and a welcome to the new.

*The First "Watch
Night"*

Fortunately, Mark Twain was called upon to begin the story telling, and he put formality completely out of countenance at the very outset. Instead of standing as if to address the company, he seized a chair, straddled it, and with his arms folded across its back, proceeded to tell one of the most humorous of all his stories. Frank Stockton followed with his account of the "mislaid corpse" and before the new year had an hour or two of age, there had been related enough of exquisitely humorous incident—real or fanciful—to make the fortune of two or three books of humor.

At midnight we turned out the gas and sang a stanza or two of "Auld Lang Syne" by way of farewell to the old year. Then, with lights all ablaze again, we greeted the new year in the familiar "He's a jolly good fellow."

Max O'Rell was my guest on one of these occasions, and in one of his later books he gave an account of it. After recording the fact that "at precisely twelve o'clock the lights are turned out," he added a footnote saying in solemn fashion: "A clock is *borrowed for the occasion.*"

I saw a good deal of that witty Frenchman during his several visits to America. I wrote an

introduction to the American edition of his "John Bull, Jr.," and it served to protect that work with a copyright entry.

He never paid me a cent for the service.

That was because I refused to accept the remuneration he pressed upon me.

I offer that as a jest which he would have appreciated keenly.

He was a man of generous mind, whose humor sometimes impressed others as cynical, a judgment that I always regarded as unjust, for the reason that the humorist must be allowed a certain privilege of saying severer things than he really feels, if he is to be a humorist at all. When Max O'Rell says of a certain type of stupid British boy of the "upper class," that he ultimately enters the army and fights his country's enemies, and then adds: "And whether he kills his country's enemy or his country's enemy kills him, his country is equally benefited," he does not really mean what he says. He once confessed to me that he had had an abiding affection for every such boy, but that the temptation to make a jest at his expense was irresistible in the case of a writer whose bread and butter were dependent upon his ability to excite smiles.

In the same way, as everybody must have observed, the humor that has made the reputation of many newspaper editors is largely leveled at women in their various relations with men and at the sacred things of life. Much of it would be cruelly unjust if it were seriously meant, as ordinarily it is not.

I have sometimes wondered whether the injustice did not outweigh the humor—whether the smile excited by the humor was worth the wound inflicted by the injustice.

[283] The professional humorist, whether with pen, pencil, or tongue, is the victim of a false perspective. He is so intent upon his quip or quibble or jest, that he loses sight of more serious things. He does not hesitate to sacrifice even truth and justice, or the highest interest of whatever sort, for the sake of "making his point." He perhaps mistakenly believes that his reader or the person studying his caricature will regard his jest lightly and without loss of respect for the more serious things that lie behind. As a matter of fact, this rarely happens. The reader of the jest accepts it as a setting forth of truth, or at any rate is affected by it in some such fashion.

*Habitual
Humorists*

On the whole, therefore, I cannot help regarding the confirmed humorist in literature or art as a detrimental force.

I do not mean to include in this condemnation such genial literary humorists as Charles Battell Loomis, and Frank R. Stockton, and Charles Dudley Warner, who made things funny merely by looking at them with an intellectual squint that deceived nobody and misled nobody. I refer only to the habitual jokers of the newspapers and the like,—men who, for a wage, undertake to make a jest of everything that interests the popular mind, and who, for the sake of their jest, would pervert the Lord's Prayer itself to a humorous purpose. These people lose all sense of propriety, proportion, perspective, and even of morality itself. They make their jests at so much per line, and at all hazards of truth, justice, and intelligence.

[284] In literature these mountebanks impress me as detrimental impertinents—in conversation they seem to me nuisances. I cannot forget one occasion on which the late Bishop Potter and a distinguished judge of the Supreme Court were discussing a question of the possibility of helpful reform in a certain direction. There was a humorist present—a man whose sole idea of conversation was sparkle. He insisted upon sparkling. He interrupted the gravest utterances with his puns or his plays upon words, or his references to humorous things remembered. The thing became so intolerable that some one present slipped his arms into those of the Bishop and the Judge, and led them away with the suggestion that there was a quiet corner in the club where he would like to seat them and hear the rest of their conversation. As they turned their backs on the humorist and moved away, the Bishop asked:

"What did you say the name of that mountebank is?"

The Judge replied:

"I knew at the time. I'm glad to have forgotten it."

"It is just as well," answered the Bishop. "There are many things in this life that are better forgotten than remembered."

There is one thing worthy of note in connection with the Authors Club. Almost from the hour of its inception it has furnished the country with a very distinguished proportion of its most eminent diplomats and statesmen. To mention only a few: James Russell Lowell, Andrew D. White, David Jayne Hill, William L. Wilson, Carl Schurz, General Horace Porter, John Hay, Theodore Roosevelt, Oscar S. Straus, Edward M. Shepard, and a dozen others easily mentioned, may be cited as illustrations of the extent to which a club of only about 180 members in all has been drawn upon by the national government for its needs in diplomacy and statesmanship.

The Authors Club idea of a watch night meeting has been borrowed by a number of other organizations, but I think in none of them has it become so well recognized an event of the year. At any rate, it throngs our rooms to the point of suffocation on the night of every thirty-first of December.

Another habit of the club has been for a considerable number of members and guests to linger after its regular meetings until the small hours of the morning, telling stories or discussing matters of intellectual interest. This has become a feature of the club meetings since Charles Henry Webb—better known in literature as "John Paul"—said one night at two o'clock:

"Upon my soul, the Authors Club is one of the very pleasantest places I know—*after* the authors have gone home."

Soon after the club took its quarters in Twenty-fourth Street, three of us—Rossiter Johnson, John D. Champlin, and myself—were impressed with the need of more funds and better furnishings. We suggested the publication of a unique book, as a means of securing the funds and providing the furnishings. Our plan contemplated a sumptuous volume, in an edition limited to two hundred and fifty-one copies—one for the club, and the rest for sale at one hundred dollars a copy. We proposed that the members of the club should furnish the poems, stories, and essays needed; that each of them should agree never to publish his contribution elsewhere, and that each poem, story, or essay should be signed by its author in pen and ink in each copy of the book.

*"Liber
Scriptorum"*

We were met with prompt discouragement on every hand. The older men among the members of the club were confident that we could never secure the papers desired. Our friends among the publishers simply knew in advance and positively, that even if we could make the book, we could never sell it. Mr. Joe Harper offered to bet me a hat that we could never sell twenty-five of the two hundred and fifty copies. I lived to wear that hat and rejoice in it, for we not only made the book—"Liber Scriptorum"—but we realized something more than twenty thousand dollars on its sale, as a fund with which to provide leather-covered morris chairs, soft rugs, handsome bookcases, and other luxuries for our friends the doubters to rejoice in.

Authors are supposed to be an unbusinesslike set, who do not know enough of affairs to manage their personal finances in a way to save themselves from poverty. Perhaps the judgment is correct. But the Authors Club is the only club I know in New York which has no dollar of debt resting upon it, and has a comfortable balance to its credit in bank.

The case is not singular. It has been written of William Pitt that while he was able to extricate the British exchequer from the sorest embarrassment it ever encountered, he could not keep the duns from his own door.

LXIII

I had been operating my little literary shop successfully for three or four years after quitting the *Evening Post*, when Mr. Parke Godwin came to me to say that he and some friends were about buying a controlling interest in the newspaper called *The New York Commercial Advertiser*, and that he wanted me to join his staff. I told him I had no desire to return to journalism, that I liked my quiet literary life at home, and that I was managing to make enough out of it to support my family.

He replied that at any rate I might undertake the literary editorship of his newspaper; that it would involve no more than a few hours of office attendance in each week, and need not interfere in any way with my literary undertakings of other kinds.

I had a very great personal regard for Mr. Godwin; a very great admiration for his character, and an abiding affection for him as a man. When he pressed this proposal upon me, insisting that its acceptance would relieve him of a burden, I decided to undertake what he wanted. I was the readier to do so for a peculiar reason. In those days pretty nearly all books, American or English, were first offered to the Harpers, and I had to examine them all, either in manuscript, if they were American, or in proof sheets if they were English. Consequently, whether they were published by the Harpers or by some one else, I was thoroughly familiar with them long before they came from the press. I foresaw that it would be easy for me to review them from the acquaintance I already had with their contents.

I was resolutely determined not to be drawn again into the newspaper life, but I foresaw no danger of that in making the literary arrangement suggested.

*In Newspaper
Life Again*

Accordingly, I became literary editor of the *Commercial Advertiser* under Mr. Godwin's administration as the editor-in-chief of that newspaper. The paper had never been conducted upon the lines he proposed or upon any other well-defined lines, so far as I could discover, and I foresaw that he had a hard task before him. All the reputation the paper had was detrimental rather than helpful. I was eager to help him over the first hurdles in the race, and so, in addition to my literary duties I not only wrote editorials each day, but helped in organizing a news staff that should at least recognize news when it ran up against it in the street.

Mr. Godwin was himself editor-in-chief, and the vigor of his utterances made a quick impression. But his managing editor lacked—well, let us say some at least of the qualifications that tend to make a newspaper successful. Mr. Godwin was an exceedingly patient man, but after

a while he wearied of the weekly loss the paper was inflicting upon him. In the meanwhile, I discovered that my attention to the newspaper was seriously interfering with my literary work, and that the fifty dollars a week which the paper paid me did not compensate me for the time I was giving to it at the expense of my other undertakings. I wrote to Mr. Godwin, recommending a very capable young man to take my place, and asking to be released from an engagement that was anything but profitable to me.

For reply I had a prompt letter from Mr. Godwin asking me to see him at his home. There he asked and urged me to become managing editor of the paper from that hour forth. He told me he was losing money in large sums upon its conduct, and appealed to me to come to his rescue, urging that he was "too old and too indolent" himself to put life into the enterprise.

The question of salary was not mentioned between us. He appealed to me to help him and I stood ready to do so at any sacrifice of personal interest or convenience. But when the board of directors of the corporation met a month later, he moved an adequate salary for me and suggested that it should be dated back to the day on which I had taken control. A certain excessively small economist on the board objected to the dating back on the ground that no bargain had been made to that effect and that he was "constitutionally opposed to the unnecessary squandering of money."

Instantly Mr. Godwin said:

"The salary arranged for our managing editor is the just reward of the service he is rendering. He has been giving us that service from the hour of his entrance upon office. He is as justly entitled to compensation for that time as for the future. Either the board must pay it or I will pay it out of my own pocket. We are neither beggars nor robbers, and we take nothing that we do not pay for." There spoke the great, honest-minded man that Parke Godwin always was.

It was a difficult task I had undertaken. There were many obstacles in the way. The chief of these was pointed out by Mr. John Bigelow when he said to me:

"You're going to make yours a newspaper for the educated classes. It is my opinion that there are already too many newspapers for the educated classes."

I am disposed to think the old journalist and statesman had a prophetic vision of the early coming time when success in newspaper editing would be measured by the skill of newspaper proprietors in making their appeal to the uneducated classes—to the million instead of the few thousands.

A more perplexing difficulty beset me, however. I had a definitely fixed and wholly inadequate sum of money to expend weekly in making the paper, and when I came to look over my payroll I found that the greater part of the sum allowed me went to pay the salaries of some very worthy men, whose capacity to render effective service to a "live" modern newspaper was exceedingly small. I had sore need of the money these men drew every week, with which to employ reporters who could get news and editors who knew how to write. The men in question held their places by virtue of Mr. Godwin's over-generous desire to provide a living for them.

*An Editor's
Perplexities*

I represented the case to him in its nakedness. I told him frankly that whatever he might be personally able to afford, the newspaper's earnings at that time did not justify the maintenance of such a pension roll. Either I must discharge all these men and use the money that went to pay their salaries in a more fruitful way, or I must decline to go on with the task I had undertaken.

He solved the problem by calling the board together, resigning his editorship, and making me editor-in-chief, with unrestricted authority.

With all the gentleness I could bring to bear I detached the barnacles and freed myself to make a newspaper. I had the good fortune in all this to have the support of Mr. Godwin's two sons, who were large stockholders in the newspaper, and of Mr. Henry Marquand, who was also the owner of an important interest.

I had also the good fortune to secure the services of some reporters and some editorial assistants whose energies and capacities were of the utmost value to me.

Many of them are dead now—as, alas! most other persons are with whom I have been closely associated. But those of them who are living have made place and reputation for themselves in a way that justifies the pride I used to feel in their abilities, their energies, and their conscientious devotion to duty when they worked with me. Indeed, as I contemplate the careers of these men, most of whom came to me as "cubs" fresh from college, I am disposed to plume myself not only upon my sagacity in discovering their untried abilities, but also upon the tutelage I gave them in journalism. The eagerness with which other newspapers have since sought them out for important employments, and the rapidity of their promotion on those other newspapers have always been a source of pride to me—pride which is not, I think, vainglorious or unduly personal.

Perhaps the reader will permit me here to pay tribute to those loyal men who so willingly stood by me when the most that I was permitted to pay them was less than one-half—sometimes less than one-third what they might have earned upon other newspapers.

Among them was Charles E. Russell, who has since earned high literary place for himself. Another was Timothy Shaler Williams, who

Some of My

has since been lured from literature, for which his gifts were great, to *Brilliant "Cubs"*
affairs, and who for many years has been president of the Brooklyn
Rapid Transit Company. I had Earl D. Berry for my managing editor, and I could have had none
[291] more capable. In the news department were De François Folsom—dead long years ago—Edward
Fales Coward, who has since made a distinguished place for himself; Hewitt, the author of
Dixey's song, "So English, You Know"; Sidney Strother Logan, one of the shrewdest news
explorers I have ever known,—dead years ago, unfortunately,—and George B. Mallon, who came
to me fresh from college and whose work was so good as to confirm my conviction that even in a
newspaper's reporting room an educated mind has advantages over mere native shrewdness and
an acquaintance with the slang and patter of the time. Mr. Mallon's work was so good, indeed,
that I personally assigned him to tasks of peculiar difficulty. The New York *Sun* has since
confirmed my judgment of his ability by making him its city editor, a post that he has held for
seven years or more.

Another of my "cubs" was Henry Armstrong, whose abilities have since won for him a place on
the brilliant editorial writing staff of the *Sun*. Still another was Henry Wright, who is now editor-
in-chief of the paper on which he "learned his trade,"—though the paper has since changed its
name to the *Globe*. Another was Nelson Hirsh, who afterwards became editor of the *Sunday*
World.

On my editorial staff were Henry R. Elliot—dead now,—James Davis, who carried every detail of
a singularly varied scholarship at his finger-tips, ready for instant use, and whose grace as a
writer, illuminated as it was by an exquisitely subtle humor, ought to have made him famous, and
would have done so, if death had not come to him too soon.

Doubtless there were others whom I ought to mention here in grateful remembrance, but the
incessant activities of the score and more of years that have elapsed since my association with
[292] them ended have obliterated many details from my memory. Let me say that to all of them I
render thanks for loyal and highly intelligent assistance in the difficult task I then had to wrestle
with.

With a staff like that we were able to get the news and print it, and we did both in a way that
attracted attention in other newspaper offices as well as among newspaper readers. With such
writers as those mentioned and others, the editorial utterances of the paper attracted an
attention that had never before been accorded to them.

So far as its books of account gave indication, the *Commercial Advertiser* had never earned or
paid a dividend. At the end of the first year under this new régime it paid a dividend of fifty per
cent. At the end of its second year it paid its stockholders one hundred per cent. The earnings of
the third year were wisely expended in the purchase of new presses and machinery. Before the
end of the fourth year I had resigned its editorship to become an editorial writer on *The World*.

I intensely enjoyed the work of "making bricks without straw" on the *Commercial Advertiser*—
by which I mean that with a staff of one man to ten on the great morning newspapers, and with
one dollar to expend where they could squander hundreds, we managed not only to keep step but
to lead them in such news-getting enterprises as those incident to the prosecution of the boodle
Aldermen and Jake Sharp, the Diss de Barr case, and the other exciting news problems of the
time.

The strain, however, was heart-breaking, and presently my health gave way under it. A
leisurely wandering all over this continent restored it somewhat, but upon my return the burden
seemed heavier than ever—especially the burden of responsibility that made sleep difficult and
rest impossible to me.

In the meanwhile, of course, my literary work had been sacrificed to the Moloch of journalism. I
[293] had canceled all my engagements of that sort and severed connections which I had intended to
be lifelong. In a word, I had been drawn again into the vortex of that daily journalism, from which
I had twice escaped. I was worn, weary, and inexpressibly oppressed by the duties of responsible
editorship—a responsibility I had never sought, but one which circumstances had twice thrust
upon me.

I wonder if the reader can understand or even faintly imagine what
all this means. I wonder if I can suggest some shadow of it to his mind. *The Dread Task*
Think of what it means to toil all day in the making of a newspaper, and *of the Editor*
and to feel, when all is done that the result is utterly inadequate. Think of
what it means to the weary one to go home with the next day's task upon his mind as a new
burden, and with the discouraging consciousness that all he has done on one day's issue is dead
so far as the next day is concerned. Think what it means to a sensitive man to feel that upon his
discretion, his alertness, his sagacity, depends not only the daily result of a newspaper's
publication, but the prosperity or failure of other men's investments of hundreds of thousands of
dollars.

For the value of a newspaper depends from day to day upon its conduct. It is a matter of good
will. If the editor pleases his constituency, the investment of the owners remains a profitable
property. If he displeases that constituency the newspaper has nothing left to sell but its presses
and machinery, representing a small fraction of the sum invested in it.

That responsibility rested upon me as an incubus. All my life until then I had been able to sleep.
Then came sleeplessness of a sort I could not shake off. At my usual hour for going to bed, I was

overcome by sleep, but after five minutes on the pillows there came wakefulness. I learned how to fight it, by going to my library and resolutely sitting in the dark until sleep came, but the process was a painful one and it left me next morning crippled for my day's work.

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In the meanwhile, as I have said, I enjoyed my work as I suppose a man condemned to death enjoys the work of writing his "confessions." I enjoyed my very intimate association with Henry Marquand, one of the most companionable men I ever knew, for the reason that his mind was responsive to every thought one might utter, and that there was always a gentle humor in all that he had to say. He had a most comfortable schooner yacht on board which I many times saved my life or my sanity by passing a Sunday outside on blue water, with nothing more important to think of than the cob pipes we smoked as we loafed in our pajamas on the main hatch.

Marquand had a habit of inviting brilliant men for his guests, such men as Dr. Halsted, now of Johns Hopkins; Dr. Tuttle, who has since made fame for himself; Dr. Roosevelt, who died a while ago; James Townsend, Dr. William Gilman Thompson, then a comparatively young man but now one of the supreme authorities in medical science, and others of like highly intellectual quality. Now and then there were "ladies present," but they were an infrequent interruption. I don't mean that ungallantly. But rest and women do not usually go together.

It was our habit to board the yacht down Staten Island way on Saturday afternoon, sail out to the lightship and back, and anchor in the Horseshoe for dinner and the night. On Sunday we sailed out toward Fire Island or down toward Long Branch, or wherever else we chose. We were intent only upon rest—the rest that the sea alone can give, and that only the lovers of the sea ever get in this utterly unrestful world of ours.

On deck in the afternoon and evening, and in the saloon at dinner and other meals, we talked, I suppose, of intellectual things. At sea we rested, and smoked, and were silent, and altogether happy. I have always enjoyed the sea. I have crossed the ocean many times, and I have sailed in all sorts of craft over all sorts of seas, with delight in every breath that the ocean gave to me; but I think I may truly say that no other voyage I ever made gave me so much pleasure as did those little yachting trips on the "Ruth" in company with men whose very presence was an intellectual inspiration.

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But the most abiding recollection I have of my service on the *Commercial Advertiser* is that which concerns itself with Parke Godwin. He was a man of great thought impulses, only half expressed. That which he gave to the world in print was no more than the hem of his intellectual garment. A certain constitutional indolence, encouraged by his too early acquisition of sufficient wealth to free him from the necessity of writing for a living, prevented him from giving to the world the best that was in him. He would have a great thought and he would plan to write it. Sometimes he would even begin to write it. But in the end he preferred to talk it to some appreciative listener.

Parke Godwin

I remember one case of the kind. He had several times invited me to visit him at his Bar Harbor summer home. Always I had been obliged by the exigencies of my editorial work to forego that delight. One summer he wrote to me, saying:

"I wonder if you could forget the *Commercial Advertiser* long enough to spend a fortnight with me here at Bar Harbor. You see, I don't like to issue invitations and have them 'turned down,' so I'm not going to invite you till you write me that you will come."

In answer to that invitation I passed a fortnight with him. From beginning to end of the time he forbade all mention of the newspaper of which he was chief owner and I the responsible editor. But during that time he "talked into me," as he said at parting, a deal of high thinking that he ought to have put into print.

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His mind had one notable quality in common with Emerson's—the capacity to fecundate every other mind with which it came into close contact. One came away, from a conference with him, feeling enriched, inspired, enlarged, not so much by the thought he had expressed as by the thinking he had instigated in his listener's mind.

It was so with me on that occasion. I came away full of a thought that grew and fruited in my mind. Presently—an occasion offering—I wrote it into a series of articles in the newspaper. These attracted the attention of Dr. William M. Sloane, now of Columbia University, then professor of history at Princeton and editor of the *Princeton Review*. At his instigation I presented the same thought in his *Review*, and a little later by invitation I addressed the Nineteenth Century Club on the subject. I called it "The American Idea." In substance it was that our country had been founded and had grown great upon the idea that every man born into the world has a right to do as he pleases, so long as he does not trespass upon the equal right of any other man to do as he pleases, and that in a free country it is the sole function of government to maintain the conditions of liberty and to let men alone.

The idea seemed to be successful in its appeal to men's intelligence at that time, but many years later—only a year or so ago, in fact—I put it forward in a commencement address at a Virginia College and found it sharply though silently antagonized by professors and trustees on the ground that it seemed to deny to government the right to enact prohibitory liquor laws, or otherwise to make men moral by statute. The doctrine was pure Jeffersonianism, of course, and the professors and trustees sincerely believed themselves to be Jeffersonians. But the doctrine had gored their pet ox, and that made a difference.

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One day Mr. Godwin expressed himself as delighted with all I had written on the American Idea. I responded:

*Some
Recollections of
Mr. Godwin*

"That is very natural. The idea is yours, not mine, and in all that I have written about it, I have merely been reporting what you said to me, as we stood looking at the surf dashing itself to pieces on the rocks at Bar Harbor."

"Not at all," he answered. "No man can expound and elaborate another man's thought without putting so much of himself into it as to make it essentially and altogether his own. I may have dropped a seed into your mind, but I didn't know it or intend it. The fruitage is all your own. My thinking on the subject was casual, vagrant, unorganized. I had never formulated it in my own mind. You see we all gather ideas in converse with others. That is what speech was given to man for. But the value of the ideas depends upon the use made of them."

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Mr. Godwin had been at one time in his life rather intimately associated with Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot and statesman. As all old newspaper men remember, Kossuth had a habit of dying frequently. News of his death would come and all the newspapers would print extended obituary articles. Within a day or two the news would be authoritatively contradicted, and the obituaries would be laid away for use at some future time. On one of these occasions Mr. Godwin wrote for me a singularly interesting article, giving his personal reminiscences of Kossuth. Before I could print it despatches came contradicting the news of the old Hungarian's death. I put Mr. Godwin's manuscript into a pigeonhole and both he and I forgot all about it. A year or so later Kossuth did in fact die, and in looking through my papers to see what I might have ready for printing on the subject, I discovered Mr. Godwin's paper. It was not signed, but purported to be the personal recollections of one who had known the patriot well.

I hurried it into print, thus gaining twelve or fourteen hours on the morning newspapers.

The next morning Mr. Godwin called upon me, declaring that he had come face to face with the most extraordinary psychological problem he had ever encountered.

"The chapter of Kossuth reminiscences that you printed yesterday," he said, "was as exact a report of my own recollections of the man as I could have given you if you had sent a reporter to interview me on the subject; and the strangest part of it is that the article reports many things which I could have sworn were known only to myself. It is astonishing, inexplicable."

"This isn't a case of talking your thought into another person," I answered, referring to the former incident. "This time you put yourself down on paper, and what I printed was set from the manuscript you gave me a year or so ago."

This solved the psychological puzzle and to that extent relieved his mind. But there remained the further difficulty that, cudgel his brain as he might, he could find in it no trace of recollection regarding the matter.

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"I remember very well," he said, "that I often thought I ought to write out my recollections of Kossuth, but I can't remember that I ever did so. I remember taking myself to task many times for my indolence in postponing a thing that I knew I ought to do, but that only makes the case the more inexplicable. When I scourged myself for neglecting the task, why didn't my memory remind me that I had actually discharged the duty? And now that I have read the reminiscences in print, why am I unable to recall the fact that I wrote them? The article fills several columns. Certainly I ought to have some recollection of the labor involved in writing so much. Are you entirely certain that the manuscript was mine?"

*A Mystery of
Forgetting*

I sent to the composing room for the "copy" and showed it to him. As he looked it over he said:

"'Strange to say, on Club paper.' You remember Thackeray's Roundabout paper with that headline? It has a bearing here, for this is written on paper that the Century Club alone provides for the use of its members. I must, therefore, have written the thing at the Century Club, and that ought to resurrect some memory of it in my mind, but it doesn't. No. I have not the slightest recollection of having put that matter on paper."

At that point his wonderfully alert mind turned to another thought.

"Suppose you and I believed in the occult, the mystical, the so-called supernatural, as we don't," he said, "what a mystery we might make of this in the way of psychical manifestation—which usually belongs to the domain of psycho-pathology. Think of it! As I chastised myself in my own mind for my neglect to put these things on paper, your mind came under subjection to mine and you wrote them in my stead. So complete was the possession that your handwriting, which is clear and legible, became an exact facsimile of mine, which is obscure and difficult. Then you, being under possession, preserved no memory of having written the thing, while I, knowing nothing of your unconscious agency in the matter, had nothing to remember concerning it. Isn't that about the way the mysticists make up their 'facts' for the misleading of half-baked brains?"

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In later years I related this incident to a distinguished half-believer in things mystical, adding Mr. Godwin's laughingly conjectural explanation of it, whereupon the reply came:

"May not that have been the real explanation, in spite of your own and Mr. Godwin's skepticism?"

I was left with the feeling that after all what Mr. Godwin had intended as an extravagant caricature was a veritable representation of a credulity that actually exists, even among men commonly accounted sane, and certainly learned. The reflection was discouraging to one who hopes for the progress of mankind through sanity of mind.

LXIV

In the days of which I have hitherto written there was a dignity, reserve, contentment—call it what you will—in the conduct of newspapers of established reputation. There was rivalry among them in their endeavors to publish the earliest news of public events, but it was a dignified rivalry involving comparatively little of that self-glorification which has since come to be a double-leaded feature in the conduct of many newspapers. The era of illustration and exploitation by the use of pictures had not yet been born of cheapened reproductive processes. Newspapers were usually printed directly from type because stereotyping was then a costly process and a slow one. As a consequence, newspapers were printed in regular columns consecutively arranged, and articles begun in one column were carried forward in the next. There were no such legends as "continued on page five," and the like.

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Headlines were confined to the column that began the article. The art of stretching them halfway or all the way across the page and involving half a dozen of them in gymnastic wrestlings with each other for supremacy in conspicuity had not then been invented, and in its absence the use of circus poster type and circus poster exaggeration of phrase was undreamed of.

Now and then an advertiser anxious for conspicuity would pay a heavy price to have column rules cut so that his announcement might stretch over two or more columns, but the cost of that was so great that indulgence in it was rare even among ambitious advertisers, while in the reading columns the practice was wholly unknown.

Another thing. It was then thought that when a copy of a newspaper was sold, the price paid for it ought to be sufficient at least to pay the cost of its manufacture, plus some small margin of profit. All the great morning newspapers except the *Sun* were sold at four cents a copy; the *Sun*, by virtue of extraordinary literary condensation, used only about half the amount of paper consumed by the others, and was sold at two cents. The afternoon newspapers were sold at three cents.

*The Price of
Newspapers*

The publishers of newspapers had not then grasped the idea that is now dominant, that if a great circulation can be achieved by selling newspapers for less than the mere paper in them costs, the increase in the volume and price of advertising will make of them enormously valuable properties.

That idea was not born suddenly. Even after the revolution was established, the cost of the white paper used in making a newspaper helped to determine the price of it to the public. It was not until the phenomenal success of cheap newspapers years afterwards tempted even more reckless adventurers into the field that publishers generally threw the entire burden of profit-making upon the advertising columns and thus established the business office in the seat before occupied by the editor and made business considerations altogether dominant over utterance, attitude, and conduct.

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There were in the meantime many attempts made to establish a cheaper form of journalism, but they were inadequately supported by working capital; they were usually conducted by men of small capacity; they had no traditions of good will behind them, and above all, they could not get Associated Press franchises. For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the facts, I explain that the Associated Press is an organization for news-gathering, formed by the great newspapers by way of securing news that no newspaper could afford to secure for itself. It maintains bureaus in all the great news centers of the world, and these collect and distribute to the newspapers concerned a great mass of routine news that would be otherwise inaccessible to them. If a president's message, or an inaugural address, or any other public document of voluminous character is to be given out, it is obvious that the newspapers concerned cannot wait for telegraphic reports of its contents. By way of saving time and telegraphic expense, the document is delivered to the Associated Press, and copies of it are sent to all the newspapers concerned, with a strict limitation upon the hour of its publication. Until that hour comes no newspaper in the association is privileged to print it or in any way, by reference or otherwise, to reveal any part of its contents. But in the meanwhile they can put it into type, and with it their editorial comments upon it, so that when the hour of release comes, they can print the whole thing—text and comment—without loss of time. The newspaper not endowed with an Associated Press franchise must wait for twenty-four hours or more for its copy of the document.

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Hardly less important is the fact that in every city, town, and village in the country, the Associated Press has its agent—the local editor or the telegraph operator, or some one else—who is commissioned to report to it every news happening that may arise within his bailiwick. Often these reports are interesting; sometimes they are of importance, and in either case the newspaper not allied with a press association must miss them.

At the time of which I am writing, the Associated Press was the only organization in the country that could render such service, and every newspaper venture lacking its franchise was foredoomed to failure.

But a newspaper revolution was impending and presently it broke upon us.

*The Pulitzer
Revolution*

In 1883 Mr. Joseph Pulitzer bought the *World* and instituted a totally new system of newspaper conduct.

His advent into New York journalism was called an "irruption," and it was resented not only by the other newspapers, but even more by a large proportion of the conservative public.

In its fundamental principle, Mr. Pulitzer's revolutionary method was based upon an idea identical with that suggested by Mr. John Bigelow when he told me there were too many newspapers for the educated class. Mr. Pulitzer undertook to make a newspaper, not for the educated class, but for all sorts and conditions of men. He did not intend to overlook the educated class, but he saw clearly how small a part of the community it was, and he refused to make his appeal to it exclusively or even chiefly.

The results were instantaneous and startling. The *World*, which had never been able to achieve a paying circulation or a paying constituency of advertisers, suddenly began selling in phenomenal numbers, while its advertising business became what Mr. Pulitzer once called a "bewildering chaos of success, yielding a revenue that the business office was imperfectly equipped to handle."

[304] It is an interesting fact, that the *World's* gain in circulation was not made at the expense of any other newspaper. The books of account show clearly that while the *World* was gaining circulation by scores and hundreds of thousands, no other morning newspaper was losing. The simple fact was that by appealing to a larger class, the *World* had created a great company of newspaper readers who had not before been newspaper readers at all. Reluctantly, and only by degrees, the other morning newspapers adopted the *World's* methods, and won to themselves a larger constituency than they had ever enjoyed before.

All this had little effect upon the afternoon newspapers. They had their constituencies. Their province was quite apart from that of the morning papers. A circulation of ten or twenty thousand copies seemed to them satisfactory; any greater circulation was deemed extraordinary, and if at a time of popular excitement their sales exceeded twenty thousand they regarded it not only as phenomenal but as a strain upon their printing and distributing machinery which it would be undesirable to repeat very often.

But the revolution was destined to reach them presently. At that time none of the morning newspapers thought of issuing afternoon editions. The game seemed not worth the candle. But presently the sagacity of Mr. William M. Laffan—then a subordinate on the *Sun's* staff, later the proprietor and editor of that newspaper—saw and seized an opportunity. The morning papers had learned their lesson and were making their appeal to the multitude instead of the select few. The afternoon newspapers were still addressing themselves solely to "the educated class." Mr. Laffan decided to make an afternoon appeal to the more multitudinous audience. Under his inspiration the *Evening Sun* was established on the seventeenth day of March, 1887, and it instantly achieved a circulation of forty thousand—from twice to four times that of its more conservative competitors.

[305] A little later an evening edition of the *World* was established. Its success at first was small, but Mr. Pulitzer quickly saw the reason for that. The paper was too closely modeled upon the conservative and dignified pattern of the established afternoon newspapers. To his subordinates Mr. Pulitzer said:

*The Lure of the
World*

"You are making a three-cent newspaper for a one-cent constituency. I want you to make it a one-cent newspaper."

What further instructions he gave to that end, I have never heard, but whatever they were they were carried out with a success that seemed to me to threaten the very existence of such newspapers as the one I was editing. I was satisfied that if the newspaper under my control was to survive it must adopt the new methods of journalism, broaden its appeal to the people, and reduce its price to the "penny" which alone the people could be expected to pay when the *Evening Sun* and the *Evening World* could be had for that price.

[306] The board of directors of the newspaper could not be induced to take this view, and just then one of the editors of the *World*, acting for Mr. Pulitzer, asked me to take luncheon with him. He explained to me that Mr. Pulitzer wanted an editorial writer and that he—my host—had been commissioned to engage me in that capacity, if I was open to engagement. In the end he made me a proposal which I could not put aside in justice to myself and my family. My relations with Mr. Godwin and his associates were so cordial, and their treatment of me had been always so generous, that I could not think of leaving them without their hearty consent and approval. The summer was approaching, when the members of the board of directors would go away to their summer homes or to Europe. The last regular meeting of the board for the season had been held, and nothing had been done to meet the new conditions of competition. I was discouraged by the prospect of addressing a steadily diminishing audience throughout the summer, with the

possibility of having no audience at all to address when the fall should come.

I hastily called the board together in a special meeting. I told them of the proposal made to me by the *World* and of my desire to accept it unless they could be induced to let me adopt the new methods at an expense much greater than any of the established afternoon newspapers had ever contemplated, and much greater than my board of directors was willing to contemplate. I said frankly that without their cordial consent, I could not quit their service, but that if we were to go on as before, I earnestly wished to be released from a responsibility that threatened my health with disaster.

They decided to release me, after passing some very flattering resolutions, and in early June, 1889, I went to the *World* as an editorial writer free from all responsibility for the news management of the paper, free from all problems of newspaper finance, and free from the crushing weight of the thought that other men's property interests to the extent of many hundreds of thousands of dollars were in hourly danger of destruction by some fault or failure of judgment on my part. As I rejoiced in this sense of release, I recalled what James R. Osgood, one of the princes among publishers, had once said to me, and for the first time I fully grasped his meaning. At some public banquet or other he and I were seated side by side and we fell into conversation regarding certain books he had published. They were altogether worthy books, but their appeal seemed to me to be to so small a constituency that I could not understand what had induced him to publish them at all. I said to him:

[307] "I sometimes wonder at your courage in putting your money into the publication of such books."

He answered:

"That's the smallest part of the matter. Think of my courage in putting *other people's money* into their publication!"

It was not long after that that Osgood's enterprises failed, and he retired from business as a publisher to the sorrow of every American who in any way cared for literature.

When Osgood went to London as an agent of the Harpers, some of us gave him a farewell dinner, for which Thomas Nast designed the menu cards. When these were passed around for souvenir autographs, Edwin A. Abbey drew upon each, in connection with his signature, a caricature of himself which revealed new possibilities in his genius—possibilities that have come to nothing simply because Mr. Abbey has found a better use for his gifts than any that the caricaturist can hope for. But those of us who were present at that little Osgood dinner still cherish our copies of the dinner card on which, with a few strokes of his pencil, Abbey revealed an unsuspected aspect of his genius. In view of the greatness of his more serious work, we rejoice that he went no further than an after-dinner jest, in the exercise of his gift of caricature. Had he given comic direction to his work, he might have become a Hogarth, perhaps; as it is, he is something far better worth while—he is Abbey.

*The Little Dinner
to Osgood*

LXV

[308] I shall write comparatively little here of the eleven years I remained in the service of the *World*. The experience is too recent to constitute a proper subject of freehand reminiscence. My relations with Mr. Pulitzer were too closely personal, too intimate, and in many ways too confidential to serve a purpose of that kind.

But of the men with whom my work on the *World* brought me into contact, I am free to write. So, too, I am at liberty, I think, to relate certain dramatic happenings that serve to illustrate the Napoleonic methods of modern journalism and certain other things, not of a confidential nature, which throw light upon the character, impulses, and methods of the man whose genius first discovered the possibilities of journalism and whose courage, energy, and extraordinary sagacity have made of those possibilities accomplished facts.

It has been more than ten years since my term of service on the *World* came to an end, but it seems recent to me, except when I begin counting up the men now dead who were my fellow-workmen there.

I did not personally know Mr. Pulitzer when I began my duties on the *World*. He was living in Europe then, and about to start on a long yachting cruise. John A. Cockerill was managing editor and in control of the paper, subject, of course, to daily and sometimes hourly instructions from Paris by cable. For, during my eleven years of service on the *World*, I never knew the time when Mr. Pulitzer did not himself actively direct the conduct of his paper wherever he might be. Even when he made a yachting voyage as far as the East Indies, his hand remained always on the helm in New York.

Colonel Cockerill was one of the kindest, gentlest of men, and at the same time one of the most irascible. His irascibility was like the froth *John A. Cockerill*

that rises to the top of the glass and quickly disappears, when a Seidlitz powder is dissolved—not at all like the "head" on a glass of champagne which goes on threateningly rising long after the first effervescence is gone. When anything irritated him the impulse to break out into intemperate speech seemed wholly irresistible, but in the very midst of such utterance the irritation would pass away as suddenly as it had come and he would become again the kindly comrade he had meant to be all the while. This was due to the saving grace of his sense of humor. I think I never knew a man so capable as he of intense seriousness, who was at the same time so alertly and irresistibly impelled to see the humorous aspects of things. He would rail violently at an interfering circumstance, but in the midst of his vituperation he would suddenly see something ridiculous about it or in his own ill-temper concerning it. He would laugh at the suggestion in his mind, laugh at himself, and tell some brief anecdote—of which his quiver was always full—by way of turning his own irritation and indignation into fun and thus making an end of them.

He was an entire stranger to me when I joined the staff of the *World*, but we soon became comrades and friends. There was so much of robust manhood in his nature, so much of courage, kindness, and generous good will that in spite of the radical differences between his conceptions of life and mine, we soon learned to find pleasure in each other's company, to like each other, and above all, to trust each other. I think each of us recognized in the other a man incapable of lying, deceit, treachery, or any other form of cowardice. That he was such a man I perfectly knew. That he regarded me as such I have every reason to believe.

After our friendship was perfectly established he said to me one day:

"You know I did all I could to prevent your engagement on the *World*. I'm glad now I didn't succeed."

"What was your special objection to me?" I asked.

"Misconception, pure and simple, together with ill-informed prejudice. That's tautological, of course, for prejudice is always ill-informed, isn't it? At any rate, I had an impression that you were a man as utterly different from what I now know you to be as one can easily imagine."

"And yet," I said, "you generously helped me out of my first difficulty here."

"No, did I? How was that?"

"Why, when the news went out that I had been engaged as an editorial writer on the *World*, a good many newspapers over the country were curious to know why. The prejudice against the *World* under its new management was still rampant, and my appointment seemed to many newspapers a mystery, for the reason that my work before that time had always been done on newspapers of a very different kind. Even here on the *World* there was curiosity on the subject, for Ballard Smith sent a reporter to me, before I left the *Commercial Advertiser*, to ask me about it. The reporter, under instructions, even asked me, flatly, whose place I was to take on the *World*, as if the *World* had not been able to employ a new man without discharging an old one."

"Yes—I know all about that," said Cockerill. "You see, you were editor-in-chief of a newspaper, and some of the folks on the *World* had a hope born into their minds that you were coming here to replace me as managing editor. Some others feared you were coming to oust them from snug berths. Go on. You didn't finish."

"Well, among the speculative comments made about my transfer, there was one in a Springfield paper, suggesting that perhaps I had been employed 'to give the *World* a conscience.' All these things troubled me greatly, for the reason that I didn't know Mr. Pulitzer then, nor he me, and I feared he would suspect me of having inspired the utterances in question—particularly the one last mentioned. I went to you with my trouble, and I shall never forget what you said to me. 'My dear Mr. Eggleston, you can trust Joseph Pulitzer to get to windward of things without any help from me or anybody else.'"

"You've found it so since, haven't you?" he asked.

"Yes, but I didn't know it then, and it was a kindly act on your part to reassure me."

Cockerill's abilities as a newspaper editor were very great, but they were mainly executive. He had no great creative imagination. He could never have originated the Napoleonic revolution in journalism which Mr. Pulitzer's extraordinary genius wrought. But Mr. Pulitzer was fortunate in having such a man as Cockerill to carry out his plans. His alert readiness in grasping an idea and translating it into achievement amounted to genius in its way. But during all the years of my intimate association with him, I never knew Cockerill to originate a great idea. With a great idea intrusted to him for execution, his brain was fertile of suggestions and expedients for its carrying out, and his industry in translating the ideas of his chief into action was ceaseless, tireless, sleepless. He would think of a thousand devices for accomplishing the purpose intended. He would hit upon scores of ways in which a campaign projected by another mind could be carried out effectively.

*An Extraordinary
Executive*

There was at one time a good deal of speculation as to whose brain had made the phenomenal success of the all-daring *World* experiment in journalism. I think I know all about that, and my judgment is unhesitating. Mr. Pulitzer was often and even generally fortunate in his multitudinous lieutenants, and that good fortune was chiefly due to his sagacity in the selection

of the men appointed to carry out his plans. But the plans were his, just as the choice of lieutenants was, and the creative genius that revolutionized journalism and achieved results unmatched and even unapproached, was exclusively that of Joseph Pulitzer.

I do not mean that every valuable idea or suggestion which contributed to the result was originally his, though on broad lines that was true. But it was part and parcel of his genius to induce ideas and call forth suggestions at the hands of others, to make them his own, and to embody them in the policy of the *World*. So readily did he himself appreciate this necessity of getting ideas from whatever source they might come, that he often offered premiums and rewards for helpful suggestions. And when any member of his staff voluntarily offered suggestions that appealed to him, he was always ready and very generous in acknowledging and rewarding them.

But it was Joseph Pulitzer's genius that conceived the new journalism; it was his brain that gave birth to it all; it was his gift of interpreting, utilizing, and carrying out the ideas of others that made them fruitful.

I emphasize this judgment here because there has been much misapprehension regarding it, and because I knew the facts more intimately and more definitely perhaps than any other person now living does. I feel myself free to write of the subject for the reason that it has been more than a decade of years since my connection with the *World* ceased, and the personal friendship I once enjoyed with Mr. Pulitzer became a matter of mere reminiscence to both of us.

My relations with Cockerill were not embarrassed by any question of control or authority. Cockerill had general charge of the newspaper, but the editorial page was segregated from the other sheets, and so far as that was concerned, William H. Merrill was in supreme authority. Whenever he was absent his authority devolved upon me, and for results I was answerable only to Mr. Pulitzer.

I shall never forget my introduction to my new duties. It was arranged between Merrill and me, that I should take a week off, between the severance of my connection with the *Commercial Advertiser* and the beginning of my work on the *World*, in order that I might visit my family and rest myself at my little place on Lake George. I was to report for duty on the *World* on a Sunday morning, when Merrill would induct me into the methods of the newspaper, preparatory to his vacation, beginning two or three days later.

Unfortunately, Merrill had greater confidence in my newspaper skill and experience than I had, and so when I reported for duty on Sunday, Merrill was already gone on his vacation and I was left responsible for next day's editorial page.

*An Editorial
Perplexity*

I knew nothing of the *World's* staff or organization or methods. There were no other editorial writers present in the office and upon inquiry of the office boys I learned that no others were expected to present themselves on that day.

I sent to the foreman of the composing room for the "overproofs"—that is to say, proofs of editorial matter left over from the day before. He reported that there were none, for the reason that Merrill, before leaving on the preceding day, had "killed" every editorial galley in the office.

Cockerill was not expected at the office until nine or ten o'clock that night, and there was nobody else there who could tell me anything about the matter.

Obviously, there was only one thing to do. I sat down and wrote an entire editorial page, for a newspaper whose methods and policy I knew only from the outside. When I had done that, and had got my matter into type, and had read my revised proofs, messengers arrived bearing the manuscripts of what the other editorial writers—men unknown to me—had written at their homes during the day, after the Sunday custom that then prevailed but which I abolished a little later when Merrill went to Europe upon Mr. Pulitzer's invitation and I was left in control of the editorial page.

I have related this experience thinking that it may interest readers unfamiliar with newspaper work, as an exemplification of the emergency problems with which newspaper men have often to deal. These are of frequent occurrence and of every conceivable variety. I remember that once some great utterance seemed necessary, and Mr. Pulitzer telegraphed it from Bar Harbor. It filled the entire available editorial space, so that I provided no other editorial articles whatever. I had "made up" the page and was only waiting for time before going home, when news despatches came that so completely changed the situation treated in the editorial as to compel its withdrawal.

It was after midnight, and I hadn't a line of editorial matter on the galleys with which to fill the void. The editorial page must go to the stereotypers at half-past one, and I had no soul to help me even by writing twaddle with which to fill space. The situation was imperative and the case was clear. The case was that I must write two or three columns of editorial matter and get it into type, proof-read, and corrected, before one-thirty of the clock—or one-forty-five, as the foreman of the composing room, a royal good fellow, Mr. Jackson, volunteered to stretch the time limit by some ingenious device of his own.

I wish to say here, lest no other opportunity offer, that in the thirty years of my newspaper service, I have found no better or more loyal friends than the men of the composing room,

whether in high place or low; that I have never known them to hesitate, in an emergency, to help out by specially strenuous endeavor and by enduring great inconvenience on their own part. So great is my gratitude for their comradely good-fellowship that even now—ten years after a final end came to my newspaper work—one of the first parts of the establishment I visit when I have occasion to go to the *World* office is the composing room, where old friends greet me cordially on every hand. Great—very great—are the printers. They do their work under a stress of hurry, noise, and confusion that would drive less well-made men frantic, and they do it mightily well. To one who knows, as I do, what the conditions are, every printed newspaper page is a miracle of human achievement under well-nigh inconceivable difficulties.

It was soon after my service on the *World* began that I became acquainted with a man of brilliant gifts, often erratically employed, and of singularly interesting personality—Donn Piatt. From that time until his death I saw much of him in a quiet club-corner way, and listened with interest while he set forth his views and conclusions, always with a suggestion of humor in them and often in perverse, paradoxical ways. Donn Piatt

One day some question arose between us as to the failure of a certain book to achieve the success we both thought it deserved. Donn Piatt's explanation was ready:

"It is because we have altogether too much education in this country," he said. "You see, our schools are turning out about a million graduates every year, under the mistaken belief that they are educated. All these boys and girls have been taught how to read, but they haven't the smallest notion of what to read, or why to read. They regard reading as you and I might regard a game of solitaire—as a convenient means of relaxing the mind, diverting the attention from more serious things—in brief, they read for amusement only, and have no notion of any other possible purpose in reading. That's why every sublimated idiot who makes a mountebank of himself as a 'humorist' wins his public instantly and easily. The great majority of readers are that way minded, and of course the publishers must cater to the taste of the multitude. They'd be worse idiots than their customers if they didn't. It's the same way with plays. The people who go to the theater want to be amused without the necessity of doing even a little thinking. Why, a few years ago when Wallack was running such things as 'She Stoops to Conquer,' 'School for Scandal,' 'London Assurance,' and the like, in his old Thirteenth Street theater, with Dion Boucicault, John Brougham, Harry Montague, John Gilbert, Harry Beckett, and a lot of other really great actors in the casts, he played to slender houses, while just around the corner there wasn't standing room when 'Pink Dominoes' was on."

My acquaintance with Donn Piatt began in a rather curious way. Some time before, there had appeared in one of the magazines a series of letters signed "Arthur Richmond." They were political philippics, inspired chiefly by a reckless, indiscriminating spirit of attack. They were as mysterious in their origin as the letters of Junius, but otherwise they bore little if any of the assumed and intended resemblance to that celebrated series. There was little of judgment, discretion, or discrimination in them, and still less of conscience. But they attracted widespread attention and the secret of their authorship was a matter of a good deal of popular curiosity. A number of very distinguished men were mentioned as conjectural possibilities in that connection.

Even after the letters themselves had ceased to be of consequence, a certain measure of curiosity as to their authorship survived, so that any newspaper revelation of the secret was exceedingly desirable. One day somebody told me that Donn Piatt had written them. Personally I did not know him, but in the freemasonry of literature and journalism every man in the profession knows every other man in it well enough at least for purposes of correspondence. So I wrote a half playful letter to Donn Piatt, saying that somebody had charged him with the authorship of that "iniquitous trash"—for so I called it—and asking him if I might affirm or deny the statement in the *World*. He replied in a characteristic letter, in which he said:

"I was one of a syndicate of blackguards engaged to write the 'Arthur Richmond' letters and I did write some of them. You and I ought to know each other personally and we don't. Why won't you come up to the — Club to-night and help me get rid of one of the infamous table d-hôte dinners they sell there for seventy-five cents? Then I'll tell you all about the 'Arthur Richmond' letters and about any other crimes of my commission that may interest you. Meanwhile, I'm sending you a letter for publication in answer to your inquiry about that particular atrocity." *"A Syndicate of Blackguards"*

As we talked that night and on succeeding occasions, Donn Piatt told me many interesting anecdotes of his career as a newspaper correspondent much given to getting into difficulty with men in high place by reason of his freedom in criticism and his vitriolic way of saying what he had to say in the most effective words he could find.

"You see the dictionary was my ruin," he said after relating one of his anecdotes. "I studied it not wisely but too well in my youth, and it taught me a lot of words that have always seemed to me peculiarly effective in the expression of thought, but to which generals and statesmen and the other small fry of what is called public life, seem to have a rooted objection. By the way, did you ever hear that I once committed arson?"

I pleaded ignorance of that incident in his career, and added:

"I shall be interested to hear of that crime if you're sure it is protected by the statute of

limitations. I shouldn't like to be a witness to a confession that might send you to the penitentiary."

"Oh, I don't know that that would be so bad," he interrupted. "I'm living with my publisher now, you know, and a change might not prove undesirable. However, the crime is outlawed by time now. And besides, I didn't myself set fire to the building. I'm guilty only under the legal maxim 'Qui facit per alium facit per se.' The way of it was this: When I was a young man trying to get into a law practice out in Ohio, and eager to advertise myself by appearing in court, a fellow was indicted for arson. He came to me, explaining that he had no money with which to pay a lawyer, but that he thought I might like to appear in a case so important, and that if I would do the best I could for him, he stood ready to do anything for me that he could, by way of recompense. I took the case, of course. It was a complex one and it offered opportunities for browbeating and 'balling up' witnesses—a process that specially impresses the public with the sagacity of a lawyer who does it successfully. Then, if by any chance I should succeed in acquitting my client, my place at the bar would be assured as that of 'a sharp young feller, who had beaten the prosecuting attorney himself.'

"But in telling my client I would take his case the demon of humor betrayed me. Just across the street from my lodging was a negro church, and there was a 'revival' going on at the time. They 'revived' till two o'clock or later every night with shoutings that interfered with my sleep. With playful impulse I said to the accused man:

"You seem to be an expert in the arts of arson. If you'll burn that negro church I'll feel that you have paid me full price for my service in defending you."

[319] "I defended him and, as the witnesses against him were all of shady character, I succeeded in securing his acquittal. About four o'clock the next morning a fire broke out under all four corners of that negro church, and before the local fire department got a quart of water into action, it was a heap of smouldering ashes—hymn-books and all. A week or so later I received a letter from my ex-client. He wrote from St. Louis, 'on his way west,' he said. He expressed the hope that I was 'satisfied with results,' and begged me to believe that he was 'a man of honor who never failed to repay an obligation or reward a service.'"

With Donn Piatt's permission I told that story several times. Presently I read it in brief form in a newspaper where the hero of it was set down as "Tom Platt." I suppose the reporter in that case confused the closely similar sounds of "Donn Piatt" and "Tom Platt." At any rate, it seems proper to say that the venerable ex-Senator from New York never practiced law in Ohio and never even unintentionally induced the burning of a church. The story was Donn Piatt's and the experience was his.

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I first made Mr. Pulitzer's personal acquaintance in Paris, where he was living at that time. I had been at work on the *World* for a comparatively brief while, when he asked me to visit him there—an invitation which he several times afterwards repeated, each time with increased pleasure to me.

*First
Acquaintance
with Mr. Pulitzer*

On the occasion of my first visit to him, he said to me one evening at dinner:

[320] "I have invited you here with the primary purpose that you shall have a good time. But secondly, I want to see you as often as I can. We have luncheon at one o'clock, and dinner at seven-thirty. I wish you'd take luncheon and dinner with me as often as you can, consistently with my primary purpose that you shall have a good time. If you've anything else on hand that interests you more, you are not to come to luncheon or dinner, and I will understand. But if you haven't anything else on hand, I sincerely wish you'd come."

In all my experience—even in Virginia during the old, limitlessly hospitable plantation days—I think I never knew a hospitality superior to this—one that left the guest so free to come on the one hand and so entirely free to stay away without question if he preferred that. I, who have celebrated hospitality of the most gracious kind in romances of Virginia, where hospitality bore its most gorgeous blossoms and its richest fruitage, bear witness that I have known no such exemplar of that virtue in its perfect manifestation as Joseph Pulitzer.

Years afterwards, at Bar Harbor, I had been working with him night and day over editorial problems of consequence, and, as I sat looking on at a game of chess in which he was engaged one evening, he suddenly ordered me to bed.

"You've been overworking," he said. "You are to go to bed now, and you are not to get up till you feel like getting up—even if it is two days hence. Go, I tell you, and pay no heed to hours or anything else. You shall not be interrupted in your sleep."

I was very weary and I went to bed. The next morning—or I supposed it to be so—I waked, and looked at my watch. It told me it was six o'clock. I tried to woo sleep again, but the effort was a

failure. I knew that breakfast would not be served for some hours to come, but I simply could not remain in bed longer. I knew where a certain dear little lad of the family kept his fishing tackle and his bait. I decided that I would get up, take a cold plunge, pilfer the tackle, and spend an hour or two down on the rocks fishing.

With this intent I slipped out of my room, making no noise lest I should wake some one from his morning slumber. The first person I met was Mr. Pulitzer. He gleefully greeted me with congratulations upon the prolonged sleep I had had, and after a brief confusion of mind, I found that it was two o'clock in the afternoon, and that my unwound watch had misled me. In his anxiety that I should have my sleep out, Mr. Pulitzer had shut off the entire half of the building in which my bedroom lay, and had stationed a servant as sentinel to prohibit intrusion upon that part of the premises and to forbid everything in the nature of noise.

*Mr. Pulitzer's
Kindly Courtesy*

Mr. Pulitzer himself never rested, in the days of my association with him. His mind knew no surcease of its activity. He slept little, and with difficulty. His waking hours, whether up or in bed, were given to a ceaseless wrestling with the problems that belong to a great newspaper's conduct. I have known him to make an earnest endeavor to dismiss these for a time. To that end he would peremptorily forbid all reference to them in the conversation of those about him. But within the space of a few minutes he would be in the midst of them again, and completely absorbed. But he recognized the necessity of rest for brains other than his own, and in all kindly ways sought to secure and even to compel it. I remember once at Bar Harbor, when for two or three days and nights in succession I had been at work on something he greatly wanted done, he said to me at breakfast:

"You're tired, and that task is finished. I want you to rest, and, of course, so long as you and I remain together you can't rest. Your brain is active and so is mine. If we stay in each other's company we shall talk, and with us talk means work. In five minutes we'll be planning some editorial crusade, and you'll get to work again. So I want you to go away from me. Let Eugene drive you to the village, and there secure an open carriage and a pair of good horses—the best you can get—and drive all over this interesting island. Get yourself rested. And when you come back, don't let me talk newspaper with you, till you've had a night's sleep."

It was in that kindly spirit that Mr. Pulitzer always treated his lieutenants when he invited them to pass a time with him. So long as he and they were together, he could not help working them almost to death. But, when he realized their weariness, he sent them off to rest, on carriage drives or yachting voyages or what not, with generous consideration of their inability to carry weight as he did night and day and every day and every night.

Sometimes his eagerness in work led him to forget his own kindly purpose. I remember once when I had been writing all day and throughout most of the night in execution of his prolific inspiration, he suddenly became aware of the fact that I must be weary. Instantly he said:

"You must rest. You must take a carriage or a boat and go off somewhere. Think out where it shall be, for yourself. But you sha'n't do another thing till you've had a good rest."

Then, as we strolled out into the porch and thence to the sea wall against which the breakers were recklessly dashing themselves to pieces, he suddenly thought of something. In a minute we were engaged in discussing that something, and half an hour later I was busy in my room, with books of reference all about me, working out that something, and it was three o'clock next morning before I finished the writing of what he wanted written on that theme. At breakfast next morning I was late, and the fact reminded him of the plans he had formed twenty-four hours before for a rest for me. He refused even to light a cigar until I should be gone.

"If we smoke together," he said, "we shall talk. If we talk we shall become interested and you'll be set to work again. Get you hence. Let me see no more of you till dinner to-night. In the meantime, do what you will to rest yourself. That's my only concern now. Drive, sail, row, loaf, play billiards—do whatever will best rest you."

I relate these things by way of showing forth one side of the character of a man who has wrought a revolution in the world. I have other things to relate that show forth another side of that interestingly complex nature.

In his anxiety to secure terseness of editorial utterance he at one time limited all editorials to fifty lines each. As I had final charge of the editorial page on four nights of the week, I found myself obliged, by the rule, to spoil many compact articles written by other men, by cutting out a line or two from things already compacted "to the limit."

*The Maynard
Case*

I said this to Mr. Pulitzer one day, and he replied:

"Well, just to show you that I have no regard for cast-iron rules, I am going to ask you now to write four columns on a subject of public importance."

The subject was the nomination of Judge Maynard for Justice of the Court of Appeals. Judge Maynard stood accused of—let us say questionable—conduct in judicial office in relation to certain election proceedings. The details have no place here. Judge Maynard had never been impeached, and his friends indignantly repudiated every suggestion that his judicial conduct had been in any wise influenced by partisan considerations. His enemies—and they were many,

including men of high repute in his own party—contended that his judicial course in that election matter unfitted him for election to the higher office.

I have every reason to believe—every reason that eleven years of editorial association can give—that in every case involving the public welfare, or public morality, or official fitness, Mr. Pulitzer sincerely desires to ascertain the facts and to govern his editorial course accordingly. I have never been able to regard him as a Democrat or a Republican in politics. He has impressed me always as an opportunist, caring far more for practical results than for doctrinaire dogmas.

In this Maynard case the contentions were conflicting, the assertions contradictory, and the facts uncertain so far at least as the *World* knew them.

"I want you to go into the Maynard case," said Mr. Pulitzer to me, "with an absolutely unprejudiced mind. We hold no brief for or against him, as you know. I want you to get together all the documents in the case. I want you to take them home and study them as minutely as if you were preparing yourself for an examination. I want you to regard yourself as a judicial officer, oath-bound to justice, and when you shall have mastered the facts and the law in the case, I want you to set them forth in a four-column editorial that every reader of the *World* can easily understand."

This was only one of many cases in which he set me or some other lieutenant to find out facts and determine what justice demanded, in order that justice might be done.

In 1896, when the Democratic party made its surrender to populism and wild-eyed socialism by nominating Bryan, I was at the convention in Chicago, telegraphing editorial articles. I foreshadowed the nomination as inevitable, contrary to the predictions of the *World's* newsgatherers in the convention. Instantly, and before the nomination was made, Mr. Pulitzer telegraphed me from Bar Harbor, to come to him at once. By the time I got there the nomination was a fact accomplished.

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Mr. Pulitzer said to me:

"I'm not going to tell you what my own views of the situation are, or what I think ought to be the course of the *World*, as a foremost Democratic newspaper, under the circumstances. No"—seeing that I was about to speak—"don't say a word about your own views. They are necessarily hasty and ill-considered as yet, just as my own are. I want you to take a full twenty-four hours for careful thought. At the end of that time I want you to write out your views of the policy the *World* ought to adopt, giving your reasons for every conclusion reached."

Mr. Pulitzer did not adopt precisely the policy I recommended on that occasion. But the *World* refused to support the Bryan candidacy with its fundamental idea of debasing the currency by the free coinage of silver dollars intrinsically worth only fifty cents apiece or less.

While I was still his guest on that mission, there came to Bar Harbor an emissary from Mr. Bryan, who asked for an interview with Mr. Pulitzer in Mr. Bryan's behalf. As I happened to know the young man, Mr. Pulitzer asked me to see him in his stead and to receive his message. Armed with full credentials as Mr. Pulitzer's accredited representative, I visited the young ambassador, and made careful notes of the message he had to deliver. It was to this effect:

*Bryan's Message
and the Reply*

Mr. Bryan was unselfishly anxious to save the reputation of the newspaper press as a power in public affairs. His election by an overwhelming majority, he said, was certain beyond all possibility of doubt or question. But if it should be accomplished without the support of the *World* or any other of the supposedly influential Democratic newspapers, there must be an end to the tradition of press power and newspaper influence in politics. For the sake of the press, and especially of so great a newspaper as the *World*, therefore, Mr. Bryan asked Mr. Pulitzer's attention to this danger to prestige.

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When I delivered this message to Mr. Pulitzer, he laughed. Then he gave me a truly remarkable exhibition of his masterful knowledge of American political conditions, and of his sagacious prescience. He asked me to jot down some figures as he should give them to me. He named the states that would vote for Bryan with the number of electoral votes belonging to each. Then he gave me the list of states that would go against Bryan, with their electoral strength. When I had put it all down, he said:

"I don't often predict—never unless I know. But you may embody that table in an editorial, predicting that the result of the election four months hence will be very nearly, if not exactly, what those lists foreshadow. Let that be our answer to Mr. Bryan's audacious message."

The campaign had not yet opened. Mr. Bryan had just been nominated with positively wild enthusiasm. The movement which afterwards put Palmer in the field as an opposing Democratic candidate had not yet been thought of. All conditions suggested uncertainty, and yet, as we sat there in his little private porch at Bar Harbor, Mr. Pulitzer correctly named every state that would give its electoral vote to each candidate, and the returns of the election—four months later—varied from his prediction of results by only two electoral votes out of four hundred and forty-seven. And that infinitesimal variation resulted solely from the fact that by some confusion of ballots in California and Kentucky each of those states gave one vote to Bryan and the rest to his opponent.

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I have known nothing in the way of exact political prescience, long in advance of the event, that

equaled this or approached it. I record it as phenomenal.

LXVII

Ever since the time when he bought two St. Louis newspapers, both of which were losing money, combined them, and made of them one of the most profitable newspaper properties in the country, Mr. Pulitzer's methods have been Napoleonic both in the brilliancy of their conception and in the daring of their execution. I may here record as a personal recollection the story of one of his newspaper achievements. The fact of it is well enough known; the details of its dramatic execution have never been told, I think.

*A Napoleonic
Conception*

In February, 1895, the government of the United States found it necessary to issue \$62,300,000 in four per cent., thirty-year bonds, to make good the depletion of the gold reserve in the treasury. The bonds were sold to a syndicate at the rate of 104-¾. Once on the market, they quickly advanced in price until they were sold by the end of that year at 118, and, if any bank or investor wanted them in considerable quantities, the price paid was 122 or more.

At the beginning of the next year it was announced that the treasury would sell \$200,000,000 more of precisely the same bonds, printed from the same plates, payable at the same time, and in all respects undistinguishable from those of the year before—at that time in eager popular demand at 118 to 122. It was also announced that the treasury had arranged to sell these bonds—worth 118 or more in the open market—to the same old Morgan syndicate "at about the same price" (104-¾), at which the preceding issue had been sold.

[328] Mr. Pulitzer justly regarded this as a scandalous proposal to give the syndicate more than twenty-six millions of dollars of the people's money in return for no service whatever. The banks and the people of the country wanted these bonds at 118 or more, and banks and bankers in other countries were equally eager to get them at the same rate. It seemed to him, as it seemed to every other well-informed person, that this was a reckless waste of the people's money, the scandalous favoring of a syndicate of speculators, and a damaging blow to the national credit. But, unlike most other well-informed persons, Mr. Pulitzer refused to regard the situation as one beyond saving, although it was given out from Washington that the bargain with the syndicate was already irrevocably made.

Mr. Pulitzer set his editorial writers at work to make the facts of the case clear to every intelligent mind; to show forth the needlessness of the proposed squandering; to emphasize the scandal of this dealing in the dark with a gang of Wall Street bettors upon a certainty; and to demonstrate the people's readiness and even eagerness to subscribe for the bonds at a much higher rate than the discrediting one at which the Treasury had secretly agreed to sell them to the syndicate.

When all this had been done, to no purpose so far as I could see, inasmuch as the response from Washington was insistent to the effect that the sale was already agreed upon, Mr. Pulitzer one afternoon summoned me to go at once to Lakewood, where he was staying at the time. The train by which alone I could go was to arrive at Lakewood after the departure of the last train thence for New York that evening, and I mentioned that fact over the telephone. For reply I was asked to come anyhow.

[329] When I got there night had already fallen, and as I was without even so much as a handbag, I anticipated a night of makeshift at the hotel. But as I entered Mr. Pulitzer's quarters he greeted me and said:

"Come in quickly. We must talk rapidly and to the point. You think you're to stay here all night, but you're mistaken. As this is your night to be in charge of the editorial page, you must be in the office of the *World* at ten o'clock. I've ordered a special train to take you back. It will start at eight o'clock and run through in eighty minutes. Meanwhile, we have much to arrange, so we must get to work."

E. O. Chamberlin, the managing editor of the news department of the *World*, was there and had already received his instructions. To me Mr. Pulitzer said:

*A Challenge to
the Government*

"We have made our case in this matter of the bond issue. We have presented the facts clearly, convincingly, conclusively, but the Administration refuses to heed them. We are now going to compel it to heed them on pain of facing a scandal that no administration could survive.

"What we demand is that these bonds shall be sold to the public at something like their actual value and not to a Wall Street syndicate for many millions less. You understand all that. You are to write a double-leaded article to occupy the whole editorial space to-morrow morning. You are not to print a line of editorial on any other subject. You are to set forth, in compact form and in the most effective way possible, the facts of the case and the considerations that demand a popular or at least a public loan instead of this deal with a syndicate, suggestive as it is of the

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patent falsehood that the United States Treasury's credit needs 'financing.' You are to declare, with all possible emphasis that the banks, bankers, and people of the United States stand ready and eager to lend their government all the money it wants at three per cent. interest, and to buy its four per cent. bonds at a premium that will amount to that."

He went on in this way, outlining the article he wanted me to write.

"Then, as a guarantee of the sincerity of our conviction you are to say that the *World* offers in advance to take one million dollars of the new bonds at the highest market price, if they are offered to the public in open market.

"In the meanwhile, Chamberlin has a staff of men sending out despatches to every bank and banker in the land, setting forth our demand for a public loan instead of a syndicate dicker, and asking each for what amount of the new bonds it or he will subscribe on a three per cent. basis. To-morrow morning's paper will carry with your editorial its complete confirmation in their replies, and the proposed loan will be oversubscribed on a three per cent. basis. Even Mr. Cleveland's phenomenal self-confidence and Mr. Carlisle's purblind belief in Wall Street methods will not be able to withstand such a demonstration as that. It will *compel a public loan*. If it is true that the contract with the syndicate has already been made, *they must cancel it*. The voice of the country will be heard in the subscription list we shall print to-morrow morning, and the voice of the country has compelling power, even under this excessively self-confident administration. Now, you're faint with hunger. Hurry over to the hotel and get a bite to eat. You have thirty minutes before your special train leaves."

I hurried to the hotel, but I spent that thirty minutes, not in eating but in making a written report, for my own future use, of Mr. Pulitzer's instructions. The memorandum thus made is the basis of what I have written above.

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The climax of the great national drama thus put upon the stage was worthy of the genius that inspired it. The responses of the banks and bankers—sent in during the night—showed a tremendous oversubscription of the proposed loan at a price that would yield to the government many millions more than the syndicate sale offered, and there remained unheard from the thousands and tens of thousands of private persons who were eager to buy the bonds as investment securities. In the face of the facts thus demonstrated, it would have been political suicide for the men in control at Washington to refuse a public loan and to sell the bonds to the syndicate for millions less than the people were eager to pay for them. The administration yielded to moral force, but it did so grudgingly and with manifest reluctance. It cut down the proposed loan to the minimum that the Treasury must have, and it hedged it about with every annoying device that might embarrass willing investors and prevent the subscriptions of others than banks and bankers. In spite of all such efforts to minimize the administration's defeat, the bond issue was promptly taken up at a price that saved many millions to the Treasury, and within a brief while the very bonds that Mr. Cleveland and Mr. Carlisle had so insistently desired to sell to the syndicate at 104-¾ were very hard to get in the open market at 133 or more.

I have related this incident with some fullness because I know of no other case in which the "power of the press"—which being interpreted means the power of public opinion—to control reluctant political and governmental forces, has been so dramatically illustrated.

The Power of the Press

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The only other case comparable with it was that in which not one newspaper but practically all the newspapers in the land with a united voice saved the country from chaos and civil war by compelling a wholly unwilling and very obstinate Congress to find a way out of the electoral controversy between Tilden and Hayes. No newspaper man who was in Washington at any time during that controversy doubts or can doubt that the two Houses of Congress would have adhered obstinately to their opposing views until the end, with civil war as a necessary consequence, but for the ceaseless insistence of all the newspapers of both parties that they should devise and agree upon some peaceful plan by which the controversy might be adjusted.

At the time when the prospect seemed darkest I asked Carl Schurz for his opinion of the outcome. He replied, with that intense earnestness in his voice and words which his patriotism always gave to them in times of public danger:

"If left to the two Houses of Congress to decide—and that is where the Constitution leaves it—the question will not be decided; on the contrary, the more they discuss it, the more intense and unyielding their obstinate determination not to agree will become. If it isn't settled before the fourth of March, God only knows what the result will be—civil war and chaos are the only things to be foreseen. But if left alone, as I say, the two Houses of Congress will to the end refuse to agree upon any plan of adjustment. The outlook is very gloomy, very discouraging, very black. Only a tremendous pressure of public opinion can save us from results more calamitous than any that the human mind can conceive. If the newspapers can be induced to see the danger and realize its extent—if they can persuade themselves to put aside their partisanship and unite in an insistent demand that Congress shall find a way out, a peaceful result may be compelled. Fortunately, the Southern men in both houses are eager for the accomplishment of that. They and their constituents have had enough and to spare of civil war. They may be easily won to the support of any plan that promises to bring about a peaceful solution of the controversy. But public opinion, as reflected in the newspapers, must compel Congress, or nothing will be done."

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LXVIII

This mention of Mr. Schurz reminds me of some other occasions on which I had intercourse with him. He and I many times served together on committees that had to do with matters of public interest. We were members of the same clubs, and we saw much of each other at private dinners and in other social ways, so that I came to know him well and to appreciate at its full value that absolute honesty of mind which I regard as his distinguishing characteristic. Without that quality of sincerity, and with a conscience less exigent and less resolute than his, Carl Schurz's political career might have compassed any end that ambition set before him. That is perhaps a reflection on public life and the men engaged in it. If so, I cannot help it. As it was, he never hesitated for a moment to "quarrel with his bread and butter" if his antagonism to wrong, and especially to everything that militated against human liberty, called for such quarreling. He was above all things a patriot in whose estimation considerations of the public welfare outweighed, overrode, and trampled to earth all other considerations of what kind soever. Party was to him no more than an implement, a tool for the accomplishment of patriotic ends, and he gave to party no allegiance whatever beyond the point at which it ceased to serve such ends. He was always ready to quarrel with his own party and quit it for cause, even when it offered him high preferment as the reward of continued allegiance.

*Recollections of
Carl Schurz*

[334] In the same way, he held the scales true in all his judgments of men. Mr. Lincoln once wrote him a letter—often quoted by his enemies—which any "statesman" of the accepted type would have regarded as an unforgivable affront. Yet in due time Mr. Schurz wrote an appreciative estimate of Lincoln which has no fit fellow in the whole body of Lincoln literature. His judgments of men and measures were always the honest conclusions of an honest mind that held in reverence no other creed than that of truth and preached no other gospel than that of human liberty.

One evening I sat with him at a little dinner given by Mr. James Ford Rhodes, the historian. Paul Leicester Ford sat between him and me, while on my right sat our hostess and some other gentlewomen. Our hostess presently asked me what I thought of a certain distinguished personage whose name was at that time in everybody's mouth, and whose popularity—chiefly won by genial, humorous, after-dinner speaking—was wholly unmatched throughout the country. I do not mention his name, because he still lives and is under a cloud.

I answered that I thought him one of the worst and most dangerous of popular public men, adding:

"He has done more than any other man living to corrupt legislatures and pervert legislation to the service of iniquitous corporations."

Mr. Schurz, who was talking to some one at the other end of the table, caught some hint of what I had said. He instantly turned upon me with a demand that I should repeat it. I supposed that a controversy was coming, and by way of challenging the worst, I repeated what I had said, with added emphasis. Mr. Schurz replied:

[335] "You are right so far as your criticism goes. The man has done all that you charge in the way of corrupting legislatures and perverting legislation. He has made a business of it. But that is the very smallest part of his offense against morality, good government, and free institutions. His far greater sin is that he has *made corruption respectable*, in the eyes of the people. And those who invite him to banquets and set him to speak there, and noisily applaud him, are all of them partners in his criminality whether they know it or not."

One other conversation with Mr. Schurz strongly impressed me with his exalted character and the memory of it lingers in my mind. In the summer of the year 1900, when Mr. Bryan was nominated for the second time for President, on a platform strongly reaffirming his free silver policy and everything else for which he had stood in 1896, it was given out that Carl Schurz, who had bitterly and effectively opposed him in 1896, intended now to support him. I had finally withdrawn from the *World's* service, and from newspaper work of every kind, and was passing the summer in literary work at my cottage on Lake George. But the *World* telegraphed me asking me to see Mr. Schurz, who was also a Lake George cottager, and get from him some statement of his reasons for now supporting the man and the policies that he had so strenuously opposed four years before.

*Mr. Schurz's
Patriotism*

I had no idea that Mr. Schurz would give me any such statement for publication, but he and I had long been friends, and a call upon him would occupy a morning agreeably, with the remote chance that I might incidentally render a service to my friends of the *World* staff. Therefore, I went.

Mr. Schurz told me frankly that he could give me nothing for publication, just as I had expected that he would do.

[336] "I am going to make one or two speeches in this campaign," he said, "and anything I might give you now would simply take the marrow out of my speeches. But personally I shall be glad to talk

the matter over with you. It seems to me to be one of positively vital importance—not to parties, for now that I have come to the end of an active life I care nothing for parties—but to our country and to the cause of human liberty."

"You think human liberty is involved?" I asked.

"Yes, certainly. Those conceptions upon which human liberty rests in every country in the world had their birth in the colonies out of which this nation was formed and they were first effectively formulated in the Declaration of Independence and enacted into fundamental law in our Constitution. The spectacle of a great, free, rich, and powerful nation securely built upon those ideas as its foundation has been an inspiration to all other peoples, and better still, a compulsion upon all rulers. If that inspiration is lost, and that compulsion withdrawn, the brutal military force that buttresses thrones will quickly undo all that our influence has accomplished in teaching men their rights and warning monarchs of their limitations."

In answer to further questions he went on to say:

"The spirit of imperialism—which is the arch-enemy of human liberty—is rampant in the land, and it seems to me the supreme duty of every man who loves liberty to oppose it with all his might, at whatever sacrifice of lesser things he may find to be necessary. I am as antagonistic to Mr. Bryan's free silver policy and to some other policies of his as I was four years ago. But the time has come when men on the other side jeer at the Declaration of Independence and mock at the Constitution itself. There is danger in this—a danger immeasurably greater than any that financial folly threatens. It seems to me time for a revolution—not a revolution of violence or one which seeks overthrow, but a revolution of public opinion designed to restore the landmarks and bring the country back to its foundations of principle. Financial folly, such as Mr. Bryan advocates, threatens us with nothing worse than a temporary disturbance of business affairs. Imperialism threatens us with the final destruction of those ideas and principles that have made our country great in itself and immeasurably greater in its influence upon thought and upon the welfare of humanity in every country on earth."

I have recorded Mr. Schurz's words here, as nearly as a trained memory allows me to do, not with the smallest concern for the political issues of nine years ago, but solely because his utterances on that occasion seem to me to have shown forth, as nothing else could have done, the high inspiration of his patriotism, and to explain what many have regarded as the inconsistencies of his political attitude at various periods of his life. That so-called inconsistency was in fact a higher consistency. His allegiance was at all times given to principles, to ideas, to high considerations of right and of human liberty, and in behalf of these he never hesitated to sacrifice his political prospects, his personal advantage, or anything else that he held to be of less human consequence.

LXIX

In the spring of the year 1900 I finally ceased to be a newspaper worker. I was weary, almost beyond expression, of the endless grind of editorial endeavor. My little summer home in the woodlands on Lake George lured me to the quiet, independent, literary life that I had always desired. There was an accumulation in my mind of things I longingly desired to do, and the opportunity to do them came. Above all, I wanted to be free once more—to be nobody's "hired man," to be subject to no man's control, however generous and kindly that control might be.

*The End of
Newspaper Life*

Life conditions at my place, "Culross," were ideal, with no exacting social obligations, with plenty of fishing, rowing, and sailing, with my giant pines, hemlocks, oaks, and other trees for companions, and with the sweetest air to breathe that human lungs could desire.

I had just published a boys' book that passed at once into second and successive editions. The publishers of it had asked me for more books of that kind, and still more insistently for novels, while with other publishers the way was open to me for some historical and biographical writings and for works of other kinds, that I had long planned.

Under these favorable circumstances I joyously established anew the literary workshop which had twice before been broken up by that "call of the wild," the lure of journalism.

This time, the summer-time shop consisted, and still consists, of a cozy corner in one of the porches of my rambling, rock-perched cottage. There, sheltered from the rain when it came and from the fiercer of the winds, I spread a broad rug on the floor and placed my writing table and chair upon it, and there for ten years I have done my work in my own way, at my own times, and in all other ways as it has pleased me to do it. In that corner, I have only to turn my head in order to view the most beautiful of all lakes lying almost at my feet and only thirty or forty feet away. If I am seized with the impulse to go fishing, my fishing boat with its well-stocked bait wells is there inviting me. If I am minded to go upon the water for rest and thought—or to be rid of thought for a time—there are other boats in my dock, boats of several sorts and sizes, among which I am free to choose. If the weather is inclement, there are open fireplaces within the house and an ample

stock of wood at hand.

For ten years past I have spent all my summers in these surroundings — staying at "Culross" four or five or even six months in each year and returning to town only for the period of winter stress.

Life at Culross

During the ten years in which that corner of the porch has been my chief workshop, I have added twenty-odd books to the dozen or so published before, besides doing other literary work amounting to about an equal product, and if I live, the end is not yet. I make this statistical statement as an illustration of the stimulating effect of freedom upon the creative faculty. The man who must do anything else—if it be only to carry a cane, or wear cuffs, or crease his trousers, or do any other thing that involves attention and distracts the mind, is seriously handicapped for creative work of any kind.

I have worked hard, of course. He who would make a living with his pen must do that of necessity. But the work has been always a joy to me, and such weariness as it brings is only that which gives added pleasure to the rest that follows.

LXX

Every literary worker has his own methods, and I have never known any one of them to adopt the methods of another with success. Temperament has a good deal to do with it; habit, perhaps, a good deal more, and circumstance more than all.

[340] I have always been an extemporaneous writer, if I may apply the adjective to writers as we do to speakers. I have never been able to sit down and "compose" anything before writing it. I have endeavored always to master the subjects of my writing by study and careful thought, but I have never known when I wrote a first sentence or a first chapter what the second was to be. I think from the point of my pen, so far at least as my thinking formulates itself in written words.

I suppose this to be a consequence of my thirty-odd years of newspaper experience. In the giddy, midnight whirl of making a great newspaper there is no time for "first drafts," "outline sketches," "final revisions," and all that sort of thing. When the telegraph brings news at midnight that requires a leader—perhaps in double leads—the editorial writer has an hour or less, with frequent interruptions, in which to write his article, get it into type, revise the proofs, and make up the page that contains it. He has no choice but to write extemporaneously. He must hurriedly set down on paper what his newspaper has to say on the subject, and send his sheets at once to the printers, sometimes keeping messenger boys at his elbow to take the pages from his hand one after another as fast as they are written. His only opportunity for revision is on the proof slips, and even in that he is limited by the necessity of avoiding every alteration that may involve the overrunning of a line.

[341] In this and other ways born of necessity, the newspaper writer learns the art of extemporaneous writing, which is only another way of saying that he learns how to write at his best in the first instance, without lazily depending upon revision for smoothness, clearness, terseness, and force. He does not set down ill-informed or ill-considered judgments. Every hour of every day of his life is given to the close study of the subjects upon which he is at last called upon to write under stress of tremendous hurry. He knows all about his theme. He has all the facts at his fingers' ends. He is familiar with every argument that has been or can be made on the questions involved. He knows all his statistics, and his judgments have been carefully thought out in advance. His art consists in the ability to select on the instant what phases of the subject he will treat, and to write down his thought clearly, impressively, convincingly, and in the best rhetorical form he can give it.

I think that one who has acquired that habit of extemporaneous writing about things already mastered in thought can never learn to write in any other way. Both experience and observation have convinced me that men of that intellectual habit do more harm than good to their work when they try to improve it by revision. Revision in every such case is apt to mean elaboration, and elaboration is nearly always a weakening dilution of thought.

*Extemporaneous
Writing*

I am disposed to think that whatever saves trouble to the writer is purchased at the expense of the reader. The classic dictum that "easy writing makes hard reading" is as true to-day as it was when Horace made laborious use of the flat end of his stylus. For myself, at any rate, I have never been able to "dictate," either "to the machine," or to a stenographer, with satisfactory results, nor have I ever known anybody else to do so without some sacrifice to laziness of that which it is worth a writer's while to toil for. The stenographer and the typewriter have their place as servants of commerce, but in literature they tend to diffusion, prolixity, inexactitude, and, above all, to carelessness in that choice of words that makes the difference between grace and clumsiness, lucidity and cloud, force and feebleness.

In the writing of novels, I have always been seriously embarrassed by the strange perversity of fictitious people. That is a matter that has puzzled and deeply interested me ever since I became

a practising novelist.

[342]

The most ungrateful people in the world are the brain-children of the novelist, the male and female folk whose existence is due to the good will of the writer. Born of the travail of the novelist's brain, and endowed by him with whatever measure of wit, wisdom, or wealth they possess; personally conducted by him in their struggles toward the final happiness he has foreordained for them at the end of the story; cared for; coddled; listened to and reported even when they talk nonsense, and not infrequently when they only think it; laboriously brought to the attention of other people; pushed, if possible, into a fame they could never have achieved for themselves; they nevertheless obstinately persist in thwarting their creator's purpose and doing as they wickedly please to his sore annoyance and vexation of spirit.

In truth, the author of a story has very little control over its course after he has once laid its foundations. The novel is not made—it grows, and the novelist does little more than plant the seed and keep the growth unchoked by weeds. He is as powerless to make it other than what it tends to be as the gardener is to grow tomatoes on corn-stalks or cucumbers on pea-vines. He may create for the story what manner of people he pleases, just as the gardener may choose the seed he will plant; but once created these fictitious people will behave according to their individual natures without heed to the wishes of the author of their being.

In other words, the novelist is under bond to his conscience to represent his personages as talking and acting precisely as such personages would talk and act under the circumstances in which he has placed them. It often happens that their sentiments, their utterances, and their conduct do not fit into the author's preconceived arrangement of happenings, so that he must alter his entire story or important parts of it to make it true.

[343]

I have borrowed the last few paragraphs from a playful paper I wrote for an obscure magazine thirty-odd years ago, because they suggest a trouble that must come to every conscientious novelist many times during the writing of every story. There come times when the novelist doesn't know what happened, and must toilsomely explore his consciousness by way of finding out.

My working hours are determined by circumstances—morning, afternoon, evening, or late at night. When there is a "must" involved, I work when I must; when I am free I work when I choose or when I feel that I can.

*Working Hours
and Working
Ways*

I never carry my work to bed with me, and I never let it rob me of a moment's sleep. To avoid that I usually play a game or two of solitaire —perhaps the least intellectual of all possible occupations—between work and bedtime; and I usually take a walk in the open air just before going to bed, whatever the weather may be. But whatever else happens, I long ago acquired the art of absolutely dismissing the subject of my work from my mind, whenever I please, and the more difficult art of refusing to let any other subject of interest take its place. I do that when I go to bed, and when I do that nothing less than positive physical pain can keep me from going to sleep.

I have always been fond of fishing and boating. In summer, at my Lake George cottage, I have a little fleet of small boats moored within twenty paces of my porch-placed writing table. If my mind flags at my work I step into my fishing boat and give an hour or two to a sport that occupies the attention without fatiguing it. If I am seriously perplexed by any work-problem, I take a rowboat, with a pair of eight-foot oars, and go for a ten-mile spin. On my return I find that my problem has completely wrought itself out in my mind without conscious effort on my part.

[344]

I am fond of flower gardening and, without the least technical skill in it, I usually secure astonishingly good results. The plants seem to respond generously to my uninstructed but kindly attention.

In my infancy my mother taught me to begin every day with a plunge into water as cold as I could get, and I have kept up the habit with the greatest benefit. I find it a perfect tonic as well as a luxurious delight.

I have always enforced upon myself two rules with respect to literary style: First, to utter my thought simply and with entire sincerity, and, second, never consciously to write or leave a sentence in such form that even a blundering reader might mistake its meaning.

Here let me bring to an end these random recollections of a life which has involved hard work, distressing responsibility, and much of disappointment, but which has been filled from the beginning with that joy of success which is the chief reward of endeavor to every man who loves his work and puts conscience into it.

THE END

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