

VARIOUS

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EMERSON

¹The genius of America seems hitherto disposed to manifest itself rather in works of reason and reflection than in those displays of poetic fervour which are usually looked for in a nascent literature. And a little consideration would lead us, probably, to expect this. America presents itself upon the scene, enters into the drama of the world, at a time when the minds of men are generally awakened and excited to topics of grave and practical importance. It is not a great poem that mankind now want or look for; they rather demand a great work, or works, on human society, on the momentous problems which our social progress, as well as our social difficulties, alike give rise to. If on a new literature a peculiar mission could be imposed, such would probably be the task assigned to it.

The energetic and ceaseless industry of the people of

¹ *Essays*. By Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Nature*, an *Essay*, and *Oration*s. By the same.

America, the stern and serious character of the founders of New England, the tendency which democracy must necessarily encourage to reason much and boldly on the interests of the community, – would all lead us to the same anticipation; so far as any anticipation can be warranted, regarding the erratic course and capricious development of literary genius.

The first contribution, we believe, our libraries received from America, was the half theological, half metaphysical treatise on the Will by Jonathan Edwards. This follower of Calvin is understood to have stated the gloomy and repulsive doctrines of his master with an unrivalled force of logic. Such is the reputation which *Edwards on the Will* enjoys, and we are contented to speak from reputation. The doctrine of necessity, even when intelligently applied to the circle of human thoughts and passions, is not the most inviting tenet of philosophy. It is quickly learned, and what little fruit it yields is soon gathered. But when combined with the theological dogma, wrung from texts of scripture, of predestination; when the law of necessity supposed to regulate the temper and affairs of the human being in this little life, is converted into a divine sentence of condemnation to a future and eternal fate – it then becomes one of the most odious and irrational of tenets that ever obscured the reason or clouded the piety of mankind. We confess, therefore, that we are satisfied with re-echoing the traditional reputation of Jonathan Edwards, without earning, by perusal of his work, the right to pronounce upon its justice.

The first contribution, also, which America made to the amount of our knowledge, was of a scientific character, and, moreover, the most anti-poetical imaginable. As such, at least, it must be described by those who are accustomed to think that a peculiar mystery attached to one phenomenon of nature more than another, is essentially poetic. Several poets, our Campbell amongst the number, have complained that the laws of optics have disencharmed the rainbow; but the analysis of Newton is poetry itself compared to that instance of the daring and levelling spirit of science which Franklin exhibited, when he proved the lightning to be plain electricity; took the bolts of Jupiter, analysed them, bottled them in Leyden jars, and experimented on them as with the sparks of his own electrical machine.

As the first efforts of American genius were in the paths of grave and searching inquiry, so, too, at this present moment, if we were called upon to point out amongst the works of our trans-Atlantic brethren, our compatriots still in language, the one which, above all others, displayed the undoubted marks of original genius, – it would be a prose work, and one of a philosophical character we should single out: – we should point to the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The Americans are frequently heard to lament the absence of nationality in their literature. Perhaps no people are the first to perceive their own character reflected in the writings of one of their countrymen; this nationality is much more open to the observation of a foreigner. We are quite sure that no French or

German critic could read the speculations of Emerson, without tracing in them the spirit of the nation to which this writer belongs. The new democracy of the New World is apparent, he would say, in the philosophy of one who yet is no democrat, and, in the ordinary sense of the word, no politician. For what is the prevailing spirit of his writings? Self-reliance, and the determination to see in the man of to-day, in his own, and in his neighbour's mind, the elements of all greatness. Whatever the most exalted characters of history, whatever the most opulent of literatures, has displayed or revealed, of action or of thought, – the germ of all lies within yourself. This is his frequent text. What does he say of history? "I have no expectation that any man will read history aright, who thinks that what was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing to-day." He is, as he describes himself, "an endless seeker of truth, with no past at his back." He delights to raise the individual existing mind to the level, if not above the level, of all that has been thought or enacted. He will not endure the imposing claims of antiquity, of great nations, or of great, names. "It is remarkable," he says, "that involuntarily we always read as superior beings. Universal history, the poets, the romancers, do not, in their stateliest pictures, in the sacerdotal, the imperial palaces, in the triumphs of will or of genius, anywhere make us feel that we intrude, that this is for our betters, but rather is it true that in their grandest strokes, there we feel most at home. *All that Shakspeare says of*

the king, yonder slip of a boy that reads in the corner, feels to be true of himself."

Neither do the names of foreign cities, any more than of ancient nations, overawe or oppress him. Of travelling, he says, "I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that the man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Palmyra, his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins. Travelling is a fool's paradise. We owe to our first journeys the discovery that place is nothing. At home, I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go."

In a still higher strain he writes, "There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought he may think; what a saint has felt he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man he can understand. Who hath access

to this universal mind, is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent." This passage is taken from the commencement of the Essay on History, and the essay entitled "Nature," opens with a similar sentiment. He disclaims the retrospective spirit of our age that would "put the living generation into masquerade out of the faded wardrobe of the past." He will not see through the eyes of others. "Why should not we also," he demands, "enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight, and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? The sun shines to-day also! Let us demand our own works, and laws, and worship."

In the Essay on Self-reliance – a title which might over-ride a great portion of his writings – he says: "Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history, our imagination makes fools of us, plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house and common day's work: but the things of life are the same to both: the sum total of both is the same. Why all this deference to Alfred, and Scanderberg, and Gustavus? Suppose they were virtuous: *did they wear out virtue?*" And in a more sublime mood he proceeds: "Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away, – means, teachers, texts, temples fall. Whence, then, this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and majesty of the soul... Man is timid and apologetic. He is no longer upright. He

dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses, or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose, – perfect in every moment of its existence. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he, too, lives with nature in the present, above time."

Surely these quotations alone – which we have made with the additional motive of introducing at once to our readers the happier style and manner of the American Philosopher – would bear out the French or German critic in their views of the nationality of this author. The spirit of the New World, and of a self-confident democracy, could not be more faithfully translated into the language of a high and abstract philosophy than it is here. We say that an air blowing from prairie and forest, and the New Western World, is felt in the tone and spirit of Emerson's writings; we do not intend to intimate that the opinions expressed in them are at all times such as might be anticipated from an American. Far from it. Mr Emerson regards the world from a peculiar point of view, that of an idealistic philosophy. Moreover, he is one of those wilful, capricious, though powerful thinkers, whose opinions it would not be very easy to anticipate, who balk all prediction, who defy augury.

For instance, a foreigner might naturally expect to find in the speculations of a New England philosopher, certain sanguine and enthusiastic views of the future condition of society. He will not find them here. Our idealist levels the past to the present, but he levels the future to the present also. If with him all that is old is new, so also all that is new is old. It is still the one great universal mind – like the great ocean – ebbing, flowing, in tempest now, and now in calm. He will not join in the shout that sees a new sun rising on the world. For ourselves, (albeit little given to the too sanguine mood) we have more hope here than our author has expressed. We by no means subscribe to the following sentence. The measure of truth it expresses – and so well expresses – bears but a small proportion to the whole truth. "All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves. Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes: it is barbarous, it is civilised, it is christianised, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under. But compare the health of the two men, and you shall see that his aboriginal strength the white man has lost. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a

broad axe, and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave. The civilised man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but loses so much support of muscle. He has got a fine Geneva watch, but he has lost the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His notebooks impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance office increases the number of accidents; it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a christianity (entrenched in establishments and forms) some vigour of wild virtue. *For every stoic was a stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?"*

A French critic has designated Emerson the American Montaigne, struck, we presume by his independence of manner, and a certain egotism which when accompanied by genius is as attractive, as it is ludicrous without that accompaniment. An English reader will be occasionally reminded of the manner of Sir Thomas Brown, author of the "Religio Medici." Like Sir Thomas, he sometimes startles us by a *curiosity* of reflection, fitted to suggest and kindle thought, although to a dry logician it may seem a mere futility, or the idle play of imagination. Of

course this similarity is to be traced only in single and detached passages; but we think we could select several quotations from the American writer which should pass off as choice morsels of Sir Thomas Brown, with one who was familiar with the strain of thought of the old Englishman, but whose memory was not of that formidable exactness as to render vain all attempt at imposition. Take the following for an instance: – "I hold our actual knowledge very cheap. Hear the rats in the wall, see the lizard on the fence, the fungus under foot, the lichen on the log. What do I know sympathetically, morally, of either of these worlds of life? As long as the Caucasian man – perhaps longer – these creatures have kept their council beside him, and there is no record of any word or sign that has passed from the one to the other... I am ashamed to see what a shallow village tale our so-called history is. How many times we must say Rome, and Paris, and Constantinople. What does Rome know of rat or lizard? What are Olympiads and Consulates to these neighbouring systems of being?"

Or this: – "Why should we make it a point to disparage that man we are, and that form of being assigned to us? A good man is contented. I love and honour Epaminondas, but I do not wish to be Epaminondas. I hold it more just to love the world of this hour, than the world of his hour. Nor can you, if I am true, excite me to the least uneasiness by saying 'he acted and thou sittest still.' I see action to be good, when the need is, and sitting still to be also good. Epaminondas, if he was the man I take him

for, would have sat still with joy and peace, if his lot had been mine. Heaven is large, and affords space for all modes of love and fortitude. Why should we be busy-bodies, and superserviceable? Action and inaction are alike to the true... Besides, why should we be cowed by the name of action? 'Tis a trick of the senses, – no more. We know that the ancestor of every action is a thought. The rich mind lies in the sun and sleeps, and is Nature. To think is to act."

Or if one were to put down the name of Sir Thomas Brown as the author of such a sentence as the following, are there many who would detect the cheat? "I like the silent church, before the service begins, better than any preaching. How far off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary; so let us always sit. Why should we assume the faults of our friend, or wife, or father, or child, because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood?"

But Emerson is too original a mind to be either a Montaigne or a Sir Thomas Brown. He lives, too, in quite another age, and moves in a higher region of philosophy than either of them. The utmost that can be said is, that he is of the same class of independent, original thinkers, somewhat wayward and fitful, who present no system, or none that is distinctly and logically set forth, but cast before us many isolated truths expressed in vivid, spontaneous eloquence.

This class of writers may be described as one whose members, though not deficient in the love of *truth*, are

still more conspicuous for their love of *thought*. They crave intellectual excitement; they have a genuine, inexhaustible ardour of reflection. They are not writers of systems, for patience would fail them to traverse the more arid parts of their subject, or those where they have nothing new, nothing of their *own*, to put forth. The task of sifting and arranging materials that have passed a thousand times through the hands of others, does not accord with their temperament. Neither are they fond of retracing their own steps, and renewing, from the same starting-place, the same inquiry. They are off to fresh pastures. They care not to be ruffling the leaves of the old manuscript, revising, qualifying, expunging. They would rather brave all sorts of contradictions and *go on*, satisfied that to an ingenuous reader their thoughts will ultimately wear a true and faithful aspect. They will not be hampered by their own utterances more than by other men's – "If you would be a man," says Emerson, "speak what you think to-day in words as hard as cannon-balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day." These headstrong sages, full of noble caprice, of lofty humours, often pour forth in their wild profusion a strange mixture of great truths and petty conceits – noble principles and paradoxes no better than conundrums. As we have said, they are lovers pre-eminently of thought. Full of the chase, they will sometimes run down the most paltry game with unmitigated ardour. Such writers are not so wise as their best wisdom, nor so foolish as their folly. When certain of the

ancient sages who were in the habit of guessing boldly at the open riddle of nature, made, amidst twenty absurd conjectures, one that has proved to be correct, we do not therefore give them the credit of a scientific discovery. One of these wise men of antiquity said that the sea was a great fish; he asserted also that the moon was an opaque body, and considerably larger than she appears to be. He was right about the moon; he was wrong about the fish; but as he speculated on both subjects in the same haphazard style, we give him very little more credit in the one case than the other. Perhaps his theory which transformed the sea into a fish, was that on which he prided himself most. Something of the same kind, though very different in degree, takes place in our judgment upon certain moral speculators. When a man of exuberant thought utters in the fervour or the fever of his mind what *comes first*, his fragments of wisdom seem as little to belong to him as his fragments of folly. The reader picks up, and carries off, what best pleases him, as if there were no owner there, as if it were treasure-trove, and he was entitled to it as first finder. He foregoes the accustomed habit of connecting his writer with the assemblage of thoughts presented to him, as their sole proprietor for the time being: "he cries halves," as Charles Lamb has said on some similar occasion, in whatever he pounces on.

The task of the critic on a writer of this class, becomes more than usually ungracious and irksome. He meets with a work abounding with traits of genius, and conspicuous also for its faults and imperfections. As a reader only, he gives himself up

to the pleasure which the former of these inspire. Why should he disturb that pleasure by counting up the blemishes and errors? He sees, but passes rapidly over them; on the nobler passages he dwells, and to them alone he returns. But, as critic, he cannot resign himself entirely to this mood; or rather, after having resigned himself to it, after having enjoyed that only true perusal of a book in which we forget all but the truth we can extract from it, he must rouse himself to another and very different act of attention; he must note defects and blemishes, and caution against errors, and qualify his admiration by a recurrence to those very portions of the work which he before purposely hurried over.

We take up such a book as these Essays of Emerson. We are charmed with many delightful passages of racy eloquence, of original thought, of profound or of *naive* reflection. What if there are barren pages? What if sometimes there is a thick entangled underwood through which there is no penetrating? We are patient. We can endure the one, and for the other obstacle, in military phrase, we can *turn* it. The page is moveable. We are not bound, like the boa-constrictor, to swallow all or none. Meanwhile, in all conscience, there is sufficient for one feast. There is excellence enough to occupy one's utmost attention; there is beauty to be carried away, and truth to be appropriated. What more, from a single book, can any one reasonably desire? But if the task of criticism be imposed upon us, we must, nevertheless, sacrifice this easy and complacent mood, – this merely receptive disposition; we must re-examine; we must cavil

and object; we must question of obscurity why it should stand there darkening the road; we must refuse admittance to mere paradox; we must expose the trifling conceit or fanciful analogy that would erect itself into high places, and assume the air of novel and profound truth.

Some portion of this less agreeable duty we will at once perform, that we may afterwards the more freely and heartily devote ourselves to the more pleasant task of calling attention to the works of a man of genius, – for we suspect that Emerson is not known in this country as he deserves to be. With some who have heard his name coupled with that of Carlyle, he passes for a sort of echo or double of the English writer. A more independent and original thinker can nowhere in this age be found. This praise must, at all events, be awarded him. And even in America – which has not the reputation of generally overlooking, or underrating, the merits of her own children – we understand that the reputation of Emerson is by no means what it ought to be; and many critics there who are dissatisfied with merely imitative talent, and demand a man of genius *of their own*, are not aware that he stands there amongst them.

When we accuse Mr Emerson of obscurity, it is not obscurity of style that we mean. His style often rises – as our readers have had already opportunities of judging – into a vivid, terse, and graphic eloquence, agreeably tinged at times with a poetic colouring; and although he occasionally adopts certain inversions which are not customary in modern prose, he never lays himself

open to the charge of being difficult or unintelligible. But there is an obscurity of thought – in the very matter of his writings – produced first by a vein of mysticism which runs throughout his works, and, secondly, by a manner he sometimes has of sweeping together into one paragraph a number of unsorted ideas, but scantily related to each other – bringing up his drag-net with all manner of fish in it, and depositing it then and there before us.

Mysticism is a word often so vaguely and rashly applied, that we feel bound to explain the sense in which we use it. It is not because Mr Emerson is an idealist in his philosophy – what we are in the habit in the present day of describing as the German school of metaphysics, though he does not appear to have drawn his tenets from the Germans, and more frequently quotes the name of Plato than that of Kant or Hegel – it is not for this we pronounce him to be a mystic. Berkeley was no mystic. In support of this philosophy reasons may be adduced which appeal to the faculties, and are open to the examination of all men. We do not pronounce idealism to be mystical, but we pronounce him to be a mystic who upholds this, or any other philosophy, upon grounds of conviction not open to all rational men; whose convictions, in short, rest upon some profound intuition, some deep and peculiar source of knowledge, to which the great multitude of mankind are utter strangers. A man shall be an idealist, and welcome; we can discuss the matter with him, we can follow his reasonings, and if we cannot sustain ourselves in that nicely-balanced aerial position he has assumed, poised

above the earth on a needle's point of faith, we can at least apprehend how the more subtle metaphysician has contrived to accomplish the feat. But the moment a man proclaims himself in the possession of any truth whatever, by an intuition of which we, and other men, find no traces in our own mind, then it is that we must, of force, abandon him to the sole enjoyment of an illumination we do not share, and which he cannot impart. We call him mystical, and he calls us blind, or sense-beclouded. We assume that he pretends to see where there is no vision, and no visual organ; he retorts that it is we, and the gross vulgar who have lost, or never attained, the high faculty of vision which he possesses. Whether it is Plato or Swedenborg, Pagan or Christian, who lays claim to this occult and oracular wisdom, we must proclaim it a delusion. It is in vain to tell us that these men may be the *Ã©lite* of humanity, that they are thus signally favoured because they have more successfully cultivated their minds, both intellectually and morally, and purified them for the reception of a closer communion with the divine and all-sustaining and interpenetrating Intelligence, than is vouchsafed to the rest of mankind. We, who have nothing but our eyesight and our reason, we of the multitude who are not thus favoured, can, at all events, learn nothing *from them*. Whether above or beside human reason, they are equally remote from intellectual communion. We do not recognise their reason as reason, nor their truth as truth; and we call them mystics to express this unapproachable nature of their minds, this hopeless severance

from intercommunion of thought, from even so much of contact as is requisite for the hostilities of controversy. These wisest of mankind are in the same predicament as the maddest of mankind; both believe that they are the only perfectly sane, and that all the rest of the world have lost their reason. The rest of the world hold the opposite opinion, and we are not aware that in either case there is any appeal but to the authority of numbers, to which, of course, neither the lunatic nor the mystic will submit.

We have frequent intimations in Mr Emerson's writings of this high intuitive source of truth. Take the following passage in the Essay on Self-reliance: —

"And now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid, probably, cannot be said; for all that we say is the far off remembering of the intuition. The thought by what I can now nearest approach to say it, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or appointed way; you shall not discern the foot-prints of any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name; the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new; it shall exclude all other being. You take the way from man not to man. All persons that ever existed are its fugitive ministers. There shall be no fear in it. Fear and hope are alike beneath it. It asks nothing. There is somewhat low even in hope. *We are then in vision.* There is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor, properly, joy. The soul is raised over passion. *It seeth identity and eternal causation. It is a perceiving that Truth and Right are.* Hence

it becomes a tranquillity out of the knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature – the Atlantic Ocean – the South Sea – vast intervals of time – years – centuries – are of no account. This, which I think and feel, underlay that former state of life and circumstances as it does underlie my present, and will always all circumstance, and what is called life, and what is called death."

Whenever a man begins by telling us that he cannot find language to express his meaning, we may be pretty sure that he has no intelligible meaning to express; and Mr Emerson, in the above passage, fully bears out this general observation. "I cannot," he says in another place, "I cannot, nor can any man, speak precisely of things so sublime, but it seems to me, the wit of man, his strength, his grace, his tendency, his art, is the grace and the presence of God. It is beyond explanation. When all is said and done, the rapt saint is found the only logician. Not exhortation, not argument, becomes our lips, but pã'ans of joy and praise. But not of adulation: *we are too nearly related in the deep of the mind to that we honour. It is God in us which checks the language of petition by a grander thought. In the bottom of the heart it is said 'I am, and by me, O child! this fair body and world of thine stands and grows. I am: all things are mine: and all mine are thine.'*"

If we can gather any thing from this language, it must imply that the individual mind is *conscious* of being a part, an emanation of the Divine mind – is conscious of this union or

identity – the pretension to which species of consciousness is, in our apprehension, pure mysticism.

But we shall not weary our readers by seeking further proofs of this charge of mysticism; for what can be more wearisome than to have a number of unintelligible passages brought together from different and remote parts of an author's works. We pass to that other cause of obscurity we have hinted at, – the agglomerations of a multitude of unrelated, or half-related, ideas. Sometimes a whole paragraph, and a long one too, is made up of separate fragments of thought or fancy, good or amusing, it may be, in themselves, but connected by the slightest and most flimsy thread imaginable. Glittering insects and flies of all sorts, caught and held together in a spider's web, present as much appearance of unity as some of these paragraphs we allude to.

For an example, we will turn to the first essay in the series, that on History. It is, perhaps, the most striking of the whole, and one which has a more distinct aim and purport than most of them, and yet the reader is fairly bewildered at times by the incongruous assemblage of thoughts presented to him. It is the drift of the essay to show, that the varied and voluminous record of history is still but the development and expansion of the individual being man, as he existed yesterday, as he exists to-day. "A man," he says, "is the whole encyclopædia of facts. The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn, and Egypt, Greece, Rome, Gaul, Britain, America, lie folded already in the first man. Epoch after epoch, camp, kingdom, empire, republic, democracy, are merely

the application of his manifold spirit to the manifold world." This idea is explained, illustrated, amplified, and very often in a novel and ingenious manner. To exemplify the necessity we feel to recognise *ourselves* in the past, he says, – "All inquiry into antiquity, all curiosity respecting the pyramids, the excavated cities, Stonehenge, the Ohio circles, Mexico, Memphis, is the desire to do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now. It is to banish the *Not me*, and supply the *Me*. It is to abolish difference and restore unity. Belzoni digs and measures in the mummy-pits and pyramids of Thebes, until he can see the end of the difference between the monstrous work and himself. When he has satisfied himself, in general and in detail, that it was made by such a person as himself, so armed and so motived, and to ends to which he himself, in given circumstances, should also have worked, the problem is then solved, his thought lives along the whole line of temples and sphinxes and catacombs, passes through them all like a creative soul, with satisfaction, and they live again to the mind, or are *now*."

This is good, but by and by he begins to intercalate all sorts of vagrant fantasies, as thus: —

"Civil history, *natural history*, the history of art, and the history of literature, – all must be explained from individual history, or must remain words. There is nothing but is related to us, nothing that does not interest us, – kingdom, college, *tree*, *horse*, or iron shoe, the roots of all things are in man. It is in

the soul that architecture exists. Santa Croce and the dome of St Peter's are lame copies after a divine model. Strasburg cathedral is a material counterpart of the soul of Erwin of Steinbach. The true poem is the poet's mind, the true ship is the ship-builder," and so forth. It would be waste of time and words to ask how "tree and horse," in the same sense as kingdom and college, can be said to have "their roots in man;" or whether, when it is said that "Strasburg cathedral is the material counterpart of the soul of Erwin of Steinbach," this can possibly mean anything else than the undoubted fact, that the architect thought and designed before he built.

This subject of architecture comes sadly in the way of the author, and of the reader too, whom it succeeds in thoroughly mystifying. "The Gothic cathedral is a blossoming in stone, subdued by the insatiable demand of harmony in man. The mountain of granite blooms into an eternal flower with the lightness and delicate finish, as well as the aerial proportions and perspective of vegetable beauty. *In like manner*, all public facts are to be individualised, all private facts are to be generalised. Then at once history becomes fluid and true, and biography deep and sublime."

The fables of Pagan mythology next cross his path, and these lead to another medley of thoughts. "These beautiful fables of the Greeks," he says, "being proper creations of the imagination, and not of the fancy, are universal verities." And well they may be, whether of the fancy or the imagination (and the great

distinction here marked out between the two, we do not profess to comprehend), if each mind, in every age, is at liberty to interpret them as it pleases, and with the same unrestrained license that our author takes. But how can he find here an instance of the *present man* being written out in history, when the old history or fable is perpetually to receive new interpretations, as it is handed down from generation to generation – interpretations which assuredly were never dreamt of by the original inventor?

"Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, said the poets. Every man is a divinity in disguise, a god playing the fool. It seems as if heaven had sent its insane angels into our world as to an asylum, and here they will break out into their native music, and utter at intervals the words they have heard in heaven; then the mad fit returns, and they mope and wallow like dogs." Whether witty or wise, such interpretations have manifestly nothing to do with the fable as it exists in history, as part of the history of the human mind.

"The transmigration of souls: that too is no fable; I would it were. But men and women are only half human. Every animal of the barn-yard, the field and the forest, of the earth and of the waters that are under the earth, has contrived to get a footing, and to leave the print of its features and form in some one or other of these upright, heaven-facing speakers." Very good; only, if poets and wits are to set themselves to the task, we should like to know what fable there is in the world, whether the product of imagination or fancy, which might not be shown to abound in

eternal verities.

Travelling on a little farther, we meet with the following paragraph, some parts of which are to be made intelligible by putting ourselves in the point of view of the idealistic philosopher; but the whole together, by reason of the incongruity of its parts, produces no other effect than that of mere and painful bewilderment, —

"A man is a bundle of relations, a knot of roots, whose flower and fruitage is the world. All his faculties refer to natures out of him. All his faculties predict the world he is to inhabit, as the fins of the fish foreshow that water exists, or the wings of an eagle in the egg presuppose a medium like air. Insulate and you destroy him. He cannot live without a world. Put Napoleon in an island prison, let his faculties find no men to act on, no Alps to climb, no stake to play for, and he would beat the air and appear stupid. Transport him to large countries, dense population, complex interests and antagonist power, and you shall see that the man Napoleon, bounded, that is, by such a profile and outline, is not the virtual Napoleon. This is but Talbot's shadow;

"His substance is not here:

For what you see is but the smallest part,

And least proportion of humanity;

But were the whole frame here,

It is of such a spacious lofty pitch,

Your roof were not sufficient to contain it.

Columbus needs a planet to shape his course upon. Newton and Laplace need myriads of ages and thick-strewn celestial areas. One may say, a gravitating solar system is already prophesied in the nature of Newton's mind. Not less does the brain of Davy and Gay-Lussac, from childhood exploring always the affinities and repulsions of particles, anticipate the laws of organisation. Does not the eye of the human embryo predict the light? the ear of Handel predict the witchcraft of harmonic sound? Do not the constructive fingers of Watt, Fulton, Whittemore, and Arkwright, predict the fusible, hard, and temperable texture of metals, the properties of stone, water, and wood? the lovely attributes of the maiden child predict the refinements and decorations of civil society? Here, also, we are reminded of the action of man on man. A mind might ponder its thoughts for ages, and not gain so much self-knowledge as the passion of love shall teach it in a day. Who knows himself before he has been thrilled with indignation at an outrage, or has heard an eloquent tongue, or has shared the throb of thousands in a national exultation and alarm? No man can antedate his experience, or guess what faculty or feeling a new object shall unlock, any more than he can draw to-day the face of a person whom he shall see to-morrow for the first time."

And the essay concludes by presenting its leading idea in this distorted and exaggerated shape: —

"Thus, in all ways does the soul concentrate and reproduce its treasures for each pupil, each new-born man.

He, too, shall pass through the whole cycle of experience. He shall collect into a focus the rays of nature. History no longer shall be a dull book. It shall walk incarnate in every just and wise man. You shall not tell me by languages and titles a catalogue of the volumes you have read. You shall make me feel what periods you have lived. A man shall be the Temple of Fame. He shall walk as the poets have described that goddess, in a robe painted all over with wonderful events and experiences; – his own form and features by that exalted intelligence shall be that variegated vest. I shall find in him the Foreworld; in his childhood the age of gold; the apples of knowledge; the Argonautic expedition; the calling of Abraham; the building of the temple; the advent of Christ; dark ages; the revival of letters; the Reformation; the discovery of new lands, the opening of new sciences, and new regions in man. He shall be the priest of Pan, and bring with him into humble cottages the blessing of the morning stars, and all the recorded benefits of heaven and earth."

We regret to say that instances of this painful obscurity, of this outrageous and fantastical style of writing, it would not be difficult to multiply, were it either necessary or desirable. We have quoted sufficient to justify even harsher terms of censure than we have chosen to deal in; sufficient to warn our readers who may be induced, from the favourable quotations we have made, and shall continue to make, to turn to the works of this author, that it is not all gold they will find there, that the sun does not always shine upon his page, that a great proportion of

his writings may be little suited to their taste.

That which forms the great and inextinguishable charm of those writings is the fine moral temper they display, the noble ardour, the high ethical tone they every where manifest and sustain, and especially that lofty independence of his intellect, that freedom of his reason which the man who aspires after true cultivation should watch over and preserve with the utmost jealousy. Addressing the Divinity students of Cambridge, U. S., he says, —

"Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those most sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you will find, who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins, saints and prophets. Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.' Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity. The inventor did it because it was natural to him; and so in him it has a charm. In the imitator, something else is natural, and he bereaves himself of his own beauty, to come short of another man's...

"Let us not aim at common degrees of merit. Can we not leave to such as love it the virtue that glitters for the commendation of society, and ourselves pierce the deep solitudes of absolute ability and worth? We easily come up to the standard of goodness in society. Society's praise can be cheaply secured, and almost all men are content with those easy merits; but the instant effect of conversing with God, will be to put them away. There are sublime

merits; persons who are not actors, not, speakers, but influences; persons too great for fame, for display; who disdain eloquence; to whom all we call art and artist seems too nearly allied to show and by-ends, to the exaggeration of the finite and selfish, and loss of the universal. The orators, the poets, the commanders, encroach on us only, as fair women do, by our allowance and homage. Slight them by preoccupation of mind, – slight them, as you can well afford to do, by high and universal aims, and they instantly feel that you have right, and that it is in lower places that they must shine. They also feel your right; for they, with you, are open to the influx of the all-knowing spirit, which annihilates before its broad noon the little shades and gradations of intelligence in the compositions we call wiser and wisest.

"In such high communion, let us study the grand strokes of rectitude: a bold benevolence, an independence of friends, so that not the unjust wishes of those who love us shall impair our freedom; but we shall resist, for truth's sake, the freest flow of kindness, and appeal to sympathies far in advance. And, what is the highest form in which we know this beautiful element? – a certain solidity of merit that has nothing to do with opinion, and which is so essentially and manifestly virtue, that it is taken for granted that the right, the brave, the generous step will be taken by it, and nobody thinks of commending it. You would compliment a coxcomb doing a good act, but you would not praise an angel. The silence that accepts merit as the most natural thing in the world, is the highest applause."

Nothing but the necessity to husband our space prevents us

from quoting other passages of the same noble strain.

There is an Essay *on Love* which has highly pleased us, and from which we wish to make some extracts. To a man of genius the old subjects are always new. The romance and enthusiasm of the passion is here quite freshly and vividly portrayed, while the great moral end of that charming exaggeration which every lover makes of the beauty and excellence of his mistress, is finely pointed out. There is both poetry and philosophy in the essay – as our readers shall judge for themselves from the following extracts. We do not always mark the omissions we make for the sake of economy of space, nor always cite the passages in the order they appear in the essay.

"What fastens attention, in the intercourse of life, like any passage betraying affection between two parties? Perhaps we never saw them before, and never shall meet them again. But we see them exchange a glance, or betray a deep emotion, and we are no longer strangers. We understand them, and take the warmest interest in the development of the romance. *All mankind love a lover.* The earliest demonstrations of complacency and kindness are nature's most winning pictures. It is the dawn of civility and grace in the coarse and rustic. The rude village boy teases the girls about the school-house door; – but to-day he comes running into the entry, and meets one fair child arranging her satchel: he holds her books to help her, and instantly it seems to him as if she removed herself from him infinitely, and was a sacred precinct. Among the throng of girls he runs

rudely enough, but one alone distances him; and these two little neighbours that were so close just now, have learned to respect each other's personality."

As is ever the case when men describe what is, or might be an exquisite happiness, there steals a melancholy over the description; and our author makes it a primary condition,

"That we must leave a too close and lingering adherence to the actual, to facts, and study the sentiment as it appeared in *hope*, and not in *history*. Let any man go back to those delicious relations which make the beauty of his life, which have given him sincerest instruction and nourishment, he will shrink, and shrink. Alas! I know not why, but infinite compunctions imbitter in mature life all the remembrances of budding sentiment, and cover every beloved name. Every thing is beautiful seen from the point of the intellect, or as truth. But all is sour, as seen from experience. It is strange how painful is the actual world, – the painful kingdom of time and space. There dwell care, canker, and fear. With thought, with the ideal, is immortal hilarity, the rose of joy. Round it all the muses sing. But with names and persons and the partial interests of to-day and yesterday, is grief.

"But be our experience in particulars what it may, no man ever forgot the visitations of that power to his heart and brain which created all things new; which was the dawn in him of music, poetry, and art; which made the face of nature radiant with purple light, the morning and the night varied enchantments; when a single tone of one voice could make the heart beat, and the most trivial circumstance

associated with one form, is put in the amber of memory; *when we became all eye when one was present, and all memory when one was gone*; when the youth becomes a watcher of windows, and studious of a glove, a veil, a ribbon, or the wheels of a carriage; when no place is too solitary, and none too silent for him who has richer company and sweeter conversation in his new thoughts, than any old friends, though best and purest, can give him; when all business seemed an impertinence, and all the men and women running to and fro in the streets, mere pictures.

"For, though the celestial rapture falling out of heaven, seizes only upon those of tender age, and although a beauty, overpowering all analysis or comparison, and putting us quite beside ourselves, we can seldom see after thirty years, yet the remembrance of these visions outlasts all other remembrances, and is a wreath of flowers on the oldest brows."

And on this matter of beauty how ingenious and full of feeling are the following reflections! —

"Wonderful is its charm. It seems sufficient to itself. The lover cannot paint his maiden to his fancy poor and solitary. Like a tree in flower, so much soft, budding, informing loveliness, is society for itself, *and she teaches his eye why Beauty was ever painted with Loves and Graces attending her steps*. Her existence makes the world rich. Though she extrudes all other persons from his attention as cheap and unworthy, yet she indemnifies him by carrying out her own being into somewhat impersonal; so that the maiden stands

to him for a representation of all select things and virtues. *For that reason the lover sees never personal resemblances in his mistress to her kindred or to others.* His friends find in her a likeness to her mother, or her sisters, or to persons not of her blood. *The lover sees no resemblance except to summer evenings and diamond mornings, to rainbows and the song of birds.*

"Beauty is ever that divine thing the ancients esteemed it. It is, they said, the flowering of virtue. Who can analyse the nameless charm which glances from one and another face and form? We are touched with emotions of tenderness and complacency, but we cannot find whereat this dainty emotion, this wandering gleam, points. It is destroyed for the imagination by any attempt to refer it to organisation. Nor does it point to any relations of friendship or love that society knows or has, but, as it seems to me, to a quite other and unattainable sphere, to relations of transcendent delicacy and sweetness, a true faerie land; to what roses and violets hint and foreshow. We cannot get at beauty. Its nature is like opaline doves'-neck lustres, hovering and evanescent. Herein it resembles the most excellent things, which all have this rainbow character, defying all attempts at appropriation and use. What else did Jean Paul Richter signify, when he said to music, 'Away! away! thou speakest to me of things which in all my endless life I have found not, and shall not find.' The same fact may be observed in every work of the plastic arts. The statue is then beautiful, when it begins to be incomprehensible, when it is passing out of criticism, and can no longer be defined by compass

and measuring wand, but demands an active imagination to go with it, and to say what it is in the act of doing. The god or hero of the sculptor is always represented in a transition *from* that which is representable to the senses, *to* that which is not. Then first it ceases to be a stone.

"So must it be with personal beauty which love worships. Then first is it charming and itself when it dissatisfies us with any end; when it becomes a story without an end; when it suggests gleams and visions, and not earthly satisfactions; when it seems

'Too bright and good
For human nature's daily food;'

when it makes the beholder feel his unworthiness; when he cannot feel his right to it, though he were C sar; he cannot feel more right to it, than to the firmament and the splendours of a sunset."

But this dream of love is but one scene in the play; and our author concludes his essay by pointing out what is, or should be, the denouement of the drama.

"Meantime, as life wears on, it proves a game of permutation and combination of all possible positions of the parties to extort all the resources of each, and acquaint each with the whole strength and weakness of the other. For, it is the nature and end of this relation, that they should represent the human race to each other.

"At last they discover that all which at first drew them together, – those once sacred features, that magical play of charms, was deciduous, had a prospective end, like the scaffolding by which the house was built; and the purification of the intellect and the heart, from year to year, is the real marriage foreseen and prepared from the first, and wholly above their consciousness. Looking at these aims with which two persons, a man and a woman, so variously and correlatively gifted, are shut up in one house to spend in the nuptial society forty or fifty years, I do not wonder at the emphasis with which the heart prophesies this crisis from early infancy, – at the profuse beauty with which the instincts deck the nuptial bower, and nature and intellect and art emulate each other in the gifts and the melody they bring to the epithalamium. Thus are we put in training for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeketh virtue and wisdom every where, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom."

If there is some of the *ideal* in this account given of love and matrimony, there is, nevertheless, a noble truth in it. And surely in proportion as the sentiment of love is refitted and spiritualised, so also ought the moral culture, to which it is subservient, to be pure and elevated.

The longest essay in the collection, and that which approaches nearest to the more formidable character of a treatise, is that entitled "Nature." This exhibits, so to speak, the practical point of view of an idealist. The idealist has denied the substantial, independent existence of the material world, but he does not deny

the existence of a phenomenal world. The Divine Nature reveals itself in the twofold form of finite mind and this phenomenal world. Thus, we believe, we may express the general creed of these philosophers, though it is a very delicate matter to act as interpreter to this class of thinkers: they are rarely satisfied with any expressions of their own, and are not likely to be contented with those of any other person. This phenomenal world has for its final cause the development and education of the finite mind. It follows, therefore, that all which a realist could say of the utility of nature can be advanced also by the idealist. He has his practical point of view, and can discourse, as Mr Emerson does here, on the various "uses" of nature which, he says, "admit of being thrown into the following classes: – commodity, beauty, language, and discipline."

We have not the least intention of proceeding further with an analysis of this essay; as we have already intimated, the value of Mr Emerson's writings appears to us to consist in the beauty and truthfulness of individual passages, not at all in his system, or any prolonged train of reasoning he may adopt. It is impossible to read this production without being delighted and arrested by a number of these individual passages sparkling with thought or fancy; it would be equally impossible to gather from it, as a whole, any thing satisfactory or complete.

On the beauty of nature he is always eloquent; he is evidently one who intensely feels it. "Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, night and the stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows."

The shows of heaven and earth are with him a portion of daily life. "In the woods is perpetual youth." "We talk," he says in another place, "with accomplished persons who appear to be strangers in nature. The cloud, the tree, the turf, the bird are not theirs, have nothing of them; the world is only their lodging and table." No such stranger is our poet-philosopher. "Crossing a bare common, in twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. Almost I fear to think how glad I am."

The only quotation we shall make from the Essay on "Nature," shall be one where he treats of this subject —

"A nobler want of man is served by nature, — namely, the love of beauty. Such is the constitution of all things, or such the plastic power of the human eye, that the primary form, as the sky, the mountain, the tree, the animal, give us a delight *in and for themselves*; a pleasure arising from outline, colour, motion, and grouping. And as the eye is the best composer, so light is the first of painters. *There is no object so foul, that intense light will not make beautiful.* And the stimulus it affords to the sense, and a sort of infinitude which it hath, like space and time, will make all matter gay. But besides this general grace diffused over nature, almost all the individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them; as the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lion's claw, the serpent, the

butterfly, sea-shells, flames, clouds, buds, leaves, and the forms of many trees, as the palm.

"The influence of the forms and actions in nature is so needful to man that, in its lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of Commodity and Beauty. To the body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company, nature is medicinal and restores their tone. The tradesman, the attorney, comes out of the din and craft of the street, and sees the sky and the woods, and is a man again. In their eternal calm he finds himself. The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon. We are never tired so long as we can see far enough.

"But in other hours nature satisfies the soul purely by its loveliness, and without any mixture of corporeal benefit. I have seen the spectacle of morning from the hill-top over against my house, from daybreak to sunrise, with emotions which an angel might share. The long slender bars of cloud float like fishes in the sea of crimson light. From the earth, as a shore, I look out into that silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations; the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind. How does nature deify us with a few and cheap elements! *Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous.* The dawn is my Assyria, the sunset and moonrise my Paphos, and unimaginable realms of faerie."

Mr Emerson has published a volume of poems, and it has been generally admitted that he has not succeeded in verse. But there are touches of charming poetry in his prose. This discrepancy,

which is not unfrequently met with, must result, we presume, from an inaptitude to employ the forms of verse, so that the style, instead of being invigorated, and polished, and concentrated by the necessary attention to line and metre, becomes denaturalised, constrained, crude, and unequal. We have looked through this volume of poems, but we should certainly not be adding to the reputation of the author by drawing attention to it. If we wished to find instances of the poetry of Emerson, we should still seek for them in his prose essays. Thus he says: —

"In this pleasing contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record, day by day, my honest thought, without prospect or retrospect, and I cannot doubt it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not and see it not. *The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also.*"

"Our moods," he says, "do not believe in each other. To-day I am full of thoughts; but yesterday I saw a dreary vacuity in this direction in which now I see so much; and a month hence, I doubt not, I shall wonder who he was that wrote so many continuous pages. Alas for this infirm faith, this will not strenuous, this vast ebb of a vast flow! *I am God in nature — I am a weed by the wall!*"

"A lady," he writes on another occasion, "with whom I was riding in the forest, said to me that the woods always seemed to her *to wait*, as if the genii who inhabit them suspended their deeds until the wayfarer has passed onward. This is precisely the thought which poetry has celebrated in the dance of the fairies

which breaks off on the approach of human feet." The lady had a true poetic feeling. And the following thought is illustrated by a very happy image.

"In man, we still trace the rudiments or hints of all that we esteem badges of servitude in the lower races, yet in him they enhance his nobleness and grace; as Io in Æschylus, transformed to a cow, offends the imagination, but how changed when as Isis in Egypt she meets Jove, a beautiful woman, with nothing of the metamorphosis left but the lunar horns, as the splendid ornament of her brows!"

In his philosophy, we have seen that Mr Emerson is an idealist, something, too, of a pantheist. In theology, we have heard him described as a Unitarian; but although the Unitarians of America differ more widely from each other, and from the standard of orthodoxy, than the same denomination of men in this country, we presume there is no body of Unitarians with whom our philosopher would fraternise, or who would receive him amongst their ranks. His Christianity appears rather to be of that description which certain of the Germans, one section of the Hegelians for instance, have found reconcilable with their Pantheistic philosophy. It is well for him that he writes in a tolerant age, that he did not make his appearance a generation too soon; the pilgrim fathers would certainly have burnt him at the stake; he would have died the death of Giordano Bruno. And we believe – if the spirit of his writings be any test of the spirit of the man – that he would have suffered

as a martyr, rather than have foregone the freedom and the truthfulness of his thought. His essays are replete with passages such as this: – "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please – you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates ever. He in whom the love of repose predominates, will accept the first creed, the first philosophy, the first political party he meets, – most likely his father's. He gets rest, commodity, and reputation; but he shuts the door of truth. He in whom the love of truth predominates, will keep himself aloof from all moorings and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism, and recognise all the opposite negations, between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion, but he is a candidate for truth, as the other is not, and he respects the highest law of his being."

We gather from what little has reached us of his biography, that he has in fact sacrificed somewhat of the commodity of this life, to this "higher law of his being." In a work which has just fallen into our hands, entitled "*The Prose Writers of America, with a Survey of the Intellectual History, Condition, and Prospects of the Country, by Rufus Wilmot Griswold,*" we find the following scanty account of Emerson. "He is the son of a Unitarian clergyman of Boston, and in 1821, when about seventeen years of age, was graduated at Harvard University. Having turned his attention to theology, he was ordained minister of one of the congregations of his native city, but, embracing

soon after some peculiar views in regard to the forms of worship, he abandoned his profession, and retiring to the quiet village of Concord, after the manner of an Arabian prophet, gave himself up to 'thinking,' preparatory to his appearance as a revelator." Which meagre narrative, not very happily told, leads us to infer that the recluse of Concord has lived up to the high spirit of his own teaching.

It is remarkable that Mr Griswold, in the prefatory essay which he entitles *The Intellectual History, Condition, and Prospects of the Country*, although he has introduced a host of writers of all grades, some of whom will be heard of in England for the first time, never once mentions the name of Emerson! Yet, up to this moment, America has not given to the world any thing which, in point of original genius, is comparable to his writings. That she has a thousand minds better built up, whose more equal culture, and whose more sober opinions, one might prefer to have, – this is not the question, – but in that highest department of reflective genius, where the power is given to impart new insights into truth, or make old truths look new, he stands hitherto unrivalled in his country; he has no equal and no second.

Very popular he perhaps never may become; but we figure to ourselves that, a century hence, he will be recognised as one of those old favourite writers whom the more thoughtful spirits read, not so much as teachers, but as noble-minded companions and friends, whose aberrations have been long ago conceded and forgiven. Men will read him then, not for his philosophy, – they

will not care two straws for his idealism or his pantheism: they will know that they are there, and there they will leave them, – but they will read him for those genuine confessions of one spirit to another, that are often breathed in his writings; for those lofty sentiments to which all hearts respond; for those truths which make their way through all systems, and in all ages.

HOW I CAME TO BE A SLOVEN

A pretty question this, my dear Eusebius, – and that the question comes from you, who at no time of your life were a "Beau Nash," is rather extraordinary. It is after the fashion of most of your movements, however, and so far should not be thought extraordinary in you. For as you do not walk in the track that other men's shoes have made, nor dress your thoughts in other men's draperies; but both walk and think as few other men do, I ought not to wonder that you turn suddenly round upon me, eye me from head to foot, and ask me this curious question, How I came to be a sloven. Now, I can easily imagine your own slovenly attitude and attire when you wrote me this precious letter, and how fantastically conceited you fancied yourself standing before me, *ὡστε Ζωγράφης* – like a painter, as says Hecuba, when she had her rags and misery be looked at, – and thought to put me out of countenance with your own perfections. Perfections, indeed! Why, your whole wardrobe would not be worth exporting in charity to the land of Ne'erdo-weels – and I doubt not that the loss of a single suit, bad as it may be, would leave you in some small respects as bare as when you came into the world. You have been reading, you tell me, the "Ästhetics of Dress," as you term them, those very amusing papers in *Maga* – from which you mean to cull materials for the history of the art, and to write a treatise on "The Philosophy of

Tailors," wherein you intend to set forth upon what principles of the "*Fitness of things*" it is that nine tailors make a man. It is a whimsical notion of yours that the game of nine-pins was set up in honour of these nine worthies – "Knights of the thimble" – signifying how weakly they stand upon their *pins*, and how they go by the board at the very breath of a ball. You affect to think that the Templars were but the imitators of a more honourable cross-legged company – and that their antiquity is shown prior to the invention of Heraldry, for that the very term, the *coat of arms*, must have come from them. You say they can show *parchments* with the oldest companies and families, and cut to shivereens the longest pedigrees, and yet never go beyond their own measure.

What would a parliament be without them? They not only make their man, but *seat* him. Indeed, man is no man, till he is made one by these Novemviri, and hath been invested by them, as of old, with the *toga virilis*; and now-a-days (we vulgarise every thing even in the nomenclature) the first advance to manhood is to be "breeched: " – that first step when, with the dignity of newly assumed and duly authorised manhood, the dressed youth puts his best foot foremost, on the first step of the ladder of life, and is not ashamed, while ascending, to turn his back, and show what stuff he is made of.

It is said, that when a man marries he enters into a bond with society for his future good behaviour – but of what consequence is this, in comparison with that previous bottomry bond, to use a mercantile word suitable to these our mercantile days, that every

man has entered into and given the surety of nine men besides, without which, whatever bottom he may show in the fight, the greatest hero would be but a *sans culotte*. Heroes! why, are not tailors the very models after which men should dress themselves? They have made, in all senses, the best regiments. And what a large slice of this globe is governed and commanded by the Board in Threadneedle Street.

Thread and thimble do wonders to make a man – rig him out with the best materials – no devil's dust, disdaining dishonest "thimble-riggery."

The son of Japetus admired not more his man-invention, than does the tailor. The fleshly life which he condescends to stuff into his manufacture, is with him but a secondary consideration; and it must be confessed he is often not very choice in these his human materials. Any thing that way will do to adorn the real "man of shreds and patches." Pegs and lay figures would answer the purpose quite as well as these, pattern-humanities, if they would but walk. Bad, however, as they are, as specimens *per se*, they are made so much of by the adornments, that their painted effigies and portraits, as they are exhibited in tailors' laboratories, saloons, and establishments, excite the envy and wonder of a gaping population. They are set forth, to show what the worst man may be made – to portray vividly the excellence of the art, and to "give the world assurance of a man," even built and fabricated out of next to nothing but his dress. It is no longer "*Ex pede Herculem*." The boot-maker has been defeated

– Hoby dethroned – you may have a Hercules or an Apollo only according to cloth measure. Then will the proud artificer hold the mirror up to Nature to show her how vastly she is improved, even though it be by the slandered hands of "Nature's journeymen." Then, so various in its powers is the art, that the real professors will at the shortest notice turn the shopman into the esquire, and, if need be, the thief into an archdeacon. They will fit you with any character, fit or unfit: – will send you most genteelly to the court or to the gallows. Vain is the conceit of the scoffing world of fashion that affect to scorn the craft that makes them what they are; – nay, a great deal better, and to look what they are not. Let them try to set up for themselves, what sorry figures they would be – perfectly ridiculous, to be kicked out of Fop's Alley, and whipped by the beadle!! worse clad than Prince Vortigern in that despicable and invisible slip of a vestment,

"Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won

But that can never be to any extent. What man in his senses would enter upon this stage of the world, rushing in like a wild man of the woods, a general wonder, and without the introductory aid of his proper master of the ceremonies; when, too, at a trifling cost, he can take his ticket of admission, and go boldly certificated by the sign-manual of a Doudney or a Moses? No man dares to walk entirely out of rules sartorial, nor utterly to despise the images which it pleaseth the tailors to set up. Not that their laws are like those of the Medes and Persians, which alter not – their very principle is change – and every change is

suitable. The seasons change not fast enough for them. Is a man to be married? – even then he is in the tailor's hands – he must have a new suit – nay, he must wait for it, he dare not appear without it. Is he to be hanged? – he must have a new suit; nay, before condemnation he is tried in his best, as if he were to be judged as much by appearance as evidence. The public, the real thinking public, take more notice of his appearance than of his crimes. Every journal is full of accurate detail, not of his doings, but of his looks and of his dress. The Pictorials present the very cut of his coat, and pattern on his waistcoat; and what the graver cannot, they supply in words, so that you may see not only the shape but the colour. Blue is the favourite colour at the altar of Hymen, – a suit of black on the platform of the hangman – but that is a compliment to the clergy – or a malice, that folk may think most who go out of the world that way are of the cloth – and that is what they call giving the culprit "the benefit of clergy."

Really man should be defined "a dressing animal." – Were all the powers of the earth to meet together to consult upon their everlasting interests, the previous question would be, in what are they to appear; and the first announcement of the great congress of the gentlemen of the press would be what they wore, – what they said, would be slurred over as of less importance. Thus, for example, the Roman historian is particular when he describes the great ambassador before the senate of the Carthagenians, making a fold of his robe, as if it alone were worthy to contain the fate and fortunes of empires, asking them which they would have,

Peace or War – and so letting it fall loose out of his hand, – just as a modern senator on the opposition side might put his hands into his breeches pockets, make a show of searching, and taking them out with nothing in them, might, with all the dignity of senatorial energy, declare that he could not surmise where the minister would get his supplies.

It is extraordinary man is ashamed of nothing so much as of his own natural figure. It is a mean and low thing to appear to have flesh and blood, excepting in the face and hands, – this remark must, however, apply only to the male sex. The female is allowed a greater latitude. Even a Count D'Orsay would be hooted through the streets, should he dare to appear, on foot or on horseback, without a coat, and with his shirtsleeves tucked up, – such is the obeisance we make to the tailoring craft. And if it be a folly, it is one of an old growth, and is rife among our antipodes as ourselves. Savage and cultivated, civil and uncivil, all have the propensity. The Chinese exquisites felt the skirts of the coats of the members of our embassy, and burst out into immoderate laughter. They quizzed the cut and colour, proud of their own envelopes; and, to their cost, judged us by our clothes. They have since felt our arms. Your tailor is an important personage all the world over, but alas! he is too restricted in his commerce. He is confined to spots and spaces, that is, individually speaking, – universal is the race. It is quite curious to consider what free trade may do for him. The export and the import may quite change the appearances of all, men, women, and children. When navigation

laws shall be done away with, and "free bottoms shall carry free goods," then, indeed, may it come to pass that "motley is your only wear." The picturesque will triumph; wondrous will be the variety; in apparel, China and Kamschatka shall meet and shuffle together in every public way. Then "all the world will be a stage," and all the men and women at least look like players. The drab world will be extinct – it is nearly so now. Quakers have been long since ashamed of their Sartorian antipathies, and from growing to be coxcombs in their own particular line, have pretty generally thrown off the dull garb, and plunged with eagerness into the emporium of fashion, and come out so as that their mothers would not know them. The snake throws off his old skin, and when he comes out shining in his new, looks with a sly leer from under the hedge, and seemeth to say, "Thanks, friend, thee hast complimented me by following my example, I am verily proud of thy similitude." Too many of us have a spice in our veins of the snake's venom, – shift skins, and turn coats, – but no more of that, Eusebius, it leads to fearful questioning, and we both eschew politics; and do not let us call up the evil one, whoever may be among the tailors. Yet let me remind you of a whimsical accident that happened the other day to a certain M.P., who, having bought a ready-made paletot, walked boldly into the streets, forgetting that he was thus ticketed on the back, "This neat article to be sold cheap." I dare to say, it was warranted to keep its gloss, and turn as good as new – and that the wearer *peeled* well in the house.

You would, I see, implicate me in fopperies. If it is not my humour to patronise by personal wear, I at least panegyrise all fraternities of tailors. You may make yourself look ridiculous if you please, and the change may not ill become your vagary-loving mind; but I do not mean to doff my old habit, not having faith in novelties, that I should trust the present easy motion of my limbs to unused ties and compressions. Dress, with such old ones as we are, Eusebius, should have the blessings Sancho bestows upon sleep, and "should wrap us warm like a blanket;" and what reason is there that we should think the worse of ourselves for showing the dates of our thoughts and ways, and bearing upon our coats the figures of a somewhat backward age. We may yet brighten up our countenances, and say out of the book of that dramatist who knew life so well, and may thus depict ours – even for some few years to come, my dear good Eusebius, —

"Though time hath worn us into slovenry,
But, by the mass, our hearts are in the trim."

They that have taken off and put on their clothes as often as you and I have done, may well look upon them as old friends, with their familiar looks, and see in their wear and tear a certain kinship with ourselves, and all our own elbow rubs that the world hath given us, and the thread-bare arguments that we have put upon ourselves, from which we imagined we could raise fine flattering maxims, and substantial truths, which have more deceived us in the wear than in the affection with which they retain us and are still retained.

"When this old cloak was new,"

says the old song, – and how much does it imply – what a world of memory is involved in its every fold. At the shaking of the skirts out fly visions of the past, – familiar faces, endearing converse round the pleasant hearth, – cares that we have wrapped round with them, buried in them, and now come up but as effigies of thoughts that no longer trouble, dreams of life's anxieties, from which the mind takes wholesome food, indulging in the repose of the old envelopment. Would you exchange this, Eusebius, for any new untried thing, forcing its intimacy upon you without claim to your friendship, jerking you and twitting you with impertinent and ill-fitting pressure, with no other association but of the congregational squattings of the nine journeymen who made its existence, redolent of misshapen and snuff-stained thumbs?

I would no more willingly part with the habit that gives me personal ease, and is familiar with all my movements, than I would with that metaphorical habit of mind, of thoughts and feeling, that makes the continuing identity of my being. I say identity, for a man of any character must identify himself with his clothes: by wear they acquire somewhat more than a likeness. No man can ride the same horse daily for five years, but the two animals will in some strange way give out to each other something of their natures – there is sure to be a resemblance. So is it with our clothes. There is an old caricature of Bunbury's, – "The Country Club" – in which this truth is shown. You know you could put every man's hat upon his head, though they are

all hung on pegs. And this is surely a most characteristic kind of portraiture. I should as much think of setting up the painted likeness of a deceased friend or dearer relative as a sign to a pot-house for the Saracen's head, as I would give his suit of clothes, at least in the shape in which he left them, to a mumper that should go begging in them. Would it not be an offence, that the noble air of freedom and of sentient responsibility they have acquired, should be doomed to contract in damp and unwholesome decay, the look of degradation and drooping melancholy of a vicious meanness, retaining, at the same time, that something of the departed, which, by its presence, seems to connect him with an abominable deterioration? Let the clothes be buried with the man, lest your friend's very effigies be seen in low haunts and vile places. For you can steep them in no dye of a Lethe that will wash away the remembrances, the likenesses they have acquired. Would you have the apron of sanctity transferred, by ill-advised gift, from a defunct archbishop to the boddice of an indecent figurante? Detestable notions these – that nothing should be lost, and all turned to use! What use of any thing is better than that one which keeps feelings, affections, respect, entire! Were I a modern iconoclast, I would rather burn the petticoats of "our Lady of Loretto," than transfer them to a still lower puppet-show. I had rather say for ever with the Mayor of Garratt, "Stand back, you gentleman without a shirt," than present him with one of my grandfather's wearing. When a boy, I always used to think it a painful sight to see cast clothes hung

out on poles or lines, and extending half across a street, blown to and fro with the winds, like ghosts affecting the show and motion of vitality, undergoing their purification in an upper aerial purgatory, preparatory to their metempsychosis, uncertain if they should adopt unto themselves a bodily being of a higher or a lower order. To hang the coat seemed very like hanging the man.

Pythagoras was the first man, says history, that wore breeches. When he hung up the shield of Euphorbus in the temple of Juno, to show that he had been Euphorbus, did he suspend his breeches also? He probably did, disliking any meaner transmigration for them; for we are told his fashion was not followed until some generations had passed. The modern Pythagorean would send them to the pawnbrokers.

The fine idea of Lucian, that our shadows will be our accusers, might very properly be transferred to coats and inexpressibles; for, besides that they might witness of our whereabouts and of our doings, they might witness of our ingratitude in casting them off, – wearing our old friends threadbare, and then throwing them off when they have most singularly accommodated themselves to all our strange ways, – of sending them, as the unfeeling do the high-mettled racer to the cart, to other service to which they are but ill-fitted. The wearer of another man's coat is guilty of a kind of larceny; he does more than steal from the person, he in one sense steals the person itself! At least, he should be held responsible for all that has been done

in the coat, and that on the principle of taxation, as the law comes not on the tenant gone off, but upon the land. Better that a man should make a museum of his apparel, than part with it out of the family of which it so properly forms a part.

A gallery of suspended braces might represent one's ancestors, equally with the be-wigged portraits that seem to lay their hands upon their hearts, and say from their frames, "Posterity, I begot you." A breeches-gallery might with much less expense serve the same purpose; for if these articles have not fittingly belonged to posterity, it is notorious that they have most fittingly belonged to something very like it. Do you not think, Eusebius, that these suspension breeches, the idea of which is worthy the Shandean philosophy, would be very expressive of family character, and nicely distinguish unseemly interpolation; and that a genealogical wardrobe-gallery would become an object of pride, and most proper appendage to the family seat? It could no more be doubted to what race and blood apparel would justly belong, than to what shoulders certain heads must belong – which illustration reminds me of that saying of Bishop Bonner's to Henry VIII. who threatened to cut off the head of every Frenchman in his power, should Francis I. take the life of the bishop? "True, sire," said he with a smile, "but I question, if any of their heads would fit my shoulders as well as that I have on." So would the family-fit be no bad test of the true character and vitality in the genealogical tree.

I suppose that, by your question – How I came to be a sloven – you would have me throw off my old habits, and put on new –

and perhaps, in your satirical innuendo, attack more than apparel, which we abuse by metaphor, when we term ill manners "bad habits!" Did I tell you how ingeniously our gay and jocund friend and poetical satirist defended himself in encounter of wit with a bantering opponent? "How do we know," said he, "but that our vices may be our persecuted virtues." "Slovenry," Eusebius, is a persecuted virtue. It is a tone and virtue that unbends, loosens the stiffness of the social body, liberates it from the strict tie of an awkward formality, and is to the whole of society what variety is in the dress in an individual – a happy relief, without which there would be too much monotony. The philosopher who made his bow to the jewelled and richly dressed man, and thanked him for the sight, and the trouble he took in putting on and bearing such a costly suit, should have been thanked, in his turn, for acting the foil, the contrast, which made the finery so conspicuous. If we were all dressed up kings and queens – were all the world to wear a lord mayor's livery, there would be no show to see. It is the intermixture, the great variety, that makes the exhibition, which is only then complete when it has a little dash of slovenry. What a sorry picture it would be that should have all bright colours! the finest carnation is best set off with a little adjacent umber. You would no more wish to see people in the streets all dressed alike, than you would wish to see the streets all alike, and every house like another. Nature dresses not after this one millinery. In the richest corn field, it is not every blade, and ear, and stalk, that is equally broad, full, and straight. Some have a kind of slovenly

lying off from others, a grace, the very purposed gift of Nature, to entice the eye to a more curious and nice selection, whereby to discover the infinite degrees of beauty, that all united make the whole perfection. The precision of the tall and upright stalk is the more strongly marked in its strength, by the decoration of its neighbour – and how beautifully do a few clustered together plume off their individual irregularity into a graceful shape! Has not the tangled hedge its own beauty even when it "putteth forth disordered twigs?" You would not bear all pruned to one smooth fashion. The *finery* of Nature's robes makes but a small part of her wardrobe; she hath her ordinary wear, and even when she putteth on her mantle of the richest green, she trims it sparingly – and that for the most part with a loose lacery of unobtrusive jasmine and vine-weed. And the nature that bids all the garniture of earth thus grow variously in richness, in moderation, and in a sweet and humble disorder, putteth it into man's mind; for he is doomed to dress himself, so as to follow her law; – and thus it is, that in any given number of persons you shall see some few endowed with this natural gift and grace of slovenry. And that careless, modest, unassuming part in the arabesque ornament of life, you and I, Eusebius, are intended to perform. One character for the harlequin, another for the clown, and we must have the lean and slippered pantaloon – and there must be some one besides, my good friend, to play the fool too, or the stage will not be well filled, nor the comedy of life well performed, nor the spectators well pleased.

Take, Eusebius, which part you please, – you will ultimately fall into your natural character, and however you may shift a little with age, you will ever have a hankering after "one more last appearance" in motley. I doubt if the daily moving scene would be perfect without the beggar's rags. Their loose-uncared for freedom, the independence of an escape beyond the limits of poverty, which, says the satirist, makes men ridiculous, floating in the wind or drooping in the rain, alike defying and disregarding the better or the worse of fortune, have their moral as well as pictorial use and dignity too in the panorama. The beggar's negligence is the running commentary on the rich man's anxieties. All is right in its place; you have only to look and admire the show. The grandest cathedrals, with their ornamented towers or spires seeking heaven as their own, are not always the worse for a contiguous poverty of humble dwellings, which they do but seem to take under their sacred protection; and thus the low elevates still more the great. You and I may be well content, by the lowness of our apparel, to magnify the magnificent; only, I confess that when I find myself standing as a foil to one of our rough-haired, be-whiskered and bearded fops, I do sometimes feel inclined to throw a nut in his way to see if he be a monkey or a man. One would not wish to be showman to the brute. The contempt of the fop is of little moment; and here I cannot but think Anacharsis was wrong, when he proposed to himself to leave Greece on account of the derision cast upon him for his dress.

I admire your offering the example of Aristippus, as an inducement to quit the character of the sloven. You say he accepted a rich robe; but you must remember that the wiser Plato refused it. Besides, it was in the philosophy of Aristippus to take either part, and to appear fop or sloven as his humour pleased him, or convenience led him. "Omnis Aristippum decuit color," says Horace; and let me suggest that *color* must have meant, not *color vitæ*, (or if it so be, it is a metaphor from the thing,) but the colour of his cloth – black, perhaps, turned brown – seedy. He was certainly one to "cut his coat according to his cloth." Diogenes in his rags and his tub was a coxcomb – one would not be like him; he tricked up his poverty, to be observed, and looked at, and admired, quite as much as any other coxcomb would trick out his fashion for the eye. When he desired Alexander to step aside, not to interpose his person between him and the sun, it was but a self-magnifying vanity, that his filthy rags might be the more conspicuous and set off in the splendour of a new light, as conceited religionist sects have done, calling aloud for the finger of scorn to point at the filthy rags of their own flesh and blood; vilifying their bodily man, that their unfleshed and spiritual selves might be seen by that glass through which they bid you look, to rise above and shine in the new light of their own glorification – an idea which they have borrowed from those picture-cherubs, who, only heads and wings, seem altogether to have dropped their bodies and enveloped themselves in a smoky and cloudy vapour peculiarly their own. And truly, Eusebius, I

am apt to agree with you, when we see these congregated saints of the New Calendar, and to join in their personal vilification, and to think that merely heads and wings might offer a more salutary odour of sanctity than that which you say you have ever found too pungent in the "Rag Fair" of their New-Paradise Row.

And your Aristippus was not quite to my mind; for though there was a show of wisdom in his carelessness, it was the very show that was displeasing, and the easy putting on of other men's tastes and opinions, as if he himself was as changeable as they. Does not the confirmed sloven appear to be actuated by a nobler kind of philosophy, who, with a soul bent, as man's should be, on durability, resisting to the utmost a common, degrading, and visible mutability, and seeing how changeable a thing fashion of any kind is, and how unworthy a thing it is to become to-morrow utterly unlike what he is to-day, and to be to-day what he was not yesterday, despises these shiftings and changes, – these fittings on and takings off, – these ever-varying metamorphoses that so unman him, and rests with a firm disregard of appearance, which, if unsteady, must be false to the character that is or should be within him; and if it be not false, is but the greater shame, and fixes the instability upon his mind? Is it not a kind of blot upon the fair profession of respect and reverence, to stoop and put on the livery of a fashion which leads you up to the portraits of your ancestors, and bids you turn to ridicule their attire, and perhaps makes you laugh at the father who begat you? – or subject yourself to a like disgrace, by imagining them to be looking down

from the walls in contempt upon yourself, and that the fading colours blush for you? I have heard a neighbour tell of a friend of his, who had done great things, in a worldly sense, for his family, and who, wishing to stand well in the eyes of his posterity, with an affectionate reminiscence had his portrait taken in his wedding-suit. But after this, going to a play, and seeing the counterpart upon the stage, he bethought him that such might be the case with his suit, – that it might be sold, and go to the theatrical wardrobe: so, as he said, to save his posterity the disgrace of casting contempt or ridicule upon one who had done so much for them, he had the dress painted out, and left it in his will, that the real wedding-suit should be buried with him. Indeed, it is recorded of a gentleman about a century ago, who, having a very goodly show of ancestors, was so shocked at the unfashionable appearances of his Vandykes, that he had the fashionable bob-wigs of the day put upon them all.

And this, Eusebius, reminds me to speak of painters, who in nothing are more at a loss than in what manner to dress their sitters. They have almost all come to the conviction at last, that a kind of slovenly undress is the best, and are sure to adopt it, unless by particular desire, and to commemorate official consequence, the robes and chain of a lord mayor are required, at an extra charge, or the solemn look of one who is nobody must be removed from asinine insignificance by a great quantity of fur, or a red curtain suspended from a marble column in the open air. Sculptors take a bolder step, and, with a taste that does credit

to their sagacity, give the bust, without hesitation, a slovenly dignity, – simply throw an old huckaback towel round the chest and over the shoulder, and trust to the features of the man and the material of the marble to add weight and consequence. The historical painter would be worse off still, had he not by common consent a kind of sovereignty over dress. His greatest desire is, upon all occasions, entirely to discard it, as much as may be to paint the nude, as if there were no truth but naked truth. The trim suit is his aversion; the wardrobe for his lay figures offers but a curious assemblage of rags.

It would be difficult to learn how to grapple with this Proteus of dress – mutable fashion. I am told that our dresses, male and female, were extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the French, when we visited the continent after the Peace. The Persian visitors were astonished that we wore our hair in the wrong place – on the head instead of the chin. There is almost a slovenly simplicity which alone properly imitates the natural ease and grace of unconfined nature. The farther we depart from it, we go but back again to the rude, uncultured barbarian. Sir Joshua somewhere says, that if a tattooed Indian and a powdered and buttoned man of fashion should meet in the street, he that laughed first would be the real savage.

I am not, Eusebius, contending against the advice of Polonius,

"Costly your habit as your purse can buy."

You should, however, remember to whom that advice was given, – to the courtier Laertes, that "man about town" in

Denmark.

Your quotation will not, be assured, fit me, and, I suspect, not yourself either, with a new suit. We must play our parts, and dress accordingly. For, as the old courtier adds —

"The apparel oft proclaims the man."

I would have your courtier, who is but a sort of palace furniture, dress to suit, and make perfect the millinery and upholstery about him. You say that the being a good dresser made the fortune of Sir Walter Raleigh, when he threw his costly paletot before the feet of Queen Elizabeth. True; but that trick is not to be played twice. You are more likely to enter the palace like the boy Jones, than through any such Eusebian gallantry. And what should you or I do there? You would make but a sorry Aristippus, wearing your court suit, indeed, "with a difference;" for there is not a tailor that would not mismeasure you in your unsteady postures; and you would make them worse by your uncontrolled laugh at your new position.

I am no greater sloven than yourself. You have, in fact, therein the advantage of me by a greater laxity. You could not make a Mantalini. But — not to think of that extravagance — let me remind you of a kind of "well-dressed man" whom I have often heard you say you should like to trip up and lodge in a gutter. It is one who is always well-dressed, always the same, whatever the temperature — one whom rain never wets, suns never make to fade, whom dirt will not splash. In summer he never looks hot. Dust will not attach to his boots or to his coat. He walks about, and always

alone. He is quite out of the pale and contact of friendship, as if the invisible creatures so admirably described in the "Rape of the Lock" were with invisible brushes ever busying themselves about his male attire. You never see him accost or be accosted by man or woman. His shadow, if he has one, must smooth the dust upon which it falls. There is no wear and tear in him, nor in any thing about him. His voice, if utterance he hath, must be of a poor monotony, of a preservative tone, and without growth. Whence he comes or whither he goes, is an undivulged secret. Does he undress? He is so unchangeable, so ever the same neat, well-dressed, unsoiled, and unsoilable man. He never was in a chrysalis state. He must have been beat out of some tailor's brains with a goose, and come into the world ready dressed, and unborn of woman. However fashion changes, it is all the same, he is never out of it. Like dissolving views, he slides unnoticeably from costume to costume, without one article about him being ever newer or older, and you never can tell where the difference is. Changes must take place, yet in some charmed invisible manner. He is like a man made by the magical words of Pancrates the Memphian out of a broomstick, and set walking about, and as if the Encrates tailor had forgotten the charm to reduce him again; and so he had walked about ever since.

While I thus laugh in the glory of slovenliness, I must refrain from entering upon a wider field, – woman's influences in the full dressed world. – Let them enjoy their prerogative undisturbed. As we shall not undergo a feminine metamorphosis, we are not

likely to suffer, from their amiable dress vagaries, unless they should return to some of their older fashions, in which case, we must alter our very houses to please them; as was done for Isabel of Bavaria, the luxurious consort of Charles VI. of France, who, when he kept court at Vincennes, was compelled to call in the architect, and have all the doors of the palace made higher, to admit the head-dresses of the Queen and her ladies. Yet we need not laugh, for, Eusebius, if the trunk hose should come into vogue again, our doorways must be widened. That would not be so bad as a return on our side of the question to a tight fit, on which condition every limb was in misery, that, to think of, will reconcile you to our loose indifference. What a monstrous contrast of extremes has been exhibited, from the tight pantaloons, such as we see it in some old pictures, to the great breeches worn in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth! In the "Pedigree of the English gallant," an account is given of a man, whom the Judges accused of wearing breeches contrary to law, (a law was made against them.) His defence of himself is curious. "He drew out of his slops the contents," viz., a pair of sheets, two table-cloths, ten napkins, four shirts, a brush, a glass, and a comb, with night-caps, and other things, saying, "Your worships may understand, that because I have no safer a store-house, these pockets do serve me for a room to lay up my goods in, and though it be a straight prison, yet it is big enough for them, for I have many things of value yet within it." He was discharged, as he should have been, with his

merchandise, and allowed to trade freely on his own bottom. Hudibras carried some such a cupboard. Small must have been the population, when these inexpressibles, great inexpressibles, gallanted with the ladies' large hoop farthingales. A few pairs must have occupied no small space. A courtship in those days must have resembled a siege, where the principal defence lay in the outworks, and the difficulty of approach was not a little enhanced by the encumbrances of the advancing party.

Who was the first coxcomb? Was dress, in its origin, a modest or immodest appendage to the person; or rather when did it first cease to be merely a protection or concealment? Is love of ornament a natural virtue, or a superinduced vice? These are curious speculations. There is an old play I have somewhere read of, which represents our first parents in Paradise perfectly nude, and so were they exhibited, and in public, without shame. The subsequent acts introduced them dressed; and the last act, I believe, in the fashion of the day in which the play was acted. As all plays were then serious, was this representation a satire on coxcomby, and intended to exhibit the progress of personal degradation?

What does a man propose to himself when he goes to his tailor's? Is it to be clothed or adorned? Is it to hide a defect, that he may not appear worse than he is, or that he may appear better than he is? To attract observation or to escape it. Is the pride in dress, or in undress? Ingenious in self-deceit was the reply of the man reproved for the badness of his dress, "Oh every body knows

me here;" and his reply when seen in the same suit far from his home, "Oh nobody knows me here." This was a true amateur; he loved slovenliness for its own sake. Few believe themselves so ill-made, as that the "dogs will bark at them." Even Richard III., who owned to his deformity, gets a little in love with himself, and thinks of adorning his person. "I do mistake my person all this while." He determines to act the exquisite.

"I'll be at charges for a looking-glass;
And entertain a score or two of tailors,
To study fashions to adorn my body.
Since I have crept in favour with myself,
I will maintain it with some little cost."

Or does the satirical and successful Richard merely laugh at your fop-wooters, and, proud of his own superiority, condemn them, by imagining their dress on his own person? One would really think, from the figures one sees, that there are people who dress purposely to spite the tailors, as there are those who are paid to be walking placards of recommendation.

The butcher who ran after the fat man, and stopped him crying, "Be so good, sir, as to say you buy your meat of me," was not more aware of the benefit of such a personal recommendation, than is our fashionable tailor. A well-made man, if he is in tolerable fashion, may be supplied with clothes, as I am credibly informed, for nothing but the merely notifying the makers. They are the decoy-ducks, excepting that, though they

have fine feathers, they have no bills.

I am told that a fashionable tailor would be quite shy of an ill-made and vulgar looking customer; and generally charges his dislike in his bill, that he may lose him. I knew a portrait painter, that professed to decline, painting ugly people, upon that principle, and consequently his success was quite astonishing; every one he did paint was in better humour with himself, and was proud of his certificate of beauty when he named the artist. Were you and I, Eusebius, to presume to enter the saloon of a fashionable cutter, and order suits, they would be purposely so ill-made, that no one should suspect from whence they came. And we should ever wear them with a hitch of discomfort in some part or other. So that, were we to try our best at foppery, we could not now succeed. I have tried it upon various occasions, and convinced myself that I was not born to it, and certainly neither of us has acquired a second nature that any tailor would recognise. A tailor's man, like the poet, must be born with nature's fit, or nothing else will fit him, – "nascitur non fit." Some wear their limbs so loosely, that they move them as do those German toys, whose legs you see children jerk with a string. The best Sartorial artist can make nothing of them; they are a mockery even upon the manufacture of "journeymen," they "imitate nature so abominably."

How I came to be a sloven! Well, if I am a sloven, which I hardly know how to admit, and if I am a little in love with a kind of genteel slovenry, how came I by it? I did not take to it naturally,

as you did, Eusebius; I caught it. And once caught, however we may upon occasions throw it off, it returns like an influenza, and becomes a continual habit. Few, indeed, are there who are not born with a contrary propensity, inheriting it from their mothers, whose preparations for the coming offspring were of the finest, the *ventum textilem*, as Apuleius calls it, – woven wind. Early, indeed, in his day of existence, is the little infant taught to show off, both his nude and his finery, and to hear the beauty of both commended. Thus is vanity engendered in the bud. You were a born genius, and exempt from the cradle from this visible mark of frailty. It was not so with me; I was an incipient fop before I could walk. And now I remember, Eusebius, that I sent you a letter some years ago, that should have answered, though perhaps imperfectly, your question. It was a "passage of autobiography," giving you an account of my first entrance at a public school, and how I was "breeched." How one Mr. Flight, after much tugging and pulling, by himself and foreman, did contrive to fit me into a pair of mouse-colour leather inexpressibles, – a good name for them, too, for I was hardly *pressible* in or out of them. Do you not remember my narration of the second time of putting them on, on my first morning at Winchester College, while the chapel bell was going, and I not yet fitted in; and how at last I did contrive to get some portion of me into them, and to fasten one button, and how I ran (but that word won't express the movement I made) breathless into the chapel, and on kneeling down, the button gave way to my shame, discomfort, and disgrace, exposure, ridicule.

I might parody what the cock said to the fox,

"The master my defeat, and all the school-boys, see."

This was my first disgust at my own personal appearance. I hated my leathers; but they *stuck* to me, nevertheless, – my wardrobe contained nothing but leathers. I was like the dog that had killed his first lamb, forced to wear the skin, that became more odious every day. Here was a first distaste to dress. The fit was uncomfortable enough; but, besides, I was a subject of ridicule.

Time, with its wear and tear, took off the pride of my nether garment, and affected at length a kind of reconciliation between us. We fitted each other better, and both entered into a compact of mutual slovenry. Things won't last for ever, although, in those days, the trade did affect to manufacture a material they called "everlasting." As the quotation from an old song will show:

"And this my old coat, which is threadbare to-day,
May become *everlasting* to-morrow."

With new breeches come new manners, new ideas. Foppery takes growth again, though it is somewhat tender; struggles for life, but somehow or other acquires strength in the struggle. You contend against it, you wrestle with it, and, by a kind of enchantment, it becomes the tailor AntÃ¡us, and rises from every defeat a bigger man than ever. Behold me, let me stand for my picture, *Ãtatis 18, ScholÃ! Wintoniensis alumnus*. The date is at present unmentionable, – it will be found one of these days at the

back of the canvass; behold me at the college gates, turning my back, for about my last holidays, upon those statuesque antique worthies, Sophocles, Euripides, Æschylus. We have shaken hands finally with the sublime Longinus, preferring for the time a "sublime and beautiful" of our own, a butterfly of the first down. On second thoughts, I am not quite fit to stand there yet; I must describe my preliminary state. My boots, I rather think, my first boots, had come home the night before; boots then were no more like boots now, than are loose trousers to Mr. Flight's mouse-coloured tights. There was nearly the same process of pulling and tugging to get them on, and when once on, the *revocare gradum* was next to an impossibility. The leather, too, was of a more soaky oily kind, I suppose, and stuck like adhesive plaster, and drew like that medicated material. My boots were on, overnight, but no tug of war, no steam power of man or men – for we all tugged, and all steamed – could get them off. So it was determined I should sleep in them. It was very well so to determine, but sleep, as the negro said, "hab no massa," and would not obey. The bootmaker had advised and disappeared. It was soon found a just observation, *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*. Sleep would not be bed ridden, for I was booted, possibly spurred; not even a classical charm would do,

"Heus, al quis long Æ sub nocte, puellÃ¡,
Brachia nexa tenens ultro te somne repellit,
Inde veni."

Sleep was only the more obstinate, and preferred better

society, or worse. Sleep has been too much petted by panegyrists, till he has learnt ill manners, lies down with the clown and the drunkard, for whom he leaves the presence and courting arms of suffering beauty, – such were my thoughts in those youthful classical and romantic days, and the above passage was most likely Latinised, – "shown up." *Probatum est.*

I must hasten on, for I am, though booted, not dressed yet. With a sickening sensation, at the earliest gray light of a midsummer dawn, did I put on my clothes – my bran-new, in which I was to go out into the sunshine of life. First, there was a pair of bright orange-colour plush breeches; a light buff waistcoat with a sham-red under; a coat – no – nor jacket nor coat, but a beautiful tailor-creation, a coatee; colour, green; buttons, shining metal. My boots were of the kind called tops.

Now I am ready to stand at the college gates for my picture, whip in hand, though a chaise is waiting for me and two more. My "copartners in exile" temporary, are waiting for me. They vociferate impatience. Is the portrait finished? Then complete it at your leisure, *secundum artem*. I am off. But while I have been standing for this portrait, the sun has risen; it is intensely hot. Heat of weather, tight boots, and swelling legs and limbs, are doing their work in and out of me. I am in a sad perspiration; and so off we go. We had reached the first mile-stone; then I discover I had left my purse behind me. Out I leap, run all the way back to "chamber," and away again to the chaise. I have at this moment a painful remembrance of that short pedestrian

excursion – the heat intense, the orange-yellow plush flushing up into my face, the glare of buttons, the now-agony of my booted legs and feet, the difficulty of making the needful speed, and fear of the practical joke of leaving me behind – altogether these pains and discomforts put me into a kind of bilious fever, so that, if I did not loathe myself, I did most thoroughly my clothes. From that day I took a disgust to yellows, any thing glaring – abhorred my orange-plush: and I do not believe I had any symptom of foppery about me for three years after that memorable time. There is, indeed, a miniature portrait of me extant, taken about that period: it has a dash of powder in the hair, a rather smirking look; and there is a blue coat, metal buttons, the yellow waistcoat and red under; but I suspect these are not out of my wardrobe. They are from Mr Carmine's recipe-book of portrait costume, and may be found in page 6, lettered, "For very young gentlemen." I am pretty sure the dress, at least as it looks there, was not mine; for I remember well a remonstrance from my parent about that time, thus – "My son, you are too great a sloven."

I never quite recovered this; but there did come days of philandering, when I mended a little, and occasionally appeared thus. Behold me entering the ball-room – coat, blue, metal buttons; waistcoat, white dimity; nethers, black tights; pinkish silk stockings, highly-polished shoes, with small silver buckles; hair slightly powdered, and a slip of a tail that could flirt with either shoulder. You will see that there is a little of the

sentimental cast in this: it was a doubtful dress, capable, by a very small change, of making the wearer a Hamlet or a Romeo for the night, as he might determine beforehand. I continued thus for a while respectable, and might have remained so to this day, but for an unfortunate taste which I acquired, and which threw me into irredeemable slovenry, in which I have remained ever since. In my idleness, which soon became, as Shakespeare so aptly calls it, "shapeless," I dabbled with paints, oils, and colours; and as with growing improvement I enlarged the dimensions of my operations from inch to the foot, and from foot to the yard, I was soon above my elbows in the unclean "materiÃl." There were no tube colours in those days; we had bladders. They were always bursting; and thus they bedaubed the hands, and the hands bedaubed the clothes; and amateurs were then Picts, up to their very eyes. Young as I was, I of course fancied myself a genius, and painted so large, and so largely, that a common-sized palette impeded my work. I enlarged that, and increased the quantity of my colours. I now mention a frequent disaster, that, being frequent, was quite enough to make a sloven of any one. Take the following scene: – A room such as could be spared me, not too large, in tolerable confusion; daubs in all states of disorder on the walls, against the walls, loose and strained, in all directions; large slabs for grinding colours – oils, turpentine, varnishes, &c. &c., all in that proper disorganisation to enable any youth of a tolerably slovenly person to set up for a genius. Now – it has taken me an hour to set my palette – look at it –

here is a goodly row of colours mixed and intermixed after the recipe of Lionardo da Vinci, who would have added more, if paper, as he said, had not failed him. Here, however, are quite enough – and more than enough —*satis superque*– I look at the palette with extreme satisfaction – my canvass is on the easel – imagination begins to work – alas! too soon – I am not quite ready; I must put in a cup, that diluent oil – in another, turpentine; it is done. I am a little weary, and sit, down for a moment to rest, looking full on my canvass, and giving loose to my fancy – I rise, where is my palette – alas! I have sat upon it. I have had misfortunes in etching with aqua fortis – have been the "biter bit" – but here I was the painter painted. I do not know why the arts should be called Fine – "The Fine Arts" – unless it be in derision of the slovenliness which they occasion. Many a time have I sat upon my colours: a poetical friend once wrote me an ode upon it, and begged me to learn it by rote, as a kind of *memoria technica*, or charm of preservation. This I declined, not being good-humoured enough to admire any poetry not my own. But I remember upon one such occasion working off my vexation in a sonnet. And I recommend the recipe; you may successfully salve over many a sore distraction by soothing verse. There is a great charm in rhyme, or at least in searching for it, and versifying either altogether saves swearing, or enables you to throw it off very genteelly, and with a grace. I addressed the Fine Arts, whose epithet *Fine* I take to be given with a superstition of dread, as the old poets did the Furies, calling them Eumenides, thinking they

should not fare the worse for giving them a good name; and as later times called the Fairies "the good people," lest they should punish poor innocents, and pinch o'nights. Read, Eusebius, my remonstrance to these personified, deified, and worshipped Fine Arts.

TO THE FINE ARTS

O, ye Fine Arts – why were ye once so Fine,
So dingy now, and working sore disaster;
As that my best of pigments look like plaster,
Compared with those of "Raphael the divine,"
That grow by time still brighter like old wine,
And seem to renovate a dead old master.
Better had I been born to wield a mallet,
A hod, a plough – than sables, hogs and fitches;
If ye must mock and mark your fool your valet,
With motley livery on my coats and breeches;
Making me sit upon my well-set palette,
With merry jeers the whilst I hear you titter,
And compliment me on my only sitter.

Look, Eusebius, as I dare to say you have often done, into the smudge of a colour-maker's shop, and imagine a personification of it in a young amateur aspirant. What a ludicrously serious Harlequin he is made! At last, in despair of acquirement of

cleanliness, I plunged, as it were, into the very mud and smudge of paint, and did not hesitate to wipe a brush upon my sleeves.

Thus, I acquired a bad habit – and as I often had the fit to paint when my better dress was on, I now and then seized an unlucky moment of desire, and the better soon came to be the worse. By degrees I fell into a despair of mending; and so I became a confirmed sloven.

One who fastens his knapsack on his back, that is to hold his temporary all, including materials for art, and pedestrianises over a roughish country, may acquire an exquisite taste; but he will not be personally an exquisite. He will be characteristic in look, of the picturesque which he hunts after. He will be very unlike the man I have described to you, whom dust would not soil, or rain wet, or sun burn. The geologist who walks forth, armed to tomahawk the mountains, and bag their bones, will, in a month or so, acquire a strange and stony look; and be, on his first return, and sitting in civil society, little better than the "Man Mountain" himself. Our pursuits are in us and about us, soil our dress and chisel our features. We look in the glass, easily reconcile ourselves to any metamorphosis, and think no one has a right to quarrel with that, which we think, in our self-satisfaction, makes up our beloved identity. No man can be every thing – not all "Admirable Crichtons" – it is the diversity and the difference that makes the pleasing motley in the masquerade of the world. Though you might dance more like the brutes, it does not at all follow but that you may fiddle like Orpheus. Johnson defended

Kit Smart, the sloven, (mockery of a name,) having himself no great predilection for clean linen. Dionysius was more happy in the "inky cloak" of the slovenly schoolmaster, than in the golden mantle which his father took from the statue of Jupiter.

Let us both be content to remain as we are. For be assured, Eusebius, that if we make the attempt to change our habits, either of person or of mind, and put on the more trim, and of more fashionable cut, we shall but amuse the spectators by becoming ridiculous; and in making up the characters that are to figure on the stage of the drama of life, insignificant though we be, there will be found wanting two good slovens.

AN UNPUBLISHED FRENCH NOVEL

In the year 1843, a fancy fair was held at Paris, for the benefit of the sufferers by an earthquake in the island of Guadaloupe. The patronage of the Queen of the French, added to the strong sympathy awakened by the catastrophe, filled the bazaar with a gay throng, delighted to combine amusement with charity, and to chaffer for baubles with aristocratic saleswomen. Amidst the multitude of tasteful trifles, exposed for sale was a contribution from Queen Marie Amélie – fifty books, printed at the royal press and elegantly bound. They were fifty copies of a volume containing three charming tales, and soon it was whispered that no others had been printed, and that the author was a lady of rank, distinguished for grace and wit, but whose literary talents were previously unknown, save to a limited circle of discreet and admiring friends. At the queen's request, and at the voice of pity, pleading for the unfortunates of Point-à-Pitre, she had sanctioned the printing of fifty copies; these taken, the types had been broken up. Such rumours were more than sufficient to stimulate curiosity, and raise the value of the volume. Every body knows that an author's title often sells a stupid book; should any doubt it, we refer them to our friends Puff and Co.; how much greater the attraction when the book is a clever one, written

by a countess, printed by a sovereign's command, and at a royal press. The market rose instantly. Sixty francs, eighty francs, five napoleons, were freely given; how much higher competition raised the price, we cannot say; but we are credibly informed the improvement did not stop there.

The editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was not the last to hear the history of the volume. He procured a copy, and esteeming it unjust to reserve for a few what was meant for mankind, by limiting the produce of so graceful a pen to the narrow circulation of fifty copies – he laid violent hands upon one of the tales, and reprinted it in his excellent and widely-circulated periodical. Although literally a day after the fair, it was not the less acceptable and successful. The tale, whose title is "Resignation," was attributed by many to the amiable Duchess of Orleans, then in the first year of her widowhood. The real authoress is the Countess d'Arbouville, wife of the lieutenant-general of that name, granddaughter of Madame d'Houdetot, and niece by marriage of Monsieur de Barante. Inheriting much of the wit of her celebrated ancestress, and no small share of the literary aptitude of her accomplished uncle, this lady, without aiming at the reputation of a woman of letters, writes tales of very remarkable merit. Whilst her husband, as governor of Constantine, wields the sabre in defence of Algeria, the Countess, secluded in her boudoir, beguiles her leisure and delights her friends by the exercise of her pen. Last spring, it became known that she had completed the matter of a second

volume. Thereupon, she was so besieged by petitioners for the favour of a perusal, that in self-defence, and out of regard to the integrity of her manuscript, she was compelled to print fifty copies for private circulation. Through the kindness of a Parisian friend one of these has reached us. It contains two tales. The first, "Le Medecin du Village," is a simple and touching story, highly attractive by its purity of style and exquisite feeling. The circumstances under which it was printed forbid criticism; otherwise we might cavil at its introduction as unartistical, and at one of the incidents – the restoration of an idiot boy of fifteen to unclouded reason – as unprecedented and out of nature. But one dwells not on these blemishes whilst reading the old doctor's affecting tale, which does equal honour to the heart and mind of the authoress. We would gladly place it before our readers in an English dress, but the indefatigable Monsieur Buloz, ever watchful of the interests of his review, has already pounced upon it. It had scarcely been printed, when he transferred it to the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*

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