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THE LAWS OF BEAUTY

The fatal mistake of many inquirers concerning the line of beauty has been, that they have sought in that which is outward for that which is within. Beauty, perceived only by the mind, and, so far as we have any direct proof, perceived by man alone of all the animals, must be an expression of intelligence, the work of mind. It cannot spring from anything purely accidental; it does not arise from material, but from spiritual forces. That the outline of a figure, and its surface, are capable of expressing the emotions of the mind is manifest from the art of the sculptor, which represents in cold, colorless marble the varied expressions of living faces,—or from the art of the engraver, who, by simple outlines, can soothe you with a swelling lowland landscape, or brace you with the cool air of the mountains.

Now the highest beauty is doubtless that which expresses the noblest emotion. A face that shines, like that of Moses, from communion with the Highest, is more truly beautiful than the most faultless features without moral expression. But there is a beauty which does not reveal emotion, but only thought,—a beauty which consists simply in the form, and which is admired for its form alone.

Let us, for the present, confine our attention to this most limited species of beauty,—the beauty of configuration only.

This beauty of mere outline has, by some celebrated writers, been resolved into some certain curved line, or line of beauty; by others into numerical proportion of dimensions; and again by others into early pleasing associations with curvilinear forms. But, if we look at the subject in an intellectual light, we shall find a better explanation. Forms are the embodiment of thought or law. For the common eye they must be embodied in material shape; while to the geometer and the artist, they may be so distinctly shadowed forth in conception as to need no material figure to render their beauty appreciable. Now this embodiment, or this conception, in all cases, demands some law in the mind, by which it is conceived or made; and we must look at the nature of this law, in order to approach more nearly to understanding the nature of beauty.

We are thus led, through our search for beauty, into the temple of Geometry, the most ancient and venerable of sciences. From her oracles alone can we learn the generation of beauty, so far as it consists in form alone.

Maupertuis' law of the least action is not simply a mechanical, but it is a universal axiom. The Divine Being does all things with the least possible expenditure of force; and all hearts and all minds honor men in proportion as they approach to this divine economy. As gracefulness in motion consists in moving with the least waste of muscular power, so elegance in intellectual and literary exertions arises from the ease with which their achievements are accomplished. We seek in all things simplicity and unity. In Nature we have faith that there is such unity, even in the midst of the wildest diversity. We honor intellectual conceptions in proportion to the greatness of their consequences and to the simplicity of their assumptions. Laws of form are beautiful in proportion to their simplicity and to the variety which they can comprise in unity. The beauty of forms themselves is in proportion to the simplicity of their law and to the variety of their outline.

This last sentence we regard as the fundamental canon concerning beauty,—governing, with a slight change of terms, beauty in all its departments.

Beginning with the fundamental division of figures into curvilinear and rectilinear, this *dictum* decides, that, in general, a curved outline is more beautiful than a right-lined figure. For a straight-lined figure necessarily requires at least half as many laws as it has sides, while a curvilinear outline requires, in general, but a single law. In a true curve, every point in the whole line (or surface) is subject to one and the same law of position. Thus, in the circle, every point of the circumference is subject to one and the same law,—that it must be at a certain distance from the centre. Half a dozen other laws, equally simple, might be named, which in like manner govern every point in the circumference of a circle: for instance, the curve bends at every point by a certain fixed but infinitesimal amount, just enough to make the adjacent points to be equally near the centre. Or, to take another example, every point of the elastic curve, that is, of the curve in which a spring of uniform stiffness can be bent by a force applied at the ends of the spring, is subject to this very simple law, that the curve bends in exact proportion to its distance from a certain straight line. Now a straight line, or a plane, is by this definition a curve, since every point in it is subject to one and the same law of position. A plane may, indeed, be considered a part of any curved surface you please, if you only take that surface on a sufficiently large scale. Thus, the surface of water conforms to the surface of a sphere eight thousand miles in diameter; but, as the arc of such a circle would arch up from a chord ten feet long by only the ten-millionth part of an inch, the surface of water in a cistern may be considered a plane. But no figure or outline can be composed of a single plane or a single straight line; nor can the position of more than two straight lines, not parallel, be defined by a single simple law of position of the points in them. We may, therefore, regard it as the first deduction from our fundamental canon, that figures with curving outline are in general more beautiful than those composed of straight lines. The laws of their formation are simpler, and the eye, sweeping round the outline, feels the ease and gracefulness of the motion, recognizes the simplicity of the law by which it is guided, and is pleased with the result.

Our second deduction relates principally to rectilinear figures; it is, that symmetry is in general, and particularly in rectilinear figures, more beautiful than irregularity. It requires, in general, simpler laws to produce symmetry than to produce what is unsymmetrical; since the corresponding parts in a symmetrical figure are instinctively recognized as flowing from one and the same law. This preference for symmetry is, however, frequently subordinated to higher demands of the fundamental canon. If the outline be rectilineal, simplicity of law produces symmetry, and variety of result can be attained only at the expense of simplicity in the law. But in curved outlines it frequently happens, that, with equally simple laws, we can obtain much greater variety by dispensing with symmetry; and then, by the canon, we thus obtain the higher beauty.

The question may be asked, In what way does this canon decide the question, of proportions? Which of the two rectangles is, according to this *dictum*, more beautiful, that in which the sides are in simple ratio, or that in which the angles made with the sides by a diagonal are in such ratio?—that, for instance, in which the shorter side is three-fifths of the longer, or that in which the shorter side is five hundred and seventy-seven thousandths of the longer? Our own view was formerly in favor of a simple ratio between the sides; but experiments have convinced us that persons of good taste, and who have never been prejudiced by reading Hay's ingenious speculations, do nevertheless agree in preferring rectangles and ellipses which fulfil his law of simple ratio between the angles made by the diagonal. We acknowledge that we have not brought this result under the canon, but look upon it as indicating the necessity of another canon to somewhat this effect,—that in the laws of form direction is a more important element than distance.

We have said that a curved line is one in which every point is subject to one and the same law of position. Now it may be easily proved, that, in a series of points in a plane, each of which fulfils one and the same condition of position, any three, if taken sufficiently near each other, lie in one straight line. A fourth point near the third lies, then, in a straight line with the second and third,—a

fifth with the third and fourth, and so on. The whole series of points must, in short, form a line. But it may also be easily proved that any four of these points, taken sufficiently near each other, lie in the arc of a circle. How strange the paradox to which we are thus led! Every law of a curve, however simple, leads to the same conclusion; a curve must bend at every point, and yet not bend at any point; it must be nowhere a straight line, and yet be a straight line at every part. The blacksmith, passing an iron bar between three rollers to make a tire for a wheel, bends every part of it infinitely little, so that the bending shall not be perceptible at any one spot, and shall yet in the whole length arch the tire to a full circle. It may be that in this paradox lies an additional charm of the curved outline. The eye is pleased to find itself deceived, lured insensibly round into a line running in a different direction from that on which it started.

The simplest law of position for a point would be, either to have it in a given direction from a given point,—a law which would manifestly generate a straight line,—or else to have it at a given distance from the given point, which would generate the surface of a sphere, the outline of which is the circumference of a circle. The straight line fulfils part of the conditions of beauty demanded by the first canon, but not the whole,—it has no variety, and must be combined in order to produce a large effect. The simplest combination of straight lines is in parallels, and this is its usual combination in works of Art. The circle also fulfils but imperfectly the demands of the fundamental canon. It is the simplest of all curves, and the standard or measure of curvature,—vastly more simple in its laws than any rectilineal figure, and therefore more beautiful than any simple figure of that kind. There is, however, a sort of monotony in its beauty,—it has no variety of parts.

The outline of a sphere, projected by the beholder against any plane surface behind it, is a circle only when a perpendicular, let fall on the plane from the eye, passes through the centre of the sphere. In other positions the projection of the sphere becomes an ellipse, or one of its varieties, the parabola and hyperbola. The parabola is the boundary of the projection of a sphere upon a plane, when the eye is just as far from the plane as the outer edge of the sphere is, and the hyperbola is a similar curve formed by bringing the eye still nearer to the plane.

By these metamorphoses the circle loses much of its monotony, without losing much of its simplicity. The law of the projection of a sphere upon a plane is simple, in whatever position the plane may be. And if we seek a law for the ellipse, or either of the conic sections, which shall confine our attention to the plane, the laws remain simple. There are for these curves two centres, which come together for the circle, and recede to an infinite distance for the parabola; and the simple law of their formation is, that the curve everywhere makes equal angles with the lines drawn to these two centres. According to the fundamental canon, a conic section should be a beautiful curve; and the proof that it is so is to be found in the attention which these curves have always drawn upon themselves from artists and from mathematicians. Plato, equally great in mathematics and in metaphysics, is said to have been the first to investigate the properties of the ellipse. For about a century and a half, to the time of Apollonius, the beauty of this curve, and of its variations, the parabola and hyperbola, so fascinated the minds of Plato's followers, that Apollonius found theorems and problems relating to these figures sufficient to fill eight books with condensed truths concerning them. The study of the conic sections has been a part of polite learning from his day downward. All men confess their beauty, which so entrances those of mathematical genius as entirely to absorb them. For eighteen centuries the finest spirits of our race drew some of their best means of intellectual discipline from the study of the ellipse. Then came a new era in the history of this curve. Hitherto it had been an abstract form, a geometrical speculation. But Kepler, by some fortunate guess, was led to examine whether the orbits of the planets might not be elliptical, and, lo! it was found that this curve, whose beauty had so fascinated so many men for so many ages, had been deemed by the great Architect of the Heavens beautiful enough to introduce into Nature on the grandest scale; the morning stars had been for countless ages tracing diagrams beforehand in illustration of Apollonius's conic sections. It seemed that this must have been the design of Providence in leading Plato and his followers to investigate the

ellipse, that Kepler might be prepared to guide men to a knowledge of the movements of the heavenly bodies. "And," said Kepler, "if the Creator has waited so many years for an observer, I may wait a century for a reader." But in less than a century a reader arose in the person of the English Newton. The ellipse again appeared in human history, playing a no less important part than before. For, as it was only by a profound knowledge of ellipses that Kepler could establish his three beautiful facts with regard to the motions of the planets, so also was it only through a still more perfect and intimate acquaintance with the minute peculiarities of that curve that Sir Isaac Newton could demonstrate that these three facts were perfectly accounted for only by his theory of universal gravitation,—the most beautiful theory ever devised, and the most firmly established of all scientific hypotheses. If the ellipse, as a simply geometrical speculation, has had so much power in the education of the race, what are the intellectual relations of its beauty through its connection with astronomy? Who can estimate the influence which this oldest of physical sciences has had upon human destiny? Who can tell how much intellectual life and self-reliance, how much also of humility and reverential awe, how much adoration of Divine Wisdom, have been gained by man through his study of these heavenly diagrams, marked out by the sun and the moon, by the planets and the comets, upon the tablets of the sky? Yet, without the ellipse, without the conic sections of Plato and Apollonius, astronomy would have been to this day a sealed science, and the labors of Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Tycho, and Copernicus would have waited in vain for the genius of Kepler and of Newton to educe divine order from the seeming chaos of motions.

But the obligations of man to the ellipse do not end here. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also owe it a debt of gratitude. Even where the knowledge of conic sections does not enter as a direct component of that analytical power which was the glory of a Lagrange, a Laplace, and a Gauss, and which is the glory of a Leverrier, a Peirce, and their companions in science, it serves as a part of the necessary scaffolding by which that skill is attained,—of the necessary discipline by which their power was exercised and made available for the solution of the great problems of astronomy, optics, and thermotics, which have been solved in our century.

There is another curve, generated by a simple law from a circle, which has played an important part at various epochs in the intellectual history of our race. A spot on the tire of a wheel running on a straight, level road, will describe in the air a series of peculiar arches, called the cycloid. The law of its formation is simple; the law of its curvature is also simple. The path in which the spot moves curves exactly in proportion to its nearness to the lowest point of the wheel. By the simplicity of its law, it ought, according to the canon, to be a beautiful curve. Now, although artists have not shown any admiration for the cycloid, as they have for the ellipse, yet the mathematicians have gazed upon it with great eagerness, and found it rich in intellectual treasures. Chasles, in his History, says that the cycloid interweaves itself with all the great discoveries of the seventeenth century.

A curve which fulfils more perfectly the demands of our *dictum* is that of an elastic thread, to which we have already alluded. If the two ends of a straight steel hair be brought towards each other by simple pressure, the intervening spring may be put into a series of various forms,—simple undulations, and those more complicated, a figure 8, loops turning alternately opposite ways, loops turning all one way, and finally a circle. Now the whole of this variety is the result of subjecting each part of the curve to a law more simple than that of the cycloid. The elastic curve is a curve which bends or curves exactly in proportion to its distance from a given straight line. According to the canon, therefore, this curve should be beautiful; and it is acknowledged to be so in the examples given by the bending osier and the waving grain,—also by the few who have seen full drawings of all the forms. And the mathematician finds in it a new beauty, from its marvellous correspondence with the motions of a pendulum,—the algebraic expression of the two being identical.

The forms of organic life afford, however, the best examples of the dominion of our fundamental canon. The infinite variety of vegetable forms, all beautiful, and each one different in its beauty, is all the result of simple laws. It is true that these simple laws are not as yet all discovered; but

the one great discovery of Phyllotaxis, which shows that all plants follow one law in the arrangement of their leaves upon the stem, thereby intimates in unmistakable language the simplicity and unity of all organic vegetable laws; and a similar assurance is given by the morphological reduction of all parts to a metamorphosed leaf.

The law of phyllotaxis, like that of the elastic curve, is carried out in time as well as in space. As the formula for the elastic curve is the same as that for the pendulum, so the law by which the spaces of the leaves are divided in scattering them round the stem, to give each its opportunity for light and air, is the same as that by which the times of the planets are proportioned to keep them scattered about the sun, and prevent them from gathering on one side of their central orb.

The forms of plants and trees are dependent upon the arrangement of the branches, and the arrangement of the branches depends upon that of the buds or leaves. The leaves are arranged by this numerical law,—that the angular distance about the stem between two successive leaves shall be in such ratio to the whole circumference as may be expressed by a continued fraction composed wholly of the figure 1. It is, then, true, that all the beauty of the vegetable world which depends on the arrangement of parts—the graceful symmetry or more graceful apparent disregard of symmetry in the general form of plants, all the charm of the varying forms of forest trees, which adds such loveliness to the winter landscape, and such a refined source of pleasure to the exhilaration of the winter morning walk—is the result of the simplest variations in a simple numerical law; and is thus clearly brought under our fundamental canon. It is the perception of this unity in diversity, of this similarity of plan, for instance, in all tree-like forms, however diverse,—the sprig of mignonette, the rose-bush, the fir, the cedar, the fan-shaped elm, the oval rock-maple, the columnar hickory, the dense and slender shaft of the poplar,—which charms the eye of those who have never heard in what algebraic or arithmetical terms this unity may be defined, in what geometrical or architectural figures this diversity may be expressed.

When we look at the animal kingdom, we recognize there also the presence of simple, all-pervading laws. The four great types of animal structures are readily discerned by the dullest eye: no man fails to see the likeness among all vertebrates, or the likeness among all articulates, the likeness among alt mollusks, or the likeness among all radiates. These four types show, moreover, a certain unity, even to the untaught eye: we call them all by one name, animals, and feel that there is a likeness between them deeper than the widest differences in their structure; there are analogies where there are not homologies.

The difference between the four types of animals is marked at a very early period in the embryo,—the embryo taking one of four different forms, according to the department to which it belongs; and Peirce has shown that these four forms are all embodiments of one single law of position. If, then, one single algebraic law of form includes the four diverse forms of the four great branches of the animal kingdom, is it extravagant to suppose that the diversities in each branch are also capable of being included in simple generalizations of form? Is it unreasonable to believe that the exceeding beauty of animated forms, and of the highest, the human form, arises from the fact that these forms are the result of some simple intellectual law, a simple conception of the Divine Geometer, assuming varied developments in the great series of animated beings? It is the unity of the form, arising from the simplicity of its law, and the multiplicity of its manifestations or details, arising from the generality of its law, that, intuitively perceived by the eye, although the intellect may not apprehend them, give the charm to the figures of the animate creation.

The subject, even in the narrow limits which we have imposed upon ourselves, would admit of a much longer discussion. The various animals might, for instance, be compared with each other, and the beauty of the most beautiful could be clearly shown to be owing to the greater variety in the outline, or the greater variety of position, which they included in equal unity of general effect. And should we step outside the bounds which we have prescribed to ourselves, we should find that in other things than questions of mere form the general canon holds true, that laws produce beauty

in proportion to their own simplicity and to the variety of their effects. As a single example, take the most beautiful of the fine arts, the art which is free from the laws of space, and subject only to those of time, and in which, therefore, we find a beauty removed as far as possible from that of curvilinear outlines. How exceedingly simple are the fundamental laws of music, of simple rhythm and simple harmony yet how infinitely varied, and how inexpressibly touching are its effects! In studying music as a mere matter of intellectual science, all is simple; it is only an easy chapter in acoustics. But in studying it on the side of the emotions, in studying the laws of counterpoint and of musical form, which are governed by the effect upon the ear and the heart, we find intricacy and difficulties, increased beyond our power of understanding.

So in the harmony of the spheres, in the varied beauty which clothes the earth and pervades the heavens, in the beauty which addresses itself to eye and ear, and in the beauty which addresses only the inward sense,—the harmonious arrangements of the social world, and the adjustment of domestic, civil, and political relations,—there is an infinite diversity of result, infinitely varied in its effect upon the observer. But could we behold the Kosmos as it is beheld by its Creator, we should perchance find the whole encyclopedia of our science resting upon a few great, but simple laws; we should see that the whole universe, in all its infinite complication, is the fulfilment of perhaps a single simple thought of the Divine Mind, and that it is this unity pervading the diversity which makes it the Kosmos, Beauty.

FOUND AND LOST

And he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles.

GEN. xxv. 33, 34.

……So! I let fall the curtain; he was dead. For at least half an hour I had stood there with the manuscript in my hand, watching that face settling in its last stillness, watching the finger of the Composer smoothing out the deeply furrowed lines on cheek and forehead,—the faint recollection of the light that had perhaps burned behind his childish eyes struggling up through the swarthy cheek, as if to clear the last world's-dust from the atmosphere surrounding the man who had just refound his youth. His head rested on his hand,—and so satisfied and content was his quiet attitude, that he looked as if resting from a long, wearisome piece of work he was glad to have finished. I don't know how it was, but I thought, oddly enough, in connection with him, of a little school-fellow of mine years ago, who one day, in his eagerness to prove that he could jump farther than some of his companions, upset an ink-stand over his prize essay, and, overcome with mortification, disappointment, and vexation, burst into tears, hastily scratched his name from the list of competitors, and then rushed out of doors to tear his ruined essay into fragments; and we found him that afternoon lying on the grass, with his head on his hand, just as he lay now, having sobbed himself to sleep.

I dropped the curtains of the bed, drew those of the window more closely, to exclude the shrill winter wind that was blowing the slant sleet against the clattering window-panes, broke up the lump of cannel coal in the grate into a bright blaze that subsided into a warm, steady glow of heat and light, drew an arm-chair and a little table up to the cheerful fire, and sat down to read the manuscript which the quiet man behind the curtains had given me. Why shouldn't I (I was his physician) make myself as comfortable as was possible at two o'clock of a stormy winter night, in a house that contained but two persons beside my German patient,—a half-stupid serving-man, doubtless already asleep down-stairs, and myself? This is what I read that night, with the comfortable fire on one side, and Death, holding strange colloquy with the fitful, screaming, moaning wind, on the other.

As I wish simply to relate what has happened to me, (thus the manuscript began,) what I attempted, in what I sinned, and how I failed, I deem no introduction or genealogies necessary to the first part of my life. I was an only child of parents who were passionately fond of me,—the more, perhaps, because an accident that had happened to me in my childhood rendered me for some years a partial invalid. One day, (I was about five years old then,) a gentleman paid a visit to my father, riding a splendid Arabian horse. Upon dismounting, he tied the horse near the steps of the piazza instead of the horseblock, so that I found I was just upon the level with the stirrup, standing at a certain elevation. Half as an experiment, to try whether I could touch the horse without his starting, I managed to get my foot into the stirrup, and so mounted upon his back. The horse, feeling the light burden, did start, broke from his fastening, and sped away with me on his back at the top of his speed. He ran several miles without stopping, and finished by pitching me off his back upon the ground, in leaping a fence. This fall produced some disease of the spine, which clung to me till I was twelve years old, when it was almost miraculously cured by an itinerant Arab physician. He was generally pronounced to be a quack, but he certainly effected many wonderful cures, mine among others.

I had always been an imaginative child; and my long-continued sedentary life compelling me (a welcome compulsion) to reading as my chief occupation and amusement, I acquired much knowledge beyond my years.

My reading generally had one peculiar tone: a certain kind of mystery was an essential ingredient in the fascination that books which I considered interesting had for me. My earliest fairy tales were not those unexciting stories in which the good genius appears at the beginning of the book, endowing the hero with such an invincible talisman that suspense is banished from the reader's mind, too well enabled to foresee the triumph at the end; but stories of long, painful quests after hidden

treasure,—mysterious enchantments thrown around certain persons by witch or wizard, drawing the subject in charmed circles nearer and nearer to his royal or ruinous destiny,—strange spells cast upon bewitched houses or places, that could be removed only by the one hand appointed by Fate. So I pored over the misty legends of the San Grail, and the sweet story of "The Sleeping Beauty," as my first literature; and as the rough years of practical boyhood trooped up to elbow my dreaming childhood out of existence, I fed the same hunger for the hidden and mysterious with Detective-Police stories, Captain Kidd's voyages, and wild tales of wrecks on the Spanish Main, of those vessels of fabulous wealth that strewed the deep sea's lap with gems (so the stories ran) of lustre almost rare enough to light the paths to their secret hiding-places.

But in the last year of my captivity as an invalid a new pleasure fell into my hands. I discovered my first book of travels in my father's library, and as with a magical key unlocked the gate of an enchanted realm of wondrous and ceaseless beauty. It was Sir John Mandeville who introduced me to this field of exhaustless delight; not a very trustworthy guide, it must be confessed,—but my knowledge at that time was too limited to check the boundless faith I reposed in his narrative. It was such an astonishment to discover that men, black-coated and black-trousered men, such as I saw in crowds every day in the street from my sofa-corner, (we had moved to the city shortly after my accident,) had actually broken away from that steady stream of people, and had traversed countries as wild and unknown as the lands in the Nibelungen Lied, that my respect for the race rose amazingly. I scanned eagerly the sleek, complacent faces of the portly burghers, or those of the threadbare schoolmasters, thinned like carving-knives by perpetual sharpening on the steel of Latin syntax, in search of men who could have dared the ghastly terrors of the North with Ross or Parry, or the scorching jungles of the Equator with Burckhardt and Park. Cut off for so long a time from actual contact with the outside world, I could better imagine the brooding stillness of the Great Desert, I could more easily picture the weird ice-palaces of the Pole, waiting, waiting forever in awful state, like the deserted halls of the Walhalla for their slain gods to return, than many of the common street-scenes in my own city, which I had only vaguely heard mentioned.

I followed the footsteps of the Great Seekers over the wastes, the untrodden paths of the world; I tracked Columbus across the pathless Atlantic,—heard, with Balboa, the "wave of the loud-roaring ocean break upon the long shore, and the vast sea of the Pacific forever crash on the beach,"—gazed with Cortés on the temples of the Sun in the startling Mexican empire,—or wandered with Pizarro through the silver-lined palaces of Peru. But a secret affection drew me to the mysterious regions of the East and South,—towards Arabia, the wild Ishmael bequeathing sworded Korans and subtile Aristotles as legacies to the sons of the freed-woman,—to solemn Egypt, riddle of nations, the vast, silent, impenetrable mystery of the world. By continual pondering over the footsteps of the Seekers, the Sought-for seemed to grow to vast proportions, and the Found to shrink to inappreciable littleness. For me, over the dreary ice-plains of the Poles, over the profound bosom of Africa, the far-stretching steppes of Asia, and the rocky wilds of America, a great silence brooded, and in the unexplored void faint footfalls could be heard here and there, threading their way in the darkness. But while the longing to plunge, myself, into these dim regions of expectation grew more intense each day, the prison-chains that had always bound me still kept their habitual hold upon me, even after my recovery. I dreamt not of making even the vaguest plans for undertaking explorations myself. So I read and dreamt, filling my room with wild African or monotonous Egyptian scenery, until I was almost weaned from ordinary Occidental life.

I passed four blissful years In this happy dream-life, and then it was abruptly brought to an end by the death of my father and mother almost simultaneously by an epidemic fever prevailing in the neighborhood. I was away from home at a bachelor uncle's at the time, and so was unexpectedly thrown on his hands, an orphan, penniless, except in the possession of the small house my father had owned in the country before our removal to the city, and to be provided for.

My uncle placed me in a mercantile house to learn business, and, after exercising some slight supervision over me a few months, left me entirely to my own resources. As, however, he had previously taken care that these resources should be sufficient, I got along very well upon them, was regularly promoted, and in the space of six years, at the age of twenty-one, was in a rather responsible situation in the house, with a good salary. But my whole attention could not be absorbed in the dull routine of business, my most precious hours were devoted to reading, in which I still pursued my old childish track of speculation, with the difference that I exchanged Sinbad's valley of diamonds for Arabia Petraea, Sir John Mandeville for Herodotus, and Robinson Crusoe for Belzoni and Burckhardt Whether my interest in these Oriental studies arose from the fact of the house being concerned in the importation of the products of the Indies, or whether from the secret attraction that had drawn me Eastward since my earliest childhood, as if the Arab doctor had bewitched in curing me, I cannot say; probably it was the former, especially as the India business became gradually more and more intrusted to my hands.

Shortly after my twenty-first birthday, I received a note from my uncle, from whom I had not heard for a year, or two, informing me that my father's house, which he had kept rented for me during the first years of my minority, had been without a tenant for a year, and, as I had now come of age, I had better go down to D– and take possession of it. This letter, touching upon a long train of associations and recollections, awoke an intense longing in me to revisit the home of my childhood, and meet those phantom shapes that had woven that spell in those dreaming years, which I sometimes thought I felt even now. So I obtained a short leave of absence, and started the next morning in the coach for D–.

It was what is called a "raw morning," for what reason I know not, for such days are really elaborated with the most exquisite finish. A soft gray mist hugged the country in a chilly embrace, while a fine rain fell as noiselessly as snow, upon soaked ground, drenched trees, and peevish houses. There is always a sense of wonder about a mist. The outlines of what we consider our hardest tangibilities are melted away by it into the airiest dream-sketches, our most positive and glaring facts are blankly blotted out, and a fresh, clean sheet left for some new fantasy to be written upon it, as groundless as the rest; our solid land dissolves in cloud, and cloud assumes the stability of land. For, after all, the only really tangible thing we possess is man's Will; and let the presence and action of that be withdrawn but for a few moments, and that mysterious Something which we vainly endeavor to push off into the Void by our pompous nothings of brick and plaster and stone closes down upon us with the descending sky, writing *Delendum* on all behind us, *Unknown* on all before. At that time, the only actual Now, that stands between these two infinite blanks, becomes identical with the mind itself, independent of accidents of situation or circumstance; and the mind thus becoming boldly prominent, amidst the fading away of physical things, stamps its own character upon its shadowy surroundings, moulding the supple universe to the shape of its emotions and feelings.

I was the only inside passenger, and there was nothing to check the entire surrender of my mind to all ghostly influence. So I lay stretched upon the cushions, staring blankly into the dense gray fog closing up all trace of our travelled road, or watching the light edges of the trailing mist curl coyly around the roofs of houses and then settle grimly all over them, the fantastic shapes of trees or carts distorted and magnified through the mist, the lofty outlines of some darker cloud stalking solemnly here and there, like enormous dumb overseers faithfully superintending the work of annihilation. The monotonous patter of the rain-drops upon the wet pavement or muddy roads, blending with the low whining of the wind and the steady rumble of the coach-wheels, seemed to make a kind of witch-chant, that wove with braided sound a weird spell about me, a charm fating me for some service, I knew not what. That chant moaned, it wailed, it whispered, it sang gloriously, it bound, it drowned me, it lapped me in an inextricable stream of misty murmuring, till I was perplexed, bewildered, enchanted. I felt surprised at myself, when, at the end of the day's journey, I carried my bag to the

hotel, and ate my supper there as usual,—and felt natural again only when, having obtained the key of my house, I sallied forth in the dim twilight to make it my promised visit.

I found the place, as I had expected, in a state of utter desolation. A year's silence had removed it so far from the noisy stream of life that flowed by it, that I felt, as I pushed at the rusty door-lock, as if I were passing into some old garret of Time, where he had thrown forgotten rubbish too worn-out and antiquated for present use. A strong scent of musk greeted me at my entrance, which I found came from a box of it that had been broken upon the hall-floor. I had stowed it away (it was a favorite perfume with me, because it was so associated with my Arabian Nights' stories) upon a ledge over the door, where it had rested undisturbed while the house was tenanted, and had been now probably dislodged by rats. But I half fancied that this odor which impregnated the air of the whole house was the essence of that atmosphere in which, as a child, I had communicated with Burckhardt and Belzoni,—and that, expelled by the solid, practical, Occidental atmosphere of the last few years, it had flowed back again, in these last silent months, in anticipation of my return.

Like a prudent householder, I made the tour of the house with a light I had provided myself with, and mentally made memoranda of repairs, alterations, etc., for rendering it habitable. My last visit was to be to the garret, where many of my books yet remained. As I passed once more through the parlor, on my way thither, a ray of light from my raised lamp fell upon the wall that I had thought blank, and a majestic face started suddenly from the darkness. So sudden was the apparition, that for the moment I was startled, till I remembered that there had formerly been a picture in that place, and I stopped to examine it. It was a head of the Sphinx. The calm, grand face was partially averted, so that the sorrowful eyes, almost betraying the aching secret which the still lips kept sacred, were hidden,—only the slight, tender droop in the corner of the mouth told what their expression might be. Around, forever stretched the endless sands,—the mystery of life found in the heart of death. That mournful, eternal face gave me a strange feeling of weariness and helplessness. I felt as if I had already pressed eagerly to the other side of the head, still only to find the voiceless lips and mute eyes. Strange tears sprang to my eyes; I hastily brushed them away, and, leaving the Sphinx, mounted to my garret.

But the riddle followed me. I sat down on the floor, beside a box of books, and somewhat listlessly began pulling it over to examine the contents. The first book I took hold of was a little worn volume of Herodotus that had belonged to my father. I opened it; and as if it, too, were a link in the chain of influences which I half felt was being forged around me, it opened at the first part of "Euterpe," where Herodotus is speculating upon the phenomena of the Nile. Twenty-two hundred years,—I thought,—and we are still wondering, the Sphinx is still silent, and we yet in the darkness! Alas, if this riddle be insoluble, how can we hope to find the clue to deeper problems? If there are places on our little earth whither our feet cannot go, curtains that our hands cannot withdraw, how can we expect to track paths through realms of thought,—how to voyage in those airy, impalpable regions whose existence we are sure of only while we are there voyaging?

"Nilus in extremum fugit perterritus orbem Occuluitque caput, quod adhuc latet."

Lost through reckless presumption, might not earnest humility recover that mysterious lurking-place? Might not one, by devoted toil, by utter self-sacrifice, with eyes purified by long searching from worldly and selfish pollution,—might not such a one tear away the veil of centuries, and, even though dying in the attempt, gain one look into this arcanum? Might not I?—The unutterable thought thrilled me and left me speechless, even in thinking. I strained my forehead against the darkness, as if I could grind the secret from the void air. Then I experienced the following mental sensation,—which, being purely mental, I cannot describe precisely as it was, but will translate it as nearly as possible into the language of physical phenomena.

It was as if my mind—or, rather, whatever that passive substratum is that underlies our volition and more truly represents ourselves—were a still lake, lying quiet and indifferent. Presently the sense of some coming Presence sent a breathing ripple over its waters; and immediately afterward it felt a sweep as of trailing garments, and two arms were thrown around it, and it was pressed against a "life-

giving bosom," whose vivifying warmth interpenetrating the whole body of the lake, its waters rose, moved by a mighty influence, in the direction of that retreating Presence; and again, though nothing was seen, I felt surely whither was that direction. It was NILEWARD. I knew, with the absolute certainty of intuition, that henceforth I was one of the *kletoi*, the chosen,—selected from thousands of ages, millions of people, for this one destiny. Henceforth a sharp dividing-line cut me off from all others: *their* appointment was to trade, navigate, eat and drink, marry and give in marriage, and the rest; mine was to discover the Source of the Nile. Hither had all the threads of my life been converging for many years; they had now reached their focus, and henceforth their course was fixed.

I was scarcely surprised the next day at receiving a letter from my employers appointing me to a situation as supercargo of a merchant-vessel bound on a three-years' voyage to America and China, —in returning thence, to sail up the Mediterranean, and stop at Alexandria. I immediately wrote an acceptance, and then busied myself about obtaining a three-years' tenant for my house. As the house was desirable and well-situated, this business was soon arranged; and then, as I had nothing further to do in the village, I left it for the last time, as it proved, and returned to the city,—whence, after a fortnight of preparation, I set sail on my eventful enterprise. Although our voyage was filled with incident that in another place would be interesting enough to relate, yet here I must omit all mention of it, and, passing over three years, resume my narrative at Alexandria, where I left the vessel, and finally broke away from mercantile life.

From Alexandria I travelled to Cairo, where I intended to hire a servant and a boat, for I wished to try the water-passage in preference to the land. The cheapness of labor and food rendered it no difficult matter to obtain my boat and provision it for a long voyage,—for how long I did not tell the Egyptian servant whom I hired to attend me. A certain feeling of fatality caused me to make no attempt at disguise, although disguise was then much more necessary than it has been since: I openly avowed my purpose of travelling on the Nile for pleasure, as a private European. My accoutrements were simple and few. Arms, of course, I carried, and the actual necessaries for subsistence; but I entirely forgot to prepare for sketching, scientific surveys, etc. My whole mind was possessed with one idea: to see, to discover;—plans for turning my discoveries to account were totally foreign to my thoughts.

So, on the 6th of November, 1824, we set sail. I had been waiting three years to arrive at this starting-point,—my whole life, indeed, had been dumbly turning towards it,—yet now I commenced it with a coolness and tranquillity far exceeding that I had possessed on many comparatively trifling occasions. It is often so. We are borne along on the current like drift-wood, and, spying jutting rocks or tremendous cataracts ahead, fancy, "Here we shall be stranded, there buoyed up, there dashed in pieces over those falls,"—but, for all that, we glide over those threatened catastrophes in a very commonplace manner, and are aware of what we have been passing only upon looking back at them. So no one sees the great light shining from Heaven,—for the people are blear-eyed, and Saul is blinded. But as I left Cairo in the greatening distance, floating onward to the heart of the mysterious river, I floated also into the twin current of thought, that, flowing full and impetuous from the shores of the peopled Mediterranean, follows the silent river, and tracks it to its hidden lurking-place in the blank desert. Onward, past the breathless sands of the Libyan Desert, past the hundred-gated Thebes, past the stone guardians of Abou-Simbel, waiting in majestic patience for their spell of silence to be broken,—onward. It struck me curiously to come to the cataract, and be obliged to leave my boat at the foot of the first fall, and hire another above the second,—a forcible reminder that I was travelling backwards, from the circumference to the centre from which that circumference had been produced, faintly feeling my way along a tide of phenomena to the *noumenon* supporting them. So we always progress: from arithmetic to geometry, from observation to science, from practice to theory, and play with edged tools long before we know what knives mean. For, like Hop-o'-my-Thumb and his brothers, we are driven out early in the morning to the edge of the forest, and are obliged to grope

our way back to the little house whence we come, by the crumbs dropped on the road. Alack! how often the birds have eaten our bread, and we are captured by the giant lying in wait!

On we swept, leaving behind the burning rocks and dreary sands of Egypt and Lower Nubia, the green woods and thick acacias of Dongola, the distant pyramids of Mount Birkel, and the ruins of Meroë, just discovered footmarks of Ancient Ethiopia descending the Nile to bequeathe her glory and civilization to Egypt. At Old Dongola, my companion was very anxious that we should strike across the country to Shendy, to avoid the great curve of the Nile through Ethiopia. He found the sail somewhat tedious, as I could speak but little Egyptian, which I had picked up in scraps,—he, no German or English. I managed to overrule his objections, however, as I could not bear to leave any part of the river unvisited; so we continued the water-route to the junction of the Blue and the White Nile, where I resolved to remain a week, before continuing my route. The inhabitants regarded us with some suspicion, but our inoffensive appearance so far conquered their fears that they were prevailed upon to give us some information about the country, and to furnish us with a fresh supply of rice, wheat, and dourra, in exchange for beads and bright-colored cloth, which I had brought with me for the purpose of such traffic, if it should be necessary. Bruce's discovery of the source of the Blue Nile, fifty years before, prevented the necessity of indecision in regard to my route, and so completely was I absorbed in the one object of my journey, that the magnificent scenery and ruins along the Blue Nile, which had so fascinated Cailliaud, presented few allurements for me.

My stay was rather longer than I had anticipated, as it was found necessary to make some repairs upon the boat, and, inwardly fretting at each hour's delay, I was eager to seize the first opportunity for starting again. On the 1st of March, I made a fresh beginning for the more unknown and probably more perilous portion of my voyage, having been about four months in ascending from Cairo. As my voyage had commenced about the abatement of the sickly season, I had experienced no inconvenience from the climate, and it was in good spirits that I resumed my journey. For several days we sailed with little eventful occurring,—floating on under the cloudless sky, rippling a long white line through the widening surface of the ever-flowing river, through floating beds of glistening lotus-flowers, past undulating ramparts of foliage and winged ambak-blossoms guarding the shores scaled by adventurous vines that triumphantly waved their banners of white and purple and yellow from the summit, winding amid bowery islands studding the broad stream like gems, smoothly stemming the rolling flood of the river, flowing, ever flowing,—lurking in the cool shade of the dense mimosa forests, gliding noiselessly past the trodden lairs of hippopotami and lions, slushing through the reeds swaying to and fro in the green water, still borne along against the silent current of the mysterious river, flowing, ever flowing.

We had now arrived at the land of the Dinkas, where the river, by broadening too much upon a low country, had become partially devoured by marsh and reeds, and our progress was very slow, tediously dragging over a sea of water and grass. I had become a little tired of my complete loneliness, and was almost longing for some collision with the tribes of savages that throng the shore, when the incident occurred that determined my whole future life. One morning, about seven o'clock, when the hot sun had already begun to rob the day of the delicious freshness lingering around the tropical night, we happened to be passing a tract of firmer land than we had met with for some time, and I directed the vessel towards the shore, to gather some of the brilliant lotus-flowers that fringed the banks. As we neared the land, I threw my gun, without which I never left the boat, on the bank, preparatory to leaping out, when I was startled by hearing a loud, cheery voice exclaim in English, —"Hilloa! not so fast, if you please!"—and first the head and then the sturdy shoulders of a white man raised themselves slowly from the low shrubbery by which they were surrounded. He looked at us for a minute or two, and nodded with a contented air that perplexed me exceedingly.

"So," he said, "you have come at last; I am tired of waiting for you"; and he began to collect his gun, knife, etc., which were lying on the ground beside him.

"And who are you," I returned, "who lie in wait for me? I think, Sir, you have the advantage."

Here the stranger interrupted me with a hearty laugh. "My dear fellow," he cried, "you are entirely mistaken. The technical advantage that you attribute to me is an error, as I do *not* have the honor of knowing your name, though you may know mine without further preface,—Frederick Herndon; and the real advantage which I wish to avail myself of, a boat, is obviously on your side. The long and the short of it is," he added, (composedly extricating himself from the brushwood,) "that, travelling up in this direction for discovery and that sort of thing, you know, I heard at Sennaar that a white man with an Egyptian servant had just left the town, and were going in my direction in a boat. So I resolved to overtake them, and with their, or your, permission, join company. But they, or you, kept just in advance, and it was only by dint of a forced march in the night that I passed you. I learned at the last Dinka village that no such party had been yet seen, and concluded to await the your arrival here, where I pitched my tent a day and a night waiting for you. I am heartily glad to see you, I assure you."

With this explanation, the stranger made a spring, and leaped upon the yacht.

"Upon my word," said I, still bewildered by his sudden appearance, "you are very unceremonious."

"That," he rejoined, "is a way we Americans have. We cannot stop to palaver. What would become of our manifest destiny? But since you are so kind, I will call my Egyptian. Times are changed since we were bondsmen in Egypt, have they not? Ah, I forgot,—you are not an American, and therefore cannot claim even our remote connection with the Ten Lost Tribes." Then raising his voice, "Here, Ibrahim!"

Again a face, but this time a swarthy one, emerged from behind a bush, and in answer to a few directions in his own dialect the man came down to the boat, threw in the tent and some other articles of traveller's furniture, and sprang in with the *nonchalance* of his master.

A little recovered from my first surprise, I seized the opportunity of a little delay in getting the boat adrift again to examine my new companion. He was standing carelessly upon the little deck of the vessel where he had first entered, and the strong morning light fell full upon his well-knit figure and apparently handsome face. The forehead was rather low, prominent above the eyebrows, and with keen, hollow temples, but deficient both in comprehensiveness and ideality. The hazel eyes were brilliant, but restless and shallow,—the mouth of good size, but with few curves, and perhaps a little too close for so young a face. The well-cut nose and chin and clean fine outline of face, the self-reliant pose of the neck and confident set of the shoulders characterized him as decisive and energetic, while the pleasant and rather boyish smile that lighted up his face dispelled presently the peculiarly hard expression I had at first found in analyzing it. Whether it was the hard, shrewd light from which all the tender and delicate grace of the early morning had departed, I knew not; but it struck me that I could not find a particle of shade in his whole appearance. I seemed at once to take him in, as one sees the whole of a sunny country where there are no woods or mountains or valleys. And, in fact, I never did find any,—never any cool recesses in his character; and as no sudden depths ever opened in his eyes, so nothing was ever left to be revealed in his character;—like them, it could be sounded at once. That picture of him, standing there on my deck, with an indefinite expression of belonging to the place, as he would have belonged on his own hearth-rug at home, often recurred to me, again to be renewed and confirmed.

And thus carelessly was swept into my path, as a stray waif, that man who would in one little moment change my whole life! It is always so. Our life sweeps onward like a river, brushing in here a little sand, there a few rushes, till the accumulated drift-wood chokes the current, or some larger tree falling across it turns it into a new channel.

I had been so long unaccustomed to company that I found it quite a pleasant change to have some one to talk to; some one to sympathize with I neither wanted nor expected; I certainly did not find such a one in my new acquaintance. For the first two or three days I simply regarded him with the sort of wondering curiosity with which we examine a new natural phenomenon of any sort. His

perfect self-possession and coolness, the *nil-admirari* and *nil-agitari* atmosphere which surrounded him, excited my admiration at first, till I discovered that it arose, not from the composure of a mind too deep-rooted to be swayed by external circumstances, but rather from a peculiar hardness and unimpressibility of temperament that kept him on the same level all the time. He had been born at a certain temperature, and still preserved it, from a sort of *vis inertive* of constitution. This impenetrability had the effect of a somewhat buoyant disposition, not because he could be buoyed on the tide of any strong emotion, but because few things could disturb or excite him. Unable to grasp the significance of anything outside of himself and his attributes, he took immense pride in stamping *his* character, *his* nationality, *his* practicality, upon every series of circumstances by which he was surrounded: he sailed up the Nile as if it were the Mississippi; although a well-enough-informed man, he practically ignored the importance of any city anterior to the Plymouth Settlement, or at least to London, which had the honor of sending colonists to New England; and he would have discussed American politics in the heart of Africa, had not my ignorance upon the topic generally excluded it from our conversation. He had what is most wrongly termed an exceedingly practical mind,—that is, not one that appreciates the practical existence and value of thought as such, considering that a *praxis*, but a mind that denied the existence of a thought until it had become realized in visible action.

"'The end of a man is an action, and not a thought, though it be the noblest,' as Carlyle has well written," he triumphantly quoted to me, as, leaning over the little railing of the yacht, watching, at least I was, the smooth, green water gliding under the clean-cutting keel, we had been talking earnestly for some time. "A thought has value only as it is a potential action; if the action be abortive, the thought is as useless as a crank that fails to move an engine-wheel."

"Then, if action is the wheel, and thought only the crank, what does the body of your engine represent? For what purpose are your wheels turning? For the sake of merely moving?"

"No," said he, "moving to promote another action, and *that* another,—and–so on *ad infinitum*."

"Then you leave out of your scheme a real engine, with a journey to accomplish, and an end to arrive at; for so wheels would only move wheels, and there would be an endless chain of machinery, with no plan, no object for its existence. Does not the very necessity we feel of having a reason for the existence, the operation of anything, a large plan in which to gather up all ravelled threads of various objects, proclaim thought as the final end, the real thing, of which action, more especially human action, is but the inadequate visible expression? What kinds of action does Carlyle mean, that are to be the wheels for our obedient thoughts to set in motion? Hand, arm, leg, foot action? These are all our operative machinery. Does he mean that our 'noblest thought' is to be chained as a galley-slave to these, to give them means for working a channel through which motive power may be poured in upon them? Are we to think that our fingers and feet may move and so we live, or they to run for our thought, and we live to think?"

"Supposing we *are*," said Herndon, "what practical good results from knowing it? Action for action's sake, or for thinking's sake, is still action, and all that we have to look out for. What business have the brakemen at the wheels with the destiny of the train? Their business is simply to lock and unlock the wheels; so that their end is in the wheels, and not in the train."

"A somewhat dreary end," I said, half to myself. "The whole world, then, must content itself with spinning one blind action out of another; which means that we must continually alter or displace something, merely to be able to displace and alter something else."

"On the contrary, we exchange vague, speculative mystifications for definite, tangible fact. In America we have too much reality, too many iron and steam facts, to waste much time over mere thinking. That, Sir, does for a sleepy old country, begging your pardon, like yours; but for one that has the world's destiny in its hands,—that is laying iron foot-paths from the Atlantic to the Pacific for future civilization to take an evening stroll along to see the sun set,—that is converting black wool into white cotton, to clothe the inhabitants of Borrioboolagha,—that is trading, farming, electing, governing, fighting, annexing, destroying, building, puffing, blowing, steaming, racing, as our young

two-hundred-year-old is,—we must work, we must act, and think afterwards. Whatsoever thy *hand* findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"And what," I said, "when hand-and-foot-action shall have ceased? will you then allow some play for thought-action?"

"We have no time to think of that," he returned, walking away, and thus stopping our conversation.

The man was consistent in his theory, at least. Having exalted physical motion (or action) to the place he did, he refused to see that the action he prized was more valuable through the thought it developed; consequently he reduced all actions to the same level, and prided himself upon stripping a deed of all its marvellousness or majesty. He did uncommon things in such a matter-of-fact way that he made them common by the performance. The faint spiritual double which I found lurking behind his steel and iron he either solidified with his metallic touch or pertinaciously denied its existence.

"Plato was a fool," he said, "to talk of an ideal table; for, supposing he could see it, and prove its existence, what good could it do? You can neither eat off it, nor iron on it, nor do anything else with it; so, for all practical purposes, a pine table serves perfectly well without hunting after the ideal. I want something that I can go up to, and know it is there by seeing and touching."

"But," said I, "does not that very susceptibility to bodily contact remove the table to an indefinite distance from you? If we can see and handle a thing, and yet not be able to hold that subtile property of generic existence, by which, one table being made, an infinite class is created, so real that tables may actually be modelled on it, and yet so indefinite that you cannot set your hand on any table or collection of tables and say, 'It is here,'—if we can be absolutely conscious that we see the table, and yet have no idea how its image reflected on our retina can produce that absolute consciousness, does not the table grow dim and misty, and slip far away out of reach, of apprehension, much more of comprehension?"

"Stuff!" cried my companion. "If your metaphysics lead to proving that a board that I am touching with my hand is not there, I'll say, as I have already said, 'Throw (meta)physics to the dogs! I'll none of it!' A fine preparation for living in a material world, where we have to live in matter, by matter, and for matter, to wind one's self up in a snarl that puts matter out of reach, and leaves us with nothing to live in, or by, or for! Now *you*, for instance, are not content with this poor old Nile as it stands, but must go fussing and wondering and mystifying about it till you have positively nothing of a river left. I look at the water, the banks, the trees growing on them, the islands in which we get occasionally entangled: here, at least, I have a real, substantial river,—not equal for navigation to the Ohio or Mississippi, but still very fair.—Confound these flies!" he added, parenthetically, making a vigorous plunge at a dark cloud of the little pests that were closing down upon us.

"Then you see nothing strange and solemn in this wonderful stream? nothing in the weird civilization crouching at the feet, vainly looking to the head of its master hidden in the clouds? nothing in the echoing footsteps of nations passing down its banks to their destiny? nothing in the solemn, unbroken silence brooding over the fountain whence sprang this marvellous river, to bear precious gifts to thousands and millions, and again retreat unknown? Is there no mystery in unsolved questions, no wonder in miracles, no awe in inapproachability?"

"I see," said he, steadily, "that a river of some thousand miles long has run through a country peopled by contented, or ignorant, or barbarous people, none of whom, of course, would take the slightest interest in tracing the river; that the dangers that have guarded the marvellous secret, as you call it, are not intrinsic to the secret itself, but are purely accidental and contingent There is no more reason why the source of the Nile should not be found than that of the Connecticut; so I do not see that it is really at all inapproachable or awful."

"What in the world, Herndon," cried I, in desperation, "what in the name of common sense ever induced you to set out on this expedition? What do you want to discover the source of the Nile for?"

He answered with the ready air of one who has long ago made up his mind confidently on the subject he is going to speak about.

"It has long been evident to me, that civilization, flowing in a return current from America, must penetrate into Africa, and turn its immense natural advantages to such account, that it shall become the seat of the most flourishing and important empires of the earth. These, however, should be consolidated, and not split up into multitudinous missionary stations. If a stream of immigration could be started from the eastern side, up the Nile for instance, penetrating to the interior, it might meet the increased tide of a kindred nature from the west, and uniting somewhere in the middle of Soudan, the central point of action, the capital city could be founded there, as a heart for the country, and a complete system of circulation be established. By this method of entering the country at both sides simultaneously, of course its complete subjugation could be accomplished in half the time that it would take for a body of emigrants, however large, to make headway from the western coast alone. About the source of the Nile I intend to mark out the site for my city, and then"–

"And call it," I added, "Herndonville."

"Perhaps," he said, gravely. "At all events, my name will be inseparably connected with the enterprise; and if I can get the steamboat started during my lifetime, I shall make a comfortable fortune from the speculation."

"What a gigantic scheme!" I exclaimed.

"Ah," he said, complacently, "we Americans don't stick at trifles."

"Oh, marvellous practical genius of America!" I cried, "to eclipse Herodotus and Diodorus, not to mention Bruce and Cailliaud, and inscribe Herndonville on the arcanum of the Innermost! If the Americans should discover the origin of evil, they would run up penitentiaries all over the country, modelled to suit 'practical purposes.'"

"I think that would pay," said Herndon, reflectively.

But though I then stopped the conversation, yet I felt its influence afterwards. The divine enthusiasm for *knowing*, that had inspired me for the last three years, and had left no room for any other thought in connection with the discovery,—this enthusiasm felt chilled and deadened. I felt reproached that I had not thought of founding a Pottsville or Jenkinsville, and my grand purpose seemed small and vague and indefinite. The vivid, living thoughts that had enkindled me fell back cold and lifeless into the tedious, reedy water. For we had now reached the immense shallow lake that Werne has since described, and the scenery had become flat and monotonous, as if in sympathy with the low, marshy place to which my mind had been driven. The intricate windings of the river, after we had passed the lake, rendered the navigation very slow and difficult; and the swarms of flies, that plagued us for the first time seriously, brought petty annoyances to view more forcibly than we had experienced in all our voyage before.

After some days' pushing in this way, now driven by a strong head wind almost back from our course, again, by a sudden change, carried rapidly many miles on our journey,—after some days of this sailing, we arrived at a long, low reef of rocks. The water here became so shallow and boisterous that further attempt at sailing was impossible, and we determined to take our boat to pieces as much as we could, and carry it with us, while we walked along the shore of the river. I concluded, from the marked depression in the ground we had just passed, that there must be a corresponding elevation about here, to give the water a sufficient head to pass over the high ground below; and the almost cataract appearance of the river added strength to my hypothesis. We were all four armed to the teeth, and the natives had shown themselves, hitherto, either so friendly or so indifferent that we did not have much apprehension on account of personal safety. So we set out with beating hearts. Our path was exceedingly difficult to traverse, leading chiefly among low trees and over the sharp stones that had rolled from the river,—now close by the noisy stream, which babbled and foamed as if it had gone mad,—now creeping on our knees through bushes, matted with thick, twining vines,—now wading across an open morass,—now in mimosa woods, or slipping in and out of the feathery dhelb-palms.

Since our conversation spoken of above, Herndon and I had talked little with each other, and now usually spoke merely of the incidents of the journey, the obstacles, etc.; we scarcely mentioned that for which we were both longing with intense desire, and the very thoughts of which made my heart beat quicker and the blood rush to my face. One day we came to a place where the river made a bend of about two miles and then passed almost parallel to our point of view. I proposed to Herndon that he should pursue the course of the river, and that I would strike a little way back into the country, and make a short cut across to the other side of the bend, where he and the men would stop, pitch our night-tent, and wait for me. Herndon assented, and we parted. The low fields around us changed, as I went on, to firm, hard, rising ground, that gradually became sandy and arid. The luxuriant vegetation that clung around the banks of the river seemed to be dried up little by little, until only a few dusty bushes and thorn-acacias studded in clumps a great, sandy, and rocky tract of country, which rolled monotonously back from the river border with a steadily increasing elevation. A sandy plain never gives me a sense of real substance; it always seems as if it must be merely a covering for something,—a sheet thrown over the bed where a dead man is lying. And especially here did this broad, trackless, seemingly boundless desert face me with its blank negation, like the old obstinate "No" which Nature always returns at first to your eager questioning. It provoked me, this staring reticence of the scenery, and stimulated me to a sort of dogged exertion. I think I walked steadily for about three hours over the jagged rocks and burning sands, interspersed with a few patches of straggling grass,—all the time up hill, with never a valley to vary the monotonous climbing,—until the bushes began to thicken in about the same manner as they had thinned into the desert, the grass and herbage herded closer together under my feet, and, beating off the ravenous sand, gradually expelled the last trace of it, a few tall trees strayed timidly among the lower shrubbery, growing more and more thickly, till I found myself at the border of an apparently extensive forest. The contrast was great between the view before and behind me. Behind lay the road I had achieved, the monotonous, toilsome, wearisome desert, the dry, formal introduction, as it were, to my coming journey. Before, long, cool vistas opened green through delicious shades,—a track seemed to be almost made over the soft grass, that wound in and out among the trees, and lost itself in interminable mazes. I plunged into the profound depths of the still forest, and confidently followed for path the first open space in which I found myself.

It was a strangely still wood for the tropics,—no chattering parroquets, no screaming magpies, none of the sneering, gibing dissonances that I had been accustomed to,—all was silent, and yet intensely living. I fancied that the noble trees took pleasure in growing, they were so energized with life in every leaf. I noticed another peculiarity,—there was little underbrush, little of the luxuriance of vines and creepers, which is so striking in an African forest. Parasitic life, luxurious idleness, seemed impossible here; the atmosphere was too sacred, too solemn, for the fantastic ribaldry of scarlet runners, of flaunting yellow streamers. The lofty boughs interlaced in arches overhead, and the vast dim aisles opened far down in the tender gloom of the wood and faded slowly away in the distance. And every little spray of leaves that tossed airily in the pleasant breeze, every slender branch swaying gently in the wind, every young sapling pushing its childish head panting for light through the mass of greenery and quivering with golden sunbeams, every trunk of aged tree gray with moss and lichens, every tuft of flowers, seemed thrilled and vivified by some wonderful knowledge which it held secret, some consciousness of boundless, inexhaustible existence, some music of infinite unexplored thought concealing treasures of unlimited action. And it was the knowledge, the consciousness, that it was unlimited which seemed to give such elastic energy to this strange forest. But at all events, it was such a relief to find the everlasting negation of the desert nullified, that my dogged resolution insensibly changed to an irrepressible enthusiasm, which bore me lightly along, scarcely sensible of fatigue.

The ascent had become so much steeper, and parts of the forest seemed to slope off into such sudden declivities and even precipices, that I concluded I was ascending a mountain, and, from the length of time I had been in the forest, I judged that it must be of considerable height. The wood suddenly broke off as it had begun, and, emerging from the cool shade, I found myself in a complete

wilderness of rock. Rocks of enormous size were thrown about in apparently the wildest confusion, on the side of what I now perceived to be a high mountain. How near the summit I was I had no means of determining, as huge boulders blocked up the view at a few paces ahead. I had had about eight hours' tramp, with scarcely any cessation; yet now my excitement was too great to allow me to pause to eat or rest. I was anxious to press on, and determine that day the secret which I was convinced lay entombed in this sepulchre. So again I pressed onward,—this time more slowly,—having to pick my way among the bits of jagged granite filling up terraces sliced out of the mountain, around enormous rocks projecting across my path,—overhanging precipices that sheered straight down into dark abysses, (I must have verged round to a different side from that I came up on,)—creeping through narrow passages formed by the junction of two immense boulders. Tearing my hands with the sharp corners of the rocks, I climbed in vain hope of at last seeing the summit. Still rocks piled on rocks faced my wearied eyes, vainly striving to pierce through some chink or cranny into the space behind them. Still rocks, rocks, rocks, against whose adamantine sides my feeble will dashed restlessly and impotently. My eyeballs almost burst, as it seemed, in the intense effort to strain through those stone prison-walls. And by one of those curious links of association by which two distant scenes are united as one, I seemed again to be sitting in my garret, striving to pierce the darkness for an answer to the question then raised, and at the same moment passed over me, like the sweep of angels' wings, the consciousness of that Presence which had there infolded me. And with that consciousness, the eager, irritated waves of excitement died away, and there was a calm, in which I no longer beat like a caged beast against the never-ending rocks, but, borne irresistibly along in the strong current of a mighty, still emotion, pressed on with a certainty that left no room for excitement, because none for doubt. And so I came upon it. Swinging round one more rock, hanging over a breathless precipice, and landing upon the summit of the mountain, I beheld it stretched at my feet: a lake about five miles in circumference, bedded like an eye in the naked, bony rock surrounding it, with quiet rippling waters placidly smiling in the level rays of the afternoon sun,—the Unfathomable Secret, the Mystery of Ages, the long sought for, the Source of the Nile.

For, from a broad cleft in the rocks, the water hurled itself out of its hiding-place, and, dashing down over its rocky bed, rushed impetuous over the sloping country, till, its force being spent, it waded tediously through the slushing reeds of the hill-land again, and so rolled down to sea. For, while I stood there, it seemed as if my vision were preternaturally sharpened, and I followed the bright river in its course, through the alternating marsh and desert,—through the land where Zeus went banqueting among the blameless Ethiopians, —through the land where the African princes watched from afar the destruction of Cambyses's army,—past Meroë, Thebes, Cairo; bearing upon its heaving bosom anon the cradle of Moses, the gay vessels of the inundation festivals, the stately processions of the mystic priesthood, the gorgeous barge of Cleopatra, the victorious trireme of Antony, the screaming vessels of fighting soldiers, the stealthy boats of Christian monks, the glittering, changing, flashing tumult of thousands of years of life,—ever flowing, ever ebbing, with the mystic river, on whose surface it seethed and bubbled. And the germ of all this vast varying scene lay quietly hidden in the wonderful lake at my feet. But human life is always composed of inverted cones, whose bases, upturned to the eye, present a vast area, diversified with countless phenomena; but when the screen that closes upon them a little below the surface is removed, we shall be able to trace the many-lined figures, each to its simple apex,—one little point containing the essence and secret of the whole. Once or twice in the course of a lifetime are a few men permitted to catch a glimpse of these awful Beginnings,—to touch for a minute the knot where all the tangled threads ravel themselves out smoothly. I had found such a place,—had had such an ineffable vision,—and, overwhelmed with tremendous awe, I sank on my knees, lost in GOD.

After a little while, as far as I can recollect, I rose and began to take the customary observations, marked the road by which I had come up the mountain, and planned a route for rejoining Herndon. But ere long all subordinate thoughts and actions seemed to be swallowed up in the great tide of

thought and feeling that overmastered me. I scarcely remember anything from the time when the lake first burst upon my view, till I met Herndon again. But I know, that, as the day was nearly spent, I was obliged to give up the attempt to travel back that night, especially as I now began to feel the exhaustion attendant upon my long journey and fasting. I could not have slept among those rocks, eternal guardians of the mighty secret. The absence of all breathing, transitory existence but my own rendered it too solemn for me to dare to intrude there. So I went back to the forest, (I returned much quicker than I had come,) ate some supper, and, wrapped in a blanket I had brought with me, went to sleep under the arching branches of a tree. I have as little recollection of my next day's journey, except that I defined a diagonal and thus avoided the bend. I found Herndon waiting in front of the tent, rather impatient for my arrival.

"Halloo, old fellow!" he shouted, jumping up at seeing me, "I was really getting scared about you. Where have you been? What have you seen? What are our chances? Have you had any adventures? killed any lions, or anything? By-the-by, I had a narrow escape with one yesterday. Capital shot; but prudence is the better part of valor, you know. But, really," he said again, apparently struck by my abstraction of manner, "what *have* you seen?"

"I have found the source of the Nile," I said, simply.

Is it not strange, that, when we have a great thing to say, we are always compelled to speak so simply in monosyllables? Perhaps this, too, is an example of the law that continually reduces many to one,—the unity giving the substance of the plurality; but as the heroes of the "Iliad" were obliged to repeat the messages of the gods *literatim*, so we must say a great thing as it comes to us, by itself. It is curious to me now, that I was not the least excited in announcing the discovery,—not because I did not feel the force of it, but because my mind was so filled, so to speak, so saturated, with the idea, that it was perfectly even with itself, though raised to an immensely higher level. In smaller minds an idea seizes upon one part of them, thus inequalizing it with the rest, and so, throwing them off their balance, they are literally *de*-ranged (or disarranged) with excitement. It was so with Herndon. For a minute he stared at me in stupefied astonishment, and then burst into a torrent of incoherent congratulations.

"Why, Zeitzer!" he cried, "you are the lucky man, after all. Why, your fortune's made,—you'll be the greatest man of the age. You must come to America; that is the place for appreciating such things. You'll have a Common-Council dinner in Boston, and a procession in New York. Your book will sell like wildfire. You'll be a lion of the first magnitude. Just think! The Man who discovered the Source of the Nile!"

I stood bewildered, like one suddenly awakened from sleep. The unusual excitement in one generally so self-possessed and indifferent as my companion made me wonder sufficiently; but these allusions to my greatness, my prospects, completely astounded me. What had I done,—I who had been chosen, and led step by step, with little interference of my own, to this end? What did this talk of noise and clamorous notoriety mean?

"To think," Herndon ran on, "that you should have beaten me, after all! that you should have first seen, first drunk of, first bathed in"—

"Drunk of! bathed in!" I repeated, mechanically. "Herndon, are you crazy? Would I dare to profane the sacred fountain?"

He made no reply, unless a quizzical smile might be considered as such,—but drew me within the tent, out of hearing of the two Egyptians, and bade me give an account of my adventures. When I had finished,—

"This is grand!" he exclaimed. "Now, if you will share the benefits of this discovery with me, I will halve the cost of starting that steamboat I spoke of, and our plan will soon be afloat. I shouldn't wonder, now, if one might not, in order to start the town, get up some kind of a little summer-pavilion there, on the top of the mountain,—something on the plan of the Tip-Top House at Mount Washington, you know,—hang the stars and stripes off the roof, if you're not particular, and call

it The Teuton-American. That would give you your rightful priority, you see. By the beard of the Prophet, as they say in Cairo, the thing would take!"

I laughed heartily at this idea, and tried, at first in jest, then earnestly, to make him understand I had no such plans in connection with my discovery; that I only wanted to extend the amount of knowledge in the world,—not the number of ice-cream pavilions. I offered to let him take the whole affair into his own hands,—cost, profit, and all. I wanted nothing to do with it. But he was too honest, as he thought, for that, and still talked and argued,—giving his most visionary plans a definite, tangible shape and substance by a certain process of metallicizing, until they had not merely elbowed away the last shadow of doubt, but had effectually taken possession of the whole ground, and seemed to be the only consequences possible upon such a discovery. My dislike to personal traffic in the sublimities of truth began to waver. I felt keenly the force of the argument which Herndon used repeatedly, that, if I did not thus claim the monopoly, (he talked almost as if I had invented something,) some one else would, and so injustice be added to what I had termed vulgarity. I felt that I must prevent injustice, at least. Besides, what should I have to show for all my trouble, (ah! little had I thought of "I" or my trouble a short time ago!)—what should I have gained, after all,—nay, what would there be gained for any one,—if I merely announced my discovery, without–starting the steamboat? And though I did feebly query whether I should be equally bound to establish a communication, with pecuniary emolument, to the North Pole, in case I discovered that, his remark, that this was the Nile, and had nothing to do with the North Pole, was so forcible and pertinent, that I felt ashamed of my suggestion; and upon second thought, that idea of the dinner and procession really had a good deal in it. I had been in New York, and knew the length of Broadway; and at the recollection, felt flattered by the thought of being conveyed in an open chariot drawn by four or even eight horses, with nodding plumes, (literal ones for the horses,—only metaphorical ones for me,) past those stately buildings fluttering with handkerchiefs, and through streets black with people thronging to see the man who had solved the riddle of Africa. And then it would be pleasant, too, to make a neat little speech to the Common Council,—letting the brave show catch its own tail in its mouth, by proving, that, if America did not achieve everything, she could appreciate—yes, appreciate was the word—those who did. Yes, this would be a fitting consummation; I would do it.

But, ah! how dim became the vision of that quiet lake on the summit of the mountain! How that vivid lightning-revelation faded into obscurity! Was Pharaoh again ascending his fatal chariot?

The next day we started for the ascent. We determined to follow the course of the river backwards around the bend and set out from my former starting-point, as any other course might lead us into a hopeless dilemma. We had no difficulty in finding the sandy plain, and soon reached landmarks which I was sure were on the right road; but a tramp of six or eight hours—still in the road I had passed before—brought us no nearer to our goal. In short, we wandered three days in that desert, utterly in vain. My heart sunk within me at every failure; with sickening anxiety I scanned the horizon at every point, but nothing was visible but stunted bushes and white pebbles glistening in the glaring sand.

The fourth day came,—and Herndon at last stopped short, and said, in his steady, immobile voice,—

"Zeitzer, you must have made this grand discovery in your dreams. There is no Nile up this way,—and our water-skins are almost dry. We had better return and follow up the course of the river where we left it. If we again fail, I shall return to Egypt to carry out my plan for converting the Pyramids into ice-houses. They are excellently well adapted for the purpose, and in that country a good supply of ice is a *desideratum*. Indeed, if my plan meets with half the success it deserves, the antiquaries two centuries hence will conclude that ice was the original use of those structures."

"Shade of Cheops, forbid!" I exclaimed.

"Cheops be hanged!" returned my irreverent companion. "The world suffers too much now from overcrowded population to permit a man to claim standing-room three thousand years after his

death,—especially when the claim is for some acres apiece, as in the case of these pyramid-builders. Will you go back with me?"

I declined for various reasons, not all very clear even to myself; but I was convinced that his peculiar enticements were the cause of our failure, and I hated him unreasonably for it. I longed to get rid of him, and of his influence over me. Fool that I was! *I* was the sinner, and not he; for he *could* not see, because he was born blind, while *I* fell with my eyes open. I still held on to the vague hope, that, were I alone, I might again find that mysterious lake; for I knew I had not dreamed. So we parted.

But we two (my servant and I) were not left long alone in the Desert. The next day a party of natives surprised us, and, after some desperate fighting, we were taken prisoners, sold as slaves from tribe to tribe into the interior, and at length fell into the hands of some traders on the western coast, who gave us our freedom. Unwilling, however, to return home without some definite success, I made several voyages in a merchant-vessel. But I was born for one purpose; failing in that, I had nothing further to live for. The core of my life was touched at that fatal river, and a subtile disease has eaten it out till nothing but the rind is left. A wave, gathering to the full its mighty strength, had upreared itself for a moment majestically above its fellows,—falling, its scattered spray can only impotently sprinkle the dull, dreary shore. Broken and nerveless, I can only wait the lifting of the curtain, quietly wondering if a failure be always irretrievable,—if a prize once lost can never again be found.

AN EXPERIENCE

A common spring of water, sudden welling,
Unheralded, from some unseen impelling,
Unrecognized, began his life alone.
A rare and haughty vine looked down above him,
Unclasped her climbing glory, stooped to love him,
And wreathed herself about his curb of stone.

Ah, happy fount! content, in upward smiling,
To feel no life but in her fond beguiling,
To see no world but through her veil of green!
And happy vine, secure, in downward gazing,
To find one theme his heart forever praising,—
The crystal cup a throne, and she the queen!

I speak, I grew about him, ever dearer;
The water rose to meet me, ever nearer;
The water passed one day this curb of stone.
Was it a weak escape from righteous boundings,
Or yet a righteous scorn of false surroundings?
I only know I live my life alone.

Alone? The smiling fountain seems to chide me,—
The constant fountain, rooted still beside me,
And speaking wistful words I toil to hear:
Ah, how alone! The mystic words confound me;
And still the awakened fountain yearns beyond me,
Streaming to some unknown I may not near.

"Oh, list," he cries, "the wondrous voices calling!
I hear a hundred streams in silver falling;
I feel the far-off pulses of the sea.
Oh, come!" Then all my length beside him faring,
I strive and strain for growth, and soon, despairing,
I pause and wonder where the wrong can be.

Were we not equal? Nay, I stooped, from climbing,
To his obscure, to list the golden chiming,
So low to all the world, so plain to me.
Now,'twere some broad fair streamlet, onward tending
Should mate with him, and both, serenely blending,
Move in a grand accordance to the sea.

I tend not so; I hear no voices calling;
I have no care for rivers silver-falling;
I hate the far-off sea that wrought my pain.

Oh for some spell of change, my life new-aiming!
Or best, by spells his too much life reclaiming,
Hold all within the fountain-curb again!

ABOUT THIEVES

It is recorded in the pages of Diodorus Siculus, that Actisanes, the Ethiopian, who was king of Egypt, caused a general search to be made for all Egyptian thieves, and that all being brought together, and the king having "given them a just hearing," he commanded their noses to be cut off,—and, of course, what a king of Egypt commanded was done; so that all the Egyptian "knucks," "cracksmen," "shoplifters," and pilferers generally, of whatever description known to the slang terras of the time, became marked men.

Inspired, perhaps, with the very idea on which the Ethiopian acted, the police authorities have lately provided, that, in an out-of-the-way room, on a back street, the honest men of New York city may scan the faces of its thieves, and hold silent communion with that interesting part of the population which has agreed to defy the laws and to stand at issue with society. Without disturbing the deep pool of penalogy, or entering at all into the question, as to whether Actisanes was right, or whether the police of New York do not overstep their authority in putting on the walls this terrible bill of attainder against certain citizens of the United States, whom their country's constitution has endeavored to protect from "infamous punishments,"—the student of moral science will certainly be thankful for the faces.

We do not remember ever having "opened" a place or picked a pocket. We have made puns, however; and so, upon the Johnsonian *dictum*, the thing is latent in us, and we feel the affinity. We do not hate thieves. We feel satisfied that even in the character of a man who does not respect ownership there may be much to admire. Sparkles of genius scintillate along the line of many a rogue's career. Many there are, it is true, who are obtuse and vicious below the mean,—but a far greater number display skill and courage infinitely above it. Points of noble character, of every good as well as most base characteristics of the human race, will be found in the annals of thievery, when they are written aright.

Thieves, like the State of Massachusetts in the great man's oration, "have their history," and it may be safely asserted that they did not steal it. It is dimly hinted in the verse of a certain ancient, that there was a time in a remoter antiquity "ere thieves were feared"; yet even this is cautiously quiet as to their non-existence. Homer, recounting traditions old in his time, chuckles with narrative delight over the boldness, wit, and invention of a great cattle-stealer, and for his genius renders him the ultimatum of Greek tribute, intellectually speaking, by calling him a son of Zeus. Herodotus speaks plainly and tells a story; and the best of all his stories, to our thinking, is a thief's story, which we abridge thus.

"The king Rhampsinitus, the priests informed me, possessed a great quantity of money, such as no succeeding king was able to surpass or nearly come up to, and, wishing to treasure it, he built a chamber of stone, one wall of which was against the palace. But the builder, forming a plan against it, even in building, fitted one of the stones so that it might be easily taken out by two men or even one.

"In course of time, and when the king had laid up his treasures in the chamber, the builder, finding his end approaching, called to him his two sons and described to them how he had contrived, and, having clearly explained everything, he told them, if they would observe his directions closely, they might be stewards of the king's riches. He accordingly died, and the sons were not long in applying themselves to the work; but, having come by night to the palace, and having found the stone as described, they easily removed it, and carried off a great quantity of treasure.

"When the king opened the chamber, he was astonished to see some vessels deficient; but he was not able to accuse any one, as the seals were unbroken, and the chamber well secured. When, therefore, on his opening it two or three times, the treasures were always evidently diminished, he adopted the following plan: he ordered traps to be made and placed them round the vessels in which the treasures were. But when the thieves came, as before, and one of them had entered, as soon as he went near a vessel, he was straightway caught in the trap; perceiving, therefore, in what a predicament

he was, he immediately called to his brother, told him what had happened, and bade him enter as quickly as possible and cut off his head, lest, if seen and recognized, he should ruin him also. The other thought he spoke well, and did as he was advised; then, having fitted in the stone, he returned home, taking with him his brother's head.

"When day came, the king, having entered the chamber, was astonished at seeing the body of the thief in the trap without the head, but the chamber secured, and no apparent means of entrance or exit. In this perplexity he contrived thus: he hung up the body of the thief from the wall, and, having placed sentinels there, he ordered them to seize and bring before him whomsoever they should see weeping or expressing commiseration for the spectacle.

"The mother was greatly grieved at the body being suspended, and, coming to words with her surviving son, commanded him, by any means he could, to contrive how he might take down and bring away the corpse of his brother; but, should he not do so, she threatened to go to the king and tell who had the treasure. When the mother treated her surviving son harshly, and he, with many entreaties, was unable to persuade her, he contrived this plan: he put skins filled with wine on some asses, and drove to where the corpse was detained, and there skilfully loosed the strings of two or three of those skins, and, when the wine ran out, he beat his head and cried aloud, as if he knew not which one to turn to first. But the sentinels, seeing wine flow, ran with vessels and caught it, thinking it their gain,—whereupon, the man, feigning anger, railed against them. But the sentinels soothed and pacified him, and at last he set the skins to rights again. More conversation passed; the sentinels joked with him and moved him to laughter, and he gave them one of the skins, and lay down with them and drank, and thus they all became of a party; and the sentinels, becoming exceedingly drunk, fell asleep where they had been drinking. Then the thief took down the body of his brother, and, departing, carried it to his mother, having obeyed her injunctions.

"After this the king resorted to many devices to discover and take the thief, but all failed through his daring and shrewdness: when, at last, sending throughout all the cities, the king caused a proclamation to be made, offering a pardon and even reward to the man, if he would discover himself. The thief, relying on this promise, went to the palace; and Rhampsinitus greatly admired him, and gave him his daughter in marriage, accounting him the most knowing of all men; for that the Egyptians are superior to all others, but he was superior to the Egyptians."

The Egyptians appear to have given their attention to stealing in every age; and at the present time, the ruler there may be said to be not so much the head man of the land as the head thief. Travellers report that that country is divided into departments upon a basis of abstraction, and that the interests of each department, in pilfering respects, are under the supervision of a Chief of Thieves. The Chief of Thieves is responsible to the government, and to him all those who steal professionally must give in their names, and must also keep him informed of their successful operations. When goods are missed, the owner applies to the government, is referred to the Chief of Thieves for the Department, and all particulars of quantity, quality, time, and manner of abstraction, to the best of his knowledge and belief, being given, the goods are easily identified and at once restored,—less a discount of twenty-five per cent. Against any rash man who should undertake a private speculation, of course the whole fraternity of thieves would be the beat possible police. This, after all, appears to be a mere compromise of police taxes. He who has no goods to lose, or, having, can watch them so well as not to need the police, the government agrees shall not be made to pay for a police; but he whom the fact of loss is against must pay well to be watched.

Something of this principle is observable in all the East The East is the fatherland of thieves, and Oriental annals teem with brilliant examples of their exploits. The story of Jacoub Ben-Laith, founder of the Soffarid dynasty,—otherwise, first of the Tinker-Kings of the larger part of Persia,—is especially excellent upon that proverbial "honor among thieves" of which most men have heard.

Working weary hour after hour in his little shop,—toiling away days, weeks, and months for a meagre subsistence,—Jacoub finally turned in disgust from his hammer and forge, and became a

"minion of the moon." He is said, however, to have been reasonable in plunder, and never to have robbed any of all they had. One night he entered the palace of Darham, prince of the province of Segestan, and, working diligently, soon gathered together an immense amount of valuables, with which he was making off, when, in crossing a very dark room, his foot struck upon a hard substance, and the misstep nearly threw him down. Stooping, he picked up that upon which he had trodden. He believed it, from feeling, to be a precious stone. He carried it to his mouth, touched it with his tongue,—it was salt! And thus, by his own action, he had tasted salt beneath the prince's roof,—in Eastern parlance, had accepted his hospitality, become his guest. He could not rob him. Jacoub laid down his burden,—robes embroidered in gold upon the richest materials, sashes wanting only the light to flash with precious stones worked in the braid, all the costly and rare of an Eastern prince's palace gathered in one common spoil,—laid it all down, and departed as silently as he had come.

In the morning the disorder seen told only of attempted robbery. Diligent search being made, the officers charged with it became satisfied of Jacoub's complicity. They brought him before the prince. There, being charged with the burglary, Jacoub at once admitted it, and told the whole story. The prince, honoring him for his honor, at once took him into his service, and employed him with entire confidence in whatever of important or delicate he had to do that needed a man of truth and courage; and Jacoub from that beginning went up step by step, till he himself became prince of a province, and then of many provinces, and finally king of a mighty realm. He had soul enough, according to Carlyle's idea, not to need salt; but, for all that, the salt saved him.

Another king of Persia, Khurreem Khan, was not ashamed to admit, with a crown on his head, that he had once been a thief, and was wont to recount of himself what in these days we should call a case of conscience. Thus he told it:—

"When I was a poor soldier in Nadir Shah's camp, my necessities led me to take from a shop a gold-embossed saddle, sent thither by an Afghan chief to be repaired. I soon afterward heard that the owner of the shop was in prison, sentenced to be hanged. My conscience smote me. I restored the stolen article to the very place whence I had removed it, and watched till it was discovered by the tradesman's wife. She uttered a scream of joy, on seeing it, and fell on her knees, invoking blessings on the person who had brought it back, and praying that he might live to have a hundred such saddles. I am quite certain that the honest prayer of the old woman aided my fortune in attaining the splendor she wished me to enjoy."

These are variations upon the general theme of thievery. They all tend to show that it is, at the least, unsafe to take the fact of a man's having committed a certain crime against property as a proof *per se* that he is radically bad or inferior in intellect. "Your thief looks in the crowd," says Byron,

"Exactly like the rest, or rather better,"—

and this, not because physiognomy is false, but the thief's face true. Of a promiscuous crowd, taken almost anywhere, the pickpocket in it is the smartest man present, in all probability. According to Ecclesiasticus, it is "the *heart* of man that changeth his countenance"; and it does seem that it is to his education, and not to his heart, that man does violence in stealing. It is certainly in exact proportion to his education that he feels in reference to it, and does or does not "regret the necessity."

And, indeed, that universal doctrine of contraries may work here as elsewhere; and it might not he difficult to demonstrate that a majority of thieves are better fitted by their nature and capacity for almost any other position in life than the one they occupy through perverse circumstance and unaccountable accident. Though mostly men of fair ability, they are not generally successful. Considering the number of thieves, there are but few great ones. In this "Rogues' Gallery" of the New York Police Commissioners we find the face of a "first-rate" burglar among the ablest of the eighty of whom he is one. He is a German, and has passed twenty years in the prisons of his native land: has that leonine aspect sometimes esteemed a physiognomical attribute of the German, and, with fair enough qualities generally, is without any especial intellectual strength. Near him is another "first-rate,"—all energy and action, acute enough, a quick reasoner, very cool and resolute. Below these

is the face of one whom the thief-takers think lightly of, and call a man of "no account." Yet he is a man of far better powers than either of the "first-rates,"—has more thought and equal energy,—a mind seldom or never at rest,—is one to make new combinations and follow them to results with an ardor almost enthusiastic. From some want of adaptation not depending upon intellectual power, he is inferior as a thief to his inferiors.

This man was without a cravat when his picture was taken, and his white shirt-collar, coming up high in the neck, has the appearance of a white neckerchief. This trifle of dress, with the intellectual look of the man, strikes every observer as giving him a clerical appearance. The picture strongly resembles—more in air, perhaps, than in feature—the large engraved portrait of Summerfield. There is not so much of calm comprehensiveness of thought, and there are more angles. Thief though he be, he has fair language,—not florid or rhetorical, but terse and very much to the point. If bred as a divine, he would have held his place among the "brilliants" of the time, and been as original, erratic, or *outré* as any. What a fortune lost! It is part of the fatality for the man not to know it, at least in time. Even villany would have put him into his proper place, but for that film over the mental vision. "If rogues," said Franklin, "knew the advantages attached to the practice of the virtues, they would become honest men from mere roguery."

Many of the faces of this Rogues' Gallery are very well worth consideration. Of a dozen leading pickpockets, who work singly, or two or three together, and are mostly English, what is first noted is not favorable to English teaching or probity;—their position sits easily upon them. There is not one that gives indication of his having passed through any mental struggle before he sat down in life as a thief. Though all men capable of thought, they have not thought very deeply upon this point. One of them is a natural aristocrat,—a man who could keep the crowd aloof by simple volition, and without offense; nothing whatever harsh in him,—polite to all, and amiable to a fault with his fellows.

There would be style in everything he did or said. He is one to astonish drawing-rooms and bewilder promenades by the taste and elegance of his dress. Upon that altar, doubtless, he sacrificed his principles; but the sacrifice was not a great one.

"'Tis only at the bar or in the dungeon that wise men know a felon by his features." Another English pickpocket appears to have Alps on Alps of difference between him and a thief. Good-nature prevails; there is a little latent fire; not enough energy to be bad, or good, against the current. He has some quiet dignity, too,—the head, in fine, of a genial, dining Dombey, if such a man can be imagined. Face a good oval, rather full in flesh, forehead square, without particular strength, a nose that was never unaccompanied by good taste and understanding, and mouth a little lickerish;—the incarnation of the popular idea of a bank-president.

The other day he turned to get into an omnibus at one of the ferries, and just as he did so, there, it so happened, was a young lady stepping in before him. The quiet old gentleman, with that warmth of politeness that sits so well upon quiet old gentlemen in the presence of young ladies, helped her in, and took a seat beside her. At half a block up the street the president startled the other passengers by the violent gesticulations with which he endeavored to attract the attention of a gentleman passing down on the sidewalk; the passengers watched with interest the effect or non-effect of his various episodes of telegraphic desperation, and saw, with a regret equal to his own, that the gentleman on the sidewalk saw nothing, and turned the corner as calmly as a corner could be turned; but the old gentleman, not willing to lose him in that manner, jumped out of the 'bus and ran after, with a liveliness better becoming his eagerness than his age. In a moment more, the young lady, admonished by the driver's rap on the roof, would have paid her fare, but her portmonnaie was missing. I know not whether the bank-president was or was not suspected;—

"All I can say is, that he had the money."

Look closer, and beneath that look of good-humor you will find a little something of superciliousness. You will see a line running down the cheek from behind each nostril, drawing the

whole face, good-humor and all, into a sneer of habitual contempt,—contempt, no doubt, of the vain endeavors and devices of men to provide against the genius of a good pickpocket.

It was said of Themistocles, that

"he, with all his greatness, Could ne'er command his hands."

Now this man is a sort of Themistocles. He is a man of wealth, and can snap his fingers at Fortune; can sneer that little sneer of his at things generally, and be none the worse; but what he cannot do is, to shake off an incubus that sits upon his life in the shape of old Habit severe as Fate. This man, with apparently all that is necessary in the world to keep one at peace with it, and to ease declining life with comforts, and cheer with the serener pleasures, is condemned to keep his peace in a state of continual uncertainty; for, seeing a purse temptingly exposed, he is physically incapable of refraining from the endeavor to take it. What devil is there in his finger-ends that brings this about? Is this part of the curse of crime,—that, having once taken up with it, a man cannot cut loose, but, with all the disposition to make his future life better, he must, as by the iron links of Destiny, be chained to his past?

There is a Chinese thief-story somewhat in point here. A man who was very poor stole from his neighbor, who was very rich, a single duck. He cooked and ate it, and went to bed happy; but before morning he felt all over his body and limbs a remarkable itching, a terrible irritation that prevented sleep. When daylight came, he perceived that he had sprouted all over with duck-feathers. This was an unlooked-for judgment, and the man gave himself up to despair,—when he was informed by an emanation of the divine Buddha that the feathers would fall from him the moment he received a reproof and admonition from the man whose duck he had stolen. This only increased his despair, for he knew his neighbor to be one of the laughter-loving kind, who would not go to the length of reproof, though he lost a thousand ducks. After sundry futile attempts to swindle his neighbor out of the needed admonition, our friend was compelled to divulge, not only the theft, but also the means of cure, when he was cured.

And this good, easy man, who is wealthy with the results of pocket-picking;—that well-cut black coat, that satin waistcoat, that elegantly-adjusted scarf and well-arranged collar, they are all duck-feathers; but the feather that itches is that irreclaimable tendency of the fingers to find their way into other people's pockets. Pity, however, the man who cannot be at ease till he has received a reproof from every one whose pocket he has picked through a long life in London and in New York city.

The amount of mental activity that gleams out upon you from these walls is something wonderful; evidence of sufficient thinking to accomplish almost any intellectual task; thought-life crowded with what experience!

The "confidence" swindlers are mostly Americans,—so that, the pickpockets being mostly English, you may see some national character in crime, aside from the tendency of races. The Englishman is conservative,—sticks to traditions,—picks and plods in the same old way in which ages have picked and plodded before him. Exactly like the thief of ancient Athens, he

"walks The street, and picks your pocket as he talks On some pretence with you";

at the same time, with courage and self-reliance admirably English, risking his liberty on his skill. The American illuminates his practice with an intellectual element, faces his man, "bidding a gay defiance to mischance," and gains his end easily by some acute device that merely transfers to himself, with the knowledge and consent of the owner, the subtile principle of property.

This "confidence" game is a thing of which the ancients appear to have known nothing. The French have practised it with great success, and may have invented it. It appears particularly French in some of its phases,—in the manner that is necessary for its practice, in its wit and finesse. The affair of the Diamond Necklace, with which all the world is familiar, is the most magnificent instance of it on record. A lesser case, involving one of the same names, and playing excellently upon woman's vanity, illustrates the French practice.

One evening, as Marie Antoinette sat quietly in her *loge* at the theatre, the wife of a wealthy tradesman of Paris, sitting nearly *vis-à-vis* to the Queen, made great parade of her toilet, and seemed peculiarly desirous of attracting attention to a pair of splendid bracelets, gleaming with the chaste contrast of emeralds and diamonds. She was not without success. A gentleman of elegant mien and graceful manner presented himself at the door of her *loge*; he delivered a message from the Queen. Her Majesty had remarked the singular beauty of the bracelets, and wished to inspect one of them more closely. What could be more gratifying? In the seventh heaven of delighted vanity, the tradesman's wife unclasped the bracelet and gave it to the gentleman, who bowed himself out, and left her—as you have doubtless divined he would—abundant leisure to learn of her loss.

Early the next morning, however, an officer from the department of police called at this lady's house. The night before, a thief had been arrested leaving the theatre, and on his person were found many valuables,—among others, a splendid bracelet. Being penitent, he had told, to the best of his recollection, to whom the articles belonged, and the lady called upon was indicated as the owner of the bracelet. If Madame possessed the mate to this singular bracelet, it was only necessary to intrust it to the officer, and, if it were found to compare properly with the other, both would be immediately sent home, and Madame would have only a trifling fee to pay. The bracelet was given willingly, and, with the stiff courtesy inseparable from official dignity, the officer took his leave, and at the next *café* joined his fellow, the gentleman of elegant mien and graceful manner. The bracelets were not found to compare properly, and therefore were not returned.

These faces are true to the nationality,—all over American. They are much above the average in expression,—lighted with clear, well-opened eyes, intelligent and perceptive; most have an air of business frankness well calculated to deceive. There is one capacious, thought-freighted forehead. All are young.

No human observer will fail to be painfully struck with the number of boys whose faces are here exposed. There are boys of every age, from five to fifteen, and of every possible description, good, bad, and indifferent. The stubborn and irreclaimable imp of evil nature peers out sullenly and doggedly, or sparkles on you a pair of small snake-eyes, fruitful of deceit and cunning. The better boy, easily moved, that might become anything, mercurial and volatile, "most ignorant of what he's most assured," reflects on his face the pleasure of having his picture taken, and smiles good-humoredly, standing in this worst of pillories, to be pelted along a lifetime with unforgetting and unforgiving glances. With many of these boys, this is a family matter. Here are five brothers, the youngest very young indeed,—and the father not very old. One of the brothers, bright-looking as boy can be, is a young Jack Sheppard, and has already broken jail five times. Many are trained by old burglars to be put through windows where men cannot go, and open doors. In a row of second-class pickpockets, nearly all boys, there is observable on almost every face some expression of concern, and one instinctively thanks Heaven that the boys appear to be frightened. Yet, after all, perhaps it is hardly worth while. The reform of boy thieves was first agitated a long while since, and we have yet to hear of some encouraging result. The earliest direct attempt we know of, with all the old argument, *pro*

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