# VARIOUS

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# Содержание

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## PRONOUNCERS

Do you not find, in almost every company, one who pronounces decisively upon every matter which comes in question? His voice is loud and firm, his eye bold and confident, and his whole manner oracular. No cold hesitations as to points of fact ever tease him. Little time does he require to make up his mind on any speculative subject. He is all *yes* or all *no* at once and without appeal. Opposite opinions he treats with, at the best, a sublime pity, meant to be graceful, but, in reality, galling. He is often a goose; but, be he what he may, it is ten to one that he carries off the majority of the company in the mere sweep of his gown. They are led by him for the time, fascinated by the energy of his pronunciations. They may all recover from him afterwards—some after one day, some after two, and particularly weak men after, perhaps, a week. At the moment, however, the pronouncer has vast influence, and, if immediate action can be determined on, it is very likely that he drags his victims into some committal of themselves, from which subsequent escape may not be very easy.

While pronouncing is thus the prominent quality of a few, it is more or less the vice of nearly all. Men feel that they have an inherent right to their opinion, and to the promulgation of it, and are not very apt to reflect that there is another question—as to whether their opinion be worth delivering; whether it has been formed upon a good basis of knowledge or experience, or upon any basis at all; whether it is the emanation of ripe judgment and reflection, or of some mere passing gust of ideas springing from the whim of the minute. Hence, when any question arises, it is seldom found that any one is quite unprepared to give some sort of decision. Even the giddy girl of seventeen will have something to say upon it, albeit she may never have heard of the matter before. It is thought foolish-looking not to be able to pronounce, as if one imperiled the right of private judgment itself by not being prepared in every case to act upon it. In consequence, what absurd opinions do we hear in all kinds of companies upon all kinds of topics! How the angels, who know better, must weep!

A conversational party even of tolerably well-educated persons, often presents itself in a ludicrous light. Some question has arisen amongst them. No one has any clear or definite information upon it. They have had disputes about the simplest matters of fact involved in it. Yet no person there, down to the youngest, but would take scorn to be held as incapable of pronouncing upon it. There are as many opinions as there are persons present, and not one less confident than another. What is very natural in such circumstances, no one has the least respect for the opinions of any of the rest. Each, in fact, does justice upon his neighbour for the absurdity of pronouncing without grounds, while incapable of seeing the absurdity in himself. And thus an hour will be passed in a most unprofitable manner, and perhaps the social spirit of the company be not a little marred. How much better to say: 'Well, that is a subject I know nothing about: I will not undertake to judge.' Supposing all who are present to be in the same predicament, they might dismiss the barren subject, and start another on which some one could throw real light, and from which, accordingly, all might derive some benefit.

Is not this habit of pronouncing without preparation in inquiry and reflection just one of the causes of that remarkable diversity of opinion which is so often deplored for its unpleasant consequences? In ignorance—fancy, whim, and prejudice usurp the directing power. If we take no time for consideration, we shall be apt to plunge into an error, and afterwards persevere in it for the sake of consistency, or because it has become a thing which we regard as our own. In such circumstances, no wonder there are as many 'minds' as 'men.' But when any one can speak on the

ground of well-ascertained facts, and after some deliberation on the bearings of the question, he must carry others with him, not by fascination, but by real conviction, and thus greatly reduce the proportion of opinions to men. Very likely, some other man has got hold of a somewhat different range of facts, and come to different conclusions: he, too, will have his party of followers. But there being two or three discrepant views on the subject, is a much less evil than there being as many as there are individuals.

The right of pronouncing upon public affairs is one that would be particularly clung to if there were any danger of its being lost, and it certainly is not in England that any writer would be found ready to challenge so valued a privilege. At the same time, no one will seriously deny, that if this right were used more generally with the advantage of a tolerable knowledge of the subject, it would be an improvement. Public men may be acting, as, indeed, they must generally do, upon certain data carefully brought out by inquiry: they may judge and act amiss after all, for human judgment is fallible. But when we contrast their means of forming a judgment with those of many persons who hesitate not to pronounce upon their measures, it cannot be denied that they stand in a strong position. When we hear a bold condemnation of their acts from men who, so far from having gone through the same process of inquiry, have not even perused the documents in which the grounds of the administrative policy were explained, can we do otherwise than smile at the pretensions of the *pseudo*-judges? Is not the frequency of this unfounded judging much more apt to harden an unlucky statesman than to make him amenable to counsel? On the other hand, when a public man finds himself and his actions criticised by men who have knowledge, he must be a hardy one indeed who can entirely disregard the judgment.

If we attentively study the progress of any man who has acquired influence over his fellow-creatures—apart from certain matters in which the feelings are mainly concerned—we shall find that he has distinguished himself by a habit of not pronouncing where he has no means of forming a judgment. Such a man has had the good sense to see and confess that he could not be expected to know many things sufficiently well to entitle him to pronounce authoritatively upon them. He has probably given some considerable share of attention to certain subjects that are of some importance to his fellow-creatures, and thus fitted himself, with regard to them, to speak with more or less decision. Never found guilty of giving a vague, crudely-formed judgment on things a hundred miles out of his way, but, on the contrary, obtaining credit occasionally for the manner in which he treats those with which he is conversant, he irresistibly acquires character and influence. Young hasty minds laugh at his taking such care not to commit himself: he is perhaps taxed with getting credit for merely looking grave and holding his tongue. But this very holding of the tongue when there is nothing to say, is, in reality, one of the greatest, though often one of the last-learned virtues. Were his merits purely negative, they would be great; tending as they do to save truth from that obscuration which a multitude of ill-formed opinions necessarily throw upon it. But we shall usually discover in such men a positive merit also in their power to illustrate and give a guiding opinion upon certain subjects of importance to public or private interests.

There is not one sentence in this little essay which may not be justly set down as mere commonplace. We acknowledge the fault; but defend it on the ground that sound and useful commonplaces require a continual refreshing and re-presentment, so many persons being, after all, unaware or forgetful of them.

On a similar ground of defence, we would take leave to remind mankind of the good old maxim, 'Hear the other party.' Familiar to most people, observed by some, there are multitudes who uniformly act as if they had never heard of it. To be quite candid, we often catch ourselves neglecting it; and always, at the best, it takes a struggle to make it a reality in our conduct. Experience, however, impresses us more and more with a sense of its being absolutely essential to the ascertainment of truth in any disputable case. There is so much bias from self-love, so much recklessness about truth in general, and so much of even a sincere faithlessness of narration, that no partial account of anything

is to be trusted. It is but a small concession to the cause of truth, to wait till we hear the statement of the opposite party, or not to pronounce without it. If anything were required to prove how little this is reflected on, it would be the readiness of nearly all persons to tell their own story, without intimating the slightest doubt that it is to be implicitly received on their own shewing. One cannot walk along a street, but some friend will come up and inflict a narration, limited entirely to his own view of a case in which he is interested or aggrieved, practically ignoring that there can and must be another way of stating it. And so great is the complaisance of mankind, that no one thinks of intimating any necessity for consulting another authority before giving judgment. Here the vicious habit of thoughtless pronouncing is doubly bad, as it involves also a kind of flattery.

There are some novel doctrines and theories, which seem doomed to meet with prejudice and opposition, but which yet must have some vitality about them, seeing that they survive so much ill-treatment. It is curious to observe how little regard to the rules of reasoning is usually felt to be necessary in opposing these theories—how mere pronouncing comes to stand in their case in the stead of evidence and argument. Although they may have been brought forward as mere forms of possible truth—ideal points round which to rally the scattered forces of investigation—and only advanced as far as facts would go, and no further—you will find them denounced as visions, tending to the breach of the philosophic peace; while, on the other hand, those who oppose them, albeit on no sort of ground but a mere pronunciation of contrary opinion, obtain all the credit due to the genuine philosopher. Abstractly, it would be generally admitted that any doctrine for which a certain amount of evidence is shewn, can only be overthrown by a superior force of evidence on the other side. But practically this is of no avail. Doubt and denial are so important to philosophy, and confer such an air of superior wisdom, that merely to doubt and deny will be pretty sure to carry both the educated and the uneducated vulgar. To get a high character in that position is of course very easy. Little more than pronouncing is required. As to the respective positions of the affirmer and denier in some future time, when truth has attained the power of asserting her reign against prejudice, that is another thing.

To return to the general question—If any one be impressed by our remarks with a sense of the absurdity of pronouncing without knowledge and reflection, let him endeavour to avoid it, and he will confer a sensible benefit on society. When next he is in company, and a subject occurs to tempt him into an expression of opinion, let him pause a moment, and say to himself: 'Now, do I know anything about it—or if I know something, do I know enough—to enable me to speak without fear of being contradicted? Have I ever given it any serious reflection? Am I sure that I have an opinion about it at all? Am I sure that I entertain no prejudice on the point?' Were every one of us children of British freedom to take these precautions, there would be more power amongst us to pronounce wisely. There would be a more vigorous and healthful public opinion, and the amenity, as well as instructiveness of private society would be much increased.

# COOLING THE AIR OF ROOMS IN HOT CLIMATES

In our last number, allusion was made to a process for cooling the air of apartments in hot climates, with a view to health and comfort. The intolerable heat of the climate in India, during certain hours of the day, is well known to be the cause of much bad health among European settlers. By way of rendering the air at all endurable, the plan of agitating it with punkahs, hung to the roofs of apartments, the punkahs being moved by servants in attendance for the purpose, is adopted. Another plan of communicating a sensation of coolness, is to hang wet mats in the open windows. But by neither of these expedients is the end in view satisfactorily gained. Both are nothing else than make-shifts.

The new process of cooling now to be described, is founded on a scientific principle, certain and satisfactory in its operation, provided it be reduced to practice in a simple manner. The discoverer is Professor Piazzi Smyth, who has presented a minute account of it in a paper in the *Practical Mechanic's Journal* for October 1850, and also separately in a pamphlet. We invite public attention to this curious but simple invention, of which we shall proceed to present a few principles from the pamphlet just referred to.

Mr Smyth first speaks of the uselessness of the punkah, and the danger of the wet mats. 'The wet mats in the windows for the wind to blow through, cannot be employed but when the air is dry as well as hot, and even then are most unhealthy, for although the air may feel dry to the skin, there is generally far more moisture in it than in our own climate; but the height of the temperature increasing the capacity of the air for moisture, makes that air at 80 degrees feel very dry, which at 40 degrees would be very damp. Now, one of the reasons of the lassitude felt in warm climates is, that the air expanding with the heat, while the lungs remain of the same capacity, they must take in a smaller quantity by *weight*, though the same by *measure*, of oxygen, the supporter of life; but if, in addition to the air being rarefied, it be also still further distended by the vapour of water being mixed with it, it is evident that a certain number of cubic inches by measure, or the lungs full, will contain a less weight of oxygen than ever; so little, indeed, that life can barely be supported; and we need not wonder at persons lying down almost powerless in the hot and damp atmosphere, and gasping for breath. Hence we see that any method of cooling the air for Indians, instead of adding moisture, should rather take it out of the air, so as to make oxygen predominate as much as possible in the combined draught of oxygen, azote, and a certain quantity of the vapour of water, which will always be present; and hardly any plan could be more pernicious than the favourite though dreaded one by those who have watched its results—of the wet mats. Cold air—that is, air in which the thermometer actually stands at a low reading—by reason of its density, gives us oxygen, the food of the lungs, in a compressed and concentrated form; and men can accordingly do much work upon it. But air which is merely cold to the feelings—air in which the thermometer stands high, but which merely gives us one of the external sensations of coolness—on being made by a punkah, or any other mere blowing machine, to move rapidly over our skin—or on being charged with watery vapour, or on being contrasted with previous excessive heat—such air must, nevertheless, be rarefied to the full extent indicated by the mercurial thermometer, and give us, therefore, our supply of vital oxygen in a very diluted form, and of a meagre, unsupporting, and unsatisfying consistence.... The *sine quâ non*, therefore, for healthy and robust life in tropical countries, is air cold and dry—cold to the thermometer and dry to the hygrometer; or, in other words, dense, and containing little else than the necessary oxygen and azote, and this supplied to a room, fresh and fresh, in a continual current.'

He next goes on to describe the principle of his new plan of cooling:—'The method by which I propose to accomplish this consummation, so devoutly to be desired, is chiefly by taking advantage of the well-known property of air to rise in temperature on compression, and to fall on expansion. If air of any temperature, high or low, be compressed with a certain force, the temperature will rise above

what it was before, in a degree proportioned to the compression. If the air be allowed immediately to escape from under the pressure, it will recover its original temperature, because the fall in heat, on air expanding from a certain pressure, is equal to the rise on its being compressed to the same; but if, *while the air is in its compressed state, it be robbed of its acquired heat of compression*, and then be allowed to escape, it will issue at a temperature as much below the original one, as it rose above it on compression. Thus the air, being at 90 degrees, will rise, if compressed to a certain quantity, to 120 degrees; if it be kept in this compressed and confined state until all the extra 30 degrees of heat have been conveyed away by radiation and conduction, and the air be then allowed to escape, it will be found, on issuing, to be of 60 degrees of temperature. If a cooler be formed by a pipe under water, and air be forced in under a given compression at one end, and be made to pass along to the other, it may thereby, if the cooler be sufficiently extensive, be robbed of all its heat of compression; and if the apparatus is so arranged, as it easily may be, that at every stroke of the pump forcing in air at one end of the pipe, an equivalent quantity of the cooled compressed air escape from under a loaded valve at the other, there will be an intermittent stream of cooled air produced thereby, of 60 degrees Fahrenheit, in an atmosphere of 90 degrees, which may be led away in a pipe to the room desired to be cooled.'

The only difficulty to be encountered consists in the erection and working of machinery. There can be little fear on this score. We have no doubt that any London engine-maker would hit off the whole scheme of an air-cooling machine in half an hour. What is wanted is a forcing-pump wrought by a one horse or two bullock-power. This being erected and wrought outside of a dwelling, the air will be forced into a convolution of pipe passing through a tank of water, like the worm of a still, and will issue by a check-valve at every stroke of the piston into the apartments to be cooled. Properly arranged, and with a suitable supply of water trickling through the tank, air at 90 degrees will be reduced to 60 degrees or thereabouts, which is the temperature of ordinary sitting-rooms in England. What, it may be asked, will be the expense of such an apparatus for cooling the air of a dwelling-house? We are informed that it will not be greater than that usually paid for heating with fires in this country; and if so, the expense cannot be considered a serious obstacle to the use of the apparatus. In the case of barracks for soldiers, hospitals, and other public establishments, the process will prove of such important service, that the cost, even if greater than it is likely to be, should present no obstacle to its application.

# THE CHURCH OF THE CUP OF COLD WATER

One beautiful evening, in the year 1815, the parish priest of San Pietro, a village a few miles distant from Sevilla, returned much fatigued to his little cottage, where he found his aged housekeeper, the Señora Margarita, watching for him. Notwithstanding that one is well accustomed to the sight of poverty in Spain, it was impossible to help being struck by the utter destitution which appeared in the house of the good priest; the more so, as every imaginable contrivance had been resorted to, to hide the nakedness of the walls, and the shabbiness of the furniture. Margarita had prepared for her master's supper a rather small dish of *olla-podriga*, which consisted, to say the truth, of the remains of the dinner, seasoned and disguised with great skill, and with the addition of some sauce, and a *name*. As she placed the savoury dish upon the table, the priest said: 'We should thank God for this good supper, Margarita; this olla-podriga makes one's mouth water. My friend, you ought to be grateful for finding so good a supper at the house of your host!' At the word host, Margarita raised her eyes, and saw a stranger, who had followed her master. Her countenance changed, and she looked annoyed. She glanced indignantly first at the unknown, and then at the priest, who, looking down, said in a low voice, and with the timidity of a child: 'What is enough for two, is always enough for three; and surely you would not wish that I should allow a Christian to die of hunger? He has not tasted food for two days.'

'A Christian! He is more like a brigand!' and Margarita left the room murmuring loudly enough to be heard.

Meanwhile, the unwelcome guest had remained standing at the door. He was a man of great height, half-dressed in rags, and covered with mud; while his black hair, piercing eyes, and carbine, gave him an appearance which, though hardly prepossessing, was certainly interesting. 'Must I go?' said he.

The priest replied with an emphatic gesture: 'Those whom I bring under my roof are never driven forth, and are never unwelcome. Put down your carbine. Let us say grace, and go to table.'

'I never leave my carbine, for, as the Castilian proverb says, "Two friends are one." My carbine is my best friend; and I always keep it beside me. Although you allow me to come into your house, and do not oblige me to leave it until I wish to do so, there are others who would think nothing of hauling me out, and, perhaps, with my feet foremost. Come—to your good health, mine host, and let us to supper.'

The priest possessed an extremely good appetite, but the voracity of the stranger soon obliged him to give up, for, not contented with eating, or rather devouring, nearly the whole of the olla-podriga, the guest finished a large loaf of bread, without leaving a crumb. While he ate, he kept continually looking round with an expression of inquietude: he started at the slightest sound; and once, when a violent gust of wind made the door bang, he sprang to his feet, and seized his carbine, with an air which shewed that, if necessary, he would sell his life dearly. Discovering the cause of the alarm, he reseated himself at table, and finished his repast.

'Now,' said he, 'I have one thing more to ask. I have been wounded, and for eight days my wound has not been dressed. Give me a few old rags, and you shall be no longer burdened with my presence.'

'I am in no haste for you to go,' replied the priest, whose guest, notwithstanding his constant watchfulness, had conversed very entertainingly. 'I know something of surgery, and will dress your wound.'

So saying, he took from a cupboard a case containing everything necessary, and proceeded to do as he had said. The stranger had bled profusely, a ball having passed through his thigh; and to have travelled in this condition, and while suffering, too, from want of food, shewed a strength which seemed hardly human.

'You cannot possibly continue your journey to-day,' said the host. 'You must pass the night here. A little rest will get up your strength, diminish the inflammation of your wound, and'–

'I must go to-day, and immediately,' interrupted the stranger. 'There are some who wait for me,' he added with a sigh—'and there are some, too, who follow me.' And the momentary look of softness passed from his features between the clauses of the sentence, and gave place to an expression almost of ferocity. 'Now, is it finished? That is well. See, I can walk as firmly as though I had never been wounded. Give me some bread; pay yourself for your hospitality with this piece of gold, and adieu.'

The priest put back the gold with displeasure. 'I am not an innkeeper,' said he; 'and I do not sell my hospitality.'

'As you will, but pardon me; and now, farewell, my kind host.'

So saying, he took the bread, which Margarita, at her master's command, very unwillingly gave him, and soon his tall figure disappeared among the thick foliage of a wood which surrounded the house, or rather the cabin. An hour had scarcely passed, when musket-shots were heard close by, and the unknown reappeared, deadly pale, and bleeding from a deep wound near the heart.

'Take these,' said he, giving some pieces of gold to his late host; 'they are for my children—near the stream—in the valley.'

He fell, and the next moment several police-officers rushed into the house. They hastily secured the unfortunate man, who attempted no resistance. The priest entreated to be allowed to dress his wound, which they permitted; but when this was done, they insisted on carrying him away immediately. They would not even procure a carriage; and when they were told of the danger of removing a man so severely wounded, they merely said: 'What does it matter? If he recovers, it will only be to receive sentence of death. He is the famous brigand, José!'

José thanked the intercessor with a look. He then asked for a little water, and when the priest brought it to him, he said in a faint voice: 'Remember!' The reply was merely a sign of intelligence. When they were gone, notwithstanding all Margarita could say as to the danger of going out at night, the priest crossed the wood, descended into the valley, and soon found, beside the body of a woman, who had doubtless been killed by a stray ball of the police, an infant, and a little boy of about four years old, who was trying in vain to awaken his mother. Imagine Margarita's amazement when the priest returned with two children in his arms.

'May all good saints defend us! What have you done, señor? We have barely enough to live upon, and you bring two children! I suppose I must beg from door to door, for you and for them. And, for mercy's sake, who are these children? The sons of that brigand, gipsy, thief, murderer, perhaps! I am sure they have never been baptised!' At this moment the infant began to cry. 'And pray, Señor Clérigo, how do you mean to feed that child? You know very well that we have no means of paying a nurse. We must spoon-feed it, and nice nights that will give me! It cannot be more than six months old, poor little creature,' she added, as her master placed it in her arms. 'Fortunately, I have a little milk here;' and forgetting her anger, she busied herself in putting some milk on the fire, and then sat down beside it to warm the infant, who seemed half-frozen. Her master watched her in silence, and when at last he saw her kiss its little cheek, he turned away with a quiet smile.

When at length the little one had been hushed into a gentle slumber, and when Margarita, with the assistance of her master's cloak, and some of her own clothes, had made a bed for the elder boy, and placed him in it, the good man told her how the children had been committed to his care, and the promise he had made, though not in words, to protect them.

'That is very right and good, no doubt,' said Margarita; 'I only want to know how we are all to live?' The priest opened his Bible, and read aloud:

'Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'

'Amen!' said Margarita.

Twelve years passed by. The parish priest of San Pietro, who was now more than seventy years old, was sitting in the sunshine at his door. Near him, a boy of about twelve years old was reading aloud from the Bible, looking occasionally towards a tall, fine-looking young man, who was hard at work in a garden close by. Margarita, who was now become blind, sat and listened. Suddenly, the sound of wheels was heard, and the boy exclaimed: 'Oh! the beautiful carriage!' A splendid carriage approached rapidly, and stopped before the door. A richly-dressed servant approached, and asked for a cup of water for his master.

'Carlos,' said the priest to the younger boy, 'go, bring water to the gentleman; and add some wine, if he will accept it. Go quickly!' At this moment, the carriage-door opened, and a gentleman, apparently about fifty years old, alighted.

'Are these your nephews?' said he to the priest.

'They are more than that, señor; they are my children—the children of my adoption.'

'How is that?'

'I will tell you, señor; for I am old and poor, and know but little of the world, and am in much need of advice; for I know not what to do with these two children.' He related the story we have just told. 'And now, señor, what do you advise me to do?'

'Apply to one of the nobles of the court, who must assign you a pension of four thousand ducats.'

'I asked you for advice, señor, and not for jest.'

'And then, your church must be rebuilt. We will call it the Church of the Cup of Cold Water. Here is the plan. See, this is to be the vicarage; and here, divided by this paling'–

'What does this mean? What would you say? And, surely, I remember that voice, that face'–

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.