

has never seen the time when every good interest was in such dread of Congress as it is at present. If Congress could not meet again for the next five years, there is hardly an interest or a class in the community that would not feel profoundly relieved. The members of both houses have, in so many instances, come from their constituencies so possessed by and charged with crude theories of government and finance, based in popular ignorance and caprice, that the country at large has no faith in them. The popular estimate of the silver question and the soft money question, in many localities that make themselves felt in Congress, is absolutely dangerous to every political, commercial and industrial interest. There are multitudes to-day who honestly believe that the resumption of specie payments is a great public calamity—that an honest dollar is a curse to a poor man—that the poor man is harmed by the fact that a dollar in paper is as good as a dollar in gold. Still the heresy lingers in the popular mind in many localities that money can, by some process, be made cheap, so that by some hocus-pocus the poor man can get hold of it without paying its equivalent for it. They do not reason upon the subject at all. They seem incapable of understanding that no value can be acquired without paying for it, and that a good dollar will buy just as much more of the commodities of life as it is dearer than "a cheap dollar." They have but to look back a few years to the time of cheap money: their labor, it is true, commanded nominally a large price, but their rent was twice what it is now, and food and clothing were proportionally dearer than they are now; but this seems to teach them nothing. They seem incapable of comprehending the fact that by an unchangeable law money will command only what it is worth, and will certainly command from them what it is worth. They have an idea that there should be more money when it is the testimony of all who know that the volume of money is quite large enough for all purposes, only it cannot be had without rendering an equivalent for it. It has to be worked for and earned, but when it is acquired it is good money, without any discount,—competent to enter the markets of the world on even terms.

The popular estimate and treatment of the silver question are as wild as the popular estimate and treatment of the soft money question. The effect that silver was to have upon the laboring man's interests was to be little less than miraculous. It was to increase his debt-paying power. No wise financier could see how this was to be done. Nobody wanted the silver to handle, and nobody wants it now, when he can get gold or paper, but there were sections of the people represented in Congress, who believed there was in silver a panacea for their financial ills; but they have learned that a silver dollar costs as much as any other dollar, and that its coinage does nothing toward putting it into their pockets. So the dollars which everybody dislikes accumulate in the treasury, and go on accumulating, for the business world has no use for them.

Nearly all these financial schemes have had their

birth in ignorant brains, have been adopted by ignorant people, and pushed in Congress by demagogues fresh from the people, and sworn to the service of those who sent them. These men, representing these people, are the bane and terror of the country, in all its great interests and enterprises. So true is this that the one danger that stands as a menace of all national prosperity and safety is Congress. We dread Congress as we do pestilence. It is a stench and an abomination. It was well that the writers of "A Modern Symposium" did not appeal to the present conduct of American affairs for evidence of the superiority of the political wisdom of the common people. They certainly would have appealed in vain. Everything in our history shows us that brains, well cultivated, are needed for government. In great crises, when the moral element is involved, when right and wrong are to be decided upon, and the patriotic sentiment and impulse are to be appealed to, the people can be trusted, but of the science of government, of true political wisdom, and of the knowledge of political economy, they are as innocent as children, and cannot be trusted to take care of themselves.

Good Talking.

THERE is an impression among people who talk and write that the art of conversation has died, or is dying out; that there are not as many remarkable talkers in the world as there were, and that the present generation will leave no such records of brilliant conversation as some of its predecessors have done. We suspect that the impression is a sound one, and that for some reason, not apparent on the surface, less attention has been bestowed upon the art of talking than formerly. It may be that the remarkable development of the press which has given opportunity for expression to everybody, with a great audience to tempt the writer, has drawn attention from an art demanding fine skill, with only the reward of an audience always limited in numbers, and an influence quite incommensurate with the amount of vitality expended.

Still, there are doubtless many who would like to be good talkers. Social importance and consideration are perhaps more easily won by the power of good talking than by any other means, wealth and the ability to keep a hospitable house not excepted. A really good talker is always at a social premium, so that a knowledge of the requisites of good talking will be of interest to a great many bright people. For it must be confessed that men's ideas of the art are very crude and confused. When we talk of "the art of conversation" people really do not know what we mean. They do not know what the art is, or how it may be cultivated; or, indeed, that it is anything more than a natural knack.

The first requisite of a good talker is genuine social sympathy. A man may not say, out of some selfish motive, or some motive of personal policy, "Go to! I will become a good talker." He must enjoy society, and have a genuine desire to serve and please. We have all seen the talker who talks for his own purposes, or talks to please himself.

He is the well-known character—the talking bore. The talker who gets himself up for show, who plans his conversations for an evening, and crams for them, becomes intolerable. He lectures: he does not converse; for there is no power of a talker so delightful as that of exciting others to talk, and listening to what his own inspiring and suggestive utterances have called forth. Genuine social sympathy and a hearty desire to please others are necessary to produce such a talker as this, and no other is tolerable. Social sympathy is a natural gift, and there is a combination of other gifts which constitute what may be called *esprit*, that are very essential to a good talker. This combination includes individuality, tact and wit—the talents, aptitudes, and peculiar characteristic charm which enable a man to use the materials of conversation in an engaging way, entirely his own; for every good talker has his own way of saying good things, as well as of managing conversation based on his *esprit*.

Yet it is true that there are no good talkers who depend upon their natural gifts and such material as they get in the usual interchanges of society. For the materials of conversation we must draw upon knowledge. No man can be a thoroughly good talker who does not know a great deal. Social sympathy and “the gift of gab” go but a short way toward producing good conversation, though we hear a great deal of this kind of talk among the young. Sound and exact knowledge is the very basis of good conversation. To know a great many things well is to have in hand the best and most reliable materials of good conversation. There is nothing like abundance and exactness of knowledge with which to furnish a talker. Next to this, perhaps, is familiarity with polite literature. The faculty of quoting from the best authors is a very desirable one. Facts are valuable, and thoughts perhaps are quite as valuable, especially as they are more stimulating to the conversation of a group. The talker who deals alone in facts is quite likely to have the talk all to himself, while the man who is familiar with thoughts and ideas, as he has found them embodied in literature, becomes a stimulator of thought and conversation in those around him. Familiarity with knowledge and with the products of literary art cannot be too much insisted on as the furniture of good conversation.

Beyond this, the good talker must be familiar with the current thought and events of his time. There should be no movement in politics, religion and society that the good talker is not familiar with. Indeed, the man who undertakes to talk at all must know what is uppermost in men's minds, and be able to add to the general fund of thought and knowledge, and respond to the popular inquiry and the popular disposition for discussion. The man who undertakes to be a good talker should never be caught napping, concerning any current topic of immediate public interest.

How to carry and convey superiority of knowledge and culture without appearing to be pedantic, how to talk out of abundant stores of information and familiarity with opinion without seeming to

preach, as Coleridge was accused of doing, belongs, with the ability to talk well, to “the art of conversation.” It has seemed to us that if young people could only see how shallow and silly very much of their talk is, and must necessarily be, so long as they lack the materials of conversation, they would take more pains with their study, would devote themselves more to the best books, and that, at least, they would acquire and maintain more familiarity with important current events. To know something is the best cure for neighborhood gossip, for talk about dress, and for ten thousand frivolities and sillinesses of society. Besides, a good talker needs an audience to understand and respond to him, and where is he to find one if there is not abundant culture around him?

A Reply from Mr. Kiddle.

WE have received the following letter from Mr. Henry Kiddle:

TO THE EDITOR OF SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY:

Will you permit me the privilege of a reply to the paper on my book which you published in the July number of the Monthly?

This book has received a peculiar treatment at the hands of critics,—very naturally, of course, and certainly not unexpected by me. The history of literature shows that of all writers literary critics are the most shallow, the most pretentious and dogmatic, and the most unreliable in their judgment and utterances. Of my book you say, “It has come, and has gone”; but this statement only shows how little you really know of the success of the book thus far, and how unable you are to judge of its future. The class for whom you write may, indeed, reject it upon your arbitrary dictum; but tens of thousands who never read a page of SCRIBNER will peruse this book with satisfaction, and “pass it around” to be read by others. Were you to read the letters which I have received from those who have read the book faithfully and humbly, you would perceive your mistake in the form of the participle used, and say not “gone” but “going.”

Now, my dear sir, will you seriously assert that you have fairly reviewed this book? Ignoring every claim set up, and sought to be established in this certainly remarkable volume, you have undertaken to judge it exclusively from a literary stand-point; and even from this stand-point you have misjudged it—denounced it not only wrongfully and unjustly, but in terms which should never have fallen from your pen—in language which I can show is far more deficient in rhetorical and grammatical propriety than any which you can point out in my book. You say: “There is not one sentence in it, from beginning to end, to indicate a heavenly origin, but everything to show that it is the offspring of a very commonplace and immature mind;” that its literary quality is “simply and irredeemably wretched;” that all the communicating intelligences “write exactly alike;” that all “utter the same ‘hifalutin’ pious slang;” that it is “simply impossible bosh;” that the communicating intelligence must be an “unconscionable liar;” etc., etc. Are these the choice phrases and epithets,—is this the pure English that “passes muster” in a magazine office?

To disprove your sweeping assertions, I should have to quote a large part of the book; but I will cite a few passages that seem to me to “indicate a heavenly origin”:

1. [From Bryant.] “In my own home on earth, I was respected for talents and mental capacities; while *here* I exhibit characteristics that outshine human faculties, and all the actions of my life stand forth in my external appearance, as never to be conceived of by mortal power. Take heed, friends, that in this judgment each day, each hour, each moment, bear testimony to the righteous working of your souls for God's glory.”

Now, I ask, does not that express a most important, nay, an awful truth, with an appropriate injunction? And could it have been said in much better or stronger language?