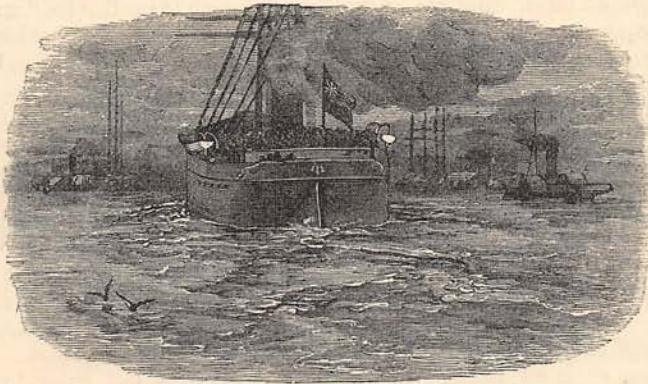


caprice is anticipated. Want and wealth everywhere, you see; Dives in the saloon, and Lazarus in the steerage; riches and rags on the raging sea—Belgravia and Bethnal Green on the Atlantic, even.

The last luggage is being lowered into the hold, where perchance in some dark crevice may hide some starving stowaway, who across the water has the chance—ever open to tact and talent—of some day becoming President of the United States. The first bell is ringing for the tender now, and I am in "Queenie's" little state-room, with its two snowy berths, and its electric bell, and its bright, cheerful appointments, and its plate-glass window, whose face will soon be washed by the "rolling forties" of the mid-Atlantic. A certain *écru* gossamer veil, which has been tied closely over the pale face and lambent eyes, is turned up, and somebody—"Silence that dreadful bell!" It is, however, swinging out its last summons now for the friends and relatives of passengers to leave the ship. I go back to the tender, which is dwarfed to ridiculous proportions as it lies

beside the stately sailing palace of 5,000 tons. The parting time has come. The pathos of a life is put into this mute shake of the hand, or into that tremulous word of farewell. Everybody tries to utter the eloquent word "good-bye" cheerfully, but there are eyes that belie the bravery of courageous tongues, and bleeding hearts cannot be disguised behind smiling faces. The tender puts off. There is a snowstorm of pocket-handkerchiefs, and a sorrowful imitation of a cheer. And now the screw of the great steamer is throbbing, and the sailing city, with its mixed argosy of hope and despair, love and hate, business and pleasure, weal and woe, glides down the broad water-way. And when the crowd on her deck have become a black mass, I can still see a sweet, sensitive girl, with sealskin hat and long, tight-fitting sealskin jacket, that shows every grace of that young rounded form. See! she is waving a white handkerchief, that looks no bigger than a postage-stamp. The snowy signal cannot flutter more than her own yearning heart. The great vessel recedes in the yellow haze of the river. Farewell! No, not farewell, "Queenie;" only—*au revoir*. E. B.



CFM1878

A WORD UPON EASY ATTAINMENTS.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.



ALL worthy attainment is hard! Genius should never be opposed to plodding, for genius to be successful must have an infinite power of taking pains. I am not about to write on the attainments of scholarship, or scientific pursuit, or musical proficiency, or medical skill: or even bonnet-making, which I am told is difficult.

No: Easy Attainment is my theme. In a literary sense, to glue a few commonplace expressions to-

gether, with interlardings of Latin quotation: in a pedestrian sense, to walk with an air of considerable conceit, so that the typical street-boy would ask, "Please, sir, will you tell me if you are anybody in particular?" in a conversational sense, to stick an eye-glass in your eye, letting the interlocutor down by perfect silence, and saying with an air of imperturbable wisdom, "Aw."

Some attainments are manifestly very easy. Organ-grinding is; but I select it because it is as distressing to others as it is easy to the performer. So are some habits. A man who "filberts" his nails or "bayonets" his teeth in society, ought to be admonished that it is an ill-mannered attainment. It is very mild to pronounce it bad etiquette: it is a sort of employment that does not add to the felicity of others.

But I suppose you have travelled with people who have a hateful way of—coughing, shall I say? No; clearing the throat in an ostentatious way, like the noise of a damaged drum, just to call attention; and you have met people who had apparently bought

up all the shares in the "Staring Society," and looked at you as if they had paid a shilling to inspect you at the wax-work show; the attainment of staring without winking being their forte.

A little deeper down—I mean deeper in the sense of more unpleasant—in our discoveries is the attainment of sneering. I do not mean actual scorn—indignant scorn—but very mild people indeed can sneer; they find, I suppose, that it "tells" with some folk, and that the accomplishment betokens a lofty range of mountainous thought, which can look down upon the mind of ordinary attainment with disdain. Some people have attained a sneering eye, a sneering mouth, a sneering nose, and a sneering voice, and when all these are at work at once the sight is amusing—very!

The attainment of a half-note pitch in the voice higher than any one else is remarkable too. I can hear it in imagination now—like a little bugle that calls attention from every one else; and when said note is carried along quickly it will override all conversation, and become so dominant that it needs no acquiescence of others to give it its turn. Turn indeed! it is master of all turns. But the attainment of pretending not to see people is one of the most despicable I know, especially as it is associated with the habit of being hurt because they were not spoken to. Precious creatures! do they not know in their hearts that you were looking at them and that *they tried not to look?* Catch your eye? Not they; and you, my dear friend, bothered your poor heart lest they should be slighted. They are saying to themselves all the while, "Aha, aha! so would we have it." Exactly; this is the attainment of a little cheap *hauteur* which makes them very unpleasant to their neighbours.

The attainment of indifference is equally obnoxious. "Death to all Enthusiasm" is its motto. So the manner and countenance assume an expression of the kind which we call *passé*. Nothing is supposed to be able to interest or excite these graduates in the school of indifference. Sometimes it is so overacted that nobody believes in it, and sometimes it is so disagreeable that nobody seeks its fellowship. Fashionable it may be, and the country cousin may be laughed at for enthusiasm in picture galleries or elsewhere, but the country cousin has the best of it, for in such case we find a living heart, and in the *nonchalant* it is a

dead one indeed. Handel, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Gounod—who are they that their music should give us rapture? Be quiet, my friend; subside into the mood which pretends that all inspiration is gone!

But I have not done yet, for the attainment of a hopeless scepticism is easier still. Pilate reproduced! What is truth? Pyrrhonism triumphant. But what a triumph! I need scarcely say that this is the "attainment" of many who wish to be considered "highly intellectual." It is the "advanced thought" which loses itself in the Eternities, the Immensities, the Silences, and, as I should say, the Absurdities! I cannot call it the Ridiculousities, because it is too sad. In the presence of a faith which has altered the whole state of society, purified morals, emancipated slaves, elevated woman, uplifted the downtrodden, and saved the lost, it is saddening indeed to see an assumption of profound wisdom in those who deny the faith, and who, with all their so-called destructive criticism, have been unable to lay the foundation of any temple of truth in which to find refuge and rest themselves. In other ages scepticism at its worst was content to be numbered amidst the "deplorable" things; to-day it is not too much to say that the "attainment" of its mental mannerism is somewhat fashionable.

Easy attainments, remember, I am now writing about, and I might insert with a wise brevity the power to talk in a "haw-haw" sort of fashion, the cultivation of the "lisp," and the other general aspects of Dunderism, and, alas for England! the ability amid all large classes to be always "thirsty"—*that* seems to be about as unnatural an attainment as possible; yet it never seems to strike these "imbibers" that, apart from intoxicating indulgence, it is very little liquid that a really healthy constitution requires per diem, and that many of our worst diseases come not alone from liquorism, but from liquidism.

I might close this paper by observing how many things are precious in attainment and can only be secured by strenuous toil and effort; how many things once attained are never lost, and supply perennial sources of interest and joy; and how many attainments out of the reach of the fathers are now possible to the sons. I might show that as there are no royal roads to learning, so there are no quack medicine roads to health, and no easy modes of transit up-hill. But I elected to write on easy attainments—and how baleful many of them are!

