

## LEGISLATIVE HUMORS.

BY THE HON. S. S. COX.

E voi ridete? Certo ridiamo.—  
*Così fan tutti.*

IN a previous article the word Humor was defined. Its derived sense was traced down to its present meaning. My present title is in the same vein, although the plural number, "Humors," is rather ambiguous. A humor is not always the quality of the mind we call humor. A humor may be a particular mannerism; a humor may not be funny, but humor is. In the old days, when our language was plastic and while it was being moulded, any incongruity, caprice, or singularity was called a humor.

"Legislative Humors" are meant to comprehend not alone the collective idiosyncrasy of the legislative body, but the peculiar fancies, fun, wit, and manners which obtain with the individual members of the body.

Moreover, certain legislatures have had peculiar humors and characteristics. One is intellectual, one industrious, one stupid, one jolly, one lazy, one fond of this or that recreation, and on different days and at different hours such collective bodies, like our human bodies, show peculiar sensibilities. We have known Speakers, chairmen of committees, the whole House itself, to be so cross one day that it could not deliberate, and so jocund on another that it would not work. The Speaker may be dyspeptic one day and the House good-natured, or *vice versa*. All will agree, however, that legislatures have an individuality. We call them good, or bad, or average, according to their work, mood, and ability. The best of these bodies, however, are good-tempered, even when not so able. In the time of Henry IV. one parliament was styled *Parliamentum Indocorum*, or the lack-learning parliament. It was this parliament that went in a body to the king to ask that the clergy be obliged to pay a part of the taxes out of their estates. The Archbishop of Canterbury, being present, said, "To strip the clergy thus would put a stop to their prayers." Upon this, Mr. Speaker Esturmy, the founder of the Somersetts, smiling, said, "The prayers of the Church, I fear, are a slender supply." We are not told how his Grace took the allusion, but his Majesty (Prince Hal) evidently smiled; for are we not told that the Speaker was chief butler to the king? He who furnished the wit furnished the wine. If this parliament, presided over by this lover of wine and maker of wit, was the illiterate parliament, we need more such parliaments, for its members voted against making themselves collectors of subsidies, and made the interests of their constituents their own! "At the same time," says Walsingham, "they took care that no useless grants or pensions should be made from the

crown to impoverish the revenue." And we may add that they had a Speaker who scorned political danger when ruin and death encompassed him.

Some editorial friend has raised a personal question, which may be pardonably noticed. Leigh Hunt once said that he was perplexed whether to speak of himself in the singular or plural number, whether to subject himself to the impatience of people vainer by saying "I," or to hamper himself with saying "we were," "we would," and "we once." But resolutely, under Montaigne's advice, he concluded that he had plenty of imperfections to set off his self-love; so that he courageously wrote of himself, regardless of any imputed egoism.

In these papers it is impossible not to recall the writer's experience, and to impress somewhat of his personality upon the analysis. "We" beg, however, to disavow any intention or expectation of making this subtle essence called humor. The only object is, by collation and generalization, to show the humor of classes and individuals. Should we be forbidden to do this because now and then the writer has himself been suspected, though never fairly convicted, even by a stupid jury, of a joke? Especially in the delineation and demonstration of legislative humors, in recalling those diversions of staid Solons in whose midst many years have been passed, can there be entire impersonality?

There is an account of a dramatic Mæcenas who took a steady boy from his parents, and, ignorant of any humorous or other propensity, solemnly dedicated him to the Comic Muse. The boy, however, did ripen into a capital comedian. Perhaps this was an exceptional case; for there is no special chrism whose anointing will induce the jolly genius; but a little discipline and some research may enable a serious soul to group and illustrate the humor of others.

In considering the humor of a deliberative body, often engaged in friendly contest, and liable at a moment to be whirled out of eddies of good temper into the turbulent and yellow currents of partisan spite and personal antagonisms, great allowances are to be made in deciding upon the flavor or genuineness of the brand of humor. It is no test that the spoken word is a momentary hit, or that the hit hurts, or that the victim winces. The wit may give a temporary delight and exaltation, and the humor may be enjoyed by the victor. A better test to be applied to the parentheses of "laughter" as well as "cheers" is that of time. The best test is translatability into a foreign tongue. The "laughter of hate and the hisses of scorn" which burden our Congressional literature are not the highest evidences of the best humor or of genuine wit. It was not always that

Randolph's sarcasm, Tristram Burgess's invective, John P. Hale's waggery, Thaddeus Stevens's irony, old Ben Hardin's fun, or Corwin's drollery produced unanimous good spirit. Such results are generally won upon themes outside of party polemics. They are attained only when the object of the humor agrees with both sides and with the orator.

Sometimes the loudest laughter is provoked by the emptiest conceit. When examined, the conceit is found to be an empty anticipation of victory; and this, owing to the vicissitudes of politics, is a ticklish theme for vaticination.

When a gifted member of Congress, before the terrible thrashing of his party in 1840, brought down the House by representing a Democrat as one whom he met going out to hew wooden razors with a broad-axe to shave dead Whigs with in the fall, one fails to discern either the congruity of the metaphors or the brilliancy of the wit, though the fun that followed fast followed still faster when it was said that their hard cider would turn into sour milk, which was a little acidulous then, and would be very sour when the elections ended! Alas for the prophetic humor of the sanguine and impulsive hustings, and of the temporary "spanking" majority!

There are similar illustrations showing the senseless laughter of the moment.

There is a humor which, even when genuine, makes one melancholy. Swift's wit made Thackeray sad. In an assembly representing the whole people one must not expect the superfine, or always the fine, or even middling brands. In such an assembly all classes of minds meet. Legislative bodies are not exempt, collectively and individually, from Shakspeare's description:

"Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time;  
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,  
And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper;  
And others, of such vinegar aspect  
That they'll not show their teeth in the way of  
smile,  
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

In a body as grave as Congress, the fun is not always and at once apparent. The gravity of such a body precludes levity. A child's toy may ripple the pond, but Neptune only arouses a tumult on the sea. It requires an effort to overcome ponderosity. To raise a laugh is to lift the weight of dignity—nay, to lift the weight of dignity. Humor always starts handicapped in large assemblies. Upon their proceedings hang, not trifles, but momentous things. But may not the very froth and sparkle of the wave indicate its strength and depth? He only is a philosopher who, looking at the sea, not only dives into its imperturbable profundity, but observes its eccentric currents and superficial buoyancy. No one should underrate the dignity and influence

of a Congress like ours, representing as it does to-day nearly a half hundred millions, with a history nearly centennial, and speaking for a territory having such varied interests, because evidences of humor were not apparent in its earliest period. Is it a vain ceremony to open the deliberations of such a body with prayer to the Supreme Being? Even when the nation numbered but three or four millions, and but a third of the present number of States, it was laying the foundation of empires. There was a solemnity and solicitude about its first and early assemblages which would seem inconsistent with the whimsical fitfulness and reckless dash of humor.

The first Congress met in the spring of 1789. Nearly a month elapsed before it had a quorum. Its first act was no jocular matter—that of counting the votes of the electors, which proclaimed "George Washington, Esq.," President of the young republic. It was in no playful mood that Congress declared him our *first President*. A few days afterward Federal Hall, at the corner of Nassau and Wall streets, New York city, was tendered to this grave body. Soon thereafter the rules for its conduct were adopted. Were there no smiling genii, such as are conversant with our recent Congresses, to squint a roguish eye from a reporters' gallery at that solemn primary rule "that no member should speak to another or read any printed paper when any member is speaking?"

There were great anxieties in that opening Congress. In very deed, the "eyes of the world" were directed to it. The effervescence of the festive writers of our day would have been strangely out of place there. Under most interesting associations, and into that octagonal hall, whose damask hangings gave richness and tone to the scene, and attended to the gallery in front of the Senate-chamber by John Adams, the Vice-President, and Senators, and by Mr. Speaker Muhlenberg and the Representatives, there is ushered the august form of Washington. The oath is administered by the Chancellor of New York. Proclamation is made: "Long live George Washington, President of the United States!" The solemn consecrations then begin for the American Congress. The weighty and untried duties, the dangers of disunited counsels, the invocation to the Divine Parent of social order and of the human race—these give added concern, fear, and piety to the momentous ceremony of this crucial period and the deliberations of our first Congress.

Was there nothing to relieve the serious dignity of these solemn proceedings? Was the triumphal progress of Washington from Mount Vernon to New York only a solemn and sacred pilgrimage? Where was Hopkinson? Was his comic muse mute? The

truth is that there was something like a sporadic laugh here and there, and even indecorously, as we now think, at *Pater Patriæ* himself. The aristocratic pretensions of some of the fussy actors, and their efforts to ape royalty in preparing for the inauguration, with its pomp and show, brought out many a jest. Federal Hall was a sort of Athenian *σπυαία*. There the gossip and wit of New York met. There, as even now, at the corner of Wall and Nassau, speculators most did congregate. It was their Rialto. How these plebeians ridiculed the anxious patricians, bent on decorations, titles, and places of honor! In a letter from John Armstrong to General Gates this is more than hinted. Even Roger Sherman endeavored to devise some style of address more novel and dignified than "Excellency." We are told that a caricature appeared called "The Entry," and that it was full of "profane allusions." It represented Washington mounted on an ass, and in the arms of his man Billy, Humphreys leading the jack, and chanting hosannas.

This humor had some foundation for its fun. It gathered in the lobbies of Federal Hall, crept crinkling into Congress, and had its amusing influence on legislation. Dr. Griswold, in his *Republican Court*, tells a Congressional anecdote at the expense of Washington himself, in relation to his title:

"General Muhlenberg states that Washington himself was in favor of the style of 'High Mightiness' used by the Stadtholder of Holland, and that while the subject was under discussion in Congress he dined with the President, and, by a jest about it, for a time lost his friendship. Among the guests was Mr. Wynkoop, of Pennsylvania, who was noticeable for his large and commanding figure. The resolutions before the two Houses being referred to, the President, in his usual dignified manner, said, 'Well, General Muhlenberg, what do you think of the title of High Mightiness?' Muhlenberg answered, laughing, 'Why, general, if we were certain that the office would always be held by men as large as yourself or my friend Wynkoop, it would be appropriate enough; but if by chance a President as small as my opposite neighbor should be elected, it would become ridiculous.' This evasive reply excited some merriment about the table; but the chief looked grave, and his evident displeasure was increased soon after by Muhlenberg's vote in the House of Representatives against conferring any title whatever upon the President."

M. Brissot, a traveling French gentleman of that day, wrote that the presence of Congress in New York contributed much to extend the ravages of luxury, including the habit of smoking, which had not disappeared with other Dutch customs; "for they use cigars," he said, "without the use of an

instrument, as it accustoms to meditation and prevents loquacity." Happy, hilarious habit! No previous question, only a smoke to second the demand against loquacity.

Certainly our early Congressmen did not lack humor. We may lack many of the *evidences* of this humor, for the debates which followed for many years after this first inauguration, either because the stenographers were not abroad, or because of the brevity and meagreness of the records, show little or none of the pyrotechnics with which the press of to-day scintillates, and none of the boisterous brackets which indicate the mirthful provocation. Even our best Revolutionary humorist, Franklin, clothed his fun in allegory and story. Indeed, the Senate sat with closed doors for five years after its organization. It was a secret body for all business, executive and legislative. The record which transpired is all too brief of those years. It does not indicate whether the fathers held high carnival in their seclusion, or if they did, how they held it. We are left to conjecture. Were they always pompous and sedate? May not the builders of our government, like those of other governments, have had their rejoicings? Out of their exuberant spirits, may not *Momus* have had his heyday? Thebes is fabled to have been built by the music of *Amphion*. The myth is full of meaning. No labor ever was done, no city or government ever built, without joy to make melody in the heart of the builder. If the thews and sinews of our workmen become more pliant with more pleasure, if the very boatmen on our ships sing their roundelays as they pile in the coal to make the steam come and the steamer go, why may not our political architects and workmen have had their jubilation as they wrought plinth, architrave, column, and dome of the political temple?

If we are to believe that fun belongs only to our time, and that its *esprit* and extravagance are limited to one country, then the rollicking effrontery of Aristophanes and the easy pleasantries of *Plautus* are not laughable. Or, not to go too far back, let us reject the comic delineations of Florentine life by *Ginguené*, and the humorous extravagances of *Peter Aretin*, even though *Hallam* crystallizes them as shining specimens of humor.

We can not believe our early statesmen insensible to humor. We would not thus detract from their fame. Our recent Senates have been called fog banks. This appellation is less invidious when applied to the sessions of the early Senates, as they were enveloped in secrecy. But when we reflect that our Senate is dull at times, because a foggy speech is being read to empty chairs, and when its giants are in committee-rooms and libraries fabricating their armor, is it less

reasonable to believe that our early representative men had their merry moods with in the adytum—all the merrier, if we may believe in reports, for the secrecy? Nor will we believe in the dullness of our earlier debates because the evidences are not as abundant as they are now of humor in deliberation.

Are we to infer that Cicero never smiled, because his orations are funless? It is reasonably certain that Cicero was a wit. Certainly he was a punster. Caesar collected his puns. We have no account of his repartees in debate; but the Roman Senate must now and then have smiled at the sharp pricking which he gave a senator who was the son of a tailor: "*Rem acu tetigisti.*" In spite of his verbose writing, and what Montaigne calls his tedious languish, he could "take off" the paper cap of a cook by a play on the word "*quoque*," or on the word "*jure*," which means juice or soup! "*Ego quoque tibi jure favebo.*"

Because the reported orations of the bema or the forum show no humor, does it follow that they evoked no laughter, and that the faculty of fun was wanting in the ancients? Why may we not fancy Cicero rolling out an *ad absurdum* on his antagonist, or Æschines, fresh from the theatre, making a pithy point against Demosthenes? In those climes where the bright azure sky produces a race permeable to fun, a race overfond of grimace and demonstration, ready with mimicry and quick to see the ludicrous, can it be that no odd quirk, apt anecdote, or telling *ad hominem* gave vivacity to debate?

There are—there must be—lost arts in the domain of senatorial humor. We have lost arts in poetry, painting, sculpture, and mechanics. Even Toledo to-day, with all the appliances of modern chemistry, can not produce the famous blade of Saladin, which cut his gauzy scarf in the air. If this art be lost, may there not have once been—and have been lost too, or at least hidden from us—the elegant art of repartee, more exquisite than the Oriental cimeter? May not the thunders of the Agora have had electric flashes of wit? Were there no "arsenals" to be shaken by fulminations of fun? Wendell Phillips has said that the best part of our wit is ancient, and that we only reproduce what is gone. Perhaps the parliamentary pleasantry which insists that it can not furnish brains to the stupid opponent, or the ruling of the Speaker who sees the pungency, but not the personality, in the questionable remark of an honorable gentleman, may, for aught we know, be stereotyped on the crockery tablets of an Assyrian council, or written in the hieroglyphs of some Egyptian record. Perhaps some Champollion or Smith may yet educe from the dead past Assyrian bulls more amusing than those of Sir Boyle Roche, and

burlesque more exaggerative than that of Proctor Knott. If so, *a fortiori*, may we not believe that our earlier Congressmen had their weapons keenly tempered by ridicule; and that neither in their cups and committees nor in open discussion were they wanting in the fine sense of the humorous?

Humor is perennial and immortal. It will reproduce itself. It was only the other day that Mr. Archer, of Maryland, whose name on the roll came after that of Oakes Ames, having voted by mistake when Mr. Ames's name was called, voted again when his own name was called. He was saluted by the poetic apostrophe, "Insatiate Archer! could not one suffice?" And yet, knowing that remark to be original, what was my surprise to find in an old newspaper of 1825 the same remark from John Randolph to Mr. Archer's uncle, then a Virginian member, who had asked a *second* day to continue his debate on the Bankrupt Bill. Humor is as repetitious as reason. It knows no age, clime, or assembly. Laughter is as immortal as the gods.

No one, except the most jaundiced, but will confess that the talent for wit or humor is one of the most potential in influencing men, and especially bodies of men. If administration or legislation consists in understanding how to thread the avenues to the heart, if to please is to rule, who will account such a gift useless in human society? Those who most depreciate the talent are those who are void of it. Lord Froth, in the *Double Dealer*, says, "There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh; 'tis vulgar. Every body can laugh. Then, especially, to laugh at the jest of an inferior person! Now when I laugh, I always laugh alone." False logic about humor is as silly as the foppish Froth, and as old as Hobbes. Hobbes held that laughter was a demoniac pride. It came out of the arrogance of men. He thought that men laughed because they felt that they were better, smarter, or more powerful than others. They either saw further into matters, or else the inferiority and infirmity of others were a proof of their own superiority and grace. He confesses that mirth and laughter are proper, but proper only to comedy and satire. He plainly indicates that great persons that have their minds employed on great designs have not leisure enough to laugh, or are too much absorbed with the contemplation of their own power and virtues. "Such eminent worthies," he holds, "do not need the infirmities and vices of other men to recommend themselves to their own favor by comparison, as all men do when they laugh." We wonder whether "Tom Corwin," the orator and statesman, an accomplished advocate and an able Secretary of the Treasury, could have read Hobbes, and then have dared to joke a

scoundrel out of office or a political vice out of existence! Before he died he told a friend that he would only be remembered after death as a clown. Perhaps this was one of his own pleasantries; for he is best remembered, as is Webster, by those graces which flowed from his genial heart. The writer is not unaware that however much one may cipher and work in dry, statistical, and syllogistic debate, no one regards him for the laborious days and studious nights because on some odd occasion he may have killed a bill by a playful allusion. The utility of the humor is rarely considered and appreciated.

If Madame De Staël could see little in Shakspeare but puerility, bombast, absurdity, and *grossièretés*, if she overshadowed his sublime and pathetic passages by what she considered his buffooneries, the shade of Corwin should rest content under the willows of Lebanon. Will common or æsthetic sense never see the necessity of lights as well as shades? Will it persist in calling that a blot which is a shadow, and that an extravagance of levity which is a luminous beauty? "No great men are jocose," intimates the surly Hobbes. Let the roll of parliamentary worthies be called. Who will then say that this gift of humor is inconsistent with studious labor and far-reaching statesmanship? Call the roll! Sir Thomas More, Selwyn, Pitt, Fox, Canning, Grattan, O'Connell, Palmerston, and Disraeli. Even Madame De Staël in her day found more logical sarcasm in Parliament than rhetorical flourish. She really began to like the eloquence which detected sophistry and enforced truth. Who denies to Sir Thomas More, either as Speaker of the Commons or Chancellor, as polemic or man, inherent greatness? Yet his jocundity was used constantly as a mask for a wise purpose. He was censured for his gravity of demeanor; but every one who looked on his face could detect the constitutional disposition to be merry. When committed for treason, to the executioner he exclaimed, "Ah, if you chop my head off, save my beard! That at least is innocent of crime." Yet much of his humor dropped from his tongue when he seemed most grave. He said that he loved to tell his mind more merrily than more solemnly to preach. Jests to him were but sauce; and it were but an absurd banquet in which there were few dishes of meat and much variety of sauces. It was to him, however, an unpleasant feast where there was no sauce at all. Yet this rare scholar, honest officer, poor gentleman, busy Chancellor, and racy Speaker of the Commons, was accounted worthy of martyrdom for the sense which lay beneath his quips and cranks.

To my mind, there never was so good a practical joke, so "saucy" an expedient, as

that which Mr. Speaker More prepared at the expense of Cardinal Wolsey. More was a friend of liberty. He believed in the privileges of the Commons. He opposed, when a beardless burgess, a royal budget. Once the Commons over which he dominated irritated Wolsey. The cardinal came down in person to the House with all the pomp and blazonry of his office. In he comes, with his seven silver pillars, his maces, his pole-axes, his crosses, his hat, and his great seal. He makes a solemn oration to the House. The House receives him, by preconcert, in dead silence. All are mute. The word "parliament" means to parley, to talk; yet this body was humbly, jocosely, curiously dumb. The cardinal turned to More. He remembers that the Speaker is the mouth-piece, by the English Constitution, of the Commons. More explains that such a presence and such insignia strike them into the eternal silences! Tacita is queen, and yet free speech rules! When Wolsey left, there must have been a jolly roar.

In Harry the Fourth's time one of the Speakers was named Tiploft. He obtained a grant of "harness for peace and war, as well as for great horses called coursers, and saddles for tilts and tournaments." Was this grant a joke? Imagine Mr. Speaker tilting down through the corridors of the Capitol or down the aisles of the House, with lance or battle-axe, to enforce the previous question!

It is not true that the humorist is necessarily a frivolous person. He commands by the potency of his wit. It may be true that the *mere* humorist is frivolous. You can not carve a great man out of him any more than a colossus out of a pebble. The mere wit is very near a fool. Nor does it follow that because the mere wit is foolish and light, the real wit is not the concomitant of wisdom and greatness. All great wits are not great men, but all great men are witty. On this thesis we pit Sydney Smith against Hobbes. That divine intimates that it is seldom that wit is the eminent quality of any man. It is commonly accompanied by many other talents, and ought to be considered as evidence of a superior understanding. He instances almost all the great poets, orators, and statesmen of all times—Cæsar, Alexander, Aristotle, Descartes, and Lord Bacon; Cicero, Shakspeare, Demosthenes, Boileau, Pope, Dryden, Fontenelle, Jonson, Waller, Cowley, Solon, Soerates, Dr. Johnson, and almost every man who has been distinguished in the House of Commons. Had he lived later, he could offer a longer list. A friend of mine challenged the idea that great wit to greatness was always nearly allied. He named George Washington as lacking this sense of humor. Washington was aristocratic, but not too starched for humor. How lordly he unbent

when he did unbend! Irving, in his *Life of Washington*, says that he found but few sportive allusions in Washington's correspondence. He gives one only in his third volume. It is an invitation to some lady friends to dine with him at his quarters on the Highlands. The fun is in an elaborate picture of the scanty meal, in which the dishes and meats, in meagre array, like a small force of untrained militia, are scattered over the board!

Let us return to our legislative examples. Silas Wright is called the "Cato of America;" but was there ever a man more readily risible? Judge Douglas I knew intimately. His mind was as fully stored with anecdote and as radiant with mirth as that of his great competitor, Lincoln. Crittenden, of Kentucky, with whom I served on committee, had the same subtle quality. Many a time during the war, at the table of Governor Seward, have I listened to their mutual wanton wiles and infinite jests.

The recorded humor of these giants is, however, sparse. But there are others still more elevated in our past legislatures whose record amply proves my thesis.

If called upon to name our three great public men who shone most in public debate, Calhoun, Webster, and Clay, the triumvirate of the Senate, trip to the tongue. Were these men too serious for jest? Was their stately *aplomb* and unassuming pomp in the forum ever relieved by the fantasies of humor? To deny them this quality is to render their hold on public opinion a mystery, if not a mistake. Each of them had this quality, not in that eminent degree which overshadows the solid parts of the understanding, but ever ready to flash out when that weapon was the proper one for forensic success. It was my fortune to hear but one of this triumvirate, Webster, and then in his most solemn vein. But if he transmitted one tithe of the humor which belonged to his son Fletcher, the father had a richer treasury of this ringing currency than he had of some other more advantageous resources. Did he reserve his great fund of humor for his hours of ease and conviviality? How much soever of this interesting quality he possessed, he often used it in public. Mr. Curtis, in his preface to the life of Webster, says that his great intellectual endowments and conspicuous civil functions were united with a character of equally marked peculiarities. Among these peculiarities, to which Mr. Curtis does not give sufficient emphasis, was his sensibility to the humorous. Why do our biographers so depreciate that which we most desire to remember? "Peculiarity" is almost a definition of humor; and if Webster be most vividly and fondly remembered for any thing, it is for these peculiarities. Doubtless first among the loving traits of all great

men is a quick appreciation of the absurd and angular phases of life. As my theme does not take me into private life, it will suffice if there be discovered in the public debater this element. Where do I find it? Go to the matchless masterpiece of modern eloquence, Webster's reply to Hayne. His biographer properly characterizes this memorable oration. He compares it, not unjustly, with that of Demosthenes on the crown. It was not only great as a protest against the "oppugnation" of South Carolina, and as an explanation of the Constitution, but both for plainness of speech and splendor of imagery it is unrivaled in the annals of oratory. It was spoken from notes, and not without forethought. Would that it had been fully reported! Did he disdain on this great occasion to harness his humorous faculty? Even the notes of this speech, to say nothing of the traditions of its delivery, indicate that he rallied his opponent wittily, turning the Banquo ghost allusion against him, and then made a grotesque and laughable picture of the militia of South Carolina marching upon the custom-house and overthrowing the United States! Mr. Curtis calls this only a lighter tone of illustration, running out the practical application of the South Carolina doctrine into the inconvenient consequences of treason. Whatever it was, it was effective, for it was fun in the traces of ratiocination.

But we have proofs in plenty of Webster's love of the humorous. When his ambition had been disappointed, and infirmity fell upon him at Marshfield in 1852, we catch now and then little gleams of sportiveness even in his last petulant talks. "I care," said he to his biographer, "no more about politics than the jackdaw that sits on the top of St. Paul's;" and then he repeated some of Cowper's lines on that interesting bird:

"He sees that this great roundabout,  
The world, with all its motley rout,  
Church, army, physic, law,  
Its customs and its businesses,  
Is no concern at all of his,  
And says—what says he?—Caw!"

Almost in his dying moments, finding his nurse still up at his side, he exclaimed, "That *everlasting* Sarah is still there!"

Mr. Webster was in President Harrison's cabinet. Harrison never forgot his Plutarch. This his inaugural showed. It was full of classic allusions. A friend met Webster the day of the Message, and said,

"What is the matter with you, Mr. Webster? You seem agitated."

"Agitated, Sir! And who would not feel agitated that had committed a murder?"

"A murder, Mr. Webster?"

"Ay, Sir," said the godlike, "murder, with malice aforethought, of I know not how many Greeks and Romans!"

Upon the Sub-Treasury debate Mr. Web-

ster had the advantage of Mr. Calhoun in every thing except condensed logic. Mr. Calhoun rarely indulged in the luxury of a laugh. While Webster's wit was bitterless, he used it unsparingly. It was tart and pungent. But who could complain of his friendly, refined ridicule? Once, when describing the abrupt transfer of Calhoun into another party, he referred to a sentimental German play: "Two strangers meet at an inn. One cries out, 'A sudden thought strikes me—let us swear eternal friendship.'" Well versed in the English classics, as he looked at his opponent he must have understood the full philosophy of Drayton's poetry:

"Let your jests fly at large, yet therewithal  
See they be salt, but yet not mixed with gall,  
That they with tickling pleasure may provoke  
Laughter in him on whom the jest is broke."

It is said that Calhoun himself joined in the general laughter which tumbled on his head from gallery and Senate as Webster recited this mockery of sentimentality.

Mr. March, in his reminiscences of Congress, attributes much of the effect of Webster's oratory to his manner, and even to his dress. His dark hair, massive sombre brow, and dark and deep-set eye were aided by the blue coat, buff vest, and white neckerchief. He affected the Revolutionary colors.

There was now and then in his highest reaches of eloquence a good-natured irony, not nettling or satirical, which made his acting alternate between genteel well-dressed comedy and tragedy, which the biographer is as much at a loss to appreciate and explain as for his sublime flights. He seems unable to find finite expression. Webster, in his Hayne encounter, is pictured now as a Moses emerging from the clouds of Sinai, now as a figure which only a Salvator Rosa should paint. His voice is the far-resounding sea; he is satanic, he is godlike. But it is no less true that Webster had the finer quality of wit and humor ingrained in his massive mind, and that the various elements were so combined in him as to make up our grandest orator and man.

Of Mr. Calhoun, little can be said of his public use of humor. He did not use it much as a means of debate. Only one instance do I recall, and that has rather the unpleasant bitterness of sarcasm. It was in reply to Mr. Clay, who had left his fame on various topics to posterity. Mr. Calhoun, in reference to the famous coalition known as that of the Puritan and blackleg, by which John Quincy Adams was elected President, said, "This the honorable Senator has not left to posterity. It is already decided!"

Mr. Clay, however, like the Kentuckian orators who have copied him, was blooded full with this essential attribute of oratory. He was at times as playful as a colt with his

fancies, but he always had them under curb. In debating the executive patronage in 1835, when such men as Wright, Buchanan, and Marcy were his compeers, and in vindicating the character of public offices as trusts and not as spoils, he dropped now and then into pleasant interpellations. His mirth constantly restored and preserved the good temper of the Senate. Mr. Buchanan was an especial target for his stinging fun. The ex-President was somewhat cross-eyed, and had no more specific levity than a Conestoga team. Mr. Clay was referring to the Democratic leaders, at the same time looking at Silas Wright, between whom and himself sat Mr. Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan rose and said "he was sorry the Senator from Kentucky was so often disposed to pay his respects to him."

"But," said Mr. Clay, "I had no allusion to you when I spoke of the *leaders*, but to another Senator," pointing to Silas Wright.

MR. BUCHANAN. "The Senator looked at me when he spoke."

MR. CLAY. "No, Mr. President, I did not look at him." And then, holding up and crossing his two forefingers with the mischievous air of a Puck, and his eye all twinkling with fun, he said, "It was the way *he* looked at *me*!" The laugh went round heartily.

Once charging upon Mr. Calhoun for leaving some partisan alliance as to the Sub-Treasury question, Mr. Clay humorously said that he (Calhoun) took up his musket, knapsack, and shot pouch, and joined the other party; he went horse, foot, and dragons, and he himself composed the whole corps! Again said Clay, "The Senator was once gayly mounted on his hobby [internal improvements]. We rode double, he before and I behind. But *he* quietly slipped off, leaving me to hold the bridle."

On another occasion Mr. Buchanan was defending himself against the charge of disloyalty during the war of 1812. To prove his loyalty he stated that he entered a company of volunteers at the time of the battle of North Point, and marched to Baltimore. "True," he said, "he was not in any engagement, as the British had retreated before he got there."

MR. CLAY. "You marched to Baltimore, though?"

MR. BUCHANAN. "Yes, Sir."

MR. CLAY. "Armed and equipped?"

MR. BUCHANAN. "Yes, armed and equipped."

MR. CLAY. "But the British had retreated when you arrived?"

MR. BUCHANAN. "Yes."

MR. CLAY. "Will you be good enough to inform us whether the British retreated in consequence of your valiantly marching to the relief of Baltimore, or whether you marched to the relief of Baltimore in con-

sequence of the British having already retreated?"

This colloquy has fun unalloyed with baser metal.

In the South and Southwest there was a company of men who, like Henry Clay, impressed their character on the country from the beginning of the government. Starting in Georgia with James Jackson, Crawford, the Clarkes, Forsyth, Early, Troupe, Cobb, Upson, Campbell, Shorter, Colquitt, Lumpkin, Dooley, Clayton, Harris, Charlton, Talbot, Tatnall, Cuthbert, Gilmer, the Lamars, M'Intosh, Wayne, Telfair, Dawson, Berrien, Cumming, Wild, Toombs, Stephens, Holt, Hill, Campbell, and a host of other brilliant men, who were compeers of Macon, Loundes, Randolph, Barbour, M'Duffie, Clay, Lomax, Grundy, Preston, Otis, Tompkins, Doddridge, General Jackson, Van Buren, Adams, Webster, Benton, Allen, Wright, and others—these men gave tone and spirit to the first half of our centennial life. They led public sentiment by their mobile Anglo-Norman and pertinacious Scotch-Irish blood—by strength of will, purity of purpose, chivalric devotion to woman, love of adventure, attachment to politics, and their readiness in natural humor and eloquence. Impatient, impassioned, and impetuous, yet in and around all their experiences they revealed in a stupendous sense of humor. These heroes of debate and their descendants, many of whom appeared in the Confederacy in arms (and are re-appearing above the surface of Southern society since the war), form a class of men unique and droll, cultured and gentle, peculiar and grand. They remind us of the Bruces and Wallaces of another history. Nor was their sense of humor, so happily reproduced in Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes*, altogether restrained by the religious emotion, though this element was a large leaven through the bucolic and camp-meeting life of the South. Its pious impulses had been stirred by the fervid eloquence of Wesley and Whitefield, which Summerfield, Bascom, Maffit and others had reproduced with increased zealotry. But in spite of this tendency to the seriousness of existence, their political and legislative life illustrates the humorous abandon of their nature. But why do not more of their facetiæ appear in Congress? Was it because we had then no short-hand writers? Did the militia muster and the county court-house monopolize their humor? Has no one preserved it, and with its full flavor? Some traditions of it at least survive. Here is one instance. No more comical device appears in the narrative of the Irish duello than the attempt of Dooley of Georgia to incase his leg in a hollow gum-tree, so as to make him the equal of his wooden-legged antagonist. It is said of these men in the graphic pages of Sparks's *Fifty Years* that

they always played "high game," never "low jack."

Take as a specimen the Congressman and preacher, Colquitt. "Ah!" said an elderly sister, "talk of your great men! None of 'em's equal to Brother Colquitt. Why, in our county he tried a man for his life, sentenced him to be hung, preached a sermon, mustered all the men in the county, married two couple, and held a prayer-meeting all in one day. Now, wa'n't that great?" Out of this stock came the rare men who made Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Southwest, with its Jacksons, Grundys, Polks, Poindexters, Houstons, and Bells. Out of the conflict of their ambitions came often as victors such Northern men as Robert J. Walker of Pennsylvania, Sergeant S. Prentiss of Maine, and others, who captured their hospitable constituents and overcame their hot competitors by sheer bravery of will and muscle, elegance of aim and manners, superb dashes of humor, and dazzling splendors of rhetoric.

There was a class of members of the last generation, of which Howell Cobb, Toombs, Stanley, Hunter, Peyton, and Wise are samples. A little later still, say 1838, were such brilliant and able men as Prentiss, Fillmore, Wise, Polk, Bell, Evans, Lincoln, Cushing, Hoffman, Legaré, Vinton, Dawson, and Sargeant, of the House. From this group we select Prentiss, although his splendid rhetorical efforts give no adequate idea of his humor. There is a dash of it here and there in his stump speeches. No man, South or North, ever left a reputation for purer eloquence. Pitted in his early day against Claiborne, of Mississippi, and against a candidate for Governor who alone of all the Democracy had the courage to meet him in public debate, he took captive the Southern mind. Not alone by his sublimated eloquence or ready wit did he capture it, but by his ready sympathy and honest bravery. We have often heard Judge Sharkey speak of his victories at the bar, and the volumes which record Congressional successes speak of the great ovation which the demi-gods of Senate and House paid him on his debate upon the contest for his seat. All were enthralled by his witchery. He became national at a bound. His simple letters to his New England home describing his trials and victories give no idea of his romantic life. They vainly endeavor to tell of the success of his elocution and the temptations of his wild and glorious life. His paramount genius was oratory. His humor was the servant of this genius, not its lord. Once, when in joint discussion Governor M'Nutt deplored his habits, which were rendering his learning and eloquence useless, he retorted on the Governor with *riant* effect. He first described in classic style the utilities and inspirations of wine and whisky. Before



making the *ad hominem* upon the Governor, he pictured the glug-glug-glug of the jug, as the politician tilts it and pours from its reluctant mouth the corn juice so loved of his soul. There is no music dearer to his ear, unless it be the same glug-glug-glug as it disappears down his capacious throat. Then turning to his opponent, his face all shining with fun, he said: "Now, fellow-citizens, during this ardent campaign, which has been so fatiguing, I have only been drunk once. Over in Simpson County I was compelled to sleep in the same bed with this distinguished nominee, this delight of his party, this wonderful exponent of the principles and practices of the unwashed Democracy, and in the morning I found myself drunk on corn whisky. I had lain too close to this soaked mass of Democracy, and I was drunk from absorption!"

Another galaxy of legislative brilliance, just preceding and during the war, was composed of men like Stephens of Georgia, Winter Davis of Maryland, Campbell of Ohio, Gilmer and Vance of North Carolina, Nelson and Etheridge of Tennessee, and Faulkner and Boteler of Virginia.

Of all these whom I have named it is difficult to say who were most eloquent; but for humor Wise wielded the most trenchant blade, Etheridge had the most original flow, and Vance had the greatest abundance of anecdote and good nature. But none of them came up to the repute of that veteran who was called the "sarcastic, crazy Randolph," unless it be Henry A. Wise, with his copious invective and abundant illustration. Mr. Wise had a peculiarity in his speech of leaping from the severest denunciation to the broadest humor. In his famous fight against the Know-Nothings he used this versatility with great effect. Once, in a philippic against the "Northern conscience," he exclaimed: "O gods! Northern conscience! Take a shark-skin and let it dry to shagreen; skin the rhinoceros; go then and get the silver-steel and grind it; and when you have ground it, take the hone and whet it till it would split a hair, and with it prick the shagreen or the rhinoceros-skin, and then go and try it on Northern conscience!" This, looks artificial, but Mr. Wise was ever ready for the "occasion sudden," as his elaborate debates in Congress show. He comes nearer to the manner, wit, and style of Randolph than any other man in our legislative annals.

Much has been said unjustly of Randolph. It is not in the line of these articles to vindicate, only to analyze. But no one in any parliamentary body ever figured so quaintly, so honestly, so intellectually, and so tenderly as this incarnation of legislative wit. He is properly placed in an article like this at the climax of these rare Southern statesmen.

The following description of John Randolph's personal appearance we quote from Sparks's admirable *Memoirs*: "His person was as unique as his manner. He was tall and extremely slender. His habit was to wear an overcoat extending to the floor, with an upright standing collar, which concealed his entire person except his head, which seemed to be set by the ears upon the collar of his coat. In early morning it was his habit to ride on horseback. This ride was frequently extended to the hour of the meeting of Congress. When this was the case he always rode to the Capitol, surrendered his horse to his groom—the ever-faithful Juba, who always accompanied him in these rides—and, with his ornamental riding-whip in his hand, a small cloth or leathern cap perched upon the top of his head (which peeped out, wan and meagre, from between the openings of his coat collar), booted and gloved, he would walk to his seat in the House, then in session, lay down upon his desk his cap and whip, and then slowly remove his gloves. If the matter before the House interested him, and he desired to be heard, he would fix his large, round, lustrous black eyes upon the Speaker, and in a voice shrill and piercing as the cry of a peacock exclaim, 'Mr. Speaker!' then for a moment or two remain looking down upon his desk, as if to collect his thoughts; then lifting his eyes to the Speaker, he would commence. His style of speaking was peculiar; his wit was bitter and biting; his sarcasm more pungent and withering than had ever been heard on the floor of Congress; his figure was *outré*; his voice fine as the treble of a violin; his face wan, wrinkled, and without beard; his limbs long and unsightly, especially his arms and fingers; the skin seemed to grow to the attenuated bone, and the large, ill-formed joints were extremely ugly. But those fingers, and especially the right forefinger, gave point and *vim* to his wit and invective."

There is a story often told of how he rid himself and the House of a pestering antagonist. While debating the Missouri question, a member from Ohio became impatient with Randolph's tirade. In the long pauses made by Randolph, the member would rise to move the previous question, in order to cut off debate. The Speaker ruled these interruptions out of order. At the third effort, Randolph, looking up from his notes, said: "Mr. Speaker, in the Netherlands a man of small capacity, with bits of wood and leather, will in a few moments construct a toy that, with the pressure of the finger and thumb, will cry 'Cuckoo! cuckoo!' With less of ingenuity, and with inferior materials, the people of Ohio have made a toy that will, without much pressure, cry, 'Previous question, Mr. Speaker! previous question, Mr. Speaker!'" at the

same time pointing at his victim with his skeleton finger. The House was convulsed.

Mr. Sargent, in his *Public Men and Events*, makes the victim of this humor a Mr. Cushman, of Maine. This is more likely.

Whoever was struck by the Roanoke statesman seldom survived. One man, however, was almost his match—Tristram Burgess, of Rhode Island. In 1845, when a student at Brown University, I called on this genius of elocution, and talked with him of his public services and memories. He was old then, and lived in Massachusetts. He had had a feud with the little State, and moved over the Pawtucket to show it his contempt. His eye shone with a youthful lustre. His pet name was "Eagle Eye." His aquiline nose was emblematic of his character.

When Burgess went to Congress it was soon understood that he would encounter that spook of a member, the piping, thin-legged Virginian. Mr. Burgess was an expert of belles-lettres, and had the graces of oratory at command. He went into the tourney with little genial humor, but an infernal sarcasm. So keen and antithetic were his shafts that they have the appearance of study. What the custom of Mr. Burgess was I do not know; but others as witty have been accused of memorizing their wit.

Tom Moore intimates that Sheridan's witticisms were all made *à loisir*, and kept by him till the effective occasion. This is incredible; for in his last moments he joked, and joked his best. He once said that a joke in Lord Lauderdale's mouth was no laughing matter. So even in his last illness it was no laughing matter to Randolph; but even then he joked with his servants about having his hair cut—as a surgical operation! He could not have memorized his parliamentary punyency any more than Burgess.

The observation of the writer is that the best humor is that which springs out of the surroundings. No jest depending merely on memory strikes kindly, strikes home, or strikes hard. Besides, studied invective implies malice aforethought, and no malicious man was ever great either in wit or humor. Malice corrodes the steel of the polished poniard. It unfits it for its work. Hence it will be found that men of spirit like Burgess, Randolph, Clay, and others, before they closed their career, illustrated by many amenities either to friends or antagonists, to servants or family, that genuine goodness upon which true wit and humor alone depend.

In my talk with Mr. Burgess he spoke kindly of all his early competitors; and Randolph, when dying, was called on by his old antagonist, Clay. It was the grasped hand, the knightly honor, and the tender

tear—these show the springs of sensibility, the secret of rhetorical power.

In his letters to his friend Francis S. Key Mr. Randolph showed that his heart was touched with gentlest and purest thoughts of another world. Toward the end of his legislative career, in a tariff debate with Louis M'Lane, of Delaware, he gave signs that it had genial culture. In spite of his own remark, that he would have gone to the distaff or the needle but for a spice of the devil in his nature, he was as gentle as a woman; and on this occasion he begged his opponent, Mr. M'Lane, in the kindest way to point out his (Randolph's) fallacies even by ridicule. "It is as fair a weapon," he said, "as any in the whole parliamentary armory." But he denounced the poisoned arrow and the scalping-knife, and in this debate he illustrated, by his reply, that he could, but would not, retort in kind. He rather praised the head and heart of M'Lane, who had praised Randolph's head at the expense of his heart. This delicacy of feeling was a part of the elemental life of the Roanoke wit. No one in the American Congress was fully his equal as a personal antagonist. He often made the infirmities of others a target. Nor does it detract from his wisdom as a statesman. The man who did so much for the Louisiana purchase, who foresaw our grand national future, who so detested and denounced the corruption which even then existed in land grabs from Erie to Mobile, who was ever rocking on the vicissitudes of our wildest politics, had a heart illumined by the warmest friendships, and the most faithful constituents and servants. While his mind was instinct with the finest humor, it was alive to the largest humanity, as his will of manumission shows. His spirit has not altogether departed from the Congressional body. At least we have two of his connections in the present Congress, Bland of Missouri and Tucker of Virginia.

Randolph is a sample of that class of public men who, having no special avocation, gave to their country and their neighbors the benefit of a large roundabout sense. Are not such men rare? Are they not the best of our statesmen?

The present House of Commons, like our House of Congress since the war, likes good solid sense, but it takes it best when seasoned. Condiments with meats suit better than the Philipian order of elocution. We agree that men in all legislative bodies are listened to on their specialties—Laird on shipping, Lennox as an *arbiter elegantiarum* in art, and so on. No one challenges their ability or information in their peculiar spheres. But all qualities combine to equip a Sir Robert Peel for command, as all qualities combine to make a Randolph, a Webster, or a Clay. To make a good Speaker,

like Banks, or an influential Senator, like Schurz, something more than business qualities is necessary.

We take issue at once with the assertion, so common in England, and becoming so general here, that the practical talent for business is that required for legislation. The mere business men in Congress are not the most successful as legislators. They seldom give their attention to general thoughts. Even a great lawyer or scientist, a manufacturer of paper or the editor of a journal—notably such men have seldom impressed themselves directly on debates and legislation.

It is complained that the greatest men in America are ostracized from public life, and that our second-rate men fill third-rate places. The complaint is untrue. Horace Mann on a school board was great; in Congress he was as much a babe in the woods as Horace Greeley off his tripod. Vanderbilt or Beecher would be lost in Congress. All *ex parte* men, preachers especially, are unfitted for the forum of open debate. It is the full rounded development of all the faculties, including that of humor, which is the secret spring to political success and the test of our greatest men.

Had Horace Mann, Horace Greeley, and Henry J. Raymond used half the fun-power which they possessed, as General Schenck, General Nye, or John P. Hale did theirs, their legislative career would not be overshadowed by their renown in other spheres. Francis Jeffrey was a great reviewer, Macaulay a great historian, and Bulwer a splendid genius, but their parliamentary fame is as dust in the balance against their literary glories. It is not mere abstract knowledge of human society or of political economy that makes Senatorial fame. Pistol hit the mark on Falstaff. The latter was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Said the fat knight, arguing for his budget,

"My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about."

"Two yards or more," shrieked Pistol.

"No quips now, Pistol. I am about thrift."

But he shook his sides with Pistol on the fun, and went to work on the budget—or the highway. This was statesmanship.

General Schenck, after two months' debate in 1870-71, when his tariff bill had been torn to shreds by close contests, item by item, turned his missiles of sarcasm upon all his contestants. He passed his own bill as a substitute, and received all the credit for the reform. How did he make the turn?

"My bill, Mr. Speaker, has been nibbled to death by pismires and kicked to death by grasshoppers."

In the next paper I shall consider the collective humor of legislatures, as distinguished from the individual humor of members.

## BERTHA'S EXPERIMENT.

BERTHA MACALISTER sat by the window, looking out into the garden. She had laid down the long white seam in her lap, and was watching the vagrant butterflies outside, and the humming-bird glancing here and there and making love to the flowers. She had lived many years in this great old house, and had passed many a summer afternoon looking into the old-fashioned garden where the roses were, and the blue-eyed larkspurs and the heavy-scented syringas. Bertha was twenty-eight, and she had never been in love. Now she had reached that age at which old school-mates, happily married long ago, had begun to tell her how young she looked. That is always the first sign of coming age; so it goes to a woman's heart with a queer little pang when kind-hearted friends begin to say, "Why, time stands still with you, my dear. You haven't grown old at all."

It was very curious, when you think of it, that Bertha had never loved. She had had two or three offers soon after she left school, but none of the suitors had touched her heart, and so she had sent them away, and then for five or six years past no lovers had knocked at her door. But now, at last, one had come, and she was thinking of him as she sat and watched the sun-suffused vagrants of the summer outside the window. She lived in the house of her older brother, for they were orphans, he and she, and had always clung to each other. His wife was a not unkindly woman, but she did not understand Bertha, and sometimes the girl realized, with a sort of pathetic self-pity, how weary are the feet that climb the stairs of others.

Now, as she sat by the window, her brother's wife—this good, practical, but unsympathetic Maria—was talking with an aunt who was there on a visit. Miss MacAlister had paid scant heed to the drift of their drowsy discourse, but suddenly a sentence caught her attention. Maria was saying,

"I think she married him just for a home."

Aunt Sarah's voice took on a certain touch almost of solemnity as she answered, "Marrying for a home is always a dangerous experiment, and almost always a fatal one."

At this sentence Bertha MacAlister turned round quickly. They had touched the very subject about which she had been thinking so intently—a subject concerning which she would have asked her mother's counsel, had she had a mother, but, having none, was trying to think out for herself. She joined in the conversation almost eagerly: "So you think marrying for a home is always wrong, Aunt Sarah?"

"I did not say that, child: I think it is always dangerous. And yet I can easily

## LEGISLATIVE HUMORS.

## PART II.

By THE HON. S. S. COX.

"Thou art too wild, too rude, and bold of voice;  
Parts that become thee happily enough;  
...but pray thee take pains  
To ally with some drops of modesty  
Thy skipping spirit."

SHAKESPEARE.

HOW are we to test the flavor of humor? No brackets in the *Globe*, as [laughter], will help the article if it be adulterated or poor. Perhaps this was Mr. Speaker Blaine's reason for forbidding in the last Congress the insertion of these odd notes of risibility and admiration! And yet there are remarks frequently appearing in the reports utterly senseless without the significant parenthesis, as there have been humorously reported remarks utterly dull without hearing them or seeing their utterer. This is especially so when irony is used. A genial and rich old gentleman from Massachusetts, now deceased, touched the uproarious chord on the salary question. He had deposited his back pay in a bank, fell grievously sick, and, while ill, sent for his clerk. "Here! put this amount to the credit of the United States." "Now," said he, "here comes the sequel: I began to get better [roars of laughter], and let the money lie—where it is now!" This is another form of the story of the sick and well devil. When he reached in his remarks the cost of living in Washington, he made the climax of fun by exclaiming, "Let the farmers come here with their families and stay a fortnight, and my word for it, they will feel it down here [slapping his pockets, amidst great laughter]." If the report had stopped before the brackets, and unless the manner of the speaker were known, the cause of this immoderate laughter would be unknown.

Laughter is not, however, always the sign of humor. Thackeray tells of a person who produced laughter by cultivating stammering, with no expenditure of genius. So in public debate the only way to account for certain laughs is to know the tone and manner of the debater. His mere language and thought fail to reproduce the sense of the humorous.

In deciding upon this deliberative fun we can not, therefore, rely altogether on the printed reports, nor be certain of its genuineness by the laugh which follows. It can only be tested by its intrinsic quality.

The humor of legislation is collective as well as individual. My division for this paper is that of

## I.—COLLECTIVE HUMOR.

The body of the House laughs as such. It is not the tongue of the talker always that makes the fun for the body. The body

may laugh *sua sponte* at the talker as well as with him. It makes its own fun in a gregarious way, as geese may be said to cackle in concert, or as one animal of the menagerie may be said to arouse a discordant concordance of harmonious dissonance! As in the human body, so in a legislative body, it is not the *chordæ vocales*, nor the facial muscles, nor the head, which enjoys, but the whole frame, from the topmost exultant hair to the swelling diaphragm, heels, legs, eyes, all in one paroxysm of jubilation. It is not alone because the fun is contagious, but because all parts of the body are in a consentaneous roar. On some days the whole House, with its Speaker and officers, messengers and pages, is ill-natured. On other days it is as good-tempered as if on a holiday excursion. This is to be representative. We get this from our changeable climate, if not from our English cousins.

It is a part of the rule of the English Parliament to yawn, scream, shuffle, cough, howl, and break a member down, if he is not liked, or if the House is impatient for a division. It is no fiction that Dr. Warren relates when he says that Tittlebat Titmouse broke down a ministry by an inopportune "cock-a-doodle-doo." Will it be believed, ye who stickle for the leaden gravities of debate, that there is a rule in the American Congress, to be found in Barclay's *Digest*, allowing considerable license for the hilarious felicities of debate, and for that fancy which Hobbes thinks "pleases by extravagancy?"

On the 15th of September, 1837, Jefferson's *Manual* was adopted in so far as applicable, and in it (Barclay, 79) it is said that "no one is to disturb another in his speech by hissing, coughing, or spitting!" Ample authorities are quoted on this head. "Nevertheless," it is further said, "if a member finds that it is not the inclination of the House to hear him, and that by conversation or any other noise it endeavors to drown his voice, it is his most prudent way to submit to the pleasure of the House and sit down; for it scarcely ever happens that members are guilty of this piece of ill manners without sufficient reason, or inattentive to a member who says anything worth their hearing" (2 Hats., 77, 78). This is quite consoling to the vanity of the majority of our public debaters.

Is the practice under this rule obsolete in England? and how far do we practice it in Congress? To answer this we touch the key of much of our collective fun.

Dr. Kenealy appears in Parliament with his green bag and umbrella. He is the pariah of Parliament, representing simply an impostor and the old bigotry of "no bloody popery." Is that noble body disturbed by his presence under this rule? One would

think so, to read the accounts. But generally, as in Congress, so in Parliament, members listen with great good temper to a maiden effort. The nervous are put at ease and the diffident encouraged. But impudence and bumptiousness are met, *à l'outrance*, with festive if not diabolical defiance. This defiance generally takes the form of fun. If the member bores the House, loud talk all around deadens his tone. The more animated and vehement he becomes (and we have this in Congress), the more furious the fun. "Divide!" "divide!" "'vide!" "'vide!" stun his ear and shut his mouth. If that does not answer, the House proceeds to "count out." What we do to obviate long speeches, by our one-hour rule, previous question, and night sessions for "debate only," the English do by "counting out." Forty members make a quorum in the Parliament, though with us a majority makes a quorum. An orator who is unpopular or irrelevant is tripped up in Parliament by the failure to have a quorum. When the Speaker's attention is called to the thin House, he is bound to count the House. He orders the electric bells to be sounded, and the hour-glass is called in and turned over. In two minutes the doors are barred, and the forty members not being in the House, but being in the lobbies, smoking and laughing, the question goes over, the House is relieved, and the present chance is gone for the orator. This scene is invariably accompanied with good temper. It is irregular regularity.

We too have our calls of the House to discover or bring about the quorum, and the rule which has been quoted has considerable latitude on such occasions. During calls of the House, and when filibustering all night, when tired nature seeks relief and finds it not, the boyhood of the House bursts into a saturnalia. Before recalling some of these scenes let me quote some examples of roistering disorder in Parliament. The liberties which the young and old statesmen of that body take with the unfortunate orator appall the delicate and decorous and even the stoutest will. Dr. Kenealy or Sir Charles W. Dilke is not an exceptional case. Filibustering under the rules, which leads to so much disorderly levity in our Congress, is not peculiar to us. Sheridan moved to adjourn nineteen times to prevent a vote respecting the French war. He succeeded in his object, as filibustering generally does. Perhaps the House of Commons is more tumultuous in its jollity because it never gets fairly under way in an important debate until after dinner, after ten o'clock at night. If our constituents, looking down upon the House of Representatives, become disenchanted with free institutions because of the apparent inattention to the orator or to the business before the House, what must

John Bull feel when for the first time he hears the noisy levity of his precious Parliament! Its tumult may be sometimes heard outside in the street, through closed doors, for half an hour at a time, vainly endeavoring to drown the voice of some 658th part of that body. The scene is indescribable. The vociferous majority, which gives its applause to its leaders, creates a rapturous confusion utterly unknown to our American Legislatures. These legislators of England seem to be trained like the Greeks of Crete, whom Homer pictured in his loud-lunged Achilles and his big-mouthed Stentor. The one was called on to roar the Trojans into Troy and disorder, and the other could be heard two miles off. It is not infrequent to see hats go up in Parliament with huzzas. Applause is rare on the floor among our members, and it is becoming less so. Though there are instances of applause on our floor, still the general sentiment is against it, but in no case does it take the form of huzzas or vociferation. There is no way yet found to stop laughter. I have known members to call on the Speaker to do it. On one occasion when this was attempted, during a description of members of Congress retreating from Bull Run, Governor Wickliffe, a ruffle-shirted, large, jolly Kentuckian, made the fun worse by apologizing: "Indeed, Mr. Speaker, for my life's sake I couldn't help it."

Some time before Mr. Randolph was appointed minister to Russia he had delivered a speech in which he inveighed, in his peculiar way, against being at the tail of the *corps diplomatique* in Europe. "A cup of cold water would be better. What! should he give up his Congressional life, with its heartless amusements, vapid pleasures, and tarnished honors, to dance attendance abroad instead of at home?" When the news was brought into the House that he was appointed to Russia, there was a prompt and hearty roar, and then incredulity. Some censured it as a joke, believing it to be a falsehood; but the general jubilee was extensively expended on the famous parliamentary satirist. This was collective humor; and it was fully within the definition of Hobbes, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others.

The spirit of exasperation, defiance, and intimidation which has ever been indulged in by the French Deputy, and which had its origin in the French Revolution, forbids the broad play of humor which abounds in the English Parliament and in the American Legislatures. If it be true, as our old friend Blair, in his *Rhetoric*, says, that humor is the peculiar province of the English nation, because of the unrestrained liberty which the

government and manners allow to every man, and that the indulgence of humor is incompatible with despotism, *a fortiori*, the greater unrestraint in our "land of liberty" and in our independent and social life ought to give us a freer and a bolder strain of the comic spirit. Cervantes once said: "My Don Quixote would have been more entertaining but for Inquisitorial and political intimidation."

Not a few of the scenes of spiteful disorder in Parliament occur upon mutual recriminations; but most of the scenes where Momus enters occur when that body is indisposed to hear a bore. An illustration of the first was the scene between Mr. Shaw and Mr. O'Connell, both Irish members. Shaw charged the great agitator with an attempt to subvert the Established Church, which he had sworn not to subvert. "Order!" "Order!" shout the Irish members in chorus. Then O'Connell accuses Shaw of falsehood; then the opposition cry "Order!" then the House is on its legs, and gestures as wildly as the French Assembly; then a lull; then other charges are made of atrocious calumny; then cries of "Chair!" "Chair!" and "Order!" then the poor Speaker uses gavel and voice in vain; then more "lies" given, more confusion; then that everlasting threat of the chair to name members or dissolve the committee; then an abatement, and Shaw gets in one blow on O'Connell: "The member charges me with spiritual ferocity; but my ferocity does not take for its symbol a death's head and cross-bones!" Cheers and roars. Then O'Connell—never before so ready, though often more brilliant—"Yours is a calf's head and jaw-bones!" Deafening cheers and general thunder of fun.

This scene is not quoted to confirm, as it would seem to do, the English impression of O'Connell as a Parliamentary orator. That impression is grossly prejudiced and unjust. The bold, natural man, who is pictured with large faults and coarse sincerity, whose speech was "tinsel upon frieze," was ever subtle, musical, and skillful. Had he hated the Saxon and loved the Celt less, and had he been of another creed and isle, he would not have been stigmatized as the Athenian Cleon and the Irish railer. The Woolsack or the Premiership would have been his guerdon had his Titanic strength grown from English earth! But all confess that, whether in Parliament or in the County Clare, before the jury or the mob, he

"Now stirred the uproar, now the murmur stilled,  
And sobs and laughter answered as he willed."

Here is a scene of another kind, into which the bitterness of altercation did not enter. A member for Oxford hardly says his "Sir" to the Speaker before the uproar begins. Babel is as Spenser's Cave of Silence com-

pared to it, and the supposititious account of the Park menagerie, when the rhinoceros upset the cages, is as a prayer-meeting. The sounds are not merely confused, but are blended in inextricable and pleasing variety. The bass of a hoarse member crying "Read" fills the interlude of bagpipes from the back benches; agonized coughs, lengthened yawns, sublime sneezes, such as the Olympians might indulge, are perceivable amidst the yelp of hounds and the hullabaloo of the chase, while, to add to the *ensemble*, all the cocks of the rosiest-fingered Auroras are in full crow, and all the "meek children of misery," the gentle asses, bray harsh discord! Up and down the chorus leaps, amidst groans and laughter; and this is the great deliberative body of history—the omnipotent Parliament whose fiat rules four hundred millions of souls on our star, from "furthest Ind" to extremest Zealand!

Nothing like this has ever been performed in our Congress. It is with us an utter impossibility. No future crisis perhaps will ever appear so full of legislative struggle for us as the legislative scenes before our civil war; and during that struggle there was much of this boisterous deviltry. On one or two occasions there was exhibited sectional hatred, amidst much confusion; but this was not funny, as on the night when Keitt and Grow had their fracas. The insensate hilarity and ingenious devices for obstruction which out-Herod Herod, as exhibited in Parliament, find no counterpart here.

Another scene in Parliament which illustrates one of its undeliberative moods: A member arises: "I rise, Sir"—he is saluted with ironical cheers and a zoological serenade—"to state"—a flock of South-Downs bleat him with their "ba-a's!" Loud laughter follows, till exhausted nature pauses—"I rise to perform, Sir, a duty to my con—" Cries of "Sit down!" and all the sounds of the chromatic scale, led by the octave squeak of a pig under a gate, the shrill voice of chanticleer, the "bow-wow-wow" of the English mastiff, and the mewling of Tabitha and her kittens. Does he sit down? He does. I can sympathize with him, having been under fire recently; and when I sat down, it was with the remark, "I take my seat, Sir, boldly!" This sedentary alacrity always restores good humor.

One may well believe the anecdotes told of the first attempts of leading statesmen who were driven to temporary obscurity by the howls of Parliament. Their merit is measured by the magnitude of the difficulty when overcome. Pilots gain reputation in storms. It was only the other day that a Mr. Pell dashed in on an educational matter. He began: "No member can be more sensible than I am," and there he forgot what he was going to say, and

paused, while a titter ran through the House. "No member," he resumed, "can be more sensible than I am," and again he stopped, amidst the cries of "Hear! hear!" "No member, Mr. Speaker, can be more sensible than I am"—a voice from below the gallery, "Who denies of it?"—"that the question of education," etc.

The Hon. Mr. Stanley, Earl Derby's brother, is a member of experience, but his manner of speaking is execrating. He is nervous and embarrassed. He gets up to speak with a large sheet of paper in his hand, on which he has made his notes. He fumbles this over, and never finds what he looks for. "I think, Sir," he says—"I think, that is, I would venture to say"—a long pause, in which the House sits in respectful silence—"now, this question is one which a colonel, or I may say a major, might, in point of fact—that is, I think, supposing his regiment were ordered to India—to India"—another long pause, in which some one says, in a stage whisper, "On, Stanley, on!"

The same thing once happened in the old Hall of Congress, where a stranger in the gallery saluted M'Duffie, who was about to reply to an attack, "Lay on, Macduff!" Convulsive and resonant laughter greets all such efforts. It is the quick anticlimax of the whole body. Such instances are not rare in our Congress. "What would you have, Sir? I am a plain man, Mr. Speaker, and am tired of these theories," etc., referring to free trade. "What I want, Sir, is more common-sense!" A fife-like voice across the way, "That's so," provokes the fun.

Humor is often unintentional; that is, it causes fun in the collective body without prepose on the part of the occupant of the floor. Once in a debate as to the admission of the cabinet, the writer undertook to picture them seated within the House after the British method, and by a fancy he supposed certain members were proposing questions after the same method to the organs of the government. An Iowa member was supposed to ask of Mr. Welles, then Secretary of the Navy, "whether or not the Argonautic expedition of Admiral Jason would have any effect, in case the golden fleece had been captured in Australia, either upon the gold or wool market." Then some one inquires, "What gentleman from Iowa?" With perfect frankness it was responded, "My pastoral friend." The honored member was a gentle shepherd, keeping immense numbers of sheep, and was also a congregational minister. It was only *truth*; but the House welcomed it as if it were witty. It was upon a question which "opposed no man's profit nor pleasure, and to all was welcome;" and therefore it falls within the rule of humor. Here is another instance of unintentional wit on the part of the mem-

ber, but to which intent was given by the body: The Marquis of Salisbury was discussing to the Lords the Church establishment. He made the parenthetical laughter by a bull. "A congregation," said he, "may be divided among themselves into two parties; yet if there were any means of separating them, they would both go on happily together—I mean apart!" The noble lords enjoyed the logical fun, and perhaps at the expense of the noble marquis.

"Who ever knew the gentleman to agree with any gentleman whom he differed from?" literally is a bull. It was once humorously applied by a Cincinnati member whose jocose Christian name is Job. Yet it admirably describes the character of a bigot. A Senator once said: "We are illustrating the impossibility of accurate discussion, based on a state of facts which are altogether unknown." But these bulls were only apparently unintentional. In the confusion of debate there is sometimes much unintentional unconcatenated facetiousness. For instance: Mr. Wood struggles for the floor. "He has had his hour," says Mr. Conger, of Michigan, and, by way of suavity, adds, "and he is an expert speaker and scholarly statesman." Mr. Wood, not hearing the compliment, said, "The gentleman makes a statement which I wish to correct." The House enjoys, though the individual did not intend, the pleasant surprise.

How quickly a laugh will settle a member and a question, even if the member be so considerable a member as Benton. He was in the Lower House during the Thirty-fourth Congress. There was a question in his mind whether the *sine die* adjournment of the 4th of March should be at twelve midnight or twelve meridian. It had often been mooted in other years. It was once made by Quincy Adams, in a classic allusion to the graceful figure of the Muse of History in her car above the clock, looking down on members to remind them that she is recording the proceedings of Congress. When the clock pointed to twelve midnight, Benton, full of the old issue, arose. Pointing to the hands of the clock, he exclaimed, "I am no longer, Sir, a member of this House, Sir." The Speaker ordered the sergeant-at-arms to remove all those not members, amidst a quick fusillade of fun at Old Bullion's expense. The session held on, with the irate statesman still in his place, till noon next day.

It is in the call of the House that our Congress comes the nearest to copying the English extravaganza of deliberation. There is not much at stake in the simple call, except to get the quorum. But out of the personal excuses and general demoralization of a night session, when many members are "o'er a' the ills o' life victorious," there is a deal of fun evoked. It is prop-

erly classed under the collective humors of the body, rather than the individual humor of the member.

Why this occasion should be prolific of fun is owing to the fact that for a certain time the body is shut in, waiting for the reculant absentees; and then when they appear, under arrest, there is a sort of jolly diabolism in putting them to the inquisitorial torture. These exceptional occasions generally occur after a weary time, or when a dull member or a tedious question is up, or when some party defeat or victory depends, or at the end of a session, when the House falls below the quorum because of the natural rest and relief which many members seek. This generally happens at night.

Is it a sign of our degeneracy that the night session is becoming more frequent?

In England the legislature has reversed the curfew. That body does not begin to awaken until *after* eight o'clock in the evening. It has realized Addison's satire on the customs of *his* time, when the daughters were busy at crimp and basset while the grandmothers were asleep, whereas it used to be, he says, that the latter were wont to sit up last in the family. Some one, speaking of this custom of nocturnal deliberation in Parliament, thinks that the Parliamentarians are the worse rulers for it, as their heads are muddled with wine. It is regarded as another line of separation from the people, who generally use night for sleep, and the spirit of dissipation and fashion conspire thus to render such members sorry guardians of liberty. They are called a parcel of drinking, gambling, nervous, gouty men, unfit to wage war with corruption at two o'clock in the morning. The Parliament House, it is confessed, has a dingy daylight, and the inspiration to speak by gas is too great to be lost. Disraeli last June threatened the Home Rulers with day sessions on the Irish bill, so as to hurry the debate to a conclusion. Is it a harsh judgment on Parliament to say that nocturnal sessions unfit it for business? But it is Leigh Hunt's judgment, and to be taken *cum grano salis*. We pit against him Douglas Jerrold, who says that the owl, "the very wisest thing in feathers," is silent all the day. Like the scolding wife, she hoots only at night. Since the hours of owls and legislators in England are alike, we leave the reader to settle the question between Hunt and Jerrold—night and day.

It was in the convivial night sessions, in 1797, that Pitt and Dundas labored under the scandal of sometimes appearing drunk in the House of Commons. Out of it grew the famous epigram:

PITT. "I can not see the Speaker, Hal, can you?"

DUNDAS. "Not see the Speaker! d—n me, I see two!"

But it is a significant commentary on our

time that the old Parliamentarians met at 8 A.M. In the time of the Stuarts the sessions ran till "candles were brought in." Late hours and luxury go together. The industrious are at their dreams, and the legislators are cheating the scale of labor to heap the scale of wealth. Such is the complaint in England. And are we not approaching the British fashion all too fast? By A.D. 1900 Congress will meet after dinner; and then look out for the menagerie! Already our occasional night sessions provoke the liveliest frolicsomeness. As I have said, they give rise to calls of the House, and to scenes which would "smile paralysis out of Nestor." The rules require that on such a call the absentees shall be noted and the doors shut. If no excuses are offered, the absentees are trundled out of bed or away from a dinner party, and in custody of the sergeant-at-arms. They are then brought before the bar. It is then that the fun grows furious. No business but hearing excuses is in order. The members are cooped in, and must find amusement. A New York member in the old Hall once climbed down the granite pillars, and got caught midway in a ludicrous style. Another once in clambering down caught his button in the net about the hair of a fair companion, and took the hair before the bar. When the absentees are called, the Speaker sternly asks, "You have been absent, Sir, without leave: what excuse have you, Sir?" Then listen to the fun. One member deprecatingly says, "The law allows me *per diem*, but not a *per noctem*:" his wit saves him. Another has been married recently: he is fined. Another has a sick wife, and could not come: excused. Another intimates that the House is tight: fined. Another was sleepy, and tired of the dull debating: fined. Another has been to the hospital to visit a constituent with the small-pox, intimates gently that the disease is contagious, and asks to go home: fined. Another, who was absent, happens in somehow without arrest. How did he get in? All sorts of surmises at his expense. A has been out to put on a clean shirt. B has gone to Baltimore to see his wife, whom he has not seen for a month: excused. C informs the House that he told his absent colleagues there would be nothing done of consequence, and proposes to be punished vicariously: it will not do. D has been to a dinner party, and E sat up with him: both fined. F was telegraphing about his oil well: voted a bore. G was at home on low diet. H asks to be excused on "general grounds:" no. H's friend has been at his room, reading the *History of Civilization*, and commends the book to the needs of the House: fined. J had promised his wife when he left Massachusetts not to keep bad company or late hours. He might have quoted Falstaff: "Company, villainous company,



hath been the spoil of me." He caught it. No man can vote till he pays his fine; therefore K proposes to stop proceedings till he "settles up." L has had a difficulty, and expected to go out of the District, etc.: he is mulcted extra, but finally excused, because it was so rare an occurrence for a New England member to have an affair of honor. M has had a fall upon the slippery steps; an ardent debate ensues. As he would not say whether it was before or after dinner, he received the penalty. N has more than an average constituency—a noble body; two of them called on him, and he went with them, to be fined for his courtesy.

Sometimes the deserters when brought in assume airs, and lecture those who have been up all night. Such only escape with a double fine. One member apologized to the country for being brought in on a Sunday morning! When the House adjourned, the question was taxing the whisky on hand. A point is made whether, pending that question, it is in order to *consume* the stock on hand. A common source of fun is to propose that members address the House on their hobbies. Mr. Fuller was once asked to speak on light-houses. He briefly rejoined that they were situated on land, to be used on the sea. Mr. Prun is urged to restate his views on the Presidential vote of Western Virginia. The largest man in the Thirty-eighth Congress was Baldwin of Massachusetts. A small man—nameless—proposes first that he be divided to make a quorum, and next that he speak an hour on the prehistoric man. The hour is granted, but he yields the "time" to the small man. "Does he yield space too?" inquires Thaddeus Stevens. So many are reported sick that some one proposes a sanitary commission; another, the removal of the Capitol to a healthy spot; another proposes an appropriation for "chips" to a noted faro player. An Illinois member is asked for his excuse. "Guilty, my lord." It is proposed to reprimand him. He pleads in mitigation of damages. Another bought tickets, and agreed to take a lady to the theatre: not excused. One man wants to know what day it is on Friday morning. He is informed it is Thursday, though it was Friday; for the legislative day is not the day of the week. Finally, there being some contumacy reported, a member proposes to bring in certain absentees, dead or alive. There is a call for a division, and a motion to strike out "alive." The House begins to weary. Thaddeus Stevens leaves; a motion is made for a burial service, as when the brains are out the body dies. "We have lost our head," said one, as Stevens departs.

It will be impossible for me to forget my first experience on a call of the House. It was in the merry month of May, 1858. It

occurred on a private bill. I had not then learned the secrets of the prison-house. Being caught by the sergeant's officer on my way to my duty, I was graciously allowed the freedom of the mail wagon. How I chafed under my first arrest! What would lynx-eyed constituents, and especially my opponents, in Ohio think! I tremble as I recall these apprehensions. I was brought before the bar with Zollicoffer and James B. Clay. The then leviathan of the House, Humphrey Marshall, was in the chair. How he glowered on me with ponderous savagery! He made me feel that I had personally affronted him. I told him that I was sorry to *wast* his precious time, and would *lean* on his mercy; but there was no mercy in him. What a company there was that night! Minister Washburne, General Quitman, Jones of Tennessee, Governor Houston of Alabama, General Sickles, Grow, Stevenson, Colfax, Bishop of Connecticut, Bingham, Lamar, Groesbeck, Pendleton, Governor Smith of Virginia, Giddings, Farnsworth, John Cochran, and many others since then ministers, Governors, and Senators. Some of them are in the cold, cold ground. "Where be their gibes now?" Another "call" has summoned them to a more serious session. But it happened on that night, as frequently since, that the vigilant and leading men were absent, while the dilatory wags were on guard. How they delighted to catch Mr. J. Glancy Jones, chairman of the Ways and Means, at President Buchanan's dinner table! What a riotous row was made over his white tie and rubicund face and the Pennsylvania delegation, with the "J. B." brand on their brows, fresh from festivity! Few excuses were received, though many were tendered. A member from Niagara had "paired off" with his wife; another felt so bad because his wife had gone home, he could not participate in deliberation; a member from Maryland was remarked as showing a disposition to be in the hall, by being in the gallery; one member found the sergeant before the sergeant found him, and asked to have that officer fined; a Kentucky member had attended all day, expecting to die in his tracks, for a favorite measure; but as the measure did not come up, he could not die, so he left for home!

When John Cochrane was called, we all knew he had been to the Presidential dinner; and his exculpation was not only a fine piece of oratorical humor, but he turned the tables on the House, as he did on the "fell sergeant" who had shocked him by the arrest. The man physiological was astounded, the man psychological was appalled, his federal constitution trembled, and nature gave signs of woe that all was lost, for had he not been rudely grasped by the hand of authority? He had been called *high*, he felt low; and then some one suggested that the

sergeant-at-arms held "Jack" and the game. Upon these occasions the native style of the member thus comes out. A dozen members explain that they had gone out for a bite, etc.; but General Cochrane disdained the ordinary Saxon tongue, and sailed into the empyrean of Epicurus.

The stately Groesbeck is brought in. He asks for counsel. Counsel is freely tendered. He makes a solemn plea in extenuation, whereupon Hughes of Indiana likens it to the sermon the old lady heard, the best she ever heard. She could not remember the text, or the points, or the sermon, but it had such a godly tone! General Curtis, of Iowa, comes in voluntarily; and he is fined for coming in without compulsion. Then arises the member from the wild-cat district of Pennsylvania, Mr. Gillis. He makes his excuse. Is it expected that he should know the rules of such a disorderly body? He confessed that he had been to dine with the President. All he knows of etiquette is to go and dine when asked, and he is willing to pay for it like a man. He had heard that he was to be arrested, and flew, not to the horns of the altar, but to the *horns* of "Old Buck." Harry Phillips, of Philadelphia, who had himself moved the call, had abandoned the House for the dinner. He was caught. He claimed to be the author of all their amusement, and threw himself on their gratitude.

And so on through the long night the imprisoned members indulge in what seems the very puerility of frivolity. But is it altogether to be reprehended? Compared to the English saturnalia which I have described, it is rational: as one may see a lot of grizzlies upon the side-hills of the Nevadas, where cattle are wont to congregate, doubling themselves up for sportive rolls, somersaulting in a most diverting way, until they make the herd familiar with their antics, when suddenly they pounce on the fattest of the beeves, and are happy.

It may be queried whether there is any real wit or humor in these scenes of Parliament or of Congress. The clown makes you laugh, but is it humor? The answer is, first, that generally men do not laugh without cause, at least gregariously. Man is the only animal that laughs (or weeps either), for he is the only animal, says Hazlitt, who is struck with the differences between what things are and what they ought to be. Hence there is a sort of ratiocination in laughing. It is generally the galled person who maintains that ridicule is improper for grave subjects; but who is to decide as to the real gravity? Shall there be no logic because it is abused, and no humor for the same reason? Second, is it fair to decide that such and such a scene is trivial or unimportant, worthy of playfulness or contempt, or of titillations of mirth or hearty derision,

until you know as well the assembly and its manner at the time and the occasion? Some of these calls of the House show a contradiction between the grand object, which is a quorum, and the ludicrous modes of obtaining it; and if they elevate the mind into effervescence, or raise mirth in order to relax and entertain, are they to be altogether condemned?

Is it gravely asked "whether such scenes are fit for the first assembly of gentlemen in the world," and the freest body of representatives—assemblages which deal with myriad rights and interests, the growth of centuries, with their conflicts of passions and interests, principles and prejudices? Are these Parliamentarians of England, many of them hereditary legislators, the tenth transmitters of a foolish face, to be commended for such extravagances? Ah, Sir! there is something better here than this nocturnal mirth. Here is the elder spirit of liberty! Here are her Majesty's opposition! "By Allah!" said an Oriental potentate, looking in on the Commons, "in my country we would have their heads off in a week!" This very freedom—nay, license—of debate compensates not only for the inanity of the Lord Tomnoddys and the Earl Fitz-Doodles of the English senate, and the broad-shouldered bucolic Englishmen of the prize ox and ruddy face order, but it gives us the rollicking spirit which is never unpopular with English or American people. It is the great lever in moving masses of mankind. Is it said, again, that the wit of deliberative bodies like the Commons or the Congress is of inferior grade? So it seems often when reported. The jokes of the judge in court are simple, the facetiousness of the bar is foolish, and in all assemblages on business intent, the mind seeks relief from the lightest lisp of the silliest *bonmot*. A laugh is catching. We laugh often because others are laughing. Independence and impudence help it along, and the next morning's debates fail to show the real causes of the risibility. A member once called his constituents "tinkers" by mistake for "thinkers." There was a laugh. The rotund face of Bernal Osborne may sometimes account for the fun he provokes, as did the burly, hearty form of O'Connell. The one was the "saucy boy" of the House, and the other could agitate your person or your politics at will. But they impart liveliness to debate, and make logical wounds with their rapiers.

Sydney Smith held that wit was not quite so inexplicable a visitation as is generally supposed. He thought that a man could study it as he would mathematics. It is often studied and far fetched, we admit, but I defy the whole Smith family to graduate any one in wit where the native element is lacking. Palmerston, who rose to the Pre-

miership by his *bonhomie*, won his honors by turning the unanswerable away by an absurd side-wind of allusion. If Disraeli, the dandy *débutant*, was at first coughed down as a failure, it was rather because he had overstudied his part. Now he commands most when not expecting or expected. He sucks an orange or pares his nails while impaling an opponent. Like Mrs. Siddons,

"he is cool enough  
To pause from murder for a pinch of snuff."

True humor is not always that which awakens love, pity, and kindness. It may instill scorn for untruth, and disrobe pretension of its imposture, and, like the sportive Parliamentarians on a night session, unshadow the deliberative brow, and with "mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come."

In discussing the collective humor of the legislature we have said that the body is moved often and only by the peculiar manner of the member, even when the member intends and makes no wit. A lisping, a stammering, a boisterous man, and especially a one-ideaed man, may bring down the House, without intending to do it, simply by his peculiar manner. This manner is never reported. A member is always reported in good English, irrespective of his *impedimenta* of speech. When a member of Parliament gets up and "awks the liberty to awnswer hereafter the oppobious," etc., he is as well reported as the member who says, "I rithe, Thir, for the purpothe of atking the honorable," etc. When the ear is accustomed to this style it may be pleasant; but how are we to judge of the fun by the report next day? We once had a Congressman from Ohio, now Chief Justice of the District of Columbia—David K. Cartter. President Pierce called him a Mirabeau. Judge Cartter stammered just enough to make his copious points gush at intervals like a flood. His speech, like that of Charles Lamb, was punctuated by the notes of admiration which his tongue involuntarily made. This also may make humor with the audience, though it be that of the orator also.

On one occasion, about two in the morning, when six minority Senators were vexing the majority by holding out against an obnoxious measure and urging an adjournment, two Senators, Sherman and Conkling, of the majority, grew indignant. Sherman declared that before he would submit to such dictation he would be torn to pieces by wild horses, and Conkling declared he would die on the floor first. As these astonishing remarks were being uttered, it came to Senator Stockton to take his turn in the time-consuming debate. He put the Senate in good humor and adjourned it by saying that if there was one time more than another in which he felt well—felt like

speaking—it was at the early hour of 2 A.M.; that he was not willing to see the Ohioan die by horses; and if there was danger to the New Yorker, he pledged himself to throw his body in the breach and save so distinguished a man at the peril of all he held sacred in life! The Senate adjourned.

This may not strike us as the best humor, but it answered the purpose, and the manner of it was inimitably comical. Like Boileau, the Jersey Senator dressed his adjourning speech in the classic model of burlesque, and made the insignificant seem ludicrously heroic. The Senate, as a body, caught the infection of the orator.

But the collective humor of the House has generally an objective point. As in the call of the House, it is directed primarily to the quorum, so incidentally it hits some personal frailty. It is the joy of triumph at the mischances of others less fortunate. It is the sudden conception of some ability to discover and punish. Sometimes the loudest laughter is at the signal discomfiture of the most exemplary and regular members.

The loudest laughter may be that which is most gregarious, but the best humor is that which the mass of members do not produce. It is the individual quality which produces the best vintage of fun, and which I shall discuss in my next paper.

In conclusion, for the present, let me say that I am not one of those who believe that the American legislature is lacking in a healthy, logical, aggregate humor any more than the people it represents. It may not be as notably witty as that of the old Irish Parliament. There may not be in it the badinage and satire, philippic and abuse, of the English Parliaments in the days of Pitt and Sheridan, Peel and O'Connell; but it is nevertheless true that our leviathan does disport himself in our Congress with wonderful glee.

If for this glee some spirit we are reproached by the dullards and rasped by the envious, as one of the "fathers" of the House in their behalf, and quoting the imperial words of Theodosius, I answer them: If it be by folly that any one has spoken unjustly of us, we pity them; if by ill-will, we pardon them.

### ROCOCO.

By studying my lady's eyes  
I've grown so learned day by day,  
So Machiavellian in this wise,  
That when I send her flowers, I say  
To each small flower (no matter what,  
Geranium, pink, or tuberose,  
Syringa, or forget-me-not,  
Or violet) before it goes:  
"Be not triumphant, little flower,  
When on her haughty heart you lie,  
But modestly enjoy your hour:  
She'll weary of you by-and-by."

T. B. ALDRICH.

## LEGISLATIVE HUMORS.

## PART III.

BY THE HON. S. S. COX.

"Fancy is ever popular; all like  
The sheeted flame, which shines but does not strike.  
... These fine merits above all:  
Point without sting, and satire without gall;  
A courteous irony so free from scoff,  
The grateful victim felt himself let off;  
St. Stephen takes not from St. Giles his art,  
But is a true good gentleman at heart."

BULWER.

IN Congress, as at the bar, to acquire eminence something more is needed than a knowledge of current politics. Since the war there are complicated and added Federal relations. To compass these implies that a member should know something about every thing. He should be especially informed about matters of his committee. The Parliamentary conflict can not be won by small-arms alone, but by infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The mere cross-roads stumpers generally becomes a yearling Congressman, that is, a member with one term of service; for in his last session, being beaten the previous autumn, he is a mortuary monument. The survivors are the men who hold the House by making their minds an arsenal for every weapon. They are accomplished, or should be, in physics, metaphysics, ethics, history, philosophy, and, above all, in pertinent facts. To omit the "lath" of satire and humor in the close encounter, which is lissom and sharp only as it is well tempered in all these streams, is to leave the prince out of the play.

This good temper has become indispensable since the enlargement of the Hall in 1857. It is the attractive element. It is so especially since the recent increase of the number of members. The most weighty, or rather the best, speech is listened to with fatigue unless there be an occasional smart *double-entendre*, tart retort, tickling piquancy, personal point, or pertinent fact. That which draws most, which empties the members' seats to fill the area in front of the Speaker's desk, is the bellicose. It is this which, like a dog fight, will break up any deliberation. If it takes the form of a personal explanation it is more welcome. This attraction consists in the capability of wrath joined to the felicities of fun.

The men who make our humor in and out of Congress are the favorites of the people. We give them pet names. Corwin, Douglas, Butler, Lincoln, all had these affectionate freedoms extended to them by their supporters or enemies, just as "Little Johnny," "Old Pam," "Dizzy," and others in England had them. They were associated with something jocular. Lord Russell's crisp scorn and Disraeli's epigrammatic sneer helped to mould English politics. Mr. Gladstone's serious mind, ever meditating between the

moral and material interests, has not contributed to gladden the tone of English oratory. But in his despite there is much of the old flavor of humor remaining in the Commons. This decorous Gladstonian solemnity seems to be generally confined to the followers of Sir Robert Peel. It is well represented on the Tory side by the present Lord Derby. Hence we miss much of the brilliance of other and elder Parliamentary days. These Adullamites would be more popular if, with their information and sense, they would unlimber from that painful and prudent restraint which marks their public efforts. The food they furnish may be nutritious, but it is not always agreeable. In vain we look among them for the wit and humor even of the corn-law times. Is English humor degenerating? In the five volumes of Hansard of the last session but one of Parliament there is a "dull and sickening uniformity" of mere statement of fact, little deduction or reasoning, and much less vivacity. This is well, perhaps; but would it not be useful now and then to have a thunder-storm like that of Plimsoll's, the sailor's friend, when he cleared the sky by a tragic performance and a cry of "Murder?" Better now and then the menagerie than the everlasting tame collision of selfish interests unrelieved by any gleam of nature. The burden of debate is church livings and beer, Irish miseries and trade,

"Improving rifles, lecturing at reviews,  
And levying taxes for reforms—in screws."

We may well ask: Are these the only elements of a national existence? Are these the only means of winning popular favor? Have the newspaper and caricaturist monopolized all the points of ridicule against wrong and all the jocularity which illustrates affairs?

Without being too much a praiser of the time past, and without derogating from the management of the English Parliament under its new conditions, we naturally recur to the "giants" of other not very recent days. It is no mere pun to say its palmiest days were those when Palmerston charmed the British public. He did it because he was himself a fit receptacle of his own jokes. Lord Granville had, and has yet, something of the easy, winning wit of social life. He has a velvety mode and a honeyed tongue. His flame is lambent. "Fair as the Lovelace of a lady's dream," he is not inaptly called ox-eyed, from his Juno-like majestic meekness. Have the days of roaring irony and sarcasm gone by with Palmerston? Palmerston had no peer for ruling, for he heartily relished it. How he could laugh at the "puerile vanity of consistency!" The nation laughed with him. He ruled as well by his laugh as by his judgment. Cobden is gone. Bright and

Russell lag superfluous; Goschen ciphers only; and even Gladstone is half retired. Brougham, that incarnate encyclopedia, whose coach with its B on the panels reminded Sydney Smith that it had a B on the outside and a wasp in the inside—Brougham, he too belongs to the rear, with the Bolingbrokes, Pitts, Sheridans, Burkes, O'Connells, Cannings, and Peels—almost myths for their rare graces of wit and oratory. Disraeli himself, though a power, wields his weapon wearily; and Bernal Osborne hardly essays to play his old rôle as Mercurio.

Are public life and debate belittled in the public esteem in England or upon the Continent? The Parliamentary sessions at Rome are scarcely sessions, if we are to believe Mr. Trollope. How sombre is his Italy—in sackcloth and ashes, her head drooping on her breast, her hands hanging listlessly by her sides—sitting solitary and sleepy in the deserted hall upon Monte Citorio! The entire Chamber consists of 508. The quorum is a majority, as in our system; yet for month and month business is impossible, and that, too, at the Grand Capitol. Is it because Italy pays no salary to her Deputies? Salary seems hardly to keep our Congress full. Is the real reason the lack of piquant, eloquent debate, or has the omnipresent newspaper absorbed the other "estates?" There is no complaint of this kind in France. Even now, when Versailles is the Parliamentary capital, there is a freshness which allures to the Chamber, springing as well from the exceptional and transitory nature of the organism as from the inflammable vivacity of Gaulic and galling debate. The wit of the tribune is, however, too finical for general appreciation. When De Remusat dashes an epigram at an impotent ministry, Paris chuckles. "It has found," he said, "a new way out of a false position—by remaining in it." The retention of office after defeat is not a new subject for the pasquinade and the epigram, but no spruicer specimen has yet appeared than this of the departed statesman.

Nothing so arouses the French Chamber as a personal imputation. The Deputies are never used to it, always resent it, and are always at it. They give every thing a personal turn. Gambetta could have a duel a month for announcing merely abstractions. They do not distinguish between the official and the person. Nor, for the matter of that, do others. Mr. Garfield, Speaker *pro tempore*, once touched this idea daintily when some member intimated that the moral weight of the chair favored a motion. "The chair has no moral weight. Its office is to keep order." The most logical specimen of wit at the English Parliamentary noonday turned on this point. Fox reprehended Pitt for resting the sincerity of a

ministerial declaration on the purity of his private character. "Such conduct," said Fox, "is by no means Parliamentary, nor could it in this instance have much weight. His private character has no reproach. As a minister he *has no character*." A similar point was once made by Sheridan on Pitt; but Pitt, in reply, was scorching. He turned his electricity upon Sheridan by likening his tirades to the fizz and froth of an uncorked bottle. Then the caricaturist drew a cartoon, "Uncorking Old Sherry."

Looking at the stirring personal debates growing out of the Adams-Clay coalition and the Jackson administration in our country, we look in vain for something roseate and fragrant. Scarcely any plant appears on the surface, except that which, like the cactus, shows a hot sun and a prickly vegetation. Did these fierce personal invectives, which often led to the duel, have no relief in the atmosphere of social and legislative geniality? Was Benton always hectoring Clay? Was Randolph always studying how most bitterly to bite? Was McDuffie ever alert to thunder and lighten? Men then talked about halts and honor, contempt and monsters, conspiracies and treason, in a way to astound our later day. This talk is not less surprising to us than would be the re-appearance of those departed Senators with the then fashionable blue coat and brass buttons, the invariable plug of tobacco and gold-headed cane, the immense flux from the salivary gland, and the incessant, magnificent profanity. There were fewer members then. They were better known, and made more mark than now. A philippic on the humblest was recognized, and had its run. There were two Barbours from Virginia, one a member of the Senate, and the other of the House—both able men. One, named James, was ornate and verbose; the other, Philip, was close and cogent as a debater. A wag once wrote on the wall of the House:

"Two Barbours to shave our Congress long did try;  
One shaves with froth, the other he shaves dry!"

Have we, too, followed the hearse of our great orators and humorists? Who can fill the place of Ben Hardin or Tom Corwin? No one has approached them, unless it be another Kentuckian, J. Proctor Knott, the present member from Bardstown. In him Kentucky gives to us a second edition of Hardin, revised and improved. He is the fresh volume. It is more elegant, scholarly, piquant, and bound in superior morocco, and clasped in undeniable gold. Our people are not yet through reading his Duluth speech. It hits the American sense of extravagance, which, as I undertook in previous papers to show, is the reservoir whence flows most of our fun. It is in his magic mirror that the identical and ironical Col-

onel Sellers and Senator Dillworthy are seen. His wit took down and off and out the most grandiose schemes and schemers in the most superlative way.

These three members of Congress, Hardin, Corwin, and Knott, are selected to illustrate this extravagant type of humor. Whence came this inspiration? All three were Kentuckians. It is said of Sheridan that he ripened a witty idea with a glass of port; and if it resulted happily, another glass was the reward. Like the Kentucky Congressman who took two cocktails before breakfast. When asked why, he said, "One makes me feel like another fellow, and then I must treat the other fellow!" Is the humor which Kentucky gave and gives owing to any peculiar juice or humor growing out of her soil? Or is it drawn from the "still" air of delightful studies? Something of both, as will appear.

First, of "Old Ben Hardin."

Governor Corwin once told me that Hardin was the most entertaining man he ever knew. He had an exhaustless fund of anecdote, and with it great natural parts and acquired culture. His celebrity for a quarter of a century as a Southern Whig member of Congress was not altogether owing to his gift of remembering or telling good stories, nor to his *bonhomie*. There is always in or about Congress a class of good fellows more witty in a social than in a debating way. The court always had a jester. Why not Congress? Charles I. had "Archie." His sayings were called "arch." Such men as Ogle of Pennsylvania, M'Connell of Alabama, and William H. Polk of Tennessee may be remembered in this socially jovial connection, but their printed or public humor, except in little spurts, is hardly to be found, even if it existed.

"If you believe in the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions, follow in the footsteps of Captain Andrew Jackson; then, Sir, I hang my hammer on your anvil," said the eccentric M'Connell to President Polk.

"The gentleman asks me who are my friends," said Etheridge, of Tennessee. "I answer, any body who don't spell constitution with a K."

These dashes of humor generally have a personal tang. Before describing Hardin, let me set him within a frame of lesser brilliants of this character. General Butler once rallied General Banks on his fine theatric voice. "You say you read my speeches?" said Banks. "I read them," said Butler, "but your manner and voice were not in them, and hence they were ineffectual."

Mr. Tipton once used the spirit of the wit of Dean Swift about Defoe. "The man who was in the stocks—I forget his name," said Swift. So Tipton: "The gentleman from—I wish the State was larger; it is so hard to think of its name." "Rhode Island?"

suggested Judge Trumbull. One Senator had a natural habit of strutting. General Schurz being accused of that style, with mock modesty hinted that he did not want to encroach on the exclusive privilege of New York. Senator Carpenter was not less facetious, though less good-tempered, when on the French arms debate he punctured the alleged egotism of Senator Sumner to the quick. "He identifies himself so completely with the universe that he is not at all certain whether he is part of the universe or the universe is part of him. He is a reviser of the decalogue. You will soon see the Sermon on the Mount revised, corrected, and greatly enlarged and improved by Charles Sumner."

Mr. Sumner's gravity often led to these little missiles, but they fell quite harmless, for they were feathered with the lightest of levity. "Ah," said Mr. Conkling to Mr. Sumner, "I fell into an error by supposing the Senator was paying me attention. His mind is roving at large in that immense domain which it occupies."

Judge John C. Wright, of Ohio, so many years the inspiration of the Cincinnati *Gazette* and of his party, was a member of Congress when pungent wit was apt to be called out to Bladensburg. Personality was then as common as courage. His pluck and his humor were once shown in this scene: While he was answering Mr. Randolph, General Hamilton, of South Carolina, who was one of the worshipers of Randolph, sprang to his feet, and at the top of his voice, under great excitement, said: "The most infernal tongue that was ever placed in a man's head, and wholly irresponsible. Challenge him, and he will swear he can't see the length of his arm!" This idea grew out of the answer of Mr. Wright to the challenge of Romulus M. Saunders: "I have received your challenge, but can not accept it. Owing to the imperfection of my vision, I could not tell your honor from a sheep ten steps." The moment Mr. Wright took his seat a member rose, and with a voice like a newly weaned mule colt, said, "The gentleman reminds me of an old hen I have at home that is always cackling and never lays an egg." Then Judge Wright desired, coolly, to read a copy of a criminal indictment found against the member, and the personality was not so humorous.

These personalities are a piquant kind of humor which often becomes caustic wit. It touches the peculiar avocations, personal foibles, or physical peculiarities of members. This is not the highest order of festive legislation, but it is often used. It gives occasion, however, for the readiest retort. Sheridan was once twitted by Pitt on his theatrical pursuits—"Sui plausu gaudere theatri." He retorted on the youthful Premier: "If ever I again engage in the composition

he alludes to, I may be tempted to improve on one of Ben Jonson's best characters—the character of the Angry Boy in the *Alchymist*."

To call a large man my feeble friend, or a little man the gigantic gentleman; to dilate upon a loud-voiced member, or cry "louder" to his loudness; to mimic his intonations, or "take off" his hair or wig, make sport of its color, or emphasize the peculiarities of his dress or toilet, of his eyes, ears, or legs—these little diversions are as common to the legislature as to the stage. They make their momentary music, but scarcely rise into the risible utilities of the logical *ad absurdum*.

A palpable hit of this kind may sometimes be defended, as when a man wears his clothes to illustrate his own business, as woolen manufacturer for a tariff, or, *vice versa*, a foreign suit to show the amenities of free trade. Then the toilet is subordinated to the topic. The man is measured by the worth of his clothes as well as his oratory. Often references are made to the ambition of members. Senators especially who are Presidential aspirants receive these hits. They are fair, and are relished: they are the pungent penalties of prominence. Prominent members are generally the butt of the most ridicule. In the instances heretofore given during calls of the House these personal observations appear in *déshabillé*. Nor are these freedoms peculiar to Congress. On the question of sending the Prince of Wales to India and paying a large sum, it was piquantly put that as the object to be instructed about was the need of the empire, that the responsible officials to be sent ought to be the ministers, and not the Prince.

These little jets from this class gave a momentary sparkle to the sluggish waters of debate. Now while Hardin is not to be classed with these characters, a greater disadvantage attends a sketch of his career as a humorist. He is not reported according to his reputation. His quarter of a century of service fails to show the voluminous fun with which he enlivened and enforced his positions. Here and there we have a few shots from small-arms, as when he said, meekly, "That if like a sheep I am shorn, unlike a sheep, I will make a noise about it." When denouncing extravagant naval salaries, and referring to the naval lobby, he exclaimed, "Their march may be on the mountain wave, but their home is—in the gallery!" I have the "substance" of one of his speeches delivered in the hall of the House. It was in self-vindication about a local and now obsolete matter. It is only eighty pages. He began by saying he had pleaded more causes and defended more men than any lawyer in Kentucky, yet never was he under the painful necessity of de-

fending himself before. This speech shows a remarkable array of facts, a keen appreciation of political ethics, a fervid patriotism, a touching pathos, but hardly one gleam of his reputed rare humor. Referring to the Kentucky families whose sons, with his own, were warring in Mexico, and speaking of the Governor, who was his antagonist, he said: "The next news from the theatre of war may put our families in mourning. But in the midst of this general distress it is consoling to see with what philosophy the Governor bears it. He slowly walks from the palace to the Secretary's office, and then back to the palace, with stoical firmness that does honor to his resolution. Cato when in Utica never showed more. He knows that none of his family is in danger. They would have been soldiers 'if it had not been for those vile guns.' The only danger to his family is that they may be mashed up in the palace gate in a rush for offices; and when they get them they can truly say that they are competent to the emoluments thereof." This was the only smile in this lengthened speech.

It is said that Hardin was a rough-and-ready debater, that his oratory was rather racy of the Kentucky stump and soil, that he had more pugnacity than polish. He was known by the *sobriquet* of "Meat-axe Hardin." Randolph said of him that he was a butcher knife sharpened on a brickbat. This is not my impression from the meagre report of his speeches, nor from the articles now being published about him by Mr. Haycraft, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. It is not the true impression.

Hardin was a man of disciplined mind. He was not at all of the Crockett-Boone order. He had a native chivalry and independence which were representative of a border class at that day, but he was a man full of classic, historic, legal, and other resources. He had the varied armory which equips for general or special debate. Like a good lawyer, and with a wonderful memory and quick perception, he was the very man for the "occasion sudden." But he was rather of the humorous than of the witty kind. The butcher knife is too coarse and the vendetta dirk too polished to describe his quality.

He was born in Pennsylvania, Westmoreland County, removed with his family to Kentucky when a boy, and was educated by an old Irish teacher, who was a good linguist. The teacher killed a man, and had to move to another county. Young Ben followed him, and changed the venue, to finish in the *dead* languages. He studied law with Felix Grundy, and began to practice in 1806. He never left his profession till he died, in 1852. He was on one side of every important case in those early days. His animation allowed no juror to slumber

He was not only successful because of generous reading, but, by rare tact, he could gain a case by "side-by" remark. Here is an instance, and it serves to show the secret of his legislative humor and success:

Henry Ditto had some sheep killed by a dog. Ditto shot the dog. A suit for damages was the consequence. Mr. Hardin appeared for Ditto. The trial occupied two days. The cause was argued with great ability on each side, and the jury retired. After being out an hour or two they came back into court for instructions on some law point. After being instructed, and the jury ascending the stairway, one of them turned and said, "Judge, if the jury is hung, what will be the consequence?" Mr. Hardin replied, "The consequence will be that twelve honest men are hung for one sheep-stealing dog."

It is related of Mr. Buchanan that in early life he went to Kentucky to settle. He saw Hardin in court, dressed in his unbleached linen, careless and clownish. But he heard him argue, and turning from the courthouse, he said, "If such looking men are so smart in Kentucky, it is no place for me."

Hardin was in the Twenty-fourth Congress. We had then unfriendly relations with France. A fierce debate springs up between Cambreling, John Quincy Adams, Evans of Maine, Wise, and others, in which Hardin is a conspicuous figure. He plays his irony upon the indefatigable commercial member from New York, Mr. Cambreling. He compares him most amusingly with Daniel Webster; then, turning on Mr. Adams as the Sempronius, "whose voice was still for war," he reminds him that in the sequel Sempronius deserted to Cæsar, while Lucius (to whom he likened himself) remained faithful to Cato, and fought it out for peace like a man.

Mr. Hardin's allusions to the classics are not infrequent. He especially loved Homer, and, as will be seen hereafter, he became indissolubly linked with one of the Homeric heroes—the "snarling Thersites." Caleb Cushing forged the link in a graceful retort. Was this love of the classics one of the levers of this Kentuckian's power over men? It is related of him that when one of his own side made a speech he took his hat and left the House. But when Rufus Choate began his first mellifluous speech this "meat-axe" man lingered and listened, and, listening, was lost in rapture. This demi-god of the Western hustings sits fascinated and enmeshed by the involutions, all full of depth and all starred with learning, with which Choate delighted his ear and mind. Was there no refined susceptibility in this rough and hardy man? Choate brought the music out of his soul as the wind does out of the woods. He held Hardin as with the glittering eye of the ancient mariner. It

was done by no other necromancy than the silver tongue and the golden thought, interwoven and intertwined by a skill that would puzzle a Genoese filigree-worker.

Few men in Congress appreciated Rufus Choate. Was it because he was too fond of the odd ends of learning, or that his rhetoric was too involved in fancies and frolics? Certain it is that while he could hold Hardin, he did not make the impression on the Senate or on Congress which we would expect. When M'Duffie, in his rude way, on the tariff question, charged Choate with weaving the texture of a cobweb, and picking up worm-eaten pamphlets to form an argument for the leader of a band of highway robbers, and held him up to ridicule as a humming-bird in a flower-garden or a butterfly in a farm-yard, how did this splendid orator respond? Gracious heavens! this man, "only not divine," who even yet holds in thrall the gentlest and brightest of New England's bravery of intellect, actually and elaborately "*denied the facts* and called for proof," as some Western lawyer once did in an answer in chancery. "The accusation is groundless. Let the Senator sustain it if he can." Imagine Butler, Hoar, or Dawes answering such a speech otherwise than by a counter-charge of chivalric pungency! Yet the large-hearted and broad-humored Kentuckian threaded delightfully the labyrinthine beauty of Choate's rhetoric, and saw something in the legal dialectician and in the Gothic style of his multifarious oratory that entranced him by a witchery beyond the reach of art. What is the mystery? It is the same charm of life and heart which in our first paper we remarked in Webster, Randolph, and Burgess, and in all those who have the susceptibility to humor. It is in the innate gentleness which, as in Hardin's case, shone in his life and triumphed in his death; for at the last, when dying at threescore and ten, Mr. Hardin called around him all of his kith and the brethren of his Methodist communion, and offered up from those lips which had so often commanded in great debate, the gentlest orison which ever preceded the departing soul to its God.

Thomas Corwin, in so far as the record allows judgment, far outshone Hardin in this Kentuckian constellation of humor. In all the elements, from the lowest burlesque to the finest wit, he was confessedly the master. He drew from the arsenal all the weapons of parliamentary warfare; but how seldom he used them! His effusions were brilliant, fervid, eloquent, pathetic, but above all, his satire, while keen, was not poisoned or barbed with ill temper. It was pertinent and powerful, demolishing, yet stingless. The motto at the head of this paper, which is the description of Shiel, describes the humor of Corwin. He was a great lawyer—as great as Ogden Hoffman,



and far greater than he in Congress. His mind was full, and his words were thoughtful. He was no cynic. He was also a scholar. His mind had ranged through the bounds of human knowledge. His eloquence on the stump and at the bar, in the House or Senate, when pleading against the Mexican war, or for compromise before our civil war, whether he struck the basso of sorrow or the tenor of merriment, was full of divinest sympathy. Yet he is best remembered for lighter efforts, as when he started in full opulence of illustration after the foible of a fellow-member. No one can imagine his power unless he has seen his facial expression and heard his variety of tone. The play of his dark countenance was the prelude to his witty thought. What Bulwer has sung of Canning, who "schemed for the gaze and plotted for the cheer," may be more truly said of Corwin:

"Read him not; 'tis unfair. Behold him rise,  
And hear him speak! The House all ears and eyes!"

It is said of Alvan Stewart, the eloquent abolitionist of New York, that he could read a dry affidavit so as to upset the gravity of bench and bar. It was in the manner. In this line Corwin was *primus inter pares*; or, rather, he was simply peerless. His face and its serio-jocoseness would have been the fortune of any player. "Will you have condiments in your coffee?" said a good landlady to him, as he was once traversing my old Ohio district, on the "weevil platform." Imagine that face, and the solemn courtesy of his response! "Pepper and mustard, madam, but no salt, thank you!"

Whether this rare gift of humor came to him from his Magyar ancestry, or was induced by influences in his native county of Bourbon, Kentucky—whether it was a part of his early training or practice when a "wagon boy," it is certain that few men were ever so effective in publicly using it. As early as fourteen he had the action, emphasis, and gesture which make the rhetorical youth. His childhood was father to the orator. His independence of thought and his lucid expression we are not called upon in this paper to discuss. His humor makes one of the green spots in the Congressional desert.

One of its best illustrations is his answer to General Crary, of Michigan, who had accused General Harrison of want of strategy at Tippecanoe. Crary was a militia general. The droll manner of the response can not be put on paper. The humorous orator described a training-day—the leader of the host on horseback, the retreat to a neighboring grocery, the trenchant blade of the general remorselessly slaying water-melons, and the various feats upon this bloodless field—in such a style that his victim was ever after known as "the late General Crary."

Never was speech couched in a happier vein. The time of its delivery is Saturday afternoon, when a saturnalia is given, as he demurely hinted in the proem, to servants of good masters. The way he touches the *non sequitur* of the debate is felicity itself. The pending bill is about the Cumberland road, and the debate is on General Harrison's war record. Before members can vote money for the road, they must know how the Indians at Tippecanoe were painted—whether red, black, or blue. The appropriation in 1840 is identical with the tactics of an Indian war in 1811.

Then he begins quietly to lift high his opponent in the controversy that he may drop him lower. General Crary is called an illustration of the way in which we in America can turn our hands to any business. On a question involving a subtle knowledge on strategy, what preparations had not General Crary made for the criticism! But there is only one way to give this speech its real meaning, and that is by quoting:

"He has announced to the House that he is a militia general on the peace establishment. That he is a lawyer we know, tolerably well read in *Tidd's Practice* and *Espinasse's Nisi Prius*. These studies, so happily adapted to the subject of war, with an appointment to the militia in time of peace, furnish him at once with all the knowledge necessary to discourse to us, as from high authority, upon all the mysteries in the 'trade of death.'

"Again, Mr. Speaker, it must occur to every one that we, to whom these criticisms are addressed, being all colonels, at least, and most of us, like the gentleman himself, brigadiers, are, of all conceivable tribunals, the best qualified to decide any nice point connected with military science.

"I trust, as we are all brother officers, that the gentleman from Michigan, and the 240 colonels or generals of this honorable House, will receive what I have to say as coming from an old brother in arms, and addressed to them in a spirit of candor,

"Such as becomes comrades free,  
Reposing after victory."

"Sir, we all know the military studies of the gentleman from Michigan before he was promoted. I take it to be beyond a reasonable doubt that he had perused with great care the title-page of *Baron Steuben*. Nay, I go further. As the gentleman has incidentally assured us he is prone to look into musty and neglected volumes, I venture to assert, without vouching the fact from personal knowledge, that he has prosecuted his researches so far as to be able to know that the rear rank stands right behind the front. This, I think, is fairly inferable from what I understand him to say of the two lines of encampment at Tippecanoe. Thus we see, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman from Michigan, so far as study can give us knowledge of a subject, comes before us with claims to great profundity. But this is a subject which, of all others, requires the aid of actual experience to make us wise. Now the gentleman, being a militia general, as he has told us, his brother officers, in that simple statement has revealed the glorious history of toils, privations, sacrifices, and bloody scenes through which we know from experience and observation a militia officer in time of peace is sure to pass. We all, in fancy, now see the gentleman from Michigan in that most dangerous and glorious event in the life of a militia general on the peace establishment—a parade day—the day for which all the other days of his life seem to have been made.

"We can see the troops in motion; umbrellas, hoe and axe handles, and other like deadly implements of

war, overshadowing all the field, when lo! the leader of the host approaches.

*'Far off his coming shines.'*

His plume, white, after the fashion of the great Bourbon, is of ample length, and reads its doleful history in the bereaved necks and bosoms of forty neighboring hen-roosts. Like the great Suwaroff, he seems somewhat careless in forms and points of dress. Hence his epaulets may be on his shoulders, back, or sides, but still gleaming, gloriously gleaming, in the sun. Mounted he is, too, let it not be forgotten. Need I describe to the colonels and generals of this honorable House the steed which heroes bestride on such occasions? No, I see the memory of other days is with you. You see before you the gentleman from Michigan mounted on his crop-eared, bushy-tailed mare, the singular obliquities of whose hinder limbs is described by that most expressive phrase, 'sickle hams'—her height fourteen hands, 'all told'; yes, Sir, there you see his 'steed that laughs at the shaking of the spear,' that is, his 'war-horse whose neck is clothed with thunder.' Mr. Speaker, we have glowing descriptions in history of Alexander the Great and his war-horse Bucephalus at the head of the invincible Macedonian phalanx; but, Sir, such are the improvements of modern times that every one must see that our militia general, with his crop-eared mare with bushy tail and sickle ham, would literally frighten off a battle-field a hundred Alexanders. But, Sir, to the history of the parade-day. The general, thus mounted and equipped, is in the field, and ready for action. On the eve of some desperate enterprise, such as giving orders to shoulder arms, it may be, there occurs a crisis, one of the accidents of war which no sagacity could foresee or prevent—a cloud rises and passes over the sun! Here an occasion occurs for the display of that greatest of all traits in the character of a commander, that tact which enables him to seize upon and turn to good account events unlooked for as they arise. Now for the caution wherewith the Roman Fabius foiled the skill and courage of Hannibal. A retreat is ordered, and troops and general in a twinkling are found safely bivouacked in a neighboring grocery! But even here the general still has room for the exhibition of heroic deeds. Hot from the field, and chafed with the untoward events of the day, your general unsheathes his trenchant blade, eighteen inches in length, as you will well remember, and with an energy and remorseless fury he slices the water-melons that lie in heaps around him, and shares them with his surviving friends!

"Others of the sinews of war are not wanting here. Whisky, Mr. Speaker, that great leveler of modern times, is here also, and the shells of the water-melons are filled to the brim. Here again, Mr. Speaker, is shown how the extremes of barbarism and civilization meet. As the Scandinavian heroes of old, after the fatigues of war, drank wine from the skulls of their slaughtered enemies in Odin's Hall, so now our militia general and his forces, from the skulls of melons thus vanquished, in copious draughts of whisky assuage the heroic fire of their souls after the bloody scenes of a parade-day.

"But, alas for this short-lived race of ours, all things will have an end, and so even is it with the glorious achievements of our general. Time is on the wing, and will not stay his flight; the sun, as if frightened at the mighty events of the day, rides down the sky; and at the close of the day, when 'the hamlet is still,' the curtain of night drops upon the scene;

*"And the glory, like the phoenix in its fires,  
Exhales its odors, blazes, and expires."*

Would that our men of genuine humor would, like Corwin, more frequently level their lances at the extravagance and vanity which disfigure our national character! Then, indeed, would our humor have that humanity and refinement which Sydney Smith gave to it in definition and practice, whose office he likened to a Lorraine glass, which throws a sunny hue over the land-

scape. How it expands caution, relaxes dignity, tempers coldness, teaches age and care and pain to smile, extorting reluctant gleams of pleasure from melancholy, and charming even the pangs of grief! How it penetrates through the coldness and awkwardness of society, gradually bringing men nearer together, and, like the combined force of wine and oil, giving every man a glad heart and a shining countenance! If more of this flavor of the mind enlivened our pilgrimage on earth, it would elevate benevolence and inspire principle. If more of the Hardin-Corwin type of men were in our public assemblies, there would be less of the treasors, stratagems, and spoils of politics.

The third humorous triumvir is one yet living, and now again returned to Congress. Proctor Knott, next after General Butler, is best known as a Congressional humorist. But his humor, like all genuine virtues, has little or no malice in its composition.

When people first come to Washington they are disappointed—not now at the city itself, for it more than fills expectation, but at the public men. Sergeant S. Prentiss, the Maine-Mississippian orator, was there in February, 1833, and writes to his sister that he has seen General Jackson, "who is no more fit to be President than I am. You have no idea how destitute of talent are more than half of the members of Congress. Nine out of ten of your ordinary acquaintance are fully equal to them." This is the first impression. Closer acquaintance reveals that each of these unpromising members has some peculiar quality which lifts him aside from, if not above, his fellows at home. They are "singed cats" many of them, who, like Proctor Knott, may not be taken for much at sight for a month or a session or so, and then their native hue and quality burst out unexpectedly and grandly, like certain tropical flowers, with a report!

Few suspected Mr. Knott of the possession of such an abundant flow of the facile and graceful faculty of fun-making. One speech about paving Pennsylvania Avenue had only provoked the House to hear more. They heard it in his Duluth speech.

When I first heard the English Parliamentarians speak, it was with surprise. No one except Bright and Walpole seemed to be fluent after the American method. Their hesitation and mannerism were atrocious. Imagine Cicero addressing the Roman Senate: "*Quousque—ah!—tandem—hem!—abutere—have!—Catilina—patientia—ahem!—ah!—he!—haw!—nostrah-h-h?*" In Parliament the orator sits on a rough bench, his head covered, to pour forth this outlandish gibber.

Literally, he "puts off his hat to put his case." A case thus put is the very anticlimax of graceful and fervid oratory. It is the ideal of an awkward manner, even when

delivering brilliant sense. Disraeli has it. It is the dandyism of dawdleism. It is the reverse of the *copia loquendi* of Cicero, and of the fluency of the incomparable Corwin and the unhesitating Knott. If a man in Congress hesitates, he is lost. Twenty interruptions give him pause. In Parliament it would seem that he is lost if he does not hesitate and hem and haw. But it was not the easy flow of Mr. Knott's periods that gave him prompt fame. He struck a prevailing sense of fun connected with our superlative language and exaggerated speculation.

The man who touches this theme in fit style, whether it be Mark Twain and his speculative lobby with "millions in it," or Proctor Knott with his Duluth, as the centre of the visible universe where the sky comes down at precisely the same distance all around it, or one vast corral into which all commerce goes whether it will or not, demonstrates the typical American trait.

Senator Nye discusses the merits of torpedoes. How does he do it? He tells the Senate that Lieutenant Cushing blew the *Albatross* so high that gravitation did not operate on it; and in describing the old blunderbuss and other ancient and effete arms, he said that in those olden times if a man was killed, it was an accident!

But if you would have the superlative of this extravagant humor, gaze at the picture which Governor Wise once drew of Virginia agriculture: "The landlord skins the tenant, the tenant the land, until all are poor together. The ledge patches outshine the sun. Inattention has seared the bosom of mother earth. Instead of cattle on a thousand hills, they chase the stump-tailed steer through the ledge patches to procure a tough beefsteak!" He had met a Virginian on horseback, on a bag of hay for a saddle, without stirrups, and with the leading line for a bridle, and he had said to him, "Whose house is that, Sir?" "It is mine." They came to another house. "And that?" "Mine too, stranger." To a third house. "And whose house is that?" "Mine too; but don't suppose, stranger, I'm so darned poor as to own all the *land* about here!"

Already in other papers I have endeavored to analyze this indigenous taste for intensity of expression and magnificence of idea. It is not new with us. It is as old as the Revolution. Ethan Allen's "Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress" is in the same swelling vein. When the English commissioners came here to treat for peace in 1778, it seems that the very meteorological phenomena and physical scenery stunned the curled darling of the court, Lord Carlisle, one of the commissioners. He humorously attributes the great English disasters to the comprehensive magnitude of the country. Excusing his failure to rec-

oncile the colonies, he writes to his friend the witty George Selwyn: "I inclose you our manifesto, which you will never read. 'Tis a sort of dying speech of the commission, an effort from which I expect little success.....Every thing is upon a great scale upon this continent. The rivers are immense, the climate violent in heat and cold, the prospects magnificent, the thunder and lightning tremendous. The disorders incident to the country make every constitution tremble. Our own blunders here, our misconduct, our losses, our disgraces, our ruin, are on a great scale."

He caught the salient feature of our scenery and society. We have only aggrandized it since.

A burst of exaggeration in an American assembly as surely awakens ludicrous interest as an allusion to a horse-race in the English Parliament. The model average English statesman is well described as

"The lounging member seldom in his place,  
And then with thoughts remote upon a race."

Hence an allusion to a ministry as splintered, spavined, and broken-winded is always received with laughter by a body which adjourns for the Derby, and which represents a people who on that day take the liberty to abuse all on the road—nob and snob, tramp and shop-man, Queen and courtesan. But in an American Congress nothing so suits the prevailing temper and tone as the grotesque and ample hyperbole, the accumulated largess of language bestowed on the description of a grand speculation, with its gorgeous incidents and its magnificent accidents.

When this Kentuckian, Knott, first talked in Congress, he struck this Big Bonanza vein. How the house enjoyed it! I remember well his first pathetic description of the depth of that love for the people entertained by members; how it surpassed that of the young mother for her first-born—a depth of sentiment which bankrupts all the resources of pathetic eloquence and stirring poetry. How affluently he smoothed the raven down of darkness till it smiled as he pictured the negroes who hung about the Capitol and in the galleries, perched like turkey-buzzards in a deadening, waiting for the rich repast that Congress was expected to prepare for their rapacious beaks! Then how neatly he changed the scene to Judiciary Square, full of the same class, reclining in the shade, like black snakes in a brier patch. In this strain of exaggeration he took up the Pennsylvania Avenue Pavement Bill. Did he argue the points logically? Of course. But who remembers the logic of arithmetic when down the deep Iambic lines the cothurn treads majestic, full of mock and tumid tropes? Who cares for the syllogism or the *ignoratio elenchi* when a

chorus of Bacchantes sing the dithyramb of wild and intoxicating frolicsomeness? There is a logic of fun which drowns, overtops all; and Proctor Knott floated on this rolling sea as easily as Captain Boyton in the Channel, or, rather, like a behemoth of the deep.

After making a picture of the luxury of the capital, its fragrant squares, its polished walks, its promenades and drives, its sinuous foot-paths, laid with an elastic concrete of white sea sand, bordered with shrubbery that would have lent new charms to Calypso's favorite bower, and winding away in all the intricate mazes of the Cretan labyrinth—its satin-slipped beauties, reclining in such ecstatic languor upon the downy cushions of their splendid carriages that even the perfumed zephyr, as he steals from beds of rare exotics, shall not kiss their velvet cheeks too rudely, nor the dancing sunbeams taste the delicious fragrance that exhales from their honeyed lips—the orator, like the gladiator of Byron, sees his young barbarians of Kentucky at play on the blue grass; and he turns lovingly to the toil-browed, barefooted daughter of a taxed Kentucky constituent, in her homespun gown, innocent of crinoline or train. Is this ample enough? Like his predecessor, he, too, is fond of Homer; and the touching picture he draws of the sacrifices of the office-holder is in the best vein of Ben Hardin. There was no being on earth for whose comfort he entertained so profound a solicitude as for that of your public functionary, no one whose smallest want so stirred his sympathetic soul to its serenest depths.

"When I see him bidding adieu to the sweets of private life, for which he is so eminently fitted by nature, to immolate himself on the altar of his country, Homer's touching picture of the last scene between the noble Hector and his weeping family rises before my imagination; when I see him seated sorrowfully at a miserable repast of sea terrapin and Champagne, my very bowels yearn for him; and when I see him performing, perhaps, the only duty for which he is fully competent, signing the receipt for his monthly pay, I am so overwhelmed for his miserable condition that I wish I were in his place."

In a similar strain of elaborate satire he desired new pavements over which the carriages of our government officials, with their coats of arms and liveried outriders, might glide as smoothly and noiselessly as the aerial car of the fairy queen through the rose-tinted clouds of the upper ether. Winding up his speech with pregnant statistics and prophetic sense, he saw what many did not see then (1870), what local and Federal extravagance was bringing upon the capital.

In the peroration of this his first speech, which brought the Kentucky orator to the front, he was puzzled to tell what power short of an omniscient providence could foretell what the government would eventually

have to pay for the improvement of this avenue. The astronomer predicts a total eclipse of the sun a hundred years in the future, and names the exact time and place upon the earth at which the sublime phenomenon will first be seen; and, whether it be upon the costly icebergs of Alaska or the blood-stained soil of suffering Cuba, punctual to the second the gigantic shadow falls upon the precise spot he indicates. Thus summoning the infinitudes and splendors of the starry hosts by a sublime anticlimax, all radiant with humor, he can not foretell what any public improvement about Washington city will cost or when it will be finished. It defies the highest mathematics and the utmost range of conjecture.

Until the Duluth speech was made, the House had little thought of the rich plente of humor in store for them. The surprise was enhanced because Mr. Knott spoke rarely. He was not an active, rather a lazy, member—ostensibly so.

"All the day, before the sunny rays  
He used to slug or sleep, in slothful shade."

They took the alligator for a log till they sat on him. Grudgingly was the floor yielded to him. He was offered only ten minutes; whereupon he remarked that his facilities for getting time were so poor that if he were standing on the brink of perdition, and the sands were crumbling under his feet, he could not in that body get time enough to say the Lord's Prayer. The St. Croix and Bayfield Road Bill asked for some of the public domain. Mr. Knott disavowed any more interest in the bill than in an orange grove on the bleakest summit of Greenland's icy mountains. It was thus he introduced the splendid project:

"Years ago, when I first heard that there was somewhere in the vast *terra inognita*, somewhere in the bleak regions of the great Northwest, a stream of water known to the nomadic inhabitants of the neighborhood as the river St. Croix, I became satisfied that the construction of a railroad from that raging torrent to some point in the civilized world was essential to the happiness and prosperity of the American people, if not absolutely indispensable to the perpetuity of republican institutions on this continent. [Great laughter.] I felt instinctively that the boundless resources of that prolific region of sand and pine shrubbery would never be fully developed without a railroad constructed and equipped at the expense of the government, and perhaps not then. [Laughter.] I had an abiding presentiment that, some day or other, the people of this whole country, irrespective of party affiliations, regardless of sectional prejudices, and 'without distinction of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,' would rise in their majesty and demand an outlet for the enormous agricultural productions of those vast and fertile pine-barrens, drained in the rainy season by the surging waters of the turbid St. Croix." [Great laughter.]

He put this problem to the House as to the value of the lands: If the timbered lands are the most valuable, and valueless without the timber, what is the remainder of the land worth, which has no timber on it at

all? How he pictured this land satirically as the Goshen of America and an inexhaustible mine of agricultural wealth, and then with truthful exaggeration as a region which in ten years would by its vegetation fatten a grasshopper; how he brooded over the dangers to our government if it neglected or abandoned such a region; how he amplified these dangers from the Declaration of Independence, secession, reconstruction, and the new amendments, and, after all, the worst of all dangers, the peril of our navy rotting in their docks for want of railroad communication with the prolific pine thickets of the St. Croix! Then he was concerned because we had lost *Alta Vela*, a guano isle, and then as to the proper point of connection with the teeming pine-barrens, until at last, amidst shouts of laughter, he mentioned "Duluth!" How he rolls it as a sweet morsel under and over his tongue!

"Duluth! The word fell upon my ear with peculiar and indescribable charm, like the gentle murmur of a low fountain stealing forth in the midst of roses, or the soft, sweet accents of an angel's whisper in the bright, joyous dream of sleeping innocence. Duluth! 'Twas the name for which my soul had panted for years, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks. [Renewed laughter.] But where was Duluth? Never in all my limited reading had my vision been gladdened by seeing the celestial word in print. [Laughter.] And I felt a profounder humiliation in my ignorance that its dulcet syllables had never before ravished my delighted ear. [Roars of laughter.] I was certain the draughtsman of this bill had never heard of it, or it would have been designated as one of the termini of this road. I asked my friends about it, but they knew nothing of it. I rushed to the library and examined all the maps I could find. [Laughter.] I discovered in one of them a delicate, hair-like line, diverging from the Mississippi near a place marked Prescott, which I supposed was intended to represent the river St. Croix, but I could nowhere find Duluth.

"Nevertheless, I was confident it existed somewhere, and that its discovery would constitute the crowning glory of the present century, if not of all modern times. [Laughter.] I knew it was bound to exist in the very nature of things; that the symmetry and perfection of our planetary system would be incomplete without it [renewed laughter]; that the elements of material nature would long since have resolved themselves back into original chaos if there had been such a hiatus in creation as would have resulted from leaving out Duluth. [Roars of laughter.] In fact, Sir, I was overwhelmed with the conviction that Duluth not only existed somewhere, but that, wherever it was, it was a great and glorious place. I was convinced that the greatest calamity that ever befell the benighted nations of the ancient world was in their having passed away without a knowledge of the actual existence of Duluth; that their fabled Atlantis, never seen save by the hallowed vision of inspired poesy, was, in fact, but another name for Duluth; that the golden orchard of the Hesperides was but a poetical synonym for the beer gardens in the vicinity of Duluth. [Great laughter.] I was certain that Herodotus had died a miserable death because in all his travels and with all his geographical research he had never heard of Duluth. [Laughter.] I knew that if the immortal spirit of Homer could look down from another heaven than that created by his own celestial genius upon the long lines of pilgrims from every nation of the earth to the gushing fountain of poesy opened by the touch of his magic wand, if he could be permitted to behold the vast assemblage of grand and glorious productions of the lyric art called into being by his own inspired strains, he would weep tears of bitter anguish that, instead of

lavishing all the stores of his mighty genius upon the fall of Ilion, it had not been his more blessed lot to crystallize in deathless song the rising glories of Duluth. [Great and continued laughter.] Yet, Sir, had it not been for this map, kindly furnished me by the Legislature of Minnesota, I might have gone down to my obscure and humble grave in an agony of despair because I could nowhere find Duluth. [Renewed laughter.] Had such been my melancholy fate, I have no doubt that with the last feeble pulsation of my breaking heart, with the last faint exhalation of my fleeting breath, I should have whispered, 'Where is Duluth?' [Roars of laughter.]

"But, thanks to the beneficence of that band of ministering angels who have their bright abodes in the far-off capital of Minnesota, just as the agony of my anxiety was about to culminate in the frenzy of despair, this blessed map was placed in my hands; and as I unfolded it a resplendent scene of ineffable glory opened before me, such as I imagine burst upon the enraptured vision of the wandering peri through the opening gates of paradise. [Renewed laughter.] There, there for the first time, my enchanted eye rested upon the ravishing word 'Duluth.'

"If gentlemen will examine it they will find Duluth not only in the centre of the map, but represented in the centre of a series of concentric circles one hundred miles apart, and some of them as much as four thousand miles in diameter, embracing alike in their tremendous sweep the fragrant savannas of the sunlit South and the eternal solitudes of snow that mantle the ice-bound North. [Laughter.] How these circles were produced is perhaps one of those primordial mysteries that the most skillful paleologist will never be able to explain. [Renewed laughter.] But the fact is, Sir, Duluth is pre-eminently a central place, for I am told by gentlemen who have been so reckless of their own personal safety as to venture away into those awful regions where Duluth is supposed to be that it is so exactly in the centre of the visible universe that the sky comes down at precisely the same distance all around it." [Roars of laughter.]

After thus locating his paradise, he ascertainment its neighborhood advantages—buffaloes, Piegans, and other savages. He describes the convenience by which the red men could drive the buffalo into Duluth. "I think I see them now," exclaimed the inspired humorist—"a vast herd, with heads down, eyes glaring, nostrils dilated, tongues out, and tails curled over their backs, tearing along toward Duluth, with a thousand Piegans on their grass-bellied ponies yelling at their heels! On they come! And as they sweep past the Creeks, they too join in the chase, and away they all go, yelling, bellowing, ripping and tearing along, amidst clouds of dust, until the last buffalo is safely penned in the stock-yards of Duluth!"

Was this burlesque relished by honest and fun-loving people? Yes; thousands have sent and are yet sending for the document. Why? Simply because the orator played with imagery, as a cunning harper with the strings of his harp? No. Because this speech and its humor had a moral which he deftly turned against the subsidy, or, as he expressed it in his peroration:

"My relation is simply that of trustee to an express trust. And shall I ever betray that trust? Never, Sir! Rather perish Duluth! Perish the paragon of cities! Rather let the freezing cyclones of the bleak Northwest bury it forever beneath the eddying sands of the raging St. Croix!"

Where did this Kentucky genius obtain

his rich resources of illustration? First from nature, with its deadenings and black snakes; next from patient culture, with his Homeric and other epical allusions; and next from mixing in the heat and dust of our extravagant active life, and studying the grand volume of human nature. A close student of men and books, once Attorney-General of Missouri, familiar with frontier and prairie life, he had the rare perception to observe the queerness and oddity of things, and the rarer gift to so mix his colors and limn his figures that all should recognize beneath the heightened colors the graphic genuineness and design of his art. But the special humor of this Duluth speech lies in its magnifying, with a roaring rush of absurdity, the exaggerations of a Western Eden, in which utter nakedness and fragrant luxuriance alternate, and between whose aisles of greenery the sly devil of selfishness sat squat at the ear of Congress, tempting it to taste the forbidden fruit of subsidy. It is the string of spoken pearls, this effluence of diamond dew, this beguiling linked humor long drawn out, that holds the ear; but there is more meant than meets the sense. Like the allegory or the parable, there is moral hidden beneath this elaborate imagery. It is this moral which exalts the American mind to the sublimity of its own peculiar fun, and relieves the Leviathanic lawfulness of exaggeration of its strain upon the faculties. No speech that I can recall produced at once so signal an effect.

I do not except General Butler when he addressed the House on the moiety question. He had an audience prepared to applaud. He had the accessories, the *mise en scène*, together with abundant gas-lights and personal spleen, to set off the whole for a grand effect. He succeeded, for no one could up-trip him or knock him down. Like the Dutch toy, he is up again, rubicund and triumphant. When he drew out of the ship hold those leaden statues representing the Goddess of Liberty and the Conscript Fathers, and described them as devices to avoid the customs duty, the shouts of laughter were loud and uproarious. Without detraction from this performance, I fail to find in it, or in any reported speech of General Butler, notwithstanding the skillful arrangement and statuesque poses by which he graced the fervor of that rhetoric hour, with a Mephistophelean-Brobdingnagian energy of fun, any comparison with this Duluth effort of Knott.

I refer to these efforts of Hardin, Corwin, Knott, and Butler for the sake of showing one class of humor which is not strictly that of the House. It proceeds from the peculiar manner of the man. It is elaborate and descriptive narrative, depending for its success on its splendid exaggeration

of expression and thought. It is not peculiar to the Legislature. It would be felicitous in any forum.

In my next and concluding paper I shall consider the less elaborate individual humor of the Legislature, and in so doing will confine myself more strictly to American illustrations of repartee and other forms of condensed humor.

### A GHOSTLY VISITATION.

IT had been a dismal day; a steady drizzling rain had proved fatal to all excursions, and in-doors the resources of pencil games, cards, and even reading aloud had long been exhausted. The dreary monotony of the early tea was over at last, and we were once more assembled in the shabby little parlor, propounding the momentous inquiry of what to do for the next few hours until bed-time should solve the problem. The small room was ill adapted to quiet *tête-à-têtes*, and the alternative of the damp piazza had no attractions for even the most enthusiastic. "Twenty Questions" had been languidly suggested, and instantly voted down by the lovers of peace and harmony, and things generally wore an air of intense depression.

"Really," said good-natured, fat Mrs. Gray, clicking her inevitable knitting-needles, "I must say that for a company of clever and accomplished young people—as you all, I think, profess to be—you seem to have very few resources. I came in here to be amused, and I think I shall be able to get my nap without going up stairs."

Mrs. Gray was privileged, and her remark only provoked a feeble smile.

"If we but had a piano," sighed Miss Wister, who prided herself on her fine contralto, "we might have some pleasure; but one *can't* sing without an accompaniment."

"As far as I can see in this dusky light," continued Mrs. Gray, "the only persons who appear to have any occupation are those two in the corner, and that's a queer one, for 'fifteen, four, and a pair are *six*' seems certainly an odd way to count, let alone the singular allowance of 'two for his heels,' and the fact that they're always telling each other to '*go*.'"

"It's very evident," laughed Mr. Liston, looking up from his cards, "that you're uninitiated in the mysteries of cribbage, Mrs. Gray.—A sequence of three for me, Miss Leniton."

"I wish," drawled Harry Britton, who was lounging on the sofa, and flirting in a desultory way with pretty Grace Arcott, "that somebody would tell us a story; it's too dark to read, and conversation apparently lags. Methinks, as they say in novels, 'tis the very hour for a ghostly tale of horror. Who can tell one?"

The slumbering heat in the eyes of Miles Van Dorn leaped into a blaze. "And that person is not, then, Ralph?" he asked, eagerly.

"Why, the monstrous egotism of the fellow!" said Jane, laughing with the air of one to whom laughing is unfamiliar. "Of course it isn't. How could he dream of such a thing?"

"It is natural sometimes to fall into error," said Miles, a gradual agitation betraying itself in his ordinarily cold and measured tones. "I have myself been driven to think of this subject; it has, entirely against my judgment, absorbed much of my time. Since that night Miss Dora fainted I have found it impossible to keep her from my thoughts. You will pardon my determination to discover this party who can be of benefit to your young sister if I confess to you, Miss Fairfield—" Miles paused; a sudden impulse of passion swept away all his rhetoric. He went over to Jane. "I love Dora," he cried; "I love her with my whole heart and soul. Now tell me, who is this party of whom you speak?"

"Why, then, God bless you, Miles Van Dorn!" said Jane, the tears bursting from her burning eyes: "that party is yourself!"

These tears, seemingly wrung from an unwilling source, melted the heart of Miles Van Dorn. "Miss Fairfield—Jane," he said, "it has not been my fault that Dora has suffered. I have not dared to think of love; it has not been a part of my plan of life. It did not seem possible—I did not know—"

"But you know now," said Jane. "Hasten back to Ralph, tell him the little mistake he has made, and meet me at the train."

Needless to tell of the interview between Miles and Ralph, or strive to paint the rapture of Jane when she was able to give into her darling's hands the elixir of life in the old shape of love.

Jane had the felicity afterward to see Dora, dressed in a marvelous mixture of lace and illusion, singing to thousands of people who hung entranced upon her voice. But it was not as a *cantatrice* she sang, nor altogether to further the delight and ambition of her good sister Jane: it was at a charity concert, as the wife of the eminent judge and jurist Miles Van Dorn.

### THE GHOST'S ENTRY.

The candle flutters and darkles;  
There is no sound within;  
The embers in ashes redden;  
One flame crawls spectral and thin.

The candle flutters and darkles—  
Wide and black is the door! I start—  
The Wind was the ghost that entered,  
And shook me and chilled my heart.

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

## LEGISLATIVE HUMORS.

### PART IV.

By THE HON. S. S. COX.

"Let man send a loud ha! ha! through the universe, and be reverently grateful for the privilege."—DOUGLAS JERROLD.

IN previous papers the analysis of the de-liberative mind, collectively and individually, has been directed to its humors. Their utility in debate has been defended. The attempt has been made to remove from them the reproach of levity, while from different epochs of legislative history, and from other conspicuous sources, this element of parliamentary rhetoric has been illustrated.

In this paper the purpose is to treat in detail of the occasion and mode of using the various kinds of parliamentary weapons which are tempered by humor.

The liberty which allows so many levities is, as Mr. Hallam has said, "the slow fruit of ages." This indulgence is in proportion to the lusciousness of the fruitage. Just before and during our civil war, when men were almost on their knees in prayerful perplexity and trouble, as well as on their muscle and skill in great conflicts—the legislative humor was not pleasant. In vital conflicts fun does not flow so readily. Shadow and sorrow do not make mirth. Thaddeus Stevens was, perhaps, an exception, but his flavor was not always saccharine. It grew out of the war. It was acidulous and sharp. Few "summer-sweets" were found in his orchard. If they were there, there were plenty of stones and clubs beneath the trees.

If I should generally characterize the humor of Congress in the twenty years of my knowledge of it, it should be said that the Forty-first and Forty-second Congresses had the rarer felicities. Do you ask why? Because the war was over, and reconstruction had begun to show itself in better temper. Again, do you ask, "Who should be selected from this period as the happy members?" Using my tests, first, the lapse of time, and next the translatability of the merry words, I should say that Edmunds of Vermont was the capital wit; but Thurman met him ever with exquisite cunning of fence. Then follows a constellation, comprising Tipton, Nye, Howe, Conkling, Casserly, and others in the Senate, and Schenck, Butler, Stevens, Dawes, Garfield, Ross, Proctor Knott, Johnson of California, and a score of members of the House answered well the call of genial-tempered debate.

The same law which forms the pearl rules the witty expression. Naturalists ascribe the origin of the pearl to an irritation produced by the intrusion of a grain of sand or grit into the shell of the mollusk. This by a peculiar process is covered over with

a calcareous secretion, which is deposited in layers, and lo! the pure and perfect pearl. It is this same audacious and gritty though small intruder which irritates, till its priceless and creamy beauty is radiant with the rare iris of humor. Although humor, like the pearl, may only seem fit to be strung as an ornament to tickle vain minds "to mirth effuse," yet its utility is no less evident.

Quite a portion of the chit-chat which gives zest and life to the daily routine of Congressional work and worry is laminated, little joke on joke, as pearls are formed. It is that which concerns the personal foibles, the length of service, the manners, or the committee-work of members. Sometimes it is the bar-room and cross-roads talk, the badinage of the stump, the ignorant and ungrammatical fanfaronade, and the stupid brag of the Bobadils. Sometimes vulgarity competes with courtesy, and wins an apparent advantage until tested by taste and time. Yet such simple chit-chat is not without its utility. It is far better than the forcible-feeble denunciations, spiteful snap, and pandemoniac howling which fill the earlier *Globes*. These are associated with cries of "Order!" "Order!" They brought forth at times the emblematic mace itself from its marble pediment. Often its silver eagle flew into the arena restrained by the stalwart grasp of the sergeant-at-arms.

Let me, then, refer to some of the occasions and illustrations of this by-play of humor. The gentler sex is a frequent theme. The laughs, however, are too often equivocal and reprehensible. Widows' pensions, the marriage and other relations, are subject to the usual bandy of unexpressed but suggested ribaldry. The stage is not coarser than Congress in this respect, and a gallery of ladies makes no difference. No matter what the subject, whether Topsy or Thanatopsis, mention "women," and the old joke appears, ineradicably suggestive of something not said. References to whisky and Democracy; to finance and its intricacies; to our colored brethren; to party shibboleths and motions for adjournment; to the youth and age of members, and by the member who would "not kick at nothing for fear of a sprain;" to the devil and the Lower House, where he presides; to old Jacob Townsend; to victorious election prophecies and news; to Daniel and the locked-jawed lions, and the other roaring lion—the lobby; to Sir Boyle Roche's mixed metaphor of rat, bird, and bud; to "loyalty;" to opening the mouth and putting your foot in it—these furnish much of the chit-chat of debate. There are certain quotations very common, such as, "Ill fares the land;" and on funeral occasions, that "storied urn" is sure to make an "animated bust." "Your gory locks" are as sure to be shaken as "the galled jade to vince." That jade has winced till she has

quite lost her winsome ways. General Morris's woodman has so often been besought to "spare that tree" that the theme is hackneyed; and Mr. Bryant's "drapery" has been a good deal crumpled by insane though "pleasant dreams." On solemn occasions there have been a sufficiency of "weeping hermits" dwelling around the Congressional Cemetery to make a procession of the Middle Ages to the Holy Sepulchre.

Frigid statistics thaw into humor, and help to give a merry tone to dry detail. How the House laughed at the mortality of the Maine regiments as compared with those of New York! It was a question of rations and liquor. The tax and the Maine law played their part in the debate. New York stood 52, but Maine 124. Temperance was shown to be unhealthy, and Maine and her soldiers demoralized. And the House found the figures funny.

Once Senator Edmunds proposed an amendment to an appropriation so artfully as to change the \$20,000 for goods to that sum for transportation, and the \$5000 for transportation to the cost of the goods. It had pertinency against the inordinate cost of transportation.

"It is alleged," said Mr. Axtell, "that we have traded away \$15,000,000 for Alaska, and have only one million's worth of real estate. Any man who can't trade within 1400 per cent. of the value of an article ought to be expelled. Such a Congress, Sir, no longer deserves the confidence of a free people."

The pungency of wit is seldom associated with mere phraseological conceits. This element of legislative life, though it give vivacity to the session, is to be found in a higher grade of humor. I propose to characterize it in the following order: First, personalities and localities, and their points; second, defending the bad by the fallacy of fun; third, pithy narration and application of anecdote; fourth, apt repartee and cunning diversion; fifth, argumentation, in the form of burlesque and irony; sixth, anti-thetic brevities; seventh, and lastly, those miscellanies which defy classification.

*First.* Personalities and localities.

An allusion to the personal appearance of a member excites as much fun in the English Parliament as in our Congress, if not more. When Colonel Sibthorpe said that he did not like the countenances of the ministers opposite, as their faces were the index of the mind, there was an artillery of explosions. But O'Connell, in reply, turned the House upside down with its echoing roar by referring to the gallant colonel's own face, bushily bearded all over; and he (O'Connell) "would not abate a single hair on the point of good humor." The famous pasquinade of the same great Irish orator was made upon the same theme—whiskers—



and on the same Colonel Sibthorpe, "to beard whom Nature had shaved" the other two obnoxious and bigoted members!

Could any thing be finer than O'Connell's compulsory apology: "I said you were composed of six hundred scoundrels, and I am very sorry for it!" It was the royal purple upon his frieze coat. It was a personal generality, with the subtle ambiguity of regret. It was worth a centennial birthday celebration, in which it played a festive part.

The same kind of risibility which O'Connell provoked on the hirsute Sibthorpe was produced in Congress when General Farnsworth referred to General Butler's face, and the latter then got tangled in the long beard of the gallant Illinoisan. But there is too much venom in such allusions to be enjoyable. Henry Clay's supreme and genial jocosity is better. He had a habit of making merriment at ex-President Buchanan's peculiarity of optics, to which I have referred, with such a Palmerstonian *bonhomie* that no offense was or could be taken.

Ex-President Tyler once touched the Senatorial vein of pleasantry by referring to the firm of "Madison, Grundy, John Holmes, and the Devil!" He remarked that Mr. Grundy had retired, leaving his Satanic Majesty to take care of the remaining partners!

Mr. Hawes, of Kentucky, on the French debate in 1835, to which reference was made last month, defending Quincy Adams from a general attack, said that he "did not like to see the gentleman from Massachusetts, whose long career had been crowned by that brightest of all crowns, the suffrage of a free people, exposed to a rifle here, a musket there, and a popgun over yonder!" That popgun was not so frequently fired for the rest of the session.

Our rules, like those of the Commons, try to guard against personalities. They forbid the use of members' names. The French and Spanish are less punctilious on this point. But while the rule is not observed in Congress as it used to be, there is no difficulty in making it apparent to whom allusion is made. Some members are at once recognized by a reference to their seat or locality, to their committee, or to their hobby. No reference to the red man in the late Congresses would have been complete unless it pointed at General Shanks, of Indiana, just as a reference to a tragic manner or to pig-iron immediately suggests an accomplished Pennsylvanian. Once I had occasion to insist on having macaroni kept on the free list. A long and red-haired, tall, lank, and odd member, full of complaisance, opposed it, as he said that he did not affect the dish. It was foreign; it was not nice. A playful allusion to his being fed on the badly manufactured native article was an *ad hominem* that brought forth a round of fun from the House, and from him the ex-

clamation that he once promised his wife never to find fault with his "vittels," and he never would again!

That was a very clever rejoinder Senator Conkling made to Judge Thurman last Congress. "When the Senator turns about and addresses me, as he has half a dozen times, does he expect me to respond?" said the judge, just a little nettled. "When I speak of the law, I turn to the Senator as the Mussulman turns toward Mecca. I look to him only as I would look to the common law of England, the world's most copious volume of human jurisprudence." Those who know the judicial aspect of the Senator from Ohio will appreciate the force and elegance of this superb badinage.

The "long gentleman's speech," by an amusing mistake, is used for a short Senator who made a long speech, and the ripple of fun runs around at Garrett Davis.

The question of specie payments was under discussion in 1866, and so in clamoring for them was Long John Wentworth. He begged Mr. Stevens to lead them on to specie. "I believe it can be done," said Long John. "My friend is large, but he has faith like a grain of mustard seed," said Stevens.

John Morrissey was once ordered to be arrested, under a call of the House. Mr. Eldridge, of Wisconsin, amusingly suggested two sergeants-at-arms for the apprehension of the gladiator.

Senator Conkling, famous for his hyacinthian lock, one day inadvertently referred to the old abolition times, when politicians thought it derogatory to say that their hair curled. Of course, in the remarks which followed by another Senator, the blonde curl of Conkling became crisp with more than Numidian elegance.

Not unlike these personal hits are those which consist in taking off localities. This is a favorite theme for pleasantry. Dickens made his description of our new Eden, as Proctor Knott did of Duluth; but whether located in one section or another, such grotesque allusions to the *locus in quo* of members are enjoyed as if they were a "*tu quoque*." How Mr. Rollins, of Missouri, played his jet of fun on watery Cairo! His steamboat landed passengers in the third story of its first-class hotel. In the very heart of the new city the cry of the faithful boatman is, "No bottom!" Said another member, on another occasion, "I say to gentlemen that Cairo is one of the rising cities of this Union!" To which, "Has it risen above high water yet?" was the apt response.

We remember the impeachment trial. How important a part a Delaware witness played. He swore that the "eyes of Delaware" were on the Executive conduct and War Department. What trepidation followed! In vain the Chief Justice rapped "Order!" The laugh would be renewed.

Delaware has sometimes received a slap for being small; but only when small States or men are pretensions do good men assail their diminutive proportions. A Senator from Delaware cries out, "If Delaware had the physical force, Sir, she would hurl you from her borders should you attempt it." To which a Maine Senator, with a *sang-froid* such as becomes an ice-bound coast, replied that he "hoped the day was far distant when the nation would array itself against Delaware." "Or," added another, as the laugh grew lively, "Delaware array itself against the nation!"

"Where is the Seekonk River?" "In Rhode Island." "How long is it?" "Four hundred yards," answered Cowan of Pennsylvania. "Oh, longer than that," said the Senator from Rhode Island. Judge Trumbull: "There's no such river. It is not in the bill." "Well, it's in the State, anyhow," said Governor Anthony.

When, however, League Island, near Philadelphia, was asking appropriations, Anthony returned the compliment by similar ridicule. "There was an iron-clad took fire on that island," said he, "and there was not water enough to put it out."

Senator Cole represented California. He had charge of appropriations, and he, too, had made an adverse dash at League Island. The Pennsylvania Senator—Scott—intimated that a noted example taught that all good works should begin at Jerusalem, and therefore that Mare Island, California, was a good place to begin. The ever-felicitous Edmunds, well up in geography, remarked, "Mare Island is not Jerusalem." Mr. Cole: "No; far from it." This was Ionic in softness and Attic in elegance.

But a Senator from Rhode Island is not always the man to touch upon localities. This, Governor Anthony has often experienced. Who was it said that a traveler on horseback, stopping overnight, and hitching his horse in Rhode Island, was sued in trespass twice next morning—once in Massachusetts, for his horse eating oats from a field in that State, and again, at the same time, for his kicking down a stone fence in Connecticut? Some one once intimated that Rhode Island was a large State, for it had two capitals!

*Secondly.* Why is it that some of the best humor is in defense of the bad? Why is the indefensible so often defended by fallacious fun? Does the devil monopolize the best jokes as well as the best music? Falstaff, when he defends his vices, lards the lean earth with unctuous hilarity. Hudibras makes a witty theme out of Puritanic austerity, as Aristophanes made Athens laugh rather with than at the corruptions of his time.

One of the most exquisite pieces of rhetorical humor was once delivered by a Cali-

fornia Senator. He defended the exaltation of intoxication with such incomparable pleasantries that many went out and imbibed. The Senate was left without a quorum. In the spring of 1870, Mr. Johnson, just elected Lieutenant-Governor of California, made a speech, almost a poem, in which the fruit of the vine was celebrated in a purple shower of wit, and where no tears but "tears of wine" were shed to enhance the luxury of nature's rich clusters and golden goblets!

In the same perverse tendency of fun, a Senator is up arguing lustily for the abolition of the frank. Another Senator, whose significant name is Fowler, leads a pack of Senators after this first Senator with questions like these: "Is there any thing to prevent the Senator paying his postage if he chooses?" "May he not dispense with the accursed privilege?" until the hoarse voice of Sumner tumbles in with: "The Senator may emancipate himself by refusing to frank, and paying all his own postage." Whereupon the Senator who would make reform is put down as a charlatan. A member in 1866 offered to expel another because he did not take the extra compensation voted; while another argued that if the salaries were reduced, the incomes of all Senators should be equalized.

*Thirdly.* Another species of humor consists in the narration and application of anecdote. It may seem strange that a body of men so accustomed to use this trick of rhetoric on the stump should not fully appreciate its use in Congress. But such is the fact. The galleries sometimes appreciate it. Whether because the story is too slow and zigzag a way of reaching the object, or whether the joke is generally stale—whatever it is, anecdote is too diffuse and vapid; and if pungent, it is apt to degenerate into the coarse acidity of vulgarism. Stories are almost as much out of place in Congress as Shakspeare's sea-coasts were in Bohemia. Still, they are not infrequently used, whatever may be their effect. The Senate and House seem equally impatient and inappreciative of anecdote. General Logan arises and tells the old story of the man who bragged he was one of the minister's converts. The minister rejoins, "I should think so, for it don't seem as if the Lord was in it." Does the joke tell? It hardly evokes a simper or cachinnation. But once I saw General Houston quit his whittling of cedar sticks in the old Senate-Chamber to pledge General Cass. He did it by relating the story from Irving of a fight between two tortoises on shipboard. The fight consisted in blowing at each other, standing on their hind-legs. It was intended to illustrate diplomatic logomachy. Did it win applause? Palpably; but it won by the grotesque manner of the narrator and the pithy pertinency

of the story. General Hawley, to show the horrors of war, briefly related how he once asked one of his subordinates in his first battle, "Colonel, how did you like it?" "Well," said he, "I am satisfied; but when I saw my men going down all around me, I thought, 'Can't this thing be compromised?'" These instances are, however, exceptional, and depend for their success on their pointed application and concise expression.

General Nye was happy in a short story. The question of rebellion and amnesty was up. "Guilty or not guilty, is it you ask me?" said an Irishman. "How can I tell till I hear the evidence?" The story is somewhat rusty. The point was a good deal in the Cerwinian manner. How well, not to say how often, he told the story of the man who mauled the dead badger, for the purpose, as he said, of convincing the badger that there was punishment after death! Not less brief, as an illustration of the "uncertainty of the law," was that of the young lawyer who had thrown up the profession and gone to speculating in lottery tickets.

Mr. W. R. Roberts, of New York, neatly touched up the peaceful character and doubtful existence of the Ku-Klux by calling attention to the fact that nowhere in either party, from the South or elsewhere, were there evidences of violence. An Irishman in a strange town stood looking at a vessel. He was accosted, "Where are you from, Paddy?" "Begorra, Sir, I'm from any where but here, and I'll soon be from here too, Sir." *Argal*, where were the K. K.'s?

Illustrating the monopoly of ferries over the streams in a remote Territory, an exaggerative Delegate said that he had known two horses to be taken to pay the toll for one.

General Nye illustrated the binding force of instructions to a committee by the story of an Irishman in one of our big cities. The dogs took after him, and he tried to stone them. He found the stones fast in the street, and he said, "It was a very pretty country for liberty, to turn the dogs loose and tie the stones down." This Senator seemed more than any one to make the Senate redolent of the stump. He had carried his hustings from New York to Nevada, and thence brought them to Congress. He could not strike an inconsistent Senator without telling the story of the Dutch artist representing the Scriptural scene of Abraham offering up Isaac. He gave, by a cruel anachronism, a pistol to Abraham instead of a knife. "How, then, could the angel intervene?" He finally poised the angel on wings, with a cup of water to wet the powder in the pan! Thus was Isaac saved.

John P. Hale once told this story of patronage: "A lady appealed to me to assist her, as she had a Revolutionary claim; she said that she would go out into the street

and get some boy, and bring him in and have him appointed a page, and she would take half his pay for her ancestor's services in the Revolution."

Senator M'Creery, who is unctuous with humor, once related that a lawyer in his State, while admitting the foreknowledge of God as a general proposition, did not believe He could tell in advance how a county court of Kentucky would decide a case.

General Butler once apologized for a long speech by the remark of Charles II. when dying. He knew he was an unconscionable long time dying, and apologized therefor to his friends.

To make clear some of the beauties and virtues of reconstruction, Senator Dixon once repeated Dr. Johnson's narrative to Boswell: "I was passing a fish-monger's stall, and I saw him skinning an eel alive; and he was cursing the eel because it would not lie still." The disquieted and uneasy South, and the debate on its outlawry, were the points aimed at by the elegant and lamented Senator from Connecticut.

A Missourian desired to help a special bill, but not give up a general one for the benefit of his State. He said: "It reminds me, Sir, of the case of a profligate man who went to a respectable judge, and said, 'The laws of society are not properly constructed.' 'What is the matter with them?' said the judge. 'Why, you are rich, and I am poor, and I think we ought to divide.' 'If I did divide with you,' said the judge, 'at the end of six months you will have spent all your money. What will you do then?' 'Why, divide again, of course.'"

An Ohio member once touchingly related how an old bridge on the Miami had been carried off in a freshet. Bill Beckett was there, looking on. As he saw the bridge float away, with fifty years of association from rosy youth to gray age, tears stood in his eyes. "Ah! no wonder," said a friend of Bill's; "he was its biggest stockholder."

One of Mr. Lincoln's stories was once used to display the heavy points made by an antagonist. One of the President's neighbors had some heavy butts of logs on his land. "They were too infernal heavy to roll, too darned soggy to burn, and too tarnal tough to split; so he just plowed all around them."

A point was once made on the Methodist Senator, Mr. Harlan, by Senator Saulsbury. "A brother was in the habit of responding to all the minister said with a hearty 'Amen.' He became troublesome, and was cautioned. He held in for a while. But feeling a disposition one night, he hallooed out, 'Amen! at a venture!'"

"Are you not conscious that you are laboring under a prejudice against that man?" was one of Judge Collamer's happy anecdotes. "Yes, Sir, I think it likely. I have detected him stealing two or three times."

Another of the judge's well-applied though aged stories is that of the Irish proposition: first, that a new jail should be built out of the materials of the old one; and second, that the old one should be kept good for prisoners till the new one was finished.

Apropos of this sort of narrative for rhetorical effect, it is a marvel that spicy literary allusions are so seldom used for illustration in Congress. They are quite infrequent, more so than in Parliament. Only once can I recall a reference to Dickens, and rarely have I heard a hint of Cervantes. Judge Kelley once called Bunsby to his side to help him answer the question whether a protective duty is a tax or a bounty: "The bearing of this observation lays in the application of it."

*Fourthly.* Under this head may be considered, in connection with the last remark, those natural and ready responses which are condensed by the fire and hurry of debate. The quick fusillade of fun, the sudden turn of expression—these are repartees. They are unstudied and innocent. But the keenly barbed shafts that strike the white may not be classed strictly with repartee. They are retorts and sarcasms. They are the *diablerie* of wit, not the benevolences of humor.

Once when the Calhoun and Van Buren rivalry existed, and Calhoun was presiding in the Senate, with Jackson at the White House, General Noble, in alluding to those relations, said, "I tell you, Mr. President, the little magician will spoil your dish with the old hero; he is as cunning as a serpent and as harmless as a dove." "The Senator will confine himself to the subject." "Which subject?" "The one before the Senate." "I am trying to do so. I see but one subject before the Senate, the other is at the White House." "The Senator will take his seat." "As I was saying, the little magician—" "The Senator was directed to take his seat." "So I did, but the chair did not expect me to sit there the balance of the session."

"What's before the House—does the gentleman know?" says the irate Speaker. "I am," said the member. The House and Speaker laugh.

"Will the gentleman explain so that I can understand?" "I will not engage to do that," says General Butler.

A member is urging the widening of the bronze doorway, so as to make more commodious the promenade from the House to the Senate. "Does the gentleman," said Mr. Dawes, who may then have been cultivating an enlarged bronze for the Upper House, "find his progress to the Senate obstructed by the narrowness of the way?"

Mr. Dawes once suggested a monument to Governor Swann's memory for certain reforms he had projected. Governor Swann,

with his usual *savoir-faire*, begged him not to hurry the monument.

A Pennsylvanian was opposing an appropriation for the Ohio River. Said Mr. Stevenson, of Ohio, "It is a public work." "But," responded Mr. Dickey, "the gentleman thinks the country begins and ends on the Ohio River." "Why, Sir," said Stevenson, "it rises in Pennsylvania." Mr. Dickey: "The only good thing about it."

They were talking of the system of compulsory pilotage. It is a State system. "They have to be boarded," said one. "They board the vessel and the vessel boards them," said General Garfield. "I put four pilots in irons for refusing to pilot Farragut," said General Butler. "Ah, that was compulsory pilotage," said Mr. Potter.

A member anxious to take up the tariff, in which the duty on coffee was involved, said, "There is a cry of agony from the coffee interest." "Then it needs settling," said a Senator. "On what grounds?" said another.

A member asks to insert "rock" before "salt" in the tariff. He fails. "You split on that rock," says a member.

"My colleague," said General Banks, "has deceived me again; he would deceive the very elect." "Of course," said Mr. Dawes to the defeated colleague, "that does not include you."

In discussing about improvements in Washington, Mr. Cameron said, "Talk about parks and lungs. The city is all lungs." "So it appears here," said Edmunds, with a chuckle.

"Sir," said a Southern member, "sal-soda enters into the composition of soap; and soap, Sir, is used by every man, woman, and child in the country." "Or ought to be," said the jocose Job Stevenson, of Ohio.

Ohio desires a bridge elevated, as it is only forty feet high. "The river is a gorge, and rises sixty feet from low to high water," argues Senator Sherman. "Then," said Governor Ramsey, "the fault is in the river, and not the bridge." Why did not some practical legislator move an amendment to lower the river?

The Indian service is before the Senate, and the local Christian agencies. "I have met no Christians in Nevada," said Oregon. "You did not associate with our best people," said Nevada.

They were taxing petroleum. It was called the poor man's light by a Pennsylvanian. "Were there no poor men before this light was discovered? No light from fish oils?" "That," said the Pennsylvanian Scofield, "was the 'light of other days.'"

There is a canny sort of fun in Cameron's homely thrusts. Judge Thurman was interested in a debate. Mr. Cameron, who wanted an executive session, suddenly interrupts. The polite and irate Ohioan is a thousand times obliged to the Senator for interrupt-

ing him in the middle of a sentence. Mr. Cameron: "It will give the Senator more time to reflect on the rest of it." The secret session is ordered, with genial temper.

"If the Senator is firing at the flock, it is a safe way of firing," said Mr. Casserly. "One bird is hit, at any rate," rejoined Edmunds.

The navy is anchored in Congressional waters. "What the Senator says shows that he is a thorough seaman." "Or a good deal at sea," responded Mr. Edmunds.

"The Senator says that neither war nor secession can take a State out of the Union." This was from Senator Patterson to Senator Hendricks. "Suppose," he pursued, "all the male voting population of South Carolina were to die, where would the government be?" Mr. Hendricks: "That, Sir, is rather an exhaustive question."

Hickman of Pennsylvania called Vallandigham of Ohio severely to account for having a rebel camp named after him in Kentucky, when Vallandigham turned sharply and said, "Is there not a town in Kentucky by the name of Hickman?" The effect was electrically humorous.

"Were one to rise from the dead, would it convince the gentleman?" "Well," said Mr. Stiles, of Pennsylvania, "I would as soon take it from a dead man as from my colleague."

John P. Hale once made a retort that filled the galleries with laughter by quoting ironically a text from Second Samuel on Judge Douglas: "Absalom said, moreover, oh, that I were made a *judge* in the land!" He was equally happy on Wigfall, who had insisted on secession and that Texas was out. He called Colonel Wigfall the Senator of the *late* State of Texas. When Wigfall protested, he called him the late Senator from Texas.

It was a railroad grant. "Where is all this to lead?" exclaimed Washburne. "To the Pacific coast," said Garfield. "To the bottom of the Treasury rather," was the prompt rejoinder.

"They may use any power to stop the cholera," said Chandler. "What! martial law? I would rather have the cholera," said Governor Anthony.

"This is whipping the devil round the stump," said a member. "No matter, if you can only hit him," said Lynch of Maine.

One of the proofs of genuine humor is often found not only in the pert repartee, but also in the manner of adroitly avoiding the point. It is a part of the study of an English minister to parry a question. *We* have no cabinet in our Congress to be interrogated, but we have the American or habitual disposition to interrupt with a question "just here."

No man had a better knack than General Banks for parrying these queries and mak-

ing a diversion. His reply to a Mississippi member in 1854 is felicitous not only for the grandiose manner which the general always displays, but for the affected wisdom of the answer. "I am asked whether the black race is equal to the white. I answer, this can only be determined by the absorption or disappearance of one or the other, and I propose to wait until the respective races can be properly subjected to this philosophical test before I give a decisive answer." This would elicit laughter from a legislature of owls. So non-committal a member on the then prevailing topic was naturally preferred as Speaker of the House, which was of doubtful majority on either side.

*Fifthly.* There is a species of humor which consists in a quaint commingling of opposites as incongruous as "lutes and lobsters, seas of milk and ships of amber." It is a species of argumentation. It belongs to the *reductio ad absurdum*. It is epigrammatic. One of the most eloquent members, Mr. Fitch, of Nevada, used it frequently. Referring to the Indian appropriations in this vein, he said, "What a mixed assortment of Quakers and blankets, saw-mills and school-books, to send to vicious and unappreciative savages!"

An original paraphrase for a "pork thief" was once made by a Virginian: "Scoundrels who had plenty of pork in the winter and no hogs in summer."

"Let the Senate clear the galleries." "You will be fortunate," said the witty Wigfall, "if the galleries do not clear the Senate." This was in the days when Benjamin's musical voice allured Southern men and women to the Senate.

This rhetoric has often the cogency of logic. It belongs to this category of humor if to any, as the following elucidations show:

Was that not a pleasing argument made by a member under arrest, after a call, that the Constitution provided "that members shall be privileged from arrest while going to and returning from the sessions of the House?"

"The man is to be hung if he does the act, and to be hung if he does not," said Senator Doolittle, in reference to certain State laws against the Federal fugitive law. "If so, it does not make any difference to him. Then, in a certain case, the State law is void." "And the hanging too," said Mr. Benjamin. "But the hanging would be a certainty, and not void for uncertainty." And the lawyers had their smile at their legal quiddity.

Judge Douglas once made a humorous argument against secession. "Here you deny the right to coerce, and here by its side is a proposition to buy Cuba for three hundred millions. Would it not be a brilliant achievement to buy Cuba, let her se-

cede, then re-annex herself to Spain, and sell her out at half or double price, according to the gullibility of the purchaser?"

A member ridiculed a lot of abstract resolutions against rebellion by moving a resolution to abolish the rebellion.

I had the honor once to propose to inflate the currency by moving to stamp all ones as twos, all fives as tens, etc., whereat a brilliant member intimated that I was a noun with a profanatory prefix. Yet I endeavored to save the cost of printing new notes and all the risks of counterfeits.

Senator Morrill, of Vermont, once made himself a similar target by moving to a railroad grant that any body in any State should have power to build a railroad from any one spot to another, and have all the lands not claimed by any other railroad. This was seriously pronounced simply ridiculous, in fact, impossible—really out of the question.

Judge Van Trump, of Ohio, desired General Schenck to answer whether he would follow the interest on the new bonds, by exempting it from tax, into other investments. "Suppose a man," said Schenck, in reply, "has a quantity of whisky, on which whisky there is now levied a tax, and he swaps it off for a horse, you do not continue to tax that horse as whisky." The verbose and complicated query of the dignified judge was simplified amazingly, and the House enjoyed the whisky and rode the horse.

The Civil Rights Bill is up, and so is Mr. Sumner. The Pacific coast is aroused, and so is the Chinese topic. A motion is made to keep the Celestials out of the benefaction of the bill. Then the large hearted and bodied Senator M'Creery moves, and his motion comprehends the argument. It is that the act shall not apply to persons born in Asia, Africa, or any of the isles of the Pacific, nor to Indians born in the wilderness. And yet with what grace did this liberal Senator last Congress receive his colored highness Kalakana in the Capitol! We served together on the reception committee, but we had *white* gloves and *mouchoirs*, and thus saved *our* colors.

Mr. Wood once made a startling point humorously as to the duty on Cuba sugar. It was that his Republican brethren were offering a premium on slave labor. He vociferated for tellers, amidst a roar of logical fun, "to see who were the friends of slavery." There was sweetness in the House all day.

Mr. Senator Tipton, arguing ironically for permanency in the officers of the government, intimated that he would carry the idea so far that when occasionally one should die, he would bury him in a vault under the building, in order that the outside and greedy world should not know that a vacancy had occurred in the inside.

"The gentleman so declares for economy that the wheels of the universe must be stopped because they consumed too much grease." This was one of Donnelly's good hits upon the frugal Washburne.

A more innocent species of humor was displayed upon a dispute of boundary. New York once had an interest in Vermont. Vermont had to pay New York \$40,000 before she was admitted as a State. "It is the impression in Vermont," said General Banks, in a quizzical way, "that this payment was the foundation of New York's prosperity."

Even in burlesque we find a species of logical humor. Although it is reckoned in the lower rank, yet it is more useful and delightful than the aggravating retort. The easy repartee, the babbling gossip, the prattling puerility, which too often pass current for "good humor," are not comparable with burlesque. Not one ray of light, but a whole orb sometimes, glows with a diffusive splendor, from the contrast which burlesque weaves between the subject and the manner of treating it. Herein shone Corwin and Knott.

On a proposition to send black and white children to the same school, Mr. Senator Norwood hit off the project in a spreading eloquence quite enjoyable: "He proposes to capture them with a lasso, drag them humanely to the same school-room, tie them on the same forms, lash their arms together to hold the same book, fix their eyes on the same page, make their eyeballs stationary, and then, by some patent process as yet unknown to any one except the inventor of this exquisite machinery for the propagation of knowledge and peace among men, to wind up their brains like eight-day clocks, and set their tongues, like pendulums, in motion, to tick out learning in harmonious measure."

How musically expansive was Senator M'Creery on the currency speech of Senator Morton! "He began his voyage amidst the convulsions of revolution, circumnavigated the globe, visiting England, Germany, France, and Spain, and, more fortunate than Captain Cook, he entered the ports of redemption and reconstruction with flying streamers, under cloudless skies, and impelled by pleasant breezes!"

When General Nye eloquently remarked that the Goddess of Liberty had her home in the mountains of Nevada, Governor Hendricks pricked his swollen balloon by remarking, "Quite a solitary residence for the lady." How happily Nye rejoined that Liberty was a mountain nymph; that the flag when it went down elsewhere would find its barricade in the mountain fastnesses, where our people inhale liberty in the air they breathe, unmingled with the malaria of States located in that aguey country

along the beautiful Ohio. Indiana called for quinine and whisky.

Senator Logan once made a burly burlesque of the Indian Commissioner on a high horse, booted and spurred, lassoing the Indian children on the plains to put blue breeches on them; and the House was quick to take in the scene. It was the forerunner of Proctor Knott's race of the Indians after buffaloes, and driving them into the corrals of Duluth.

"There is not a sheep from the green hills of Vermont to the mountain ranges of California, where sheep are slaughtered by tens of thousands, that does not in his dying moments ejaculate as to both of these revenue arguments on wool, 'Baa! baa!'" This was from Mr. Brooks, of New York, and was effective.

These inflated expressions, by the unexpected escape of gas, are often compelled to come to earth. Two notable instances should be recorded, one by General Butler, and the other by Mr. Everts on the hole in the sky, before the impeachment legislative tribunal. General Butler used to answer Mr. Bingham's rhetorical flights about the land drenched with the blood of millions, and the gathered wisdom of the Constitution, by saying, "I always did like that speech."

There is a certain kind of wit or humor too evanescent and exquisite for general apprehension. Large assemblies do not quickly catch it. If Addison had spoken in Parliament what he makes Sir Roger de Coverley say in the *Spectator*—that he would have given her (his mistress, or his country) a coal-pit to keep her in clean linen, and that her finger should have sparkled with a hundred of his richest acres, the heavy yeomanry of the Commons would have looked at him in daft amazement. There is in such humor too much recondite fancy for the ordinary mind. Its very prepensive prettiness and precariousness prevent any sting or stimulus. The Addisonian wit, like that of Webster and Corwin, was jeweled in the hilt. It never carried blood away on its blade. Not so with the wit of Thaddeus Stevens. His retorts riled; his quiet question quenched his opponent. It is said that a needle under the microscope will show ragged edges. Doubtless if the microscope magnified sufficiently, the needle point, so smooth and acute to the eye, would show jagged crags, Alpine peaks, and abysmal gorges; but Nature is infinite in her exquisite craft. The sting of a bee is as smoothly keen under the microscope as the needle is to the naked eye. This was not the sting of Thaddeus Stevens. His was the sting of the wasp or adder; for though he had much gentleness in his nature, he was not careful of consequences. "Who will take me up in their strong arms when you two mighty

men are gone?" said he to the two officers who carried him in his chair across the Capitol grounds. This was nectarine fun. "Ah, John," said he to his friend Hickman, as he was dying, "it is not my appearance, but my disappearance, that troubles me." This, too, is a spiced dainty. But when he said to a troublesome member, who was ever uncertain as to his course and vote, and who was asking liberty to pair, "I do not object to your pairing, but pair with yourself," he displayed no honeyed humor. When he said, "Must we forgive these traitors as they forgive us? why, they do not forgive any body on earth," he was not of amnesty all kind. A member asks him, "Are there not sixty-four half gills in a gallon? If I am not correct, the chairman of Ways and Means will correct me." "I need not tell you. You have counted them a hundred times." This was in his happy mood, and perhaps more characteristic. And in the same vein, when once the question of taxing lager-beer came up, he humorously defended lager. "Its effects are eccentric and amusing," he said. "Many a night I have looked out of my house and seen the honest men who drank it stumble against the fence. Once they knocked it down. I should therefore designate its effect not as intoxicating, but rather as exhilarating." Once he remarked in a speech that he was not well; and hence he was "diffuse." "A man always is diffuse when feeble, and feeble when diffuse." This had the playfulness of the lamb; and so has this: An appropriation is up for a sewer in Washington. "It is out of order," said one. "The sewer is," said Stevens, "but not the proposition." His sarcasm was not always thus curbed. "I do not," said he, "give the gentleman my censure or advice: the one is beyond my jurisdiction, and the other would do him no good." This was not a little sarcastic; but not more so than the next: "The style of these Congressional biographies is as various as the gentlemen who write them." His diabolic wit shone with the *feu d'enfer* when he met James Brooks in a hot encounter. Mr. Brooks had said, in response to Mr. Stevens, very bitterly: "There are three gates in London renowned for peculiar architecture: Newgate, of the prisons; Cripple-gate, of the cripples; Billingsgate of the fish-women. The gentleman has studied his vocabulary in all three." "There is one gate which the gentleman will enter," retorted Stevens, "that I will try to avoid."

In contrast with this sarcastic humor, let me recall one of the most playful speeches ever listened to. It is remembered for a humor iridescent and fluttering. It was a short speech of Judge Holman's. His subject was "the economic plants," as they had been termed, raised under "the glass struc-

ture to make elegant bouquets for the delectation of officials." Is it too dainty a simile to say that the judicial mind on that occasion reminded me of the *trochilide*? What are they? or, rather, "what is it?" It is to America what the sun-bird is to Europe. It is an airy sprite, "barrin' it's a bird." It has the lustre of topaz, emerald, and ruby on its plumery. It revels, as did my friend's rallery, amidst tropical blossoms which rivaled those jewels in hue. Like the humming-bird, from fuchsia to japonica, from sunny heliotrope to night-blooming cereus,

"Each rapid movement gave a different dye,"

as the judge, with the barbed and viscid tongue of the hummer, drew the mischievous insects, with the honey, from the flowery depths. So illustrated he his theme that the House was tickled into a vein of honest reform.

*Lastly.* Let me hang upon my string a few more pearls—or imitations, perhaps—of various color and shape, and which can only be defined as miscellaneous.

Speaking of the civil service, General Banks turned on this *jeu d'esprit*: "It is no matter whether the applicant knows how near the sun is to the earth, unless it gets so near as to scorch him on duty."

Mr. Morton wittily likened the Bourbon element of the improgrivists to the man riding in the cars backward, who never sees any thing till he has passed it.

Once in the chair I made the mistake of saying, "Gentlemen will please go *through* the tellers." I should have said "between." It was an agreeable variation from the stereotyped form, and from a representative of the big bad city it was accounted larcenously and eminently proper, for to go "through" is to—become amenable to the criminal law.

"What are these fifteen extra Capitol police for?" "To keep the people from stealing the bronze doors and carrying off the dome," said Dawes; but the laugh was bracketed thus—[great]—when he answered the argument for this extra police that they were necessary for the funerals of members: "If we are not more earnest in economy, our funerals will be attended to elsewhere, and without charge."

"Such a selection for an Indian superintendency," said Senator Sargent, talking about Nevada, "would necessitate Artesian wells; for if the Indian agencies are to be distributed among religious denominations without the wells, you must inaugurate a sect of dry Baptists."

General Cass once made the Senate ring with fun as he described the effect of noticing a slanderous enemy. He gave it as a lesson to younger members. After rising to a personal explanation, and denying and disproving what all knew to be false, yet,

when he went home to Michigan, what was his surprise when he found the whole batch of lies fortified and proven against him by affidavits!

John Covode was an odd member. It is said that Mr. William J. Florence, in his famous character of Bardwell Slote, the member from Cohosh, has taken him as the anti-type of his histrionic member. However that may be, one thing Slote does not do which Covode did—quote Biblical history. "Solomon," said Mr. Covode, "went on taxing to beautify Jerusalem, and the result was, it bursted up the ten tribes of Israel, and left Judæa and Jerusalem high and dry." Covode was known as Ahab, from his frequent and pungent references to that party. Slote's ways and dress and mannerisms are wonderfully like the average Congressman, but I will not say that for his moral tone. The expressions of these half-loose public trustees are hardly to be taken as full indices of their generous and genial character. As the quaint Sir Thomas Browne once said of his own style, "Many expressions are merely typical, and to be taken in a soft and flexible sense." Many allowances are to be made for the stormy passions of a body representing such diverse interests. Our Congress can not for that reason be, like the Italian Parliament, as dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm. No fugitive or cloistered virtue can live in such an arena, where are exhibited so much ardor and *élan*. You must meet the adversary not in the impersonal editorial or the one-sided pulpit, not in the controversial tractate or the quiet thunder of the big folio, but face to face. There can be no slinking, no hiding. The garland of the Congressional race must be won through the heat and dust of active personal conflict.

In making this analysis and collation of the humors of such an arena the writer is conscious of its meagreness. The spoken word has nothing of the immortality of the written word. It does not live a life beyond life. Tradition can not, does not, convey its impression. The very ecstasy of its enjoyment by the orator unfits him afterward, as it unfits his reporter, to place his evanescent humors upon the same scroll with sedate thought. Still, enough has been distilled from the conduct of Parliament and Congress to show that our legislative life is not made up of the dull, cheerless, sunless commonplaces so often derided by the press.

We might wish in our legislative discussions for more variety in style, and now and then for some quaintness or felicity of expression in place of the old state-paper and commonplace jargon. Why can not some one change the monotony of the public formula? Why must the question be always put just so, and the clerk read in a high dead level? Why should a motion to



adjourn be made without the slightest regard to the inflection of the voice or the object of the motion?

Oratory should follow the teachings of her sister art. In painting, the artist who distributes his lights and shades best shows his taste and skill when he gives relief by contrast. The dark parts of his canvas would fail of their intended effect if the light parts were darkened. Our energies as a people need the relief which the shadow does not bestow. Public speakers are not exempt from the ordinary rules of art. We have enough clouds of sorrow here. Let us fringe their dark edges with sunshine. Let us mellow and brighten them for the solace of others, if not for the joy of our own heart. Grief and melancholy are selfish. All nature calls for hilarity. To a spirit penetrated with its subtle essence "the open sky will sit upon its senses like a sapphire crown, the air will be its robe of state, the earth a throne, the sea a mighty minstrel playing before it," and no sphere in the wide range of its sympathies will be kingless. In that province of human activity in which life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the ostensible objects of guarantee—the province of statesmanship—where collisions of prejudice, interest, and passion are of constant occurrence, while there may be no need for the cap and bells of the fool or the acrobatic entertainment of the harlequin and clown, there is ever an urgency for those gifts which cheer, brighten, and bless, and which diffuse through society their soft radiance like the sweet hallowing influences of sunset.

## DON JOAQUIN.

### I.

HAD the summer midnights of 1874 found you in Havana, you could not have idled long among the grave and elegant loungers of the Alameda but you would certainly have noticed one man, tall, faultlessly attired, dark, handsome, sombre, who moved among his more quiet fellow-Cubans—for something made him restless—conspicuous, not for youth, less for conversation, but for the grace of his figure and the impressive dignity of his bearing.

You would presently notice that he was much courted. As, with his slow and stately step, he passed one and another group, half officers, half civilians, that sat smoking and chatting in the broad moonlight of the Parque, an acquaintance would lift a cigar from his lips, and say, invitingly, "Don Joaquin!" and draw up an empty chair; or another, more free and soldier-like, would say, "Justiniani!" and beckon coaxingly, but generally without success. Then a third would say, "He learned that odd habit of promenading from Simpson." And they

would resume their gossiping upon the subject of the war.

In the Casino he was always the centre of a circle, though he listened far more than he spoke, never played, avoided the library, and seldom filled his glass. Not that he turned his back on Pleasure, but he had caught a habit of looking her in the face and never smiling.

Monasterio, the architect, of Matanzas, but lately come to locate in Havana, said of him that he walked the earth as a man who had had one love affair and could never have another; but Monasterio was a sentimentalist—even his fast and effeminate Havaneese comrades admitted that—and we shall see whether he was not mistaken.

The don's friends understood, however, that there was something wrong with his heart. Not any thing silly—that even a voluntario would smile at—but something that made life all romance and burden. No matter where he carried this heart, by day in the bustling Calle del Mercaderes, by night under the romantic blending of lamp-light and starlight on the Prado, in the Tacon, under the palms of the Quintas, in the gay hurry of the Paseos, through all the halls of the Casino, it had one constant moan, like the cry of a feeble child in the arms of a forlorn father, crying, "Give! give!"

Said Simpson, the burly English merchant, who used to sit in the card-room of the Casino with his big pink fist lying beside his glass of ale, while he railed by turns at his two great aversions, Cuban customs and womankind—said he:

"I'd be confounded glad if Justiniani didn't have a heart! Why don't he come square up like a man, and look his trouble in the eye till it gives over and backs down? But no; to-day he punishes it, and to-morrow he fondles it. That's the way with you bloody Cubans. To-day he runs away from it to the bull-fight. What a beastly bit of foolishness that bull-fight is!"

"Si," said Monasterio, who understood a little English, and was æsthetical.

"To-night," continued the Englishman—"to-night he lets it follow him to the theatre, and here to-morrow he'll take it up gently to church, and kneel with it through all that deuced mummery. I hate to see a fine man spoiled that way. For Justiniani is a fine man. If Justiniani was an Englishman, what a bully fellow he'd be!"

"Si, si," said the invincible courtesy of his Cuban listeners.

But Justiniani was not an Englishman; wherefore neither friends, nor incense, nor blood of bulls, nor wine, nor music, nor ladies—ah! the poor heart turned away quickly with a little shudder. None of those—no, no, any thing but them!

Nothing brought him joy.

One lovely night in summer the mood