

Monday, June 3, 1872.

THE ENGLISH AT HOME.

(CONTINUED.)
From conversation in this house and elsewhere, during my sojourn in England, I learned that the English have less affinity with the French than the Americans. They have more of the German characteristics than we. Besides, several members of the royal family have married Germans, which gives German ideas and the German language a certain vogue. Most of the women and many of the men of the higher class understand the language. The Englishman on his travels, by predilection, goes to Germany, Italy, or the East. Americans who travel go to Paris;—the good reach it after death, as the proverb tells us. It is perhaps the Celtic blood coming from Ireland which thus modifies our character, and gives us that bearing to the people on either side of the Channel, not possessed by the English.

When the women retired from the table, the cloth was not removed; the table was allowed to remain as it was. Heavy drinking did not follow the departure of the better part of mankind, as in the first-class establishment; at most a couple of glasses, then a pipe and a cigar, the time thus occupied not exceeding half an hour, when the men with a proper degree of decorum—gray without being drunk—joined the dames. There was much less consumption of port in this than the house first described, and a freer use of Burgundy, Bourgogne, and other wines, latter, contrary to American custom, being drunk at the beginning of the dinner.

The tones employed by the English in conversation are truer and healthier than those of the Americans. They use chest-notes with all their healthy vibrations from the lungs upward. In America the voice is high-pitched, and most of it comes from the head; the practice, at least, is so general, as to render national trait. New England, as the cradle of this nasal bantling, must be held responsible. The fault of the South, as, "before the war"—full and round, the r's suppressed—is generous and harmonious in comparison. But by way of compensation, New England also furnishes the best English—that spoken in Boston.

The material life in this hospitable mansion was pleasant. To American ears, accustomed to suppress, laconic humor, the English humor is somewhat slow and boisterous. In the lower classes one is fairly knocked down by it as with a cudgel. In the theatre the average sense of humor fails to be more subtle than with us; the points are made so strongly as to become Americans. The words of banditages which pass between a couple of New Yorkers are telegrams in comparison. The slowness is such that one often anticipates the coming word. They are not, however, given to long stories as the Americans are, for which they deserve a good mark.

A gulf separates the working people from the aristocrats of the hall, in education, intelligence, and manners. No such distance separates the two classes in America. The laboring people in the neighborhood were thick-headed, ignorant boors, speaking imperfect English who had not an idea beyond beef and beer. The occupants of the hall were better bred, perhaps, than the better class in the United States, but without their frankness and elasticity of character. It has taken a number of generations to produce this cultivated gentleman. Like the thorough-bred horse he has come to his present perfection through long training and breeding, extending back through a number of masters and mothers. He has almost lost the obstinate characteristics of his race. He is polished, dignified, and manly. In artistic education, as well as by race, he is not second to a respectable mediocrity. This is his greatest point. His general knowledge of events and popular currents of thought throughout the world is only equalled by that of the Americans. He can stand up before a professional boxer, row with an oarsman, ride a stocky-chuck with a jockey, and not be far behind them in their respective callings. His valuable quality is his love of truth and justice, of which, however, he does not enjoy a monopoly, but which extends through all classes of the English people; no one is ignorant of the enduring principles of the Great Charter.

This roughing it has done much toward conserving the superiority of the aristocracy. Muffs are no more encouraged in this class than they are among cows. The boy of birth, says, resorts to fistfights, and is thrashed like the proletaire. Seeing a slight lad of twelve or thirteen (who, by the way, was an earl) mounted on a rather unmanageable horse, I asked his mother if she was not apprehensive about his safety. She answered that she wanted to have him insured to dangerous exercise; that she would sooner see him mauled than chicken-hearted.

The aristocracy is being continually strengthened by what is best in the common. When the latter achieves distinction in the upper walks of life, he is lifted into the circle of the elect. This system gives vitality to the class, and keeps up its domination. Dis crimination is used in making selections from the commonalty, so that the balance is kept up against dead weights in the way of wooden lords, and young noblemen with much blood and little brain who give over to the horse and general dissipation.

The excellence of English servants is proverbial, and the kind of hierarchy which existed among them in this establishment was not without interest to one coming from a country where this useful body is inadequately represented. They were divided into upper and lower servants, with classification in both. The upper began with the butler, following in the order named; the coachman, cook, grooms, and footmen; among the women, with the housekeeper, ladies' maids, and seamstresses. Almost the same distance separates the upper from the lower servants, as that between the former and their masters. They take their meals in different rooms, and it was the duty of the kitchen-cleaner to wait on the higher branch of service at their repasts. In France, these cooks being carried to such perfection, the cook calls himself an artist, and his place is considered as the head of the people below stairs, which seems proper in a country where gentlemen-amateurs like Alexandre Dumas and Brillat-Savarin take a hand at the spit. In the lower classes we found the assistant cooks, scullions, women-of-work, stable-keepers, and what not. The two branches did not associate with each other. The butler had entered the service of the family when a boy, as a knife-cleaner, and his case was cited in illustration of the conscientious discharge of duty and ambition properly directed would do for a place in the humble walks of life. It was understood that, in moments of unusual expansion with the housekeeper, he referred to his remarkably successful career with much pride. He always appeared a model of grave deportment and respectability, not subject to the weaknesses common to the world. The world sees the outer men, but he could not intermediate men; for to him were confided the keys of the luggage, and he knew the condition and the quality of the guest's baggage, means, together with the other articles not usually subjected to public scrutiny. Preserved as he was of this knowledge, his calm, dignified gait was enough to distract one's equanimity. At the expiration of a week he informed me that my lines were crossed; a member would submit a bill in Parliament, and asked if he would be allowed to supply the deficiency from his own wardrobe until the washerman could be heard from, which showed him to be a man ready for all contingencies.

To be continued.

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