

atoned for in the distinction conferred upon the victim by his attention, and the comic method of the whole performance. This aspiring mountebank after an open air constitutional, stamps through the entry with as much clamor and as little grace as possible, blares a snatch of some boisterous song at the chamber of a sick friend, batters the door with iron fastened cow-hides, and having thus calmed the quaking nerves of the invalid, slashes along the corridor something as an intoxicated slave proprietor might be supposed to pace, whip in hand, the threshold of some delinquent Canaanite's hovel. At the dining board he is a perfect hero. He enters the apartment with the same bravado fling, sprawls into his chair as awkwardly and noisily as he is able, catches up his napkin so that it trails in the gravy, or subverts the cruet stand in the process, and proclaims his wants in a tone somewhere between the nasal appeal of an orphan lamb, and the yell of bacchanal;—and yet, all this is so funny, you know, no one could think of accusing him of discourtesy or rudeness. He of course is quite justified in seizing with a sudden grab, which works ruin among an interviewing pitcher of water and group of glasses, the viand of which he sees his neighbour about to partake, the wink and imbecile smirk immediately following, indicating that this manœuvre is only a pretty little trick, designed to entertain rather than incommode his companion. This species of wag derives prodigious delight from such exploits as tripping the bashful small boy into a creamy pool of slush and mud, ascends to the apex of glory, when he succeeds in attaching an April Fool, or some such decoration to the rear of a diffident stranger's coat, and parading him thus adorned, before a concourse of ecstatic damsels. In short, everything which persons of ordinary thoughtfulness and common sense indignantly disclaim, any practice which propriety condemns and sober reflection denounces, all these so long as they are not positively criminal, are eagerly embraced and habitually indulged in by the buffoon. But that which above everything else disgusts and exasperates his associates, is the cool presumption with which his puerile fooleries are conducted, and the condescension which he evidently thinks he exercises in designing to make them the theme of his merriment.

Such a character is always supported by a swarm of imitators, who probably in course of time, develop his enviable art in themselves. Yet highly as he estimates his rank in popular favor, the liberty which he assumes, and that contempt for individual rights,

manifested by him towards the persons and effects of others, and which he bases upon this estimate, though often endured, are rarely enjoyed by the subjects of such mirthful abuse and soon incur for the aggressor a larger share of odium than friendship or admiration.

The genuine humorist on the other hand is a person very different from the individual we have just been considering. It must be conceded that in most instances he aims, like the latter, to secure applause, as well as to amuse; but it is easy to ascertain wherein the distinction between them lies. The one yearns vehemently for notoriety and laudation longing above everything else to be accounted an expert satirist, and yet lacks the simplest essentials to success in this capacity; his brain is turbid, his perceptions obtuse, and his notions of the ludicrous limited to grotesque demeanor and boorish disregard of all social and conventional forms. When indeed such forms are extremely exacting and absurd in their very nature, to burlesque and ridicule them may be both diverting and beneficial; but persistent and methodical mockery of every principle of order and comfort, must ever evoke scorn and aversion, among people of refined taste and judgement. Such is the conduct of the swaggering empty head in question. A true wit on the contrary is swift and accurate in thought, acute in discernment, and while possessing the keenest sense of the comic, and prompt apprehension of anything laughable, is yet duly attentive to the claims of politeness, and scrupulously avoids the semblance of braggadocio and coarseness. He is careful not to obtrude his witticisms indiscriminately, and his sallies when he makes them are guarded by a shrewd observance of circumstances, and a discreet comparison of their influence for or against the effectiveness of his venture. He never blunts the sting of a satire by levelling it against an individual in no respect exposed to attack. He presumes no peculiar privileges beyond the verbal exercises of his gift, or a practical joke sufficiently good to compensate for the annoyance and temporary resentment of the sufferer, for he is sensible of the folly of sacrificing friendship and goodwill for the sake of some paltry trick. Proficiency in sarcasm and expertness at retort, depend upon natural genius; and genius, when not marred by malignity, or corrupted by misuse, claims cordial esteem and sincere respect. Persons so endowed are possessed of a potent weapon of self defence, and a prompt means of succoring friends who may be subjected to injustice, or become involved