

rate there was no sign of him; securely locked, the wickets were opened for no one, and, indeed, nobody but myself seemed to have any wish to go inside; the casual passers-by, lounging slowly along, looked neither to right or left, murmuring, if they spoke at all to each other, of the stifling heat, while the ordinary denizens of the Inn, the lawyers and the lawyer's clerks had sauntered off under umbrellas to the restaurants about Holborn, from which retreats they were long in returning. A very mirage, the beautiful gardens lay shimmering, steeped in sunlight before my longing eyes. To me, out in the desert, it seemed as if leaves and grass, and flowers and priceless shade were as unreal as the wraiths on the terrace amongst whom Bacon sat musing on the subject of his next essay, while Sir Roger de Coverley "cleared his pipes" in the fresh morning air. As there is never any use in keeping one's mind fixed on the unattainable, I turned from the inhospitable gates and wended my way through the courtyards to the hall, as the next coolest place after the gardens, meeting Mr. Perker and his clerk Lowten, frequenter of "The Magpie and Stump," Jack Bamber, immortal Mr. Pickwick, and "my esteemed friend Parkle," of whom Dickens discourses delightfully in "An Uncommercial Traveller." Dickens, I am sorry to say, has spoken disparagingly of the Square more than once, but I think he can't have known it in the summer when the most captious person would not call it either dismal or depressing. Then, again, Gray's Inn no doubt has altered for the better since Mrs. Sweeney and Mrs. Miggot were laundresses here, and the dozen of lively young leeches, escaped from the feeble hands of the trembling ticket porter, were met taking their walks abroad. So improved is the quarter, that in one or two of the houses, no longer let off in flats for chambers, children were looking out of their nursery windows as I passed, and more than once there came across the Square the shrill voice of a canary, and the sound of familiar monotonous scales thumped by small tired fingers. The beautiful hall, with its raftered louvre-roof of polished oak, its many interesting old portraits, its delicate shields and lozenges of stained glass, has been the dining-room of the members of Gray's Inn for over 300 years. Anyone can go in who likes: the doors stand open through the day. You can rest on seats (made, they say, of planks of the Spanish ships driven on our shores in 1588), while the maiden Queen, surrounded by her solemn judges, glances at you from the walls. You can watch the light stream in, all colours, through the great panes, and fall on the same objects standing in precisely the same places on the oaken floor as in the time when loyal Benchers wore black on the death-day of the martyr, King Charles, or Jacobite students defiantly whistled "Lillabullero" as the young Chevalier came nearer and nearer to Derby. Peopled with the figures of the few successful lawyers, Cecils, Bacons, Sydneys and the like, who once sat at meat here on the dais, and with those many unsuccessful members ("surely called to the Bar," says Dickens, "by deceiving spirits, seeing they are wanted there by no mortal"), dragging through the weary days with nothing to do, the long hall is far from lonely, and is full of interest even to the ignorant intruder who knows next to nothing of the originals of many of these portraits, or the names of the owners of these magnificent coats-of-arms which shine in the jewelled window-panes.

As I stayed on in the dim, cool room, looking now at my Lord Raymond, now at Sir Nicholas Bacon (the ruins of whose house I saw the other day at Gorhambury) some one came from across the passage to tell me a little of the history of the Inn. Originally, it seems, the property belonged to Lord Gray de Wilton, who sold it, houses, gardens, windmill and all, to a Mr. Denny. From him it came into the hands of the monks at Sheen, who let it as a lodging for lawyers till the evil days of the Reformation, when Henry VIII. took it into his possession. I was shown a carved high-backed chair, on which Queen Elizabeth sat when she came, attended by her court, to see a Masque or partake of a banquet; and some glazed Roman pottery, found when a new room was built not many years ago; and some excellent mezzotints and line engravings of portraits of those Benchers who have made themselves and their Inn famous.

"Do you know that an invitation to dine at Gray's Inn is considered a very great compliment indeed?" [writes Frith, R.A., in a letter, the receipt of which this morning sent me down to Holborn to see the pictures he mentions] I am not now much of a diner-out, but as those great lawyers seemed to desire my company the other day, I resolved to bestow my tediousness upon them. Every one assembles in the library, a modern room upstairs, from whence the guests are conducted down to the hall, each on the arm of a Benchers, who wears a solemn black gown. Being late, I missed that part of the ceremony, so was taken straight to the hall, which seemed to my bewildered eyes to be filled with a multitude of people. An awful Presence, carrying a rod, went in front; with his staff he struck the ground three times, announcing in a loud voice, Mr. W. P. Frith, R.A. There rushed up a figure in flying robes to welcome me. Then, "You know the Lord Chief Justice, I think?" he said, and the chief, in shaking hands, remarked: "You have good reason for remembering me." His tone was not threatening. He sat, you know, to me in my picture of the Private View at the Royal Academy, a function he never attended except for my benefit. After more knocking, a stentorian voice announced dinner was served, and the multitude, consisting of barristers and students, separated themselves from the Benchers and their guests (the élite), and took their places

at the long tables lining the hall from the dais to the magnificent screen at the end of it. There were about twenty of us grandees at the upper table. Next the Lord Chief Justice sat Mr. Manisty, a great judge and a great fisherman, over eighty years of age, whose favourite amusement is salmon fishing. He stands for hours with the Scottish waters up to his waist, an experience likely, I should have thought, to be fatal to much younger people than the judge. Then came Mr. Justice Stephen, and then Mr. Justice Bowen, who, my neighbours told me, had just recovered from a severe illness. Morley was there, a man whose genius I admire and whose politics I detest, and, nearly opposite, a nephew of his, another Morley, who is exceedingly handsome. I should like to paint that youthful M.P., and if he should fail in the House I can promise him a decent livelihood as a model. This offer is worth notice, for at the next election I hope—but I will forbear. Sir Charles Russell looked very worn on the edge of the Irish Commission, to say nothing of the terrible wear and tear of his other suits. Near him was a gentleman with a very astute face, ornamented by one of the most provoking noses I ever saw. There is no mistaking the handwriting of Providence on the human face, and I wasn't surprised to find that this was Reid, Q.C. The rest of the company consisted of common nobility in whom I didn't feel interested. The dinner was splendid. My kind neighbour told me all sorts of interesting things. He told me the hall was finished in the reign of Elizabeth, that Bacon was a Benchers, and that there are two portraits here of him. "The small one which hangs there to your right," he went on, "is, we believe, a genuine picture, and the tradition is that he sat for it. There's Queen Elizabeth, the one on the screen behind the chaplain. Shakespeare may have sat where you are, you know. Bacon may have asked him to dinner. We've no record connected with him, except that it's pretty sure one of his plays was acted here, but we don't know which. We often think it is a pity the cloth is never removed, for underneath this one we have a highly polished table made from wood taken from the Spanish Armada. Speeches? No, we've no speeches; just the usual formal toast, the Royal Family, and one special one, the health of Queen Elizabeth." "The health?" said I. "The memory—the immortal memory, I mean," answered my friend, laughing. Another and a longer Latin grace (we began dinner with one) from the chaplain, and then the loving cup appeared, such a beautiful silver thing, filled with sack, the veritable sack of Shakespeare's time, made from a receipt, a great secret, in the possession of the society, and dating back from Elizabeth's days. The guests rose and bowed to each other. "I drink the glorious, pious and immortal memory of good Queen Elizabeth," some one began. Then the cup was passed on to the next person, and as we each in turn held it we repeated the toast. I tasted sack for the first time; it was peculiar, and not very nice. The students were quite quiet at the long tables, except for an occasional burst of laughter. "They will find their tongues when we leave," I was told. "Their silence don't prove any great amount of respect to the upper table; each of them thinks he has a judge's wig in his pocket." After dinner, the Lord Chief Justice leading, we went upstairs to the library (modern, full of ancient books) to dessert: fruit, ices, and what was to me of far greater importance, cigars. . . . As I left I passed the hall, and, hearing melodious sounds, looked in to find they proceeded from a band of students who were "waking the night owl with a catch." By the way, and not apropos of Gray's Inn and my entertainment, I forgot to tell you Sidney Cooper's eyesight, at eighty-four, has returned. He can't account for it, but says simply that, after years of spectacles, he can now see without them as well as ever he did at twenty-five. There's a curious thing. His pictures prove it is true. In the Academy this year you can see how precise and delicate his touch is, not in the least like an old man's work. This beats Beswick's grandmother, who cut a new set of teeth at seventy-five.

The other day I came across the "Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton," the good Quaker poet of Woodbridge, whose daughter Edward Fitzgerald married, and who was the lifelong friend of Lamb and Southey. Clad in a sober suit of grey, the small volume lay unheeded on a bookshelf. The bells of St. Clement Danes, Psalm-ringing overhead, set the bits of rhymes to music as I turned the pages:

Midnight has stolen on me. Sound is none,
Save where light, tinkling cinders, one by one,
Fall from my fire, or its low, glittering blaze
A faint and fitful noise at times betrays;
Or distant baying of the watch-dog, caught
At intervals; it is the hour of thought.
Canst thou then marvel now that thought is free,
Memory should wake and fancy fly to thee?

The bells have no hard task, and the words, written by Elia's friend to Elia, trip lightly to the chime from the steeple. We may burn our candles at many shrines, says Mr. Birrell in his "Obiter Dicta," so I light my penny taper in front of this modest table, where the wild flowers bloom, raised by Barton in honour of Poesy. If you wish for priceless altar-pieces, for ornaments of gold and silver, rich hangings or fragrant incense, you will not find them here. The gentle Quaker only offers his goddess a handful of wild roses and a branch of sweet briar. Yet the manner in which the poesies are arranged is worthy the attention of idle worshippers, who, wandering from one gorgeous jewelled shrine to another, would not waste their time if they stayed for five minutes by this lonely, neglected little side-altar, where the blossoms are so sweet and the scent of the leaves so fresh.

WALTER POWELL.

QUATRAINS.

1
THE lictor slow unties his rod,
Lest the doomed man repent,
But slower moves the will of God
Unto man's punishment.

2
For pleasure do not swerve
Aside in thine employ;
Content if thou deserve,
Let other men enjoy.

3
He who sings never makes
No discord in his song;
He who speaks never speaks
The word that is not wrong.

4
All comes to him that waits,
If his desire be pure;
Master he will all fates,
His victory is sure.

5
Question not, but enjoy;
Scan not too curiously,
Lest thy close search destroy
The charm of sympathy.

MATTHEW RICHEY KNIGHT.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BOWS."

ACCORDING to a reliable authority, familiar at least in name to ignorant and learned alike (Webster's Unabridged), a bow is a "bending or an inclining of the head or body in token of respect, homage, condescension, reverence or civility," which definition, so far as it goes, is precise and true enough. But my readers will allow, with a knowing smile, that the "unabridged conventional" interpretation of this very interesting and comprehensive monosyllable is vastly more than the name implies; in fact it is a question whether an *un*-abridged conventional definition would not carry its writer into an infinity of research, for the subject is pregnant with other important aspects that tempt the keen observer into fertile arguments *ad infinitum*.

It is evident, therefore, that in a necessarily short essay of this nature the question can be little more than touched upon in a few of its striking commonplace phases. Space, or the want of it, will hardly allow me to analyse the subject as an exponent, in individual cases at any rate, of men's self-taught social beliefs; for not even this simple gesture has escaped the omnipotent influence of our times, which, though a would-be occult power, is very plainly revealed in the smallest actions of worldly men and women. Let us call these results the fruit of involuntary motives, of impulses that are stronger than the force of ordinary human resistance, concomitant with that inward growth which seems in so many instances to outreach our zealous controlling efforts, if by so doing we throw a straw to the perishing dignity of our better nature. This is merely, however, a speculative act of charity which a review of stubborn reality cannot and does not encourage to any extent.

I must deny myself the pleasure of taking the extreme limits of my subject as my starting and finishing points. Were I to begin with, I shall not say "the nod that ratifies the will divine," but hold my quill to earthly confines, and begin instead with the imposing, not to say solemnly majestic, bend of the gentleman usher of the Black Rod on the occasion of the opening of Parliament, and come carefully down the gamut to that heart-warming (!) sign of recognition, a bow with the "eyelids" (if my inexperienced reader can narrow his conception of unknown things to such a fine point as to understand what a "bow with the eyelids" means), I should have to resign myself to a task which time and labour would magnify into matter for many essays. But the subject *prima facie* suggests a great deal from which very practical reflections may be deduced, without probing any farther than the surface-aspects.

The obvious differences between those signs of mutual recognition which we call "bows," make it almost unnecessary for me to qualify them according to the sentiment that inspires them. Any public thoroughfare will serve more satisfactorily to vividly illustrate the truth of what I intend to say on the subject of "bows" than any argument, I care not how subtle nor how convincing, that I might adduce.

One needs no extraordinary power of disquisition to distinguish between bows of equality and bows of inequality; the former, though certainly the most natural and unaffected, are perhaps also the most uninteresting of all bows. Their substance is a simple sign of mutual recognition, a passive token of civility, unobtrusive of either condescension or unworthy adulation. The bow of inequality has a rarer and more savoury interest for the sly observer, from the supercilious nod of the self-inflated social or political "snob" to the servile bend of the over-affable cringing.

By a slow and subtle process, from either of these