

MY AVERSION.

It was about ten years ago I first met with my aversion. It was, if I remember rightly, when I was studying at King's College and had a deal of spare time.

The circumstance may appear trivial to others, but it affected me greatly—depressed me—had crushing influence on my animal spirits, which were ordinarily great. I acquired a sudden but severe tendency to thoughtfulness, from which disagreeable fault I had hitherto been considered free; in fact, it had been previously said of me that I thought of nobody—but myself.

I do not imagine my friends meant to aver that I was selfish, only my actions were such that they (my friends) could scarcely help thinking otherwise. Anyhow, I had not been addicted to thought before, and now there was evidently something occupying the space which is usually tenanted by the brain.

It was this. I had seen somebody I could not understand; and priding myself, as I then did, upon my knowledge and judgment of human nature (for I had thought I was equal, after a careful survey of anybody, to determine who or what they were), I was naturally annoyed, for, for once, I was undoubtedly outwitted. This man defied my scrutiny, and consequently became my aversion.

It was my custom of a morning to patronise the neighbourhood of St. James's Palace, and regale my musical proclivities by listening to the gratuitous strains of the military bands; and it was at one of these early inexpensive *al fresco* concerts I first noticed my aversion.

There was nothing particularly strange in his appearance beyond being seedy in the extreme, but my attention was attracted notably by the regularity of his attendance. He never missed. Morning after morning, whenever I availed myself of this cheap entertainment, there, sure enough, was this person also, always in the same poverty-stricken garb—just one remove from a beggar, which appellation he avoided by invariably having some tobacco which he smoked in a dirty little, almost black, clay pipe, and by the use of a wretchedly old and faded pair of what had once been kid gloves—such luxuries I believe, not being permitted to beggars during their business hours.

His constant attendance was the reason of my annoyance, and set me thinking as to who or what he could be. Indeed, such an effect had his appearance upon me, that I determined to abstain from my customary morning exercise at any rate for a time, and to change my hours of relaxation from study to the afternoon.

Accordingly, instead of frequenting St. James's Park at ten a. m., I paid a visit to that more fashionable quarter, "The Rows" between the hours of four p. m. and six, and mingled, so to speak, with the aristocratic world. Here, thought I, I shall be safe from my antipathy; from this man, who, by his, to me, mysterious surroundings, has visibly affected my very being.

Judge, then, of my state of mind, when on my first visit, at the very height of the season, at the hour when the "Ladies' Mile" is most besieged by the pink of fashion, I perceived this dreaded object, with the same clay pipe and the never-to-be-forgotten costume.

His face was so familiar, that at first I almost thought he would recognise me as an acquaintance, and perhaps bow. The idea was too monstrous. I turned sharply round, and made my exit through one of the smaller gates, into Piccadilly, and returned home—home, to think again of this spectre, who had so engrossed my mind, that I began to regard him as, in some inconceivable manner, connected with my destiny.

One thing was very certain—another place of public resort was closed to me now, for go anywhere where there was a probability of his presence I would not. Who could he be? In vain I tried to solve the query.

He evidently did not work, nor did he appear to want, judging by his contented, though impecunious, manner; and yet there was such an impression of abject poverty conveyed in his look, that I could not help wondering where his next suit of clothes was to come from.

The following day I remained at home all the forenoon, and did not stir out till nearly six o'clock, when I sauntered up Regent Street, to have a look at the well-dressed people who are usually to be met there at that time.

I had proceeded as far as Beak Street only, when, horror upon horrors! this "thing," as Shakspeare would say, "appeared again." Positively he was there! It may seem absurd to recount, but there he was, leisurely strolling down the street, with his inseparable black pipe.

To say I was rooted to the spot would be untrue, because I walked past him as fast as I could, with a feeling of something very much akin to fear.

However, despite of my antipathy, I could not suppress a strong desire to know the business, if any, of the singular-looking object; so I retraced my steps, and followed him, at some short distance, determined, if possible, to put an end to my suspense.

He soon turned out of Regent Street, and lazily wended his way through the mass of back streets and courts that lie between there and Holborn.

Once he stopped at a shop which was devoted to the sale of fish; but he emerged, in a few seconds, with a small parcel, enveloped in a piece of newspaper, and continued his course as before through a mass of alleys and back streets.

I was compelled to remain a tolerable distance behind, in order to escape his observation; and, on his turning a corner, I lost him, and had the

mortification of finding myself no nearer the solution of the problem, and considerably farther from my home than I liked.

It would take up a good deal too much space to recount the various circumstances under which, and the numberless occasions upon which, I came across my antipathy.

I met him everywhere; at least, everywhere where the British subject can roam unmolested by fees or charges of any description. Any and everywhere where the admission was free, there, from time to time, did I encounter this man.

It had gone on for some months, and I had almost despaired of ever solving the strange coincidence, when, one evening, while witnessing a glorious spectacular Shakspearean revival at Drury Lane Theatre, with hundreds of auxiliaries, my attention was suddenly drawn to one of a miserable-looking "rabble," who, tottering beneath the weight of a banner he was upholding, occupied a prominent position in the vast procession, whose numerical strength gave such effect to the spectacle.

Surely the face was familiar! I could not be mistaken! No, a second glance convinced me. I had discovered my aversion.

There he was—somewhat altered, it is true. He had exchanged his old modern costume for a new suit of ancient date; and his pinched, shrivelled cheeks and sunken eyes were rendered a little more ghastly by some daubs of rouge artistically laid on.

The spell was broken! I had run him to death, and discovered that the man whose movements had so excited my curiosity, whose frequent appearance across my path, and whose walk of life had so defied and baffled my powers of penetration—this being who, for weeks and weeks, had been my *bête noire*, was no other than a supernumerary at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

RANDOM SKETCHES ON THE ROAD.

BY A CANADIAN COMMERCIAL.

"Our Mutual Friend," the "Blow by Implication," deserves more than a passing mention; his developments are many, he is eropping up in some new form continually. He may be a reticent, taciturn character and perhaps cultivates those qualities in order to have great store set by what little he may say.

"And when I open my mouth let no dog bark," is written on his face in unmistakable characters. Dogmatic assertion is his forte, and paucity of words, a weakness with most men, is to him a tower of strength. His dupes, and they are many, speak of him in whispers and with wondering awe. He knows his silence to be far more impressive to his admirers and withering to his opponents than his speech, and he acts upon that knowledge. For the character to sit well upon him he should be a man of ponderous avoirdupoise and goodly corporation, and his gait and air should be cultivated to express that presence of semi-dignified pomposity inseparable from the character. He should also understand (literally as well as figuratively) how to fill the chair, and the chair must be capable of displaying such a grand accumulation of pomposity and obesity to advantage—that is, it should be large, with a well-concaved seat, two ponderous arms and a broad back. The eternal fitness of things being exemplified in the construction of the chair, and the chair with its unwieldy contents placed at the head of a hotel dining-table flanked by two rows of admiring commercial satellites, behold the impersonation of "the Blow by Silent and Massive Implication!" Young and green commercials who have not yet so to speak cut their commercial teeth, glance furtively at him, and await with tremulous anxiety his approval or disapproval of any remark they summon up courage to make. They laugh consumedly at anything he may say that has the faintest approach to a witticism, and concentrate their indignant glances on any unfortunate wight whom the great man may see fit to wither with his disapproving silence. His commendation or condemnation of any dish on the table is awaited with anxiety—either seals its fate. But, withal, I must confess to a sneaking regard for this specimen Blow; he is so unique and his tribe is so small numerically that it would be a pity to make any attempt to extinguish one of the number. Besides which, his company is very comfortable as I always seem to draw from him a sense of corporeal importance I did not previously possess, and I find too, by long and practical experience, that the civic dignitaries of any town I visit in his company, if they do not cordially salute him, at least survey him with an air of kindly and even fraternal interest that proves

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

Another development of this type of Blow is the dark-clothed, sombre-faced man who is "a partner in the firm," and who wishes it distinctly to be understood that he is not a "Commercial Traveller"—perish the thought! He is only taking a trip to "see his customers" and "do" the country, although if the former will but sufficiently pander to his self-conceit he has no objections to "doing" them. He drops casually into a merchant's store and after having endeavoured to sufficiently impress him with the condescension he is manifesting in the call he remarks with a supercilious air, "I have a few samples with me, Mr. Brown, just some special lines and if you step down to the hotel," &c., &c.

Should Mr. Brown honour himself in the proposed manner, he will probably find that the "partner" has all the samples that ever came from the house, and often displays far less knowledge of his business than a genuine "Commercial" of very ordinary abilities. He makes few friends. There are too many good men on the road who make no such pretensions to "great Mogulism" for business men to need to bow the knee to this Commercial Baal, and as for travellers themselves, he professed by his speech and manners such a profound contempt for them, that it becomes reciprocal. To use an expressive slangism, they "go for him" at every opportunity.

Dropping the "Blow by Implication" with this creature, whose assumed and magnificent indifference to business constitutes the implication, we will have a little examination into the character of the Society Blow. This is the gentleman who knows all the little great men of every town he visits, who draws on his kid gloves every evening about eight o'clock—no earlier, as it would imply vulgarity, and to be suspected of vulgarity is the bugbear of his life; and when asked where he is going, tells the enquirer in a tone of languid nonchalance—"Oh, out to spend the evening, awful bore, but must be done, you know." On Sundays he disappears in a mysterious manner after breakfast and is not seen again till after church at night, and a similar enquiry as to his whereabouts elicits a similar reply. He is, or wishes to be thought a thorough ladies' man. None of these traits are in themselves objectionable to me—far from it—I wish this to be distinctly understood, as a too hasty interpretation by the ladies themselves of what I have penned might bring me into bad odour with them, a result I should greatly deplore. No, it is the self-satisfied assumption of a superior capacity for *shining* in society manifested, by these well-dressed apes, that disgusts me. Ask one of them if he has been in such and such a town—"well, yes, guess he has—knows all the girls in the place—danced with Miss So-and-so at the last calico ball," the name of the lady being supposed by him sufficient to overpower his listeners with awe. "Does he do anything with Smith, the 'boss' grocer of the town?" "No, never sold him—knows Miss Smith well, though—nice girl, Miss Smith" and so his rapid gas escapes. Small talk, minced conversation, is his forte. He is the successful rival of bank clerks in the towns he visits; they hate him, flirts adore him, sensible men despise him, his brother travellers laugh at him in what he "wears his heart upon"—his sleeve. Business with him is, as he pretends it to be, the last of all considerations; occasionally he meets another drummer of the same ilk, and it is amusing, exquisitely so, for an uninterested on-looker to listen to the verbose attempts one makes to outdo the other in reciting his social triumphs and female conquests. Each is intensely jealous of the other. But bah! why waste words on such nonentities! We all know them, know them too well.

Another peculiar variety, but a *rara avis* among commercial Blows is the "Ancient Traveller," the gentleman who traffics or tries to traffic on his experience and renown. Finding himself worsted in an argument or expecting to be worsted, he will fall back on his "experience," and with a "magnifico" air intimate to the presumptuous youth who dares to pit himself against him in the wordy tournament: "Well, I don't know, but I think I ought to know, for I have been on the road—let me see—well, fifteen years anyhow," then, with a snap-dragon outburst of well-simulated wrath "long before you had left school, sir, long before you had left school." This usually concludes the controversy, for if the juvenile party to it possesses in any degree the bump of veneration, such a showing of his adversary's hand effectually silences him, and should even the bump in question be deficient, he will (unless too bumptious) preserve afterwards a discreet silence in deference to the frailties of age. "Second childhood" is always more provocative of the sentiment of pity than contempt, for which of us can say that in our

"Sere and yellow leaf"

we may not lapse into it? Well, let us leave him, only praying for him with Charles Dickens,

"Lord, keep his memory green,"

for without that his life having outlived its usefulness, would be a blank.

With which wish I dip my pen in the bottle of rascally hotel ink before me for the last time to-night, to subscribe myself

THE WAYFARER.

THE CANADIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION.

Elsewhere are given to-day portraits of the President and Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Press Association, an institution which we are happy to learn has become a power in the land, and exercises a potential influence for good upon the fraternity of the press. It is not too much to say that the most sanguine expectations of the Founders of the Association—many of whom still survive—have been amply realized. The object of the organization was to bring together the members of the press at least once a year; with the view of becoming more acquainted with one another, so that the tone of bitterness which at that time unfortunately characterized the journals of the day might be partially, if not wholly eradicated. The result thus far has been

truly gratifying, and every member of the Fourth Estate, throughout the Province of Ontario, may well feel proud of such an institution as the Press Association, numbering as it does so many good men and true in its ranks.

The Association was originated in 1859, the first meeting being held at Kingston, at the time of holding the Provincial Fair. Mr. William Gillespie, then of the Hamilton *Spectator*, presided. There were also present Dr. Barker, of the Kingston *Whig*; Mr. Armstrong, of the Kingston *Herald*; Mr. H. C. Grant, of the Kingston *News*; Mr. Bowell, of the Belleville *Intelligencer*; Mr. W. Sheppard, of the Belleville *Independent*; Messrs. Lowe and Dunbar Browne, of the Montreal *Gazette*; Dr. Gillespie, of the Picton *Times*; Mr. Beach, of the Whitty *Watchman*; Mr. Campbell, Nanawee *Standard*; Mr. David Wylie, Brockville *Recorder*; Mr. Doyle, Cornwall *Freelancer*; Mr. Thomas Sellar, Montreal *Echo*; Mr. John Jacques, Milton *Journal*; and Mr. W. G. Culloden, Milton *New Era*. Of the above sixteen Founders of the Association, we believe there is only one now directly connected with the press, and four have passed from this earthly scene. The following have been the Presidents since the association was formed:—W. Gillespie, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862; D. McDougall, 1863; D. Wylie, 1864; Thomas White, 1865; M. Bowell, 1866; Thomas Sellar, 1867; J. A. Campbell, 1868; N. Buckingham, 1869; David Wylie, 1870; E. Jackson, 1871; James Somerville, 1872; John Cameron, 1873; Rev. W. F. Clarke, 1874; H. Hough, 1875. The annual meetings have been held as follows:—At Hamilton, 1860; London, 1861; Toronto, 1862; Toronto and excursion to Orillia, 1863; Belleville, 1864; Brockville and excursion to Ottawa, 1865; Montreal and excursion up the Saguenay River, 1866; Goderich and excursion to the Saginaw Valley, Michigan, 1867; Collingwood and excursion up Lake Superior to Fort William, 1868; Cobourg and excursion to Oswego, 1869; Brantford and excursion to Cleveland, 1870; Toronto and excursion to Montreal and Ottawa, 1871; Toronto and excursion to Muskoka Territory, 1872; London, 1873; Toronto and excursion to Duluth and Fort William, 1874; Hamilton and excursion to Niagara Falls and Buffalo, 1875. This year the meeting will probably be held in Toronto, and the excursion is to be to the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia. The whole of the arrangements have been entrusted to the President and Secretary, Mr. D. McDougall, the Centennial Commissioner, and Mr. Fraser, Secretary to the Advisory Board, are kindly giving their assistance.

Mr. John Cameron, President of the Association for this year, is a native Canadian, and has climbed his way from the lowest step in the ladder. He served his time as a printer in the London *Free Press* office, commencing as carrier boy. Twelve years ago he started the *Evening Advertiser* on a very small scale, and without any assistance. It is now one of the best and most influential journals in Ontario. Mr. Cameron is the principal writer for the *Advertiser*, but we believe has not accomplished any other than newspaper literary work, if we may except occasional magazine articles and a series of letters from the old world which appeared under the title of "Impressions of a Canadian."

Mr. J. G. Buchanan, the Secretary-Treasurer, has occupied the present position for three consecutive years. He is comparatively a young man, having entered on the printing business at twelve years of age. Born in Montreal, he came to Upper Canada and served his apprenticeship in the office of the Brampton *Times*. In 1866 he became local editor of the Hamilton *Spectator*; on resigning the position he took charge of the Port Hope *Mercury*, and has been on the staff of the Hamilton *Evening Times* since 1869.

ROUND THE WORLD.

SERBIA has raised a forced loan of \$2,400,000.

CHARLES DOUCET has been elected Permanent Secretary of the French Academy.

CAVALRY reinforcements have started from Spain for Cuba.

THE French Government will re-appoint a Vice-Consul at Boston.

Seven Communist refugees have been ordered to quit Germany.

A member of the Reichstag has been imprisoned for insulting Bismarck.

THE Italian Parliament has adjourned till the 25th of April.

THE truce granted to the King of Abyssinia has been broken.

THE French Chamber of Deputies has agreed to abolish the state of siege.

THE direct cable is again broken between Rye Beach and Torbay.

REPRESENTATIVES of England and France will, it is said, shortly meet to negotiate a new commercial treaty.

COUNT Von Arnim has been summoned to appear before the Imperial Court of Discipline at Potsdam on the 26th of April.

THE Income Tax in Great Britain is going to be raised 1d. on the pound, owing to the increased army and navy estimates.

THE Turkish Pacification council has issued a proclamation granting all refugees one month to return to their homes, after which the property of all absentees will be confiscated.

THE billiard match for the championship of the world was played at Paris last week, and was won by Maurice Vignaux, of Toulouse. His rival was Mr. William Sexton, of New York.