

but which are so difficult to describe or recall. Here is his diagnosis of one: "*All at once a conviction flashes through us that we have been in the same precise circumstances as at the present, once or many times before.*" Everyone was interested in this and especially the irrepressible John. "He knew all about it; he had just lighted a cheroot the other day, when a tremendous conviction all at once came over him that he had done just that same thing ever so many times before." "I looked severely at him," says the autocrat, "and his countenance immediately fell—*on the side towards me*, I cannot answer for the other, for he can wink and laugh with either half of his face without the other half knowing it."

It is difficult to extract samples of his wit; the best of it is a quiet vein running along through his conversation and not often displaying itself in outbursts. Here are a few bright sayings however. "Boston State House is the hub of the solar system, you couldn't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar." "The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town or city." Coming home from deer-shooting he "brought home one buck shot." "A visitor, indigenous to the region (country), looking pensively at the figure (a statuette of Cupid) asked the lady of the house if that was a statoo of her deceased infant? What a delicious, though somewhat voluminous biography, social, educational, and aesthetic, in that brief question!" In the opening number of a new volume of the monthly he greets his readers thus. "The Atlantic obeys the moon, and its luniversity has come around again."

The feature of Holmes' writings is his power of illustrating by analogies. He thinks in figures; the most abstract thoughts are embodied in familiar concrete examples, and every idea is coupled with a counterpart. The whole book would not be badly estimated as a collection of beautiful analogies. A few extracts will best convey an idea of this aptness of his. He speaks of a model club he has in mind as "strung like a harp with about a dozen ringing intelligences," and mentions among the delights of a dinner there "that

carnival-shower of questions and replies and comments, large axioms bowled over the mahogany like bomb-shells from professional mortars, and explosive wit dropping its trains of many colored fire, and the mischief making rain of bon-bons pelting everybody that shows himself." Another—"If I had not force enough to project a principle full in the face of the half-dozen most obvious facts which seem to contradict it, I would think only in single file from this day forward." A dull speaker with a lively listener is compared to a crow with a king-bird after him, flying all around him and occasionally plucking a feather until the victim drops down exhausted. Such expressions as "narrow streaks of specialized knowledge," "speckled globes of falsehood," and "white angular blocks of truth" are characteristic of his pictorial language.

There are some men who, by dint of natural delicacy of mind and constant contact with well trained intellects acquire such a delicate sensibility that they can detect the slightest unevenness of thought. Holmes was one of them. He was a most accomplished conversationalist and had this keen discernment in a high degree; *verbi gratia*, "scientific knowledge," says he, "even in the most modest persons has mingled with it a something which partakes of insolence. Absolute, peremptory facts are bullies, and those who keep company with them are apt to get a bullying habit of mind,—not of manners perhaps." "Who does not know fellows that always have an ill conditional fact or two which they lead after them into decent company like so many bulldogs, ready to let them slip at every ingenious suggestion or pleasant fancy," and he continues to justify himself by an illustration that entirely acquits him of cowardice. "Because bread is good. . . . shall you thrust a crumb into my wind-pipe when I am talking? Do not these muscles of mine represent a hundred loaves of bread? and is not my thought the abstract of ten thousand of these crumbs of truth with which you would choke off my speech?"

Holmes is known as a poet quite as much as a humorist and a very finished poet at that. His verse is not voluminous but it has an exquisite finish and smooth-