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On Feeling Superior

[By Bernard McEvoy]

To feel superior is much easier than actually to *be* superior. The first, accordingly, is much more prevalent than the second. Where there is one man or woman who could pass the tests of an acknowledged superiority, there are a thousand who derive much gratification from a merely imaginary elevation above their neighbours.

It is evident, therefore, that there exists a large fund of this pleasant feeling without any solid foundation. It may be compared to the apparently large resources—on paper—of certain limited liability companies, the shareholders of which live in a fool's paradise of fancied riches.

It is well known to those who take the trouble to observe current human nature, that some people are born with a tendency to indulge this feeling of superiority; or if they are not born with it they soon develop it. Sometimes this tendency is sporadic in families—coming out only once or twice in half a century. In other cases it seems to be inbred and essential, as much to be expected as a certain shape of nose. Fathers and mothers possess it, and their children inherit it. It may be further observed that it is frequently introduced on the distaff side of the house. Alliance with an ambitious and conceited woman has been known to change the quality of a family for generations. A mother who believes in her own divine right of superiority, and has more than the normal amount of stiffness in her spinal column, is altogether likely to induce in her offspring a sort of conviction that they are not as other children. Almost from their birth they are differentiated in their own estimation from those around them, and their faith in their own supposed quality is sometimes comic, though oftener it is pathetic.

Where there is a tendency to self-exaltation, very small circumstances and considerations will serve as foundation and cause for its development. Those who have ancestors in any degree illustrious or noted, are in this regard, most favourably placed. There is no need for them to do more than judiciously introduce the fact on suitable