

SOMETHING MORE ABOUT "AN."

The Cynic's correspondent, "Unit," may feel interested in the following quotation. It is from a letter written by David Hume to William Robertson, which contains some familiar criticisms on his style. The whole letter may be found at p. 65 of Dugald Stewart's "Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson, D.D."

"What a fancy is this you have taken of saying always '*an hand, an heart, an head?*' Have you *an ear?* Do you not know that this (n) is added before vowels to prevent the cacophony, and ought never to take place before (h), when that letter is sounded? Thus I should say, *a history*, and *an historian*; and so would you too, if you had any sense. But you tell me that Swift does otherwise. To be sure, there is no reply to that; and we must swallow your *hath* too upon the same authority! I will see you d—d sooner. But I will endeavour to keep my temper."

Not the least remarkable point of this letter is the fact that Hume uses the irreverent d—d without any apology to the Reverend D.D.

OUR SICK CONTRIBUTOR'S FELLOW BOARDERS.

BOARDER NO. 5.—THE OLD LADY'S GRAND-DAUGHTER.

She is a boarder now. She has come home for the holidays. She is seventeen years of age, and decidedly pretty,—that is to say, she would be pretty, if she would wear her hair simply, and without that huge cricket-ball of a *chignon*. She dresses in the extreme of fashion, with Lilliputian hat and Grecian bend, and divides herself into melon-shaped slices by means of puffed ribbons and other bobbety-bobbeties, (vide *Le Follet* for an explanation of this term). Her personal charms are much marred by a voice which has something between the sound of a sledge-hammer and the whistle of a locomotive. Her grandmother scolds her for this, but she informs her aged relative that Mrs. ——— (that is, the schoolmistress) always commends girls for "speaking out." Her elocution is curious. She always emphasizes her little words so as to make them the most important in the sentence. Thus—

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

On my once venturing to remonstrate, gently, with her on this subject, I was snubbed and triumphantly informed that in reading, Mrs. ——— liked to hear all words pronounced distinctly, and never allowed girls to mumble monosyllables. This young lady talks Yankee. She says they all do at school. There are several Yankee girls there, and to talk like them is "such fun." She *guessties* in every third sentence. She *fixes* her bonnet. She *lassus* her scissors, and complains of her music being *tossed*. Whatever she approves of is characterized as *real nice*; what she dislikes is either *dreadful* or *awful bad*. "Grammar," she says, "is all very well to learn, but who cares about it when talking." She has, seemingly, but little respect for her grandmother, or, indeed, for old age in any shape. Such respect seems to her rather an exploded idea. Her two great pursuits in life are dress and flirtation. She buys all her own dresses, but can scarcely hem a pocket-handkerchief. She delights in knowing the price of everything in the dry goods line. She has no compunction about walking into a store, having a variety of goods shewn her, and, after declaring them all to be "awful dear," walking out without buying anything. She never intended otherwise. She only wanted to see the new summer goods and enquire the price before victimising grandmother. Young gentlemen have commenced to call upon her, to the great horror of the old lady, who sits in the room with her back up, is much in the way, and means to be so. "Miss" abhors the quiet ways of our house. The young men are all "trouts," (that is the last new word from Mrs. ———'s establishment). She makes an exception in favor of the "athlete," who is rather *nice*. He is teaching her to play at Lacrosse, and it is proposed by them to get up Croquet in the yard.

To judge by the number of prizes brought home, this young lady must have highly distinguished herself. These prizes are elaborately-bound volumes,—chiefly of poetry. They are not read, and never will be, but do very well for a centre-table. I have been rather curious to find out what she has learnt at Mrs. ———'s. Certainly not even the rudiments of any science. She does not know what the degrees on the thermometer mean. She speaks French, or what is intended for French, with an accent something between that of a St. Jerome *habitant* and an Irish servant girl. She certainly writes rather a pretty hand, but her spelling is anything but irreproachable. With regard to accomplishments, she excels in dancing—at least so I am told. Her movements are anything

but graceful, though eminently gymnastic. Her walk in the street is that of a duck in long grass, and she carries her body as though suffering from a spinal affection. She rears her parasol directly in front of her nose, to the imminent danger of the eyes of the public. She is rather proud of her musical accomplishments, having learnt music for seven years. What is the result? She can play three or four pieces with thunder-and-lightning variations in the received acrobatic style of execution. She can play a little dance music in most atrocious time. Of the theory of music she knows nothing. She says that Mrs. ——— says that thorough bass is quite unnecessary for a girl. She has even forgotten her gamut—that is, if she ever knew it. Ask her to strike the chord of A. minor, and she won't know what you mean. She cannot transpose the simplest piece of music one note above or below, to save her life. Her singing voice is allied to her speaking one. It is an impure soprano of most unpleasant compass. Her favorite songs are Italian, of which language she does not understand a single word, but is taught to pronounce it by Mrs. ———. I should say that even this lady's accent cannot be of the purest Tuscan. Why, among songs, has Ardit's "Bacio" been so long in vogue among young ladies? Can it be the subject? I own that I was rather surprised, not to say shocked, to hear, the other day, our young lady yelling "Sulla labbra, sulla labbra," with such astonishing energy. Her learning of singing seems to comprise the ill-learning of a few songs. The other day, she attempted the chromatic scale up and down, with a most ignominious result. She sometimes plays at doing a little ornamental needle work. A certain music-stool cover, has, I am credibly informed, been in hand for more than four years. But her proudest accomplishment is drawing. Her drawing-book is a collection of classical heads with helmets on, landscapes with clouds like mountains, and trees like clouds, besides a series of wonderful castles on the banks of lakes, on the tranquil bosoms of which repose white swans, black gondolas, and barges containing humanity and guitars. All these productions bear evident traces of having been touched up with no sparing hand by the drawing-master. I, one day, asked the young lady if she ever sketched from nature? She said, "sometimes, but copies were so much *nicer*." Once, to please grandmother, she consented to take the portrait of Thomas, the cat. This was to have been a great effort. She borrowed a box of "paints," as she called them, from the scientific boarder, and has not yet returned them, to the great disgust of that precise gentleman. After three hours' labor, she produced a curious, heraldic-looking animal,—half-pig and half-alligator. She tore this up in a pet. I can forgive her for this. Thomas is a provoking cat. Whenever he is wanted to lie down quietly, he will insist upon standing bolt upright and elevating his back and tail. The young lady's disposition is lively. Her humor is malicious. It is especially directed against her own sex. Her observation is acute. She sees evil in every one but herself.

Since making the acquaintance of this "girl of the period," I have resolved not to send my niece, of whom I am guardian, to a fashionable finishing school.

A VOICE FROM THE COUNTRY.

LITTLE PEDDLINGTON, (Sherbrooke,) June 25, 1869.

DEAR DIOGE-KNEES,—

Kneeling upon *two knees* is a *knee*-cessity in religious worship. The sooner this plain truth is known to the vulgar crowd the better.

A very naughty man named Fontaine attended church in this town on Sunday, the 13th instant, and not having the fear of the parish beadle before his eyes, he manifested the "knee-plus ultra" of hostility to the ancient and time-honored usage of bending both knees at the elevation of the host! Sad to relate, at this sacred moment this "wickedest man," (with *two knees*, mind you,) was observed by Ambrose Couture, the church constable, to be kneeling upon *only one of them*! Had he lost one knee in the cause of the church—in the Papal Zouaves, for instance—he might have been allowed to kneel, *not on that one*, but upon the *other one*. Even a stiff knee, or a wooden leg, might be an excuse for a breach of the Law of Genuflexions. Couture mildly expostulated with Fontaine upon the heinousness of his offence, but Fontaine "couldn't see it." In his blindness he thought one knee equal to two: emergency; but Couture, single-handed, surrounded and captured the delinquent—knee caps and all—and, in the absence of an Inquisition, appealed to the civil law, before two of our magistrates! So far, well; but alas for the insufficiency of this same civil law! Fontaine, instead of having both knees cut off, and being obliged to worship on his stumps, was allowed to go *un-a-kneeled*, and unpunished.

"Oh, Canada! mon pays, mes amours!"

What a fall was there my countrymen! Couture, however, is a *brick*! He has done his duty; and if the law did not back him up, all that can be said is, more shame for the law—and *more power to Couture's elbow*!

Yours truly,

NEAL DOW-N.