

some of "them fellows," as I have picked up, of late—thanks to an enforced vacation, *i. e.*, to a sojourn in *Bohemia Howells*.

Yes! he is one of *them*. Not so *very* long ago I consigned him to the ranks of mush-room scribblers—but that was premature, and I was *young then*. It is kind o' dismal to have to take one's opinions out of the jeweller's cotton one has wrapped them in, to rub off the prejudice. Yet, I've done it, and feel a weak inclination to call upon the mountains "to clap their hands" in token of appreciation; but mountains are never effusive out of Rhetoric—and so, I *don't*; but I *do* admit Howells gives us the popular idea of a New England life, if not the real thing; we've always clamored for "black hair cloth sofas," "air tight stoves" "doughnuts," etc. Howells has pampered us all; after all, the idea of a thing is more interesting than the thing itself—!!—He is truer to the New England *menu* than he is to the New England female. One never dreams of calling his "beans" or "doughnuts" into question, they are ideally real, or really ideal, (which is it?) But! the women! They are not "ghouls," not exactly—only dress makers models. His "*Marcias*" are possible, but his "*Lurellas*" and "*Imogenes*"! Well! I'd know"! His men are better.

"*Mr. Erwin*" is excellent; an Englishman is too elephantine—in thought as well as action, to float gracefully into an extreme either of appreciation or prejudice. Nevertheless, *Mr. Erwin* is delicious "all at sea" though he is, with his outlandish Americanisms. I have read "*Silas Lapham*," and though I can't gush over him nor his makers, it ought to be read. I wish Howells had not such an awfully good opinion of himself. Everybody knows that he would not have tried to show the world *Dickens* didn't know how to write, if he, Howells, didn't think so much of his own capacity, but see here I'm waxing *Inquisitorial* and that's not my nature—"live and let live" is my motto—so....who next? Well in the order of time *Cable* comes next. In mean I read him after Howells, but in the order of ad-

miration—as well as in alphabetical order C precedes H—by a long run. It's not an age since I read "*Dr. Sevier*" and put him away in the snugest corner of my heart's cupola. "*Mrs. Ristofalo*" and "*Mike*," an the "*Twins*," and "*Narcisse*," (what an oasis he is), and the "*Stronghearted John*" and "*Mary Richling*" and all the rest, to say nothing of the interesting people related to the "*Grandissimes*"! What finer prose epic than the story of "*Bras Coupe*"? These must all be securely locked up with a goodly company of other folk. . . . Poor John Richling, a failure in one sense, that "*Dr. Sevier*" might be a success, I sometimes fancy that people, in their relation to one another, are like the lights and shadows in crayon sketch—one serves to bring the other out. How many Richlings there are! People who never master the science of life until the "old, old story, *Death*, has made it a "lost art."

Holmes. What about him? Oh, "an everlasting lot." So, very little here. That's my better sense's conclusion. His genial, quizzical face smiles on me, as I scribble, from the first page of the "*Autocrat*"—smiles, but at the same time says "beware! no foolin' with me, you young sprig;" I like his face, "crisp and fine, like a tight little grape-skin, full of wit instead of wine"—he has always seemed to me not *Oliver*, but a condensation of "*Little Boston*"—the model of all virtues;" yea, even the "woman in Bombazine," and especially the "young man" the boarders called "*John*." What becomes of the metaphysical diagnosis *Holmes* makes of the young *unscquelchable John*?—the three-ply John?—and which of all is the "Simon-pure" *John*? But this begins to have a mental arithmetic twang. Sometime, when "the melancholy days have come," and my quill gets sobered down, I may come down on this genial "autocrat" poet," "professor," etc., and say some certain hard things, which, as an orthodox Christian, I'm bound to say. But for to-day, let's be easy on him.

Emerson. Shall I venture on this sage in this mood? Guess not. He requires solemnly severe handling, and I'm in *Bohemia*, *ergo*. Suffice it to say, for the