

pleasantly upon paper, when the writer can take his own time for thought and correction, is not always found in conjunction with that snap-shot readiness which his its mark instinctively, and with fair accuracy, at the moment. There may be here and there an author of whom it might be said, as of Goldsmith, that

"He wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll."

On the other hand, we must consider from what quarter the charge comes. In answer to the cynical proverb that no man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, it was observed with much fairness that the fault might quite as likely be the valet's as the hero's. So, before we set down genius as a dull companion, we must consider what we have a right to expect from it in that character. The child who is shown the Queen will be terribly disappointed to see a lady plainly dressed in black; the young imagination misses the crown, the orb, and the sceptre. There are unreasonable people, no doubt, who expect to have an author always put on his war paint, and talk in character, as it were: as Mrs. Siddons terrified the footboy by asking in her deepest tragedy tones for "beer." Lord Macaulay probably never delivered orally a supplementary chapter of the History of England after dinner, and would have been extremely tiresome if he had. Mr. Dickens would likely object to doing a little Pickwick in a conversational form. Many writers who contribute, in their proper place, to the entertainment of the public, might very fairly shrink, out of natural dignity and delicacy, from anything like showing off in the ordinary intercourse of society. The conversation of clever people, whether their powers have ever been tested in print or not, is likely to be more or less interesting to clever people; it does not always follow that they should be appreciated by stupid ones. One may have heard the sneer that they keep their good things for their books. In a very limited sense, and by no means the sense intended, this may be true. Most literary performances which are worth anything are the result of considerably more thought and pains, and go through a longer process of mental correction and revision, than careless readers are inclined to believe. The two hundred lines an hour which Lucilius wrote standing on one foot were, in all probability, what might be expected—very lame affairs. Much which passes for rather brilliant conversation when we hear it, or take part in it, might have a very different effect if we had to read a proof-sheet of it. It is extremely probable that an author's best things *will* be found in his book rather than in his conversation. Miss Austen in past days, Mr. Lever and Mr. Trollope in the present, contrive to make their characters talk very cleverly indeed. Does any one suppose that they had nothing more to do than to sit down and take notes of what their clever friends said in actual life?

Books have been written on what their writers are pleased to call, "The Art of Conversation." But whether it is an art at all, in the sense of being subject to any rules, or attainable by any discipline of teaching, is much more than doubtful. In the same way there was supposed to be an art of poetry: the aspirant was to be fitted out with a dictionary of synonymes, and another of rhymes, and, by their help, was to turn out unexceptional verse. Judging from what has before now been printed as poetry, this creed must have found its proselytes. But the instances are probably rare in which talk has formed any subject of study, whether such an addition to our social education would be an improvement or not. Some of the best talkers, according to their lights, will be found among the uneducated classes, by any one who will be at the pains to draw them out. The power of telling a story well, with all due embellishment of tone and gesture—including such a disguise of the plain prosaic truth as all good story-tellers have a licence for—belongs to some of this class in perfection. Shrewd remarks upon things and persons, founded very often upon a nice discrimination of character; satire, keen if not refined; often very delicate flattery (if flattery be not too harsh a word for what is much more the real good-breeding than the smiling insincerities of higher life); and never, under any circumstances, those covert sneers under the mask of politeness,

of all social impertinences the most insufferable, which pass too often unrebuked, because to resent them involves almost an equal breach of good manners, and which are the exclusive accomplishments of the gentler sex. If some of the poor had only their Boswells, what amusing volumes might take the place of some of our tedious modern biographies! But these good talkers in humble life are fast dying out. They exist chiefly among the generation who knew not Her Majesty's School Inspectors—who read the book of life much more readily than their prime's, and understood the world within the limits of their own experience none the worse because they never knew which hemisphere they lived in. Learning may have done much for the village young ladies who press in Standard VI., but at least it has not made them pleasanter to talk to than their grandmothers. Possibly their little knowledge embarrasses them. They are conscious that their natural talk will hardly bear strict grammatical analysis, and they despair, on the other hand, of reaching the exalted style of dialogue which they find in the pages of their favourite penny novelist. The consequence is an awkward affectation, which is anything but an improvement on the rough and ready converse of the more illiterate poor. One cannot help feeling that there is much truth in the quaint protest of a pleasant writer who has little sympathy with modern cultivation—"If we had as many readers as we have books, what a precious dull lot we should be!"

BLACKWOOD.

(To be continued.)

Blind People.

It is a mistake, although a very common one, to suppose that the loss of sight is necessarily, or usually, accompanied by an atoning strength or acuteness of the other senses. In individual instances blind persons have shown themselves remarkable for what they could do by touch, hearing, and taste; but this is the result of the special training of those senses, coupled with a developed power of making quickly, and depending on, intellectual inferences from the impressions which the unimpaired senses communicate; and not a gift accompanying blindness.

The men who have lost their right arms on the battle-fields of the civil war have been taught to write with their left so well that their penmanship has won praise and prizes. But they have not learned to write with the left hand any more easily than an unharmed man might do—they have not learned as easily; but they have had a motive in necessity. So the loss of sight weakens and depresses the powers that remain, diminishes the courage, obscures and enfeebles many of the fundamental ideas and conceptions of the mind, and deprives the sufferer of a most important aid in the development of the other senses. But notwithstanding this drawback, how wonderful is the quickness displayed by blind persons!

Such, for instance, as that of Blacklock, who was on the point of walking into a deep well, if the sound of his little dog's feet, pattering before him on the board by which half of it was covered, had not warned him of danger; of Saunderson, who touched an antiquarian coin with his tongue and was sure it wasn't Roman; and who knew that a certain lady had white teeth, because "for the last half hour she had done nothing but laugh;" of the Bokhara shopkeeper, described by Vambéry, who kept sixteen kinds of tea, and could tell them all apart by the touch (or was it by the taste?); of Stanley, who, unexpectedly addressed in Pall Mall with the question, in a feigned voice, from a gentleman who had been absent in Jamaica for twenty years, "How do you do, Mr. Stanley?" responded, after an instant's hesitation, "God bless me, Mr. Smith! how long have you been in England?" of Gough, the blind mathematician and naturalist of Kendal, who, when in his old age a rare plant was brought to him, examined it with the tip of his tongue, at once gave the correct name, and declared he had never seen but one specimen of it, and that was fifty years ago; of Wilson, the blind bell-ringer of Dumfries, who tripped up the steps to the belfry as quickly and