

in propitiating, and in our relations with whom we may feel that we have not made our own calling and election sure.

But inconsiderateness often takes a wider range than this, and the injunction, "Make the most of thy friends!" is frequently felt to have a more literal fulfilment. How irrepressibly, for instance, does the young literary aspirant follow us to our lair, and, when we have just settled down, as we thought, to an afternoon's uninterrupted work, beseech us to read over the poem or the essay he has written? With what ruthlessness, too, does his elderly maiden sister, with a portfolio of unpublished treasure, drop in upon us unwarily, and take up our time with the prolix narration of her intellectual strivings. Nor have we peace when both have gone, for the express or the postman rings, and a voluminous package of manuscript is shot at us, with an irresistible appeal to read and deliver literary judgment upon it, as if the world paid one to sit continuously *en banc* for the benefit of nascent authorship. Then there is the man whose misshapen imagination conceives that you have done him an injury, or that you have somehow stood in the way of his personal advancement. In vain you rack your brain trying to account for his pitiful animus, and succeed only in assuring yourself that you had long forgotten his soured and disappointed existence. But for this—to him the unpardonable sin—he stabs you in the dark, and in some hole-and-corner broadsheet pours out the venom of his small mind in lying print. This, however, is the inconsiderateness of the dastard, and with him and his kind we are glad to have no words.

Equally glad are we to have as few words with another plague of this boorish age—the anonymous letter-writer. His diabolical mode of attack is generally by means of a post-card, open to the gaze of every one who thinks it not dishonourable to read these so-called non-privileged communications. When you happen to have written some article which arrests attention, or, over your own signature, to have unburdened your soul in the newspapers on some subject you feel strongly about, then is the time to look out for the anonymous libeller, who calls you foul names, accuses you of being a mercenary hireling, and peremptorily and unqualifyingly consigns you to eternal infamy. "Turn author," said the poet Gray, "and straight-way you expose yourself to pit, boxes, and gallery: any cockcomb in the world may come in and hiss if he pleases; ay, and what is almost as bad, clap too, and you cannot hinder him." Only once in a while does your anonymous letter-writer condescend to reason with you, advance argument to confute your position, or endeavour to reclaim you from the supposed error of your ways. Still more seldom are you gratified at receiving a note of commendation and agreement, and never does it chance to come from an anonymous source. If that good fortune at any time befall you, it is a pleasing change from the calumny heaped upon you by the stalking pestilence circulated through the medium of the unsigned post-card. To strike back in the case of these dastardly stabs in the dark, is, of course, impossible; and all that is left you is to make unlimited draughts on your philosophic composure, and to take what comfort you can in quoting that remembered scrap of your Latin Delectus: *mens sibi conscia recti*.

Another of the insufferables, who takes no end of liberty with you, is the young person with the "Album of Mental Characteristics," whose thirst for knowledge is unslakeable, particularly in those facts with which album makers so ingeniously contrive to torture mankind, and above all, those who endeavour unostentatiously to live by their pen. Who does not know, who has not suffered from, this ghoul in literary society, who affects the intellectual calling, and, note book in hand, vindictively haunts those who pursue it? Nothing is sacred from his intrusiveness, as no cynicism avails to prevent him from plying you with his questions. "What"—he launches bravely forth—"are your mental characteristics as an author?" "Which part of the day do you devote to your work?" "Do you have to give much polish to what you have written, or do your thoughts flow freely in good literary form?" But who does not know the stock questions put to one who is accustomed to write for the press, and who has not experienced the weariness with which one turns from his work to fill up the irritating blanks and get rid of the torment? The serious aims of those who thus haunt one make the interruption the more intolerable. If now and then there were only a gleam of humour in the catchisings to vary the monotony, one could put up with the annoyance; but how rarely does humour make apology for impertinence? Why, for instance, should not these questions be differently constructed—say upon some model such as the following? "What effect have interruptions and a buzz of conversation upon your work?" "Do you take occasion to revise your manuscript when you are being interviewed, or only when the 'printer's devil' is waiting?" "Do you find your thoughts take a prose form after an altercation with your landlady?" "When 'a dun' is at the door, have you much difficulty in expressing your thoughts?" "Can you write spring poetry best during a snow storm?" "Have you to loosen your necktie and unbutton your shirt collar when you are indignantly replying to a critique upon your work in the newspapers?"

But if such idiocy is to be tolerated, why should not the interrogations be made to serve some ethical purpose? Why should not the questions be framed so as to evoke literary judgments, the circulation of which might benefit the community? How advantageous would it be, for instance, to procure and disseminate answers to the following questions? "In your opinion, what are the moral influences of political journalism? and which of the party organs supplies the best incentive to the intellectual life?" "Do you think 'boodle-contracts' and 'log-rolling' in the Legislature make for righteousness in the nation?" "Is there any moral objection to Riel's scaffold being made the Liberal ladder to power?" "What prospect is there of an early union between the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches, and which of these bodies is likely to exercise the greatest influence in the coming elections?" "Is it not written in the Book of Fate that all the members of the present Ontario Cabinet will die in the Roman

Catholic faith?" "Have you any doubt of the Dominion Premier being the Man of Sin?"

Our readers may be assured that we have far from exhausted the topic which we set out to illustrate, as general experience of "Social Solecisms" will doubtless abundantly testify. With one aggravated form of interruption—that of the placid book canvasser—we have not dealt, and for the reason that the subject is practically limitless, and is not to be handled unwarily. But we have got to the end of our allotted space, and to the much-enduring editor we ourselves must not be a living illustration of inconsiderateness, or exemplify in our person one of the nuisances we would strenuously seek to suppress.

G. MERCER ADAM.

SALVETTE AND BERNADON.

[Translated from the French of Alphonse Daudet.]

I.

It was Christmas Eve, in one of the largest cities of Bavaria. The streets were covered with snow; and in the confusion of the fog, the noise of the carriages and bells, the crowd gathered gaily about the cook-shops and open-air booths, in which there was quite a display of goods. Touching lightly the fancy shops wreathed with branches of holly and evergreens entirely laden with hoar-frost, the snow passed over them, and hung in festoons, like the shadows of the forest of Thuringen, being, as it were, a souvenir of Nature, in the fictitious life of winter. It grows dark. There, behind the gardens of the Consul, one can still see a ray of the setting sun, of a roseate hue, across the fog; and there is in the city such gaiety and so many preparations for the *fête*, that each light which illuminates the windows seems to hang before a Christmas-tree. The reason for this is that it is not an ordinary Christmas time. We are in the year 1870, and the birth of Christ is only a pretext to drink still more to the illustrious "Von der Than," and to celebrate the triumph of the brave warriors. Christmas! What a Christmas! The Jews of the lower town are even merry. There is old Augustus Cahn, who became dizzy in turning the corner of the Blue Grape. His ferret-like eyes were never so bright as to-night. His little bunch of brushwood never snapped about so cheerily. Inside his worn sleeve, and attached to the strings of his wallet, he fastened a little basket full to the top, covered with a brown napkin. The neck of a bottle protruded from one side, and a branch of holly covered all.

And now, at this time, when you see him walking so fast, with his basket on his arm, it is because the military hospital closes at five o'clock, and there are two Frenchmen waiting for him up there in that large, black house with the barred windows, where Christmas time has nothing to brighten its coming but the dim lights which are placed at the head of the beds of the dying.

II.

The names of these Frenchmen are Salvette and Bernadon. They belong to the infantry from Provence, and come from the same village; they enlisted in the same battalion, and were wounded by the same shell. Salvette, who is the stronger of the two, could get up and walk a few steps from his bed to the window. Bernadon did not get well so fast. In the dim curtains of his hospital-bed he seemed to grow thinner and more languishing from day to day, and, when he spoke of returning home, it was with the sad smile of the dying, in which there is more resignation than hope. To-day, however, he brightened up a little in thinking of that beautiful Christmas time, which, in Provence, resembles a great blaze of light in the middle of winter. He remembered coming out of church after midnight mass, the church decorated and lighted, the streets of the village black with people; then waiting up late around the table, the three traditional torches burning, and the pretty ceremony of the yule log that the grandfather carried about the house and sprinkled with boiled wine.

"Oh! my poor Salvette, what a sad Christmas time this is for you! If you only had enough money to buy a roll of white bread and a little wine! It would give me much pleasure to sprinkle the 'yule log' with you once more before I join the army again."

And in speaking of white bread and wine the invalid's eyes glistened. But how can it be managed? They have neither money nor watches. Salvette had a note for forty francs in the lining of his coat. Only he intended to keep this for the day when they should be liberated, to be spent at their first halting-place at an hotel in France. That money was sacred. He felt he must not touch it. Nevertheless, poor Bernadon was so ill! Who knows if he will ever be able to return home? And we might have a jolly Christmas time feasting together; and ought we not to profit by this chance?

Then, without saying a word, Salvette ripped the lining of his coat to get at the note; and when old Cahn came and made his usual round, after having a long discussion with him in a low tone, he slipped the square of paper into his hand. It was stiff and yellow, smelling of powder and stained with blood. From this time Salvette had a preoccupied air. He rubbed his hands together, and smiled to himself, when he looked at Bernadon. And now that it was dusk he was by the window with his head pressed against the glass, watching until he saw through the fog the man he was waiting for—old Augustus Cahn—who arrived all out of breath, with his little basket on his arm.

III.

It is the solemn hour of midnight, which all the clocks in the city are striking. It fell dismally on the night of the restless and wounded ones. The hospital is quiet, lighted only by the dim lamps suspended from the ceiling. Deep shadows hang over the beds and bare walls with perpetual