

*The Acadia Athenæum*

vin and John Knox ever smiled. How could they when they knew so many poor, little babes were in such uncomfortable quarters? Methinks they ought to have made war on motherdom. Age of Bronze, with thy ghostly, saturnine visage, away! Thou canst behold no resurrection. No promises ever came to thee from the sunlit skies. Even now the morning sun beats thy head with light, and makes thee give music like Egypt's Memnon.

Some men you meet who salute you with a smile, others are grave as if they made a serious business of it, (those who take no notice of you at all from their sombrous loftiness we leave out of the category.) Some (most frequently young ladies) meet you with lips unwreathed with such expressions as one might imagine adorned Apollo, the un-god when he flourished in the day spring of life. I have known men who set me in a perfect quandary of wonder and conjecture. Wonder if he ever condescends to kiss his wife? What a queer figure he would make rocking the baby to sleep! And then imagination would endeavor to depicture such a scene, vainly trying to rid the dignified hero of the idea of unfitness which clings to him in such common-place emotions.

My pater-familias was a man who appreciated a good joke. He didn't carry the thing to excess but he wasn't afraid to laugh articulately at times. He had one of the pleasantest smiles when he met a friend I ever saw. How often I've vainly practised that inimitable smile before the glass and given it up in despair! How natural he looked with two of his promising arrows (he had his quiver well filled) laid over his knees! No exotic was he transplanted from his Plato to the fireside. I confess I love a man in whose soul the springs of emotion are active; whose pulse of passion has not declined to a sickly throb, in whom lives the joyance of youth side by side with the mellow fruit of age; who fires and glows at times with the old spontaneity. But the man whose *animalism* (if I may use the term) has gone to seed who has evaporated into an attenuated intellectuality, or who has bloated out into a tearful, hypochondriacal snivelling moralist, let him be relegated to the shadows of the pyramids fitting abode for mummies, or to the middle ages, the only peculiar garden for the growth of such superstitious plants. It

is a significant fact that man is the only animal who laughs. Even the monkey, so very, very near to the human species, can muster no more than a sardonic grin, (if that be not libel on monkeydom.) Your true laugh is as ebullient as the song of birds and speaks of innocency. The great head and type of our ideal humanity has no recorded smile. But he did many things which were unwritten. It is a gratuitous and pathetic folly to think the son of man never smiled on a human friend. It belongs to other dark winged myths of the East. There is a time for mourning, but there is a time likewise for laughter, for joy, merciful equipoise of nature. Night endureth not always; the morning radiant and ruddy with youth, hurls the hoary anarchy from his throne, while the light dances along the dawn. The virtues flourish bravely beneath smiling skies; pleasance is the sunlight of the soul.

President Lincoln, in the midst of the most momentous state-transactions would shock his Secretary of State by suddenly taking up "Artemus Ward" and indulging in a most irreverent laugh. Charles Lamb would astonish his company by turning some serious thought into an occasion for a jest. The only weapon with which you can beat back care and vexation, and heavy grief is oftentimes that which compels nature to admit the guest into the draped presence chamber who trips on the light fantastic toe, and cracks his quips and wreaths the wanton smile. I bless thee Shakespere for thy humanity. I could sooner dispense with the stately "Paradise Lost," than thy inimitable Falstaff. How often have I roared with the merry roystering crew, Bardolph, Nym, and the Merry Prince Hal, up in the old tavern of Eastcheap. How oft have I been edified by the sallies of thy comedy-kings and thy tragedy—fools! How have smiles and tears alternated on my face as I have lived with the broken-hearted Lear, moaned over his Cordelia, and have felt the tickling fingers of a king's jester!

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

Thou too Sydney Smith, with thy never-to-be-forgotten *bon-mots*, thy shafts of wit, flung at red heat—mirthful but genial; couldst dispense the bread of life to souls, and the bread of enjoyment to the circle of thy friends.