

you that they were all regular non-entities without an idea in their heads !” And then he shook my arm nearly off.

“Do you know,” I said to him, “that you make me feel quite proud, for I perceive by your warmth of manner that I am an exception, the one you were perhaps expecting to ———”

“Ah yes, my dear friend,” he broke in, without allowing me to finish my sentence, “that is the only witty thing that I have heard this morning.” And he crossed the street to speak to a client on his way to Court, who was doubtless a twelfth non-entity !

“Well,” thought I to myself, “it seems to me that it cannot be a very difficult matter to be witty if there is really so much wit in what I have just said. I must certainly be well stored with that commodity, and yet I had never even suspected it.”

Quite proud of my discovery, and repeating to myself that I was a far wittier man than any of my friend’s eleven non-entities, I hurried to the stationer’s shop, and buying a ream of foolscap paper, set to work.

I am writing for my own amusement, at the risk of wearying the reader who may have the patience to read this volume ; but as I am of a compassionate nature, I have one excellent piece of advice to give to the said reader, which is to throw aside this unlucky book without taking the trouble to criticise it. It would be giving it too much importance, and besides it would be a useless task for a *bonâ fide* critic, inasmuch as, unlike the old archbishop of Grenada that Gil Blas speaks of as so touchy about his homilies, I am a very easy-going person, and instead of saying to the said critic, “I wish you all sorts of good fortune and better taste,” I should frankly admit that there were plenty of faults in my book, and that I was quite aware of the fact.

As to the ill-natured critic, it would be sheer loss of time for him to attack me, as he would be unable to provoke me to any discussion. I warn him before-