

the rascal, and stationed him in the hall with pencil and paper, giving him strict directions to take down those words and phrases to which I would call attention by a cough or slight tap upon the table. I then returned to the parlor, with somewhat of a guilty feeling, I must confess; and, from the object I had in conversing, it has since been a matter of doubt to me as to what impression my conduct made upon our guests. It taxed my ingenuity to the utmost to keep up the coughing and tapping with such a careless and natural air as not to draw particular attention to my conduct. Then, after running the risk of being styled a fool by these ladies and awakening their disgust, imagine my mortification to find, after their departure, that Charlie, with a desire to play me a trick, early abandoned his post and allowed me to grunt and pound away for nearly half an hour to no purpose.

I would like to be able for the benefit of those less favored, yet ambitious persons, who, among other desires, are ever anxious to make valuable additions to their vocabulary, to reproduce all the conversation embodying expressive words and phrases; but since my memory does not enable me to do this, I will give all I can in their context, as in no other way is it possible to obtain an exact and satisfactory notion of what words mean.

The weather was of course the first topic discussed. For several days it had been unusually fine, and after this manner I then expressed it; but Miss Bessie, the elder, eclipsed my trite remark by saying that it was "just stunning weather," which Katie corroborated by the use of the epithet "boss." I was at that time, and in fact am still, unable, though possessing some genius for discerning fine shades of difference in words, to grasp the subtle distinction between several of these approximate synonyms. On passing from the weather to the general health, occasion was given to speak of Dr. Haw who had recently begun the practice of medicine in the village, or "stuck out his shingle," as one of our visitors put it. For the new physician they seemed to have contracted a dislike—at least I so construed such remarks as

"Laws! I can't stomach the saphead." And since individuals had been introduced as the subject of remark the ladies displayed an inclination to take a wider range on this than on most topics; and it was soon manifest that their vocabulary was especially suited to conversation of this character. The younger, whose likes and dislikes were clearly defined, in speaking of one young gentleman, expressed the opinion that he had "too much brass," and too easily "got his back up;" while in contrast another was a "sheepish puke," and "daft soft." Both agreed in calling Jim Jones a "jolly good fellow," with whom they were "very thick;" and, by the way, they just "fell in with him," coming down, with an "awfully smashing, spick-span-bran-new team," and nothing would do but he must "haul up" and give them his "paw." His cousin Nell, also, they considered "a buster," upon whom that "cheeky hulk" of a lawyer was "spooney," but a "bitter pill" awaited him in the disappointment of getting any "tin" for she wasn't worth a "rap." Bill Smith, who is "no slouch" of a fellow, was "running" Alice Perkins, who is "a whole team," and has "the stamps," and "by a long chalk" "takes the shine off of" that "cranky" cousin of hers from town who is "no great shakes," and anyway has "too much chin music." Several persons being made the subjects of unfavorable remarks about this time, I endeavored by strategy to give the conversation a more pleasing turn, but in this I miserably failed. It was like trying to stop a runaway horse only to be knocked down and run over. I have invariably found it to be the case that those who have the most to say derogatory to the characters of others are themselves the fittest victims for the merciless lash. The more fully one realizes his own imperfections the more guarded he will be in his remarks about others—but this is a digression, or, in modern English, "only a side show;" therefore, to use a favorite expression of a learned friend, "I must haul in my horns." While I have stepped aside for the sake of striking a blow at an evil as prevalent as it is abominable, let it not be supposed for a moment that I condemn the language itself, but rather