

# THE VARSITY

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## IN A DRAWING-ROOM—THE DIFFERENCE.

As you speak of men,—and living,—and books  
With quick sharp words and a wit like flame,  
I think of another face and voice,  
From heart to lip, springs another name.

I think of a little white-faced girl,  
Not the great grand woman you bid to be,  
Who is waiting afar in her quiet home  
Till love-harvest ripen for her and for me.

Mayhap she never could think your thoughts,  
As they flash from a mind electric keen ;  
But her voice, when she speaks, is clear and low  
With room for sweet silences in between :

And then I can look at her pure curved face,  
And the lids down dropt over hazel eyes,  
And the thoughtful pout of the tender lips  
Where the wavering shadow flits and flies.

I am glad I can leave *you* and straight forget  
Your face and your words so fast and free.  
How could there be more than one sweet girl  
In this great round world for me?

BOHÉMIEN.

“WE.”

That journalism is now recognized as worthy of a place amongst the regular professions is a fact that must be admitted. The name given to it—“The Fourth Estate”—plainly shows the importance attached to it by the public. It is customary to talk of the immense power of the press as an educator, and as a powerful factor in modern civilization. But few ever stop to think by whom the power is wielded. The individuals who wield this enormous power are usually hidden behind the impenetrable mask of anonymity. The editorial “We” is rarely associated with a personality, or in other words, “localized.” And there are good and sufficient reasons for the retention of the editorial mask. It would assuredly weaken the effect upon the public mind if the opinions of a powerful paper were always credited to an individual; if, instead of “*The Thunderer*” thinks so and so, people were to say, “John Smith” thinks so and so. For, although “John Smith” may be an estimable and capable gentleman, yet, for many reasons, his *ipse dixit* would not produce such an influence upon the public mind as would the very same opinions when clothed with all the dignity and prestige with which the substitution of

“We” for “I” invests the utterances of a public journal. If “John Smith” were to sign with his name all the articles which go forth with the editorial stamp upon them, he would be dubbed a crank and a bore inside of a week, though these same editorial utterances may be “John Smith’s” work for all that. Having granted, then, the relative force and power of the editorial utterances of *The Thunderer* as compared with the opinions of “John Smith,” it must be granted that a very great responsibility attaches to the writer who, under the cover of the editorial barricade, produces such wonderful effects; and that it is most important that the editorial or leader writer should be a man possessed of the most varied attainments and general culture possible, unless he simply chooses to occupy the position of a sort of literary photographer, content to picture merely the passing show, and either unable or unwilling to lead public opinion and to direct, to some extent, the course of human affairs, ever upward and onward.

But, at the same time, this must be said in favour of our sometimes much abused friend “John Smith.” He is, in the majority of cases, simply an “accessory after the fact;” simply the active agent who gives expression, in his own particular way, to the opinions of those who are *particeps criminis* with him; in other words, who back and support him. And so the editorial “We” often does denote a plurality of control, whilst at the same time expressing unanimity—perhaps, sometimes, singularity of opinion. As has been said previously, the average “John Smith” should be possessed of a high degree of culture and be a person of varied attainments. To this must unquestionably be added sensitiveness, fine feeling, and true gentlemanliness, if this latter word be admissible. Doubtless readers will smile when they think of the average editor as being possessed of sensitiveness, fine feeling, and gentlemanly character, and here perhaps the reader will unconsciously dissociate the editor in general from the specific one which occurs most readily to the mind, and thus again our reader will do our friend “Smith” an injustice. For may not even the specific “John Smith” of the reader’s own acquaintance carry, as Will Carleton says, “a gentleman’s feelings under a rhinoceros hide?” Most probably he does; but still it is to be feared that “John Smith” in general is a very ordinary person, possessed of talents of the average kind, and gifted with a facile pen and no very alert conscience or sensitive feelings. But “John Smith” is capable of improvement. Surely it will not be allowed that in “John Smith’s” case evolution does, and always must, take a retrograde direction! Surely to say so were pessimism of the worst kind! No; there are influences even now at work which cannot but affect “John Smith” for the better, and give an upward tendency both to him and his work. And these are nothing more or less than the growth of independence in journalism, and the relatively higher class from which the ranks of journalism are now being recruited. “John Smith” now serves Party and the Caucus—the accolade of which is not the Queen’s Shilling—but a debased and discredited coinage; his bugle call is the shibboleth of his leader, and his conscience is anybody’s but his own. But the dawn of better days already is gilding the mountains, verdant with hope and bright with promise, and “John Smith” is even now preparing to welcome the day-star, the forerunner of the coming of the great Sun that shall herald his emancipation, and proclaim a glorious change of heart, if not of name. And the new day cannot dawn too soon.

TRISTRAM.