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Poetry.

WHAT WILL IT BRING?

ONLY a grain, a single grain,
Let fall by a childish hand;
Years pass, and we see a field of corn,
Instead of a barren land.
A single grain is a little thing,
What did it bring?

And so to-day, of the seed of truth,
We may plant a single grain;
'Twill multiply through coming years
Of sun, and wind, and rain.
A single grain! 'tis a little thing;
What will it bring?

Watch well thy sowing, for harvest-time
Must surely come at last,
And naught can change it for good or ill
When sowing-time is past:
Watch well the seed thou art dropping in!
What will it bring?

Essays.

CONVERSATION.

If there is any pleasure in life that is always and everywhere attainable, that is profitable, yet inexhaustible, and that is quietly, perhaps imperceptibly, fascinating,—it is the pleasure to be derived from the interchange of thought in conversation. It is a universal pleasure, for man is a rational animal capable of thought and language, and there are its essential elements; it is inexhaustible pleasure, for subjects of thought are inexhaustible; and it is entertaining just in proportion as our interest and attention are enlisted.

“Talking,” says Oliver Wendell Holmes, “is one of the fine arts, the noblest, the most important, and the most difficult.” The venerable American philosopher and talker never gave utterance to a truer sentiment. Talking is one of the fine arts, and withal, the most important and most difficult. Other arts we might possibly dis-

pense with, but, abolish the interchange of thought, and ultimately thought becomes extinct, and life without thought is a living death. Again, each other branch of the fine arts, to be brought to perfection, needs not the assistant knowledge of any other, but is, as it were, self-contained. To write poetry does not demand an acquaintance with scripture, to paint does not require familiarity with music; but to converse, and to converse well, demands a knowledge broader than them all, a knowledge inclusive of them all.

Like other arts, this art of conversation is capable of the highest perfection, but unlike them, agreeably puts up with the day of small things. The greater the genius, the broader the information, the keener the wit and logic brought into its service, the nobler will be the thought and the grander its expression. Yet, not in this lies the supremacy of the art, for the great and learned are but few in this world; they are like scattered beacons that tower aloft in solitary grandeur, far above and beyond the flickering, flaring rushlights that throng the banks of the rapid river of Time. No, all may indulge in this art, all may taste of the pleasure it gives, and the humblest intellect, though it may never attain anything like the proficiency of a Macaulay or a Johnson, may still be the centre of some smaller circle, and illumine with a steady though a feebler ray, a diminutive sphere of its own.

There is one point, however, in which conversation falls behind the other arts, and to fame-seekers it might prove an important point; it speaks only to one generation, it is not immortal. The efforts of the great art-geniuses will always remain, treasured up by admiring fellow men. The creations of Angelo, Raphael and Reubens will live and speak to reverent, awe-stricken gazers just as they spoke to the multitudes in long years gone by. The soul-stirring strains of Haydn, Handel, Mendelssohn, lingering now in the ears of mankind, will be wafted down