

what monotonous, for it has nothing to do but grow and twirl its feelers, float in the tide, or fold itself up on its foot-stalk when that tide has receded, for months and years together. Now, would it not be very dismal to be transformed into a zoophyte? Would it not be an awful punishment, with your human soul still in you, to be anchored to a rock, able to do nothing but spin about your arms or fold them up again; and knowing no variety, except when the receding ocean left you in the daylight, or the returning waters plunged you into the green depths again, or the sweeping tide brought you the prize of a young periwinkle or an invisible star-fish?

But what better is the life you are spontaneously leading? What greater variety marks your existence, than chequers the life of the sea-anemone? Does not one day float over you like another, just as the tide floats over it, and find you much the same, and leave you vegetating still? Are you more useful? What real service to others did you render yesterday? What tangible amount of occupation did you overtake in the one hundred and sixty-eight hours of which the last week consisted? And what higher end in living have you than that polypus? You go through certain mechanical routines of rising, and dressing, and visiting, and dining, and going to sleep again; and are a little roused from your usual lethargy by the arrival of a friend, or the effort needed to write some note of ceremony. But as it curtsies in the waves, and vibrates its exploring arms, and gorges some dainty medusa, the sea-anemone goes through nearly the same round of pursuits and enjoyments with your intelligent and immortal self. Is this a life for a rational and responsible creature to lead?

II. But this precept is also violated by those who are diligent in trifles,—whose activity is a busy idleness. You may be very earnest in a pursuit which is utterly beneath your prerogative as an intelligent creature, and your high destination as an immortal being. Pursuits which are perfectly proper in creatures destitute of reason, may be very culpable in those who not only have reason, but are capable of enjoyments above the range of reason itself. We this instant imagined a man retaining all his consciousness transformed into a zoophyte. Let us imagine another similar transformation; fancy that, instead of a polypus, you were changed into a swallow. There you have a creature abundantly busy, up in the early morning, for ever on the wing, as graceful and sprightly in his flight as tasteful in the haunts which he selects. Look at him, zigzagging over the clover field, skimming the limpid lake, whisking round the steeple, or dancing gaily in the sky. Behold him in high spirits, shrieking out his ecstasy as he has bolted a dragon fly, or darted through the arrow-slits of the old turret, or performed some other feat of hirundine agility. And notice how he pays his

morning visits, alighting elegantly on some house-top, and twittering politely by turns to the swallow on either side of him, and after five minutes' conversation, off and away to call for his friend at the castle. And now he has gone upon his travels, gone to spend the winter at Rome or Naples, to visit Egypt or the Holy Land, or perform some more *recherché* pilgrimage to Spain or the coast of Barbary. And when he comes home next April, strange enough he has been abroad;—charming climate,—highly delighted with the cicadas in Italy, and the bees on Hymettus;—locusts in Africa rather scarce this season; but upon the whole much pleased with his trip, and returned in high health and spirits. Now, dear friends, this is a very proper life for a swallow, but is it a life for you? To flit about from house to house; to pay futile visits, where, if the talk were written down, it would amount to little more than the chattering of a swallow; to bestow all your thoughts on graceful attitudes, and nimble movements, and polished attire; to roam from land to land with so little information in your head, or so little taste for the sublime or beautiful, in your soul, that could a swallow publish his travels, and did you publish yours, we should probably find the one a counterpart of the other; the winged traveller enlarging on the discomforts of his rest, and the wingless one on the miseries of his hotel or his chateau; you describing the places of amusement, or enlarging on the vastness of the country, and the abundance of the game; and your rival eloquent on the self-same things. Oh! it is a thought, not ridiculous, but appalling. If the earthly history of some of our brethren were written down; if a faithful record were kept of the way they spend their time; if all the hours of idle vacancy or idler occupancy were put together, and the very small amount of useful diligence deducted, the life of a bird or quadruped would be a nobler one; more worthy of its powers and more equal to its Creator's end in forming it. Such a register is kept. Though the trifler does not chronicle his own vain words and wasted hours, they chronicle themselves. They find their indelible place in that book of remembrance with which human hand cannot tamper, and from which no erasure save one can blot them. They are noted in the memory of God. And when once this life of wondrous opportunities and awful advantages is over—when the twenty or fifty years of probation are fled away—when mortal existence, with its faculties for personal improvement and serviceableness to others, is gone beyond recall—when the trifier looks back to the long pilgrimage, with all the doors of hope and doors of usefulness, past which he skipped in his frisky forgetfulness—what anguish will it move to think that he has gambolled through such a world without salvation to himself, without any real benefit to his brethren, a busy trifier, a vivacious idler, a clever fool!