

To this editor I here make confession. I dare to do so only anonymously, but what weary weight of insincerity he has made me carry! Dear Sir, forgive me; I am poor, and you pay so well for piety. I write to your order, as per your printed circular, "short, inspiring tales in which a character crisis is involved," and I always let my sin-tossed hero, *ætat.* fifteen, land cat-like on his feet. I bedew with simple pathos the eye of grandam and grandchild, but O Sir Editor, I who write thus am myself full of the Old Boy. I who write thus innocently for the tender juvenal could with this same red right hand write for the tough senior tales of riot or of ruin, of divorce, destiny, or naughty Paris!

I shudder to recollect that before I met him I fancied my pious editor, — he who supplied the public with the milk of human kindness, germ-proof, hygienic, fresh-bottled weekly, — was just such another even as I — his — his *côw*! (Heaven save us from our own metaphors!) In my first interview I actually caught a wink on the wing, and in the nick of time clapped it into my pocket, marked for future reference, "Not for editors or the clergy."

I met the extreme of my pious editor some weeks ago. His is a Sunday School publication and it was my proud purpose, judiciously concealed, to use him as a scrap-basket in extreme need. But even as a scrap-basket his appreciation of my wares needed stimulating. I speak commercially, otherwise his appreciation overflowed several typewritten pages. He pressed me to call, but first he sent me a small devotional book of his own. Now, I can bear religion in the open, when I'm all alone, in woods or fields, with the wind blowing, and the world all about big and breezy; but compress religion into a book, a little gold and white book, with versicle, canticle, and prayerlet for every day, tack my soul sensations to a calendar thus, — well, my soul is too fond of playing truant for that.

I called, I waited in a room ornamented

with texts and typewriters and lank begonias. Then, my card having preceded me, I was passed on into the sanctum. Just because he was thrice as old, did he need to hold my hand so fervently, and to say, "I want to know you, to look into your eyes, to be your friend"? My embarrassment must have embarrassed him. I shot off into business as dexterously as possible, and, having moderately accomplished my aim in coming, rose to go, but was detained. "We have talked of your writing, now let us talk of you," persisted my host. He discovered my college, my class, my birthplace, my boarding-house, my mother's maiden name, my church connection; but he did not catch *me*. Pray, why should he have tried to? Is it not enough that we who write must cook up out of our inmost sensations and experiences appetizing dishes for an editor's palate, without having either editor or public think they have a right to knock at the kitchen door? I am willing to cook, but when I entertain I do so on the front piazza, or anonymously, as now, at the rooms of the Contributors' Club.

CHOKED UTTERANCES

The Contributor takes his well-gnawed pencil and his scribbling pad in hand with some degree of insecurity. For many years he has admired the wit and ease with which various members of the Club seize and hit off as literary material the things that all of us have always known, but that none of us have ever noticed. He has more than once, on turning over the new *Atlantic* to those ever alluring pages at the back, found the familiar subjects which he discussed that morning with his wife while dressing for breakfast, clothed in language, dignified by print, accepted and inserted in the coveted spaces of the magazine. It was like discovering a picture of one's own kitchen-garden or blackberry patch illustrating an article on "Beautiful America:" a homely, accustomed thing brought into the public eye. It had been within a

stone's throw of him his entire lifetime, a helpless prey to his kodak; but some one else had seen the possibilities and done the photographing.

Once the Contributor thought of a familiar, but as yet unexploited, topic of his own; he tried to treat it lightly, to lend to its commonplaceness a certain touch and go, and to have it printed. The subject was something like "Borrowed Umbrellas" or "My Neighbor's Faults." Whatever it was he sent it off. That same day another Contributor discovered the chances for development that lay in that same homely topic, wrote it up, sent it to the Club — and had *his* version published. The blow was temporarily crushing; the Contributor gave his new foolscap pad and his providently whittled pencils to his youngest child, and went humbly back to his pursuit of the Law.

And now again a topic has come to mind; hurriedly, feverishly, the Contributor begins to write; distractedly he is conscious of a score of other Club members all over this land inspired with the same idea, and putting it into better and more *acceptable* English than his own. Into his throbbing head comes Matthew Arnold's "Consolation," but the inward chaos of hurry and hope and fear changes the lines: —

Yes, while I scribble,
Every where countless
Contributors work on my theme,
And countless versions
Flow from their pens.

The topic whose happy
Unexpressed possibilities
I would eternalize,
Ten thousand others
Submit respectfully.

The brief, civil note,
Whose certain refusal
I would escape from,
Holds for the others
Acceptance, joy.

The lines shout themselves, but through the din, clear and lucid, the Contributor comes to his point, begins to gild the homely subject, and to cheat fate.

Even as he writes, the new issue of the *Atlantic* comes to hand; it has happened again; some one else has taken his theme and done it ample justice; too many cooks have spoiled his broth; and, this time permanently, the Contributor returns to the Law. *Vale, vale*, — "there is no new thing under the sun," — the game is to say the old thing first.

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON

I have been reading an epoch-making book, which only Titanic minds like that of its author (so I am told) can criticise; but Lilliputian minds, fortunately for me, may confess their personal bewilderment. At one point in his exposition the author deals with the theory of "recapitulation," according to which the human body and soul repeat the development of the race from monad to man. Dwelling on the fishy stage of man's career, he mentions the testimony of dreams to a former aquatic existence. "In sleep, which is a kind of decapitation of higher functions, ancient ancestral experiences crop out. . . . One of the present writer's most persistent dream experiences was that, by holding the breath and controlling it in a peculiar way, he could rise from the ground and float through the air by slight movements of the limbs and body. So urgent and repeated was this experience that he has many times awaked with a sense, projected for some moments into waking life, that he could now demonstrate to his friends the astounding trick of levitation over houses and fields at will. . . . Now, as lungs have taken the place of swim-bladders, these unique hovering experiences of sleep suggest that here traces of a function have survived their known structure. Our ancestors floated and swam far longer than they have had legs, and why may the psyche not retain traces of this as the body does of its rudimentary organs? It may be that these are some of the oldest strata or elements of our psychic life, a reminiscent echo of