


A REPLY TO MY CRITICS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DEGENERATION."

 HAVE no doubt as to the consequences to myself of the present undertaking. . . . Grievous is the fate of him who ventures to stamp esthetic fashions as forms of mental decay. The graphomaniacs and their critical body-guard dominate nearly the entire press, and possess in the latter an instrument of torture by means of which they can, Indian-fashion, stretch the troublesome marplot upon the rack to the very end of his days."

Thus I wrote in the preface to "Degeneration," before the book had yet made its appearance. Even well-disposed readers found this prophecy to be an exaggeration. My opponents cried jubilantly, "Megalomania — persecution mania!"

The result has shown, however, that my forecast was correct. Since my book left the press it is literally true that not a day has passed without bringing down upon me a shower of printed calumnies. Not content with attacking "Degeneration," my opponents have vented their rage upon all my literary productions. The critics have recurred to my earlier publications, and have defiled them with mud and venom. In August, 1893, and in October, 1894, two of my plays were brought upon the boards at the Lessing Theater in Berlin, and both achieved a decided success with the public. The critics, however, fell foul of them, and in their reports of the plots indulged in misrepresentations. They shamelessly denied their favorable reception, judged them in terms of mockery and contempt, and succeeded not only in keeping the public away from the stalls, but in preventing other theaters from performing pieces which were referred to by the newspapers as unspeakable filth. A well-known Berlin critic is known to have said in the presence of witnesses: "As long as I am alive, everything that Nordau may henceforth publish will be slaughtered or ignored. No mercy for him! If he cares for his peace of mind he had better stop writing."

I am not complaining. What has happened is exactly what I expected. I was fully prepared for it. I only wish to demonstrate that my prophecy was neither a mistake nor an exaggeration.

Truth to tell, I have not been able to keep pace with my critics up to date. I have found among twenty critics one who had anything to teach me (though scarcely anything of impor-

tance), while the other nineteen indulged in mere foolish abuse, which could benefit me neither intellectually nor morally, still less enrich my knowledge or increase or even maintain my respect for humanity. For no one can form any conception of the monotony of their hostile animadversions. Malice and fury are indeed exceedingly powerful emotions. I had theoretically anticipated that they were capable of strongly stimulating the intellect, making it inventive, inspiring new similes and unprecedented imprecations. But, strange to say, in the case of my assailants this anticipation has not been verified. They invent nothing. The substance of their brains seems to be lead or clay. Their wrath is impotent to arouse their fancy. They content themselves with gnashing their teeth, rolling their eyes, clenching their fists, and emitting guttural cries. An excited Hottentot would do exactly the same. What can one do with such antagonists? The best thing to do, perhaps, would be to perpetuate their savage attitudes by means of instantaneous photography, and put them all together in an album of grotesque caricatures.

In persons of a low stage of intellectual development the power of repartee, as is well known, is limited to the observation, "You're another!" That was the happy inspiration which seized all my critical antagonists. With sorrowful solemnity they assured their readers that I was myself a degenerate, a lunatic. Some went even further. They embellished their brilliant discourses with unblushing inventions. They hinted that they might from my family history deduce the proof that I was not only myself a madman, but that I was descended from insane ancestors. I have by no means given up the expectation of reading, one of these days, that I have been confined for so and so many years in a lunatic asylum — nay, that I am perhaps at this very moment an inmate of such an institution. A credulous lady who was actually disturbed by the numerous hints of this kind wrote me a letter in which she anxiously begged me to inform her whether it was really true that there had been lunatics among my ancestors; and she expressed to me her sincere relief when I assured her that the only evidence of an abnormal mental condition which had ever been observed in the members of my family was a strange indifference to money. For several generations both my paternal and my maternal ancestors have accord-

ingly been poor. They did not understand how to make money. They did not concern themselves about it. They preferred to occupy themselves with abstruse scholarship. They were rabbis or officials of Jewish congregations. As their heir I have had frequent occasion to reproach them with their lack of worldly sense; but as an alienist I should hesitate, on account of this defect, to charge them with insanity.

Other critics who, like the above-mentioned amiable wags, were concerned about my person rather than my work, were kind enough not to doubt my sanity; but they asserted that I did not myself believe a single word of what I had written. My book was a bit of humbug, and I was myself the first to laugh at it. I wished to make a sensation; and for that purpose nothing seemed to be cleverer than to declare a multitude of celebrated persons to be lunatics. I am far from resenting the imputations of the poor devils who ascribe to me such motives. Every one is inclined to judge others according to his own standards. I know in Paris a lot of hysterical *cabotins* who, when the excellent sculptor Turcon recently died in an insane asylum, declared among themselves, with a knowing wink, that "he had done it in order to advertise himself."

Very frequently I have found among the insinuations of my critical adversaries the reproach that I possessed no qualifications for writing such a book as "Degeneration." What they mean by this assertion is that I am neither an expert in psychiatry nor the director of an insane asylum. They represent me as a kind of dilettante who has cursorily turned the leaves of some books on psychiatry, and now tries to apply his superficial information. I shall not condescend to enumerate to these people my scientific titles, or to tell them that I was for eight years an attendant of the clinical lectures of Professor Ball, and his companion on his visits to his patients in the St. Anne Asylum. This scornful exclamation, "No qualifications!" I do not hear for the first time. I have heard it often before. I have been quite familiar with it since I published my book "Conventional Lies." I beg to be allowed to repeat what I then replied to this narrow-minded reproach:

No qualifications! Why this circumlocution? Why not say straight out what you mean? You intend to affirm that I am neither a professor nor a councilor; that I have not the smallest official title, nor the most inferior appointment under the government. What? A free and independent man of letters should venture to occupy himself with these deep scientific questions! . . . That is really not to be endured. If he must "absolutely write, then let him produce lyrical poems. That is the inalienable right of every German. But to delve

for the truth! To wish to instruct others! To penetrate into the domain which is reserved for the sages of the learned guild, duly appointed by official decree! Woe to him! Out with the intruder! Set the dogs upon him! He is an outsider!"

These miserable police souls and slaves of rank who deny me the vocation to seek the truth and to utter it, if I fancy I have found it, belong to a well-known species. They have ancestors in legend and history. Their cry is as old as organized authority. Since there has been such a thing as official wisdom, every man who has no place in the official register has been denied the right to a hearing.

Not a few of my adversaries have found refuge in the contemptuous assertion that I showed no comprehension of the men whom I subjected to my analysis. I had no conception of poetry or art. I wonder if these phrases have made any impression upon my readers. I have no need of answering them. I have devoted much space in my book to the pretension of the degenerates that they have a finer intelligence and more delicate perceptions than those who deny the beauty of green-tinged human faces, senselessly raving verses, and idiotic marionette dramas. This pretension is scarcely worth a shoulder shrug. To disprove it would be absurd. The black cannibals from whose feasts Livingstone turned away with horror grinned at him and said: "You have no taste. You do not know what is good." These cannibals were firmly convinced that Livingstone lacked all higher intelligence.

Shrewder than the reviewers who chose my person for their target, and traduced my motives, was another group who pretended to deal only with my works, and cited from them the most flagrant evidences of idiocy. This method of putting into the mouth of an author the most incredible stupidities is very effective, but it is hazardous. He who has only read the reviews, and not the book, may, to be sure, derive the impression that I am a contemptible charlatan. There are, however, people who have read my book and are capable of taking the reviewer to task; and these people, perhaps, will not regard me as an imbecile, but my unscrupulous critics as knaves. That is the danger to which one is exposed if he adopts this convenient method of discrediting an author. Here is one, for instance, who asserts that I dub every person who writes a graphomaniac, and triumphantly asks whether, according to this definition, I am not myself a graphomaniac. The reader of "Degeneration" need not be assured that I give quite a different definition of graphomania. Not every one who writes is on that account a graphomaniac; but only he who writes senseless, inco-

herent stuff which by perpetual repetitions betrays slowness and laboriousness of ideation; by words of violent color and frequent underscorings indicates an extreme emotionality; and by puns reveals an association of ideas determined only by the similarity of sound.

Another critic assures me that I confound degeneration with hysteria, and he is good enough to instruct me that these are two different conditions. Unhappily, I cannot profit by the lesson. I have no use for it. I have myself expressly affirmed that hysteria is an acquired condition of exhaustion of the nervous system, while degeneration is an innate anomaly of development. I have shown that an overstrained and intemperate generation becomes hysterical, and will, in turn, beget a generation of degenerates. The critic who charges me with confounding degeneration and hysteria probably did not know the distinction between the two conditions until he learned it out of my book.

Lesser perfidies I shall only briefly refer to. One reviewer informs his readers that I accord recognition in literature only to the novels of Georges Ohnet, and in music only to the operas of Mascagni. Any one who has hurriedly turned the leaves of my book will remember that I characterize these two worthy men, not as my own favorites, but as the favorites of the multitude which has not yet risen to an appreciation of the subtleties of Mallarmé and Puvis de Chavannes. Another observes in cold blood that I call Dante Gabriel Rossetti a degenerate because he employs refrains in his poems; and he puts me to shame by referring me to the folk ballads, which all have refrains, and yet are surely not the work of degenerates. To this wise Theban I might reply that in my psychological analysis of Rossetti I have dwelt at great length upon the difference between the natural, proper, and poetically effective refrains of healthful poets and the senseless repetitions of Rossetti. But why should I take the trouble to do this? He has read that passage, although he pretends that he knows nothing about it. He would continue to do the same even if I reprinted the passage here.

A rare comic effect has been attained by those of my reviewers who indulge in ejaculatory phrases and interjections, who fling both their arms toward heaven, and call down its wrath upon me. What? Zola a degenerate! Zola, the greatest author of the century! Zola, that radiant genius! Zola, the Shakspeare of the novel! What heresy! What blasphemy! But surely the sorrow I have caused these emotional persons, though they have my sympathy, was scarcely to be avoided; and their pitiful cries will scarcely invalidate a single one of my arguments.

The most astounding performance which has come to my notice is that of a Berlin physician who has devoted an entire book to me. In the first half of it he regales me with the whole vocabulary of opprobrious epithets which is to be found in the German language; but in the second half he turns coolly about, and applies my own method to certain authors whom I had purposely ignored because they played an altogether too inferior rôle,—as for instance, poor Strindberg,—and in the end he exclaims, with lyrical pathos: “No; humanity will not perish in madness and deterioration, as Nordau asserts. It will adapt itself to its new conditions; it will make these conditions to serve its own organic power of achievement.” When I had read so far, I had to rub my eyes. I fancied I must be suffering from an optical illusion. But no; there it was in black and white. The man had actually written out my own arguments. He had appropriated the conclusion of my chapter entitled, “Prognosis,” in order to crush me utterly!

I have now afforded my reader enough specimens of the criticisms of my adversaries, some of whom are incompetent, some dishonest, and some both. He will surely share my opinion that contempt is the only treatment they have deserved. Misrepresentation of a work, and personal vilification and abuse of its author, may of course make an impression upon the public, people may thereby be deterred from reading my book, prejudice may be aroused against me, and reproach may be brought upon my name; but such methods are powerless to invalidate a single one of my arguments; and they are, moreover, discredited in advance by every page of my book, and branded as intentional distortions and base lies.

It is now my purpose to deal with the few objections which have been advanced in good faith by competent judges against the fundamental principles of “Degeneration.” These are worthy of being seriously discussed.

It has been said:

You maintain that the present state of civilized humanity is something entirely unprecedented, and that it is the result of the extraordinarily rapid progress during the last sixty years, which has imposed upon the civilized nations a too great burden of work. History, however, teaches us that there have frequently been epochs during which a kind of epidemic insanity takes possession of the human race. These epochs belong, in part, to the very depths of the middle ages—accordingly to a period of stagnation and intellectual lethargy. These spiritual epidemics were therefore surely not the results of new inventions and intellectual over-exertion. But if the present wholesale degeneration and hysteria are neither a new condition nor the consequence

of the too rapid pace of civilization, your whole theory falls to the ground.

This argument, I admit, looks very formidable, but is, perhaps, less so than it appears. To be sure, spiritual epidemics have been known in the past. The Crusades were embarked upon under the stimulus of a religious delirium, even though they were later conducted chiefly by spiritually very sane people, with the perfectly rational purpose of having amusing adventures, escaping prosecution in the courts at home and the duns of creditors, making booty, and conquering lands. The excesses of the Flagellants and the Beguins were spiritual epidemics of the most hideous sort—a mixture of religious insanity, erotomania, sadism [*sic*], and homicidal impulsions. The witch delusion during the period of the Reformation was the same thing. It is also perfectly true that these epidemics were in no wise the results of a headlong pace of progress. But I have never asserted that progress is the only possible cause of a spiritual epidemic. It may, indeed, have a multiplicity of causes. Everything which weakens and shatters the human organism tends to produce hysteria in the first victims and degeneration in their descendants. The great spiritual epidemics of the middle ages were the product of a condition of the most profound insecurity on the part of the great multitude, who might at any moment be robbed, maimed, or cruelly murdered by their barons and princes, and were, moreover, exposed to the perpetual terror of all—the everlasting hell fire. A race of people that were forever trembling before the devil in the hereafter and the armed cutthroats in the present could not help suffering from delirium, the expression of which was the Crusades. As the immediate causes of the excesses of the Flagellants and the Beguins, the St. Vitus dance, etc., we find terrible epidemics, such as the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century, or local pestilence or famine. These causes produce effects similar to those of over-exertion. They weaken the body by privations and by violent, depressing, and disorganizing emotions. It is also beyond dispute that over-exertion is not the sole possible cause of hysteria and degeneration; but it is, on the other hand, no less indisputable that over-exertion may be a cause of these conditions, and quite as potent a cause as war, pestilence, and famine, insecurity of life and property, and fear of the devil. I believe that I have by my statistical tables proved that it is the cause of the present universal hysteria and degeneration in no less a degree than the Black Death of 1348 was the cause, in Germany at least, of the madness of the Flagellants.

There is, however, a very distinct difference between the present spiritual epidemic and those of past ages. The epidemics of insanity which history records seized in part only limited circles, or only the lower strata of the population. The church anathematized and the state combated them. The cultivated classes recognized them as maladies. Upon the intellectual life, upon art, they exerted no influence. Other epidemics of this sort, such as the Crusades and the witch delusion of the period of the Reformation, did, to be sure, rage chiefly among the upper classes, and were strengthened by the authority of the Church; and they left some traces in art and literature. But art and literature did not in those days penetrate into wide circles of the populace, and the form which these spiritual epidemics assumed was such that they quickly destroyed those whom they affected. We do not sufficiently consider how tremendously the Crusades and the witch persecutions reduced the number of degenerates and sufferers from hysteria. It may be asserted without exaggeration that all men who between 1095 and, let us say, 1291 A. D. were disposed to religious delirium, and all women who between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries were afflicted with hysteria or any of the different forms of mania, had a hundred chances to one of perishing—the former on the journey to Palestine and in the war against the unbelievers, the latter upon the rack or at the stake.

But the present wide-spread hysteria and degeneration are on the point of dominating our whole art and literature. As at the present time all the world visits art exhibitions and reads, the epidemic has an opportunity of vitiating the whole people from top to bottom. It proceeds from the cultivated classes, and threatens to take possession of the uncultivated. It is therefore far more dangerous than the former mental epidemics which history has recorded. The contemporary mystics, decadents, and esthetes have no taste for being cut to pieces in battles with Saracens. Our Ibsen fanatics and Bayreuth pilgrims are not roasted alive at the stake. (I do not wish it to be understood that I regret this!) The present epidemic has accordingly no chance of being quickly stamped out by natural processes, like the earlier ones, by the destruction of its victims. For these reasons I am of opinion that we are to-day in the midst of an epidemic outbreak of hysteria and degeneration the cause of which is the over-exertion of the last sixty years; furthermore, that it is, to be sure, not the first phenomenon of its kind, but that it is far more dangerous than the previous ones because it has gained a far greater headway. It must be combated by intellectual remedies, because we have no

longer the sword and the stake at our disposal in dealing with it.

The following objection has been made to my method of demonstrating the degeneration of poets, philosophers, and artists from their works:

It is not permissible to identify the artist with his work. The characters of his fictions are not the man himself. What his characters think, say, and do need not at all represent his own opinions and purposes.

Very true, at least as regards the second half of the proposition. The poet is not to be found behind all his characters. But no psychologist will admit that it is illegitimate to draw conclusions from an author's work to the author himself. Every intellectual performance betrays with the greatest distinctness the intellectual peculiarities of its originator — the quality and strength of his emotions, his sympathies and antipathies, his character, his philosophy of life, the manner in which the association of his ideas is developed, his idiosyncrasies, and his intellectual shortcomings. The question then is, Whether one understands how to read and how to interpret what one reads. No sane reader will regard *Iago* or *Shylock* or *Richard III.* as the counterpart of Shakspeare, or trace the real sentiments of Goethe in *Mephistopheles*. In the works in which criminal or infernal characters occur, it is emphatically obvious that the poet does not represent them as worthy of commendation; that they are not drawn from his own heart; that he depicts them as anthropological curiosities with the love and exactness of an enthusiastic naturalist, but does not maintain that they are in the right, nor plead their cause. Only a fool would say: "Shakspeare was a rogue, for he has created *Iago*. Goethe was a scoundrel, for his *Mephistopheles* plots only seduction and ruin." Quite a different aspect does the case assume when it is not a repellent figure which is depicted, with whom other and sympathetic figures are contrasted; but when either the author speaks in his own name, as, for instance, Nietzsche in his writings, or Wagner in his "The Art of the Future"; or when all the characters of one work, or of all the author's works, are insane or criminal or idiotic, as is frequently the case with Ibsen and Maeterlinck; or when a definite peculiarity predominates in all the productions of an artist, as the love of dirt (*coprololie*) in Zola, and the predilection for death, decay, and vice in Baudelaire,— then the psychologist is justified in saying with the greatest confidence: "Each one of these works reflects with fidelity the spiritual condition of its originator; in each one of them his peculiarities are revealed. He has written thus because he could not write

otherwise. His books are confessions; they are objectifications of his mental state; and we are as much warranted in applying them as material for judging of his spiritual quality as we have the right thus to apply his oral utterances, his actions, or any other objective fact from which we are in the habit of drawing conclusions regarding a man's character and mental caliber."

Very important is another objection which demands serious consideration. It is as follows:

By your method it is possible to demonstrate that all men of genius are degenerates. But if all genius is a form of degeneration, then degeneration cannot be a pathological condition, and, accordingly, is not a defect. On the contrary, it becomes a blessing. Then degenerates are enviable creatures, and deserve our respect and veneration, for we are indebted to degenerates for the highest boons of humanity, the noblest possessions of our race, all progress, all the works of which we have reason to be proud.

If this were true, I should have no refuge but to declare: "My book is, from beginning to end, a colossal mistake; and I take back every word I have uttered in it, and offer my apologies." I am, however, very far from believing that it is true. That objection rests upon a confounding of two different things; viz., anomaly and degeneration. Every form of degeneration is an anomaly, but not every form of anomaly is an evidence of degeneration. There are anomalies which are evidences of progress. Every organic innovation which has appeared in the course of evolution had manifestly, at one time or other, to appear for the first time. At its first advent it was an anomaly, a departure from the type of the species; but it was an advantageous departure. It was an evolutionary anomaly, and became subsequently the common property of the species, which was benefited by its possession. Degeneration, on the other hand, is an anomaly which does not appear for the first time, but recurs long after it has ceased to be typical. It is a form of atavism. If it were to become general, it would cause the species to revert to stages of development long since passed. That is a fundamental difference. Healthy genius is, to be sure, also an anomaly. If it were something universal and typical we should not call it genius, and it would in no wise attract our attention. But it is an anomaly inherent in evolution and progress. It means survival and a future. Degenerate pseudo-genius is also an anomaly, but it is a retrogressive, atavistic anomaly. It means destruction and a past.

It is therefore of prime importance to distinguish between healthy and degenerate genius. Facetious critics have exclaimed: "No-

thing can be simpler. To be healthy is to think and feel like Max Nordau. Whoever thinks and feels differently is hysterical or degenerate."

That is a very good joke. I was the first to laugh at it. But it is, after all, a joke; and no one should try to give it the authority of an argument. There is an unerring criterion by which mental health can be distinguished from mental disease. It is the same criterion by which health, generally speaking, is differentiated from disease. What we call disease is a condition in which the organism falls below its full power of performance (*Leistungsfähigkeit*), and is in danger of perishing. Apply this definition to literary and artistic manifestations, and you will without difficulty recognize which are healthy and which pathological. Every work of art proceeds from an emotion, and embodies an ideal, a longing, an idiosyncrasy, of the artist. Is this emotion, this ideal or longing, compatible with the normal functions of the human organism, with the preservation of the life of the individual or the species? If so, it is healthy; if not, it is diseased. A poet who praises vice and violations of nature is unhealthy; for the predilection which he manifests will of necessity lead to the ruin of the individual and of society. All the emotions which are introduced in Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea" are healthy; for if all people were possessed of these emotions they would be happy; they would by means of them discharge all their duties in life, and reach a ripe old age in good health. All the emotions, on the other hand, which Huysmans expresses in "À Rebours" are pathological; for a man who should be possessed of such emotions and desires would inevitably, in a very short time, perish miserably from disease, or be hanged.

It is therefore, according to my opinion, a mistake to assert that all genius is a form of degeneration, and that in every work of art traces of a pathological condition are to be observed. The fact that insanity has been known to attack men of true, evolutionary genius should not lead us astray. It is by no means a rare thing for men of true genius to be exposed to mental maladies. But that is far from proving that true genius is, in its essence, degenerate. It only proves that an evolutionary innovation, an individual acquisition,—a higher differentiation, occurring for the first time,—is more sensitive and less capable of resistance than an organ which, by heredity and long discipline, has been strengthened and made

tough and durable. The insanity of men of true genius is a secondary phenomenon of exhaustion, not a primary condition. It is a well-known fact that many athletes suffer from hypertrophy and fatty degeneration of the muscles of the heart. This is the professional disease of the champions of field sports and the acrobats of the circus. But would not everybody laugh in my face if I were to say, "Athletics is a form of heart disease"?

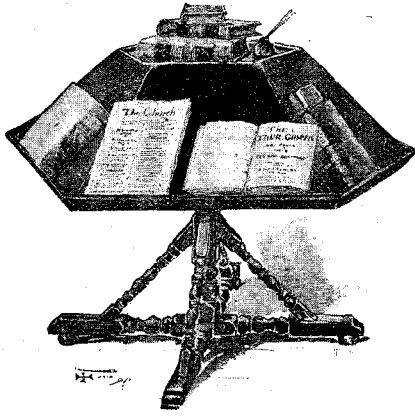
It is necessary to bear these distinctions and criteria in mind in order not to be led astray by sophistries. Genius and degeneration are two different things; for genius is incidental to evolution, while degeneration is retrogressive. If true evolutionary genius, as well as degenerate pseudo-genius, is subject to madness, it is in consequence of its greater sensitiveness, complexity, and fineness; while in the case of pseudo-genius it is an occasion for those manifestations by which notoriety is achieved. If the ideals and emotions embodied in a work of art are compatible with the preservation of the life of the individual and of society, then that work of art is healthful; if they are incompatible, the work of art is pathological and injurious. There are, of course, many grades in this scale of health and disease; but the principle is irrefragable.

Let us take as an instance a degenerate painter who paints all things in dull colors like Puvis de Chavannes, or green like Lucien Monod, Roger, or Latenay. If these painters are honest and sincere, if their pictures are genuine expressions of their sentiments, they prove that they are afflicted with a peculiar form of color-blindness. This color-blindness does not directly imperil their lives. Nor does the prevailing daltonism. But for all that, no one will deny that a person who cannot distinguish the colors of outward objects is organically less completely equipped than one who perceives all things in their true colors, and that in the struggle for existence the former is likely to be vanquished by the latter. We may therefore safely assert that a painter who sees all things green is unhealthy, and that green pictures, with green people, green hair, green faces, are pathological phenomena, and are an indication of the degeneracy of the artist.

I have taken pains to discuss seriously all serious objections to my book on the part of bona-fide critics. My readers will now have to judge whether a single one of my arguments has been invalidated by these objections.

Max Nordau.

REMINISCENCES OF LITERARY BERKSHIRE.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.
JONATHAN EDWARDS'S DESK, STOCKBRIDGE.

OF the prominent figures who, a half-century ago or more, flitted across the patch of Berkshire landscape on which I happen to have been born and bred, the first that I recall is Mr. Van Buren. He drove to Stockbridge one fine day from his farm in Kinderhook, which was called "Lindenwold," and was afterward baptized by the Whigs in the "log-cabin" singing campaign of 1840—more, perhaps, for the sake of the rhyme than the reason—"the fox's hold." This visit was in 1835, not long before his nomination to the Presidency. Besides his dapper appearance, smug face, black stock, silvery hair, and irreproachable shirt (which looked just as one sees them in his portrait in the governor's room in the New York city hall), all I remember of him is this. Mr. Theodore Sedgwick, eldest son of Judge Theodore Sedgwick, as stout a Democrat as his father was a Federalist, by way of showing that the enthusiasm for the hero of New Orleans had spread to Berkshire, called me to him, remarking that I had just been shouting, "Hurrah for Jackson!" This was the boyish slogan of the day. "Ah," said Mr. Van Buren, patting my head, "how interesting it is to see the instincts of Democracy spring up at this tender age!" Perhaps if he had known how fond I was of "Jackson balls,"—a popular confection of those days, named after his distinguished chief,—he would have been still more impressed. My only other personal recollection of Mr. Van Buren dates some years later, after his Presidency and before his Free-Soil candidacy. His stories were more entertaining than his state papers, and I

was delighted by his account of the description, drawn by a rival candidate for office, of a certain Western judge who swore like "my Uncle Toby," and was famous for what Yankees call "cussedness." The diatribe ended as follows: "He sat before the fire, squirting tobacco-juice a gallon a minute, denouncing everybody except his Creator, and thinking—hard of him."

His son John—often called "Prince John" from his having once danced with the princess Victoria—also came to Stockbridge about the same time. His rather rollicking bearing was a contrast to his father's staid demeanor that might have puzzled Galton. One drizzling morning when Lieutenant-Governor Bradish, a dignified gentleman of the old school (of whom it was once remarked by a country member of the legislature that he was "ape-riently a little pompouse"), was presiding over the Court of Errors at Albany, the prince on entering the court-room nodded familiarly to the lieutenant-governor, with the observation, "A fine morning for young ducks, governor." "Think of it," said Mr. Bradish afterward, describing the occurrence—"think of his speaking of young ducks to me when presiding over the Court of Errors of the great State of New York!" By nature the prince was, I think, brighter than his father, though his indolence and want of persistency, and perhaps of ambition, prevented his ascending to high official position. The audacious humor and satire of his stump speeches have never been outshone in the northern part of the United States. In 1847 Edwin Croswell, editor of the "Albany Argus," then the leading Democratic organ of New York, changed from one wing of the party to the other, and came out with an editorial against Silas Wright's renomination for governor. The electric telegraph, then just invented, had not yet come into practical use, and it happened that the news of Mr. Wright's death, which occurred unexpectedly before the article was written, did not reach Albany till after its publication. John Van Buren, in a speech in the following campaign, referring to this incident, said: "The blow which was aimed at the living man fell upon his new-made grave, and he who had aspired to be an assassin was, by a strange freak of fate, doomed to become a jackal." This masterly invective, as a gentleman said at the time, equals anything in Junius.