

Portfolia.

We should do our utmost to encourage the Beautiful, for the Useful encourages itself.—
GORTON.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE

YEARLY COURSE OF ROMAN HISTORY.

Delivered at the Ladies' College, 47, Bedford-square, October 1, 1850.

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It has been questioned whether we are to interpret the events of past time by the present, or conversely. Each view has been plausibly maintained. We ought, I believe, to combine both, in order to be correct. For the present and the past throw light on one another. To understand ourselves we must study our predecessors: to understand them, we must study ourselves.

This ought not to be thought a paradox; it is only part of a larger truth, viz., all things are best perceived by comparison and contrast. If we had never seen any colour but red, we should not be aware that anything was red; but when we see both red and green, our attention is stimulated, and we learn to discriminate. In this way the contrasts of ancient times to modern lead us to meditate more deeply on what is; while the similarities of the modern to the ancient enable us, by means of what is, to understand what was.

We have three ancient literatures extant, the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Latin; out of which flow three main streams of ancient history. But the Hebrews were inhabitants of a very narrow district and made no distant or permanent conquests: moreover, their literature has nearly all a directly religious aim, is of very limited extent, and only by accident (as it were) gives us historical information. Hence it is of secondary importance in history, and is by this college intended to be comprized in theological knowledge.

There remain to us the two great subjects which we vaguely call Greek and Roman history. But our range of Greek history takes in all that is known of Ancient Assyria, Babylon, Syria, Lydia, Phœnicia, Egypt, Persia—of none of which countries or empires have we any full and continuous history. On the other hand, our Roman history comprizes what is known of the countries which came into contact with the Roman arms. These are, Italy, Spain, France, Britain, a large part of Germany, all of Modern Turkey, with Northern Africa, including the Carthaginian cities. To speak roughly, Greek gives us the history of the East, and Latin of the West. My historical lectures last year within these walls were mainly directed to Greece, and to the Eastern region of history: in the coming year the Western world will engage me.

There is more of variety and brilliancy in ancient Greece than in ancient Italy; yet for this very reason there was too much to embrace in so scanty a number of lectures. In Greece we have to tell, not of one city, and one civil polity, but of many; not of one race, but of several. We are not confined to the domain of politics, to accounts of war and peace, of industrial expansion and popular organization: we are also brought into poetry, poetical religion, and philosophy. At last the history of Greece proper suddenly breaks up, when the Macedonian arms spread over the whole Persian Empire, until Greece touches India, Bokhara, and Nubia. We get glimpses of distant countries, and leave off dissatisfied that our knowledge is so partial.

But, if in the Grecian world there was a more various and enticing scene, it must be admitted that the world of Rome is one which still more nearly concerns us. When Greece had attained her highest energy, it overflowed against Persia, her hereditary foe. To subdue the stubborn and poor barbarians of Europe was a very uninviting task; and, as the Greek arms spread eastward, little direct impression was made by Greek civilization on Europe at large. But with the progress of time Europe very sensibly changed. The Spaniards and the Gauls of proper France attained so much of industry and wealth as to attract Roman cupidity. The dominion of Rome reached successively to Spain, to France, to Britain; as well as to the southern bank of the Danube, and at last to Dacia (that is, to Wallachia) on the northern bank. At the Scotch Highlands and the whole frontier of Germany the Roman generals paused, and saw before them countries too full of mountain, swamp, or forest, too empty of moveable wealth, to repay the prodigious effort which it would cost to conquer and keep them. Thus the Gael and the German,—and, behind Germany, the Bohemian, the Pole, the Hungarian, the Russ,—remained outside the Roman empire: and, in a geographical view, that empire embraced but half of Europe. Nevertheless, a mere geographical view is here incomplete. What Horace says of Rome, when she conquered Greece,—

"Captive Greece made captive her rude conqueror,
And brought arts into rustic Latium;"

this we may say of Germany, when her time came for conquering Rome. The Germans imbibed from Italy both arts and religion; and when political empire had fallen in the city of the Cæsars a new ecclesiastical empire began. To detail this series of events belongs to the modern historian, and it cannot form part of my lectures; but I now allude to the subject in order to indicate how far over Europe the influence of Rome has spread. The Saxons, the Bohemians, the Poles, and the Hungarians, in time, submitted to the religion of Germany and of Rome; so also did the remote Gaels and Irish. Russia alone, of the great northern nations, received Christianity from Constantinople, and thus became imbued with a Greek rather than an Italian influence. With religion became imbued with a Greek rather than an Italian influence. With religion first language, and at length something of literature, also spread: so that the Latin culture, which had fixed itself in Spain and France by conquest, found its way into Germany and Saxon England, into Scandinavia, into Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary, by means of religion. Russia was very late in entering the circle of European politics, and at last, perhaps, has received more of its knowledge from Germany and France than from its Greek connection. Indirectly, therefore, all Europe (except Greece proper) has been largely affected by Roman influences.

To come home on this subject, our language is exceedingly imbued with

Latin words, and still more with Norman, which is the Latin as corrupted in France by the old Gauls and by the invading Germans. Our religion, and in great measure our literary culture, at first came from Papal Rome. It surely belongs to an enlightened curiosity to acquaint ourselves with the history of that remarkable nation, which two thousand years ago exerted so powerful an activity for good or evil over Western and Southern Europe.

But there are, besides, analogies and contrasts between the histories of England and of Rome, which from us deserve a steady contemplation: and I propose, in this lecture, to run over several lines of thought, which are far from exhausting this subject. In monarchical England and in republican Rome there was alike a hard struggle for liberty on the part of the commonalty. The causes of oppression and the modes of gradual extrication were diverse; yet there was this in common, that ultimate benefit was obtained by a series of smaller constitutional victories and by the establishment of precedents. Each nation occasionally revolted, yet even successful revolt did not always fulfil expectation. For any decisive success of the moving party generally caused a reflux towards the Conservatives; and as the victory of our Parliament over Charles I. yielded no visible advantage to liberty, so in Rome it is striking to see how little fruit comes of the most complete triumph ever won by the plebeians over the patricians, that which is known as the overthrow of the Decemvirate.

It has been often observed that as in England the power of the purse is that which enabled the parliaments to wring out of our monarchs the securities found necessary to liberty; so in Rome, the great weapon of the commonalty was that of refusing to enlist in the army. It was a passive resistance in each case; and experience seems to show that this is the only appropriate mode of constitutional warfare. A weapon must not be too sharp if it is to be used against authorities which we desire to regulate not to overturn. The most violent of the early Roman measures was SECESSION, or a threat of emigration in mass.

Constitutional history is not a subject into which it has hitherto been thought desirable carefully to initiate ladies. I confess it is rather a masculine topic: more feminine, however, than stories of battles, and tournaments, and sieges. To me it appears that as man has been justly called by Aristotle a *political animal*, not to understand his political capacities and achievements is to remain ignorant of one large part of his moral nature; those who approve of moral philosophy as a feminine study will not disapprove of the less abstract subject of constitutional history. But I am here disposed to advocate what some will think an extreme doctrine; namely, that our boys need a more feminine, and our young ladies a more masculine culture. If, in the education of boys, we attended more to that delicacy and purity of mind, that refinement and gentleness of manners which is appropriate to women, as well as to that cultivation of fine taste which we do appreciate, I believe that our young men would be more virtuous and not less manly. And if, in the education of young ladies, we thought less exclusively of that refinement which they have by nature, and were more anxious to give them that strength of understanding and breadth of view which few women have by nature, I think that the sex would become neither less fair, nor less gentle, nor less womanly, but, on the other hand, there would be less danger of their gentleness or fervour degenerating into weakness.

After this digression I admit that in all the earlier history of Rome, its constitution is rather undesirably predominant. Under the kings of Rome we open with an account of the several races whose fusion at length formed the Roman people; and already at that time constitutional questions must occupy us. For the greater part of the early period our accounts of the wars and foreign relations of Rome are untrustworthy, and the internal battle of the constitution is unavoidably our main subject. To those who intelligently attend, I believe it will always be found very interesting: but here, as elsewhere, those who desire to be rewarded must earn their delight by exertion. Unless we form clear ideas in the mind, study to complete our picture, fix it thus in our imagination, and familiarize ourselves with that of which we are hearing; and at the same time learn to sympathize with the sufferings and efforts of the oppressed commonalty;—many things may be judged dry and tedious, which to greater diligence are agreeable as well as instructive. Still, it must be confessed, that here, as in all the darker and more distant portions of history, we know less of individual men than of masses of men, orders, parties;—we cannot confidently draw biographical sketches;—we do not often know with certainty the moral qualities of the men who are prominent in the political movements; so that our sympathies are little drawn out by individuals. But it is only in the early times that we have to complain of this. Moreover, even then already the peculiar character of the Roman develops itself; so that when individuals have no deep mark, there is interest in studying the nation collectively.

This, indeed, also we may remark in common between the Romans and the English,—perhaps, however, not peculiar to them,—that no sooner is their own liberty consolidated than they enter upon a continuous career of conquest. We must regard this as a natural consequence of the strength which a nation acquires from internal freedom and good laws. It is melancholy to discover, that the first use which every free nation makes of its new strength, is to destroy and oppress the freedom of others. If conquerors proved able to impart their own freedom to the conquered nations, all regret for the violences of conquest would soon be swallowed up in its benefits. But it needs a very high morality for a free nation to raise its subjects into its equals; and the problem is not yet solved for us.

The era at which English liberty was finally established against the tyranny of the Crown, is the great Revolution which brought William of Orange to the throne. In the two preceding reigns, the foreign power of England had been at the lowest; but with William began our inveterate series of wars with France, which lasted for a century and a quarter; in the course of which, considerable portions of our vast colonial empire were conquered. In the same period, by wars which were partly kindled by French enmity, a company of English merchants conquered nearly the whole of India. Such is the astonishing and anxious result of the power which the security of industry and energies of liberty have wrought out in our nation.

The era at which the Roman commonalty established the adequate securities

for its freedom, is that of the plebeian consulate; nearly 365 years B.C.; when it was enacted that, of the two chief yearly magistrates, one should always be a plebeian. Henceforward, the interests of the plebeians were constantly looked after, their grievances were gradually redressed, the two orders were fully amalgamated, and a vast increase of internal strength rapidly ensued. The immediate result was, that, instead of the equal alliance which Rome had formerly had with her Latin brethren, she disdainfully spurned their claims of equality, and subdued Latium after a fierce and doubtful struggle. Upon this followed in steady succession, with enormous effort and horrible bloodshed, the conquest of all Italy. The Roman commonalty obtained a more and more secure and satisfactory social position, until the state became prepared for its dreadful contests with Carthage, out of which it came politically victorious, but fatally deranged in its social and moral interests.

In modern times, great and successful wars are apt to leave behind them (like the wounds endured by a conquering champion) great national debts; evils embarrassing for the present, and exceedingly threatening for the future. The Romans had not invented this device, and in no case could have carried it out far. But their war with Hannibal left on them a permanent crippling in the ruin of their small proprietors, who had been the moral strength of the nation. These were the true commonalty of Rome; the upright, independent, simple plebeian freeholders, who possessed enough and to spare, on the condition of regular industry. Their votes made them the real sovereigns of the state in any matters affecting the general welfare; and their wishes and influence were for peace, order, and good government. Hannibal for seventeen years was master of the field in Italy. Such an enemy, and the perpetual demand for men to fill the ranks, were very disastrous to the Roman farmers: one vast number was slain, another was hopelessly ruined; and, when the victory was won, the Rome which remained to enjoy it was no longer the same Rome as had commenced the war. The rustic middle class of pure Romans was enormously lessened. Over all Italy, wherever the population had sympathized with Hannibal, the incensed conquerors confiscated large masses of land to the state, and ejected the free Italian proprietors; so that, instead of being in the hands of freehold cultivators, Italy was very disproportionately occupied by domain land, nominally belonging to the state, but practically held in masses by the aristocracy, and tended by slaves. To this calamitous result of the second Punic war the later disorders of the Roman state can be mainly traced. How instructive it is for free and powerful nations to learn that the evils which war inflicts upon them are not to be measured by the immediate visible losses! Internal disorganization is often a more fatal consequence than carnage and prodigious waste of substance.

One great event has profitably arrested victorious England, to which there is nothing similar in the Roman history: (let us hope that it will save us from the fate of Rome!)—I mean, the successful revolt of our American colonies. Sir James Mackintosh has called this the greatest event in modern history: probably because he regarded it as determining that the New World shall be filled with great Republics; as also, because it so vehemently contributed towards the first French Revolution. But I here regard it in another point of view, viz., as raising up a second great naval power by the side of England, and, by its example to our other colonies, making it morally impossible for us to turn our empire into a despotism. If England had been victorious in the American war, she might, indeed, afterwards have conceded all that was under contest, as we have done in the case of Canada. But we probably should not: rather, we should have tried to enforce our rule, we should have been more rigorous towards the other colonies, and have set up a great despotism: we must have kept powerful armies for this purpose, with great danger to our own liberties at home. A dread of this heightened the sympathies of our great Whig party with the colonists during the struggle, and greatly aided the ultimate result. We may now regard it as happily decided, that England is *not*, like Rome, to lose her liberties through her conquests.

One Roman war there is, in its moral aspects, not dissimilar to this American war of England. I mean the war against the Italian allies (B. C. 90), who demanded equal civil rights with the Romans. The Italians were at that time virtually but one nation with Rome. They had (except Etruria) the same language, religion, manners, sentiments, capacities. They were in no respect inferior, and their demand was as just to make as it would have been wise to concede. But the concession had been delayed by selfishness so long that the Italians at last demanded it with arms in their hands; and then the Romans were too proud to concede until they should have disarmed the revolters. Every thing was granted to those who had, as yet, stood aloof;—a confession that Rome knew her cause to be bad. Then ensued a deadly war, in which 180,000 men of both sides are estimated to have perished, until at last the scale turned in favour of Rome. After this the allies, with some exceptions, were admitted to the franchise which they had claimed, and sadly late attempts were made to heal the ravages of Italy.

If the Italian allies had made a successful resistance (a supposition nowise extreme), they would have established a second or northern Italian Republic in Corfinium, with two yearly consuls, similar to those in Rome; for, in fact, they had already so organized themselves. Had such a power existed for but one generation, it would have forced Rome to enfranchise Sicily and Spain and the Carthaginian territory, which they called Africa, as the sole way to repair her strength; and even if (as is almost certain) the two Republics had afterwards coalesced by conquest or by goodwill, the temporary success of the Italians might nevertheless have saved freedom. But (alas for Europe, and for Rome herself!) the inveterate military system, backed by long-experienced wily policy, prevailed. Freedom could nowhere stand against Rome, and therefore it did not long stand within Rome.

While, in this respect, the fortunes of England have been happily different, it is of interest to compare our British Empire in India with that which the Romans erected beyond Italy. The original circumstances of the conquerors were exceedingly contrasted. The Romans rested on the territorial basis of Italy, and had a large homogeneous population of native soldiers. The East India Company had a few fortified factories for the purposes of trade on Indian

soil—no sovereignty anywhere to fall back upon—no troops but mercenaries, and for their support no appropriate funds. Nearly all the empire of republican Rome was conquered by strictly Italian soldiers; but British India has been conquered chiefly with Indian sepoys, acting under British officers. In a military point of view, the English victories in India may appear more marvellous than those of Rome; but such comparisons are superficial and rather uninteresting. It is more to the purpose to consider the policy pursued during war and after conquest.

In each case the conqueror owed at least as much to policy (which was deep and versatile, often cunning or treacherous) as to the force of arms. As the English gained help from petty chieftains in India and from Indian soldiers, and by a series of alliances won battles, and from victories formed new alliances, so did the Romans abroad. Thus, when they first set foot on Greece against the Macedonian power, they entered into league with the Ætolians, who were hostile to Macedon. They used the Ætolian force as long as it proved convenient. They affected to liberate Southern Greece from Philip, the Macedonian King, and by such arts succeeded in crippling him. They farther got aid from the Rhodians and from Attalus, King of Pergamus, against Antiochus the Great, who crossed from Asia to oppose them: but no sooner had they repelled him than they neglected, insulted, and crushed the Ætolians, not without pleasure to Philip and to the southern Greeks, who were, in their turn, presently attacked; and, in time, the Rhodians also, and all who were foolish enough to expect from Rome any other gratitude than that which Polyphemus promised Ulysses—viz., to reserve him for his last mouthful.

Such a description of Roman conquest is very revolting; but there is one consideration that a little softens it, as in the parallel case of England, or is at least instructive—namely, such conquest would have been impossible, had not the conquerors possessed *one* great virtue in which the conquered were deficient; viz., mutual trust and mutual faithfulness. The Greeks, as the nations of India in modern times, were full of mutual distrust, and with too good reason. I will not venture to enter into the comparison how much less treacherous towards the foreigner has been *our* course in India than that of Rome; but it is clear that the military strength of every people depends far more on having a single idea, and a full devotion to that idea, than on all other virtues; and, though this is no virtue in itself, it generally gives rise to a thousand virtues in detail through the heroism which self-abandonment inspires.

After their first successes against a small power, the Romans generally inflicted cruel slaughters or expatriations. In theory, the State was generally left free and independent, only *protected* by Rome. It had its own laws, and constitution, and native magistrates, as before; and Rome seemed still to stand outside. Yet, in fact, the magistrates dared to do nothing without the approval of a Roman commissioner. In this way the nation served apprenticeship of obedience, until all the men were dead who remembered freedom; after which, as soon as convenient, the country was absorbed in a Roman province. This implied that no natives were henceforth to bear rule, but only Roman officers. Martial dominion was made the permanent system. The civil judge had at his side lictors with axes, to tell plainly that the life of every provincial was at his mercy. Native law was annihilated. The business of the Roman governor generally was to enrich himself in his year of office; a task not difficult in a wealthy province, by accepting bribes in the infinite mass of lawsuits which this system brought before him. So infernal a system of oppression, under the mask of law, was perhaps never before invented by civilized conquerors.

If we compare this with our proceedings in British India, we find many similarities, with many happy advantages on our side. We never disgrace our conquests by personal cruelties or resentments against classes of men. We have generally looked out for princes of a conquered dynasty, not to imprison or kill them, but to give them a princely salary and royal title; and we have generally taken pains not to reduce our enemy to despair. Our military system is subordinated to the civilian; nor does the judge make the law at pleasure; nor have we ever forced English law upon the natives. If our rule is in fact oppressive, it is not through individual wickedness so much as by its intrinsic unsuitability. Nevertheless, with us, as with the Romans, the states which are *protected*, whether they have been enemies or allies, infallibly lose their independence, and are at length absorbed in the great empire. Loyalty then becomes an impossible virtue, and patriotism can take no form but that of rebellion; which are evils of first-rate magnitude.

But when the conquered state was at all considerable, the Romans often adopted the intermediate step of breaking it up into smaller states. Thus, after their first victories over Philip of Macedon, they were satisfied with stripping him of all his extraneous resources, so as to shut him up into his own kingdom. Meanwhile, they devoured the rest of Greece in detail. When this had been done, they entered into a new war with his son Perseus; and, after conquering him, divided his kingdom into four parts or tetrarchies, which were now *protected* in nominal independence, but with a jealous prohibition of any common plans and counsels. About two generations later came the final throwing off of the mask, and the absorbing of all four into the Roman Province of Macedonia. It is impossible for an Englishman to avoid thinking how we have subdivided the kingdom of our ally, Runjeet Singh, because we are not yet ready to incorporate it with our empire. But the instructiveness of the comparison is this: it teaches us to judge Roman statesmen rather more mildly. I freely avow, that to me the rise and advance of Roman empire appears the direst calamity which ancient Europe ever endured; and I regard the admiration lavished on the civilization which their arms extended as a gross and pernicious blunder. The individual statesmen of Rome were often cruel and brutal towards foreigners; so that on all sides I can have no sympathy with the conquering Roman. Nevertheless, I believe the great and unmanageable evil was in the conquest itself, the conquest of nations that have a homesprung civilization by uncongenial foreigners; and if, instead of Metelluses, Scipios, Catos, and Mariuses, men like Lord Lake, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Auckland, Lord Hardinge had been at the head of the Roman empire, though many details of cruelty would have been avoided, yet (I suspect) the general series of events would not have been very different. Pretences for new and new wars would not have been wanting, and would have been grasped at. The steps of policy which strike us as so invidious

would often have been adopted by the most humane of our statesmen as much as by the most heartless of the Romans; and the oppression of the people, with or without our will, would have continued, as it did, until, by the miseries of several generations, all that was native, and racy, and prominent in the character of the conquered people had been violently ground away. After they had lost manliness, and bravery, and personal dignity, they would at last begin to thrive and fatten like tamed cattle. Such was the civilization which Rome bestowed, until the admiring emperor was able to point at the marks of prosperity and physical abundance.

The problem of our empire is not yet solved; nor will any great light be shed on the question, What ought we now to do? by considering what the Romans did, or did not. This would be pedantic, even in a practical argument of politics; and quite absurd to enter upon in a lecture to ladies. But, on the other hand, I think much light is shed on the question, What ought we to wish for? by studying this history: and this is a very main point, and, I may add, one in which women are far from being unimportant. Men devise how an end is to be brought about; women in no small degree dictate to men to what ends they shall aspire. But I pass to the matter itself before us. No history was ever better adapted than that of Rome to show us the undesirableness of conquest to the people that conquers, and to rid us of that false patriotism which desires aggrandizement for our country at any price and in any cause. How unbridled ambition at last plunges itself into dangers that overpower it is exhibited by many thrilling tales of history; but the story of Rome shows peculiarly the evil of success. She did not fall, like Athens, by failing in distant and splendid enterprises, but by allowing a general to form armies strong enough to subdue France. These same armies afterwards overpowered Italy, and made freedom for ever impossible. The cruelty of the early Cæsars rooted out the Roman aristocracy: little remained of pure Roman blood in the plebeian multitude. For whom then had Rome conquered? For a series of emperors and their German guard. A despotism was thus erected which destroyed genius and steadily cut away all the roots of national greatness, until the decay had gone so far that the irruptions of northern barbarians were irrepressible.

We hear a great deal, and justly, about false religion; but I think we need to hear a little more about false patriotism. I would on no account disparage military merit, where the cause is assumed to be a good one. But I cannot admit that it is the part of a good or wise man to wish success to his country, where he is convinced that the cause is bad, or to wish to her such successes as shall tempt her to insolence and injustice. For our country we must desire a real welfare, a true happiness, not a hollow and deceitful prosperity. But as to an individual nothing is more dangerous than to be left without controul, so to a state it is not good to be too powerful. There are many who think it patriotic to deprecate the growth of other countries, who grudge that the United States should be powerful on the Atlantic, or Russia in the extreme East, lest either interfere with the supremacy of England. I reply: oh, that British power had more restraint in Asia! There is no permanence for a country which has no antagonism. The true patriot will desire that his country may not only be just, but be constrained to be; for states are not more virtuous than individuals, but less so; and we cannot individually bear the permission to be rude and violent. We will then not wish for Roman aggrandizement, Roman isolation, Roman decay and ruin; but to be good as well as great, just as well as splendid, to be one powerful state among many sisters; and, if so it may be, wish to aid others onward into like strength, being persuaded that in states, as in individuals, selfishness is folly, and prudence needs not to be selfish. Let us hope to approximate to a time when we shall not love Country less, but Mankind more, so that as County interests are swallowed up in those of the Nation, so at length National interests may be absorbed and comprized in those of Man.

SONG.

Cold heart, I heed not thee;
Cold heart, judge thou not me;
Soon, soon, must I depart:
Farewell, farewell, cold heart!
Farewell, farewell!

As in the lonely vale
Fadeth the windflower pale,
Where bee nor butterfly
Mourns when her blossoms die,
In her sweet cell.

So none will mourn for me,
When from lone earth I flee;
So, too, must I depart:
Farewell, farewell, cold heart!
Farewell, farewell!

M.

PETER FOLGER.

A YANKEE SKETCH.

In the year 1840 I spent a few months in the pleasant island town of Sherburne, in the state of Massachusetts, making my home at a second-rate hotel called "The American Eagle." The landlord was a quiet, good-natured, stupid sort of man, wholly given over to sleep and tobacco, and disposed to treat his house as if it were a huge Connecticut clock, to be wound up once a week, and then left to manage itself. At the time of my visit, however, the old clock was about to assume a new face, and there was to be a change of hands. For just at that time there happened to come to the "Eagle" as a guest a Yankee named Peter Folger.

Peter was a tall, thin, broad-shouldered man, with long, hollow cheeks, high, precipice sort of forehead, large aggressive nose, fierce grey eyes, and the mouth,

teeth (and appetite) of a shark. Their knife and fork exercise was a study, even in America. Yet it never interfered, in the least, with the exercise of his tongue. And such a tongue! It reminds me yet of a cotton-mill. Not that Peter was anything of a bore. Far from it. He talked incessantly, to be sure, but he always talked to some purpose. His keen eye darted at once into the heart of a thing. He never swam long on the surface, but dived to the bottom at once, and staid there as long as he could hold his breath, and then came up, like a whale, to spout. Peter could not only talk, he could do. He could do anything. He was "Jack of all trades," and, despite the old saw, good at all. He could be carpenter, smith, tailor, sweep, painter, cook, architect, shoemaker, parson, at will. He was a good boxer, a first-rate swimmer, a crack whip, a famous conjuror, a noted mesmerist, and a—dead shot.

Before Peter had been at "The American Eagle" an hour, he saw that it needed a master. Before he had been there twenty-four hours he resolved to be that master. To this end, the morning after his arrival (having first prepared himself for his work by a regular American breakfast of baked beans and pork) he pulled the bell-rope to order up the—landlord. The rope broke, and Peter turned a somersault over his chair, which would have drawn cheers from Widdicomb. He then commenced an entirely original air upon the pine floor, with the tongs and the poker. By this means he at last raised the maid, who, on receiving her orders, vanished like a shadow. In about an hour (by the Eagle clock) up came the landlord, like the ace of trumps, and began to grumble like the deuce.

What had he done to be called up at that time in the morning. He had slept in that house for forty years, and never been disturbed in this way before. He wouldn't stand it. If people didn't like the "American Eagle," they might go to the "British Lion," or, for aught he cared, to the "Mexican Ass."

"There, old fellow, now you keep quiet," said Peter, "while I talk to you like a father! Now, then, don't go to sleep, but button back your eyelids till I've done with you. Just look here! I want to drive a bargain with you. What'll you take for the American Eagle?"

Now, be it known that no unburied Yankee is proof against the word bargain. It goes like an arrow to every American heart. Not even the somnolent nature of our landlord could resist it; for the moment the word was spoken his little elephant eyes began to twinkle, and his old brain to revolve as if he had experienced an electric shock.

"What'll you take for the American Eagle?"

Though it was like asking the old fellow what he would take for his soul, or his wife, or his pipe, he addressed himself to the question with all his remaining faculty, and for about half an hour seemed to be wholly absorbed by it. During his meditations, Peter paced to and fro the room with the restlessness of a caged lion.

At last, the labouring pipe having quite exhausted itself, the landlord took the hint, and beckoning Peter to a chair, said to him that if he had any proposition to make concerning "The American Eagle," he might "go a-head with it."

Peter obeyed the summons, and, in a few words, not difficult even for our host to understand, set forth that as the aforesaid "Eagle" was evidently going to the dogs, he, Peter Folger, from the enterprising port of Damariscotta, was prepared to take it into his own keeping, and, in less than a twelvemonth, transform it into just the smartest bird that ever presented a bill.

The landlord demurred in general terms to Peter's scheme; insisted, in the face of all evidence, that the "Eagle" was in a high state of preservation; and swore, by his very pipe, that it had been as good to him as a raven for the last forty years.

Peter, asserting all such talk to be "gammon," and appealing to the empty coffee-room, the broken bell rope, and even the sprawling chair, for proof, proceeded with a series of calculations and guesses, which so impressed the landlord with a sense of shrewdness and power, that he suddenly broke in upon his guest with the startling question:—

"What'll you give for the American Eagle?"

Now commenced the tug of war. Behold these two Yankees, disciples, both, of "THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR," as they stand, in the utmost attitude of trade, and seek each to get to the windward of the other. They shake their heads; seize each other by the button; snap their eyes; whistle; whittle; make curious passes, like a brace of mesmerists; draw in their breath; discharge it again; puff, pant, perspire; until, at last (as was certain from the first) the vanquished landlord sinks back into his chair a used-up man, and the conqueror, making a bow to the company, consisting of myself and the cat, announces himself to the surprise of us both, and to the evident dismay of the cat, "GOVERNOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE AMERICAN EAGLE."

The old landlord disappeared at once and for ever, and Peter assumed his place.

Such a ringing of bells (for bells now rung that never rung before), such a rattling of crockery, quarrelling of pots and kettles, flying of dust and feathers, hammering of nails, smashing of glass, barking of dogs, throttling of kittens, never was heard of. The old "Eagle" screamed with agony. The neighbouring streets were crowded, from morning till night, for a week, with swarms of black and white vagabonds, who could be dispersed only by a free distribution of old washstands and bedposts, varied by periodical discharges of hot water and ashes. But out of all this chaos soon came perfect order; and in a month from Peter's inauguration the new house was one of "the best in the country," and Peter was the Prince of Publicans.

All this happened ten years ago, and we have our eye on Peter yet. But he is no longer landlord of the "American Eagle" at Sherburne. The same Yankee activity that placed him in that position, has since then carried him triumphantly through a series of changes all leading upward; and Peter is now a great man and a member of Congress. We shall, probably, soon see him as a candidate for the Presidency; and if so, everybody else may as well make way for him, and come down, like David Crockett's 'coon; for Peter, as we said before, is a dead shot.