

INTRODUCTIONS.

There is one subject concerning which the American people labor under a most grievous error. I allude to the general and indiscriminate passion for introductions. Not introductions to books, which are very good things in their way, provided they be not too long; but introductions to persons—forcible abductions, so to speak, of a human being out from the jurisdiction of his or her rational inclinations without the preliminary form of an extradition treaty.

If there be one inherent right of a man which should be respected under any and all forms of government—imperial, constitutional, monarchic, patriarchal, or elective—it is the undoubted prerogative of each individual to have a voice in the selection of his acquaintances. An old Spanish proverb says, "Tell me who your associates are, and I will tell you what you are;" and yet, in the face of the universal credence attached to this saying, a man's character and reputation are, in our great republic, entirely at the mercy of every ruthless monomaniac of whom he may have the slightest possible knowledge.

The worst feature of this great social evil is that it increases in a geometrical progression with x for a ratio. The common but surprising problem relating to a barber, founded on the number of nails in a horse's shoe, is a trivial impertinence compared with the stupendous proportions soon assumed by one's range of acquaintances in a large city under the hideous system that prevails. For instance—you have the ill luck to meet one John Smith some day at one of your usual resorts. Smith was, perhaps, a college classmate, or a fellow-clerk in a counting-house (before you rose to your present commercial eminence); or, preadventure, he is a client, or a patient (if a learned profession claim you). At all events, Smith is a fact; a disagreeable one, it may be, but none the less a fact. Smith is, of course, delighted to see you, and, after a few anxious inquiries touching your health and "your folk's," avails himself of the opportunity to "make you acquainted" with Messrs. Brown, Jones and Robinson, three friends of his, who happen to be with him on that occasion. If you should be residents of the same city, the chances are that you will meet Smith nearly every day, and that, at each meeting, he will present you to a fresh batch of "friends;" for such fellows as he are popular men, and seldom go abroad without picking up a few desultory companions. This is bad enough; but it is only a beginning to your catalogue of undesired introductions. Each of Smith's friends has as large a circle of acquaintances as the original poisoner of your social existence; and, go where you will—to a hotel, to a reading room, in cars, steamboats, banking houses, restaurants—in town or county—you are sure to meet some one of Brown, Jones, Robinson and Company, and as sure to be presented to some half dozen more of their friends until your mind reels, and you envy the position, social and physical, of St. Simon Stylites as one precluding introductions except through a speaking-trumpet. If you be of a nervous temperament, you are forced to shun public promenades and other "busy haunts of men" by the momentary fear that some "veterated" acquaintance may grapple with you, and parade his arm-in-arm vulgarity—horrible idea!—even thrust upon you still others of his cognizance and kidney.

This is the most appalling phase of the epidemic in question; but there are other forms of the disease less grave as to their effects upon the reputation of the sufferer, but involving an even more acute pang at the time of infliction. Prominent among these is what may be termed "Ball-room Borgianism"—a sacrificial ceremony wherein the lady of the house officiates as high-priestess, and immolates defenseless male youth upon the altars of unresponsive Wall-Floras. You find upon your library table a crested missive, through whose copper-palated medium Mrs. Hautevolee requests the pleasure of your company on Monday the—th instant, at 9 o'clock. Dancing, R. S. V. P. Knowing that the adorable Euphrasia will be there, you have, veraciously and conventionally, "great pleasure in accepting Mrs. Hautevolee's polite invitation for Monday evening next, and Bridget

receives particular attention about "doling up" your white cravat with the embroidered ends, and the elaborate shirt-bosom you brought from Paris. A week passes, filled with entrancing visions of Euphrasia and Fairyland; murmured rapture in the mazy waltz; delicious intercourse of souls in the conservatory's leafiest nook; sweet sounds and floating perfumes; and at last Monday evening comes. Who that sees you enter those resplendent rooms can realize the anxious care bestowed upon that *degage* costume—the *ars celare artem* adroitly manifested in the easy tie of the white cravat with the embroidered ends? Who among that throng of worldly votaries can know that beneath the elaborate shirt-bosom swelling heart crinkles the superfine starch with palpable tremor? The saloons swarm with lovely girls; a vanishing perspective of gauzy robes and flashing jewels is indefinitely reflected in opposing mirrors; soft, languid music steals through the air, rising and falling in the hum of conversation; the "world" is there with its hopes and fears, its intrigues and enmities; but what are all these to you? Your eyes, your ears, your thoughts are centered in Euphrasia; Euphrasia, who sits yonder, more bewitchingly than ever, being terribly bored (you feel sure) by that stupid, conceited puppy, Blifflins, whom you remember when his father kept a small shop in the "thread-needle" line of business, and whose intelligence, education, and fortune you are confident are very much overrated. Being a man of the world, you are, of course, too diplomatic to address the object of your devotion at once; your policy (worldly schemer that you are) is to wait until the earlier crowd shall have dispersed; to be dutifully polite to ladies present who have invited you to their parties, and ingratiatingly attentive to those who may invite you hereafter; and then, when supper-time arrives, to offer her your arm; minister to her wants; to struggle fiercely for her refection; and afterward to thrill through three blissful hours of "German" with her as partner. You pass her, therefore, with a bow and an expressive glance, and enter upon your routine of "business," artfully contriving, as midnight draws near, to remain unencumbered by confining your civilities to such fair beings as are certain to be claimed by other admiring swains.

Finally, the supper-room doors swing open, and the reward of all your toil seems close at hand; you are hastening to where Euphrasia's delicate kid glove awaits your protecting broadcloth, when the hostess arrests your progress, and like a civil highway-woman, robs you of your birth-right of free agency, and remorselessly scratches from your grasp the prize for which you have waited and served so long. She "wants to introduce you to a very sweet girl who doesn't know many gentlemen, and who has no partner for the 'German.' Would you kindly see that she gets some supper?" Resistance is futile. You know that there is no escape; so, with a gulp of resignation, you suffer yourself to be handed over to the custody of an immature seraph with pronounced collar-bones and a freckled complexion, whose vocabulary consists mainly of monosyllables, and whose comprehension has never soared higher than the level of a school history. She feeds voraciously at supper (how different from the delicate daintiness of Euphrasia!), and when the 'German' commences you discover that she dances execrably, and puts water on her hair. To add to your anguish, Euphrasia (doubtless reserving herself for you) is for sometime without a partner, but finally dances with the brutal Blifflins, whom you watch, eight couples away, grinning and basking in the light of her smile, while you, the legitimate heir to that happiness, are exiled to the arid promontories and sterile plains of the seraph's mind and body.

But if an "arbitrary arrest," such as the foregoing, be reprehensible, even when made by the high official authority of the hostess, what language can adequately anathematise the still more aggravated instances of kidnapping constantly perpetrated in "society" by brothers, cousins, uncles, and guardians of an unprotected debutantes? The hand that traces these lines has scores of times been clasped with hypocritical fervor by felonious men who sought a victim to whom they might

transfer the incubus of some forlorn female relative, and whom, once lodged within her desperate clutch, they would leave to his fate throughout the weary night, pursuing the pleasures of their own emancipation in heartless indifference to the languishing captive.

Can no species of social *habeas corpus* be devised for the relief of such cases of distress? Is there no law to prevent such flagrant breaches of the peace of mind? The minor miscreant restricts your personal liberty in the outer world is condignly punished by the laws of the land; but what are their crimes compared with the offence against the nobler inner man, involved in these fashionable garrottings?

Many people consider it a point of good breeding to present each of their visitors to all the rest; and, consequently, every new-comer on their "reception days" is formally retailed out to some dozen or fifteen previous arrivals.

This may occasionally produce some awkward complications. Cardovan and I fell out some ten years or more ago. (Oh, Sophronia! there are scars which never, never fade.) From that time to this a mortal enmity has been between us. We glare defiance at each other in the streets, and each is to the other gall and worm-wood; and yet scarcely a month passes wherein we are not introduced by some well-meaning person at whose house we chance to meet. To me the oft-repeated form has lost its bitterness; but I can see his coarser nature wince under the chilling courtesy with which I recognized his presence. By continued practice I have succeeded in imparting to my "delighted to make your acquaintance, Sir," a barb which I can see rankle in his plebeian soul; and my adolescent anguish is amply revenged.

A trustful mind, unlearned in the world's vile ways, might innocently imagine that by refraining from the outer intercourse of society, and adopting an eremitical course of life, these persecutions could be avoided. Vain delusion! You may forego the privilege of breathing the free air of heaven; you may shun your fellow-men, and resign the sphere of lovely woman's inspiring influence; you may forget old acquaintances, but you can not escape new ones. Popular solicitude will be aroused by your absence from your wonted resorts, and objectionable interlopers will "just drop in to see how you are," each one "taking the liberty to present a friend who happened to be passing with him." Should you be so utterly unfortunate as to possess a tastefully furnished house, a valuable picture, a fine group of statuary, a cabinet of coins or conchology, or any other attraction to public curiosity, your fate is sealed. "Not at home" is an entirely ineffective barrier against intruders. Every one who has ever had the most distant intercourse with you will bring scores of country connections to examine the interesting features of your domicile, and they troop from garret to cellar, hunting you down in any place of concealment you may have resorted to, and forcing upon your hospitality a crowd of prying inquisitors, each of whom will probably within the week presume upon this formality to act as cicerone to a party of his own selection.

At your club you are pursued by the same relentless ill-fortune. A visitor from another city, perhaps, brings a letter of introduction to you, and as the simplest mode of disposing of him, you inscribe his name upon the list of club guests. Now, one would suppose that to the most ordinary comprehension it would be self-evident that the fact of your neglecting to avail yourself of the facilities offered by club life to form the acquaintance of some of your fellow-members of long standing, must necessarily arise from disinclination on one side or the other; but the very first demonstration of gratitude on the part of your invited guest is to introduce you to the man whom, of all others, you have most sedulously striven not to know.

Illustrations of the nuisance under consideration could be multiplied *ad infinitum*; but I trust that enough has already been said to impress upon my kind readers the importance of speedy and thorough reform; not precluding the inauguration of an intercourse between persons likely to prove mutually agreeable, but branding the want of tact which imagines it necessary to inflict an abominable formality upon even the worst assorted members of the human family.

A HINT ON CARPETS.

Of all the expensive things in a modern house of the ordinary class, perhaps, carpets are the dearest. In case of removal, they become almost useless, and have to be sacrificed at any price that can be got for them, because, having been cut and measured for one room, perhaps of a peculiar shape, they are useless in any other; for if the pattern could be matched, which it often cannot, a bit of bran new carpet sown on to a bit not so new, would be out of harmony, and tell a story which the pride of poverty would rather wear concealed. The Persian and Turkish system of carpeting rooms is infinitely better and prettier than ours. The Persian carpet, especially those from Beshit, are exquisitely beautiful. Their colors are brighter, the designs prettier, and they are far more durable than our carpets. They are made in strips usually between two and three yards long, and about one yard in breadth, to go around the sides of the room, with a square carpet, of any size, preferred for the center.

They do not require to be nailed or fitted, and a sufficient number of them will of course carpet any room, however large or small. They have a very rich and grand appearance, too. In Summer they are easily taken up, beaten, rolled, and put aside by a single servant man; and in the hot weather why should we not more generally imitate Continental custom, by painting or polishing floors! Floors painted or polished look far prettier in July sunshine than any carpets, which are then mere fausty traps to catch dust, harbor insects and retain bad smells. Everything has its use and its seasons. The use and season of carpets are not in the Summer time. Where it is impossible to paint or polish the floors of a house the employment of oil cloth will be found good economy in Summer, and far cleaner. Oil cloth, too, of charming patterns, may now be bought very cheap, and it keeps a room delightfully cool and fresh.

AN INVERTED GLASS OF WATER.—Wipe a wine-glass perfectly dry; then pour water into it until it is quite full. Now take a card, carefully place it on the top of the water, and press it on the rim of the glass. If this be cleverly done, there will be no air bubble between the card and the water; and if the glass be very full, this can be certainly accomplished. Now dexterously turn the glass upside down, keeping the finger on the card the while. This being done, the finger can be removed from the card, and yet the water will not run out, nor will the card fall away, owing to the pressure of the air upwards on the card, and there being no air within the glass. If the glass still inverted be placed on a dish, the card can with care sometimes be slipped away, and yet no water will run out. In this way you may hand a glass of water to a friend, but he cannot remove it without spilling the whole.

GATHERING MANNA.—A correspondent sends the following: "The children of Israel, when journeying toward the Promised Land, gathered manna each morning that fell each night, during a portion of their wanderings in the wilderness. What that manna was, we have no means of knowing, as no explanation has ever been given. We were reminded of the circumstance by witnessing the gathering of honey dew by the aborigines. Every morning, for a long time, the Indian females were seen busily picking up some substance beneath the huge oaks in front of our residence. Curiosity led us to investigation, and we found that they were picking up the honey dew that had fallen and candied, some of them having large rolls of the Indian manna. The query in our mind was, whether the children of Israel did not gather honey dew and call it manna.

MEXICAN ALABASTER.—Large deposits of very fine alabaster have been discovered in Mexico, which resembles the very finest onyx of Algiers. It is extensively used in France for tables, clocks, mantels, and other ornamental purposes. It was supposed to be chiefly composed of gypsum, but recent analysis made by Damour show it to be a carbonate and not a sulphate. It is a carbonate of lime, magnesia, iron and manganese. Fine specimens of this stone are on Exhibition in Philadelphia.