Lachrymals Versus Pocket-Handkerchiefs https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acw8433.1-10.230/208:4?page=ro...

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in advance; and this conflict between report and our own observation confuses us. The cheering has almost wholly died away; at least, so it seems in our vicinity. No one knows quite what his neighbor is doing; all are watching; and only occasional, ineffective cries of "Yale" and "Harvard" strike out under the gray and darkening sky. The faint dusk which has already begun to creep over the river is hardly needed to throw a hesitancy over our judgment of the final issue. The telegraph-operators themselves have apparently lost their presence of mind; and the assistant totters feebly at his bulletin-cards, and then desists altogether. Then, all at once, a deafening scream of "Yale!" and a turmoil of triumphant voices come from a point a little nearer the finish.

It is all over. We linger about for a moment, and look at each other.

"Too bad!" says one.

Another, whose voice is hoarse and altered from the long standing in damp garments and the strenuous cheering, says: "There's some mistake!"

The telegraph-man hastily strips down his cards; and still no relief comes in the shape of a denial that Yale has won. Then the conviction that every thing is finished comes over us all, and we break away at once and run for a wagon. There is a host of these on the ground, but all are filled in an instant. Making a fortunate scramble, we find ourselves among a wagon-load of silent and dejected devotees of Harvard. But the unsatisfactory result of the race does not altogether reconcile us to the thought of immediate death, of which, nevertheless, we seem to be in some peril, from the reckless driving which now ensues. After jolting and twisting our way through dangers of multifarious collision, and jaunting more easily over an improvised road through a tobacco-field, which happens to lie between us and the main road, we find ourselves in the Agawam turnpike, on the way to Springfield again. From each of the more northern posts of observation along the river, a similar train of vehicles to that which came from the grand stand pours out into the highway, so that we find our clumsy omnibus to be one of a concourse of carriages that must be something like two miles in length. There were fast teams and slow teams, and some must pass the others; and, at intervals, therefore, a rush was made, the line thrown into confusion, and, amid a sharp cracking of whips, some one drove ahead. The pace was never less than a trot, and frequently increased to a gallop; and the road was of such abysmal uncertainty here and there, and had such a decided convex curve of surface, that the naturally stimulant conditions of the ride were greatly enhanced. The whole movement was like that of a routed army falling back upon its base. In this case, however, we were making a strategic descent upon supper. Thousands of people were pouring simultaneously toward Springfield, each little party in the mass fearing that every thing eatable in the town would have been consumed before their arrival. The spasmodic races which thus occurred here and there along the line sometimes assumed the character of contests upon the river to the excited imaginations of the participants.

"They're taking our water!" cries some one, indignantly, of a carriage in front.

"Forge ahead, then, and give them our wash," says another.

Once, a rickety hack, driving up from behind, passed us, tilting over on the rounded road not a little, as a ship under full sail might lean before a breeze on her quarter. It was full of young women, wearing blue. Only one gentleman was with them, and he, crushed, stretched a despairing arm, clothed in brown linen, out of the window, clinging to the frame of the carriage near its top.

"Hurrah for the Yale and the blue!" sang the young women, spitefully, waving their blue streamers, as they rolled by.

But, at one point on the road, we were more kindly greeted. A young man, with dark, curly hair, and an enormous magenta rosette on his coat, stood at the door of a meek, white house, of small dimensions, shouting "Har-vard!" several times. He pointed, also, to his rosette, for fear we should not have seen it. Behind him, in the obscurity of the little porch, appeared a short, gray, modest woman, in all probability his mother, who, in a quiet way, seemed to take part in the youth's freshman-like ardor. But, alas! no response was vouchsafed him from our dispirited company, and his pathetic enthusiasm was neglected. He looked just a shade disappointed, but not much, and, as we continued on our way, retired silently, with his little, wistful mother, into the small white house. Meanwhile, plunging on through dust and discord, we drew toward the end of our route. Occasional allusions were still made to Harvard's defeat, of course; and at last one of our number, who had been hardening into a more and more cynical expression all the way, muttered, gloomily, "I guess those girls from Northampton lost their gloves—betting—Harvard," and so dropped his chin morosely upon the handle of his upright umbrella, keeping it there until darkness fell, and we passed through the long, covered, and lamplit bridge leading into the city.

The four hours which followed our return—the hours from eight in the evening until midnight—were really as much a part of the race as those which had preceded. We came back with the dust of defeat upon us, only to find that, in Springfield, everybody believed Harvard to have won the victory. The crew of that university had indeed received the prize-flags, and supposed themselves triumphant; and it was not until the night was spent that the decision in their favor was reversed. But, in the interval, a surging crowd of young men, owing allegiance to Cambridge or New Haven, had rushed seething into the office and passage-ways of the Massasoit House, and there continued to sway about in ceaseless babble and agitation, questioning one another, hurrying and jostling hither and thither, and raising in conflict the cry of either rival.

. . . .

When I closed my eyes, two hours after midnight, in the narrow seat of a railroad-car, amid a mass of relaxed humanity, which sought by every contrivance to bring its limp muscles and the hard edges of the seat-backs into soporific connivance, I saw before me a vast river, filled with swift, silent boats, ever speeding past, without really advancing; shores crowded by dense ranks of spectators; the listless droop of large flags among trees, the flippant flutter of little ones on the press-steamboat, and the glimmer of gay badges in the crowd; and always the sharp spurt of smitten water, and its angry gleam beneath the oars, as the race was rowed and rowed again. The tired brain could no longer control its action, and continually reproduced, in various or exaggerated shape, the scene of the day's excitement, as our train thundered homeward through the night. After several hours of deep sleep in the flying car, I awoke. The white, rainy glare from the misty world beyond the windows announced the morning. It seemed an indefinite period since the rowing of the race. Some one in another part of the car, talking in a drowsy, daybreak sort of tone to a companion, was discussing again the topic of the struggle between Harvard and Yale.

"You see, the finish-line" . . . . (the rest I lost); "and Yale's course was" . . . . (again the conclusion escaped me).

Where was I? Where had I been? When did it happen? Could it be possible that I had seen and was returning from the college regatta?

G. P. LATHROP.

LACHRYMALS VERSUS POCKET-HANDKERCHIEFS.

I HAD been standing on the steps of "Stewart's," Tenth Street, while a perfect Red Sea of step-keeping regimentals passed by, and then and there my pocket was relieved of my very best laced and embroidered *mouchoir*. Now, a pocket-handkerchief is but a vulgar appendage to the dress, suggesting the uncannie need thereof, so broadly spoken out by Othello, and which must have been unpleasant to Desdemona in more ways than one.

This loss set me a thinking, till the common designation grew quite repulsive to me, and I cast about for a substitute. *Mouchoir* will not do—it is only Frenchifying the same thing. All at once it flashed upon me like a revelation—lachrymals! Is not the word an improvement? classical? suggestive? Does it not soften and elevate a common idea? Does it not carry the thought over and beyond the volcanic region of the nose, up to the beautiful stars in the heaven of the human face, where sits enthroned the language of the soul? Does it not open the world of tender romance to the mind, where the smile is just within the boundary-line of tears? Moonlight, and balconies, and fair damosels, and manly lovers, awake at the sound. Ships sail out on summer seas, and return no more. Fond wives, and noble men, and still lips, and marble brows! Margery pulls the daisies, and whispers, "He loves" (drops a leaf), and, "a little—much—passionately—not at all"—ah! the French is prettier—*un peu—beau-*

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coup—*passionnément*—*pas du tout*—and we feel the tear in her gentle eyes as she repeats the last with the last daisy-leaf, and to say she put a pocket-handkerchief to her eyes is matter-of-fact, and a little vulgar; but to say she raised her lachrymal becomes tender, ideal.

Pocket-handkerchief is savagely utilitarian—monstrously suggestive of coughs and catarrhs, iron north winds, and frost-red noses; whereas a lachrymal appeals to the eyes, and hints of a tear rather than a cold in the head. Let us christen them lachrymals till such time as better harmonies shall lift us above the necessity of their use; till colds, and tears, and all manner of rheums and megrims, shall disappear; and then, if by any mischance a tear should be forthcoming, we can do as Milton's Eve did, who

"Wiped them with her hair,"

or drop them plump and round upon something we wish to efface, after the manner of Sterne's angel, who flew up to heaven's chancery with Uncle Toby's oath, and the recording angel made good use of a tear by blotting out a sin.

Tears should well from the heart in token of divine sympathies, and fall upon a lachrymal, not a pocket-handkerchief. I have sometimes been at a loss to understand how Andromache, Helen, Sappho, Aspasia, and other queens of beauty, managed their tears, having lived before the advent of the pocket—(I beg pardon) what should be called the lachrymal. As for Cleopatra, I do not believe she shed any, being of such royal make that she disdained our common way of exhibiting her trouble.

But I was led to speak of the Greeks particularly, because their noses were so uncommonly handsome; whereas, the modern nose being wiped, tweaked, and pulled, so often in its ductile state, by nurses, malignants, etc., and, in after-years, being blistered and swollen by the abuses incident to a sensual civilization, is much defrauded of its pristine beauty. Women, in particular, are strenuous Jeremiahs, and pride themselves upon the abundance of their tears.

But to the Greeks. They hadn't half the sensibility that we have. Their literature shows this. Nobody weeps over Antigone, or Clytemnestra, or our English Lear, as to that. The blood goes back to the heart, and we agonize in spirit over these creations, but do not weep. For myself, I do not readily forgive an author who makes me cry. Things that we weep over have their remedy; but the great, black tragic is irremediable, and its tears are blood.

Women in our day go up-stairs, or off into some by-place, and there cry to their hearts' content. I knew one woman of this kind who, upon a grievance, would lay a bundle of *mouchoirs* upon her lap, and then set herself to crying them sopping wet; as one after another became saturated, she hung them on the back of a chair to dry. She had very fine eyes, which did not turn red for tears, but they bleached her hair white as the hoar-frost. Now, these grand old Greek women might let fall upon occasion a tear or two, but the immoderate flow of the women of our day would have filled them with consternation. They would not have wasted their life and beauty in useless weeping, but would have roused their energies to surmount the cause for discomfort. They *hired* people to do the crying, which was a good investment of money. The Irish utilize their aged crones by employing them to wail and lament at their funerals, as the Jews did before them.

Excessive secretion from the lachrymal gland unquestionably followed the introduction of the pocket-handkerchief. Supply increases demand. Facilities for travel start everybody, as well as the school-master, abroad. Telegrams render news imperative, and we are flooded with newspapers. Photography incites the desire to see how we and our neighbors look, and women may be seen on all sides studying bits of cords, which faithfully report the decaying charms of a rival.

I might enlarge upon this ground, and show how modern crime has followed other inventions. Nobody ever heard of a pick-pocket till the tailor inserted this tempting place of deposit in our garments, and thus came the generation whose fingers have an affinity with pockets and "wipes," but the idea is trite.

Weeping, just a drop from either eye, might have been graceful in the classical ages, when a woman raised the corner of her veil, and thus indicated that a little moisture blurred the clearness of vision, or the long, flowing sleeve thus raised, when to use the veil might have disarranged the becomingness of the head-gear. These considerations explain the fact of how these Greeks kept their beautiful noses. They knew better than to indulge the melting mood—no dress could stand it. Think of a lovely Mia using her sleeve or veil as Sterne's Maria used her pocket-handkerchief, which he washed out for her in a puddle: and to spill such quantities upon the hair would have kept it damp and soppy about the neck and shoulders!

No, the classicals did not weep as we do—we are assured of this by their history and dress, and most of all by their profiles. No young Alcibiades ever had his nose rubbed up and pinched by napkin or handkerchief; and as for the little Aspasias—well, talking is useless. We must think and feel, to believe. That most wondrous of nations, the Greeks, had too much imagination, and too many resources, to go round with dripping tears; no sooner did they find themselves in difficulty than with one ejaculation to Zeus, they at once hasted to rouse somebody to help them out of it. I do not believe that Sappho ever pined for any lover, or threw herself from Latmos. It is not in character. Some other woman of the name might have done both, for the majorities are weak if not wicked, but the woman who wrote—

"Blest as the immortal gods is he,
The favored youth who sits by thee,
And sees and hears thee all the while,
Softly speak and sweetly smile"—

never would become acquainted with defeat or despair.

The languishing vapidity of modern women makes them delight in a dreamy, half-tearful state of feeling which they imagine tender and feminine; and they like to flourish an embroidered and belaced appendage, in proof of their refinement, and exemption from "strong-mindedness." Jeremiah, that dolorous prophet, never would have cried, "Oh, that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" had he lived in our day, when there would have been hazard of an inundation.

Really and verily, nothing is more vulgar than to see a women make her appearance, pocket-handkerchief in hand. It, however choice and dainty, should be in the pocket or hung in a ring, like Goldsmith's broken tea-cups, which

"*wisely kept for show*,
Ranged on the mantel, glittered in a row."

I like the idea of the ancient lachrymals, and hence the significance of "Thou hast put all my tears into a bottle!" as sang the sweet singer of Israel. By means of a lachrymal, a tender lover could save his tears, and, having sealed them up, he might transmit them to the beloved, which would be a tribute most tender. Artists could devise pretty patterns for these lachrymals, shaped like lilies or violets; and I advise the ladies to provide themselves with these vessels, and when an author should write a pathetic story it would be a pretty image, in his mind's eye, of all his readers daintily seated and pouring their tears into a "bottle."

Elizabeth Oakes Smith.

THE AUTHOR OF "SWALLOW BARN."

There seems to be something inexorable in "fashion"—the old goes as the new comes; and this is true of books, as of costume. Why is it that we lose our zest for the volume which charmed us a dozen years ago? It is not, alone, that we have grown older and changed our point of view; the "rising generation" likes no better than we do what pleased us when we were at that age; they prefer the "sensation" of Mr. Reade, the humor or pathos of Mr. Harte, and the minute delineation of George Eliot, to all the masterpieces of the past.

This obdurate "fashion" in letters is banishing Walter Scott to the upper shelves, and consigning to oblivion two great works of two American writers—the "Bracebridge Hall" of Washington Irving, and the "Swallow Barn" of John P. Kennedy. Once upon a time the reading public of England and America pored with delight over Irving's admirable picture of English rural life; and looked with scarcely less pleasure upon Kennedy's equally graphic delineation of Virginia life in "Swallow Barn." Now they read "Middlemarch," say it is "Shakespearian," and are rapidly forgetting Irving and Kennedy.

Let me speak of one of these old books, and of its worthy author—of "Swallow Barn," and the kindly, the genial, the accomplished John P. Kennedy. I wish I could convey to the friendly reader some idea of the pleasure I have enjoyed in rereading this admirable book. I knew well its author,