SOME NEW BOOKS.

The First Senate of the United States—What Took Place in Its Secret Sessions.

For light upon the meaning of our Constitution we naturally turn first to the debates in the Federal Convention which drew up the instrument, and next to the declarations made by those members of the first Congress who had taken a conspicuous part in framing our organic law. Unfortunately, the Senate of the United States, during the first five years of its existence, insisted upon sitting behind closed doors, and but little authentic information respecting its proceedings has been hitherto accessible. The annals of Congress exhibit only a bare outline of the business transacted in the Senate, and for some glimpses of the discussions which preceded legislative action we have had to depend on a few scattered allusions in the published writings of John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Wolcott, and other persons of more or less prominence at the time. All of these incidental notes pieced together would be far from constituting a continuous and exhaustive record of the words spoken and the things done in the Federal Senate between the years 1789 and 1794. This serious gap in the history of Federal legislation, this lacuna in the materials available for the interpretation of the Constitution, is now to some extent filled up by a volume called *Sketches of Debate in the First Senate of the United States*, edited by GEORGE W. HARRIS, and published in Harrisburg, Pa. The basis of this important contribution to our political chronicles is a journal, never before printed, which covers the two years beginning in April, 1789, and ending on March 3, 1791. This journal was kept by William Maclay, a Senator from the State of Pennsylvania, under the impression, apparently, that he might be called on by his constituents for information relating to proceedings in the Senate. The diarist does not undertake to reproduce the precise language used, but he evidently aims to set down the ideas and sentiments expressed by the leading speakers on both sides of every important question which came up for discussion. Among the interesting matters which were earnestly debated in the Senate during this period may be mentioned the proposition to confer titles upon the President and other Federal officials, the dispute concerning the mode of communication between the Houses, the controversy touching the method of voting in the Senate whether by ballot or viva voce) on nominations sent in by the President, the doubt whether the sole power of removal from office were vested in the Chief Magistrate, the organization of the judiciary, the designation of the permanent seat of the General Government, the Funding bill, and—what will now be regarded with peculiar curiosity—the first bill imposing duties on the importation of foreign goods, whereby the constitutional power of Congress to protect manufactures was necessarily made a subject of investigation. The importance of the opinions uttered regarding these and other questions of national concern by Mr. Maclay's colleagues will be appreciated when we call to mind that, out of the twenty-two Senators who met in New York at the opening of the first Congress, eleven had been members of the Federal Convention, and could therefore speak with authority respecting the intentions of the authors of the Constitution, and the purport which the language of that instrument had been supposed to bear. When we consider how much cause for regret lay in the vacuum which was heretofore encountered upon the threshold of our national history, we cannot but recognize our great obligations to the editor and publisher of this curious and useful book.

No careful reader of this journal will be likely to question its trustworthiness. The author was manifestly a man of good sense, sound sentiments, and an upright character. He was a patriot of the school of Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams; that is to say, he viewed the centralizing tendencies of the new Constitution with considerable distrust, and resolved that, at all events, the large powers conferred on the General Government should be strictly construed. He was a man of genuine republican simplicity, who believed that the thirteen colonies had not thrown off the dignified rule of the British sovereign to substitute a pinchback and brand-new monarchy of their own, and he viewed not only with misgiving, but with boldly avowed contempt, the efforts of many Federalist leaders to ape the forms and reproduce the usages of European courts. It is clear, indeed, from this journal that to William Maclay, more than to any other man, we owe the failure of the silly attempt made by John Adams and by R. H. Lee to transform the Senate into a mock House of Lords, and to confer the ridiculous title of his Highness on the citizen who might happen to be chosen to fill, or who might fill by accident, the Presidential office. He it was who stood forth at first almost alone in the Senate, and denounced the unconstitutionality and the puerility of seeking to dignify by borrowed titles a man lifted by the suffrages of a free and enlightened people to the post of their Chief Magistrate.

We purpose to make copious extracts from that portion of this journal which records with how much heat and acrimony the question of titles was discussed behind the closed doors of the Senate, and how, thanks mainly to the influence exerted by Maclay upon the House of Representatives, all hope of an agreement between the two branches of the Legislature on this subject was abandoned, and thus the foolish project was dropped forever. Indeed, the time came when they who had been most urgent in forwarding the scheme were heartily ashamed of the mummery they had advocated, and, supposing that no record of the words spoken in secret session existed, sought to conceal or palliate the contemptible part which they had played. For Washington, indeed, it has been urged that by him the question of titles which engaged for many days the anxious attention of the Senators was regarded with the disdain that it deserved, though, out of deference apparently to the wishes of the Federalist leaders, he refrained from proclaiming his opinions with the openness and emphasis which would have been destructive of the preposterous design. In a letter, written some three months after the controversy was settled, he avers that he was opposed to an additional title, that the project was hooted before he arrived at New York, without any privity or knowledge on his part, and pressed, after he was apprised of it, contrary to his opinion. The facts are that Washington arrived in New York April 23, 1789; that between that day and May 14 the question of titles occupied the Senate almost to the exclusion of more serious business, and that during the whole of that time, as we now learn from this journal, Mr. Maclay and other anti-Federalists made every effort in their power to ascertain Gen. Washington's views upon the matter, but were unable to learn them. It would seem, therefore, that the person or persons to whom Washington divulged his unfavorable views had been remarkably successful in suppressing them. It is certain that a word from the Chief Magistrate, spoken in the right quarter, would have been fatal to the fine scheme devised by Mr. Adams as, in his early days, according to the legend, his hatchet was to the cherry tree.

Scarcely had John Adams been installed as President of the Senate, and his pompous speech, which Maclay slyly characterizes as heavy," been delivered, than the fun began. On April 23 a committee appointed to suggest a mode of communication between the two Houses reported regulations calculated to invest the Senate with the awful majesty of a House of Lords, and to place the Representatives on the humble level occupied by the English Commons in mediæval times. The proposition was that while a bill or message from the Senate to the House of Representatives should be conveyed by the Secretary, who is a mere servant of the former body, a bill, on the other hand, sent up by the House of Representatives to the Senate should be "carried by two members, who, at the bar of the Senate, should make their obeisance to the President, and thence, advancing to the chair, make a second obeisance and deliver the paper into the hands of the President. After having delivered the bill they were to make their obeisance to the President, and repeat it as they retired from the bar." This edifying plan for placing the Senate on a duly august footing unluckily miscarried; for, a day or two later, as we learn from this journal, the Senators were distressed to hear from the conference committee that the "House below had laughed at it." On the same day another "most curious question arose," which threw Mr. Adams and many of the Federalist Senators into great perplexity. "The President (Mr. Adams) knew not how to direct the letter to the Speaker. He called on the House to know how it should be directed. The House showed a manifest disinclination to interfere. The President urged, and ceased not until a question was pointedly put whether the Speaker should be styled *honorable*. It passed in the *negative*; and from this omen I think our President may go and dream about titles, for none will he get."

On the following day, April 25, the Senate spent the whole time in discussing the ceremonies to be observed on the impending inauguration of President Washington. A report having at last been read to the effect that the President should be received in the Senate Chamber, and proceed thence to the House of Representatives to be sworn, Mr. Adams startled the Senate by revealing a new and painful quandary in which, he said, he found himself. We learn from Mr. Maclay's journal the tenor of Mr. Adams's remarks on this occasion, and the reception which they met with from Senators. "Gentlemen, I do not know whether the framers of the Constitution had in view the two Kings of Sparta or the two Consuls of Rome when they formed it, one to have all the power while he held it, and the other to be nothing. Nor do I know whether the architect who formed our room, and the wide chair in it (to hold two, I suppose), had the Constitution before him. Gentlemen, I feel great difficulty how to act. I am possessed of two separate powers—the one in *esse*, the other in *posse*. I am *Vice-President*. In this I am nothing; but I may be everything. But I am President also of the Senate. When the President comes into the Senate, what shall I be? I wish gentlemen to think what I shall be." To one at least of his auditors Mr. Adams's embarrassment must have recalled that experienced by Bottom, the weaver, for Mr. Maclay goes on to tell us that "a solemn silence ensued. God forgive me, for it was involuntary, but the profane muscles of my face were in tune for laughter in spite of my indisposition. However, Elsworth (Senator from Connecticut and previously a member of the Federal Convention) thumbed over the sheet Constitution and turned it for some time. At length he rose and addressed the Chair with the most profound gravity: 'Mr. President, I have looked over the Constitution (here he paused), and I find, sir—it is evident and clear, sir—that, wherever the Senate is to be, there, sir, you must be at the head of them; but further, sir (there he looked aghast, as if some tremendous gulf had yawned before him), I shall not pretend to say.'"

Apropos of John Adams's egregious self-importance, and his amusing partiality for the formalities and manners of the European courts, at which he had been a dazzled onlooker, but about which his recollections seem to have been rather hazy we find the following note set down in Mr. Maclay's journal: "We have really more republican plainness and sincere openness of behavior in Pennsylvania than in any other place I have ever been in. I was impressed with a different opinion until I had full opportunity of observing the gentlemen of New England; and sorry am I to say it, but no people in the Union dwell more on trivial distinctions and matters of mere form. They really seem to show a readiness to stand on punctilio and ceremony. A little learning is a dangerous thing ('tis said). May not the same be said of breeding? It is certainly true that people little used with company are more apt to take offence and are less easy than men much versant in public life. They are an unmixed people in New England, and used only to see neighbors like themselves; and when once an error of behavior is crept in among them there is small chance of its being cured, for should they go abroad there Mr. Maclay laid his finger on a congenital weakness of the Bostonians, being early used to a ceremonious and reserved behavior, and believing that good manners consist entirely in punctilios, they only add a few more stiffened airs to their deportment, excluding good humor, affability of conversation, and accommodation of temper and sentiment as qualities too vulgar for a gentleman." That Mr. Maclay was a Democrat to the backbone is clear from every act and word of his recorded in this journal, and he unquestionably deemed it highly creditable to John Adams that the latter should have been the son of a shoemaker, just as he honored Benjamin Franklin for a rise to eminence from equally obscure beginnings. But Mr. Maclay seems to think that, all things considered, it might have been more becoming and more discreet in Mr. Adams to profess the democratic opinions and practise the republican simplicity for which Franklin had been distinguished.

Washington's inauguration had been fixed for April 30. "This," writes Mr. Maclay in his journal, "is a great, important day; Goddess of Etiquette assist me while I describe it. * * The Senate met; the President, Mr. Adams, rose in the most solemn manner. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I wish for the direction of the Senate. The President will, I suppose, address the Congress. How shall I behave? How shall we receive it? Shall it be standing or sitting?'" This momentous problem was debated with considerable trepidation, the few Senators who had been abroad edifying their less fortunate colleagues by somewhat confused recollections. "Mr. Lee began with the House of Commons, as is usual with him, then the House of Lords, then the King, and then back again. The result of his information was that the Lords sat and the Commons stood on the delivery of the King's speech. Mr. Izard got up and told how often he had been in the House of Parliament. He said a great deal of what he had seen there; made, however, this sagacious discovery, that the Commons stood because they had no seats to sit in on being arrived at the House of Lords. It was discovered after some time that the King sat too, and had his robes and crown on. The President (Adams) got up again, and said he had been very often, indeed, at the Parliament on those occasions, but there always was such a crowd, and *ladies along*, that he could not say how it was. Mr. Carroll rose to declare that he thought it of no consequence how it was in Great Britain; they were no rule to us, and so forth." Just then a communication from the other House was announced, and so, unluckily, the important question of Senatorial demeanor remained unsettled when Gen. Washington arrived. Mr. Adams was so much dismayed thereat that "he seemed to have forgot half that he was to say, for he made a dead pause, and stood for some time to appearance in a vacant mood." We learn that the Father of his Country was also a good deal discomposed, for when he came to read his address "this great man was agitated and embarrassed more than ever he was by the levelled cannon or pointed musket. He trembled, and several times could scarce make out to read, though it must be supposed he had often read it before. He made a flourish with his right hand, which left rather an ungainly impression. I sincerely, for my part, wished all set ceremony in the hands of the dancing masters, and that this first of men had read off his address in the plainest manner, without ever taking his eyes from the paper; for I felt hurt that he was not first in everything."

When, on the following day, the minutes of the Senate were read, it was discovered that the Secretary, by the specific direction of Mr. Adams, had referred to Washington's address as "*His most gracious speech.*" The obsequious formula borrowed from monarchical usages was promptly resented by Mr. Maclay. "I looked," he writes, "all round the Senate; every countenance seemed to wear a blank. The Secretary was going on: *I* must speak or nobody would. 'Mr. President,' said I, 'we have lately had a hard struggle for our liberty against kingly authority; the minds of men are still heated. Everything related to that species of government is odious to the people. The words prefixed to the President's speech are the same that are usually placed before the speech of his Britannic Majesty; I know they will give offence; I consider them as improper.'" Mr. Maclay moved, therefore, that "most gracious" be struck out, and that the minutes stand simply "address" or "speech." Thereupon Mr. Adams "rose in his chair and expressed the greatest surprise that anything should be objected to on account of its being taken from the practice of that Government under which we had lived so long and so happily, formerly. That he was for a dignified and respectable Government, and, as far as he knew the sentiments of the people, they thought as he did." To this naïve disclosure of Mr. Adams's predilections, Mr. Maclay cogently rejoined that while it was true enough the people of the colonies had once enjoyed great happiness under that species of government, yet the abuses under which they had smarted had taught them what they had to fear from that kind of polity. "There had been," he said, "a revolution in the sentiments of people respecting political systems equally as great as that which had happened in the Government itself." Even the modes and formalities of a monarchical régime were now abhorred; he went on to remind his colleagues that "the enemies of the Constitution had objected to it the facility there would be of transition from it to kingly government, and all the trappings and splendor of royalty. If such a thing as this appeared on our minutes, they would not fail to represent it as the first step of the ladder in the ascent to royalty." After some debate Mr. Adams was tacitly rebuked for his unwarranted interpolation in the minutes of the Senate by the passage of a resolution directing the words *most gracious* to be erased.

About this time Mr. Adams, Mr. Hamilton, and other prominent Federalists were much exercised touching the restrictions which it would be safe to impose on access to the Chief Magistrate. Mr. Hamilton, in an extant letter, advised that the President should be isolated as much as possible from his fellow citizens, and walled in by rules of etiquette borrowed from foreign courts. Most of the leading men in both Houses of Congress were privately sounded on the subject, and it seems that Gen. St. Clair was sent for the purpose to Mr. Maclay. The Pennsylvania Senator did not hesitate to speak his mind. "I told the General that Gen. Washington stood on as difficult ground as he had ever done in his life. That to suffer himself to be run down on the one hand by a crowd of visitants so as to engross his time would never do, as it would render his doing business impracticable. But, on the other hand, for him to be seen only in public at stated times like an Eastern Lama would be equally offensive. If he was not to be seen but *in public*, where nothing confidential could pass between him and any individual, business would, to all appearance, be done in the dark. He could not escape the charge of favoritism; all court would be paid to the supposed favorite weakness and insignificance would be considered as characteristics of the President, and he would not escape contempt. It was not thus, I said, that the General had gained the universal plaudits of his admiring fellow citizens. I reiterated these ideas in every shape and every different light I could place them in for nearly half an hour that we walked in front of St. Paul's Church. Gen. St. Clair said that he wished to collect men's sentiments, and the design was to communicate them to Gen. Washington. I told him my late conduct in the Senate had been such as would render any opinion of mine very ungracious at court, and perhaps he had better never make mention of my name."

Meanwhile the committee of the Senate, charged, on the 27th of April, with devising suitable titles for the Chief Magistrate and other Federal officers, had been strenuously working at their appointed task. At one time, as Mr. Maclay was informed, "the title selected from all the potentates of the earth for our President was to have been taken from Scripture, viz., Excellency Majesty. What a royal escape." After deliberating, however, for more than two weeks, the Senate committee reported on May 9 that it would be proper to address the President as "His Highness the President of the United States of America and Protector of their Liberties." In the course of the debate, which occupied the greater part of five days, the title of Excellency was at one time suggested by Mr. Izard, but this was subsequently withdrawn in favor of "Highness," which, as being less democratic, was deemed more in harmony with monarchical forms united. Mr. Carroll and Mr. Few spoke on the other side, but the friends of republican simplicity were greatly outnumbered, and but for the vehement opposition of Mr. Maclay, who had taken measures to enlist Representatives, unwilling to waste more time in such a puerile discussion, cut the knot by prefacing an address to the Chief Magistrate with the simple words "to the President of the United States." Thereupon the Senate was constrained to indefinitely postpone the report of its committee on the subject of titles, and to pass a resolution that, for the present, it would follow the example of the other House as regarded the method of addressing the Executive. One of the last entries relating to this topic in Mr. Maclay's journal is as follows: "Through the whole of this business I have endeavored to mark the conduct of Gen. Washington. I had, to be sure, the greatest share in this debate, and must now have completely sold (no, sold is a bad word, for I have got nothing for it) every particle of my favor, if a court and Senate seems determined on, and to run into all the fooleries, fopperies, and pomp of royal etiquette."

It seems that when Mr. Adams learned that the House of Representatives was likely to adopt Mr. Maclay's view of titles, he said with tears in his eyes, "I now grant that the lower House, as he was fond of calling it, had no competence in the matter. Gentlemen, said Mr. Adams, I must tell you that it is *you* and the President that have the making of titles. Suppose, he went on, the President to have nominated the minister of Mr. Jefferson at the court of France. Mr. Jefferson is, in virtue of that appointment, the most illustrious, the most powerful, and what not. But the President himself must be something that includes all the dignities of the diplomatic corps and something greater still. What will the common people of foreign countries—what will the sailors and soldiers say—George Washington, President of the United States, they will despise him. Upon hearing the extraordinary claim of exclusive powers for the President and Senate, Mr. Maclay rose and made the following amendment: 'That the Constitution of the United States has designated our Chief Magistrate by the appellation of the President of the United States of America. This is his title of office, nor can we alter, add to, or diminish it without infringing the Constitution. In like manner persons authorized to transact business with foreign powers are styled Ambassadors, public Ministers, and so forth. To give them any other appellation would be an equal infringement. Can, then, the President and Senate do that which is prohibited to the United States at large? Certainly not. Let us read the Constitution: 'No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States.' The Constitution goes further. The servants of the public are prohibited from accepting them from any foreign State, king, or prince. So that the appellations and terms given to nobility in the Old World are contraband language in the United States, nor can we apply them to our citizens consistent with the Constitution. As to what the common people, soldiers, and sailors of foreign countries may think of us, I do not think it imports us much. Perhaps the less they think, or have occasion to think of us, the better." At a later stage of the debate Mr. Maclay thus referred to the term Protector, which had been inserted in the proposed official appellation. "As to the latter part of the title, I would only observe that the power of war is the organ of protection. This is placed in Congress by the Constitution. Any attempt to divest them of it, and place it elsewhere, even with Gen. Washington, is treason against the United States, or, at least, a violation of the Constitution."

Although Mr. Maclay's arguments were obviously unanswerable, Mr. Adams was able to control a large majority of the Senate; but his scheme came to nothing, for the House of Representatives, unwilling to waste more time in such a puerile discussion, cut the knot by prefacing an address to the Chief Magistrate with the simple words "to the President of the United States." Thereupon the Senate was constrained to indefinitely postpone the report of its committee on the subject of titles, and to pass a resolution that, for the present, it would follow the example of the other House as regarded the method of addressing the Executive. One of the last entries relating to this topic in Mr. Maclay's journal is as follows: "Through the whole of this business I have endeavored to mark the conduct of Gen. Washington. I have no clue that will lead me fairly to any just conclusion as to his sentiments. I think it scarce possible but he must have dropped something on a subject which has excited so much warmth. If he did, it was not on our side or I would have heard it. But no matter, I have been ploughing with the heifer of the other House completely defeated them." Writing about the same time to a friend in Philadelphia, he says: "This business [of titles], after having agitated us for near three weeks, is, I expect, blown over. I sincerely hope it never will again be blown up so as to kindle the fire of contention. The minority in this business was so small as to be unable to obtain the yeas and nays in our House except on one question; yet they were firm to the last, and with the assistance derived from the countenance and determination of the other House have really obtained a temporary victory. They had some other difficulties to contend with, which at present shall be nameless."

This was not by any means the only service which this stanch republican was able to render to his country during the short period of his official life. At some other time we may be able to point out the part he took in the discussion of several important questions, but we have dwelt for the present on his successful opposition to monarchical formulas, both because few persons are aware how near we came to conferring a princely appellation on our Chief Magistrate, and because, even in our day, some ignorant or foolish persons are addicted to addressing the President as his Excellency. Had the Federalists been half as strong in the early part of 1789 as they had grown to be two years later, the resistance of a few patriots like Maclay to the monarchical and oligarchical predilections of Hamilton and Adams would have been entirely futile. As it was, the Senator from western Pennsylvania was a marked man, and as, unluckily for him, he had fallen by lot into the class which was to go out after the expiration of two years, his enemies were certain that they would soon be rid of him. The all-powerful Federalists took measures to prevent his re-election, and as he seems to have disdained all the tricks of office-seeking, they found it easy enough to fill his seat with a more tractable legislator. But although the Federalists could exclude Maclay from the Senate House, they could not long bar out the spirit of which, toward the end of his legislative career, he had seemed to be the only spokesman. Maclay died in 1804, but he lived to see the ideas of which he had been the steadfast advocate before an unfriendly audience planted deep in the convictions of a nation, and embodied forever in the creed of his countrymen. He lived to see John Adams, after a single term of the Presidential office, consigned to private life, and the Federalist party plunged in swift and hopeless ruin. When, three years before the death of the author of this journal, Thomas Jefferson rode unattended from the White House to the Capitol, and tied his horse to a board fence before proceeding to deliver his inaugural address, there were few men living in those States who could recall the character of a time "His Highness the Protector," or the callow posturings and preenings of the first-fledged Senators, without a qualm of self-contempt or a shout of Homeric laughter.

M. W. H.

Confessions of a Transcendental Skeptic.

A study of M. RENAN's writings, and particularly of his speculative works, such as the "Philosophical Dialogues" and the two Shakespearean fancies, "Caliban" and "Prospero," reveals in their author many psychological complications. Having been early thrown into the chaos of manifold criticism, and having tasted all that he understood, M. Renan became a dilettante. Having lived a childhood of profound religious belief, and having none but sweet souvenirs of that period of his life, he has remained religious in spite of the negations of his mind. In his newly published volume, called *Souvenirs of Childhood and Youth*, M. Renan has further illustrated the psychological phenomena above mentioned and developed in a singular degree the priestliness of his whole being, a quality which, it is true, had never escaped those who are in the habit of seeing and conversing with him, but which, perhaps, they have hardly conceived in such proportions as are revealed in the "Souvenirs." Théophile Gautier, inventing a new word for the purpose, used to say of Renan, "Il est prêtreux," and the impression one feels after reading this new volume is that the author, as he himself confesses, ought to have remained a priest. In two or three passages M. Renan says: "Je suis un prêtre manqué." Another impression that one feels is that since Jean Jacques Rousseau's "Confessions" we have had no book so curious and so interesting from the point of view of psychology as M. Renan's "Souvenirs."

M. Renan's "Souvenirs," however, do not form a complete or continuous narrative. They consist simply of half a dozen fragments, almost without order, images that have appeared to the author, and reflections that have come to his mind on summer days when he amused himself by calling up the memories of fifty years ago, the lost Atlantis of his youth. M. Renan does not pretend to record the small details of his life or to furnish ready material for his future biographers. His endeavor is to express certain shades of thought not rendered in his other writings, to transmit to us in a measure his theory of the world, and this he does while relating the conditions of his life successively in his native Breton village of Tréguier and at the seminaries of Saint Nicolas and Saint Sulpice at Paris. And so the first chapters are full of stories and legends of Brittany, while the latter are full of discussions, sombre intellectual struggles and reasonings. In the last chapter he sums up a general view of his own life, and makes some confessions which it will be curious to examine. Here, once for all, let it be said that M. Renan's "Souvenirs" contain many delicious pages. The descriptions of Tréguier and of all the different holy fathers with whom he came into relations, are quite perfect. Throughout the volume is fascinating, yet dangerous withal, and not to be placed readily in the hands of persons of young and unstable faith.

M. Renan has been described as a skeptic, a transcendental skeptic, who doubts even his doubt. Skepticism is, however, a doctrine implying a certain fixity of basis, a determined attitude. Would it not be preferable to call M. Renan a dilettante? For dilettantism is much less a doctrine than an intellectual disposition, at once intelligent and pleasurable, that inclines us, butterfly-like, by turns toward all the different forms of life and makes us lend ourselves to all these forms without abandoning ourselves to any one of them. Happiness is manifold. The ways of tasting it are manifold; they vary according to epochs, climates, temperaments, ages, days, and even hours. Generally a man arrived at the age of maturity, both physical and intellectual, makes his choice, and the more logical his nature is the more he disapproves the choice of others, or at least understands it with difficulty. For, in fact, it is difficult to get outside of one's self, to represent to one's self another kind of existence, and much more to live that other existence were it only for a few minutes, wholly, heartily, and without regret, without even a thought of criticism. To realize this dream, sympathy is not sufficient; refined skepticism is necessary, and the art of transforming this skepticism into an instrument of enjoyment. Thus dilettantism becomes a delicate science of intellectual and sentimental metamorphoses. Among the great dilettanti were Alcibiades, Cæsar, Leonardo da Vinci, Montaigne, and Shakespeare. Only these great dilettanti lived in ages of action when the creative energy was abundant and their dilettantism did not reach the poetry of the dilettantism of ages of extreme civilization, where the faculty of creation seems gradually to yield place to the faculty of comprehension. Virgil is credited with these words, which form the dilettante's creed: "We grow weary of all things, except of comprehending." M. Renan's dilettantism is only mitigated by a remnant of priestliness and a rancorous recollection of disappointed political ambition.

It is by this refined skepticism or dilettantism that we must explain the contradictory propositions which are as abundant in M. Renan's "Souvenirs" as in his philosophical writings. "In politics and in philosophy," said M. Renan in one of his Academy speeches, "whenever I find myself in presence of fixed ideas I am always of the opinion of my interlocutor. In these delicate questions each one is right in some respect." In the same spirit M. Renan can write in his "Souvenirs": "I no longer believe that Christianity is the supernatural résumé of all that man ought to know; but I persist in believing that existence is the most frivolous thing in the world if it be not regarded as a great and continual duty." And yet a few pages further: "I cannot get rid of the idea that it is perhaps after all the libertine who is in the right and who practises the true philosophy of life." Then again, referring to Homais, the chemist in Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," the type of the provincial freethinker M. Renan says: "I sometimes reproach myself with having contributed to M. Homais's triumph over his parson. What will you? M. Homais is right. If it were not for M. Homais, we should be all burnt alive. But, I repeat, when one has taken a heap of trouble to find out the truth, it is painful to have to admit that it is the frivolous, those who are thoroughly resolved never to read Saint Austin, or Saint Thomas Aquinas, who are the really wise men. Gavroche (type of the Parisian street gamin) and M. Homais arrive at once and with so little trouble at the last word of philosophy! It is very hard to think."

Even his own life's work does not escape the dilettanti his skepticism, and he comes to regret, with apparent sincerity, that he was attracted toward the historical sciences, "little conjectural sciences that are unmade as fast as they are made, and which will be neglected a hundred years hence. Indeed, we can see an age dawning when man will no longer attach much interest to his past. I am afraid that our exact writings of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres, destined to give some exactitude to history, will rot before they have been read. It is in chemistry at one end, in astronomy at the other, and above all in general physiology, that we really have the secret of existence, of the universe, or of God, according as you may please to call it. The regret of my life is that I chose for my studies a branch of researches which will never impose itself, and will always remain in the state of merely interesting considerations respecting a reality that has forever disappeared."

It would be easy to multiply citations illustrating the vagueness, complexity, versatility, and shiftiness of M. Renan's mind, his skepticism, his dilettantism, his intellectual pride. Let us rather come to the chapter of moral self-analysis in which M. Renan speaks of himself apparently without reserve, and with, at least, a semblance of sincerity. M. Renan professes unchangeable gratitude to the venerable fathers who directed him and surrounded him with their care up to his twenty-third year. He recognized subsequently that their history was insufficient, that they had no criticism, that their idea of virtue was narrow, and their idea of truth too material; still he held with them that life is only worth living if devoted to truth and virtue, and that the aim of a noble life ought to be an ideal and disinterested pursuit—a principle fatal to worldly success, but fruitful of happiness. Now, the moral teaching of these pious ecclesiastics may be summed up in the four points on each of which M. Renan proceeds to examine himself. These points are disinterestedness or poverty, modesty, politeness, and the rule of morality. On the point of poverty M. Renan attempts in vain to delude his readers. Food, lodging, and a new suit of clothes once a year, such would be his dream, he says. "I have never desired anything else for myself. The modest independence that I have came to me late and in spite of myself." This is not true. M. Renan has feathered his nest as warmly and as wisely as any of his contemporaries, and no one would think of reproaching him for it. Why, then, this unctuous resuscitation of seminary insincerity? What, again, are we to say to this statement? "Every time that I wanted to buy a bit of land anywhere, an interior voice prevented me. Land seemed to me material, heavy, and contrary to the principle *non habemus hic manentem civitatem*. Stocks and shares are things more ethereal, more fragile; they attach one less, and one runs a greater risk of losing them!"

On the score of modesty, M. Renan thinks he has been modest. He does not admit that he has the vanity of the man of letters; he has not exploited his talent as he might have done had he aimed at success; in short, his literary success, like his fortune, has come to him in spite of himself! We may add, a fact which none of his readers will deny, that one of M. Renan's most characteristic mental attitudes is pride. By his intellectual gifts and his immense culture M. Renan is a superior man; furthermore, he is supremely conscious of his superiority, and he shows it by a certain air of imperceptible irony and transcendental disdain. In all his writings he is heedless of the opinion of the vulgar; the elegance of his style and the subtlety of his arguments appeal to any but the vulgar. Nay, how often do we find such phrases as these: "I write only for intelligent and enlightened readers?" "The mass of narrow intellects." "We others of cultivated minds." No, M. Renan is an aristocrat who has been thrown by the hazards of his birth into a democratic current; furthermore, he is an aristocrat who combines the pride of science with the pride of heredity. For who more eloquently than M. Renan has celebrated the qualities of that Celtic race of which he is a son, a race unfitted for the conquest of money, but a race of invincible dreams, gentle idealism, and uncorrupted antiquity? M. Renan's profession of modesty is uncalled for and inexact.

On the matter of politeness, M. Renan may justly say that he is polite. He adds in a note that the effect of the early education he received in the seminaries of Brittany was such that it would be impossible for him to be wanting in respect even toward a dog, or to treat the animal rudely and with an air of authority! On the point of chastity, M. Renan declares that after he ceased to be a priest he did not change his austere habits, but continued to live as Paris and the world live. He continues:

"Later on," he says, "I saw the vanity of this virtue, as of all other virtues; I recognized, in particular, that nature does not at all care about man being chaste." Still he persisted in the way he had chosen, and lived the life of a Sorbonnist. In the same strain, further remarks about chastity, M. Renan has a queer sentence which seems still queerer in an English dress. "In general," he says, "women have understood the respect and sympathy that underlie my affectionate reserve. After all I have been loved by the four women by whom I have been needed—my mother, my sister, my wife, and my daughter. My portion has been goodly and shall not be taken away from me; for I often imagine that the judgments that will be passed on me by the Eternal, who knows the secret of all hearts, will be none other than the judgments of women countersigned by the Eternal."

After this particular confession, M. Renan proceeds in a complementary confession on certain points. Speaking of his mother, he says that, thanks to his clerical education, his friends pardon him a certain apparent want of frankness in the commerce of life." "I confess," he continues, "in the first part of my life I lied often, not out of interest, but out of kindness, out of delicacy, out of pride. I do not think I have told a single lie, except naturally joyous lies, officious and polite lies, such as all casuists admit." Is it not curious how the priest peeps out in this talk about lies? Then he continues:

"I have never shown indulgence on the part of my friends to pardon me another defect. I mean a certain coldness, not in loving them, but in serving them. One of the things most recommended at the seminary was to avoid private friendships. Such friendships were represented to me as a larceny at the expense of the community. This rule has remained profoundly graven in my mind. I have never arranged for anything. I have done little for my friends, and my friends have done little for me. One of the ideas that I most often have to combat is that friendship, as it is generally understood, is an injustice, an evil, in that it makes you see the qualities of one person alone and shuts your eyes to the qualities of other persons worthier perhaps of your sympathy. Sometimes my friends have reproached me the ideas of my old masters, that friendship is a theft upon human society, and that in a superior world friendship will disappear."

In a previous chapter, speaking of his friendship with the celebrated chemist Berthelot, whose figure is largely in the "Philosophical Dialogues," M. Renan says:

> When I try to represent to myself the unique pair of friends that we have been, I imagine two priests in surplices walking arm in arm. This costume does not embarrass them in their talking of superior things, but the idea would never come to them in such a dress to smoke a cigar together, to gossip, or to recognize the most bestialoid requirements of the body. We not only M. Berthelot and I never knew in the slightest degree familiar with one another, but we should almost blush to ask each other a service or even to give advice. To ask a service would be in our eyes an act of corruption, an injustice toward the rest of mankind; it would at least be a recognition that we attach importance to something. But we know so well that the world orders us to be egotists, that we are so obvious that we fear to give body even to friendship. We esteem ourselves too much to admit to one another a weakness. Equally convinced of the insignificance of fleeting things, having the same passion for the eternal, we could not resign ourselves to avow a willing distraction toward the fortuitous and accidental. It is certain, indeed, that ordinary friendship presupposes that we are not thoroughly convinced that all is vain.

When one is familiar with the unctuous, smiling, affable, oily, agreeable, and corpulent gentleman who tucks his napkin under his armpits, crosses his hands benignly on his bosom, and throughout the dinner, which he seems to enjoy uncommonly, is invariably of the opinion of his neighbors, even if the neighbor on the left maintains views diametrically opposed to the opinions of the neighbor on the right; when one is familiar with the speculative chameleon of the "Philosophical Dialogues" and the undulating aristocratic dreamer of "Prospero," one is not too ready to take all these fine ascetic professions letter for letter. M. Renan's ambiance of frankness is never satisfactory. Indeed, on the whole, we may say that the "Souvenirs of Childhood and Youth," while giving a very high opinion of M. Renan's intellectual sensibility, give us the poorest opinion of his moral character. The book is full of Jesuitical insincerity and of professions of virtue and asceticism utterly uncalled for, since it has never been M. Renan's pretension to preach by example, and since, after reading his confessions, we no more credit him with the virtues that he claims than we did before reading them; we simply come to the conclusion that the man Renan is a singularly inhuman, unsympathetic, insincere, and unestimable man if his portrait of himself be faithful. But is that portrait faithful?

And the conclusion of the confessions of this devout, dreamy, poetical, religiously disposed Breton, who remains in spite of everything in the curious position of a priest without a god, in a temple without a shrine? He is satisfied with his life. His age and his country have been full of indulgence toward him. The two ambitions that he avows, the Institute and the Collège de France, have been satisfied. He has enjoyed the benefits of the French language, of the fine literary traditions of France, and of the audience that France has in the world. As for the disappointed political ambition referred to in other passages, M. Renan omits it in the final summing up. Men, he says, have been kind to him, and his experience of life has been very sweet. His peace of mind is perfect; he is naturally good-humored; his body has never caused him much suffering; indeed, he has so much enjoyed this life that he feels that really he has no right to claim compensation beyond the grave. All that he now desires is to die suddenly, without pain and without having to traverse a period of bodily suffering and weakening of the intellectual faculties. Renan as he is to-day, healthy in heart and mind, declares that the existence which has been given him without his having asked for it has been a benefit for him. If it were offered him again, he would accept it with gratitude. Finally he says: "The century in which I have lived will probably not have been the greatest, but it will doubtless be reputed the most amusing of all the centuries. Unless my last years have in store for me very cruel pains, I shall, in bidding adieu to life, have only to thank the cause of all good for the charming promenade that it has been given me to accomplish through reality."

T. H. C.

THE COLOR LINE.

The Tendency to Draw the Line No New Thing in the History of Peoples.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir*: In your issue of the 22d inst. you grow serious in an editorial headed the "Color Line." You have noted from time to time, with fidelity and apparent solicitude, the growing tendency among colored people to seek association among themselves socially, religiously, and politically. It appears to me that THE SUN puts too much stress upon this tendency.

The tendency among us is neither unique nor ominous. It has been illustrated in the history of every tribe and nation of which history has taken cognizance. Where two or more races are brought together on the same soil and are subject to the same governmental authority, amalgamation and assimilation have been the slow growth of time. It is almost needless to point to the peculiar idiosyncrasies of the Alexandrian Jews, who for centuries maintained their racial and social integration in the midst of an alien and hostile people. The heterogeneity of the Roman population, and the acrimonious conflicts arising therefrom, are as marked in the history of that great people as the gradual absorption which at length welded them into an empire, which only yielded to the unprecedented floods of barbarians which ultimately worked the downfall of the Roman Government. The Russian Jew is to-day more persecuted, despised, and isolated than the African is in the United States, while the German Jew is not wholly free from the malice, hate, and persecution of his Teutonic fellow citizens. The persecution and contempt which have followed the Anglo-Celts of Ireland, and the distinctive racialty and social and political integration of that people, dwelling in the midst and ruled by Anglo-Saxon government for centuries, is among the most striking illustrations history furnishes of what the mongrel American type of man would call the "drawing of race lines."

Even in our own land, where everybody is supposed to be a part of one harmonious whole, an Irishman remains an Irishman, brings with him his Catholic religion, prefers his own race above all others, and, even when casting the ballot of an American freeman, he is receiving in his active mind ways and means by which to liberate his unhappy country from the thraldom of British oppression. The German American sticks to his beer, his German frau, and his Lutheran Church, and, after half a century of American citizenship, sincerely and fondly recollections the glories of his fatherland.

The race tendency is true of all the diverse peoples associated under our Government as one people, and the attempt of newspapers and individuals to mark out a "special" tendency for the African is dictated sometimes by malice and oftener by profound ignorance of the history and peculiar idiosyncrasies of races. A man always feels safer and more at ease in his own home than in the home of his best friend; and the disposition of a race to perpetuate itself by marriage and social affiliation is one of the most natural as well as one of the most thoroughly understood of ethnological phenomena.

Among