

### SCIENCE AND GENIUS.

#### A Limit to the Iconclasm of the Former Which Cannot be Crushed.

BRANTFORD, Ont., Sept. 4.—It used to be called the divine afflatus and several other desirable things. Genius meant sovereignty, and the crown of its possessor sparkled with a light reflected to no prosaic sun. It has been left to the scientific monthly of the nineteenth century to discuss it as a probable disease of the nerve centers, non-communicable except by heredity, with entertaining phases and possibilities of profit, these, however, outweighed by invariably accompanying headaches and strong chances of indigestion. One breathes more freely on observing that Mr. Sully does not absolutely establish the fact. The headaches and dyspepsia we have heard of before and are willing to accept again; eccentricities are credible, and we do not cavil at insanity in foregoing generations. We are content to have our demi-gods mentally a little out of equipoise with the actualities of existence with which our ordinary intelligence contrives to keep itself so well balanced, to permit them to despise certain of our conventionalities and to erect glorious standards for our own exaltation that we would be obliged to inspect through smoked glass; but we would be loth to consent to any diagnosis of genius based upon the queerness of its fleshly appearing. We will not have the celestial secrets of Parnassus revealed in a palpitating tangle by the sacrilegious scalpel of any psycho-physiologist—even in these iconoclastic days.

It is good to know that Mr. Sully has not quite accomplished this. He has quoted and compared and concluded, and his conclusion is a probability. We are bound to accept a probability, and we rejoice in the knowledge that genius lends itself about as well to statistics as it does to a parallelogram. We are not yet indebted to scientists for a soul-gauge. They can show us the dim outlines of the undeveloped idea, they can guess the trembling passion of him who contemplates its beauty, and can measure the force that in painful patience or with one stroke of sublime audacity makes it vocal and visible to the world; but that is all they can do. They cannot resolve ideal-ity, or explain his marvelous power whose glorious visions rise where the rest of us see only jostling crowds and dusty streets and avarice—whose dreams instruct in any language known to art, throw lovely glamors over common things and lift our heavy eyes from the sodden ways we walk in. I suppose Science thinks she has long ago compensated us for the pot of gold where the rainbow springs; but some of us feel degraded yet, and we are glad when she turns away baffled in her effort to rob us of our inalienable right to worship that in individuals without which humanity were common-place enough—turns away leaving genius as the ages have left it, still untranslatable, incommunicable, far. Still it is rather a melancholy reflection that the uncertain intellectual flicker that every scribbler cherishes consciously and carefully in anguished vacillation as to whether it be a genuine spark divine or only the reflection of some appreciative bit of tin in his composition is, after all, in the opinion of some people, only an evidence of temporary aberration.

Insane or not, what an aristocracy they are, these genius folk! Whose title so undeniable, whose birthright so absolutely unquestioned, whose inheritance so vast! Having a certain limited acquaintance among this nobility I have frequent occasion to glorify it, and Theophilus, who belongs to the Norman variety, overhearing me the other day, immediately appropriated my remarks as personal and complimentary. Misguided youth, my adulation was neither for you nor for your ancestors, though brave their deeds and broad their acres, but for certain coroneted individuals whose names are not found in any peerage with which you are familiar, although for courtesy and simple dignity and valorous achievement they might be, truly. One may be very abject at the feet of this aristocracy and rather plume oneself upon one's humility, for none bring homage here that are not richer for the gift. Richer by the intoxicating idea that this rapt appreciation that springs deep in our innermost being, its tendrils twining about our highest thought, its growth a constant joy, must be somewhat rooted in a subtle affinity, too faint and fluctuating perhaps to claim its royal kindred in this world, but that shall wake and walk—who knows!—an uncrowned king in the full noon-tide of some other, some star of heaven's myriads perhaps that glimmers now as far as our prospective greatness! O, bold, beguiling speculation, based on a sentimental predilection for subjective verse and a fair ability to spell! But as you lie still in your hammock late some August night listening to the stridulous cricket-fiddlers, refreshed by their nightly dew potations and lustily at it again, watching the mystical moonshine filter through a torn cobweb, and staring up through the waving chestnut leaves at the magical skies in their jeweled silence and remoteness, did it never occur to you along with the various ills incident to an exposure to the night air?

How he would benefit his species, by the way, the man who would settle for us this vexed question of the atmosphere deprived of the blessed sunlight! To the arguments of one distinguished physician as to its noxious qualities another distinguished physician replies, "Bosh!" this being the professional attitude upon a variety of subjects more or less important than night air, but equally incidental to the well-being of humanity. The state of mind of the non-professional is one of distressing uncertainty. A valuable addition to the information already accumulated about night air may be found in the fact, which I have discovered and put thus unobtrusively forward, that a good deal depends on the season of the year. I have known exposure to it in November to be productive of the very worst results, a cold in the head, neuralgia, rheumatism, the blues. In January it has the effect of quickening one's circulation and giving one an undesirable appetite at an unaccommodating hour. In June, with an accessory and ever-rhyming moon, it will produce sentimental symptoms in the most weather-hardened constitution; and in October—why, in October, when the moonlight shines down mistily and shifts through branches, all red and brown and rustling, and lies in great gold patches on the fallen leaves; when groups of long black shadows dance apart in the rising wind and meet to confabulate again, and the asters nod askance at one another as summer's ghost flits down the garden path—I have myself frequently experienced an acute attack of poetic perpetration never induced, at least in such aggravated form, by any other circumstances. In my opinion, therefore, night air is pernicious to a degree, but I should like to see it corroborated.

The mountains sometimes come to Mahomet and to people of less importance. They came to me last week, great spurs and ridges of them, in long, obedient procession, the mountains of Tennessee. Purple and silent in the solitude of the stars, eloquent with the splendor of the dawn, stretching faint and far in the radiance of a summer noon into that blue infinity that we call the sky. And they brought with them, these mountains of Tennessee, all the solemn refrain of their eternal conversation, their clinging cloud thoughts, and the sighings of their pine trees. Far away, in some

inaccessibility, I heard a red fox barking in the moonlight. I saw it shining blankly in the great round eyes of a startled owl, and where it lay broadly on a solitary footpath, the speeding shadow, *auribus arrectis*, of an adventurous rabbit. The mountaineers came, too, simple, ignorant folk, with much of the unconscious melancholy of their native altitudes. And I looked deep into these unquarried mountain natures and beheld divinity shining there like hidden gold. All this while I stirred not hand nor foot from Dustytown. Yes, there was a magician, but beardless—only a fragile woman, they say—whose steel-tipped wonder-working rod evoked these dreams of mine; timid withal, for she does her conjuring in the name of Charles Egbert Craddock. But surely she is of those for whom the undertones of the earth are so full of strange, sweet music that her jarring discords clash unheard; of those who creep close to her heart and listen to its mighty throbbing—who know a subtle sympathy with all her moods, even with all her children. Poor, wrathful old Mother Earth! I sometimes think it must be a comfort to her to find among her multitudinous progeny born blind and deaf a son or daughter like this:

"For indeed 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure,  
(And blissful is he who such happiness finds),  
To possess but a span of the hour of leisure  
In elegant, pure and aerial minds."

If that is the construction of poor Keats' love letters, the *Westminster Review* need not exercise itself about the sacrilegious fact of their being sold. How trippingly it goes! How well regulated the passion it expresses! How proper and discriminating its complimentary vein! Not "light feet, dark violet eyes and parted hair"—ah, Keats, no material precision there!—but "elegant, pure and aerial minds!" Some ladies had sent him a curious shell, and he thus expresses his gratitude, probably in the autograph album of the oldest and ugliest, or he never would have complimented her on her intelligence. The love letters to Fannie Braune were probably not of this order of composition. It does seem a little soon to buy and sell documents of so private and personal a character, especially when the writer has already let the world so confidently into the secrets of his impulsive breast; but we may reflect that it is only a matter of time. We would not be shocked in the least at the disposal of Shakespeare's amatory epistles. Keats' personality will crumble away with the bones of the last person who knew him, and nothing will be left but the unending flame of his genius and the fact that a bundle of human susceptibilities existed in its immediate vicinity about which one may be naturally curious. GARTH GRAFTON.