[From "The Ingham Papers."]

DINNER SPEAKING.

A LETTER TO MY NEPHEW.

So you did not enjoy your first Phi Beta dinner, dear Tom, because you were afraid all the time that the new members would be toasted, and then "the fellow" who was old must reply for them. That is a pity. Again all, the fellows were not toasted, it is a great pity. I am glad you wrote to me about it, however, and now it is for me to take care that this never happens to you again.

I will tell you how to be always ready, will tell you how I do.

My first Phi Beta dinner was, like yours, my first public dinner. It was on the day, which this year everybody remembered who was old enough, when Mr. Emerson delivered his first Phi Beta oration at Cambridge. How proudly he has the right to look back on the generation between, all of which he has seen, so much of which he has been! Well, he is no older than, day, to all appearance, than he was then,—and your uncle, my dear boy, though older to appearance, is not older in reality. What is it dear G——— Q——— sings, who sat behind me that early day at Phi Beta?

"When we've been there ten million years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We'll have more days
To sing God's praise,
Than when we first begin!"

Remember that, my dear oldest nephew, as the ten million years go by,—and, remembering it, keep young or grow young.

Mr. Emerson was young, I say,—and I. We were all young.

Mr. Edward Everett was young. He was then Governor,—and, I think, presided, certainly spoke, at that Phi Beta dinner. By the almanac he must have been that year forty-five years old,—just as old, dear Tom, as some other people are this year by the almanac. He had been pretty much everything, had gone round everywhere, had seen almost all the people that were worth seeing, and remembered more than all the rest of us had forgotten. And he was very young. My relief has an inspiration. I got round to the Flag. Do you remember how safe General Hallock always found a place to dine to the Flag?

And so it happened that he made the first dinner speech that I remember. It was at one in the South Commons Hall of University, now used as somebody's lecture-room, say at, I guess, Professor Lovering's. And he gave some charming reminiscences of Edward Emerson, brother of the philosopher, who was then, and everywhere loved,—and then, speaking of the orator of the day, he said and of the style of philosophy to which it belonged, and of which the orator was, is, and will be the prophet, he said, that it was precious, funny, courtly, and hearty way, that he always thought of its thunders as he did of the bolts of Jupiter: Great Gods and we have complimented an orator more than to compare him to Jupiter! Are they not the words to verify the comparison by quoting the description,—

"Τρεις υπατοι τοτ' ησαν, ο μεν Φρυξ, ο δε Λυδος,
Αυτιος, ρυτιν τε, τε ιχνια, τε, αιθις Αυστρι,"

and translated the words for his purpose,—

"Three parts were ranging fire, and three were whelming waves!
But three were thirsty cloud, and three in the empty wind!"

Ah well, my boy! You do not remember when all the world, except a few of the elect, then said of "Transcendentalism." So you cannot imagine the scream of fun and applause which saluted this good-natured analysis of his thunder.

And I,—I was delighted at the aptness of quotation. Should I ever bring my capping lines to such a market? Here was a big as good as the famous parliamentary retorts, which were so precious to us in the I. O. H. and in the Harvard Union. Should I ever live to see the happy day when I should find that it was wise, witty, and just the thing to say,

"Τις φυσιν ικατοιμι, ποθεν, Ρωμη πατρις;"

or,

"Πατερα δωιν ρεδεο, πρεσβυ εστ' ια, μασε ταμ' ιμβας;"

or any other of the Τ's? Or,

"Ζευσπαι ποτνιαι ωμεστιαι ρεριτ;"

or,

"Ζ' ικαυς ικαρωτιε, τιστιμε ια νοβε ιοκυτιας,"

or any other of the Ικ diphtongs? It did not even possible to speak in Latin.

Now it happened that, in the vacation following, a French steamer, I think the Geryon, came to Boston. And there was, perhaps, a civic dinner, certainly an excursion down the harbor, to present her officers, and to freight them. Louis Philippe, for this was in the early age of steam, that Boston Harbor was the best point—for the—speaking—for the mail-packets to stop at,—and somebody invited me to go. And it turned out that few of the Frenchmen spoke English, and few of the common Councilmen spoke French, so all of us, gentlemen, who could, were able use as a half-interpreter. I remember telling a Lieutenant de Vaisseau that "Bunker Hill" was called so because the 74 Centurion was lost there; and that an indignant civic authority, standing by, said to me, that if they did not want the Frenchmen to know anything about it in Boston Harbor? Perhaps that was the reason the French packets never came. Well, by and by there was the inevitable collation in the cabin. Fancy, dear boy, is a dinner where you have nothing to eat? Anyhow we went down stairs to dinner. I began to think of the speeches. Suppose they should call on the youngest of the interpreters, what could he say? Latin quotation that would answer? Not Τρεις certainly! No. Not Ζευσπαι, nurse certainly, for she went overboard,—had luck to her!—or she buried decently? Had once that Ικ-ρεί certainly,—what better than the thunderbolts of Jove? Steam-navigation forever,—Robert Fulton, Marquis of Worcester, madman in the French bedlam,—bolts of heaven secured for service of earth. Franklin,—the great alliance,—electricity, guitation uniting the world! Was not the whole prefigured, sustained, spread if, grand and forged the very thunderbolts of the *Diet des Cieux?*

"Τρεις υπατοι τοτ' ησαν, ο μεν Φρυξ, ο δε Λυδος,
Αυτιος, ρυτιν τε, τε ιχνια, τε, αιθις Αυστρι."

What better description of the power which, at that moment was driving us along,—

"Three ways of written vain, of fire three more,
Of wind southern winds, and cloudy store,
As many parts the dreadful mixture frame"?

Could anything have been more happy? And fortunately for the Phi Beta Kappa we present but myself.—But unfortunately there was no speaking, and for the moment I lost my opportunity.

But not my preparation, dear Tom. And for this purpose have I written this long story to show you how, in thirty happy years since, when I have had nothing else to say, "Τρεις υπατοι τοτ' ησαν" has always stood me in stead. One good quotation makes an after-dinner speaker the delight of his fellows. And if you have it in Latin, the people who understand that language enjoy it especially, and those who do not always appear to enjoy it more especially. Perhaps they do. There is also the advantage of slight variations in the translation. Note the difference between Mr. Everett's above, and John Dryden's:

"Three parts in fire, three in air, the rest in water." or,

"Three parts from distant mountains' cloudy store,
While three parts fined all with three parts more!"

You see, dear Tom, these audiences are always good-humored, and by no means critics of your version.

Why, at the only time I was ever at a regimental dinner on the Plains, long before the war, you know, when to the untaught mind it did seem as if there was no reason why we were there, and no pretence for mutual congratulation, I remember when poor Prendergast called me up to represent science (I was at that time in the telegraph business), the dear old quotation came to my relief like an inspiration. I got round to the Flag. Do you remember how safe General Hallock always found a place to dine to the Flag?

"The flag, gentlemen,"—colors,"—vain, bow of my liberties."—"Liberty everywhere,"—"Blue, white, and red of Low Countries,"—"Red, white, and blue of France,"—English guess, Professor Lovering?—"Virginia Reels, &c., &c.

"Does it seem too much to say, gentlemen, that, with the divine instinct of poetry, the unequalled hard of the court of Augustus, looking down the stage beyond the sickly purple of the palace, to the days when armies should be the armies of freedom, and not the Praetorian guards of a tyrant,—that he veiled the glad prophecy of the future in the words in which he describes even the thunderbolt itself? Not white crest of the foam, the blue of the sky, the red of the fleery fleece, are assessed together, and play together, and rejoice together there in the smile or in the rage of the very breeze of Heaven.

"Τρεις υπατοι τοτ' ησαν, ο μεν Φρυξ, ο δε Λυδος,
Αυτιος, ρυτιν τε, τε ιχνια, τε, αιθις Αυστρι."

"Three parts range fire, and three were whelming waves!
But three were thirsty cloud, and three in the empty wind!"

Three parts of fiery red with these were blend,
And on the wave-born wind across the world they went."

You are not old enough, my dear nephew, to remember the great consistory when the Pope held at Somerville, when for a moment he thought that the churches of the world had recognized that, notwithstanding that fact does make them one, and were willing to offer one fealty to the Vicar of Christ, of Rigling, as they always had done, on ten thousand hooks of their own. You understand, it was not this Pope, Pius IX. It was the Pope who came after Gregory XVI. and before Pius IX. Well, at that moment, the bolts which had been built on the plan of John O'Groat's, so that each of the seven thousand seven hundred and thirty rifles present might sit at the head,—I was fortunate enough to be appointed to represent the Scandinavian Confederacy, the only body, as I will venture to say to you, which really preserves the simplicity of Gospel institutions, or in the least carries into our own time, the spirit and life of fundamental Christianity. Now you may imagine the difficulty of speaking on such an occasion. I had thought it proper to speak in Latin. The difficulty was not so much in the language as in what to say. That one might be at once brave as a Scandinavian, and at the same time coherent as a catholics a Christian. Now it is not for me to say how well I acquitted myself. If you were to see my speech, you had better look in the *Annales de Foi*; and, if it is there, you will certainly find it. I did not think it proper, certainly, that I was able to close by comparing the great agencies which the United Christ would be able to employ to the thunderbolt itself. We had there present bishops from England of perpetual rain, from Sicily of perpetual cloud, from the eternal fires of Etna, and from the eternal snows of south of Patagonia. When we selected our sacred twelve, it was easy for us to take Jesus, as if we were forging thunders.

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Now, my dear Tom, I am sure this lesson needs no moral. Of course I do not think that you had better start in life with my quotation. To tell you the truth, I am still young. I am a life-member of many societies, and, as they arrive at their maturity, I find my quotation do they dine together. I may therefore have some other occasion when I may be reminded of the Cyclops. But it, at your dinner, I had happened to be called upon, I think I—I do not know, but I think that, seeing such men as you describe, I should have been irresistibly led to consider the varied gifts which the University every year scattered over the land, and the exquisite harmony by which, from such different callings, different homes, and different destinies, they unite in the merriment or in the wisdom of her festivals. The men of practice who have been taming the waterfall, and made it subservient; the men of the gentle ministries of peace, whose blessings distil upon us like the very dews of heaven; and the men of the spoken word, of the spirit of truth, of which, like the wind itself, no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth,—the men of the ministry of war who have passed through its fires to give us the free America of to-day, all were assembled yet. Surely in such a union I should have been reminded of the divine harmony of the elements the most diverse were welded into the bolts of Jove.

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Αυτιος, ρυτιν τε, τε ιχνια, τε, αιθις Αυστρι."

"Three parts were ranging fire, and three were whelming waves!
Three parts of fiery red with these were blend,
And on the wave-born wind across the world they went."

Always, dear Tom, your affectionate uncle,

FREDERIC INGHAM.

SUBSEQUENT POSTSCRIPT BY MR. INGHAM.

The subject, perhaps, needs no further illustration; but I am tempted to add,—as I file this printed copy of the letter away,—that my friend, George Hussey, hearing, the week after it was printed, that we had lost good cherry-brandy at our house, sent me round some, which had proved excellent in his year's medical practice, with the following formula for its manufacture:

"Τρεις υπατοι τοτ' �, τε, τε ιχνια, τε, αιθις Αυστρι."

"Three parts from distant mountains' cloudy store,
From the wave-beat shore,
Three from the soft-winged breeze, and three from blood-red war."

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