

but because in all time talking has been one of the greatest sources of pleasure as well as improvement. We have a thought but half-formed; moulded by the single touch of the tongue it leaps into definite shape. Butler says: "It matters little how vast an amount of intellectual wealth a man has in solid bars if he cannot mint it into coin in the commerce of thought." We may have a line of argument, vague and dimly out-lined, but in giving itself expression, it unwinds a clear and well defined chain. Who can bound the pleasure experienced by intelligent and congenial people when they converse with each other, and exchange their thoughts and opinions upon subjects mutually interesting.

Nothing is so indicative of character as conversation. Hear any one talk and you know what he is. Here, culture, refinement, wit, eloquence and genius show themselves in every sound; there, coarseness and ignorance.

Some people profess to read character from the hand-writing or face of a person, where to a great extent character may be concealed; but let a man open his lips and immediately we say: "He is educated, cultured, intelligent;" or on the other hand we pronounce him, ignorant, rude, silly. In short as some one has put it, "Conversation is the vent of character as well as of thought." How delightful it must have been to sit and listen to such talkers as Macaulay, Ben Johnson, Burke, Lord Chatham, Madame DeStael, and scores of other brilliant talkers. I remember a little anecdote told of Madame De Stael which well illustrates her conversational power. At one time, though poor, she was obliged to invite a number of gentlemen to dine with her. At the table she endeavored by conversation to cover if possible the bareness of the board. The servant slipped up to her in the midst of the dinner and whispered in her ear: "one more anecdote, Madame, there is no roast." She told the anecdote, and neither the roast, nor any thing else that was nec-

essary was missed. How wonderfully fascinating she must have been to make men forget their dinners.

In choosing illustrations from brilliant conversationists I am at a loss whom to select from the many who have shone in that sphere. Going back to the ancients, there was Socrates, who spent his whole life in talking and testing the goodness of others, confuting and entangling them in their own arguments until he made them flatly contradict themselves and acknowledge his victory. Cicero we may judge by some few stories that are told of him. Once in conversation with a Roman lady, she said she was thirty years old; he replied that it must be true as he had heard it for twenty years. In modern times we find a large number of fine conversationists. Samuel Johnson, Matthews thinks was the most celebrated of all. He styles him "the Goliath and David," at the same time of conversation, "strong to wield a spear like a weavers beam, and nimble to whirl a pebble from a sling; tongue, with a garnish of brains."

Ben Johnson was also distinguished in this regard. One of his opponents said of him: "there is no use arguing with Johnson, if his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt end."

Coleridge was most elegant in his use of language, indeed honeyed words were said to drop from his tongue so smoothly that at last they grew exceedingly monotonous from very nicety. He talked so much that he grew absolutely tiresome. When talking with people he detained them until they were completely wearied.

Theodore Hook, in telling of a talk he had with him occasioned by seeing two soldiers by the way-side said: "Zounds, I was never so bethrumped with words" Thank Heaven he didn't see a whole regiment, for then he never would have finished.

Carlyle is also in the first rank of conversationists. He is said to advance on his opponent, not only with a perfect volley of words, but also with his voice rais-