

that one man with a perfectly balanced mind has at some time existed. If there is to be another mind perfectly balanced it must be precisely identical in every respect, or the first one was imperfect. Here, then we would have what we have just agreed to be an almost impossible coincidence. If you are minded to be an intellectual phenomenon, our advice is to cultivate common sense, or, to speak plainly, horse sense. You will find it far more useful than any amount of silly eccentricity, and, if you are successful, you can have the additional satisfaction of knowing that you are a very rare specimen of the genus homo.

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It occurs to us that it is an exhibition of very poor taste in those in control of *Harper's Magazine* to permit the editor of one department to devote the greater part of his space to puffing the editor of another department. Laurence Hutton, whoever he is, begins his "Literary Notes" in the December number with an article on Mr. Howells long enough to completely analyze this writer quite a number of times. But this isn't the worst of it. He next reviews *Narka*, and insists on bringing Mr. Howells into prominence again. We fail to find any excuse for this. If there is any connection between *Narka* and Mr. Howells, it is altogether too fragile to be handled by one of Mr. Hutton's caliber. Let us employ a minute in considering the first of these two articles. Mr. Hutton thinks he is using a particularly brilliant figure when he speaks of Mr. Howells as a cobbler making shoes that pinch. Like a half-witted boy who imagines he has said something funny, he repeats his metaphor over and over again. Now the great inspirer of all this professes to be a realist. We wish to inquire whether a true realist in the role of a cobbler would not be more likely to make the shoes fit. In a little town in Russia, there is a grand old man, not only titled, but honored by all the civilized world, who is, even now, making shoes for the peasants. He does this through charity. He makes the shoes fit, and is especially easy where the feet are tender. This is literal and not figurative, for Count Tolstoi is become a cobbler. In his writings we find the same careful following of nature, and the same clemency when the weak points of humanity must be touched. This man is a realist, and his realism is sublime. Howells' redeeming point is his admiration for Tolstoi. Howells makes a fairly good mimic as to the idiosyncrasies of dialects, possibly a very good one, but he utterly fails to portray the thoughts and emotions of those who use these dialects. He relies on his cunning and parrot-like twaddle to gloss over the defects of his powers of motive-analysis. If the accurate reporting of conversation is all we desire, let us leave off novel-reading and take to the phonograph. It is almost as parrot-like as Howells, and gives us the tone as well as the words. For contrast's sake let us look at "Inja," in the same number of *Harper's*. The conversation in this, and the parts played by the different actors, are as true to life as anything Mr. Howells has ever produced. The aged father uses a broad Virginian dialect, but the stress is not on this. When, in the last act, he gives "Faginiah" as his home, we feel the pathos the one word conveys, but forget to see its uncouth form.

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#### THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Every reader of recent English Literature must have more or less curiosity to learn something more about this strange being. Vague rumors concerning his learning, singular personal habits, and wonderful conversational powers fre-

quently reach us, but unless one has made an especial study of his character and writings, he is apt to find his real knowledge of De Quincey very vague.

Thomas De Quincey was born near Manchester, the fifteenth of August, 1785. His father, engaged in mercantile pursuits, was so successful that at his death, he was able to leave his family an annual income of £1600; hence the accounts of the early life of De Quincey reveal considerable luxury in the domestic appointments of the family. He was reared with unusual care and early introduced into noble society. Some incidents of this period are note worthy, as showing the presence in the child of those traits, which were afterwards most characteristic of the man. A dream is recorded as happening in his second year, so remarkable as to show that the marvellous visions had their cause in something else than opium. He was educated in a somewhat irregular manner. First he was under the tuition of one of his guardians, the Rev. Mr. Hall of Salford, who taught him a little Latin. When his mother removed to Bath, Thomas was transferred to the grammar school of that place, under the tuition of Mr. Morgan. In this school he showed great facility in acquiring the classical languages, so that his tutors predicted that he might easily obtain distinction at college. He was accordingly sent to Oxford, but soon his reckless extravagance forced him to choose Worcester College, which he never liked on account of its cheaper terms. It was no doubt their knowledge of these traits in his character, which led his guardians to decide that he should return and attend Manchester High School for three years. To this young De Quincey submitted very reluctantly, and remained for eighteen months, then he longed to break away and get forth into the world. He escaped one night from the school and went to Chester, where his mother resided, in the hope that he might obtain a regular allowance of money, which he did; for strangely his mother consented to furnish him with a guinea a week. He was only too glad to go upon adventures. So starting out with an equipment consisting of a small bundle of clothes, a guinea or two in his purse, and two small editions of poems—one English and the other *Æschylus*—in his pocket, he began the maddest of pilgrimages. At first, he frequented inns, but finding them too expensive he began to sleep in open air, buying such food as he could, more often subsisting entirely upon wild fruits, or lodging with cottagers, whose kindness he repaid by writing letters about business or love. This continued for months, when he began to fear capture by his guardians. So he ceased applying for his stipulated guinea a week and turned his steps toward London. There he hoped to borrow of Jews two hundred pounds upon his expectations, dreaming that he could live upon that sum, until four years, he should come of age.

This is the substance of the theory concerning him, after leaving Manchester school. The other, more natural one is that he ran away without the knowledge of his mother or guardians. But while negotiating with the Jews at London, he chanced upon a friend of the family, who loaned him money enough to buy a suit of clothes and pay his expenses home, where his life went on as before, quarreling with friends, worsting them in logical encounters, and finally under a taunt that he was wasting time, he set off to Oxford to again begin university life. Here he lived a recluse, read English Literature, studied German and Hebrew, got in debt for books, borrowed money of the Jews at exorbitant interest, and withal worked diligently for his degree. But though he entered the final examination with excellent prospects and did the written work well, he became angry with