

isms, respecting which every nation has a right to enforce its own arbitrary rules. The frequent use of the words, "sir" and "ma'am," in the United States, like "oui, monsieur, oui, madame," in France, for the sake of softening the bald and abrupt "yes" or "no," would sound to a Frenchman or Italian more polite; and if the Americans were to conform to the present English model in such trifles, it might happen that in England itself the fashion may soon change. There are also many genuine old classical phrases, which have grown obsolete in the parent country, and which the Americans retain, and ought not to allow themselves to be laughed out of. The title of Madam is sometimes given here, and generally in Charleston (S. Carolina), and in the South, to a mother whose son has married, and the daughter-in-law is then called Mrs. By this means they avoid the inelegant phraseology of old Mrs. A., or the Scotch, Mrs. A. senior. Madam, in short, very commonly serves as the equivalent of dowager, as used in English titled families. There are also some antique provincialisms handed down from the times of the first settlers, which may well deserve to be kept up, although they may be subjects of diversion to English tourists. In one of Shirley's plays, written just before the middle of the seventeenth century, when the largest emigration took place from Old to New England, we find the term, "I guess," for "I think," or "I suppose," occurring frequently; and if we look farther back, it is met with in the "Miller's Tale" and in the "Monk" of Chaucer:—

. . . "For little heaviness
Is right enough for muchel folk, I guess."

And in Spenser's "Faerie Queene"—

"It seemed a second Paradise, I guesse."*

Among the most common singularities of expression are the following:—"I should admire to see him" for "I should like to see him;" "I want to know," and "Do tell," both exclamations of surprise, answering to our "Dear me." These last, however, are rarely heard in society above the middling class. Occa-

* Canto x. 23.