



## C H A P T E R 1 3

I LATELY RECEIVED A LETTER FROM ENGLAND FROM A GENTLEMAN whose belief in **phrenology** is strong and who wonders why phrenology has apparently never interested me enough to move me to write about it. I have explained as follows:

Dear Sir:

I never did study phrenology deeply; therefore I am neither qualified to express an opinion about it nor entitled to do so. In London, thirty-three or thirty-four years ago, I made a small test of phrenology for my better information. I went to Fowler under an assumed name and he examined my **elevations** and depressions and gave me a report which I carried home and studied with great interest and amusement—the same interest and amusement which I should have found in the report of someone who had been passing himself off as me and who did not resemble me in a single detail. I waited three months and went to Mr. Fowler again. Again I carried away a fancy report. It contained several details of my character (using the same assumed name), but it bore no recognizable resemblance to the earlier report. These experiences gave me feeling against phrenology which has lasted until now.

In America forty or fifty years ago, Fowler and Wells stood at the head of the phrenological industry, and the firm's name was familiar in all ears. Their publications were read and studied and discussed by truth-seekers all over the land. One of the most frequent arrivals in our village of Hannibal was the traveling phrenologist and he was popular and always welcome. He gathered the people together and gave them a free lecture on the wonders of phrenology, then felt their heads and made an estimate of the results, at twenty-five cents per head. I think the people were almost always satisfied with the results.

It is not at all likely, I think, that the traveling expert ever got any villager's character quite right, but it is a safe guess that he was always wise enough to furnish them with reports that would compare favorably with George Washington's.

I was brought up in this atmosphere of faith and belief and trust, and I think its influence was still upon me, so many years afterward, when I saw Fowler's public announcements in London. I was glad to see his name and glad of an opportunity to personally test his art. That I did not give my real name shows that not all the faith of my boyhood was still with me.

Fowler received me with indifference, fingered my head in an uninterested way and named my qualities in a bored voice. He said I possessed surprising courage, great daring, a stern will, a fearlessness without limit. I was astonished at this, and pleased, too. Then he felt the other side of my head and found an elevation there which he called "carefulness." This elevation was so tall, so mountainous, that it reduced my fearlessness one to a mere hill by comparison. He continued his discoveries, with the result that I came out safe and sound, at the end, with a hundred great and shining qualities; but which lost their value and amounted to nothing because each of the hundred was paired with an opposing weakness which took the effectiveness all out of it.