

SOMETHING ABOUT PICTURES.

It is not surprising that pictures, with all their attraction for eye and mind, are, to many honest and intelligent people, too much of a riddle to be altogether pleasant. What with the oracular dicta of self-constituted arbiters of taste, the discrepancies of popular writers on Art, the jargon of connoisseurship, the vagaries of fashion, the endless theories about color, style, *chiaro 'scuro*, composition, design, imitation, nature, schools, etc., painting has become rather a subject for the gratification of vanity and the exercise of pedantic dogmatism, than a genuine source of enjoyment and culture, of sympathy and satisfaction,—like music, literature, scenery, and other recognized intellectual recreations. In these latter spheres it is not thought presumptuous to assert and enjoy individual taste; the least independent talkers will bravely advocate their favorite composer, describe the landscape which has charmed or the book which has interested them; but when a picture is the subject of discussion, few have the moral courage to say what they think; there is a self-distrust of one's own impressions and even convictions in regard to what is represented on canvas, that never intervenes between thought and expression, where ideas or sentiments are embodied in writing or in melody. Nor is this to be ascribed wholly to the technicalities of pictorial art, in which so few are deeply versed, but in a great measure to the incongruous and irrelevant associations which have gradually overlaid and mystified a subject in itself as open to the perception of a candid mind and healthy senses as any other department of human knowledge. Half the want of appreciation of pictures arises from ignorance, not of the principles of Art, but of the elements of Nature. Good observers are rare. The peasant's criticism upon Moreland's "Farm-yard"—that three pigs never eat together with-

out one foot at least in the trough—was a strict inference from personal knowledge of the habits of the animal; so the surgeon found a head of the Baptist untrue, because the skin was not withdrawn somewhat from the line of decollation. These and similar instances show that some knowledge of or interest in the thing represented is essential to the appreciation of pictures. Sailors and their wives crowded around Wilkie's "Chelsea Pensioners," when first exhibited; French soldiers enjoy the minutiae of Vernet's battle-pieces; a lover can judge of his betrothed's miniature; and the most unrefined sportsman will point out the niceties of breed in one of Landseer's dogs. To the want of correspondence so frequent between the subject of a picture and the observer's experience may, therefore, be attributed no small degree of the prevalent want of sympathy and confident judgment. "Gang into an Exhibition," says the Ettrick Shepherd, "and only look at a crowd o' cockneys, some with specs, and some wi' quizzing-glasses, and faces without ae grain o' meaning in them o' any kind whatsoever, a' glowering, perhaps, at a picture o' ane o' Nature's maist fearfu' or magnificent warks! What, I ask, could a Prince's-Street maister or missy ken o' sic a wark mair than a red deer wad ken o' the inside o' George's-Street Assembly-Rooms?"

The incidental associations of pictures link them to history, tradition, and human character, in a manner which indefinitely enhances their suggestiveness. Horace Walpole wove a standard collection of anecdotes from the lives and works of painters. The frescoes of St. Mark's, at Florence, have a peculiar significance to the spectator familiar with Fra Angelico's life. One of the most pathetic and beautiful tragedies in modern literature is that which a Danish poet elaborated from Correggio's artist

career. Lamb's great treasure was a print from Da Vinci, which he called "My Beauty," and its exhibition to a literal Scotchman gave rise to one of the richest jokes in Elia's record. The pen-drawing Andre made of himself the night before his execution,—the curtain painted in the space where Faliero's portrait should have been, in the ducal palace at Venice,—and the head of Dante, discovered by Mr. Kirkup, on the wall of the Bargello, at Florence,—convey impressions far beyond the mere lines and hues they exhibit; each is a drama, a destiny. And the hard but true lineaments of Holbein, the ærial grace of Malbone's "Hours," Albert Durer's mediæval sanctities, Overbeck's conservative self-devotion, a market-place by Ostade, Reynolds's "Strawberry Girl," one of Copley's colonial grandees in a New England farmer's parlor, a cabinet gem by Greuze, a dog or sheep of Landseer's, the misty depths of Turner's "Carthage," Domenichino's "Sibyl," Claude's sunset, or Allston's "Rosalie,"—how much of eras in Art, events in history, national tastes, and varieties of genius do they each foreshadow and embalm! Even when no special beauty or skill is manifest, the character of features transmitted by pictorial art, their antiquity or historical significance, often lends a mystery and meaning to the effigies of humanity. In the carved faces of old German church choirs and altars, the existent facial peculiarities of race are curiously evident; a Grecian life breathes from many a profile in the Elgin marbles, and a sacred marvel invests the exhumed giants of Nineveh; in the cartoons of Raphael, and the old Gobelin tapestries, are hints of what is essential in the progress and the triumphs of painting. Considered as a language, how definitely is the style of painters associated with special forms of character and spheres of life! It is this variety of human experience typified and illustrated on canvas, that forms our chief obligations to the artist; through him our perception of and acquaintance with our race, its

individuality and career, its phases and aspects, is indefinitely enlarged. "The greatest benefit," says a late writer, "we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the *extension of our sympathies*. Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying our experience and extending our contact with our fellow-creatures beyond the bounds of our personal lot."

The effect of a picture is increased by isolation and surprise. I never realized the physiognomical traits of Madame de Maintenon, until her portrait was encountered in a solitary country-house, of whose drawing-room it was the sole ornament; and the romance of a miniature by Malbone first came home to me, when an ancient dame, in the costume of the last century, with trembling fingers drew one of her husband from an antique cabinet, and descanted on the manly beauty of the deceased original, and the graceful genius of the young and lamented artist. Hazlitt wrote an ingenious essay on "A Portrait by Vandyck," which gives us an adequate idea of what such a masterpiece is to the eye and mind of genuine artistic perception and sympathy. Few sensations, or rather sentiments, are more inextricably made up of pleasure and sadness than that with which we contemplate (as is not infrequent in some old gallery of Europe) a portrait which deeply interests or powerfully attracts us, and whose history is irrevocably lost. A better homily on the evanescence of human love and fame can scarcely be imagined: a face alive with moral personality and human charms, such as win and warm our stranger eyes,—yet the name, subject, artist, owner, all lost in oblivion! To pause before an interesting but "unknown portrait" is to read an elegy as pathetic as Gray's.

The mechanical processes by which Nature is so closely imitated, and the increase of which during the last few years is one of the most remarkable facts in science, may at the first glance appear to have lessened the marvellous in Art, by making available to all the exact

representation of still-life. But, when duly considered, the effect is precisely the reverse; for exactly in proportion as we become familiar with the mechanical production of the similitudes of natural and artificial objects, do we instinctively demand higher powers of conception, greater spiritual expression in the artist. The discovery of Daguerre and its numerous improvements, and the unrivalled precision attained by Photography, render exact imitation no longer a miracle of crayon or palette; these must now create as well as reflect, invent and harmonize as well as copy, bring out the soul of the individual and of the landscape, or their achievements will be neglected in favor of the fac-similes obtainable through sunshine and chemistry. The best photographs of architecture, statuary, ruins, and, in some cases, of celebrated pictures, are satisfactory to a degree which has banished mediocre sketches, and even minutely finished but literal pictures. Specimens of what is called "Nature-printing," which gives an impression directly from the veined stone, the branching fern, or the sea-moss, are so true to the details as to answer a scientific purpose; natural objects are thus lithographed without the intervention of pencil or ink. And these several discoveries have placed the results of mere imitative art within reach of the mass; in other words, her prose language, that which mechanical science can utter, is so universal, that her poetry, that which must be conceived and expressed through individual genius, the emanation of the soul, is more distinctly recognized and absolutely demanded from the artist, in order to vindicate his claim to that title, than ever before.

Perhaps, indeed, the scope which Painting offers to experimental, individual, and prescriptive taste, the loyalty it invokes from the conservative, the "infinite possibilities" it offers to the imaginative, the intimacy it promotes with Nature and character, are the cause of so much originality and attractiveness in its votaries. The Lives of Painters abound in the

characteristic, the adventurous, and the romantic. Open Vasari, Walpole, or Cunningham, at random, and one is sure to light upon something odd, genial, or exciting. One of the most popular novelists of our day assured me, that, in his opinion, the richest unworked vein for his craft, available in these days of civilized uniformity, is artist-life at Rome, to one thoroughly cognizant of its humors and aspirations, its interiors and vagrancies, its self-denials and its resources. I have sometimes imagined what a story the old white dog who so long frequented the Lepri and the Caffè Greco, and attached himself so capriciously to the brother artists of his deceased master, could have told, if blest with memory and language. He had tasted the freedom and the zest of artist-life in Rome, and scorned to follow trader or king. He preferred the odor of canvas and oil to that of conservatories, and had more frolic and dainty morsels at an *al fresco* of the painters, in the Campagna, than the kitchen of an Italian prince could furnish. His very name betokened good cheer, and was pronounced after the manner of the pert waiters who complacently enunciate a few words of English. *Bif-steak* was a privileged dog; and though occasionally made the subject of a practical joke, taught absurd tricks, sent on fools' errands, and his white coat painted like a zebra, these were but casual troubles; he was a sensible dog to despise them, when he could enjoy such quaint companionship, behold such experiments in color and drawing, serve as a model himself, and go on delicious sketching excursions to Albano and Tivoli, besides inhaling tobacco-smoke and hearing stale jests and love soliloquies *ad infinitum*. I am of *Bif-steak's* opinion. There is no such true, earnest, humorous, and individual life, in these days of high civilization, as that of your genuine painter; impoverished as it often is, baffled in its aspirations, unregarded by the material and the worldly, it often rears and keeps pure bright, genial natures whose contact brings back the dreams of

youth. It is pleasant, too, to realize, in a great commercial city, that man "does not live by bread alone," that fun is better than furniture, and a private resource of nature more prolific of enjoyment than financial investments. It is rare comfort, here, in the land of bustle and sunshine, to sit in a tempered light and hear a man sing or improvise stories over his work, to behold once more vagaries of costume, to let the eye rest upon pictorial fragments of Italy,—the "old familiar faces" of Roman models, the endeared outlines of Apennine hills, the *contadina* bodice and the brigand hat, until these objects revive to the heart all the romance of travel.

The technicalities of Art, its refinements of style, its absolute significance, are, indeed, as dependent for appreciation on a special endowment as are mathematics; but the general and incidental associations, in which is involved a world of poetry, may be enjoyed to the full extent by those whose perception of form, sense of color, and knowledge of the principles of sculpture, painting, music, and architecture are notably deficient. It is a law of life and nature, that truth and beauty, adequately represented, create and diffuse a limitless element of wisdom and pleasure. Such memorials are talismanic, and their influence is felt in all the higher and more permanent spheres of thought and emotion; they are the gracious landmarks that guide humanity above the commonplace and the material, along the "line of infinite desires." Art, in its broad and permanent meaning, is a language,—the language of sentiment, of character, of national impulse, of individual genius; and for this reason it bears a lesson, a charm, or a sanction to all,—even those least versed in its rules and least alive to its special triumphs. Sir Walter Scott was no amateur, yet, through his reverence for ancestry and his local attachments, portraiture and architecture had for him a romantic interest. Sydney Smith was impatient of galleries when he could talk with men and women,

and made a practical joke of buying pictures; yet Newton and Leslie elicited his best humor. Talfourd cared little and knew less of the treasures of the Louvre, but lingered there because it had been his friend Hazlitt's Elysium. Indeed, there are constantly blended associations in the history of English authors and artists; Reynolds is identified with Johnson and Goldsmith, Smibert with Berkeley, Barry with Burke, Constable and Wilkie with Sir George Beaumont, Haydon with Wordsworth, and Leslie with Irving; the painters depict their friends of the pen, the latter celebrate in verse or prose the artist's triumphs, and both intermingle thought and sympathy; and from this contact of select intelligences of diverse vocation has resulted the choicest wit and the most genial companionship. If from special we turn to general associations, from biography to history, the same prolific affinities are evident, whereby the artist becomes an interpreter of life, and casts the halo of romance over the stern features of reality. Hampton Court is the almost breathing society of Charles the Second's reign; the Bodleian Gallery is vivid with Britain's past intellectual life; the history of France is pictured on the walls of Versailles; the luxury of color bred by the sunsets of the Euganean hills, the waters of the Adriatic, the marbles of San Marco, and the skies and atmosphere of Venice, are radiant on the canvas of Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese; Michel Angelo has embodied the soul of his era and the loftiest spirit of his country; Salvator typified the half-savage picturesqueness, Neapolitan Claude the atmospheric enchantments, Carlo Dolce the effeminate grace, Titian the voluptuous energy, Guido the placid self-possession, and Raphael and Correggio the religious sentiment of Italy; Watteau put on canvas the *fête champêtre*; the peasant-life of Spain is pictured by Murillo, her asceticism by the old religious limners; what English rustics were before steam and railroads Gainsborough and Moreland reveal, Wilkie has perma-

nently symbolized Scotch shrewdness and domesticity, and Lawrence framed and fixed the elegant shapes of a London drawing-room; and each of these is a normal type and suggestive exemplar to the imagination, a chapter of romance, a sequestration and initial token of the characteristic and the historical, either of what has become traditional or what is forever true.

The indirect service good artists have rendered by educating observation has yet to be acknowledged. The Venetian painters cannot be even superficially regarded, without developing the sense of color; nor the Roman, without enlarging our cognizance of expression; nor the English, without refining our perception of the evanescent effects in scenery. Raphael has made infantile grace obvious to unmaternal eyes; Turner opened to many a preoccupied vision the wonders of atmosphere; Constable guided our perception of the casual phenomena of wind; Landseer, that of the natural language of the brute creation; Lely, of the coiffure; Michel Angelo, of physical grandeur; Rolfe, of fish; Gerard Dow, of water; Cuyper, of meadows; Cooper, of cattle; Stanfield, of the sea; and so on through every department of pictorial art. Insensibly these quiet but persuasive teachers have made every phase and object of the material world interesting, environed them with more or less of romance, by such revelations of their latent beauty and meaning; so that, thus instructed, the sunset and the pastoral landscape, the moss-grown arch and the craggy seaside, the twilight grove and the swaying cornfield, an old mill, a peasant, light and shade, form and feature, perspective and anatomy, a smile, a gesture, a cloud, a waterfall, weather-stains, leaves, deer,—every object in Nature, and every impress of the elements, speaks more distinctly to the eye and more effectively to the imagination.

The vicissitudes which sometimes attend a picture or statue furnish no inadequate materials for narrative interest.

Amateur collectors can unfold a tale in reference to their best acquisitions which outvies fiction. Beckford's table-talk abounded in such reminiscences. An American artist, who had resided long in Italy and made a study of old pictures, caught sight at a shop-window in New Orleans of an "Ecce Homo" so pathetic in expression as to arrest his steps and engross his attention. Upon inquiry, he learned that it had been purchased of a soldier fresh from Mexico, after the late war between that country and the United States; he bought it for a trifle, carried it to Europe, and soon authenticated it as an original Guercino, painted for the royal chapel in Madrid, and sent thence by the government to a church in Mexico, whence, after centuries, it had found its way, through the accidents of war, to a pawnbroker's shop in Louisiana. A lady in one of our eastern cities, wishing to possess, as a memorial, some article which had belonged to a deceased neighbor, and not having the means, at the public sale of her effects, to bid for an expensive piece of furniture, contented herself with buying for a few shillings a familiar chimney-screen. One day she discovered a glistening surface under the flowered paper which covered it, and when this was torn away, there stood revealed a picture of Jacob and Rebecca at the Well, by Paul Veronese; doubtless thus concealed with a view to its secret removal during the first French Revolution. The missing Charles First of Velasquez was lately exhibited in this country, and the account its possessor gives of the mode of its discovery and the obstacles which attended the establishment of its legal ownership in England is a remarkable illustration both of the tact of the connoisseur and the mysteries of jurisprudence.

There is scarcely, indeed, an artist or a patron of art, of any eminence, who has not his own "story of a picture." Like all things of beauty and of fame, the very desire of possession which a painting excites, and the interest it awakens, give rise to some costly sacrifice, or incidental

circumstance, which associates the prize with human fortune and sentiment. I remember an anecdote of this kind told me by a friend in Western New York.

"Waiting," said he, "in the little front-parlor of a house in the town of C——, to transact some business with its occupant, I was attracted by a clean sketch in oil that hung above the fireplace. It might have escaped notice elsewhere, but traces of real skill in Art were too uncommon in this region to be disregarded by any lover of her fruits. The readiness to seize upon any casual source of interest, common with those who "stand and wait" in a place where they are strangers, doubtless had something to do with the careful attention I bestowed upon this production. It was a very modest attempt,—a bit of landscape, with two horses grazing and a man at work in the foreground. Quiet in tone, and half-concealed by the shaded casement, it was only by degrees, and to ward off the *ennui* of a listless half-hour, that I gradually became absorbed in its examination. There were some masterly lines, clever arrangement, a true feeling, and a peculiar delicacy of treatment, that implied the hand of a trained artist.

"My pleasant communion with the unknown was at last interrupted by the entrance of my tardy man-of-business, but the instant our affair was transacted I inquired about the sketch. It proved to be the work of a young Englishman then residing in the neighborhood. I obtained his address and sought his dwelling. He was scraping an old palette as we entered, and advanced with it in one hand, while he saluted me with the air of a gentleman and the simplicity of an honest man. He wore a linen blouse, his collar was open, his hair long and dark, his complexion pale, his eye thoughtful, and a settled expression of sweetness and candor about the mouth made me feel, at a glance, that I had rightly interpreted the sketch. I mentioned it as an apology for my intrusion, and added, that a natural fondness for Art, and rare opportunities for gratifying the

taste, induced me to improve occasions like this with alacrity. He seemed delighted to welcome such a visitor, as his life, for several weeks, had been quite isolated. The retirement and agreeable scenery of this inland town harmonized with his feelings; he was unambitious, happy in his domestic relations, and had managed, from time to time, to execute a portrait or dispose of a sketch, and thus subsist in comfort; so that an accidental and temporary visit to this secluded region had unconsciously lengthened into a whole summer's residence,—partly to be ascribed to the kindness and easy terms of his good old host, a thrifty farmer, whose wife, having no children of her own, doted upon the painter's boy, and grieved at the mention of their departure. I doubt if my new friend would have had the enterprise to migrate at all, but for my urgency; but I soon discovered, that, with the improvidence of his tribe, he had laid nothing by, and that he stood in need of medical advice, and, after a long conversation, upon my engaging to secure him an economical home and plenty of work in Utica, he promised to remove thither in a month; and then becoming more cheerful, he exhibited, one by one, the trophies of Art in his possession.

"Among them were a Moreland and a Gainsborough, some fine engravings after Reynolds, prints, cartoons, and crayon heads by famous artists, and two or three Hogarth proof-impressions; but the treasure which riveted my gaze was a masterly head of such vigorous outline and effective tints, that I immediately recognized the strong, free, bold handling of Gilbert Stuart. 'That was given me,' said the gratified painter, 'by the son of an Edinburgh physician, who, when a young practitioner, had the good-fortune to call one day upon Stuart when he was suffering from the effects of a fall. He had been thrown from a vehicle and had broken his arm, which was so unskilfully set that it became inflamed and swollen, and the clumsy surgeon talked of amputation. Imagine the

feeling of such an artist at the idea of losing his right arm! The doctor's visit was not professional, but, seeing the despondent mood of the invalid artist, he could not refrain the offer of service. It was accepted, and proved successful, and the patient's gratitude was unbounded. As the doctor refused pecuniary compensation, Stuart insisted upon painting a likeness of his benefactor; and as he worked under no common impulse, the result, as you see, was a masterpiece.'

"A few weeks after this pleasant interview, I had established my *protégé* at Utica, and obtained him several commissions. But his medical attendant pronounced his disease incurable; he lingered a few months, conversing to the last, during the intervals of pain and feebleness, with a resignation and intelligence quite endearing. When he died, I advised his widow to preserve as long as possible the valuable collection he had left, and with it she repaired to one of her kindred in affluent circumstances, living fifty miles away. She endeavored to force upon my acceptance one, at least, of her husband's cherished pictures; but, knowing her poverty, I declined, only stipulating that if ever she parted with the Stuart, I should have the privilege of taking it at her own price.

"A year passed, and I was informed that many of her best things had become the property of her relative, who, however, knew not how to appreciate them. I commissioned a friend, who knew him, to purchase at any cost the one I craved. He discovered that a native artist, who had been employed to delineate the family, had obtained this work in payment, and had it carefully enshrined in his studio at Syracuse. This was Charles Elliot; and the possession of so excellent an original by one of the best of our artists in this department explains his subsequent triumphs in portraiture. He made a study of this trophy; it inspired his pencil; from its contemplation he caught the secret of color, the breadth and strength of execution, which have since placed him among the first of American

portrait-painters, especially for old and characteristic heads. Thus, in the centre of Western New York, he found his Academy, his Royal College, his Gallery and life-school, in one adequate effort of Stuart's masterly hand; the offering of gratitude became the model and the impulse whereby a farmer's son on the banks of the Mohawk rose to the highest skill and eminence. But this was a gradual process; and meantime it is easy to imagine what a treasure the picture became in his estimation. It was only by degrees that his merit gained upon public regard. His first visit to New York was a failure; and after waiting many weeks in vain for a sitter, he was obliged to pay his indulgent landlord with a note of hand, and return to the more economical latitude of Syracuse. There he learned that a wealthy trader, desirous of the *éclat* of a connoisseur, was resolved to possess the cherished portrait. Although poor, he was resolved never to part with it; but the sagacious son of Mammon was too keen for him; discovering his indebtedness, he bought the artist's note of the innkeeper, and levied an execution upon his effects. But genius is often more than a match for worldly-wisdom. Elliot soon heard of the plot, and determined to defeat it. He worked hard and secretly, until he had made so good a copy that the most practised eye alone could detect the counterfeit; and then concealing the original at his lodgings, he quietly awaited the legal attachment. It was duly levied, the sale took place, and the would-be amateur bought the familiar picture hanging in its accustomed position, and then boasted in the marketplace of the success of his base scheme. Ere long one of Elliot's friends revealed the clever trick. The enraged purchaser commenced a suit, and, although the painter eventually retained the picture, the case was carried to the Supreme Court, and he was condemned to pay costs. Ten years elapsed. The artist became an acknowledged master, and prosperity followed his labors. No

one can mistake the rich tints and vigorous expression, the character and color, which distinguish Elliot's portraits; but few imagine how much he is indebted to the long possession and study of so invaluable an original for these traits, moulded by his genius into so many admirable representations of the loved, the venerable, and the honored, both living and dead."

Another friend of mine, in exploring the more humble class of boarding-houses in one of our large commercial towns, in search of an unfortunate relation, found himself, while expecting the landlady, absorbed in a portrait on the walls of a dingy back-parlor. The furniture was of the most common description. A few smutched and faded annuals, half-covered with dust, lay on the centre-table, beside an old-fashioned astral lamp, a cracked porcelain vase of wax-flowers, a yellow satin pincushion embroidered with tarnished gold-lace, and an album of venerable hue filled with hyperbolic apostrophes to the charms of some ancient beauty; which, with the dilapidated window-curtains, the obsolete sideboard, the wooden effigy of a red-faced man with a spyglass under his arm, and the cracked alabaster clock-case on the mantel, all bespoke an impoverished establishment, so devoid of taste that the beautiful and artistic portrait seemed to have found its way there by a miracle. It represented a young and *spirituelle* woman, in the costume, so elegant in material and formal in mode, which Copley has immortalized; in this instance, however, there was a French look about the coiffure and robe. The eyes were bright with intelligence chastened by sentiment, the features at once delicate and spirited, and altogether the picture was one of those visions of blended youth, grace, sweetness, and intellect, from which the fancy instinctively infers a tale of love, genius, or sorrow, according to the mood of the spectator. Subdued by his melancholy errand and discouraged by a long and vain search, my friend, whose imagination was quite as excitable as his taste was correct, soon

wove a romance around the picture. It was evidently not the work of a novice; it was as much out of place in this obscure and inelegant domicile, as a diamond set in filigree, or a rose among pigweed. How came it there? who was the original? what her history and her fate? Her parentage and her nurture must have been refined; she must have inspired love in the chivalric; perchance this was the last relic of an illustrious exile, the last memorial of a princely house.

This reverie of conjecture was interrupted by the entrance of the landlady. My friend had almost forgotten the object of his visit; and when his anxious inquiries proved vain, he drew the loquacious hostess into general conversation, in order to elicit the mystery of the beautiful portrait. She was a robust, gray-haired woman, with whose constitutional good-nature care had waged a long and partially successful war. That indescribable air which speaks of better days was visible at a glance; the remnants of bygone gentility were obvious in her dress; she had the peculiar manner of one who had enjoyed social consideration; and her language indicated familiarity with cultivated society; yet the anxious expression habitual to her countenance, and the bustling air of her vocation which quickly succeeded conversational repose, hinted but too plainly straitened circumstances and daily toil. But what struck her present curious visitor more than these casual traits were the remains of great beauty in the still lovely contour of the face, the refined lines of her mouth, and the depth and varied play of the eyes. He was both sympathetic and ingenious, and ere long gained the confidence of his auditor. The unfeigned interest and the true perception he manifested in speaking of the portrait rendered him, in its owner's estimation, worthy to know the story his own intuition had so nearly divined. The original was Theodosia, the daughter of Aaron Burr. His affection for her was the redeeming fact of his career and charac-

ter. Both were anomalous in our history. In an era remarkable for patriotic self-sacrifice, he became infamous for treasonable ambition; among a phalanx of statesmen illustrious for directness and integrity, he pursued the tortuous path of perfidious intrigue; in a community where the sanctities of domestic life were unusually revered, he bore the stigma of unscrupulous libertinism. With the blood of his gallant adversary and his country's idol on his hands, the penalties of debt and treason hanging over him, the fertility of an acute intellect wasted on vain expedients,—an outlaw, an adventurer, a plausible reasoner with one sex and fascinating betrayer of the other, poor, bereaved, contemned,—one holy, loyal sentiment lingered in his perverted soul,—love for the fair, gifted, gentle being who called him father. The only disinterested sympathy his letters breathe is for her; and the feeling and sense of duty they manifest offer a remarkable contrast to the parallel record of a life of unprincipled schemes, misused talents, and heartless amours. As if to complete the tragic antithesis of destiny, the beloved and gifted woman who thus shed an angelic ray upon that dark career was soon after her father's return from Europe lost in a storm at sea while on her way to visit him, thus meeting a fate which, even at this distance of

time, is remembered with pity. Her wretched father bore with him, in all his wanderings and through all his remorseful exile, her picture,—emblem of filial love, of all that is beautiful in the ministry of woman, and all that is terrible in human fate. At length he lay dangerously ill in a garret. He had parted with one after another of his articles of raiment, books, and trinkets, to defray the expenses of a long illness; Theodosia's picture alone remained; it hung beside him,—the one talisman of irreproachable memory, of spotless love, and of undying sorrow; he resolved to die with this sweet relic of the loved and lost in his possession; there his sacrifices ended. Life seemed slowly ebbing; the unpaid physician lagged in his visits; the importunate landlord threatened to send this once dreaded partisan, favored guest, and successful lover to the almshouse; when, as if the spell of woman's affection were spiritually magnetic, one of the deserted old man's early victims—no other than she who spoke—accidentally heard of his extremity, and, forgetting her wrongs, urged by compassion and her remembrance of the past, sought her betrayer, provided for his wants, and rescued him from impending dissolution. In grateful recognition of her Christian kindness, he gave her all he had to bestow,—Theodosia's portrait.

CRETINS AND IDIOTS:

WHAT HAS BEEN AND WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR THEM.

AMONG the numerous philanthropic movements which have characterized the nineteenth century, none, perhaps, are more deserving of praise than those which have had for their object the improvement of the cretin and the idiot, classes until recently considered as beyond the reach of curative treatment.

The traveller, whom inclination or science may have led into the Canton Valais, or Pays-de-Vaud, in Switzerland, or into the less frequented regions of Savoy, Aosta, or Styria, impressed as he may be with the beauty and grandeur of the scenery through which he passes, finds himself startled also at the frightful de-