

ART AND WEALTH.

A FRIEND who had been abroad came in to talk about Europe. The conversation fell on art, the masterpieces whereof we had both seen. My friend was something of a traveler, but unlike many, if not most, travelers, he was a man of much reading and of independent thought. It had been my fortune, in New York, to inspect, with the architect, a sumptuous house, then almost finished, costly to a degree unexampled, except in the case of some princely foreign palace which generations of men rich with inherited wealth had adorned with works of painting, sculpture, and rare examples of human skill in ivory, precious metals, and glass. My friend listened attentively to the account of inlaid woods, mosaics, marbles, bronzes, statuary, tapestries, frescoes, gilded ceilings and cornices, paintings by the most famous of modern artists, ornaments in terra cotta made by imported workmen; and when the tale was ended expressed satisfaction that the time had come for America to show what she could do in the way of solid splendor. For wealth, he contended, is the precursor of fine art. The natural precedes the spiritual, was his fundamental principle; and as inevitably the spiritual succeeds the natural. A fixed condition of prosperity being secured, — a condition of material prosperity resting on permanent foundations, or such as seem permanent, — the higher culture will be sure to come. Wealth in America is becoming firm, settled, established. In another generation art will flourish. Genius of the æsthetic order will be encouraged; genius of the poetic, artistic, creative order will spring from that; and in due season no workmen in stone, canvas, wood, clay, need be imported. Every want will be met at home; a new school of art will arise, characteristic, fresh, original, a genuine

product of the Western world, the demand creating a supply as ample as itself. So it must be, he went on to say; for wealth makes the market, without which no industry whatever can subsist. Wealth gives the opportunity, provides the motive, furnishes the attraction, directs mental force to certain ends, stimulates talent, brings floating genius to a useful point, determines method and form, and prescribes to achievement its bent.

So, he maintained, it always has been. There has been no great art in ages of poverty; no age of wealth has been without it. The supreme accomplishments of the artist have glorified prosperous times. Witness the period of Pericles, which was the culminating point of Athenian opulence. The energy of the ruler, conspiring with the popular feeling of abundance, raised the Parthenon, and erected those works the loveliness and grandeur of which astonish the world. A generation afterwards the fire of genius died away, and creative talent disappeared in the agony of the Peloponnesian war, draining the treasury and diverting the mind of the people. No triumphant Athens, no Phidias; no Phidias, no statues of ivory and gold, no stately columns, no sculptured friezes, no rhythmical symmetry of line. The glory of that moment will never be forgotten, but the moment passed, never to return. There was but one Pericles, one Phidias, one Parthenon. The flower of Athenian fortune bloomed and faded, and along with it the beauty of art glowed and went out. Thenceforward Greece had no marvel of genius to show.

Turn to Italy. What did not the painters of the Umbrian school, at Florence, owe to the princely family of the Medici? What did not Buonarrotti and Raphael, to say nothing of lesser men,

owe to Julius II. and the line of Medicean Popes? What would Venetian art have been without the Doges and the magnificence of the merchant kings in that marvelous city of the sea? Milan called Leonardo da Vinci; Genoa called Vandyck; Siena had its school; Pisa was a centre of attraction; Perugia drew aspirants for fame. There was not a city of that once opulent peninsula which did not have its group of painters, sculptors, cunning artificers in mosaic and bronze. The workmen sought the work; the work called into existence the workmen. There was a cathedral to be built, and architects were at hand to furnish plans. There was a palace to be decorated, and designers thronged to the spot. There was a mausoleum to be erected, and the brains of sculptors teemed with suggestions. The mysteries of drawing and color were explored and fathomed. The secrets of anatomy were brought to the light. The tools of the graver learned new tricks. Combinations of material, — stone, wood, metal, — never before imagined, were invented. Quarries were opened; factories were built; studios were arranged. A rich church, unchallenged, with inexhaustible supplies of money from nobles and people, offered permanent premiums for the highest excellence in the ornamental arts. A fixed social order, resting on tradition and maintained by force, standing in no fear of overthrow, and having no elements of anarchy within itself, justified any amount of expenditure on private elegance, or luxury, or vice, as the case might be, and the purveyors for either were at hand. Read the history of Velasquez at the court of Philip IV.; of Holbein at the court of Henry VIII.; of Sir Peter Lely, of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The story is the same everywhere, and always it is a tale of patronage on the one side, of ambition on the other.

There is a notion that art flourishes only in certain climates, in certain coun-

tries, — in Greece, for example, or Italy, or Spain, — in Southern Europe, under sunny skies; that to such regions a genius for art is native; the position of an artist is a position of honor, and the artist's profession one of dignity, not to say popularity. This is a mistake, a superstition, a foolish fancy. Artists are born in all climates, in all lands, under all skies. Theirs is a calling, like any other, requiring stimulus and patronage, — the stimulus of gain, the patronage of the opulent. They multiply according to the demand for their services. As fortune decreed, the wealth centred in Greece, Italy, Spain, and thither the painters, sculptors, architects, all went, for there they found welcome and occupation. In our day wealth is scattered, divided, precarious. Over a large part of the earth poverty is the rule. In Greece the trading spirit has supplanted the political. Glory departed from Italy along with splendor and imperialism. Spain has fallen. Skepticism has taken the place of faith throughout Europe. The great powers in church and state stand on the defensive against an insurgent people. England is the one rich country; the artists go thither for employment, and find it, as once they found it in Venice, Florence, Rome, — the radiant lands of the South. So long as London holds the purse-strings, matters will continue as they now are. When the sceptre passes from England to the New World, art will take leave of her shores. The old experience will be repeated elsewhere; the ancient glory will be revived under new auspices, and works as beautiful as ever saw the day will delight the gaze of men.

For all art, my friend argued, was decorative. Its inspiration was earthly glory. Its office was to adorn the palaces of the great, the churches of the lofty, the mansions of the princely. The portraits are likenesses of grandes, who could afford to hang on their walls canvases by Titian, Raphael, Tintoretto,

Guido, Velasquez. The saints, madonnas, nativities, crucifixions, were painted by order of proud ecclesiastics who wanted to decorate a shrine, chapel, or altar; perhaps were the gift of some devotee who had no other use for superfluous gold. The subject was conventional where it was not assigned. The artist took the intellectual materials which lay about him, and worked them up according to his skill or the desire of his employer, aiming always to excel some rival aspirant for fame or fortune. The pictures look calmly down on the beholder in saloon or gallery, but who knows how the heart of the artist was tormented with envy, jealousy, rage, or spite as he stood before his easel? Read the story of Michael Angelo, of Cellini, of Andrea del Sarto, of Leonardo da Vinci, and see how human these men of genius were; how the spirit of competition animated their breasts; how hard they worked, not to embody their ideal so much as to please their patrons, who simply wished to be flattered or entertained, to boast of finer houses than their neighbors had, to celebrate the exploits of their ancestors or exalt their personal renown. Follow the pictures themselves to their origin, and see how mean in motive, how sordid in purpose, how vain in intention, they were. The theme may be seraphic, but far from seraphic was the temper of workman or employer: the one thinking of his rival, the other of his ducats. Visit the immense palaces of the Corsini, the Borghese, the Doria, and a thousand others in Italy, and you cannot fail to comprehend the necessity for decoration to enliven the enormous stretches of wall, and make the vast chambers habitable. Such buildings would be desolations, without the glowing attractions of art. When to all this expanse of room is added corresponding wealth of gold and power, there can be no marvel that the chief artists of the age vied with one another in their efforts to make beautiful

what in its nakedness was so ugly. And while religion set a high standard of excellence in regard to themes for the pencil, while costume and rich furniture surrounded the artist with a luxurious atmosphere, it cannot be surprising that the great pictures should be what they are,—wonders of glory in line and color; we cannot marvel that such times should eclipse all that preceded or came after them; that the culmination of artistic genius should seem to have come then and there. It is a natural delusion that Italy was the chosen spot of earth for the painter. But genius departed from it with power and opulence, and for many a generation nothing deserving the name of art has been produced; a circumstance which helps the delusion by presenting a stronger contrast between present and past, confining the creative spirit within narrow limits, and making smaller the area of its operation. The decadence of Italy; the departure of wealth to other lands; the decline of the papal authority; the decay of Florentine grandeur; the diminution of cities like Siena, Perugia, Orvieto; the substitution of a money-making for a money-spending spirit, are facts of such gradual and general import that they are unobserved, while the sudden cessation of creative genius in art is startling, like the gaunt apparition of the higher rocks during a slowly sinking tide, which still covers the lower reefs. This fine talent is the first to feel a change in the flood of prosperity; is soonest abandoned by the reflux wave. It is the glory of successful periods. Poor, struggling, preoccupied men cannot afford to indulge in its productions. Its energy ceases when the springs of opulence dry up, as they did in Greece and Italy. And since their splendid day wealth has been nowhere concentrated enough to revive it, save, perhaps, in England; while even in England there is more stir, unrest, ferment of ideas, agitation of feeling, shifting of parties

and powers, than is agreeable to artists. The great privilege of a fresh revival is reserved for America, which already possesses foreign masterpieces, and will in due time have schools of its own. For, in America, wealth increases with measureless rapidity. The period of convulsion is over, and seclusion from the agitations of English and European politics is pledge of the permanency of a national state. Greece and Italy had the past; England and France have the present; but America will have the future, as we shall see by and by.

Thus my friend ran on, ingeniously bringing forward such considerations as supported his theory; believing cordially that no others existed, and for the moment persuading me that the doctrine was sound. It was not until he went away, and left me to my quiet reflections, that the weakness of it appeared. When the effect of his brilliant talk had passed off, other thoughts arose, like the following.

In the first place, the existence of genius as distinct from talent is not, on the foregoing theory, sufficiently accounted for. Genius implies a creative impulse, which is not found in mere ability to work successfully. It is impelled to this or that kind of activity whether circumstances favor or discourage. Considerations of private advantage, in the shape of money, ease, popularity, never suggest themselves. In fact, the presence of such is always regarded as detracting from the genius, as in the sad case of Andrea del Sarto. Genius resents the overtures of fortune; in the well-known example of Michael Angelo it flung them off in disdain. It will have its own way, follow its own leadings, observe its own seasons and methods, be rich or poor as events may decide; in all emergencies it must be true to itself. No analysis of material conditions has yet succeeded in explaining it, as no chemistry has accounted for the flavor of the Johannisberg grape.

It is willful, capricious, passionate. It has a light that comes from no visible skies, and a fragrance that is not native to any soil. It will not be commanded; it cannot command itself, but obeys the prompting of some hidden spirit, whose law has not been traced. It is found in lands the most unpromising, in climates to all appearance the most unpropitious: in lands like Holland, England, Russia, in climates like those of Northern Germany, Denmark, Sweden. It comes and goes unexpectedly, without warning; wealth may use it if it can; power may seize on it: but it is the creature of neither wealth nor power.

Wealth, surely, will not account for Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Leonardo da Vinci, Angelico da Fiesole, Andrea del Sarto, Cimabue, Orcagna, Correggio, Giotto, or artists of an inferior order to any of these. What had opulence to do with the creation of men like Memling, Dürer, Rubens, Rembrandt, or the less known masters of Dutch or Flemish art? Was patronage conspicuous in calling into existence Wilkie, Hogarth, Turner, Stanfield, Gainsborough, to name no others whom their genius impelled to pursue in England the career of painting? Nay, to come to our own country, what part did money perform in raising from nothing Allston, Peale, Read, Doughty, Stuart? Wealth may have supplied opportunity; it did not give original bent of mind. Had these men not existed, gold would never have summoned them into being. In due time they appeared, without consulting the social or financial situation, without asking permission of duke, king, pope, millionaire, or inquiring what particular work was laid out for them. In fact, the relation of some of these men to wealth was just the reverse of what the theory we are considering demands. They were creators of it, laid it under contribution, fought their way to it, wrung from it an acknowledgment of their greatness, drew it within the circle

of their fascination. They struggled into prosperity as a cedar pushes its way through some crevice in a rock towards air and light, afterwards to be wooed by the elements and become an object of admiration to many idlers or students. Their genesis it would be useless to search into. Their career is often hidden from the view of men. Their beginnings are obscure, sometimes, in proportion as their endings are glorious, while the beauty of their lines is frequently concealed from all but spiritual eyes, which, behind the surface beauty, can discover the revelation of an eternal loveliness.

Quite inconsistent with the notion that art is a child of opulence is the fact that poverty is so often its parent and nurse. It is related of Rivera, the Spanish artist, that, being in Rome, "steeped in poverty to the very lips," but happy in his industry, his talent at copying frescoes from the street walls attracted the regard of a cardinal, who took him home, provided him with comforts, and furnished him with models for his pencil. But the artist, loving his poverty better, made his escape into the streets, that he might pursue his art in his own way. The cardinal, meeting him again, persuaded him to return once more to his palace, upbraiding him for his vagabond disposition. Rivera soon relapsed a second time, saying that if he were to become an artist he must return to his rags and crusts. This pleased the cardinal and delighted the colony of artists, who nicknamed him *Il Spagnoletto*.

Apart from the intervention of the cardinal, the story of Rivera is applicable to many of the fraternity. They grew in the shadow. Their days of high dreaming, purposing, aspiring, were the days of their penury, when frost and darkness thrust them back on themselves, made them blow with painful breath on the embers that smouldered in their bosoms, and fortify their talent

with faith and courage, drawn from the depths of their souls. In the mountain tops, amid ice and cloud, their flashing waters had their source. The life of Claude Lorraine began in poverty. Mantegna was always in debt. Filippo Lippi was an orphan; Murillo was destitute; Masaccio was poor; so were Fra Bartolommeo, Perugino, Nicolas Poussin, Thorwaldsen. Velasquez began in humblest condition. As far as we know, the greatest artists were not rich at first. Though their latest works may have been their best, the genius which made them possible arrived at consciousness before prosperity came. This was the case with Michael Angelo. So it was with Raphael, whom Julius II. employed, but did not inspire. In all the noblest instances, the years of toil were the great ones, — not the years of fame; and the period of toil was that of want.

We must notice in this connection the influence which Italy exerted on the unfolding of genius. It was the native soil of the artistic soul, the casual touch whereof awoke the passion for beauty in natures comparatively cold. The power of that charming land has been felt by multitudes, who merely touched it in passing. There the great masters live in their works. Even people without talent are tempted, in Florence and Rome, to spoil canvas; where real talent exists it is easily fanned into flame. The country is poor. Wealth has gone to distant climes. But a creative mind animates the dust, and draws the devotees of art away from regions of opulence. The history of painting discloses the fact that, while genius neglects no portion of the earth, it has its favored spots, its vital centres. The regenerating force of Greece and Italy is active, in spite of ruin and devastation. Greece is immortal in sculpture, and Italy in painting; and both must be studied, though neither may be imitated. All we learn about Greece increases our wonder;

and the remains of art in Italy excite our admiration at the sudden achievement of two or three centuries. Where would art have been but for those two lands? The light that streams from them still irradiates the world. Modern art turns its eye thitherward from London, Paris, Berlin, New York. Gibson lived in Italy; so did Overbeck, and Greenough, and Powers, and Crawford. Van-dyck spent years there. Vernet lived in Rome seven years. Sir Joshua Reynolds studied with zeal the masterpieces of the Peninsula. West went thither for inspiration. Allston was at home in Rome. Need we mention Flaxman, or write the names of the innumerable company of men all but unknown, who owed what incitement they had to the stimulus of that wonderful country? Nature favored other regions with delicious climates, enchanting scenery, the materials for sensuous joy; but genius consecrated Italy. Great writers, like Milton, Goethe, Heine, felt the glow, and confessed the revelation. Every soul acknowledged the presence of the spiritual contagion, and where no soul was present to be touched, but dry bones only, the dry bones lived. The result may not always have been admirable, but there it was, the more surprising since the material upon which it was exerted was so unpromising. We may concede that residence in Italy, or familiarity with the art of those lands and ages which genius has made sacred, has not in all cases been favorable to modern talent, without in the least qualifying our admiration of the works of Phidias or Praxiteles, of Titian or Bellini. Their greatness remains unquestioned; nay, the more unquestionable, by the side of the futile efforts to imitate them. The necessity of resorting to them attests their superiority the more emphatically when resort to them is unfruitful. The failure of the pretender shows the power of the lawful king.

Nor should it be forgotten, when we

are discussing the relations of riches to art, that in the great epochs of which we are speaking riches were associated with elegance of taste and extraordinary fullness of acquisition. The patrons of Raphael, Titian, Buonarrotti, were remarkable men. The Medici, Julius II., Leo X., the Venetian Doges, nobles, merchant princes, the dukes of Milan and Mantua, were eminent as friends of learning, devotees of science, promoters of every lofty scheme in the æsthetic world. Intellectually they were as distinguished as the men they encouraged. All accomplishments felt the magic power of their smile. However unscrupulous of character they may have been, however imperious, overbearing, cruel, lascivious, their mental endowments were splendid, and made, not their own age only, but many ages, illustrious. Of such men, wealth, rank, dominion, were the least prevailing characteristics. The opportunity they afforded to genius was intelligent and sympathetic. They did not merely open a door; they opened space. They bade welcome to the best the earth had to offer. They met artists half-way, and even suggested the path they might follow, stimulating their higher faculties as well as furthering their material welfare. The names of Pericles and Lorenzo the Magnificent awaken thoughts respecting the union of power with intellect which reach far into the interior of our subject, and explain in some degree the possible influence of opulence on art. Such princes have not yet appeared in the New World.

On the whole, the connection between art and wealth does not appear to be intimate. From that association alone little or nothing can be hoped for in the near or distant future. It is not certain that an increase of prosperity will be attended by a fresh growth of the sentiment of beauty; and unless it should be, the prospects of art must be dim indeed. Before we can predict the rise

in America of a fresh, to say nothing of an original, school, either of plastic, pictorial, musical, or architectural art, — before, that is to say, we can prophesy a brilliant future in America for any form of poetic expression, we must meditate seriously on several points.

The characteristic feature of American society is homogeneousness. To this it more and more tends, or ought to tend, in order to justify the democratic proclivity, which aims at putting all people on a level, so far as law and custom and human institutions can do it. Homogeneousness would not of itself be an objection. But it should be accompanied by moral conceptions commensurate with its extent, — a faith in man, a confidence in principles, an enthusiasm for progress, a noble optimism founded on the nature of spiritual laws, a sublime hope of the future of humanity, a rational assurance of the ultimate victory of republican ideas, such as thus far have been unknown in the history of the race. Two or three elect souls have hitherto been great enough to entertain aspirations so exalted. The multitude of people do not cherish them, and to all appearance never will. They are regarded as unpractical, visionary, transcendental, fanatical, quite unsuited to the needs of a working world. The faith declines in proportion as the call for it increases. When the country was small, fifty years ago, the air was bright with anticipations of grandeur, refinement, intellectual expansion, social improvement, and reform. Now such anticipations are distant and faint. The task of developing the material resources of the country, of maintaining order, of getting possession of foreign markets, of educating or absorbing populations, engrosses attention to the exclusion of higher concerns. So far as one can see, the ideal period of American life is in the past. The civil war called forth heroism, but did not awaken poetry or art; and such a convulsion

furnished an occasion the like of which may not recur. Industrial enterprise has since then taken a prodigious stride forward, and “material interests” overbear all others. Artistic creation is discouraged. A race for success seizes on all men, and success, as Rachel said, means money.

The homogeneousness we speak of is attained by the suppression of whatever helps to distinguish one man or one group of men from another, and this tendency is unfavorable to art. To plane down the summits is to produce monotony; and monotony is not encouraging to aspiration. Picturesqueness is destroyed; not merely in dress, which is reduced to uniformity, or in features, which are rapidly assimilated to one inexpressive type, but in mental and moral attributes. An uninteresting average of sentiment comes into vogue, from which nothing short of a genius singularly profound and penetrating can draw sustenance. The two summits, often clouded, covered with snow, or hidden by mist, but resting on foundations adamantine, immovable, are church and state. So long as these are seen to abide, the race of men rests in security. When these seem to disappear, a sense of uneasiness disturbs the foundations of mind. In America effort is making to remove both of these pillars. The church, in ancient times and in old communities a centre of awe and mystery, a perpetual stimulant to the imagination, the soul's support and nutriment, is rapidly breaking in pieces, under the action of secular forces. Theological controversy is substituted for faith. The swelling tide of agnosticism washes away the shores of belief. Symbols, forms, doctrines, words, are deprived of their meaning. Lectures take the place of sermons. The clergy wear the costume of the laity. The original unity is broken up by the sectarian spirit, which multiplies divisions and subdivisions, till the substance of faith is disintegrated. It is far from

our present intention to pass opinion on the merit or demerit of this tendency. That is a large subject, and involves considerations essentially foreign to the purpose of this article. Desirable or undesirable, it is not favorable to art in any of its grand forms, which demand permanence, unity, and elevation of feeling, a blending of repose and aspiration, solidity of conviction coupled with a sentiment of yearning after ideal attainment. Art is poetic, and will not flourish in an unpoetic age.

The state, in America, is exposed to a similar process of decomposition. Ours is an administration by parties, and parties, as we know, split on temporary and local issues. All questions, the greatest and the least, are made partisan questions. Every social and political idea is open to debate. There are no undisputed principles. The very conception of government is by many repudiated, business committees acting instead of appointed officials. Even the mildest proposals of reform in the civil service of the nation are regarded with suspicion, as inconsistent with our fundamental ideas, which are held to require an equal division of party spoils. How far this movement may proceed it is idle to conjecture. One thing, however, is certain, — art cannot thrive under such circumstances, for this reason, among others: that the poetic faculties require as conditions of their exercise a state of serenity, and also points of established authority, as in Greece, Italy, Holland; whether the authority be monarchical or democratic matters not, so it be established. In fact, democratic institutions, when firmly believed in, may be preferable, since they insure permanence of administration, or, in other words, immunity from revolutionary change. But in countries where democratic forms are adopted, the faith in pure, disembodied, unemblazoned, unadorned ideas must be implicit. A democracy must be in the best sense rational, that is spiritual, in

order that art may take root in its soil; and from anything like this we are far distant at present, hope hardly daring yet to reach so high.

Another consequence of the leveling tendency in America is the devotion of mind to practical affairs, commerce, invention, politics, the various devices for obtaining place and power. The genius of the country is expended on the arts which materially exalt the individual in wealth or influence. The fine idealists, who might in other societies become poets or painters, give themselves to reform, the reconstruction of the state, the rehabilitation of religion. Goethe was of opinion that, in the coming generation, art would perform the office of religion in elevating and refining mankind. Thomas Carlyle, on the other hand, thought that the problems of religion would engross the creative energies of the mind, to the temporary exclusion, perhaps the long suppression, of art. Time will show which is right. Thus far, the signs favor the surmise of Carlyle rather than that of Goethe. In America the disintegration of religion has gone farther than in Germany, while the development of art is conspicuously less. In America, too, the finest minds devote themselves to the restatement of religious doctrines and the reinstallation of ecclesiastical forms, apparently feeling the necessity of intelligent religious faith as a condition of intellectual cultivation. This was characteristic of Emerson, and is almost a peculiarity of the highest order of intelligence. An instinct suggests that love of truth precedes love of beauty; for the love of beauty is evanescent unless it has foundation in truth. There can be no art where there is no conviction.

Some have maintained that the size of America is incompatible with fine art in painting; that none but coarse products are likely to grow from such a soil; that concentration, so necessary

for keen stimulus of intellectual faculty, is made impossible by the vast expanse of territory which spreads out on every side, and by the immensity of life's diffusion, which dissipates force of imagination. Greece, they remind us, was small; Italy was made small by divisions of land, and separations of government; Holland was diminutive; the area of Flanders was limited. The comparisons are striking, but the relation between bulk and attainment in artistic perfection is not, in the present instance, apparent. The American artist, like the European, lives within bounds: he dwells in a city, a town, a village; in Ohio or New York he occupies no more space than in Italy or Hellas. If genius possesses him, he lives in himself, as much alone as if he inhabited the corner of a desert, celibate and friendless. The quality required for greatness is genius, wealth of imagination. That will open heavens in a cavern, and will set waters running in a wilderness. Society is nothing, the stir of business activity is of no effect, political excitement is uninteresting, to one who has the glorious world of beauty in his soul. Let that vision dawn, and to him it matters not whether he lives in ancient Athens or in modern New York. Place and time and order of civilization are indifferent. Like the French Millet he abandons Paris for the seclusion of Barbizon.

Others have suggested that the climate of America is unpropitious to art, being too extreme and violent. The masterpieces of sculpture and painting were produced in even temperatures and sheltered spots of earth, like Attica, Lombardy, Southern Spain. And yet pictorial art in America is mainly devoted to landscape. Landscape is the peculiarity, we may say, of American art. If criticism has a word to speak, it is to the effect that the landscape is somewhat wanting in soul. Much of it is painstaking, conscientious, accurate.

Some of it is touched with a delicate feeling for beauty of line and color. But much of it is weak, sentimental, artificial. It lacks depth of sincerity, a constraining love of truth, reverence for the spirit of beauty in nature. Faith is absent from it, — faith in anything beyond the vision of the outward eye. The art is tainted by materialism; fine in quality, dainty and subtle, it is true, but materialism still. The afflatus has not come. Climate is not at fault. Nature is present in her loveliness. But nature invites a soul in complete sympathy with herself; to no other will she yield up her secret. Mere skill with the pencil will not suffice. How intimately familiarity with external nature may be associated with a general absence of faith in spiritual realities, or whether there is any traceable connection between them, is a question that need not be raised here. It is enough now to say that, as yet, faith in spiritual realities does not distinguish those who are externally most familiar with nature. Neither naturalism nor spiritualism seems to inspire them. They belong to no school of thought, but rather abjure what is called speculation. They profess to be realists, worshipers of things as they are, — meaning things as they appear, — not heeding the lesson of the poet's line, "And things are not what they seem." The artist of nature must believe that nature stands for something, either divine or demonic, and must express on canvas that persuasion. Otherwise, his work, however skillful and picturesque, is uninteresting. Turner was a believer, after his kind; so was Millet; so was Corot. But the American artist still cultivates the surface of his mind, and scrutinizes the superficialities of the world about him. Yet he, of all men, should be a believer, if only in consequence of the magnificence of the scene he daily contemplates, — the expanse of sky above him, the width of view around. He should be an American, not

an Americanized European, and, seizing the essential idea of American life, should translate that into beauty. The characteristic quality of America is not bulk. Not by depicting Niagara, the mountains which surround the valley of the Yosemite, or the lofty scenery of the Blue Ridge, but by filling his soul with thoughts of the invisible glory, will the artist render himself immortal. His ideas cannot be the same as those held by ancient painters; but the faith in them need be no less sincere. It must, in fact, be equally profound, entire, unquestioning; else will the achievement be poor and cheap.

The assertion that art is eternal is one of those commonplaces that seem to signify a great deal, but in truth mean little. Faith in divine things is eternal, yet there have been ages of unbe-

lief. Hope is eternal, but many bosoms are uncheered by it, and large areas of humanity are unvisited by its consolation. Charity is eternal, yet love is a stranger to multitudes of hearts. The spirit of beauty will never die, and some will seek it. But eternal things, when domesticated in time, must conform to temporal conditions, and the conditions of eminent excellence in art are not easy. They were fulfilled once; whether they will all be again remains to be seen. Art of the mere decorative kind wealth may provide, as it provides carpets, rugs, curtains, wall papers, tapestries, coverings for chairs and sofas, carved furniture, and mantel ornaments. But art of an ideal, imaginative kind it originates not. As to creating such, it might as well dream of creating the stars.

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STUDIES IN THE SOUTH.

X.

INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS INTERESTS.

THE industry or labor of Mississippi appeared, in many places at least, to be in a less satisfactory condition than that of most other Southern States. It was pretty clear that the negroes were often cheated out of their wages, and that they were sometimes roughly and severely treated on the plantations; while they, in turn, were restless in various portions of the State, and somewhat turbulent, idle, and dishonest. In the "black districts" the white women were really afraid of the negroes, and apparently with good reason, judging from the frequent accounts of assaults on women by negroes. Where the white people are roughest and most given to violence the negroes exhibit similar traits. Probably these facts should not be regarded as standing in

the relation of cause and effect, so much as in that of similar results proceeding from like causes operating upon both races. In the towns of Mississippi and near them, the negroes have improved, and are still advancing in civilization; but in the regions in which the blacks greatly outnumber the whites, I could see little sign of any effort or tendency toward improvement. To remain for a few days in the heart of a black district always gave me a strong feeling of remoteness from the world of civilized life. I was irresistibly impressed by the vastness of the mass and multitude of a race alien, animal, half savage, easily made sullen or aroused to fury. It was not an agreeable feeling. One could see that, from their great preponderance in numbers, the negroes had a half-unconscious, half-conscious, animal, instinctive sense of their superior strength, just as, while