

A LAST PRAYER.

FATHER, I scarcely dare to pray,
 So clear I see, now it is done,
 That I have wasted half my day,
 And left my work but just begun;

So clear I see that things I thought
 Were right or harmless were a sin;
 So clear I see that I have sought,
 Unconscious, selfish aims to win;

So clear I see that I have hurt
 The souls I might have helped to save,
 That I have slothful been, inert,
 Deaf to the calls thy leaders gave.

In outskirts of thy kingdoms vast,
 Father, the humblest spot give me;
 Set me the lowliest task thou hast,
 Let me repentant work for thee!

August 8th.

THE LESSON OF GREEK ART.*

PART I. THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

THE very difficulty which we must feel in expressing by means of words the chief artistic characteristics of the works of Greek art points to one of the cardinal virtues inherent in it, namely, its simplicity.

The works were meant to be gazed upon, and not to be the subject of learned commentaries; they were intelligible to the people, appealed to their senses, their feelings, their moral and intellectual nature, by means of their own substance and form, without the need of a verbal explanation. But the remains are comparatively scanty and in a fragmentary condition, and therefore require instruction and study in order to be appreciated. Furthermore, they belong to an age removed from us by more than two thousand years, to a people differing from us in the natural, social, and religious conditions of life; and thus it is not only from the purely artistic, but especially from the historical point of view that we must regard them. Here it is that art becomes perhaps the chief, at least one of the most important means of apprehending and realizing the civilization of ancient Hellas.

Still, we must never forget that art to the Greeks was a great reality; that it was a part of their daily life, covering and affecting their smallest, humblest needs, as it was evoked by and expressed their highest aspirations. And, above all, the modern student must remember that the works were not meant to be stowed away in museums, by which most of us mean repositories of curious, outlandish, and fractured articles, of all out-of-the-way things that have nothing to do with the needs of daily life, and from the contemplation of which we return with the sense of having done

something uncommon, almost amounting to a moral penance which is followed by a stern but pleasant self-approval.

Art with the Greeks was above all the outcome of a real need felt among the people, as it was at the same time the means of conveying to the whole public the most unalloyed and edifying pleasure. It was to the people a really intelligible language which conveyed to them in its impressive form the highest fruits of the culture of their time. And this it is which makes the position of Greek art so unique in the history of the world's civilization: the fact that, on the one hand, it was the adequate expression of the very best that the intellectual life of the people could offer, the highest and deepest of their thought; and that, on the other hand, its expressions were intelligible to the lowliest and humblest of Greek citizens. I will refer you to but one well-known instance in illustration of this fact: In the eastern pediment of the Parthenon Pheidias represented in the forms of mythology, in the most sensuous and easily intelligible form, one of the widest conceptions of cosmogony. The birth of Athene out of the head of Zeus is the cosmical conception of the birth of the clear atmosphere out of the depths of heaven. The clear-eyed daughter of Zeus is born on the heights of Olympus, in the presence of the gods, surrounded by the broadest personifications of nature. The scene is bounded at the one angle of the pediment by the rising sun-god, Helios, with his chariot, and at the other angle by the moon-goddess, Selene, descending into the regions of darkness with her steeds. We here have the widest metaphysical conceptions, Time and Space incorporate. And, moreover, they are put in such a form that these widest conceptions were intelligible and appealed to the most childlike of

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minds among the Greek citizens.* The questions must present themselves to us: How came Greek art to be possessed of these attributes? And can this state of art be reproduced? As regards the second of these questions, most people answer hastily, "No, the time has gone by; that age will never again return," as if there were some mysterious essence underlying the growth and flower of Hellenic culture. But if we study the main conditions which led to this peculiar growth of Greek art, we may find that these conditions are to a certain degree reproducible; nay, that there is always something abnormal and wrong in the social constitution of a civilized community when the conditions are not similar.

The conditions which made Greek art intelligible to the mass of the population and adequately expressive of the highest culture of the age are above all to be found (1) in the education of the art-appreciating public, and (2) in the education of the productive artist.

In the first place, the chief characteristic of Greek popular education was, that it above all meant to produce men who were mentally as well as physically fully and normally developed on all sides of their nature. It is the roundness and versatility of the types of Greek social and political history which most strike us who belong to an age of over-specialization. A political leader like Pericles was at the same time a skilled soldier with full athletic training, a keen student of philosophy and of literature, and a votary of the highest art. A dreaming philosopher like Socrates was keenly alive to the political questions of his time, and, as a brave and hardy soldier, took part in the war-like expeditions of his country. As in the *Palæstra* the normally and fully developed human body was held up as the aim of physical education, and the defective growth of any one member was remedied by a series of athletic exercises; so the *musical* side, the intellectual training, and the full and normal development of the human mind on all sides was the supreme aim, and any deficiency in power or taste was vigorously counteracted.

But the chief distinctive feature of Greek education must be referred back to the distinctive Greek conception of the life for which this education was to prepare. Aristotle distinguishes two main aspects of the human soul: the active, laboring soul (*νοῦς ποιητικός*), and the passive, enjoying soul (*νοῦς παθητικός*).

* Some readers may here object that the many theories which exist concerning the interpretation of this very work tend to prove the opposite of the simplicity which I claim for Greek art. I need but remind them that the interpretation of the whole scene and of Helios and Selene are beyond dispute, and that the differences which exist with regard to the meaning of

Education was not only to prepare for the life which consists in the material struggle for existence; but life to the Greeks had another half of equal importance with and practical bearing upon the material subsistence of the individual: it is the life of intellectual relaxation and enjoyment. Food was here to be provided to satisfy the moral and intellectual appetites of rational beings, in a manner most conducive to the moral health and vigor of the individual citizen and the people as a whole. Education was thus not only elementary or technical in character, but set itself the immediate aim of bestowing upon the fully-grown youth a fund of interests and appreciative power which would restore to its normal condition the mind strained in one direction during the hours of toil, and would furnish with interest old age when toil was no longer possible.

Finally, public feeling in Greece was so real a power that it drove the Greeks to demand and to create those forms of enjoyment that are essentially public in themselves, namely, the great works of art. It was not only the imminent danger of the advancing Persian foe which drove the citizens of Athens to concerted action, but after the war was over they joined with the same vigor and public-spirited eagerness not only to rebuild their needed homes, but to adorn them with the greatest works of art the world has ever seen; for art was to them a real need, as it responds to one side of human nature and life which remains the same throughout all ages.

In the second place, the education of the productive artists was equally characterized by this roundness and versatility of interest and training. They were not only carefully educated in the technical manipulation of their art, so that they could express with facility and clearness of form whatever they desired to express, but their education, even after the period that we should call school-days, as well as their intercourse with men of varied interests, were such as to make them conversant and in sympathy with all the varied intellectual interests and pursuits of their age. The artist as a man stood on the highest scale of the intellectual culture of his age. As a man he was the highest type of the civilized Greek; while as an artist he had the power to express clearly, in the sensuous language of his art, the high culture of which he himself was a living type. That Pheidias had

the figures are caused by the fact that the arms holding the distinct attributes are all lost. A Greek child would recognize a male figure holding the thunderbolt as Zeus, a reclining female with fruits or corn as Demeter, or one with sea-animals as Thalassa. For further information on this subject I must refer the reader to Essay V. in my work on the art of Pheidias.