

# The Dream-Child

BY LOUISE MORGAN SILL

MY little dream-child called to me  
Upon a midnight, cold and stark.  
"Sweet mother, take me in," sighed she,  
"For I am weary of the dark.  
My little soul has missed the way  
Out in the wide and wandering air—  
O take me to your arms, I pray,  
That I may find a shelter there."

My heart leapt up to hear the sound.  
"My tender dream-child, can it be  
Only the dusk that folds you round,  
Folds you and holds you thus from me?  
Then come! the way is broad and fair  
Unto my heart, my own, my own"—  
But waking came. . . . and only air  
Swept past into the far unknown.

## Editor's Easy Chair.

THE formal dedication of a hall of fame in New York city is an incident of our ingenuous civilization which hardly any other can parallel. It recalls a little the perfunctory fêtes of the French Revolution in honor of the Supreme Being, and it brings dimly to mind several exemplary incidents of allegory in which mild, imaginary despots of the Orient or antiquity crowned a life of beneficence by the consecration of a temple to a Virtue or an Attribute. Something idyllic in the notion of a hall of fame such as ours must commend it to people of sensibility; something definite and practical will appeal strongly to the business instinct of our nation. Other races, other regions, have their halls of fame, but these have grown up slowly in the long process of the ages, and are the effect of accident gradually taking on the hue of purpose. We had come so early in our history to the need of such a memorial that we could not wait for its evolution; some of our most imperishable memories might in the mean time have faded; the only way, as soon as we realized our long-felt want, was to supply it with all possible

despatch. With the habit of former centuries, England could wait for the slow transformation of Westminster Abbey into a hall of fame; and Italy could be patient with Santa Croce; but for America it was different, and in an electrical epoch, with all the modern appliances at command, there was no reason why we should not have our hall of fame at once, as we have other things—suspension-bridges, subways, tunnels, sky-scrapers, railroads.

### I

We have got our hall of fame within less than two years from the time when the first rumor of it struck the incredulous as an effect of the national humor, and it seems that we have it none too soon, for without it the memory of twenty-nine immortal Americans, of all achievements, would at this moment be exposed to the malice of the elements. As it is, their names are now safely and handsomely housed against wind and weather, in places to which they were chosen in a kind of electoral college, by votes varying from fifty-odd to ninety-seven. These soldiers, scientists, au-

thors, sailors, statesmen, artists, philanthropists, and divines are not every one of a celebrity that has penetrated the popular mind the most deeply or the most widely, and a plebiscite might have shown a different choice. It might not have shown a wiser choice, and probably it would have failed in the matter of just æsthetical appreciation, the taste of the people not being of such divine quality as its voice. But what will seem to the outside world a fatal defect in the composition of the electoral college is that Time, once supposed of sovereign judgment in questions like that before it, was not apparently invited to its councils. We can urge that in many cases Time had already done his work; but they could reply that Time wants a long while in those things, and that celebrities over a hundred years old have sometimes been known afterwards to perish utterly. Ozymandias, king of kings, they could say was a case in point, and not the only case.

Still, we can feel that for a new country the immortals elected to our hall of fame are not so bad, and there are several of them who would do credit to the oldest countries in the world. The doubt that will remain with more minds now than in a former age concerns the usefulness of enduring fame. The pleasure of the famous person may be safely left out of the account. If he is somewhere alive on better terms than he had here, terms that would allow him freely and frankly to own himself what he really was on earth, he is probably so much pained by the mistaken remembrance of mortals that he would rather be forgotten. The worthier he is of remembrance, the more he must shrink from it, and the question limits itself to those who remember him, and how far his memory is a use or a joy to them.

## II

The fame of others is supposed to be the incentive of achievement, and the achievement of the individual is supposed to be for the advancement of the race, whether he means it solely for his own behoof or not. So far fame may be accepted as a good, but it is not to be kept constantly in view even on such terms, with constant advantage. Prob-

ably most famous persons desired fame in the beginning of their careers, but if they lived long enough to possess it, they wearied of it, as men weary of most other possessions, before they died. It became a burden, a bore; a sort of affront to their self-knowledge; and, as has been suggested, nothing could be more dismaying to the average immortal than the notion of having it through all eternity. The characteristic in which the human grows most like the divine is in becoming no respecter of persons, and one is one's self a person, and the least susceptible of an honest respect. To be sure, the wicked immortals, like Gengis Khan, and Tamerlane, and Captain Kidd, and Napoleon, might well insist upon a show of deference from mortals through all eternity. One of the most interesting facts observed by Swedenborg in his visions of perdition was that the lost souls passionately insisted upon one another's reverence, and that their fiercest quarrels arose from a sense of its absence; but the angels he found very modest, and unaware of anything worthy admiration in them. One cannot imagine Washington or Lincoln caring for earthly honors even while they were still in this life, and in another life such a notion of them is preposterous.

Our hall of fame is not for the dead, then, but for the quick: for the young, the trusting, the innocent, who can be animated in their generous ambitions by the memory of high examples. They alone can take the great and good on the terms fixed by their celebrity; but it may be a pity that the great and good, the greatest and best, could not be offered to their veneration on some other terms. The old theory is that youth can be incited to greatness and goodness by a conception of these embodied in constant perfection by certain lives; but the tendency of modern history is to find such lives great and good in spite of a pretty constant imperfection. It has come to be thought that the story of the struggles and the defects of great men is that part of their story which in the light of their prevailing success is the most significant. But the tablets in a hall of fame can give no hint of this to inexperience; and it is still questionable how far it is desirable they should. Certainly it is not