

Original.

## ON BEAUTY.

Forma bonum fragile est; quantumque accedit ad annos,

Fit minor; et spatium carpitur ipsa suo. Non violæ semper, nec liliæ liliæ florent: Et riget, amissa spina relicta rosa.

Et tibi jam cani videntur, formosæ, capilli; Jam videntur rugosæ, quæ tibi corpus arent Jam molire animum, qui durat; et adstrue forma:

Sous ad extremos permanet ille rogos. Ovid.

"Beauty is but a perishable good, which loses by duration, and is wasted with age. Neither the violet nor the expanding lily is always in bloom; and rugged is the thorn, when stripped of its rose. Gray hairs, shall spoil all thy comeliness; and wrinkles plough thy polished brow. Improve then the mind, which endureth, and make it a substitute for beauty. It alone will tarry with thee through life; and accompany thee to the grave."

Beauty of person is certainly a very great natural advantage, in as much as it is sure at once to conciliate the good will of all who behold it; and to interest them in its favor.

This feeling is universal, and therefore inspired by the Creator for some generally wise and beneficent end.

Whether beauty of body is intended as the sign of beauty of mind; and, as such, is instinctively taken: just as one is apt to judge of the inmate's quality by the elegant exterior of his mansion; or whether it is merely the feeling of taste, which admires and covets most what is most perfect of its kind: sure it is that he must be of a very coarse and callous mould, who feels no such kindly emotion, no such friendly sympathy arising in his bosom, at the sight of exquisite beauty.

There is nothing at all improvable in conceiving it the sign of mental worth; though those possessing it are often found the most worthless of their species. May not these have become such, though originally formed the most perfect; and there is many a proof upon record that the most perfect, when once depraved, are the most depraved? A general rule is not destroyed by the exceptions found to it.

It is true again that we frequently meet with others ugly and deformed in the extreme: yet, whose worth and good sense are of the most exalted kind.

Such, an *Æsop* and a *Socrates* are reported to have been. But these may form to the opposite rule only similar exceptions: which conjecture seems indeed confirmed by the avowal of *Socrates* that he felt within himself all that native baseness and propensity to vice, which an eminent physiognomist had ascribed to him from his looks and appearance; but which, as he said, he had made it his constant endeavour to subdue, by practising the opposite virtues. A good face, after all, if it is not, ought at any rate to be the indication of a choice and generous mind.

Deformity, however; is a less sure subject of surmise; since it all may be but the effect of accident. Yet I feel myself as naturally repulsed by this last, as I am attracted by the former.

Neither, to be sure, can form any safe criterion to go by; as man by his free will has the power of debasing in himself a mind the most noble and dignified: or, by struggling against every natural diffi-

culty and obstacle, of improving a less perfect one, and exalting it to no common pitch of real worth and excellence. The baneful effects also of fondness and flattery alter for the worse the natural condition of the one; while they spare, and spoil not the other.

Notwithstanding all this, the face is rightly considered as the index of the mind, which shews to our fellow creatures all the feelings we wish to express; and likewise betrays to them, even in spite of us, those which we wish to conceal. How often, when the tongue is false, do the looks give it the lie; and warn us against crediting its strongest asseverations! But when a comely countenance is in league with a deceitful tongue to impose upon us, we have no other natural means afforded of knowing what is passing in the minds of our fellow creatures; or of guessing their designs; which for no good purpose are kept closely folded up within them. Such an extreme case of duplicity as this, is, however, providentially for the safety and welfare of mankind, a very rare one; and we would consider the wretch as an uncommon monster, in society, who is discovered at last to have been such a consummate impostor.

Yet beauty, though so lovely a quality, so universally admired, and so desirable; is a dangerous charge to those who possess it; especially to the weaker half of our species, whose peculiar perquisite nature has doomed it to be; for, besides the vanity, with which it is apt to inspire them, and which so often makes them turn to bad account the best natural dispositions, and most valuable endowments, either through their neglect to improve them, relying too much on the advantage of a fine exterior; or their abuse of them; it exposes particularly the fair sex to every tempting allurements of vice; and too frequently proves in the end the very bane and ruin of their virtue; consequently the disturber of their peace, and the destroyer of their happiness both here and hereafter. It should therefore prove some consolation to those not so gifted by nature with a fascinating appearance, to be thus exempted from the many dangers which attend it, and the fatal consequences of the numberless temptations, to which it is continually exposed. Not to say but what those have the most merit, who gain the victory in such a conflict, though the unattacked are most secure; nor ever experience the evils resulting from a defeat. It should also make such regret their want of beauty the less, to know that nothing on earth is more perishable and transient. It not only withers with age, and decays like a flower, when its short season is o'er: but it is often nipped in the bud, or in all its full spread bloom, by sudden disease. The slightest sickness impairs or destroys it. Its delicate frame is shaken with every slight blast; and its lovely form, on which we used to gaze with such admiration and transport, thrown prostrate on the ground, all soiled in dirt and blended with its native earth: the companion left, and prey of become rottonness and the worm.

Frequent and serious meditation on death is the most infallible cure to all the

moral infirmities of the mind; but particularly to the vanity we are apt to feel at being endowed with a fair form & prepossessing exterior. It is impossible to indulge in such vanity, if we but reflect on the appalling change which that form undergoes after death; and its hideous and humbling transmutation in the grave.

From the Orthodox Journal.

THE POPES WERE THE FIRST TO REFORM THE SEVERITY OF PRISON DISCIPLINE.

As the traveller trends with thoughtful step the mouldering ruins and forsaken apartments of ancient baronical castles and border fortresses, his blood chills as, passing through some broken archway, he descends into those gloomy and dreary vaults where his fellow man was once confined. Even in their desolateness, though wall and tower built over them have fallen, the light of day never penetrates them. The bat and the lizard, the toad and the slug—the usual tenants of abandoned dwellings—shun their noisome atmosphere; and the more loathsome creeping things that feed and fatten 'mid dirt and damp cannot breathe their tainted air. As the reader's eye follows this description his memory will run off to revisit some of those dismal places which, haply, he may have seen in some youthful excursion. If he be a wanderer, he may have passed along the storied banks of the Rhine, and visited some of those craggy dens from which issued forth iron-handed counts to exact black mail of every passer by; or he may have visited the interior of *Hadrian's tomb*, from which the bold *Crescentius* formerly ruled, or the *Mamertine prison*, in which the miscreant *Theseus* and the cruel *Jugurtha* were strangled. Though now preserved out of religious veneration for *St. Peter*, who was formerly confined therein, it is frightfully dismal. It is built of huge massive blocks, is vaulted over head, and anciently had no other means of access than a square aperture at the top of the vault, through which the prisoner was let down. Now, however, there is a staircase leading down to it, and the bubbling of an ever-flowing fountain, which rose at the bidding of *St. Peter*, and in which tradition records that he baptised his gaoler and family, tends somewhat to relieve the oppressive silence of this horrid abode.

To the Popes the poor prisoner is indebted for much alleviation in his condition. Four centuries before the benevolent *Howard* had made his tour to lighten their miseries, *Eugenius IV.* (1431) had restored an ancient practice of the Christian church, according to which the magistrates, accompanied by the procurators of the poor, visited the prison twice a month, to examine causes, listen to each one's statements, alleviate their penalties, and compound with creditors in behalf of unfortunate debtors; the institution of *Eugenius* still flourishes. *Scanavoli*, archbishop of *Sidon*, exercised the office of procurator of the imprisoned for the confraternity of *St. Jerom* for forty years. In 1665 he printed three books, full of interesting details of his visits; they

breathe an ardent love for the poor disconsolate prisoner, and an interesting energy to secure his rights and privileges. This confraternity of *St. Jerom* was instituted by *Cardinal Julian de Medici*, afterwards *Clement VII.* Composed of the flower of the Roman nobility and clergy, it undertook the care of the prisoner. Those whom society had expelled as outcasts to languish in dungeons, they cherished with fond care, nourished, clothed and consoled. Though the prisons of Rome are now much bettered, the confraternity of *St. Jerom* still sheds over them a blessed and cheering influence.

On its footsteps followed another arch-confraternity, inculcating affection for the prisoner, which was instituted by *John Tallier, S. J.* The Pontiff, *Gregory XIII.*, approved of the new institution. The debtor was the especial object of its care. From Rome, these institutions passed into other Catholic countries. But criminals condemned to undergo the supreme penalty of the law were objects of the most tender solicitude. Three centuries and a half ago *Pope Innocent VIII.* instituted the arch-confraternity of *St. John the beheaded*. In 1655, while all Europe was resounding with the din of arms, and destruction seemed to be the passion of the day, *Innocent X.*, for the better security and milder treatment of prisoners, erected the new prisons. If judged by the standard of the time, they speak highly for the superior wisdom and humanity of the pontiff. When visited by the benevolent *Howard*, a century later, he pronounced them to be the most healthy and the most humane that he had met with either in the old or new world.

But the resources of Catholicity for the relief and consolation of the prisoner were not yet exhausted. Acting on that human principle that punishment is intended to reform not to pain the prisoner, that the severity of the law is intended to make men better, not to punish them for transgression, we find the two popes, *Clements XI.* and *XII.*, laying the first foundation of that penitentiary system which has since been tried, but with disastrous results, in America and in England. To trace the course of its success in Rome, and of its failure in other countries, would be foreign to our present enquiry: we shall make it the subject of another paper. The popes had not to look beyond the bosom of the church for a model penitentiary: they already possessed one in the retired and laborious life of the recluse. A life of labor, silence, and prayer, led by men who had grievously offended God by sin, or who yearned after greater perfection, suggested the idea of compelling those that were guilty both before God and man to lead a similar penitential life. Ere the monastic penitentiary system of the great *Maillon* had been laid before the world, a similar but more extensive plan for the regulation of prisons had suggested itself to the fertile genius and humane disposition of the then reigning pontiff, *Clement XI.* Prayer, silence, labor and solitude formed the basis of the new system. The first prison governed according to this system was built in 1703, after the design of *Carlo Fontana*, near the Apostolic Hospitium of *St. Michael*.