

SIGHT SEEING.

BY H. V. C.

WHAT a universal passion is that of Sight Seeing! The veriest infant stretches out its little arms and crows its note of admiration at some passing pageant, and children most of us remain in this passion for excitement and love of brilliant shows. The policy of all nations has ever been to sanction gala-days and festivals, civil processions and military shows, and thus the common people have been kept amused, and their attention diverted from the subtle game which those in authority played at their own discretion, or for their own selfish ends. The throne has been upheld by pageantry, and *tabooed* by conventionalities; and the people in their vain egotism have identified themselves with its glory, and sheltered by the gilded shadow of royalty, submitted to eat the crumbs, awarded them in return for their hard labor which gave stability to that throne, and encircled it with splendor. Even the plain chair of state that holds republican dignity, must be taken with some civic pomp to please the sovereign people who hold it at their disposal.

In the days of ignorance and barbarism, one could scarcely wonder at such things. The masses were then swayed by outward, tangible forms; they were scarcely permitted to know that they had an inward, independent life, and in their freedom from thought and responsibility turned eagerly to the splendid shows got up as food for their contentment. The ancient Jews, singular in their pure theocracy, but still in the childhood of the world, required the terrors of the law, manifested by external signs and miracles, to quell their murmuring and rebellion; and but for sacrifices and oblations, for the gorgeous ceremonies and imposing ritual of their religion, through which their minds were fixed on the one great idea of a Supreme Being, their worship would have degenerated into materialism, and their sensual minds have bowed down before the idols of the heathen.

The Christian era brought some advance in civilization, but still the common people were doomed to ignorance, and scarcely had the first simple age of Christianity passed away, before man's craft invented new fetters for the intellect, and bound down the conscience to an iron sway. Scarcely had the Roman plough-share levelled the walls of Jerusalem, and razed the last stones of its ancient temple, when a new Church arose,

and a spiritual throne was founded, girt round with outward splendor, which, for ages, held the freedom of mind, and the liberty of states in abeyance to its selfish policy. All the world lay in thick darkness, save where, in a few mountain passes and solitary valleys, a remnant of brave and pious hearts offered up their worship to God in the simplicity of their early faith, and there, as in the Ark of the old Covenant, the pure spirit of religion found a resting place, and was preserved.

All that could exalt the Church in the eyes of the world, of imposing pomp and splendor, was lavishly bestowed upon it. Then were its feast days held with surpassing magnificence—its processions led by high dignitaries robed in gold and purple, cardinals and mitred abbots, and long trains of chaunting monks, and ever the ranks were swelled by devotees and superstitious followers. The Church was at the zenith of its glory, but never has man been found so ignorant and besotted, and at no period was Sight Seeing so universal and so eagerly sought after, as in that age of darkness and fanaticism.

We can fancy the gigantic army of crusaders, winding through the heart of Europe, with banners floating and martial music pealing—an incongruous multitude of mail-clad knights and mendicant friars—the flower of chivalry and humble artisans, princes and peasants, and at each advancing step, thousands flocking to the holy standard which was upheld by consecrated hands. All were pressing on with stern enthusiasm to carry fire and sword into a peaceful land, and in God's name to commit deeds of violence at which humanity recoils. With what shouts of applause was that *holy army* followed in its course—what welcome rung from every city—how many eyes gazed upon it with proud and admiring superstition! But beneath the coat of mail and monkish cowl, what passions raged—what lust of power, ambition, cruelty and revenge—all masked by fair profession and burning zeal for the holy cross and sepulchre! And among the tens of thousands who looked on and bade them God speed, how few hearts beat warmly with that human love, that divine compassion, and those self-sacrificing, lowly virtues which are symbolized by that cross and sepulchre! In that imposing display, men were not elevated and made wiser or better, for no generous enthusiasm or lofty aspirations were