



CITY WALLS, NUREMBERG.

seldom attains to perfect beauty of form. He is so possessed by his grand aspiration after a reality, which grasps and holds one, that a higher style, even for ideal themes, does not seem to him of supreme value.

As with intense conviction he followed the struggles for reformation which were everywhere shaking the world during his lifetime; as, in his clear-sighted, acute intellect, the traditional symbolic conception of the Divine resolved itself into the human; so, too, everywhere in his representations he gives evidence of this revolution. His sacred figures are the Nuremberg burghers of his time, and, for the most part, from the sphere of common life, caught and fixed by his pencil with all the accidental surroundings of their daily existence. He took the matter of his pictures from his own environment, and never sought after types of dignity and

beauty, but rather after strongly-marked and characteristic heads, which are oftener coarse than noble or graceful.

And even this motley crowd, full of rude individuality as it was, he usually presented in such wise in the treatment of form, that an arbitrary, knotty mannerism in the drawing of heads and hands, as well as in other portions of the picture, became a necessity, and even broke up the large, fine masses of his drapery into wrinkled, uneasy folds. His appreciation of form, too, recognized hardly any distinction, whether he represented any of the sacred personages of religious belief, the rude manifestations of every-day life, or the wondrous images of his fancy; they are all taken from the same sphere, and never attempt to seem more than they really are.

This curious propensity of Durer's is not satisfactorily accounted for by the fact that he