

not for the life of me conceive, who has a soul appreciative of all beauty in art or nature; who is capable of admiring Giotto's Campanile, and Ghiberti's Gates, and the rainbow front of St. Mark's, or a fresco of Angelico's, or a statue of Donatello's, or even a plate of Palissy's, who would fill our streets with palaces, as of old, instead of with regimental rows of brick; who can love the lilies of the Swiss meadows as an Holy One, whom this age would gladly forget, once loved those in the fields of Gallilee; who is not ashamed to have felt a choking at the sudden sight of the glad rippling of a broad, sunlit water, or to be strangely moved by the sight of pine-tops waving against the blue. As rationally contend that the poet who confesses that to him—

"the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,"

was a man weaker and less manly than the ignoblest of his own creations, the sturdy idiot of whom he writes:

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

Addison in his essay on "The Man of the Town," with perhaps a little more real venom than his wont, after enumerating and castigating several kinds of pedants, concludes thus.—"In short a mere courtier, a mere soldier, a mere scholar, a mere anything, is an insipid, pedantic character, and equally ridiculous." And had he lived in our day, I am sure he would have added—the *mere* aesthete.

A real love for the beautiful will indeed make us desire in building to build nobly—to make, as I said before, our streets, streets of palaces, our homes full of grace, but only that we may live nobly and gracefully, above all, honestly and purely in them. It does not necessitate an affectation of gait, or appearance, or dress, nor inanity of speech, nor—though the Chinese have taught us much in the minutiae of art, and how to draw birds and flowers as we knew not before—to bespatter our walls with cheap imitations of Celestial art, and cracked "willow-patterns" from the kitchen dresser. It does not necessitate an assuming of attitudes of rapt admiration before a sunflower, nor, *very decidedly*, any maudlin palliation of the sin of Francesca di Rimini, though, like Dante, we may be utterly pitiful of her fate.

Ah! there's a true aesthete for you—grand, passionate, brave, *melancholy*—there are those, we are told, who shrank from converse with him, scared by the aspect of the man who had passed through the glooms of hell, and seen the "Vision of the Almighty"—yet with senses to be thrilled with all beauty of form and sound and colour, and a heart so sympathetic as to divine the hearts of all men else.

Read his description of the valley of the Kings on the slope of the Mount of Purgatory, and of its angel guardians, and of Matilda gathering flowers on the edge of Lethe, and singing "as though enamoured," of the glare of the crescents over the city of Dis, and of the concentric

bands of Angels, like a great white rose, singing the Alleluias in Heaven, and say if these are not æsthetic in the true sense of the word—in a ravishment of every sense, a refining and purifying of it, enabling us to see beneath the surface of things, and illustrating Plato's saying that "the beautiful is only the visible form of the good."

And as Dante is the greatest and noblest of Christian poets—that is, of all poets—so is the age of Dante the greatest and noblest of all ages. For as in a man "nobly planned," the three parts will be found in perfection, i. e. each acting so as best to subserve the end of beauty aimed at by its superior part—so also in an age or a state.

And St. Louis fought the paynim for the glory of God, and established his kingdom in peace and justice, yes, and built Sainte Chapelle, too, to the glory of God, and died broken-hearted because he failed in the ideal of his life. And our own Earl Simon, with strong hand and clear head, thought and fought for truth, and right, and country, and he died, too, unsuccessful, and on a field of defeat, and devout monks of Evesham "carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." And Cimabue painted and Giotto planned, and Angelico—for though not in fact in this century, yet assumedly, as M. Taine says, of it—brought heaven down to men that they might grow purer, having seen the forms of Angels. And Florence rose, not it alone, but cities throughout all Europe, filled with all preciousness of art and design, and nobility of building, and wealth of colour, and endless grace of form. And above all, sanctifying and ruling all, in very truth the soul and vital principle of this age. Francis in his cell at Assisi, subdued demons, and conversed with the citizens of Heaven, and with the birds and beasts of the earth too, and became so filled with the love of God and man that he, like St. Paul, was judged worthy to bear in his body "the marks of the Lord JESUS," and receiving the *stigmata*, died in blissful agony.

Here, then, in an age in which were attained the mightiest triumphs in art, and literature, and architecture, we find the highest spirituality, and the most effectual uses of strength, so that I conclude that not only is true Æstheticism not inconsistent with them, but that they flourish best together with it.

PAST AND PRESENT.

II.

airew airpá airi—Pindar.

It does not appear a very long time since I was an Undergraduate. The habits and ideas happily contracted in *Academia*—clinging to one through life—friendships tried and strong bring one back in recollection imperceptibly to Alma Mater. The fragmentary remains of a treatise on logarithms, all that is left deservedly in hand or head of what cost so much time and patience curled up in an out-of-the-way corner of your box, an old letter, a disabled pipe each the witness of young