

made men nobler, better, happier? I fear there is but one answer to these questions. The condition of France at this moment, crushed, torn and bleeding, not so much from the blows of external enemies; as from the weakness that flows from a decline of public virtue, affords a fearful comment on the results of a material civilization divorced from morality. Nobler patriotism, purer self-sacrifice for the public weal, healthier souls and bodies we moderns fail to show when confronted with the ancients. Mrs. Browning's verdict is true:—

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster, Oh! this wondrous, wondrous age—
Little thinking if we work our souls as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
’Twere but power within our tether, no new spirits power comprising,
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.”

The great lesson, then, that we should gather from all this is one of humility. It should modify our self-applause to understand that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that our forefathers were as great, as wise, virtuous and happy as ourselves. In this self-conscious age we are disposed to stand on the graves of the past and cry “behold how great we are compared with those uncircumcised Assyrians, Greeks and Romans, who all walked in darkness. We have no idolatries. Ours are the seeing eyes and the pure hands. We may look out of heaven's windows and wave our victorious banners. How prosperous and all-powerful we are!” But the warning voice of the past is heard saying “boast not, O poor mortals!—the nations whose dust is whirled about by the desert wind—whose skeleton remains are the study of the antiquary—whose glory and splendour have vanished without other trace than such as the foot of the Indian impresses on the withered leaves of the forest—whose greatness is still a source of inspiration, like that of heroic Greece, even in their immortal memories—these all were mighty workers, traders, colonisers, conquerors; reared their majestic cities, had their rich cornfields, their roads, canals, bridges; their marts swarmed with merchants, and their sea-ports with sailors and pilots, as London does to-day. They have all perished ‘like a snow-fall on the river,’—vanished like a child's morning dream. Be humble, therefore, when you stand by the grave of the buried past, and think of your own possible future. Let us try to gather some wisdom from these weighty teachings of the past. In our imagined superiority to that past we point to our wonderful mastery over the powers of nature, and no doubt this is very wonderful; but still how much remains to be done when still the coasts of England and America are annually strewn with the corpses of drowned mariners and wrecked ships; when new and horrible diseases still sweep off young and old and medical science is powerless to avert and heal; when the deadly fire-damp every year scorches to death hundreds of poor miners. We have not yet mastered the small-pox; and the grim cholera, the filth-and-famine-bred typhus, the fatal consumption are