

## THE RHYTHM OF NATURE *VERSUS* THE RHYTHM OF ART.

THE Greek maiden, glorious in physical strength and beauty, plucking the rose, that perfect flower, is the type of that energy of thought in literature which is least dependant on language, the symbol of that poetry in which Energy and Art are in equipoise. Poetry is the expression of the human mind in language inspired by imagination and emotion. Exceptional feeling is characteristic of the poet. He is drilled with a thousand facts unseen by the ordinary eye; he pours the flaming thought on the page, making it precious with rhythmic life. His expression may follow the Rhythm of Nature wherein the idea controls the style, or, the Rhythm of Art wherein the ideas are dependant on the language by which they are expressed.

The Greeks, both in art and life, aimed at grasping the perfection of nature which if neglected by her in one individual was carried out in the next. They pursued the rhythm of life.

The Greek sculptor represented by human figures not men, but broad-limbed gods; not realities but infinities. They put a gigantic idea into marble, a living soul, hence the form is deathless and supreme. The fascination of beauty in the Greek mind banished all other considerations. Their sculptors not only produced ideal forms that manifested the triumph of nature, but their legislators made laws and established the emulative games whereby the individual might in his own body aspire to perfection of life.

Vitality, vigor of form, splendor of limb, were the chief ideas; the outer garments and mode of life must adopt themselves thereto. Hence the Greek maiden in our illustration as compared with the artificial maiden of to-day, fitly represent that titanic energy of thought that makes diction, sentiment, rhythm, color and melody its vassals. She is the symbol of the thought least supported by language; the thoughts of Homer and Sophocles: Shakespeare and Dante. "Rhythm, melody, precision and force in the words of the

poet" says Ruskin, "are necessary to his greatness, but not the test of his greatness." The vital thought takes precedence of style. Only as good deeds are the outcome of benevolence of soul, so elevation of language and melody of style do often bear witness to richness of emotion and dignity of thought.

Dante is our favorite poet. He combines the might of Shakespeare with the melody of Tennyson in perfect harmony. His *Paradiso* is one of the world's treasures unparalleled in force and melody of thought.

Witness his description of heaven in one line:

And all the laughter of those bloomy shores.

Can splendor of words more perfectly picture a shipwreck:

Then rose the poop, and sank the prow  
And over us the booming billow closed.

or the song of angels, when

Voice answers voice, so musical and soft,  
It can be known but where day endless shines.

He thus describes the Purgatorial Pilot:

Upon the prow the heavenly steersman stood  
Visibly written 'Blessed' in his looks,  
Waiting his wings between such distant shores  
Lo, how straight up to heaven he holds them reared,  
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,  
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change.

In the "Dream of Clarence" the poet says;

The first that there did meet my stranger soul  
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,  
Who cried aloud "What scourge for perjury  
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence.  
And so he vanished. Then came wandering by  
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair,  
Dabbled in blood; and he shrieked out aloud  
Clarence is come! false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,  
That stabbed me on the field of Tewkesbury.  
Seize on him furies, take him to your torments!

The modern poet would have described this scene by giving all the emphasis to the words, or appurtenances of the idea, and not to the idea itself, thus:

The first to meet me at the sable doors  
Was mighty Warwick blazoned in his shame,  
He cried aloud in maddening mimicry,  
He howled and gabbled till the yellow foam  
Stood on his lips, and all the courts of hell  
Did knell like beaten bells. "What fiery scourge  
Can torture Clarence, who has now come home."  
And so he vanished. Then came wandering by  
A shimmering shadow, with its bright bronze hair  
Stained in barbaric blood, and so he shrieked  
"Clarence the murderer that stabbed me on the field,  
False, perjured Clarence." then the shoal of ghosts  
Wheelled in a living circle round and round  
Their heads were skulls, their eyes like rubies flamed,  
And hand in hand forever wheeling on  
They sang the ritornel of damned souls!