

CHOICE LITERATURE.

"THE SNAKE IS BROKEN."

BY REV. C. J. WHITMORE.

"What a fool you are, Carry, to be sure. What does it matter what people say, so long as you have good clothes, plenty to eat and money to spend?"

Words of hideous temptation addressed by one young girl to another in a miserable garret in London. The speaker was passably good-looking; the listener of rare beauty. Both orphans, and free to do as they would, with none to guide or control them. Marion had already chosen her life-path of shame and ruin, and now was tempting her work-fellow of former days to enter the same dark way of sin and sorrow.

"It does matter," was the reply; "for my dead mother's sake, and so nobody else. I'll starve and strive as long as I possibly can before I come to it."

The tempter departed, and the temptation with her for the time, but only to recur with added force over the poor meal the friendless girl now set herself to prepare. A little tea without sugar or milk, and some bread, was all she had, and she sat down to her spare and solitary meal—her only companion the temptation against which she had hitherto fought and triumphed. "What can I do?"—her thoughts ran—"I have sought work until I didn't know whether my feet or my heart ached the most; and here I am with my last meal, my rent due, no money to pay with, and shall be turned out even from this on Monday; not a friend in the world to help or comfort me. But it does matter; I want to keep right if I can, so that when I see her again I may be able to look up into her dear face, and give her back the kiss she gave me before she went away and left me without a helper or friend. I keep these for her sake, and, if I can, I will keep myself too." She opened a torn and discolored book as she thought thus, and her wet eyes fell dimly upon some dried flowers carefully spread between the leaves. They were memorials from the grave of her Sunday-school teacher, who, in the midst of life and usefulness, had been called from earth to heaven.

The next day—the last of the week—the poor girl again set forth on her quest for employment, at every application meeting with a chilling repulse. Through the day she persevered bravely, returning at night to her desolate garret, weary, hungry, sick at heart, all but conquered by the fierce pangs of hunger and hopelessness.

There was no possible prospect of money or food for at least two days, unless she sought out Marion and shared her riotous plenty. This was the lowest ebb, the most fiery trial to which she had been exposed. Hitherto she had always been able to get food at least; but now she lay—too hungry to sleep—tossing on her poor bed through the miserable hours, that, as they passed, ushered in the Lord's day to the garret in the East of London.

Through the livelong day she covered in her lonely room like some wild animal famishing in his den: still battling with the dreadful temptation. On the morrow she would be homeless; and why bear another night of cold and hunger for nothing! In the evening she went forth, hungry and despairing; and as she turned into the blaze and bustle of the main street she felt as if she had reached the limit of endurance, and could face the terrible hunger and darkness of her garret no more.

Before her, on the path, was a man busily engaged in distributing printed invitations to attend a special service at a theatre in front of which he was standing. He was approaching middle age, "with a strong, good face," thought Carry. "If I can only speak to him he will help me." She laid her hand timidly on his arm, simply saying, "I should like to speak to you."

He turned and looked upon her with something of suspicion in his glance, which faded away before the pale, stricken beauty of her face, as she said, "I am out of work, have eaten nothing for two days, and can bear it no longer. I feel as if I must sin for bread, and yet I don't want to do so."

"Now, the good Lord forbid!" he replied. "I've no time to ask even whether it is true or not, but a meal won't cost much at any rate; so go and get one and come back to me. If you are cheating me, may He forgive you; if you are not, you are as welcome as though you were my own dear girl at home." He stretched out a hard hand with a little money in it as he spoke; but his words were loving, and the rough hand stretched out with ready sympathy to help and save. To his intense astonishment and dismay the girl caught his hand and pressed it to her lips as she hastened away.

Her hunger speedily satisfied, she returned to seek her friend; but he had departed. More than once she met with temptations which she was now able to pass with loathing. As she proceeded in her search, a hand was laid upon her, and a soft, refined voice said, "May I ask whom you are seeking?" It was unmistakably the voice of a lady; and the girl turned in astonishment to gaze at her questioner—a woman of short stature, verging upon middle age, very plainly dressed, but certainly a lady, and well-known as one of God's earthly ministering angels, aiding the poorest and vilest of the East of London.

"I am seeking the man who was giving bills," said the girl.

"He is to preach in the theatre," the lady replied. "Come, and I will take you to him presently."

The vast space was rapidly filling with an audience largely composed of the lowest grades of the great city, and thus hundreds were gathered whom no consideration had induced to enter churches or chapels. Coarse jests, slang phrases, and licentious conversation abounded, the usual order and decorum of places of worship "conspicuous by their absence," and all ordinary ideas of public worship turned upside down.

The advent of the preacher and committee on the stage was a signal for a cry of "Hats off!" such as used to be heard at the Old Bailey on execution mornings; in the midst of which Carry saw her rough-handed friend advance to the

front of the stage, and address the assembled multitude. He chose for his text the inquiry, "Why will ye die?" and proceeded to introduce his subject by an illustration that was almost terrific in its application to present circumstances. "I have been reading," he said, "in a recent volume of travels, of a wooden theatre in Russia, constructed to hold many more people than are now gathered here. One evening, when the house was crowded, a fire broke out behind the scenes. At first the actors said nothing, hoping to extinguish it without alarming the audience, and when the brightness became visible the audience applauded the splendid illumination. Then the buffoon, who had previously performed, rushed again on the stage, crying, 'We are on fire! we are on fire! save yourselves!' But the audience laughed the leader, considering him as still performing. So loud was the laughter and applause that no voice could be heard, and therefore, the scene was drawn up that every one might become aware of the danger. A smoke and flame poured into the body of the house, laughter changed to wild-est terror, shrieks of horror took the place of mirth. All rushed towards the outlets, but only the foremost succeeded in escaping; the fire extended to roof and walls; upon a struggling, writhing mass of living men and women, the blazing ruins fell; and all other sounds were lost in the roaring and crackling of the fire."

A silence, profound and awful, fell upon that vast audience as the preacher proceeded—"Suppose you had been in that preliminary hell, what would you have thought and done? Suppose ye they were sinners above others, because they suffered such things? Nay! but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

Having thus attracted their attention, the preacher went on to preach repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus, laying before his hearers the whole plan of the common salvation, and urging its immediate acceptance. The poor girl drank in the discourse eagerly; with lips parted, and eyes fixed, she remained until its close, and then only returned to the consideration of herself and her condition.

At the end of the service all who wished to remain were invited to do so; and then Carry saw and spoke to her friend again; and with the lady listening, also, he proceeded to speak in more familiar words of the way of our Father towards returning children, until the happy tears ran over; the snare was broken, and she was delivered.

Then Carry turned to go.

"But where are you going, and what will you do for to-morrow?" asked the lady, with a smile; for she had noticed that all such thoughts had passed as completely from Carry's mind as though hunger and darkness were dreams. Then the thought of her condition flashed upon her; but, asking nothing more, she turned again to depart. A gentle, loving hand detained her, as the lady said.

"I have a home especially for such as you; they are as daughters and sisters to me. Come and be with us. You may be sure of food and shelter and employment, and a hearty, loving welcome—for Jesus' sake."

In the front of a wide thoroughfare there is an excellent shop occupied by a thriving tradesman. We pass through the shop into the parlor behind, which is the very picture of cosiness and comfort. Here, on a low seat before the fire, nursing her little child, is the tradesman's wife, a strikingly beautiful woman. This is Carry. The snare broken, the brand plucked from the fire!

HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN ART.

The history of art in Egypt we find, now that we have an exact knowledge of its different phases, has proceeded in an inverse direction from that taken by all other nations. These last began by exclusively hieratic art, and it was only gradually that they progressed to the true and free imitation of Nature. The Egyptians alone began by living reality and ended in hieratic conventionalities. Their most archaic sculptures—those which we may probably assign to the second dynasty and which bear evident signs of art still in its infancy—have nothing of the hieratic element about them. They are already conceived with that realistic tendency which attained its perfection under the fifth and sixth dynasties.

On the banks of the Nile the first development of plastic art was entirely free and secular in character. It had no intermixture of sacerdotal influences till later, when these struck it with immobility and robbed it of life by establishing an immutable canon of proportion, placed under the guardianship of a religious sanction.

Let us turn from the works of the schools of the Ancient Empire to those of the latest Renaissance of Egyptian sculpture, in the time of the Saitic princes of the sixth dynasty, of those very men who opened out Egypt to intercourse with Greece. Life has departed, close and accurate imitation of Nature is sought for in vain. Everything is flaccid, rounded, and, above all, conventional. The general outline is still grandiose and severe; the sentiment of the composition majestic. High traditions still linger, to which the artist seeks to conform; but skillful and precise study of details, true and careful modeling are absolutely wanting. Art has ceased to be real in order to become hieratic; henceforth it produces according to an invariable and conventional type, instead of attaching itself to Nature, lovingly studied in the living subject.

We learn the mode of procedure of the Saitic epoch, up to the last and irremediable decadence which succeeded the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, from a very curious series, in the Egyptian Exhibition of the Trocadere, of models intended for the instruction and guidance of artists. They are numerous and come from diverse quarters. M. Mariette has found actual depositories of models of the kind wherever he has carried on excavations. They are all in limestone of very fine grain. Some have served for bas-reliefs. These are small rectangular slabs, on each of which we see the figure of a man or of an animal or portions of their figures: the other side of the slab being left flat and generally divided into squares, giving the proportions with mathematical precision. Generally, too, each discovery of the kind has brought to light a series of models showing the same figure in all stages of its progress, from the first sketch to the last

touch, without the minutest difference in proportion in any of them. Sometimes the sketch and the completed model are brought into juxtaposition on one slab, either side by side or on opposite faces. Other types of the kind afford graduated models, beginning with the mere outline, so as step by step to direct the sculptor in his execution of a royal head in full relief. Some of these are squared, in order to fix the proportions; others divided vertically down the middle of the face, the better to show the profile, for it was most especially in the exact reproduction of individual features that the artist was to be guided by this latter class of models. Probably at the beginning of each new reign these official types of the sovereign's portrait were sent out to all locations where there were buildings to be erected or adorned.

Thus the Egyptian sculptor of the latest schools was not only held in bondage by the general laws of a fixed scale of proportion; in all phases of his work, from the first stroke of the chisel on the stone to the last touch, he had to restrict himself to following, step by step, without any liberty of choice, a mechanical guidance which foresaw and ruled the whole. Hence, the sculptor's art became a dead routine, a servile artisanship, where there was no longer scope for the originality of personal feeling for all that constitutes the living and divine portion of plastic art. Smothered in these official and sacerdotal bonds, the last descendants of the great and free artists of the ancient empire came to be mere handicraftsmen, hewers of stone, lacking all individuality; among whom there was no difference, except as regarded a certain skill and delicacy of touch, shown in mechanical copies of invariable types, to be reproduced again and again.

We are familiar with the story told by Diodorus of Sicily respecting two of the oldest sculptors of Asiatic Greece:

"The Egyptians," says he, "insist that the most celebrated of the old sculptors of Greece must needs have dwelt among them—for instance, Telekles and Theodorus, sons of Rhoikos, who executed the statue of the Pythian Apollo for the inhabitants of Samos; for we are told that one-half of this statue was wrought by Telekles, at Samos, and the other half at Ephesus, by Theodorus, his brother. It is also said that the two halves of the body when joined together fitted so perfectly as to appear the work of a single artist. It is added that work of this kind is unknown among the Greeks, while common and customary among the Egyptians. The latter do not, like the Greeks, judge of the proportions of statues from the effect they produce on the eye; but, after cutting the stones and squaring them, they refer to similar data alike the proportions of the largest and smallest works, for, dividing the human body into twenty-one equal parts, they arrive at its perfect harmony. Thus, when once artists have agreed as to the size of any given statue, they can, even when separated, work parts corresponding in size with such exactness as must needs occasion wonder."

I am far from guaranteeing the authenticity of the anecdote as regards the two sculptors of Samos. In the days of Diodorus it rested on mere hearsay. I even strongly doubt any Grecian artists having ever been directly the pupils of Egyptians or adopting their method thus completely. The monuments that have come down to us tend rather to contradict than to establish this. But as regards the artistic habits of the Egyptians of later ages, of which the Greek writer speaks with the precision of an eye-witness, the models for sculptors which the Historical Egyptian Hall at the Universal Exhibition offers us in such profusion prove him perfectly accurate. It is only, indeed, by their aid that we can understand the expressions he uses; and, hence, I have given the passage, which up to the present time had never been satisfactorily rendered.—*F. Lenormant, in the Contemporary Review.*

THE SCHOOL OF BEAUTY.

A London medical journal of high authority says that efforts are making by a number of women of prominence to form a "School of Beauty" in England, the members pledging themselves to do everything in their power to render themselves comely by natural means. Prizes are to be given to those who can move with ease and grace, and so furnish evidence of good health and physical unconstraint. Something of this kind is needed here. Although American women have, to a great extent, seen the folly and ugliness of lacing and going thinly clad in cold weather, there are still many who think an absurdly small waist attractive, and any number that so pinch their feet that they cannot walk comfortably or becomingly. They do these ridiculous things generally because they imagine men admire them. If men have done so, they do so no longer. They prefer healthy and graceful women to invalid and awkward ones, as all women must be who cramp their waists, wear shoes too small, or dress in any way to interfere with their freedom and satisfaction. Nature and beauty are one. No woman can be beautiful who fetters or hinders nature. The more nearly she approaches the natural the closer she comes to loveliness. Women have heard this a thousand times, and accept it mentally. Yet, in their blind worship of false gods, they sacrifice themselves to infirmity and deformity. It is entirely incomprehensible to men that so many women will endure pain and incur disease from a mistaken notion of beauty.—*A. Y. Times.*

SATURDAY NIGHT IN CORNWALL.

Perhaps there is no country in England where the influence of the "weekly rest-day" is more valued than in Cornwall. To the thousands of Cornish fishermen Saturday night brings many a home joy. The children look out on the beach for the return of their "father," and rejoice to run by his side to the cottage, where the wife has the welcome meal ready for the hard-handed bread-winner. "You can always tell a Cornish fishing-boat," said the Rev. Mr. Windle, of Kings-town, in Ireland, to us a few years ago. "In what way?" we inquired. "O, the Cornishmen never fish on Sundays. Their boats are smarter than any other boats, and the men in their Sunday dress crowd to the Mariner's Church during the fishing season. It does my heart good to see those worthy men from Cornwall."—*The British Workman.*