

But, ladies and gentlemen, the endeavor is vain and futile. Art is the embodiment of beauty by the hand of man, and the beautiful is the higher synthesis of the true and the good, and all three are inseparable and eternal, like the Triune God from whose mind they have sprung. Art, then, with her sisters, Truth and Virtue is descended from heaven, and they are forever and inseparably enthroned in the heart of man.

Let us cast a glance about us, ladies and gentlemen, and let us examine whether the above statement can be verified by the facts of the present and the past, so as to gain a basis for our prognostication of the future. Who, that can read the signs of the time, will deny that modern art has descended to a low level, lower, perhaps, than it has ever reached since its regeneration during the Christian era. Not that vice has not marred some of her fairest creations during our older Christian centuries, but that vice sprang rather from a weakness of the will, and found its own correction in that all-supporting, all-redeeming faith, which forms the bed-rock on which the civilization of those ages is founded. But in our own day this foundation has gradually crumbled away through a poisoning of the intellect by unbelief; Art now stands face to face with nature, and is attempting to grow its fairy flowers on that barren soil, unaided by any loftier inspiration from on High. And what is the result, ladies and gentlemen, what triumphs has she won? Let us look about us, and let us study the ideals which a century of goddess, religionless art has raised up to our admiration. In England what has the Atheism of Swinburn, the Deism of Shelley, the Cynicism of Byron produced that will live in the hearts of the coming generations? And on the Continent what has the sensualism of a Heine and DeMusset and the rationalism of a Hugo, or the pantheistic naturalism of a Goethe produced that will elevate the minds of the coming millions, above the sufferings and sorrows of this stormy voyage through life? And yet, in the artistic form, in all the purely aesthetic elements of art, they have never, perhaps, been excelled. Their melody and diction charm our senses; their exquisite fancies enrapture our imagination, and their pathetic portrayals of human sufferings and delights thrill our hearts. But,

ladies and gentlemen, in art there is something above the harmony of verse, and in the bold flight of fancy there is something nobler even than the graphic delineation of life's weary journey that draws tears from our hearts and fills our souls with gloom and despair. For modern art, having cut loose from all hope above, sinks under the burden of human misery here below, and as exhibited in most of its above named representatives, has fitly been called the art of despair. Not that all those writers utter forth their lamentations in the same manner; each one sheds or suppresses his tears in accordance with the ideosyncrasy of his individual nature.

Thus while Swinburn blasphemes, and Shelley thunders, and Byron throws mud at the face of European society, while De Musset gently wails and Hugo gnashes his teeth, while Heine's sardonic laugh rings through our ears, Goethe in philosophic self-complacency wraps the stoic mantle around his stately form, and swallows the bitter pill of life without a twitter of his noble countenance.

But it may be asked are all those names who constitute the literary glory of our age to be ranked among the so-called immoral writers. Judged from a Christian point of view the lives and writings of some of them are certainly to be reprehended, but looked at from their own standpoint their lives are but the natural outcome of their convictions, and could we but for a moment assume that revelation was a myth, and that man had to solve the mystery of his existence by his own unaided reason, then their doctrines, like the stoicism and epicureanism of old, would have to be accepted as the new gospel, and the leaders of that school would become the apostles of the new dispensation.

Let us now examine this peculiar phase of modern art in its relation to the most sacred interests of humanity, to the family, to woman, for in its fruits we shall best determine the quality of the tree. As art is the truest exponent of the civilization of its own age, so its treatment of woman is the touch-stone of any particular art. And it is in this respect that a goddess art has exhibited its weakest side. For when man's conscience is freed from the restraints of heaven, his hand falls heavily upon the weak, and woman is invariably his first victim. Chivalry is distinctively a Chris-