

TORROR

Light Literature!

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[For the Torch.]

FERNS.

I.

Hast thou the tender eyes and golden hair,
The peachy cheeks and lips like cherries red,
The heart that ached o'er tales of sin or care,
To joy, at sight or tone of joyance wed?
Hast thou the traits that rendered thee so dear,
In thy bright morning, which I oft recall?
How long and desolate hath been the year,
Since thou wert here, my sunlight and my all?
'Tis vain to question! And the days roll on,
While I sit here in illness, by the sea,
The faith and hope of early manhood gone—
Remembered, only as some melody
We know in childhood echoes in our dreams,
While the dead Past a living Present seems.

H. L. SPENCER.

[For the Torch.]

ESTHETIC EMBERS.

BY HARRY FLETCHER.

We were sitting around the hearth, Vitruvius, Raphael, and the Colonel having come in for an after dinner smoke, and as it is customary with us at such times we sat without candles, being lighted only by the flickering and uncertain light of the open fire. Without the wind had arisen, and the air was filled with that fine driving snow which always seems to find its way under the closest covering and intrude itself upon the most carefully protected pedestrian who has the hardihood to venture out upon such a night. The wind howled over the chimney top as if angry that we had protected ourselves from its cold blast; and moaned at the windows in that dreadful agonizing way that seems to send shudders through one's evis by the side of the fire. There is nothing so comfortable in life as an easy chair before an open grate, at such a time when the elements without seem to be doing their utmost to prove themselves stronger than poor humanity. There is such a sense of security in thus enjoying oneself in spite of the storm, and feeling that one is entirely sheltered from its fury, and we hug ourselves and move up closer to the generous heat and give up to a feeling of blissful content.

We sat thus for some time engrossed in thought quietly smoking when the Colonel took his pipe from his mouth and broke the silence.

"Have you bought your Christmas presents Raphael?"

RAPHAEL.—No, not yet, I find great difficulty in selecting what I want, the market is so full

of trash, and anything at all worthy of being called artistic is so dear, that one needs either to have few friends, or to be a modern Cressus to satisfy his Christmas generosity.

VITRUVIUS.—Yes, it is certainly a difficult thing to select what one wants under these circumstances, one's tastes so frequently are so entirely out of proportion to one's income; but really don't you think that the artistic element enters more extensively into the selection of Christmas gifts than formerly?

RAPHAEL.—Yes, as in everything else, there is certainly an advance being made in this direction in matters of art, and we find more articles that may be called artistic than before this revival. There is not so much time wasted in fruitless attempts to represent upon canvas impossible perspectives of the Tower rises the size of cabbages, and resembling them in effect, or in painting landscapes by methods learned in half a dozen lessons, all calculated to surprise one's friends at Christmas. We find now, certainly a greater amount of taste displayed in the selecting of articles for parlor ornament or personal decoration, and we see that this demand has created a supply of Christmas gifts that are really a pleasure to look upon. But the public at large are still a great way down the mountain, and it will be a long time before they will get up into the pure air of esthetic taste where they will enjoy a thing not merely because it is costly, but because it is good, and because the conception and execution of it are governed by such principles as go to make good art.

VITRUVIUS.—That reminds me of an incident told me by a friend of mine who is somewhat of an artist as well as a shrewd business man. He is a dealer in Paintings, Engravings, etc., and he had a customer one day who had evidently more money than brains. This man seemed greatly interested in an elegant oil painting, the price of which was fifteen hundred dollars. It was a landscape, a broad reach of country dotted with peaceful farm houses, and a quiet river winding gracefully along in the distance. It was a work of art, but it didn't seem to satisfy his taste. "I like the frame, he said, and most of the picture, but I would like it better if it had a mountain right in there," pointing with his cane. Oh, said my friend, "we can put a mountain in there very easily." Can you? said the man, "then I'll take it," and it was done for him. "When such men are the patrons of art, what can we expect."

RAPHAEL.—You will find such men every where. They are like the father of the young girl who was once sent to me to study oil painting. He was rich but ignorant, and he had an idea that one could learn art as one

learns to run a sewing machine. As he was a good customer of mine, I disliked to offend him, and so I consented to teach his daughter. But my time was more than wasted, and I was obliged to tell her father one day that she was not progressing as well as I might desire. "What is the matter?" said he, "hasn't she got all the tools she needs?" Oh! yes I said, "she has everything of that kind, but she lacks capacity." Then buy it for her, BUY IT FOR HER, said he with an involuntary movement of his hand towards his pocket. You see there are a great many people who think they can buy capacity, but good art, good architecture, or good taste, generally are not the results of a lavish expenditure of money, and are only fostered by wealth, when it is applied by people of good judgment in producing articles which are in themselves worthy of the name of art. It is unfortunate, too, that the wealthy are too often ignorant of the true principles of esthetic culture and ostentatious show is frequently mistaken for good taste. How many people there are who will seriously tell you that a grandy chromo is as good as an oil painting, and they will choose the one as soon as the other. This is not to be wondered at, perhaps, when you consider that in matters of art education the public at large have absolutely no safe guide, and no means of informing themselves except by the unstable impressions of public opinion. But we are in the infancy of a better era, and the dissemination of art literature is beginning already to be felt by the masses.

VITRUVIUS.—Yes I feel it, too, in my profession; although I have still many disheartening things to contend with. I am confident that the time will come when an architect will be judged by his merit and succeed in proportion to his architectural ability. I remember when I first began to practice the difficulty I had in impressing people with the idea that an architect was anything but an artist, who could only be employed with advantage by the rich. I have many amusing incidents to tell you sometime when we have more leisure, about my clients, but the ladies will soon be here and we shall have to change the subject.

RAPHAEL.—Speaking of ladies, I have some hope for the country when I see the ladies taking such a lively interest in art subjects. In the Normal Art Schools, which are being started in different parts of the country, the majority of the pupils are women, and if they only set themselves to the task, the work of redeeming the world is half done. No man of sense will buy a picture, or a statuette, or build a house, without consulting his wife, and if the wives are educated, the husbands can't go far wrong. I was at an exhibition of one of these schools of which I speak, and I could not help