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(For the Torch.)

FERNS.

v.

Of what avail, he said, of what avail
This toil that taxes hand and heart and
brain?

Dangers beleague the vent'rous ships that sail
From clime to clime; while those that do
remain

In some snug harbor ne'er are tempest tost,
Ne'er are dismantled, ne'er are wrecked or lost!

Of what avail, he said, of what avail
The ships that through the years at anchor ride,
That never battle with the deathful gale,

That sleep securely on the rocking tide,
And never push out boldly from the shore
Near which they sink at last and are beheld
no more?

Thus questioned he his heart—and this his
heart's reply—

Toil is man's privilege—toiling man should
die.

H. L. SPENCER.

ESTHETIC EMBERS.

BY HARRY FLETCHER

The day had been clear and sunny, and in spite of the sharp air it was most enjoyable to drive out into the country behind the Colonel's bays, who seemed themselves to catch the spirit of the occasion, and dashed over the road with a hearty, impetuous stride, which always fills one with an exhilaration, and a feeling of generosity, so often experienced when one is well-treated by one's friends.

Talk about sleighing! You think the subject is exhausted do you? Then take a drive out in the clear air when the sun is shining bright, or the moon perhaps, or even the stars alone, and have a horse, and if it don't open your mouth, and your heart too, I am no judge. There is something in the association with a good horse that makes one feel nobler and better, and I do not mean that a thorough horseman,—I do not mean a jockey or a sporting gentleman,—but a real lover of horses, can be a bad man. There is something almost human in the clear eye and the distended nostrils, the arched neck and the proud step, that draws out the finer qualities of one's nature and makes him better.

But if you have no horse of your own, why then you can enjoy a ride behind someone else's horse as we did, and though the comfort is as great, the sensation is different. We feel at such times so much at peace with the world, and so willing to see a display of charity on the part of others, that we wrap our mantles of comfort about us, and wonder how the world can be so pitiless, and we sit down before the fire and pity the poor who have none of their own.

The Colonel had driven us out to look over a house which had been remodelled and refurnished by one of his friends, who, having spent years in the service of an Indian Mercantile house, and having amassed a fortune thereby, with the characteristic lavishness of such a man, had expended upon the decoration of the interior a wealth of ornament which was only limited by the want of opportunity to express itself. So as we gathered around the fire after dinner had been removed, Miss Agatha said:

"Isn't the furnishing of Mr. Van Ransceller's house perfectly lovely. O, I do think that it is the most charming furniture I ever saw, so rich and elegant, and such a style to everything, why it seems like a fairy palace instead of a house to be used by mortals, and I do think that those curtains are the loveliest I ever saw. They cost one hundred and fifty dollars apiece. Mrs. Gov. Brooks's were very nice and stylish, but they only cost one hundred dollars. And those chairs worked in silk with gilt frames, so genteel and delicate, and the carpets, and the paintings. Do you know they were all imported directly from Italy at Mr. Van Ransceller's order, and that one in Drawing-Room cost over three thousand dollars. And did you see that lovely picture of a lady holding a little baby, with little cherubs all around her, what was it? "Madonna." I think they said. Raphael who was Madonna?"

THE COLONEL.—Well, Agatha, I think you had better take one more quarter at school; Madonna was one of Shakespeare's heroines, my dear.

MISS AGATHA.—Well, I know it was just lovely whoever it was, and I think she must have been a lovely woman. But what did you think of the pictures, Raphael?

RAFAEL.—They were generally good, Miss Agatha, especially the one to which you alluded. The Madonna, which was a fine copy of my namesake Raphael's, I am obliged to remind you, was that artist's conception of the Mother of our Lord. It is truly a grand picture and worthy of the master mind from which it emanated—and as I said, nearly all the others were of a high order of merit.

It is one of the blessings of wealth, that it is possible by means of it, to surround ones

self with those objects of art, that, from their rarity are of great value. But it does not necessarily follow that one can only have artistic surroundings when one has an abundance of money. We who have only moderate means can, if we choose, enjoy the comforts which art brings to those who can appreciate them. And I have peculiar ideas upon the subject. I do not expect that the great mass of the people will entirely agree with me, but the time will come when a discriminating taste will be shown on the part of the people that will drive all bad and indifferent art out of the market. But in regard to the fitting of a house with pictures, I think that some judgment should be exercised, to have such pictures, as shall in a great measure represent the person to whom they belong; that is, for the man who is fond of home and whose tastes are quiet and home-like, let such pictures as represent those ideas be hung upon his walls. Battle scenes and suggestions of strife may do for the warrior, but I think that many pictures which adorn the walls of Drawing Rooms in private houses are fit only for the public gallery and for general exhibition as works of art. The home is not a museum, or for the purposes of public exhibition, and should be, as far as possible, a place where the finer sentiments of man's nature are fostered. Why should Martyrdoms, Crucifixions, Assassination scenes, or any form of human agony be represented under the roof where the tired spirit at his end of a day's labor, seeks the balm of quiet repose. Let us have only those impressions and ideas suggested that will make the home what we shall look back to with pleasure when we are gone out to do battle with the enemy of us all, the great busy world. But contrary to this feeling, many of our houses are filled up as if only for the inspection of the curious, and are better adapted to be occupied by saints than sinners. Make home beautiful say I, not only for the association with beautiful things, but by the use of beautiful things that suggest only the comfortable, home like sentiments that will make our boys feel truly, "that there's no place like home." I wish I had time to go into the subject more at length, for it is one I love to talk about, and some time, I will give my ideas as to what I would have in my own home. (Good evening ladies.)

OUR LANDLADY.—Good night Raphael.

Let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this precept well to heart: "Do the duty which lies nearest to thee, which thou knowest to be a duty;" the second duty will have already become clearer. —Thomas Carlyle.