

the commercial spirit ; that up to a-certain point it is in the nature of a preservative against some of the moral dangers that beset trading and manufacturing enterprise, and that we are justified in regarding it not merely as an economical benefit, not merely as contributing to our works an element of value, not merely as supplying a particular faculty of human nature with its proper food, but as a liberalizing and civilizing power, and an instrument in its own sphere of moral and social improvement.

#### STRIIVING AFTER EXCELLENCE—ITS INFLUENCE ON MEN'S CHARACTERS.

We may not be able to reproduce the time of Pericles or the *cinque cento*, but yet it depends upon our own choice whether we shall or shall not have a title to claim kindred, however remotely, with them. What we are bound to is this, to take care that everything we make shall in its kind and class be as good as we can make it. When Dr. Johnson, whom Staffordshire must ever place among her most distinguished ornaments, was asked by Mr. Boswell how he had attained to his extraordinary excellence in conversation, he replied he had no other rule or system than this, that whenever he had anything to say he tried to say it in the best manner he was able. It is this perpetual striving after excellence on the one hand, or the want of such effort on the other, which, more than the original difference of gifts, contributes to bring about the differences we see in the works and characters of men. Such efforts are more rare in proportion as the object in view is higher, the reward more distant. In the application of beauty to works of utility, the reward is generally distant.

#### NATIONAL ART CHARACTERISTICS—FRANCE, ENGLAND, GREECE, ITALY.

The beautiful object will be dearer than one perfectly bare and bald, not because utility is compromised for the sake of beauty, but because there may be more manual labour, and there must be more thought in the original design.

"Pater ipse colendi  
"Hand facilem esse viam voluit."

It may be argued that, in the case, for example, of durability and solidity, that which appears cheapest at first is not cheapest in the long run. And this for two reasons. In the first place, because in the long run mankind are willing to pay a price for beauty. France is the second commercial country of the world ; and her command of foreign markets seems clearly referable in a great degree to the real elegance of her productions, and to establish in the most intelligible form the principle that taste has an exchangeable value. England has long taken a lead among the nations of Europe for the cheapness of her manufactures ; not so for their beauty. There are three regions given to man for the exercise of his faculties in the production of objects, or the performance of acts conducive to civilization and to the ordinary uses of life. Of these, one is the homely sphere of simple utility. Then there is, secondly, the lofty sphere of pure thought, and its ministering organs, the sphere of poetry and the highest arts. Here, again, the place of what we term utility is narrow ; and the production of the beautiful, in one or other of its innumerable forms, is the supreme, if not the only object. Now, I believe it to be undeniable that in both of these spheres, widely separated as they are, the faculties of Englishmen and the distinctions of England have been of the very first order. In the power of economical production she is at the head of all the nations of the earth. If in the fine arts, in painting, for example, she must be content with a second place, yet in poetry, which ranks even higher than painting, I hope I am not misled by national feeling when I say it, she may fairly challenge all the nations of Christendom, and no one of them but Italy can as yet enter into serious competition with the land of Shakespeare. But, for one, I should admit that while thus pre-eminent in the pursuit of pure beauty on the one side, and of unmixed utility on the other, she has been far less fortunate,—indeed, for the most part, she has been decidedly behindhand, in that intermediate region, where art is brought into contact with industry, and where the pair may wed together. This is a region alike vast and diversified. Upwards it embraces architecture,—an art which affords the noblest scope for grace and grandeur, downwards, it extends to a very large proportion of the products of human industry. Utility is not to be sacrificed for beauty, but they are generally compatible, often positively helpful to each other ; and it may be safely asserted, that the periods when the study of beauty has been neglected have usually been marked, not by a more successful pursuit of utility, but by a general decline in the energies of man. In Greece, the fountainhead of all instruction on these matters, the season of her highest historic splendour was also the summer of her classic poetry and art ; and, in contemplating her architecture, we scarcely know whether most to admire the acme of beauty or the perfect obedience to the laws of mechanical contrivance. The arts of Italy were the offspring of her freedom, and

with its death they languished and decayed. In the particular department of industrial art, France, perhaps, of all modern nations has achieved the greatest distinction ; and there is no country which has displayed, through a long course of ages, a more varied activity, or acquired a greater number of titles to renown.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF WEDGWOOD ON ENGLISH INDUSTRIAL ART.

Of imagination, fancy, taste, of the higher cultivation in all its forms, this great nation has abundance. Of industry, skill, perseverance, mechanical contrivance, it has a yet larger stock, which overflows our narrow bounds and floods the world. The one great want is to bring these two groups of qualities harmoniously together ; and this was the peculiar excellence of Wedgwood ; his excellence, peculiar in such a degree as to give his name a place above every other, so far as I know, in the history of British industry, and remarkable and entitled to fame even in the history of the industry of the world. We make our first introduction to Wedgwood about the year 1741, as the youngest of a family of 13 children, and was put to earn his bread at 11 years of age in the trade of his father, and in the branch of a thrower. Then comes the well-known small-pox, the settling of the dregs of the disease in the lower part of the leg, and the amputation of the limb rendering him lame for life. In the wonderful ways of Providence, that disease which came to him as a twofold scourge was probably the occasion of his subsequent excellence. It sent his mind inwards ; it drove him to meditate upon the laws and secrets of his art. The result was, that he arrived at a perception and a grasp of them which might perhaps have been envied, certainly have been owned by an Athenian potter. Relentless criticism has torn to pieces the old legend of King Numa receiving in a cavern from the nymph Egeria the laws that were to govern Rome. But no criticism can shake the record of that illness and mutilation of the boy Josiah Wedgwood, which made for him a cavern of his bedroom, and an oracle of his own inquiring, searching, meditative, and fruitful mind. From those early days of suffering, weary perhaps to him as they went by, but bright, surely, in the retrospect both to him and us, a mark seems at once to have been set upon his career.

#### SKETCH OF WADGWOOD'S CHARACTER—HIS WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENTS.

Here is a man who, in the well-chosen words of his epitaph, "converted a rude and inconsiderable manufacture into an elegant art, and an important branch of national commerce." Here is a man who, beginning as it were, from zero, and unaided by the national or Royal gifts which were found necessary to uphold the glories of Sevres, of Chelsea, and of Dresden, produced works truer, perhaps, to the inexorable laws of art than the fine fabrics that proceeded from those establishments, and scarcely less attractive to the public taste. Here is a man who found his business cooped up within a narrow valley by the want of even tolerable communications, and who, while he devoted his mind to lifting that business from meanness, ugliness, and weakness to the highest excellence of material and form, had surplus energy enough to take a leading part in great engineering works like the Grand Trunk canal from the Mersey to the Trent, which made the raw material of his industry abundant and cheap, which supplied a vent for the manufactured article, and opened for it materially a way to the outer world. Lastly, here is a man who found his country dependent upon others for its supplies of all the finer earthenware ; but who, by his single strength, reversed the inclination of the scales, and scattered thickly the productions of his factory over all the breadth of the continent of Europe. In travelling from Paris to St. Petersburg, from Amsterdam to the furthest point of Sweden, from Dunkirk to the southern extremity of France, one is served at every inn from English earthenware. The same article adorns the tables of Spain, Portugal, and Italy ; it provides the cargoes of ships to the East Indies, the West Indies, and America.

#### VI.—NASSAU W. SENIOR, ESQ.

##### RELATIONS OF THE STATE TO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

From the inaugural address of Mr. Senior, as President of the Social Science Congress Department of Education, we make the following extracts :—After a synoptic view of the different branches of education, its division into teaching and training, and these into various subdivisions, Mr. Senior proceeded to consider the classes of persons to whom education is given, with respect to their means of paying for it. These, he said, might be divided into three groups—those whose parents can afford to pay for the whole of their education ; those who can afford to pay only a portion of the expense ; and those who could not pay any part of it. In reference to these classes he said :—Freedom of teaching is peculiarly British. When I say that the interference of the State in the education of the higher and middle class is not absolutely necessary, I do not mean to treat it as useless. I mean merely to distinguish