

ALL ARE ARCHITECTS OF FATE.

LOOK at this stately structure gradually rising until it appears to salute the passing clouds. Day by day it grows nearer completion; block after block is added to perfect its beauty, until a time comes when the master declares with pride, that the work is done. Then the sun, dawning, gilds the glittering turrets with pale radiance; and when the dark gates of night open to receive his gorgeous chariot, the rays of dying splendor give to it diviner beauty. Let us enter. As we cross the marble threshold, strains of music float softly through the winding halls, while the light streams in crimson colors through the richly stained windows. In every room we see artistic beauty—here, a painting of a sweet fair-haired Madonna; here, some relic of Grecian sculpture, whose exquisite symmetry is half concealed in a curtained niche. Surely

"Never seraph folds his pinions

Over fabric half so fair."

But near this dwelling, so grand in proportion, is a hovel, where all that is hideous and all that is wretched combine to render the scene ghostly. The walls are mouldering in decay, reptiles are crawling through the crevices and across the floor, and loathsome weeds flourish in wild luxuriance; while night birds croak their dismal monodies over the desolation around. It repels as much as the first dwelling had charmed us.

Is the poet's conception a just one? And the edifices "built with hands" similar to those characters which day by day we are moulding into beauty or deformity? In one sense this figure is true. Let us wander through the realms of the past and see what the great ones who have gone reared in life. Milton built of his life a cathedral, vast and grand, through whose aisles the organ notes of his verse peal in melody sublime. But a burst of faction hate or political bigotry makes a crashing discord and the music is marred. Byron was like a graceful edifice, but insecure and defective. In it are united the base and the beautiful, the strong and the weak. Through its corridors we hear the maniac laughter, and from the darkness eyes gleam at us that:

"Have all the seeming

Of a demon's that is dreaming."

What a terrible medley, and what a sad waste of princely intellect and a noble soul! Cromwell's life resembles a huge granite structure, storm-defying and sturdy, but over whose cold walls climb the starry jessamine and rose, types of the tender feeling nestling in the soldier's heart.

Ah! but there is one characteristic of our lives that belongs to them above and not to men's architectural works. The buildings of men totter in decay and not a vestige of them remains. In the Coliseum, the pride of Ancient Rome, of which it was said:—

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand,

When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall,

And when Rome falls—the world,"

the owl now builds her nest and the traveller from foreign lands muses over the traces of departed grandeur. A day shall come when even the Pyramids—grey scorners of time—will crumble into dust. Yet when they shall be among the things that were, the spirits of the kings entombed there ages before will be living and mighty, their characters immutable. Character is eternal. The casket that enshrines this gem of the soul may be destroyed, but the lustre of the gem will never dim nor fade. It has an eternity of existence. Thus it lives through endless ages when things material are no more.

In another instance does character differ from these works. Only the rich and powerful may possess splendid dwellings, the poor must be content with meaner, coarser materials and unsightly homes; and although in life some are born princes and others paupers, yet to each is given the power to make his life a glory or a shame. There is no position, however lofty, that a mean man cannot disgrace; and there is no rank, however lowly, that a noble nature will not elevate. To all, then, is given the means of being good and doing good. Pope voiced a grand truth when he said:—

"Honor and shame from no condition rise,

Act well your part; there all the honor lies."

Life—that gift of mystery—is to some a blessing and to others a curse. But there was bestowed on all the power of will—the power of choosing for the good or evil side. This is all that renders us anything but the slaves of circumstance. Deny man this faculty and he is no longer a being responsible for his actions, but a mere machine at the mercy of every influence brought to bear upon him. The power of volition is God-given, but its abuse degrades as much as its use elevates. We often wrongly estimate the success or failure of a life. The words are employed to denote the worldly prosperity or adversity with which he met not the duty done or neglected in man's life. During the last year there died in the city of New York a man of princely fortune, whose name had long been the synonym of worldly gain. Far from his palace home there had lived and toiled for many years a humble city preacher. He had been endowed with the richest gifts of intellectual power, and in his brilliant University career had given earnest of a life of literary fame. In his many wanderings through New York, the squalor and sin among the lower classes induced him to spend his life in labor in their midst. He had died of a loathsome fever that had infested the quarters of the city where he had preached. How widely different was the world's verdict on their two careers! The one they pronounced a splendid success; the other "a waste of brilliant talents." But when the name of the millionaire is hardly remembered, hundreds of the poor will bless the memory of God's worker. He has carved his epitaph in letters of gold on their hearts; he has made for himself a memorial in the elevation of their lives, which will endure when brass and marbled monuments have crumbled into mother earth. Then, if worldly good be not the