

PROGRESS.

Life! This strange, mysterious life of ours, is viewed from many different stand-points, and each man colors the scene he looks upon with "auxiliary light," coming from the imagination. Some are led by their own peculiar mental constitution to abide in the *Present* with quiet content, and take no more thought for the morrow than the lilies of the field. If they have no sunny glimpses of the Elysian fields of the great *hereafter*, they are amply repaid by the immunity they enjoy from their far-reaching, prophetic insight into future sorrows,—such as the wizard gave to the dauntless Lochiel. Others cling as tenaciously to the ruins of the past, as the ivy does to the towers and buttresses of an ancient castle. To them there is no glory, no vitality, no abiding place and comfort in anything that is not of the *Past*. The word, "progress," suggests nothing but frightful images and disasters, of "noble crafts," alone on the "wide, wide sea," sweeping with all sails set, with creaking masts and straining cordage, upon the rocks of destruction, while the master and helmsman see not their peril in their mad haste to get onward!

But surely, there is a "progress" toward a sure and quiet haven, and it is for this that a third class is struggling with all the energy that the proud "I will," of a powerful mind gives to man! It always has been and still is "the conflict of ages." In all climes and seasons, in every stage of man's destiny,—from the infancy of nations to their vigorous maturity,—this "conflict" has gone on with ever-varying results, but undiminished courage. The ultimate success of many great minds has been ruthlessly darkened by persecution and prison walls,—the superficial "timeservers" of the day ending the eventful tragedy with the assassin's dagger, or an official (?) "scene" on the scaffold; because they had, in their presumption, dared to believe that man was a progressive being; and acting upon this inherent principle, disturbed somewhat, the lethargic sleep of their self-righteous tyrants.—Other champions have, however, rushed impetuously forward and filled the vacated places—the majesty of Truth, ever opposing the madness of Error!

The adventurous Spaniard, gazing from the mountain-peak, out upon the blue and radiant waters of the new-found Pacific, experienced no such delight as thrills the breasts of the enraptured *Pioneers* of progress, when they look down from the calm

heights they have attained, and see the glad Future smiling before them. Of this class was the great COLUMBUS, whose brave heart faltered not during the moons that waxed and waned while he was exploring a boundless sea, and searching for the fragrant shores of the unknown land,—hidden so long, and hidden still, but for him, and those like him. Such was the heroic Luther, whose life was a stern battle to preserve the never-to-be extinguished light, brought from the shades of antiquity, and leave the world to grope onward in the rayless obscurity of a moonless, starless night. Such again, was the stately Florentine, Galileo, whose explorations into the mysteries of nature, were rewarded with the prison-cell, not even his gray hairs shielding him from malice.

Many others there have been, who dared to act and think beyond their age, and received in return no meed but the crown and palm of martyrdom; and have since been consecrated in all eyes, by a fame that will never die. Yet we, reaping the rich harvests they have sown, dare to stand with the light of the nineteenth century falling upon us, and lament that the march of progression has swept so many flowers from our pathway. We sigh wearily over the unceasing toil demanded of us, if we would keep pace with the arts and sciences in their swift career, and long for the patriarchal ages, when, as we imagine, life was one long play-day—full of fragrance, music, and beauty. Strange infatuation!

The man of letters, as he wipes the moisture from his brow, and pores over his manuscripts in his little attic amid the noise and murmur of a crowded city, may think of the lovely vales of Arcadia with something akin to regret that his lot is cast in an age when these peaceful pictures of Grecian life are regarded as mere fictions of the poet-laureate; but would he exchange his life of active intellectuality,—his meetings with kindred minds,—his enjoyment of the garnered wisdom of the great and gifted,—to spend his days in tending sheep beside Arcadian fountains, and celebrating, with an eaten pipe, the charms of some rustic Amaryllis. London, wrapped in fog and smoke, may be a less romantic object of contemplation, than a group of Arab tents, bathed in the mellow sunlight of Oriental climes, with palm trees fluttering their plumed leaves over them and the purple cones of mountains visible in the distance; but in reality there is more of the true poetry within the walls of the prosaic-looking city,

than ever dwelt in the rustic homes of the sons of the desert. We are so accustomed to think of the literary productions of by-gone ages, as embracing the highest order of intellect, that we are very apt to undervalue our own literature.

The *present*, is, indeed, the product of the *past*, but it surpasses it, as the fully ripened fruit is better than the flower.—We contend that there is more pure and just sentiment,—higher views of man, his duties and destiny,—more exalted ideas of woman's worth,—and as much poetic brilliancy in the writings of modern bards, as in the well-filled pages of Homer and Virgil. The sublime strains of Milton,—the melting pathos, exquisite harmony, and justness of composition exhibited by the myriad-minded Shakspeare,—the haze of quiet beauty that Wordsworth brought from his lyre of many strings,—are unsurpassed by anything in the whole range of ancient literature. Our historians, orators, and philosophers are, at least, equal to those of Greece and Rome, while they have struggled under disadvantages of which the classical never even dreamed.

The indiscriminate laudation of ancient authors indulged in by those who cannot hope to rival their fame, would have repressed, if possible, the manifestations of genius in later ages; and when America awakens to the idea that there may be a progress in literature, as well as in art, science, and morals; then may our country witness the rise of a national literature, to which that of Greece, in her palmy days, will appear but as the day-star heralding the glorious sun!

GOOD MANNERS.

We know a young man, slow, sullen, heavy-browed and ungracious, who whenever you speak to him, answers as if it were an effort to be even decently civil; and who, moreover, seems to be quite content, and even proud, of his incivility. And we lean to the charitable side so far as to think this nothing more than a habit of his, which has insensibly fastened upon him; and that he goes through the world—a world of mutual dependence—little aware of the fact, that so small as his manners, is constantly producing impressions, and fast forming a reputation, such as ten years hence he may regret as the greatest blunders of his life.

— "Oh, I'm so glad you like birds! What kind do you most admire?" said a young wife to her husband. — "Ahem! Well, I think a good turkey, with plenty of dressing," said the husband, "is about as nice as any."