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THE PRIDE OF IGNORANCE.



HERE are many kinds of pride that inflate the human breast, and which may be ranged into two classes—noble pride, and ignoble pride. Of the latter none is more despicable, or more detrimental to the progress of science, and the advancement of the human race, than the upstart pride of ignorance.

The Engineer, who by his talent and genius has overcome almost insuperable difficulties in the construction of his works, such as bridging over some wide and rapid river, or tunneling through miles of rock and quicksand, under mountains, and under rivers, or cutting a canal through a desert of shifting sand, may be properly proud of the success of his work, and of the genius with which Providence has endowed him. The Architect, who, after overcoming the difficulties of an imperfect foundation, raises securely thereupon a massy edifice of beautiful proportions and chaste design, may well feel proud of the admiration bestowed upon the work of his genius. The Mechanic, who works out the details of the ponderous engine, which a child can almost govern; or produces with his skilled hand the most delicate automatic machinery, which even requires the aid of a microscope to examine its actions, may well be proud of his skill and handicraft. The artist, the sculptor, the philosopher, the physician, and all who labor with love to excel to the utmost in their arts or professions, may also feel proud of the success that has followed their efforts; for theirs is indeed a noble pride. Such men have made their professions the study and laudable pride of their lives.

But there is another class of men, who, neither gifted with genius, talent, education or modesty, put themselves forward in public places as critics, or office-seekers; they plume themselves upon a knowledge they do not possess, they assume airs of superiority at public meetings, and impose upon the world by unblushing

effrontery, which passes for experience; and a smattering of high sounding technical terms, which passes for scientific attainments; they possess a certain flippancy of speech that passes for smartness, and, too often, are placed in positions of responsibility and trust, to the detriment of the country and loss to the public. These men fancy they are clever, and are proud in their ignorance. The unmerited position to which they suddenly find themselves elevated instead of abashing, only serves to puff up their pride to a greater extent, until they really believe they possess the talent and acquirements of highly educated and professional men, and in their self-sufficient appreciation of their abilities obstruct the public service, and, frequently, endeavour to carry out themselves their own crude and impracticable ideas. They are tyrannical in their power, proud in their vanity, proud of their self-supposed ability and knowledge, and this is that ignoble pride which we class as the pride of ignorance.

This class, unfortunately, is very numerous, and we fear is in the ascendant. They find their way into our corporations, they become members of committees and associations, and have a finger in the pie in all business where busy bodies and talkative people have greater weight with the mass than true merit and experience. They are sure to meddle with matters of which they know little or nothing practically. They steal ideas from their clever subordinates and pass them off in committee rooms as their own genuine inspirations, and they glean up what little knowledge they possess, like grain that falls from the reaper's hand, but instead of binding it up in sheaves ready for the barn or the thrashing mill, they tie it all up promiscuously, heads and tails together, a disordered and entangled mass. Such people are the horror and incubus of all men of science. They mutilate their designs until almost unrecognizable; they take from their works their strength, purity and beauty, under the plea of economy; and substitute weakness, and meretricious ornaments of their own selecting, and this they call retrenchment and improvement.

When will the public be able to judge between the grain and the chaff? When will they cease to be imposed upon by these seekers after public pap; seekers after the