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[Original Poetry.]

Gradatim.

There is no point to mark progression's limit,
Since high as we may climb,
We find on reaching what we deemed the summit
Heights tow'ring more sublime.

Life holds for all its heights, its hills elysian,
Unseen by grosser eyes,
Yet to the soul's unhampered, lofty vision,
Dim and far-off they rise.

Clear be the sky, or dull and low, and leaden,
'Gainst which they stand defined,
Faint be the outline; still they point to heaven,
And pierce the mists of time.

No fair, alluring way of sudden transit,
No easy-conquered spoil,
We find before us, for we gain the summit,
Through years of patient toil.

Who in ignoble ease would reach the acme
Unknown to pain's keen touch,
Must stand on holy hills, no white-winged Psyche,
But mortal—stained with dust.

Better to mount the ladder with decision,
And reach the purer air,
Knowing each hard-won step extends the vision,
And leaves the soul more fair.

We cannot reach our life's full fair fruition,
At one gigantic bound,
But only through the single, free condition,
Of climbing, round by round.

A Fragment on Homer.

AN important characteristic of Homer's poems and one which has probably helped to render them so enduring and popular, is the air of truth they wear, truth to character and to nature. It is here, perhaps, that Homer's poetic genius appears in the most masterly effect. This is the great secret of his power over our hearts.

Take, for instance, the account of the dialogue between the unfortunate Helen and the aged

Priam, in the 3rd book of the Iliad. A truce has been agreed upon; Paris and Menelaus are to decide the weary contest by a personal combat. Iris sent from Olympus comes to Helen, whom she finds writing her history in a golden tapestry, and warns her of the contest, in the issue of which she has, of course, great interest, urging her to be present. Priam and the Elders of the city are "sitting in the gate,"—like the Old Testament Kings. Helen approaches. Homer has as yet made no mention of her wonderful beauty, but here in a few masterly touches introduced in the simplest and most natural manner, he does more than describe it, when he tells of its effects. The old men break off their talk—charmed with her beauty, and with gentle courtesy Priam receives her. He does not look upon her in that light in which later moralists would be apt to view her, although his sons were falling in protracted war for her sake. Priam himself explains:

"Not thee I blame,
But to the gods I owe this woeful war."—(3. 164-5.)

But Helen herself feels her position with bitter keenness, and in the conversation which follows in which she points out to Priam the Leaders of Greeks, she touches upon her own mournful fate. She says of Agamemnon:

"In my husband's name,
Lost, as I am, I called him brother once."

and when she vainly tries to descry among the lost, her two brothers, who had finished their mortal warfare years before, notice the poet's natural stroke of genius:

"My own two brethern, and my mother's sons,
Castor and Pollux; Castor horseman bold,
Pollux unmatched in pugilistic skill;
In Lacedæmon have they stayed behind?
Or can it be, in ocean going ships
That they have come indeed, but shame to join
The fight of warriors, fearful of the shame
And deep disgrace that on my name attend?"—
(63. 236-242.)