

THIS DEGENERATE AGE.

[Concluded.]

In the realm of thought, too, we must no longer think, but may only think that we think; while we may scarcely hope that we hope, and but dream that we dream. Perhaps the latter, as has been suggested, may be a sign that we are near awaking. Verily the world has progressed a pace since Newton, hoary with age and wisdom, seemed to himself like a boy playing with pebbles on the shore of a vast ocean, whose depths and extent lay before him unexplored and unknown; or Schiller, observing boundless realms of thought looming up beyond the circumference of his investigations, exclaims: "Truth never is, always is a—being"; nor had Hegel reached this limit of the possible, when dying—we might almost say over his manuscript—he left as his last insertion a "*but*." But now our little world of letters has traversed the wide universe of thought; and, like the ancient warrior, sits down to weep that there are no more universes to conquer. But pause for a moment ere you don the mourning weeds for a universe of thought devoured. Alexander's world is but a small part of the globe to-day: so is your conquered realm of thought but a hand-breadth, a small section cut out of that vast circle "whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference nowhere"; and to future generations your mourning may seem as ludicrous as the premature tears of the ancient warrior do to us.

Leave off chasing these evanescent phantoms, and see if there is not in stern, real life all around you, yea, even within yourself a world of untold, undiscovered riches, waiting only that development of culture which shall call it forth into life, and make it all aglow with vital thought. Is not human life as real yet as when Burns charmed his countrymen, and the world besides, with his vivid pictures of it; are not the pleasures and passions of mankind similar to what they were when *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were written? Possibly by diligent and

patient searching we may yet find enough to employ our little allotment of time upon things near at hand, when our time shall be more profitably employed than on mere star-gazing, or attempting to peer into the distant eternities, if perchance we may discover things forever sealed up from mortal ken. Is not the present time to us the meeting of two eternities, and the most important point in either of them for us? What more auspicious position then would we hold? The ostrich is indeed a foolish bird to build her nest where it is liable to be destroyed by the foot of any passing animal; but still more foolish would be that ethereal bird who should attempt to build where her wings were unable to carry her.

Not yet, however, has the whole realm of thought been exhausted; not yet have the eternal verities been reduced to the dimensions of a mathematical problem; but still there remain "more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of." The form and qualities of matter around us yet have an existence, not, in our opinion, altogether relative. Beauty, whether subjective or objective, still exists as a reality. Our small globe is, as it were, a green spot, the most beautiful in the universe, and according to the general fitness of things, we are provided with just the senses requisite to discern and enjoy its varied perfections; while for the interior world of immaterial thought, we are supplied with an inner sense or consciousness, of peculiar adaptation, for the enjoyment thereof. These things therefore we choose as a basis on which to build up the massive structure of an outward and inward life; nor can we be persuaded that thought is but of a relative existence, and is but "a secretion of the brain as bile is of the liver," or that the huge granite is identical with a mud-pie, or the great oak with a gooseberry-bush. Man is yet what he always was, nor are his capabilities impaired if he but apply himself with proper zeal, and in the right direction. "Let but the true poet be given us" says Carlyle, "place him where and when you will, and true poetry will not