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As the greatest quality of man is not his form nor his swiftness nor his strength nor his power to accumulate property, but is his ideas and sentiments, so that will be the greatest art which shall express the most of this greatness of man. To measure the fine arts one must ask which one can best express the most thoughts and feelings, and the greatest thoughts and feelings? And the answer will determine upon what forehead the laurels must be placed. In the German story of "Love Without Words," by Musæus, the value of that gateway of the soul, which is called language, becomes painfully evident, for the lovers, daring only to see each other, and at long distance, and forbidden to resort to that precious go-between and mediator

called a love-letter, could make no progress, except a progress of melancholy, by all the other arts known to human genius. Music failed, flowers failed, sighs failed, architecture and sculpture failed, and, doubtless, both lovers would have died of suppressed poetry and affection, had not Franz found the altar where Meta was accustomed to say her prayers, and had he not hung there a card with these words: "*A young man, going into a far country to make a fortune, asks you to pray for his success and return.*" These words swept over Meta's heart as no music or painting or sculpture could have touched it, for they contained a rich group of ideas—love, sacred love, house-building love; love so deep that it prayed, and a love that was bound to come back to the presence of Meta. All the other fine arts were eclipsed the moment words began their eloquence.

But what kind of words are those which

make up this fine art? The air of earth is constantly disturbed by human voices. There is no scarcity of noisy prattlers in car and omnibus; no dearth of preaching men and women in pulpit; no dearth of sand-lot orators; no poverty of campaign speakers and law-makers; no famine of theological and biological, and chemical, and etymological, and paleographic, and medical talk; but, are these organized vowels and consonants when printed in a volume, the whole or parts of that uttered soul that is honored by being called Art? Evidently they are not the whole nor a part. While many, indeed most, of the great terms in use refuse to be closely defined, while no one can tell us what is poetry, what is eloquence, what is virtue, what is religion or what beauty may be, yet there can be made approximative analyses which will serve for everyday use amid a multitude which never hopes for a perfect comprehension of even its

dearest truths. A world which cannot define its God, or its life or death or heaven or hell, may well yield gracefully when anyone asks it, What is literature? or, What is poetry? Coleridge himself did not close up the debate over the term poetry. He passed over a wide field of labor and research, and taught mankind that such word-work as that of Job and Isaiah is not poetry, but it is the poetic; it is the raw material out of which poetry might be made. As a cotton boll is not muslin, nor calico, but stands as the prime cause, and as the field of flax is not a piece of linen, as the cotton-boll and the stock of flax wait for the manufacturer to come along, so the thoughts of Job and St. John and Ossian and Hugo are not poetry, but they are the material of the fabric in waiting for a manufacturer; and only he is the full and true poet who, in one soul, both grows the blue blossomed flax and spins and weaves the linen. In such defini-

tion the after ages would have found rest and faith had not such disturbers of sleep as John Ruskin come along to show that all the followers of Coleridge were exchanging the substance for the accident; were finding Minerva not in her heart and soul, but in her sandals, and scarf, and shawl.

No one has defined eloquence. It is not very probable that the word "literature" will ever become so bounded and measured and mapped that at last all will say that they perceive the thing in its essence. The boundaries in the intellectual world are all dim. As no one can determine just when a domestic art becomes a fine art, just when a house-builder becomes an architect, just when a carpenter may be called an artist in wood-work, so in this matter of written truth or thought it is difficult to mark the place where a writer in his closet ceases to be a scribe and becomes a man of letters—an heir of this higher immor-

talities. The transition period is as obscure as that line the Calvinists used to sing of as running

"Between God's mercy and His wrath."

But, standing before a bough of apple blossoms, we can make general remarks about the coloring, although unable to tell where the pink or white absolutely comes or utterly goes away. We are perfectly composed in the belief that those blossoms are not black or green, or at all like unto the hue of the sunflower or the flag. In many worlds beside the one seen by Darwin, we must confess to the fact of "missing links." Between man and the ape there is a void; between literature and the common book there is a similar "aching void."

One will utter all the truth one has, and as much as the world deserves, should one say that literature is that part of thought that is wrought out in the name of the beautiful. A

Blue-Book, an encyclopedia, a scientific treatise, a text book, a sectarian tract in religion or politics, is issued in the name of utility or fact or self interest; but a poem, like that of Homer, or an essay upon Milton or Dante or Cæsar from a Macaulay, a Taine or a Froude, is created in the name of beauty, and is a fragment in literature, just as a Corinthian capital is a fragment in art. When truth, in its forward flow, joins beauty, the two rivers make a new flood called "Letters." It is an Amazon of broad bosom, resembling the sea. But beauty is a sentiment, a feeling, and hence all literature is sentimental. Knowledge, science, religious dicta, are cold; literature is warm. It is the tropical zone—all else is arctic. Knowledge, in all its forms, is the marble in the quarry, or dragged upon sledges a little way from the primeval mud. Literature is the subsequent statue, full of all grace and snow-white in purity. Truth is the rude



tusk of the mammoth—letters the polished ivory, the *decus*, which Virgil says labor adds to the ivory:

Quale manus addunt ebori decus, aut ubi flavo  
Argentum Pariusve lapis circumdatur auro.

Not necessarily, perhaps, but as an existing fact, almost all the decoration which is seen in this temple under contemplation is made up of emotion. In all the long journey from Homer to Shakspeare, those passing along that path must all the while laugh or smile or sigh or weep. The common book-maker can supply man with facts; the high, immortal word-weavers do not deal in facts, but in all the sad and happy experiences of the soul. Reading in the realm of this high art, we are like the travelers in the Canterbury Tales, we must be in the emotional business of riding along in a magnificent company, having set forth from a Tabard Inn, and having our faces set toward some a Becket tomb, or merry or holy place;

and, higher than the larks above the head, whose song is up in the sky, must be the heart-beats in our bosoms as we go.

" Befelle that in that season on a day  
In Southwork, at the Tabard as I lay,  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
At night was come into that hostelrie  
Wel nine and twenty in a compaynie  
Of Sundry folk. "

Thus our English literature set out, not from an Alexandrian library, but from a goodly company of sundry folk; not from intellectual analysis and discrimination, but from the loving and laughing and weeping heart. Out of such clear mountain rills, all the streams of letters have made up their sweeping floods. Homer's "goodly company" did not assemble in a hotel but in a camp; and, instead of laughing along country roads, they sailed in ships, or marched in heavy columns, and by plume and shield and spear and chariot and by heroic struggle, made up the verse

we call Homer—a flowing stream of love and hate, joy or bitterness. But human history is all one page. All that high art called “letters” rises in sentiment, and, arrayed in such vesture, it dies if stripped of its array, as the oak dies if stripped of its foliage.

Look at the evidence of facts. Passing over the centuries which came and went before the Greeks, pause in that peninsula where there flashed forth a light which in our 19th century beams on quite undimmed. Select the first great work. Who wrote it? Did it issue from a mind full of learning and speculation and analysis? On the opposite, a poor blind man sang it along the streets. The book, Homer, is the exploits of the heart. Here Achilles and Agamemnon fought, but not over a question in science or politics, but over a piece of female beauty. Here Andromache and Hector kissed each other and their child, and parted. The infant boy

“Smiled silently, Andromache all bathed  
In tears, stood by, and clinging to his hand  
Addressed him \* \* \* ‘Hast thou no pity then,  
For this, thine infant son and wretched me?’”

This Hector is soon dragged around the outer walls, fastened by leathern thongs to the chariot of Achilles. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses wanders in magic seas for twenty years; his son seeks him, his queen weeps.

What volume is this? We have come to Pindar—to harps and chariot races, and choruses and odes. All the splendor of the Olympic and Pythian games is lying in Pindar, just as the *Summer Night's Dream* lies in the English dramatist. The nearest humanity will ever come to beholding those games which once entranced Greece will be when the eye shall read this poet, and in his rapid measure and rapid thought, find again the rolling chariot and see the dust-cloud and hear the shout.

Æschylus follows, with that form of passion

called Prometheus. Sophocles follows, leading by the hand the first ideal sister—a woman never before seen in art, a woman not even in the Bible—the almost sublime Antigone. Euripides follows, with that Medea, which still comes and goes on the stage as often as a Rachel is born with the genius that can grapple with such a creation. Sappho comes only to add to this torrent of passion. Being neither a statesman, nor a scholar, nor a scientist, but only a girl, she has been borne along twenty-five hundred years by the winds of sentiment. What this girl's own estimate of literary qualification really was, we may learn from her own verses, for in one of her poems it is seen at once that she makes education consist in a refined sensibility. In her highly-strung girlhood, she had, upon a certain day, been fated to walk with an untaught woman, and the deadness of the woman's mind and heart drove the poetess to her pen,

that she might unload her soul of its mingled  
hate and pity:

TO AN ILLITERATE WOMAN.

Unknown, unheeded shalt thou die,  
And no memorial shall proclaim  
That once beneath the upper sky  
Thou hadst a being or a name.

Doomed o'er that dreary realm alone,  
Shunned by all gentle shades to go,  
No friend shall soothe, nor parent own  
Thee! child of sloth! the Muses' foe!

For never to the Muses' bowers  
Did'st thou with glowing heart repair,  
Nor ever intertwine the flowers  
That Fancy strews unnumbered there.

Thus, through Sappho are we taught that  
literature is an art, because its urns are all  
full of sentiment. She reveals the supreme  
power of emotion. Her own genius is that of  
sensibility, for in her eulogy upon the rose  
she is seen as with eyes full of tears, standing  
in her garden in Mitylene. Toward lover and

rose her feelings moved in the impetuosity of a storm.

Plato, that confessed prince of old thinkers, served as a poet long before he served as a philosopher. It looks as though his reflection had been shot into the world by the arrows of fancy, as Apollo comes in the beams of the sun. Much of his greatness took its rise in Mt. Helicon. Passion aroused the soul which afterward thought so deeply, and the reader has still his doubtful choice between the prose and the poetry of this greatest of the ancients. Great in music, and painting, and verse, and philosophy, the fathers called him a Christian, because his meaning was so hidden behind images that he was all things to all times. Like the mother of Æneas, he advanced in a concealing cloud.

The Latins repeat this phenomenon of their Attic companions, for the Latin authors which most charm the world are those who speak

from the manifold affections—Virgil and Horace and Ovid and Terence and Lucretius—all the most powerful of Roman names, but all they composed was written down at the command of love and hate, happiness and sorrow. It is a singular attribute of human nature that it would rather hear of the “widespreading beech” of Virgil than read the tables of the Roman law, and would rather cry out, “*Eureka! eureka!*” over a bunch of wild flowers than over the idea that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equivalent to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. We all believe the utterances of geometry. We do not entertain any doubt over the assertion that if two straight lines intersect each other the angles which have their heads together will be equal. Upon the whole, men are glad that Pythagorus and Euclid discovered the equality of such quantities so located, but the same men prefer to see Æneas and Dido



in their *tete a tete* at Carthage, and prefer the fourth book of Virgil to any fourth book of geometric lore.

Having observed that ancient Rome was moved more by men of sentiment than by men of erudition, and that Virgil is more immortal in his verses than Numa Pompilius in his law, or Julius in his circle of the months, we may note that more recent Rome and Florence appealed again to that beauty which lays the foundation of all art. Perhaps that human nature which changes so readily its government and religion and language and costume will be found at last demanding changes in the essence of its literature. The past having made such a long and large offering of tears and smiles and pensiveness and wit and beauty, why should not the public reverse its order and say: "Give us the facts; give us information." Let us see. In the thirteenth century, when the intellectual world was lying

dead, stretching out like a black forest, where now and then a group of ascetic monks could be seen moving along in poverty, like a pack of hungry wolves crossing at midnight a field of ice—there, where language lay shattered and was neither the Latin of the past nor the Italian of the future, a beautiful girl lifted up her divine form slowly, and around her white forehead a lover came and wove a new language. Literature was raised from the dead by two lovers. No other kind of mortal had life to spare, nor the beauty that could endow an art. Dante and Beatrice warmed up a language and epoch by the glow of their own passion. Dante was the most fully awakened mind of his century, but his awakening was not that of only learning, but also of romance. Here the world's thought began to roll back to it, not, however, by the gate of information, but by the gate of sentiment. Intellectual life had been absent for a

thousand years. A night had reached out from the fourth century to the thirteenth, and now, when light begins to dawn, its nimbus is first seen about the brows of only two—two Florentine children. Where were the philosophers and the statesmen? Indeed, they were waiting for a fine art to come and wake their sluggish souls. As Homer arose in advance of the seven wise men and was compelled to sing and dance by their couches, and beat his castanets and sweep his whole hand over his harp before Wisdom and Learning would so much as turn their heavy heads on their pillows, so Dante and his maiden were compelled to pass through the long halls of the old intellectual caravanseraï and tap with love-fingers on the doors before the giants of brain would know that the sun was up and was heralding a large day for the world. And after all that noise in the hall, the first men to awake were not the men of science and religion, but

the Raffaelles and the Angelos of art. This history all repeats itself in the more modern times. In English thought first came Chaucer. The romance which founded the Greek and Italian languages founded our great tongue. Chaucer came in the name of the beautiful—in the name of the beautiful alone. Man changes his government and his language and his fashions, but he always comes back to the fields and flowers and song, and to the adventures of the heart. Shakspeare followed with a continuation of human emotion. The world desiring to have a collection of great national books, said: "My gifted children, bring sentiment. Let others bring facts and make Blue Books and Statistics; you must bring pictures and music in words. '*Manibus date lilia plenis.*' Your thought and utterances must

" 'Come o'er my ear like the Sweet South  
That breathes upon a bank of violets  
Stealing and giving odor.' "

What a line of sentimentalists have followed

this Shakspeare! They reach out like Aurora-beams from Chaucer to Tennyson, while in the German plains we see Goethe and Schiller parallel rivers of dignified sensation.

Out of this infinite power of the heart it has come to pass that souls without great acquisition have risen to endless fame, and have composed works so amazing that men of books, inflamed by the aphorism that "knowledge is power," have attempted to find in a Lord Bacon an adequate source of Hamlet and Juliet. A recent writer says: "Are we to suppose that those plays sprang from the brain of one who was only a playwright? One who had only held horses and had poached for deer?" Of a truth we are, for much good has come from carpenters and playwrights and shepherds and railsplitters, and all that form of humanity, and much of this good has been of such a quality that the touch of a Lord Bacon would have taken away all the velvet

finish of the whole fabric. That Shakspeare stole many skeletons of plays is certain, but he did that in an age when authorship was not so glorious as the dramatic action. The question was not who could compose a play, but who could present it to the public. Shakspeare seized upon the common property of the stage, and when a drama did not suit his powerful judgment he re-fashioned it, and fortunately each amendment was a progress. There are no masses of knowledge visible in these plays, such that the giants of learning must be thought to have heaped up the Pelion and Ossa, for the real truth is that a common plowman of that period held all the law and gospel one may find in all these comedies and tragedies, for it is perfectly plain that in making up the religious element in such writers as Byron and Scott and Shakspeare, a little Scripture will go a long way. When, however, it comes to all that eloquence of the heart,

which we find in *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Merchant of Venice*, that William needed Lord Bacon no more than Burns needed help from Burke and Pitt while he was composing his *Highland Mary*. The thoughts springing up from the Misses Davidson and the Misses Carey, even the love songs of Sappho and the *Infelicia* of the humble Adah Menken, teach beyond doubt that the human mind enjoys two forms of greatness—the one acquisition, the other creation—and that while some men are made, others are born.

A fine art being therefore an industry which works in the beautiful, literature is a fine art, because it culls out and properly arranges and forms into certain wholes the attractive in thought. What painting attempts to express by color, what music would achieve with sound, it does by help of vowels and consonants; but it far surpasses its companions, because it can utter the mind and soul most

fully. But this virtue should not make it too vast to be an art. Instances have already been brought forward to show that very much of what the world calls literature, is made up of the record of sentiment. These books are all galleries of pictures, and the Sistine Chapel and Dante are similar human works, only the decorator of the chapel used literal paint; the decorator of the Divine Comedia used those better colors called verse and imagination and fancy. Macaulay was an artist; his essays and his histories are the works which remain from his chisel, or brush. Our best statue of John Bunyan is from the studio of Macaulay. In this art, we must therefore always expect that truth will be highly colored. We are never deeply impressed with the exact fact. The mind is a convex glass which magnifies each object. As Angelo made his Moses colossal, so the men and women in letters are either transformed or



belittled, until the mind becomes fully impressed with the virtues or vices which may attach to the personages. In the recent "Cæsar" of Mr. Froude, you perceive in the outset that the Roman is destined to become higher and broader than his age. Unless this Julius of Mr. Froude is to be larger than all former estimates of him, what reason exists why the world should add to its libraries that additional piece of biography? Angelo, when he conceived the idea of producing a "Moses," sought a block of marble having a height of eighteen feet. In planning his work, Mr. Froude must have said: "My Cæsar shall stand eighteen feet high in his sandals." We are not thus deceived and victimized by these books. Man is naturally so stupid, that he must be amazed before he will wake up and see anything. It is only when the Macaulays and the Lamartines and the Dantes and Homers come along, that the human family

will really confess that there is anything of value or of beauty taking place in the world.

As Froude's *Cæsar* is a recent, as well as a good illustration of literature, as an art we may as well mark in it the traces of the artist. You survey there the Roman world of *Cæsar's* epoch. Those circumstances which would seem to call for a man of genius and will are set together in such a manner that if a Julius does not come up out of them, it would seem an oversight on the part of that Providence who governs all large combinations of chemical and spiritual forces. The tumultuous barbarian hordes liable in any year to assail that citadel of civilization where Virgil and Horace desire to sing in peace—the pirates which were swarming all over the Mediterranean in such numbers that merchant-ships were compelled to sail in fleets or rot in the docks, the revolutionists who were producing too many *Catalines*, the rival maritime states—all are so set

forth in the "Sketch" of Mr. Froude, that the reader of ordinary sensibility finds himself wishing that Cæsar would hasten to rush in upon that scene. To some extent the wish is unjust. Pompey could have met the emergency. Brutus could have transacted the public business. But the painting is true in its great outlines, and while Cæsar was not the only man of the period, he was a profoundly great man, and that book is of worth which thus arouses the reader until he sees with great distinctness many great facts in a great age. The book awakens one like a band of music or the firing of heavy guns.

Mr. Froude does, however, permit his passion as an artist to carry him too far. There is a limit to this eloquence of favoritism. It may be very difficult to find this limit, but when a historian, in his desire to show well his special subject, belittles the cotemporaries of his hero, he has stepped down from his

high art, to wear for a time the soiled robes of a partisan. Some of the old painters were wont to resort to contrast, and when they painted a Madonna or a Cecilia, they placed some imp or devil in the background, evidently to enhance the Madonna or Cecilia by comparison. This comparative devil the greatest artist omitted, and hence Angelo does not attempt to make Moses greater by giving us some Aaron, with an injured nose and eyes askint. In the midst of his collection of striking pictures, Mr. Froude places Cicero as the background by which to bring out the one Cæsar in fine relief. When common adjectives fail, the distinguished writer seems to say: "I will belittle Cicero for a time and that will make my subject seem a Colossus." The vanity of Cicero is made too very visible—the state of mind which could say: "Fear not, you carry Cæsar;" The wife of Cæsar must be above suspicion—that towering self-

conceit which could claim a direct descent from Venus and Anchises, is made to disappear, and the open-hearted boasting of a refined civilian is made to be a deformity of the period which the great Julius escaped.

Mr. Froude passes beyond the lawful exaggeration of an art, also, when he attempts to make Cæsar bear some religious resemblance to certain great Englishmen, now living on the island. Buckle and Huxley and Spencer and their schools do, indeed, compose a coterie of great minds. Were they to lead armies to battle, they would probably not trouble Heaven with any prayers for victory. But no literary art can initiate Julius into such a rationalistic, self-poised order. The man who labored hard to be made high priest of Rome; the mind which saw a ball of fire descend to light him to victory; the Roman who watched upon what hand his pigeons would fly on the morning of the Ides of March; the husband that

felt troubled over his wife's bad dream—is not the man to be crowned with the calm intellect and heroic submission of a Stuart Mill. Aside from these two or more instances, in which his art has passed beyond legitimate bounds, Mr. Froude's *Cæsar* is one of the most artistic and powerful books of our powerful age. It joins with the literary creations of all times in proclaiming the fact that all the other fine arts, separate or combined, are feeble of speech compared with literature. It can express all the sentiments and thoughts of man. Painting or sculpture or music is only a window, through which some few beams of light pour in upon the imprisoned mind; or by which the imprisoned mind looks out; but literature is the removal of all the walls that confine. It is the leading forth of the soul into a great June day in a great world, with the attending benediction: "Go where you will, all truth and sentiment are before your footstep."