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"WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY."

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THE SINGER'S CONFESSION,

BY E. R. S.

Once he cried to all the hills and waters,
And the tossing grain, and tufted grasses;
"Take my message: tell it to my brothers!
Stricken mute, I cannot speak my message.
When the Evening wind comes back from ocean,
Singing surf-songs, to Earth's fragrant bosom,
And the beautiful young human creatures
Gather at the mother-feet of Nature,
Gazing with their pure and wistful faces.
Tell the old heroic human story.
When they weary of the wheels of science,
Grinding, jangling their harsh dissonances,—
Stones, and bones, and alkalies, and atoms,—
Sing to them of human hope and passion;
And the soul divine, whose incarnation,
Born of love—alas! my message stumbles,
Faints on faltering lips: O, speak it for me!"

Then a hush fell: and around about him
Suddenly he felt the mighty shadow
Of the hills, like grave and silent pity;
And, as one who sees without regarding,
The wide wind went over him and left him;
And the brook, repeating low, "his message!"
Babbled, as it fled, a quiet laughter.

What was he, that he had touched their message—
Theirs, who had been chanting it forever;
With whose organ-tones the human spirit
Had eternally been overflowing!
Then, with shame, that stung in cheek and forehead,
Slow he crept away.

And now he listens
Mute and still to hear them tell their message—
All the holy hills and sacred waters;
When the sea-wind swings its evening censer,
Till the misty incense hides the altar
And the long-robed shadows, lowly kneeling.

THE RHETORICAL ART.

BY HON. S. H. PHILLIPS.

[Extracts from the annual oration delivered before the Durant Rhetorical Society, at Brayton Hall, Oakland, Friday evening, July 17th, 1874.]

I cannot conceal a little awkwardness in rising to address young gentlemen associated for the cultivation of the Art of Rhetoric. This is not affectation—even after some experience in such efforts. Experience increases the diffidence. The natural impulse of an untrained mind, affected by the power of art, is to reproduce its works. To the inconsiderate, this may seem an easy task. Rude natures cannot appreciate a masterpiece. They can neither comprehend the magnitude of the task or the skill of the artist. Upon view of any great work, they fancy it easy of imitation. Thus, it has been reported that an untutored negro, with the aptitude for music characteristic of his race, was so entranced by accidentally hearing some difficult music of Mozart, that he at once proclaimed an intention to whistle the tune all night. He probably did not repeat much of it. How different would be the rapture with which a trained musician would listen to such sublime strains. How deliciously the melody would fall upon his ear! How calmly he would confess that the effort was beyond the range of his ambition! So in sculpture and painting. A rustic marble worker, coming upon a

chef d'œuvre like the dying Gladiator would make it a study for his next tombstone, and might even fancy that he could excel the model. But the compliment which the elegant Pliny paid to the work of Ctesilaus, with which the Roman relic is thought to be identified was that it was the statue of a wounded man, dying, in which was perfectly expressed how much life remained in him.

Such is the wonderful power of the sculptor's chisel! But neither music nor sculpture surpass Rhetoric in anything which dignifies art; or gives it power! Rhetoric must indeed be recognized as an art of the most elevated character; whether we consider the elaborate study and preparation of which it is the splendid fruit, or its noble object of reaching and controlling the minds of men. For its completeness it has drawn upon the storehouses of ages. It has been elaborated by the study of most exquisite models, and the achievements of the human intellect in most critical periods of the world's history. Of all the arts of communication, it is most universal in influence, and enduring in character. The rude melody of music may fall sweetly upon the ear. The sculptor's chisel may cause the cold plain marble to speak words of truth to the eye—but the rhetorician, especially the orator, deals at once in sweet sounds and imposing images amid the frenzy of crowded auditories, in bellowing forums, as well as upon occasions of the deepest solemnity, and amid impressive silence.

In the bar, the pulpit, and legislative halls the art is triumphant. Take the French funeral orations of Massillon and Bossuet, whose fame is traditional, and those than which nothing more elaborate has been presented in the wide field of rhetoric.

As for public deliberative assemblies, they are generally composed of trained public men, inaccessible to frothy appeals, and unwilling to surrender their own judgment to that of others. Familiar with excitement, like veteran soldiers, they brace themselves up against sudden shocks, and are unwilling to yield to pressure. Yet there have been two memorable instances, one in the British House of Commons, and one in the United States House of Representatives, where those bodies have surrendered to the impressive eloquence of a single man. I allude to the famous speech of Mr. Sheridan, which carried the articles of impeachment against Warren Hastings, and to the equally famous speech of Fisher Ames, which procured the passage of the vote to carry into effect the treaty with Great Britain. Both orators were elegant and critical scholars, highly cultivated in every art, and who brought to the performance of their respective tasks the countless treasures of richly stored minds. Possessed of lively imagination and brilliant wit, they assorted the weapons which they had long been accumulating, and dashing into the arena, they wielded them with the skill which careful practice alone can give. Each victory was a triumph of delicate rhetorical art. Nothing was done by violence. There was no harsh or unnatural language. No passions were torn to tatters. Both used simple words in their fittest significations. Neither used a word unnecessarily, and

neither obscured his ideas. But they arrayed words (which Mirabeau calls things), with great power, and combined them with peculiar skill. The effect was electrical. The houses gave way before them, and an immediate adjournment was gladly effected by the party which had been the majority.

My young friends, it is idle to hope that the highest perfection in rhetorical art, or in any art is attainable by all. We shall hardly find one Socrates, a Roccini, a Burke or an Everett in each class of the University any more than a Phidias or a Raphael, or a Thorwaldsen; etc.; or a Rembrandt; but the proficiency which is attainable is very great; and youth is the time, and the University the place for attaining it.

How shall it be attained? Not without hard work, at any rate. History abounds in cases of diligent application of rhetoricians to the study of their art. The notable instance of Demosthenes, declaiming on the sea-shore with pebbles in his mouth, is remembered by every student who has seen a classical dictionary. It is also said that he transcribed the whole of Thucydides in order to acquire the exact use of language and a familiarity with the characteristic idiom of Greece. Lord Chatham pronounced every word of Bailey's dictionary before a mirror to perfect his delivery, and it is well known by the friends of the late Rufus Choate of Massachusetts, that amid the severe pressure of professional duty, he systematically translated passages every day from the most famous classic writers to prevent his own style from degenerating. There is no *via regia* for the rhetorician. No favoring fortune or accident of birth will alone make him great.

As Pope expresses it in his familiar couplet—

True ease in writing comes by art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

In this connection, the study of renowned models cannot be too strongly commended. Turn first of all to the eloquence of Greece, which in this, as in every branch of art, is unsurpassed during the varied experience of more than 2,000 years, and may be as profitably studied in California as it even was in Attica. Especial attention however should be given to the literature of your own language, in which the pure style of Addison still remains unsurpassed. Among later essayists Lord Jeffrey's style of literary composition may be profitably studied. When it is remembered, that besides practising his profession, he more than once wrote nearly a whole number of the Edinburgh Review; students may profitably seek to learn how one man could write so much and yet so well; Macaulay's brilliant dissertations attract students by their high art, but if not difficult of imitation, as models, they are exceedingly dangerous; and only the nicest artists can safely imitate such elaborate work. Macaulay, however, exceeds any prose writer I ever knew in keeping well ahead of his readers; and this vivacity, as I have suggested, is one of the great points of Rhetoric. If you would know what effect can be given to words by careful writing and rewriting—in fact if you wish to learn how to polish sentences, by all means study the letters of Junius. I only wish that the real elevation of their

MAY.

Of all the months throughout the year,
Which is the dearest, say?
For there's none that seemeth so dear to me
As the merry month of May.

On Scotia's brave and blessed soil
It was a glorious day,
When I bade farewell to the land of my birth
In the happy month of May.

The fields were covered o'er with green,
The streamlets dashing spray,
And the sunbeams glanced on the glittering sheen
In the joyous month of May.

My heart was filled with tender joy
In youth's untroubled day,
And many the months that have come and gone,
But none like the month of May.

O, dearest month of all the year!
Rich pleasures still are they
That come to me and so merrily come
With the coming of the May

Dec.

COMMENTS SUGGESTED BY A PRINCIPLE IN
THE SCIENCE OF HISTORY.

J. 8.

What value have ideas as social forces? This question is one that will readily bear its own interest to the mind of any student of the writers of the present day on the Philosophy of History. A case of apparently great strength is often made out for each of two opposite answers to the inquiry; the first answer being that ideas are most powerful levers of progress or of retrogression, as the case may be; the other, that on the contrary, they are of the most insignificant force as motors in society. I think that each of these answers has in it some truth. By a little clearing up of matters they may be combined into a single, harmonious, final answer. Because this solution, though of course generally recognised by writers of history, is seldom found expressed, I have thought that it might be worth while to state it as it has suggested itself to my mind.

It is a favorite sentiment of a large school of writers that the world is moved by ideas. It was, they say, the idea of the high worth of the beautiful, that produced Greek art and culture. It was the idea of the insignificance of man in comparison with nature that nurtured Egyptian piety, and that characterized Egyptian civilization. Nearer our own times, it was from the idea of freedom of thought that the Reformation arose. Finally, it was the idea of equality that was expressed at once by the rise of the American Republic, and by the French Revolution. "In all these cases," they argue, "we see the force of ideas. From no other causes has society received such strong impulses, as well for good as for evil." In all this argument, I cannot but see some force. While I think that it is very liable to misinterpretation, it seems to express an important truth. But the fact that it is sometimes misinterpreted, leads to the opposition that is urged against it, which opposition itself is founded on grounds equally firm, and supported by arguments equally suggestive.

Sometimes this doctrine of the value of ideas is attacked by the statement that the whole rests on a mere fancy. These ideas, it is argued, can influence only the more advanced in any age. The people are unconscious of any such influence. Take for example the progress of art among the Greeks. How can it be supposed that the unlettered countryman who listened with deepest admiration to the poet of his time, or looked with pleasure on the marvels of sculpture and architecture around him, or that even the artist, who

spent his life in making all these, had the slightest consciousness that he was following or was influenced by an idea? On the contrary, must it not be true, that both the countryman who enjoyed, and the artist who constructed, did so because their climate and their descent had given them happy, appreciative minds, hearts full of satisfaction in viewing nature, both supported by bodies overflowing with exuberant health? They would have been perfectly confounded had any one suggested even a question as to the worth of the beautiful. Until, after the period of the perfection of art, the philosophers had arisen to criticise, it is doubtful if any one thought of such a thing. The beautiful was on earth to be enjoyed; they were on earth to enjoy it, and their thoughts went no further in that direction. Almost the same argument will apply to the Egyptians. If the weary vastness of nature in their land, if the solemn, silent, but beneficent Nile, if their climate and their race, had all combined, as Taine believes, to give their religion, their lives, even their architecture and their useful arts an overpowering air of profoundly pious thought; it was not because they were conscious of any idea working its way into their minds. The whole was an instinct; they had never made a formula of it. And in general, may it not be said that the more perfectly a people is imbued with a tendency toward the accomplishment of any end, or the following out of any line of action, the less is it conscious of being influenced by any idea; just as in case of individuals, the more one is inclined to perform any action, the more nearly its performance has come to being an instinct with him, the less is he conscious of his reason for wishing to do it, or even of having any reason, sometimes, of doing it at all.

I think that if we review this argument, we shall be compelled to admit that formulated ideas, at least, whether they be philosophical persuasions, or merely maxims, the result of feelings, seldom are the real guiding stars of popular movements. But nevertheless the original argument stands, that unformulated ideas, however vaguely understood, however unconsciously followed, are to a great extent the motors of society.

In the case of a Greek, I think it is evident that, if argued with upon the question of the utility of the works of art on which himself and his countrymen had spent so much time, he would have introduced into his defence, either openly or implicitly, the idea that the modern philosopher attributes to him. He would have spoken of the never failing beauty of nature, he would have spoken, as Aristotle did, of the spontaneous pleasure that all men feel in imitating that beauty and variety; "insomuch that those things at which we cannot look without suffering pain—such as the bodies of the dead and ferocious wild beasts, when imitated by the artists—are looked upon with admiration." He would perhaps have remarked that the great thing in which his countrymen differed from the barbarians was their love of the beautiful for its own sake. From all these considerations, which perhaps he himself had never thought of before, he would have argued that the beautiful is in a high sense the useful. This would have been an unconscious principle in his actions, but for all that, a real and powerful principle.

The Egyptian would be found in a similar position; just as the statement of geometrical axioms is new to scholars beginning the study of geometry—so to him, as to the Greek, the revelation of the ideas upon which he had all his life been working, might be a novelty, even a complete surprise; but for all that, using those ideas as unexpressed premises, he had ever been drawing

practical conclusions from them, though without knowing it.

If it then be asked how these unconscious principle have come to make the foundations of the lives not only of individuals, but also of whole nations, the answer is, that they invariably must be of slow origin, and that there are many of them traceable to physical causes. The Greeks were a nation of philosophical artists, because they had gradually developed from barbarism in a favorable locality, where nature was beautiful without being too grand or sublime, beneficent without being too luxurious, where without entirely isolating them from their fellows, she separated them from degrading influences. The penetrating but inaccurate intellect of the Hindoos, who have no end of works on philosophy and not a single tolerable history of themselves, is also traced to the influence of a climate that leaves man the power to exercise his thought, but relieves him from any such a struggle for life with nature as shall force him to be constantly alive to what goes on around him. All these things the science of History, in her advances during the past comparatively few years, has gathered together, and they all tend to show that as instinct in animals has been, in all probability, the result of the reaction of circumstances in the surroundings of the race on the physical and mental structure of its individuals, so those grand peculiarities that mark off nations, those grand ideas that are the study of philosophers, have been the result of slowly but continuously acting agencies in nature and in surrounding nations. Sometimes these agencies, by combination and reaction, produce complicated results, give rise to new ideas, perhaps as recognized by those whom they influence as were the old ideas, and these results we call reforms. But in primitive times, when uncivilized nations inhabited isolated countries, little of such a thing was known. And when, in the progress of events, remarkable nations come in contact with each other, we see for the first time the signs of great changes, and the beginnings of great steps of progress for both nations. The ideas, the internal forces that act among the molecules of each of the two chemical compounds that are called societies, these unite together with the societies, and the result is a new compound, endowed with new forces, often more interesting and more powerful by far than its constituents. Such phenomena took place when the Roman Empire had been formed fully and the whole world was brought together. Such phenomena are now taking place before our eyes in the grand mixture of ideas and peoples that the events of modern times, the needs of modern commerce, and the facilities of modern communication together have produced. In the one case the result was the change in the whole life of a great part of the world, the effects of which we still feel. In the other case the result is still in the future.

In conclusion, then, I see no reason to doubt the opinion of so many prominent men that the world has been and is under the influence of ideas. The only thing that seems necessary to guard against is the supposition that such ideas must be principles either avowed or consciously pursued.

J. R., '75.

"THE SENIOR class were examined last Monday in geography."—*News*. Hola! that's news with a vengeance.

SCENE IN A JUNIOR RECITATION.—Dr.: Mr. C., What is heat? When you have wood, coal, matches, where does the heat come from—what is heat? C.: Heat is a condition. Dr.: Have you ever been warmed by conditions?—*Argus*.