

“Niamec,” from a fringe of settlements along the sea coast, silently extended westward, settling and planting themselves everywhere solidly upon the soil; and nearly all that now remains of the original French occupation of America is the French colony of Acadia, in Lower Canada.

And even there we find one of the most striking illustrations of that intense sociability of the French which keeps them together, and prevents their spreading over and planting themselves firmly in a new country, as it is the instinct of the men of Teutonic race to do. While, in Upper Canada, the colonists of English and Scotch descent penetrate the forest and the wilderness, each settler living, it may be, miles apart from his nearest neighbor, the Lower Canadians of French descent continue clustered together in villages, usually consisting of a line of houses on either side of the road, behind which extend their long strips of farm-land, divided and subdivided to an extreme tenuity. They willingly submit to all the inconveniences of this method of farming for the sake of each other's society, rather than betake themselves to the solitary backwoods, as English, Germans, and Americans so readily do. Indeed, not only does the American backwoodsman become accustomed to solitude, but he prefers it. And in the Western States, when settlers come too near him, and the country seems to become “overcrowded,” he retreats before the advance of society, and, packing up his “things” in a wagon, he sets out cheerfully, with his wife and family, to found for himself a new home in the Far West.

Thus the Teuton, because of his very shyness, is the true colonizer. English, Scotch, Germans, and Americans are alike ready to accept solitude, provided they can but establish a home and maintain a family. Thus their compara-

tive indifference to society has tended to spread this race over the earth, to till and to subdue it; while the intense social instincts of the French, though issuing in much greater gracefulness of manner, has stood in their way as colonizers; so that, in the countries in which they have planted themselves—as in Algiers and elsewhere—they have remained little more than garrisons.\*

There are other qualities besides these, which grow out of the comparative unsociableness of the Englishman. His shyness throws him back upon himself and renders him self-reliant and self-dependent. Society not being essential to his happiness, he takes refuge in reading, in study, in invention; or he finds pleasure in industrial work, and becomes the best of mechanics. He does not fear to intrust himself to the solitude of the ocean, and becomes a fisherman, a sailor, a discoverer. Since the early Northmen scoured the Northern seas, discovered America, and sent their fleets along the shores of Europe and up the Mediterranean, the seamanship of the men of Teutonic race has always been in the ascendant.

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\* The Irish have, in many respects, the same strong social instincts as the French. In the United States they cluster naturally in the towns, where they have their “Irish Quarters,” as in England. They are even more Irish there than at home, and can no more forget that they are Irishmen than the French can that they are Frenchmen. “I deliberately assert,” says Mr. Maguire, in his recent work on “The Irish in America,” “that it is not within the power of language to describe adequately, much less to exaggerate, the evils consequent on the unhappy tendency of the Irish to congregate in the large towns of America.” It is this intense socialism of the Irish that keeps them in such a miserable hand-to-mouth condition in all the States of the Union.

The English are inartistic for the same reason that they are unsocial. They may make good colonists, sailors, and mechanics; but they do not make good singers, dancers, actors, artistes, or modistes. They neither dress well, act well, speak well, nor write well. They want style—they want elegance. What they have to do they do in a straightforward manner, but without grace. This was strikingly exhibited at an International Cattle Exhibition held at Paris a few years ago. At the close of the Exhibition, the competitors came up with the prize animals to receive the prizes. First came a gay and gallant Spaniard, a magnificent man, beautifully dressed, who received a prize of the lowest class with an air and attitude that would have become a grandee of the highest order. Then came Frenchmen and Italians, full of grace, politeness, and *chic*—themselves elegantly dressed, and their animals decorated to the horns with flowers and colored ribbons harmoniously blended. And last of all came the man who was to receive the first prize—a slouching man, plainly dressed, with a pair of farmer's gaiters on, and without even a flower in his button-hole. "Who is he?" asked the spectators. "Why, he is the Englishman," was the reply. "The Englishman!—that the representative of a great country!" was the general exclamation. But it was the Englishman all over. He was sent there, not to exhibit himself, but to show "the best beast," and he did it, carrying away the first prize. Yet he would have been nothing the worse for the flower in his button-hole.

To remedy this admitted defect of grace and want of artistic taste in the English people, a school has sprung up among us for the more general diffusion of fine art. The Beautiful has now its teachers and preachers, and by some

it is almost regarded in the light of a religion. "The Beautiful is the Good"—"The Beautiful is the True"—"The Beautiful is the priest of the Benevolent," are among their texts. It is believed that by the study of art the tastes of the people may be improved; that by contemplating objects of beauty their nature will become purified; and that by being thereby withdrawn from sensual enjoyments, their character will be refined and elevated.

But though such culture is calculated to be elevating and purifying in a certain degree, we must not expect too much from it. Grace is a sweetener and embellisher of life, and as such is worthy of cultivation. Music, painting, dancing, and the fine arts, are all sources of pleasure; and though they may not be sensual, yet they are sensuous, and often nothing more. The cultivation of a taste for beauty of form or color, of sound or attitude, has no necessary effect upon the cultivation of the mind or the development of the character. The contemplation of fine works of art will doubtless improve the taste and excite admiration; but a single noble action done in the sight of men will more influence the mind, and stimulate the character to imitation, than the sight of miles of statuary or acres of pictures. For it is mind, soul, and heart—not taste or art—that make men great.

It is indeed doubtful whether the cultivation of art—which usually ministers to luxury—has done so much for human progress as is generally supposed. It is even possible that its too exclusive culture may effeminate rather than strengthen the character, by laying it more open to the temptations of the senses. "It is the nature of the imaginative temperament cultivated by the arts," says Sir Henry Taylor, "to undermine the courage, and, by abating strength

of character, to render men more easily subservient—*sequaces, cereos, et ad mandata ductiles.*”\* The gift of the artist greatly differs from that of the thinker; his highest idea is to mould his subject—whether it be of painting, or music, or literature—into that perfect grace of form in which thought (it may not be of the deepest) finds its apotheosis and immortality.

Art has usually flourished most during the decadence of nations, when it has been hired by wealth as the minister of luxury. Exquisite art and degrading corruption were contemporary in Greece as well as in Rome. Phidias and Iktinos had scarcely completed the Parthenon when the glory of Athens had departed; Phidias died in prison; and the Spartans set up in the city the memorials of their own triumph and Athenian defeat. It was the same in ancient Rome, where art was at its greatest height when the people were in their most degraded condition. Nero was an artist as well as Domitian, two of the greatest monsters of the Empire. If the “Beautiful” had been the “Good,” Commodus must have been one of the best of men. But according to history he was one of the worst.

Again, the greatest period of modern Roman art was that in which Pope Leo X. flourished, of whose reign it has been said that “profligacy and licentiousness prevailed among the people and clergy, as they had done almost uncontrolled ever since the pontificate of Alexander VI.” In like manner, the period at which art reached its highest point in the Low Countries was that which immediately succeeded the destruction of civil and religious liberty, and the prostration of the national character under the despotism of Spain. If

\* “The Statesman,” p. 35.

art could elevate a nation, and the contemplation of The Beautiful were calculated to make men The Good—then Paris ought to contain a population of the wisest and best of human beings. Rome also is a great city of art; and yet there the *virtus* or valor of the ancient Romans has characteristically degenerated into *vertu*, or a taste for knick-knacks; while, according to recent accounts, the city itself is inexpressibly foul.\*

Art would even sometimes appear to have a connection with dirt; and it is said of Mr. Ruskin that, when searching for works of art in Venice, his attendant in his explorations would sniff an ill-odor, and when it was strong would say, “Now we are coming to something very old and fine”—meaning in art.† A little common education in cleanliness, where it is wanting, would probably be much more improving, as well as wholesome, than any amount of education in

\* Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his “First Impressions of France and Italy,” says his opinion of the uncleanly character of the modern Romans is so unfavorable that he hardly knows how to express it: “But the fact is, that through the Forum, and everywhere out of the commonest-foot-track and roadway, you must look well to your steps. . . . Perhaps there is something in the minds of the people of these countries that enables them to discern small ugliness from great sublimity and beauty. They spit upon the glorious pavement of St. Peter’s, and wherever else they like; they place paltry-looking wooden confessionals beneath its sublime arches, and ornament them with cheap little colored prints of the Crucifixion; they hang tin hearts, and other tinsel and trumpery, at the gorgeous shrines of the saints, in chapels that are encrusted with gems, or marbles almost as precious; they put pasteboard statues of saints beneath the dome of the Pantheon—in short, they let the sublime and the ridiculous come close together, and are not in the least troubled by the proximity.”

† Edwin Chadwick’s “Address to the Economic Science and Statistic Section,” British Association (Meeting, 1862).

fine art. Ruffles are all very well, but it is folly to cultivate them to the neglect of the shirt.

While, therefore, grace of manner, politeness of behavior, elegance of demeanor, and all the arts that contribute to make life pleasant and beautiful, are worthy of cultivation, it must not be at the expense of the more solid and enduring qualities of honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness. The fountain of beauty must be in the heart more than in the eye, and if it do not tend to produce beautiful life and noble practice, it will prove of comparatively little avail. Politeness of manner is not worth much unless it is accompanied by polite actions. Grace may be but skin-deep—very pleasant and attractive, and yet very heartless. Art may be a source of innocent enjoyment, and an important aid to higher culture; but unless it leads to higher culture, it may be merely sensuous. And when art is merely sensuous, it is enfeebling and demoralizing rather than strengthening or elevating. Honest courage is of greater worth than any amount of grace; purity is better than elegance; and cleanliness of body, mind, and heart, than any amount of fine art.

While the cultivation of the graces is not to be neglected, it should never be forgotten that there is something far higher and nobler to be aimed at—greater than pleasure, greater than art, greater than wealth, greater than power, greater than intellect, greater than genius; and that is purity and excellence of character. Without a solid, sterling basis of individual goodness, all the grace, elegance, and art in the world would fail to save or to elevate a people.

## CHAPTER X.

### COMPANIONSHIP OF BOOKS.

“Books, we know,  
Are a substantial world, both pure and good,  
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness can grow.”—WORDSWORTH.

“Not only in the common speech of men, but in all art too—which is or should be the concentrated and conserved essence of what men can speak and show—Biography is almost the one thing needful.”—CARLYLE.

“I read all biographies with intense interest. Even a man without a heart, like Cavendish, I think about, and read about, and dream about, and picture to myself in all possible ways, till he grows into a living being beside me, and I put my feet into his shoes, and become for the time Cavendish, and think as he thought, and do as he did.”—GEORGE WILSON.

“My thoughts are with the dead; with them  
I live in long-past years;  
Their virtues love, their faults condemn;  
Partake their hopes and fears;  
And from their lessons seek and find  
Instruction with a humble mind.”—SOUTHEY.

A MAN may usually be known by the books he reads, as well as by the company he keeps; for there is a companionship of books as well as of men; and one should always live in the best company, whether it be of books or of men.