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THE BIRTH OF BEAUTY.

An old volcano, sealed in ice and snow,
  Looks from its airy height supreme
On lesser peaks that dwindle small below;
  On valleys hazy in the beam
Of summer suns; on distant lakes that flash
  Their starry rays in greenwood dense;
On cañons where blue rapids leap and dash,
  And mosses cling to cliffs immense.

Here on this height sublime, combustion dire
  Once blazed and thundered, pouring down
Resistless cataracts of rocky fire,
  That from the cloven mountain's crown,
Around its flanks, in every gaping rift,
  O'er meads that girdled green its base,
Spread out a deep entombing drift,
  A tongue of ruin to efface.

In throes of terror Nature brings about
  What gives to man the most delight;
No scene of peaceful beauty comes without
  Such birth, as day succeeds to night.
A mountain gem, of pearly ray serene,
  Our old volcano shows afar;
Fills all the panting soul with pleasure keen,
  And draws it heavenward like a star.

THE AIM OF POETRY.

ART was, at one time, an unconscious outpouring of the human soul. Especially was this true of poetry, the first of all the arts, as well in the order of its development as in the completeness of its powers of expression. I suppose that the very idea of a definite aim in making poetry never suggested itself to anyone until the rise of critical inquiry. But this unconsciousness no longer exists. The best literary artists have for a long time written with some definite object before them. They have generally had some theory of the methods or the ends of art, and this theory has influenced all their writings. The modern critic may be, as some have said, a poet who has failed; the modern poet, at all events, is a critic who has succeeded. For, an artist whose productions are to be met on their appearance by the onslaughts of so many vigilant guardians of the road to fame is not apt to be unprepared with critical weapons for their protection. From the greatest to the least, therefore, there is hardly a poet to be

found who can not, if he chooses, give some theoretical defense of his conceptions and of his style. And so the question as to the aim of true poetry is one much under discussion in our day, both among professional critics and among poets themselves.

It must not be supposed, however, that because modern poetry is distinguished by being formed with a conscious aim, ancient poetry must on that account be looked upon as aimless. This would be a false conclusion. An idea, especially a moral or an artistic one, may influence by being felt, without the intellectual appreciation of it having any existence whatever. History is full of instances in which ideas have formed and directed the destinies of nations, while at the same time remaining unknown intellectually to individuals. Such ideas have been implicitly obeyed by millions who could not for a moment have formulated them. They have conquered kingdoms, have converted whole races to strange faiths, have discovered new continents, have revolutionized the social order of the world, without being so much as thought of by those whom they have governed. In fact, such ideas have often remained unnoticed or unappreciated even by historians, until more profound study has made them manifest. Let us not then wonder if we find that something corresponding to this has occurred in the realm of art, and that poets have followed high and useful aims, in many cases, without having been aware of the fact. When they gave themselves up to the business of expression, they were conscious only of an irresistible tendency within them. But this tendency was the representative of a want in human nature, of a reaching out for something grander than mere experience. And thus, in giving themselves up to the tendency, they were in reality attaining some noble end.

Whatever be then the true aim of poetry, that aim is, no doubt, carried out as consistently in ancient poetic art as in modern, although modern poets may have a clearer appreciation of it, and may give it a fuller development. And any arguments we may draw from ancient poetry, or from the understanding which ancient critics had of its aim, will, we may be sure, be applicable, at least so far as they go, to any real poetry whatsoever. And, too, we shall have the advantage in considering the former, that it is the free outcome of human nature, unincumbered by any theories, while the modern forms of poetry have many of them been vitiated by conformity to false theories.

One thing more must be said before we enter on the proper consideration of our subject: that is, to define what we mean by "the aim of poetry." In the sense in which it is employed in the following argument, the aim of poetry means the way in which poetry seeks to be of use to us. Is it intended mainly to instruct us, or to amuse us, or again to perform for us some greater good than either of these? The last of these three hypotheses is the one which it is here proposed to uphold. It is too common to divide all kinds of non-material benefit into the two ill-defined classes of amusing things and instructive things. But, as is easily to be seen, amusement and instruction are alike only incidental aims of art. The true value which gives art its power, which has at times caused it to be in fact worshiped, must arise from some higher aim.

In endeavoring to see just what this aim is, we shall get much help at the outset by calling to mind the view suggested by the first man who ever wrote in a systematic way on poetry—namely, Aristotle. Everything that methodical thinking, joined with a keen eye for valuable facts, could do, was done by Aristotle to all subjects he laid hold of. And in the case of the little treatise

known as the *Poetics*, the great philosopher had more facilities for his investigations than he had at his command in preparing any other treatise. No doubt the tragic representations of the Greek stage had been among the first things to arouse his philosophic attention. No doubt as a mere youth he had pondered over the grand effects of the great dramas upon him, while yet his intellect was too immature to prevent his warm southern blood from rushing hotly through his veins at the sight of those noble performances, and while perhaps he joined with the less cultivated throng in weeping and lamenting over the ideal destinies that were ruined in the mimic representations before him. All his life, too, living and working in his thoughtful pursuits, he had constant opportunities to have his attention recalled to the old subject. Probably there was nothing that received, during the many years of his activity, a more continued share of his consideration than this one matter. And so, when in his mature life he came to set in order his many ideas on poetic art, he gave us a treatise running over with suggestion, full of thought even to obscurity. Everything that has ever been written on the subject since has been more or less founded on Aristotle. If what he states is only a part of the truth, we should not be astonished; but the fact that the first essay ever written on so complicated a theme should be so complete and accurate, is certainly a matter to excite the greatest admiration.

The treatise *De Poetica* opens with a definition and a division of poetry. Poetry, says Aristotle, is in reality a form of imitation. It imitates characters, deeds, feelings. Its divisions depend on the sort of metres it uses in imitating, on the kind of things it imitates, on the stand-point the poet himself takes in the act of imitation, whether as narrator or as scenic displayer of the hings imitated. Everything about it, therefore, has connection with its fundamental characteristic, that of imitation. But now, what is the end of this imitation? This question is best answered by setting forth the causes that have given rise to imitative art. They are two; and, adds the matter-of-fact philosopher, with a tacit reference no doubt to those who sought for mysteries in art where there are none, they are both *natural* causes. The first is the desire to imitate, which distinguishes man from most other animals, together with the accompanying tendency to be pleased with all imitations, even those of frightful or loathsome objects. The second is the love of instruction, common in a certain small degree to philosophers and all other men; since instruction can be gained from imitations in the very best manner. Here Aristotle drops the subject of the aim of the art in such a way as would lead us to suppose he had said all he wished to about it. Not so, however. When he comes, a little farther on, to discuss tragic art, considered specially, he gives us an enlarged view of the matter. Now poetry, instead of imitating things as found in nature, is said to imitate things as they should be if they conformed to certain principles of artistic sequence, which he then proceeds to explain. And the end of the imitation is more fully set forth in the following definition of tragedy: "Tragedy is then an imitation of an earnest and completed action, which must possess magnitude; the imitation being accomplished by the use of language arranged in set metres, each one of the kinds of metre being made use of separately from the others in its own division of the tragedy, and the whole not producing its effect by means of narration, *but in the act of arousing the emotions of pity and fear, bringing about a* PURIFICATION *of such feelings as these themselves.*" A portion of this definition, it will be readily seen, relates only to the

ancient form of tragedy, with its iambic dialogue, its choral odes, and its *commi* or alternated songs, rendered by the actors and the chorus together. But the latter part is true, not of tragic poetry alone, but also of all highly emotional poetry. The statement plainly shows that Aristotle well understood that in the aim of poetry there was something which had special relation to the human feelings, and which was far more than merely the outcome of the love of amusement displayed in the act of imitating, or of the desire for instruction exhibited in the study of imitations.

That he had an appreciation of this fact is still further shown by the nature of his discussions on artistic justice, the choice of subjects, the necessity for deviations from truth, and similar topics, where he in all cases makes the expression of feeling the primary criterion for determining the proper method of procedure. For example, after stating that tragedy is made such, to a great extent, by the introduction of sudden revolutions of fortune occurring in the course of the action, he proceeds to set forth the kind of change of fortune that must be brought in, in order to produce the proper effect. He argues somewhat as follows: The design of the whole representation is, by the definition of tragedy, to arouse pity and fear. The change of fortune is only a mean to this end. Now if an upright man entirely blameless is thrown from good fortune into evil fortune, we neither pity nor fear primarily, but our principal feeling is that of righteous indignation. If the contrary event happens to such a man, we rejoice, indeed, but we do not receive any effect at all tragic. On the other hand, if it is a thoroughly evil man who meets with good fortune, we are again indignant; and if such a man meets with a serious reverse of fortune, we think it no more than his deserts. The only sequence then that will produce the effect of tragedy, is that in which a man, claiming our respect by his great qualities, but not altogether blameless, falls through some natural error into evil fortune. Such a case excites by its representation both our pity and our fear; pity for misfortunes that have come in natural order, and yet were not deserved; fear because of the display of the weakness which has brought ruin to a fellow-creature, whose fortunes are not altogether unlike what may happen to us. An argument such as this shows us clearly that Aristotle was not entirely under the control of his own theory of imitation, that he saw ends in poetry beyond and above either the instruction or the amusement to be found in copies, and that he more or less clearly understood that the true value of the whole art lay in its effect on the stronger emotions.

So much, then, as to the views of Aristotle. While the external form of the poetic art received the most of his attention, and while he consequently thought less of its essential aim than we could wish he had, still, with his taste and intellect, he needed the help of no preceding critic to enable him to to see and feel what that aim is. He is fully aware that the greatest good to be found in poetry is that quieting and ennobling of the more powerful feelings which he includes under the expressive word *katharsis* (purification). He knows that truthful narration, naturalness of incident, the relation of the various characters introduced, all must be subordinated to this one thing. If a superficial view of his treatise would lead us to think him a believer in imitation purely, and an upholder of the doctrine that poetry is only intended to amuse or to instruct, without any aim at culture or elevation, a closer acquaintance with him shows us that he really teaches a much broader doctrine. But, nevertheless, it is true that he does not lay much stress on the

principle which he enunciates. He does not seem to understand that culture is not only the chief aim of the best poetry, but also its only aim, considered as art. The adornment he has mistaken for a part of the original design; he has not seen that the adornment is simply the means for carrying out the original design. Poetry may imitate, in a certain way, most wonderful events, and yet fail of being art. It may call up the vaguest images only, and yet be the best of art. Nor yet is it true, as Aristotle in one place says, that poetry is distinguished from pure history merely by the introduction of some general idea into its account of events, so as to give it a more *philosophic* character than that of the latter. For we moderns have no end of histories written in subordination to a single general idea. Our philosophical narratives and narrative philosophies are simply innumerable. Yet none of them is poetry. In fact, there is no way to explain the nature of true poetry without supposing it to be the verbal expression of an *emotional idea*, in which the idea itself fashions and controls the whole, and in which imitation, naturalness, and every like quality, are only required in so far as they conduce to the expression itself.

The ancient art with which Aristotle had to deal showed this quality no less than does the modern. To be sure, a superficial observer might think that Homer was made a poet only by his faculty of imitating. But a man like Aristotle must have been able to appreciate that the *Iliad* is the greatest of epic poems, because it is the treasury of expression for every emotion of the noble age of primitive grandeur for which it was composed, and because, through this fact, it must ever remain the chief embodiment of one side of the more complicated human life of later ages. But as regards the Greek tragedy, it is hard to see how anyone could fail of understanding that in it imitation is entirely subordinate to emotional expression. The Greeks delighted in making it as ideal as possible. Many of its mechanical features were, we know, intentionally unnatural. Only in that it excited and *purified* the grander emotions of the soul was it of interest. And yet the interest of that one thing was sufficient to place it among the highest attainments of poetic art at any time. And as to the minor forms of ancient poetic creation—the hymns, the pæans—what were they, any of them, but pure expressions of emotion?

Another indication that ancient poetry was in reality formed according to this principle is the manner in which Plato speaks of it. It is to be regretted that this master did not give us a systematic work on the design of poetry. Had he done so his treatise would have been a poem of itself, and at the same time would have been an invaluable philosophic treasure. Yet he has, in disjointed passages, left hints, remarks, and even considerable arguments on the subject. The passage especially to be noted here is the one occurring in the *Phædrus*, where the poetic inspiration is placed as one of the four species of divine madness which the gods have bestowed upon favored mortals as guides to lead them upward; the others being the power of prophetic foresight, the instinct which teaches men how to rid themselves of the taint of guilt, and, greatest of all, the faculty of loving passionately and yet purely. It is plain that Plato sees in poetry something grander than amusement or instruction, something that has an intimate connection with the beautiful itself and with the loftiness of soul that comes from the contemplation of it.

But ancient poetry was much more realistic than modern. If the former was in reality the outgrowth and expression of emotion, the latter should be much more so. And this we find to be

the case. Shakspeare's portrayal of life is a natural one, but that is not what gives him his monarch's throne. He is as great as he is because he understands and gives voice to every variety of feeling, and because in doing so he works out, in complete harmony, the expression of grand artistic ideas. And from Shakspeare down, every poet of modern times is a poet only in so far as he succeeds in doing, in his own way, something parallel to this.

But now a great question still remains unanswered. Let us suppose it admitted that poetry is, as has been said, the verbal expression of emotional ideas. Then it, of course, follows that its relations to the other arts depend on the special powers of its instrument—language; that, in consequence, it is less vague than music, but more ideal than painting; that, furthermore, it portrays actions better than the plastic arts, but is less powerful in scenic effect than they are. All these things have engaged critical attention, and have been settled by critical laws. But they are, after all, merely mechanical statements of how poetry does its work. Still, there remains the query: Why does poetry exist? What want of the soul is satisfied by it? What sort of feelings does it best express? And what does it accomplish by expressing them? We have seen that amusement and instruction have been said to be the result of this act of expressing, the amusement arising from pleasure at the ingenuity of the expression, and the instruction coming from the study of the kinds of emotion expressed. But it has been stated that the real object is something better than either of these. Let us see if we can prove this.

We leave out all the lower forms of poetry—forms that are either not art at all, or only art in so far as they have something in common with the higher forms—and come directly to high art itself, where the essential aim is most clearly seen and most perfectly realized. What is the first and most notable feeling that comes from the reading of a play like "Othello," or of a great poem like "Faust?" Is it amusement at the ingenuity with which the poet has succeeded in catching the varied traits of the human mind and calling them up before us? Do we smile at the delicate turns of expression or at the fine touches of feeling? Well, we may do this, to be sure, when we are in a quieter mood, but the first impression, if we have appreciated the work, is one of deep excitement, and often of strong enthusiasm. A vast concourse of emotions, such as we have had at various times in greater or less degree, rise and surge together within us. Pity and fear, as Aristotle has told us, are the most prominent feelings aroused by a tragic representation, and these, with the others, assail us at once in the most complicated forms. But none of these feelings agree exactly with those aroused by actual experience. We are now moved not by the *same* pity, not the *same* fear, as the pity and fear that we should feel if we really saw the events occurring in our daily life. There is some other element introduced. And the result is, as Aristotle again has said, a *purification* of the stronger emotions that have been aroused. Never again will we suffer, when we meet misfortunes, with the same dull, quivering, animal helplessness that we have before felt. It will be a higher suffering, one that draws into itself a deeper knowledge of the feelings of others, that understands how to rise above itself—that is, in a word, purified.

What, it may be asked, is the reason that poetry has this effect upon us? Why should the arousing of great emotions by means of ideal instruments accomplish what it does? The answer to this question is difficult, but, if I am not mistaken, it is somewhere near the fol-

lowing. In any great poem the emotions are aroused in the simplest manner. The circumstances described are just sufficient in number to produce the desired end and to make the illusion complete, and no more. All the minor matters that fill up life are taken out. The emotions of the poem are separated from non-emotional surroundings as well as from other emotions, and are exhibited alone. The effect of this is to make the emotion aroused one not of a special and therefore petty nature, but of a general and consequently lofty kind. Do we suffer? It is no petty, trifling, everyday matter that affects us, but we are suffering with humanity. Do we rejoice? It is with no careless flippant excitement, but with a joy rendered calm by sympathy with universal joy. And so the result of this higher art is to inspire a melancholy that is not passionate, because it is conscious that sorrow is universal and inevitable; a calmness that never changes to easy joyousness, because it knows that overflowing happiness is but for a moment—the melancholy and the calmness both of a vast mountain forest, forever murmuring gently with the sea-breeze.

It has been thought by some that, in order to do this, poetry must be careful to express only the calmer emotions. Very passionate love, very terrible sorrow, or loneliness, or despair, must be avoided. Such emotions must never be expressed unless they are immediately subordinated to some higher and calmer feeling. The problem must never be given without the solution. Those who believe that poetry is meant for amusement have, of course, ground for such a view as this. They say that it is not amusing at all to be put into melancholy moods; that poets who have control over our feelings have no right thus to abuse our confidence; that it is cruel, and much more of the same kind. But those who see that the end of poetry is higher, that it is to elevate in every possible way, have no right, I think, to make this claim. Certainly Shakspeare would not teach us this. In him we find the greatest problems proposed and left unsolved; the most passionate love disappointed; the loneliness of a soul that is unaided and unsympathized with in the greatest perplexities, relieved, as in Hamlet's case, by death alone; the despair of an Othello measuring out, to use Schlegel's words, "in one moment the abysses of eternity;" and yet nothing is done to brighten the picture. For those fearful emotions are human emotions; that misery is life's misery. But all this does not oppose what we have already stated. It is this very expression of such emotions, by means of ideal surroundings and in separation from the lowest facts of common life, which produces the desired end of elevation and *purification*. The same experiences that would overwhelm us were we not prepared for them, can be borne when we see how they are human; and how, too, it is possible for one to stand outside of them, to contemplate them, to be above them, and yet at the same time to be affected by them. Art teaches us to govern such feelings, not by disguising them from us or by introducing new and fictitious feelings along with them, but by generalizing and objectifying them.

Taking, then, all those matters that lie within its province, all those emotions that are not so subtile as to need music for their expression, or of such a nature as to be only capable of embodiment in painting, poetry aims to express fully the whole emotional side of life in such a way as to enlarge, to purify, to elevate the emotions themselves. The feelings that would be petty without its aid, become noble under its influence. The poetic mind suffers grandly. Its very follies are admirable. Its superstitions are to be revered. What is a mere fancy in the brain of an ignorant

man of our day, is a great principle in a Luther or in a Bunyan, men who were poets of action. What is a harsh dogma of unenlightened theology elsewhere, becomes with one of them the mover of the purest feeling. And all this is because they are of wide-reaching minds, because they suffer with human nature, because their feelings are never petty, even if their views be infinitely narrowed by tradition, or sadly distorted by prejudice.

But the end of all this elevation and broadening of feeling, correspondent in art with the like effects produced by science in the realms of thought, what is it? We can not tell all of it. Life is too hard a problem. The evil tendencies with which we have so much to do are themselves too little understood. Much harder is it to comprehend the good tendencies that are unfortunately only too few to admit of much comparison. But one thing is certain: the end of individual attainment is a state of being that is independent and yet sympathetic, separated from the petty vexations of life, and yet able to feel itself an inseparable part of the great whole. It is a state that is calm, because it is beyond the reach of ordinary troubles, can overcome or has overcome sorrows, is in love with the unchangingly beautiful; but at the same time is ready to help others, to live for humanity, to be sorrowful over the unsolved problems of life. To this condition—this life "on the heights"—it is the mission of art, and, in a special sense, of poetic art, to lead mankind. How it does this, this essay has, to a certain limited extent, endeavored to show. But that it does do this seems too certain a truth to admit of question.

IN A CALIFORNIAN EDEN.

CHAPTER I.—THE FIRST ELECTION.

NOW there was young Deboon, from Boston, who was a very learned man; in fact he was one of those fearfully learned young men—a man who could talk in all tongues, and think in none. Perhaps he had some time been a waiter. I am bound to say that in my observations, reaching over many years of travel, the most dreadfully learned young men I have ever met are the waiters in the continental hotels.

Then there was Chipper Charley—smart enough, and a man, too, who had read at least a dozen books; but the Forks didn't want him for an *alcalde* any more than it did Deboon.

Then there was Limber Tim, and Limber certainly could write his name, for he was always leaning up against trees, and houses, and fences, when he could find them, and writing the day and date, and making grotesque pictures with a great carpenter's pencil, which he carried in the capacious depths of his duck breeches pocket. But when Sandy proposed Limber Tim, the camp silently but firmly shook its head, and said, "Not for Joseph."

At last the new camp pitched upon a man who it seemed had been called "Judge" from the first. Perhaps he had been born with that name. It would indeed have been hard to think of him under any other appellation whatever. It had been easier to imagine that when he had first arrived on earth his parents met him at the door, took his carpet-bag, called him "Judge," and invited him in.

As is usually the case in the far, far