

## CHAPTER VI.

"But you only furnish a different definition of arts and sciences, which is stricter, and is incompatible with science," I shall be told in answer to this; "nevertheless, scientific and artistic activity does still exist. There are the Galileos, Brunos, Homers, Michael Angelos, Beethovens, and all the lesser learned men and artists, who have consecrated their entire lives to the service of science and art, and who were, and will remain, the benefactors of mankind."

Generally this is what people say, striving to forget that new principle of the division of labor, on the basis of which science and art now occupy their privileged position, and on whose basis we are now enabled to decide without grounds, but by a given standard: Is there, or is there not, any foundation for that activity which calls itself science and art, to so magnify itself?

When the Egyptian or the Grecian priests produced their mysteries, which were unintelligible to any one, and stated concerning these mysteries that all science and all art were contained in them, I could not verify the reality of their science on the basis of the benefit procured by them to the people, because science, according to their assertions, was supernatural. But now we all possess a very simple and clear definition of the activity of art and science, which excludes every thing supernatural: science and art promise to carry out the mental activity of

mankind, for the welfare of society, or of all the human race.

The definition of scientific science and art is entirely correct; but, unfortunately, the activity of the present arts and sciences does not come under this head. Some of them are directly injurious, others are useless, others still are worthless,--good only for the wealthy. They do not fulfil that which, by their own definition, they have undertaken to accomplish; and hence they have as little right to regard themselves as men of art and science, as a corrupt priesthood, which does not fulfil the obligations which it has assumed, has the right to regard itself as the bearer of divine truth.

And it can be understood why the makers of the present arts and sciences have not fulfilled, and cannot fulfil, their vocation. They do not fulfil it, because out of their obligations they have erected a right.

Scientific and artistic activity, in its real sense, is only fruitful when it knows no rights, but recognizes only obligations. Only because it is its property to be always thus, does mankind so highly prize this activity. If men really were called to the service of others through artistic work, they would see in that work only obligation, and they would fulfil it with toil, with privations, and with self-abnegation.

The thinker or the artist will never sit calmly on Olympian heights, as we have become accustomed to represent them to ourselves. The thinker or the artist should suffer in company with the people, in order that he may

find salvation or consolation. Besides this, he will suffer because he is always and eternally in turmoil and agitation: he might decide and say that that which would confer welfare on men, would free them from suffering, would afford them consolation; but he has not said so, and has not presented it as he should have done; he has not decided, and he has not spoken; and to-morrow, possibly, it will be too late,--he will die. And therefore suffering and self-sacrifice will always be the lot of the thinker and the artist.

Not of this description will be the thinker and artist who is reared in an establishment where, apparently, they manufacture the learned man or the artist (but in point of fact, they manufacture destroyers of science and of art), who receives a diploma and a certificate, who would be glad not to think and not to express that which is imposed on his soul, but who cannot avoid doing that to which two irresistible forces draw him,--an inward prompting, and the demand of men.

There will be no sleek, plump, self-satisfied thinkers and artists. Spiritual activity, and its expression, which are actually necessary to others, are the most burdensome of all man's avocations; a cross, as the Gospels phrase it. And the sole indubitable sign of the presence of a vocation is self-devotion, the sacrifice of self for the manifestation of the power that is imposed upon man for the benefit of others.

It is possible to study out how many beetles there are in the world, to view the spots on the sun, to write romances and operas, without

suffering; but it is impossible, without self-sacrifice, to instruct people in their true happiness, which consists solely in renunciation of self and the service of others, and to give strong expression to this doctrine, without self-sacrifice.

Christ did not die on the cross in vain; not in vain does the sacrifice of suffering conquer all things.

But our art and science are provided with certificates and diplomas; and the only anxiety of all men is, how to still better guarantee them, i.e., how to render the service of the people impracticable for them.

True art and true science possess two unmistakable marks: the first, an inward mark, which is this, that the servitor of art and science will fulfil his vocation, not for profit but with self-sacrifice; and the second, an external sign,--his productions will be intelligible to all the people whose welfare he has in view.

No matter what people have fixed upon as their vocation and their welfare, science will be the doctrine of this vocation and welfare, and art will be the expression of that doctrine. That which is called science and art, among us, is the product of idle minds and feelings, which have for their object to tickle similar idle minds and feelings. Our arts and sciences are incomprehensible, and say nothing to the people, for they have not the welfare of the common people in view.

Ever since the life of men has been known to us, we find, always and everywhere, the reigning doctrine falsely designating itself as science, not manifesting itself to the common people, but obscuring for them the meaning of life. Thus it was among the Greeks the sophists, then among the Christians the mystics, gnostics, scholastics, among the Hebrews the Talmudists and Cabalists, and so on everywhere, down to our own times.

How fortunate it is for us that we live in so peculiar an age, when that mental activity which calls itself science, not only does not err, but finds itself, as we are assured, in a remarkably flourishing condition! Does not this peculiar good fortune arise from the fact that man can not and will not see his own hideousness? Why is there nothing left of those sciences, and sophists, and Cabalists, and Talmudists, but words, while we are so exceptionally happy? Surely the signs are identical. There is the same self-satisfaction and blind confidence that we, precisely we, and only we, are on the right path, and that the real thing is only beginning with us. There is the same expectation that we shall discover something remarkable; and that chief sign which leads us astray convicts us of our error: all our wisdom remains with us, and the common people do not understand, and do not accept, and do not need it.

Our position is a very difficult one, but why not look at it squarely?

It is time to recover our senses, and to scrutinize ourselves. Surely we are nothing else than the scribes and Pharisees, who sit in Moses' seat, and who have taken the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and will neither go

in ourselves, nor permit others to go in. Surely we, the high priests of science and art, are ourselves worthless deceivers, possessing much less right to our position than the most crafty and depraved priests. Surely we have no justification for our privileged position. The priests had a right to their position: they declared that they taught the people life and salvation. But we have taken their place, and we do not instruct the people in life,--we even admit that such instruction is unnecessary,--but we educate our children in the same Talmudic-Greek and Latin grammar, in order that they may be able to pursue the same life of parasites which we lead ourselves. We say, "There used to be castes, but there are none among us." But what does it mean, that some people and their children toil, while other people and their children do not toil?

Bring hither an Indian ignorant of our language, and show him European life, and our life, for several generations, and he will recognize the same leading, well-defined castes--of laborers and non-laborers--as there are in his own country. And as in his land, so in ours, the right of refusing to labor is conferred by a peculiar consecration, which we call science and art, or, in general terms, culture. It is this culture, and all the distortions of sense connected with it, which have brought us to that marvellous madness, in consequence of which we do not see that which is so clear and indubitable.